

Dragon Heads, Snake Tails

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Sometimes a student will decide to fast during a three-day or seven-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin. They begin strong. First day, second day, only water. Third day, “maybe I’ll have a little orange juice...” Fourth day, “maybe just a half slice of bread...” Fifth day, headache, “I think I’ll take a little nap and then...” On the seventh day, starving... so they stuff themselves. This is what’s called having the “head of a dragon, but the tail of a snake.”

If you decide to do something and you don’t do it, that means you don’t believe in yourself. Perhaps in an interview, the teacher says: “What color is the wall?”

“White.”

“Is that correct?”

You hesitate. In that gap, you’re already dead. It’s like fighting. The master attacks. How can you defend yourself? You have to attack!

“Is that correct?”

“Are you hungry?”

Ask any child, “What’s one plus two?”

“Three.”

“Is that correct?”

“Sure it’s correct.” They believe in themselves, so they don’t think about it.

“One plus two doesn’t equal three...”

“It does too! My teacher said so!” A child’s mind doesn’t shake so easily. But Zen students! They cling to their thinking.

Throw a ball hard against the wall, it comes back hard. Slow, it comes back slow. If the master takes out a sword, you take out your sword too! This is like a clear mirror... only reflect.

“What color is that?” This is a terrible question!

“You already know.”

“I don't!”

“No? Then I'll teach you: white!” This is only so-so. You have to attack.

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