

Question and Answer in Warsaw

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

On the first evening of the stay in Poland during Soen Sa Nim's trip to Europe this spring, about twenty Zen students gathered in an apartment in Warsaw to hear a Dharma Talk and ask questions of Soen Sa Nim. Dharma Teacher Jacob Perl, returning to his native country for the first time since he was fourteen years old, gave the introductory talk. Then he asked if there were any questions. What follows is the beginning of the question and answer exchange:

Soen Sa Nim: O.K. very good. Any questions are O.K., not only about Buddhism. (Long pause.) You have no questions, so this means you already understand! So I have a question. Long ago in Korea there was a famous Zen Temple on a mountain-top. At the bottom of the mountain there was a Sutra Temple. In the middle there were some very wonderful hot springs. The manager of the hot springs was a woman who was a Zen student. Zen monks and Sutra monks sometimes came to the hot springs. One day a Sutra Master went to the hot springs to bathe. When he was finished bathing, this woman said to him, "Oh Master, now you have cleaned your body, but how do you clean your mind?" If you were this Sutra Master, how would you answer her? What kind of answer is good?

Student: What is this for?

Soen Sa Nim: I hit you, not enough! What kind of answer is good? O.K., somebody ask me, then I will tell you. "How do you clean your mind?"

Student: Master, how do you clean your mind?

Soen Sa Nim: Don't smudge mind. (Pause.) Original mind is not tainted, not pure. So — "how do you clean your mind?" is already a mistake. Don't smudge your mind. Very simple. If you have mind, then cleaning mind is possible, smudging mind is possible. But if you have no mind, cleaning and smudging are not possible. So you must take away your mind. No mind is clear like space. Clear like space is clear like a mirror. Red comes; red. White comes; white.

Zen is not difficult, also not special. If you want special, you have special. But this special cannot help you. When you are eating, just eat; when you are walking, just walk; when you drive, just drive. That is Zen. There are many kinds of Zen — eating Zen, working Zen, television Zen, driving Zen, playing tennis Zen. Sitting Zen is one part. Most important is, moment to moment, how do you keep clear mind? So Nam Cheon Zen Master was asked, "What is Zen?" "Everyday mind is Zen mind." So don't make special, don't hold

something, don't be attached to something, don't make something; then you are already complete.

Somebody asked Ma Jo Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" He answered, "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind." But the next day somebody asked the same question and he said, "No mind, no Buddha." How are these answers different? "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind." "No mind, no Buddha." If you have your mind, you must practice. If you have no mind, already you are Buddha. Very simple.

So before, Dok Sahn Zen Master was asked, "What is Buddha?" "Three pounds of flax." His mind was empty mind. Just at that time he was weighing flax. So, what is Buddha? Three pounds of flax. Very simple. O.K. do you have any questions? (Long pause.)

O.K., I will teach you our formal style for questions, O.K.?

(Hits the floor with his stick.) Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

(Hits the floor with his stick.) No form, no emptiness.

(Hits the floor with his stick.) Form is form, emptiness is emptiness.

Three statements: which one is correct?

Another student: YAAAAH! (pounding the floor.)

Soen Sa Nim: You understand one, don't understand two. (Laughter.) What do you see now? What do you hear now? So only become one. Buddha and you become one mind. But Buddha is Buddha, you are you. The name for this is "form is form, emptiness is emptiness." You only hit — this means, "No form, no emptiness." So more practicing is necessary — one more step, O.K.?

O.K. We have a teaching style we use to understand the correct answer. This is a bell. If you say this is a bell, you have an attachment to name and form. If you say this is not a bell, you have an attachment to emptiness. Is this a bell or not?

(As Soen Sa Nim finishes asking the question, two students make head-first dives for the bell, accompanied by much laughter and clapping.)

Soen Sa Nim: Somebody already understands. O.K. Very good.

In our teaching style, what kinds of answers are there? "Is this a bell or not?" First course, only silence. This is without-like-this. Next, your style — hit! This is become-one-like-this. Then next, "The bell is gold, the wall is white:" only-like-this. Next, ring the bell (Soen Sa Nim rings the bell): just-like-this. Four kinds of answers.

So before I told you: form is emptiness, emptiness is form; no form, no emptiness; form is form, emptiness is emptiness. Which one is correct? (No answer.) Yah, somebody ask me, then I will tell you. (Long pause.) No? Then I have an answer for you, O.K.? If you say "correct," some word is correct, if you find correct, I will hit you. If you cannot find correct, also I will hit you. Why?

KATZ!!!

(The second student gets up quickly, scrambles to the front, picks up Soen Sa Nim's water cup, and smashes it to the floor.)

Soen Sa Nim: Not good, not bad. You only understand one. Hit, breaking the cup; katz, are all the same realm. Yah, when you are a great Zen Master, then sometimes katz!, hit are not only become-one-like-this; any use is possible — freedom. But also, $3 \times 3 = 9$. Before, when we talked about the bell, only ring is correct. Just like this. What is the function, O.K.?

(Soen Sa Nim picks up Jacob's water cup.) This is a cup. If you say "cup," you have an attachment to name and form; if you say "not a cup," you have an attachment to emptiness. Is this a cup or not? Will you break this?

The same student: No, I can drink.

Soen Sa Nim: Correct! Why do you break the cup? This is not correct. (He tosses a cup fragment on the floor.)

Same student: "I?"

Soen Sa Nim: You must make "I" disappear.

Jacob: He said, "The 'I' which broke the cup?"

Soen Sa Nim: Who is breaking the cup? You broke. So you only understand one, you don't understand two.

Student: I don't understand anything.

Soen Sa Nim: You don't understand anything means you already understand "don't understand anything," so already understand something. Don't understand anything is already one. Where does "don't understand" come from?

O.K., next, this cup and this bell, are they the same or different? Then do you break them?

(The student again gets up quickly...)

Soen Sa Nim: Strong action is not necessary, O.K.? Very strong student! You only (hits the floor with his stick) understand this style, but this cup and this bell, are they the same or different? What can you say? Only this style (hits the

floor with his stick) is not enough. You ask me, are they the same or different?
You ask me!

Student: Are they the same or different?

(Soen Sa Nim rings the bell and drinks from the cup. There is laughter.)

Soen Sa Nim: Now you understand. Very simple.

Zen is understanding your correct situation. Correct situation means your correct relationship. You and this bell, what is the correct relationship? You and this cup, what is the correct relationship? You and your parents, girlfriend, husband, wife, your job, your country, the whole universe — what is your correct relationship?

This means, you and something always become one. Don't make subject-object: no inside, no outside. Subject and object become one action. We say that is the nature of function. That is your correct relationship. So we say, when you are doing something, you must do it. This is Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. When you are hungry, eat. When someone is hungry, give them food.

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