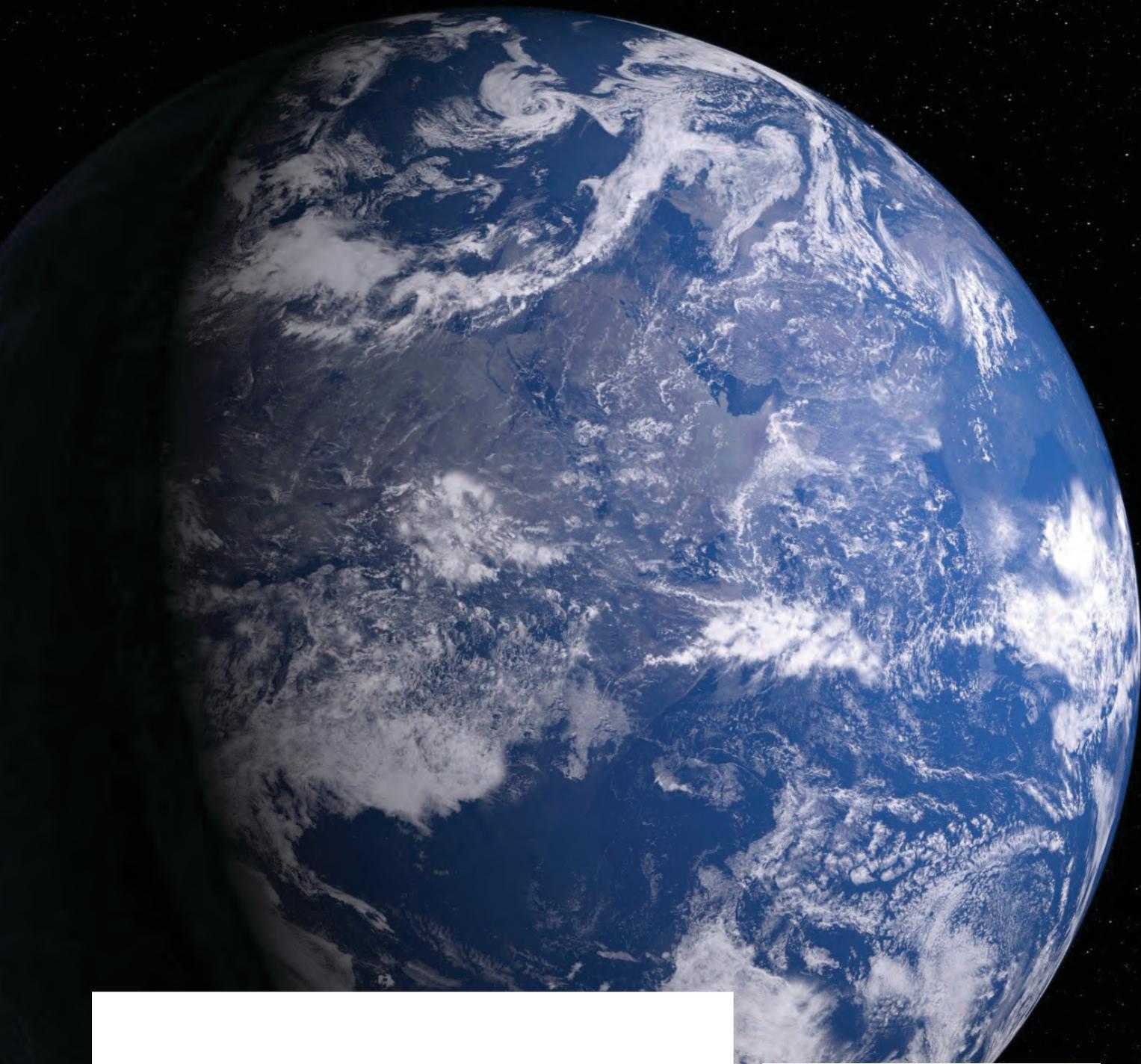


Primary Point



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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 1,800 copies.

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Cover: Stock image.

Editor's Note: After a series of discussions with representatives from our European, Asian and North American sanghas, we are trying a new approach to the production of Primary Point with this issue. We were looking at what we might do to enrich the journal, or even if we needed to think about that. We decided to see if changing the editorial process would have an effect on the content. We have begun this approach with the Asian region generating the content for this issue. Our thanks to the regional participants in this dialogue, particularly Arne Schaefer JDPSN, Paul Majchrzyk JDPSN, Koen Vermeulen JDPSN, Ben Gleason, Tamarind Jordan, and particularly to Kathy Park JDPSN, who carefully shepherded the content for this issue.

Our Original Strength and Compassion

Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Bobby Rhodes)

Practicing with don't-know means practicing with focused awareness coupled with the question, What is this? When something happens as huge as the Earth's climate change, it can be difficult to face it and to know what to do. There can be the tendency to want to put our heads in the sand.

When I first understood that the ice caps are melting at a much faster rate than had previously been predicted, and consequently the sea levels are rising rapidly, one of my thoughts was "Oh my, this is all going on in *my* lifetime! Human beings have been around for thousands of years. Why does this have to happen when *I'm* alive?" Well, that thought is a perfect example of attaching to self and other. It's also an example of attaching to time and space. It's not a good example of don't-know! It came from feeling afraid: afraid for my child, my grandchildren, for humanity, ani-

mals, rivers, oceans . . . it's so hard to conceive of.

When we can take the fear and just own it and learn from it, that is our don't-know returning us to our original strength and compassion. With our breath, move the fear and sadness down from our head, down from our heart, all the way to our center and ask, "What can I do? How can I help?" Our vow can come to life when we are able to breathe into our strong center. This is our practice.

Kwan Seum Bosal means, "Listen to the cries of the universe." Cry, fear and enter the lessons this universe is constantly giving. Enter the unknown, before thoughts of heaven and hell, loss and gain. We need to unconditionally move into life, and because of our fear and sadness, we will find our center. Our vow and direction are right there. When we attain that, we can truly find the way to help this thing we call Earth. ♦

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Hide Under the Path

Zen Master Dae Bong

A student asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "Where can we hide?" He replied, "Hide under the Path! [*The Path refers to the Way, or the Tao. —Ed.*] If you practice strongly then you can save yourself, your family, your friends and dharma friends—all those closest to you. Because dharma energy is absolute energy, without opposites. It can cut through anything. So we always say, don't-know can cure any sickness. So only try, OK!"

You all probably remember that in 1996 Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Before the year 2000, big things not happening. After the year 2000, big things happening. After the year 2000, correct-direction people, stronger correct way; wrong-direction people, stronger wrong way."

Then after 9/11, he said, "World War III already begun. Not usual war. Maybe many people fighting for 100 or 200 years. Much, much suffering. People kill each other. Some places have no food. Some places no water; other places too much water. Much pollution and many natural disasters. And disease. Finally human population

down, down, down, until maybe 1 billion people. Then more smooth."

It's no surprise, though very sad, that as a society we have been too shortsighted and greedy, unable to make necessary adjustments to our ideas of "progress" and unlimited economic growth, which have always been untenable and have brought about and sustain our current situation. It has been clear for most of our lifetime. Very sad.

Maybe young people now will drive the necessary changes: everybody reduce their personal needs and practice generosity on a personal and total societal scale. Not likely, huh?

Love, brothers and sisters, is the only way. Leonard Cohen sang, "Love is the only engine of survival." The other kind of survival is animal, not human.

I'm in Malaysia now, and it's raining outside. I hope you are all well!

Warm regards to you all,

Dae Bong ♦

Hothouse Zen: Practicing Zen in a Time of Climate and Ecological Crises

Myong An Sunim JDPS

Some months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Zen Master Seung Sahn sat with some of his students, discussing the world's situation. He said, "In the future, there will be much suffering, much fighting; some places will have too much water, some places not enough water; some places will not have enough food. There will be many natural disasters and disease. Then society will have a big problem, many people will die."

One student became very alarmed upon hearing this and asked him, "Sir, when that happens, where can we hide?"

Zen Master Seung Sahn replied, "Hide under the Path."

His words teach us that in the face of adversity, we can take refuge in the path of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This means seeing and accepting the truth of things

as they are: strengthening our Zen practice with faith and sincerity, drawing upon the support of our practicing community to help us regain our clarity and centredness and returning to our don't-know mind. Approaching the situation and our practice with a sense of openness and kindness, we can take the opportunity to help others caught up in the same circumstances through the compassionate expression of our bodhisattva vow.

Our daily lived experiences are visions of normality, its mundanity giving us a sense of familiar comfort. However, it is a veil over the prevailing climate and ecological crisis threatening our planet. The story of climate change is our story, the metastasizing of our planet's long presumed stable climate to a much hotter uncertain one. The rumblings of climate change are a portent of an unimaginable impact on our lives if we continue with our business-as-usual lifestyles.

These are no longer normal times. Yet, when viewed through the universal lens of cause and effect, things are nothing but normal. The causes of our present climate crisis are not complicated; the seeds were planted by our headlong rush to industrialize in the nineteenth century, burning fossil fuels to power our pursuit of never-ending economic growth. These actions resulted in the release of increasing amounts of planet-heating CO₂ into the atmosphere.

In less time than is required to traverse a single human milestone of birth, old age, sickness, and death, we managed to so fracture our environment and ecology that we now threaten our global habitat. It is perhaps unsurprising that we have reached this point in history, where the cascading impact of climate and ecological breakdown imperils all species, including ours. It is just the precise and dispassionate manifestation of our global cause and effect.

We reap what we sow; cause and effect is clear—that much we understand. Yet, the causes of this crisis and others like it go much deeper; they are rooted in our individual and collective afflictions of anger, desire and ignorance. They originate from our mistaken idea of "I, my, me" as a separate and independent self. Our unending efforts to try to satisfy the insatiable "I want" mind lead clearly to consequences we see in the climate crisis.

Perceiving these truths clearly helps us take a first step toward unshackling ourselves from victimhood and blame; knowing the causes of our current predicament, we can come to realize that the remedy is to be found within each one of us.

The first of the four great vows—"Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all"—acts as a guide for our actions. It points to helping those who are suffering

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Photo: Haeng Won Zen Centre

now, those who are in harm's way, those who are unable to protect themselves from future hurt. Beginning with those who we care about most, we can think about what we need to do to ensure that they have all the opportunities to live a life as rich as ours. If we look around us, we can see examples of many people who are taking action, doing their part to help at both an individual and group level. If enough of us act positively, we can make the impact needed so that we can set ourselves on a path to a cleaner, sustainable, brighter future for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. Sometimes the challenge and effort needed can feel out of reach, but if we just try, we may well find that it is within our abilities.

"Just do it" is one of our primary teachings; it counsels unselfish action. Our great teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn exemplified this teaching through his countless selfless acts of courage, wisdom and compassion, a source of inspiration for our own actions. Each and every one of our choices and actions do matter because they have an impact; it is the clear functioning of cause and effect. We have to decide what is important and the kind of impact that we want to have. Then we have to act; we have to do it.

We have learned about the temporary nature of all things from the Buddha's teachings. The fragility of our impermanence has mostly been a theoretical construct that we have rarely had to confront as an imminent and distinct possibility. Most of us want the assurance that we can continue to enjoy walking along beaches, through forests and parks with our loved ones, breathing in clean fresh air and appreciating nature's beauty. When that assumption is rudely yanked away from us, it can stir up emotions that are difficult to deal with.

Many who have acquired a good knowledge of the cli-

mate science have reported experiencing grief, anxiety, anger and despair. In certain cases, the symptoms are similar to those experiencing PTSD. These emotions are difficult to face but are a natural response to an overwhelming existential threat to our way of life and all who we care about. With the support of our community and our practice, I think that we can find a way through to accept and deal with them. It may mean learning to have hard conversations about difficult things—loss, powerlessness, sadness without getting mired in despair but turning to hope and optimism by talking about how we can engage in helpful mitigating action. It is often said that action is the antidote to despair.

Greta Thunberg, a diminutive sixteen-year-old Swedish schoolgirl diagnosed with Asperger's, OCD, and selective mutism, became depressed and stopped talking when she was eleven after learning about the climate crisis. In August 2018, when she was fifteen, she felt she had to do something about it, so she got out of bed, skipped school, went straight to the Swedish parliament and sat outside in solo protest. Her depression lifted. From her one simple, unselfish act, she was unexpectedly transformed into a shining icon of hope and inspiration to millions of schoolchildren worldwide who, like her, want concrete action to avert the climate crisis.

In Chinese, the word for crisis is *wéijī* and comprises two characters: *wéi*, meaning danger, and *jī*, meaning opportunity. Despite the many dangers in a crisis, it points to the hope that we can find opportunities within for redemption. The challenge of our climate change is therefore a reason for hope and optimism, not for the dimming of our light. The past is set and bound, but the future is yet unwritten. We are both the authors and actors of this climatic saga; the power to script each unfolding chapter firmly is in our hands.

This is without doubt the single greatest opportunity of our generation to pull ourselves out of our kamikaze dive. We know exactly why our earth is getting hotter. We also know the many solutions that are available. It is only us, we adults, who have the power and resources to craft a healing world for all of our existence. Our young do not; it will be far too late for them by the time they reach adulthood.

Jacques Cousteau, noted explorer and oceanographer, said, "We protect what we love." But we cannot love what we do not know. Most of us live in modern towns and cities, hermetically insulated from the natural world, accentuating our sense of separation from nature. Meditation helps us dissolve the wall of false duality, the habitual opposites thinking that we are all used to; and in becoming one with this world, we can also come to intimately know and love it.

Each and every one of us can be a cli-

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Photo: Haeng Won Zen Centre

mate and ecology bodhisattva.

Practicing Zen in a crisis is no different from practicing at any other time, except that in this case, the urgency and gravity with which we should apply ourselves is many orders of magnitude greater. We need to remind and motivate ourselves to practice with courage, clarity of direction, constancy of purpose; to embrace living with uncertainty and don't-know; to wake up to the reality of our oneness with nature and this world.

At the same time, we also need to realize that the ways we live and behave have a direct impact in shaping our planet and environment. What we are seeing now with extreme weather, firestorms, and extinction of countless species are the results of our collective life choices and actions. We can choose to live in ways that preserve and heal our habitat instead of destroying it. It will take great courage and the willingness to welcome radical changes to our lives. The karmic calculus of cause, action and result are clear and inescapable—we cannot continue to live in the same way and expect a different outcome.

So, it really does matter, now more than ever, that we try, that we make an effort with our whole heart, to learn to live in harmonious sustainability with this planet. In this way we can heal and nurture the planet for our children and the entirety of all species, and leave it richly habitable for them. ♦

Further Explorations

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Winter Kyol Che 2020

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Sales de Llierca, Borisa, Catalonia (Spain)

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Vražné, Seonmunsa, Czech Republic

Dates: January 04 to April 03

January 04 - February 15:

George Hazlbauer, JDPSN

February 15 - February 29:

Gu Ja, Zen Master

February 29 - March 21:

Alma Potter, JDPSN

March 22 - April 03:

Bogumila Malinowska, JDPSN

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The World's 2-Billion-Ton Trash Problem Just Got More Alarming

Ann Koh and Anuradha Raghu

The stench of curdled milk wafted from a shipping container of waste at Malaysia's Port Klang as Environment Minister Yeo Bee Yin told a group of journalists in May she would send the maggot-infested rubbish back where it came from.

Yeo was voicing a concern that has spread across South-east Asia, fueling a media storm over the dumping of rich countries' unwanted waste. About 5.8 million tons of trash was exported between January and November last year, led by shipments from the U.S., Japan and Germany, according to Greenpeace.

Now governments across Asia are saying no to the imports, which for decades fed mills that recycled waste plastic. As more and more waste came, the importing countries faced a mounting problem of how to deal with tainted garbage that couldn't be easily recycled.

"Typically, 70% of a shipment can be processed, and the other 30% is contaminated with food," said Thomas Wong, manager of Impetus Conceptus Pte, a Singaporean company that shreds locally produced plastic waste before sending it to recycling mills in Malaysia and Vietnam. Contaminated trash is sent to incinerators and landfills for a fee, but some recyclers "just find a corner and burn it," Wong said. "The smoke smells just like palm oil, so they hide in a plantation and light up at night."

Greenpeace investigations in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand revealed illegal recycling, open burning, water contamination and a rise in illnesses tied to pollution, the organization said in an April 23 report.

When China banned imports in January 2018, it started a domino effect. Shipments were diverted to Southeast Asia which soon became overwhelmed, forcing governments to take action.

Malaysia announced a ban in October. Thailand stopped issuing import licences last year and will likely impose a ban in 2020, according to Yash Lohia, an executive director at Indorama Ventures Pcl, a Bangkok-based plastics producer and recycler. The Philippines said it is sending 69 containers of garbage back to Canada. Indonesia said it will tighten waste-import rules after discovering shipments containing toxic waste. India and Vietnam have also announced restrictions.

Malaysia's Yeo said garbage is still getting into the country in falsely declared cargoes, but the government hopes to stop the trade completely by the end of this year.

As Southeast Asia stops accepting the material, companies will look somewhere else, said Wong at Impetus

Conceptus. "I think Africa will be next."

But social media have ensured public awareness of the problem in both developing countries and the wealthy nations that export the trash. That will make it increasingly difficult to export unwanted refuse.

"Everyone can voice their opinion on waste," said Indorama's Lohia. "That's when countries start taking this more seriously."

The long-term message for nations is clear: Deal with your own garbage.

But how to do that? Humans generated 2.01 billion tons of solid waste in 2016 and by 2050, that could rise to 3.4 billion tons, according to the World Bank. About 12% of all municipal waste in 2016 was plastic—242 million tons of it.

The solution could lie in new technologies and a change in social behavior that reduces and even eliminates the need for landfills and incinerators. Here are some of the ways that companies, local authorities and startups around the world are tackling the problem.

► Mine It

Most rubbish ends up in a landfill or just chucked into the street to be washed away into rivers and oceans. In giant municipal dumps in countries such as India and Indonesia, informal "trash pickers," who live near or even on the mountains of rotting garbage, make a living from things they can sell.

Companies tap the methane gas produced by decomposing organic waste trapped in the dumps.

"We are sucking out the gas and using it to make electricity," said Sarun Tunwattanapong, who is building a 5-megawatt power plant in Thailand next to a landfill in Nonthaburi province.

► Burn It

Trash can be incinerated to produce electricity. In Singapore, the residual ash is dumped by barge to create a new island. But it's expensive. Dioxins and other emissions produced during burning need to be treated by electrostatic precipitators and lime powder. And it still produces greenhouse gases.

Solid waste can also be gasified at high temperatures using plasma torches to produce syngas, metals and a glass-rock slag for paving roads. Maharashtra Enviro Power Ltd.'s plant in Pune, India, turns hazardous factory waste into feedstock for boilers.

► Sculpt It

Artist Joseph-Francis Sumegne scoured rubbish dumps in the 1990s for junk to make the 12-meter-tall New Statue of Liberty monument in Douala, Cameroon. Filipino Oscar Villamiel salvaged thousands of doll heads and debris from a landfill in Manila to create the Payatas installation in 2012. This year, U.K. duo Tim Noble and Sue Webster's shadow 2002 waste sculpture "Real Life is Rubbish" was sold at auction at \$75,000.

"Infinite wealth, infinite detritus," said Bridget Tan, director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Arts and Galleries at Singapore's Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. "There's something to be said for the irony in the obscene excess of consumption."

► Sort It

Sorting trash can be an unpleasant job, one reason why a lot of rubbish ends up in developing countries with lower wages.

But technology is increasingly automating the task and making it more efficient. Helsinki's ZenRobotics Ltd. has developed robots that grab wood and metal from conveyor belts of trash. And in Angelholm, Sweden—ranked the country's best municipality for waste management—trash collection company NSR AB uses near-infrared beams to identify different types of plastic as the rubbish shoots along a belt. Jets of air remove the plastic items, leaving non-recyclable packaging and organic waste to head to an incinerator to produce power.

Artificial-intelligence systems are being developed to make the process more efficient. "Robots could be an interesting future alternative if they learn to identify plastic material types and if they can sort fast enough," said Pernilla Ringstrom, a manager at NSR, which collected 538 tons of plastic in 2018 that was made into composite ties for railways or sold to companies in Sweden and Germany.

One challenge is getting people to sort their waste at home. In Taiwan, garbage trucks play classical music tunes like Beethoven's "Für Elise" to alert people to run down from their apartments. Plastics and aluminum cans get tossed into a white truck before it leaves while incineration waste goes into a yellow one.

► Wash It

In Japan and Europe, recycling rates exceed those in Southeast Asia because citizens give their trash a quick rinse after pouring out leftover liquids, according to Impetus's Wong. Food, shampoo and coffee all prevent plastic waste from being recycled. "In Singapore, only 4% of plastics are recycled and the remaining 96% are thrown out," said Wong. "In Japan and Europe, people take more care and wash things, so their trash isn't as messy."

► Eat It

Singapore's Taraph Technologies is one of the companies using bacteria or organic processes to tackle the issue. It's harnessing natural enzymes that digest plastics and turn them into chemicals normally produced in oil refineries. Monoethylene glycol from enzyme-eaten plastic bottles can be sold

at prices 10 times higher than the value of trash, said Taraph co-founder Liew Mei Shan, who expects the technology to be commercially available in 5 to 10 years.

"Waste collection is a cost," said Liew. "If we can transform that into a revenue unit to cover expenses, it will become profitable for the collector."

► Replace It

Startups and companies around the world are looking at alternatives to plastic, which has outpaced the production of almost every other material since the 1950s. Paper straws are making a comeback after widespread social-media campaigns. Food boxes and disposable cutlery are being made from grains or sugarcane waste. As more countries ban plastic bags, supermarkets are looking for other ways to wrap groceries. In Vietnam, some are even wrapping vegetables and meat in banana leaves.

A more high-tech route is being taken by companies such as Netherlands-based Plantics BV, which is using plant-based resins made by polymerizing glycerol and citric acid that can be used instead of petrochemical-derived plastics.

Singapore-based RWDC Industries, which just raised \$35 million in two rounds of funding, has launched Solon, a biodegradable polymer produced by microbial fermentation of plant-based oils.

"Plastic takes seconds to produce, minutes to use, but takes centuries to degrade," said Zhaotan Xiao, the company's president for Asia-Pacific. "Why are we making single-use disposables with something indestructible?"

► Stop It

Ultimately, the best solution is to not produce any rubbish that can't be recycled. That's the aim of the residents of Kamikatsu, a mountainous village in Japan. Residents already wash oil off gyoza plastic packaging and sort their trash into 45 categories. Styrofoam and dirty plastic are made into lumps of solid fuel, which can be burned instead of coal. Polyester clothes are sold in a local second-hand shop. Clean plastic is taken away by companies such as Kao Corp. for recycling.

Akira Sakano, who heads the town's Zero Waste Academy, wants to go further. She's working on eliminating the village's waste production by 2020. One trial project asks detergent suppliers to set up a stall where people can refill washing-liquid bottles. At a community craft center, seamstresses stitch together a jacket out of red children's flags.

"We already have solutions in our hands," said Sakano. "Innovations like bioplastics and technology are necessary, but also how do we turn our knowledge of sustainable materials in our culture or community into modern life?" ♦

—With assistance by Ponprom Rojanakiratikan, and Stephen Stapczynski

Reprinted with permission from Bloomberg. The original article can be found online at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-07-11/how-the-world-can-solve-its-2-billion-ton-trash-problem>.

The Zen of Gardening: Less Is More

Chow Xin Tong

In 2015, after living abroad for some time, I returned to my family's land in Kampung Serukam, Sungai Petani, Malaysia. I started to take care of the land and practice regenerative farming. When I first arrived, it looked run down and rubbish was strewn everywhere in the village. Because there's no rubbish collection truck that comes into the village, the villagers decided the fastest disposal method is to burn everything.

Each day at sunset, everyone in the village does open burning. I saw my family doing the same thing and strongly felt that they should stop. However, in Asian culture, it's very difficult to tell our elders what they should do. So, one evening when my granduncle was burning rubbish, I just took a bucket of water, poured it on the fire, extinguishing it. He was not happy but didn't say anything. As a result of my interventions, he stopped his daily rubbish

burning. If we allow ourselves to pause, we can see what is really happening.

Our farmland had a history of farming using chemicals and pesticides. When I got back, I wanted to practice organic and regenerative farming. In a small village like ours, nobody understood what that was. But they were very happy to just try it. We stopped using all kinds of chemicals in the farm. The first thing that we saw was a lot of the old fruit trees started to slowly die off. My family had a panic attack: "This organic way is not working at all!"

However, we didn't give up and instead we tried again. We planted a lot of new trees and eventually the new trees thrived and still survive today. My family could then better accept this new way of farming.

We also started planting some new garden beds to produce some food for ourselves. The first season we planted a lot of long beans because they are nitrogen fixing plants. After three months, the long beans started to fruit. We were so happy! But then, just before harvest time, it all got eaten by pests. Again, my family's doubts resurfaced and they again said, "This organic way is not working!"

But I insisted that we keep trying. In the second season, we planted long beans again. There were pests but we allowed them stay there. We didn't use any natural pest spray such as an enzyme-based repellent. We let nature do what she needed to do. What we saw was the pests attracted natural predators. However, they were not enough to overcome the problem and we still had nothing to harvest in our second season.

We decided to try again for a third season and said to ourselves, "Let's plant long beans again!" This time we again observed the same pest-predator situation. But we managed to have enough harvest for ourselves and even a little bit extra to sell in the market.

Finally, in the fourth season, there were no more problems as we arrived at an ecological balance. The pests became our best teacher—nature needs time to balance itself. We always want to fix something, but in order to give ourselves a chance to see things clearly, we may have to do less. In other words, less is more. It is actually just what we are doing in meditation. We are pausing our thinking, giving ourselves a chance to actually see what is happening.

When we talk about gardening, a lot of people are scared of weeds. If you ever come to our farm, you'll see that it is full of grass and weeds. What I noticed was that in each season, a different weed variety marches in. For

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burning.

One day after about a year later, he came up to me and said, "Wow! Today I passed by our neighbor's place and I saw them burning plastic the way I used to do. Actually, it smells really badly!" Even though he had been burning plastic and trash for thirty years, he had been not aware that the burning smelled that bad. After he stopped, he was able to see and smell what was happening. In my second year on the farm he said, "Today I saw the neighbors burning plastic again and I went to tell them that it's not good to do it."

We are so busy in our heads that sometimes we don't see what is happening. If we don't take a moment to pause, we will always try to do something instead of just allowing

A Zen Flower

Chee Hoyyee

I feel that I have been riding a roller coaster my whole life; thrown up, down and sideways with no warning. Some days my life is like a peaceful, still lake, but on other days it feels like a raging storm and I have no way to handle it. My mind then just flips from a still lake to the storm and I feel like I am getting nowhere.

When I first learned about Buddhism, I clearly remember everyone was always saying that life is suffering. I thought, “Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, I know!” So then why live with all this suffering? The reason I live on is because they also said that if you kill yourself you will go to hell and you will stay there forever! Practicing Buddhism and meditation is a way out of hell—freedom from suffering. This is what I was told but I couldn’t understand how or why.

As my life progressed, I managed to find a way to make it through the stormy days. After that, things seemed to get better. Then, my partner, Pop, and I decided to go into the jungle and stay there for some time. My life changed dramatically at that point and I realized how stupid I was because I didn’t even know where to get food, how to get water or what to do. Basically, there was nothing I could do and slowly I began to see my fear; I saw what had happened to me in my life; that what I had been chasing after did not help me to survive in the jungle.

Luckily, one of the older women who lived close to the forest was friendly and taught me how to look for food and get clean water. It was then that I realized that my life was being supported by all of nature around me, which was the source my daily meals. Fresh air from the trees; clean water from the river, underground streams and bamboo thickets. What else did I need to survive? I had to learn this important lesson or lose it.

After some months, I returned to my hometown in Penang with my idea of happiness: that nature is heaven and the city is hell. Soon, a strong feeling of separation arose within me, which caused me more suffering. It was a bad time and it really shook me up. I thought of the practice that I had done.

I wondered if the meditation I had been practicing was meant to bring peace and happiness. If I believed that nature is good and is our life’s teacher, then why did I have so much of suffering now while living in the city with my family? Did the practice work? Or was I understanding it wrongly? What was important for me? Questions leapt into my mind nonstop. Eventually I remembered a teaching about bringing peace in our mind, that is, bringing peace to wherever we go. So, Pop and I decided to try to create a kind of heaven on earth.

By then, I had an insight into how the human world worked, how greed led to heedless development that ruined nature. It takes away our ecological gold—the good, rich soil that nutritious food grows from, the clean air and water that we breathe and drink. It takes away almost all the freedoms that we used to have and take for granted.

We started our journey by growing food organically in my parents’ home, regenerating the degraded city soil. We reused whatever natural resources we found and turned them back into the land. The moment I reconnected with the reality of nature and life, I began to understand better how the natural world supports us and how can we support it in return. Life began to get better, but one drama after another caused havoc within my family, sending me straight back into the storm. Fortunately, my connection with nature helped me through. I saw our plants survive in the hot sun and through storms. I could too, through having faith in nature and myself.

Somehow, my journey led me to an encounter Myong An Sunim, my first Zen teacher. Practicing don’t-know mind was something new for me and gave me a different perspective about Buddhism. As I was practicing meditation and keeping a don’t-know mind, it felt like my mind was starting to get clearer. How? I really didn’t know. But there were fewer stormy days, and life felt like it had improved. I could see better my emotions arising and my own actions. My emotions did not stay in my mind as

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example, in one season a lot of lalang weed will appear. This means the soil needs deep tap roots to break it up. After that it could be mimosa that becomes the dominant variety, which tells us that the soil needs nitrogen. Each season brings with it a different weed variety. We call this the succession of ecology; when one type of grass finishes taking care of what the soil needs, another type will take over. This is the cycle of nature.

We didn't even have to buy organic fertilizer for our fruit trees. Nature provides a built-in abundance to regenerate the soil. Many times through farming, I learned that to do less is doing more. When we do less or pause, we get less involved with what is happening in our head. We will get to see how rich life is. There's more in life than what we think there is. And that realization comes from doing less.

I first met Myong An Sunim at a monthly organic farmers market. Every time he saw me, he would invite me to practice meditation. He invited me for a year but I never went. I knew that Hoyyee, a farmer friend in Penang, went weekly to practice meditation at the Zen center.



Photo: Haeng Won Zen Centre

When I started to give healing massages at her home, she said, "Let's go together to practice with Sunim." I didn't hesitate about going. After practicing for many times, I experienced an improvement in my life. Most of the time at the farm, I have to take care of people, plants, income and everything else related to the farm. My mind becomes busy easily and it's often difficult to settle down. I'm always thinking of how to finish everything.

When I started to practice meditation, I realized that if we just pay attention, it's easy to do things one by one. I attend to one thing at a time. Only after one thing is done do I move on to another. Meditation helps me in paying attention and breathing so that I am able

to enjoy things from moment to moment. Nowadays, when I visit my mother, she often comments that I look brighter and healthier. I believe that it stems from "less is more." ♦

Xin Tong founded and lives on Serukam Organic Farm in Sungai Petani, Malaysia.

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long as they used to. When I was able to see them, they went away quicker than before. I guess that it was one indicator for me to know that my life was getting better and clearer.

We moved out of my parents' home to an urban home farm. It became a place for us to practice and train, learning to work with nature within the environment of the city and society. Bit by bit, without realizing it, we had begun turning a piece of abandoned land into an urban educational farm.

One day, like a bombshell, some incidents involving my family and life blew up in my face at the same time. I didn't know what to do. Then, ahhh, I recognized that it was the same challenge again. I thought I had practiced well and could handle things, but like a really bad storm, it blew me back to square one again. I began to lose faith in myself and my practice; my emotions were churning up and down even though I was trying my best to keep practicing.

I started to walk out the door, legs heavy with despair. Just as I came out into the sun, I saw a yellow flower blooming in my garden; it was from a seed that I planted some time ago. I couldn't believe it still bloomed even though I had put it in a tiny container. At that moment, I suddenly became present with the flower. In that same moment, I was able to return to my breath and my body and a feeling of hope came flowing back. I realized that the seed grows, the flower blooms, I just breathe and life just goes on.

As a farmer, it's easy to see that the climate is changing for

the worse and the news is telling us that many living beings are suffering. Like them I have suffering too. I remembered one of the Facebook posts sharing a conversation that Zen Master Seung Sahn had with his students, "Seeing all this coming, what can we do? Where can we hide?"

Zen Master Seung Sahn replied, "Hide under the path."

This teaching keeps reminding me, moment to moment, to take refuge in the path.

What will happen next? Don't know. The seeds of Zen have been planted, so I just keep on going, keep on living. What is the purpose of life? I thought I knew before, but now, I just don't know. I have learned that life is often unpredictable, just as in nature; the sun shines one moment and rain falls the next. After it stops, a rainbow appears, a breeze blows the clouds away and the sun shines again. Through it all, the trees keep growing, dropping their seeds onto the soil, continuing the cycle of life of the mother tree. Trees, vegetables, fruits, flower, weeds, seeds, chickens, ducks, dogs, cats, sky, earth, people; all things around us are our teachers.

I try to keep faith in myself to grow with nature and to practice, practice, practice. To me, it is the only way to learn how to dance in the rain. Supporting ourselves with practice is also a way of supporting our friends, family and nature. ♦

Hoyyee and her partner, Pop, founded an urban educational farm and teahouse on the island of Penang, Malaysia.

The Power of Habit

Andrzej Stec JDPSN

There is a bestselling book, *The Power of Habit*, in which the author, Charles Duhigg, in a very simple way explains how habits work and how we can change them. In Buddhism, we call habit “karma.” In the Kwan Um School, we say that karma is the energy of habits, the power of habits. Everybody has some habits. We all have karma, and actually this karma controls our lives. Most people don’t understand what is happening to them because every human being is making 35,000 to 50,000 decisions every day. More than 90 percent of those decisions are made subcon-



sciously. We are doing things out of habit, not aware of a hidden software running our lives.

The karmic process has three elements:

- 1. Primary cause.** In the whole universe, there is no result without primary cause.
- 2. Condition.** Whatever is happening to us will only happen when primary cause will meet a specific condition of time, space, emotions, people, prior actions, and so on.
- 3. Result.** You have to do something to get the result. Because we are always doing something, we are always getting results. Those results become the next primary causes, closing the “wheel of karma” or “habit loop.”

Since most people are not aware of their karma, they cannot connect the dots between cause and effect. Only sometimes, when results happen immediately after the cause—for example, when we put our finger into boiling water—are we able to connect those dots and learn the lesson. With karma, we only have a choice: either karma is

controlling us, or we are controlling our karma. We practice to be in charge of our lives and help others: I control my karma; my karma does not control me.

When we control our karma, we can change it. Most karma is lingering karma, “leftover” karma. This lingering karma is the most difficult to fix, because it is created by very small, insignificant actions repeated every day. We keep repeating and repeating some actions or thoughts over a long time, and in the end we get the big result of those actions. Surprise! If we really look closely, we will see that big karmic results were

created by some kind of lingering karma. So it’s important to be aware of our daily, small habits.

If we want to change our karma, we’ve got to understand our habits first. The next step is to *attain* that understanding. Being aware that we have some negative habits is the first step, but it is not enough. Understanding can’t help. Attaining the habit means this understanding has some energy. Only then are we able to decide, “I’m going to change

it!” After we make a strong decision, we need to have a method of how to change it.

The skillful way to start the whole process is to create what Charles Duhigg calls a “keystone habit.” This one new habit can start a domino effect of changing not only one but many habits over time. Don’t worry about the rest of our karma—only do that one thing. If we try to change too many things at once, we fail. For the Zen student, nothing could be a better keystone habit than the habit of meditating first thing in the morning. In the morning, everyone’s willpower is the strongest. While sitting still and by simply breathing with the lower belly, we can recharge our willpower battery. There is no way to change ourselves if we have a weak center, that is, if our willpower battery is depleted.

So let’s start our day with some practice, just 10 minutes every morning. Over time, this one small habit of 10 minutes meditation every morning will trigger a domino effect of positive changes in our life. Zen Master Ko Bong used to say, “Don’t worry about your karma; just make a habit of strong practicing.” ♦

Just Do It for All Beings!

Hundred-Day Solo Retreat

Hye Tong Sunim JDPS

Wild blueberries, nettle, dead mouse, stars at midnight, lentil soup . . . these are conjured up when I look back at my hundred-day solo retreat in the Wisla mountains in Poland this past summer. I'm compelled to write a few words, hoping it can be useful for the next person who aspires to do a solo retreat.

Why did I decide to do a hundred-day solo retreat? If I ask myself again, initially the reason was not so clear. I'm already in my late 40s and have been living a monk's life for 23 years. I gained some weight and got a belly, but more than that, I felt my mind also became overweight. When I had to teach, sometimes I had to face some part of myself that lacked a power of conviction, and that was most uncomfortable. However, even up to the day before I started my retreat, my reason for doing it was not entirely clear. That day, I wrote an email to Zen Master Dae Bong saying, "Sunim, I start my retreat tomorrow and will end on August 27. I cannot be reached until then." Within five minutes, Dae Bong Sunim replied with just one line all the way from Korea, "Just do it for all beings!" My mind opened up with a bang. We have heard this teaching from Zen Master Seung Sahn and in the Kwan Um School of Zen countless times, over and over, and I myself have repeated it endlessly to students, but in that moment, it rang with such clarity, liberating me as if hearing it for the very first time. In fact, there is actually no other reason than that for me to do a hundred-day solo retreat. During those hundred days there were many hindrances, but whenever I would say to myself, "Just do it for all beings!" everything was fine. I decided to do a thousand bows in five sets of 200 daily. At the beginning of each set, I would start by saying, "Just do it for all beings!" and my body would move by itself. During midnight practice, or when I woke up in the morning, dazed and confused, I'd ask myself, "What am I doing right now?" and then immediately cry, "Just do it for all beings!" and it was as if I was immediately jolted with a double espresso shot. It was a deeply powerful reminder that whether it's a solo retreat, or any other kind of practice, or whatever it is we do in life, one's direction has to be clear.

After about two or three weeks, I thought a lot about death and the cycle of rebirth. Suddenly, I became very curious. I thought I had crushed this one countless times during Dharma talks and kong-an interviews, but there was definitely something deeply unresolved inside. Then I'd reach the same conclusion . . . damn! The one that drags this question around—don't-know—almost lost it again! When I started to see my ribs showing and my steps getting wobbly, the fear of death started following me. Then I remembered, "You already gave your life!" and could feel the power of "no life,

no death." Coming into this life in a human body, we really have to live without regrets. Not live by squeezing, forcing ourselves incessantly to some unknown end, but to live a life of truly no regrets. Practicing utterly all alone, I was grateful to the Polish sangha—to the Unsu Foundation, Krakow Zen Center, Katowice Zen Center; to all our Dharma family back in Musangsa Temple in Korea, who assured me to go and practice and not to worry about anything; and to my parents who gave me this body so I can practice. There's not enough space to write how truly grateful I am. Ironically, people I disliked appeared very often in my mind. I really don't like having this dislike mind, and it appeared often. So every time they would appear, I would say to myself, "Stop hating," almost like a mantra. After some time, when those dislike thoughts would appear, they became laughable. Happy mind, unhappy mind, loving mind, hating mind—which one is the true mind? In our kong-an book, there are many questions like this. We are truly fortunate to be able to practice with this as our foundation!

I did a couple of short solo retreats previously, and I remember that what was most difficult was the sense of loneliness. So this time, I made a very tight and meticulous schedule, posted it on the wall and used it like a robot. Based on our Kwan Um School of Zen Kyol Che practice schedule, I added 1,000 bows, chanting the Great Dharani and midnight practice. I just followed the schedule until I could do it automatically. Just do it, just do it, keep going, then even with the most difficult or tight schedule, we just do it, and we get the power to believe in ourselves. Believe in our true selves. Originally there is no such thing as true self. Only, the sky is blue; bowing time, only sweat; cooking rice, then just "bubble, bubble, bubble . . ." That's all. Even if we gather all the powers of the universe and try to destroy one of those things, it's not possible. It is also what Zen Master Man Gong said: "The place beyond life and death includes both the sentient and the nonsentient. Therefore, all the weapons of the universe cannot destroy the true nature of even a single blade of grass." It's the same for our everyday life. When we just do it, just do it and only go straight, we can believe in ourselves. Then every moment is the truth, and everything we do is bodhisattva action.

Every day, I read from the kong-an book. There is a commentary from Dae Soen Sa Nim: "If you want something then you lose everything. If you don't want anything then you already have everything. But you must hear the stone lion roaring. Then the whole world is in your hand. You can be free and can do anything."

This was very refreshing. Do you hear the stone lion's roar?◆

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Arhat and Bodhisattva

Kogen Sunim

The human mind always thinks in pairs of opposites. Good and bad, gain and loss, high and low. Buddhist teachings use this dualistic instrument to point to mind before thinking, before dualism appears. It's like using one thorn to remove another thorn from our skin. But over the centuries, different teaching strategies have appeared in Buddhism. Sometimes, we get attached to one particular style, and so we fall into debates about which one is better.

Singapore, for example, is a very interesting place because there are many temples from all the Buddhist traditions here. So people often hear different teachings and get confused. For example, there are the two different ideals of the arhat and the bodhisattva. A Theravada monk in one temple says that the historical Buddha never taught about the idea of bodhisattvas, so therefore Mahayana is not true Buddhism. And a Mahayana monk in another temple says that an arhat seeking nirvana is selfish, and helping others is more important. Which one is correct?

It is easy to forget that all those teachings are just skillful means. Even though the historical Buddha didn't teach about the bodhisattva way, after his enlightenment he spent 45 years only helping others to liberate them from suffering—exactly like a bodhisattva. Meanwhile, on the other hand, many Mahayana teachers leave society behind and in seclusion they focus entirely on their practice—just like an arhat—in order first to wake up so that they have the wisdom and energy to devote to helping others.

So it seems to me that the arhat and the bodhisattva are like two wings of the same bird—both elements are necessary. Strong practice without clear direction might become a self-serving pursuit. But also compassion is not enough without wisdom and clarity.

Another way to look at it is that, in ancient times, most practitioners were monastics, and they often went to the monastery or into the mountains and practiced for many years like arhats seeking nirvana. "Returning to the marketplace" as a bodhisattva was the last stage of their practice. In contrast, these days most practitioners are laypeople, and also this world needs help, wisdom and compassion urgently, more than ever before. That's why practice now often starts and ends at the marketplace.

In 2020 the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference will be held in Singapore and Malaysia. Hoeh Beng Temple in Kuala Lumpur is literally in the middle of the Malay market, and in the morning you can hear butchers chopping off chickens' heads. The Kwan Yin Chan Lin main Zen center in Singapore is located in Geylang, which is the red light district of the city and the center of its night life. We do our practice and make practice available for everyone in the middle of this suffering world where it's needed the most. Kwan Yin Chan Lin has offered by now more than 90 six-week-long meditation courses, free traditional Chinese medicine consultations, a children's class and other activities here in Geylang.

And at the same time, the Singapore sangha is lucky to have three retreat centers in Malaysia that are set in a more natural environment where people can focus on their practice 100 percent and then bring this energy back into society.

So, just as in nature everything follows the natural alternating rhythm of day and night, inhale and exhale, sleeping and waking, in the same way we also oscillate between the arhat and bodhisattva aspects of practice: our formal practice in the morning and evening and during retreats, and our moment-to-moment perceiving clearly correct situation, relation and function, as well as keeping a how-can-I-help-you mind in daily life.

So right now at Kwan Yin Chan Lin we have once again entered summer retreat to focus on our practice, and then with clear mind, refreshed and inspired, we go back to preparations for the WWSF 2020 conference and hopefully create a wonderful experience for the worldwide sangha and benefit all sentient beings! ♦

Kogen Sunim is from Poland, where he started practicing Zen in 2003. In 2008, he went to Bukkoku-ji Temple in Japan, where he received monastic ordination from Tangen Roshi-sama. Since then, he has practiced in several Buddhist monasteries in Korea. Kogen Sunim also served as head monk at Hwagyesa Temple from 2015 to 2016, and at Tosho-ji Temple from 2016 to 2017. More recently, he was also in-charge of Tahoma Zen Monastery and Enso House, a Buddhist Hospice in Washington State in the U.S. Over the years, Kogen Sunim often travels to Singapore to practice with Kwan Yin Chan Lin. He has given dharma talks at retreats and on Vesak Day celebrations.

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“I’ve Been Waiting My Whole Life to Hear That”

Zen Master Dae Bong

Dharma speech given at Musangsa Temple, May 12, 2019

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the floor with the stick.]

In this world everything is changing.

And our mind, our feelings change with changing conditions. When we are born, everybody’s happy. When we die, everybody’s sad. Around, around, around nonstop. The name for this is opposites world.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the floor with the stick.]

Originally nothing’s changing.

No birth, no death. Everything’s complete stillness. No happiness, no suffering, no problem. That’s our original nature. Not only Buddha talked about that; many religions also teach this point. We call that the absolute world, the world we all originally come from.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the floor with the stick.]

16] In this world birth is birth, death is death. Happiness is happiness, suffering is suffering. Each thing, moment to moment, is complete. If we attain this complete mind, nothing is ever lacking. We call that the complete world.

So, three kinds of worlds, which means three ways we keep our mind. Opposites; everything always changing, changing, then much suffering. Absolute world is absolute mind, our original nature is silent and still. Complete world is complete mind, each thing by itself is complete. Then everything is just as it is and moment to moment nothing is lacking.

One time about twenty years ago, I went into a bank in Seoul. I gave the teller my debit card from my account

and I told her I wanted 300,000 won. Then the lady did the things with the computer, then she looked at me very shyly. She said, “you only have 30,000 won in your account.” I burst out laughing! Then she said to the other lady, “I never saw somebody laugh at having little money.” Have money, complete. Have no money, also complete. Can we live that way? That is the complete world. So three worlds: which world do you live in? Opposite world? Absolute world? Complete world? Which world?

KATZ!

Today’s Buddha’s birthday! Many people in Musangsa and all over the world are very happy. Are you happy? I hope so.

How do we find this correct-function world? We also call that moment world. Many billions of people are born and die. Why do we remember Buddha? When Shakamuni Buddha was alive, somebody asked him, “Are you a man? Or are you a god?” He said, “I’m awake.” Last night, everybody here was sleeping, including myself. Then we woke up and did something and came to the temple today. What kind of wake-up is that? Wake up to opposites world? Absolute world? Function world? Complete world? What world? What did Buddha mean by *awake*? Did he mean simply “I am awake”? What was he awake to? We’re left with a very interesting poem. It’s called the “Human Route”:

*Coming empty-handed, going empty-handed,
that is human.*

*When you are born, where do you come from?
When you die, where do you go?*

Life is like a floating cloud which appears.

Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.

The floating cloud originally doesn’t exist.

*Life and death, coming and going are also
like that.*

*But there’s one thing which always
remains clear.*

*It’s pure and clear, not depending on coming, go-
ing, life and death.*

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?

What is the one pure and clear thing? If we open our mouth and say something, already making something, not pure, not clear. We say, if you look deeply into this question, finally you don’t know. This don’t-know is very important. Zen master Seung Sahn’s favorite teaching phrase is “Only go straight, don’t know!” In university if you don’t know, you fail. But looking into yourself, “What am I? What is the one

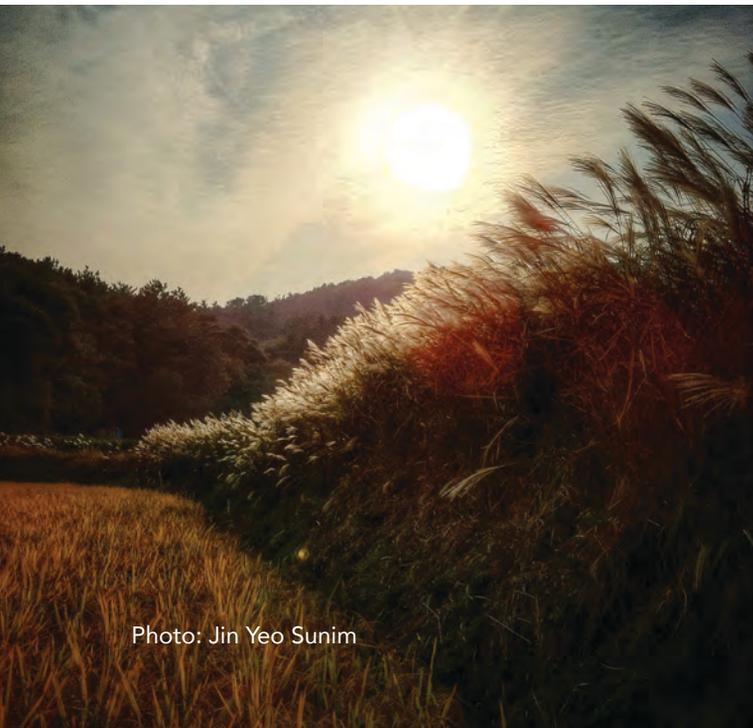


Photo: Jin Yeo Sunim

万法归一 一归何处



Ten thousand Dharmas return to one, where does one return?



世界一花 禅行天下

The whole world is a single flower, Zen blooms everywhere.

w w s f
schedule
oct. 2020

						
arrive in sg ¹	local tour	local tour	confe- rence	work- shops	desaru practice	muar practice
14 Wed >	15 Thu >	16 Fri >	17 Sat >	18 Sun >	19 ● Mon >	20 Tue > ●
21 Wed >	22 Thu >	23 Fri >	24 Sat >	25 Sun		
						
malacca tour	kl ² tour	kl ² tour	confe- rence	confe- rence	[1 singapore 2 kuala lumpur]	

price
range

14 to 20 oct 2020 : 5 days - usd230 or usd680; 7 days - usd365 or usd815
21 to 25 oct 2020 : 2 days - usd100; 5 days - usd300 or usd400

pricing
& info.

wholeworldisasingleflower.org
wwsf2020.my

pure and clear thing?” If you don’t know, only go straight, don’t know, then you get enlightenment. How can don’t-know give us enlightenment? If you don’t know, then listen to me and soon you’ll understand. When you are thinking, your mind and my mind are different. When you cut your thinking, your mind and my mind are the same. Your don’t-know mind, my don’t-know mind, somebody else’s don’t-know mind, all don’t-know mind is the same don’t-know. The moment we don’t know, that stops our thinking. Stopping thinking is before-thinking, empty mind. Before-thinking. When you keep 100 percent don’t-know, that’s before-thinking. Before-thinking is your true substance. What am I? My substance is before-thinking, before these words. Your before-thinking is your substance. My before-thinking is my substance. Somebody else’s before-thinking is their substance. Then your before-thinking substance, my before-thinking substance, somebody else’s before-thinking substance, this stick’s substance [*holding up Zen stick*], the substance of the sun, the moon, the stars—all universal substance is the same substance. Even modern science says that. We are stardust. Everything in this universe appeared inside stars, so your body came from inside a star which came from nothing. So everything in the universe is of the same substance. When I heard Zen Master Seung Sahn say that some forty years ago, I remember thinking, “I’ve been waiting my whole life to hear that.” When you keep don’t know 100 percent, at that time, you are the universe, and the universe is you. You and everything have already become one. We call that primary point. Don’t-know is not don’t-know. Don’t-know is primary point. Primary point’s name is don’t-know. Somebody says primary point’s name is mind, or Buddha, or God, or nature, or energy, or absolute, or spirit, or consciousness, or emptiness, or everything. Primary point has many, many names. Just like in this cup; Korean people say *mul*; Chinese people say *sui*; Americans say *water*; Spanish people say *agua*. Many different names [*drinks water*] but this is not a name. Our true nature is just like this. It’s before speech and words. When you keep that mind, you and all things already become one.

Today I have a question for everybody. Keeping don’t-know mind in your danjeon (center), OK? Not up in your head, not in your chest. In your danjeon! Then, this stick’s substance, [*hits the stick on the floor*] the sound substance, and your substance, are they the same or different? [*Looks around at the audience.*] Nobody can answer?

They’re the same substance. Ice, water, steam. Name and form are different, but the substance is the same. Name and form only change by conditions. All universal substance is the same; according to conditions, it becomes air, water, fire or earth. It becomes a tree or insects, or a human being. According to conditions, it becomes a Korean, American or Polish person. A man or a woman. Substance is the same, it only changes by conditions. If we attach to conditions, we can never realize our true nature. Then conditions control our lives. Economic situation good, happy; bad, then un-

happy. Health is good then happy; sick, unhappy. Do you want to be controlled by conditions?

Buddha pointed to our true substance. But not depending on Buddha, everybody already has it. This stick’s substance, sound substance, your substance, same or different? If you say they are the same, this stick will hit you. If you say different, this stick will also hit you. Same or different are our thinking words. True substance is before-thinking. Open mouth, already mistake. My whole Dharma talk is a mistake! How can we answer this question? Anybody who heard Zen Master Seung Sahn’s speech already understands this. [*Hits the table with the Zen stick*]. Stick, sound, you: same or different? [*Hits the table with the Zen stick*]. Everybody hit the floor! [*The audience hits the floor.*] Good! Some people have no thinking, just do it. Some people are a little slow. When you hit, you already attain your substance.

Buddha saw a star, understood his true substance. Last night, unless you live in Seoul, maybe you saw a star. Did you get enlightenment? How much can we believe in our own original nature? Buddha woke up to original nature. Originally no life, no death. Just this body is changing. This is like a rented car. Someday, our rented car gets old, then we have to return it to the universe. Some people here are older than me. My car now many little things broken but luckily, only all little. Everybody has that. Sometimes, big things get broken. Can we keep our mind clear and comfortable even when the car’s breaking down? That’s what Buddha woke up to. Not special, same as us, but woke up. If we realize our substance deeply, then we can see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly. Everything’s the truth. Everything’s complete, moment to moment. Trees are green. Sky is blue, clouds are white. Dog goes *mong mong*. We used to say Korean dog: *mong mong*; American dog: *woof woof*; Polish dog: *how how*. Which one is correct dog’s barking? None of them. That’s only human beings barking. If you want to attain the dog’s barking, you must ask a dog. Then you attain truth. Attain substance, attain truth, and one more step: How do we use this moment’s truth to make a correct life? Correct life is always in harmony with all things. Then correct love appears, correct compassion, correct wisdom. Then whether a good situation or bad situation, we can find a way to be, and to live in a way that actually benefits ourselves and others no matter the circumstance. If we realize our human nature, we can solve every problem in the world very easily. If we don’t, then in the future, many sufferings. Even if the outside world is suffering, if you find this true nature in your heart, you’ll be fine. So let’s do it together!

Here is part of the Morning Bell Chant:

Vowing openly with all world beings

Entering together Amita’s ocean of Great Vows

Continuing forever to save all beings

You and I simultaneously attain the way of the Buddha

Namu Amitabul

Namu Amitabul

Namu Amitabul ◆

Why Do You Have Two Eyes?

Zen Master Dae Kwan

During formal meals at retreat, students help to serve rice, soup, side dishes and clear water. This is a great practice for everyone because everyone has to keep a clear mind. Those who are serving need to be clear about the serving order. Those who receive food have to be clear about which bowls they are using because each bowl holds a different kind of food.

After the meal, we wash our bowls with hot tea, dry them with a white cloth, and wrap them neatly with a brown cloth. To conclude the formal meal, one by one we carefully line up our bowls with the bowls of the dharma friends in our row. Each row then forms a straight line with their bowls. This is such a wonderful practice.

There is a kong-an that asks why we have two eyes. Many students can easily give a correct answer after a few tries. Unfortunately many of us will treat the answer as a model answer and forget to apply the spirit of the kong-an, which is the actual attainment of the answer. Very often we are happy when we can give a correct answer. Once

we leave the kong-an room we will go back to our old habits. Most of us feel that our practice only applies to the meditation cushion. Our everyday life has nothing to do with the practice.

Attaining “why do we have two eyes” means we are able to observe and reflect the situation. At the same time our action can flow with harmony accordingly. This seeing is not about checking ourselves or others but how we use our two eyes to make harmony with everyone. When you are on a bus and you see an older person, a pregnant lady or a handicapped person, you give your seat to them. When you see that someone is about to fall, you try to help them. When you see some desirable products that you do not need, you look at them and walk away. When you are writing a check, you pay attention to what you are writing on the check. When you are at the airport, you watch out for the boarding time. In this way you are attaining “why do you have two eyes?”

This is how we use our kong-an practice in our everyday life to make a clear life and help each other. ♦

Every Day Is a Good Day

Gye Mun Sunim JDPS

Awakened to the truth of life, one's happiness is not subject to living in good conditions; even when faced with unexpected disaster, pain and suffering do not control us. What matters most is to keep clear, live fully in the present, pay attention moment to moment, just do it.

The eminent teachers of the past said:

*Clinging to the four elements as our body;
Originally there is no-mind till conditions
appear;
Let go of conditions, return to no-mind;
Just like illusion, good fortune and
misfortune come and go.*

Body is formed by the elements of earth, water, fire and air. Mental cognition is created by interactions of various conditions.

Without these various conditions, thinking and feeling will not be produced by mental cognition. In other words, the mental cognition of good or bad is only an illusion created when causes and conditions come together. As the causes and conditions extinguish, the related thinking and feeling also cease.

When we can use this penetrative insight to perceive the illusory nature of all conditions instantaneously, a mis-

fortune will not cause us to wallow in sadness and a fortunate event will not cause us to become elated.

As the last verse said: “Just like illusion, good fortune and misfortune come and go.” Any pair of opposites can be substituted for good fortune and misfortune, for example, big and small, bright and dark, heaven and hell, nirvana and samsara. All creations have the same nature as illusions, and they will ultimately extinguish. This penetrative insight to perceive the human body and mind can also help us to realize that all worldly affairs and material things are no different.

Simply remind yourself: all good things will be gone, feelings of happiness will come to an end, beauty cannot escape death, a hero will soon grow old. Since ancient times, who has not faced death? Just these mindful reflections are enough to make a person see clearly and act correctly, and to face any encounter with a different kind of thinking and feeling.

Humans often sink and get lost in their existing conditions; usually, they do not heed the inevitable creation and extinction of everything in this world; that's just like seeing the honey on the knife blade and not noticing the sharp edge underneath the honey. When the truth of existence is clear, what lifestyle a person chooses is up to the individual to decide. ♦

What's Your Question?

Kathy Park JDPSN

The Kwan Um School of Zen's global online presence, the Kwan Um Online Sangha (KUOS), provides teaching, support and community practice opportunities for members who have limited access to local Zen centers. The following are taken from question-and-answer sessions with Kathy Park JDPSN from online exchanges.

Question: I think the desire to do good things and help others can have its dangers—it can easily be shadowed by thoughts of “I feel good because I’m a virtuous person now” or “I’m helping them more than other people are.” We’ll always try and add our little egos into the equation!

Kathy Park JDPSN: Yes, very true. A human being is made of desire; otherwise we would not be born! But if we use this precious human life to practice and see our true nature, we also see that ourselves and all beings’ true nature are one. There, natural compassion arises. That’s our original human nature. But because of our habitual thinking and conditioning, our “I, my, me” creates opinions. So as you said, our ego gets in the way! That’s why practicing is important, so that our view becomes more clear, less derived from “I, my, me.” Then we transform our desires (based on “I”) into an aspiration (for all beings). If we direct our practice and life’s purpose to more than just ourselves, we call that making a vow with the seed of bodhi mind, that is, bodhicitta. Then we are already on the bodhisattva path, and everything we do is already saving all beings, moment to moment.



Question: When I sit on the cushion I’m starting to recognize how my mind is full of a huge variety of ego-based delusions. I’m learning to fully see them, and gently let them go. But occasionally I think something during meditation which is actually useful or creative—which brings me to ask: How should we look at these thoughts? If we value some of these thoughts and we want to remem-

ber them and use them in our lives, are we then clinging to them and being attached to them?

Park PSN: It’s a good question. If you don’t cling or attach to them, you can use any good idea as necessary. Good idea, bad idea—they come and go. Sometimes a brilliant idea appears during sitting, but later it doesn’t always work out in life. Sometimes we don’t keep any thinking and just go about our day, but if our mind is truly clear—what we call don’t-know—suddenly our wisdom functions in that moment and we are creative and decisive. It’s all about how clear we are when we practice, and moment to moment in our daily life. Yeah, any idea appears, no problem. See it for what it is. Might be useful later. But if you keep clear and your mind is like a mirror, just reflecting the truth, the idea may help you when really necessary—or maybe an even better thing appears! But if you attach to “my creative idea” then it may hinder you, so pay attention!



Question: Since the last check-in I am chanting Kwan Seum Bosal 5,000 times a day, as you suggested to me. For the first two days it helped me a lot: much clearer. But now I see that the mantra and my mind are separate. I mean, I am doing mantra but thinking something else. Do you have any good advice for me?

Park PSN: As many dharma friends have said, it is good that you can see your mind is thinking and doing mantra at the same time. It is normal that both Kwan Seum Bosal and thinking happens simultaneously after a while. That’s because in the beginning, your mind is doing something new and you really pay attention to doing it, so it works well. But soon your mind has already gotten used to doing the mantra and it becomes a habit, like a groove in our consciousness already replacing our usual habits. That’s good news. So one more step is necessary. When you catch yourself doing both, ask, “Who is repeating Kwan Seum Bosal?” And just return to this moment, become clear, only don’t know. Then see clear, hear clear. And back to Kwan Seum Bosal and whatever is in front of you—just do it. If you don’t attach to them, thinking is not a problem. If you make your thinking important, then it becomes a problem. Great job so far, so keep going. Most important is to keep going. Then you can experience fruit in your practice.



Question: Does one attain their vow and direction during a precepts ceremony?

Park PSN: What are you doing right now?

If this moment is clear, you attain your vow and direc-

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Photo: Won Il Sunim

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tion. If you are not clear, even during a precepts ceremony, you'll be lost.



Question: I am in pain and trying to rest to recover from a viral infection. What is my correct job here?

Park PSN: Be in pain and recover by resting. Do some Kwan Seum Bosal while breathing. Sick time, be sick. Rest time, only rest. That's all.



Question: I know our intention is always to help others. I know this can be in any way, according to what's needed in the moment. But I was wondering, are there any social projects that the Kwan Um School has set up anywhere in the world? If so, I'd like to learn from them. There is suffering in my hometown that I see every day and I really want to help. I'm specifically thinking of the problem of people sleeping on the streets. I want so much to help. I can occasionally buy a homeless person a coffee or a sandwich. But I would love to be involved in a more sustained action, with other Buddhists. There are Buddhists where I live but no one from the Kwan Um School.

Park PSN: This is a good question. We all want to help. There are many kinds of help.

22] One way is to provide charity and give to others. It is giving our generosity to those in need. That is wonderful and is a very important practice. For example, at every holiday our temple, Musangsa in Korea, provides offerings of rice, foods and supplies for single elderly people who are homebound in rural communities nearby. When we collect donations for such events, many people give generously for it. Thus we practice generosity as a community. Generosity is the foundation of our human nature. We are a species of community.

Another way to help is by giving service. We can give our time and energy, for example, as a hospice caregiver, which some of our members do. It means giving solace, giving our attention. At the Cambridge Zen Center, we also used to provide service at local canteens for the homeless by cooking and serving food. That is giving of our time, effort and support for those in need, as individuals or as a community.

Currently some KUSZ members are working hard together on actions for climate change as a global community. Education, sharing wisdom and inspiring each other to take action are other ways to become socially engaged in making changes.

Another way is by giving dharma. An example in the Kwan Um School is the ongoing prison program. For more than 30 years, Zen students in the United States go regularly to teach meditation to prisoners, and this is a powerful way of helping society. By sharing the dharma, we give the precious gift of teaching and the opportunity for others to liberate themselves by attaining their true selves

so that changing their own lives is possible. The KUSZ is a school that builds sangha, a community of practitioners globally—not only in prisons. We help as many people as possible to wake up.

In the *Compass of Zen* (Shambhala, 1997), under the chapter “The Purpose of Buddhism” is written, “First attain enlightenment, then instruct all beings.” As practitioners, we are exploring more clearly, “How can I really help?” All different ways are wonderful, and all are very much needed. While we try to help, at the same time by continuing to practice and wake up, we can tell the difference between enabling or being a bodhisattva. We can find our true calling when we become more and more clear in our own direction and purpose. We can help materially and also help with wisdom. Providing food or a coffee for a homeless person may work once in a while, but we also need to understand, what's the best way to help. Do they even want my help?

So do what you aspire to from your heart, and at the same time continue to practice looking inside. As we grow in our spiritual journey, we become more skillful in being of true benefit to others, and eventually everything you do is already saving all beings, moment to moment, no matter how big or small. No need to wait for enlightenment before we help, but along the way become more and more clear, then you can really help this world effectively. Then you are fulfilling your very own life's true purpose.

Here is a link to an article by Zen Master Seung Sahn that hits the heart of this subject:

<https://kwanumzen.org/teaching-library/1985/03/01/how-can-sitting-save-this-hungry-world>

I don't know of a specific program currently that is being organized for supporting the homeless, but you can try to connect with the Cambridge Zen Center to find out more: <https://cambridgezen.org>



Question: Thank you so much for all of this teaching. And I feel inspired by the examples you give. I suppose I've been feeling a little depressed by this whole issue—“How can I possibly change anything?” But your reply is encouraging me—I don't *have* to solve anything. That's probably my big ego stepping in! But I can do simple things—even listening or saying something to a homeless person that is respectful and friendly could have some good effect—and I can continue practicing so that little by little I'll see what I can do more clearly.

Park PSN: Yes, we can get discouraged with the idea that we have to save all beings, but we don't have to do it all by ourselves. And the greatest gift you can give is the gift of your practice. Each moment you return to your original nature, you and the whole universe become one. Then when you bow, you bow with all beings. When you chant, you chant with them. When you sit, you sit with all. So you and this universe are never separate. That way, you are always helping. Always together. ♦

Zen Blooms Everywhere

WWSF Malaysia Conference Committee

The Whole World Is a Single Flower International Zen Conference 2020 will be held in Singapore October 15–20, and in Malaysia October 21–25. The theme of the conference in Malaysia is “The Whole World Is a Single Flower: Zen Blooms Everywhere.”

Zen here means not only the teachings and practice taught by Zen Master Seung Sahn, but all the paths leading to true peace, harmony and equality, the same aspiration of Zen Master Man Gong when he calligraphed “The Whole World Is a Single Flower” after the end of World War II.

There will be true peace and harmony only when there is true acceptance of one and other among individuals, among families, among religions and among nations.

We are different in form, but all of us have the same Buddha nature. When we fully embrace our differences and let go of our ego, we are able to utilize our functions to help all beings, thus achieving world peace. Through WWSF2020 events, we will share and promote to everyone the importance of the spirit of “The Whole World Is a Single Flower: Zen Blooms Everywhere”—WE ARE ONE.

Prior to the conference, the lead organizer, the Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple, has organized a series of activities to introduce the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn and the Kwan Um School of Zen that point directly to our mind in enabling more people to have the opportunities to learn and practice Zen by hosting WWSF2020.

In January 13, 2018, we launched a “piggy bank” proj-

ect in support for the WWSF2020. For three years, Zen practitioners have been encouraged to save RM1 [*One ringgit, the monetary currency of Malaysia, equivalent to about U.S. 24¢. —Ed.*] every day with the vow “A Ringgit a Day, Fulfillment in a Thousand Days, Zen Home, Zen Community, Zen World—Whole World Is a Single Flower.” The Zen practitioners who participate in the piggy bank project can cultivate their kind deeds in offering and are also eligible to participate in the upcoming Whole World Is a Single Flower International Zen Conference. They will have the opportunity to have close association with Zen masters, guiding teachers and Zen practitioners from all over the world. The funds raised will be used in funding the conference.

In addition, we have also planned a series of activities such as a “Zen Living, True Living” meditation retreat, a Great Dharani one-day retreat, a WWSF2020 volunteer training camp and Meet the Zen Masters Series Events. We have invited Zen Masters Dae Kwang, Seong Hyang, Dae Kwan and Dae Bong to conduct meditation retreats, Zen workshops and dharma talks. We have spared no effort to introduce the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn to the public, so that more people can understand and benefit from the core teachings of the Kwan Um School of Zen—especially don’t-know mind and kong-an practice—striving toward the goal of “The Whole World Is a Single Flower: Zen Blooms Everywhere.”

Once again, dear friends from the Kwan Um School of Zen around the world, do not miss this triennial event. See you in Malaysia. ♦

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Photo: Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple

My Encounter with the Kwan Um School

Yap Ching Ching

I wish you well. I am Ching Ching, and my dharma name is Shin Jae. I am the current administrator of the 2020 Whole World Is a Single Flower conference in Malaysia. I had been practicing Zen for six years before I was introduced to the teachings of the Kwan Um School of Zen, and the main benefit I had gained was the relaxation of body and mind. I enjoyed sitting meditation greatly and, to me, longer sitting sessions meant better practice. However, the biggest challenge I had was difficulty in controlling my breathing. This problem had persisted for years.

A few years ago, I participated in an eight-day retreat at Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple in Malaysia. The retreat was guided by Zen Master Dae Bong. Initially, I could not accept the teachings of hitting the floor and don't-know mind. From my understanding, the Buddha taught us to cultivate wisdom and compassion. The way to "stream-entry" (the first step toward enlightenment in the Theravada tradition) teaches right thinking, but kong-an practice teaches us to put down our thinking and only don't know. To me, those teachings contradicted right thinking and encouraged delusion.

24] Later, I found out that putting down thinking means simply putting down thinking that attaches to "I, my, me," and that don't-know does not mean intellectual ignorance. "I, my, me" are troublemakers, and when we let them go we let go of trouble and return to nonself or emptiness, also known in the Kwan Um School as returning to zero or before-thinking mind. The buddhadharma teaches emptiness, the idea that everything has no intrinsic nature. In kong-an practice this is conveyed in a simple manner: When we hit the floor, the hand in contact with the floor makes a sound. At that moment, the sound is just the sound, and there is no "I, my, me." That is the training of nonself or primary point. It helps me greatly, and especially in overcoming my difficulty in controlling breathing during sitting and cutting off my attachment to pursuing comfort during sitting meditation. All I need to do is just go back to breathing, and not make anything.

Kong-an practice also benefited me a lot. Last summer, I went to Musangsa to participate in the Haeng Won (work study) program, and that winter I joined the winter retreat in Gaksu, Hong Kong, for nine weeks. These two experi-

ences helped me truly grasp the practice and use of kong-ans. At the beginning I was eager to pass the most kong-ans in the shortest time, but later I learned that giving the correct response to the kong-an does not mean I am able to really attain it. For example, my homework is one of Ko Bong's Three Gates: "The whole universe is on fire. Through what kind of samadhi can you escape being burned?" Although I know the answer, I am still unable to attain it 100 percent. I realized that we get the correct answer to a kong-an not by thinking, but by perceiving clearly the situation and keeping correct relation and function.

During the two retreats, I also found my life's direction under the guidance of Zen masters and Ji Do Poep Sas. Now I am practicing to keep clear mind from moment to moment and only just do it. This gives me a lot of confidence in Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings. I am grateful to the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn, and to all the teachers. I hope that more people will have the same opportunities as I have to learn the teachings. Therefore, I vow to share the teachings of the Kwan Um School of Zen, which is another reason I became the administrator of WWSF2020 Malaysia. It is my sincere wish that more people, especially my fellow Malaysians, have the opportunity to learn and practice Zen, which points directly to our mind, keep clear and enjoy helping all beings, and move toward the spirit of "The Whole World Is a Single Flower." I take this opportunity to welcome all teachers and students of the Kwan Um School of Zen from around the world to join us in 2020, to enjoy the warmth and smiles of the multiracial and multicultural society of Malaysia. I end with my sincere vow to help realize the wish of "The Whole World Is a Single Flower: Zen blooms everywhere." ♦

Yap Ching Ching graduated with a masters of science in the psychology of child development. She is an early childhood educator and home tutor, and a long-term volunteer in Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple. She started practicing in 2007, and has been following the teachings of the Kwan Um School since 2017. In addition, Ching Ching is an administrator for the WWSF2020 Malaysia conference.



Photo: Hoeh Beng Zen Centre

PRIMARY POINT Winter 2020

One Flower, One World

Xinxiang

Zen Master Man Gong (1871–1946), the grandteacher of Zen Master Seung Sahn, survived 35 years (1910–1945) of Japanese occupation in Korea. The Japanese tried to unroot the Korean monastic tradition and replace it with the Japanese monastic tradition, which has different rules in which monastics are allowed to eat meat, drink alcohol, and get married. The Japanese dictated that only married monks could be abbots at each of the 25 major temples. While most monastics surrendered to the Japanese occupiers, Zen Master Man Gong did not waver in the face of oppression and strongly upheld the traditional forms; 600 monastic practitioners followed him, and they formed a community of traditional monastics on Deok Sung Mountain (also known as Geum Gang Mountain). Despite the bad situation, at the end of World War II, Zen Master Man Gong wrote in calligraphy “The Whole World Is a Single Flower” to represent equality, harmony and peace. Each one of us is not different or separate from one another; we are of the same root.

In the spirit of this legacy, Zen Master Seung Sahn founded a triennial Whole World Is a Single Flower conference in 1987 to bring people of different countries and traditions together to open minds. Zen Master Dae Kwang explained, just as meditation is a technique, this kind of conference is also a technique to create experiences that would widen minds and increase wisdom. When we leave our home and our comfort zone, we have to put down familiar assumptions and keep a wide-open mind to follow different cultures and be open to different kinds of experience. If we get culture shock, we return to primary point and become one with the situation. This conference technique lets many practitioners come together to learn from one another, helping them to understand themselves and how to help other people.



All over the world, many people suffered during World War II. Singapore was occupied by the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. My grandfather was a teenager when the Japanese took over control of Singapore from the British. The Japanese started registering all men between the ages of 18 and 50. Since he was just a few days short of his 18th birthday, my grandfather wasn't sure whether he should

be registered. A few good Samaritans noticed this kid in the queue and pulled him out of it, saving him from a violent death, as these men were put on trucks and driven to Changi Beach to be executed. Over this period, the Sook Ching (“purge”) massacre resulted in the execution of more than 40,000 Chinese men judged by the Japanese to be hostile to their occupation.

The culmination of the bombing of Hiroshima led to the Japanese surrender of Singapore. One of the retreating Japanese soldiers inadvertently strayed from his unit and was begging for food. While my grandfather was boarding a bus nearby, there were people shouting “Don't help the Japanese ghost!” Just as the bus started to drive off, my grandfather reached out and threw his entire lunch—actually just a plain bun—to the Japanese soldier. The soldier picked up the bun and gobbled it down.

That was primary point: clearly perceiving the truth of the situation and responding to it with compassion and wisdom—when someone is hungry, give them food.

When we practice according to the Dharma, we learn to build a strong center and believe in ourselves 100 percent. Practice helps us to cut through delusions and become confident to carry out this common legacy of equality, harmony and peace. Like my grandfather, we all can return to this before-thinking mind in any situation. The single flower is complete in my grandfather, and originally in each and every one of us. Zen Master Man Gong pointed out that the biggest sin for a worldly person is to interrupt the inheritance from their ancestors. For students of the Buddha, there is no greater sin than not inheriting the Dharma. ♦

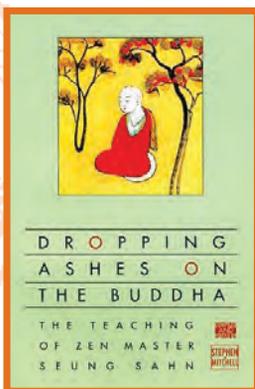
Xinxiang first encountered Zen practice in early 2000 at Kwan Yin Chan Lin (KYCL) Zen meditation center. She returned to take the three refuges and five precepts with Gye Mun Sunim JDPS in 2017. Xinxiang practices Iyengar yoga under the guidance of one of the first three yoga teachers in Singapore history. Most of her young adulthood was invested in getting MBA and CPA qualifications while working in the banking and financial services sectors as a vice president in the front office. She retired in February 2019 to practice Zen Buddhism full time. Currently, Xinxiang also volunteers at KYCL as the interim office manager and secretary for the Whole World Is a Single Flower 2020 conference in Singapore.



Photo: Kwan Yin Chan Lin
Zen Meditation Centre

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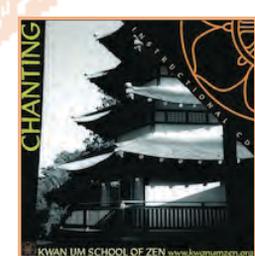
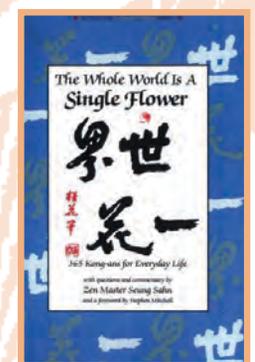
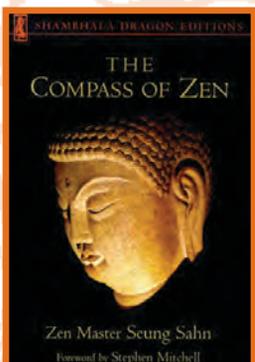
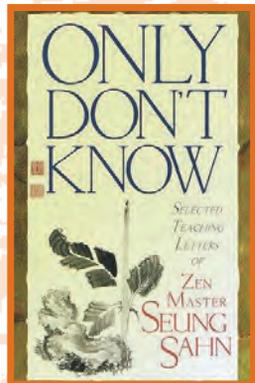
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Your membership in a participating center or group makes you a part of the Kwan Um School of Zen sangha (Buddhist Community). Your dues help support teaching activities on local, national, and international levels. Membership benefits include discounted rates at all retreats and workshops at KUSZ member Zen centers and a subscription to Primary Point Magazine. *(In other parts of the world, contact your local affiliated Zen center or regional head temple.)*

To set up a monthly membership with your credit card, visit kwanumzen.org and select "Donations & Membership"

1. Please choose a North American Zen Center (see preceding pages). If you are not located near a Zen Center, you may become a member of the head temple, Providence Zen Center.

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