

FINDING YOUR PRIMARY POINT

by Zen Master Seung Sahn

Zen Master Seung Sahn gave the following Dharma Talk at the Providence Zen Center the evening before a Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreat, April 1977.

I often talk about primary point. What is primary point? When you have a scale, and there is nothing being weighed, the indicator points to zero. You put something on it, and the pointer swings to "one pound". You take it off; the pointer goes back to zero. This is primary point. After you find your primary point, then good feelings come, bad feelings come, so your pointer swings in one direction or the other. But this doesn't matter. Don't check it. When the feeling is over with, the pointer swings back to zero.

But, if you haven't found your primary point, then it is like taking a heavy object off the scale and having the pointer stay at "ten pounds". Or, the pointer moves back only part-way; it doesn't go back to zero. Then, you have a problem. Your scale does not weigh correctly. Maybe if you put a heavy object on it, it will break completely.

So first, you must find your primary point. Then, you must keep it very strongly. A taxi has weak shock absorbers, so it hits a small bump and bounces up and down. A train has strong shock absorbers, so it is very steady. If you keep your primary point, your mind-spring will become stronger and stronger. You will meet big problems, and your mind will move less and less. A big problem comes; your mind moves, but soon returns to primary point. Finally, your mind will be very strong; it will be able to carry any load. Then, saving all people is possible.

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