

The Whole World

Zen Master Soeng Hyang



[Raises the Zen stick above her head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Modern is ancient, ancient is modern.

In the world of name and form, things are always coming and going. This is also true of what we consider to be ancient and old, or new and modern.

[Hit.]

No ancient, no modern.

Today we are meeting for the Whole World is a Single Flower conference. This point means the whole world is a single flower. This is our original nature, and the original nature of the whole universe.

[Hit.]

Ancient is ancient, modern is modern.

Everything is just like it is. At this moment, everything is the Tathagata. We just “think” that it isn’t.

Each of these three statements is very good Buddhist teaching. Which one is the best?

KATZ!

Outside the sun is shining brightly. Inside, hundreds of faces are also shining brightly.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Buddha was born to save all people from suffering. Now, we live in the modern world. How is he doing?

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ came to earth to save all people from suffering. Now, two thousand years later, how is he doing?

Our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, said that if Buddha gave transmission to Mahakasyapa now, it would not be “flower” transmission.

Long ago, Buddha held up a flower on Vulture Peak. Twelve hundred people had gathered there to hear him speak of the dharma, and he said nothing. He only held up a flower. This was one of the Buddha’s strongest and most profound teachings. Only one of those twelve hundred people understood.

Mahakasyapa looked at the flower and smiled.

This is “whole world is a single flower” transmission. Zen Master Seung Sahn said that if Buddha gave transmission to Mahakasyapa today, it would not be “flower” transmission. It would be “tear” transmission. That’s because, in our world today, there is so much suffering.

When I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1972, he was a 45-year-old man. He already understood how much suffering people can create for each other. He became a Zen monk because he wanted to find a way out of this suffering for himself and for all beings.

By the time he went to the United States, he had not just found the way out. He had also very generously, and very brilliantly, found simple and profound ways to teach Zen practice.

When I first moved into the Providence Zen Center, I had many ideas about many things. That is the human condition: many ideas about many things. One of my attachments was around the idea of “ancient” and “modern.”

I was attached to natural foods, clothes made from natural fibers, no plastics, no synthetic products, and so on. At one point, I tried using only candles and kerosene lamps in our Zen Center instead of electricity. I insisted on patched clothing, and eating only brown rice. White rice was removed from Zen Master Seung Sahn’s diet!

A good Zen Master knows how to use good timing when teaching students. After I had been living in the temple for a few months (and after he couldn’t stand the brown rice and kerosene lamps any more), Zen Master Seung Sahn called me into his study.

He told me he had a gift for me. He said, “You like very old things, yeah?” Then he gave me a paper fan with the Heart Sutra written on it. It was maybe thirty years old. I was delighted! What a beautiful old thing, and it was made of natural paper and wood.

Then he said, “I have a *really* ancient gift for you.” I thought to myself, “Wow, this must be a very special present.” He handed me a small round rock. He looked at me with his twinkling eyes and said, “Now, *that* is old!”

The well-timed lesson hit my consciousness, and my habituated attachment to ancient and modern was blown away.

I wish to publicly thank Zen Master Seung Sahn for all that he did for his students, for his very clear vow and direction, and for his immense generosity.

We are here today to celebrate the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. We are here to thank not only Zen Master Seung Sahn, but also to thank each other for just showing up today. Our vow and direction must be to keep showing up, unconditionally. Show up when things seem difficult and complicated. Show up when we are tired and perhaps discouraged. Our job is to attain enlightenment and help this world.

Attaining enlightenment and helping this world is not an ancient idea or a modern idea. It is not an idea at all. It is our

is a Single Flower

original job. It was Buddha's job, Jesus' job, and Zen Master Seung Sahn's job. Now it is our job. Actually, it was always our job.

In Zen, great love and great compassion are our original teacher. So, our job is very clear: How can we help this world?

In Zen, there are three kinds of enlightenment: first enlightenment, original enlightenment, and final enlightenment.

First enlightenment is, attain the substance of this world, its original nature. We call this "the whole world is a single flower."

Original enlightenment is keeping our whole world is a single flower mind, and perceiving that everything, just as it is, is the truth.

Final enlightenment is correct situation, relationship, and function. That means, how can our original nature, how can we ourselves, function to help this world?

In Buddhism, this is not just a good idea, but the function of our true self, which has no idea, only does it. So, "the whole world is a single flower" means, just do it.

[Hit.]

Everything is one. Also, everything is not one.

[Hit.]

No one, no different.

[Hit.]

Things are different. That's the truth.

Everything is one thing. That also is the truth.

Which one of these teachings helps the world the most?

KATZ!

Today we celebrate the Whole World is a Single Flower Conference. Please have a good time with your sangha friends.

