



## THE TWELFTH GATE

### Three Men Are Walking

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

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Three men are walking. The first man makes a sword sound, the second man waves his hands, and the third man picks up a handkerchief.

1. If you were there, what would be your correct function?
2. What is the relationship?
3. And lastly, what is the situation?

*Commentary: The function of each is different, but the situation is the same.*

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A long time ago Zen Master Cheung Sahn would ask his students this kong-an frequently. Nobody understood. Sometimes he would use wild actions or shout, “Yahhhh! Why don’t you understand?” Still, they couldn’t answer completely.

This kong-an is very important. It is an object “just like this” style kong-an. There are two kinds of “just like this” kong-ans, subject and object. Subject “just like this” means when you are hungry, what? Eat! Object “just like this” means if someone is hungry, what? Give them food! That is object “just like this” style. So, in this kong-an, what is your correct function? These three men do different actions, but the situation is the same. Their function is different, but it is the same situation. What is their relationship? What is the situation? Same situation, same condition, same relationship, but the function is different: one makes a sword sound, one takes out a handkerchief, one waves his hand—different actions, but the meaning is the same.

Here’s a hint: you go to a theater where somebody is doing a one-man show. He tells a very funny story, he acts funny, talks funny, and then everybody laughs. Everybody is happy. Many different people are laughing with different styles. Somebody is laughing, “Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha.” Somebody else is laughing, “Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu!” Somebody else is laughing, “Ho, Ho, Ho, Ho!”—different laughing styles. The action is different, but the condition and the situation are the same. So, what kind of condition, what kind of situation, what kind of relationship? You must attain that. That is the object “just like this.”

If you don’t understand, just don’t understand. If you keep this “don’t understand” then your Don’t Know mind becomes very strong and a big Don’t Know is possible, which means great question and great doubt. If you completely don’t know, then you will get complete enlightenment. If you have only a small question, only small enlightenment is possible. There are many kinds of enlightenment—small enlightenment, middle enlightenment, big enlightenment, and then finally, no enlightenment. No enlightenment is complete enlightenment.

