

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: January 13, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 19, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

[poem in Korean]

Quiet at night, I sit alone in silence. Man and nature are at one with each other.

This description of monk or monks sitting alone is called night sitting. After others all retired, they sit alone for extra meditation practice. Taking advantage of the dead quiet of the night. Now, most of you are familiar with the Southern School of Buddhism and Northern School of Buddhism or, there is this well known Buddhist quarterly coming out of New York City, it's called Tricycle. And Tricycle is Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism and Tantric Buddhism, or it usually refers to Tibetan Buddhism. But in, when I was training, we had only two Vehicles. The Theravada and Mahayana, and the Tantric Buddhism was, came as part and parcel of the Great Vehicle, Mahayana Buddhism. So when I came to the West for the first time, you know, Tibetan Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism somehow got separated from Mahayana tradition and became the third one. I guess that's because of the popularity of Dalai Lama or also Tibetan Buddhism. So they, I guess they got somehow independent from the traditional Mahayana Buddhism. Not only that, and they claim that theirs is the top-most Vehicle. And Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism is all preparation to reach Tantric Buddhism. And that, I guess, individual practitioners should find out.

But when it comes down to practice and cultivation within the Mahayana tradition, they always talk about power of self-help and power of other-help. In other words, depending upon whether you rely on your own resources available to you that come with your being or whether you rely on resources from outside, it's called, it's power of self-help and power of other-help. Whether you rely on power of self-help and then on power of other-help. That is called the way of self-help, the way of other-help. The way of other-help, which is often called Pure Land Buddhism, is actually very much akin, or similar, with like, Christian or Muslim or Jewish faith. In other words, theist faiths. There have been some dialogues going on. But when you look at the original Buddhist teachings, the teachings that were very close to or ascribed to the historical Buddha and his direct disciples, they said one of his last injunctions was, "Be a lamp unto yourself. Rely on yourself as a refuge." And actually it says don't rely on any external help. And then he also says, rely on Dharma as your refuge, as your resource. So if you follow that, then the way of self-help

or the power of self-help is authentic Buddhist practice. That's where Zen meditation comes from.

So then scholars argued, then how did it happen that Pure Land Buddhism or the way of other-help found its way into the Buddhist tradition? Some scholars argue, it may (have) happened somewhere along the Silk Road. That's the traditional trade route from India to China, what is now known as Central Asia. One time, it was like, a cosmopolitan culture prevailed over there. Much like, you know, Toronto or New York City. Buddhism originated in ancient India. Ancient India included the present day Pakistan and Afghanistan, you know. That's where Buddhism first met the West. You know the famous dialogue between the Greek King, Menander, and the Buddhist monk, Nagasena. That was the first encountered dialogue between the East and West. It's very famous, preserved in the Buddhist scripture in Pali language. So there have been a couple of English translations. That's, the Hellenism and Indian civilizations met. It's very profound teachings of the, Nagasena, this Buddhist monk, trying to explain no or non-self or not-I, you know, to this Menander, Greek King. And it is said the Greek King was so convinced, so finally he became a Buddhist. And also there was some Greek philosophers who became Buddhist monks. I don't know how much true it is, but there seems to be some evidence. Because there is a, actually, this book called the, what is the title, The Heroes of Plutarch? What's the **image** title. That's, yeah I think it's one of the characters. Plutarch Heroes, or something like that. And Menander is also up there and there is, anyway, historical evidence. And then Buddhism traveled to China along with a caravan, the merchant class. So that was a pretty hazardous road, across Hindu-Christian mountains and, of course, the Kashmir and Pakistan and Afghanistan. And then the whole central Asia, the Gobi Desert. So along this **oases**, there are many **oases**, so small Buddhist kingdoms or Buddhist republics were established where this **oasis was** located. So there, this was, a kind of metropolitan or cosmopolitan culture blossomed there. It's pluralism, there was actually Buddhism and some Hinduism, even Christianity in the form of Manichaeism. And then, also Islamic influences there. They all co-existed, pretty much, under Buddhist king. Because Buddhist kings are, they are supposed to be very tolerant and protect all religions. And, so there, apparently, some of these theistic influences found its way into Buddhism. That, some scholars argue about that. It seems there is some evidence about that.

Anyway, but let me just dwell on the Buddha's last injunction. "Be a lamp unto yourself. Rely on yourself as a refuge and rely on Dharma as your refuge and as your resource." So here, that's what meditation practice is all about, you know, instead of praying to somebody. So if you accept this, if you accept what comes with your being, that's what comes with your body, mind, and breath, that's all you ever, that's your life, you know. If you accept that as good, and there must be, you know, hope. Something noble, something infinite, that comes with your being. With your body, mind, and breath. And if you don't escape something else, to something else, then that's it. That's your hope. That's your destiny. That's the way. And there's no alternative. Then you must develop, not just accept, you must develop strong faith in what comes with your being. As hope. As the way. As the future. That's what meditation is really about. In other words, salvation and

awakening, enlightenment. And then you begin to work with that. That's Dharma practice. That's where Dharma comes in. As a refuge. In other words, what you do with those ingredients that come with your being. What is true, what is noble, what is infinite that comes with your body, mind, and breath.

So Dharma practice, basically that's, you know, you learn to help yourself. You know, with the ingredients available to you. And then, through the Dharma practice, you reach out. That's how they serve awakening. So first, it's awakening. You know, we just took Three Refuges. I go for refuge to the Buddha, but it could also mean Buddha within. I go for refuge to Dharma, Dharma within. I go for refuge to the Sangha within. So there's this Buddha within and Dharma within, Sangha within. It's going through many, many lifetimes. That's the infinite journey you undertake as a Bodhisattva. From life to life. Also with life after life. That means that this Dharma and Sangha is all within, not without. That's the true meaning of no-self, no-other. No birth, no death. That life is one. This life prevails. That's the true meaning, and true warning, of the first precept, Don't harm. Don't commit injury. Honour life. Sometimes until it hurts. Honour all forms of life. It's your life. It's our life. It's the life. It's infinite life. Life after life. That's the true meaning of no-self, no-other, no birth, no death.

And the Sangha within, here is of course we, you know, Buddhism is new. We are still trying to gather Sangha and protect Sangha. I mean Sangha, this universal Sangha. Even rocks and trees. They're all Sangha. You can talk about, Buddhists, they talk about Two-Fold Sangha. Two-Fold Sangha is a monastic Sangha, female monks and male monks. And then Four-Fold Sangha is monks and lay-people, lay-brothers and lay-sisters. But Universal Sangha, we all live in. Not just this planet. So protect Sangha and preserve it. Preserve the Sangha, preserve the Universal Sangha. So, you know, that message.

Well, if you grasp this message, you should be really proud as a Buddhist. Because you know what it means to be Buddhist. Being Buddhist comes with awakening. Not just awakening to your Buddha within, but Buddha everywhere. Whether they are potential Buddhas or Buddha in its making or incomplete Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. And then finally, your ordinary, everyday life *is* the way of Buddha. There is no other special way of Buddha. Apart from your ordinary, everyday life. So that's, the Dharma comes in your everyday life. What you do with your life. With your ordinary, everyday life. And you introduce Dharma practice into your everyday life. To help yourself and to help others and to promote Sangha, to protect Sangha.

We are, this is still in January, and usually in January we urge members to make three major resolutions and two minor resolutions. Two minor ones. So someone told me that he makes a resolution but he breaks it on the first day (laughter) by going to party (laughs). You know, I said, then you renew. If you break your New Year's resolution, and then the following day when you wake up, you renew your resolution. Over and over again. And also you come to temple and do 108 prostrations to wake up, to renew. So that you will be able to go forward, not sliding back.

It's called the power of constant practice. Just like sunlight trying to break through the clouds, you know, to shine over and over and over again. So simply you make a resolution and break and then, you don't just, you know, keep breaking it. You have to learn to renew it. That's Dharma practice. Renew over and over again. Not sliding back. Not giving up. Keep going forward. It's like stumbling toward enlightenment. That's the power of constant practice.

And that's, all you've got is body, mind, and breath. So when you practice, you mobilize body-mind and practice. That's chanting and meditation and prostrations. So you talk to your Buddha within, you know. Awareness. When you meditate, you don't just sit there daydreaming. That's not meditation. You hold your back straight, and here, in this meditation, we never close our eyes. This is so important, I keep saying this. Sometimes you close your eyes before you become aware, and immediately you become subject to daydreaming. So we never close our eyes. You watch the tip of your nose and when your eyesight drops here, awareness comes in the form of eyesight. So if you close your eyes, then you lose awareness. That's not meditation. It's the, I keep saying, the very first thing you, by the way, how many of you are here taking the introductory meditation course that started last Thursday. Can you raise your hands? (laughs) You are the only one? There were 21 people, I (laughs), it's maybe January (laughter). It's gloomy and depressing, eh? It's hard to get up and get out of your bed (laughs). And, it's cultivation. The first thing you learn in meditation is peace of mind. Without properly understanding peace of mind, you'll never make any progress in meditation practice, in your meditation practice. At least the meditation practice we do here. And then after peace of mind, you learn to pay attention. That's where cultivation of awareness comes. Cultivation of awareness in this present of your life.

Always, you know, the Zen folks, they just sum it up, "Right here. Right now. Just this." So awareness. When you lose awareness, that's when you become, then you become sloppy and fragmented and start worrying about things. Eventually may have created fears and even have anxiety attacks. And may even end up, you know, going to therapists. That's where your self, then, okay, you are on your way to the way of other-help. Some people combine both, you see (laughter). And well, I would think that, you know, you're, one Sunday you go to Christian church and then the other day you come to Buddhist temple. And just in case, you know (laughter). Okay.

Three strikes to close and chanting

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

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Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

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Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

It's great that so many of you showed up on this cold morning. It now looks really like good old Canada, right? (laughter) I was expecting about a couple hundred people this morning. That's, you know, I've learned to play this number game. In olden times, like a thousand years ago, if you look, if you read the Zen literature, it would say, the Master would say, "If I only get a half a person, not even whole person, if I can get a half a person who can inherit my Dharma, then my Dharma would flourish and the community would go on." But that's 1000 years ago.

So since I came to the West, that's coming down from the mountain, it's, you know, right now we are opening a small temple in New York City, Manhattan. And first, no one shows up. And if one person shows up, well actually this guy, the first fellow who showed up, he came all the way from Long Beach, California looking for job in Manhattan because, and also, it's interesting, this guy, did I tell you this story before? And, he's young, he's 24 years old, and he graduated from college. He thought about what he would be doing, you know. He specialized in finance. So whether looking for job right away or he would take time, you know, to travel around. Then he decided to travel around because, "If I don't do it, I would be able never do it, you see. I would get bogged down with the money making stuff. So first I will go around and travel, visiting different countries."

So he did that for 14 months. So he went to Asia and visited Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and then going around, and Middle East, and Palestine, and all that. So while visiting Asia, inevitably he came across Buddhism and he took interest in Buddhism. So when he came back, since there was not much jobs for him in California, well anyway this is like, people say Manhattan is the financial capital of the world so, you know, he came to Manhattan looking for a job. So apparently there's this, what is it, website which most people looking for jobs visit, you know. They list all the jobs available. So **Kohye**, who has become my great assistant, actually he's now a Dharma Student, he put on our Zen Buddhist Temple, you know, meditation service there, you see. So you have to update it every week, otherwise you're gone, you see. So **[unclear]**. So while looking for a job, he came across the Buddhist meditation. That's how he showed up. So, and then he became, now, a member, you see. He wanted to take the intro course. So then, when one

person showed up, when no person showed up, I think there's 100 people there. With that in mind, I hold service, you see. And then finally, one person shows up, that's 10 – 1000, you know. So that's how I started out, so like, that's my number game. So now there are, I think something like, I counted your heads so about 24 here sitting. That's like 240 in my calculations here. So that's really great, I'm energized (laughs).

Now, you lose the pearl in your hand while looking for the moon in heavens. If you go through Buddhist literature, particularly Zen and Mahayana, you come across this kind of message numerous times. In other words, if you start looking for whatever you are looking for, whether it is the moon or truth or salvation or enlightenment, outside or anywhere else, then, always, you end up neglecting your own treasure, your own jewel, your own pearl, inside, within. Well you know the simple, what does that say, "Look within, and you are the Buddha you are looking for." So here, Buddhism differs from other religions, particularly theistic religions. Well I used the word, you know, here Buddhism is clearly a wisdom-based religion. So that's why we meditate and why we don't pray. Not the kind of petitionary prayer. So it's over, over, and over, and over again this warning not to neglect, you know, your own resources. Not to neglect, not to waste, not to neglect your own life right here and right now. That's what meditation and chanting or prostration is all about.

That's why attention, peace of mind, well, I often say when I conduct introductory meditation course, the first thing you learn about meditation is peace of mind. You do need peace of mind to bring your body-mind together and have authentic peace of mind. And then attention, you learn to pay attention. Attention comes across awareness. Attention, awareness, and awakening. Enlightenment. Now in that process, I was, as some of you know, I have been doing this research. I'm writing a book or books on the history of female monks in Korea. And this is kind of detective work, you know, because there's such a dearth of original materials, you see. You have to look everywhere to find materials.

So, and say these ancient, because, well in traditional societies it's just women were ignored, simply. Their stories were ignored. So if you look at ancient records, in a very unlikely place, you see, and that record or book somehow was used by female monks, then if you look at the title of the book and publication, you would not think it would have any information about female monks or female devotees. But then if you look at the end, you know, like, **colophon** or something like that, there's some kind of a, you know, if you're lucky you'll find a, you know, writings and something like, "At such and such a place, and 15 members or female monks meditated," something like that. To your great surprise. But then also, in those days, there was a lack of writing materials so they would use any space to write down something. Of course there are certain spaces they would not touch, but anyway, some spaces, the back page, you see. That's usually empty side. So they use some scribbles. There, to my great surprise, it's clearly a female monk's writing. It says, "[**Hashi Buddha**]" – What is Buddha? And then, "[**Buljuksamyida**]," – Buddha is all about awakening. Then so, "[**Hashisamyida**]," – What's awakening? And it says, "Ouch!" (laughter) What do you make out of this ouch?

It means, now awakening, well with awakened heart, when you look at life. Well sometimes you start with compassionate heart. Even broken-hearted compassion. Whether you see people are suffering from delusion. Also people suffering from delusion, it's also terribly painful. But also physical suffering or psychological suffering. So it hurts. It hurts. And, you know, it's your own suffering too. If you look at the, you know, if you realize the Buddhist truth. So there are these two key Buddhist teachings. In Zen, they don't usually mention that because they say in Zen, it all comes down to your mind. Your mind is true. And in India, where Buddhism originated, it tends to be a little metaphysical, you see. Well, you know, all sentient beings. Sentient beings are Buddhas. But when Buddhism arrived in China, the Chinese, they like something more tactile, you know. They become very impatient with anything that is abstract or metaphysical, you see. So it's mind. Your mind is Buddha. But when it comes down to Sixth Patriarch or Huineng, it's, mind is also, you know, mind okay, well, consciousness or con..., but it's more specific. I mean these guys, you know, their main industry was agriculture. This was like nothing, modern China, Mao Zedong and all that. That's Western influence. Mao Zedong and all that was Western influence, you see. Well originally it had nothing to do with Chinese civilization. 1000 years ago, or 1500, all agriculture. That's the main industry. Agriculture was so important. Food production. Harvest and all that.

So the soil is important. Working with the soil is very important. So all these members of ruling class and officials, they just, you know, live off farmers, you see. And farmers they have to toil and work hard to feed these good for nothing mouths, you know. And so, then the ground, earth. So they say, they understand immediately earth, soil. That's why it's so important that, you know, drought, sometimes droughts, you know, when lack of rain and precipitation. So that's a very intimate thing, working with soil and the ground. So it's called ground-mind. [unclear]. Not just mind, ground-mind. Earth-mind.

Now here, we say earth-mind, ground-mind, people don't get it. Not even, you know, the, you know, public school children. Well plenty, I read somewhere, they never saw milking cows, you see. They drink milk (laughs), they have never, you know, they are far removed from countryside and all these things. And they just end up eating devitalized food in the cities, you know. So it's ground-mind. Something tactile, something very intimate, that comes with your lifestyle. It's gripping, sometimes, your body-mind and everything right away.

So I was touched when I saw that, "What is Buddha?" Buddha is awakening. Life's all about awakening. So what is awakening? It's "Ouch!" It hurts.

So now, that much clear. So we should never neglect our present life. Looking for truth, looking for salvation, looking for awakening. Even looking for justice and fairness. And then, Buddhism do have doctrine, Buddhism does have doctrines. So there is this doctrine of no-self, non-self. It's, again, difficult, doctrine of non-self. It's, doctrine of non-self is Anātman. And then doctrine

of dependent origination, it's called conditioned arising or interdependent arising. It's so obvious, but anyway let me just stay with this no-self, non-self.

Some of you know, some of you who are familiar with Heart Sutra, which we recite here Wednesday evenings. It's, there are five skandhas, it's five aggregates or five heaps or sometimes I say group of five. These five aggregates are, consist of, first, form. It's called rupa, form. And feeling, vedana. And then perception, samjñā. And impulse or formation, saṃskāra. And consciousness, vijñāna. So these are five. So in Heart Sutra, it just picks one. Form is emptiness. And the rest is just included because it can be too wordy.

So it means form is emptiness, feeling is emptiness, perception is emptiness, and our impulse or formation is emptiness, and consciousness is emptiness. And then, backward, emptiness is form, emptiness is feeling, emptiness is perception, emptiness is impulses, like that. So it's, these are, like, feeling is, you know, form is emptiness, feeling is emptiness. Now here, emptiness means, it does not necessarily mean non-existent. Anyway, and then it comes, so totally, so these five skandhas are what constitutes us as an individual, you see. Individual entity. So five skandhas means there is, like, what we call "self." So there's no such thing as self. So it's non-self. So individual self is denied.

So then, here we live in more like a positive, even aggressively assertive, society. So it's, if emptiness, I mean, an agricultural society understood, you know, empty. It's very, like for instance, like "Hapchang of Empty Heart." So you know, this is Hapchang of Empty Heart. But here in this society it sounds so negative. I mean, particularly to people on the street. Emptiness. You know it's, any religion talking about emptiness, they never heard of that (laughs). More like, you know, promising something, you know. You will go to Heaven. It's chalk-full of, you know, preaching, all that. You know, punishment and all that. So it's, Buddhist teachers, including myself, we start using, you know, I mean the tradition is one thing, and as a Buddhist teacher I have to survive. Not only to survive but I have to, you know, flourish, here, doing Buddhism. So Nirvana, the original word means, it's "extinction." So that's very negative.

So last year, you know, last fall I went to this [Weill?] clinic. It's recommended by Trump Western, you know. Have to have a colonoscopy. And this doctor who runs this clinic, he's a very devout Catholic. He had [unclear, English Theologian's name?]'s book right there (laughs), [unclear]. You know [unclear, English Theologian's name?], you know the English Theologian. And he was, he's reading everyday, you see. And, well he said before he started out, "Do you believe in Heaven?" I smiled, you know. I do believe in Heaven, but I didn't say. But, you know, he has a specific type of Heaven, you know. Heaven could be everywhere. "So you are a Buddhist monk, yeah? What is Nirvana?" (laughs). So, you know, these words are around, you see. People pick it up, the word Nirvana and Karma, you know. So either negatively or humorously, you know, you find all these song-writers and, you know, musicians, they use these words, you know. So they pick it up and then that, anyway, all these elements together, if you

take a big look, all these elements, somehow, they contribute to the Buddhist knowledge and also, remotely, they eventually, you know, contribute to the spread of Dharma in this country. So it helps my work (laughs), a little bit easier. At least, you know, I don't have to go through Nirvana with a foreign language, you know (laughter). So I said, "Peace of mind." "Oh, peace of mind. That's eye opening." So that's, I have to interpret it positively, you see, to make sense to these people.

So it's, in non-self, I warn people, you know, if you are Buddhist don't talk about non-self when you go to bank loan office to borrow money (laughter). It's true self, you know. Well the other word is non-self means true self. Because individual self is denied, but it's like if you're like, I don't have time to go into these, the 12 links, the chain of, you know, dependent origination. There are 12 links. So it means, the final message is we are an interrelated whole. Otherwise the word emptiness or non-self does not make sense here. But these, these are two key teachings. The doctrine of non-self and the doctrine of interdependent origination.

Well it's in a, it's what's put in a very simplistic form like this, as some of you who studied the life of Buddha would recall that, well, first Buddha, at his first sermon he, you know he, you know, he got five disciples. So he converted them to be his disciples. They were all his old friends when he was undergoing austerities, you see. So one of them, I think it was Asaji, they were all going on begging round, you see. Begging, that was important. Their Right Livelihood is begging, you know. So here we try to do a little bit of that. That's, sometimes I bother [Jayeung?], or [Satcha?], or sometimes Ilcho, to go around, you know, alms begging. Like bakery, you know. So now he hit the jackpot (laughs) and we now got, you know, for a while I urged them. Still, you know, they don't get the meaning but this is an important practice, you know. I mean, to teach them generosity too. So we end up with a lot of bread so you can take some bread, you know. And Ilcho is trying to make, I just learned, he got some cats and dogs, you know. He's trying to become a good householder and raising cats and dogs, and then try to turn them into vegetarian cats and dogs (laughter) eating bread.

But anyway these 12 links. So there are 12 of them, so of course 12 links of causation. But Asaji, he was going around on begging round when Śāriputra, who became one of the greatest disciples of the Buddha, he watched them, you know. The conduct. So he was very impressed with his conduct, the way he was going around, you know. So he was inspired and approached him and asked him, "Who is your teacher?" "The Buddha." But he never heard of the Buddha. Well he was familiar with the word Buddha but, like, it's always Shakyamuni Buddha, or Ilcho Buddha, or somebody's Buddha. It's not a proper noun, it's like a title. And then so, "What does he teach?" And then Asaji says, simply so well he teaches, you know, I'm still, you know, learning, so it's very, this is very rudimentary. "If that exists, if that exists, this arises." That's what he says. "If this exists, that arises." And that's like, if there is condition A, if condition A is ripe, then effect B comes into being. So like that. And then of course the other way around. If this does not arise, if this does not exist, that does not arise. So it's pretty, the most rudimentary and simplest form.

But anyway, it **stretches** over three lives. Or could be past life, present life, and future life. And starts with ignorance or lack of recognition of Three-fold, Three Holy Truths or Three Noble Truths, and **empowers** that path, and then coming to consciousness, name and form, and six sense spheres, and goes on like that. So now, true self, well it's not just, if you don't get stuck with your own life, you know, no matter how precious and no matter how melodramatic, and if you begin to see your own life in the lives of many, and finally, if you learn to relate life that goes on, with or without you, and that effects so many lives, you begin to see what true self is about.

So anyway, we are still in January of this year. Usually we celebrate the January 1st, the New Year's Day service. And on that occasion we usually encourage people to make New Year's resolutions, fully aware that you would break them soon (laughter). And then also we teach how to renew. You make, you go ahead and make your New Year's resolutions, but each time you break, you renew them. That becomes, renewing your New Year's resolutions, becomes practice. And practice, practicing is important. And practicing becomes its own practice.

So it's like, as Master Jinul said, "If you fall to the ground, then also you learn to stand up by way of God." So if you break your New Year's resolutions, then also you learn to renew them. So you learn to go forward, not sliding back. And if you can comprehend this, then you can comprehend a lot of things. It takes a little discipline. You have to learn to persevere. And also in that process of persevering, you learn something about integrity, or formation of character. Or even fidelity. Or something about wholesome. Wholesomeness, wholesomeness that comes with my life. So how it goes, that's how the Buddhist training goes. Non-neglect. Non-neglecting your life here and now. And stop looking for things. Stop getting distracted so much.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

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[poem in Korean]

Where there are 1000 rivers, there are 1000 moons.

That is to say, where there are 1000 lives, there are 1000 Buddhas. Buddhists believe in the Buddha within. Buddhists put trust in Buddha in me.

Now, what is Buddha? As you know, Buddha is awakened one. So since we have the Buddha awakened, the awakened one within and in each of us, the task is to discover that and put it into good use in your everyday life. Now this awakened and awakening. What does this awakened one do? Or how can it activate the awakened one in each of us? That becomes task. So, for instance, awakening to what is good, to what is true, to what is pure in each of us. These inherent qualities that come with being human. With human birth.

Now, most of you know Heart Sutra. We recite Heart Sutra Wednesday evenings after membership meeting. There you hear, “Kwan Seum Bosal perceives the emptiness of five skandhas.” Five skandhas. Skandhas, the word Skandha in Sanskrit or Khandha in Pali, is usually translated as heap. H-E-A-P, heap or aggregate or group. And there are five of them. The Sanskrit words, the first one is rupa. So a little bit of Buddhist doctrine here you have to know. Rupa. That’s physical body. Whether this one, or even, it’s called Buddha Rupa. It’s physical form. And then vedana is feelings. And then saṃjñā, that’s perceptions or ideals and concepts. And saṃskāra, that’s impulse or various desires and volitions. And finally, vijñāna, self consciousness. So there’s five of them. First rupa, form or physical body or corporation. And then the second one is feelings, vedana. And then the third one is perception or ideas and concepts. And the fourth one is impulse or these various desires and volitions. And the fifth one is consciousness or self consciousness.

So when body, when rupa, is charged or empowered with the rest of the four, you know, feelings, perception, and impulse and consciousness, then, so then, it simply is called body-mind. When we say body-mind that’s five skandhas, five heaps, five aggregates. And these together, five of them or group of five, constitute the entire of what is generally known as personality. So that

each of us, we are made up, consist, in the accumulation of these five aggregates, called five skandhas or personality. It reveals your personality.

So what the Heart Sutra, what it says is these five aggregates that make up your personality is empty. That is body is empty and your feelings, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, they are empty. And your ideals and concepts are empty. And your various desires and volitions are empty. And your self consciousness is empty. So realizing that these are empty, they delivered, Kwan Seum Bosal delivered all beings from their suffering.

Now, suffering here is these five skandhas. When together they are called, actually, Upādānaskandha. Upādānaskandha means it's aggregates of attachment. Because craving, craving or desire, attaches itself to five skandhas, group of five. And attracts them to itself. That's craving. So eventually it makes of them objects of attachment. So that's called Upādānaskandha. Aggregates of attachment. Then when it makes them, it makes of them objects of attachment, then suffering and pain are produced, and melodrama unfolds (laughter). You are familiar with that, eh? I'm sure each of you have a story about that. Quite a story, painful story, but five years later it can be humorous too. And then you repeat (laughter).

Now, this Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, realizing the emptiness of these five skandhas and delivering all beings from their suffering, that's called **Sudden** Path, you know. But usually what we try is, you go through training. So when we do Yebul, you know, in Korean Yebul, the first thing is Kye-Hyang, Chong-hyang, Hye-hyang, Hyet'al-hyang., Hye-t'al-ji-gyon-hyang. We recite that. It ends with hyang. Hyang means, hyang means incense, and then here the implication is fragrance. So here, Kye-hyang, Chong-hyang, Hye-hyang, the first three are **trisikṣā** of the Three-Fold Training. It's Śīla, Samādhi, and Prajñā. This is called the Three-Fold Training. Śīla, ethical discipline, ethical awakening. Through discipline, you are awakened to ethical values. More or less, ethical values. And the second one is Samādhi. That's concentration, meditation and concentration. That's called Dharma awakening or spiritual awakening. Awakening to spiritual values through discipline. That's meditation practice. And the third one is Prajñā, transcendent wisdom. That's what I call social awakening. And then, and then after that it's called Vimukti. The fourth one is called, Kye-hyang, Chong-hyang, Hye-hyang, Hyet'al-hyang. That's liberation, emancipation, freedom. Vimukti. And then the fifth one is called Vimuktijñānadarśana. It's called, sometimes, understanding. It's knowledge of liberation. Knowledge of emancipation. Sometimes it's just called knowledge and understanding. So you transform these five skandhas, you know, this is you replace five skandhas with another set of five. That's five hyangs, you see. So you can see that. So that's what the practice is all about. That's, you know, that's the training. And awakening, reawakening to your Buddha within. So you do, you know, speaking in plain words, it's awakening to what is good. Not just what is good for yourself, but what is good for your community, for the world, and for rocks and trees and sky. That's ethical discipline. That's moral discipline. Ethical awakening. And what is true. So what is good and what is noble, they go together. And what is true and what is pure. Pure and original and authentic.

This what we believe. That's the implication of Buddhists, you know, believing in the Buddha within. In Buddha in me. And failing this, of course you lose people, you know. They go and, you know, seek what Buddhists call other help, you know. So they go to church and mosque or, you know, synagogue. Sometimes it's called "Easy Path." You abandon yourself and, you know, and seek other help. Well that's good too. Sometimes you combine, you know, just in case, you know (laughter). Well more and more people do that, you see. So you learn to help yourself. Even, I think, now Christians, they also started teaching, you know, self-help. You don't just go to Heaven, you have to deserve to go to Heaven, right? But in order to deserve, you have to exert yourself. You have to make yourself worthy and noble. So that's why sometimes, you know, they pray, but then, you know, like they come and meditate.

Well, they talk about this as inter-religious dialogues. But of course, well if you go to inter-religious dialogue you go through several stages so everybody comes, you know, armed with their own, you know, [unclear] doctrine, you know. Missionaries. But then after a while that does not work, you see (laughter). So then they have to learn to share some of their stuff to open dialogue, you see. So that's interesting, this process. Because otherwise if they just insist upon, you know, the old doctrine, more and more they would find themselves become irrelevant, you see. Or non-viable. But it's, well there is such outcry for, you know, I mean, and also many people, people from many different sectors of the society, even, you know, business sectors, they, you know, it's a wake up call. I mean, environment now. What would happen to this Earth planet. What if you allow science and technology to prevail all over, you know. And but, the ultimate question is civilization and nature. What are you doing? Are you civilization in nature or civilization versus nature? But then finally, but it's, what about the nature inside us? Whether biological or psychological or spiritual?

So it comes down to, first, you know, each of us. We have to wake up. What's available with us, within us. What is good, what is noble, what is true, what is pure, and what is authentic that comes with each being, with each birth. Buddhism has been teaching this wisdom path for more than 2500 years. The founder of Buddhism did not discover Buddhism while, he made it clear, it's ancient path. He said prior to my time, people just, you know, came and awakened what's available, what came with their being most spontaneously, and they were happy with that. They didn't feel any urge to spread and to teach, you know, what they discovered. But the Shakyamuni Buddha, Gautama Buddha, was the first one who, you know, decided to spread the message. To share what he discovered with others. So we are grateful to that.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: March 30, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 25, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

[poem in Korean]

Years ago, seeking fire, I found it mingled with smoke. Today, carrying spring water, I return with the moon.

So here metaphor, or mixed metaphor, fire and smoke, water and moon. Fire and smoke versus water and moon. Here, fire is referring to purification. Or Buddhist practice, cultivation, and training. So fire burns up. Through cultivation, you burn up all your karmic obstacles. So that you would become free from your wrongdoings, defilements and delusion. So purification. So when people get inspired, motivated, and enthused, they practice hard. But the practice or cultivation they do, it has to be, it's got to be genuine. Pure and authentic. You cannot pretend. But sometimes, as it happens, instead of building good fire, you end up with making a lot of smoke. Even scaring some people away, you know. Some of you may know that. You may have even experienced that. It can be nasty.

Now, water and moon. The 1000 moons on 1000 rivers. Where there's a river, there's bound to be a body of water. Then moon is reflected. So this body of water could be your own mind. And Dharma moon is reflected in the pure body of water. Now, in sitting in meditation, when you sit still and unperturbed, then you sit with all insentient beings. In other words, you form solidarity with all insentient beings. Mountains, rivers, trees, rocks. That's called sitting still and unperturbed. You commune with nature and the universe. That's true sitting. You don't just sit. You sit and stand for all insentient beings. Rocks, trees, mountains, and rivers. Then, you breathe. When you sit and breathe in meditation, you breathe with all sentient beings. So you form solidarity with all sentient beings. Stand with them, stand for them. That's called true breathing. Then you cultivate awareness through concentration. In other words, you become aware both sentient and insentient beings. Then it comes, awakening. It dawns on you what this is all about.

Now what is this awakening? This awakening means there is no Heaven to go. There is no Hell to fall. Actually there is nowhere to go. There is no one who can save you except yourself. Simply, there is no alternative. You've got to wake up to your own true nature as Buddha, as Dharma, and as Sangha.

Once, in 1960s, Alan Watts would go around giving his own Dharma Talks. On the air and to groups of people. Then he would say, "Buddhism is a religion of religions." I still don't know what he really meant by that. But it could be, like, Buddhism is a religion or the way of Buddha, transcending the limitations of traditional religions. Sometimes he would say, "Buddhism is a religion of no religion." Buddhism can tolerate that. It is tragic, people have been deluded for so long that Jinul, the 12th century Korean Zen Master, in his essay on cultivating your mind, he said, continued, "People do not recognize that their own minds are the true Buddhas. People do not recognize that their own natures are the true Dharma. They wish to seek the Dharma, yet they still look far away for holy ones. They wish to seek the Buddha, yet they will not observe their own minds. If they aspire to the path of Buddha-hood while obstinately holding to the feeling that the Buddha is outside their mind or the Dharma outside their true nature, then even though they pass through kalpas," that's, you know, innumerable time period, "even though they pass through many, many years, hundreds of years, studying entire Buddhist cannon, meditating with a few hours of sleep each day and undergoing all kinds of ascetic practices, it will be like trying to make rice by boiling sand. It will only add to their tribulations." Isn't this making things clear? And some intellectuals said, "Buddhism is the future religion." But then, it's well known, Buddhism says the future is right here. The future is now, right here. There is no other alternative. As you know from reading the news, Dalai Lama, with such humility and with his wisdom heart, yet without being bullied by Chinese government, he has been persevering with his people. And his presence and his humility and his steadfast adherence to Buddhist peace, non-violence, should make all Buddhists very proud of being Buddhist. The whole world should be proud of him. [unclear] we have such a person on this planet.

One newspaper I read used the word "Behemoth." What does that word mean? Mhm? ("The gigantic monster.")

He used the word behemoth referring to China, Chinese government. I mean, not the people, the regime. And of course the Chinese government have been vilifying him using such derogative words. But his presence, much more than these political implications, Tibet versus China or he's asking for more autonomy for his people and Tibet, is beyond politics. Beyond race and gender. Well, race and gender has been a hot topic in US presidential politics these days.

Let me just digress a little bit here. I'm not feminist, but I'm post-feminist. I used to be feminist (laughter). I upgraded like that (laughter). I didn't vote but I have been somehow wishing for Hilary Clinton to win the democratic nomination. Partly because I have been studying women's history. Buddhist nuns' history in Korea. And it's amazing what kind of discrimination they had to go through. Actually, given the world history of Buddhism, women, they fared much better than women in other countries. I also wanted to, so I visited quite a number of Catholic convents and talk to Catholic nuns, elderly ones, too. To find out how it was, like, the lifestyle of nuns or

convent life 50 or 100 years ago. So maybe they may have heard from their seniors and all that. So I think it's true that it's, I mean, this is, I mean it's, Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton both, I mean they are rivals in their campaign to win the nomination, but it's a great historical moment, you know. Barack representing African Americans and Hilary Clinton representing women. It's really, George Bush, he loves to say, "Defining moment." (laughs) Everything is a "defining moment." (laughter) Since Iraq, you know, and now he's, you know. But anyway, in different dimension, I mean. It's quite a thing. But still I think it's, it's surprising that, you know, so many people rather elect men than women to serve as President, you know. I mean the President of the United States of America is a very powerful person, so it's the first time a woman is aspiring to, you know, for the highest position, you know, in the world.

But anyway, back to Dalai Lama (laughter). Well that's part two of my talk, eh? (laughter). I won't be long. It's, we are all somehow living embodiment of Dharma if you take Buddhist teachings seriously or at least undertake the Bodhisattva journey or wake up. Representing the three Triple Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Then we all serve as, we say, as moon or as a finger. Finger pointing to the moon. That's the truth and liberation for all beings, **beyond gender and race** and all other things. I think that's what Dalai Lama is truly about, you see.

Of course, well that's in the first step of the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni or Gautama the Buddha, he ran away. He was heir to his kingdom, Himalayan Kingdom. But he ran away and joined śramaṇa movement. And as a consequence, eventually, he contributed to destroying his kingdom and his people. He tried three times when he learned, this was after his becoming **[unclear]**, he learned that invasion of his fatherland was imminent. That was Kosala, one of the two powerful kingdoms bent on expansionism, you know. So when he heard that, he journeyed to the border and sat down under tree waiting for the invading army. So when the leading general, when he saw the presence of Buddha, he dismounted and came to him and (asked), "Why are you sitting here?" And then the Buddha's response is, "My heart still feels close to my fatherland, to my hometown." So he got the message and so they retreated. And this happened a third time, then Buddha finally realized he would not be able to prevent, you know, the invasion. So the kingdom got invaded, his people were slaughtered, and the Shakya kingdom was gone. As a consequence of them, we have now Buddhism.

So Dalai Lama is, in a sense, in a very similar situation. And the position he has been keeping, he is not taking independence. Of course Tibet was, I mean, by language and race, it's very different from Han China. Just, Chinese just swallowed up while the world powers were busy on Korea, you know. Like North Korea invading, you know, aided by Weihsien China, and then while the world's attention was turned there, simply, because it's landlocked, it's easy to go. So it happened to Manchuria. And it's a painful situation. When, 14 days ago when the first riot erupted, and then, well just a couple of days ago they invited a group of 30 journalists on a tour to Lhasa. It's kind of what, you know, **arrange them like school teachers**, you know. And then Wall Street Journal reported on a divided society in Tibet. It's obvious that Tibetan aids, they are collaborators, you know, or they help you for wealth and positions. But still they are distrusted

by Beijing, you know, government. Well they have been carefully watched. So and then, the rest of Tibetans, they are everyday Tibetans, they are desperately poor. A lot of them unemployed. And then, the monks. So these are the ones, you know, who have been protesting. So now the whole world knows that, you know, while the Chinese government officials were guiding around these, you saw that these 30 Tibetans monks, you know, they protested, you know. So [with whole divulging?] that there was a very scripted, you know, thing. Made up thing. Even that one Tibetan who used to be a cab driver and he was in detention was allowed to be interviewed by foreign journalists. He said, it's hard to talk about my personal opinions.

It's, if you look carefully, it's not just Tibet. It's like, of course it's, when I first came to US, this was 1967. Actually, I wrote about this. It should go on the website, my experience in San Francisco, Haight-Ashbury, and then Washington Square Park in New York City. And it was quite a cultural experience for me. I think since the Buddha's time, since the śramaṇa movement, so many young people, teenagers, not just male, I mean, during the śramaṇa movement it was all boys, you know, but now it's both male and female teenagers. Ran away, en masse, and joining this bohemian subculture movement or counterculture movement. In those days, I heard all night, this "San Francisco." It was a song by Scott Mackenzie, I think. That was his hit song. And, "Change Is Blowing In The Wind" by Bob Dylan. And it was quite an experience. I don't think, and also, for the first time, I think, in US history, obviously US history does not stretch, you know, more than 400 years, but for the first time, now my country, right or wrong, was on the table, examined. That was also revolutionary.

Now this ethnic nationalism going on while American economy is going down as America as a world power, superpower, is increasingly being questioned. It's, the world, it's becoming very dangerous. Just look at Russia, China. So, and Buddhists are still very small in number. It's, in US, it's just 1%. In Canada, I don't know, I have not looked at the ... but it's, traditionally, Buddhists played a great role in changing hearts.

Three strikes to close and chanting

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: April 27, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Kunaka

Date of transcription:

(Chanting Korean)

Namo Prajna Paramita

Please sit comfortably. Good morning.

[Korean]

*The water a cow drinks turns to milk
while the water a poisonous snake drinks turns to poison.*

It's the same water. Same water can turn to milk, yet the same water can turn to poison. When applied to man, the same can happen if the right person follows the dharma. If the right person follows the teaching, the teaching can be right. If the wrong person follows the teaching, the teaching can be wrong. Master Chao-chou put it more emphatically, typically in Zen-way, like man, both male and female, man is originally Buddha.

So if the right person follows the wrong teaching, the wrong teaching can become right by the power of the right person following it. But if the wrong person follows the right teaching, the right teaching can become wrong by the wrong person following it. So from this you can see it's not god that is good or beneficial, nor is it the devil that is wrong or wicked. In Zen we put it this way, I've said this a number of times. "Awakened sentient beings, man, becomes Buddha. Deluded, Buddha becomes man, Buddha becomes sentient being, an unenlightened being. So it is man, more specifically in this case, it is human being who can be right or wrong, wise or wicked.

Now, with 3000 years of history, of written history behind us, all this development of science and technology, and also of wisdom, continued compilation all this wisdom teaching and all this good political systems, what is often called empire of liberalism. But as you can see things can clearly go wrong with patriotism and ethnocentrism.

Now, but individually, in Buddhism we always count on good individual, bodhisattvas, who give their entire life to doing good things, doing what is good for all beings, doing what is good for the mountains, doing what is good for the trees, doing what is good for birds, doing what is good for rivers, and doing what is good for each other and one another.

So, you should never underestimate or make it slight a piece of good you can do, no matter how insignificant it may seem at the time, or you may think so, but often it will have a far-reaching ripples. People, many people, can benefit even from your random kindness. You don't agree with that?

It is, when I was still training in monastery, I was told this story. At the time, I did not appreciate it.

This man, he committed, he made a number of transgressions while he was alive, so as a consequence of his wrongful actions he ended up in hell. So, since he was new, he was shown, you know there are different types of hell, in Buddhism anyway. So, while visiting all these different kinds of hells, right now he's not aware, fully aware what kind of a hell he would end up in, you know for his retribution. So he was so amazed that so many people going through such agony and pain. So it occurred to him if I could replenish these people so they could take a little break, like a coffee break, from all these tortures they go through. So he came with such a good bodhisattva thought. He was so overcome with so many people undergoing so much pain and torture. But if you look at the globe there are so many people. You are blessed. You are very fortunate. You are well-fed. You have shelter. You have all this social security net which you benefit from. There are a lot of people who do not have such a benefits. They are practically starving. Many people, you know, even three generations they are growing up in refugee camps. Even they do not have good drinking water. So, when he came up with such good thoughts, bodhisattva thoughts, right away he rose to heaven. But there could have been more of story. Buddhists believe in heaven, hell, all these things, just moral teachings. Anyway, at the time, it took me some while to appreciate this story, one good acts. Usually we do good things by way of your thoughts, deeds, and speech. So, the thoughts you think, the speech you utter, and the deeds you perform can make you good and happy for a lot of people. But, the thoughts and deeds and speech you perform with wrong mind can hurt a lot of people. Not only human beings, but our soil, if you litter. The soil is organic material. The air and insects and plants and trees. It has so become so painfully clear. We even have a political party, Green Party. Fifty years ago, one hundred years ago, no body would have thought we would have a political party. I mean their main purpose is not to harm to our environment which we need. When you think about it, it is awesome, how serious the problem is and, at the same time, how selfish we all are. Being selfish means we are hurting our own life, collective life.

Buddha's birthday is coming. During Buddha's birthday we will be holding precept-taking ceremony. This morning, every morning, we take refuge in the three jewels. That's Buddha,

Dharma, Sangha. Buddha is one with awakened heart. If you are the one with awakened heart, you are Buddha, maybe with a small “b”. Dharma is the teachings, wisdom teaching, and Sangha is the community, community of living beings. So, in our generation, each of us is called a Bodhisattva, we intend to become a living embodiment of three jewels. That’s three jewel tradition. And then if you make triangle, the other side is, we it call three-fold training, that’s our meditation practice. That’s Sila, Samadhi, Prajna. That’s ethical training, ethical awakening, and spiritual or dharma awakening, and then social awakening. So, we try to become living embodiment of this three-fold training and practice through ethical discipline to become a true person. True to myself and true to all beings. And then, spiritual awakening. Many people go to church and many people to temples. We are so affected by secular and materialistic societies. I think it was Trungpa who, he actually wrote a book on spiritual materialism. So a lot of us, why we going to church and temples, still what we practice every day can be called a spiritual materialism. Our mind is so polluted. So, while everybody worries about economy, in a sense, it’s good, have to spend less, eat less, would be good for our health, for our mental health, physical health, too.

And, “All things are Buddha” means we have good will, good heart, good Buddhist heart. We have to give it expression to your Buddhist heart. In a sense, with such intention, you sit. A true person with good heart sits in meditation, then that becomes prayer, prayer for peace, prayer for social justice, prayer for better world for all human beings. That’s our prayer. We don’t pray to God, but each of us we have a good wish, good prayer for all beings. That’s part of a bodhisattva. So we will be dedicating lanterns. You may dedicate lantern for Dalai Lama, for people in Tibet, for people in Darfur, or for your family, for your children. For the trees on our street. They endure a lot. I think they are real heroes. All these pollutants, so many cars passing. They endure with so little, it’s amazing, while we complain a lot. So, once again, please do not belittle what good you can do in our every day life with your thoughts, with your deeds, with your words.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: May 11, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 26, 2024

[poem in Korean]

Buddha Shakyamuni **having** completed emancipation of all beings without having entered his mother's womb.

The meaning of this is somewhat similar to what we are familiar with the Heart Sutra. In the Heart Sutra, Kwan Seum Bosal, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion and Great Love, in her, deep practice, deep and profound practice of Prajñāpāramitā, perfection of wisdom. So the emptiness of all five skandhas, that's personality, the emptiness of all personalities, and delivered all beings of all their suffering.

Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. So they believe and they put their faith in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and Sangha. Recently, a journalist came and put this question to a Korean Seon Master, Zen Master, on the occasion of celebrating the Lord Buddha's birthday. The journalist says, said, "Buddhists, they believe in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, I understand. Is that true?" "That's true." "Then where is the Buddha? Is the Buddha, is with the Jewel of the Buddha or the Jewel of the Dharma or the Jewel of the Sangha?" And his reply was, "Buddha is not with the Jewel of the Buddha, not with the Jewel of the Dharma, not with the Jewel of Sangha." So this journalist was puzzled. "Then where is the Buddha?" He said, "Right here." Here, right here means mind. Your mind is the Buddha. There's no other Buddha aside from your mind. So that's **[unclear]** right here. That's your Buddha within. The Buddha in you.

Now Buddhism, particularly Zen Buddhism, is known for breaking the rules. For destroying even the common sense. One reason for that is no matter how good, no matter how noble, no matter how lofty the teachings or dogmas, doctrines, are, you can get stuck. Then things can go bad. Things can go wrong. So that Buddha is not in any of these Three Jewels means, can apply to other religions too. Like Jesus or Christ is not in the bible, not in the cross, not in the Holy Trinity. Then where is Jesus? Where is Christ? So nothing short of revolutionary.

Now in Zen tradition, they put these in special transmission outside scriptures. So scriptures, holy scriptures, they are not important. You can learn a lot, but holy scriptures don't save you. That's the message here. So then, again, it's where is Buddha? Where is the Christ? Words fail and your thoughts exhaust. Where your words fail, where your thoughts exhaust, that's, you come in contact with your unknowing mind, it's called Original Mind. That's special transmission outside scriptures. In other words, your knowing mind, the doctrine, the scriptures, or even Three Jewels, they, by themselves, cannot penetrate no self, no other, no birth and no death. So the true suchness cannot prevail. It takes your unknowing mind to penetrate no self, no other, no birth and no death, the true suchness. It is transcending path.

In the Mahayana tradition, there's these two giant scriptures. One is Avatamsaka Sūtra scripture and the other one is Lotus scripture. In the Avatamsaka or Flower Adornment Sūtra there's Ten Vows, Ten Great Vows, of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. When we do Yebul, that's one of the Four Great Bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra. Known for his or her great deeds in everyday life. In ordinary, everyday life. Says, "I rejoice in the belief that the entire universe is filled with great beings. That's Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Even on the tip of a single grain, Buddhas as numerous as particles of dust exist." Now what does this mean? And then this is one of the Ten Great Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. "I rejoice in the belief that the entire universe is filled with great beings. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas."

That much, maybe you can relate to. Even today, even right now, Buddha within, Buddha in each of you. Great beings. Even doing a simple, random kindness. Great being. But now, even on the tip of a single grain, Buddhas as numerous as particles of dust exist. If you cannot get it then you fail to grasp the great Buddhist teaching of we are all interrelated whole. If you grasp that, in your everyday life, you have to be busy saving yourself, saving your life. Here, saving your life, saving yourself, is saving the world, because you see yourself in every other being. That's why you have to get busy saving yourself, because every other being is none other than yourself. So you get busy saving the entire world.

If you get into this situation, the world may be deluded, but you lose, first you lose your ignorance. You remove your delusion. Your hatred, anger, it's gone. You cannot pass judgment on yourself. If anything, just great love and great compassion prevail. For instance right now, what happened to this country Burma or Myanmar. So many people died, that's one thing. Then many great beings are involved, delivering aid, food. Without passing judgment. They are just saving their life. Saving the world. And people, the Burmese people in need of help, they are great heroes too. We are all one. One body, one life. That's Bodhisattva vow. "All beings, one body, I vow to liberate." That's a priority.

Then, the vow continues, "I believe, I rejoice in the belief that the entire universe is filled with great beings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. And even on the tip of a single grain, Buddhas as numerous as the particles of dust exist." And then the vow says, "I would never grow tired of

rejoicing in this belief. Life after life.” And then there’s, there’s 10 of them but I cannot recite all of them, but another one is, “I rejoice in the merit of myself and other beings.” And, “I prostrate reverently, I prostrate myself reverently before all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.” That’s reverence for all life. You honour all beings as your own body, as your own mind. And you never grow tired of doing that. And then another vow is, “I request all these great beings to, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the past, in the present, and the future, to keep turning the Wheel of Dharma.” So if you see yourself in every other being, in every other being in your ordinary, everyday life, remember your ordinary, everyday life *is* the way of Buddha. That’s ultimate truth. Simply, there is no other alternative. Sure, you can go to Buddhist temple and meditate, you can go to churches to pray, but eventually you have to realize there is no other alternative. This is it. We’ve got to sit. Together as one body. That’s awakening.

You know what happened. It’s, I’m saying this, you know I’m, I come from Asia, and I’m a productive monastic life, and I come from South Korea, and sometimes I grieve. It makes me terribly sad what happened to traditionally Buddhist Asia and Sri Lanka and Myanmar and China and Tibet and even Mongolia and even Japan. Of course, in South Korea it’s collective failure. Certainly, particularly a country like Japan, they can do something. The Buddhist groups are powerful there. Rich and very well organized. They can certainly exert pressure on the government in their dealings with China. They can raise voice for Dalai Lama and Tibetan people. But anyway, just like Shakyamuni Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni, Dalai Lama loves his country. His people are all over the world. As a result, Buddhism is better known through his activities. And he has become World Buddhist Leader. And he’s speaking to his Buddhist agenda, non-violence. He does not hate the Chinese government, Chinese regime. And his presence makes all of us Buddhists be proud of being a Buddhist. And he’s not bullied by Chinese government.

So I watched people from Ann Arbor who are here to take precepts. They did 360 prostrations. And, what was in your mind when you did the prostrations?

(“Not, really nothing. Just doing, doing the motion.” (laughter) (“Just doing the motion.”)

Did you involve your body, mind, and speech?

(“Mhm.”)

Well, so you can either become a sentient being or you can become a great Bodhisattva depending upon how you use your body, mind, and speech. That’s the message. Anyway, doing prostrations is a very physical practice, so it’s a, it’s a good way to tame your anger. Your old habits, you see. How about you?

(“It was the same. I was, I was involved so much in doing the physical part, with my voice, with my body, that there wasn’t really room to do anything else.”)

But that’s, like when you do prostrations, well your pores open up, you see. You sweat like, what’s called 84,000 Dharma Gates open up (laughter). Observing the Dharma alive. So that’s how you become living embodiment of Dharma. But each of you, individually and collectively, would empower, with empowerment practice, you can do so much. In your everyday life. As Buddha. As a small Buddha. As **embodying** Buddha. Thank you.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: August 24, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Kunaka

Date of transcription:

(Chanting Korean)

Namo prajna paramita

Good morning. Please sit comfortably.

We now have a real summer with heat and humidity with us, so you should appreciate that.

[Korean]

Equality without discrimination is not the way of a Buddha. It is wrong equality.

Discrimination without equality is not the way of a Buddha. It is wrong discrimination.

Some of you may have heard of the word “dharma rain.” If you read some Mahayana Buddhist texts, Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, sometimes you come across an allusion to this word, “dharma rain.” The meaning is, when it rains, the rain drops fall everywhere equally applied, but when the rain drops land, then discrimination shows up depending on mountains or rivers or plains, or depending on whether you have good roof or leaky roof or roof in disrepair. Also in the fields, different plants, different trees, they take in the rain drops according to their capacity. Then some of the rain drops end up in the stream and they begin their journey towards the ocean, could be a long journey. So, during the journey they meet up with each other and sometimes, when they come up with big boulders, they get together gaining strength, and then to overcome the obstacles of their unwanted cause, and become cascade of even big waterfall. And then eventually they join the river heading towards the ocean. So, then, not these days, but in the olden times, many people, human beings and non-human beings equally, they used the river for drinking, for washing, or for transportation, for swimming or to ride a sleigh in winter. So then, the animals too. If snake drinks the same water, same water, equality. Same water available with great equality to serve all. If poisonous snake drinks it, it can turn to poison. But then cow drinks it, it can turn into milk. So, it is available equally, serving everyone, human and non-human equally. Then great spirits, they take it according to their capacity, according to their karma. So there equality with discrimination and discrimination, in other words, discrimination with equality and equality with discrimination is applied justly.

Now, that's sometimes called, "suffering is optional." Happiness, too. So, when it comes to Buddhists seriously pursuing their own path of peace and wisdom. It's something like if you read a book, academic book, scholars labor sometimes years to produce an academic book on a very specialized topic. And during the course of years in doing researching to produce, to write this book, they get lots of help. So, if you read the preface, or something like that at the beginning of the book, they write these things, they have so many people, so many librarians, so many research centres that provide these grants to them, they thank all these people. Sometimes they can't thank them all. Only important ones. And then, at the end, having thanked all these people for their help, then actually admit it my responsibility. They always say that. So, it's something like that. If you understand the Buddhist teachings properly, it's wisdom-based path. Each of us, you know, the Buddhists say since it's wisdom-based, they can use whole range of different terms and words to point out actually one way. There's no single dogmatic way. That's why I say the great way has no special door, no special gate, because the gate is every where. Each of you has your own gate to enter, right from where you are, which often you neglect. The gate of dharma, always available to each of you. Usually you go around looking for it somewhere else. That's the trouble, constantly distracted. Somehow you think it would be somewhere else while neglecting the one that has always been available right in front of your eyes. So, you are Buddha. You are definitely told that. You are endowed with the Buddha nature, so you've got everything there. So, whether you make it or not, that's up to you. So, ultimately you yourself are responsible for your own salvation, for your enlightenment, and also for the salvation of the world, for your friends, relatives, and for your community. So, we are an interrelated whole, particularly in this global village. So, that means if you take wrong step, if you commit wrongdoings, that's not just harm rest with you, but it has consequences. We all know that now, so it is awful responsibility. So, that's where we start out, ultimately, you're responsible for the welfare of yourself and for the happiness of all beings. You're constantly reminded, that's where we stand.

Now, speaking of practice, Korean war broke in June 1950, that was the beginning of so-called Cold War. The world divided into two camps, the communistic camp, the Stalinist and Soviet Russia dominated, including Eastern Europe, communist bloc, against liberal Democratic based, free market economy based, the Western Europe group with American dominance. So, there was this big monastery, Haeinsa, which has its own collection of Tripitaka Koreana. It's well-known for the wooden block printing of Buddhist scriptures. It's national treasure. Now it's designated as a world treasure by UNESCO committee. It was almost burned down because the U.S. Army ... it was occupied by the North Korean army for few months, so it became a target for bombing. So, the 8th army of US gave command to drop napalm and it was all wooden structure. It could have burned down in half hour, the whole structure. But the Korean pilots, the head of the, what do you call it, the five fighters who received this commission, the captain, the head of this team, he thought of his mother who was a very devoted Buddhist, so he just could not obey the mission. Of course, if you disobey the command you could get court-martialled and, during wartime, you would get shot and killed. But anyway, he swooped down to drop the bombs and come back up, and he did that several times. His men were all very frustrated with what this captain is doing because he has to signal to drop bombs. He has to push button. But anyway, he

flew away, he disobeyed, thereby saving this treasure. He went to court, and eventually he was pardoned. He argued that even during the Second World War you saved Kyoto, for instance, in Japan. They had also planned to bomb Kyoto, there is a lot of national treasure, and it was the same case. So he argued it. Anyway, he was spared from being executed. Now, and then the North Korean army was in retreat because the Allied troop, they advanced almost right across from Manchuria. So the Mao Zedong, the Red Army, they felt very threatened. So, they intervened, first to stop the advancing Allied troops, under US command or under United Nations command, and also to re-take North Korea. So, during this process, this was going on and there was this Korean Colonel who came to Haeinsa, this famous monastery in South Korea, and by this time the North Koreans were all gone. So, the Haeinsa monastery was liberated. And so it was completely empty, then he saw an old monk still there, so kind of socially awkward situation. So, he confronted the ... So, first he tried to find out if this old monk was collaborating with North Korean army or not, but then he quickly dismissed that because he was so fragile. So, anyway, to spare himself from the awkward encounter, he asked, "What is Buddhism?"

And this monk said, "Buddhism is nothing special. In case of emergency when faced with critical situation you just call and recite 'Kwanseum bosal.'"

So, he did not think much of it, but he heard it. And then he was advancing toward north and he got captured by Chinese army. So, as a prisoner of war, he had to go to North, all the way, with the captives. This was 1951 in winter, and he was somewhere around approaching the border area, the border of North Korea, and this is actually a well-known story. The U.S. Marines pushed very hard right to the border and then, they were not prepared, in those days it was very cold up in the north, snow piling up. Something like when I first came to Montreal and I lived in eastern townships, and in those days it snowed a lot. You even get really snowed in and everyday digging out. So, they were completely snowed in. And then this Hungnam, the U.S. war ships had to break ice to come around to Hungnam to rescue them. And this rescue story ended. There a lot of U. S. soldiers died, Koreans, too, while just retreating, mainly retreating. The Chinese communist army used what they call "human wave tactics." They don't mind, it's the numbers. The Americans had superior weapons, but if they killed them, the next column went in and they cannot stop them. There are so many Chinese there dropping like flies, but they still kept coming. So he got captured and then there was small guard, and you know either you drop dead or go all the way and his future is uncertain. So, he remembered this monk's "When faced with a critical situation, in case of emergency, just recite 'Kwanseum bosal'" So, like you know, while drowning trying to hold onto straw. So he started chanting, "Kwanseum bosal, Kwanseum bosal, Kwanseum bosal," you know, just single minded because he was desperate. So the way it works is something like this. People think it's something like ego or "me" or identity, and you become self-conscious, and therefore there is a lot of fear and anxiety and all that. So then, doing something like chanting with single mind helps you overcome that, overcome, transcend your limitations. It's called, if you become single-minded in doing something, sometimes that's called concentration or self-absorption, then you transcend yourself. That's what Buddhists call "No mind," so single mind is no mind, no mind is true mind. So then you can maintain, you can keep

calm and clear mind without anxiety and without fear and without these things. So, it occurred to him at the time they had to build this kind of camp fire to keep them warm. And then there's these North Korean soldiers were dozing, everybody is dozing, sleeping. So, he said, "This is the time, I have to escape." Overcoming all his trepidations he escaped, all the way chanting, "Kwanseum bosal." He didn't know what this means, but that's like mantra. He made it to the South, alive. So in such situations, unless you are a really trained person in meditation, I mean you cannot sit or something like that, I mean meditation in action, you see, so you can chant. The thing is chanting is, it is something organic. While chanting your body-mind, sometimes when you become subject to a lot of stress, your body-mind aches to hear something, something like healing and dharma, so it's a very healing thing, you know. So while chanting you allow your body-mind to listen to the sound of your own voice chanting, dharma, sound of dharma. Of course, you know, here when people come out of public school they like to know more before just chanting blindly. So, I say that Kwanseum bosal is when you need help, when you need help in whatever way, like when you like to forgive yourself for your wrongdoings or sometimes you get upset because you cannot pardon and forgive the other guy who you think belittled you or betrayed you. So then you have to learn to forgive the guy, so you chant cultivating the compassionate heart. Then they understand based on that knowledge. Then they learn to chant so that makes sense. This is when you come out of public school. When people don't come out of public school you don't have to explain this, they just do it. And then there is "Jijang bosal." "Jijang bosal" is for different occasion, and then they like that. Different occasion, different help is available, you see.

It has been said it was Bodhidharma who brought this meditation Buddhism or Zen Buddhism all the way from India to China by way of a sea route. It is much more convenient, otherwise going over this silk road, there is huge crags and mountains many people die while making the trip. If you come through the ocean, if you're lucky, avoiding the trade winds or storms, if you pick a good season, then you make it easy. You land in Hong Kong, the Guangdong province. So this must have happened around sixth century. So he landed over there. At the time, the area, the ruler was called Emperor, it was not entire China, just that part, Guangdong Province, was Emperor Wu. He was very, very devoted Buddhist, so he would do anything for the sake of Buddhism like the construction of monasteries and temples and feeding monks, both male and female, by holding big dharma banquet and cutting so many scriptures to spread Buddhism. He was not happy with that, as if that was not good enough even when he was Emperor, or he was ruler anyway, he entered the monastery to become monk. So his ministers they have to go and beg him because you have to come out and run the country. So then he would oblige himself and come out. It was kind of melodrama. He did this several times. Then one day he heard this high priest just arrive from India. India was like the land of Buddha. "So, okay, bring him over!"

So, Bodhidharma was invited to the palace and right away this Emperor, he started boasting. "I made so many things for the sake Buddhism to spread dharma. I build so many temples and monasteries, and entertain the Buddhist monks, and copy scriptures. In those days you really have to copy, this is sixth century, to copy each scripture. They didn't have photocopier. How many merits have I gathered by doing all these things?"

And Bodhidharma said, “Vast emptiness and no holiness.”

The Emperor was completely taken aback and was very upset. “Who are you standing before me?” After all, he is the Emperor, you have to be careful, you can be beheaded if you offend the Emperor.

So, he said, “I do not know.”

Then he, according to this story, then he left, crossed the Yangtze River and went to Northern China to sit for nine years in his cave, facing against the wall.

But anyway, obviously you can see big difference between Bodhidharma’s Buddhism, meditation Buddhism, and the Emperor Wu’s Buddhism. Of course, this story can be applied to each of you too. Sometimes it comes out, if I meditate for a while, something good would happen. All my anxieties and miseries would go away. That’s like looking for some kind of merits or miraculous cure. But, then you have to realize you are, ultimately, you are responsible. Sure, help is around, we help each other. There are so many people you can thank, grateful for. When I give instructions to those who are going to take precepts, while you do so many prostrations, one prostration for these reasons, to express your gratitude to all these people who have helped you in one way or another for what you are today now. One thousand prostrations for that, for the past buddhas, for the present buddhas, and for the future buddhas. People who help you along the way, they are all buddhas and bodhisattvas. So, you alone are responsible. You alone for good fortunes, for bad fortunes, you alone are responsible. That means only you can help yourself and bring out happiness and peace and awakening, enlightenment, for yourself and for all people. When you realize that, then you understand Buddhism. Then your journey begins. Until then you still become subject to samsara. It’s like swimming endlessly in this vast ocean of life like a blind turtle bobbing up and down, up and down, in the course producing a lot of melodrama and a lot of lamentations. Such is Buddhist face. So yes, that is initial awakening.

[Korean chant]

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: August 31, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Sunim Tr Check

Date of transcription:

(Chanting Korean)

Namo prajna paramita

Good morning. Please sit comfortably.

[Korean]

The fallen flowers drift away with longing on the flowing water.

The flowing water carries the fallen flowers away without a care.

I repeat.

The fallen flowers drift away with longing on the flowing water.

The flowing water carries the fallen flowers away without a care.

Here is the situation of the fallen flowers and here is the situation of the flowing water. The difference between these two situations, the situation of the fallen flowers and the situation of the flowering water, is one is downward movement, while the other is forward movement. With time flowing, one movement gains life, the other movement loses life. You may know this from your own life experiences. Many people play the situation of the fallen flowers over and over and over again, with lots of feelings, with regrets, with hatred, with love, with all kinds of feelings. Downward movement, eventually losing life, aging. (Laughter) You know that.

Now, there's this story asking dharma, to the (?chart), there was this famous student poem, and this was in China in the olden times, not the kind of China we know in modern days. In the long time ago, China did have a civilization, beautiful culture, and the aristocratic class, the scholars, run and had to rule the country, not the People's Army. And so, you have to pass the Civil Service Examination to get a government posting, so this poet, he was lucky. So he passed the examination and he got a government posting. On his way to his new posting, he was climbing the mountains, the mountain path. No roads were paved like the highways today. So there, just in front of him in the distance, he saw a monk practicing meditation sitting on the tree branch. So that looked very dangerous. Well, this monk, apparently he was practicing meditation sitting on the tree branch. Up until recent times, in 1960s, this was the during the Vietnam War, this was in Southeast Asia. Maybe some of you who have been to Southeast Asia, maybe from tropical areas

you would see Banyan tree. This tree grows to certain height and then drops down and then takes another root and then grows, so it forms kind of floor. People can build houses there and live there. So there the monks meditate on top of the tree, but it's pretty safe, not like tree branches. He lived on coconut, so he was called "Coconut Monk." Eventually he was discovered by John Steinbeck, Jr., not the famous novelist, but his son. His son was serving in the U.S. army, but they really didn't like the war. These days, if you desert the U.S. army, they used to come to Canada, this was during the Trudeau government. Trudeau government embraced them, but not this government. This government is trying to keep them out. And so there was this peace island, there somewhere between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, so this Coconut Monk created peace island so that he would draw the army deserters. This army would bring these shells, and with these shells, from bombs, he would build peace pagoda. What you call weapons in deploy shells or that idea. So he became quite well known. John Steinbeck, Jr., he was also a writer, he was a Buddhist, and then he was a practicing Buddhist meditation. So, he looked up and asked the monk, this is back to this Chinese poet. "Hey you look, how can you practice up there? You looks pretty dangerous. It's not safe to practice up there."

Then the monk looked down, "I think you're more dangerous than I am."

"Why so?"

"Because you can get fired by government anyway."

It's true, you cannot fire Buddhist monk meditating on the branch.

He was touched to hear that that's true. At the hands of the royal family and Emperor, he can get fired or even worse. If he ends up doing something wrong, something wrongful at least in the eyes of the Emperor and the ruling clique, he would get banished, even worse. He had to drink poison to commit suicide, even beheaded. Not long ago, this guy riding in the Greyhound bus overnight and got beheaded while sleeping, this 22 year old young man. Do you know how that got started all around? People in Mexico, there is about 11 bodies were found without heads. It comes from Japanese tradition of Samurai. But anyway it is very surprising that that kind of thing can happen today. But it is according to Buddhist world view, if you get killed without head, priests have hard time. You have to find the head to the funeral service. So, they are enlisted to find out what would be his future life, future birth, because you cannot be reborn without head. So anyway he was inspired and asked this monk, "Can you give me good Buddhist teaching since I'll be serving this district as a new magistrate. Do you have any advice?"

Then the monk said, "To do all that is good, not to commit evils, but to keep your mind pure. To keep your mind pure and your spirit high." That's a common Buddhist teaching. This Chinese poet is learned you know.

"I know that!" So, he was not impressed.

Then the monk said, “It’s true. 80 years old man know that, but he would still find it difficult to practice, so you have to be child again to practice that. That means ‘fresh mind’.”

He was very inspired by that, so he agreed with that.

Now, another story has it that this monk, he was a Zen monk, he completed his training when he was sixty years old. Then his teacher died, so he spent another 3 years spending his time practicing and keeping eye on his teacher’s grave. You see, that is Confucian custom. You mourn and honour your teacher for three years. Then at the age of 63 years, he went around. He travelled to get to know the world and to get further training in the marketplace now, this time. Not in the mountains. In the marketplace where he was not protected by rules and walls. Then he made this vow, before he set out on his travels. If there is a three year old boy, a three year old child, if there is something I can learn, I would follow him to learn. If there is an eighty year old man, person, and if I have something to teach that person, male or female, then I will pursue him to teach. So now, everybody has child, that’s a Buddhist teaching, particularly in Zen teaching. You all have a child inside. It’s called Buddha-nature, Buddha-hood. So if you discover your child in you, and follow it, then you gain life, even while aging. And if you fail to discover your child, then you lose your life aging.

What do you think about that?

As you get old, it comes as a warning to all, including me, you lose your flexibility, you become fossilized. You get stuck. You go down the hill. That’s downward movement. You lose muscle. And of course people become frightened when they get old. Once I saw this one time, these days in the US, you see on highway these mobile homes with big camp. Actually I saw one big mobile home carrying 2 boats and 2 bikes and, what else? One passenger car and then one helicopter. Can you imagine that? And then they drive around and park at, you know it’s a mobile home. They have their own like truck stop, you know. Their own camp. But anyway, one day I saw the sign. This sign says, “Too old to work, too young to die.”

How old would that be?

So, it’s the problem with all religions, too. And, so as a solution they put out like a permanent peace. Like a fix on life or salvation. The Buddhist teaching is while ... practicing meditation, if you practice meditation with a true, sincere heart and get into concentration and samadhi, you notice time is timeless. Sometimes in an emergency you step into timeless moment, like entering nirvana by mistake. Then you know what this is all about. Time is, this is timeless practice. You could be one minute or two minutes or three minutes. So this is the power of concentration. Now I could tell you, okay your mind will always wander like clouds in the sky, but don’t worry about that. That is not important. Your thought, your stray thoughts, feelings, emotions, don’t worry about them. They have their own life. So it’s ... you know the qualities of being a child. Child has boundless energy. A child can cry all day long and never lose a sound. Have you seen that? It’s boundless energy. And a child has no fear, no anxiety. His or her mind is always fresh, pure,

and clean. So we learn from our child within each of us, the way of the Buddha, the way of the Dharma, even the way of the Sangha. And if you lose that child in you, then you really get old. Getting old means losing life, losing freshness, losing energy, and vitality. That's very dangerous.

[Korean chant]

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: September 7, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: ??

Date of transcription:

[No Poem that starts, or not recorded.]

Theravada Buddhism is the form of buddhism that arose and prevailed geographically in SE Asia, in countries like Myanmar, formerly Burma, and Sri Lanka and Thailand, Cambodia or Kampuchea, and Laos, and also the Indian subcontinent. And the other movement is Mahayana Buddhism which arose in Northeast Asia and prevailed in this area for over a thousand years, that is in countries like China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Vietnam. Now, some of you may be familiar or heard of or even read the Buddhist scripture called the Dhammapada. It's pretty popular and available in pocketbook addition, and we used to carry them and I think we still carry them. There have been many translations, different translations into English. Originally it had been written down in Pali, but also in the Mahayana there was translations, either from Sanskrit or from Pali original. And the teachings in the Dhammapada, they were originally intended for monastics, but everybody can benefit from reading the Dhammapada and for purification and for a lot of teachings have something to do with the ethics, and also, since it is Buddhist scriptures, it definitely has something to do with wisdom, like even from the first verse it says about your mind. Talks about mind which is later on taken on by Mahayana Buddhism. But in Mahayana tradition, which I come from, what would be remotely comparable to Dhammapada is Heart Sutra, which we recite the English version at the end of the Wednesday evening membership sitting, membership meeting. It's a one page sutra, so it's known as the shortest religious scripture in the world. It is something like 260 chinese characters which captured the essence of what you call the perfection of wisdom, prajnaparamita, perfection of wisdom. So, it is clearly a wisdom sutra. And the other little less known, but also equally popular and famous, is Diamond Sutra. This Heart Sutra and the Diamond Sutra, they form part of this whole of wisdom sutra, that's sometimes called the prajnaparamita literature. Earlier on, I think 50 years ago, Edward Conze, he was the English scholar who devoted almost his entire buddhist scholar's life to studying and translating the wisdom scriptures into English. Earlier on it was widely available. It's a thin book. It's called Wisdom Sutra, it's the translation of the Diamond Sutra and translation of the Heart Sutra put together called Wisdom Sutra. In the Heart Sutra, I'm

just talking about the Heart Sutra, at the very beginning it says, Bodhisattva of great compassion, Bodhisattva of great love and compassion, literally called Gwanseum Bosal, in her deep practice, or in her deep realization of perfection of wisdom, prajnaparamita, she saw the emptiness of 5 skandhas, 5 aggregates, this is 5 skandhas, 5 components which make up the human character. I talk about that later. So, in her deep realization of the perfection of wisdom she saw, this Bodhisattva saw, the emptiness of the 5 skandhas, the emptiness of the 5 components that make up human character, human person, and delivered all beings from their suffering, or you could say, delivered all beings from their delusion. Now, the five skandhas are, the first one is called *rupa*, which is form or corporation of body. So form. The Heart Sutra goes on to say, "Form or *rupa* is emptiness, and emptiness form." The rest [Korean] is *rupa* is form or body. And then, the other skandhas or components are feelings, and thoughts and perceptions, and impulse, and then consciousness. So, summing up it's just mind. So it's feeling, perceptions, impulse, consciousness, mind. So basically, it means body-mind. This is what the study of body-mind, that's buddhist practice. That's what it comes down to. Buddhists often say, our mind is Buddha. Our mind is truth. Our mind is the way of wisdom. To study your mind, more specifically, your Buddha mind is buddhist practice. It's what buddhist practice is all about. Also, more specifically, watching your Buddha mind, minding your activities. There is somebody or something, Buddha in you, Buddha in me, observing, consciously or unconsciously observing or being aware of your conduct, misdeeds, thoughts and feelings, speech, all that. So that is the beginning of your buddhist practice. You know to undertake such a training or to go on such a journey the first quality is true. You know it is true, sincere, and honest. If you meditate, if you make bow, or if you recite or sing ma-um, it has to be someone who is true, someone who is noble, someone who is infinite in you doing this. Now, you trust this person, Buddha in you. Someone who is true, noble, or sincere, and earnest. Without the presence of such a person, you know, days go by, years go by, and your life is wasted. So then, the first way to approach this, like what I said, "Form is emptiness, emptiness form." Then, my feelings are emptiness, emptiness my feelings. And then, my perception, my thoughts are emptiness, emptiness my perception. It goes on like that. Now, put it this way, birth and death. Of course, here, if I just step aside doctrinally, then here emptiness here means is your form, your feelings, your thoughts, your impulse, your consciousness, they are constantly subject to change. They change all the time. And also, they suffer from the absence of a lasting entity. Buddhism does not mention, does not promote eternal soul or eternal self. It is a mistaken identity. We say, false and wrongful belief. Now, we say birth and death. Everybody is hampered with both. Whether it is human birth or non-human animal birth. That is why sometimes Buddhists are sometimes very strong, it is non-violence, which implies not to harm, not to hurt, not to kill, not to slaughter. At least the minimum guidelines, for lay people, meat-eating is widespread. On your birthday, when you celebrate your birthday, don't eat meat. Why? Because when you were born, your parents and relatives were so joyful, they make celebration of life, birth is the celebration of life. And if you think about that, you know, now you grown up, you rejoice in your birth as human beings. That's why you celebrate your birthday. That's celebrate of life, an extension. Then there is other lives, too. Animals too, when they are born, they also celebrate. They're happy, they celebrate life. How could you celebrate life and enjoy your birthday by doing harm to other life? It does not make sense. Right? There are six occasions, and death is painful. It is a loss of life. So, when you observe, you know,

funeral service or mourning or wake, don't eat meat. There are six occasions that go like that. At least, you know, start from there. So, you know, you celebrate your birthday. All birth, human or non-human, is celebration of life, continuous, in which we all participate, whether human or non-human, we all participate in the process of being and reborn. Life! We stand with this life, celebration of one life in kinship with all beings. That's okay. And then, when someone dies we grieve, we experience sadness. That's our human feeling. But when you cling, when you cling to your own upcoming death or near death, and also someone close to you, and if you cling, that's inviting suffering when it is birth and death. That's the first thing. That means instead of embracing all life in which you participate, you get stuck with your individual life. And that's delusion. Or just your own relatives and lose sight of life that is continuous, with or without your participation. It's like last week what I said is, falling leaves, falling flowers drifting away on the flowing movement. You just end up with the falling flowers and forgetful of the flowing movement. We are part and parcel of this flowing movement, body of water. Not just a falling flower, drifting wave. That is when it comes to the Heart Sutra or Diamond Sutra, all the Buddhist wisdom has a transcending power. So unless, you can read and relate to and make sense of what you read from the Dhammapada, it's easy, ethical and all that thing. But when it comes to understanding the Heart Sutra, it requires wisdom eye. Form is emptiness, emptiness form. Something like, if you climb up mountain, if you climb up mountain halfway, you cannot see much. But when you climb up to the top of the mountain, then you can see things. You can see the world and surrounding mountains better. It gives you better vision. In other words, it gives you wisdom eye to see things. That's like transcending. So, to be able to do that you have to transcend, it's climbing up is transcending processing. So all religions have that. Otherwise, if whatever you believe, whether you're a Muslim, a Christian, or Buddhist, you get stuck with image. You get stuck with what you think is image of Christ or Buddha or Allah. Which, this transcending mind, sometimes we call unknowing mind, mind that is going beyond both knowing and unknowing. That's wisdom eye, which is liberating eye. So then you come back down. Form is emptiness, emptiness form.

All beings one body, I vow to liberate.

Blind passions one root, I vow to terminate.

Dharma gates one mind, I vow to penetrate.

The great way of Buddha, I vow to realize.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: September 14, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 18, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

That there is not one thing is an infinite storehouse with flowers, the moon, and the high viewing stand.

This is a line coming from a poet who obviously enjoyed upper-middle class family status. In other words, who did not have to worry about feeding his mouth. So that means he's happy, with high viewing stand which he can ascend to appreciate the moon rising and the flowers blooming. And this was the time when members of the ruling class never heard of the word social justice or something like that. Right? That must have been 500 years ago or 700 years ago.

This morning I was out. There's a, used to be 7/11, now it's Sam's to look at the weather forecast for today because this is the last day of our book sale and crafts and arts sale. Just to look at the turnstiles [book section?], [unclear]. So when I was coming out of the store, this lady, I've seen her around, homeless lady, probably in her late 50s or even early 60s, it's a thin woman, she said, "Did you buy anything?" So I said no. "Really?" This was like, something like about 6:30 in the morning, you know. There was no one on the street. And she said, "That's good!" And then she was laughing that I didn't have to buy anything.

I was a product of a monastic life where the guiding principle of monastic life is non-possession or vow of poverty. In other words, you have to learn to be content with a homeless life, but not the homeless life here. But that means you renounce worldly life, including your family and your household, whatever. But, you know, temples are all established, monasteries all around, so wherever you go you belong to monastery so you get free lodging and free meal. But it's called

homeless life, you don't have your own private house. In other words, you have to learn to be content with traditional three pieces of clothing and begging bowl and all that. Then the world belongs to you, you don't have to struggle to belong to the world. So you gain freedom and you enjoy such freedom.

But here, I'm dealing with non-monastic people like you. And your values are non-renunciation. If anything it's non-renunciation, you see. So if the values are abundance and pleasure, you have to have enough, you know. So we [unclear.]. And there was this delightful Thai monk who used to visit us, [Vivekananda Nagashi?]. You know, when we have meals, he has two meals a day, you know. Just, he has breakfast and lunch which he has to finish before noon, you know. And then after noon they are not supposed to take anything solid, you see, until the following morning. So if you, "more," he would say, "plenty!" with a certain emphatic smile. "Plenty, I had plenty!" So we're so used to the society of abundance, and "plenty!"

And we were sorting out the books. I was amazed at how many books is health and **well-being, fitness**, yoga and how to stay thin and lose weight. There's so many books you know, with different titles, you know, too. And then even there I saw book, "A Thin Woman," you know (laughs). This woman was really thin, the woman I saw this morning. And she seemed to be pretty happy, you know. I don't know where she slept last night, but she was pretty up, early in the morning.

But anyway it's, by any standard, I mean it's, living in North America, probably including Mexico too, she's from Mexico, we live in a society of abundance. And it's, if you come to rummage sale, it's amazing how many things that we receive, you know. How many things we throw away. People don't buy things, I mean dispose of. For the last three years, people just bring things and we have more trouble with disposing of them, you know. And some of them we have to, of course, take them to Goodwill.

So it's, so we struggle with what we end up in a society of abundance. In a culture of consumerism, you see. It's, in a sense, it's ignoble. Particularly in the light of the situation in the Third World country, like in country like Haiti, or in Africa, or...

So it's, well of course it's, how much is enough in order to enjoy our life without worrying about being overweight or getting sick in the society of abundance? So here it's, well, you know, Buddhism comes up with this guideline, right livelihood. And we came up with Six Right Lively Guidehood, Livelihood Guidelines. You will see them, if you have not seen them you can get a copy at our book store. It's how we are controlled by culture of consumerism. Not just food, you know, but media and all kinds of things.

So it's just, we have to find out how much is just enough. I think everybody, wherever you are, you know, whether you are rich or poor, I think we have enough. That's my feeling, even homeless people can, because one morning, you know, we get, you know, homeless people, they come around and, not just to find shelter and sleep but, you know, drug, you know, drug trafficking going on. That's why we had to build a gate, you see. So occasionally you find someone, you know, sleeping back there. And so I woke him up and I invited him to breakfast. And then he asked us about our breakfast menu (laughter). "What do you eat?" I said, well, oats and, you know, bagels, bread, you know, toast and, you know, juice. "Well, you know, I need chicken." (laughter) So he can get better food at Scott Mission over there. Apparently they don't like the chef, you know, because it's crowded over there but they go there. Or there are other, you know, St. Stephens in Kensington Market. You know, we cannot compete with them (laughter).

But anyway, it's, basically I'd like to say two things. It's, the struggle, our struggle, is, well, aside from how to stay fit, but I mean physically fit but it's also, it's a spiritual issue to, you know. And that sharing, you know, it's, no matter what situation you are in, I think it was St. Benedict that said if you don't have anything to share, you know, materially, well, I mean, Buddhism too, it says you can share kind heart, kind words. Everybody has kind words, friendly words, encouraging words, healing words, and smile.

So how to [give] the things? How to share our happiness together? That's important practice. In Buddhism we practice Dāna. That's charity, or giving, you know. And of course there is material giving, you know. Donation. But also it's, we say, alleviating pain and suffering and fear, you see. So that's friendship, with genuine heart. Yes, we care. We care for each other. We have kind heart, compassion. That's very important Dāna practice.

So, well think about that in everyday life. It's, also sometimes, you know, I do see homeless people, actually a couple of days ago, a young couple, they were sleeping, you know, right in our yard. I think they may be traveling or whatever but, and another day, well, one guy was sleeping right in our yard. So I woke him up and had him come in and had him, you know, take a shower and sleep.

He slept, what, he woke up around 1 o'clock, you know. He said he was a storyteller, so he go from town to town to tell stories, you know. Maybe he get paid for that or something. So, and it's interesting to hear from them, you know. It's a different lifestyle, you know. Some could be drug addicts, you know, but it's all kinds of people. And some of them, they would become homeless by choice, you see.

Three strikes and chanting to close

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: September 17, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Wednesday evening Practice

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 21, 2024

Dark clouds at the end of the sky. Homeless wayfarer crossing the empty field. This evening in September.

There is poetry in the landscape and landscape in the poetry. The verse sums up, conjures up, the spirit of landscape. Its calm, peace, detachment. Tinged with loneliness. But deep and profound awareness of life in the midst of a changing season.

The true and sincere Zen practitioner, for the true sincere Zen practitioner, his or her practice would begin at the moment of his or her arriving at the temple. Even from the sidewalk. His practice would begin. And then performing three prostrations. To honour the way of Buddha, the way of Dharma, and the way of Sangha. That's also purification and empowering practice. Then you sit down. Going over posture, mudra, and the third eye, fourth eye, and fifth eye. And then constant practice, over and over again.

You come here Wednesday evenings for the study of Zen, for the practice of Zen meditation. That's presence of awakened heart. Lacking this presence of awakened heart, you just come and go and waste your time. So you have to reflect upon yourself. You have to reflect upon the state of your being.

So your coming to temple on Wednesday evenings is [unclear] act of awakening. Act of faith. Act of commitment to Dharma practice. So keep reminding yourself.

If you can reflect upon this, sometimes you can come up with profound sadness. Profound sorrow.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: September 21, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Sunim Tr Kunaka

Date of transcription:

[Korean chant]

Good Morning. Could you come around and sit down, please.

[Korean]

Forget before, lose track after.

Forget the past, lose the future

Which means nothing is lacking in this moment of your life. That's moment after moment. This very moment in your life is inclusive of all your past, inclusive of all your present, and inclusive of all your present. So, it is all-embracing moment, so, there is nothing lacking in this very moment of your life. So, that means, bluntly, stop complaining and be just grateful.

[Korean]

Let go and at once you attain peace of mind.

If you cannot do that, [Korean].

Let out, take in.

With that you go on and on, *ad infinitum*. That could be suffering is optional.

There was this Zen Master Yunmen. He would also have one answer for numerous questions. His answer was always "rice cake." You see, in your situation, it could be pumpkin pie. The main symbol is cooked rice. Well this was about 1000 years ago, so poor people or peasants if they had cooked rice with a few side dishes that's pretty good. Often they would not have that. So if you have boiled rice with a couple of side dishes, that's just good enough. That means just look within and find out if anything is lacking. Take care of your Buddha within. So, that's the message. If you still worry about, you know, about your Buddha within or about other things, then it's "rice cake." So, that was his answer. So, you miss dessert. But once this Yunmen, the master Yunmen, when he realized that too many people were stuck with this Buddhist teachings, like you can stuck with image whether you are Buddhists or Christians or Muslims or Jews. It's like finger pointing to the moon, you can get stuck with the finger and fail to see the moon. So,

then he heard this to stay to these people who got really stuck with the Buddhist doctrines and all that. If I saw the Buddha, or Shakyamuni Buddha, being born into this world, right away I would take his body apart and should have thrown it to the dog. That's pretty blasphemous, right? But this guy, they would have no hesitation to say things like that, and under the method Dhyana(?), in one winter, in the middle of night he was sleeping on this wooden floor in the Buddha hall so he woke up in cold and took a look at Buddha statue, it's wooden statue, and he brought it down and burnt it to build a fire. So, when morning arrived, the monks showed up for their morning practice and their Buddha was gone. So when they realized there was commotion. This crazy monk burned our Buddha to warm himself. So, they all surrounded him and undaunted he said, upon being asked why he did such crazy things, "Well, I was looking for [?]. If it is true Buddha, it should have [?], some kind of spiritual power, dharma power, so I was looking for it."

"How do you expect [?] from wooden Buddha statue?"

"Well, then if he does not have [?], then it's no good. So I made it useful to make a fire so I could get a little bit warmer."

Now, over the years, this temple, Toronto temple, and our Chicago temple and other temple in Michigan, it's the same thing. A few days ago, one of our members in Chicago temple sent me email. Apparently there's this website in the USA that rates, whether it is restaurants or religious organizations, you can go and rate and write your reviews of that. He sent me three reviews of our temple in Chicago. They were pretty good, actually. Five stars. But there was one complaint. In winter, when you go to Zen Buddhist temple, you have to put on more layers. So, our temple is known for being cold in wintertime. Some of you know that, right? Well, when it is warm, when you sit, you doze. You become sleepy. So what do you say about that? So, also if you eat too much or if you are too warm and comfortable, you doze, you crash. So when you are a little bit cold, you have to do something about yourself to help yourself. You learn to help yourself and stay awake and breathe, to wake up. So, it's good. Also, when you come to temple like this, you come spoiled. Spoiled by central heating system which wastes too much energy.

Now recently, there is this monk Myeongjin in South Korean, he is a meditation monk, Zen monk. So, as a Zen monk he spent close to 40 years travelling and training. Once, when he was 31 years old, he was training at Haeinsa. Haeinsa is one of the most famous monastic training centres in South Korea. And the master at that time was Seongcheol Sunim. He was a towering figure. He has been dead for more than 10 years now. His training background is awesome. He spent ten years without lying down. When he gives dharma talk everyone listens. So, he challenged the Zen master. Buddhists, they are not trained to just believe in something. You have to ask, you have to learn to ask and challenge the authority of doctrine or whatever it is to discover your own truth. The truth within, the Buddha within. So, he challenged Seongcheol Sunim after his dharma talk.

"If I cut you down with a single blade, how much would be my transgression?" he asked.

And here came his reply like rapid fire. “Your bleached bones, piling up.”

Now there were different interpretations about that. “Your bleached bones piling up.” One interpretation is that your transgressions are too large to count. Now this monk, Myeongjin Sunim, he was offered to become abbot of this large public monastery of Seoul. Seoul is the capital of South Korea, so it’s a big city. So usually, training monks, Zen monks, they would avoid it. They would hate it. To become abbot of a monastery involves a lot of administration, a lot of things. So, they would avoid it, for all their life. After a few declines, he accepted it. Then, as condition he would do one thousand prostrations every day for three years in this monastery in the heart of the big city.

So, instead of doing meditation, you know you can do meditation in a quiet place, but here, if you do one thousand prostrations, if you’re good, it takes about a couple of hours. But, if you do it slowly, it could take 3 hours. So, then he needs uninterrupted attention to do that prostrations. And, I made vow the same thing here. You know, we have temples in Ann Arbor, Chicago, Mexico, Toronto, and this is heart of big city. So, I open Zen shop to attract people like you, a convenience store. Sure, there are a lot of distractions. I meet homeless people every day and I talk to them. And all kinds of people drop by. But I am here because of my vow, I can do my practice, my cultivation. Not only not neglect my cultivation, but I can do as much as those guys, those monks up in the mountain, and they are well-protected. I can do better than them. That’s why I’m here to prove that, because this is a Buddhist out post.

So, now this Myeongjin, he was recently interviewed by Korean journalist, because right now the President of South Korea, he is a devout Christian. The Christians in South Korea, they are pretty vocal. So, they increasingly have been challenging Buddhists. Buddhists are usually, they are quiet and sometimes laid-back. And, so recently, there was the Buddhists monks are unable to withstand the harassment and discrimination from the government and also from Christian missionaries. They organized huge demonstrations in downtown Seoul. So, anyway, he was interested partly on that account, and he made this statement.

“Buddhists lose their own Buddhas due to Buddhism, their established Buddhism. And Christians lose sight of Jesus due to Christianity.”

And, if you get stuck with image or dogma or whatever it is that forms, you lose sight of what is true and noble and infinite that is available there, right now. Now, this is of course, what you call, ascending path, you see. On ascending path, when you are on ascending path, you don’t make any concessions. Buddhism is known as a religion of compassion and wisdom. You even have to throw that out on an ascending path, because you have to reach the top of the mountain to command a view, to gain bird’s eye view, to found out what it is all about. On descending path, yes, there is compassion, wisdom, love, all those things. So, that’s why the famous saying, “While you are on the way, while you are in training, when you meet Buddha, you kill the Buddha.” When you meet your parents, that’s a reference to Confucianism. Confucianism is like filial duties to your parents and ancestors. You meet your parents, you kill your parents because

they too become obstructions, hindrances. You have to remove your hindrances. Just single mind prevails. This may be too much for you to take. Then, my dharma verse, “Let go, so that you would be able to have some peace of mind. Or let out, so you that will be able to take things in, because if you are chock full with your own thoughts, with your own feelings, you cannot take anything new in.”

[Korean]

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: October 05, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 22, 2024

We are in the season that reminds us of this verse. In Heaven above and Earth below, no place to place or to plant my step, my Dharma step. Rejoice! Persons are empty and things are too.

Here, persons are empty, some of you who remember Heart Sutra. The five skandhas. Form, feelings, perceptions, impulse, and consciousness. They make up our personality. So these are empty, so it's called form is empty, emptiness form. Feelings are empty, emptiness are feelings, and so forth. So persons, self and other, we are empty. And things are too.

So in four seasons, everything that flourishes through the summer, they shed things that are not essential. So everything is reduced to bare minimum. Everything's revealed. Their original truth, we say. So the mountains look very high and the rivers flow clear. That could happen about 50 years ago when it started to be polluted. And the fields, you can see the whole island. The fields are empty and wide open. It's called vast and empty.

And so we learn from nature, the Dharma that comes with nature, the way it is. Vast and empty. So intellectual delusions break over right away and suddenly, like a diamond sword. So, when you see that, seeing is believing. You wake up. From our attachment and pain. And, but intellectually, that's, we get it. You feel at home with vast and empty universe. So that means everything's infinite, in spite of its emptiness and impermanence.

But emotional delusions stay on. Emotional delusions are settled very gradually. Like threads of lotus root. Then emotional delusions persist. So there's work to do.

We reflect upon ourselves, upon our self and others. So through these self-examinations, reflection, we grow in spiritual awareness and realize that we are all here together in shared journey. Affecting and influencing each other. So what you do with your body-mind, the choices you make and the decisions you make, are very important, not only to each other, but to the whole world.

So don't belittle yourself. Don't belittle what you do with your body-mind. Sometimes you feel small and insignificant and you can fall victim to that feeling. But you rise up to personal and social responsibility.

First, I'd like you, feelings, I'd like you to direct your thoughts and feelings to what you've done this path month, the month of September. And reflect upon your deeds and behaviour. And reflect upon your wrongful deeds and misbehaviour, either intentionally or unintentionally done, and your indifference. So I'd like you to reflect upon them deeply, and seek forgiveness where you feel it necessary, and then also learn to forgive yourself ... to direct your thoughts and feelings towards your good conduct and wholesome behaviour you did this past month. And the deeds and conduct you feel good about.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: October 12, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 23, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

If your resolution is solid, your practice, your cultivation will also be solid. If your training is solid, is deep, then your awakening will also be deep.

There are three qualities of your cultivation and training. The first one is it's deep. The second one is it's penetrating and pervading. The third one is illuminating.

The first one is being deep means, the practice and cultivation is gone beyond your [unclear] thoughts. So if you practice with a true and sincere heart, you cannot judge such a practice. It's Buddha practice so it's inconceivable. It's gone beyond your understanding and comprehension. So it's called deep, which means inconceivable.

Penetrating and pervading. Good practitioners feel that from time to time. It's, your practice is spreading all over. It's all encompassing.

And finally, illuminating. Your practice, the essence of your practice, is awareness. It's called lucid awareness. This awareness illuminating. It's like light. Buddhist practice is all about mind. We say, "My mind is Buddha. My mind is truth. My mind is the way of wisdom." Your mind, or our mind, or Buddha-mind, is too close to grasp. So you cannot grasp it. It's also very subtle, it's never still. It's also in constant flux, you know that.

Here, mind means it's whole, your whole consciousness spectrum. Your feelings are mind, your emotions, your perceptions. Your all cognitive activities are mind. It's all subsumed under the category of mind. But basically when Buddhists talk about, you know, Buddha-mind, sometimes called awakened, the presence of awakened heart, this awareness is, it's also, mind is empty and clear by nature. And when we Buddhists talk about this mind, it often refers to, means, Buddha-mind and awakened heart or awakened wisdom heart. Sometimes called luminous, that means it's awareness or lucid awareness.

Lucid awareness is like womb in women. Because of this womb, women can give birth to a child. Same thing, because of this womb, which is your awareness, you can, your practice can give birth to enlightenment and awakening.

So the first quality, even though you sit and meditate, you know here sitting, your body-mind sitting in silence. You know, silence is like a tool, you know. The meditation we practice is always concentration, which is, it's concentration not contemplation. Contemplation involves thoughts and thinking, while concentration does not involve thoughts and thinking. That's why it's called, also called, deep. It's gone beyond your thoughts. It's concentration, whether you are watching or following or counting your breath. So you learn to concentrate your mind. In other words, you try to cultivate the presence of awareness in this very moment. From moment to moment.

So, and also the person, the person, here the person is body-mind. Body-mind sitting in silence. Body-mind being alive, being among the living, sitting in silence. So silence is tool, silence is

tool that delivers you free from defilements and delusion. So that's concentration in silence which gives birth to awareness, lucid awareness. Sometimes used to see things as they really are. So it's deep. And penetrating and pervading. And illuminating.

So again, the person, the embodiment of this body-mind, has to be true person doing the true practice. So if you just come and sit and daydreaming, that's not meditation. That's daydreaming. Of course, you know, since there are different types of meditation, there's meditation practice as relaxation and stress reduction. So you like to sit quiet, peacefully, and relax, and daydream. But, so in this regard, daydreaming cannot be so bad because, you know, you cannot control your thoughts. It's called monkey mind going all over. They have their run, you know.

And, but people sit in meditation and start worrying about things. That's pretty bad, you know. So that's why I make a point, the very first thing you learn about meditation is peace of mind. So even for five minutes, ten minutes, you have to just sit. You have to stop worrying about things. Just means breathe. You can just sit here and breathe. That's why I, sometimes I keep reminding you, when your body-mind sits, then your body-mind sits with all insentient beings, with trees, rocks, mountains and rivers. We say mountains and rivers run in thousand miles, ageless, but hosts and guests, host and guest are constantly renewing. That's like human affairs. These are the nature, mountains and rivers.

Of course, you know, for the last 50 years, human hands, you know, in the name of development, manipulated and destroyed so many mountains, and so many wetlands, and so many rivers. They re-, you know, rerouted it. Right? So this environmental space, so your body-mind, sit in solidarity with all insentient beings, rocks and trees. That's sitting. You don't just sit, you know. And then you breathe. So this time when you sit and start breathing, then this time you sit in solidarity with all sentient beings. Not just human beings, but non-human beings. Then you learn to concentrate, so with solidarity with insentient beings and with solidarity with sentient beings, you learn to concentrate and wake up to your Buddha within.

So that's the extent of your practice. At least when you come up with that, that **scheme**, you know, that's also presence of awakened heart. Otherwise you just come and go. Wearing down.

So when you bring yourself to temple, it has to be the awakened heart that brings you here. And when your body-mind takes you home to gain the presence of awakened heart out in the world, you know, where you associate with people. So that much should be clear. Does that make sense?

Three strikes and chanting to close.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: October 19, 2008

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 24, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

Be Master wherever you go. Become one in every condition.

[continues reciting in Korean]

Perfection is like the great emptiness. Nothing lacking and nothing in excess.

Life is in transition. Life is always in transition. Perhaps it is now much more manifest with all the troubles going on in the world. Sometimes life seems quiet, placid, and very calm. That could be just on the surface, but inside the life would be in turmoil, in upheavals.

So this verse, be master wherever you go. Become one in every condition. We have this meditation formula which I give to practicing Zen students. Meditation is concentration, and concentration is oneness. It's also one of the six paramitas. The fifth paramita, which is meditation paramita, may I practice meditation and attain concentration and oneness to serve all beings. So practice of oneness in our everyday life.

Now, be master wherever you go, or be Zen master wherever you go. Now, the word Zen means meditation, as you may know. The original Sanskrit, that's a classical Indian language, word for Zen was Dhyāna in Sanskrit and Jhāna in Pali. Scholars say, actually, the word Chan in Chinese or Sōn in Korean and Zen in Japanese. They, actually the word Chan in Chinese, that comes from the word Jhāna. In other words, Chinese corruption of the Pali word Jhāna. And then when Chan was introduced to Korea it became Sōn. And then when it was introduced to Japan it became the

Japanese pronunciation of the word Zen. And it was the Japanese who first introduced this type of meditation to the West. So since then, in the West, it has become known as the Japanese word Zen.

Then something happened. So it basically means meditation, which is concentration, not contemplation. Here concentration means, it does not, this meditation does not involve thoughts and thinking. Traditionally it's put this way. The word prior to speech. The word prior to speech, 1000 sages have not been able to pass on. So in other words it means, when it comes to Zen, it's got to be original and authentic, which means it has come from each of you in your own style. With your own blood and vessels.

Well as you well know, it's said if you throw things at dog, dog will always run at the things thrown at them. It's called the running dog mentality. But if you throw things at lions and tigers, these guys, they don't like the second hand, third hand stuff. If you throw things at them they would never run at the things thrown at them, they would directly go at the person who did the throw. That's original experience, that's authentic experience. So the Zen wants nothing other than original and authentic. So that's why the artists, you know, they love it, you know.

Now, but something happened when Zen came to the West and became popular going through 50s, 60s, and 70s. Everybody was going through some kind of a "Zen stage", quote and unquote, in 50s, 60s, and 70s. And there were actually a number of people who were promoting it, including Alan Watts.

But since then you see that, once I used to read, someone gave me a one year subscription (to) The Economist. And I was surprised, quite often they would use the word Zen. You know, I mean this, you know, it's not even a spiritual magazine. And, so I always watched how they used Zen. But anyway, when it comes to something inscrutable, incomprehensible, inconceivable, that's Zen. Well, I mean, you need some convenient word, that's Zen. Something that goes beyond your **canon** of knowledge, that's Zen.

And then the secondary category is something funny, something outrageous, something odd, but at the same time it's profound, it makes sense. That's Zen.

And now, finally, something very plain, something intimate, and something obvious is missing, but if when, when you, sometimes by accident you discover it. It has been here all this while, but I was looking for (it) somewhere else. I mean this is close, actually comes close to traditional Zen, too. But something so ordinary, something so plain and simple, but that has been missing in my life all this while.

Even plain act, like the acts of, sometimes, you know the, like the so-called unsung heroes. I mean, they did a marvellous feat. But also, this is, this is my ordinary, everyday life. I don't think I did something fantastic, like nothing special. That's also Zen. It's actually, the word nothing special quite frequently, you know, appears in Zen dialogue. Back, you know, 700 or 1000 years ago during the quarter when Zen Buddhism, or Zen culture, Zen Buddhism, Zen practice, flourished. And then eventually, later on something came on in the form of Zen arts and culture. Right now, actually, [Komala?] is giving a series of lectures, five talks on Zen. I think she will cover Zen arts and culture.

Now, so this practice of oneness in your everyday life. Now, not long ago I had this experience. It's, there's this, there was this Korean monk who visited me a couple of times. Basically this was his first visit to the West, to Canada and USA, and he came to gain some experience and learn from Westerners how they do Buddhism, with particular emphasis on Zen. And so, like this Seungsahn Sunim, he passed away, he had a number of disciples and his disciples have been training in Korea for a number of years. Some of them speak quite fluent Korean.

So he, well in Korea he met one of them and then got some advice. And he told me one of the pieces of advice he got from one of the American Zen monks living and training in Korea is, well don't try to judge or look at American Zen or Canadian Zen, the practice of Zen, with your Korean Zen eye. Obviously Canada is not Korea, or America is not Korea, even though they practice Zen. It's going through transition.

So he went to Providence, Rhode Island, Providence in Rhode Island, that's the headquarters of Kwan Um Zen school. So initially he went there to do three months, or at least one month Kyol Che, which is intensive retreat. Then, so he had this, you know, serious intention, he went there but he stayed, well he came to visit me before that so I encouraged him. And then not long after, he called me and he went there and stayed overnight and got out.

So I asked him what happened. And what happened was when Seungsahn Sunim passed away, and, he appointed, well I don't know the details how it took place but I've known this woman for quite some time, but anyway, he appointed one of his senior woman disciples as his heir. And she's not even monastic, you know. She's not even shaven, her hair shaven, you know.

So, but of course, well, this Seungsahn Sunim, the Korean Sunim, she did clever things. You know it's, Korean Buddhism is still very much in monastic Buddhism, you see. And then there's a big gap if you're a monk, either male or female, and the lay people, there's, you know, there's big, still big difference, still there's barriers, you see. And we don't have that here, you see. Even though I, you know, sit here, you know, you know, it's, sometimes, you don't make much of it, maybe when you hear Dharma talk. But, also, over the years, I loved to play underdog than anything else.

It's, but anyway, so, and so it's, they have, I don't know, they have some rituals if you like to go in for this long retreat. Obviously you have to honour the teacher, you know. I mean, he's a monk, he's ordained monk for 20 years or some, so, and then you have to do prostrations before this lay person, you know. And that, woman at that, you know. So he cannot stomach that, you see. So he said, I can take everything else but I can't (laughs) take that.

So he came to me and it would [he would conference?]. I, you know, I had to tell him, there's this Vimalakirti Sutra, some of you may know that. Vimalakirti Sutra is one of the well-known famous Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. Here the hero, the main figure in this sutra, is a layman. His name is Vimalakirti, so that's called, this scripture was named after him, Vimalakirti Sutra. He was a, like a, something like in modern times, he was Indian CEO, you know. He made fortunes, you know, so he was a, like, upstart in, you know. That time, when Buddhism rose there was a lot of, you know, merchant class who were gaining social status in those days. So, but he was not just a CEO, you know. He was a great Buddhist practitioner with Wisdom Eye, you know. So, and he even won respect from the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha.

So one day the Buddha heard he was ill, you know. He was not well. So he wanted to send some of his senior disciples to inquire after his illness. But it turned out most of his senior disciples would fail to go and visit him, because he's so powerful, you know, and they were afraid to be humiliated in his presence. I mean, Dharmically speaking, you know. Dharma Power, like Wisdom Eye. So eventually the Manjusri, that's, Manjusri is one of the Bodhisattvas known for his wisdom and Dharma knowledge, so he volunteered. So he led, you know, Bodhisattvas and Buddha's senior disciples to go and pay a visit to him, you know.

So, well there's all these famous dialogues going on and that's actually the main content of these scriptures. But anyway, there's a famous saying comes on. "I'm not at ease because the people in the world are not at ease." That's one of his famous saying, you know.

Anyway, so I told him, "Well, what's the big deal making prostrations before lay person or before female teacher?" I mean, it's nothing at all, you know. I mean, if you cannot bring yourself down to that, you must, you have to learn to stoop as low as possible to examine yourself. If you're a Zen monk or Sōn monk. And then you can check it out.

There's even one Master Zhaozhou story, that, you know he was very filial to his master. He served his Master for something like 20 years. And then, when his Master died he was 60 years old. Then, again, he spent, this is more like a [Confucian custom] three years just beside his teacher's graveyard, grave mound. He sat, he built him a meditation hut and he sat in meditation and keeping vigil for three years.

Then he set out for the first time on a pilgrimage to visit other teachers and temples and monasteries around the country. Before he set out on his pilgrimage, he made a vow. If there's a seven year old child, and if there's something I can learn from the seven year old child, I'll go after him. I'll visit him and learn from seven year old child. But if there's 80 year old man, there's something I can teach him, I would go after him and serve him and teach the Dharma. So **this story's** famous.

So this monk, he behaved as if he never even heard of even these stories. Now of course, sometimes, you know, I, you know, so-called Zen students, even Zen teachers, visit. You know, you may heard of Stink of Enlightenment, actually that's the word [Komala?] used this past Thursday when she gave out the first lecture. There's something called Stink of Zen. You could, I'm sure it could be anything, you know, could be Stink of Buddhism, or Stink of Christianity, or Stink of Hinduism, or there is something like that. You can see a lot of that sometimes. I mean, people who are very, very righteous, or holier-than-thou, and all these things.

But Stink of Zen is something like, one day this guy, you know, I mean, I will not name, belonging to another Zen group in town, he came looking for a book. And he was very frustrated because, you know, well of course we put books according to, you know, some classifications, the life of Buddha, and Zen, or Tibetan Buddhism, you know, if you visit our bookstore downstairs. But sometimes when people take it out, they don't always put it in the same place. So sometimes they get mixed up. And we don't always, you know, we don't have a, you know, specially assigned, or, you know, someone employed to run book store, it's run by volunteers. And, so he could not find the book. And, so and then he saw the books were, some are mixed, you know. And he couldn't stand, actually, if it's Zen, everything has to be correct. He got stuck with that. And he said, "This is Zen temple?" Something like that, you know.

And, another thing is there are, sometimes there are people coming looking for Zen garden. You know, there's Zen culture, they read books, Zen garden. So, do you have a Zen garden? Can I come and take a look at your garden? Oh, we have a garden. In the back we have an organic garden and in the front we have a non-organic garden (laughter), natural garden. We have, you know, sometimes beautiful, right there, it's there, you know, wild flowers. I was surprised to find, you know, wild flowers. Tiny blossoms, but really tall. You know, just, well they bloom according to season, you know. During the summer, purple and this, that, it's beautiful.

And also we have, I think two or three years ago, first we tried, I think, you know, our members tried to get rid of dandelions. You know, dandelions take over the whole thing. But, and just okay, just leave it. So we left it, and dandelions, they really took off. And it's so beautiful. It attracted photographers, they come and take pictures. So anyway, you see that, you know. There's something called Stink of Zen.

Now it's, let me say a few more words, my time is coming up. It's, practice of oneness, let me just repeat the verse again. Be Zen Master, or be Master, wherever you go. Be one in every condition. And the next verse is, perfection is like the great emptiness. Nothing lacking, nothing in excess. Of course, this is, you know, for the consumption of monks who are renounced all attachments. So-called household life. Who are freed himself or herself from all these worldly encumbrances. So they can go placid and undisturbed, unhindered, wherever they go. But if you're householder, holding job, of course it would be very difficult.

But here, along with meditation [unclear] said your ordinary, everyday life is the way of Buddha. So that has been my teaching. That's why I'm here. Your ordinary, everyday life is the way of Buddha. That means apart from your ordinary, everyday life there is no other way of Buddha. So that's driving message.

So that means that nothing is wrong with the way you are when it comes to Buddhist practice. Soon, you know, I'll be conducting, right now I'm conducting membership, foreign membership meetings. I learn from what you have to say, leading your everyday life and still carrying on Buddhist values. So it's true, your life may be in turmoil, your life may be in transition. It's always like that. Like seasons, you know. When four seasons come, you have to become at one with what comes with four. You know, whether turning cold, leaves changing, you know. And then you have to go through winter life period. And then spring comes. Then you have to learn to enjoy each season, and appreciate that. Become one with it.

And, but here, whether your life is turmoil, in upheaval, or in discontinuous, but there is always continuity in the midst of discontinuity, in the midst of upheavals. Flows, you have to flow from moment to moment. Internally and externally. And that's called discovering hope and realizing your true nature. And that's challenging. But meeting the challenge, going through the process, that's the practice. That's why we say practice and cultivation in the midst of activities is far superior to practice quiet up in the mountains. [unclear] is here.

So the message, right here, right now, just this. That's what you've got, and all the ingredients for your awakening and enlightenment are right there. But just this. You have to become a true person. There's this, another famous word. It's [unclear], a true person, a true and sincere person of no special status. That's common, ordinary person. That means Buddha within, Buddha in us, this true person. So you have to become true to yourself. So when you meditate and sit, see it's, whether you are sitting still with falsehood or pretending or whether you are sitting true person with compassion and repentance. Compassion and repentance, but to yourself. Because you know you can cheat the whole world, but not you. So that means true person, you have to become true person to yourself. For happiness, for your own happiness. And then to pass on that happiness to people you associate with.

Three strikes and chanting to close