



## Right Mindfulness

Zen Master Dae Kwan

In Hong Kong we have a retreat center, Gak Su Temple, which is situated on the beautiful Lantau Island in a historic area called Luk Wu (Deer Pond). Luk Wu has a practicing history of more than 130 years, and many great Chinese monks have practiced and gotten enlightenment here. The well-known Chinese monk, Ven. Xu Yun (Empty Cloud), once led a retreat in this area.

This past winter we held a three-month Kyol Che retreat in Gak Su Temple. One day during the formal meal, I heard some chanting from a nearby temple. As soon as I heard the chanting, I got a headache. When this strong headache appeared, some past experiences with this temple also appeared in my mind. At that time I asked myself a few questions: Why do you let this sound of the chanting control you? Why do you give power to this chanting? What is this? As soon as I asked these questions, the headache disappeared. I was able to come back to this moment and continue the formal meal, and at the same time listen to the sound of the chanting as it came without any emotions!

Right mindfulness in Chinese is 正念. The first part, 正, means “right” and the second, 念, means “mindfulness.” The second character is itself made up of two characters: 今 means “now” or “present.” And 心 means “mind” or “heart.” So right mindfulness means how to correctly pay attention to this moment!

Zen practice is not only focused on our experience with the body and the mind; it is also about how we keep a clear mind, wide like space, and how we use this clear mind like the tip of a needle, moment to moment. This is similar to sewing. If one makes a small mistake when sewing a straight line, the entire garment would not be correct. It is the same with our practice. When one has right mindfulness, one will not be deluded or chase after what is appearing and disappearing in front of us.

So keeping big questions—such as “What am I?” or “What is this? Only don’t know . . .”—without any labeling will help us return to who we really are and not who we think we are! You can try this when you have a headache or any emotions or thinking. Then this mind by itself will be able to pay attention to what you are doing right now without any hindrance, without making pure or not pure, happy or sad, indulgence or rejection. This is how we use right mindfulness to sew our mind. This is the Zen path of not repeating the habit of our karma. We can follow and act, moment to moment, according to correct situation, correct relationship and correct function.

One of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teachings that can help us attain don’t know, or a clear mind, is before-thinking. Don’t-know mind is a direct and powerful tool that opens up the inner treasures of the eightfold path in order to help ourselves and this suffering world!



## Right Meditation

Andrzej Stec JDPSN

Lord Buddha taught that there are two ways to meditate: like a dog or like a lion. If you throw a stick at a dog, he will chase after the stick; but if you throw a stick at a lion, the lion will chase after you. You can throw as many sticks as you like at a dog, but at a lion, only one.

—*Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

There are many kinds of meditation, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. For example, lately “mindfulness meditation” is a buzzword. From Silicon Valley to inner-city elementary schools, everyone tries to become more mindful. Definitely there is a benefit to being mindful of the present moment, but is it the right meditation for you? Is that what you want?

Before we choose to practice some form of meditation, it is good to ask ourselves three questions: Why? What? and How?

### Why?

“Why?” is the most important question, a real time saver. Why do I want to meditate? Meditation takes time, so it’s better not to waste time on something that won’t give us the result we are looking for. The results depend entirely on our motivation. Different motivations create different results.

### What?

When the “why?” is clear the next step is to match our aspirations with the method. What meditation do I need to practice to achieve that result?

If you want to become more calm and feel better in this lifetime, simple mindfulness meditation will do. However, this is not a Buddhist meditation.

Buddhist meditation is not separated from the Buddhist view. Buddha taught that correct meditation is the most important thing you can do to attain liberation. In Buddhism we have three vehicles, which culminate in three results. We can aspire to become an arhat, a bodhisattva or a buddha. For each aspiration, a different kind of meditation needs to be practiced. If you want to become an arhat, meditation in the Theravada tradition is a good choice because it will enable you to remove the cause of rebirth in samsara. If you want to progress on the bodhisattva path, practicing meditation in the Mahayana tradition will enhance your ability to help beings. You cannot become a bodhisattva if you practice in the Theravada tradition, nor can you become an arhat if you practice in the Mahayana tradition. Both traditions offer gradual progress, through the four stages to become an arhat, and through the ten stages to become

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