

PRIMARY POINT

PUBLISHED BY THE KWAN-UM ZEN SCHOOL

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VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

JULY 1985

(This exchange of questions and answers which took place at Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley in April 1984, is typical of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching style.)

Q: A lot of us spend a lot of time trying to get rid of our bad karma and just end up accumulating more karma.

SSN: Is karma good or bad? Karma is not good, not bad. If you don't like karma, then take away your mind and all karma will disappear. All karma is from your mind. If your mind disappears, your karma will disappear. That's the point. When mind and karma both become empty, that is returning to your true self.

But if I have bad karma, how can I make it function correctly? How can I not be attached to my bad karma? By helping other people. In Korea there is a man like Robin Hood. He does many bad actions, takes money and gives it to poor people. So this is bad action, but how does it function? Even if you have bad karma, it's not for you but for other people, it becomes good karma. Likewise, good karma which is only for you becomes bad karma.

So it's very important how your good or bad karma functions. So don't be attached to it, don't check whether you have good karma or bad karma. You have karma, so how you use it is very important. The correct function means only helping other people, making other people happy. Then it's ok.

Once a man had very good music karma. That is very wonderful, but he used it for bad action. The music was so beautiful that people would lose consciousness, then another man would take their money. That is using good karma and making bad action. So bad karma is ok. How do you use it? How can you make it function correctly? Everybody has karma, and any karma is ok. The correct function of karma is very important.

Q: Where do good karma and bad karma arise from?

SSN: Good and bad have no self nature. You make the category "good," so you have good. You make the category "bad," so you have bad. Zen practice is about not making "good" and "bad." When you practice, what is your original face? If you

THIS UNIVERSE GIVES US EVERYTHING

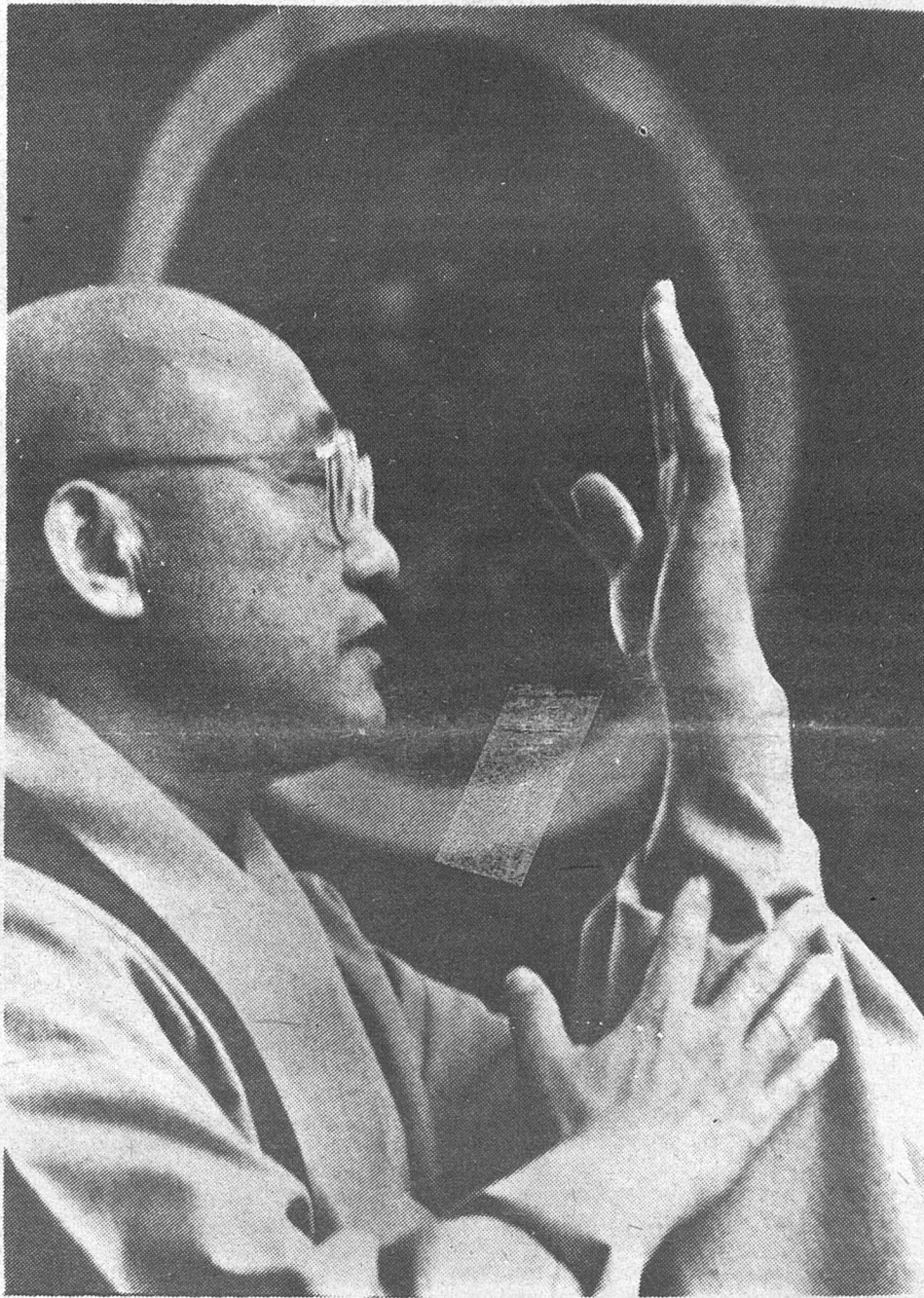


photo by Morgan Alexander

think, "I am bad," then you have bad. Don't think that, don't be attached to "I am bad." Just bring your attention back to the question "What am I doing?" If you do a bad action or make a big mistake, and you think, "I am bad," then that bad never disappears.

The mistake was made already, so how do we make it correct? How to make it correct is a very important point. Don't be attached to bad, and soon return to "What am I doing now?" If you do a bad action to someone, say "I am sorry." Then it is all finished. Understand?

Someone told me this story. A man and his girlfriend decided to do something together. In the daytime he went to the office and was working very hard. Time passed. He forgot to meet his girlfriend. She was very angry. How could he explain so that his girlfriend would feel good?

Someone suggested that he say, "I was so busy I forgot." Or, "I didn't feel so good, so I didn't go." When you are in a situation like this, many opinions occur to you. You check how your mind was at that time. Zen means don't check your past mind. Never check that. Only go straight. Already you made a mistake, so you go to your girlfriend and say, "I am sorry, I made a mistake. If you don't like me, then kill me, please." She will not kill you. But first, you have to make everything correct, then there is no good and bad.

Q: So what you are saying is, we are all bound by the law of karma and it's better to give than to receive.

SSN: Don't check on giving and receiving, just DO IT! (laughs) Just Do It! is very important. If you love somebody, then only love is enough. Don't check. If you are checking, that's like saying, when you like somebody, "I love you, why don't you love me?"—that's not love. Love is unconditional. Only giving, only giving, just as this earth, this universe, gives us everything.

Every day we breathe in, breathe out. Nobody pays money for that. Living in this world, food is very important, clothes are very important, a house is very important. For all these things we must pay money. If for only ten minutes you do not breathe, you die. But no one says "Thank you very much" for their air.

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SCHOOL CONGRESS JULY 26-28 AND ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN'S BIRTHDAY CEREMONY

The Third Annual Kwan Um Zen School Congress will be held at the Providence Zen Center over the weekend of July 26-28. Members and friends from all of the Zen centers and affiliates, including such faraway places as Brazil, Spain and Korea, will be coming to add their energy and wisdom to the common direction of the School, which is "to understand ourselves and save all beings from suffering."

There will be discussion and workshops on Zen practice in its many aspects, training for old and new Dharma teachers, and op-

portunities to develop our vision through the organizational structure of the school.

This weekend marks one of the four principal ceremonies in the School, namely, the birthday of our teacher and founder of the Kwan Um Zen School, Zen Master Seung Sahn. The ceremony, which will be held Saturday evening, will feature tributes from students representing the various Zen centers as well as others whose lives he has touched over the almost 14 years since he came to the United States. Following the ceremony will be a party.

On Sunday morning directly after bows (instead of the afternoon as originally planned), there will be a Precepts Ceremony for those taking the Five or Ten Precepts, Bodhisattva and Traditional Monk's vows.

**Zen Master
Hae Am
(1886-1985)**

The oldest living Zen Master in the world, Hae Am Su Nim, died at the age of 100 in May at Sudoksah temple in Korea, where he had been the Zen Master since 1956. Over 5,000 people attended the funeral ceremonies on May 23.

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This Universe gives us Everything

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The universe always gives us this air. This air has no hindrance, it connects with everybody, not just human beings. The air connects with trees and animals and sky. We are all connected by this breathing in, breathing out. When you sleep, when you're awake, whether you have good thinking or bad thinking, you breathe in and breathe out. Always. If you stop, you die. So this much is given to you, this air. This is love mind. Think about it.

Also, if we had no sun, we would die. If we exploded all the missiles that Russia and America have, a cloud would cover the earth. No sun could penetrate this cloud. The earth would grow cold—then what? Everything would die. So this sunlight is very important, but no one says, "Thank you very much, sun."

Any time you do not believe in love, you die.

Next is water, very important. For water we pay money. We don't pay the water, we only pay to have the water brought here from the mountain. Nobody pays the water any money. Also, if we had no earth, then what? We could not grow any food, any trees, any flowers.

Air, fire, water, earth—the four elements. The universe takes these elements and makes your body. That's your life's root. Correct roots. Nowadays, human beings don't understand their roots. "I go to the factory, I make money, so I make a living. I don't have to believe in God, I don't owe the universe anything. What's the big deal? I have money, I take care of myself." This style of thinking. We have all forgotten our human roots. If you have no air, no ground, you cannot stay alive.



SOEN SA NIM PRESENTED WITH A WORLD PEACE AWARD at the Hyatt Hotel in Seoul, Korea on May 13, in ceremonies attended by thousands. The occasion: was the Peaceful Cultural Reunification Festival, the Asian Peace Art Festival, and the convention of Men of Culture for World Peace, with the support of the government of the Republic of Korea and sponsored by the International Cultural Federation.

A lengthy biography of Soen Sa Nim was read which included his many years of establishing Zen Centers in Japan, the Americas, Europe (especially Poland), his great contributions to Korean Buddhism, and his helping Western minds to get "peace mind" and understand correct direction and correct life. The award was presented for Soen Sa Nim's "long distinguished work in the cultural world, thus contributing in the true spirit of the WVM to the eternal peace, co-existence and co-prosperity of mankind."

Among many other dignitaries that Soen Sa Nim met following the ceremonies was former Governor of California Pat Brown, the father of another former California Governor, Jerry Brown, known for his strong interest in Buddhism and vegetarianism.

If you think "I am bad," then you have bad.

Anytime you do not believe in love, you die. What is your life? The whole universe is only giving, giving to you. We call that unconditional love. It has no condition. So you must also give to this universe. Loving and helping this universe is necessary. Don't make atom bombs, don't kill animals, don't pollute the air or anything.

Many people have seen the movie, "Never Cry Wolf." Human beings never understand their correct situation. Human beings are the number one bad animal. We have destroyed much of nature, air, water and trees. Then we say we want world peace. Not possible. That is number one stupid!

Even if you have bad karma, if it's not for you but for other people, it becomes good karma.

So that is not so good. Human beings must just now WAKE UP—that is important. If we do not wake up, we cannot continue this human world, ok? It will soon disappear.

Q: If all the animals in the world can exist in peace without human beings, then why are we here? (Laughter)

SSN: Why are we here? I ask you, why do you eat every day? (Laughter) If everyone gives to each other, then there's no problem. The universe gives us everything. We are holding our I-my-me, our "I want this?" so this earth has a problem.

You must understand correct love. There's the famous story about two women arguing about a baby. Each one said, "This is my baby." The the King said, "Bring the baby here, I will divide it in two. You take half, you take the other half." He picked up his sword to kill the baby and one woman said, "Oh, you take this baby!" to the other woman. That is unconditional love. Not for myself, but only love for others.

Death of Zen Master

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Dignitaries included officials of the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism, sutra masters, government officials and congressmen, and over a thousand monks and nuns.

Hae Am Su Nim was born Seung Chun Choi in North Korea, the son of a farmer. When his father died, Hae Am Su Nim entered Phon Guk Sah temple near Seoul at the age of 11. He became a novice monk at 15, a Zen meditation monk at 23, and a full bhikku at 25. His monk's name was Hyeon Muh. He first studied with Zen Master Hye Wol, then with Zen Master Gong. In 1929 at the age of 43, he received inka and transmission from Zen Master Mang Gong. He was the abbot of many large temples, coming to Su Dok Sah at the age of 70.

Soen Sa Nim tells the following famous story. One day Zen Master Mang Gong and some of his sangha took a boat trip to an island where they were going to stay. As they went by a mountain, Mang Gong asked his companions, "Is the boat moving or is the mountain moving? Which one is correct?"

No one could answer, except Hae Am Su Nim, who said, "Neither the boat is moving nor the mountain is moving. It is your mind, Zen Master, that is moving."

Mang Gong Su Nim, replied, "How can you prove that?"

Hae Am Su Nim picked up a handkerchief and waved it. "Can you see that?"

Mang Gong Su Nim said, "That's wonderful!" and then gave him transmission.

Last November, frail and almost blind but still vigorous enough to engage visitors in Dharma combat, Hae Am Su Nim came to the United States for the first time, "to see if Zen had really taken root in America." According to Soen Sa Nim, the old Zen Master had a prodigious memory for Dharma speeches and poems and his sharpness never diminished in his old age. Thin and strong, his lightness made it possible for him to walk very quickly. On three legendary occasions he walked 60 miles in a single day.

Many poems and memorial speeches were offered in his memory at the funeral services. Soen Sa Nim gave the following poem.

FUNERAL POEM FOR GREAT ZEN MASTER HAE AM

From the sky, the Sun, Moon, Stars all into the ocean.

From the Ten Directions, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas face the East and cry.

Un Mun's dry shit on a stick, Dong Sahn's three pounds of flax, disappear into space. Joju's Mu is dancing under the white rocks.

Great Zen Master Hae Am's great wisdom shines bright under the Dok Seung Mountain pines.

Great Zen Master Hae Am's great Dharma speech is clearly heard from the sound of the Su Dok Sa stream.

Great Zen Master Hae Am Su Nim, where is he now? DOL!

Facing the blue sky, Ha! Ha!
Ha!
Looking down at the ground,
Aigo! Aigo! Aigo!

May 23, 1985

Shortly before he died, Zen Master Hae Am Su Nim was installed in February as the First Patriarch of the new Dok Seung Chongnim, or special training center at Su Dok Sah Temple on Dok Seung Mountain. There are only three other special training centers in all of Korean Buddhism, the "Three Treasure Temples." Hae In Sah (named as a chongnim in 1967) which is known as the Dharma Treasure Temple since it houses the entire Buddhist Tripitaka on 80,000 wooden blocks; Song Gwang Sah (named in 1969) known as the Sangha Treasure Temple, noted for its large number of Western students and whose famous Zen Master Ku Sahn died last year; and Tong Do Sah (named in 1984), known as the Buddha Treasure Temple where relics of the Buddha are enshrined in a stupa.

A chongnim is autonomous, enjoying complete freedom in its financial management and appointment of its abbots. The expression "chongnim" means "thicket." Literally, chong=the growth of grass without disturbance, and nim=the growth of trees without disorder. This expression signifies that within a monastery there are rules and regulations.

According to Zen Master Wol Ha of Tong Do Sah, the First Patriarch of the Tong Do Sah training center, a chongnim "is a place where the four trees grow well together and look like a single tree from the distance." The four "trees" means the four training halls of Zen meditation, sutra study, vinaya (monk's precepts) and chanting.

(We are indebted to Samu Su Nim, founder of the Zen Lotus Society of Toronto and Ann Arbor, and the editors of their quarterly SPRING WIND, for many of the above details about Su Dok Sah and chongnims.)



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