

True Practitioner

During a dharma talk at the New York Zen Center, one Korean monk shared that now Vipassana is getting more and more popular in Korea. And at the same time, Zen Buddhism is receiving lots of criticism.

Monk: Zen Master Dae Kwan, you've practiced in Thailand before. How do you see this?

Zen Master Dae Kwan: True practitioners never criticize other traditions that are different from their own. People who do not practice in their mind only see the differences. Methods are like finger-pointing to our original mind, that's all.

Monk: So why are they fighting?

Zen Master: Because they are not practicing! The assembly all laughed.

Commentary:

After I joined the Zen tradition, Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to visit my teacher, Phra Ajahn Pongsak in Chiangmai, Thailand. When they met, they bowed to each other as if they were meeting good friends. Phra Ajahn told Zen Master: "If I were younger I would also like to learn and practice Zen. I am very happy that Sudharma* is studying with you." When we were moving into the bungalow, Zen Master Seung Sahn asked, "This place is very beautiful, but why no electricity?" Then I

told him this forest was far from the village and was in a jungle, so we wanted to keep it in its natural state, without electricity. Zen Master seemed unhappy with my answer. When we all settled down, Zen Master Seung Sahn went to see Phra Ajahn again; they met outside Phra Ajahn's hut. Zen Master asked, "Can I see your hut?" Then he went inside. After a few seconds, he came out and said, "Your hut has nothing inside. You are a true monk. Your dharma is high, my dharma is low! No electricity is very good!" Everybody laughed.

These two great teachers are practitioners of the Buddha Way. They only see the nice things about each other and respect each other. This is a real-life example for us!

Buddha used different skillful means only to help free us from suffering and help us wake up to our great love and wisdom, so that we would help each other rather than argue or fight with each other.

*Pali name of Zen Master Dae Kwan when she was a *maechi* in Thailand.

From <http://www.subong.org.hk/en/content/true-practitioner>.

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Correspondence with a Student

A student wrote to Zen Master Jok Um with questions for a college paper.

Student: What is peace?

Zen Master Jok Um: What are you? If you find your true self, then you find peace.

Student: What is forgiveness?

ZMJU: Don't eat toxic mind food. Greed, hate and delusion poison the mind.

Student: What is compassion?

ZMJU: All sentient beings are your teachers. Perceive their mind-light and be guided by it.

Student: What is the importance of compassion and forgiveness concerning oneself and others around them?

ZMJU: Don't make self and others. Then you see your true nature everywhere.

Student: What methods do you use or teach to help people implement these qualities in their lives?

ZMJU: These qualities only come to life when you find that they already reside in you. Meditation practice is body practice—intentionally making a time and space to be fully with your own nature without being seduced by mind-hindrances helps you anchor in the

mind-ground. Find this mind-ground in simple activities—grooming, folding laundry, cleaning, walking. Things that don't require figuring out can be used as practice anchors throughout the course of the day. This is mind practice. Recognizing the shape of circumstances around you and following its flow is life practice. Eat when hungry; sleep when tired; know how to give and how to receive. Then seeing that all sentient beings are your teachers is student practice. The mind of a student is generous, grateful, curious, engaged, kind, receptive and responsive. Finding a guide for this is very important.

Student: What is the process one goes through to accept forgiveness?

ZMJU: Why would someone reject forgiveness?

Student: How does a community prosper when its citizens have a compassionate and forgiving nature?

ZMJU: Buddha taught that a peaceful heart makes a peaceful person. A peaceful person makes a peaceful family. A peaceful family makes a peaceful village. A peaceful village makes a peaceful country. A peaceful country makes a peaceful world. ♦