

## SUTRAS

The sutras are descriptions of how this world works. However, after the sutras appeared, some people spent all of their energy studying the sutras and so paid less attention to reality. Thus traditionally seon masters didn't allow disciples to read sutras at the beginning of their practice. If you get too caught up in the sutras, and cannot escape from them, all you'll ever achieve is becoming a bookworm.

Those people who read sutras but miss the true meaning are like bees that hit the window and die while trying to get to the flowers on the other side.

When you can firmly entrust everything to your foundation without being caught by anything, only then you can truly read sutras such as the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, or the Flower Ornament Sutra. If you correctly brighten your mind and clearly see yourself, only then you can refer to the teachings left by great teachers of the past. You have to know your true self; then, when you read sutras, you can understand the true meaning of the words. When you read sutras, don't see only the words; even if you don't read the sutras, you still have to know the fundamental truth they express.

Even though you have memorized the entire Diamond Sutra, if you haven't experienced the unseen half of reality, then you will only see and follow the words, not the Buddha's true meaning. Buddhism is *doing*. Buddhism is applying and putting into practice the truth of the sutras.

In the process of teaching people, all the Buddhas of history have used expressions and sayings that require deep reflection to understand. Don't treat these expressions carelessly: they contain great meaning. There are people who have only a superficial understanding of these teachings and go around saying things like, "Everything is empty, so what is there to cling to?" But you shouldn't be so reckless. Only those people who have truly experienced the meaning of these expressions are free to talk about them. If someone who hasn't experienced it for him or herself just repeats these kinds of teachings, the karma from those actions won't disappear even after a million kalpas.

If people had correctly understood the truth, then past masters wouldn't have needed to give so many methods and teachings. However, people didn't know the truth, so there had to be many Dharma talks and methods such as chanting, reading sutras, and lighting candles. Many places still follow those methods and traditions, but you must know the underlying meaning. Otherwise, you'll insist on using a horse cart in the age of the automobile. The important point is this: don't be distracted by methods or traditions that were developed for past eras. Everyone needs to learn how to directly become a Buddha, instead of being burdened by all kinds of different methods.