

# PRIMARY POINT

PUBLISHED BY THE KWAN UM ZEN SCHOOL

528 POUND ROAD, CUMBERLAND, RI 02864

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 1985

## TWO NEW TEACHERS ARE GIVEN 'INGA'

In a rare certification assembly held at Providence Zen Center Dec. 8, two new teachers were given "inga", or teaching approval, by Zen Master Seung Sahn. Richard Shrobe, 42, and Jacob Perl, 34, both associated with Chogye International Zen Center of New York, were certified as Master Dharma Teachers in the Kwan Um Zen School. In Korean, this title is "Ji Do Peop Sa", which means pointing to the correct path while teaching the Dharma.

The assembly was a public event in which spectators came forward to challenge the two candidates in "Dharma combat", a form of ritual questioning. Shrobe and Perl bring to a total of six the number of senior American students given "inga" by Soen Sa Nim. They are a welcome addition to the School's teaching staff, which last year provided over 70 meditation retreats in the United States and abroad. The two men will continue their training in the leading of retreats and giving formal Zen interviews, under the tutelage of Soen Sa Nim and the other Master Dharma Teachers.

There have been only two previous certification assemblies, in 1977 and 1981, but there is added significance in the particulars of the new teachers. Shrobe, a student of Soen Sa Nim's for nine years, is married, has three children, and has never lived in a Zen Center, yet was able to maintain the intensity of his training enough to become a Master Dharma Teacher.

Perl, one of Soen Sa Nim's first students in 1972, was born in Poland and makes frequent business trips there. With his fluency in Polish, he will greatly augment the teaching presence in the School's largest international sangha, which has several hundred students, four Zen Centers and a number of Zen groups. Until now, all of the teaching visits to Poland by Soen Sa Nim and the other Master Dharma Teachers have involved a tedious amount of translation, as few Poles speak English.

Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes said it is a great sign of encouragement that Soen Sa Nim has named two more teachers after such a relatively short time in Zen training. As she explained in an introductory talk to the assembly, in the Korean Zen

tradition the giving of "inga" by the Zen Master means authorization to teach koan practice, the teaching method paramount in our School.

In Korean, koan means "seal". In the Orient, prominent people had their own personal seal. A copy of an important document or letter was stamped next to the original so that each document shared the seal. The seal of the copy could be matched up later with the original. Koan practice, said Rhodes, "is a matter of asking someone questions and verifying whether genuine answers are being given."

In a certification assembly, the verification process is made public. Spectators come forward one by one, make a formal bow to the candidate, sit before him/her, and ask any question they wish except a formal koan. The candidate gives a short answer. If satisfied with this, the questioner says "Thank-you for your teaching", bows again, and leaves. This gives the entire assembly a chance to judge whether the answers are correct, truthful, and helpful.

Shrobe and Perl each endured 25 minutes of this "Dharma combat", and gave crisp, assured and often humorous answers that had the audience laughing and clapping. Then is a formal ceremony, Soen Sa Nim presented each man with his own Zen stick, to be used for teaching, and a ceremonial orange kasa.

In a short talk following the presentation, he spoke about the difficulty of becoming a Master Dharma Teacher, which means "unconditionally putting down your separate opinion, condition, and situation in order to help others. Being any kind of a teacher, not just a Buddhist teacher, means helping others. If you have a try-mind, all of your bad karma will be taken away. Then your mind becomes clear, and any koan is no problem. Also your life becomes clear, your direction becomes clear. Just like this is truth."

But he also said that becoming a Master Dharma Teacher "is not special. Anyone who has correct direction and a strong try-mind can become a Master Dharma Teacher. There are not so many teachers in

*continued on page 2*



## In This Issue

"Compassion and Wisdom: Gentle and Strong"  
by Maurine Freedgood

"Women and Buddhism in America"  
by Gesshin Myoko Midwer

"Politics of the Heart"  
by Jacqueline Schwartz Mandell

"Inquiring Without Images"  
by Toni Packer

"Believing in Yourself"  
by Barbara Rhodes

"Taking Realization into Everyday Life"  
by Jan Chozen Soule

PLUS "Fifty Recommended Books"

## WOMAN AND AMERICAN BUDDHISM CONFERENCE 1984

Six American women teachers from Buddhist traditions gathered last Sept 15 and 16 at the Providence Zen Center to focus on some of the issues for women in American Buddhist practice. Over 130 participants, mostly women, came to hear the teachers and share their experiences with each other. It was an unusual conference in

that it combined periods of formal Buddhist practice (led in the different styles of the teachers attending) with small group meetings, workshops and talks, as well as physical work and relaxation together. This issue is devoted to the formal talks given during the weekend.

## This is a Changing Time

*SOME PEOPLE SAY the end of the world is coming. But when an old age is finished, a new age begins. Human beings are part of the natural cycle, and this is a changing time for all species. This year is the beginning of the age when women will control everything, just as men have up till now: The house, the family, politics, the economy. Soon there will be many more women leading their countries. Women will become as strong as men, as it was many thousands of years ago. This change from yang to yin has already begun.*

*When Bodhidharma came to China, he became the First Patriarch of Zen. As the result of a "marriage" between Vipassana-style Indian meditation and Chinese Taoism, Zen appeared. Now it has come to the West, and what is already here? Christianity, Judaism, and so forth. When Zen "gets married" to one of these traditions, a new style of Buddhism will appear.*

*Perhaps there will be a woman patriarch, and all Dharma transmission will go only from woman to woman. Why not? So everyone, you must create American-style Buddhism. Get enlightenment!*

ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN



## EDITORS' NOTE

We would like to say a special thank-you to Suzie Bowman, whose concern for women's issues and the need to address them in Buddhist practice has been the driving force behind the Women and Buddhism conferences held the past two years at Providence Zen Center. A PZC resident for 11 years, Suzie over the past three years invited women teachers to speak and give workshops at PZC and organized a women's group here. She nurtured the idea of a women's conference through many months of planning until it finally appeared, both in 1983 and 1984. Suzie served as master of ceremonies at both conferences, adding a note of congeniality and wit to the conference weekends. Last summer she moved out of PZC to pursue her Buddhist practice in a social work career and other areas. We miss her and wish her the best.

We would also like to thank Tony Sager and Mu Soeng Sunim, present and former Directors of PZC respectively, and their office staff for their labors in making the 1984 conference happen; and the housemembers of Providence Zen Center who gave so generously of their time, and in some cases, their rooms.

Because of the intense interest generated by the 1984 conference, PZC is planning a third conference focusing on women teaching in Buddhism. Entitled "Emerging Themes in

American Buddhism", it will take place next September 14 and 15 at PZC. It will be preceded by a 3-day intensive meditation retreat co-led by two teachers in the Zen tradition, Maurine Freedgood Roshi and Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes. Conference speakers will be Ruth Denison, founder of the Desert Vipassana Meditation Center; Geshin Myoko Midwer, founder of International Zen Institute of America; Dr. Joanna Macy, author of **Dharma and Development**; Bhikshuni Pema Chodron, who is involved with developing Gampo Abbey, a Tibetan retreat and conference center in Nova Scotia; and Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes.

Your ideas and participation in planning and publicizing this conference will be very welcome. Please write to Ellen Sidor or Tony Sager at the Providence Zen Center.

In order to fully accommodate these historic talks from the 1984 conference, PRIMARY POINT has increased to 16 pages for this issue. We hope you, our reader, will understand that this is more costly for printing and distribution. We would like to reprint these talks in a more durable form than newsprint. If you have appreciated this special issue of PRIMARY POINT, please send a contribution marked "1984 Women and Buddhism" with a check made out to the Kwan Um Zen School. Even a small amount will help continue to make women's history. Thank you! □

## TEACHERS

continued from page 1

this world, so I hope everyone, not only Richard and Jacob, will have try-mind, do hard training and become Master Dharma Teachers. Which means, find your correct job moment to moment and just do it. If you don't understand your job, you cannot take responsibility."

"So everyone, understand your job, get enlightenment, and save all beings from suffering."

Soen Sa Nim spoke about Shrobe's difficulties by not being able to live in a Zen Center and the very strong efforts he made to practice on his own and get to the Zen Center for retreats, interviews and together action with the sangha, in addition to his busy family life and a demanding job as a therapist. Of Perl, Soen Sa Nim remarked that he had long ago finished koan practice but had to overcome a somewhat lazy mind by doing a lot of hard training. Perl finished two 100-day solo retreats and a 90-day Kyol Che (group intensive meditation retreat).

Short congratulatory talks were given. Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman recalled that when he looked back on doing this ceremony himself 7 years ago, he was "scared stiff. But one thing it did for me personally was that it was a tremendous inspiration to practice harder and more sincerely." He said he hoped both men would "use their sticks well and practice with all their might."

Finally, each new teacher gave a formal Dharma speech.

"What attracted me to Zen practice," Shrobe said in his speech, "Was the emphasis on everyday mind as Zen mind. Any lifestyle is o.k. What's more important than whether you live in or outside a Zen Center or whether you are a monk or a family person, is why you do these particular things."

"I needed very much to believe in the teaching, which embraced all lifestyles. By 1975, I had three children and was living in New York trying to establish a career there, and I wasn't about to give up my three children whom I cared about and who cared about me, nor was I about to leave my wife, or New York City. There was absolutely no choice in the matter."

Shrobe feels that his Dharma is to

encourage people with the fact of "no choice". "Whatever you are, whatever you're doing, try to use that 100% as your practice. It doesn't make any difference what you do, it's how you do it and how you use it."

Richard started practicing with Soen Sa Nim in 1975. Prior to that he had been intensely involved with Swami Satchidananda and Integral Yoga from 1967 until 1972, including having lived in the Integral Yoga Institute with his family for four years. A former piano player, his undergraduate training was at Mannes College for Music and with jazz pianist Barry Harris.

He has an MSW degree in Social Work and did four years of postgraduate training in Gestalt therapy. Currently he has a private practice in psycho-therapy, specializing in the Gestalt approach.

In Jacob Perl's formal Dharma speech, he spoke of "making this practice your own." Following a long solo retreat in which he became very ill and almost died, Perl realized it was possible to give up one's habitual ways of thinking. "If we try, it works. If someone thinks 'I'm too stupid to understand', fine, be stupid. Out of this stupidity, wisdom appears. Maybe someone thinks 'I'm too lazy' — (that's my specialty). But try. Then maybe out of this laziness, diligence will appear a little bit, then a little bit more."

In the same way, he said great generosity could appear out of selfishness, great compassion out of anger. "Just try. It's kind of magic. We don't have to do anything. Every day we bow, sit, chant, try to do this practice. We go to work, deal with people and our everyday problems, but we have some direction."

"Long ago an eminent teacher said, 'Without self, the truth appears always and everywhere. Bright, clear, complete.' Without self, finding your true self — what could this mean? If we grasp this question, it's like a sword cutting through a world of opposites. Then what? Please look."

Jacob was born in 1950 in Warsaw and came to the United States with his family in 1964. He began practicing Zen under a friend's direction while attending Brown University. In 1971 he took a leave of absence for a year and went to study at several Buddhist centers, including the San Francisco Zen Center and the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center under the



Photo by Nancy Brown

"ANY LIFESTYLE is ok. What's more important than whether you live in a Zen Center or not, or whether you are a monk or a family person is why you do these particular things."

direction of Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche. After a year he returned to Brown to finish school, and met Soen Sa Nim.

In 1978 he traveled to Poland with Soen Sa Nim, at which time the first Polish Zen Center was established. He has returned several times with Soen Sa Nim, and numerous times by himself. In 1978 he also earned a 5th degree black belt in Shim Gum Do, the Zen Sword martial art.

He has a real estate office in New York City and is a partner in his brother's medical business. Last year he started an import-export office. Currently he is Abbot of Chogye International Zen Center in New York.

The next step after receiving "inga", in the Korean Zen tradition, is getting transmission, after which a teacher can be called "Zen Master". Soen Sa Nim has not yet given any of his American students transmission.

Soen Sa Nim was given inga at the age of 22. This approval was verified by several other Korean Zen Masters, after which his first teacher, Zen Master Ko Bong, gave him transmission. Soen Sa Nim's first four American Master Dharma Teachers are still in training with him, and periodically study with other Zen Masters in America.

After a relatively short time in this country, Soen Sa Nim has established a coherent and orderly method of training Zen teachers. From the very beginning a student is required to take responsibility and become independent. The teaching method of abrupt confrontation also includes giving students more responsibility than they are usually comfortable with. Also, living in a Zen Center with a stiff schedule of formal practice and required togetherness creates an accelerated learning situation. Mistakes are inevitable and useful. "Don't be attached to your mistakes," Soen Sa Nim often says. "Only

make correct."

When he first set up the Providence Zen Center in Providence, he required students of only a few months' experience to give frequent short talks (called "koan talks") following a reading of one of his letters. As Master Dharma Teacher Lincoln Rhodes explained in a talk last year, even though the occasional ineptitude was somewhat embarrassing if guests were present, having to give talks served a valuable function both for the individual and the community. If one's practice was sincere and wholehearted, the talk showed it. If one's practice was unclear, this also showed. Giving a talk thus provided a "mirroring" experience that gave students immediate feedback on the genuineness of their practice.

This tradition has continued. The talks become longer as the student progresses through formal temple training positions such as moktak master (the person who keeps the chanting rhythm with a wooden instrument called a moktak). After several years of practice and the taking of more vows, acknowledging Soen Sa Nim as one's teacher and a wholehearted belief in Buddhism, a student may become a Dharma Teacher and begin to give public talks outside the center.

After five years as a Dharma Teacher, a student can become a Senior Dharma Teacher and begin to counsel other students and lead retreats. Only at the stage of becoming a Master Dharma Teacher is a student permitted to teach koan practice and give formal Zen interviews during retreats.

Within the Kwan Um Zen School, there is a teaching hierarchy progressing from new students, Five Precepts students, Dharma Teachers, Senior Dharma Teachers, Master Dharma Teachers, and finally, Zen Master. In the United States there are



"Being any kind of a teacher, not just a Buddhist teacher, means helping others."

currently several hundred Five Precepts students, about 60 active Dharma Teachers, 10 Senior Dharma Teachers, 6 Master Dharma Teachers, and one Zen Master. Students also have the option of becoming monks — either traditional celibate monks or Bodhisattva monks, who may marry.

At the School Congress in 1984, Soen Sa Nim explained this teaching hierarchy he has established, using the following metaphor. An elementary school graduate can teach primary school. A secondary school graduate can teach elementary school. A college graduate can teach secondary school. A master's or a doctorate can teach at the college level, and so forth. In this way, each student no matter what his/her level, can help others, "which is any teacher's correct job." □



Photo by Nancy Brown

"LONG AGO AN EMINENT TEACHER said, 'Without self, the truth appears always and everywhere—bright, clear, complete.' Without self, finding your true self—what could this mean? If we grasp this question, it's like a sword cutting through a world of opposites."