

# In Memory of Zen Master Seung Sahn

NO BIRTH  
DAY  
NO DEATH  
DAY  
BEEP .  
BEEP .

*Zen Master Soeng Hyang*

As most of you know, the three important things in the Buddhist teachings are the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. Zen Master Seung Sahn was all three of those things, and so are we. That's the good news.

Before the abbot mentioned that beeping sound from the alarm panel, I was listening to it earlier and it started to kind of annoy me. But then I thought, well, it's the universal heartbeat. Beep. Beep. It sounds like an intensive care unit, really.

As our practice deepens, and we continue to sit Kyol Ches and Yong Maeng Jong Jins, and just do it in our life, we begin to get that sense of the universal heartbeat, perhaps. Zen Master Seung Sahn was always famous for talking about the teaching that there is no life, no death, no coming and no going—so don't make a big deal. No birthday, no deathday.

One time, Stephen Levine was here to give a workshop on death and dying with Zen Master Seung Sahn. I went to get Dae Soen Sa Nim, up in his room. Tons of people came to the workshop because Stephen Levine was very popular; he had lots of books out about death and dying. I was walking Zen Master Seung Sahn down the stairs and he said, "What's this conference about?" There were a lot of people here—more than come to our Yong Maeng Jong Jins. I said, "It's about death and dying." He said, "What are we going to talk about? That's not important! In Korea, that's nothing. Dying is not important." I said, "Well, it's really important in the United States, so say something about it."

One thing he said was that when you die, that's how you've lived—you can't just get a special mind in the last ten minutes of your life. If you have a vow, a direction, some training, and some kind of a sense of wanting to be fully human, then death is just like flipping into life. When you die, with your last expiration, you take your vow and just say, "How may I help you?" That's all. Then there's no fear, no perverted view—just how may I help you?

Today we are honoring that very simple teaching. We don't really have to direct Zen Master Seung Sahn in our chanting and in our ceremony. It's part of the tradition of waiting these seven weeks, seven times seven is 49 days, there's a Buddhist idea about rebirth happening at that time. Then we send the light of our chanting to that person. All of us in this room have some kind of connection to Zen Master Seung Sahn, some kind of gratitude. When we're chanting, we don't have to think about the person or the photograph, or even the teaching that much. Each one of us has gratitude in our hearts for the work Dae Soen Sa Nim did. Send that gratitude. Everybody likes to be thanked. So thank you very much for coming. ☸

