

Transcendental Wisdom Is Useless to You If You Cannot Use It

Dharma Talk in the Tea Room Dobromila, Piešťany, Slovakia on November 26, 2011

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Our teachers taught me, and they also teach Lubor. [*Lubor Kosut is an older dharma teacher and abbot of the Bratislava Zen Center. —Ed.*] I also learn. We still say that we actually have to communicate more with people about what they want to hear, not what we want to tell them. So whatever we are interested in, from the point of view of Buddhism and specifically Zen, feel free to ask. What we will be able to answer, we will answer. What we will not know, maybe we will find a common answer. And in fact, this lecture may lead to a discussion.

I came here for you; take this opportunity. Tomorrow we will have an introduction to Zen practice, where we will try different techniques: how to sit in meditation, how to walk in meditation, how to sing in chanting meditation, and a few other formal practices that we do in Zen, because there is everyday Zen and formal Zen. Formal Zen means that we practice together. This is a common practice. We meet together; we meet at a certain time, in a certain place, and then we have formal chanting or, for example, formal sitting meditation. We have walking meditation, and it is a serious practice, because then a person puts down the self-mind, and their mind becomes bigger. Then we just sit. Even though I don't like it, even if something hurts, everything goes aside and we do what it is, 100 percent. Then, of course, when we finish the formal practice, we try to live what we achieve during this practice, the insights, the wisdom or the stupidity that we sometimes get when we put aside our wisdom, [laughs] so we try to use it in our everyday life, in family, with friends, at work. Our teacher said, "Transcendental wisdom is useless to you if you cannot use it." For example, in discussion with your wife or children or in your work [laughter]. We try to learn why we practice, in order to use it in completely different situations. Whether you go for walks or sit on the bus, cook dinner for your loved ones or for people you hate, it depends on who has what kind of family situation, so you do everything 100 percent.

Our teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, taught us one wonderful piece of wisdom: "Try, try, try for ten thousand years." Then you can't hold on to yourself. Because your self can last a maximum of ninety years, even with antibiotics and all sorts of medical drops, [laughs] but then you will have to leave it behind. But if you have a

clear direction, that clear direction will guide you, not looking at time and space. Then you will find your, as we say, real self, your great self. Our teachers have taught us from the beginning that you are all Buddhas. We just forgot about it. It is a slightly different approach than in Christianity.

I teach at art school, and there are small children coming to me. Once, such a sad boy was sitting unhappily; somehow I couldn't reach him in art class. So I asked him, "What are you so sad for?" And he said, "Yesterday my pastor said I was sinful." Six years old! [laughs] So I explained to him that he should not be sad, that his pastor saw things differently.

So Buddhism teaches us that we are already Buddhas; whether we are sinners or not, we are already Buddhas. And it took a while for our surroundings, society, and education to make us the buddhas that we are: people who are looking for their true selves and their buddhahood. And sometimes it takes us a while to figure it out again and learn not only to figure it out, but also to use it. It's not enough to realize it, but you also have to know how to use it. And use it not only for yourself but for the whole world. Because this world is currently facing quite difficult problems. And it is not just a financial crisis. All human questions, philosophical and spiritual, go to one question. To a question that is very simple and primordial, the question "Who am I?" "Who am I and where am I going?"

Zen teaches us to look for an answer and gives us a methodology for finding an answer to this question. It does not give us a guide or a manual that will say who you are. It does not give you any dogmatic answers that you have to learn and trust. Zen teaches you to find your own answer to this question and learn to use it, as I said. We do not have dogmatic answers about who you are and what your essence is. Because as many as there are of you, there are so many unique answers to this question. The answers do not depend on Zen; they do not depend on the Buddha himself or on Buddhism. Because the Buddha was not a Buddhist, [laughs] just as Christ was not a Christian.

[laughs] And that's why this teaching is so fresh. So here I would also end my introduction to this issue, and now it is time to ask questions. You don't have to be afraid to ask any questions, because there are no silly questions, as we say, there are silly answers. [Audience laughs.] ♦

