

# The Moment I Became a Monk

Zen Master Dae Jin

Translated by Kathy Park

**Editor's Note:** In the *Blue Cliff Record*, case 18, Emperor Su Tsung asked National Teacher Hae Chung, "After you die, what will you need?"

The National Teacher said, "Build a seamless monument for me."

Later in the case, Master Chim Won explains to the Emperor, "South of Hsiang, north of T'an. . . . In the middle there is enough gold for the country. . . . No shadow under the tree, the community ship. . . . In the crystal palace, nobody understands." Yet, when a great teacher dies, we have ceremonies, memorials and remembrances. This is no different from what we do for anyone else; why not for a Zen master? If we all can do seamless-monument practice, perhaps we do not need the rest of this. Yet how do we respond to the passing of one whose influence was so far-reaching? There is a benefit to hearing the voice of the sangha at these times; hence a memorial issue.

4]



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## Excerpt from an interview with Korean Buddhist Television (*Bulgyo TV*):

[I met Zen Master Seung Sahn] during my college years. I majored in chemistry and had an objective mindset. So I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn many questions and talked with him about many things. He always answered in a straightforward manner. I asked him why someone would become a monk and he shouted, "Why do you eat every day? Do you eat? Why do you eat?"

Zen Master Seung Sahn teaches us that we eat for all beings. In the same way, he said, becoming a monk is also for all beings.

When I asked, "How do I practice?" he would answer, "Throw away all thinking. Just do it." That's how he was teaching us: very straightforward and direct. "How can I practice to get enlightenment?" "Put down that kind of thinking. Only just do it. Only just do it."

When I became a monk, at that time in American society, I was living in a good situation, born into a good family, not poor. When I became a monk, it was with a big question—how can I help all beings who suffer in this world? That was the moment I became a monk.

## Excerpt from a Dharma talk at Mu Sang Sa Temple:

Through practice, we can realize there is dharma energy inside us. Mind power. Dharma energy appears in us then we can do anything. In this life, if we help others, we get great merit and we can be reborn in the next life in any country, any place freely, in a good family. We can also be reborn into suffering. That is a teaching.

If we only want to be like a strong lion, that's not correct. Inside a lion, there are also shortcomings. Tiger also has shortcomings. So just wanting to become a strong lion is not correct. We need to be compassionate—that's the best human being—compassion is Kwansum Bosal's purpose and direction. Being a person with compassion who is giving to others, that's important. ♦