

WAKE UP AND LAUGH

THE DHARMA TEACHINGS OF

ZEN MASTER

DAEHAENG



WAKE UP AND LAUGH

WAKE UP AND LAUGH

THE DHARMA TEACHINGS OF
ZEN MASTER DAEHAENG

Daehaeng Kun Sunim

Foreword by Chong Go Sunim



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

WISDOM, WARMTH, AND WIT FROM A RENOWNED ZEN MASTER.

THE COMPASSION, HUMOR, AND PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE OF ONE OF KOREA'S foremost Zen masters shines throughout this new collection of Dharma talks. On each page, Master Daehaeng reveals how everything in daily life, even the ugly and difficult parts, can become the fuel for our spiritual growth. Her illuminating insight guides the reader toward an understanding of her ultimate teaching—know yourself, trust yourself, and go forward, no matter what your current life situation might be.

At turns laughing and scolding, always engaging, Zen Master Daehaeng exhorts, cajoles, and instructs readers in their practice. These Dharma talks—gathered over several years—are like having Master Daehaeng at your side, urging you on.

The question-and-answer sessions with students are particularly enlightening; readers will find that the students' questions mirror their own and that Master Daehaeng's responses guide them on.

DAEHAENG KUN SUNIM was one of the most respected Buddhist teachers in Korea. In 1972 she established Hanmaum Seon Center as a place where everyone could come and learn about their true nature and how to live with freedom, dignity, and courage. The center has gone on to emerge as one of the most influential Korean Buddhist centers today, with over fifteen domestic branches and ten overseas centers. Daehaeng Kun Sunim is the author of *No River to Cross*. She passed away in May 2012.

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

To Discover Your True Self, “I” Must Die

The Furnace within Yourself

Let Go and Observe

Walking without a Trace

Mind: Treasure House of Happiness

Afterword: The Mind of All Buddhas

Glossary

Index

Anyang Headquarters of Hanmaum Seonwon

Foreword

When I first saw Daehaeng Kun Sunim* in the summer of 1992, she was sitting on a porch, and it looked like she was quietly playing with the ants. Not quite the fierce image I had expected of a great Seon, or Zen, Master.

At the time I was in a graduate program, studying for a PhD I thought I needed, and had been practicing meditation for several years. I found meditation very helpful and revealing, providing many insights into life and who I was, but I seemed to have hit a wall. No matter what I did in my life and practice, I felt like I was chasing my tail.

Now I was sitting in the Dharma hall listening to Daehaeng Kun Sunim. Instead of being intense and intimidating, she seemed perfectly open and at ease, smiling as she looked around at us. It was a brutally hot July day and she was talking about many different things, most of which were new to me. Out of the blue I heard her say, “You have to search within yourself!”

I’d heard things like this before, but this time it was different. Those words reverberated throughout me; this was the next step I had been trying to figure out. It was as though I had been looking at a small piece of a painting for a long time, and now much of the surrounding painting was revealed.

Over the months that followed, as I listened to Daehaeng Sunim’s teachings, I noticed a couple of interesting things. There were teachings I understood and those I didn’t, but of the ones I understood, there wasn’t anything that my experience showed me to be wrong. Further, of those teachings I didn’t understand, if I just thought of them once in a while as I observed the world I lived in, they began to make sense to me. As I continue to practice, it becomes clear to me that her central teaching of letting go and trusting our inherent foundation, while appearing somewhat vague at the beginning, in the end truly becomes a great path to liberation.

The Dharma talks that comprise *Wake Up and Laugh* cover these and other essential teachings of Daehaeng Kun Sunim, from basic issues of how to engage in spiritual cultivation, to how to practice after awakening. In between she covers a variety of topics, such as how to free ourselves from destructive habits, common misunderstandings and pitfalls, and the beauty of a life lived while letting go of thoughts of “me.” My hope is that you will discover for yourself what happens when you put these teachings into practice.

One last thing: a few years later I saw the video tape of that first Dharma talk

with Daehaeng Sunim, and nowhere in it did she say “You have to search within yourself.” And yet I clearly heard her say it. It seems that not all Dharma talks are spoken with the mouth, and not all Dharma talks are heard with the ears.

Chong Go Sunim
Hanmaum International Culture Institute

* At first introduction of a term, an asterisk indicates that this term can be found in the glossary.

Introduction

Faith in our true nature is the foundation of all of Daehaeng Kun Sunim's teachings. She saw this shining brightly within each of us and for over forty years taught people to make this inherent nature their focus.

In the Dharma talks that follow, she covers a vast range of topics and speaks to people at many different levels of practice and experience. At times she's speaking of things that are straightforward and easy to understand, and at other times she's speaking of things so far beyond our own experiences that they seem incomprehensible—but underlying all of this is faith in our true nature. Have faith in this inherent Buddha essence, entrust it with what arises in our life, and go forward while paying attention.

It doesn't matter that, in the beginning, we don't understand everything. If we just keep trying to apply the parts we do understand, spiritual experiences and understanding will naturally result, deepening our practice and spiritual life, and taking us on journeys we could never have imagined.

FAITH IN OUR TRUE NATURE

Within all of us is a great light, a treasure vast beyond imagining. Through this we are connected to all other beings; through this we are connected to all energy, ability, and enlightened beings. We can call this true nature, Buddha-nature, or God, but regardless of the name, it is inherently complete within us. And it is the source of our wisdom, energy, life force, and just about anything else you can think of.

Because this is the source of everything, this is what we must turn to, this is where we must look for our sustenance. This vast treasure is like the root that sustains and supports the tree. That root is where the tree has to look for its support. How long could a tree last if it didn't rely upon its root?

Although we all have our own root, many of us ignore it, trying to find sustenance and solutions outside of us. Instead, we have to discover how to draw upon the energy and wisdom that's already right there, waiting for us.

ENTRUSTING OUR TRUE NATURE WITH WHAT CONFRONTS US

Because this true nature is our root and our sustenance, this is where we need to

place our faith and what we need to stand upon. We do this by entrusting it with the things that arise in our ordinary, mundane daily life: the small, the big, the good, the bad, the known, the unknown, and the confusing.

In the Dharma talks presented here, Daehaeng Kun Sunim gives several descriptions of the process of entrusting. In the very first talk, she compares this process to dying, because entrusting our true nature with something to which we've been clinging does feel a bit like dying. We have to open up and let go of it. We have to turn it over to something else, something other than the "me" that thinks it's in charge.

Further on, she compares the process of entrusting to putting scrap metal into a furnace. All we have to do is put the metal in, and the furnace will automatically return pure, clean metal. In this furnace, everything is melted down without distinction. There's nothing too big or too small for the furnace to melt down.

In another talk, she compares the process of entrusting to leaping over attachments and thoughts of "I" and "me," which are the source of our hindrances and difficulties. In so doing, we come to release the great energy and potential that's always been within us.

Ultimately, the process of entrusting is just returning things back to the place they came from. Everything arises from there, so that's the place they need to be returned to.

OBSERVING AND GOING FORWARD

"Must be present to win" is just as true for spiritual practice as it has been for thousands of raffles: we must be paying attention in order to notice the results of our thoughts and actions. Once we notice what happens, then we can begin to learn for ourselves. We can begin to see what happens when we entrust things, what happens when we let go, and what happens in response to the various thoughts we've given rise to. It's up to us to then take what we've noticed and apply it back to our life.

In addition to awareness, we must have effort. It takes work to overcome the momentum of millennia of habits, and we are the very ones who must make this effort. Our true nature isn't some outside force that will take care of things while we sit around; it's us at our most complete. When we do our best, and do it while entrusting the task to our Buddha-nature, it's as if our true nature meets us halfway and fills in the missing parts.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The essence of all spiritual practice is discovering this divinity that's within each of us. It's there, but we aren't used to believing in it, nor are we used to relying upon it. So Daehaeng Kun Sunim teaches people to start by trying to rely upon this inner divinity, to start entrusting it with all the things that come up in life. And through

this, we begin to get a sense of this inherent nature for ourselves. So have faith in this Buddha-nature, entrust it with what confronts you, and go forward, paying attention and taking care of things as best you can.

There are two other aspects of Daehaeng Kun Sunim's teachings that should be mentioned here, for these are essential for progress on any spiritual path: First, always view things positively. Because we are connected to everything in the universe, the thoughts we give rise to affect everything in our world. This may seem hard to believe, but our thoughts do truly create our world. Everything is inherently changing and manifesting every instant, but as we give rise to thoughts, those thoughts give direction and shape to that energy.

This closely relates to the second aspect: don't blame or criticize others. When we criticize people, we lock them in the shape of our critique, making it hard for them to change and for us to see who they truly are. We're also denying any role in what happened and ignoring our connection to the other person. That other person is fundamentally another shape of ourselves, and by ignoring this we turn our backs upon the nondual nature of reality. Be very careful about these two points—a negative outlook and a tendency to criticize others will do more harm to your spiritual path than just about anything else. This can't be emphasized enough: no matter how hard you are working on your spiritual path, your progress will remain stunted as long as you are caught up in these two behaviors.

As you read the Dharma talks that follow, take the parts that strike a chord with you and do your best to put them into practice. And take those parts that you don't understand and entrust them to your true nature, letting them percolate down within you. Later, understanding will come as you need those teachings and as your practice broadens. There are treasures beyond imagining here, waiting for you to remember them.



ABOUT DAEHAENG KUN SUNIM

Daehaeng Kun Sunim (1927–2012) was born in Seoul and is widely regarded as one of Korea's foremost Seon,* or Zen, masters. She awakened at a young age and spent the decades afterward applying what she experienced.

For many years she had struggled with the question of why people suffer. Daehaeng Kun Sunim realized that ultimately the answer was ignorance. People were unaware of the non-dual foundation that connects all existence. Unaware of this inherent connection, people lived as if they were disconnected from everyone else; unaware of the ever-changing nature of reality, people tried to grasp and immobilize that which is ever flowing. Unaware that their foundation is endowed with all of the ability of the universe, people thought themselves weak and helpless, limited to the kindness of others or the ability of their intellect.

Thus, people suffered because their behaviors and thoughts were not in harmony

with the underlying truth of our world. And because people didn't know about this inherent foundation, with its infinite ability, they also didn't know how to free themselves from the suffering they had made.

So Daehaeng Kun Sunim began teaching people to entrust—to release—everything that confronts them to their inherent foundation and then to progress while observing. By continuing to apply and experiment with what we understand, a small grain of faith can grow into a great ball of flame that burns up all attachments and habits of the body and mind. Once this cloud of habits and discriminations has lifted, our inherently bright foundation, our true nature, can shine through.

While Seon masters have traditionally taught only monks and a few nuns, Daehaeng Kun Sunim was determined to teach spiritual practice in such a way that anyone, regardless of their occupation, gender, or family status, could practice and awaken.

With this in mind, in 1972 she established Hanmaum Seon Center as a place where everyone could come and learn about their true nature and how to live with freedom, dignity, and courage. And for the rest of her life, she taught only this.

To Discover Your True Self, “I” Must Die

SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1989

Although we are always truly functioning together as one, we also clearly exist as distinct individuals. In the midst of your busy lives, you have gathered here together to explore the path of truth, of how things really are. Thank you for this. When we gather like this, you, I, and all other beings are fellow practitioners and friends in the Dharma.

Today I'd like to begin by looking at what Shakyamuni Buddha said and did when he was born into this world. He said, “Throughout the heavens and the earth, there is nothing that is not this precious true self.” Then he looked in the four directions and took seven steps. Buddhism appeared at that moment, and so did the practice of learning to rely upon our fundamental, true mind,* which is the path that leads to the discovery of our true self. Although I have never been to school, nor have I read many books, here is what I think the Buddha's actions mean.

First of all, what is the meaning of “Throughout the heavens and the earth, there is nothing that is not this precious true self”? I have always told you that your foundation is directly connected to the foundation of the universe and to the foundation of every single thing in your life. Even before the Buddha was born into this world, all beings were directly connected to each other through this foundation. Thus, if you awaken to this foundation, you can save all of the lives within your body, and you can also save all of the beings outside of your body. This is possible because all of these lives are connected to your foundation. You may have some questions about this, so let's discuss them at the end of the talk.

Second, what is the meaning of the Buddha looking in every direction? It means that the foundation is neither emptiness nor form, thus everything is able to operate and function together as a whole. The Buddha looked in the four directions to demonstrate this. Finally, his taking seven steps shows that even in the midst of this wholeness, you and I exist as distinct beings, and every single instant of our daily life is the path to the truth. The Buddha taught us this without using words, because this is something that can't be learned through words. The truth can never be learned through scholarship, intellectual knowledge, worldly power, fame, or theories. From the very beginning, practitioners have learned truth only by wisely investigating the fundamental questions of where we came from, where we are going, and how we should live.

These fundamental questions surround us. For example, we consist of earth, water, fire, and air. We live in the midst of these elements and sustain ourselves by eating them. You shouldn't ignore this. You should be thankful for those elements, because all living beings originated from them and have evolved from them into the life forms of today. Everything comes from them and returns to them. Everything disappears into them and then arises from them. This is the truth. A single flower petal hanging from a tree soon falls. If the petal is protected from the wind, it may hang there a little longer, but nonetheless, before long it too will fall.

Everything around us is no more permanent than drifting clouds. We have gathered here together because we all need to overcome the illusions of this realm. Our minds inherently embrace everything, without the least exception. Through this *Hanmaum*,* this one mind, everything—plants, bugs, animals, and even inanimate objects—ceaselessly functions together. Although everything functions together as a whole, within this there is still clearly “you” and “me.” But the very existence of “you” and “me” is empty, and in the midst of such emptiness, there exists one extraordinary thing. In order to discover it, we are cultivating mind together.

I always tell people who are new here, “First, you must die! Let go of everything and entrust everything!” But where do we let go to? We let go to our fundamental mind, our true nature. Because you exist, you experience all kinds of things. However, your fundamental mind is directly connected to the foundation of everything, so it's possible for you to take care of whatever you experience by entrusting it to your fundamental mind. It's like a power plant within you. This incredible power plant! If we need some energy, we can take out as much as we need. The energy of the power plant is infinite. No matter how much energy is taken out, its energy never decreases, and no matter how much energy is put in, it never overflows. The energy comes and goes; we just can't see it.

Therefore, daily life can be practicing Seon, or Zen. Just physically sitting down is not sitting in meditation. When your mind is at ease and you have let go of everything, this is sitting meditation and practicing Seon. However, this doesn't mean surrendering your firm, upright center of mind and just falling into emptiness. It is because you have this center that you are able to practice Seon and feel comfortable or uncomfortable. Without all of these feelings you could not attain wisdom or awaken to your true self, nor could you become a Buddha.

You should entrust everything that comes up in your life—solitude, poverty, loneliness, anxiety, illness—entrust this all to your foundation and live freely. Entrusting everything is letting go of attachments; it is the path of dying. “First, you must die!” means unconditionally letting go of everything, including what you understand and what you don't understand. It means letting go without clinging to reasons or excuses. When things go well, you should let go of them with gratitude. When things don't go well, you should also let go of them, knowing that “Nothing is fixed, so this situation too can change. My foundation, my true self, is the only one that can truly take care of all things. It will lead me safely along the path.” Keep letting go like this. For it is only by dying unconditionally that you can discover your true self, your eternal root.

Second, you must die again. While practicing here, some of you have discovered yourself. Yet you still have not discarded your habits and thoughts of “I,” “me,” and “mine.” So you’re thrilled if a Buddha appears in your dreams but worried if you see a ghost. And when you feel or experience something extraordinary, you carelessly talk about that experience. What you’re seeing and hearing are just illusions, but nevertheless you’re clinging to them. This is why you must die again.

Now do you understand why first you must die and keep what you experience to yourself, and why you must die yet again, keeping what you experience secret? Even though you are able to see or know certain things after you discover your true self, those powers are not the Way. Even if you have obtained the five subtle powers—the abilities to know another’s thoughts and feelings, to know past and future lives, to hear anything, to see anything at any place, and to appear anywhere without moving your body—this is still not the Way. Only when you are free from attachment to those subtle powers will you be the master of them and able to use them to help all beings. Revealing what you hear, see, or know will only bring trouble. First, it will cause trouble for the Buddhadharmā; second, it will cause trouble for the temple; and third, it will cause trouble for you. Once you discover yourself, you enter the stage of experimenting. Know that what you experience while awake and while dreaming are all your true self teaching you. And keep everything you learn secret.

Even though you may be able to see, hear, or know things that others are unaware of, do it without clinging to any thought of “I see,” “I hear,” or “I know,” and do not reveal to others what you experience. At this stage of practice, you need to experiment with what you have learned. Your experiments will result in experiences, and then you should try to put those experiences into action. This is a very powerful stage of practice, so you must be careful to die a second time and keep what you experience to yourself.

If you keep everything secret and can completely let go of the five subtle powers, you will eventually be able to control them. If you’re a slave to your body, how can you take care of it and keep it healthy? Likewise, you must be able to free yourself from the five subtle powers. Although you see what others can’t see, release it. Although you hear what others can’t hear, release it. Although you know others’ minds and past lives, release all of that. Although your body is able to transcend time and place, and instantly go anywhere, you should also release that. This is keeping it secret. This is the very way to realize the truth of how mind works and attain wisdom. It is like a secret path where, through application and experiencing, you thoroughly understand this fundamental mind and become able to use it as needed. This secret gateway is inside of you. It is within you, working through your five senses. Don’t go looking for the entrance somewhere else. Discover the truth through the door that is already within you.

Third, you must die yet again. If you can keep what you experience secret and free yourself from all attachments to the five subtle powers, then at that point, even though you and others clearly exist as distinct beings, discriminations and barriers between yourself and others will utterly disappear. At this stage, you will be able to

manifest such that you become others, and others become you. Your ability to respond and manifest will become so powerful.

What is manifesting? Because mind has no form, an infinite variety of different shapes can come out from it. This is called the hundred and ten billion manifestation bodies of Buddha, because Buddha responds to you as you request: If you want the mountain god, Buddha manifests as the mountain god. If you want Avalokitesvara,* the Bodhisattva of compassion, Buddha manifests as Avalokitesvara. And so Buddha manifests to everyone differently. Furthermore, Buddha responds not only with physical forms but also with compassion and warmth.

Buddha manifests, transforms, and responds to every single life. Such manifestation is Buddha's stepping down from the realm of the Buddhas for the sake of unenlightened beings and working as a Bodhisattva.* This is the same compassionate action of the Lotus-Flower Buddha, the Medicine Buddha, and of Samantabhadra* Bodhisattva. Buddha responds to everyone. Regardless of who they are—the spirit of a tree or the spirit of the earth, man or woman, rich or poor, old or young, someone with power or without power, intelligent or unintelligent—Buddha responds equally to them all. This is what it means to be a Buddha.

These three stages of dying again and again can be thought of as the process of perfecting a human being. However, this isn't the completion of "me"; instead, it is where everything has been combined together and works as a whole. You still flow as yourself, and I flow as myself, yet in the midst of this, the whole, as Buddha, responds as needed. In this way, you can become anyone. According to the need, their eyes can become your eyes, and their hands can become your hands. Because you are one with them, you can understand their circumstances. Because you are one with them, you can truly know their pain. This is the compassion of Buddha, manifesting in a hundred and ten billion different forms. However, which manifestation is truly Buddha? Is it when Buddha takes the form of a worm? Is it when Buddha appears in front of you as Avalokitesvara? How about when Buddha manifests as a dog? You can't truly call any of these "Buddha"; Buddha is always changing.

Always changing and flowing every single moment is the Way, and is truth itself. If anything is "attained," it is the path that transcends all names and labels, the truth called "supreme, unsurpassed enlightenment." This path and truth are what the word "Buddha" means.

If we follow the path that the Buddha taught, we will be able to go forward intelligently, with faith grounded in our true nature. Here "intelligently" means releasing everything to your true self, your foundation, and not letting yourself be disturbed by anything. Seon Master Baizhang* was teaching this when he said, "You must not dig the ground, nor not dig the ground. Why is this?" Master Baizhang also said, "When you truly understand this practice, you will be able to plant and harvest, and feed all sentient beings with one bowl of food. Further, no matter how much you give, that bowl will never be emptied." The Buddha and countless awakened masters have also said the same thing and led us toward this path. They came to this world and, while doing without any trace of doing, showed us the path to the truth.

When the Buddha held up a lotus flower before the assembly, only the disciple Kassapa* understood and replied with a smile. He smiled because his mind had become one with the Buddha. Through this exchange the Buddha was saying, “To you, I transmit this truth, the enlightenment that is not enlightenment.” He did this in order to show us that understanding the Dharma is more than words alone. To use a Korean expression, “if you hit the wall, the roof should shake.” Hearing just one phrase, you should try to understand the unspoken, underlying meanings.

For example, when people hear the word “light,” they tend to think of only the bulb and the switch. There’s no awareness of the electricity coming and going. People only notice that the light comes on when they flip the switch. Similarly, people don’t perceive where they came from or where they’re going; they only see the bulb and the fixture. However, if you can see the electric power, then you’ll better understand how the bulb and fixture work.

The most important thing is this: First, you must let go of everything and die, and keep what you experience secret. Second, you must let go of everything and die again, and not reveal what you experience. Third, you must die yet again and keep what you experience secret. Then you’ll be able to attain wisdom and respond as a manifestation of the Dharma. Without dying like this, you won’t be able to reach the point where the entire universe bursts forth from within you.

All of the learning we’ve done since childhood, the schooling, the reading, the work experience, and learning to adjust to the patterns of society, has been a lot of hard work, hasn’t it? However, none of this effort has been in vain. After you’ve realized the essence of your mind, you’ll discover that everything you’ve ever learned, even the ordinary knowledge, will be useful. It will all be helpful because worldly learning and what we learn through our fundamental mind are not separate. Neither can be thrown away; both are necessary.

Then what comes first? You all have the mind that exists before the occurrence of thoughts. This mind is called Buddha-nature and has many other names. I am always telling you that, within your body, some lives are inclined toward good and some are inclined toward harmful things; sometimes these lives make you suffer and sometimes they make you happy. But don’t be deceived by them. These lives, these karmic consciousnesses,* keep causing all kinds of trouble and suffering. However, your true self, your center, is complete as it is. Your true self is upright and powerful. It is brightness itself.

Nonetheless, you tend to become worried and think negatively if, for example, you have a disturbing or strange dream. This indicates that you are not so good at handling your thoughts. When you’re thinking negatively, feeling sad or depressed, you should promptly change your thoughts, thinking, “Those feelings and thoughts all arise from Juingong,* our true essence, so it’s also Juingong that can keep those kinds of feelings and thoughts from arising.” Do this and your state of mind will change before long. And yet people keep telling me things like “I feel depressed” or “I’m sick” while clinging to these thoughts. Why do they tell me these things? The one who can take care of everything is you yourself. The “you” that is your true nature can deal with whatever arises, in whatever form!

By the way, you should know that when we seek the Dharma, it's often necessary to ask questions of each other and discuss spiritual practice. When fellow practitioners gather, it's good for them to energetically discuss all aspects of practice and their understanding, free of excessive politeness or fear of criticism. Paying attention to other people's experiences and observing how they act can help you a lot. From other's experiences you can learn many things: "I should be careful not to do that" or "That's a good way to do it," and so forth. In this way, you can gain wisdom and even come to understand exactly what you have to do. Some of you may be thinking, "You said that we have to let go of everything and rely upon our fundamental mind, but now you're saying that we have to work in the realm of speech and discussions?" People often wonder about this, so I'll say something about it now.

When you're looking for an answer, when you're asking a question, open yourself up and do it from your fundamental mind. When you ask me a question, I'm absorbing your words and that energy, and when I speak to you, you're hearing my words and also absorbing that energy. All of those words have been absorbed, haven't they? Asking questions and having discussion like this, while relying upon your fundamental mind, can really help you deepen and broaden yourself.

Our fundamental mind can communicate with and connect to anything. It has no physical form, so it can become any form of energy, such as light, electricity, or magnetic energy. Because of this, each side automatically absorbs what is said. When this side speaks, that side absorbs it, and when that side speaks, this side absorbs it. Like electricity or a wireless phone, mind communicates without any trace of coming or going. All of this is the working of the profound Dharma. Where is this profound and mysterious Dharma? It's in every part and every instant of our daily life. As I said before, when I have absorbed what you've said, and when you have absorbed what I've said, everything's gone, no traces remain at all.

However, as the Buddha told us, in the midst of this fleeting life, where everything ceaselessly flows and changes, there is one thing that is eternal. Physical things change every moment, but their root lasts forever. We're cultivating our minds in order to realize the eternal essence of this root, and so live freely. If you truly understand that the foundation of your mind is directly connected to the foundation of the universe, you will be able to truly hear, see, and evaluate everything throughout all visible and invisible realms. For these abilities are inherent within our foundation.

If you heard about something completely new, something you'd never even imagined, you'd probably think that it was nonsense. However, it is not nonsense to say that the foundation of human beings' minds and the foundation of everything in the universe are directly connected. Your foundation is connected to the foundation of everything you encounter in the world. Pay attention to the world around you and see how things work. People tend to gather together according to similar karmic affinity, and fit themselves to the group's rhythm. But life in that group isn't always pleasant, is it? When people don't know about this fundamental connection, they speak harshly to each other and fight. For them, life is a war, although they don't

realize it.

The last time I went to the United States, a group of Protestants and Catholics invited me to give a talk. Although we came from different cultures and religious backgrounds, I had no problem communicating with them. Why? Because the Korean word for Buddhism, *Bulgyo*, is not just the name of a certain group or organization. The first syllable, *bul*, means the eternal foundation and source of life, through which everything is interconnected. Because each one of us has this foundation of life, we have been able to evolve up to the level of human being, and will be able to become great spiritual beings like the Buddha. The second syllable, *gyo*, means words of truth and the teachings about life. This is like the wisdom and life experiences that a parent shares with his or her children. Thus, Buddhism, or *Bulgyo*, refers to everything in the world. It encompasses everything.

There are so many religions in this world besides Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. But in almost all of them, people believe in supreme beings that exist outside of and apart from themselves. Wherever I've gone, I've seen people blindly following images, names, or specific persons. But this can't lead us to what's true and essential. The Buddha taught us that the path to truth is within ourselves, saying, "Discover your fundamental mind, and in so doing, be able to perfectly take care of whatever arises and experience a truly worthwhile life. Escape forever from the cycle of birth and death, transcend time and place, and realize the truth of the universe."

I often ask myself if I am doing everything I can to guide people in the right direction. Am I living up to my name, *Daehaeng*, which means "Great Actions of a Bodhisattva?" I'm often checking to see if there is some aspect or wiser way of taking care of things that I've overlooked. Sometimes I feel like a bright gem, but other times I feel small and worthless. Sometimes when I go for a walk, if I see a twig, I become that twig. Sometimes when I see how people and animals live, I find myself smiling. Other times my eyes are filled with tears.

The awakened masters of old used to wear bells on their shoes when they passed through tall grass and brush, and even during heavy rainstorms, they walked slowly and steadily. Why did they do so? They wore bells because they did not want to accidentally kill even a tiny life, and they took steady steps because they were always focused on the unwavering, fundamental mind. You may already know this, but if you live without any kind of self-reflection, the days fly by and before you know it, your time here is finished.

So regardless of whether you are walking, driving, or working, always remember what's really doing all those things. Relying on your fundamental mind guides you to the correct path and allows you to free yourself and live harmoniously with your neighbors, while fulfilling your obligations. Relying upon your fundamental mind will also guide you during your future lives, for it is the act of watering your root.

Let me answer your questions today. When you ask questions, ask without any thought of asking. No matter what kind of problem you face, you should first return it inwardly, then the solution will arise. Likewise, when you want to say something, first return it inwardly, and then speak. By doing so, your anxiety will disappear and

you will be composed, without rashness. Go ahead and ask whatever you want, but don't make up a question. Rather, ask naturally. Even though you feel like you didn't express yourself well, don't feel bad. Feel free to say anything. That is how I speak. It's nice when things are natural.

We're here to learn about "doing without any thought of doing," so just ask without worrying about anything. Your questions will be helpful for everyone. If you come forward here and ask questions, those will become spiritual food for everyone's practice and will help guide everyone toward the truth.

QUESTIONER 1: I have been praying for all sentient beings ever since I started coming to the Seon Center. But I wonder if I have been practicing correctly. Although you tell us to let go of everything completely, whenever I recite the name of Ksitigarbha* Bodhisattva, my heart aches and my eyes fill with tears. Sometimes I ask myself, "Could I become Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva? No, how could I?"

KUN SUNIM: You said that you often seek out Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. However, you can discover Buddha regardless of the name you use. "Buddha-nature" is a name. "Ksitigarbha" is a name, and "Juingong" is also a name. All of these are just names. If you think that Ksitigarbha is great and superior to you and that you can find Ksitigarbha outside of yourself, then this is a delusion. It's completely useless. If you seek outside of yourself, you may also develop some severe psychological problems. Ksitigarbha refers to the treasure within you, the Buddha-nature that is hidden by ignorance,* by darkness. Therefore, never seek it outside of yourself. If you are always attracted to outside things, you will be far from finding your true self. Furthermore, you won't be able to properly take care of your family or yourself.

This Buddha-nature can also be known by names other than "Ksitigarbha," because Buddha-nature is the source of everything and encompasses everything. Because all things are combined together and continuously work together as a whole, Buddha-nature can be called "Juingong" or "my inner Juingong." Juingong includes every blade of grass and every single insect; here everything operates as one mind within a house made of earth, water, fire, and air. Because of this center, because of this treasure, your consciousness functions, and so does your good and bad karma, which are gathered together with your center. So stop reciting just the name of Ksitigarbha. Stop letting yourself be drawn outwardly. Know that everything functions because of Juingong. And don't forget that Juingong, Buddha-nature, and Ksitigarbha all exist within you.

When I was in New York the last time, people were freely asking questions. There was even the question "Do we live to eat or do we eat to live?" Someone beside me grumbled that it was a stupid question, but I disagreed, because it gave me a chance to address an important point. I used my glass of water as an example. If you're hot and thirsty, you open the refrigerator and go straight for the cool water. When you are dying of thirst, do you first ask yourself whether you drink water to live or you live to drink water? No, of course not. When you're thirsty, you go straight for the

water. This is also how we should practice relying upon our fundamental mind.

Likewise, there is nothing wrong with whatever you ask. Go ahead and ask about the things you don't understand. But it's also okay to check your understanding, to ask about what you understand, for your question may help other's practice. When people read books, they tend to get caught up in the meaning of the words, without thinking of the blank paper underlying the words. People pay attention only to the letters on the paper. So, in order to know the blank paper, let's ask questions.

QUESTIONER 2: I'm so grateful to be able to meet you today. I've been a Buddhist for twelve years. I would like to ask you about a term I've heard a lot about. What is the Saha world, the Sahalokadhatu?

KUN SUNIM: The Saha world is the very place where you are living right now, the world we human beings live in. This place where we are sitting is the Saha world. To explain it another way, north, south, east, and west are all the Saha world. There are lots of different ways the meaning of "Saha world" can be expressed. Everything is within the realm we live in, in the middle of our daily life, not anywhere else. We need to think deeply about what this means, and what it means in regard to how we can follow the teachings of the Buddha, how we can cultivate self-sustaining faith, and how our body, our family, and children can live freely, without ever being caught in the cycle of birth and death.

QUESTIONER 3: Until I met you, I had practiced the teachings and mantras of one of the new religions that have arisen in Korea. Some of its teachings are about living an altruistic life and dissolving resentments. Altruistic living means saving myself and others, which seems similar to the teaching of Buddhism—saving other beings is the same as saving myself. "Dissolving resentments" refers to the resentments that people have made since the beginning of mankind, the resentments that have permeated even heaven. It means saving not only all the living beings in the present, but also dissolving the resentments that exist in the invisible realm. Also, I heard that heaven consists of nine realms, and that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reside in the seventh heaven, while the founder of this movement resides in the ninth heaven, the highest of all. And...

KUN SUNIM: Look, in a nutshell, if they say that he's in heaven, then he's not there. Heaven is not heaven, and the earth is not the earth. Heaven and the earth do not exist separately. Everything depends upon our minds. People who say that they have the ability to save others cannot actually save anyone. People who can truly save don't talk about it. If your son were drowning now, you'd dive straight in and save him. You wouldn't waste time talking about it. You'd just do it without saying anything, without any thought of "I will" or "I did." Even though someone talks again and again about saving people, those words are all just theories.

So instead of relying upon other people's power, know yourself first. Even if