

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 29, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Yongmaeng Jeongjin morning

Transcriber: Jajin Stephen Bincarowsky

Date of transcription: December 1, 2022

When you come for retreat, when you come for Yongmaeng Jeongjin, each of you have to become the Buddha. In other words, the Buddha in you comes out to do Yongmaeng Jeongjin. And you have to, because it is the Buddha within that inspires each other. And then the Dharma, through the Yongmaeng Jeongjin, the schedule is our Dharma, is your Dharma. So you surrender yourself, you surrender to the Dharma, the schedule, and also become living embodiment of the schedule, the Dharma. And then of course, you are doing this to help sentient beings for the Universal Sangha. So this Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the Three Jewels to ensure you become living embodiment of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the Three Jewels, doing this Yongmaeng Jeongjin. And these Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha becomes one body. That's the meaning of you becoming living embodiment of Three Jewels. We are together as one body through the Yongmaeng Jeongjin.

Now the meditation practice, of course, during the retreat when we are doing Yongmaeng Jeongjin, everything becomes meditation. Sitting, walking, lying down, standing. It is all meditation, all concentration, all samadhi. The power of samadhi prevails and permeates every part of your daily life.

Now, Buddha means "awakened one." So your awakened heart, Buddha heart, Buddha mind. So the presence of your awakened heart is important here. So you heard awakened sentient beings become Buddhas and deluded, that means without the presence of your awakened heart, Buddhas become sentient beings. So you have to practice meditation, sitting, standing, walking, lying down with an awakened heart, with the full presence of your awakened heart. So we follow the Threefold training. The sila. That's the ethical awakening. That means that each of you are a true and sincere person. So you, by the time you get here to Yongmaeng Jeongjin, that is what you bring to the Yongmaeng Jeongjin. The true and sincere heart, ethical and spiritual awakening. And then meditation, which is concentration, moment to moment with the presence of awakened heart. That more specifically comes the meditation light. So when we are teaching the course, "the third eye." So awakened heart comes in the form of meditation light, which is awareness. You are fully alert. Your body-mind is fully alert, which in turn will lead to opening your wisdom eye. So that is why I say concentration, the power of meditation, the power of samadhi. Plus prajna.

Now doing this rigorous training, some people are very capable of doing it, while others may find it difficult. So we say there is a person of a superior capacity, a person of an inferior

capacity, or person of a medium capacity. Now the Great Way, the Great Way has no gate. So that means the Great Way is open to all. No gate means you can enter from anywhere, from any place. In other words, you can enter the Great Way right from where you are regardless of being superior, inferior, or medium. It is open to all. The only difficulty or barrier is called gateless gate or gateless barrier. It's you just don't do it enough. You neglect. Coming up with petty "whys?". That is impediment. That is barrier. In other words, each of you, whether you are superior or inferior, each of you has to be whole-hearted doing this. Whether you are inferior or superior or whatever, the main thing is the main ingredients. Which is the whole-hearted attitude is deep humility and gratitude. Deep humility and gratitude. Lacking these two qualities, even a superior person would fail. Of course an inferior person would fail. So deep humility and gratitude. So if you have deep humility and gratitude, how do you express that? It is said that the expression of deep humility and gratitude comes in the form of devotion. So you learn to devote yourself. So as your devotion increases, we say "you" decrease. Means your ego or your complaints or your difficulties decrease! Do you hear me?

HOI!!!

Now there's this. "Inside nothing to gain. Outside nothing to seek." Inside, or inwardly, there is nothing to obtain. That's in the Heart Sutra. Outside there's nothing to seek. That's what meditation is all about. That's why you are all here. Now finally hear this. "Above no Buddhas. Below no sentient beings." Above there are no Buddhas, below there are no sentient beings. That is the way your practice goes. Keep that. Is this all clear?

YES!!!

Simple answer, it's clear.

When you come to Yongmaeng Jeongjin every minute counts. Every minute is valuable. Every second is valuable. So when you do 108 prostrations each morning with the gatha, you keep the gatha. But also that's the message, the gatha along with the 4 great vows for the world. We don't waste our life. Our life is just too valuable to waste.

We live in the country, we live in the land of McDonald, also in the land of people seeking fun. But this can be fun too. See? And even, for instance, each, if you follow the schedule each day, is every part of this study. The rub down, the stretching, doing prostrations. It's kind of an unforgettable experience. And then you sit. Such quiet and peace prevails. The vow. Each day you come out with the vow power. When I came to North America, the most frequently used words were "fun" and "power". Was quite alien to me. So it took me a time to get used to it. Like one day I was jogging, or I was walking vigorously. "You are walking a power walk." I never heard of that before. (laughing) What we know is empowerment. That is Buddhism. To overcome your obstacles, impediments, difficulties. To transform them into another opportunity to cultivate yourself. To grow up. Mature. So each morning we make a vow and keep your vow power all day long.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 29, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 2 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 23, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

[poem in Korean]

If you wish to attain the truth that is always available right in front of your eyes, then stop discriminating between the favourable and the unfavourable.

[reciting in Korean]

You enter the land of Buddha without leaving the demon world.

Here means your worldly life. So with your worldly life intact, you enter the land of Buddha.

The lame duck and the blind turtle inadvertently enter the empty piggy belly. (laughter)

You know what that means. You like that, eh? And you like to be one of them, one of the lame duck in the piggy belly.

Now, because you have not completely left your worldly desires and regrets, even though, even while climbing up the upward path, you struggle a lot. Picking and choosing. Still seeking your comfort. Still trying to look for comfortable and easy path.

So here the instruction is stop discriminating. Favourable, unfavourable. Everything becomes great opportunity to become grist for Dharma mill. Now this upward path, even the ten thousand sages cannot help you. You're all alone with your vows, inspirations. But you've got all the instructions you need.

As it so often happens, after a couple of minutes, or even after four or five minutes into your meditation, your mind veers away. But if you are the guy with a true and sincere heart, with the presence of awakened heart, then your mind comes back.

So this is called catching the returning light to illuminate your mind. That's the practice. You catch your mind, you know? Your mind, your meditation light and awareness returns. Where your body is, that's its hometown. So as soon as it returns you have to catch it. You have to catch the returning light. You have to catch the awareness to illuminate your Buddha-mind.

You know what happens when you fail to do that. Do you understand?

And the rest of it. Your physical discomfort, you're hurting and aching here and there, and drowsy. You know how to help yourself. And above all, this morning I mentioned devotion. As your devotion increases, you decrease. Here "you" means your bundle of ego habits, they decrease. So here, devotion, prostration is pretty good. Once again expressing your deep humility and gratitude. And you surrender. So you surrender all your obstacles, hopes, desires, frustrations. And say, each breath say, in early morning, particularly in the mid-morning and in the evening, you say to yourself, "I'll do minimum 9 prostrations." You can all do 9 prostrations. Maximum 36 prostrations. If you say to yourself, I'll just do 9 prostrations to surrender your struggles, that's empowering practice. Then having done 9 prostrations, from there it does not take much to go on to 15 prostrations. And when you do prostrations, come here, you know.

Right here, right close to Buddha's statue. If you lose the best spot, then...(laughter). And then, as I said, when you feel drowsy, so when you get confused or fearful, then you just rock your body slowly and then breathing out deep. That helps too. To wake you up, to ease your pain, and from side to side, and breathe out, letting go. And it helps, it should help ease your pain and help you wake up. And then you can also just stand up. Standing up and then do meditation standing up. So there are all these ways to help yourself.

Now the duty persons also used to help. For instance, those of you who had us wake up - moktak right here. Two of you playing moktak together, our neighbours may hear that so maybe minus that but voice, sing-song voice reciting Great Compassion Dharani would inspire these guys, you know. Your fellow Buddhas. So that's, you have that duty, you see. Each time I tell you, whether you ring the bell, play moktak, or fixing meditation, somebody's meditation cushions, whatever you do here, you do that to fulfill the first vow out of Four Great Vows. "All beings, one body, I vow to liberate." You do that to fulfill your vow. If you remember that you do your utmost, you don't just ring the bell, you don't just do, you know, wake up moktak. They hear you. So by how you are doing, you inspire them or you don't inspire them.

And also work practice, and this breakfast. There are too many dishes. You know, I saw, so I don't know, this must be Ann Arbor style. When I go to Ann Arbor temple I'm always amazed how many, on the table, so many choices, you know. Even, you know, what is it, this oil or something like that. Please don't put out so many dishes, you see. It would spoil them. They are already spoiled. They are here to get rid of, to correct themselves, you see. Do you agree with me?

Well you tell me that, if you still need so many dishes out. [unclear], just a few ingredients. When I first entered the monastery, one of the things frequently told to the novice monks was, “When hungry and when cold you practice better.” Because, well, we took it in, sometimes we joke and say, well because when cold, you have to do prostrations to keep yourself warm. And it’s constant told.

But it took me a long time. First we didn’t like to hear that. Because there was not much to eat anyways. In those days everybody was poor. I mean, I can say that today, but in those days, everybody was poor. So we didn’t think in terms of poor or being rich. That’s the way it was. We lived that. If you have just a little bowl of rice and then soup, and if you have one other side dish, that’s pretty good enough, you know. Sometimes just, you know, a little bowl of rice and then you have one side dish, that’s all. Even then, they make it very spicy so that we would eat a little, not much. They do it on purpose, you see, because they are afraid that everybody would consume and then not much left to feed everybody.

Three strikes and chanting to close.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 30, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 3 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 24, 2024

Three qualities of your meditation practice are number one “deep,” number two “penetrating and pervading,” and number three “illuminating.”

Now, the first one “deep” means you practice going beyond. In other words, you practice beyond the words and thoughts. In other words, your meditation practice begins where words fail and thoughts exhaust. That’s called “deep.” So your meditation practice is concentration. So good concentration or poor concentration, whatever, it should be completely free from words and thoughts.

Of course, there are, you will always have thoughts swirling around, distracting you. But you practice with the presence of awakened heart. It’s like sky. Sky is completely unconcerned about clouds floating around. So that means you only stay, as I say often, what is important. That is your practice. Your concentration method or hwadu. The thoughts they come and go. Feelings come and go. They are not important. They are impermanent. So you just stay with your practice. So this has to be abundantly clear. And that’s called “deep.”

And then, number two “penetrating and pervading.” You know what that means. When you practice, when your concentration, when your hwadu practice is deep, it gains power. That means penetrates all of your body. And expanding, pervading. So, I heard people complaining. Well, when you sit on mat and cushion, you can’t sustain concentration practice. But when you stand and walk around, or eating, or work doing manual work, then often you lose your practice. Should not be so. It’s just, we say, meditation, sitting on the mat and cushion, is only preparation. That’s why we say meditation practice in the midst of activities is far superior to meditation in the quiet. So in other words, meditation practice up in the mountain or out in the countryside, secluded, is inferior to meditation practice like in marketplace. You can still hear, you know, when street cars go by. And to strong practitioners, those sounds could become remote. It’s like it’s even better than secluded in the mountains, you see. Because you can become much more aware. That’s why I say always concentration plus awareness. It is also said, the spirit of a true practitioner swallows Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. And the eyes of a true practitioner covers Heaven and Earth.

Now, finally the third one “illuminating.” Last night I mentioned, you know, you’ll always get distracted, but then you always practice in this moment. That’s the power of constant practice. Over and over again, you practice always in this moment, and you shine. You shine like Arahant. Sometimes Arahant is called “Shining Ones.” So when your practice always returns, you know, when you do Yongmaeng, you know, they always return, sometimes very fast. Then you catch, you catch that awareness, your returning light, to illuminate your Buddha-mind. So “illuminating.”

So you make that clear. No more distractions. If you are not careful, you know, I mean the instructions are very clear, but if you are not careful, basically by the force of your old habits, you see, you, you know, you become kind of a slave to your old thoughts. And that goes, you know, if you are, before you become aware, one meditation session is gone. Wasted. But then again, you wake up, you know. You wake up in each and every moment. This is all about practice for waking up. Waking up from your indolence. Waking up from your inner tension. Waking up from your old habits.

So you have to really guard and stay with your practice. Okay?

(YES!)

One more time.

(YES!!)

One more time!

(YES!!!)

Use that Dharma power, you see. All day long.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 01, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 4 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 27, 2024

The clay Buddha cannot make it close to water. But your Buddha-light illuminates Heaven and Earth.

When we do five day Yongmaeng Jeongjin, we say to people the minimum attendance are two days. So we encourage people to come and try two days. So some come and after two days of Yeongmaeng Jeongjin, they saw it and they heard it, and they said, “Sunim, this is good enough for me.” So they are śrāvaka, called. Śrāvaka, you know śrāvakas? I usually translate it as hearers. They hear. And then they see, like seasons change. Like spring turning into summer. So that’s good enough for that. But then sometimes we try to persuade them. If you survive for two days, then you can make it for the rest of Yongmaeng Jeongjin. And that means you can go from śrāvaka stage to Bodhisattvas. This Yongmaeng Jeongjin is created for Bodhisattvas, with their vows. And then some stay, with great reluctance sometimes. Then they struggle hard, and they don’t like it. And they cannot just, and then they bring all kinds of other things. And then they end up becoming, naturally, miserable scum, you know (laughter). But you don’t like to become miserable scum, right? Make sure about that.

Now, after the first two days, one way or another, you have to become a Bodhisattva doing this. Your spirit soars high. Your whole body-mind, your whole being, floats with vital spirit. Dharma energy. Do you feel that?

(YES!)

So at such a stage, we say when one is pointed out, you get it threefold, fivefold, even tenfold. You get it right away. So you know, it’s a very palpitating, it’s pitter-patter experience. Just get it. Your body-mind is, it’s a bundle of mindfulness and concentration.

Two things prevail for this Bodhisattva training. One is unknowing mind. [진짜 Jinjja??]. I mean, in the world it's called Rinzai. At the end of his record, it's called Record of Sayings and Doings of a Zen Master, "Charged like blind donkey." This blind donkey is a practitioner with a great unknowing mind. That's transcending mind, there are no obstacles. No obstacles. That's transcending power, unknowing mind. And then the other thing is vital spirit.

You brave ones, braving new Buddhist world, you're all pioneers. Pioneers in the West, not in California (laughter). So it's, as I say, every moment counts. Every moment is eternal moment. Timeless moment. Sometimes it's put this way. There is neither coming nor going, not even staying. Yongmaeng Jeongjin goes. Moves forward, like stream. Continuously. Always fresh. Always fresh in each and every moment. That's the power of running stream.

Is this much clear to you?

(YES!)

She has a mad woman's energy (laughter). You know, mad man, mad woman. They are not afraid of anything. The whole world belongs to her. It's an invincible situation. Right?

(YES!!) (laughter)

You know, vital energy.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 01, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 4 Afternoon

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 30, 2024

This afternoon and this evening and tomorrow, it's pretty much all that's left for your Yongmaeng Jeongjin. So I'd like you to step up and double your efforts. Particularly I'd like you to pay attention during the work period, when you rest, and even while resting, while lying down, you can practice. You can practice much better resting, until you fall asleep. And then when you wake up, your practice comes right back. You know, so during the lunch time. So each and every moment, you should not waste.

The American Zen Teacher, Robert Aitken Roshi, when he conducted retreats, sesshins, he would usually remind, ... He's the one who first used the word Laïcisation of American Buddhism. So it's for lay people. So they conduct three day retreats, or five, or seven, or ten day retreats for lay people. Because that's all the time lay people can afford, you see. But in monastic Buddhism in Asia, the monks, of course they have lots of time, most of time, you know. So he would remind people who come for his retreats, you'll one day, if you come for one day retreat, there would be like tantamount to ten years for monastic monks. So monastic monks, they can goof off, you see. They have lots of time, but you don't. So in other words, you have to use your one day of retreat like the monks use, you know, ten years. So the ten years of a monk's training, you'll be doing in one day. So how can you goof off? Right?

And also it's, I mean, some of you only come, some of you come all the way from Mexico and from Chicago and Ann Arbor, to be here. So given your situation, I'd like you to do your utmost. And that will make a big difference at the end and soon you'll be returning to your place in the world, you see. So much depends upon you. How will you do in this training for the rest of the Yongmaeng Jeongjin.

And now, you see, while doing retreat like this, it's intense. And you know, again, physically and mentally demanding. So it often happens, you know, all these, your emotional baggage show up. Things that have been repressed or put on the back-burner, they suddenly show up, you see. And, which Buddhists call purification, you see. So in other words, one needs to be disturbed, one needs to be troubled. They have to be disturbed and troubled and get processed through, so that you could actually do Yongmaeng Jeongjin for the true purpose. So you go through it, whether you like it or not it shows up. Like emotional outbreak.

So that's a good thing, you see. Finally you can, you know, you can let go of this thing. Somehow you have been, you know, keeping around. So it's a good thing. Sometimes I say it's free therapy (laughter). So, but you have to keep your practice. Even sobbing and crying or laughing, whatever, keep practicing. Don't lose your practice.

And I gave you those two guidelines this morning. The power of unknowing mind. Transcending mind, transcending power. And then the vital spirit of the training. You still have lots of energy left. It says, well you think, you know, like I'm tired, I'm this, my back hurts, and this, and that. So when you feel, there's this thing called, when you just thought, "mountain," you know, like you know, mountain range. Mountains end, rivers run off, lo and behold there is a plum flowers blooming village there. So what it is when you feel you thought, oh I've done it. Then all of a sudden, Dharma energy shows up. Dharma energy shows up. That's what I mean "vital spirit." So please do your utmost and, so, with so many people doing together, you can see, you know like, when you feel that, you know. Like doing prostrations, even doing [unclear]. When you're left alone you would never be able to do that. It is possible when you do it together.

So you borrow energy from each other. That's how you, it's called, ... I have not used this. It's, the Koreans, they would say, it's like, in the Korean countryside, you know. The farmer's wife, you know, sometimes during the planting season and harvest time, and, you know, she has to fill so many farmhands, you know. Helping out, you see. And she has to, ... usually they would peel, you know, potatoes one by one. But that would take time consuming. So what she does is she would bring a sack of potatoes and dump it in the bag, you know. And then pour water, and then I think she would usually put some kind of salt. And then with a stick she, you know, vigorously stir around. Then potatoes, they peel each other off (laughter).

That's how you get the work done, you see. That's something like that. You rub each other off.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 01, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 4 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 30, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting.

[poem in Korean]

The lone moon shines alone. The rivers and mountains are still.

[reciting in Korean]

A burst of laughter shatters all Heaven and Earth.

What do you think about that? (laughs)

[Unclear]. You're pretty good laughing, eh? Everybody, laughing.
(laughter)

Louder.

(louder laughter)

You need that, right? (laughter) If you laugh too hard you cry, and if you cry too hard you laugh. Right? (laughter)

[Unclear] is, you know, mad woman, you know? Laughing and laughing, completely at ease with herself, eh? (laughs)
(laughter)

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 02, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 5 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: October 01, 2024

Today is your last full day of Yongmaeng Jeongjin. When you hear this, what do you say? You get beside yourself with alarm, right (laughter)? Right?

So your seeking mind, if you still have one, and your knowing mind, your anxious mind, they have to rest now. So you have to give your life, wholeheartedly, to your Dharma practice. When you give yourself wholeheartedly to the Dharma practice, not just Dharma but karma, we say one thousand Dharmas and ten thousand karmas moving all at once. How would that be? You see, usually it's, okay, you have more karma than Dharma, right? So that's why I say one thousand Dharmas. One thousand Dharma acts, and ten thousand karma acts. Finally they are moving all at once in the same direction. So by, what it means is by this time, even your karma finally get touched by your true and sincere heart, you see. So they get converted, to Buddhism (laughter), right?

So this karma, Dharma, everything, they move together now. Wouldn't that be wonderful (laughter)? So that means no more difficulties, no more obstacles. All obstacles gone, all of a sudden.

There is this Zen drawing. I would normally say it's a painting, but Toan is a painter so they make distinctions between drawings and paintings, you see. Right? (laughter) So this Zen drawing portraying three fellows. One is mute, one is blind, and one is dumb, approaching river on log bridge. What is log bridge?

(Trees, made of log)

Yeah. Just, in the olden days you don't have, you know, you just put rope, you know. So, and then these blind, deaf and mute fellows, they cross log bridge to get to the other side. But here that's symbolic. I say, you know, in your situation you are mute, right? And dumb. Right? And now, what is it, blind. So the sights and sounds are out of the way, right? So being mute, dumb, and blind at the same time, you know, trying to cross this river, holding onto log bridge. So you have no idea where you are, you know. The only thing you can rely on is this log bridge. So hold, you know, you go forward, like, holding it. And then, you know, crawling there. So that means your Hwadu, your practice, this log bridge, you have to be completely at one with your practice. Not just at one, you become the practice. So only the practice prevails. All day long.

So just like the gata which I recited last night. The lone moon shines alone. The rivers and mountains are still.

So it's, you practice the lone moon shining all alone. And illuminating your Buddha-mind. While everything else is calm and still.

So, get that?

(YES!)

So all day long. By this time, everything is internalized, so to speak. Everything takes place here. You know, rain, sun, or shouts, or streetcars going by. Everything's here. Because your world has become vast, empty, completely open. Nothing constraints.

So enough is said now, right? No more words necessary.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 02, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 5 Evening

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: October 03, 2024

During the work practice period this afternoon, I'd like you to practice out loud and make your practice at least audible to you so that you will not lose your practice while doing work practice.

Now, depending upon the work project you are engaged in, the best thing is you, while doing practice out loud, you allow your body-mind to hear the sound of your practice. That's awareness, you know. So you practice your, practice plus awareness.

Is this clear to everyone?

(Yes!)

Okay. Now, you practice, you carry on your practice with true, sincere, and earnest heart. That's awakened heart. The presence of awakened heart. So everybody has a true and sincere heart. That's why we say everyone is Buddha. That's the first truth. That everyone has Buddha-nature. But, you know, they are like, they don't care of that. But when you come to temple and take introductory meditation course and sign up for practicing member, membership, then you become 10% Buddha (laughter). Did you know that? Now you know that.

So when we say everybody is Buddha means that's 5% Buddha. So when you take intro course and become practicing member, then you become 10% Buddha. Then when you come Yongmaeng Jeongjin, like this, you see, then you jump up, you become 20% Buddha (laughter).

(Every time?)

Pardon?

(Every time?)

Yeah, well, and then when you successfully complete Yongmaeng Jeongjin and go back to the society with a Bodhisattva vow, that's called 25% Buddha (laughter).

Now, but if you neglect, you know, when you walk out of Yongmaeng Jeongjin and just, ... and then you don't do anything, then you go back to 5% Buddha. So if you keep up with your practice and also with Bodhisattva vow, wherever your work is, with a helping hand, you know, then years later you reach this, called, "Unmoving stage." You never retrogress from then on. So it's called non-retrogression stage, you see.

There's, you know, the ten stages Bodhisattvas go through, there's called, one is non-retrogression. So then you are really firm.

And then it's called 50% Buddha. Then you're mature.

So then 50% Buddha is, you know, that's good enough. You stay like that, you don't go any further. No such thing as 100%. So 50% Buddha, when you mature, is just like 100%. Just stay 50% Buddha. Because, you know, at even that stage, you do make mistakes, you see. So just 50% is good enough. Okay?

(Yes!)

So people always complain, they, so you don't have to ring the bell and organize there. They carry on the practice on their own and out loud. So you have to learn. You are lay people. So you have to learn to do meditation practice in the midst of activities. That's a key thing, you know. So that's how you build your practice. And awareness.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: July 03, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: YMJJ Day 6 Morning

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: October 08, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

(Good morning!)

[greeting in Korean]

[(greeting in Korean!)]

[poem in Korean]

This is my Dharma gift to you, which you have to take home.

The old pine is talking prajna wisdom. The hidden bird is playing with true suchness.

So they are dating, you know? (laughter)

Living in a big population centre like this, it's pretty hard to hear the Dharma talk of insentient beings. Everything is dominated by human [unclear]. But if you live in a remote mountain, surrounded by trees, rocks, birds, and animals, of course [unclear] is close by, then you have to pay attention to your surroundings. So one way or another, you get influenced by the natural setting. So then you begin to hear their Dharma talks. Dharma talk of insentient beings.

So there are a lot of verses dedicated to Dharma talks by insentient beings. And my favourite one is, like you have a wind chime, right? So all the temples in the mountains, they have these wind bells or wind chimes. So they ring when the wind blows. And here we had also wind bell. And then the neighbours complained. And then, so we took one down and the other one, I don't know when they come and they took it down (laughter). So one is actually locked down in the office. Because, I mean, still being the product of a monastery up in the mountain, I cannot think of temples and monasteries without wind chimes, you know. It's, throughout the season, the bell rings.

Sometimes, aside from the monastics, you know, the village is further down. So like, you know, when visitors arrive they are very precious, you see. And sometimes when bell rings loud and we think there's maybe visitors coming or something.

So it says the wind bell [unclear] hanging high up in the emptiness. Wind bell preaches the best Dharma. When the wind blows eastward or westward, the bell would sing the Dharma. Ding dong dang, ding dong dang.

And there are actually, what's called [Korean], [the natural or the nature?] is the Dharma. The true face of Dharmakaya. So, the old pine is talking prajna, wisdom. But you know the, when the wind blows the, you see the sound of pine trees in the blowing wind. They make sound, you see. There's so many of those. Have you heard that? Then you have to live in the mountain. It's sound of pine wind. Pine, the old pines.

So, the old pine is talking prajna, wisdom. The hidden bird is shy, you know. Has never dated before (laughter). The little bird, you know. Little song of the hidden bird is playing, you know. With true suchness.

Now, there was this great Chinese pilgrim who went to India in early 7th century. In, I think 629 or something like that. And he made it back. Many Chinese and some Koreans travelled along the famous highway, the great thoroughfare linking East to West and West to East, known as Silk Road, travelled along the Silk Road. First it was a caravan, merchant caravan, carrying, you know, silk, tea, or horse, horses, and ceramics. And of course gold and other jewels.

And there, over there, the West was India or Mediterranean or the Persia. And later on, and the Indian monks, they joined this merchant caravans. They were often great patrons of Buddhist monks, the temples. And then later on, the Chinese monks and Korean monks, they also travelled to India to bring the original Buddhist scriptures.

And, but the journey was known as Silk Road. There were oases but it's, particularly if you, the Western edge of the Chinese empire, that's, it was oasis called, known as Dunhuang. You may have heard of the name, Dunhuang. [Unclear...], you know, it was occupied by Tibetans for, almost a couple of centuries, but most of the time it was the Chinese who maintained their territory. Their, you know, empire ends over there. And then around the Silk Road there's small Buddhist kingdoms.

And then when you leave this Dunhuang to set out on such a treacherous and long journey, the first test is this desert called Taklamakan. And there's another desert, Gobi, too, which is Taklamakan's most treacherous [unclear]. And if you make it through this Taklamakan, then [unclear] Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and Pakistan like, those part of [unclear]. It's part of, actually, ancient India, because Gandhara was there too.

And there you see the, the pilgrims. Even when you're distant you could see the huge Buddha which was destroyed by the Taliban a few years ago. You could see it from miles away. And when they see the Buddha from a distance then, you know, it's a great relief to them. Comfort. They are, you know, halfway through at least. And then after that, of course, you have to climb these Hindu Kush mountains, [unclear], and cliffs.

But that's much better than Taklamakan. Taklamakan desert is, it's those swirling sandstorms. It's nothing but, you know, sand-carved dunes. Which constantly shifts. So once you, if you survive through swirling sandstorms, you get completely disoriented. You don't know where you are. And then you may just perish here. But all you can see is the human skeletons, you know, bleached outer bones. If you see them, of course the weak ones, your heart sink (laughter), but like sign posts, it's actually (laughs), so you can use the, you know, pile of bones to serve as your sign posts.

But another menacing one is the rising heat, the heat. They make you completely, you know like, lose your mind, you see. Illusions. That's why the camels, they have, apparently, three eyelids. So they can survive. Three eyelids, they can survive through swirling storm and rising heat and all that. So, and then they see, you know, illusions. Illusory visions, you see, in this rising heat. So that's later on, you know, it was used in the Dharma talk, you know. So you really don't know where you are. So you can get scared. And you turning back, you see. Then you wait to die too. So like it's in Zen training, the same thing, you know. You're always looking for some kind of sign, how much, where am I? You still do knowing mind, and seeking mind. So anyway, you got that, as soon as your seeking mind that you get deluded (laughter).

So you see that, you know, that if you drive highway, you know, from Windsor to Canada, you know, all written down, merits and demerits, how many points you can lose if you speed. So it's in Zen Dharma talks, we say that, so if you retreat, you know, you may be 1/3 away from the goal or the end of the desert, or you're halfway through. But the thing is, dead or alive, you have to keep going once you set out, you see.

So with such determination, that's, so it's said in, like of course in desert, you never know where you are. Even, you know, until you are very close, but still you don't know. So it says, sometimes, if it is 99% you still don't know where you are.

Now, it's this Xuan Zang, Xuan Zang, he set out without a caravan. What he did was, before he set out, it's, of course it's the Chinese were tightly controlled so he had to get permission. But he didn't get permitted, he just escaped. But he had a team of his disciples travelling with him. I think 12 of them or something like that. You know, before, to prepare for the journey, he inquired and he visited some Indian monks who were active around in China in this time. One of them, one Indian monk he visited in China was, he was an ailing old monk. So to get instructions how to travel and what was ahead and all that.

So when this Indian monk heard that he was going to take such arduous and risky journey, he was so touched but then Xuan Zang, he said, you know his travel time is very close. But this Indian monk, you know, he was so far away from his fatherland. And he was left all alone, there was no one attending upon him. He was, you know, dying alone there. So he had to postpone his travel plans and he decided well, I have to take care of him. So he stayed and took care of him for a month until he passed away.

So the Indian monk was so grateful, so he took out his Heart Sutra. He had a Sanskrit version of Heart Sutra. So Xuan Zung was learning something Sanskrit, so he took this with him that what he had. And he had a bag when he left India. He carried it all the way from India to China. So this is the only thing I can give to you, so you keep it. So Xuan Zung was so happy, you know, to get it, if that's all he was [intended?], you know, original Sanskrit manuscript.

So he recited it over and over again and he memorized it right away. Later on, of course, he translated along with Diamond Sutra. So that was his, like, mantra, you know. Reciting it and, "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha," you know, as a traveller.

Actually all his disciples died. He was the only one who made it back. And many people just perished, you know. Even you get bite from poisonous snake, there's no treatment. You just die. Now this, away from Dunhuang, about 12 miles, they say, scholars say, I have never been there before. What I'm saying is all from what I read and, you know, the books and there there's, it's called Dunhuang cave, which is non-prefecture, which is 12 miles away in southeast, the area is

called Mogao, which is Chinese. Mogao means, it's a kind of Buddhist word, it means "peerless or unequalled." It's the same as Amitabha. Amitabha is one of the epithets of Buddha, and also, it's used in Heart Sutra, Amitabha Sambodhi. "Unequalled, higher."

So it's Magao cave. So it's about, it's a mile long. I think soapstone kind of cliffs, you know. It drops about 10 feet down to the riverbed. There in, anywhere from 4th century until 14th century, that was about 1000 years. But by mid-7th century, the whole rock face became honeycombed with small grottos. They are galleries, you see. There, generation after generation it's, you know, carvers, and stonemasons, and painters, and the whole team working. There's more than 800 grottos. In each grotto they carved and painted and, it's such a work, you know. Devoting their lives, you know. And of course they were sponsored, all these caravan patrons, you see. So it's like one of the wonders, one of the marvels of the world, you see.

And there, of course, it's so many Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. Not just Buddhism. You know, along the Silk Road, eventually, well you see, you know, Toronto is a cosmopolitan city. But it was a cosmopolitan culture blossoming along the Silk Road. And many Zoroastrianism, and Manichaeism, Christianity, and many Islams, you see. But of course, Buddhism was the dominant religion.

So there in these caves, there, you know, grottos, you know, it's one thousand Buddhas, but each one is all different. You know, different skins and different dress and different customs, you know. So it created, you can clearly see, this cosmopolitan influence, you see. Hindus, of course Hinduism, they were all together there.

Anyway, my point is this Buddhist pilgrims, ... of course merchants, they were, the valuables, the jewels were their trading items, you see. Like gold or ceramics or, you know, horses. But to these monks, much more than these ceramics, and gold, and, you know, silk and all that thing, it's Buddhism. So Buddhism was the most valuable thing, well worth even risking their entire life.

And that's how Buddhism was transplanted in China, eventually Korea and Japan. Now Buddhism is being transplanted in the West. But how, like pioneers, like, how we can make religion so valuable in our life that it's well worth giving our life to? Devoting our entire life to? So that is very important. That kind of attitude and devotion and fervour, which can come up. And the other thing is cosmopolitanism. We can learn from, you know, Silk Road culture. Whether Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or flying Acharas, everyone has a role there, you see, in establishing and creating new Buddhist culture.

And, as you know, for the last three years, more than three years now, I have been trying to take a foothold or toehold in New York City. So this last time, I had an eye on this property on West

54th Street, between 9th and 10th. And I visited the place 8 or 9 times. I would go in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes at night. You know, sometimes the crowd changed, how, you know, what kind of place is this. And also I would take different trains to get there, you see. The train close to that, and then another train going to Columbus Circle, and then, you know, [unclear], street one block this way and then one short block. And it was a time of World Cups, you know, everybody was watching World Cups.

But you see, say people coming to temple, say at this location, then either way they have to go through several blocks. So three blocks or four blocks or five blocks, depending on what train they take. And then, I mean it's such a densely populated area, you see. It's shops and after shops, and they, of course, they competed with each other fearlessly. And they have some hooks, you don't, well you just, they grab you (laughter).

So there is, of course, so many restaurants, it's all kinds of interests. You name it, it's there. And then drinking places. And then, you know, of course, clothing stores and shoes, and you name it. And then all kinds of shops, also [unclear...]. And then some kind of new age shop. It's very small, but if you go there and, what the shop is called? I think the shop is called, yeah I think called Samsara, actually (laughter). It's supposed to be, it's supposed to be a kind of Buddhist store, but run by a occultist. And then they have, of course, Catholic statues, Saint Mary and all that. And then a whole range of things. It's very tiny, you know. I mean it's expensive. And then they have a little book section, you know. But I didn't see any Buddhist, but some yoga and something, and then also how to make you rich, you know (laughter). So it's anything books. And then as if to compete with that, just turning around the corner there's a Catholic supplies store. The holy families are all there (laughter).

So now I think about, you know, so if people are getting off, you know, the train and trying to come to temple, you have to go through all these shops, you see. And also, you know, I get all this, depending on which area that I went, there's a plaza, you know. It's bustling with people, you know. Every, people, you know, people dating and holding each other and, you know, like Hindu gods, you know (laughter). And laughing and, you know. And it's just full of young people.

So, you know, you can see that someone coming to temple, you know, going through this like almost going through, you know, Taklamakan desert. And, you know, all these illusions, you see. Anyone, you can say that you have to survive all this to reach the temple (laughter). So you need, like Xuan Zang, you need a little mantra. You know, "Gate, gate, paragate, ..." (laughter). Maybe [unclear]'s enough. Maybe a big glass of cold water should help me, you know.

So, you know, it would be very difficult to arrive at the temple. Well if you arrive at temple, you're quite a success (laughter). You know, also it would be difficult to arrive intact, you see. What do you think?

So unless you have this, like Xuan Zang's determination, you see. Like not this, not this, something, they say, the Indian word is "neti, neti." Not this, not this. What do you say? Or can you make Buddhism so important, so valuable. Otherwise we would not be able to survive, right? Priests like us. (laughter)

Teacher: Samu Sunim

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Every day is a good day, right? (laughter)

I'd like you to keep your practice until the very end, even beyond your bed, you know. So keeping your practice faithfully until the very end itself becomes practice.

In Korea, where I grew up and trained, they followed Mahayana tradition, so they do this three month retreat in summer and in winter. And three month retreat in summer goes all the way back to the Buddha's time. It's called Gyeolje. Rainy season, so sometimes called rain retreat. And in winter, of course they call it snow retreat. That's in the North.

So during these three summer months, the 15th of the fourth moon through 15th of the seventh moon according to lunar calendar. So when the 15th day arrives, that's usually, according to our calendar here, either the end of August or in early September. It depends upon, it varies each year, and the monks who have been doing this three month retreat, you know, they become each, you know, as you, some of you say, ready make plans what you would do when you get home (laughter). You know, sometimes monks do, you know, where they would go and traveling, you see. So their mind is already gone, you see. Not here in training.

But some other monks, you cannot tell from looking at them, this guy would be gone by early in the morning. Because it's up in the mountains and then as soon as past midnight, some of them would be gone, you see. Under moonlight, because they have to climb down the mountain to catch the first boat, you see. Country boats comes only, you know, so rarely you see.

And, but while these other monks, you cannot really tell this guy would be gone or traveling. They would, you know, it's summertime after rain, you know, the weeds grow very fast so the

yard could be covered with weeds if you don't weed them. So he would be, you would find him pulling the weeds. And one other monk, I saw it, you know, as they were traveling, visiting other temples, then some other traveling monks would come and visit this, the temple where they trained, too. So he would go and, guest quarters, he found that a couple of packs were missing, you know. So skillfully he would make packs, you know, and put it on. So that the traveling monks would come and hang up their tote bags or something like that.

So when you see such a person, this person would belong wherever he goes. And while other monks, whose minds (are) already gone, wherever they go they would not belong. They would think about the next thing.

I did, twenty or thirty years ago, I did travel. Not so much in Canada. In Canada I have never been, you know, west of Windsor, you know. Windsor I go frequently, driving to Chicago. And I did travel to east side, you know, Ottawa and all that. Quebec and...but I traveled quite a bit in US. You know, before we found Chicago temple, that was 1992, I think it must have been 1989. Haju may remember. Haju's ex-husband and one other person, we travelled to Chicago. And, I forgot what was the reason. We had, you know, we wanted to see the city. And, because we were already in Ann Arbor at that time, or we visited Ann Arbor. And, do you remember that? You were not there.

(I remember you going.)

Uh huh.

(You gave a talk, when mountains and rivers...)

Hm. But whenever we travel, my preoccupation is on, not sightseeing, but always visit Buddhist temples. How they are doing. And so, we would usually call them and if it is okay, we could visit. And sometimes there was no answer. But then we would go anyway. You know, I wanted to go and see even from outside. So this [Vietnamese/Chinese?] temple, so we went there and it just rained and stopped, and then we saw the, it's just like a small townhouse, something like that. And we rang the doorbell and waited, if somebody's inside. I think it was actually Sunday. And then soon, you know, when we looked up, we were looking down and when we looked up, three heads were poking out from the windows upstairs, you know. They were all three young fellows, and then when they saw us they ran down and opened the door and then, you know, welcomed us. And it was Sunday and they were making the, you know, painting and, you know, scraping the things, trying to make the place ready. And then I learned there is, a little, big monk is coming, you know, from the town, you know, to lead the community there. So there, the all lay people, you know. I mean it's, on Sundays, and then I'm with the youngsters, they would go and

play but, you know, they were working very hard, you know. I was very impressed. They were very kind and they were happy that we took trouble to come and visit them.

And then, after that we visited quite a few. And then we visited a Thai temple. Now it's a huge temple. I think they bought a schoolhouse on the city limit and they raised so much money, a couple million, and then build even huge, like, theatre [unclear] and performing centre, inside the temple. Or on the, you know, it's a ten acre, you know, schoolhouse they bought. But at the time, it was, it was a pretty big building actually in somewhere downtown in Chicago.

And then I wanted to greet the abbot or head monk. And then, he didn't speak much English, but finally understood, and so they took me down to the basement. So maybe I thought they didn't understand what I'm talking about. But downstairs they had this printing press, and there the abbot was, you know. Supervising printing a newsletter in Thai language, you see. And, for their congregation. So I was very impressed.

Of course, then when I found our temples, you know, first this Toronto temple and Ann Arbor temple. And then when I went Ann Arbor, you know, I lived there for a while. And what is now, there's the shed there, which you now use as storage for your big yard shed, right? And then in front of that, that part was dumped. There was a lot of broken glasses and things like that. That's the, I suppose first things I cleaned. Manual actually. And then I found this, an old bottle which says something like 1821 or something like that, very old bottle. And I [treasured?] it, I don't know where I put it but... (laughter)

So then, of course, Chicago, then for a while if I go to Chicago temple I check around, often windows because winter's gone, it has to be aired and I had a lot of problems, moisture problems, you know. Toan Sunim, we were talking about the other day, you know, the Buddha Hall there, you know, entering the right hand side, I think over a period of three years he came [unclear], because the moisture problem. The walls were peeling off, you see. And some in like, you know, the room upstairs here. And of course if I go to Mexico temple, you know, kind of, I worry about Mexico temple, how it is maintained and what is the possibility of, you know, it's also, it's a very small temple. If you have compared to, you know, Chicago and Toronto, Ann Arbor. These temples are like palaces.

So anyway, the message is, my message is, you know, wherever you go, you know, this is the training here. How to stay with your practice, basically until the very end. And wherever you go you develop deep feelings. You can also see when visiting monks from Korea and from other countries. See I always go and feel I want to find out how they build the temples. What's important, and how they maintain and care for them, and how they build, you know, Sangha. Sometimes they just come and stay overnight and just go away, don't ask any questions. So you develop intimate feelings.

So something like this is, in the hills full of flowers, one is looking for flowers. In moonlight, one is looking for the moon. So it's, wherever you go, everything's always available. So that's called, you are the master wherever you are. Then if you become the master wherever you go, then wherever you are, things reveal as truly as they are.

And now, it's not your temple or my temple. And these, there was ill person, he was well known monk who passed away roughly 5 years ago now. And his whole family and his relatives, including some of their servants, 45, 45 members of their family in three generations, they all became monks or nuns. It's a well known story in Korean Buddhism. And his mother wanted to join the monastic community. So he was young and he had a younger sister so he felt obliged to do something. So he joined a Sangha when he was really young. So anyway, even though he was young, growing up his father became monk, his mother and sister, so then, anyway, even by hearsay he learned a lot about Buddhism, even though he was young. And although he heard stories that his father [famously?] [unclear] that he joined a Sangha so late or advanced in his age. So then he thought, well he has a great advantage since he's young. And so he wanted to train quickly then, become great monk, you know. So when he was 17 and, he thought meditation is good, you know. So, would got all the ingredients, you see. So, you know, he didn't want to, like, you know, someone looking for flowers while living, you know in the hills full of flowers or looking for moon in moonlight. So somehow, he was young, but he thought he's got everything, you see.

And meditation is good. So through meditation you develop all the qualities, you see. So you look within, you don't look without for your treasures. So, and then even in meditation, not just an ordinary meditation group, you know, he wanted to be with someone who are well experienced. So he learned that some monks who were well advanced in their training, they formed their own group. So, and then they go to a remote mountain to do their own, you know, training. Like it's, that's really, our Yongmaeng Jeongjin is, they don't call it Yongmaeng Jeongjin even. What they understand by Yongmaeng Jeongjin is 24 hours you don't lie down, you know. So he thought that would be great.

So, and he visited them, he begged to be admitted. So first he was refused several times, but he's really insistant with them, so finally he was admitted. And then he did it, after 3 days he would rather die than doing this thing, you know. He could not sit anymore. But he didn't want to run away, you know. That would be awful thing, you know. Failure.

So finally he made repentance and, I just cannot go with you, I cannot. But if you allow me to stay, I would do everything, you know. I would cook for you, wash your clothes, sweep the yard, and, you know, build the firewood, and I'd be very busy, you know, but just if you keep me. So they said okay. So he was very busy, you know, cooking, and he was happy all the time. You know, cooking and fetching water and making firewood and all that.

So eventually he would never retrogress from the path he chose. So, and he burned actually four fingers to keep his vow, you see. So indeed he was trained well. He was to become a great monk. But I don't like you to burn your fingers. You can do prostrations (laughter).

So that means, this is one story that's told. You know, even person of interior capacity, there are ways for them to train and to become respectable and all that, you see. So, then if you look around there are always ways you can cope with. And there's this, Haemin Sunim, eventually he goes to become head, spiritual head of Jogye order. So he allowed lay people. Some monks, they did not allow lay people, so he had quite a few followings. You know, ladies who retired, you see. Some ladies, you know, in the olden times, you know, they become subject to their husband. And then when the husband is gone, they are happy to see they are gone finally (laughter). One woman said when she came and this Ullambana service, well the other Korean, once I had some Korean congregation and the other women they would list, you know, on their memorial tablet, you know, first their husbands and their parents and all these, you know, people who had gone ahead of her. But she not do anything, you know, so I was curious, why you are? "What? I was so happy when he finally go!" (laughter)

Anyway, so then they become subject to, you know, their children, you see. And then finally when children, they get married and all that, then they are finally free. You know, this could be in their sixties or seventies, you see. And then they can, you know, go off and do whatever they want. But they would love to come to temple and live in, you know, listening to bird songs and running brooks and all that. So feel so free and happy.

So, one day, it was summer, it's, all these weeds were growing. So Haemin Sunim went to, well that's [unclear Korean], means it's community work. When we say [unclear] we say even the dead arise to join (laughter). Because everyone has to participate and called to, you know, share the work. And so, he said, you know, there's one lady that's missing. So inquired, and then he was told she's ill, you know, and lying down. So he visited her and, I'm really ill, sick. Yes, I'm really sick. Which part of your body is sick? And she said here. Then bring unailing part of your body, you see (laughter). And she didn't like it. She's sick, you know. Then she think about it, so anyway she, finally she made it out and she felt fine.

So you can do that, you know. And then, well, since [unclear] was famous, she would not make any exception to anybody at all. Even, you know, one woman, she would demand, you know, everybody has to do at least 1000 or 3000 prostrations. That's a lot, I mean it usually takes a hell of a lot of [unclear] (laughter).

So they would come out, these old ladies, they would come out, oh my back hurts, my legs are not, you know, used to be the one I had [unclear] and this. No, you have to do it.

So later he made remarks, you know, these ladies who complained about their weak legs and all that, they were the best ones who did prostrations (laughter). So even one is a little laming, you know, and she, you know, under such circumstances somehow she had to learn to do prostrations, given her predicament. And she did it, you see. And then we say we saw nobody dying of doing prostrations (laughter).

So please keep your practice until the very end and do your utmost.