

# Everything Becomes Buddha

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From a dharma talk given during the Summer Kyol Che at Warsaw Zen Center on September 3, 2008.

As you just heard, my name is Muchak. When I got five precepts, I received this name, which consists of *mu*, meaning “no”, and *chak*, meaning “attachment.” I was proud of my name. At that time I checked very much: I checked myself and I checked others. One teacher called me “Checking Woman.” Even still, I checked myself.

I’m not so much attached to money, and not so much attached to sleep, or sex, or fame. I checked myself, and thought, “I’ve got not so much attachment.” I thought I could give up everything, like this [*snaps fingers*]. And so I thought, this name is really good for me.

And then I went to Korea and met a very strong Buddhist woman. She asked me, “What is your Buddhist name?” I said “Muchak” and she immediately knew the meaning. Then she told me, “Your master must have reasons to give you this name.” I never thought of it from this viewpoint. So my ego got hurt.

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After a while I noticed my mistake. There was so much “I.” “I can do this, I know this, I can . . .” Everything I, I, I, so big. Even if we give away our life and the whole world, if we keep hold of our “I” then nothing happens.

Buddha said once that when we look closely, all the origins or roots of our suffering come from this “I.” We have something to protect, to be nourished, and to be praised. From that come the so-called five poisons: pride, jealousy, desire, hatred, ignorance.

But what is this “I”? Who am I? To find out what this is we come here together. Once during a summer retreat in America, in Providence, I sat and I got really lost in huge mountains of memories. You already know what it is like: you have lots of memories, and I saw lots of people whom I saw before, whom I loved, whom I hated, with whom I fought. Places I had been to, and wonderful experiences and bad experiences—all this stuff.

But somehow I could manage to come back to this moment where I was sitting. So I looked at the floor and suddenly a question appeared to me: “This person, this person in my memories, is it still me? Is it still me who loved this person and hated that person, who did this and that?” And I must say “No.” I was no longer this person. I could not say, “This is I, this is me.”

In this way I could see that this very person who asked this question, whether this person is me or not, soon this person will also not be me. So I somehow got into a panic. Then “What am I? Where is this I?” I was kind of desperate to look and find, to search . . . There was no answer.

Now on this day there was an interview. The teacher rang the bell and I went into the interview room. As soon as I bowed and took a seat, Zen Master Dae Kwang (then called Do An JDPSN) asked me “WHO ARE YOU!”

And all of a sudden I had to cry, I had to cry hard tears. There was no way to find out. After some time Dae Kwang Sunim told me “shhhh” and then said, “Listen!” And outside at that very moment a bird was singing. I was so happy! I was so sad and at that moment Dae Kwang told me, “Listen!” And then he said, “That’s all.”

The rest of that retreat I spent with hearing. Each and every sound I heard was wonderful. The wind, birds, doors banging constantly. There was only this sound, this wonderful sound . . . It’s not only hearing. When we are really stuck, when we don’t know, when we have this “Don’t Know” completely, then everything—whatever you hear, whatever you see, whatever you touch—everything becomes Buddha. Everything is like what it is. There is nothing to add, nothing to take away. Everything is OK.

So we sit. Many of you sat already the whole retreat, and some of us just for several weeks. We sit, looking, perceiving how the thoughts are coming, going, coming, going. This is actually all that we are doing. Our work during sitting time is to sit and watch as thoughts are coming and going. And don’t touch this; then the thought itself is Buddha.

There is no good thinking and bad thinking. There are thoughts. We don’t welcome them, but we don’t reject them. And so we sit, straight but relaxed. We just naturally—without manipulation, just relaxed—we watch. But the thinking, the sounds that we perceive are not that important. Our minds just reflect these things, but they come and go.

But one thing is important: we stay awake, aware of what is coming, what arises. And each thing we let go. This awakening from moment to moment is very important. In this way we can be master of our house. We don’t get controlled by others or by our mind.

So we don’t need to keep saying, “How may I help you”—all this is bullshit. This is only speech. If we, from moment to moment, stay awake, and be aware of what is coming, that is already a big help. So I hope we keep clear mind from moment to moment, save ourselves from suffering, and at the same time save others. Thank you. ♦