



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 Parkinson's 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 doesn't matter how much practice you do. If you don't 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 Parkinson's, and it shot straight into my heart.

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We don't want to walk around afraid. We don't want to walk around feeling hurt and separate. We don't want to continue carrying around all the feelings of betrayal and pain that we've experienced in all of the relationships of our lives. No matter how much meditation, chanting, yoga poses, or any other practice we do, it's 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 practiceÂ ultimately must be the lessening of that fear and isolation. We can't be judging ourselves if we're really singing or offering ourselves or someone else lovingkindness. These are the moments we're 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.

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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 can't control the things outside of us. We can't make people act the way we want them to act. We can't even makeÂ *ourselves*Â *act* the way we want to act! The good news is that our feeling of unworthiness, our self-judgment, is just stuff; it's not who we are. Stuff comes and stuff goes. What doesn't come and go isÂ *who*Â *we* really are andÂ *what*Â *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 actuallyÂ *hurts*.Â When we're stuck in one of those heavy states - which for most of us is all we've known - who suffers more than we do? Nobody. We may feel righteous about our heaviness and think that somebody else caused our suffering, but we're the ones who are burning! At these moments, it's very hard to practice. For example, if

I'm really upset about something, it's 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_*

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