

If You Hold the Eye's Opinion, You Get Eye Suffering

Zen Master Dae Bong on Sutra Study and Zen

Excerpt from a dharma talk during Winter Kyol Che 2014–2015 at Mu Sang Sa Temple

Student: How do I make Buddhist studies balance with my practice? Could it become a hindrance, if I am going to prepare to go to school?

Zen Master Dae Bong: When you are studying, just study. That's all. The sutras are written to be meditation. That's why they are chanted. If you are paying attention, they become meditation themselves.

I don't read the sutras often, but for example, the sutras read something like this:

"If you hold the eye's opinion, you get eye suffering. If you hold the ear's opinion, you get ear suffering. If you hold the nose's opinion, you get nose suffering. If you hold the mouth's opinion, you get mouth suffering. If you hold the body's opinion, you get body suffering. If you hold the mind's opinion, you get mind suffering. If you put down the eye's opinion, then correct eye appears. If you put down the ear's opinion, then the correct ear appears."

That is how Buddha teaches. If you were to study classical Western music from Mozart or Beethoven, they come up with an interesting theme, a melody. Then they repeat it three or four times. Then they make variations on it. Then they repeat it again, and then finish. Back then, nobody had a tape recorder, nobody had an iPod, so maybe they were never going to hear it again. So the composers repeat it, repeat it, repeat it, do some interesting variations and repeat it, repeat it, repeat it. Then it's in your consciousness. You don't think about other things.

You become one with the music.

It is the same with the sutras. When I started reading the sutras, I was amazed. There are six sense realms. So Buddha teaches about each one. Then he changes something, and teaches about each one. Then he changes again, and teaches about each one. After a while, you are on a ride somewhere, and it's not where your desire, anger and ignorance mind takes you. It's taking you into "clear," a clear view of the universe. This clear view is already the path to enlightenment, the road to enlightenment. So when you are reading, just read. Look at it as music and pay attention. Just do it. Otherwise, as Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, "The book is reading you." That's all. You don't need to think about it. That is why the sutras are chanted over and over.

We chant the Heart Sutra in Korean and English every day, every day, every day, and I have done it now for 38 years, twice a day. But still sometimes when we are chanting the Heart Sutra, I feel, "Wow! What the sutra says is amazing." It's so much better than some crap on television about somebody and somebody else. So you are lucky: instead of watching soap operas and gossiping with your friends about your relationships, you are reading the sutras over and over and over again! You don't need to think about it. Then it will start to hit you if you pay attention, OK? Then you add that to correct bowing, chanting and sitting, and *Boom!* Get enlightenment. OK? So don't spend a lot of time thinking in school. Just do it. ♦

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Kyol Che Is Three Great Things

Zen Master Dae Bong

Excerpt from the Hae Jae dharma talk at Mu Sang Sa Temple, Winter Kyol Che 2013–2014

Zen Master Seung Sahn always taught that Kyol Che is three things. First, Kyol Che is a dry cleaning machine. Our brain and body are the number-one best computer in the world but they have lots of dust. Desire, anger and ignorance dust; also many opinions dust. So during retreat we only go straight don't know. We use this "don't-know"

soap, put down our opinions, desire, anger and ignorance, only follow the situation together and keep a big question, just don't-know mind. Then this don't-know soap is cleaning, cleaning, cleaning our consciousness. After Kyol Che our consciousness is much cleaner. We can keep the correct situation, correct function and correct relationship

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peared. “Ahhhhh, day number three. There are 87 more days to go. Let’s see, 87 days times 1,000 bows, that’s eighty seven THOUSAND more bows to do! I can’t do that! Not possible!” Then the opposite mind appeared. “I can do it. I have sat so many long retreats and lived in Zen centers for a long time. I can do it! No, I can’t do it. I can do it! No, I can’t do it! I can! I can’t!” Then at some point, “I can” and “I can’t” disappeared. What appeared was “don’t know if this is possible or not but . . . this bow.” Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up.

So, “don’t know” plus action is human being’s function. When we return to this moment, we also return to the realm of name and form. Here we can use name and form in a clear and helpful way, rather than name and form pulling us around and around. That even means using this “I.” Attachment to “I” results in “I like” and “I don’t like.” Using this “I” results in “How may I help?” Every moment. Every breath. How may I help? The name for that is Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. And that is a thousand-year treasure for the whole universe.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

I is universe, universe is I. If you get stuck here, then you lose your life.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Kyol Che Is Three Great Things *(Continued from page 11)*

moment to moment. So Kyol Che is a big dry cleaning machine.

Second, Kyol Che is a dharma gasoline station. Our life has energy. This is our karma energy. We run on our karma gasoline. But karma means I, my, me. When you put down I, my, me, then you and the universe become one. Then dharma energy, universal energy, comes into you. So when we do Kyol Che together, we put down my opinion, my situation, my condition. Then the correct opinion, correct situation, correct condition appears. We and the universe are one, and then dharma gasoline comes in. So you get dharma energy. Dharma energy means being in harmony with the universe; you can follow the correct way moment to moment. So we come to Kyol Che with lots of karma gasoline. We take out this karma gasoline, then dharma gasoline comes in. So Kyol Che is also a dharma gasoline station.

No I, no universe. Attach to this point, then you will fall into emptiness and become a rock.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

I is I. Universe is universe. This is a good idea, but the Buddhas and bodhisattvas don’t believe it and turn away. The cries of this universe become louder and louder.

So, can any of these statements help right now in this moment?

KATZ!

May I help you? ♦

Jason Quinn JDPSN grew up in California and began practicing with the Kwan Um School in 1997, with the Dharma Sound Zen Center in Seattle. In 1999 he moved to the Providence Zen Center (PZC) where he held various staff positions. He trained as a monk for nine years, during which time he sat many long summer and winter retreats, and participated in retreats around the world, including in Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Mexico. In 2008 Jason relocated to Berkeley, California, where he became abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center and returned to lay life. He spent a brief time back at PZC (2012–2013) to serve as abbot, and then he returned to California. He now lives in Santa Clara with his wife and son and leads the Empty Gate Zen Center’s Santa Clara group with Bodhisattva Teacher Juan Velasco. He is currently the vice abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley.

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Next, many people in this world are hungry. There are two kinds of hungry people: body hungry and mind hungry. Body hungry people cannot get enough food, so then they starve and die. They have suffering but they do not make so much suffering for others. Mind hungry people have enough but want more: “I want more, I want more.” So mind hungry people have suffering but also make much suffering for others. When we come to Kyol Che, we attain dharma, then when we go home we make dharma food, all kinds of great dharma food, which we give to others and take away their mind hunger. This is how we make world peace. So, Kyol Che is a dharma food factory.

So please come and sit Kyol Che, clean your consciousness, get dharma gasoline, dharma energy, then in your life make dharma food, give to others, take away their mind hunger, and take away this world’s suffering. That is our practice and our job. ♦