

## REFLECTIONS

*Zen Master Dae Kwang*

On November 30, 2004, Zen Master Seung Sahn died. At that time, I had just arrived in Korea for a visit, so I was fortunate enough to be able to see him the day before he died. Zen and Buddhism teach us that there is nothing special, that only our like and dislike mind creates special. Death is also not special, however, it is our great teacher. Just before he died, Zen Master Seung Sahn was doing just what he had always been doing, teaching us. The prospect of death can lead some people to a life of self-concern, but he would use his illnesses as teaching for us. During the more than twenty-five years that I knew him, his body was quite ill, but this never hindered him. His job was to give, and he gave himself completely to us. No monument or sentiment can memorialize that.

Whenever a teacher dies, many feelings arise in people. Some feel grief at the loss; some feel remorse because of what they didn't do; some feel a sense of indebtedness or gratitude for what they have received. The most basic of these from a Buddhist point of view would be gratitude and indebtedness. The gratitude we feel at this time is for our teacher's clear teaching and for the giving of his whole life to us. This is the greatest gift that anyone can give. Any time we receive the gift of good teaching, it comes with a responsibility—a kind of debt. That means we have a duty to do something with it.

A few hours before his death, the Sixth Patriarch taught his students this way: "After my passing away, do not follow the worldly tradition and cry or lament. What you should do is know your own mind and realize your own Buddha-nature, which has neither motion nor stillness, neither birth nor death, neither comes nor goes, neither affirms nor denies, neither stays nor departs. After my death, if you practice according to my instructions it will be as if I were alive. However, if you go against my teaching, no benefit will be obtained, even if I were to remain with you."

So, what are the instructions? Our School's teaching has always been very simple and clear. Zen Master Seung Sahn only taught one thing—don't know. Sometimes this "don't know" meant "just do it," sometimes it meant primary point, sometimes correct situation, relationship and function, sometimes "put it ALL down," and sometimes great love, great compassion, the bodhisattva way. It came in many boxes, with a wide variety of wrappings, but the question was always the same, "What are you?" As he said many times, "I hope you only go straight don't know, which is clear like space; try, try, try for 10,000 years non-stop; soon get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering"—OK? 🌀



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