

“Top man cannot see his own karma”

Zen Master Dae Bong

In times past in Asia and during the spread of the dharma in the West, newly recognized Zen masters frequently went off on their own to practice and teach the dharma, often starting their own centers of teaching. One time I spoke with Zen Master Seung Sahn about this and asked him, “Why did you create teacher groups to oversee our school?” He said, “Top man cannot see his own karma.”

I feel this is brilliant. Teachers working in groups as peers helps us to see our own karma and helps our practice and wisdom to grow. Teachers themselves—and thereby all students—benefit from this arrangement. During our lifetime, it has been possible to travel

fairly easily, meet each other, share our experiences and practice, and get feedback from our peers. Students get to meet and study with different teachers of the same school. This situation is a treasure.

As we are experiencing during the current pandemic, traveling is not so easy now—in many cases, impossible. We are fortunate to still be able to connect digitally. Someday even that may not be possible. I hope we will continue to connect, support, share, and learn from each other while we can. This is one of the great strengths of our school and the practice and teaching which Zen Master Seung Sahn gave to us. ♦

Let the Gentle Breeze Send Off the White Clouds

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Gye Mun Sunim JDPS

*Fortunate is the one who donned the monastic robe;
The universe gained another who is unattached;
Stay when conditions exist, go as conditions are
extinguished;
Let the gentle breeze send off the white clouds.*

If one wishes to practice, one may do so at home; it is not necessary to stay in a monastery.

The intrinsically kind person is able to practice at home; the evil-minded stay in a monastery without practicing. A clear and pure mind is not dependent on lay or monastic identity.

When it is time to come, come; when it is time to go, go. There is no anticipation, no reluctance, no indecisiveness. There is no my-dignity, my-interests, and so forth. Only the conditions of meeting, parting, separating, and joining are considered. It is beyond control, yet it is not a coincidence. Birth and death are the same. Just live in simplicity and purity, right here, right now. With this frame of mind, even if one is busy with work, “The universe gains another who is unattached.”

If you are still attached to worldly causes and conditions, you are bound to make another round in this realm. This could be an unaccomplished ambition, a star-crossed relationship, or perhaps the great compassion and pity for humanity of a bodhisattva. ♦



Painting: James Gouijn-Stook