

On July 26, 27, and 29, 2008 Ven. Chwatawonim spoke to the Won Buddhism of NC Temple attendees about mind practice. She wanted us to understand that mind practice becomes the basis for our lives. Her dharma talk spoke to the definition of the mind, the essence of the mind, and the methods of mind practice.



Ven. Chwatawonim defined the mind as having six levels. The first level is that which handles sensory input and includes all our senses such as sight, smell, taste, touch, etc. The second level is one of emotion and allows us to react in physical and mental ways to external stimuli. The ways in which we handle our thoughts, engage in analytical and creative processes, and generally function in a cognitive manner represent the third level of our mind. Our awakening to the direct perception of emptiness through intuition is the fourth level of our mind. The fifth level of our mind is the mastery of mind and body. Once awakened, we realize that our mind and body are totally under our control. Finally, the sixth level of our mind is its ability to create all things. Buddha said “All things are the mind’s creation.” Ven. Chwatawonim told the story of a monkey which lived in a house on the grounds with Ven. Sotaesan. Because the monkey would move about and peer from each of the six windows in his house, one could surmise that there were six monkeys in the house. However, there was only one monkey; and similarly, we have only one mind, not multiple ones.

Knowing that there are different levels of our one mind, Ven. Chwatawonim asked, “What is the essence of mind?” The essence of the mind is that it has unlimited life energy. Just as an acorn can lie fallow upon the ground through drought, freezing temperatures, and long winter nights, it can spring forth with life when the correct conditions of water, temperature, and light occur. That small acorn can not only spring forth with root and stem systems but can continue to grow into a massive tree over time. The essence of our mind is numinous (i.e., spiritual or holy) awareness—an awareness that transcends all normal human experience.. It is awareness that sees the truth of ultimate reality. It is totally pure and free of all greed, hatred and delusion.

Having defined levels of the mind and the essence of the mind, Ven. Chwatawonim spoke about the three elements of mind practice. The first is the cultivation of our spirit by looking for the “hometown” of our mind in which we first seek to achieve concentration, then insight, then emptiness, and finally oneness with our original true nature. By emptying and settling our mind we can move toward freeing our mind. Also, as part of our mind practice, we should be able to inquire into facts and principles and use a mirror-like function of the mind at all times in our action and rest. By “reflecting in our mind mirror” we can hone our wisdom, discover our true self, achieve an awakening Grace, and understand the truth of the universe.. Finally, our actions should represent mindful choices. We should allow the “flower of our mind to bloom” by constantly choosing the right way and forsaking the wrong. We should use our mind and body perfectly and apply our spiritual cultivation and wisdom to achieve an awakening for all beings.

