

PRIMARY POINT

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In 1980, when I first came to this country, I had no temple, food or home. I was very poor. Arriving in New York City, Master Soen Sa Nim opened his Zen Center to me. He was the first Zen Master in America to help. Soen Sa Nim has said, "When you become a monk, you become a millionaire. Any temple you enter is your home—one million; any food which is needed, is given—two million; and all the clothes you will ever wear are provided—three million."

Our Sangha is a large family. Masters, when spreading the Dharma, bring this family close together. Students, when practicing Buddhism, bring the Dharma to life. When Soen Sa Nim gave me refuge in his New York City Temple, he became a living Buddha.

It is my prayer that all Buddhists will bow

IN CELEBRATION OF SOEN SA NIM'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

Selections from the tribute book compiled by Diana Clark

together in the Dharma, that we may all attain Buddha Nature, and lasting peace.

Ven. Maha Ghosananda
New England Khmer Buddhist Society

Congratulating 60th Birthday of Seung Sahn Zen Master

"Golden Staff Traverses
Endless miles of emptiness

*Harmonizing with clouds, with rain --
Nurturing true mind
Atop mountain-firm vows
The scenery is unique:
Unmeasurable prosperity, infinite life,
Deep is the ocean of merit."*

Ven. Hakaya Taizan Maizumi Roshi
Zen Center of Los Angeles

[this is a translation of the Chinese poem]

DO YOU SEE THIS?

An Appreciation of Tubby Teacher

Tubby Teacher raised his hand before the Maui Sangha. "Do you see this?" he cried out. I was astonished, and so was everybody else.

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Photo Courtesy of Lexington Zen Center

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Books Reviewed:

- Death and Dying: The Tibetan Tradition*
- How the Swans Came to the Lake, 2nd edition*
- Moon in a Dewdrop: writings of Zen Master Dogen*

THE SCENERY OF ZEN

Jakusho Kwong Roshi, Dharma successor to Suzuki Roshi's lineage and Abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in northern California, has jointly led several sitting and chanting retreats in the past several years with Zen Master Seung Sahn. In these retreats the Zen styles of the two teachers (Japanese and Korean) were blended and students of both teachers practiced together. In April 1984 Roshi and his wife Laura visited the Providence Zen Center. The following exchange occurred between the Kwongs, Zen Master Seung Sahn, and teachers and residents of PZC. Roshi was asked to talk about his life and how he started practicing and teaching Zen.

A dialogue with Jakusho Kwong, Roshi Abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

Kwong Roshi: This is actually our first time on the other end of America, and our first time here at your Zen Center in Rhode Island. Your hospitality, life, simplicity and directness is very commendable....

Reflecting back when I was three years old, I was a frail child, and when I went to just cry by myself, the Scotty dog next door would follow me and we would cry together.

er. (laughter) The dog knows. The dog was very kind and compassionate. He didn't tell anyone. We shared this mutual secret of truth and seemingly, weakness. I think it [one's motivation for practice] goes back further than how we began [actually] practicing, what our ideas were when we began,

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(Holding the ceremonial Zen stick above his head, Jacob brings the point of it down on the altar table with force.)

Budda saw a star, got a great enlightenment. (Hits the altar again)

Guchi's attendant saw a finger, got a great enlightenment. (Hits the altar a third time)

Today we celebrate Buddha's enlightenment, but we also celebrate Guchi's attendant's enlightenment. Which one is greater? Which one?

Hoh!

THE PILGRIMAGE TO AWAKENING

By Master Dharma Teacher Jacob Perl

The following formal Dharma speech was given at Buddha's Enlightenment Day ceremonies at the Providence Zen Center on December 6, 1986.

Today is Saturday.

This is the traditional form. Everybody is familiar with it. We celebrate this experi-

ence because it's worth celebrating. Shaky-muni Buddha—Shakymuni means "the awakened one." That means, prior to his,

enlightenment experience, he was not awake, he was asleep. In the Buddhist scriptures we often read that the way we live is as if in a dream. So it is our job, according to the Buddha and the patriarchs, to awaken from this dream.

That's what happened one day to this person called Gautama Buddha. That's also what happened to Guchi's attendant. So we celebrate their experience, but of course, this experience is not just limited to Buddha or Guchi's attendant. At any moment this

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experience can be ours. Someone asked about enlightenment and having problems in our lives. It's hard for people to understand how someone can be practicing very hard and still have many problems. What's the relationship?

Here we are in this moment. What more does there need to be? This moment is a very precious moment, and if I've been saying that a lot in my Dharma talks lately, it's because I'm coming to appreciate this more. You can never regain this moment. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. Soen Sa Nim puts it a little differently. He says, "Time does not wait for you."

Every moment of our life we have this incredible chance, every moment of our dream we have this wonderful chance to wake up. Then we can experience this moment and it can become truly ours. Buddha saw a star and experienced something. What did he experience?

There's an interesting story about Master An Sang who had a dream. In his dream he went to Maitreya's place. I don't know where that place is, but it must be a very nice place where people are practicing very hard, because the moment that Master An Sang got there, he was in an assembly full of monks. He was given the third seat, one of the seats of honor in front of the assembly. Then an old monk who was head of the assembly knocked three times with the gavel on the table and said, "And now the Dharma speech will be given by the monk of the third seat."

"You can never regain this moment. Once it's gone, it's gone forever."

Master An Sang also hit the table with the gavel three times and said, "The teaching of Mahayana goes beyond the Four Prepositions and the One Hundred Negations. Listen carefully. Listen carefully."

What does this mean? If we listen carefully, if we see carefully, if we pay attention to this present moment, then maybe we can find out the true meaning of Master An Sang's dream. If we want something, if we are attached to something, then we are losing this moment. When we lose this moment, in a way we are losing our life. So our life, our practice, is to become alive. Not to lose this moment means we can then be the awakened ones.

Maybe one moment we are awake and the next moment we fall asleep. Then we travel into our own dream world and lose this awakening. In the past while talking about the growth of our School, I used the image of an avalanche, how it starts off very small and very subtly. One person, two people, a Zen Center starts, and then grows and grows. And it has grown.

It's the same way in our practice. It starts off innocently. Just for one moment we make a moment of "try-mind"—in order to become clear, to help others. This one moment has its own special symbolism, because it is the beginning of the Dharma avalanche in our life. We lose it and we try again. Maybe this next try is not as fast, because we are busy in our lives and have many things to accomplish, but there comes a time when we try again. Then maybe we again lose it, this effort mind, this "try-mind," this mind that tries to be awake in the present, to "be here now" as a famous book said long ago. We lose that and we go off again into our own dream world.

"Our way is the way of our pilgrimage, the way of don't-know."

Whether it is caused by our ignorance or laziness or some kind of attachment, we lose that try-mind. Then, again there is the energy of this first precious moment of effort, and the second, and the third. Something is happening, so we try again. We try a little more, and before we know it we are wearing grey robes and a kasa. Many things start to happen and the process continues because we cannot stop. Whatever we do, somehow coming to this kind of assembly and making a decision, however weak, to try this practice will bear fruit.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO AWAKENING

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At the university I came to the conclusion (this was my great "intellectual enlightenment") that we live in order to die properly. In a way, our life is a preparation for our death. I still think this is not a bad conclusion. There will come a culmination of this vehicle when we have to put it aside. If we want something or are attached to something, this process can be very painful. If we can stay awake, this process can be very wonderful.

At that time I was disenchanted with the world of politics through which I was hoping to make the world a better place. I started reading about yoga and Buddhism and the mind and what is our human potential, our potential as sentient beings. At

that time the question of life and death became very fascinating. I enjoyed reading about great masters passing away. There are many accounts, and one that fascinated me was about the famous Chinese layman called Pang.

Layman Pang was a family man, and it was said that his entire family—his wife, son and daughter—had attained enlightenment. He became famous when one day he put all of his worldly possessions in a cart and pushed the cart into a river. I believe his wife and son left him after that. I don't know whether it was a coincidence or had something to do with his action, but they separated amicably. He stayed with his daughter, who made things out of bamboo and sold them in the market.

He was also a poet. In a way, he lived like a monk, but he would never cut off his hair or wear monk's robes. He used to go around and challenge all the teachers to Dharma combat.

When Layman Pang understood that it was time to die, he made the announcement in advance. When the day came, he washed and put on nice robes and sat on his cushion in his hut. He told his daughter, "Let me know when the sun is at the zenith." After a while, his daughter came into the hut and said, "The sun is being eclipsed." The layman said, "Are you sure?" The daughter went out and came back in and said, "Yes, it's being eclipsed. You'd better take a look."

When he went out of the hut, she quickly climbed onto his cushion, sat in meditation position, and died. He came back inside and saw her sitting in his place, dead. He said, "Oh, you beat me to it," or some-

thing to that effect. "Wonderful, now I cannot pass away. I have to take care of business. There has to be a ceremony for her."

In those days it was the custom to make a fire, burn the corpse, then spread the ashes around. For one week Layman Pang postponed his death and took care of this business. Then he sat down, composed himself, and also died. A friend, with whom he had left instructions, performed the ceremony for him, burned his corpse and spread his ashes around. Half of the family was now gone.



Photo By Ellen Sidor

Word got back to his wife, who was living with their son. They were supporting themselves by farming. The wife said, "Oh, that stupid old man and that foolish girl—they had to do that without letting me know." She went out into the fields and told the son, who was working the ground with a hoe. He made an exclamation, "SSSSSSAAAA!" Then he stood for a while and died, standing up.

The mother said, "Oh, that idiot son of mine." Then she went around to take care

"In a way, our life is a preparation for our death."

of business, said goodbye to all her friends, and disappeared. There was never a trace of her again.

This story fascinated me because our practice means to really become alive. That's what I understood. It also means being able to die, but most importantly it means the death of what we call "the dream." The basic truth of Buddhism, is impermanence. Nonetheless, we continue to grasp that which cannot be grasped, because it's impermanent. In this way, we go from life to death.

Jacob Perl, named

Abbot of the Kwan Um Zen School early in 1987, has been a Master Dharma Teacher since 1984. A resident teacher at Providence Zen Center, he was born in Poland and speaks Polish fluently. Traveling to Poland several times a year on business, he leads workshops and retreats and gives public talks on Zen. His presence has greatly encouraged the growth of the Polish Zen community. A Kwan Um Zen School of Poland was formed in 1984 and now consists of four Zen Centers and more than 10 affiliated groups in different cities. Jacob was elected president of the Polish KUZS.

Jacob was one of Zen Master Seung Sahn's first students in the United States, meeting him while an undergraduate at Brown University. Prior to this meeting he studied Buddhism at several other Buddhist centers, including the San Francisco Zen Center and the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center under the direction of Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche. A student of martial arts, Jacob earned a fifth degree black belt in Shim Gum Do (Zen Sword) in 1978. He manages a real estate business in Providence.

On my last trip to Poland, we did a kind of religious pilgrimage. Originally our idea was to have an ecumenical meeting of Soen Sa Nim with people from different religious traditions, but things did not work out. When we planned the meeting, we just picked a date and by some coincidence it was exactly the date of a meeting of many religious leaders in Assisi, Italy, called together by the Pope. So our pilgrimage came to be held in the spirit of Assisi. This was very nice because it was something the Polish Catholic church could relate to and which opened many doors.

Usually a pilgrimage means visiting some special place or person that is important to our direction in life. This pilgrimage was to several places in Poland of special significance to Polish Catholics, in particular. (There are no holy Buddhist spots in Poland yet, but soon there will be.) Still it had special meaning for us as Buddhists. There were some parallels we could draw between this pilgrimage and the pilgrimage of our lives. The pilgrimage itself was not so special, because we are all pilgrims. The pilgrimage we have undertaken is simply the pilgrimage to become awake.

Whatever the outward form of our pilgrimage was, whatever the outward form of this assembly is, whatever the outward form of our jobs or any activity we are involved in is—the point is always the same, because we have undertaken a kind of vow. Sometime in our life we made a decision to find our true self or to help beings. But how can I help all beings? What is this "I" that is going to help all beings?

We don't know. Our way is the way of our pilgrimage, is the way of "don't know." That's the basic speech form of our teaching. That is, what are we doing at this moment? Let's not lose it. This way of "don't know" or "enlightenment" or "true pilgrimage" or "true life" or "true death," how can we make this way real in our life? With each moment, how can we make it work, make it ours?

In traditional Buddhist teaching, we talk about the "Four Difficult Things." To be born with this human body is considered the first "difficult thing." For most of us it was very easy. We just appeared. The next difficult thing is to hear about the Dharma, and the next is finding a keen-eyed teacher. The final difficult thing is what we call "enlightenment." But traditional teaching says that the most important thing is to find a keen-eyed teacher. If we find one, if we get good teaching, then surely someday we will all become awake.

"Someday" may be far away. Somebody said, "Buddha's enlightenment is far away." Maybe this moment now is better. Why wait?

Before, Buddha saw a star and Guchi's attendant saw a finger. In order to find this, we must find good teaching. So listen carefully, listen carefully.

(Hits the altar table with the Zen stick) A great teacher once said, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

(Hits the altar table again) A great teacher once said, "No form, no emptiness."

(Hits the altar table a third time) A great teacher once said, "Form is form, emptiness is emptiness."

Which one of these teachings can help us? Which one of these teachers can help us? Which teacher is our true teacher, our enlightenment teacher, our Buddha teacher?

Hoh!

Thank you.

(Jacob bows to the assembly.) □