

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 29, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 1

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 11, 2024

Summer retreat, which is called Vassa, rain retreat. Of course, Buddhism was made during India and Southeast Asia, so that's monsoon, like hurricane here. Monsoon season, so it's rainy season. So that's when the monks stay put and do retreat. So this tradition goes all the way back to the Buddha's time.

Of course, the monks in Southeast Asia or in Theravada countries and - can you hear me in the back? Well, you'd better, you'd better come closer. Yeah, please come close. I'm getting weak.

Anyways, the monks there, they do the summer retreat for three months. But here we do it only five days. Even that is not really full five days. And we have been doing this for close to 40 years, I have been teaching that. But even though we do it for five days, but it's, it means traditionally it's alive. In our doing this. And we do it just once a year. Usually the end of June through the July 3rd. And I'm strengthening, I'm trying to improve the quality of these five day Yongmaeng Jeongjin, or intensive retreat. Because it's primarily intended for teachers so it, you know, it can be called teacher's retreat or teacher's Yongmaeng Jeongjin. And also MBS students, students enrolled in Maitreya Buddhist Seminary aspiring to become Buddhist teachers. And also senior practicing members of our local temples. Of course, we also welcome those who did Yongmaeng Jeongjin before, previously, even though they may not be members.

So while I'm trying to make it strengthened or make it more strict, this five day Yongmaeng Jeongjin, so the teachers and MBS students in particular, and senior members, would benefit, you know, from doing this. While we have become, you know, throughout the year our local temples offer two or three day winter retreat. So we have become more flexible with two days or three days winter retreats, allowing people to come even for half a day. [unclear...]. So please keep that in mind. Being strict means it's more demanding, you know.

Now, that means, given your situation, you have to do your utmost. I usually say this but I mean it.

Now, the three pointers for this Yongmaeng Jeongjin, the first one is Buddha-mind. In East Asian Buddhism, the word mind, which comes from Chinese character 心, Xīn, you know, so Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese, they use this Chinese character for, meaning mind. But you

remember the Heart Sutra, but the sanskrit word for heart is hridaya, which is, actually literally means, it's heart. Heart is, you know, our important organ of our body, maintaining circulation of blood. But it also means, like, something very important. Something central. So it's, Heart Sutra is important sutra, even though it is just one page.

Then you see also the same thing is Bodhicitta. Citta is also mind, but this mind is like a seat of consciousness. It's [unclear], you know, the five skandhas, excluding the form, you know, the rest. Feeling, perception, impulse, and consciousness. The seat of consciousness or the seat of intellectual activities. While heart would mean, you know, like courage or emotions or enthusiasm or will. But it's, when we say Buddha-mind or sometimes Buddha-hood, Buddha-heart, they are, the word is used synonymously meaning both.

So it's, Buddha-mind or Buddha-heart, or more correctly Boddhicitta, it's the presence of awakened heart. That's what brings you to Yongmaeng Jeongjin doing this, which you have to rely on throughout Yongmaeng Jeongjin. So keep that in mind. It is your Buddha-heart or Buddha-mind that brought you to this Yongmaeng Jeongjin training.

The second pointer is constant practice, but I actually mentioned the power of constant practice. But, you know, Sanha omitted out of, because of space, you know just, so the power of constant practice. I usually give this formula. Over and over again, that's number one, always fresh in this moment. Number two, once again you practice. Number three, and you begin to shine. And I usually compare that to sunlight breaking through the clouds over and over again in order to shine again.

So such is at least one power of constant practice. You always practice in this very moment. Not before, not after. That's the presence of your awakened heart. So that's understood by the word constant. Over and over again, using the power of constant practice.

And then finally, awakening. So you see, when you do the constant practice using the power that comes with it, and awakening is there, latent. Inherent. It's the same as, like, we say, the threefold training, [unclear...], it's sila, samadhi and prajna.

Sila, we just put it aside, sila is the basis. Well, in lay Buddhism it's emphasized. The monastics, they are already protected by walls and rules, you see. But you are not protected by walls and rules, you know. So that's why I say it's ethical discipline. It's got to be the true person sitting there practicing meditation. Not daydreaming.

And so, and then the samadhi and prajna, they bring it together. You know, samadhi is present in prajna and prajna is present in samadhi, power. Same thing here. It's, constant practice and awakening, they go together. So those are the three pointers.

Now, as you know, the three important things we do in Yongmaeng Jeongjin, advanced retreat, is, of course it's 좌선 jwaseon or the Japanese word zazen. Meditation sitting, in the form of sitting. And then it's called [ipsil?], interior. And then work practice. Those are three legs of the path. And then of course here we add, to enrich the Yongmaeng Jeongjin, we do rubdowns, early morning rubdown, and 108 prostrations. That's unique to our tradition. And some of you may have love and hate relationship with the prostrations and rubdown. But it just takes, you know, less than minute to get into that, you know.

You see, I live in a one bedroom apartment. And every morning I have been doing exercise in the bathtub. Toan Sunim still finds it mysterious, how Sunim can do exercise in the bathtub for more than 30 minutes? So I go through a series you know, counting always helps, you know. And I actually do, you know. So first, this bathtub is quite deep actually, you know. It's, because it's such a small place there is, I have no other place. It's, bathtub is just the right space where I can do exercise.

So first I open windows to get fresh air in. And then have two full glasses, this big glass, the beer glass, of cold water. Kind of distilled water which I keep in the refrigerator, so I bring it out and drink it. And that usually helps me enjoy good bowel movement. And then I turn cold water. This thing is very strange, you know, sometimes you turn cold or cold water gushes out and then it turns into, right away, into hot water. So they're back and forth, you can never tell. I never figured out, they have some kind of different system over there.

And so, it helps to, you know, have water running while I'm doing exercise, you see. So first I would do it 15 minutes and I increased, now it's 35 minutes and 40 minutes doing exercise. And then I do, you know, I go to the window where the fresh air, still, you know, there's, the traffic is not much, so I can breathe in deep, you know. It's abdominal breathing, breathing in deep and then breathe out 20 times or 25 times. So that's the extent of my exercise.

The reason I'm sharing this with you is, well the, drink cold water, the first thing when you wake up. It's pretty good for you health. And then of course doing your own exercise and prostrations. In the apartment I don't do prostrations. And then breathing in deep. So when you feel lethargic, inevitably you do that, particularly late afternoon in this weather. And then you get distracted. And breathe, breathe in deep. It always helps. To help you wake up. And bring your focus back, get your focus back, attention back.

Now, Toan Sunim went over the orientation. So here, following schedule faithfully, the schedules are your teacher, Dharma. So you make vow to follow the schedule faithfully, each moment. You, all you have to do is stay, is just stay in each moment. Always fresh each moment, using the power of constant practice.

The others are, the duty persons, they'll take care of you. They would make meals and prepare work practice, and everything. You have to just stay in each moment. Flowing together. In all in one and one in all situation.

Now, you may have seen these Zen paintings. They are nude, dumb, persons crossing the log bridge, crossing log bridge. But each of you, you become deaf, mute, and dumb. Or blind. Blind, mute, and deaf. And crossing the river, holding onto log bridge. That's how you do your Yongmaeng Jeongjin. If you can do that, you would be very successful doing the Yongmaeng Jeongjin.

It's better than I say, so many times, unknowing mind, the power of unknowing mind. And in Zen teachings, in Seon teachings, they would say the same message in a variety of ways. The other expression is if you try to stay alive, you die. If you die, or if you drop dead, then you become alive. Do you get that? It's if you die to yourself. It's like, so here it's being mute, blind, and deaf. It's like being dead. Then what is it that's alive here? Itself it's like hwadu.

Now speaking of hwadu, usually some students work on hwadu while others work on counting, usually outgoing breath. Still others working on dhyana meditation. Still others, for variety of reasons, they recite Great Compassion Dharani or chant Buddhas and Bodhisattvas names. But I'll just talk about hwadu students.

Now, if you have been hwadu students, six months, or one year, or two years, or three years, if you ever discussed your hwadu practice with others, with your family members, then that hwadu is no good. It's dead. I tell you that. So you are no longer hwadu student. If you receive a hwadu, you must stay with the hwadu throughout your life. Even you take it with you when you die. That's why, you know, the disciples of the teachers or monks, at the moment of their, you know, try to breathe their last breath, they challenge them. How is your, where is your hwadu? Is your hwadu awake? Are you taking it with you?

So you have to keep it deep secret, only you know. You know how it is. How joyful, how painful, you just keep it like that.

And of course, like, if you like to change your hwadu then, you know, you change your teacher. You can always go to other teacher and get a hwadu, but not with the same teacher. But of course you can, sometimes, you know, discuss it with your teacher. If you have a such a disagreement with your hwadu and, but it's just such a relationship between you and your teacher as hwadu student.

Now some people, it's non-hwadu students, it's of course when you are MBS students and teachers, they are all my disciples, they are obliged to come for interview. Unless there is a

special reason. But others who are not MBS students, that means they are not my disciples, not formally, or non-teachers, or members, then depending on your situation, you know, hwadu practice can be very stressful. So you don't have to come for interview. Because it may aggravate your situation. Do you hear me?

(YES!)

It's very important that you know this. Particularly if you are on medication or, you know, go to, you know, therapist and all that. So, and this applies to all non-hwadu students. Even hwadu students, I may not be completely aware of their situation because sometimes I usually get to see you just once a year, you see. I have to find out where you are. And of course, if you're already working with some teachers then you don't have to come for interview.

Now, also I would not allow, once, you know, you come for interview once and then you stop coming. I would not allow that. If you don't come, you don't come from the very beginning. Not coming when you like and not coming when you don't like. Is this all clear?

(Yes.)

Now, I'm still talking about coming for interview. I usually mention this a number of times during the Yongmaeng Jeongjin. You line up when you come for interview. And of course it's a constant practice, the power of constant practice, so whether formally sitting in meditation, or walking, going to bathroom, or during the work practice period, you have to keep practicing constantly. This is your utmost struggle. Keep your hwadu practice, keep counting, constant.

You know how it is, how easily your mind runs away, and then, but never mind. As soon as you become aware, right there, right there the power of constant practice comes, you see. And over and over again. Even, you know, the Japanese, they made this Bodhidharma doll. You cannot knock it down, it always bounces back.

As I say, you fail 108 times but never mind, 108 times fail, 109th time you're back to your practice. Such is the power of constant practice. That's why it's this kind of Yongmaeng Jeongjin, I use the word advancing, advanced. It's actually advancing practice. It's like climbing up mountain, you don't look back.

Well there's this Korean story. This, some disaster would fall, so until you, until you climb to the peak, the top of the mountain, you never look back. Then, some people, they look back, you know. And then, you know, like all of a sudden you catch yourself digging your old laundry. Making list of it. Then, from there, they become stone Buddha. You're fixed there. You cannot go down, you can climb back to the peak. There's this story. You know, Buddha is like statue that's, you know, fixed. Immobile.

So you don't look back. Always just the power of constant practice. Advancing, advancing, each and every moment. Flowing together, as one body.

So when you are in line for interview, when your attention is heightened, that's the best time to practice. So you bring the power of this constant practice into interview room. First you do, you know, when you come into the room, you make a deep bow. Don't do prostration, just deep bow. That means you surrender everything, body-mind. Surrender everything. Surrender, you know, if you are in bad mood you surrender your bad mood. You know, you're fighting with yourself, everything surrendered while sitting down. You surrender everything.

Now, first thing you do is you do your practice, out loud, so that I could hear your practice. And then if I ask a question, like this is relevant to hwadu students, and then your answer is just don't know. Don't know is a reply, it's answer. It's not the opposite of knowing. It's absolute, means your body-mind is unknowing mind. You just don't know anything. It's pitch dark. Completely dark. So only your hwadu, you hold onto that. Only the hwadu is guiding you. So that's the power of don't know, you say don't know. If you don't have that then you get caught with your emotion, such as, like, embarrassment and this and that.

So you say "don't know" with the power of unknowing mind. Unknowing mind prevails. That's advanced stage in non-dual practice of wisdom. All the distinctions, differences, everything gone. It's almost like, close to great liberation. The state of unknowing mind. So only you hang on to your practice. And then when I ask the same question second time, you just state, repeat your practice. That's also hwadu answer. Because that's where you are.

So is this clear?

(Yes.)

And sometimes you can ask, that if you have a, you know, what we call "karmic obstacles" are bound to persist in spite of your best intention. But you get distracted by that or troubled by that. Of course, the best thing is, you just, whatever it is, you stay with your practice. That's advancing, that's climbing up. Leaving behind. Leaving your laundry behind.

But certainly, you know, I mean, you can bring it up. I can also mention, you know, ask that. But what you should not be doing is bring out your laundry. That is not allowed, it is not helpful at all, you see. While I understand, I'm sympathetic, but my duty is to urge you on advancing path. Bodhisattva path.

So, particularly to hwadu students, is this all clear?

(Yes.)

Okay. Now, usually each morning I remind you of your practice but you have to come up with your own vow. One, two, or three vows. And then keep renewing your vows. And then come up with, what you call, vow power. Like you, usually remind you, after rubdown, after 108 prostrations, the first sitting you do hapjang. After beginning of first sitting you do hapjang and remind yourself with the vow. Usually this vow is related to your practice. Like, I will keep the power of constant practice all day long.

Now, even though we do this almost like as one body, some people are more experienced or better sitters while others are not. So given your situation, each of you, everyone can do, you can always do your best. When I say doing your utmost, it's not goofing off.

You know, some people, sometimes during the rest period, it follows a rhythm so you can always take some space, go down during the break and drink cold water. Or if you are so, feel hot or heat or whatever, and I would allow you to go quickly down, and you have to do it skillfully, and take a cold shower. During this Yongmaeng Jeongjin you are not allowed to use hot water. I usually turn off hot water completely, then the kitchen crew, they complained so I can't, but don't use hot water. It's, you can take cold shower. Takes about two minutes to refresh yourself. And then even while resting, you know, or even lying down during the rest period, like after lunch, you keep practicing. It's powerful. Sitting, lying down, standing, keep practicing. Constantly.

That's the only thing you have to do. You have freedom to do that. This is path of great liberation. Here great means not just your own liberation. We do it together. There's, many people come to know that they are Buddhas, potentially Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, because there is one awakened Bodhisattva.

So you come up with your vow, and stay with your vow. That means awake, with the power of constant practice. Awake with your practice, with your hwadu.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 30, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 2 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 13, 2024

Last night, I mentioned that you make vow each day. May I stay fully awake with my practice, using the power of constant practice.

Well you can come up with your own vow. And keep reminding you, and renewing your vow throughout the day.

You see, there are distractions, external distractions, and also internal distractions. Plus your old habits showing up. You see, when you come to Yongmaeng Jeongjin like this, you would safely assume that people attending would not look for something to read or something to look at. But still some of you do that. If you do that, actually you should feel ashamed.

And many, I would assume, you would be dealing with internal distractions. Well, I mentioned many times, using the power of constant practice, you deal with that. Over and over again. So more distractions, more practice. That's all that is. And eventually you would be ahead of your distractions. And you become invincible.

There are three qualities of your meditation practice. Number one, it's deep. D-E-E-P, deep. That means your practice is gone, if you practice with your true, sincere heart. That's Buddha-heart, you know. With the presence of your awakened Buddha-heart it's gone beyond your common thoughts, and feelings, and opinions. So that means you practice, whether you are counting your breath, or mantra, or hwadu practice. Practice itself becomes awakening. It's a tool for great liberation.

When I see great liberation, it's the Buddhist, Mahayana Buddhists, they love to say, not just bodhi, Mahabodhi. So, like, for instance, the pagoda set up at Bodh Gaya, at the place where Buddha attained enlightenment, it's called Mahabodhi, Mahabodhi temple. So if you go to Asia, like in Korea, often you would see the Korean translation 각성 gagseong, [unclear]. Either in Chinese, or Japanese, or Korean, or Vietnamese. Great awakening, great liberation. That means not just me, not just you, we all together.

Didn't I tell you, because there is one Bodhisattva with presence of awakened heart, and so many people get to know that they are Buddhas. So then, we all together, flowing together, like mighty river, helping each other, perfecting each other, that's great liberation. Movement.

So it's deep. The first quality. So you stay with that deep.

You see, I know it's summertime. It's, there's heat, and muggy. What do you expect? But you know how to help yourself. Do prostrations. You beat the heat with heat. With more heat. Well that's the healing regimen. That's self-help. And if you do prostrations, and you go downstairs and eat glass of cold water. Or if that does not work you [unclear]. Help yourself. To wake up.

Is this all clear?

(Yes!)

Then, help yourself.

Now, this morning at breakfast I counted that they did 12 dishes. Last year, [unclear] the year before I mentioned it. This is disgrace for Yongmaeng Jeongjin pupil. Can you please reduce down to five?

(I can.)

In my experience, I have never seen, I mean, I have been to many temples, many in Korea, also in Japan, too, and I visit other groups. I never seen that, you know, being served so many dishes. It's better eat less, and live simply and joyfully with good practice.

So, as I said, stay with your practice constantly, over and over again, always fresh in this moment. Soon you will have lunch and you rest. While having lunch, while washing your bowls, and while resting, practice. You know, practice and your presence become one. And they become powerful.

It's something like that, it's, first you are in first gear and second gear, and then, you know, fourth gear, when you reach a certain speed, then it goes by all itself, like cruising, you see. Practice is like that. First you have to work hard to stay awake with your practice. Then at some point, then they merge.

And particularly during the work practice. Previously we had Haju Sunim or some teachers, they would go around and ring the bell to start work and practice. That's called enforced. It's better you do yourself, on your own. It's, work practice, particularly during the retreat, it's the purpose not to get the things done fast. I was even trying to point out the people coming for interviews,

when they open and close the door. How they do it without making noise. That's Zen. It's called watch where you take step, or watch under your feet. Zen practice, Seon practice, is right there.

So help yourself. Start work. Put up hapjang, body-mind together. And practice out loud, audible to you. And then resume work.

Did you hear me?

(YES!)

So please don't go around, they have to learn to help yourself.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 30, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 2 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 13, 2024

Three strikes and chanting to open

Please sit comfortably.

What is it, mu? Flowers bloom. What is it, mu? Blazing leaves are falling. Living with a hwadu for five years, I've learned to lose both my Buddha and my sentient being.

My grandmaster is Yongseong Sunim. I've never met him because he passed away in 1940. Just a year before I was born. And he was a towering figure in his time. When he was alive, almost the entire period of his lifetime, the country was under Japanese military occupation. So in 1919, the Koreans rose up against the colonial rule. So they, in the marketplace. So there were 33 national leaders, called signatories, who signed independence declaration. And my grandmaster, Tongsan Sunim, was one of the 33. So they were arrested by the Japanese police and imprisoned. So he spent 2 years in prison.

While in prison, well he said, well, it was very, he enjoyed being in the prison because he can do a lot of work, you know. And indeed he did. He, you know, started translating the Avatamsaka Sutra and composed this one, it's called [unclear], The Right Path: On the Cultivation of Buddha-mind.

So here, one chapter he deals with the “what is it?” hwadu. And I’ll, I’ll just translate it, and I’ll read it to you.

“Each and everyone has one thing. This one thing has swallowed Heaven and Earth and the whole empty sky. Yet tiny enough to be held, to be contained, in the moat of dust. It is brighter than hundreds of sun and moon lights put together, but darker than a letter box. [unclear]. This thing is always with us in everyday life of dressing, eating, and sleeping, yet there is no name or form. It is neither mind nor not mind, neither thought nor non-thought, and neither enlightenment nor non-enlightenment. It is neither spirit nor non-spirit, and neither one thing nor non-one thing. It is none of all these varied things, but nevertheless it manifests all these diversity of things. It is luminous, mysterious, completely empty, extremely large, extremely thin, extremely strong, and extremely supple. You can neither comprehend this thing with your heart-mind, nor with no-heart-mind. And neither with words nor with silence. What is it?”

As you can see, he did a pretty good job to block all cerebral activities, or intelligence and intellectual activities. And, of course, he could have all said this with, “unknowing mind.” Because people always come up, you know all this and that things. So he has to say all these things to block them. Like blockade.

Now it says, what is it? What is this thing, this one thing? And then he recommends the practical. In order to do this practice, you have to be as earnest as mother hen hatching eggs, you see. It has to provide warmth constantly, using, you know, the power of constant practice. So as urgent as baby looking for mother’s breast, you see. And if you approach this hwadu with such earnestness and sincerity, you would not fail to discover your original face. What is it?

Now, as you can see for yourself, a true practitioner gone deeply into herself or himself with hwadu practice using the power of constant practice, we say such a person, such a practitioner, is invisible. Such a person is there, but not there.

Last night I mentioned three qualities of meditation practice. The first one, deep. The second one and third one I did not mention. The second one is penetrating and pervading. And third one is illuminating. So you can see such a true and sincere practitioner is there, but not there. Even though he’s there and not there or almost invisible, the whole world belongs to that person.

So the whole world is with him or with her. He does not worry about it. He just stays with practice. Going deeper, and then penetrating, pervading, and illuminating. Here, he’s completely surrounded by the power of unknowing mind. The only thing he has is “What is it?” hwadu practice.

It's something like that. Given your situation, wherever you are with your own practice, it's like water flow. Once you join this flow, eventually, and if you don't dry out, and if you keep flowing, eventually you end up in the ocean. That's the Buddhist faith. Everyone would end up in great liberation. Even the word called ocean seal samadhi. You know, that's the meaning of [unclear], it's a famous [Zen?]....

Well, once you end up in, in the ocean, that's great liberation. There's no self, no others. No birth, no death. Samsara is in Nirvana and Nirvana is in Samsara. So in a sense, we are in this flow. In this stream, in this river.

So when you do extra practice on your own, it's true and sincere practitioner, completely free from obstacles. Hindrances. You practice, for five minutes, ten minutes, and 15 minutes. Either doing prostrations, or walking meditation, or just standing tree Zen looking at the Buddha statue. Or sitting in chair.

And I used the word advancing. Don't try to look back. Of course, you know that. If there's a little crack taking place in your practice, and ooh la la, there's, your laundry would show up (laughter). And immediately you would start to smell badly (laughter). So then you know what to do. Right away, right away. Don't worry about it. Don't try to smell it, just right away (laughter). Right away, what is it? Hana...and five...

And your practice will shine. Your practice will shine.

So okay, well I understand your struggle, you know, I tell them don't struggle with your karma, struggle with your Dharma. So that's a meaningful struggle, you see. But better still, enjoy to do your practice.

Under this window, you look pretty good, right (laughter)? Since your body-mind is wide awake, right? So remember, may I stay fully awake with my practice using the power of constant practice throughout the day. So you have just a little bit more to go until the very end of this day. So do your practice.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 01, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 3 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 16, 2024

Today is your second full day of Yongmaeng Jeongjin. When Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the past, when they said using different melodies, that all beings, all sentient beings, are Buddhas. And awakened sentient beings become Buddhas, deluded Buddhas become sentient beings. They did not say these things in vain.

What it means, foremost, is each of you, regardless of your background, you have full potential. You have all the Dharma energy you need to wake up. To awaken to your true nature within. You have all the ingredients.

So if you can devote what you have, what comes with your being, all these ingredients and energy, if you can devote them whole-heartedly, full-heartedly, 100% to the practice, with the help of unknowing mind, it should make a difference. You can see that, the product of careful training. Makes difference.

So just look at yourself. Look within, deeply. Reflect. If you are still complaining and wasting time, whether you can wake up and give yourself 100% body-mind to your practice, the instructions are all there. It's very clear.

All the Bodhisattvas, including you, both renunciant Bodhisattvas or non-renunciant Bodhisattvas. So you are non-renunciant Bodhisattvas. They made a vow. So you make vow, and follow your vow. Follow your schedule, which is the Dharma during the retreat. Something like, "May I stay fully awake with my practice. Relying on my presence of awakened heart, or relying on my power of constant practice."

No more indulgence in your disturbances and obstacles. Or complaints.

Is this clear?

(YES!)

One more time.

(YES!!)

One last time.

(YES!!!)

That's how you empower yourself. You have all the energy. And when we practice collectively, together, your energy doubles and triples. That's how we help each other, in order to perfect one another.

So all day long, each and every moment, you give yourself to your training.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 01, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 3 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 16, 2024

At the end of the gata, the refrain which we recite together is, in case some of you do not know, that is maha. M-A-H-A, maha. Repeat after me, maha.

(Maha.)

Prajna.

(Prajna.)

Paramita.

(Paramita.)

Maha prajna paramita.

(Maha prajna paramita.)

As you know, prajna paramita is often translated into English as perfection of wisdom. It's actually Edward Conze's translation. That's like mahabodhi, or enlightenment, or salvation or emancipation, the ultimate meaning is the same thing. It's all release from suffering.

[Three strikes and chanting]

[poem in Korean]

That's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. That's Avatamsaka Sutra. Five, four, three, two, one, zero. It's Myung Sung, silent meditation. If you gain where there is something, it becomes canonical knowledge. If you gain where there is nothing, that's when silent meditation flourishes, or flowers bloom in the empty sky.

Now, the power of unknowing mind and the power of constant practice, those are like two mantras for hwadu students. The power of unknowing mind, externally it's like you are deaf, blind, and mute. Did I say it right? And internally, internally you are completely ignorant. So that's when your mind goes beyond the distinction between knowing and unknowing. So such is the power of your unknowing mind. Complete and absolute.

So if you attain, if you gain the power of unknowing mind, all these distractions or your struggles or whatever you do with your obstacles, there is simply no room for them. When your power of unknowing mind prevails. Right?

(Yes.)

But you keep allowing them. Like, say, leaky roof or leaky wood, where the wind comes and rain water would smear. And then the power of constant practice, ceaseless practice, you know what that means?

(Yes.)

Well, you think you know, but actually as your practice deepens, you will get to know more and more appreciative of the power of unknowing, I mean, power of constant practice. But usually you are in a stage, you are ascending path. So that means, you know, you think, "Wow, I like to sit quiet and, you know, can they leave me alone in my solitude?" But then they come, they get reinforced, you know. It seems, you know, more distractions show up. You don't know where they come from. Maybe from deep down, your subconscious, you know. Surprised, wow, I never had thought these things are still around me.

Then what do you do? So more distractions, more practice. You have that Dharma energy, at least you learn that, right? So that's the indefatigable, what do you say, indefatigable Dharma, right? You never get knocked down. So much for hwadu students.

So those two, that's all you need actually. For your hwadu practice.

And now, those of you who are counting your outgoing breath. The best situation would be you just fall in love with your practice. I mean, your breath bringing body-mind together in harmony and in stability. Now that's good for your body and good for you mind, and good for the world.

Now, those of you who are called the name of the Buddha, the name of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, it's actually, even, you know, counting your breath in this situation, on this situation, it's better, you know, to hold and play with your meditation beads. I mean, precept beads. You got precept beads and each bead, that's the right size, you know. [unclear] I saw that, that's, you know, that's not precept beads, right? That's too small so you don't get much feeling, you know. That's for little girls, you know (laughter).

So you use your beads. Because that's, it helps you, you know, keep your mind focused, you know. Otherwise all these, heat and all these things, you know, then if you start complaining, soon you would end up feeling like, it's called, Mouse Wet with Rainwater. You would not get it (laughs). That's what the Koreans say. Or, like, Soaked Mud Hen.

So there, it's, students calling the name of Buddha or Bodhisattvas, you have to bring your feelings. You must have feelings. Whether negative or positive, all kinds of feelings. If you leave them lying around, eventually they would come around harming your practice. So you put them together, you know. And throw it into the grist, you know, as grist for the mill. Even, you know, when you feel angry, it's also, the other way of saying is you surrender. Surrender all your feelings to your practice. So the practice would turn it around, you see. Make butter or, you know, something like that. Something useful.

So you do that.

(YES!)

Even resentment, ill feelings, everything. It's good for you. Do you know how to do that?

(Yes.)

Well it happened in Mexico, you know. Said I'm so upset, I'm so angry and, well obviously, she was making a long list of her laundry, you know. So the more she gets upset and angry, you know, it was obvious. So I, I just cannot practice. It's not for me. So can you help me? I said, "Well, okay, then you do anger practice. With anger, it's a powerful energy, negative energy. Say, kwan-seum-bosal, kwan-seum-bosal, kwan-seum bosal (laughter)!" And then she said, "Following this, Sunim it's worse, it's worse!"

But that's not the real purpose. There's a higher purpose of why we are doing this. But it happens, you know it's, since you are lay or non-renunciants, you have all these things, you see. So bring them together, and practice hard.

And now, above all, this is more important, you have to, each of you, you have to become a true person. A true person doing true practice. You've got to figure that out. I'm a true person. Then your practice takes another dimension.

Sometimes in our tradition it's called unworldly repentance practice. But anyway, whatever it is called, you just become a true person. True, sincere, and earnest. It makes a difference. Not just sitting. Standing, walking, even lying down.

And also, with quality of being true comes with paying attention. Mindfully. See, we are trying to help each other, to motivate each other. And, you see, in the monastery, I mean, there are lots of training systems, you see. Of course, not a single monk follows all of them but at least quite a number of them, when they go through they come out as a monastic product of careful training. You can smell it, you see. You can smell it, you can feel it.

Now, even we are in the middle of a big city, you know. While I was interviewing there was these two fellows outside. Well, the window is open and you can hear all their chatting outside, right in front of the temple. So in the marketplace, in the midst of this, you know, big city, we have to do retreat. That's why I'm here. That's why you are here.

So it's, working, you know, I don't know if you've noticed, I tiptoe. So that's how the monks learn. Because these heels, you know, that's where it makes noise, when you put it down. Because I can hear in my apartment, you know, the people walking, you know. So that's why you learn tiptoe to minimize making noise. To provide quiet so people can concentrate with minimum distractions. To keep the distractions at minimum.

And also, even when you stand up and move to the chair, you know, you go around so that if you walk in front of other people sitting, that's also distracting. So all these things you learn. That's what helps. That's, you can say it's, when I say invisible, the person. When, the person, how he sits down and works and all that, almost like invisible being.

Well, a common way of saying is considerate. Because we help each other to bring this community on another level together. So that's how, bit by bit, we learn to transform each other. With a helping hand.

Do I make sense?

(Yes!)

So keep that in mind, what it means. It has a, that's totally another implication, you know, become a true person with a cultivating of, cultivating good heart, good Buddhist heart.

So keep that in mind. And you have two more days to go, and Robert Aitken Roshi, he passed away. He, when he had retreats, you know, he had a centre in Honolulu, Hawaii. He lived there pretty much for the rest of his life. And he would say, it's not big, it's, compared to that our temple is big, he would, when he organized five day or seven day retreat, he would tell people, I mean, these are lay people working full time job or raising family and all that so it's not an easy thing to take time off, you know, five days or seven days, you see.

So they take trouble, also to get, also there was this Mexican guy, this Dharma student, he just got a new job and he thought he would get kind of vacation, together. So that's, you just got this job, you have to wait one year to apply for a vacation. And then Toan encouraged him, you know, well say that this is my special religious holiday. But anyway, he was very disappointed he was unable to come. His Dharma name is Noan.

So Robert Aitken Roshi would say that if you come for three day or five day or seven day retreat, that's tantamount of, you know, three years or five years or seven years for the renunciant, the monk, who renounced the worldly life. So in other words, what it would take the monk three years, five years, or seven years cultivation, you have to do it in three days, five days, and seven days. So they can goof off, but you cannot (laughter).

So each and every moment counts. So how can you waste your time? And time is here for you to wake up. As a true person. With good Buddhist heart. Always eager, you know. To extend yourself.

Okay?

(OKAY!)

One more time!

(OKAY!!)

One more time!

(OKAY!!!)

Use that Dharma energy.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 02, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 4 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 17, 2024

Today is your third full day of Yongmaeng Jeongjin. The time is here for you to wake up, and keep waking up, throughout the day.

I was surprised to learn that some of you didn't even know what meditation light is about. Is there anyone who does not know what meditation light is about? Anyone else? Meditation light, I said.

You have to keep your meditation light. Sitting down, standing up, walking. With the help of penetrating silence and great unknowing mind, your practice, your hwadu alone goes. Prevails.

You cannot waste your time anymore. In the monasteries they say you have to turn your split second into two hours or ten hours. They are referring to the ceaseless practice. From moment to moment, without interruption.

So each of you must be true practitioner and true Bodhisattva. Means the same thing. And ask yourself penetrating question. If you can become a true person doing this, a true person with a presence of awakened heart. If you keep that vision, that vow, that aspiration, then all your distractions, they would stay away.

Is that correct?

(Yes!)

So it's all day long. See what difference you can make to your practice.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 02, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 4 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 17, 2024

Three strikes and chanting to open

Please sit comfortably.

I had no idea when I came for Yongmaeng Jeongjin, rubdown is cruel, 108 prostrations not bad (laughter). Sitting really hurts. Ouch, ouch! Hwadu study beats me completely. Ouch, ouch, ouch! Sunim keeps reminding me that I would pass the first gate of Seon, Zen, if I go through 36 big ouches. I still have no idea. Yes, from time to time, tears form in my eyes.

How about that?

(YAY!) [clapping]

It's not bad? It's good?

(Good.)

It's fun?

(FUN!) [laughter]

[unclear] is a little different.

Now, all I can remind you is the three qualities of your meditation practice. Number one, deep. Number two, penetrating and pervading. Number three, illuminating. So your concentration practice and hwadu study spreads, expands, penetrating and pervading, and illuminating.

If I say these things, your seeking mind would come out anticipating that. But all you have to do is stay with your practice, ruthlessly. Constantly. Using the power of constant practice and great unknowing mind. If you stop, if you stop flowing with constant practice, you know what would happen. It stinks. You know that. In other words, here the stink comes in the form of complaints.

So you can see that. You have made it this much. And then your sentient being and your Buddha within, they struggle. Some would struggle, trying to avoid and muddle along, somehow get it

finished and then go home. That's sentient being. The other side is you come up with superior mind. It's advancing. As I pointed out, you still have a lot of energy. Right?

(YES!)

So you come out. And double your efforts. Your effort is your meditation light, and constant practice, and power of unknowing mind. Those are your tools, those are your liberative tools.

So, it's just this evening and tomorrow. We come up with a vow. Aspiration. That you will give your utmost. You will go straight ahead with your practice. No wavering, no wandering.

Okay?

(YES!)

So that's a promise you make to your being. With Buddha-heart, Buddha-heart-mind, and with presence of awakened heart.

Okay?

(OKAY!)

One more time!

(OKAY!!)

So it's, the walls and ceilings they all hear it. As witness.

One more time!

(OKAY!!!)

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 03, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 5 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 17, 2024

This is your last full day of Yongmaeng Jeongjin. It's Bodhisattva day.

There's no time to waste. I still see some of you getting sluggish and getting groggy, or seeking a little comfort under this serious situation. If you cannot come out of your old shell of ego and attachment to your comfort, you might as well go into your room or lie down and take nap, or even go home.

It says in the Heart Sutra, no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body-mind. No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or objects of mind. No consciousness, no extinction of consciousness. This is the realm where you should be, today.

If you are still hanging on to your old habits, you have to learn to kill them. Defeat them completely. If you cannot let go of yourself, you have to kill them.

So all day long, the path is very, very clear. So many times I refer to the power of constant practice and power of unknowing mind. If you become blind, deaf, and mute person, there should be no hindrance, no obstacles. Straight forward. Constant.

Is this all clear?

(YES!)

This last day is Bodhisattva day. Everyone has to persevere, prove that you are Bodhisattva. For yourself, for your family, for the community, for the world.

Okay?

(YES!)

One more time!

(OKAY!!)

So promise to yourself. Make vow. And renew vow. Each time something comes up to distract you.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 03, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 5 Afternoon

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 17, 2024

If you, instructions for your practice for the rest of the day.

It's lunchtime, so eat less at your lunchtime. You may also consider skipping lunch. Because if you eat too much, it's not good for your practice. It's harmful. Also with a full stomach you feel stupid. If you feel stupid you may end up doing more stupid things, then you become really stupid. Being really stupid means you don't even know you're stupid.

So during the lunchtime you have to keep your practice, ceaselessly. And during the rest period, you may lie down. Do your practice lying down, until you fall asleep. So the practice continues. And during the work practice period we have to pay very good attention to carry on your practice while at work, okay? And, of course, it would be easier if you can make your practice audible to you. Make a little sound. Otherwise your practice would run away. So make your practice audible, okay? Moving your lips during the work practice period.

Now, if you are deeply into your practice, that means also deeply into yourself, here your being and practice, they become kind of merged, or forged, and sometimes when you see things, they would illuminate. That's why the, you know, third quality of practice, illuminating. Do you know why? Because your awareness is sharpened. It's called illuminating awareness. Could be [unclear], could be [unclear], illuminates. So bright. But don't look for that, that's, just stay with the practice. That's being, [unclear] way of becoming stupid.

Because if you eat too much, if you have a stupid lunch, you are...(laughter).

Okay? So, you have to really protect your practice until the very end of the day. As I mentioned, your coming and doing this practice, it's very precious. Sometimes, you know, you may complain on the weather, and like this and that, and resistance, but still you are doing something precious. Well, you know that not many people are willing to do this kind of thing. So it's very precious, so you have to take care.

Okay?

(OKAY!)

And you don't doze, okay?

(Right.) [laughter]

So, pretty good shouting (laughter). You know, if you have good shouting, you should not fall asleep like that. Then you have to shout at yourself (laughter).

Okay?

(OKAY!)

One more time!

(OKAY!!)

Okay. You got, you are now empowered.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 03, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 5 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 18, 2024

[Three strikes and chanting to open]

Please sit comfortably.

What is meditation? Under bright moonlight, migratory birds are enjoying their overnight rest.

What is concentration? Mother monkey holding herself, holding her body, steady. It's peeling banana, for her children.

[chanting in Korean]

What is oneness? The ox is plowing the field, leading the farmer. There is no distinction between these three.

What is no self, no others? Perplexed, the village woman reacts. Asking, what is it? I've never heard of it.

You see, this is part of my meditation formula. Meditation is concentration, concentration is oneness. Oneness is no self, no others. I thought this oneness often, because of my poor pronunciation, people don't get it right away. Oneness. And so, this must be a pretty strange word to use. But then I saw a mail saying Oneness Buddhist Centre. It's located in California. What other state can you expect? (Laughter)

There was this monk who was working very hard on his hwadu. Buddha said all beings have a Buddha-nature. So surely, dogs should have Buddha-nature. So just in case, he visited Jōshū Master Jōshū, and asked him does a dog (have) Buddha-nature. And, but they do things like that. You know, they go around and check out the old farts, you know (laughter). And Jōshū said, "Mu." So that's strange. All beings must have Buddha-nature, why would he say mu? So that became his hwadu. So he worked on it. Why did he say mu? Why?

And, so he worked on it a couple of years. And then one day, he was in the kyolche. The monks do three month kyolche in summertime and three month kyolche in wintertime. Rain retreat and snow retreat. So at dusk, he was deeply into his hwadu. All of a sudden, he saw these ferocious dogs. Three of them approaching him. And then he got scared. Then a little later they disappeared. And then again he was very deeply into this hwadu. Then this time, there was much more ferocious dogs approaching. So he got really scared, and he got up and ran out. And then, you know, and then about 25 other monks, they didn't know, you know, like, this is oneness, they all act as one. So there must be something happen, so everybody was following him (laughter).

So it is said, he got so scared, so he ran and ran and for two kilometres. Two kilometres is what, two miles?

(A little over one mile.)

Over one mile. So then, then he looked back. Then, you know, I mean the dogs are gone and all these monks were following (laughter). It said, well he felt a little awkward, why are you following me? Well you ran out so I thought that something happened, that's all, we are following you.

So then the monks got upset this time, you know. This guy, good for nothing, you know, we have been following him. So I think the head monk, [Ipsum?], went to the Master and told him. So Master called him, what happened? So this monk, a little sheepishly, he explained what happened. Okay, don't worry about it. If you see them again, before they come close to you, you go after them first! Go get them! (laughter)

So, and then, so he came back and then they both started sitting. And sure indeed, that they all started coming. As soon as he saw them coming, then he, with such force, he threw himself

through the air to get them. Jump them, get them. And then he landed in a laundry tarp outside the meditation hall, you know. You know, he had such force. Boom, like, you know.

So then he realized he landed in the laundry tub, you know. And then when he got up, he shouted. This old fart, Jōshū, has been deceiving me all these years. If I ever see him, I'll stretch him very hard and give him 108 blows. So that he would never give us anymore trouble.

Now, we have this saying. Sincere and earnest. True, sincere, earnest for three years. And then, thorough, thorough and complete for three years. Then, after that, you can attain no mind. That is, you can, your body-mind can harmonize with any situation. Under any circumstances. Practice with no-mind, just flowing.

So, now you heard so much about true, being true, being sincere, and being earnest.

(We heard so much about what?)

Being true, sincere, and earnest. And then, it's called thorough. Everything, like, I was talking to, what's your name?

(Sudo.)

Oh Sudo. I was telling Sudo because the wooden mallet, the strike, bell strike, you know, he left it visible instead of putting underneath, invisibly. So, that's also Zen practice, Zen life. The way you talk, the way you greet people, and everything. The way you ring the bell, the way you play jukbi, everything because you have to be thorough and complete. If it is incomplete it's like leaving trace behind. You can see that. It's not good.

So it's like [unclear]. You really pay attention to the detail.

And now, it should be about time for you to enjoy what we call effortless effort. Like cruise control (laughter), it's just, the practice goes, you see. The practice goes without you. That would be nice, eh? Or, you know, free from pain and free from all the hassle. So absolutely, it's just, practice goes.

And, then you can really enjoy it. Sitting and standing. What do you think?

(Sure.)

It's, well different practice has different quality, as you know. So, you know, it's sometimes, if I speak in general terms it basically applies to every practice, that's not true. For instance, like some of you doing, reciting Sogamoni-bul. That's very peaceful, a very calming practice. But the

underlying quality is always deep humility. And every teacher or aspiring teacher should know that.

Okay, I'm a little bit wearing out. So this is your last evening of the practice. So do your best, do your utmost, until that last minute. I usually tell, do you have difficulty hearing me? It's okay?

I, you know, many of you have already heard this story but I usually tell this story to remind you. You see, we do five day summer retreat, but the monks do three months retreat. And when the last day arrives of the three month retreat, you can tell the monks, they are, already packing (laughter). And their mind is gone. But by so doing, you can ruin the whole three months of work, Dharma work. It happens. They don't realize that. But I saw, you know, one monk, by looking at this one monk, you would not think this monk would be gone by tomorrow morning, you see. Because those guys, you know, after midnight, they are allowed to leave. Because it's up in the mountains and, well there's a country bus, comes only twice a day. So in order to catch the first bus, they have to be down there, you know. The, climb down and wait for the bus. Otherwise they have to wait many, many hours to catch the last bus, you see.

So this monk, he would put, well, you know, after rain, the weeds, they grow, you know, very wild. So if you're not careful, you know, if you don't weed them, in a few days, soon it would become like a jungle, you know. Then of course, you know, toads and snakes and they are around, you see. So you have to, you know, pulling the weeds becomes an important task during the summer retreat. So he was pulling the weeds, you see.

And at one point, another monk I saw, as they would leave and travel visiting other monks, other temples, monasteries, and so some other monks, traveling monks, would arrive at this temple, at this monastery too. So there are guest quarters. So in the guest quarters there is wooden pegs so that they would hang their tote bag and things like that. So a couple of them were missing, so ingeniously he would go around and make a, you know, wooden peg and put it there, you see.

So these monks, you look at them, you know, they belong here, you see. Until the last minute. So that means wherever they go, they belong. While those packing, and their mind is already gone, then wherever they go, they don't belong.

Did I deliver the message to you?

(Yes!) [Laughter]

Well, that's good enough (laughter).

Three strikes and chanting to close

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 04, 2012

Location: Chicago

Event: YMJJ Day 6 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: December 19, 2024

Three strikes and chanting to open

Please sit comfortably.

It was a warm, sweaty, and good Yongmaeng Jeongjin, right?

(Yes!)

What is, what is the goal of Buddhism? What is the goal of Buddhist practice? To make a Buddha out of sentient beings. To become a Buddha.

Now, what does it mean to become a Buddha? To make a Buddha out of a sentient being? That's [unclear] the teaching that your mind is Buddha. And all sentient beings are Buddhas.

Now, all beings are Buddhas, or your mind is Buddha. Same thing. Particularly human beings, each and everyone has mind. So each and everyone is a Buddha.

Now, Seongcheol sunim insisted when he was teaching, while when he was alive. And, sentient beings are Buddhas does not mean they have to do a lot of practice to become a Buddha. In other words, it does not mean sentient beings, each of them, have to be transformed in order to become a Buddha. Just the way they are, they are Buddhas.

So if you read, for instance, [unclear], you know, the three selections [Walter?] read during the lantern lighting service, or Buddha's birthday celebration, it says, you know the, all these Buddhas, you know, [street?] Buddhas, or temple Buddhas, and renunciant Buddhas and non-renunciant Buddhas, you know, the people in red districts, prostitute Buddhas, you know, they are all, lists all things.

And it's a very good book, and each temple has the lantern lighting service which is the last event of Buddha's birthday celebration. Usually make a selection from Dhammapada and other books. But those are very good selections, The Echoes of Mount Kaya. And someone who can recite, you know, wonderfully. It really touches you. Right?

(I thought that was wonderful stuff. Great.)

And now, so, just the way they are, they are already Buddhas.

Now, then you may ask, why this practice? One word, one answer for that is, because of your hard training, hard practice, as a Bodhisattva. Or aspiring you to, for, Bodhisattva vocation. There are so many Buddhas. You help them realize they are already Buddhas. Such is the extent of our work. Okay?

(Yes!)

Now, it's, I forgot this fellow's name, he, there's a small book which I saw recently. It's three major religions in the United States. And first Christianity, and Islam, and Buddhism. And in terms of numbers of followers or believers, and also their influence, you know, I mean you know, Christians are numerous in their influences, widespread.

(Can you speak a little bit louder?)

Okay, I'll try. So they have been around here, well established. Or more recently, Islam, you know they are, they are, many of them are new citizens and new immigrants. But it is remarkable how their numbers have been increasing in this country. And also, even though all this, you know, negative publicity about this religion and, just in terms of numbers, and then their influence is more and more beginning to effect in this country. For instance, look at the debate that's still raging at twin towers, they are putting up near, not too far from me, they have this Muslim group, Islam group, they have been trying to establish a mosque or Islamic cultural centre. And then, they have quite important leaders, you know, who begin to speak out, you know, for their interests and, you know, to bring out new image of, you know, the real teachings of Islamism apart from the Taliban or, you know, those suicide bombers.

So then you may wonder, why Buddhism? You know, in terms of numbers, I think there would be certainly more Hindus than Buddhists in this country, and probably there are more Jewish.

(Yes, we were sort of wondering.) [laughter]

More Jewish than Buddhists.

(For several hundred years they've been saying that the Jews controlled everything, now suddenly we're off the list.) [laughter]

I'm not the right person for you to lodge your complaint (laughter). But you are not, well here I think Jews, the word Jews and Jewish are different. You know, it's more like ethnic, you know. But you are not really a follower of Judaism.

(No, I'm not a follower of Judaism.)

So, anyway. I don't like to get into that [unclear] (laughter). But anyway, it's interesting. I mean, the writer of each chapter, you know, of Buddhism and Islam, of course, they are specialists. Academics you know. Or they are religious leaders. But the one who wrote this chapter on Buddhism, obviously he's big in confidence. Obviously it's intended for [unclear] mix of this country, and journalists, and, you know, just to show them, you know, what are these three religions that have been taking root and what they mean to us in terms of, you know, [unclear] and all that.

So he used the word, Buddhism is unique. It's, I guess, he did not say it's different from Islamism or Christianity, or ethical alternative to Christianity, [unclear] but he used the word unique. In quality, you know. It's, I think he did say it's different, you know. It has a different worldview, and different perspective, and different practice. I mean, obviously all monotheistic religions, they pray to God, or to Allah, or to [unclear]. But Buddhists, they meditate. So the approach is radically different. Approach to salvation.

Now, and okay, so much is clear that, you know. And, so in a sense, I usually say, if you get tired of meditation you can, you know, just in case you can always go to church and start praying (laughter). Or if you get tired of praying you can come and [unclear] (laughter).

Now, it's, meditation is important, but each of you have a practice. Whether it's hwadu or counting breath or Sogamoni-bul or another form of practice, including prostrations, too. Now, this practice you have is very important. I mean Buddhists, we don't have something like a Koran or Bible or prayer, you know, to guide. But we have practice. That much is important.

This practice is your guide. Your guide who shows you the way for your Buddhist journey. And it's a tool to fix your problems. And saviour to set you free from suffering. From attachment and suffering. Also this practice is a delight and hope for you. So, I mean, you can relate to this. This much is important.

So that means, if you live like your guide, your guide, and the truth, and your saviour, and delight, and hope, you have to learn to take care of it. That's what it's all about. It's very important. Without this practice, what would be Buddhism?

You may think, oh just counting outgoing breath over and over again. Or this endless sitting. The endless sitting has been killing me (laughter). That's true.

(Yes!)

But that's direct experience.

(Yes!)

I mean, you can't read about your direct experience. So go right to your bone marrow (laughter).

So you have to think about, and also doing [ipseon], entering the teacher's room so many times, that's also great practice. You may not think much but that's a very important practice. And it's, each time you enter it's different. It may be very brief, but the importance is not diminished by that.

You never discuss your practice with others. If you do that, you do that at the risk of losing your practice. This is something precious, something important. It's like treasure. So you guard it, or keep it safe. All to yourself. That's very important. Anyone understand it? As soon as you start discussing, when I say you lose means it becomes cerebral. [unclear]. The efficacy is gone.

And also, that you have this practice means you trust yourself. You place strong faith in yourself doing this. You may not be aware of that each and every moment, but that [unclear] is there.