

Clear Mary

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

The stories of Zen Master Dok Sahn and Zen Master Guji are very interesting. They tell us about the purpose of Zen practice and Zen teaching. Both of these monks were great sutra masters. Both of them completely understood all the Buddha's speech. They understood the whole Buddhist tradition, they understood various profound philosophies, and they understood all the eminent teachers. But when someone asked them for their own true speech, they could not say anything. They could not show their true nature to anybody. Understanding is not good and not bad. But what are you? This is very important. That point is beyond the reach of understanding. That point cannot be read in some book. Even Buddha himself cannot give you that point. The reason for this is because our true nature is before thinking. If you do Zen meditation, that point becomes clear, and is shining everywhere. It can do anything.

In Florida they have dog races. It is a very popular betting sport. People go to the dog track and bet money on the greyhounds, and if their dog wins, they win a lot of money. It is very simple. Everybody understands how the greyhounds race, yah? The dogs come out of a starting gate, and start heading around the track. Meanwhile, there is an electric rabbit that is carried along the inside rail of the track. Actually this is not a real rabbit. It is a fake rabbit with real rabbit fur on it. Dogs have very keen noses, and they follow a good smell. So this rabbit fur leads them around the track. All the dogs think they can catch the rabbit if they just run a little faster. Meanwhile, some man is watching the dogs and controlling the speed of the rabbit. If the dogs are very fast that day, he speeds the rabbit up; if they are slow, he slows it down. He always keeps this rabbit just within range of the dogs so that they think they can catch it. Every single day, the dogs go around and around and around this track. Race after race after race, the dogs just follow this rabbit.

One day, a very interesting thing happened at the races in Florida. There was a certain dog named Clear Mary. She was a very fast greyhound, and usually always won her races. But Clear Mary was also a very clever dog. One afternoon, she ran out of the starting gate with the other dogs, as usual. The rabbit hummed around the track, and the dogs sped after it. Running, running, running -- around, around, around, around. Every day, sometimes several times a day, these dogs did the same thing, over and over and over again. And today they were doing it again, as usual. Chasing the electric rabbit.

But in the middle of the race, Clear Mary suddenly stopped. Many of the people in the grandstand stood up, fixing their binoculars on this dog. "What is happening?" they said. "What's wrong with that dumb dog?" Some people

had placed lots of bets on Clear Mary, so they were very angry. "Run! Run! You dumb dog! What's wrong with you?"

But Clear Mary did not move for a few moments. She looked up at the grandstand. She looked at the tail ends of the other dogs scampering around the bend. And she looked at the rabbit, whirring around the bend and over to the other side of the oval track. Everything was completely still and silent for that moment at the races that day.

Suddenly, Clear Mary leapt over the guard rail that kept the dogs on the track. She sped straight across the big center infield like a flash. Leaping at just the right moment over the other guard rail, she caught the rabbit! Boom! Ha ha ha ha ha!

So that is a Zen mind. Everybody wants something in life. Everyone only follows their karma. They follow their ideas and their opinions, and believe that this is a true life. But Clear Mary is like a high-class Zen student. She was trained very strongly for many years only to follow the rabbit. Every day, she was taught to go around the track — around and around and around. But one day she stops and takes a close look. That is just like Zen practice: stopping and taking a close look at what is happening in life. Then she perceives something clearly, and just does it, one hundred percent. She doesn't check inside or outside. Inside and outside - boom! - become one. That is a Zen mind. It's very simple, yah?

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