

Taking the Dharma to Heart

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Thursday, 02 January 2014 09:42



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Learning the Dharma takes more than just listening to talks on the teachings. Oftentimes, while listening to the Dharma talk, our hearts become very open and expansive, full of great joy, peace, and inner freedom. Yet, with the end of the talk and our return to the matters of everyday life, we easily lose this sense of joy and peace. Our encounters with people or issues can very quickly upset us, causing our mind to give rise to many afflictions. Haven't we all experienced this? Why does this happen?

When listening to the Dharma talk, our minds were on the Dharma, and in the process we began drawing closer to our Buddha nature. When we returned to our daily living, however, our mind also returned to our habitual ways of seeing and thinking. That is why it did not take much for afflictions to arise once more. With the arising of afflictions, we drew farther away from our Buddha nature.

What this shows us is that though listening to the Dharma talk brought us spiritual joy, this joy is temporary until we have worked on overcoming our many habitual tendencies and afflictions. Without addressing these, our heart and mind easily slip back into their mundane state. What we need to do is to take the teachings to heart and truly apply and practice them. It is through this practice that we can truly touch the teaching's meaning and become effective in eliminating our afflictions and unwholesome habitual tendencies.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team