

# Bodhisattva Way

## Zen Master Dae Jin

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

Every morning before bowing, we recite four great vows, the first of which is: Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all.

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

An eminent teacher once said, “Before the Buddha left the Tushita heaven he had already finished saving all beings from suffering.” Then why do you vow to save all beings from suffering?

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

So if the Buddha already finished saving all beings from suffering before he was born, then why do we recite these vows every morning?

If one being appears, all suffering appears; if one being disappears, all suffering disappears. If you appear in this world, then you create suffering. But if you disappear from this world, then you lose the Great Bodhisattva Way. Without appearing or disappearing, how can you save all beings from suffering?

KATZ!

Inside the dharma room, the Buddha is gold. Outside, Sam Gak San Mountain is white.

So, my dharma speech is finished, but I still have a few words to say. I’ve been here at Hwa Gye Sa Temple for, as many of you know, almost thirteen years. And I’ve seen many changes happen here. Also I have traveled with Zen Master Seung Sahn to many different countries and assisted him when he was teaching. So I have been able to experience many important kinds of teaching by watching how he conducts his life, from moment to moment. One story in particular comes to mind:

Zen Master Seung Sahn was invited to Taiwan about seven years ago, and I went with him as his attendant. Our Taiwanese



*Photo: Mu Sang Sa / KUSZ Photo Archives*

hosts were very kind and gracious. They put us up and fed us their delicious traditional vegetarian food. One day, Zen Master Seung Sahn was invited to officiate at a Buddha's Eyes Opening Ceremony at a prominent temple. We went to the temple, where three new Buddha statues were being installed in the dharma hall, and many people had gathered. There was a profusion of color, red and gold, and all the monks were very well taken care of. We were given gifts and many kinds of different food and drinks. Zen Master Seung Sahn was given the best room in the house to stay in.

On the day of the ceremony, many people assembled and Dae Soen Sa Nim did the Buddha's Eyes Opening Ceremony, and afterward more gifts were given and an elaborate lunch was served. After lunch we went back to Zen Master Seung Sahn's room. But when we entered his room a surprise awaited us. During the ceremony, someone had come into the room, gone through his bags, and taken all of his money, and some other things, too. Of course, I was very anxious, but Zen Master Seung Sahn only looked at me and said, "It's already gone, so don't worry!" But this was a lot of money that they had taken, perhaps a few thousand dollars, because he had planned to help some people along the way, giving money to monks and nuns living in this or that city on our itinerary. The interpreter was a Korean nun who spoke fluent Chinese. She was very sad, too. "This is no good," she said. "We have to tell the temple officials and our other hosts!" But Zen Master Seung Sahn asked her not to tell anyone of the incident, and only said to her, laughing heartily, "Don't worry! We just made a big donation to somebody!" But she told them anyhow.

The Taiwanese were upset because they were very conscious of being good hosts and taking such good care of their guests. They were very unhappy! And various things were being said, like, "Mu Shim Sunim, the door should have been locked" and "You are the Zen Master's attendant! This was your responsibility! You should have kept his monk's bag on you all the time!" And so I had a lot of thinking after that.

But then an interesting thing happened. This theft occurred in one of the southern cities, a provincial center called Taichung. But after our stay in the city of Taichung, our hosts had also arranged a big dharma talk in the capital city, Taipei. And so after a couple more nights' stay in Taichung, we went up to Taipei, and we had this big public talk, with many people, and there was a long dharma speech. Zen Master Seung Sahn taught in his usual style, as if nothing had happened, not referring at all to the grievous incident of a couple days before. After the talk, as is Chinese tradition, everybody came up and made offerings to the monks, putting money in these little red envelopes. The leader of their association had evidently told everybody, "Oh, this Zen master suffered a big loss in Taichung. Something was taken from him. We should really give a lot." Therefore many people came up. Old people,

young people—even little kids—and these old women came up and each pulled one coin from deep inside their dress pockets. I was suddenly given this big shopping bag by the president of the lay association, and I was told to hold it out. The people spontaneously formed a long line, and in my head I started to calculate how much money was in this bag, and how much will this make up for the money that was lost on this trip. There were young kids, there were very old people, people from all walks of life, rich, and poor—they all came up one by one, bowed to Zen Master Seung Sahn, and put into this big shopping bag many red envelopes. The bag was very, very full!

When it was all over, Zen Master Seung Sahn motioned to the interpreter, "I cannot take this money. This is not my money. This money belongs to all these people!" So he said to the association director, "You take all this money, and use it for monks' education, for hospitals and charitable things." Now I was off the hook! For myself this was very good teaching. In that situation I saw clearly how this Zen master's teaching was not for any kind of fame or profit, or for "getting back" the money that was "lost" on a trip, or to get back to a good situation. His teaching was purely about dharma, only for dharma. So loss or gain did not matter. Only how you can make some situation correct, and save all beings from suffering? So, if you are thinking, if you only try to take care of some being, if you have "I, my, me," then you have a problem. But if you don't make even one being, how do you appear and save all people? That's what I was talking about before.

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

In the Kwan Um School of Zen, there are many different ways of practicing. We have the calling on the Buddha or bodhisattva's name.

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

We have the reciting of some kind of mantra. *Om mani padme hum, or shin myo jang gu dae dharani . . .* We have this path.

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

We also have the path of formal Zen practice. Just sitting, just following your breath, just walking, only doing something very completely. So I ask you, which path is best? Which is the best way? Can you find that? *[Someone in the assembly suddenly hits the floor.]* You understand one, but do you understand two?

KATZ!

Thank you all for walking up these stairs today, coming into the dharma room, and listening to this dharma talk. ♦

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*Reproduced from the March–April 2013 edition of Zen Mirror, a bimonthly newsletter of the Kwan Yin Chan Lin (Singapore Zen Center).*