



PRIMARY POINT

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive PRIMARY POINT free of charge, see page 30. To subscribe to PRIMARY POINT without becoming a member, see page 26. The circulation is 4000 copies.

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Cover picture:
Hwa Gye Sa temple, Seoul, Korea
Photo by Zen Master Dae Kwang

*my
dharma speech
is already finished*

Talk by Zen Master Seung Sahn at Mu Sang Sa temple
at the close of Winter Kyol Che 2001

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

The meaning of this hit is: becoming tight is becoming loose; becoming loose is becoming tight. The Heart Sutra says, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form." Because all things in this world have name and form, we can also say that this is "opposites world." In this opposites world we have becoming tight and also becoming loose. Today is Hae Jae, the end of the winter retreat, which means to loosen. Kyol Che, the name for our three month winter retreat, means to tighten. In the opposites world there is always contention.

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

The meaning of this hit is originally there is not even one thing. The Sixth Patriarch taught us that all things in this world, all the myriad things have name and form. All these names and forms are created by the mind. And even the mind itself does not exist. However much we search, we cannot find the mind. So, if there is not one thing at all that we can find, then what is it that becomes tight, what is it that becomes loose? We call that nirvana world.

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

In this world, becoming tight is just tight, becoming loose is just loose. If we read the Heart Sutra, we finally come to Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, unexcelled supreme enlightenment. This is the area where tightening is just tightening, loosening is just loosening. First I talked about opposites world. Here everything is very distinct—becoming tight, becoming loose—very clear. Then I talked about nirvana world: no tight, no loose. Then I talked about truth world: tight is tight, loose is loose. Of these three worlds, which one is the real world? Form is emptiness, emptiness is form; is that world the correct world? No form, no emptiness—nirvana world; is that the correct world? Form is form, emptiness is emptiness; is that the correct world? If somebody says that they found the correct world, this stick will hit them thirty times. If they cannot find the correct world, this stick will also hit them thirty times. Why is that?

KATZ!

Today is the full moon day of the first month. We call that Hae Jae day—the first day after a three month intensive meditation retreat.

A person's head becomes whiter and whiter as he gets older, but the color of the mountain remains green. In the end, both the mountain and the person return to emptiness. Today is the end of Kyol Che. That means don't attach to the world of name and form. If you don't attach to the world of name and form, there's nothing left but our moment-to-moment world. What am I doing in this moment? That's most important.

Actually my dharma speech is now finished. However, many people don't understand so I will explain a little more. Usually we would say that my mind brought me here to listen to this talk. But where is mind? From where does it appear and where does it go? We don't understand that. That is human. You carry your mind around everywhere but you don't know what it is. We are always proclaiming, "I, I, I," but we don't understand "I." So the big question is: What is human? A famous Zen poem says: "Coming empty handed, going empty handed—that is human. When you are born, where do you come from? When you die, where do you go? Life is like a floating cloud which appears. Death is like a floating cloud which disappears. The floating cloud originally does not exist. Life and death, coming and going are also like this. But there is one thing which always remains clear. It's pure and clear, not depending on life and death. Then what is that one pure and clear thing that pulls this body around?" What is the meaning of all these people from foreign countries coming here to our temple in Korea to practice Zen? Because of that one pure and clear thing they come here.

If you don't attach to the world of name and form,

If you find that one pure and clear thing, then you become the Tathagata Buddha. Another famous poem says: "If you want to understand the realm of Buddha keep a mind which is clear like space. Let all your thinking and all external desires fall far away. Let your mind go anyplace with no hindrance. Buddha's world is the world of no hindrance. Then what is keeping a mind which is clear like space? If you don't understand that, then listen to the following: It is enlightenment nature. Above is the dwelling place of all Buddhas. Below are the six realms of existence. One by one each thing has it. One by one each thing is complete." Everything has the same nature as the Buddha. All of you—even a dog, a cow, a cat, a bird—all have the same essential nature. That nature is originally clear like space. The poem goes on to say, "It (original nature) and dust (the world of name and form) interpenetrate. It is already apparent in all things."

From that place we can understand Zen Master Un Mun when he says: "Buddha is dry shit on a stick" or when Zen Master Dong Sahn says: "Buddha is three pounds of flax." We don't need to do meditation for many, many years and wait and wait and wait until this place appears. There is no place that is not Buddha's place. There is no place that does not have Buddha nature. Even though everything we see, hear and smell has Buddha nature, we don't recognize it, because of all our thinking. If we put it down, all of our thinking, completely put it all down, then we become one with the whole universe. Then everything we see, hear, smell... is Buddha. Everything has Buddha nature.

[Raises Zen stick over head.]

So, holding up the Zen stick—do you see?

[Hits table with stick.]

Do you hear? Already you see clearly and hear clearly. Then, are this stick, this sound and your mind the same or different? If you say they are the same, this stick will hit you thirty times. If you say different, this stick will also hit you thirty times. Why is it that you get hit whether you say same or different? Why?

KATZ!

Three times three is equal to nine.

Even though my dharma speech is now completely finished, some people are still not clear. My mind is the thing that carries around this body. But I don't understand, "Where is my mind?" If you understood your mind clearly—where it was, how it is—then everything I said to you would be very clear, but you don't know that. Everybody who did the retreat understands this question.

Honey and sugar are both sweet. But how do you explain the difference between the sweetness of honey and

that of sugar? It's impossible to explain. Even if you wrote many volumes on the subject you still couldn't explain the difference. But if you come up here and I put honey and sugar in your mouth... aah! then you will understand the difference. You must experience it. Even though you read everything about it, you still wouldn't understand. Fortunately we have a Zen center here at Hwa Gye Sa where people can come to get a taste. If you try and practice in the Zen center, then at some point you will understand, "Ah, that's my mind. That's the place where my mind stays." Then gradually where your mind is, how it is, will always appear in front of you.

A long time ago in China, whenever he was asked a question, Zen Master Lin Chi always shouted KATZ! Any time someone asked Zen Master Dok Sahn a question, he would only hit them. If Zen Master Gu Ji was asked a question, he held up one finger. Dok Sahn's hit, Lin Chi's KATZ and Gu Ji's one finger, are they the same or different? If you say they are the same, this stick will hit you. If you say they are different, this stick will still hit you. What can you do? That's the first course.

Somebody asked Zen Master Dong Sahn, "What is Buddha?" He replied, "Three pounds of flax." A monk asked Zen Master Un Mun, "What is Buddha?" He answered, "Dry shit on a stick." The first three Zen Masters did not open their mouths to answer... only action. But the next two Zen Masters opened their mouths, teaching us truth. If we keep on practicing, finally we enter this realm of enlightenment. Then everything we see, hear, smell, taste and touch... all is clear. Before our idea of self, our "I," was obstructing the truth. But, if you take that away, then there's nothing preventing us from becoming one with the universe.

So, what is the truth? Everything we see, hear, smell, taste and touch... all are the truth. The sky is blue, a tree is green, a dog is barking, sugar is sweet. Even though we live in the truth all the time, we forget our "don't know" truth. That's because of the thought, "I." The thought of myself is blocking the truth. So if you have no "I," if you have no idea of self, then everything is truth. For this reason, the great monks of old said, "Attaining my true self and getting enlightenment is easier than drinking water when you're thirsty." Why is it that we don't know such an easy thing? Because we have so much thinking. What will we do with all that thinking? We must practice to take away our think-

there's nothing left but our moment-to-moment world

ing. If you have a mind, give it to a passing dog. If you give away your mind, then you and the whole universe become one. At that time, everything you see and smell is real, everything is truth. The whole world is truth.

Zen teachers during the Tang and Sung dynasties only taught about this "truth world." Eventually, Zen disappeared in China because there was no teaching of how human beings should *function* correctly moment to moment. But fortunately, there have been great teachers who have handed down correct Zen teaching. What is correct teaching? What is correct function? Our job is to help all suffering beings. If a person is hungry, give them food. If someone is thirsty, give them water. If someone needs our help, just help them. That's our correct function.

In our teaching three points are clearly stated: substance, truth and function. First, we teach substance by using one action, such as holding up a finger, shouting KATZ or just hitting the floor. Next, we teach about truth world: the cushion is yellow, the floor is brown, the wall is white, the sky is blue. There is nothing that is not truth. Everything is truth, everything is clear. If we can attain this truth world, then we can use it to help suffering beings everywhere. We call this the Bodhisattva Way. In our school, substance, truth, and function are very distinct and clearly taught.

Buddhism is very consistent in its teaching, its practical application and its function. Almost all religions have some kind of opposites thinking. For example, I must call upon God for help, I must pray to God, or I must reach a God outside of myself. But Buddhism teaches that if you practice and attain your true self, then you become Buddha. In the Christian Bible, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." But most people don't understand the meaning behind this. What is the meaning of "way"? Way means to return to substance. What is the meaning of "truth"? Everything you see, hear, smell and taste is already truth.

What is not truth? The sky is blue, the tree is green, the dog is barking, sugar is sweet. Even though we live this truth all the time, we don't know truth

because we don't know ourselves. What is the meaning of "the life?" The life means helping all beings. When they are hungry, give them food. When they are thirsty, give them drink. Whenever you meet suffering beings, only help them. Buddhist teaching shows us how to find the correct way, truth, and correct life and use that to save all beings from suffering.

Our practicing family should all be very clear about this. We should not forget this when we are chanting. At that time we should ask ourselves: "Who is chanting?" When we are bowing we should ask: "Who is bowing? Who is doing these things?"

When the Korean War broke out, there was a widow whose only son had to go to war. Because she was completely devoted to her son, she worried about him all the time: "I have to make sure he gets married; I have to make sure he gets a good house and has nice things; so I must work hard while he is away." Every day, even though she worked very hard and kept long hours, she never forgot about her son, even in her dreams. When her son comes back, the widow will be very happy.

Just as this widow thinks only of her son, our students should never forget the Buddha's teaching. They should never forget their direction. As we keep this great question in our everyday lives—this great "don't know"—we can only look forward to the moment when suddenly it appears and we become clear. Just as this widow always looks forward to the day her son returns, we should always keep our great don't know mind. Always keep the great question in everything we do, when we chant, when we eat, in everything until the day we attain enlightenment and can save all beings from suffering.

