

Also, saying “What am I doing just now? What is this?”

My next big lesson with Zen Master Seung Sahn was this. When I first moved into the Zen center I quit working and was just hanging around the temple. I was a registered nurse, but had decided that I didn’t like nursing anymore. In the 1970s, the doctors could be autocratic, and I had been placed in some difficult and painful situations while working in hospitals. As nurses, nobody listened to us. So I decided, “Oh, Soen Sa Nim is the best doctor. I’ll stay home and hang out with Soen Sa Nim and not be a nurse.”

One day Zen Master Seung Sahn said, “You’re a nurse, aren’t you?”

“I don’t like hospitals so much.”

“We need money. You be a nurse.”

So that was good. I went back to nursing, and I helped to pay the rent! I learned to integrate the Zen practice of

paying attention to each moment into my nursing vocation, everything became my teacher. Good, bad or ugly, I learned to enter it all more unconditionally.

Zen is not about whether we live monastically or whether we live a lay life. Every single one of us has to ask, “What am I?” “For what and for whom?” And of course, “How may I help you?” Asking these questions completely helped me be a better nurse than I ever could have been without practice. We cannot spread the dharma. That’s a big mistake. If we have the idea, “Oh, we’re having this conference; we’re going to help spread the dharma,” then we’re mistaken. Each one of us has to find out what we are; what we are in *this* moment. As we learn to do this, we will be able to teach others. Then the conference and the dharma are not separate. Let us all enjoy and listen to each other and have fun.

Thank you very much.

We Have a Fine Refuge

Seol Jeong Sunim

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I’d like to offer a heartfelt welcome to all of you who must have come from a great distance. Some of you had to take time out of a difficult schedule. I’d like to thank all of you for coming and for your contribution. We are



Photo: Lubor Kosut

disciples of Buddha. We are all family. Family are not just people who meet because they happen to be in the same place. They meet each other because they understand each other, they respect each other, and they love each other. Buddhists meet each other also to practice the buddhadharma. We call this conference “The Whole World Is a

Single Flower,” which means the correct eye to be able to discern the correct dharma.

We all have the question, “Why do we live? What achievements do we have to attain in this life?” The goal of all Buddhists—the goal of all beings—is to reach nirvana, to reach ultimate liberation. That is the world of joy, ecstasy and ultimate perfection. Nirvana and this world are not two, so we and the world are not two. When mind is at ease in the Buddhist sense, that means it’s the state of mind completely free from agony, fear and suffering. And in such complete, perfect stillness, we have a fine refuge. That is the refuge of perfect freedom.

It’s a place of no hindrance. It’s a place of eternal bliss. It’s a place where true self can be unfurled forever. It is a place of utter purity and light. And you will find the whole universe a clear and pure place. It’s where there is no object and subject. There is no set order. Everywhere you go, you find truth. And everywhere is authentic. It is the place of truth beyond words.

Maybe Zen masters have taught you the important question, “What am I?” The true meaning of “The Whole World Is a Single Flower” is finding yourself. It is only because people have lost their true self that the world has become a place of conflict, jealousy, struggle and suffering. Finding this true self is the ultimate goal of this conference—The Whole World Is a Single Flow-

er—and to this goal, Zen Master Seung Sahn dedicated his whole life. No matter how rich you are, no matter how famous you are, money and fame are here only for a moment. It's here and then it's gone. It doesn't guarantee you true freedom. It doesn't guarantee you true happiness. It doesn't even give you joy.

Where does suffering come from? It comes from within. Where does it come from within? It is from greed and attachment. Sentient beings are too used to attachment and greed, so much so that they don't even know how uncomfortable it is, how agonizing it is, how sad it is, how painful it is.

What Buddha taught and what Seung Sahn Sunim taught you all his life is to be free from attachment and greed. If you are totally immersed in greed, you don't know how to live. We already have true happiness. We already have true freedom. We already have true virtue. We all have complete merit and wisdom already inside of us. We just forget that we do. Buddha's teaching, in other words, is compassion and wisdom. Wisdom is knowing that you have been on the wrong, incorrect path and finding the place in your mind from which you can see everything in the world with the mind of no thought. It is knowing with certainty what kind of life we should lead.

That's wisdom, and the Whole World Is a Single Flower conference is for us to gain that wisdom. We aim to be free from suffering and live the life beyond life and death. So put down anger, greed, ignorance, attachment, right here, right now. That's Zen.



Photo: Jerry Botha

Some people may ask, "How can we live after we put down anger, greed and ignorance? We cannot live like that."

Wise people put it down. Unwise people cannot put it down. If you just put down anger, greed and ignorance, then boundless merit, boundless wisdom will just come to you naturally. Buddha taught that already limitless boundless compassion, boundless wisdom, boundless life, boundless merit is already completely realized in you. Just bring it out and use it for yourself and for sentient beings, life after life. If we aim to reach nirvana, to reach the state of ultimate liberation through this conference, you have to reach *jnana* (knowledge). Jnana does not realize just naturally. After you let go of anger, greed and ignorance, in that place free of anger, ignorance, and attachment, find the question, "What am I?" Once you let it go, this boundless treasure of true self will reveal itself. That's the teaching of the Buddha. That's the teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn.

The old sage sat.
When you see an object, don't just see the object—see the mind.

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

If this is the object, where is the mind?

There is this thing that is object and the mind; mind and object appear.

People! Do not look at the object, but seek for the empty mind!

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

KATZ! ♦

Biography of Seol Jeong Sunim

Seol Jeong Sunim was born in 1942 in Ye San, in Chungcheong province in South Korea. He was ordained as a monk at Su Dok Sa Temple in 1955. His teacher was Zen Master Won Dam, who was one of Zen Master Man Gong's students.

After he graduated from Hae In Sa Temple's traditional sutra school, he entered Seoul National University in his thirties and studied horticulture. He served as the abbot of Su Dok Sa in 1978, the



Photo: Allan Matthews

chairman of the legislation committee of the Jogye Order reform council in 1994, and the chairman of the eleventh central committee of the Jogye Order in 1996.

After he determined to die practicing in a Zen Center, he has been practicing in Zen temples such as Bong Am Sa, Sang Won Sa and Jeong Hye Sa. He is currently the Jo Sil (Zen Master) of Hwa Gye Sa and also the Bang Jang (the Superior Patriarch) of Su Dok Sa.