

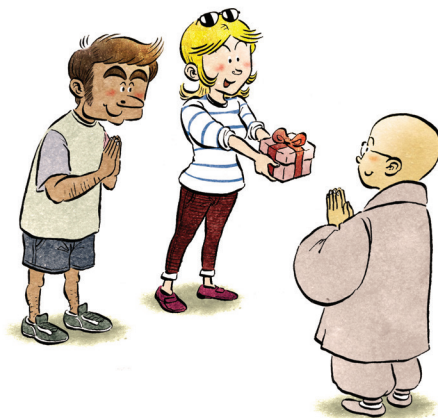
Conversations





S*ara and Luca return to Muchak-sa to see Mumyeong Sunim once again. They are very excited to continue learning about life and Korean culture.*

Conversation 26: Enlightenment?



Luca: (*doing hapjang*) Hello Sunim, how nice to see you. We are really benefitting from being with you and are very grateful.

Sara: (*doing hapjang*) In fact today we brought you a little present and we hope you will accept it.



Sunim: Thank you very much.

Sara: But aren't you going to open it?

Sunim: Don't you remember? We never open presents until we get home because...

Luca and Sara: (*interrupting*) Because you don't want to spoil the fragrance of generosity.

Sunim: Ha! Ha! Ha! Wow, you are good students... So what were you going to ask?

Luca: You said that Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings. What is enlightenment?

Sunim: Well, some people decide that they want to understand reality, understand life and so they dedicate themselves to doing meditation or chanting or social work or study. If they practice long enough and well enough then they may break through their everyday understanding of the world which is based on their experience and education. Then they may see things the way they really are. For example, do you want to grow old?



Conversation 27: Do you want to Grow Old?

Sara: No way!

Sunim: You will eventually get old no matter what you do, that is the reality of our lives; this is the first of the three characteristics of the universe. But we don't see it. I didn't understand that I would grow older when I was young! The second characteristic is that we are never satisfied. You



You get something and then proceed to look for another one, a better one, for example something delicious to eat. And the third is that nothing is permanent. Even this mountain is changing! So everything is changing, everything is unsatisfactory, and there is no eternal part to anything. These are the three characteristics of the universe according to the Buddha.



Luca: Sounds sad. Are all Buddhists depressed?



Sara: They don't look it. When I went to Thailand, all the people were so jolly!

Sunim: Understanding gives us the ability to accept things more easily. No problem with the good events in our lives. But the bad ones? We have to learn to deal with them. But let us return to our tour...

Sara: So, do you mean that after enlightenment a Buddha understands reality and teaches others?

Sunim: That's right. You both seem to be very interested in philosophy. We will have some fine discussions later. But for now, let us get back to this building.



Conversation 28: Statues

Sara: You were telling us about the statues.

Sunim: Here we have Sakyamuni Buddha, the Historical Buddha, with two Bodhisattvas. Look carefully! Do you see any major differences between the central statue and the others?

Luca: Well... The central statue is much simpler than the other two. The statues on either side have jewelry and fancier clothes.

Sunim: That's right. Do you remember? I explained that Bodhisattvas are beings who have given up enlightenment in order to help all beings. They are also artistic representations of some of the most beautiful human values.

Sara: What do you mean?

Sunim: Bodhisattvas represent perfect compassion or perfect wisdom, for example. Just imagine perfect compassion and perfect wisdom. They are complimentary. If you have too much compassion then



you don't do anything, you just feel overwhelmed by all the suffering in the world. And if you have too much wisdom, then you become cold. So compassion is balanced by wisdom and wisdom is balanced by compassion.

Sara: That is really beautiful. I hope I can become like that.





Conversation 29: More Statues

Luca: That Buddha is holding his finger and the other one in the picture is touching the ground. Why are they different?

Sunim: Once again it is because of symbolism. After his enlightenment, the Buddha was challenged as to his right to sit on the ground. Can you imagine? Being challenged for that!

Luca: And we take so many things for granted...

Sara: So what happened?

Sunim: The earth bore witness to all his wonderful previous lives and said he had the right. So this statue reminds us of that event. Then the one holding his finger represents cosmic energy and is called Vairocana or Birojana in Korean.

Luca: But that is an amazing





story, I'd like to hear more about it...

Sunim: You will when we discuss the teachings and have tea.

Sara: Can't wait. But what do those Bodhisattvas do?

Sunim: They remind us of certain values. On the right of the statue is Samantabhadra (Bohyeon in Korean) the Bodhisattva of Practice or Wisdom in Action and to the left of the statue is Manjusri (Munsu in Korean) the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. They represent the perfection of values which are important in our lives.





Conversation 30: Paintings

Luca: Behind the Buddha is another painting. I suppose the different beings are also Bodhisattvas and the ones in armor are guardians. And then over there on the wall is another. What is that being in the center with wings on his hat?

Sunim: That's Dongjin Bodhisattva. The painting is known as a guardian painting. The story goes that Dongjin, who was the god of war, won his first battle at age 8. He then took refuge in the Buddha and made all the warriors kind and gentle. If you look closely at the picture, you can see all the different communities in Buddhism.





Luca: Where do the paintings come from?

Sunim: They come from ancient cartoons.

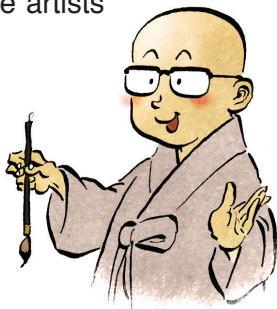
Luca: You mean like Mickey Mouse?

Sunim: Ha! Ha! Ha! No. They are drawings that have been handed down and are copied again and again. We have special Buddhist artists that learn the art for many years. It is not easy to draw those long lines.

Sara: What sort of training do the artists receive?

Sunim: Well, let me see. The first thing they have to do is trace a cartoon 1,000 times.

Luca: You mean the same one? How boring.



Sunim: Yes. But it is the only way that the lines become very smooth and beautiful.



REVIEW 6

A. Questions

1. Can you remember the three characteristics of the universe?
2. Are all Buddhists depressed?

Why or why not?

3. What happens to a Buddha after enlightenment?
4. What is difficult to do in the paintings?
5. Why was the Buddha challenged?

B. Try these Expressions for Yourself!

1. ...who is considered / it is considered
 - i) Einstein, who is considered the greatest scientist who ever lived, believed in god.
 - ii) It is considered important to eat lots of vegetables.
 - iii) Who do you consider to be the most suitable for the job?



2. To represent something or someone

- i) They represent the perfection of human values.
- ii) Sunims wear grey which represents the ashes they will become when they die.
- iii) Prince Phillip sometimes represents the Queen.

3. Let's face it.

- i) Let's face it. Sunims' hairstyle isn't very beautiful.
- ii) You can't learn all about temples in a short time.
Let's face it.
- iii) Pagodas are beautiful but, let's face it, they are boring.

4. Look carefully!

- i) Look carefully. Can you see all the colors of the rainbow?
- ii) If you look carefully you can see where the accounts are wrong.
- iii) As you work, look carefully so that you don't make a mistake.

5. Based on...

- i) My opinion is based on research.
- ii) My choice of religion is based on careful thought.
- iii) Based on everything we know, the world is definitely round.