

▶ ▶ ▶ **Just do it.** Only go straight, don't know. Keep a clear mind. Don't hold anything. Don't attach to anything. Don't want anything.

Dae Soen Sa Nim gave us all these teaching words and one of the most important of them was: practice great love, great compassion, and the great bodhisattva way.

All of these have become internalized in part of our consciousness because he embodied them. This great love, great compassion, great bodhisattva way. I want to tell you one story about each point.

First, great love. I live in New York now but I began practicing in New Haven. The first time I met Dae Soen Sa Nim, the story is in *Dropping Ashes On The Buddha*, "When the lights go off, what?" That was the talk he gave. That was a long time ago, in the seventies. He was present through my many years while practicing in New Haven. He always asked me about what was happening in my life, about my wife and my children. One time, when my second child was born, he asked me, "How is it going?"

I said, "It's going okay, but I have a little problem. Now that my new daughter is born, my son is not so happy. He's a little jealous."

Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Oh! No problem. I'll tell you what to do. You take some candy. When your daughter is in the room, you go up to your son and give him this candy and say, 'You are wonderful. I don't like her so much either!'" [laughter]

That made my son very happy! My son and daughter are now very good friends, in their twenties.

He showed me father mind. I was the father, and he showed me father mind. He also understood sibling-father love and sibling love. He understood teacher love.

Another time, we were practicing in New Haven and we were blessed by his visiting very frequently in the beginning before he became so peripatetic and began traveling so much. He was always coming to New Haven.

One morning we were practicing in the dharma room and during practice when we were doing sitting meditation, someone rang the doorbell and somebody let this person into the Zen Center. When he came in, even though he was instructed to sit on the cushion, he just wandered around the dharma room. He was mumbling and kind of creating a significant disturbance. I'm sitting there—I'm a doctor—and I just didn't know what to do. I was sitting there thinking, "Maybe we should take this person away." All of a sudden, Dae Soen Sa Nim jumped up, walked over, put his arm around this man, and called the monk who was there—Mu Gak Sunim—and said, "Oh! This very good man, but he doesn't feel so good now. You take him to the hospital." So Mu Gak Sunim took him to the hospital. He was totally psychotic and they admitted him to the hospital. This man is still around—he became a lifelong student of Dae Soen Sa Nim. He's still a student. But meanwhile, I'm thinking, "Wait! I'm the doctor here! I'm supposed to know about this!" But I wasn't listening so clearly. Dae Soen Sa Nim taught me something about this great compassion. Being a doctor is helping people, but if you're not listening, you don't see what's going on. He made this diagnosis: The patient is psychotic, take him to the hospital!

Finally, this great bodhisattva way. The last time I was with Dae Soen Sa Nim he had come to New York City and was staying in Long Island. He was coming to have his heart checked. This is before he had all of his operations and he was going to this famous heart hospital, St. Francis. It was difficult to get to see the doctor so he took a hotel room and there were at least four or five, maybe six monks, sometimes even more would come and they would stay. I went out to see him frequently. When I went there one Saturday afternoon after practice, he was surrounded by the monks, many of whom you know. He said he wanted to do something, because he was getting bored. They said, "No, you're not feeling so good. You're sick, so we got you some videos. We can watch these videos." They asked him which video he'd like, and he picked *The Seven Samurai*.



We all started watching this video. He had a big, king-size bed. There were two monks and me sitting on the bed, some were sitting around the room. This is a Japanese movie, it's a very long, very interesting movie about a samurai who comes to the rescue of these people who are being attacked by these bandits, and then he gets six of his compatriots together and these seven samurai save the community. After maybe fifteen or twenty minutes goes by, somebody is snoring. After an hour, everybody was sleeping except Dae Soen Sa Nim and me. He was sitting there watching and laughing. After maybe two more hours, this long movie comes to an end and he turns to me and says, "Ah, now understand bodhisattva action!" [laughter]

Everybody else was sleeping! They missed that message!

What I got from that is that this heroism embraced by bodhisattva action was completely part of his life. He gave always great love, great compassion, and he lived this great bodhisattva way. I also wrote a poem, which I won't repeat, but the last line of my poem was:

The great temple bell resonates long after the hammer strikes.

Thank you for your teaching, Dae Soen Sa Nim.

Steve Cohen, JDPSN

