

From *The Way of Korean Zen*

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LECTURE COMMEMORATING THE BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT

As the assembly already knows, today is the anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment. It is also the day for a ceremony, being the forty-ninth day after the death of Pak Ilgwi from the city of Kwangju.¹³

If you say that the Buddha awakened, you would be slandering him. If you say that the Buddha did not awaken, you would also be slandering him. If you say that Pak Ilgwi lived, it would be like saying that clouds formed and covered the sky. If you say that he died and departed, then it would be like saying that imaginary flowers fell at random from the sky. Do not fall into either of these two extremes! All of you monks gathered here, say something!

Hak!

Even though the mountains move, the moon does not. Everywhere is a place of enlightenment.

Actually, if you say this is easy to understand, it will be easy. If you say it is difficult to understand, then it will be difficult. The Buddha renounced the world and on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month realized Buddhahood. It is a historical fact that he left the palace, retreated to the hills and forests, practiced for six years and finally awakened. However, if you say that the Buddha awakened anew, you would be slandering him. Why? Because he attained that which does not need to be attained. Originally he was already endowed with Buddhahood. Then why did he demonstrate the eight deeds of a fully enlightened being? His doing so was just an expedient means to lead others to liberation. Thus it is wrong to say that he either did or did not realize Buddhahood.

As for layman Pak Ilgwi, in a certain way it seems that he was born and then passed away. But in reality no birth and death took place. If he had really died then what would be the use of doing a forty-ninth-day ceremony today? It is only because there is definitely something that does not die that a memorial ceremony is being performed.

The thousand world systems are originally the Dharma body.

The eighty-four-thousand lesser actions turn the wheel of Dharma.

Since birth and death are fundamentally empty, they permeate a single path.

All distinctions are actually Nirvana.

The thousand world systems are originally the clear and pure Dharma body of Vairocana, the original body of Shakyamuni, the original body of the deceased Pak Ilgwi, and the original body of those of you gathered here today. The Buddha's demonstrating the realization of Buddhahood and Pak Ilgwi's undergoing the process of birth and death are both the turning of the wheel of Dharma. In reality, even though you may realize Buddhahood, there is nothing that can be said to have been realized. And even though you die, there is nothing that can be said to have died. Therefore, to show the Dharma in all its manifoldness is to reveal Nirvana.

The lecture should formally be concluded here. However, I am afraid that the deceased may not have understood what I have said above. Therefore, I would like to add a few more words. Deceased Pak Ilgwi, listen once more to these words! (The master lifts his staff, strikes it once on the base of his seat and holds it up to the assembly.) You can hear this sound very clearly and you can see this staff very distinctly. What is it that knows how to hear and see clearly? Indeed, what is it? As flames spring forth from ice and snow, a stone cow is bellowing.

If, disregarding the mind, you are only concerned with the body and become entangled in external affairs, this world will be a samsaric world for you. Yet the Buddha never departed from such a world. He

remains here just as he is. So if you relinquish worldly enjoyments, search for the mind, and awaken to it, this world will become a Buddha world for you. Moreover, the Buddha never came here. Both departing and coming are fundamentally empty. Birth and death are not two. The Dharma of nonduality is the very Buddha dharma itself. What is meant by non-duality? It means that fundamentally there is no coming or going, no birth or death, no being a man or a woman, no being an ordinary person or an accomplished one, and no nearness or distance. This should be understood to be the essence of the Buddha dharma.

Birth is just like the formation of clouds in the sky and death is like their dispersal. Although a difference seems to be created by the formation and dispersal of clouds, space itself remains unaffected. Likewise, ultimate reality is also immutable. With no apparent purpose this body comes into being. We then mistake it for a self,

and for a while, remain under this illusion. However, when the four physical elements of the body disintegrate, the mind alone—today that of Pak Ilgwi—appears clear and bright. This is similar to when clouds are dispersed throughout ten thousand miles and the solitary sun shines forth.

Although we go, there is no going; although we come, there is no coming. Thus, Pak Ilgwi roams freely through the worlds of the ten directions. Likewise, beings come and go as they wish, to and from the Pure Lands and the Buddha realms. At this time they are truly joyful. This body is a burden for us as it is bound by materiality. When coming, it suffers; when going, it suffers. It is limited as to where it can go. With this body we cannot go to the Pure Lands or the Buddha realms, for example. Complete freedom to come and go is only present when the mind alone appears brilliantly. What great joy to have such freedom!

Do not say that you have no choice to live long or to die early: The original nature being as it is, you are always free to roam at will.

Long ago as well as now, clear and pure, it is very subtle. From the top of a shadowless tree, flowers never fall.

Why has the original nature always been so clear and pure? Because even though countless aeons have passed, it has never changed, and, even though time may endlessly elapse, it will never change. Therefore, at the top of a shadowless tree, flowers are always blooming.