

PRIMARY POINT

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A Time Of Complete Transformation

by Zen Master Seung Sahn

(The following is taken from a talk given by Zen Master Seung Sahn on March 19, 1984 at the Providence Zen Center.)

Everything that happens in this world is correct. Things go in cycles: spring, summer, fall, winter. Every year this cycle of seasons occurs. But there are longer cycles too, and this year makes the beginning of both a 60 year cycle and a 360 year cycle. It is a very interesting time.

There is a very large insect called the cicada, that grows very slowly inside a cocoon fastened to a tree. The transformation from cocoon to winged creature takes a long time, about 17 years, and is very difficult. During this time in the cocoon, the cicada's internal body appears disrupted. The skin, the organs, the wings, all appear not to be working. They aren't moving. The body looks as if it were confused and broken.

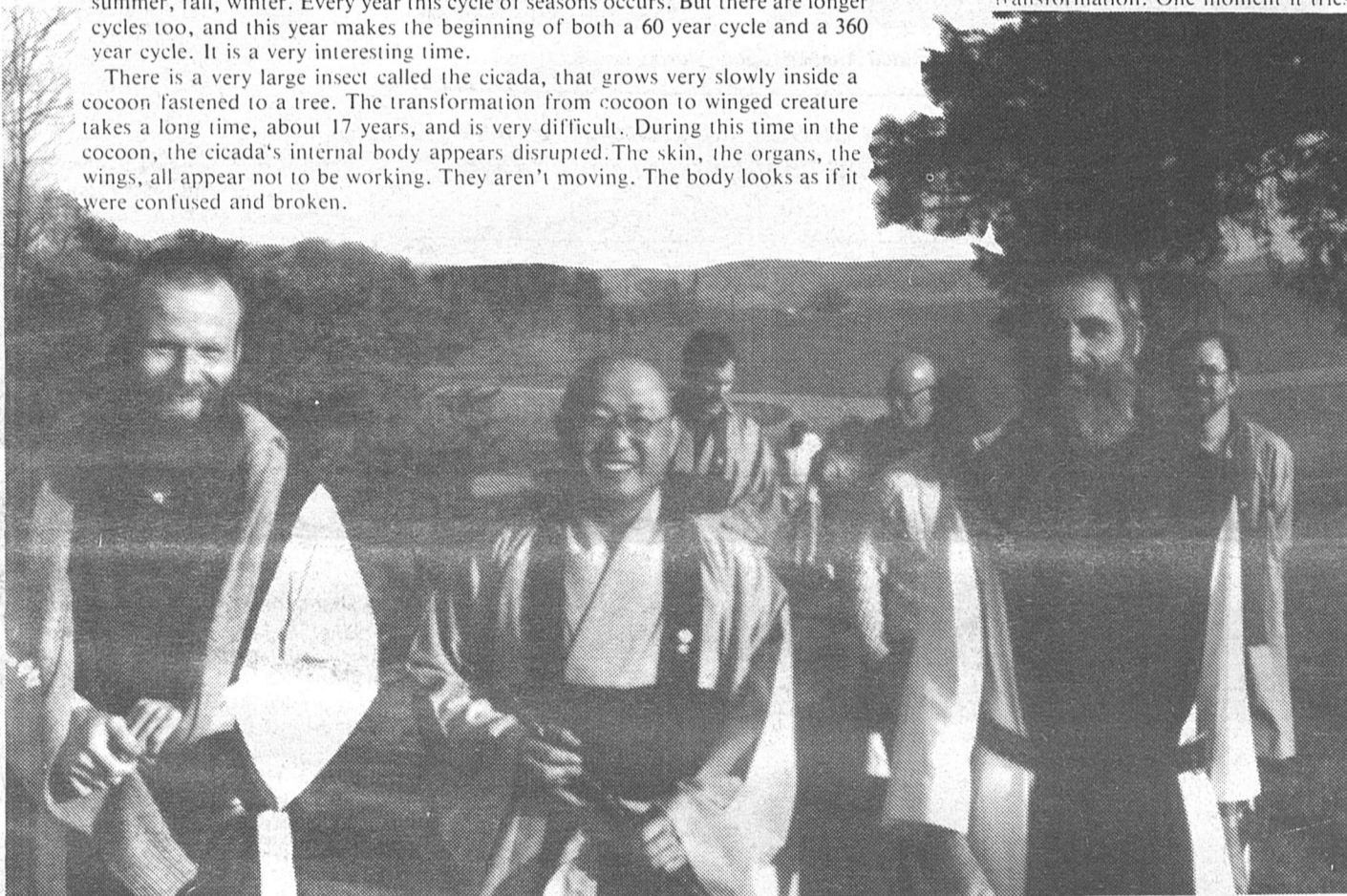
Then slowly the cocoon breaks open and the new body begins to appear. A wing emerges, then a leg stretches forth. At first the cicada's movements are slow and difficult. It crawls out of the cocoon and falls to the ground. At this stage the cicada never thinks about the sky or about flying - it only thinks about how to get food, any kind of food. Sometimes it takes three or four hours between the time it leaves the cocoon and the time it is able to fly. But this is a time of complete transformation. One moment it tries to fly and then it flies!

This year is like that. Things look disrupted, stuck in a state of not working. We are very worried about the future. How can we ever fly? How will our wings possibly appear? How can we get enough food? Many problems are appearing. If we buy a business, we want to know if the future will be good for sales or bad. So we have many worries. But human beings are part of nature. Like the cicada, even if we have already emerged from our cocoon, it still takes time before we understand how to stretch our wings out and fly. Finally we will fly.

There is always change. But changing means not changing. Moment to moment, everything is complete. Everything that happens is correct. If you are attached to name and form, it means that your thinking appears and disappears. If your thinking does not appear and disappear, everything is complete. If your center is not moving, you will have no difficulty even though many new conditions will appear. If you have no center, you will always have problems.

Think of it like this: not much happens in the winter months, the season of cold and ice. No leaves or flowers appear from the frozen ground. When spring comes, the ground thaws. Water goes into the soil and starts working. Everything erupts. The grass grows. Leaves appear and get bigger. Flowers appear. All the colors are changing. Everything is changing, quickly changing.

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TRAPPIST MONKS SIT CHRISTIAN-ZEN RETREAT with Soen Sa Nim at Gethsemane Monastery in Kentucky, where the late Fr. Thomas Merton lived. Story on page 2.

KWAN UM ZEN SCHOOL CONGRESS AND ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN'S BIRTHDAY CEREMONY: AUGUST 1-3, 1986

For School members and friends, the annual summer gathering at the Providence Zen Center is an important tradition, the highlight of our year. First and foremost, the weekend is an opportunity to just be together. Ours is a large and ever more far-flung sangha; rarely do we have occasion to congregate in one place.

Secondly, within the program are panel discussions, workshops and small groups. We talk about issues in our School, how we can help our Zen Centers, our practice, each other. Zen Master Seung Sahn and all the Master Dharma Teachers will be present.

Finally, we celebrate our teacher's birthday with tributes, music, food and fun.

For further information, contact your local Zen Center or the Kwan Um Zen School office.

CARRYING SNOW IN A TEASPOON: The Bodhisattva effort

by Master Dharma Teacher Richard Shrobe

(The following exchange of questions and answers took place during a retreat at the Providence Zen Center on February 1, 1986.)

Q: What is the underlying essence of Zen?

RS: (Lifting up his cup and drinking) Cold water. (Laughter) Soen Sa Nim told me that's what they say in Korea when they want to tell someone to just keep a clear mind, "Go drink cold water." (Laughter) Only that. I had an interesting and useful experience a few weeks ago. I was talking with Ken Kessel, and oldtime student of Soen Sa Nim's [and a director of the Chogye International Zen Center]. He told me that sometimes he likes to practice for two hours straight in the morning. He doesn't walk, he doesn't get up, he just sits there for two hours in his full lotus position, without moving.

I got inspired to find out what that was about. (Laughter) So I tried a couple of times. I got pretty close, one time an hour and 50 minutes. But one of the interesting experiences I had when trying this was coming to a moment when I had the recognition that it was just sitting. There was nothing miraculous that was going to appear, even if I sat for two more hours straight. (Laughter) It was just sitting, pure and simple, just like drinking cold water is just drinking cold water.

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A TIME OF COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION

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It's the same in our minds, in our "inside" world as well as the "outside" world. During winter for three or four months everything stays the same, so we experience no difficulty. In the spring there are many changes, so our minds move and we experience many doubts and problems. Just at this time of the ending of an old set of 60 year and 360 year cycles and the beginning of a new set, many things are happening "inside". A strange, complicated mind is appearing.

Just now we need to practice more strongly and make our direction clear. If you are not doing hard practice or your direction is unclear, any kind of demon might take you. When you die, you will not understand where you go. What kind of hell will you go to? There are many kinds. If in this life you have killed many animals, when you die, these animals will appear to you saying, "Give me my life!"

It is necessary to die every day, and every day to give life. If in one day you die ten thousand times, you are ten thousand times alive. In only one day, understand? This life is maybe 70-80 years long. Many things happen in one life. We think it is so short, but to some beings, even one second is very long.

Buddha went to Heaven to save his mother. He only stayed three days, but in this world, it was 90 days. During this time the king missed the Buddha. He went to see the Buddha, expecting a Dharma speech, but the Buddha was not there. The king was



WALKING with members of Comunidad Ahabad, Spain, during last fall retreat

"Women will become as strong as men, as it was thousands of years ago. This change from yang to yin has already begun."

unhappy. His mind could not rest. So he invited a very good sculptor to make a gold Buddha, and he put it on the Buddha's seat.

The Buddha said, "You understand form is emptiness, emptiness is form. If you think this Buddha is truth, that is me". So Buddha statues appeared at that time.

Then the Buddha came back. He looked at the gold Buddha - its face and his face were the same! The king explained, "We missed you, so we made this statue just like you and put it on your seat. Is this good or bad?"

Just like that story, if your mind, your center is strong with no thinking, then you

already have infinite time and infinite space. If you have thinking, then even one hour can seem like many years. Sometimes our thinking makes many years seem like only one second. So it's very important how strong your center is. In a changing time, a time of beginnings, it's very important to have a strong center. At this time, if your direction is clear, then the beginning goes this way and that way. If you are not clear, the future is not clear.

Some people say the end of the world is coming. But when an old age is finished, a new age appears. 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 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 women Matriarch and all Dharma transmission would go only from woman to woman. Why not? So everyone, you must create American Buddhism. Get enlightenment!

In this new age time, a strong center is necessary. Are you clear, everyone? No? Then more hard training is necessary. Also, your direction must become clear. Why do you eat every day? Why do you study Zen? Why do you sit? These are important questions. □

SOEN SA NIM ON SPRING-SUMMER WHIRLWIND TRIP



IN THE MOUNTAINS OF SPAIN last autumn, Soen Sa Nim led a first-time Zen meditation retreat for the Comunidad Ahabad. Centro Zen de Palma Abbot Joan Insa, Centre Zen de Paris Abbot Do Mun Sunim and Mu Sang Sunim accompanied Soen Sa Nim and assisted during the retreat.

Soen Sa Nim is in the middle of a tour of the United States and Europe, with a few side trips to Korea. In early March, after officiating at closing ceremonies for the first international winter Kyol Che at Su Dok Sah temple in Korea, he returned to the

West Coast and proceeded east, leading retreats and giving talks at Ojai (CA), Kansas, Chicago and Ontario. In April he officiated at the closing ceremony for the winter Kyol Che retreat at Providence Zen Center, then went on to Paris to support ex-

citing developments at Centre Zen Paris (see separate story in this issue). He led two retreats in Kentucky, one at the Trappist Monastery where Thomas Merton lived (see separate story), and another at Lexington Zen Center.

Book News...Currently there are at least six new book projects about Soen Sa Nim's teaching that are underway or recently finished. In the USA, Senior Dharma Teacher Stanley Lombardo of Kansas Zen Center and Dharma Teacher Dhananjay Joshi of Chicago Meditation Center are in the final editing stages of "Ten Gates," a book about kong-an practice which includes let-

ters and some of Soen Sa Nim's formal Dharma speeches. Lexington Zen Center Abbot Bob Genthner has started working with Soen Sa Nim on a book tentatively entitled "Just Do It," which will be "a practical Americanized version of Soen Sa Nim's teaching." Bob is working from 900 minutes of taped discussions with Soen Sa Nim.

The Kwan Um Zen School staff is work-

ing on a translation of "100 Cases," which Soen Sa Nim published in Korea in 1965. Just arrived from Korea is a small pamphlet entitled "Zen Dialogues in China," an account of Soen Sa Nim's "Dharma combat" with the old Chinese monks and Zen Masters he met during his trip last fall to the People's Republic of China. Excerpts from the pamphlet are printed in this issue. Some

copies will be available through the Kwan Um Zen School office in Cumberland, RI.

Centre Zen de Paris Abbot Do Mun Sunim reports that some members are working on French translations of Soen Sa Nim's work. Last but not least, the Krakow Zen Center (Poland) publishing group has a number of translations of Soen Sa Nim's books underway.