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PRIMARY POINT

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ONE PERSON'S ENERGY HELPS ALL PEOPLE

An Interview on Family and Practice with
Zen Master Seung Sahn

Primary Point (PP): In many families now, both the husband and wife have to work. They also have children and social responsibilities. How can the parents make a living, raise a family and still have time to practice?

Zen Master Seung Sahn (Dae Soen Sa Nim): If you have children and both parents are working, it can be very difficult to practice, especially if you live outside of a Zen Center. So, some kind of together action practicing with children is necessary. Simple exercises like breathe in, breathe out; hands up, hands down, like in Tai Chi; make a circle with your arms and breathe deeply. Children like doing these kinds of exercises with their parents. You can do this together action at

home every morning and evening, just for ten minutes. Then, maybe you can sit for awhile, with the children joining you for a few minutes. Husband and wife should also do one hundred and eight bows every day, together. Altogether, the practice should take one hour every day.

PP: How old should the children be?

DSSN: At least seven years old. Doing some kind of "Tanjen" practicing (i.e. breathing in and breathing out from "hara" — the area just below the navel) is very important. Then, their consciousness becomes very clear. When children are growing up, they cannot control their feelings. They often have only "I want" mind— anger mind. If you do breathing

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Altered States of Consciousness

by Lincoln Rhodes, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim*

Lincoln Rhodes, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, holds a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from M.I.T. He has been instrumental in the formation of many Zen centers and groups around the country, and has lived and taught at the Providence Zen Center for many years. He currently owns and manages a construction and home renovation business. This article is composed of selections from dharma talks given during 1983-85 at the New Haven Zen Center.

Someone was talking about using drugs to open your consciousness. I think the evidence is overwhelming that most of this planet is in an altered state of consciousness already and our job is to find out what's it like to not be in an altered state of consciousness. I grew up and my family wasn't too much different than any other family. I had a rather set way of seeing things that was given to

me. You don't realize it but you're given and taught ways of seeing things. When you realize there are other ways of seeing things, that is, as soon as there's not just one, it opens up a whole different ball game. It is very helpful to know that there is more than one way to view things. That's a necessary step somehow. You don't have to know what all the ways are, but you do know there isn't just one way to see.

I was quite shocked because I had all this training as a scientist. I thought while I was doing it that the reason you do it is to discover some ultimate truths about the universe and the way things are. So, I went about trying to do that. Then, lo and behold, I discovered that there are all these controversies about the ultimate na-

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Robert Genthner, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

Ninth Student Receives Inka

GETTING A ZEN STICK

by Robert Genthner, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim*

At a ceremony held at Providence Zen Center this past December, Robert Genthner, of Lexington, Kentucky, became the ninth student to receive formal teaching authority from Zen Master Seung Sahn. Bob is a long-time student of Zen under several teachers and a practicing psychotherapist. He and his wife, Mara, started the Lexington Zen Center in 1982. Bob and members of the Lexington sangha have purchased a large piece of land in Kentucky that Dae Soen Sa Nim has christened as a major retreat site; it is rapidly becoming an important gathering place for the sangha. This talk is excerpted from a talk at PZC after the ceremony. Excerpts from the formal Dharma Combat encounters that traditionally precede the granting of inka, or teaching authority, can be found on page 6.

The issues of giving and taking, and of generosity appear regularly in our practice. I was reading recently in the Mu Mun Kwan. Case 44 is a case called Pa Cho's Zen Stick. Pa Cho was Korean, and he went from Korea to China traveling around and then he met his teacher and later became a great Zen Master in China. The case goes like this: "If you have a Zen stick, I will give you a Zen stick. If you don't have a Zen stick, I will take it away." Some of you who came for interviews this morning worked on some kong-ans that are like this. The wonderful gift that Pa Cho gives us is Don't Know

Mind. It's very confusing— if you have a Zen stick, I'll give you a Zen stick, but if you don't have one, I'll take it away. It interrupts our thinking. It interrupts our logical analytic discursive thinking. What does that mean? That's the beginning of don't know. To give you an example of Pa Cho's mind (he was a brilliant Zen master), a monk came to him and asked him "what is the water of Pa Cho Mountain." (He was named after the mountain.) And Pa Cho said, "Warm in the winter, cool in the summer." He had an incredibly clear, non-analytic, non-logical mind. He saw the essential nature of things.

In Zen talk, the stick is symbolic of or represents our true nature, our essential nature. And, all of us who have come here today have something in common with Pa Cho, he's our ancestor. We also have in common this way seeking mind. Nobody is here by accident. All of us are here together out of some question, some wonderment, and this is our ancestor who is saying to us, if you have a Zen stick, if you have essential nature, if you have true nature, I will give you a Zen stick, I will give you a good beating. Whap! If you don't have true nature, if you have emptiness, everything is blankness, or nirvana, I'll take it away from you. So, it's not resting on either/or. Not having, not-having. Not resting in some conceptual perspective. Life simply isn't that way. Our life is

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* See page 12 for an explanation of this new title for Master Dharma Teachers

Altered States of Consciousness*continued from the front page*

of the way things are, and there are people fighting with each other over their views, about what it is, and how you figure it out. The further I looked at it, the more I discovered there's no standard by which to figure it out; it's all different views. That was a real eye opener! I thought there was some real absolute something or other to find.

The same kind of thing happened to me living with a whole other culture, at a Korean temple for a while, finding out there were people that had a completely different way of doing things. It seemed insane most of the time, but I did it long enough that I found out that it wasn't insane, just very different. When we let in other possibilities, when we see that there isn't only one way, that changes the ball game.

In lots of ways, if you watch what Dae Soen Sa Nim does, he's always giving people questions to shake them up somehow. People are always holding on to some ideas about the way they think it should be, or would like it to be. He's always trying to shake that up. There is a gate you have to go through to get anywhere, and that is to say, "I don't know". The gate is to quit thinking that you know the way it is. That's not easy, in our culture we're not accustomed to that way.

Partly because of my training in science and rational logic and going to graduate school, I did some nutty things. There was one period in my life when it seemed that strange states of mind were very interesting. Perhaps a lot of people have experienced this, so I won't go into the details. One experience that really helped me was that during graduate school I had a girlfriend whose mother had been in and out of mental hospitals for years. The mother was not in the hospital at this particular time, but was on medication and was at home. We used to go see her mother, a quite remarkable woman. When I met her she was just sitting in front of the TV, on various medications so she wouldn't have to be in the hospital.

You'd be sitting talking to her and everything would be fine for a while and then she'd whisper, "Don't go out into the back yard, there're tigers out there" and you'd go, "OK." And then she'd say, "I mean it, I've seen them, don't go out there, you're not going to go out there, are you?" That was really interesting to me, she definitely had altered states of consciousness. But, when I actually saw the reality of it, it was incredibly sad. I had to experience that and see what the ramifications of it were in somebody's life and how her family disintegrated. She's in the hospital now, talking about the tigers to anybody that will listen to her. She couldn't help herself, she couldn't change it; she was too far gone somehow to help herself or change her karma. That was a valuable experience, because it had been

such a romantic thing to do all these crazy things and try all these things. After you do enough of that, you have such altered states of consciousness it starts happening on its own without making an effort at it.

I feel like I've spent many years trying to get back to just being in the room, and having that be OK, not having to have some spectacular colors or dream happening to keep me interested.

Once in a while I get to go to New York City; you get on this train and walk out and you're in Penn Station and it's pretty insane. It's difficult in that situation to have any clear consciousness or compassion because there's so much violence and mess—and some beautiful things, too; it's all mixed up. I was walk-



Lincoln Rhodes, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

ing down the street one time and a van came plowing through a crowd of people walking across the street, against the no-walk sign, as people in New York do, and people, my friend and myself included, had to literally jump out of the way to not get hit by this van. Right after we jumped we heard a loud thump! A man wearing a three piece suit and tie and carrying an umbrella had hit the van with his brief case. He was really angry. The van screeched to a halt. The driver got out of the van and proceeded to beat the guy with the briefcase to a pulp in the middle of the street. All I could do was get a policeman and even he didn't want to

"I've spent many years trying to get back to just being in the room, and having that be OK."

stop it. He called some other cars, and eventually they came, but the driver of the van had, in the meantime, beaten this man up and smashed his glasses.

All this because someone hit his van with a brief case and he was mad at him. New York isn't any different than any other place, it's just so concentrated with people, you can walk around and see that stuff all the time. People who live there all the time, with all that happening, have

to find some way to not pay too much attention to it, or they couldn't live there.

That's an altered state of consciousness; and it's necessary for survival. In a strange way this world is getting like that with all the things that happen. Most of us require altered states of consciousness to block most of it out, to go about our business. That's an interesting state of affairs!

With all this going on, people ask if

"You can't say wait a second, I made a mistake here, I think I'll go back to not paying attention."

there is an "ultimate reality." You can try to express it with words, but it's this incredible need to logically make sense of the mind that is impossible. That's different than expressing music or art. When I was in graduate school, I had a group of friends that were incredible geniuses. It's unbelievable the minds that these people had and the information they took in and the way they tried to analyze it and make sense of it. Trying to describe how this world was and explain it somehow was real enticing to me and incredibly exciting. But what I noticed was that all of these friends were miserable; they didn't have their daily life in order. Their family lives were all disasters. The only time they were happy was when they were in these high states of inspiration with ideas they had, but meanwhile their lives were disastrous. The guy that was the most brilliant of them all killed himself.

It was real tempting for me at first to go that way, use this mind, be clever, figure things out. But I thought there was something wrong there, because something was separating them from the way this ideal world was and from getting along and functioning in this world. For a long time I thought you had to forget about that, it was too crazy, you had to fight it, make it different and then maybe you could figure it out. Then I met Dae Soen Sa Nim. It was really interesting because the experience tapped the same kind of thing. He talked about all kinds of things and had all kinds of things to say about any subject, any time, anywhere. You get an idea of this incredible wisdom, this brilliant mind, so you want the same thing. For me, I got interested again, and here was this person that could teach me. However, the more you listen to him the less he says. It's extraordinary; he says all this stuff and then you go away and he didn't say very much at all—except "pay attention, don't make anything."

One Zen master only used to say, "Don't make anything exist that doesn't exist." That's all, very interesting! Just

don't make anything that doesn't exist. This mind is capable of extraordinary possibilities. Then we don't know what exists any more, what's this mind, what's there, what's somebody else's mind, what's them—we don't know.

Question: When you talk about our being able to choose the Bodhisattva path, it strikes a chord in me. I wonder if that is

true for me? Is something compelling me to stop playing and to get serious?

Rhodes: You don't have too much choice in the matter actually. Sorry. There is this wonderful idea that floats around that I think describes it in the best way. And that is, "Ignorance is bliss." Doesn't it seem that things work that way? But, if you lose some of that ignorance—then you can't go back. You can't say wait a

second, I made a mistake here, I think I'll go back to not paying attention.

Question: I keep thinking I'll get to middle age and I'll sink into something. I just assume eventually I'll get over this Bodhisattva trip and I'll go get my job and my martinis and my house and my money and my car.

Rhodes: Sorry, too late!

Question: There's a strong pull in that direction.

Rhodes: Oh, sure the whole world is doing that and they're saying, "Come on have a good time!"

Question: You're not saying that's not going to happen to me, right?

Rhodes: Well, somehow I doubt that will happen to you, I don't think it's possible anymore. I think it was Trungpa Rinpoche who said "If people ask me if they should practice or not, I tell them not to, because once you start it's all over!" So, you're better off with "Ignorance is Bliss", and if you ask me, don't start. If you have started—forget it. If you wake up, what can you do? I know for myself no matter how hard practicing or facing my fears might be, there is no other game in town.

One of the things that happens to us as we get more awake or pay more attention is that we become more capable of holding two views at the same time. We become capable of having things not become contradictions.

Nuclear weapons are bad, terrible, horrendous, horrible—Yes, but they could also be seen as a wonderful thing. They make people say, wait a second, what's going on here? Maybe they're the best thing that ever happened to us? If we did not have them maybe we'd be out there with martinis, seeking the good life. You don't have to decide. You don't have to say bad or good or like or dislike, it's both or it's neither and that can be OK.

I grew up in what may be described as the age of reason, science and logic and you had to have the answers to everything—there had to be yes, no, good, bad, like, not like. That was the way it was supposed to be for you and if it wasn't then something was wrong. Then you tried to find out what was wrong so you could make it the way it was supposed to be. Most people choose one perspective and then try to defend it or hold on to it. But your life does not have to be this way. Practicing "Don't Know" is a wonderful way to learn how to accept life just as it is. Those human beings that have been able to actualize their human beingness are the people that could live with contradictions.

You can see clearly how suffering is caused by our desire, anger and ignorance, and how people don't want to see it, don't want to do anything about it—

continued on next page

Honoring the Teacher, Honoring Each Other

by Ken Kessel

This article grew out of a discussion at the Kwan Um Zen School Council meeting this past December. There were questions about the implications of being more formal in the relationship between student and teacher. We have a Teachers' Group consisting of Dae Soen Sa Nim and the Master Dharma Teachers, which meets regularly to discuss, clarify and decide matters of formal teaching. There is an ongoing dialogue between the Teachers' Group and the Council. While the Teachers' Group has ultimate responsibility for decisions about teaching, they inform and get feedback from the Council in matters that affect that teaching. The Teachers' Group has initiated some changes in the formalities of the relationships between student and teacher, and the Council has concurred in the value of these changes. This article will describe two major changes, then will explore corresponding questions and implications.

Part of the power of our practice is that it is what we choose to make it. Entering the Dharma Room and bowing to Buddha could be the act of praying to a statue. It also could be a reaffirmation of a commitment to practicing by engaging in the clear and simple act of "just bowing". Similarly, according a degree of formal respect to the teacher might be a confirmation of the hierarchical and possibly patriarchal nature of the relationship. I could also choose to make it an opportunity to reaffirm and reengage in my practice, to renew my vow. Being aware of my weaknesses, my desire, anger, and ignorance, I find value in the forms of bowing, chanting, and sitting. Entering into these forms, I become balanced and more able to give myself to the forms of this world.

My teacher's role is to remind me to practice and to guide me and in so doing, to remind me of the Dharma. For this, I am grateful. Thus, when I see my teacher, I bow to the Dharma, to our own Buddha-nature, and renew my practice. My teacher sees me, is reminded of a teacher's responsibility, and

"The intention was that by requiring greater formality, there would be greater respect and thus greater seriousness about practice."

We will be addressing the Master Dharma Teachers by their Korean title, *Ji Do Poep Sa Nim*. "Ji" means "to point," "Do" means "way" or "path" as in the Chinese word "Tao". In common Korean usage, "Ji Do" means a map or guide; it literally means "Pointing the Way." "Poep" means "Dharma"; "Sa" is "Teacher" or "Master," and "Nim" is an honorific article, appended to a title to show respect. This title, then, refers to *one who is a guide to or provides a map of the Dharma*. The implication is that one teaches by example, and, by the conduct of one's life, points the way of the Dharma. A rough equivalent would be "Dharma Master."

For formal introductions, as for talks, brochures and ceremonies, we will refer to the teacher by their name plus "Ji Do Poep Sa Nim," e.g., "Jacob Perl, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim." (We thought it would be easier to use the English name prior to the title.) Following the spoken or written introduction it is fine to refer to the teacher simply by their name plus "Poep Sa Nim," or just by "Poep Sa Nim." When addressing a teacher directly, as when asking a question during a Dharma Talk, it is also permissible to simply address him or her as "Poep Sa Nim."

Second, we will be according the Poep Sa Nims appropriate respect in the Dharma Room. Thus, during retreats, we will bow to the teacher one time (before morning bows). After bows and after practice, the teacher will leave the room first, while we stand with hands folded. As always, both before and after interviews, the teacher sits with hands in hapchang, while the student does a full prostration.

One of the attractions of our school has been its relative informality. Council members and Teachers were both concerned about whether these changes would adversely affect the student-teacher relationship or people's practice. The intention was that by requiring greater formality, there would be greater respect and thus greater seriousness about practice.

We were also concerned about the possibility that increased formality would alienate teacher and student. Here are some personal reflections emanating from my experience of practice.

also bows to the Dharma. Why have a teacher? Why have a Buddha statue? They remind me of my True Self. Bowing to my teacher or to a statue is, then, a selfish act. I do it for me, for the Dharma, not for the teacher or the statue. And if I just bow, then Buddha, Dharma, teacher, me, and the statue are gone. There is just bowing, and my practice at that moment is full and renews itself. I bow and I find my Self. This is a model for giving myself fully to any relationship. Thus, I give respect to my teacher for myself, and at the same time for all beings.

To receive such respect is both a practice and a responsibility. Respectfully receiving such acts is a public reminder of one's responsibilities; it is both an encouragement and a goad to practice. The relationship of teacher and student is reciprocal, not hierarchical. Each receives, each gives; and this mutual recognition creates Sangha. In these acts, we both recognize and recommit ourselves to our own Buddha-nature, to the Dharma, and to the Sangha. Any formality is subject to misinterpretation and abuse. Mutual and clear understanding of the purpose of what we do will allow us to use the forms of our practice wisely.

Ken Kessel is a Senior Dharma Teacher and Abbot of New Haven Zen Center.

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just keep suffering and fighting with each other. It has been this way for centuries. The little bit of history I've read is pretty strong evidence that it hasn't changed too much and that we may be doing it all over again. Maybe it's a difficult time right now, but it may be a great time to help us put aside this trivial stuff that we're involved with and get into another arena that is a little more valuable. I always understood that people got old and died and got killed in car accidents, but it wasn't until it happened to me, and somebody sitting right there died while I was holding them, that I really got it. You hear of such things but if you experience them you get a little dose of reality, and it's not just an idea anymore.

Question: But realistically isn't it all futile?

Rhodes: Realistically, if you want to be really realistic, what else can you do? I remember one time in my life I never would have imagined bringing a child into the world. It seemed like things were so crazy, I wouldn't have wished that on anyone. Since then, I have a different way of looking at things. Yes, my daughter is going to have a lot of suffering and joy. A lot of suffering because things are pretty crazy but whatever you do for this child someone has done that for you. You know that your parents took care of you. But it is not until you really do it that you understand that someone taught us how to go to the bathroom and where to go.

This world would be a terrible place if we all decided not to bring children into it because it's not so nice, to spare them from it. It's also not an attitude that will contribute to the long term health of the planet. The best thing we can do is to try and do the best job so they will be better prepared than we were. You have to have both of those things at the same time: there is suffering and joy and beauty; it's all together. It's not just one or the other.

Before I heard about Zen, I had a wonderful experience, kind of like someone answered a koan for me. I was a graduate student at M.I.T. and there was a professor there whose name was Houston Smith; he had written some books on religions. He showed a movie which depicted an interview he had with Krishnamurti. He was a professor and an intellectual and he sat there and asked questions and Krishnamurti gave him answers. What intellectuals do when they don't understand is agree with the other person and repeat what they've said, using synonyms so it sounds like they know what they're saying. Krishnamurti would say something precise and exact and Houston would say "Yes, what you're saying is..." and Krishnamurti would say "No, that's not what I'm saying..." This went on constantly during the interview and it made Professor Smith look foolish. Krishnamurti said, "What is love?" and Houston Smith said love is when two souls intertwine and merge...etc. Krishnamurti said, "No! No! Love is desire and hate and anger and joy and sex." When Houston Smith had said his beautiful thing I went for it, I loved it. Then Krishnamurti wiped it out with the truth.

Question: Dae Soen Sa Nim says, "You are already dead." I read this poem which ended with: "Dead from day one." Do you have any sense of this *Dead from day one*?

Rhodes: What is this *I* which we consider alive or dead? What am I? We have a whole bunch of ideas about it, it's our image of us—not great looking, but not too bad, pretty smart and sort of clever. We have this whole thing that we call by this name that we go by. And we think: I'm sort of a victim, or sort of helpless, or I'm sort of not talented, or I'm sort of stupid, or whatever. We have an image and a picture. Sometimes it gets frayed and we fix it up, try to acquire new skills for it. This is something we're trying to keep alive and what Dae Soen Sa Nim means is: *This is dead*. Yes, we do this, but that is not us and we need to get rid of it. It's real and exists, but in another way it doesn't. It's like the Bogeyman! Dead from day one.

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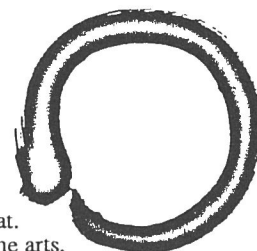
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