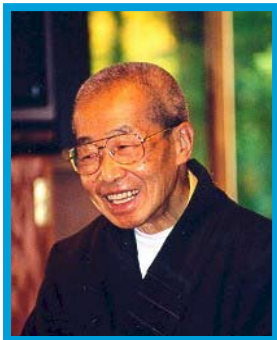


Begin by understanding your Self



Ven. Master Jen-Chun

To learn Buddhism, you must begin by understanding yourself.

It is the most difficult task. If you are able to understand yourself, you will be able to understand everything around you. You will be able to subdue or dissolve your defilements — internally you will not be trapped by your-“self” and externally you will not be disturbed by the environment.

In order to acquire such ability, one must learn to meditate. Meditation helps us focus our minds and not be scattered. Once the mind is focused, then we can contemplate the Dharma. After the mind is focused and settled, how does one contemplate “no-self”?

Most ordinary people are attached to the notion of a real self. They believe in the existence of a “self” that is permanent and dominant. Believing in permanence is when one thinks that there is a real self within our body and mind.

When one has this belief, one must ask oneself the question: Where is this self?

If it is in us then we should be able to isolate it and identify it.

Even if we were to use X-ray, would we be able to see the self? After investigation and scrutiny, we will come to the conclusion that there is ***no self that is permanent.***

Believing in dominance is when one thinks that one has total control over one's own life. If that's the case, then one would be able to stop death or sickness. Even with today's medical advancements, we still have no say over our lives when it comes to sickness or death. Therefore, how true is dominance?

If we cannot identify a real self, and we recognize that we do not have dominance over our lives, then where is this real self that we think exists?

By persistently asking ourselves the above questions during meditation, gradually our notion of a self can be dissolved.

When the Dharma refers to the self, it refers to the conditioned self — the self that arises from causes and conditions. Understanding that the self is due to all sorts of causes and conditions, we can dissolve all kinds of conflicts, and establish all kinds of wholesome conditions.

We must learn to make good use of this conditioned self and dissolve the notion of a real self.



For the past 20 years, MASTER JEN-CHUN has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching with the goal of creating a pure form of Buddhism in the United States. He emphasizes the study and practice of Dharma, instead of ritual practices and ceremonies. He is founder and spiritual leader of Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.