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# PRIMARY POINT

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## PERCEIVE UNIVERSAL SOUND

### An Interview with Zen Master Seung Sahn

This interview with Zen Master Seung Sahn appeared in "The American Theosophist" (AT) in May 1985. It is reprinted by permission of the Theosophical Society in America, Wheaton, Illinois. The interviewer is Gary Doore. Zen Master Seung Sahn is now referred to by his students as Dae Soen Sa Nim. (See note on page 3)

**Gary Doore:** What is Zen chanting?

**Seung Sahn (Dae Soen Sa Nim):** Chanting is very important in our practice. We call it "chanting meditation." Meditation means keeping a not-moving mind. The important thing in chanting meditation is to perceive the sound of one's own voice; not hear, but perceive.

**AT:** Are you using the word "perceive" in a special sense?

**DSSN:** Yes. Perceiving your voice means perceiving your true self or true nature. Then you and the sound are never separate, which means that you and the whole universe are never separate. Thus, to perceive our true nature is to perceive universal substance.

With regular chanting, our sense of being centered will get stronger and stronger. When

we are strongly centered we can control our feelings, and thus our condition and situation.

**AT:** When you refer to a "center" do you mean any particular point in the body?

**DSSN:** No, it is not just one point. To be strongly centered is to be at one with the universal center, which means infinite time and infinite space.

The first time one tries chanting meditation there will be much confused thinking, many likes, dislikes and so on. This indicates that the whole mind is outwardly-oriented. Therefore, it is necessary first to return to one's energy source, to return to a single point.

**AT:** In other words, one must first learn to concentrate?

**DSSN:** Yes. Below the navel we have a center that is called an "energy garden" in Korean. We eat, we breathe, and this area becomes a source of power. If the mind becomes still, this saves energy. The mind, however, is constantly restless. There is an endless stream of desires for various kinds of experience; sights,

(continued on next page)

## Mt. Fuji in the Mist and Rain

by George Bowman, Master Dharma Teacher

This talk was excerpted from a Dharma Talk given at the Providence Zen Center in January 1988.

During this retreat we have been sitting short, twenty minute rounds with the intention of not moving. Ordinarily, we sit much longer and allow people to stand behind their cushions when they are in great pain or uncontrollable sleepiness. Perhaps we have been fearful of scaring new students away from their cushions when they feel overwhelmed with pain or boredom. There is, however, great wisdom to be found in stillness.

Before each round of sitting we are vowing not to move, to sit with whatever appears in this moment and to relate to it as our teacher and friend. Of course, some friends are quite challenging, but nevertheless we are committed to a full relationship with them!

Why should we try this experiment? We can enjoy the flowers only if we stop long enough to look at them. What stops moving? First, our body stops moving; next, our scattered thinking stops moving; then, our dispersed and confused awareness stops moving; and finally, we come into full relationship with this flower. This full relationship and clear experience of the flower is not a meditation upon something that is separate from us. Rather, in stillness, we forget ourselves and become intimate with the flower, we enter the boundless world of prajna.

In sitting still we are able to receive what this moment has to offer. We see that this moment, regardless of what our idea about it may be, is entirely trustworthy—not only can we trust it, we are it. So we are not trying to amputate pieces of ourselves to fit some arbitrary image of what is acceptable. (That would be

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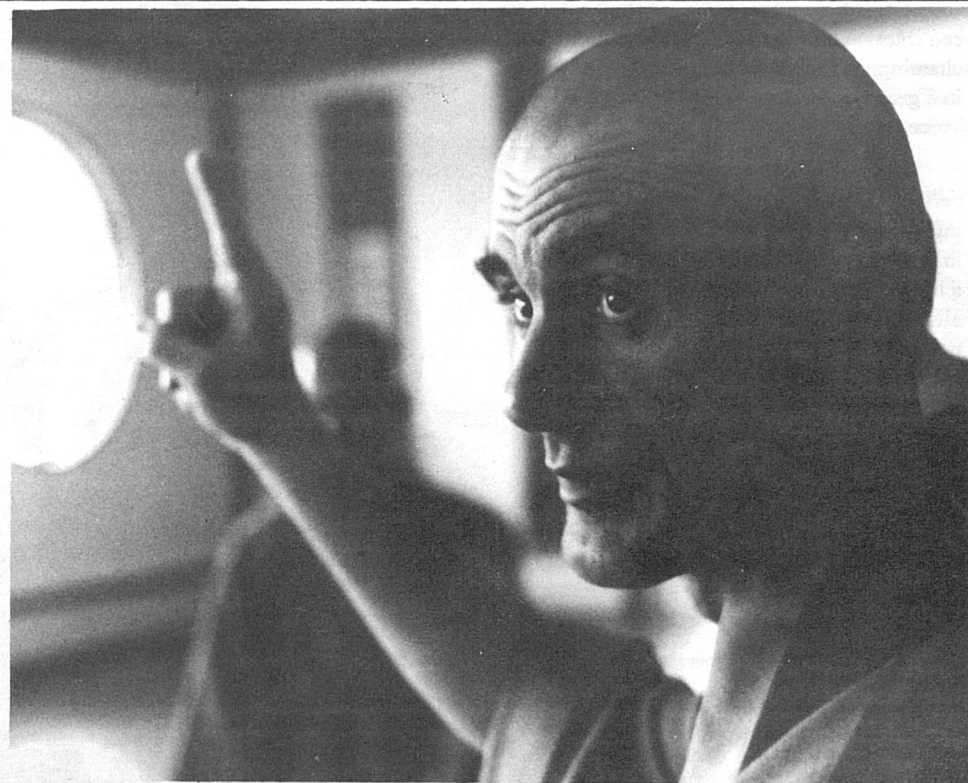
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Master Dharma Teacher Do Am Sunim

## Do Am Sunim Becomes Poland's First Master Dharma Teacher

Zen Master Seung Sahn is now referred to by his students as Dae Soen Sa Nim. (See note on page 3)

[Editor's note: excerpts from the inka ceremony given below were translated by Dorota Krzyzanowska and edited by Susan Phillips.]

On June 4th of this year Do Am Sunim became the first Master Dharma Teacher of Kwan Um Zen School of Poland. Over one hundred fifty people came to the Warsaw Zen Center to see Dae Soen Sa Nim give inka—the authority to teach kong-an practice and lead retreats—to Do Am Sunim. The inka ceremony took place one day before the Polish Sangha's ten year anniversary celebration. Master Dharma Teacher (and honorary Polish KUZS President) Jacob Perl joined Dae Soen Sa Nim there for these major events. Representatives from all the Buddhist sanghas in Poland attended, reflecting the very close ties that the groups have.

The Polish Sangha had its beginnings in 1978, when Dae Soen Sa Nim and Jacob Perl visited Poland at the invitation of a former member of Chogye Zen Center in New York who had returned to his native land. During that visit, Dae Soen Sa Nim and Jacob first met Do Am Sunim or, as he was known at that time, Andrzej Czamecki.

In 1978, Andrzej was a self-employed artisan producing mosaic tiles. After the visit he became deeply involved in Zen practice and started a Zen Center in his home in Krakow. A couple of years later Andrzej moved to War-

saw, and, as often happens among Zen students, he switched careers: his experience with Zen practice enabled him to use meditation techniques to counsel drug addicts.

In Warsaw, Andrzej started a second temple which was given the name Do Am Sa, from its founder's Dharma name, Do Am (Sa means temple). The Polish Kwan Um Zen School was formed as a separate entity from the North American Kwan Um Zen School. Andrzej has been Abbot of that body since its inception. As Dae Soen Sa Nim often tells his students, the Polish school is very strong and is growing. In addition to the centers in Warsaw and Krakow already mentioned, there is a center in Gdansk and approximately fifteen affiliated sitting groups throughout Poland.

In December of 1986, Andrzej took traditional monk's precepts at Providence Zen Center, and would thereafter be called Do Am Sunim. Now, less than two years later, he would participate in another momentous ceremony that would profoundly affect his life.

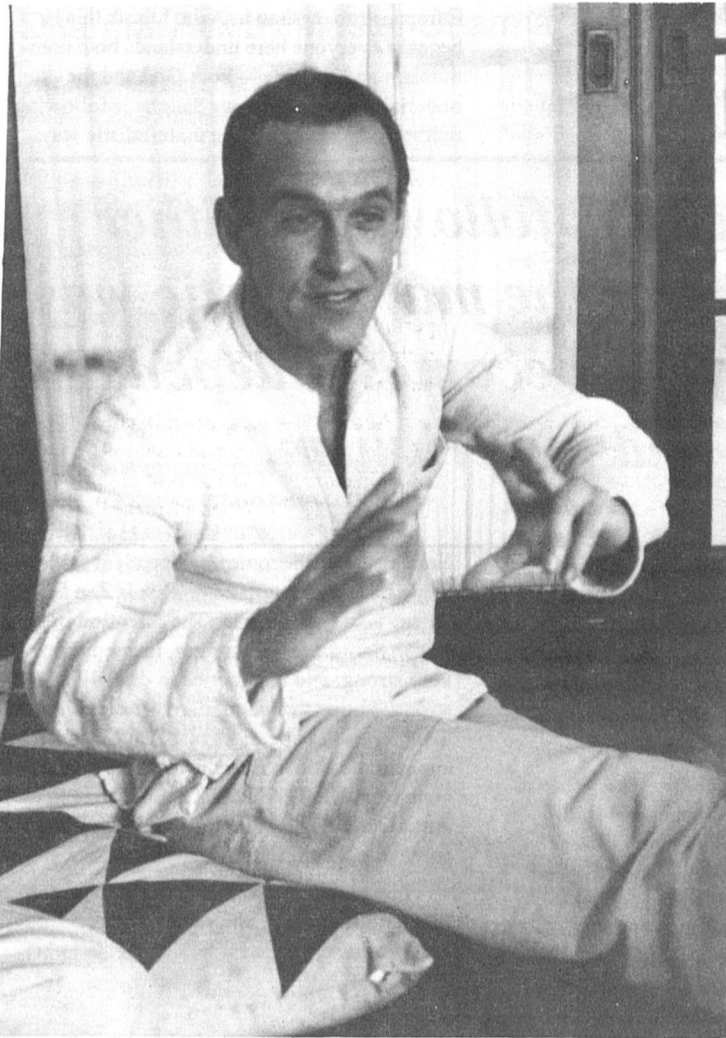
Traditionally, inka ceremonies include an explanation of the procedures to the audience, a period of Dharma Combat in which members of the audience challenge the initiate, a speech by the new Master Dharma Teacher, and congratulatory speeches. In this the first Polish inka ceremony, Jacob Perl, who was born in Poland and speaks the language fluently, explained the ceremony and invited members of the audience to engage Do Am Sunim in Dharma combat. The following are excerpts from the Dharma combat exchanges, Do Am Sunim's Dharma Talk, and congratulatory speeches by Jacob Perl and Dae Soen Sa Nim.

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**George Bowman—"Mist and Rain"***(Continued from front page.)*

creating a monster.) Instead, we are stopping and embracing ourselves.

Can you understand this very important relationship between samadhi, that is, concentration and unwavering attention, and wisdom? Wisdom is not something we accumulate or understand but rather it is be-

**Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman**

coming one with experience. In order to do that we must renounce the well-traveled mind road—the understanding, the judgment and the dispersion of attention that keep us separate. Then we can appreciate the wisdom of pain and the wisdom of happiness, we can appreciate a mosquito on a flower.

The Sixth Patriarch put it quite succinctly in the Platform Sutra, "Learned Audience, in my system, Samadhi and Prajna are fundamental. But do not be under the wrong impression that these two are independent of each other, for they are inseparably united and not two entities. Samadhi is the content of Prajna, while Prajna is the activity of Samadhi." In other words, the content of wisdom is a not moving mind without ideas and when this not moving mind without ideas manifests or acts that activity is the truth.

**Questioner:** There is physical pain and there is the pain of clinging to our likes and dislikes. Can you talk about these?

**George:** What is our relationship with our suffering? Of course there is the physical pain and our attempts to escape, barter, hypnotize, or congratulate ourselves on our strength or openness. Perhaps we judge or criticize or decide that we can't stand it any longer. When all is said and done then physical pain settles into physical pain and it is boundless and

clear. It is quite challenging to let go of our opinion about pain. Our practicing is only a matter of letting go of our cherished opinion. Then we can feel clearly, hear clearly, and our mind functions smoothly by itself!

We love our opinions so! It is a great loss to let them go even though they are the source of endless sorrow. Someone once described Zen as a practice of grieving. Without being morbid about it, the practice is one of letting go and appreciating the vivid, changing nature of our experience. It is clear that whatever we are clinging to so hopefully will disappear. There is no way around it. Everything will inexorably be taken away from us—our wives, our husbands, our children, our friends, our moods, our eyes, our wishes, our wants, every last speck. There is nowhere to

take refuge and nothing to which we can cling. We might as well begin letting go right now. It is such a paradox that as we let go we appreciate this life so much more! Our minds tell us that we will lose something, that something will die. I suppose that is true, but in that dying something else is born, something vivid, boundless and clear.

This letting go and "not making anything" soon becomes another idea, another distortion or confusion. Instead of letting go and realizing that there is no self and no practice to attain, letting go becomes another problem, another ideal and identity.

A lot of Zen students sincerely think that not making something or not having an opinion is to be dull or blank, or to be unaware of the continual mix of their feelings and

opinions, likes and dislikes. The fact of it is, that not making anything is not reacting to what's already there. It's not telling yourself, that it must not be there if you're to be a good Zen student. It's already there. That's the truth that the Buddha talked about. This continual changing suchness. That things are impermanent and that we have this human predicament. There's a very important difference between blankness and not making anything. We take into our practice these slogans like "not making anything" or "going straight" and then use them in the service of our neurosis.

Practice is so simple. And yet we're so unskillful. Fog asks you to slow down or you'll get hurt. You'll panic or run off the road. So, when you're in the fog of your own ignorance, slow down and move very, very, very slowly and carefully. Then the fog has its own beauty. The mist has its own beauty.

This was the point in Basho's wonderful Haiku. Everyone was writing their commentary on Mount Fuji. They all wrote, "Clear Mount Fuji, Radiant Mount Fuji, Stable Mount Fuji, Massive Mount Fuji, Not-moving

## *"When you're in the fog of your own ignorance slow down and move very, very, very slowly and carefully— Then the fog has its own beauty."*

I speak for myself. For me a long time my not making anything was sort of a super athletic Zen, anything that got in its way... "poof". That was my idea of not making anything. It has changed a little bit over the years. Now, it really has to do with softening to the fact of my experience in this moment, just as it is, without adding, or ignoring or taking away. Of course, this is also making something. It's an aversion. "This experience is unacceptable so I will move here." And when we hear people tell us, in Zen circles, "don't make anything," or "put it all down," 99 times out of 100 it's because they are experiencing some difficulties themselves. They are in pain over who we are and they want us to get away, or get themselves away as soon as possible. So, when they say "Don't make anything", what they mean is "Please get away from here because I'm making something."

**Questioner:** You mentioned doing some work with running. A couple of years ago when I started running I said, "Let's try something else— instead of hating the pain and using that to abuse yourself by going further, see if you can embrace it and see if you can run just as well or better? Can you talk about your running experience and how you relate it to practice?"

**George:** Distance running was my way of life for ten years. There are two schools of distance runners. One is that you deal with the pain of the moment, the inevitable pain of pushing your self to your limits. It's very painful, if any of you run or do anything like that. It also has a very strange beauty. It's very vivid, alive and beautiful. You want more. You want to go back to it, again and again, not realizing that your whole life can become vivid and clear. It's very delicious.

Maybe some of us are like that in our sitting, "Now, I will sit in the triple lotus." Anything to avoid being enshrouded in mist and fog. Anything. Instead, if we are sitting in triple lotus to avoid sleepiness or to avoid mist and fog, maybe it's time then to be enshrouded, coming to your point, in mist and fog.

Mist, rain, fog, wrapped in cotton, ignorance, numbness, all are a kind of a body novacaine. It has a really rare and wonderful beauty of its own if you're willing to attend to it and be with it, if you're willing to know your ignorance, your foggy, instead of castigating yourself for being a bad meditator, for being in the fog. But if you're in the woods and it's foggy, or in a field when it's misting, you may go for a walk. If you're driving in it, it can be quite a panic. It's happened to me, where I'll be driving along, and then suddenly the quality of the air will change. It will suddenly be damp and all of a sudden you're in it. You can't see anything. Now you will insist on continuing to drive fast. You're terrified and panicked. You want to escape. And the more you want to escape from your lack of vision and awareness, the greater chance you will drive faster and cause an accident or run over some hapless creature in the road. Or the road will turn and you will find yourself in the woods. So what that fog is asking you to do is to slow down.

Mount Fuji, Samurai Mount Fuji." ...and variations on the theme in however many ways you can say it succinctly and clearly— all in 17 syllables, of course. Basho, wonderful Zen Master that he was, a completely realized human being, wrote, "Mount Fuji in the mist and rain." Now that's interesting. That's so wonderful. Can we sit with that spirit? Mount Fuji in the mist and rain. It's not someplace else. What's happening is the Dharma, is the way. Can we have enough trust in ourselves? It's hard, because we are so confused and crazed a lot of the time. *Trust that?* What, you've got to be kidding? But can we have enough trust in our experience to see that the Dharma is not outside of what's happening. That's what's continually being called for with our practice. That it isn't happening somewhere else. That exactly what you're experiencing right now is the Dharma. And you're on the way.

Back to running, the other method was called the Mantra School. You repeat a mantra enough times, or you do something to distract yourself from the pain. Then you won't think about the pain and you'll run faster. The school that I belong to, that I liked, was the first one, that you try not to distract yourself at all. That you're completely so. That you carry no baggage. That you run naked when you run. If you hurt you hurt completely. That's the style I appreciate the most. It's a vivid and alive style. I don't like this other one. Maybe it works for some people.

Our coach used to encourage us to have no baggage. The less baggage we carried the more we would run to our full potential. If we were carrying no baggage whatsoever, we would manifest as the one who runs. Then winning and losing would not be an issue. But if you're carrying your baggage then there's some problem. So that was the practice of running. It's quite a practice when you're in the heat of it. How do you realize your Buddha nature while running?

I've been trying to encourage people on this retreat to take what they are experiencing seriously and let it be what it is. Just do this much. Whatever that experience is.

Ah, but you think Mu is some place else. Realize the moment— just now. "Yes, but Mu is somewhere else." Then we think, "Oh, I know what Mu is." "Mu is everything. Now I know what Mu is! Or "Don't know." "What does this mean? Don't know what a wall is. Oh, that's what don't know is." Or we think, "Gee better do something while I sit here. I really have to do something. I've got half an hour between now and the end of sitting. And after lunch I can probably fit in a few bows. Or I might do a little Kwan Seum Bosal-ing or something." Yak, yak, yak.

It's so sweet. We sit on the cushion and think, "Well I better do something about this." What are you going to do? "I better do some bows."— this is critical. "Better count my breath now." But what is there to do? Who are we trying to become?

**Questioner:** Would you talk about *shikantaza*— just sitting? When I began my practice I was told to count my breaths. And then a little later somebody said I should do, "What is

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this?" on the in-breath, and "Don't know" on the out-breath. For a long time I did that.

**George:** Just throw yourself into it, whatever it is— fly closer and closer to the flame until you're gone! It's very difficult to practice pure *not knowing*. I think it's the most wonderful, challenging thing in the world. I have this wild love affair with Zen practice, but it's very difficult to *just sit*. The tendency is to fool ourselves and to think that we are practicing when we're just lost in our own fantasy and just spaced out. "I just don't know." "No Problem." "Don't know." Hey. That's not practice. That's automatic pilot. You slip into your invisible, familiar self. And every time you do that what happens is then you slip into doubt, or you feel cheated. Like, I don't need to do this. Just "Don't know." Or you slip into hiding but you don't know what you're hiding from.

Yes, it's very hard to just sit. And traditionally in Zen practice, in the purest form, we're studying the self. We're not studying the art of attention. The art of attention is like studying a tape recorder and taking each little piece apart and you realize that there's nothing left. That, if you're really careful, you could put it back together again and there's your tape recorder. That's a kind of Vispassana style. Zen studies the self, itself, how it comes to be born and how it dies. Where does this wave of experience come from? How does it manifest itself, what does it return to?!

Traditionally with Buddhist practice, it's taught that there is a balance between concentration and focus, and this open hearted quality. So both are necessary and both are absolutely important. And the foundation of practice is concentration. The foundation of our practice is Samadhi, which is not some sort of space zone but the ability to pay attention to

nothing under it. Otherwise you will suspect that there's something under it. Right? So you have to look. You cannot take your doubt lightly. You have to exhaust your doubt, completely. So if you think it's under the glass of water, look. Nope. Now look around this room. There are a lot of hiding places here. Look under the mike. Nope. There is a moment of relief for each one of us. When we've looked and we say, "Whew, just like I read." "I can relax now, it's not there." And then the doubt appears again. That's what we call exhausting the *Hwado*.

But rather than trying to get rid of the doubt we'll look again for this ungraspable fundamental principle. And maybe you'll think it's under the cushion, so you look under the cushion and it's not there. Well, we're working on it now. We know where it's not. It's not under the glass. It's not under the mike and not under the cushion. The closet! It's back there. And during walking meditation you can just sort of peek, but it's not there. Or maybe you get in bed at night, if you're on a platform bed, you might think it's under the bed. Or under your Zafu. So we continue this practice of sincerely looking into this matter of, "Is it there?"

What we find continually is that it's not there. Sometimes this causes us frustration, disappointment and anger, all from the perspective of the small I. But from another perspective, this can mean our liberation, our release and to our becoming a truly sane and loving human being. So, we look and look and finally, we begin to get the message from the other side. Rather than from the fearful side of losing what we never had to begin with, we start to experience it and perceive it from this other perspective. This "I" does not exist.

"There is no attainment with nothing to at-

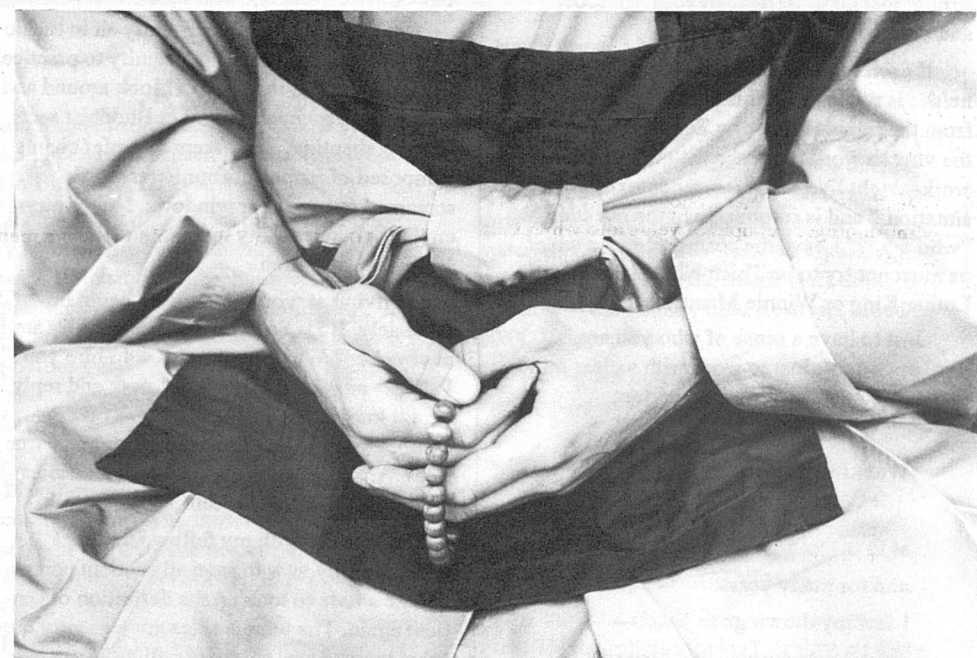


Photo by Steve Wunrow

one thing and to keep your attention there. And you are either doing it or you aren't. It's that simple. Feel your breath. Are you with it or aren't you? Or is your mind a mad gorilla, somewhere swinging through the trees? And if it is, be aware of that and continue. You can collect yourself so that you can in time actually feel your whole breath. It's a wonderful, wonderful experience to be able to sit in the evening and to enjoy a quiet and peaceful Samadhi with occasional thought fading by. Simple. But it's a wonderful thing, the content of that moment of experience, whether it be a happy moment or a sad moment. The content of each moment of experience is that which doesn't move. That which is clear and before thought. That's what practice is. Realizing that each moment of experience has as its content zero. Or Not-moving Mind. Or Mu itself. Or "Don't know." Or Buddha Nature. Or whatever you're comfortable talking about. And in order for you to realize that clearly you have to stay with it and see what it is that's happening. What's happening is the truth.

So, in the Zen tradition if you can focus your attention on anything. If you can understand one particle of dust clearly, you've got the whole picture. Because everything is working under the same fundamental principle. It's an interesting thing, this not knowing. What am I? It's completely unknowable. Completely ungraspable. Where is it? Oops, almost saw it that time. I'll try again. I mean you have to look under the glass of water to see that there's

tain." This is not a belief or understanding or experience— this "I" is simply not to be found. That's a tremendous relief. It's like being on a wonderful desert island, filled with fruits and vegetables, where you can fish and the sun shines brightly, and every conceivable thing is there right at your fingertips. But you are convinced that this island belongs to someone else. And the owner is going to appear momentarily and snatch it away from you. You've really covered the island thoroughly and could not even find another foot print. You could never find anyone, then it would dawn on you, "It's my island. I can enjoy the sunlight. I can eat the fruit. I can swim in the ocean. I can roll in the sand. It's my home." Imagine. "Sariputra perceives that all five skandhas are empty and is saved from all suffering and distress."

Well, then let's go back to our sitting, and take refuge in the Buddha. Taking refuge in the Buddha is taking refuge in ourselves. Now we can take refuge in the fact of our experience, trusting and taking refuge in what we are experiencing because it is true and entirely trustworthy. No one knows better than you how it is for you. Take refuge in the Sangha, which is all sentient beings. Sentient beings, from our perspective of Dharma practice, includes the stones and the trees and this floor and our cushions. So, let's sit still and appreciate this moment!

## First Kyol Che

by Do Won

*Kyol Che is the Korean name for the 90-day retreat that is held twice a year (winter and summer) in Korea and has been held at Providence Zen Center (or across the pond at the Diamond Hill Zen Monastery) every winter since 1980. Kyol Che's are also starting in Poland. Do Won is a senior student of Zen Master Seung Sahn and is Abbot of the Providence Zen Center.*

The meaning of 'Kyol Che' is *Tight Dharma*. It is a time for intensive practice. Silence is maintained except for functional talking, one-on-one interviews with the teacher twice a week and the one or two Dharma Talks a week. Participants can do one to four, 3-week intervals, and there is an intensive week in the middle of the Kyol Che (when 12 midnight to 2 a.m. practice is added onto the schedule).

Over the years the schedule has changed slightly, but generally it means rising at 4:45 a.m. and practicing through most of the day until bed at 9:40. Fifteen minutes of prostrations are the kick-off to the day, followed by sitting meditation from 5:30 to 7 and then 45 minutes of chanting. Shortly thereafter we have a formal breakfast followed by a work period and again sit until the formal lunch at noon. After lunch is the longest break of the day— almost one hour (a treasure time— I would generally walk to a solitary spot in the woods to sit and look and listen or would add my own voice to the sounds of nature with chanting). The practice begins again at 1:30 and goes until 4:30. These sitting stretches are generally 30-40 minutes with 10 minutes of walking meditation in between. Occasionally, there is a long walking meditation outside during the afternoon. A light, formal supper is served at 5:30, chanting is from 6:30 to 7:30, and sitting goes again until 9:30 when the evening winds up with one final effort: chanting together for 10 minutes. (Kyol Che in Korea maintains a schedule that is very similar except wakeup is at 3 a.m. when the Korean temple where it is held begins the day.)

Kyol Che offers the opportunity to simplify the structure of our life and serves as a wonderful background against which to attend to mind's functioning. Outward distractions are minimized so that our focus can more readily return to this moment.

To me, a new student before my first Kyol Che, it sounded wonderful—a perfect and rare opportunity to hunker down with the habits of mind that seemed to me to hinder a clearer, more energetic and compassionate functioning of my life. And the group support would be so useful in maintaining the schedule—in not buying into my own wavering mind when the original intention and motivation would be fogged in. It seemed like a very good idea, and making that space in my life was possible. So...

Lying awake for a little while before the bell and listening to the stirrings of those still asleep and those beginning to awake— outside in the woods and on the pond the sounds are still too quiet to hear. Some mornings it's still hard to get up and others it's easy and natural. In any case these is no choice: We're all sleeping together here on the Dharma Room floor, so it's time to get up, roll up our mats and sleeping bags, put them away and use the bathrooms quickly. Then we meet back at our seats for bows. Today I'll try again to be, mentally as well as physically, here for bows— or at least for one third of them— so far it's probably been about one eighth.

Today is interviews— good— a break for the old knees and back— but then there's that damn kong-an. George gave me this one four months ago and still no clarity about it. (Hey— cut the crap— stay with this moment— What is this!?)

How can I sit really deeply when there is this person next to me sneezing for the 20th time? Once more— just one more time, and I'll scream!

Oh, God! The pain is too awful— surely we've sat past the scheduled time. Is the Head Dharma Teacher sleeping— or is she simply

torturing me? I've read stories about this, purposefully making us sit longer to push our limits. Well, it's damn inconsiderate. Don't they know how painful this is? (Sound of the wooded clapper) Oh— right on time— my thinking again.

Okay. Just walk around this room... One step at a time... Whoops— once again I haven't been here for 7 minutes— okay— there are 3 minutes left— just come back to this step and this step.

Bananas again?! I want something more substantial— and some variety. Boy! when this thing is over I'm going to the "Swiss Alps" for cheese fondue and salad with that wonderful house dressing and wine and chocolate mousse and coffee.

Gradually there is a change— small inroads into complaining, wanting mind— periods of quiet; light changing on the floor as a cloud passes overhead. The small bruise on an apple— wow! It tastes of slightly hard cider.

And bows— at times it is just the movement of the body, up and down— and not just me. This whole group moves as one— one body— is this it? When I finish here I'll give a Dharma Talk about this experience: This is what practicing is about! Whoops— How many bows have we done? There are countless ways to lose this moment, even through wonderful insights and feelings.

Interviews again... there's the bell... my turn... up, walk to the room... close the door... holding this question carefully. The same question asked— still no answer... return... sitting down. Oh, that's it! Of course! So simple, so obvious, open the window of mind ever so slightly— the joy of a fresh spring breeze...

And now a new kong-an. There's no handle on this one. Anyway, I look at it— just a smoothly polished metal ball with no place to catch hold or to penetrate. Impossible! Let it go. What is this?!

Day after day— how many now? 65? That willow— every day now there's some sense that buds are beginning to expand. The cold creaks of winter winds are giving away to enormous winds carrying some warmth. More frequently now there are downright balmy days. Today after lunch with my sweatshirt off, I'm down to a t-shirt. The big rock I sit on more often now gives warmth rather than draws it from me.

83 days? One week left. Can't believe it. All these days and minutes are suddenly almost at an end. Such mixed feelings arise. Family, friends soon to see and talk with. And these increasingly precious moments on the cushion soon to decrease. So what is this! Let's not waste this time.

And this group. I know next to nothing of anyone's like history yet some strong bond has grown here— through sharing this effort together. The idea of one body/mind has given way to a fuller experience of one body/mind— so much more complete than the idea and so ordinary, too... What is this? Breathing, light changing— still pain at times but the flow of the day and its rhythm is smoother with less struggle. Still many kong-ans unanswered— and these, too, are part of the rhythm. The willow is glowing with a light yellow-green. Spring bird songs fill our ears. No more creaking of the massive trunk with these gentler winds.

Tomorrow we finish. Tonight many of us sit later and rise earlier, a habit that has been gradually happening over the last few weeks. All of our habits seem to remain, and yet softer— the raw energy of beginning has given way to a more supple movement as group; the openness of the air jives with the milder air of Spring.

Today we finish— stay with it... What is this? Movement— of light, of season, of bodies through the day, of each of us offering a stick of incense and any merit earned to all sentient beings, of packing our bags and hugging and speaking 'hello' and 'goodbye' and moving on.