

Editor's Note: We would like to thank Kathy Park JDPSN for her generous service to our journal as Asian regional editor. She has stepped down, and Bop Yo Sunim is now in that role. Bop Yo Sunim is from Japan. She started to practice at Mexico City Zen Center in 2007 and later moved to her home temple of Musangsa to begin her monastic training. Currently she lives and practices in Hong Kong under the guidance of Zen Master Dae Kwan. Our current issue is a reflection of Bop Yo Sunim's efforts, for which we are grateful.

The Power of Together Action

Zen Master Seung Sahn

4] We live together and act together. Acting together means cutting off my opinions, cutting off my condition, cutting off my situation. Then we become empty mind. We return to white paper. Then our true opinion, our true condition, our true situation will appear. When we bow together and chant together and eat together, our minds become one mind. It is like on the sea. When the wind comes, there are many waves. When the wind dies down, the waves become smaller. When the wind stops, the water becomes a mirror, in which everything is reflected—mountains, trees, clouds. Our mind is the same. When we have many desires and many opinions, there are many big waves. But after we sit Zen and act together for some time, our opinions and desires disappear. The waves become smaller and smaller. Then our mind is like a clear mirror, and everything we see or hear or smell or taste or touch or think is the truth. Then it is very easy to understand other

people's minds. Their minds are reflected in my mind.

When people do things together, they make some of the same karma together. The Buddha taught when you walk down the street and just brush shoulders with some person, that is because you have made karma with that person for more than five hundred lifetimes. That is very interesting! Imagine how much karma you have made with your parents and brothers and sisters to be born in the same family with them! A man and woman meet and fall in love, or two people meet and become best friends. This is not an accident. It is the result of many, many thousands of lifetimes spent together, doing similar things with one another. Then in this life, their karma with one another connects. They feel like they have always known each other. And this also happens with practicing people. You go to some dharma talk and sit in the room with many people you don't know. You probably wouldn't have anything to do with each other, and no reason to be friends. But all of you have the same interest in hearing the dharma. This is because in previous lives we have all gathered together to hear this teaching. Chinese people have the same general karma together, so in this life some people are reborn Chinese. Korean people shared the same general karma together in Korea, so that is why they are reborn as Korean. The same is true for Americans, Japanese, Germans—any country or group.

Since you share similar karma with certain other people, you can use this karmic affinity to hurt or help them. Nearly everyone is deeply attached to their thinking, so they are attached to their karma. They are completely asleep, and cannot help other people. If you cut off all thinking and all desires, you will wake up. If you keep a thinking mind, however, then, your daily life is a dream. Waking up from this dream is more difficult than waking from an ordinary dream, so you must try very hard. When you wake up, then you can control your karma. With no special effort this helps those around you. So you must wake up! ♦

Note: This article consists of excerpts from *Dropping Ashes on Buddha* (Grove Press, 1994) and *The Compass of Zen* (Shambhala Publications, 1997).



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