

Keep the Great Vow

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

During his visit to Europe last spring, Zen Master Seung Sahn gave a kong-an talk after the morning sitting each day. What follows is part of a talk he gave in London.

Enlightenment is a name. This name is only a teaching word. Originally there is no Enlightenment. Already everybody has everyday Enlightenment. Drinking coffee — coffee Enlightenment; walking — walking Enlightenment; watching television — watching-television Enlightenment; driving your car — driving Enlightenment. Moment to moment, only Enlightenment, Enlightenment, Enlightenment. Enlightenment means clear mind. Clear mind means there is no subject, no object, no inside, no outside. Outside and inside already become one. If you have becoming one, what do you want? That's all! That's enough!

So moment to moment keep clear mind, moment to moment get Enlightenment. It's not special. If you make special, if you make Enlightenment and un-Enlightenment, you cannot get Enlightenment. This mind already separates Enlightenment and un-Enlightenment, so it makes Enlightenment special. So no Enlightenment. The Heart Sutra says, "No attainment with nothing to attain." You must attain no Enlightenment. There is nothing. Nothing is also not correct. When you drink, only drink. When you are tired, only sleep. If someone is hungry, give them food. That's all. It is very simple.

Everybody has too much understanding, so they are not simple. Not being simple, they want Enlightenment, they make something. If you want Enlightenment, maybe you spend your whole life practicing, but you cannot get it. Even if you spend an infinite time sitting Zen, you cannot get Enlightenment. So we say, put it all down. But many people want something. This wanting something comes from our karma. Everybody has karma. When karma appears, you lose clear mind. When karma appears, you lose yourself. So this mind is not clear.

Long ago there were great monks and scholars who had great understanding. They understood all philosophies — Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism. They understood, but they completely digested this understanding. If you digest all your understanding, then your mind is very simple. But if you understand many things, read a lot of books, talk a lot, experience a lot, but you cannot digest this, then you cannot get your own things. You have many things that belong to others. So this mind is very complicated. It cannot decide. This means your intellect controls you. If you put other ideas into your mind, you must digest them. Then they become yours. This is very important. So scholars long ago took everything in and then digested it. But their mind was

nothing. It's like a computer. A computer can do many different operations, but when it's resting, it's nothing! Push a button — click, click, the answer appears. Very simple. So put everything into your mind, then digest it, then when you use it, pick out the right thing. Then the answer appears.

So the ancient scholars and great Zen Masters' speech, understanding, and actions always became one. But people today cannot digest, so their understanding goes this way, their actions go that way.

One day Mang Gong Sunim, my grand-teacher, visited Kyeong Ho Sunim, his teacher. It was Kyeong Ho Sunim's birthday, so Mang Gong Sunim brought some meat, drink, and some rice cakes with him. Kyeong Ho Sunim was very happy to see Mang Gong Sunim.

"You are so busy, how can you find time to come?"

Mang Gong Su Nim said, "No, no, Master, I am not busy. It's your birthday, so I'm visiting you. You already have everything, so I'm just bringing you this food." So he took out the meat, the alcohol, and the rice cakes.

Kyeong Ho Sunim said, "Oh, wonderful! Where did you get all this?"

Mang Gong Sunim said, "Nowadays I have no hindrance. If someone gives me wine, I drink. If they don't, I don't drink. If someone gives me meat, I eat. Meat and rice are the same. If they don't, I don't eat. If rice cakes come, I eat rice cakes." This style talking.

The Kyeong Ho Sunim said, "Oh Mang Gong Su Nim, you are wonderful. But my mind is not this style."

"Oh? What is your style, Master?"

"I cannot get freedom. I want something. Maybe I want garlic. In the temple there is no garlic, so I go to the city, I buy some garlic, I put it in the ground, it grows up, a lot of garlic appears, then I eat it."

When Mang Gong Sunim heard this, his mind went, "Bong!" "Zen Master," he said, "I am sorry. Before I didn't understand. Now I understand."

Mang Gong Sunim's mind was only original Enlightenment. Kyeong Ho Su Nim's speech was final Enlightenment. In original Enlightenment, everything is no hindrance. Seeing just like this is truth; hearing just like this is truth; everything just like this is truth. So there is no hindrance. Everything is O.K. Practicing is O.K., not practicing is O.K..

This is already past primary point. Attaining primary point is first Enlightenment; only like this is original Enlightenment. Final Enlightenment means, not only for me. I want something, for all people. This means, you must keep the Great vow. Then you must go straight. Don't check yourself. If you say, "Something comes, I eat; nothing comes, I don't eat," there is no vow

there, there is no Bodhisattva, no great love, no compassion. Coming is O.K., going is O.K., suffering is O.K., not suffering is O.K. This style mind is no good. You must go straight, do hard training for other people. This is correct teaching. So soon Mang Gong Su Nim understood: "Ah, I am sorry."

So I hope you only go straight don't know, do hard training for other people, attain Enlightenment, Great Love, Great Compassion, and the Great Bodhisattva Way, and save all people from suffering. Thank you.

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