

PRIMARY POINT

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WORLD PEACE IS POSSIBLE

[The following talk was given by Zen Master Seung Sahn at Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center on January 19, 1983.]

Recently one of my students died. I went to his funeral at a church. The minister talked about God. He said that anytime you have a problem, if you just depend on God, the problem disappears. But sometimes this doesn't seem to be enough. Our life is impermanent, like smoke or water, like grass or flowers. Our life appears, then disappears. We worry about many things: money, family, our job, and also about the next life. Human life means worry. But human life also means, don't worry. If you understand impermanence, everything is okay. Problems appear because human beings always want more.

How do we control our desire for more, and our anger and ignorance? This is a very important point. In elementary school the students learn to study and play. They learn about their country and its boundaries. They learn, "This is my country and it starts here, ends here." After school when the students go home to their mothers, the idea of "my country" disappears. You are born into this world. When you are about to leave it, you think "This is my house, my family, my country." Your "I-my-me" appears. But when you die, this I-my-me disappears.

In childhood, you are your mother's child. When you grow up, you are the student of the universe. So this is your home. When you are born, where do you come from? When you die, where do you go? Everyone has a true home. Buddhism means becoming completely independent: not dependent on God or Buddha or your understanding. If you completely become your true self, there is no life or death, no coming or going.

A long time ago a Zen Master said:

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 itself originally does not exist.

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

But there is one thing which always remains clear.

It is pure and clear, no depending on life and death.

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?

If you find it, you are free from life and death. Why then would you need Buddha or Christ? You are already Buddha, you are the same as Christ. So put down all your opinions and understand your true self. If you understand what is the one pure and clear thing, there will be no problems, no life or death. It won't matter whether the sun rises or sets.

Our eyes see blue sky in the daytime, dark sky at night. High up in the sky it never changes. Only our eyes perceive a change. Where do your eyes come from? Now you have eyes, but before you were born you had no eyes. When you die, your eyes will disappear. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind: these are like the floating cloud which appears and disappears. Don't be attached to them. Put down all of your opinions and thinking.

When you are thinking, you perceive other people's minds as different from yours. If you cut off all thinking, your mind and my mind are the same, the same as Christ and Buddha. Then there are no opposites, no coming or going, no good and bad, no high and low, no you and me.

The sun never says, "I am the sun." The

Continued on Page 2



William K. Dalby, Providence Journal—Bulletin

CAMBRIDGE ZEN CENTER: A TEN YEAR PORTRAIT

by Ellen Sidor

Cambridge Zen Center has come a long way in just ten years: from three students in a small, rented apartment to becoming one of the largest residential Buddhist centers in metropolitan Boston. How could a handful of students, professors and ex-hippies blossom in such a short time into a well-respected spiritual group that is fully authorized as the first Buddhist monastery in the city of Cambridge? In making the massive financial and physical commitment of renovating an aging 40-room townhouse and adjacent building, Zen Center members have undergone many changes, and their perspectives on the function of the Center have become much wider. This review of the Zen Center's remarkable ten-year growth and maturing will look at the history of the Center, why it undertook a project of such magnitude, and what are the possible ramifications of their new location in a high energy urban setting.

ing anything, we see that everything has as its basis Zero. What is Zero? It is before thought, unfathomable, vast and inconceivable. Zero is the point we return to when we have run out of logical explanations. Far from being void and empty, it is rich and deep and all pervasive. It holds everything.

Jan. 19. Who is it that is facing all this stuff? Only reflective awareness. We set up a fake discipline and then congratulate ourselves for enduring it. Where there is discipline, there is fear—yet you have to start somewhere.

Continued on Page 7

Cambridge Zen Center began in June, 1974 when two students, Stephen Mitchell and Lynn Woodcock, decided to move with another student, Kevin Bell, to a house on 31 Fayerweather Street, Cambridge. A few weeks later Soen Sa Nim, who was still learning English and formulating the teaching language we use today, moved in and stayed the rest of the summer. "There wasn't much structure," said Cambridge Zen Center Vice-Abbot Dyan Houghton. "Lots of people would come just for an interview, and not even bow or sit. One day Becky (Rebecca Bernen) came in and told us that Soen Sa Nim wanted us to bow to him when he came. We didn't like that. One day we had a meeting with Soen Sa Nim. We told him we wanted Sunday off from practicing. Soen Sa Nim made it clear he wouldn't come anymore if people didn't bow and eat formally every day. It was always tightening and loosening, and gradually it got more structured."

From the beginning Cambridge Zen Center has been a center that attracted a lot of visitors. Even back in 1974 it was not uncommon for 50 people to appear for retreats, although few of them observed the forms that Soen Sa Nim was beginning to introduce. Today, ten years and three residences later, the Cambridge Zen Center has returned to Cambridge 3 blocks from busy Central Square, and it established on an entire block on Auburn Street, centrally located for public transportation to all parts of Boston and Cambridge. The new quarters, a 100-year old townhouse with 40 rooms and an adjacent building with 4 apartments, accommodates all 22 current Zen Center residents and still has room for 10-12 more. Today the visitors still come, some

Continued on Page 8

Journal of A Winter Solo

[Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman has returned to formal teaching following a year of silence, during which he worked on the construction of the new Diamond Hill Zen Monastery in Cumberland, RI. Between January and March of this year he did a two-month solo retreat in a cabin in Maine. The following excerpts are from a journal he kept on the retreat.]



Ruth Klein

Jan. 11. Everyone is headed home, like it or not. That is the one great longing in the human heart: to become one, to dissolve into all that is. It is disguised in so many ways, misinterpreted and sought after. Sexual release, that forgetting of self, is confused with the object of experience and so there is pain and sorrow and all the misery of human desire and sense of inadequacy.

If there is any great lesson, it is that from waking to sleep we are looking at our own face. Moment to moment it is none other than us. That which we like, that which brings satisfaction we are naturally drawn to—that which we don't like, we shrink away from.

Look at your everyday life—why is it that you return again and again to the same problems? Why not a new problem every day? What we fear most, what we hope is not our piece to unravel, is exactly what our job is, and if that is done with courage and straightforwardness, it is our unique and tremendously important offering to the universe.

Returning home is returning to balance to zero mind. Everything, mosquito or moose, has as its content Zero. A mosquito is a mosquito worth of zero. A moose is a moose worth of Zero. When we look at the world from the perspective of not hold-

World Peace is Possible

Continued from Page 1

moon never says, "I am the moon." It is your thinking that creates the sun and the moon. When you see the sun, you and the sun become one. When you see the wall, you and the wall become one. The wall is white, the sun is hot. That's all. Just like this is the truth. That's Zen mind. Your thinking also creates heaven and hell. If you make heaven, then there is also hell. If you don't make heaven, then there is no hell. So don't make opposites.

A lot of people liked the movie E.T. When you are watching it, completely absorbed, you and the picture become one. E.T.'s finger, the boys on the bicycles flying through the forest: there is no consciousness, no "I" and no "me." Seeing a movie like this brings out the true love that everyone has inside them, sometimes better than the Bible or Buddhist sutras!

When we put down "I," we become the original human mind, which means great love, great compassion. A dog cannot find its true self, nor can a cat, but human beings can. Zen means finding your true self and obtaining the correct way, truth and correct life. What is the correct life? Keeping your correct relationship with everything, moment to moment. If you cling to your opinions, you will have difficulty.

Everyone says at one time or another, "I'm not bad. I don't have much desire or anger." But this is still making "I," so it's a big mistake. One of my students helps people a lot. But sometimes he thinks, "I have already helped a lot of people." This "I" is like a mountain, taking it away is very difficult. One person sent me a letter and I wrote down how many times he said "I"—75 times! So I said to him, "I hit you 75 times!" When you die, this "I" breaks up and disappears, and isn't a problem anymore.

"Make your mind simple, then wisdom will appear."

Recently I visited Harvard and Yale Universities. They have many libraries and millions of books. What is a book? Thinking, thinking, thinking. These books create a big problem. Many people are afraid in this nuclear age, and everyone says they want world peace. But if you only study and become more clever, you make this world more complex. Clever minds have made the atom bomb and the nuclear age. Zen means becoming simple. If we were simple, we wouldn't make bombs. So simple is better than clever. Maybe it will be necessary to burn all the books, so the world will not be so complicated! Make your mind simple, then wisdom will appear.

How are knowledge and wisdom different? Knowledge means understanding, that is, someone's idea. This book says this,

Personal Questions?

If you have personal questions about your life or Zen practice we encourage you to write to any of the four Master Dharma Teachers. Soen Sa Nim will continue answering his mail, but his extensive traveling, especially outside the United States, often forces considerable delays in his response.

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that book says that. But any kind of understanding will lead you to difficulty. You must digest your understanding. If you can't, then problems appear everywhere: the economy, religion, business, politics, the weather. In fact this is already happening.

Some religions are saying it's the end of the world. I say it's the beginning of the world. The end of the world and the beginning—how are they different? Who made this world? God? Buddha? You are sitting there, I am sitting here. I make my own south, north, east, and west. So do you. We each make our own directions. Are they the same? Also we each make our own time. For example, I have been waiting for my girlfriend for 10 minutes, and she hasn't come. Why hasn't she come? I am getting angry. Now I am suffering, and the time seems very long. One minute seems like an hour, because my mind is so angry. Then she comes and we go dancing. Cha cha cha! Three hours pass in what seems like only a few minutes.

In the same way that we make our own time, we also make our own space and our own cause and effect. If my girlfriend leaves me, I am sad. I cry and the whole world seems to cry. Then I get a new girlfriend. She makes me very happy. One moment we are very happy, the next moment we hate each other. The world seems happy, then the world seems sad, but actually it is always the same. Buddha said, all things are created by the mind alone. I create this world with my mind. You create your world with your mind. But the world is always the same.

So what is world peace? How can we attain it? First, you must understand that each one of us has a like-dislike mind inside of us. My preferences make my world. Your preferences make your world. But if we can both put down our preferences, our minds can connect with each other. I make my world, you make yours. If your mind and my mind both disappear, then what?

Then the world disappears and we can make a new one together.

If each of us only clings to our opinions, fighting inevitably appears. If America, China, and Russia are each clinging to their opinions about their world, fighting appears and world peace is impossible. If all these worlds disappear, it is possible to connect with each other's countries.

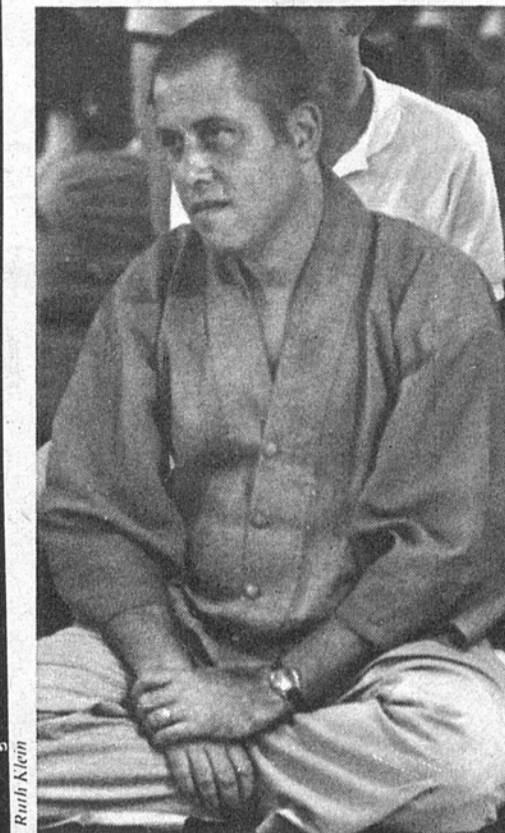
Everyone has mental power. If you are a thief, you create a bad cycle (bad energy). If you perform good actions, you create a good cycle (good energy). If you put down both good and bad, the original cycle appears, which is correct mental power. It's the same cycle, not two. Checking it creates a different cycle. If you put down your opinions, condition and situation, this original cycle appears and your cycle and mine can connect. Then world peace is possible.

America is only clinging to its American situation. President Reagan said America is number one. He understands one, but he doesn't understand two. America is only several hundred years old. The original Americans were Indians, and the incoming Europeans killed thousands of them. Now we say, "This is our country." We have made boundaries and laws preventing other people from moving here. It's just like a robber taking over a house and then saying, "This is my house. I have a gun and you can't come in!" That's America's mind, like a robber's mind.

World peace is possible only if we do not hold our opinions. Some people think it will not be possible to attain world peace in their lifetimes. But if even one young person who believed in world peace became President of the United States, changing

THE TURNING POINT

[Master Dharma Teacher Lincoln Rhodes gave the following talk on November 13, 1983, to a group of Brown University students who came to Providence Zen Center for a Sunday night Dharma talk.]



LR: Does anyone have any questions? This is different from Brown University. You're encouraged to have questions. You shouldn't have any concern whether someone might think your question is dumb or not. When I taught at a university, I found that by the time people get to your age, most of the questions are gone. This is a little different, so please ask, disagree, complain or add anything you want.

Q: I'm interested in the background of some of the people who practice Zen here. In particular, who introduced them to Zen?

LR: There's everything you could imagine. You came here tonight, and you got introduced to Zen. There's a background for you, not any different from anyone else's. I'll tell you a little about my story.

Not unlike you, I went to college. Halfway through graduate school I realized there was something wrong. I didn't know exactly what it was, but there were some days I'd walk up the stairs at MIT, turn around and walk back down again. Up to that point, I thought I was going to be a great scientist, win the Nobel prize, and understand a lot of truth about the universe. I had every reason to think that, because people were paying me money and

Continued on Page 6

things like the immigration laws would be possible.

When I have spoken to politicians and lawmakers, I have said to them, "You only talk about world peace, but you don't do anything about it. Just saying it is only world peace of the tongue. So maybe only your tongue will go to heaven, and the rest of you will go to hell! It is necessary to do something to obtain world peace." If all politicians tried meditation, change would be possible. World peace can be achieved.

If we take our inside preferences, and remove the outside boundaries, then we can truly connect with other people. E.T.'s mind had no preferences, no boundaries. He didn't make distinctions between human beings and animals and stars, so he could connect with everything. Having "no mind" is necessary. Having no boundaries is also necessary. If we removed all boundaries, how could Russia attack America?

Last summer at Omega Institute hundreds of people came to study with masters from different religious traditions: Catholic, Sufi, Christian, Zen, Indian, Jewish and so forth. All the masters together were teaching "love mind" and asking, "How can we help this world?" This kind of teaching together is very necessary, otherwise we will not be able to change the world. In our society today, we are not teaching people how to become correct human beings. We don't teach them about obligations to teachers, to parents and society, to this world and to all beings. We only teach people how to live like robots: push buttons, only have a good time, enjoy a good taste. This kind of society has no direction. Without direction, how can our society teach us to become correct human beings?

The question for all of us is, "What are human beings?" This world is like a ripe pear. On the outside it looks and tastes good, but inside it is rotting. This rotting is the pear's correct function. Its correct job is to get new pear seeds into the ground, to become a corpse so that a new pear tree will grow. The outside appearance isn't important. This rotting is necessary. Nowadays a lot of people say that society is rotten. If you see only the outside of this world, you might say that the end of the

world is coming, but if you see the seeds inside this world, you would say it's the beginning of the new world. The outside is rotting, but the seeds inside are ok.

Everyone has seeds inside them. In order to help the world, you must find your seeds. If you can't find them, it's the end of the world. If you do find them, it's the beginning. Which do you like? Where are your true seeds? It doesn't matter whether it's the end or the beginning of the world. In your mind there is no end, no beginning. Put down your opinions, all of them, and your correct seeds will appear.

The sun is very bright, but your mind light is even brighter. Sunlight is hindered by obstacles, but there is no hindrance to mind light. This room originally is not dark or light. If you turn on the light, it's bright. If you turn off the light, it's dark. Heaven and hell are the same. It's possible for this world to become heaven or hell, but our minds create the distinction. If your mind is bright, the world becomes heaven. If your mind is dark, the world becomes hell and it seems like the end of the world is coming.

Where does this mind light come from? Think about electrical energy. It comes from natural sources, like falling water. If we have no falling water, we can't make electricity. So where does energy come from? Your mind. In Taoism it is said that human beings follow the earth, the earth follows the sky, the sky follows nature. Where does nature come from? From the Tao—the path. Where does the path come from? Your mind.

So your mind makes everything. A crazy mind makes craziness, a busy mind makes busy-ness. So we go around and around. But mind is not mind, it is true self. The name of our true self is true nature, Buddha nature, God nature, the Absolute, or energy. We have a lot of different names for it, but originally this point has no name. There aren't any words for it. We cannot even speak about it. All these names are made by thinking, so many meanings arise. But originally this point is before thinking. If you put down your thinking, your opinions, you can find your true nature and your correct seat, and world peace is possible. □



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