

*From a dharma talk by Grazyna Perl JDPSN
at the Paris Zen Center*

These days many people are concerned about freedom, but their idea of freedom is not so clear. Today I would like to talk about true freedom or what we call in Zen, inner freedom. Often people say: "I am free! I do things in this way, which is just the way I like to do them." Other people say: "I am free. So I do things in another way, which is just the way I like to do them." Is that true freedom? No! As soon as we say: "I must do this because I like it," that is not freedom, because we are being controlled by our likes and dislikes. Of course we have our preferences. That is not good, and not bad, it's just the way it is. Inner freedom, however, means that we do not have to follow our preferences.

I recall a story of an event which took place at Providence Zen Center in the seventies. This was a time when many young "hippies" were interested in Zen. One day Zen Master Seung Sahn ran into one of these long haired young men in the hall and said, "Your hair is too long. You have to cut it." The man replied, "Of course, sir." At that moment Zen Master Seung Sahn started to laugh and said, "Wonderful! Now you can keep your hair." In the seventies long hair was very important, but for that young man there was no hindrance. He could keep his hair or he could cut it. Either way, it was fine—no problem. True inner freedom means that we can do anything.

Next important point is: Why do we do the things we do? Many times people will say, "Me, I am free. I want to do this, and I do not want to do that." But, again, that's

just following our desire. True inner freedom is finally not for us. Zen practice means that our action, our speech, our enlightenment, our freedom—all are for others. If it helps someone that I cut my hair, then I will cut my hair. I have short hair, so I hope that everyone is happy.

[Suddenly someone in the audience said:] "I am not happy, because I have long hair."

Then cut your hair, and you will be free.

Question: What is enlightenment and what is its purpose?

Perl PSN: You want to know what is enlightenment? Why don't you ask the sky? Look, it's already complete. It already understands its job. Only human beings don't. That's why they want philosophy and enlightenment, but they don't want practice too much. In true enlightenment there is no enlightenment. Only for others. Only: how can I help? You must understand your correct function, your correct job. What are you? Why are you here?

In one of our chants it says: Become Buddha, become dharma, become sangha. Buddha means awaken. Dharma means wisdom. Sangha means compassion. Many here understand that already, but you must make one more step. You must attain that.

Then what is the true meaning of enlightenment? Tell me, tell me!!!

The sky is blue; the water flows to the ocean.

