

# On the Religiosity of *Hwadu* Meditation

*Sung-bae Park*

*People's opinions about the Hwadu fall into two distinct categories: "pro" and "con." Those in the former category feel that the Hwadu is the only means by which enlightenment can be achieved, whereas those in the latter category feel that Hwadu is ineffective. However, from my observation, both sides are experiencing a sense of crisis regarding the proper use of Hwadu meditation.*

*Hwadu is nothing but returning to the Buddha. The Hwadu, in and of itself, does not promise us anything. It merely points to what already is, to what exists right in front of us. The Hwadu means to return to our ordinary, everyday life as it is. There is no mystery about it; therefore, we should not try to add anything extra. What is important is that we return to the Buddha. The Hwadu shows us who we are. It is enlightenment itself. Let's wake up and celebrate our true identity.*

Key Words: Hwadu, Jinul, Mom-momjit, Ti-yung, Rinzai.

## Prologue

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Recently I have read many articles and books on *Hwadu* meditation published in Korea. In the year of 2005, many articles and books are published to discuss *Hwadu* meditation in Korea.<sup>1</sup> What I have observed from my readings and discussions is that people's opinions about the *Hwadu* fall into two distinct categories: "pro" and "con." Those in the "pro" category feel that the *Hwadu* is the only means by which enlightenment can be achieved, whereas those in the "con" category feel that *Hwadu* is ineffective. However, from my observation, I have noticed that both sides are experiencing a sense of crisis regarding the proper use of *Hwadu* meditation. I feel that the suffering on both sides is intensifying; I hear it as a scream for help, and I cannot ignore these screams. I will now look at each side in more detail.

The message of the "pro" people is simple: using *Hwadu* is the only way to become enlightened. However, these people realize that many, if not most, people are not practicing it correctly. People may appear to be using *Hwadu* during their meditation but in reality they are not. This is the crux of the crisis. In order to help these people, the "pro's" continue to emphasize the teachings of the ancient *Zen* masters, reminding them of the basic fact of non-duality and so forth. Some of the "pro" people have proposed to develop some kind of special technique of meditation in order to help those who are having difficulties, such as putting band-aids next to their ears or having them listen to tranquilizing music with headphones, and so forth. However, such methods are not a solution, as they only serve to increase a sense of duality between the practitioner and the practice. In my opinion, the problem is that practitioners are not examining themselves deeply. In other words, they lack the necessary practice of brutal and honest self-criticism.

When I observe the "con" people, I see that they can be further divided into two groups. The first group consists of people who have tried using the *Hwadu*, but feel that it does not work, so they give up

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<sup>1</sup> In the year of 2005, many articles and books are published to discuss *Hwadu* meditation in Korea (Bojo Sasang Yonguwon. Ed., 2005; Bulhak Yonguso. Ed., 2005; Jung, 2005).

and claim that it cannot lead to enlightenment. These people, I feel, are innocent in the sense that they are not aiming to malign or demean others; they simply feel that the *Hwadu* has no value. The second group is more sophisticated. These people are intellectually well-armed; they have much knowledge, having by and large been trained or at least influenced by modern scholars. Of course, there are many things to be learned from their research, yet what I feel lacking in their comments is any real interest in *Zen* meditation. They have no real desire for spiritual practice. They are isolating themselves within their fortress of intellectual security, and from there they feel safe enough to freely attack others. Again, as with the “pro’s”, I feel that there is an absence of brutal self-criticism. In a way, these people cannot be blamed entirely for their views. The media is forcing them to feel as they do, for the media sees any true spiritual practice, any practice based on non-dualism, as mysticism, and looks at it with a skeptical and disdainful eye. But putting blame aside, I find that there is presently no room in the consciousness of the “con” people to accept the mission of the *Hwadu*. What is the mission? It is, metaphorically speaking, to cause the practitioner to have an experience of being in a shipwreck. That is, their very foundation must be shaken. This will be discussed in more detail later on, but for now I would like to ask: is it really possible for “con” people to accept the mission of the *Hwadu*? My answer is: yes, it is possible. However, most of them are simply not ready for such an experience. They have not reached the point in their lives at which they are able to accept the possibility of, or the need for, any real or fundamental change in the way they view things.

### I. The Nature of the Problem

Two immediate facts need to be mentioned: one concerning spirituality in general and one concerning *Hwadu* meditation specifically. First of all, in Korea today, and indeed all over the world, an increasing spiritual thirst is becoming more and more evident among people of all ages and from all sectors. We are all experiencing the

pressures caused by our modern way of living and are searching for ways to alleviate these stresses. As a result, we are discovering and learning about various techniques that can presumably enable us to calm our minds and/or strengthen our bodies. Some of these techniques include *tai-chi*, yoga, *chi-kung*, as well as various forms of breathing exercises and meditation. Any and all of these techniques are certainly capable of helping us to feel better.

The second fact that needs to be recognized is that *Hwadu* meditation is, by its very nature, not intended to alleviate people's tensions and stress. Its practice is far too serious and demanding for it to be categorized among the previously mentioned methods that are on the market today. This is important for people to realize so that they don't attempt to compare *Hwadu* meditation with any of these other methods, and so that they don't hold any false illusions or expectations about either the purpose or the value of the *Hwadu*. It requires tremendous discipline and diligence.

It is also helpful to remember that the *Hwadu* method of meditation was introduced and practiced by *Zen* masters many hundreds of years ago, when the economy of the country, whether it is Korea, China, Japan, or any other country, was completely self-supported. If food was needed, people went into the fields and planted rice and vegetables. If fuel was needed, they went into the mountains and collected firewood. In such a serene atmosphere of relative simplicity, using the *Hwadu* was doubtlessly much easier than it is in today's world. The most vital requirement for *Hwadu* meditation is the ability to attain a state of total concentration, so that one can then transcend the limits of time and space. In our modern society, to reach such a state is not an easy task, as we are constantly being bombarded by all kinds of external distractions wherever we go. We cannot even try to escape them at home, as most of us now own television sets, radios, computers, telephones, and numerous other technological gadgets.

Another important feature of the *Hwadu* is that it is not intended to be practiced only during the time of one's formal sitting meditation. Rather, it is supposed to be used during each and every one of our

four possible bodily positions: sitting, standing, lying and walking. In other words, regardless of one's physical situation, whether he/she is in the meditation hall, the garden, the kitchen, the car, the store, the office, or wherever, his/her mind should be with the *Hwadu*. Is it possible for modern people to maintain such a total, uninterrupted concentration?

It was in order to alleviate the problem of being distracted by external stimuli that serious practitioners left home in the past, and still do so today, to become monks or solitaries. They left the secular world behind and completely isolated themselves in the monastery or the mountains, living like hermits in partial or complete solitude. Yet the *Zen* masters taught that such an attitude, that is, of attempting to avoid difficult external conditions, was not correct. They constantly emphasized that *Hwadu* meditation could be practiced by anyone, no matter who that person was or where that person lived. Many *Zen* practitioners living in our world today, however, have abandoned the *Hwadu* method of meditation altogether, replacing it with other, easier styles of meditation, such as those mentioned earlier. Feeling the stresses of modern day society, they have opted for practices that help to calm their minds so that they feel able to cope with all their tensions. Yet this is not the true purpose of *Zen*.

What is to be done? In the Jogye Order, here in Korea, the leaders are in a bit of a dilemma, as they have lost a large part of their membership to these popular styles of spiritual practice. To point out the dangers of this modern trend, a group of reformers has recently arisen and become quite vocal. This group is concerned about what they view as the misbehavior and even the corruption of the religious community. They have made it a point to analyze the psychology of *Hwadu* meditation and they claim that the leaders of the *Zen* community, that is, the *Zen* teachers practicing today, are misleading people. What is the nature of their accusation? These reformists claim that the *Zen* leaders are “sugar-coating” *Hwadu* practice by promising that if done correctly it leads one to enlightenment. The reformers point out that this was never the Buddha's message. As we know, his

great gift to us was his understanding that we are all already enlightened, just as we are. So how can practicing the *Hwadu* with such a futuristic goal in mind ever produce the correct results?

The majority of practitioners, however, are seduced by these promises of enlightenment. They don't believe that they are already enlightened. They don't understand that their real task is to awaken to their inherent essence as fully enlightened beings. They believe instead that by donating money or medicine or by providing gifts to the monks and leaders of their order they can earn merit and thus eventually gain salvation. The leaders in turn are monetarily benefiting from such attitudes, as they are the recipients of all these donations and gifts. Therefore, they are often reluctant to make any changes to this system. They continue to receive gifts while the members continue to practice incorrectly.

To summarize what has been said so far: 1-In the present world, *Hwadu* practice is generally viewed by most people as too difficult to undertake and 2-the leaders and monks are not willing to correct people's views, as they continue to profit from them.

## II. The Real Meaning of *Hwadu*

Almost all *Zen* texts contain at least some discussion about the use of the *Hwadu* in one's practice. Indeed, *Hwadu* meditation is and always has been considered the core of *Zen* practice. Yet this term "*Hwadu*" is not being understood correctly by the vast majority of people living in Korea today. In my opinion, they have "stolen" the term and given it a completely erroneous meaning, which translates into English as "an agenda to be pursued or an issue to be clarified." Korean journalists, politicians, and others from all walks of life use this term in their writings and/or speech freely, saying for example, "The *Hwadu* of the president in this situation is ... " or "What is the *Hwadu* to be discussed here?" Such uses of this term are totally incorrect; the word is currently being presented in a secular manner, but that was not the original intention of the *Zen* masters who originally taught with

it.

A similar situation may be seen to exist in the contemporary Christian world. The word “God” has also lost its original meaning, except to a very rare few. Most people these days view God as a kind of broker or agent to whom they can appeal when they have a need to be met. Yet this was certainly not the understanding of Abraham or Moses or Jesus.

Throughout the course of history humans have invented many such sacred words, whose original meaning has either been completely distorted or else has disappeared altogether. To name a few: “*tao*” in Taoism (meaning the Way), “*ren*” in Confucianism (meaning benevolence), “*ti-yung*” in early Chinese thought (meaning essence-function), and so forth. The meaning of these words was originally pure and essential, but as time passed people did not practice according to the original message of the meaning, and so these terms eventually lost their power. This is a great tragedy which has occurred to our human civilization, and it explains why I say that the meaning of “*Hwadu*” has been stolen. It no longer exists in its pure form.

In Korea, during the Koryo Dynasty (from the 10th to 14th century), there was a very popular event that used to occur regularly: Buddhist practitioners would gather together, not in a temple or monastery, but in a large field. There they would discuss and practice the teachings of the Buddha. As there were no boundaries to the field, anyone could attend. Such gatherings were called “*yadan popsuk*”, which means “*Dharma seat in the field.*” Later the Koryo was replaced by the Choseon Dynasty, which embraced neo-Confucianism, and this popular practice disappeared. To this day, the term “*yadan popsuk*” is still in use, but just like the word “*Hwadu*”, its meaning has become greatly distorted; now when people use the term, they use it to mean “noisy.” This is yet another example of a sacred term whose original meaning has been lost due to people's inability to live up to it.

So what is the original meaning of “*Hwadu*”, the meaning reflected by the teachings of the ancient *Zen* masters? In my understanding, “*Hwadu*” helps us to return to the Buddha. The *Hwadu* may be used to

help us make this journey back to the source. In the history of religion, such a message has always been the core principle: return to the Buddha, return to God, return to Allah, return to Brahma, and so forth. The special message that lies hidden within all these religions is that this source exists within each and every one of us. We ourselves contain or reflect the source that we are seeking. In the Buddhist tradition, when the ancient *Zen* masters saw that the practitioners did not understand or did not accept this truth, and instead viewed themselves as existing apart from their own, innate Buddha-nature, these *Zen* masters became angry and hit the seekers with a stick to wake them up. This was an animal instinct arising from inside and manifesting itself. Parents often exhibit the same behavior, scolding or even hitting their children if they see them doing something wrong. The *Zen* masters recognized the severity of the practitioners' error in understanding, and wanted to help them rectify it. What was the mistake the seekers were making? In the *Zen* masters' eyes, the aspirants' fundamental error was that they were too attached to the scriptures. After reading a particular text, they would organize various dogmas based on their understanding and would then become imprisoned in their own dogmas. The *Zen* masters knew very well that this was not in accordance with Buddhist teachings. They knew that no matter how well an aspirant might understand a scripture intellectually, if he remained attached to the idea that he was not a Buddha, his understanding would yield no results, like a farmer without a harvest. So the message of the *Zen* masters was always the same: Don't go in the wrong direction. Return to the Buddha.

How did the use of the *Hwadu* come into being? At an early stage in the history of *Zen* Buddhism, there emerged a division into two schools, each practicing quite differently. One school is called "*Soto*" in Japanese; in Korean it is called "*Mukjo*." Westerners usually translate this term as "sitting only", and interpret it to imply the absence of the use of the *Hwadu*. Yet if we analyze this word "*Mukjo*", we find that it may be broken down into two parts: "*muk*", which means "silence", and "*jo*", which means "bright illustration." In the "*Mukjo*" school, then, the

practice involved first quieting the mind and body and then observing the manifestation of one's field of consciousness. There are several other terms which are now in use that reflect a similar practice: they are "śamatha/vipaśyanā" in Sanskrit, "chih/kuan" in Chinese, "ting/hui" in Chinese, and "dhyāna/prajñā" in Sanskrit. These terms all have similar meanings. Yoshito Hakeda, in his translation of the *Awakening of Faith*, has rendered "śamatha/vipaśyanā" as "cessation/clear observation" (Hakeda, 1967:93). Jinul, the well-known Korean monk of the 12th to 13th century, made extensive use of the combined practice of "dhyāna (meditation)" and "prajñā (wisdom)."

The second school of *Zen* was called *Rinzai* in Japanese. This school used the *Hwadu* exclusively. The *Zen* masters of this school observed the practitioners of the *Soto* school with a critical eye and concluded that their practice was ineffective. They felt that too many seekers were using the "Mukjo" practice in the hopes that some day all of their problems would be magically solved. They saw that the aspirants did not understand the true relationship between "muk" and "jo", which is based on non-duality or non-separation. Instead, they were striving to create a balance between the two and thus were attempting to control their practice through the use of their intellects. The *Zen* masters knew, however, that in order for enlightenment to occur, the intellect must be abandoned. Yet instead what was happening was that the practitioners were holding onto their intellects with all their might! It is for this reason that the *Zen* masters created the *Hwadu*; it was used to help practitioners loosen and ultimately break their bondage to their intellect. This is always the reason why *Zen* masters would hit meditators with a stick. The stick itself was a *Hwadu*. It helped the seeker let go of his habitual conceptual tendencies.

With reference to the techniques of the *Soto* school, however, please do not misunderstand what I say. There is nothing wrong with the practice of "mukjo" if it is performed correctly. It must be understood, though, that the two aspects, "muk" and "jo", should not be viewed as two different types of practice to be pursued. The truth of the matter is that if the first aspect, "muk", is performed with the

correct understanding, the second aspect, “*jo*”, will occur naturally on its own. Thus, if cessation is practiced correctly, then clear observation will automatically emerge, with no effort required on the part of the practitioner. We may see a similar truth if we look at the relationship between the sun and the clouds. When the clouds disappear, the sun is automatically seen. It doesn't have to be coaxed out in order to manifest itself; it is already there. The *Zen* masters, then, introduced the use of the *Hwadu* in order to help the practitioner dispel the clouds, which are a reflection of his own ego, his own intellect, so that he could see the sun, or his own Buddha-nature, shining in all its beauty and magnificence.

We live in a pluralistic world; there is no one way of life or culture that exists to the exclusion of all the others. The same may be said of religions, beliefs, and practices. We need to respect all views, whether it is belief in the Pure Land, use of a *mantra*, practice of prostration, or the performance of various types of breathing exercises. What these practitioners need to be aware of, however, is that they are all practicing “*muk*” or cessation. That is, these practices are all examples of the first aspect of the *Soto* school practice, which involves the calming of the mind. They need to ask themselves if they are practicing it correctly. If they are, then the second part, “*jo*” or clear observation will arise spontaneously. So what does it mean to practice correctly? It means to break apart the whole of the intellect, the ego, and to abandon the dualism between the practice and the one who is practicing. If the seeker is able to practice in this way, then he will be in accordance with the *Zen* masters' original message. This has been the basic teaching of all religious saviors of the past, and remains the most vital point which all monastery leaders should be imparting to their members.

Let us now delve into the nature of the *Hwadu* a little more deeply. Why is it that the *Hwadu* is considered by many as being too difficult to practice? Is it merely due to the fact that it requires one's utmost concentration and discipline, as mentioned earlier? In my view, the issue goes deeper than that. In my understanding, as I mentioned

earlier, the core of the nature of the *Hwadu* is that it gives the practitioner the experience of being in a shipwreck. In other words, his very foundation is completely destroyed. Such an experience may be compared to an earthquake. About thirty years ago a severe earthquake struck Berkeley, California, where I was living as a graduate student. The experience was totally devastating. Inside my living quarters pictures fell off the walls. Books, tables, chairs, and all the furniture were turned over. Outside in the streets, buildings collapsed and cars were demolished due to the debris that fell on them. Our lives are based on the belief that our physical foundation, the earth, is solid. When this earthquake occurred, however, this belief was completely turned 180 degrees in my mind. Our earth is not a permanent fixture, I now realized; it can be disrupted at any time.

It is understandable that people seek security, both physical and psychological. Living in fear can and does cause many internal as well as external problems. Thus, we will do everything we can to avoid any fears that arise regarding our own mental and personal safety. Let it be understood: the *Hwadu* will shake our very foundation, just as the earthquake shook my living space. What is the nature of this shipwreck, this earthquake that occurs within us as we practice the *Hwadu*? What is it inside of us that is being shaken to the core?

Unlike the physical shaking of the earth caused by an earthquake, when we are shaken by the *Hwadu*, it is our very belief system, which has been developed within us from the time we are born, that is being attacked. This belief system, which includes our world-view as well as our views about ourselves, has been created by the letter culture in which we live. By letter culture I mean the value system which we have created over hundreds and thousands of years by means of the written word. This letter culture has gone a long way to contribute to our illusion of safety; it has become a dogma for most of us, deceiving us by pretending to insulate us from fear and by claiming to make us feel strong and secure. It is like living inside a dark fortress.

The *Hwadu*, however, bombs this fortress. It rips away any and all illusions we may have regarding who we are and what this world is. It

does not allow us to receive the benefits which other types of meditation or spiritual practice may offer us, such as better health, ease of tensions, calmer minds, and so forth. Thus, if a teacher asserts that *Hwadu* mediation can be used to achieve any such beneficial effects, he is being dishonest. We must never propagate the belief that the *Hwadu* can be used in order to bring about any enhanced state of being, including enlightenment. To do so is to use the *Hwadu* as a type of bait in order to lure or entice the practitioner, or like an advertisement in which one says, "Use the *Hwadu* and be cured!" Such tactics are greatly misleading and do not support the teachings of either the Buddha or the ancient *Zen* masters.

### III. The Solution

As mentioned above, almost every Buddhist monastery these days teaches various forms of meditation in addition to the *Hwadu*. Also, many universities now include *Zen* Buddhism among their course offerings. In Korea alone, there are about 100 large-scale universities, most of which offer such courses, which generally include information on how to practice meditation. How are they teaching *Hwadu* meditation? If we examine the *Zen* texts being used in these university courses and in the monasteries as well, we discover that there exists a serious problem: the texts, by and large, are based on ordinary logic as opposed to *Zen* logic. What is the difference between the two? In ordinary logic, a friend is a friend and an enemy is an enemy. In *Zen* logic, however, a friend may be an enemy and an enemy a friend. In other words, the reality of a situation and indeed, the reality of existence, cannot be based on one's pre-conceived understanding alone. This is a fundamental fact that *Zen* students need to keep in mind at all times. Yet these texts are often using ordinary people's logic, based on the intellect, in their attempts to interpret *Zen* logic. This is a serious mistake. The students are being misled and are thus bound to develop an incorrect understanding of the true meaning of *Zen*.

I like to use the Korean term "*mom*" which means body or

essence, and “*momjit*” which means function, when discussing the logic of *Zen*. *Zen* logic is “*mom*” in other words, *Zen* logic is primarily concerned with the entire body or essence of any phenomenon or circumstance. It thus transcends the dualism of the intellect. Ordinary logic, on the other hand, is “*momjit*” logic, and reflects our usual, day-to-day way of viewing ourselves and life in general. This logic, stemming from our intellect, is based entirely on dualistic concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, and so forth.

We find many examples of *Zen* logic in the Buddhist texts. For example, after the Buddha gave his famous sermon on the four noble truths, one of his disciples, Koṇḍañña, remarked that the second noble truth, which identifies desire as the cause of suffering, was in essence the same thing as the third noble truth, which refers to the cessation of desire.<sup>2</sup> By his statement, Koṇḍañña was using *Zen* logic; he was saying that the arising of a state and its cessation are no different. In other words, in one is contained the other and vice versa; they cannot be separated. In the field of science, we may discover a similar truth when we examine the law of gravity. What goes up must come down; one cannot exist without the other. This type of understanding is what we usually fail to recognize when we use our ordinary, conceptual way of thinking to view our world or ourselves.

Another example of *Zen* logic may be found in the *Mahāyāna* text entitled *The Awakening of Faith*. This treatise categorizes all phenomena, including all sentient beings as well as our thoughts and actions, as operating within the confines of four distinct sequential stages: 1-arising, 2-abiding (or lasting), 3-decaying and 4-dying. The stage of arising corresponds to our physical birth; then for the major part of our lives we exist in the abiding stage; later, in old age, our bodies begin to decay; finally, at the end of our life, we die. The same process occurs with our every thought and action as well: they arise, experience a period of lasting or abiding, eventually beginning to ebb or die out, and finally they disappear altogether.

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2 I have discussed this extensively in my preface to the Korean translation of my book (Park, 1983; Korean Trans. By Yun, 2002).

For ordinary people like you and I, these four stages are experienced as completely distinct and separate phases of a process. Usually, for regular people, it is not until a thought has already disappeared that we even realize that we were thinking the thought. Buddhist practitioners who have a slightly higher level of awareness, for example the level of a *Hīnayāna* Buddhist, are able to realize the existence of their thoughts. When they are still at the third level, that is before they have disappeared from their consciousness. A *Bodhisattva*, who functions at an even higher level, is able to be aware of his thoughts while they are at the second stage of abiding. This is the stage at which our thoughts are most powerful; we can see the value of being able to thus catch hold of our thoughts before they begin to lose their force and die out. Only an enlightened being, a Buddha, is able to perceive his thoughts at the very moment of their inception, as they are being created in his mind. Indeed, ultimate enlightenment entails knowing right from the start exactly what is occurring within your own mind.

The crucial point that the text makes is that these four stages are said to occur simultaneously. This is a clear example of *Zen* logic. Everything is seen to happen right at the very beginning; there is no sequential development of one stage occurring before or after another. This understanding is also reflected in the often-quoted analogy of the water and the wave. Each is a part of the other, and they both exist together and at the same time. It is not possible to separate them into two independent entities. Similarly, “*mom*” and “*momjit*” also operate in unison. Every “*mom*” is also a “*momjit*” and every “*momjit*” is also a “*mom*.”

The teachings of *Hua-yen* Buddhism are yet another example of this fundamental *Zen* truth. According to this school of thought, there exist 52 stages with regard to the attainment of enlightenment. The first stage refers to the arising of the desire for *bodhicitta*, or the wisdom mind, which reflects one's initial desire for enlightenment. Each stage represents one step further along on the path, and the 52nd and final stage is the attainment of ultimate enlightenment itself. *Hua-yen* thought

teaches that at the moment one enters the first stage, that is, the moment the aspiration for enlightenment arises, at that very moment the last stage is inherently included. This is the timeless perspective; by using theistic language, we may call it God's perspective.

It is extremely difficult to comprehend the *Zen* logic described above. Our intellects alone cannot accomplish such a feat, for this logic points to an understanding which lies beyond the realm of our reason. It is here that faith is required in order to bridge the gap; otherwise, the practitioner may easily be tempted to give up his practice altogether. What is meant by faith? It is nothing other than having complete and utter trust in the teachings of the Buddha. If the practitioner can develop and maintain such an attitude of firm conviction within himself, then eventually his intellect will soften its grip and the practitioner may catch a glimpse of the truth of non-duality.

Many, if not most, scholars, including Hakeda in his discussion of the four stages of phenomena as mentioned above, fail to recognize the crucial need for faith on the part of the practitioner (Hakeda, 1967:40). They discuss non-duality in a straightforward, scientific manner, but do not understand that such an approach is incomplete. Something more is needed if one is to grasp the truth of the Buddha; something is required if we are to transcend the limits of our intellect. In my opinion, it is the underlying background of faith, or the ultimate trust that we, too, are the Buddha, which enables us to “cross to the other shore” and attain our goal of enlightenment. It is this issue, the issue of faith, that scholars need to recognize and address if they are to correctly and successfully interpret and communicate the Buddha's understanding.

#### IV. Conclusion

What is the *Hwadu*? It is nothing but returning to the Buddha. We must not fall prey to the temptation of mysticizing it by saying that it promises enlightenment. The *Hwadu*, in and of itself, does not

promise us anything. It merely points to what already is, to what exists right in front of us. If a *Zen* master was asked, "What is the essence of the Buddha's message?", he would reply, "Flowers are red and leaves are green", or "My nose is vertical and my eyes are horizontal."

How did the mystification of the *Hwadu* arise? Whatever the answer to that question, we must not view the *Hwadu* in such an illusory sense. The *Hwadu* means to return to our ordinary, everyday life as it is. There is no mystery about it; therefore, we should not try to add anything extra. Nor should we be concerned with others' practice with other methods - these things are not important. What is important is that we return to the Buddha. How can we do this? We need to fix our false techniques. We are already the Buddha; we exist as timeless beings, as "*mom*." So let's not use "*momjit*" language or ways of thinking in our spiritual practice. Let's move, act, think, and speak as that which we are. The *Hwadu* shows us who we are. It is enlightenment itself. Let's wake up and celebrate our true identity.

In his *Tao Te Ching*, Lao-tzu says, "One who knows does not speak; one who speaks does not know" (Lau, 1967). Yet I feel that those who know need to speak. Ordinary, unenlightened people need to hear the message of the Buddhist truth as understood by enlightened *Zen* masters. What is this message that we need to hear? In my opinion, the idea of the fundamental truth of *Hwadu* meditation needs to be sharpened. Jinul's book concerning the *Hwadu* was the first book in the history of Korean Buddhism to discuss the meaning and value of *Hwadu* meditation (HPC. Vol.4:741-766). His understanding of the live word versus the dead word proved to be of great benefit to Buddhist practitioners, and successfully helped to sharpen this fundamental issue concerning the *Hwadu*. Now, *Zen* masters living today need to continue to relay this message. What is the message? It concerns the utmost necessity for all practitioners to return to the spirit and practice of religiosity. The meaning of religiosity itself needs to be sharpened. What is its meaning? In terms of *Hwadu* meditation we can say two things:

First, as practitioners we need to "shut up." We first and foremost need to abandon all sense of ownership. I may own many things, in

terms of physical possessions, professional qualifications, personal opinions, and so forth. Yet while I am investigating the *Hwadu*, I must abandon all of these things. This is the meaning of surrender, which is so central to all religions. I must surrender all of my opinions, all of my values, all of my understandings, so that in front of the *Hwadu*, I am empty; I have nothing to say. This attitude of “shut up” is the humblest position that can be seen to exist. It is this attitude that comprises religiosity and which needs to be sharpened by all practitioners.

Second, religiosity means to recognize the primary importance of faith. What is the meaning of faith, with regard to *Hwadu* practice? It means to accept the message of the Buddha, which is conveyed by all enlightened *Zen* masters. The basic teaching is: don't seek anything outside of yourself. Look inside; there you can see the Buddha existing within you, just as you are. Your outer circumstances are not important so don't pay attention to them. Just hold onto the faith that proclaims that you are already the Buddha, right here, right now. This kind of faith must be exhibited in our practice. How is it practiced? By respecting ourselves and others, just as we are, just as they are. This is the meaning of faith, of practice, and of religiosity. It is this message that must be sharpened and then conveyed by all enlightened teachers.

### **Glossary of Chinese Terms**

(K=Korean, C=Chinese, J=Japanese, S=Sanskrit, P=Pali)

Bodhicitta (S) 菩提心

Chi-kung (C) 氣功

Choseon (K) 朝鮮

Hua-yen (C) 華嚴

Hui (C) 慧

Hwadu (K) 話頭

Jinul (K) 知訥

Koṇḍañña (P) 憍陳如

Koryo (K) 高麗

Mukjo (K) 默照  
 Prajñā (S) 慧  
 Ren (C) 仁  
 Rinzai (J) 臨濟  
 Śamatha (S) 止  
 Soto (J) 默照  
 Tai-chi (C) 太極  
 Tao (C) 道  
 Tao-te Ching (C) 道德經  
 Ti-yung (C) 體用  
 Vipasyanā (S) 觀  
 Yadan Popsuk (K) 野壇法席

## Abbreviation

HPC *Han'guk-pulgyo-chunseo* (韓國佛教全書; Complete Works of Korean Buddhism). Seoul: Dongguk Univ. Press.

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