

Under the sky there is world peace.

Zen Master Dae Kwan

Good afternoon. Are you awake?

[Audience: Yeah.]

Wow, very soft awake.

[Audience: YEAH!]

OK, start from this vow, OK? So we start from this awake vow.

I'd like to share with you from my own personal experience how I came to Zen. I was in a Theravadan tradition for quite a long time. I came to join a three-month retreat in Korea. That was the first time I encountered Zen teaching, including kong-an practice and Zen stories. At that time of my life, Zen kong-ans and Zen stories from the past were just legend. They could not connect with us. But in the January retreat, every day we practiced; every day we went to kong-an interviews, listened to the dharma talk. Suddenly, something appeared. "Wow, Zen really connects with each one of us."

At that time I heard Zen Master Su Bong, who talked about Zen Master Seung Sahn wanting to bring the Zen tradition back to China. And when I heard this, tears ran, not from my eyes, but inside my heart. And at that time, one sentence came from inside, not from the brain. It said, "I can die for you, Zen Master."

For us Chinese, we can study Chinese Buddhism easier than any of you here, because many Buddhist translations are all in Chinese. But I think Zen Master Seung Sahn had a different way to offer this Zen practice, especially from a Chinese point of view. Soon after the retreat, Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Oh maybe you'll go back to Hong Kong and start a Zen center there." Then, actually I had a little confusion—half of me wanted to do that, but the other half wanted to go back to Thailand. I had no problem with Thailand. I liked my Thai teacher, and I loved the forest. But there is this vow. So I want to help to bring Zen back to China.

Until we started a Zen center in Hong Kong 22 years ago, nobody in Hong Kong had heard of Korean Buddhism. When we went out, they would say, "You are practicing a in cult." Many senior monks there were familiar with only the Chinese tradition, so when they saw us, they didn't even want to look at us. Even when we bowed to them, they looked at us like we were transparent. We had that kind of hard training in Hong Kong.

Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching helped us to go through those difficult situations. He always said, "Don't check. Don't check people. Don't check your feeling. What are you doing now? Just do it." Actually, if you're not checking people and you're not checking yourself, what appears? This attitude of accepting people. Apart from merely accepting, you also respect them, even though they don't like you. That you respect them is an important message to me, to sail through all these difficult situations.

Zen is originally from China. It's not from Korea; it's not from America. Originally it's from China. This is our heritage; this is our teaching. So after all these years with Zen Master Seung Sahn, we're finally building a good connection with Hong Kong Buddhism. Many, many

other monastics appreciate our tradition, and we've become good friends. In fact, in Hong Kong we have one place, Gak Su Temple, that is surrounded by much natural beauty. In that region are many other temples, all coexisting. At the beginning, they too didn't want to know much about us. But now they talk about "don't know" and "just do it." And finally, one of them also sent a nun to Mu Sang Sa Temple last year to attend a three-month

retreat. If you study the history of Zen Buddhism, you'll see that many great Zen masters appeared during difficult times. Now all of us face difficult situations in the world. Many countries are not at peace, and there are many conflicts—many splits in the family. So this practice of Zen to understand my true nature is very important.

We have a great monk from China, from Jo Ah Sahn. He also has a big mind; he also wants to help China. He wants to make an international school. He is building a Zen temple where Zen Master Nam Cheon killed the cat. You understand that place? He is building an international temple there, and maybe in the future we can have another international conference in that place. The last I heard about him was that, when somebody asked him, "What is practice?" He said, "Under the sky there is world peace." Under the sky. That means that in this world there is already peace. That is a speech from a Zen master. So may we start from here.

Thank you very much.



Photo: Allan Matthews