



GREAT DHARANI

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When we think of Zen Master Seung Sahn, we remember him as a teacher. We are all his students.

Just before watching the video of his funeral, we were chanting the Great Dharani. Zen Master Seung Sahn said many times, “I don’t teach any technique, I only teach don’t know.” But, actually,

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the Great Dharani was his technique. That was his practice. He got enlightenment by chanting the Great Dharani and later he kept this Dharani all of the time.

Being around Zen Master Seung Sahn in Poland or America or Korea, any Zen Center, any temple, he was always the most strongly practicing person in the place. I remember at Hwa Gye Sah temple where we had wake-up at 3:20 am, many of us woke up a little earlier, and whenever any of us looked at Zen Master Seung Sahn’s windows, his lights were already on. Then some of us wanted to wake up a little earlier—at 2:30 am, we looked at his windows, and still, the lights were on. 2:00 am—still! He was the first person in the temple who woke up and practiced.

One time I went to him and said, “I have this and this problem, lots of thinking.” He said, “How many bows do you do?” I said, “Oh, maybe 100 or 200.” He said, “That’s not enough. Myself, I’m sixty years old, and every single day, 1000 bows.” He would wake up at 2:00 am and, first thing, do 1000 bows straight. Zen Master Seung Sahn was not only a teacher, he was also a great practitioner himself. He was always trying to practice and give us this gift of formal practice.

The last conversation I had with him—well, the last one maybe wasn’t so important, but the one before that was again about his practicing. Somehow, I ended up being with him by myself in a hotel room. Everybody disappeared and it was only the two of us in the room. Whenever I was with him, he would never start talking to me first. He would always keep silent. He was doing his Dharani, of course. We were sitting there for five or ten minutes, not talking. Finally, thinking about how to start a conversation, I said, “Dae Soen Sa Nim, are you doing the Great Dharani right now?” He said, “Yes, of course. I do it all of the time.” I said, “Even in your sleep?” He said, “Yeah, even when I’m sleeping I’m doing it. Even right now while I’m talking to you.”

From other sources, we found out he could do this Great Dharani, if he wasn’t tired, three times a minute. When he was a little tired, only two times a minute. He was doing this 24/7. He told me, “For fifty years, for fifty years, I never change.” Fifty years. Never change. Then he said, “All my life, I never look back, even for one second.” That was the last teaching I got from him.

So now, whenever we are chanting this Great Dharani, I think he’s doing it wherever he is. If you want to meet him face-to-face, just chant it one more time. ☸