

We Believe in Our Thinking, We Don't Believe Our Eyes

Myong Hae Sunim JDPS

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Question: Some teachers say that this body does not exist at all.

Myong Hae Sunim JDPS: [*pointing to another student*] Hit him!

Q: OK, I understand, but then the question. I believe I have this body, but maybe that is my problem. And maybe then those teachers are liars. But as long as I think I have this body or even that I am this body, then there is that fear of death, the fear of losing this body.

MHSN: Here is the difference: “I have this body” versus “I am this body.” This is a fundamental difference. If you say “I am this body,” there is a big problem. If you say “I have this body,” you know what to do with it. If you say, “I am this body,” then you have that fear, because if this body disappears, you disappear. Are you really this body?

Q: Now, to be honest, I'm sure I'm this body. Buddhist theory says otherwise. But my strong belief is that I am this body.

MHSN: OK, let's just say that's so. Now look at that. When you were born, what size were you?

Q: Well, I don't know, [*holds hands apart about the size of a baby*] maybe like this.

MHSN: How big are you now?

Q: Like this. [*Stands up.*]

MHSN: How did you get from that small to so big?

Q: I don't know, by itself.

MHSN: By itself? Cannot be!

Q: I did nothing myself.

MHSN: I don't think so. You did. You do it every day.

Q: Eating?

MHSN: Eating. Good. If you didn't eat, you wouldn't grow. So this body is an accumulation of the food you eat. People who eat rice are smaller; those who eat meat are taller. People who follow one diet have one body, eat differently. If you eat a lot, your body will grow very big. You can clearly see that your body has a connection to food. Where does food come from? From the earth. So this is an accumulation of things coming from the earth. You buy a lot of things. Buy a house and load a lot of things inside. And then you say, “It's my stuff.” You don't say, “It's me.”

So here is the problem when you identify that collection of things as yourself. One begins to think in this way, because there's no other experience than those received through the body. If you say, “I believe I am this body,” you are using logic, but not direct experience. Better look straight ahead. Your body is changing. It grew because you ate food. It is just an accumulation of food. That is, if it accumulates, it

belongs to you. You accumulated; you got it from somewhere else; it wasn't you from the beginning. You ate, and it became your body. The same is true with memory. Same with our impressions, or mind. Minds are different in different cultures. Why? The environment is different, the impressions they get are also different. It all accumulates in people's minds, and they are different. These are again accumulations in our minds. Therefore, we have to be careful about who we contact, because it goes into our head. Therefore, even during meditation, we experience that from this, or from this, some memory comes to life. The longer we sit, the deeper the memories appear, the more spam begins to rise to the surface. It's not you; it's your accumulated memory.

Identifying with all this causes us suffering. Because if something happens to that “wealth” we have accumulated, we are scared. If I identify with this stick [*holds up the Zen stick*] the same as with my hand, then if you do something with the stick, I will suffer. And I suffered similarly when I was a kid. I had a toy that I loved very much. My brother had fun with it. He didn't need to touch me for it to hurt. He slammed the toy, and I cried like crazy. Because my identification with that toy was so strong, if anything happened to that toy, I felt like it happened to me.

So identification became a problem. It's not the body that is the problem, and neither is it the tool or toy in your hand, but rather the identification with the body or that tool. A knife in your hand is neither good nor bad. How you use it can be good or bad. Your body belongs to you, but if you identify with it, you become frightened, because we have nothing else in our experience. That's why when we sit down, we start watching: Hmm, logically, maybe I'm not this body; the body belongs to me. Maybe I'm not this mind; the mind belongs to me. But so far as I belong to that mind, I am a slave to that mind. If the mind tells me something, I'm 100 percent sure—hence the suffering. If I suddenly start thinking from either this or that, that he wants to kill me, [*points to a student sitting next to her*] what will happen?

Q: Bad things.

MHSN: Yeah, not-so-good things. My world will be completely different. And something like this is constantly happening in our lives. We see a man and start judging: hmm, he doesn't like me, or maybe he wants to do something for me. But we don't know! But if we start to appreciate, to create something, we create it as a new reality. And we start to act accordingly. We believe in our thinking. We don't believe our eyes. ♦

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