

Finding Your Lion Body

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Dharma Speech given by Zen Master Seung Sahn during the Opening Ceremony of the Centre Parisien de Zen Kwan Um, Paris, France, April 12, 1997.

[Holding up the logo of Centre Parisien de Zen Kwan Um.]

Has everybody already seen this picture? If not, look closely. Here is the lion's head. Here is the lion's tail. But in the middle there is no body. [Laughter from the assembly.] Who made this mistake? [Sustained laughter from the assembly.] If you find the missing part, then there is no longer any mistake. But in fact we do have a mistake. The reason for this is because nobody understands why they came into this world. It was a mistake to come into this world, because this world is a suffering world. So does anybody understand why they came into this world?

Everybody needs a body to connect their head to their tail. That is very important! [Loud laughter from the assembly.] If you connect your head and tail, then your life becomes wonderful. But if you cannot connect them, then your head is always in the East while your tail is in the West. Then a problem appears. "Oh, goodness! Where is my head? Where is my tail? I don't knowww..." [Loud laughter from the assembly.]

So even by being born in this world, we have already made a big mistake. Then for our whole lives we cannot connect our head and our tail: that is another mistake. How do we make our life correct? How can you connect your head and tail and make a correct life? Today's Opening Ceremony for the Paris Zen Center means that the answer is very clear: come to a Zen Center and practice.

But let us return to this logo for a moment: Behind the image of a lion we see the logo of the Kwan Um School of Zen. This logo is a very interesting design. Its meaning teaches us the Buddhist Way: the Zen Way, the Mahayana Way and the Hinayana Way. Inside this logo are many kinds of teachings. So if you come here to practice, there are many ways that you can find your lion's body. Today we begin to try that way, the practicing way, OK?

Nowadays this world is too complicated. This comes from the fact that human beings have too much desire, anger, and ignorance. Human beings are the number one bad animals in this world. Cats, dogs, and even lions are not so bad. Only human beings make problems: they make nuclear weapons, political problems, all the while polluting the earth, the air and the ocean. Human beings really are the number one bad animal. So it is very important for us to clean this world. Perhaps everybody understands this kind of speech. Yet exactly how do we clean this world?

We have a "cleaning mantra." Everybody place your hands together in front of you in a prayerful position, or "hap chang," and please say together OM NAM. We'll chant this mantra seven times together.

[The Assembly stands and chants together, slowly.]

OM NAM ... OM NAM ... OM NAM... OM NAM... OM NAM ... OM NAM ... OM NAM.

Thank you very much, everybody, for practicing hard and helping to clean this world.

The sky is blue.
The tree is green.
The ground is yellow.

If somebody is hungry, give him food!
If somebody is thirsty, give her something to drink!
If suffering people appear, help them!

That is all.

This article copyright © 2008 Kwan Um School of Zen