



Practice Without Integration is a Waste, by Krishna Das

I once met Roshi Philip Kapleau, the author of *The Three Pillars of Zen*. He was one of the first Westerners to go to Japan and do intense practice there. He was suffering from very advanced Parkinsons disease and had terrible physical discomfort, along with the involuntary spasms that come from the disease. One thing he said to me really stuck. As he was sitting there, writhing, he looked into my eyes and said with great intensity, "It doesnt matter how much practice you do. If you dont bring it into your daily life, it is all a waste." The power of this statement came from the depths of his realization and his daily battle with Parkinsons, and it shot straight into my heart.

We dont want to walk around afraid. We dont want to walk around feeling hurt and separate. We dont want to continue carrying around all the feelings of betrayal and pain that weve experienced in all of the relationships of our lives. No matter how much meditation, chanting, yoga poses, or any other practice we do, its very hard to remove the fears that come up in our daily lives and the feeling of being isolated from the rest of the world. But the result of a true spiritual practice ultimately must be the lessening of that fear and isolation. We cant be judging ourselves if were really singing or offering ourselves or someone else lovingkindness. These are the moments were taking energy away from unconscious programs that run all the time in our heads about how small we are or how unworthy we are of love and affection.

We have a lot to worry about in our daily lives, a lot of stress. We move very fast and often get lost in the unconscious flow of our days. We cant control the things outside of us. We cant make people act the way we want them to act. We cant even make *ourselves* act the way we want to act! The good news is that our feeling of unworthiness, our self-judgment, is just stuff; its not who we are. Stuff comes and stuff goes. What doesnt come and go is *who* we really are and *what* we really are. To experience this, we need a spiritual practice.

When we are doing a practice and begin to experience lighter states of being, we start to recognize that being greedy, fearful, jealous, angry, pushy, and manipulative in our relationships actually *hurts*. When were stuck in one of those heavy states - which for most of us is all weve known - who suffers more than we do? Nobody. We may feel righteous about our heaviness and think that somebody else caused our suffering, but were the ones who are burning! At these moments, its very hard to practice. For example, if Im really upset about something, its very hard to sit down and chant. Sometimes I have to burn for a while until I can begin to let go and return to my practice.

-- Krishna Das, excerpted from *Chants of a Lifetime*

