

Become an Expert... Or Become a Buddha

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Question: Sometimes I feel complete, and everything is clear, but then at other times I lose that, and no longer understand. What can you say about this?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Being complete is not dependant on your feeling. Everyone is complete, you are all Buddha. Does that help your life? You have everything! I don't have anything that you don't have. Buddha doesn't have anything you don't have. Does hearing that help your life? No? So any understanding, even the most wonderful understanding, cannot help you. You are already complete, but until you realize that for yourself, until you become intimate with that, until you digest that understanding so that it becomes yours, it has no power to help you.

Maybe sometimes it will make a nice feeling: "I am already complete. I am Buddha. Ahhh . . ." But feelings change, so you will not remember that you are complete. Understanding that and attaining that are very different. So practicing is necessary.

Q: How can one be Buddha and not be Buddha?

ZMWB: I ask you, what is Buddha?

Q: I have no idea.

ZMWB: That's correct. That's Buddha.

Q: But what about people who don't know that they don't know?

ZMWB: Those people are the experts. So you have a choice in this life; you can become an expert, or you can not know, and become Buddha. Again this brings us to practicing. No matter what anybody says and no matter how well anything can be explained; it is finally all up to you. The wonderful thing about Buddha's teaching is that Buddha taught us not to accept something just because a wise person or an expert said it. Don't accept something because a holy book says that it's true, or because of tradition. You must find the truth for yourself. Everyone has that capacity. You came to a dharma talk, but no matter how well things are explained and how appealing it may be to you, that alone has no power to change your life. There is a vast gulf between understanding what is being said and actually being able to do it. That's why having a big question is very important. In Buddhism we talk about bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is propensity toward bodhi or enlightenment. Everybody has that. That question is your bodhicitta. That is the power that brought you here.

Bodhicitta is called the seed of enlightenment by some Buddhist scholars, so your seed has already sprouted. Next, you must cultivate it; that cultivation we call practicing. If you take care of this question, then it can grow up, grow up, grow up. Then one day, this flower can bloom. Then you can say, (slapping his knee) "Ah ha." This "Ah ha" is not the Buddha's, is not Zen Master Seung Sahn's, is not Zen Master Wu Bong's, it is all yours. So everybody must find that, because this world needs you.

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