

tested about it before being allowed to take precepts. There might be a yearly training course for all Dharma Teachers, followed by an exam. Saturday afternoon the small groups each had time to meet with Soen Sa Nim to discuss issues more privately. The Saturday afternoon large group session was productive, with several concrete plans and changes adopted:

1) Soen Sa Nim agreed to give a series of talks on *Compass of Zen*. The transcribed talks will be edited into a training manual for Dharma Teachers.

(Editor's note: Soen Sa Nim has already given these talks, and the transcribing is underway.)

2) *Dharma Mirror* will be revised and updated. It will have some additional teaching, be generally livelier, and an index will be added.

3) The currently available translations of the chants will be checked for accuracy and revised as necessary. The English translations will be added to the back of the new chanting books.

4) There will be an annual Dharma Teacher Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Next year, it is scheduled for March and again at Kansas Zen Center.

5) The Dharma Teacher Association governing board will be drawn from Dharma Teachers attending the annual Dharma Teacher Yong Maeng Jong Jin and will be composed of three Master Dharma Teachers and four Zen Center Head Dharma Teachers. The membership will rotate regularly. The current body is composed of:

Bobby Rhodes-Providence Zen Center, Richard Shrobe-Chogy International Zen Center, Judy Roitman-Kansas Zen Center, Nina Davis-Chogy International Zen Center, Robin Rowedder-Seattle Dharma Center, and Jonathan Bowra-Empty Gate Zen Center

Saturday night, everyone (thirty-two people) went out to dinner at a local Chinese restaurant, which was great fun, and then returned to the Zen Center to sprawl on the floor and watch a video (Star Trek IV).

Sunday was a crazy high energy day. The final morning session offered a dharma talk by Richard Shrobe on the "Dropping Ashes" kong-an and on connecting

kong-ans with our daily lives. Soen Sa Nim again stressed the role of Dharma Teachers in keeping Zen practice vital by ensuring its involvement in everyday life. There was a closing circle talk and lunch and many people had to leave to catch planes. For those who stayed, the activity was non-stop for the rest of the day. There was a precepts ceremony in the early afternoon. Ron Sutherland and Hwei-chi Yang were married by Soen Sa Nim in a well-attended, Buddhist ceremony at a local country club and then gave a talk at the Kansas University campus in the evening.

A terrific amount of work was accomplished during the retreat. That it was so productive owes a lot to some of the intangible aspects of the weekend. A warm, family-style atmosphere prevailed: a strong unbroken sense of sangha. There was plenty of free time for relaxing, taking walks or talking with old friends. One of the small groups walked downtown Saturday afternoon, shopping for gifts, visiting a bookstore and eating ice cream. The retreat was simply a lot of fun and very energizing.

Many people worked hard to pull off the weekend so successfully. It was wonderful that Soen Sa Nim came with his usual humor, clarity and energy. With so many events scheduled, particularly on Sunday, it was taxing, and everyone was grateful for Soen Sa Nim's effort and teaching. Richie Streitfeld, Bobby Rhodes, Nina Davis, Karen Ryder and Stanley Lombardo all worked very hard organizing the retreat, setting an agenda, and generally making an idea real. Many thanks also to the Kansas Zen Center members who gave their time, work and rooms as needed. Particular thanks go to Carole Hojun Welker and Marla Wambsgans who spent the weekend cooking up terrific meals. Finally, thanks to everyone who attended and made the retreat happen. The Kwan Um Zen School is a far-flung entity and it's often easy for individuals or whole Zen Centers to feel isolated. There is inestimable value for all of us in getting together face to face for whatever reason and realizing that Sangha is more than just a word.

Dennis Duermeier is a Bodhisattva Monk and Director of the Kansas Zen Center.

Human Survival Conference

(Continued from page 1.)

ments, but as individuals representing the human family. The goal of the conference was to create an interaction and on-going dialogue in order to enlarge all of our capacities to deal with global, life-and-death issues.

The selection of participants was guided by the desire to bring together leaders known for their dedication, enthusiasm, integrity and courage. Participants included the heads of the Church of England, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Russian Orthodox Church; emissaries from various churches of the United States; a representative of the Pope (who was the organizer of the World Interfaith meeting at Assisi last year); Mother Teresa; prominent leaders of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism (including the Dalai Lama); and leaders of the Hopi Indians of North America and native religious groups of Africa. Political leaders included the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, American congressmen and former ambassadors, and former presidents and parliamentary leaders of governments from all over the world. There were also international media leaders and scientists from England (James Lovelock), Africa (Wangari Maathai--Kenya), the U.S.A. (Carl Sagan) and the U.S.S.R. (Evgueni Velikhov--Vice President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences). Poep Sa Nim was the only female Buddhist master at the conference.

The entire assembly convened each morning in the beautiful Oxford Town Hall for speeches and discussions on various current topics. In the afternoon participants broke up into small working groups in order to enhance personal contact. In these working sessions each participant was invited to speak. One person

said that in this age we should all follow women. Poep Sa Nim responded by saying, "in the absolute world there is no woman and no man. In one life we may appear as a woman, in the next life maybe as a man. Because of that we should not attach to our form. Not only man and woman, but also with countries, religions, etc., we should not attach to our form or situation. If you attain the absolute world, from which we all came, your actions and speech will automatically help others. This is the basis of human survival.

"We all have 10,000 intelligent ideas and have been talking a great deal. If we cannot harmonize together, how can we help and lead others? Why don't we all stand up, hold hands and practice together so that we can share energy, let down our barriers and attain this absolute world." The whole group then did as she asked while chanting "Om Nam" together, raising and lowering their arms, chanting fast and slow.

Afterwards, there was a lot of animated discussion and a relaxed atmosphere among the participants. During a tea break and at dinner that night, many people expressed their appreciation for this practicing. People were able to taste the one mind and energy which appears when barriers are let down.

On the way home Poep Sa Nim was asked for her observations on the participants of the conference. She said, "generally speaking, the political people are more open than many of the religious people. They are looking for solutions to serious everyday problems and are more open to experience, energy and new ways of looking at things. Religious people tend to protect their ideas and positions more. Often they are following someone else's idea or their own beliefs and are less open and less able to go before-thought. That's not good and cannot help this world."

Dharma on French Radio

by Poep Sa Nim

In February of this year Poep Sa Nim was invited to talk on a radio show in Paris. The following talk is a partial transcription from that event. The questions were telephoned in by people listening to the show.

Question: I don't know much about the Asian religions. What is Buddhism?

Poep Sa Nim (PSN): Buddhism is not a religion. We practice Zen which means finding your true self. Because of that, I cannot say that Buddhism is a religion. Everyone would like to find themselves, who they really are. Buddhism appeared to show people the way to find truth, which, in fact, exists prior to and independent of any religious form. This means not following someone else's idea.

We have many lives, not only this one. For most people, when they exist, their human body is their world. We forget our true self and we attach to this present body, present form. This form is made up of the six senses—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. People think only of and do action only through these six senses. We follow the senses and then, when we get old, we don't know why we have lived this life. Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Many people have these questions. So, Buddhism is to show you where

you came from, where you are going and how to live this present life correctly, without having any objective or subjective conditions.

We receive this human form and it is built by the four elements. We form this body and then forget what nature wants us to do. We only attach to our body. When you attach to this body it has objective and subjective conditions, which means like and dislike, right and wrong, good and bad. If you keep following like/dislike, right/wrong, and good/bad you only follow objective things. That's what human society is fighting about. Right and wrong, good and bad. But Buddhism means, conquer this objective/subjective action to find what is before this condition. This means that before-thinking is our true self. This before-thinking does not have any condition; there is no attachment. Your mind is clear like a mirror. When your mind is clear like a mirror you see things as they are. For example, when someone appears before you, because your mind is clear like a mirror, it reflects that person and you see their mind—their before-karma, present-karma and future-karma. But, only perceiving is not enough. This before-thinking is absolute energy or what I call complete energy. As you know, right now you are listening to the

(continued on the next page)



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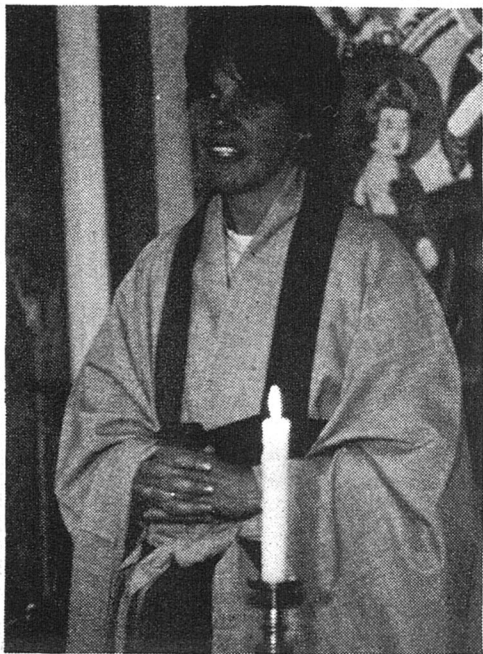
Kong-an Practice in America

A Kong-an Is Nothing Other Than The Present Moment

By Barbara Rhodes

The function of a kong-an is to spark a question, to give rise to that which in the Zen tradition has been called the *Great Question*. When the mind "questions", it awakens and opens. This moment of questioning, however fleet it is, is a manifestation of a pure and unconditioned mind. In this moment all filters of pre-conception and pre-judgement are taken away and only pure questioning remains.

This "questioning" is vastly different from "checking". A "checking" mind is always resisting, trying to find an argument based on its preconceived ideas and opinions. A "questioning" mind on the other hand, is one which is stuck, which truly doesn't know. This mind only asks, "What is this?" The mind that truly asks, "What is this?" does so in



Master Dharma Teacher
Barbara Rhodes

response to something in the present moment,

whether it be a concrete life situation, a feeling, an emotion, an incomprehensible thought or whatever. In asking, "What is this?", the mind stops assuming, even if only for a fleeting second, stops operating on pre-conceptions and, instead, feels and looks attentively at the moment at hand.

There are two stories that have helped me tremendously to understand how kong-an practice applies to daily life. As it happens, both stories are about mothers. The first story was told by Zen Master Seung Sahn when someone asked him how to "keep" a kong-an:

A mother of four has just watched her oldest child board a plane headed for Vietnam. In the months that follow she attends to her family, her part-time job, her friends and community. She plays bridge, goes to her daughter's class play, shops for food, etc. Through all of this she never forgets that her son is in Vietnam. She never doesn't feel some fear and concern. There is never a time when she doesn't wonder where her son is, or what he is doing. She always asks herself: "When is my son coming home?" Because of her tremendous love for her son, she always has him in the recesses of her mind. At the same time she is totally present in her daily life.

Kong-an practice can be like this mother's mind. The "Great Question" of a kong-an, like the the "Great Question" in the mother's mind about her son, remains with you, always in the recesses of your mind. The kong-an reminds you always to

ask, look into "What is this?", rather than to *know*.

The second story is about a mother lion. This mother lion takes her five cubs out for their very first walk. They instinctively form a single line behind her. Up until this point, she has been their only source of love, warmth, protection and nourishment; their world so far has been safe and most generous. So as they walk, the cubs take in the sights, sounds, and

smells around them and innocently delight in nature's gifts. Suddenly, the mother lion turns to one of the cubs and bats him five feet into the brush. The cub is shocked and hurt. Why would the thus-far warm and benevolent mother do such a thing? The cub scrambles back to the line and continues with the others. The mother has just taught the cub to be careful, be aware. She did it in the simplest, most direct way she knew.

A kong-an is able to wake up the mind in the same way. An

alert mind can see through the kong-an and bring it to a wholesome conclusion, like a wise lion walking through the forest and being perfectly in tune with all that is there. As the mother lion swings her great paw towards her child, she has no thought as to being superior or better. She only wants the child to learn. A genuine Zen master shares this mind.

The questions that a kong-an can raise can bring a deeper attentiveness to both sitting meditation and to daily activities. Just as a weight attached to a fishing line can help the hook to sink deeply in the ocean rather than bobbing on the water's surface, a kong-an can guide the mind to places of deeper insight, to places that are often difficult to enter without a persistent, steady direction. Using the mind's natural tendency to question gives it more focus and perception.

Thus, bringing the mind to the present moment by asking, "What is this?" is to enter the space of *not-knowing*. Trusting this process of not-knowing is to go beyond the edge of what is familiar. Going beyond the edge of what is familiar is to let go of the self-imposed constructs of reality that we have created for ourselves and to which we cling so desperately. It is to look at each moment with a pure awareness, rather than through colored filters. So, maybe when you ask someone, "How are you?", you are *really* asking, really open to see, feel and listen to the response. Then true intimacy is possible and compassion naturally arises.

Poep Sa Nim- "Dharma on the Radio"

(Continued from page 9.)

radio. You are listening to me and I'm talking to you. Without energy we cannot do this. So, this energy is very important.

When you attain this absolute world you are not only perceiving karma; you can also give energy to others. Your body is like a generator of electricity. But it is not only giving; it is actually balancing people's energy. For example, when your mind is sick it is not because you don't have enough energy. It means your energy is not balancing out. When your body is sick, it is not that you don't have energy. You are balancing your energy. So, by perceiving a person's karma, a master can balance their energy, if necessary. But it is not enough if I only help the person by perceiving their karma and balancing out their energy. Because then they will only attach to me and my method. This is not correct Buddhism. Therefore, we teach them how to practice, how to attain their true self. Then they are able to save themselves and find their own, true master. When we do that, we know what human beings are about and what life is about. It is very important to find our correct human beings' job.

Question: You said that the energy goes through you like through a generator to help others. Is that because you practice mind-to-mind transmission?

PSN: It is not only mind-to-mind transmission. Actually, mind comes from thinking. As I said just now, before-thinking is absolute energy. So, when your mind is clear you can receive and utilize this universal energy to help others.

Question: Is this what we call "cosmic energy"?

PSN: Actually, the energy does not have a name. "Cosmic" or whatever, it's people who make the names. For example, the blue sky never says, "I am blue sky". This means that this world does not have words and speech. That's what you call, if you want to, mind-to-mind. But I don't think that that is the correct word. If you want to explain it, this is complete stillness and extinction. That's what you call absolute energy. So, if you want to call it cosmic, I don't think that is clear.

Question: What is the energy center for the human being?

PSN: Energy is everywhere. It is right in front of you. But we can't see it because when we receive our human form it is as though we are blocked by the six senses. So, when you take off the six senses, which means when you attain truth, you can use the six senses very clearly and then you can see right in front of you. This is absolute attainment. Someone who is a master is not special, which means he or she attains through their practicing. Everyone has this, but it can only appear when you cease to be controlled by your karma. Absolute attainment is not a knowledge, it is not intellectual. You have to attain for yourself. For example, when you eat salt, you can say that it is

salty. But you cannot express or capture in words for another how salty it is. Same with sugar and honey. They have a different sweetness. But until you put them in your mouth, you don't know for yourself what the different tastes are.

Question: Poep Sa Nim, you attained Enlightenment. What is the correct function of Enlightenment?

PSN: Enlightenment is not special. Everybody already is enlightened but we cannot see it because we are covered by our form. You and everyone are already enlightened but you have not re-discovered that. When you discover, that is what you call Enlightenment. The reason you attain Enlightenment is not that you want to be clairvoyant or a hermit or something for yourself. In other words, you attain Enlightenment to live life correctly, without any condition, any suffering. It is not special.

When I was eighteen I attained, but to me that wasn't special. That was the right thing to do in life, in order to live correctly with others. Enlightenment is not kept for yourself. Everything that you do, you have to do with others, for others. Exist with and help others. That's what you call Enlightenment.

Daido Looi- "Koan Study"

(Continued from page 4.)

in realizing themselves. There is no correct "answer" to a koan. Seeing it is a state of consciousness in which our usual reference system has been abandoned and the thing itself is seen directly and intimately. This intimacy transforms our way of seeing ourselves and the universe. Once realized it is no longer possible to live our lives in the old way.

These words represent one experience of koans, and as words they remain dead until you the reader make them your own, bring them to life in the moment-to-moment reality of your own existence. At that time these words, having fulfilled their meager function, should be thrown away, so that the spiritual journey may continue as it is and always has been from the beginningless beginning- boundless and unhindered.

John Daido Looi, Sensei is the spiritual leader and resident Zen teacher of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, New York, and the spiritual leader of the "Mountain and River Order," an organization of affiliate Zen centers and sitting groups in the U.S. and abroad. Rev. Looi's interest in Zen began in the sixties as Zen practice first emerged in America. His training is in both the rigorous school of koan Zen and in the subtle teachings of Dogen's Zen. Looi is a Dharma successor of Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Roshi.

Looi's background as scientist, artist, and Zen priest affords his students the rich opportunity to experience Zen Buddhism in its unique and emerging American form. Looi's other published works include: The Way of Everyday Life (Maezumi & Looi, Center Publications) as well as articles in various periodicals.

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