

Still Helping You

Zen Master Dae Bong

Speech given at the funeral ceremony, Paris, April 23, 2013.

We are all gathered here in great sadness. Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's death was sudden and shocking, even though most of us knew that he had serious health problems for many years, and especially because in the last few years—and recently in particular—he was looking brighter and stronger and better.

Zen Master Wu Bong was a strong person, and his teaching was strong, his action was strong, so his death was strong. He just did it. He has given us all a very great and powerful and important and difficult teaching. Big medicine takes time to digest. Even though we talk about impermanence and we all know that, when we experience it with someone who is so close to us, it becomes real.

Zen Master Wu Bong has no problem. He is fine, and I have no doubt about that. And I'm sure none of you doubt that at all. Maybe we have a problem. If we have a problem, then it just means that we were attached to his body, his voice and his form, and we didn't completely digest his teaching. But if your teacher has power, then even after he dies, he is still helping you.

A great Zen master is like a sun shining. They keep our mind warm, help wake us up. A great Zen master dying is like a supernova: all the material goes out. So all his dharma energy, all his dharma power is coming out to us even more now than when he was alive.

So cry when you are sad, and grieve and feel bad, but I'm sure if you continue practicing as he taught us, you will more and more feel his great dharma energy filling you, even more than you felt when he was alive. This is completely my experience with Zen Master Seung Sahn, and I'm sure it will be yours with our dharma brother, our great teacher and our great friend, Zen Master Wu Bong.

Gary Snyder is a famous American poet and Zen student who was a monk in Japan. He tells a story about working in the monastery garden with one of his brother monks, a Japanese monk. One time his brother monk leaned over and said, "Our teacher passed away five years ago. Remember how during his dharma speeches he used to speak so softly that you could barely hear him? Well, I'm just beginning to hear him now."

So the interactions you have had with Zen Master Wu Bong and the things he said to you, none of that's gone. His energy, which continues to come to us, will be more strongly inside you and more beneficial. I have no doubt about that.

Wu Bong Sunim lived a great deal of his life as a layperson. I think he and his wife were sunims on the inside. I call them undercover sunims. Undercover people are important—we have some sunims who are undercover lay-

people! *[Laughter.]* So if we all do our job correctly moment to moment, being undercover just makes our minds wider.

But Zen Master Wu Bong understood this life is not simply about getting happiness. Our great grandteacher, Man Gong Sunim, was once asked, "Why don't more people practice Zen?" He said, "Everybody wants a good thing, but most people don't understand that when you get a good thing you also get a bad thing. If they understood that, then they would practice Zen." So our life is not about getting good things and avoiding bad things. It is about attaining how to correctly use each thing that appears. Good things come, we use them to go the correct way; bad things come, we use them to go the correct way.

This was Zen Master Wu Bong's life. It is why we met him, and why we all feel sad that he seems to be gone. We have an obligation now to deeply digest his teaching and his efforts for us; it is our own true nature. Then his most recent teaching to us will help us greatly. We are not going to waste the shock that we have experienced. Then he will be very happy.

The first time I met Zen Master Seung Sahn, as soon as he opened his mouth I thought, "This is my teacher." Then I sat a three-day retreat with him and had private interviews with him each day. At the end of the interview on the last day, he looked at me for a moment and asked, "Do you have any more questions?"

I was 26, but I felt 3 years old. I said, "When will I see you again?"

He immediately took his stick and hit me strongly across the thigh. It was 36 years ago but I still feel it today! *[Laughter.]* I was shocked. Then he leaned forward and looked at me deeply in the eyes and said, "When you keep don't know mind, you and I are never separate."

So if you want to be with Zen Master Wu Bong now, just keep don't know mind. Don't know where he is; don't know who you are; don't know where you are; don't know what you are doing; then you'll suddenly be together with him, and that moment's direction and action will become very clear.

I am sure his teaching will continue to be even more powerful for us than before. We are lucky because your teacher and my dharma brother had power, so he will continue to help us even though his form has changed.

Everyone, everything, returns to the original point.

That is the universal rule.

Clouds are always coming and going.

The high sky is always blue.

Thank you, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim. ◆