

International School Zen Master's Note



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

Did They Pass On?

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Zen Master Seung Sahn's passing and the 20th anniversary of Zen Master Su Bong's passing.

What huge gifts they both are to our sangha and the world. No past tense for those two! They are alive and well in all of the important bodhisattva ways. Actually, all they have done is turn in their rusty rental cars and taken off to continue the great work of life and death.

So we will eternally thank them for all their gifts, their strong practice, and of course wisdom and generosity. Their humor, lack of pretentiousness and their sometimes unorthodox behavior enable them to always make me smile when I think of them.

The biggest tribute we can give to them is for each of us to aspire to emulate their great effort and compassion. Three bows to them both.

4] Not Just a Human World

Zen Master Seung Sahn

This world is changing very fast. Recently, I went to Moscow to take part in a large conference called the Global Forum. The idea of this conference was very interesting: How can we save this world? Soviet President Gorbachev had invited over six hundred people—prominent religious, political, scientific and business figures—from many countries. Gorbachev perceives that this world is in danger. His mind is very wide. He isn't attached to the idea of Communism.

Human beings have proven themselves to be very stupid animals. We have broken the natural world—broken the air, mountains, rivers; killed animals; fought each other. We don't understand our own correct situation or the correct way. In human life, keeping the correct way is very difficult. People get money, become famous, have this possession or that, but

when old age and death approach, there is much suffering. In a way, if you have much money, there is more suffering;

if you have no money, there is no suffering. Also, if you have too much thinking, too much understanding, then there is more suffering; if your mind is simple, there is no suffering, and it is possible to accept old age and death as a natural process. This simple mind is don't know mind. The don't know mind does not check, does not hold, does not want, is not attached to anything. It only keeps a one-pointed, simple direction.

But if you are holding your opinion, your condition, your situation, then this world attacks you. First, your mind attacks you; then your family, your friends, all the people you meet attack you; your society, your culture, time and space, everything attacks you. If you put it all down, this world and



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

time and space cannot touch you. Then you can control this world, you can control time and space.

Human beings always want something, and this wanting never ends, so our life is always complicated, always suffering. Putting it all down means making life very simple, like a clear mirror. The name for this mirror-mind is Great Love, Great Compassion and the Great Bodhisattva Way. Originally everything is very simple, very harmonious. Only when “I” appears do things get complicated and suffering begins. When “I” disappears, this whole world is yours. When “I” appears, you lose Us world.

For instance, in West Germany some people are wary of unification. Why? Because East Germany is very poor. So “I don’t like” appears. That’s animal mind, not human being’s mind. East Germany has had much suffering; West Germany is prosperous. We must put down our prejudices and live in the world with the sky, the trees, the air and other people.

At this conference in Moscow, the religious and political leaders of the world got together and talked about how to save this world. Now they are all concerned about ecology, about the environment, about pollution in the air and in the water. They talked about how to fix the problems of the world, how to raise enough money, things like that. In my talk to them, I explained that this is not just the human beings’ world; our universe includes animals, birds, plants, air, sky, everything. When there is harmony in all these things, the world is harmonious. When there is no harmony, there is a problem. So the problems of this world are only a result; this result is from primary cause. If you don’t understand primary cause, you cannot fix the results. What kind of primary cause?

Today there are five billion people in the world. In 1945, at the end of the war, there were only two and a half billion people. So since the Second World War, the human population has grown very fast. Also, there has been an economic revolution. Now many people in the West are comfortable: good house, good car, good situation. But how many people have happiness? Every day twenty-five thousand people die of hunger in the poor countries of the world. But in the rich countries of the world, there is much leftover food thrown into the garbage. So there is



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

imbalance in this world. Who made this imbalance? Human beings holding on to their opinion, condition and situation have made this imbalance, this suffering in the world.

Only a short time ago, everyone was afraid of nuclear war. Now everyone is afraid of AIDS. Always, everyone is afraid of dying. But if you keep your correct function, correct situation, correct relationship moment to moment, you can never die. Then you make harmony and balance in this world; that’s how you help this world—not only human beings, but the entire universe. That’s a very wide mind.

Western history always talks about change from the outside, so Western societies have many revolutions. Eastern mind means inside revolution,

not outside. It means sharing our world with the sun, animals, trees, all of life. Many Western people have been attracted to meditation because of these ideas. When your life becomes correct, you become harmonious with the rest of the universe.

The Buddha always talked about this idea: love and compassion, harmony with everything in the universe. He talked about equality and love. Everything in the universe has its job: tree has tree’s job, bird has bird’s job, human being has human being’s job. Only human beings don’t understand their correct job.

So any kind of Zen practice means making your mind very simple, which means don’t know mind. Don’t know mind means understanding human beings’ original job. The Buddha practiced unceasingly for six years. Bodhidharma sat for nine years. Why? He already had enlightenment, so why did he sit for nine years in the cave at Sorim? He realized that the time was not ripe for his teaching, so these nine years were a time of waiting for him. This waiting was not for himself but for all beings. So his waiting was his practice.

Bodhidharma’s waiting mind is also your mind. Putting down your opinion, your condition, your situation, while keeping correct function, correct situation, correct relationship is also Bodhidharma’s waiting mind. This is the bodhisattva mind; this mind’s job is never finished, because this mind is only for all beings.

I hope you continue to keep this Bodhisattva Way. Don’t make anything. Moment to moment, just do it. ♦