

Why Do You Have Two Eyes?

Zen Master Dae Kwan

During formal meals at retreat, students help to serve rice, soup, side dishes and clear water. This is a great practice for everyone because everyone has to keep a clear mind. Those who are serving need to be clear about the serving order. Those who receive food have to be clear about which bowls they are using because each bowl holds a different kind of food.

After the meal, we wash our bowls with hot tea, dry them with a white cloth, and wrap them neatly with a brown cloth. To conclude the formal meal, one by one we carefully line up our bowls with the bowls of the dharma friends in our row. Each row then forms a straight line with their bowls. This is such a wonderful practice.

There is a kong-an that asks why we have two eyes. Many students can easily give a correct answer after a few tries. Unfortunately many of us will treat the answer as a model answer and forget to apply the spirit of the kong-an, which is the actual attainment of the answer. Very often we are happy when we can give a correct answer. Once

we leave the kong-an room we will go back to our old habits. Most of us feel that our practice only applies to the meditation cushion. Our everyday life has nothing to do with the practice.

Attaining “why do we have two eyes” means we are able to observe and reflect the situation. At the same time our action can flow with harmony accordingly. This seeing is not about checking ourselves or others but how we use our two eyes to make harmony with everyone. When you are on a bus and you see an older person, a pregnant lady or a handicapped person, you give your seat to them. When you see that someone is about to fall, you try to help them. When you see some desirable products that you do not need, you look at them and walk away. When you are writing a check, you pay attention to what you are writing on the check. When you are at the airport, you watch out for the boarding time. In this way you are attaining “why do you have two eyes?”

This is how we use our kong-an practice in our everyday life to make a clear life and help each other. ♦

Every Day Is a Good Day

Gye Mun Sunim JDPS

Awakened to the truth of life, one's happiness is not subject to living in good conditions; even when faced with unexpected disaster, pain and suffering do not control us. What matters most is to keep clear, live fully in the present, pay attention moment to moment, just do it.

The eminent teachers of the past said:

*Clinging to the four elements as our body;
Originally there is no-mind till conditions
appear;
Let go of conditions, return to no-mind;
Just like illusion, good fortune and
misfortune come and go.*

Body is formed by the elements of earth, water, fire and air. Mental cognition is created by interactions of various conditions.

Without these various conditions, thinking and feeling will not be produced by mental cognition. In other words, the mental cognition of good or bad is only an illusion created when causes and conditions come together. As the causes and conditions extinguish, the related thinking and feeling also cease.

When we can use this penetrative insight to perceive the illusory nature of all conditions instantaneously, a mis-

fortune will not cause us to wallow in sadness and a fortunate event will not cause us to become elated.

As the last verse said: “Just like illusion, good fortune and misfortune come and go.” Any pair of opposites can be substituted for good fortune and misfortune, for example, big and small, bright and dark, heaven and hell, nirvana and samsara. All creations have the same nature as illusions, and they will ultimately extinguish. This penetrative insight to perceive the human body and mind can also help us to realize that all worldly affairs and material things are no different.

Simply remind yourself: all good things will be gone, feelings of happiness will come to an end, beauty cannot escape death, a hero will soon grow old. Since ancient times, who has not faced death? Just these mindful reflections are enough to make a person see clearly and act correctly, and to face any encounter with a different kind of thinking and feeling.

Humans often sink and get lost in their existing conditions; usually, they do not heed the inevitable creation and extinction of everything in this world; that's just like seeing the honey on the knife blade and not noticing the sharp edge underneath the honey. When the truth of existence is clear, what lifestyle a person chooses is up to the individual to decide. ♦