

NO HINDRANCE

Zen Master Seung Sahn

One day, a nun visited Zen Master Song Sahn.

“What is dharma?” she asked.

“No hindrance.”

“Then what does ‘no hindrance’ mean?”

Song Sahn replied, “why do you wear clothes?”

At this, the nun stripped naked and walked to the door.

1. What is dharma?
2. If you were Zen Master Song Sahn, at that time what would you do?
3. The nun stripped naked. Is that no hindrance?

COMMENTARY: A tree understands tree's job, and water understands water's job. What is a Zen Master's job? What is a nun's correct job? If you are attached to speech, you will go to hell like an arrow. If you digest speech you can kill all Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Which one do you like? Put it all down. Go to the store and drink iced tea.

This nun doesn't understand correct “no hindrance.” What is true no hindrance? At interview time if a teacher asks you, “What is no hindrance?” maybe you hit the floor. Not good, not bad. Maybe someone else says, “Ah, sky is blue, tree is green.” Not good, not bad. But one more step is necessary. What is complete no hindrance? No hindrance means, only help other people. That is true no hindrance.

In the eighteenth century, the French Revolution completely overturned society. All the French people said, “Ah, I am free, I am free!” At that time some people were in a restaurant where there was no smoking allowed, but one man was smoking. A man came up to him and said, “Why are you smoking inside?”

The smoking man said, “Ah, no hindrance—free, everything is free.”

Then the first man hit him. PTCHEW!

“Why did you hit me?”

The first man said, “I am free!”

So that's not free, OK? If you are attached to free, then freedom will kill you.

If you completely keep the rules, then you're truly free. Completely free means freedom from life and death. If life and death are no hindrance for you, then complete

freedom is possible. This kind of freedom is not for me, but for all beings. If hungry people come, give them food; thirsty people, give them drink—only help. That is the bodhisattva way.

First question. What is dharma? Dharma means everything; when you see, when you hear, when you smell, everything is the dharma. That is 100% dharma.

Second. If you are Zen Master Song Sahn, at that time, what would you do? This nun is not correct! How do you hit her mind?

Third. The nun stripped naked. Is that no hindrance? That is not no hindrance. No hindrance means not holding anything. Not holding anything means, help other people. That is no hindrance, OK?

If you still have like/dislike mind, then you are not free. Take away like/dislike mind, then there are no opposites. Then you can see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly, taste clearly; everything is clear. Then you can understand your correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. Then do it! Only do it, OK? If you are checking, then you have a problem. So, completely put it down. Then do it. That is freedom.

