

Please Come Back

Zen Master Bon Haeng

This dharma talk was given at Vulture Peak in India, during the Whole World Is a Single Flower tour in October 2011.

The Buddha said if you rub sleeves with somebody walking down the street, you've had an energy interaction with that entity for ten thousand generations. So, not much happens by chance. Even the monkeys—yeah, they're listening to the dharma talk. They're here for two reasons: one, we're very interesting; two, they're hungry.

I heard this story about Zen Master Seung Sahn one time when he was in Los Angeles. Everybody came down to do prostrations in the morning and he quickly stopped everyone. And he said, "Please, please, come over. We must bow." So everybody stood up, including Zen Master Seung Sahn, and went over and stood in front of the teacher's seat. Three prostrations. Then he went over very carefully and picked up this big beetle and carried it out the door and said, "Please come back when you get human body, OK?" Very interesting.

I was flying to Europe and I opened a magazine and it said for every human being on this planet there are more than two million bugs. More than two million bugs for every human being! We've been meeting some of them this trip. But the point is, for us even to get a human body and be able to come here and practice is just an extraordinary gift.

There's a story about a colt. When it was very young they put it in the pasture with the cows. So this horse



Photo: Allan Matthews

grew up all the time thinking, "I'm a cow!" You know, a cow doesn't do much. Eating, shitting, standing. But this horse had lots of energy. It wanted to run and gallop and be a horse. So this horse started to think, "Ugh! I'm not a correct cow! There's something wrong with me! I have a problem!"

Then one day this horse walked down to this little pond and went to get a drink of water. Just as it started to drink it looked in and saw its reflection. Gasp! "Oh! I'm a horse!" Sometimes people do pilgrimages or travel to spiritual places and have a similar experience. "Ah! I am OK just the way I am!" We are already Buddha, just the way we are.

Before studying Zen, I studied yoga. In yoga, they don't have dharma talks. They have what they call *satsang*, which is a Sanskrit word. *Sat* means truth, and *sang*—I didn't know what it meant. As I have been traveling around I've been asking some people. I said to Tin Le, "What is this *satsang*? What is this *sang*?" He said *sang* means "suchness." So, "truth-suchness." Then I also made friends with one of these young children. And I said to him, "What does *satsang* mean?" And he said, "This *sang* means 'sharing.'"

When the Buddha came here to speak, at first he was expounding the eightfold path, the twelve links of dependent origination, the four noble truths. At that time there was much explanation. But when he came to Vulture Peak to give perhaps his most famous sermon—which happens to be the primary point in Zen practice—not so many words. As a matter of fact, when he did use words, he sort of screwed it up because he tried to explain it afterward. As we

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sit here today, then, our job is not about explanation. Nor is it about understanding. It's always about attaining the same insight that the Buddha attained.

What I wanted to do today was just read the sermon, the short kong-an, that was given.

And as I read it, let your energy come down. Let your mind rest a little bit. We're here today with the Buddha. Maybe as I read it I'll explain just a little bit as I go along, too.

When the Buddha gave this speech, he didn't say, "Now we will sit for ten minutes," and then held up the flower. He only sat down and was still. Then everybody's mind moved. This is a long walk up here. At that time, twenty-five hundred years ago, maybe you walked two miles, three miles, five miles to hear a dharma speech. Then this famous teacher sits down to give a speech and doesn't say anything. "This is no good! I walked all this way! I want something!" Desire mind comes up. But the Buddha didn't say anything; he just sat. Nobody knew how long. One minute passed. Two minutes passed. Five minutes passed.

Then, when Buddha held up a flower, only Mahakashyapa smiled. So this is very interesting, because most people talk about Buddha holding up a flower. But it's not just about holding up the flower. First, he sat. Primary point. Next, the situation was clear for him. There it was. And out of the twelve hundred people—some sto-

ries say five hundred, some say five thousand—only one person smiled. Only one person made this mind-to-mind connection with the Buddha.

Long ago on Yeong Sahn mountain (Grdhrakuta), Shakyamuni Buddha sat down to give a Dharma talk before a vast assembly of followers. After sitting for several minutes in silence, he held up a flower. All were silent. Only Mahakashyapa smiled.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "I have the all-pervading true Dharma, incomparable Nirvana, exquisite teaching of formless form. Not dependent on words, a special transmission outside the sutras, I give it to Mahakashyapa."

1. Why did Mahakashyapa smile?
2. Why did the Buddha pick up the flower?
3. What kind of Dharma transmission was given to Mahakashyapa?
4. The Buddha gave his Dharma to Mahakashyapa. But what if Mahakashyapa had said, "No, thank you, I already have Dharma. [You already saw the smile.]" If you were the Buddha, what could you do?

Commentary: The flower smiles. The Buddha's face is red.¹

So this teaching is so simple. So direct. And even for the Buddha he had to comment on it at the end. In our school, we call that putting legs on a snake. Not necessary. So if you were the Buddha at that time, recognizing Mahakashyapa's insight, how could you do it in a very simple, clear way? No need for words or speech, but from your heart, from your action, from your clarity.

All of us know that Zen Master Seung Sahn taught situation, relationship, function. Each moment, a situation is appearing. We have a relationship with it. Then, an action appears out of that. For the Buddha, twenty-five hundred years ago, situation-relationship-function was that. But we have this beautiful altar, so our situation is a little bit different. The transmission has already taken place. We have already received it. So then we have some flowers here, first to hold up and then to function correctly and offer to the Buddha. Jo and Grace will pass them out. Thank you very much. ♦

Note

1. From Seung Sahn, *The Whole World Is a Single Flower* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Publishing, 1992).

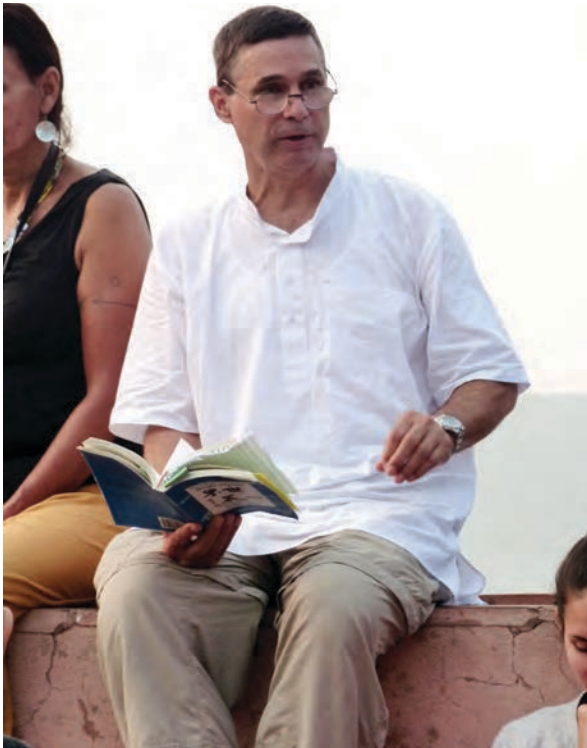


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