

# Gathering Our Great Merit

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

*Dharma speech at Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center, Mu Sang Sah.*

*(This speech was given in Korea and is translated from the Korean. Zen Master Seung Sahn's western students, used to his original and simple English style, will find this talk rather different, perhaps surprising. In Korean, his language is quite sophisticated. (Korean Americans tell us we don't know what we are missing.) Also, this speech was aimed at a Korean audience, so it has a slightly different tone, and different content, from talks which Zen Master Seung Sahn gives to Westerners. It does, however, have a beauty of its own, as well as a strong direction, and for that reason we are presenting it here.)*

The Patriarchs and eminent teachers have always taught that true form is silent and truth is not moving. However, in the materialistic culture of today's industrial society, reality is changing so rapidly that "yesterday" and "today" are completely different. People are so attached to making money that they seek freedom, happiness, peace and equality primarily from the external world. But because everything in the world is impermanent, even if someone attains what they want, it eventually must disappear.

Today's westernized cultures try to find solutions exclusively in the outside world. Social reformation and revolution appear endlessly. Despite this, human beings are becoming ever more confrontational and hostile; fighting and killing each other more and more, ultimately disregarding and disrespecting even human life itself. At the same time, they do not hesitate to destroy the natural environment which is the basis of all life. Though many call out for world peace, the law of cause and effect is always very clear. We are afraid of the end of the world, yet still we cannot awaken to the fact that our own self-destruction is imminent. This is simply because we are attached to name and form.

*In order to enter this gate,  
Simply do not give rise to thinking.*

All of us together, therefore, must let go of our "I." We must put it all down. Only when we return to our before-thinking mind is it possible to eliminate the confrontation, hostility, fighting, and killing which are destroying the world. If your mind becomes clear like space then it is possible to attain the absolute world, then everything you see and hear will be the truth.

*Mountain is blue, water is flowing.  
The dog barks, "Woof, woof!"  
Salt is salty. Sugar is sweet.*

This is "truth world." When we perceive clearly that the absolute and truth worlds are not different but one with our true nature, then we attain correct life, which means attaining the correct situation, relationship and function. This we call "complete world," world peace. That is Zen.

Zen is not just for Buddhists. Rather, it is a bright ray of hope to restore the humanity of our world, a compass pointing us back toward true world peace. The original Zen tradition disappeared in China a long time ago. In Japan, Zen has become more secularized. Only Korean Buddhism has inherited the tradition of Bodhidharma's patriarchal Zen and now Zen practitioners from all over the world recognize this. In some thirty countries of the world, in over one hundred and twenty Zen centers and groups, the number of people devotedly practicing Korean Zen has increased to number in the thousands. Many of these practitioners want to come to Korea to train, but regrettably we do not have adequate facilities to support them in their practice. Inspired by countless Buddhists' deep sincerity and earnest vows, our Mu Sang Sah will become a great international Zen temple. It will become a place where practitioners from all over the world can come together and practice to attain enlightenment. Then they can return to their respective countries to open the mind's eye of sentient beings and save them from suffering.

So, I implore all of you to consider these words and contribute generously to help build this great temple. May all beings, at the same moment, attain enlightenment.

---

*This article copyright © 2008 Kwan Um School of Zen*