

WORK

by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett

The following section on work is an excerpt, page 221-226 from the Roar of the Tigress. This book is drawn from the many lectures of the late Rev. master Jiyu-Kennett that had been taped and transcribed. Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy edited these talks and a wonderful job was done of capturing the tone and rhythm of her spoken words onto the written page.

Don't despise any occupation. All is the work of a Buddha, especially if it is offered for the benefit of other people as well as self. You must never cut self out of this, by the way. We train for self and other. I remember saying to the person who was teaching me, "No, we don't: we train for others and self." And he said, "Well, you may, but I don't and neither does anybody else here. And if you take the trouble to think about it, you'll find that you're wrong." I thought about it and I was wrong: we train for self and others. But we do not make self with a capital "S" and others with a small "o". We are both equal in this; we are all training for the same reason. But don't think that you do not count in this; don't always put yourself down. And if you do always put yourself down, you will not find the Eternal because you will always think you are no good, that you're not capable of finding the Eternal. "It's not possible for me to find the Eternal: I'm a female, I'm a this, I'm a that; I couldn't possibly find the Eternal."

The Cosmic Buddha doesn't care two hoots what you are. Pure Love can only be interested in the fact that you want to find It. So don't put yourself down and don't give yourself the idea that you are only doing something for everybody else. We're all in this together, both self and others. Now, this may not seem to be all that relevant to the work we do, but stop and think about it: what is the purpose of our livelihood? Is it not the mutual benefit of self and others?

Question: "Next week at work I must choose between nine people who want the same job. How do you not hurt eight people?"

Well, you choose the best person for the job, the one who will be the most compassionate and the most efficient, and you hope that the other eight will get work. You see, the danger in what you're coming up against is that you (forgive me, it may sound a little harsh but it's not meant to) are really saying, "I would love to be God, because then I would have enough jobs for the whole lot." But you're not, you're human; you've got one. So you do the very best you can and, as a human, you wish the very best for the other eight. And tell them if something comes up that they're suitable for, you'll think of them. That way even if you can't spread jobs, you spread love. That's doing the best you can. But if you get emotion in it ("Oh dear, I so want to give work to the other eight, what can I do?"), you've wasted a wonderful opportunity of giving what you actually can give. There's no simple answer, and there's no avoiding the taking of the karma. And you will be taking the karma, because one or two of them are going to hate your guts (I guarantee you that one) however much love you give out. But that's not your problem; that's their training, not yours. You will have done the best you could.

Question: "I've been meditating for a few years now, and I find that it's harder to do my work than before I started. Not that I'm not as good at the job; if anything, I seem to be better at it, or at least that's what I'm told. The problem is that I seem to be so much more sensitive to the pain

around me, in my fellow workers and our clients, that I get really tired and drained. And when I ask for help with this, the pain does not seem to go away, but somehow its 'darkness' is filled with 'specks of gold'. Is this making any sense?"

Any time someone, whether a lay member of the sangha or a priest member of the sangha, tries to do something about themselves they will find themselves burdened with other people's grief unless they really know that they themselves are not the Cosmic Buddha and that there is nothing in them that is not of the Cosmic Buddha. One of the sad things for members of the helping professions is that too many of them take onto themselves the suffering of others and make themselves eventually ill with it, instead of realizing that they are not the Cosmic Buddha and must ask for help from the Cosmic Buddha. This person, when asking for help, is shown the suffering and is shown it "shot through" with the golden points of light, the little moments that make one dance, the essence of the Buddha. One has to look at those little moments, one has to be willing to cry, "I am not sufficient. I cannot do it." But it is exactly these little glimpses of something greater that make it possible. These are the little moments of faith. The deeper we go into meditation, the more suffering becomes apparent, therefore the more important it is that our faith shall deepen and we shall learn to recognize the little golden moments that point the way to the Cosmic Buddha. We have to stop trying to hold on to being able to do something ourselves about that very suffering. For we can do nothing of ourselves, if "we" are in the way. If all we see is suffering, we ourselves are in the way. And if we are in the way, we cannot see the Cosmic Buddha working through it. This is a very, very hard lesson to learn; for a layman or a laywoman it is even harder. But all the signs are there. This person is never truly apart from the temple. The "presence" is always there. Perhaps they need to study more deeply what the real temple is. For the real temple is the temple of one's own body, and the real cloister is everywhere. This does not mean that one should not become a monk, if one has a calling to do that. Nor does it mean that monks should all go out into the world. It means that the real cloister is everywhere, and the real "presence" is everywhere. We enter into a monastery—we retreat, as it were, in order that we be able to advance. We can only advance if we do not become caught by the hindrances. If our grief over the suffering of the world is constantly hindering us, we will not advance. If we cannot look at the suffering and see the "golden moments" and recognize what they are, recognize that they are the Cosmic Buddha shining through that suffering, and have faith to hold on to that, then nothing can help us. Thus, what was originally a dark and seemingly grieving and despairing place becomes the garden of the Bodhisattvas, the wave-less sea of the saints, both before what is known as "death" and after what people call "death". The spirit of truth is within all these situations; the Buddha Nature is within all things. The world is a rough place to those who do not know this. The advantage of coming to a monastery for retreats is that it is a place in which one can set the world somewhat aside for a little and get closer to the little golden moments, to the Cosmic Buddha. Thus, they are the more easily recognized, not only in the monastery itself, but also in the world outside. To see the Buddha in suffering, in pleasure, in pain, in joy, in sorrow—this is one of the greatest gifts of enlightenment. But faith is much needed to be able to do this, and you have to do a lot of work upon yourself before faith is a fully understood concept. Far too few people know what faith really means. In one sense, every one of us has incredible faith: we all believe that we will waken in the morning, though we have no proof of it. We also have no proof that we won't. We believe that we will, but one day we will not. Neither of these ideas terrifies us. It is with this attitude of mind that one must go through the world and the monastery. It is absolutely imperative that we feel the cloister beneath our feet wherever we go and the presence of the ceremony hall within our hearts wherever we go. Then, however much grief and suffering others try to lay upon us, or try to bring into us simply because in some cases the person concerned is looking for a sympathetic ear, or simply because we

happen to be more open than others and therefore can feel it more clearly—whichever way it is—if we have found how to carry that “presence” in our hearts from the temple, whether we are here or whether we are sitting in the dining hall or working in a hospital or in a hospice or sitting in an office or driving a bus—no matter what we are doing— whatever the suffering that we see or that may come into us, we will see the Lord’s work within it. And we will learn to accept that this is the way it is, because this is how karma works. And in accepting karmic consequence, we will find the Lord in all things and be able to work peacefully and effectively. This is to fully accept our humanity. And from this place you can actually do the very best that is possible about that suffering, although it is not “you” which does it.