

Death

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Cambridge Zen Center on the 10th December 1995.

Question: Can you talk about death and dying? What is death?

DSSN: What is death? I have no experience! (*Much laughter.*) Last night I lay down and slept. No dreams. No consciousness. No thinking. Where is my consciousness?

Some religions say, if you believe in God you go to heaven. In Japanese Zen, when you die, if you believe in Buddha, you go to nirvana. Any religion says, if you die, you go some place.

That is because we have consciousness. Consciousness does not die. This my body: that's my head, that's my hand, that is my body. My body has life and death. But my true self has no life, no death.

Buddha sat under the bodhi tree for six years. Then one morning he saw a star. Boom! Got enlightenment. Attain my true self.

So, who are you? Everybody says "I am I". What is "I"?

Don't understand.

Too much understanding! Human beings have too much understanding. Too much understanding, too much have problems. Little bit understanding, little problem. If you don't know, no problem! (*Laughter.*) That's the point: if you don't know, no problem. So Don't-Know mind is very important.

Much understanding means somebody's idea; it's somebody's idea that makes problems for me. Many desires, cannot get the desires, then get angry, then ignorance appears, make ignorant actions – stupid actions. So then you have problems.

So Buddha is teaching us, you must attain your true self. If I ask you, "Who are you?", what do you say? You know what I mean? Human beings have much understanding, but don't understand anything!

When a dog is barking, Korean people say the dog is barking "meong-meong" American people say the dog is barking "woof-woof". Polish people say dog is barking "how-how". So different sounds, okay? Koreans say "meong-meong", American say "woof-woof", Polish say "how-how". So which kind of dog barking is correct?

Student: Ours is. American. Ours is. (*Much laughter.*)

DSSN: You are attached to American! I hit you thirty times! (*laughter*)

So “meong-meong” is Korean people barking, “woof-woof” is American people barking, also “how-how” is Polish people barking – not dog barking, people barking. You must become 100% dog, then dog barking appears. That is our practicing. Only understanding cannot help. Nowadays, too much understanding, so you have problems. ...

You must attain your true self and find your correct job. Everybody’s got a job. Teacher’s job or engineer’s job, storehouse-working job over there, any kind. Everybody has a job. Mother’s job, father’s job, children’s job, any kind of person has a job.

But what is your true original job? What is a human being’s original job? That is the perfect job.

So Zen means to find human beings’ original job. This body, my head, my hand, my body, someday will disappear. Then your consciousness, that controls your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, whatever thing controls, where does it go? Don’t understand!

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