

## dharma talk

*[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]*

Attainment is no attainment.

No attainment is attainment.

*[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]*

No attainment, also no “no attainment”.

*[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]*

Attainment is attainment.

No attainment is no attainment.

Three statements – which one is correct?

KATZ!

Today is Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>.

When I was nineteen years old, a very close friend of mine died. At the funeral I had a very strong experience. That experience had a great effect on my life. At that time I didn't understand what had happened, but all of my thinking disappeared for a short time. I didn't intend it to happen like that, but naturally, automatically, the experience appeared.

After that I had many questions. He was a very good friend, he had good abilities, but he died. What he practiced, what he studied, what he did became nothing. Because of that, I began to think about myself. What is the purpose of my life? What's the meaning of life? What am I? What should I do? Many questions. But still sometimes the thinking naturally disappeared. At that time, there was no life, no death, no thinking. Just very calm and clear. At that point there is no meaning. But again thinking and feeling would appear and then I would begin to worry again. What do I want to do? What's my life? If I try very hard to get money or anything, if I die, what is the use of it?

For almost ten years these two things would happen: one, thinking disappears, the other, a lot of thinking and worrying appears. I was really confused—which one is correct? Which one is my true mind? So, I had to live, on the one hand, like a regular person—go to school, go into the army and then get a job. But on the other hand, there was always that moment of experience before thinking. I became very unclear about my life...

As the years went along it became more and more serious. Then I moved to Toronto. I thought that maybe there was something in Toronto, in western society, worth striving for... something. But when I got there I soon realized my hopes were wrong. I was even more disappointed. There's nothing, no place to find answers to my questions. So my life became more and more miserable. Outside, things were OK, but inside I couldn't believe myself at all.

Then I began looking for a teacher, somebody who could help me. I met a few teachers, but nobody could connect with me, until I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. Af-

ter the Ontario Zen Center was founded in 1976, he would come to Toronto every year and stay two or three days teaching at the Zen Center. I also met a Korean nun at that time and would go to her temple and read books about Buddhism.

When I met Zen Master Seung Sahn the first time he really drew me in, his energy was so clear and strong. You already understand that. When he'd come to Toronto I would always try to follow him around and stay with him as much as I could. One day after a dharma talk at a Korean temple, after everyone had left he look at me and said, “You! Do you want to learn from me?”

I said, “Of course! Yes, sir!”

Then he said, “Come.” He sat in the dharma room and told me, “Bow three times.”

It was just like an interview situation—I never had an experience like that. Then he opened the kong-an book and tried to teach me. Soon I understand how to answer. One kong-an... passed, two kong-ans... passed, three kong-ans... passed. Finally he asked me the cigarette man kong-an. I tried to answer it in many ways, but he kept saying, “No. No. No.” I was very upset and frustrated.

“I have to answer,” I thought.

Then he smiled, “That's your homework. When you get an answer, come and tell me.” He had to go back to the United States the next day, so I just had to find the answer before he left. From that time until the next day I couldn't do anything. “Oh, what's the answer? What's the answer?” Thinking, thinking, thinking, but I couldn't find the answer. The next morning we had breakfast alone together. During the meal I tried to give an answer.

He said, “Don't be deluded. Don't make a stupid idea.” I was very embarrassed and quite upset.

“What can I do?” I couldn't think of anything else. That morning a lot of people come to the temple to see Zen Master Seung Sahn, but I couldn't stay in the room. My mind was spinning, “I must find the answer. I must find the answer before he leaves.” And then very soon, it was time for him to leave, but my mind was only saying, “I must find the answer.” Then a large group of people were saying goodbye and bowing to the Buddha. The people went outside to see him off, and he and I were left alone in the dharma room. He too bowed and tried to go, but I couldn't stand not being able to answer. So I grabbed him. “Sir! What should I do?!”

Quickly he turn around and said, “You got it!” And then he walked away leaving me there. What did I get? *[laughter]* Then I was really stuck, I couldn't do anything! That was almost eighteen years ago. He said “You got it.” So I ask everyone here, what did I get? Do you understand? That was almost eighteen years ago. If he gave me that same answer today, I'd hit him back thirty times. Why?

KATZ! .

Today we have an inka ceremony. Thank you very much for your teaching, Dae Soen Sa Nim.