

“I’ve Been Waiting My Whole Life to Hear That”

Zen Master Dae Bong

Dharma speech given at Musangsa Temple, May 12, 2019

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

In this world everything is changing.

And our mind, our feelings change with changing conditions. When we are born, everybody’s happy. When we die, everybody’s sad. Around, around, around nonstop. The name for this is opposites world.

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

Originally nothing’s changing.

No birth, no death. Everything’s complete stillness. No happiness, no suffering, no problem. That’s our original nature. Not only Buddha talked about that; many religions also teach this point. We call that the absolute world, the world we all originally come from.

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

16] In this world birth is birth, death is death. Happiness is happiness, suffering is suffering. Each thing, moment to moment, is complete. If we attain this complete mind, nothing is ever lacking. We call that the complete world.

So, three kinds of worlds, which means three ways we keep our mind. Opposites; everything always changing, changing, then much suffering. Absolute world is absolute mind, our original nature is silent and still. Complete world is complete mind, each thing by itself is complete. Then everything is just as it is and moment to moment nothing is lacking.

One time about twenty years ago, I went into a bank in Seoul. I gave the teller my debit card from my account

and I told her I wanted 300,000 won. Then the lady did the things with the computer, then she looked at me very shyly. She said, “you only have 30,000 won in your account.” I burst out laughing! Then she said to the other lady, “I never saw somebody laugh at having little money.” Have money, complete. Have no money, also complete. Can we live that way? That is the complete world. So three worlds: which world do you live in? Opposite world? Absolute world? Complete world? Which world?

KATZ!

Today’s Buddha’s birthday! Many people in Musangsa and all over the world are very happy. Are you happy? I hope so.

How do we find this correct-function world? We also call that moment world. Many billions of people are born and die. Why do we remember Buddha? When Shakamuni Buddha was alive, somebody asked him, “Are you a man? Or are you a god?” He said, “I’m awake.” Last night, everybody here was sleeping, including myself. Then we woke up and did something and came to the temple today. What kind of wake-up is that? Wake up to opposites world? Absolute world? Function world? Complete world? What world? What did Buddha mean by *awake*? Did he mean simply “I am awake”? What was he awake to? We’re left with a very interesting poem. It’s called the “Human Route”:

*Coming empty-handed, going empty-handed,
that is human.*

When you are born, where do you come from?

When you die, where do you go?

Life is like a floating cloud which appears.

Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.

The floating cloud originally doesn’t exist.

*Life and death, coming and going are also
like that.*

*But there’s one thing which always
remains clear.*

*It’s pure and clear, not depending on coming, go-
ing, life and death.*

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?

What is the one pure and clear thing? If we open our mouth and say something, already making something, not pure, not clear. We say, if you look deeply into this question, finally you don’t know. This don’t-know is very important. Zen master Seung Sahn’s favorite teaching phrase is “Only go straight, don’t know!” In university if you don’t know, you fail. But looking into yourself, “What am I? What is the one

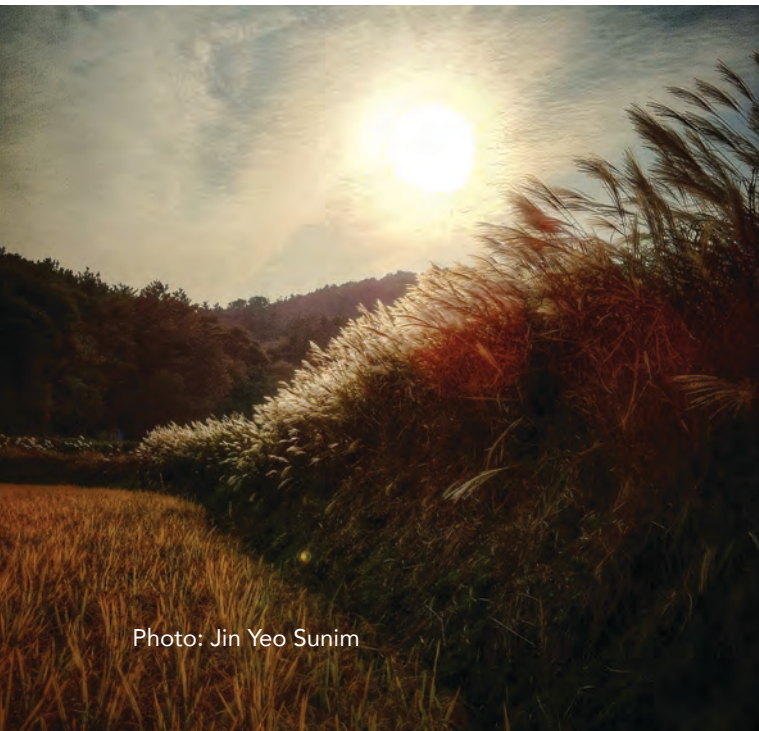


Photo: Jin Yeo Sunim

pure and clear thing?” If you don’t know, only go straight, don’t know, then you get enlightenment. How can don’t-know give us enlightenment? If you don’t know, then listen to me and soon you’ll understand. When you are thinking, your mind and my mind are different. When you cut your thinking, your mind and my mind are the same. Your don’t-know mind, my don’t-know mind, somebody else’s don’t-know mind, all don’t-know mind is the same don’t-know. The moment we don’t know, that stops our thinking. Stopping thinking is before-thinking, empty mind. Before-thinking. When you keep 100 percent don’t-know, that’s before-thinking. Before-thinking is your true substance. What am I? My substance is before-thinking, before these words. Your before-thinking is your substance. My before-thinking is my substance. Somebody else’s before-thinking is their substance. Then your before-thinking substance, my before-thinking substance, somebody else’s before-thinking substance, this stick’s substance [*holding up Zen stick*], the substance of the sun, the moon, the stars—all universal substance is the same substance. Even modern science says that. We are stardust. Everything in this universe appeared inside stars, so your body came from inside a star which came from nothing. So everything in the universe is of the same substance. When I heard Zen Master Seung Sahn say that some forty years ago, I remember thinking, “I’ve been waiting my whole life to hear that.” When you keep don’t know 100 percent, at that time, you are the universe, and the universe is you. You and everything have already become one. We call that primary point. Don’t-know is not don’t-know. Don’t-know is primary point. Primary point’s name is don’t-know. Somebody says primary point’s name is mind, or Buddha, or God, or nature, or energy, or absolute, or spirit, or consciousness, or emptiness, or everything. Primary point has many, many names. Just like in this cup; Korean people say *mul*; Chinese people say *sui*; Americans say *water*; Spanish people say *agua*. Many different names [*drinks water*] but this is not a name. Our true nature is just like this. It’s before speech and words. When you keep that mind, you and all things already become one.

Today I have a question for everybody. Keeping don’t-know mind in your danjeon (center), OK? Not up in your head, not in your chest. In your danjeon! Then, this stick’s substance, [*hits the stick on the floor*] the sound substance, and your substance, are they the same or different? [*Looks around at the audience.*] Nobody can answer?

They’re the same substance. Ice, water, steam. Name and form are different, but the substance is the same. Name and form only change by conditions. All universal substance is the same; according to conditions, it becomes air, water, fire or earth. It becomes a tree or insects, or a human being. According to conditions, it becomes a Korean, American or Polish person. A man or a woman. Substance is the same, it only changes by conditions. If we attach to conditions, we can never realize our true nature. Then conditions control our lives. Economic situation good, happy; bad, then un-

happy. Health is good then happy; sick, unhappy. Do you want to be controlled by conditions?

Buddha pointed to our true substance. But not depending on Buddha, everybody already has it. This stick’s substance, sound substance, your substance, same or different? If you say they are the same, this stick will hit you. If you say different, this stick will also hit you. Same or different are our thinking words. True substance is before-thinking. Open mouth, already mistake. My whole Dharma talk is a mistake! How can we answer this question? Anybody who heard Zen Master Seung Sahn’s speech already understands this. [*Hits the table with the Zen stick*]. Stick, sound, you: same or different? [*Hits the table with the Zen stick*]. Everybody hit the floor! [*The audience hits the floor.*] Good! Some people have no thinking, just do it. Some people are a little slow. When you hit, you already attain your substance.

Buddha saw a star, understood his true substance. Last night, unless you live in Seoul, maybe you saw a star. Did you get enlightenment? How much can we believe in our own original nature? Buddha woke up to original nature. Originally no life, no death. Just this body is changing. This is like a rented car. Someday, our rented car gets old, then we have to return it to the universe. Some people here are older than me. My car now many little things broken but luckily, only all little. Everybody has that. Sometimes, big things get broken. Can we keep our mind clear and comfortable even when the car’s breaking down? That’s what Buddha woke up to. Not special, same as us, but woke up. If we realize our substance deeply, then we can see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly. Everything’s the truth. Everything’s complete, moment to moment. Trees are green. Sky is blue, clouds are white. Dog goes *mong mong*. We used to say Korean dog: *mong mong*; American dog: *woof woof*; Polish dog: *how how*. Which one is correct dog’s barking? None of them. That’s only human beings barking. If you want to attain the dog’s barking, you must ask a dog. Then you attain truth. Attain substance, attain truth, and one more step: How do we use this moment’s truth to make a correct life? Correct life is always in harmony with all things. Then correct love appears, correct compassion, correct wisdom. Then whether a good situation or bad situation, we can find a way to be, and to live in a way that actually benefits ourselves and others no matter the circumstance. If we realize our human nature, we can solve every problem in the world very easily. If we don’t, then in the future, many sufferings. Even if the outside world is suffering, if you find this true nature in your heart, you’ll be fine. So let’s do it together!

Here is part of the Morning Bell Chant:

Vowing openly with all world beings

Entering together Amita’s ocean of Great Vows

Continuing forever to save all beings

You and I simultaneously attain the way of the Buddha

Namu Amitabul

Namu Amitabul

Namu Amitabul ◆