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Stop Your Elephant

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From a Dharma talk on 30 July 2008, during the Summer Kyol Che at Warsaw Zen Center.

Sometimes we use the word “vacation” to show the point of relaxation – “Put it all down” – because we are too active. So we say, “Stop, stop, stop, you are on vacation.” (*Holds up hand.*) It’s a kind of mudra of Buddha – the mudra of calming down. It’s the mudra that stops the running elephant of the mind.

Tradition says that around Buddha was a man who was always very jealous of Buddha and very mean – he was always trying to kill him all the time. One time when Buddha was teaching, he made an elephant angry and this elephant started to run towards where Buddha was sitting. Then Buddha only did like this (*makes the mudra*) and this elephant (*demonstrates screeching to halt*) like in a cartoon (*laughter*), and he knelt.

But all these stories about Buddha are stories about our mind. So in the end, this story is about stopping our mind. So we say, Kyol Che is our vacation time. Stop your elephant for moment.

There are two kinds of work. The first kind of work is always about satisfying your desires. I wish you have a vacation for the rest of your life from this kind of work. There is a second kind of work from which there is no vacation. But fulfilling this job is the greatest happiness. It is the Bodhisattva work: attaining enlightenment for other beings. Here there is no vacation, but I can guarantee that this work can give you complete freedom, so you don’t need a vacation, because it doesn’t make you tired...

Student: I have been practicing every day, but the elephant of my mind never stops – it’s just running, running all the time...

Piotrowski PSN: So you have to meet an elephant trainer and ask how much time does it take to train such an elephant. If someone is too impatient, he cannot train an elephant. So more patience, and more compassion for your elephant. Maybe you shout too loud for him; elephants don’t like shouting. You have to stroke his trunk and give him something tasty – you have to make friends with your elephant. It’s true.

We quite often have an attitude of fighting and dualism in our practice; we change our practice into a battlefield. This is not good. Remember that your mind is Buddha. Your elephant is always Buddha, so treat him as a Buddha; just remind him a little.