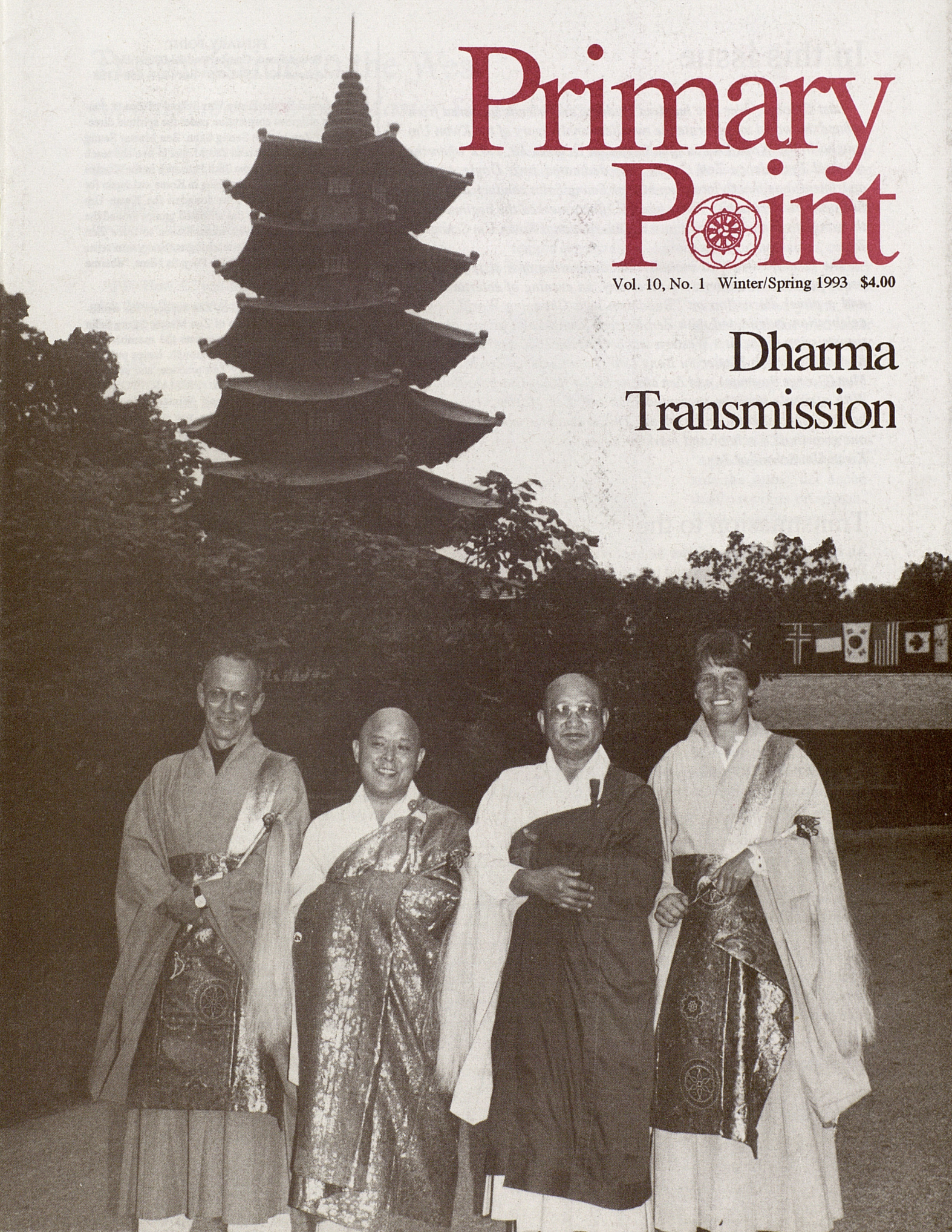


# Primary Point

Vol. 10, No. 1 Winter/Spring 1993 \$4.00

## Dharma Transmission





# In this issue

Last October, over five hundred students and friends gathered from around the world to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Kwan Um sangha in the West. This sangha began on October 10, 1972 when the original Providence Zen Center was dedicated in a Doyle Avenue apartment; one month later Zen Master Seung Sahn conducted the first five precepts ceremony. Those humble efforts marked the beginnings of the sangha which has grown into the international Kwan Um School of Zen.

The October weekend included the dedication of a sixty-four foot peace pagoda, an anniversary ceremony, an evening of entertainment, and a panel discussion on "Buddhism in a Changing World." The celebration culminated with Zen Master Seung Sahn giving dharma transmission to the first Western teachers in the 1600-year tradition of Korean Zen: Zen Master Su Bong (Mu Deung Sunim), Zen Master Bo Mun (George Bowman), and Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Barbara Rhodes). With a simple bow, he presented each new Zen Master with wooden bowls, a special kasa, and a whisk. This dramatic event acknowledged our growth as a school and marked the unfolding of a new era in the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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## PRIMARY POINT

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of Zen Master Seung Sahn and the senior teachers, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. PRIMARY POINT is published three times a year: Winter/Spring, Summer, and Fall. To subscribe, see page 23. If you would like to become a member of the Kwan Um School of Zen, see page 30. Members receive PRIMARY POINT free of charge. The average circulation is 4000 copies.

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# Transmission to the West

## *An interview with Zen Master Seung Sahn*

**PP:** Why did you choose the twentieth anniversary of the Kwan Um School of Zen to give transmission?

**ZMSS:** After twenty years, there are now three disciples whose practicing is ripe and whose teaching is correct, so now it is time for transmission.

**PP:** How did you decide to pick these three people as new Zen Masters?

**ZMSS:** We have a process. First, someone finishes all the kong-ans and is tested in a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim certification ceremony. At the ceremony, anybody can ask any kind of question, and if the candidate answers with no hindrance then he or she can become a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim.

After three years, each Ji Do Poep Sa Nim is tested again by doing dharma combat with Zen Masters both outside and inside our school. Three years after they successfully complete this dharma combat, I check their teaching again. At that time, if their teaching is clear, their mind is clear, and their actions are clear, then transmission is no problem. Meditation and wisdom have come together; their practice is now ripe.

**PP:** When you were twenty-two years old, Zen Master Ko Bong Sunim gave you transmission. Nobody knew who you were. That style and our present process seem different.

**ZMSS:** Yes. Ko Bong Sunim was a freedom-style Zen Master. He did not stay at a big temple and have many students like other Korean teachers. He didn't even want to teach Korean monks; he thought they had too much pride and didn't practice correctly, so he only taught nuns and lay people. He wasn't so concerned with

building an organization or a teaching lineage. Ko Bong Sunim would come and go. He was a freedom-style Zen Master, so he gave a freedom-style transmission.

I do not teach freedom style. In the United States, from the beginning, I have taught correct organization: correct temple organization, correct work organization, correct school organization. Now we have correct teacher

organization: Ji Do Poep Sa Nim for three years; then dharma combat with other Zen Masters; then again after three years I will check their teaching; then transmission. That's our style.

**PP:** In Zen we refer to "a special transmission, outside the sutras, not dependent on words or speech." What does this mean?

**ZMSS:** Three times Buddha's mind and Mahakasyapa's mind met and became one. Thus, Mahakasyapa became the First Patriarch. The three occasions of transmission were:

First: "Sharing the cushion with Mahakasyapa in front of the Pagoda of Many Children." Many disciples had gathered for the Buddha's daily dharma speech. The great monks

were in the front; the newer monks were seated in the rear. No one spoke as they anticipated the talk. At that time, Mahakasyapa was still a relative novice, even though he was an old man. He was out begging and arrived late to the assembly. As he walked in, his eyes and Buddha's eyes met—their minds connected. Mahakasyapa proceeded toward the front of the crowd, to the consternation of the senior monks. As he approached, the Buddha moved over on his cushion to make room for Mahakasyapa. This was the first transmission.

Second: "Holding up a flower on Vulture's Peak." Again, Buddha had appeared for a dharma speech in front



*Zen Master Seung Sahn*



of a huge gathering. For several minutes he was silent. Finally, he picked up a flower. Everyone was confused except Mahakasyapa, who smiled. Then Buddha said, "My true dharma I transmit to you." This was the second transmission.

Third: "At Niranjana River, when Buddha's feet burst out of the casket." After Buddha died, his disciples gathered around his gold casket. They were very sad. Also, they were very confused—he had said "no life, no death," so how could he die? Maybe his teaching was not correct. So there was a lot of thinking. Mahakasyapa arrived late and saw this; then, he slowly began walking around the casket, with his hands at hapchang. He walked around three times; when he came to the front of the casket he bowed three times. No one knew what he was doing—why wasn't he crying over the Buddha's death? Suddenly, the Buddha's feet shot through the end of the casket. Everybody was happy—only the Buddha's body had died, not his true self. This is the story of the third transmission.

In all three cases, there were no words, just mind to mind connection.

PP: Buddha's mind to his mind; what does that mean?

ZMSS: It's kind of like an auction. You make a

---

*This tradition of mind-to-mind transmission has continued from the Buddha to our present day.*

---

gesture and the auctioneer's mind and your mind connect—there is a recognition. Words are not necessary. *From mind to mind.*

PP: When you give transmission, is this also mind to mind?

ZMSS: Yes. This tradition of mind to mind transmission has continued from the Buddha to Mahakasyapa, from Mahakasyapa to Ananda, and through our lineage to the present day.

PP: You are the seventy-eighth patriarch in your line. You gave transmission to three people; which one is the seventy-ninth patriarch?

ZMSS: They are all seventy-ninth patriarchs going back to the Buddha, and "second patriarchs" in the American extension of the lineage that began when I

came to the West.

PP: Usually we think of transmission as one person. So what does this mean, three?

ZMSS: Before the sixth patriarch there was only one line of transmission; no patriarch had given transmission to more than one student. The Buddha's robe and bowl were passed on as a symbol of the singular, direct lineage. After the sixth patriarch, five lines appeared. Later on, teachers would spawn as many as one hundred lines. My grandteacher, Man Gong Sunim, gave transmission to more than a dozen students.

PP: How do we know which of the three transmissions represents the Kwan Um School of Zen line?

ZMSS: They are all considered Kwan Um School of Zen lines because they all descend from Kwan Um School of Zen. But the first monk to receive transmission fosters the "main line," responsible for preserving our specific tradition and practice forms. Zen Master Su Bong (Mu Deung Sunim) thus continues our main line, which is a tradition of monk to monk transmission. The Kwan Um School of Zen centers and organization follow this main line.

Zen Master Bo Mun (George Bowman) and Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Barbara Rhodes), if they wish, can begin their own schools with their own traditions, their own centers. They can also teach at the Kwan Um School of Zen centers, where they would follow the practice forms of the main line. And all the teachers who receive transmission will participate in the overall governing of Kwan Um School of Zen.

PP: When people have asked you over the years about American-style practice, you have said "when an American Zen Master appears, we will have American style." Today, three American Zen Masters are appearing.

SS: As more Zen Masters appear, their individual styles will emerge. Perhaps some of them will make their own schools. So maybe, slowly, this Korean style will disappear and be replaced by an American style or American styles. But the main line does not change.

PP: Now you are giving transmission, so you will have no job. What will you do, sir?

SS: Yes, hungry time only eat, tired time only sleep, that's all.

PP: Thank you very much. □



# Zen Master Su Bong

## (Mu Deung Sunim)

Transmission name Su Bong  
(High Mystic Peak)  
Dharma name Mu Deung  
Original name See Hoy Liau

*In the clear clear, stillness stillness  
True face stands revealed.  
All dharmas originally empty.  
Pine tree is green, rock peak is white.*  
Zen Master Seung Sahn



Zen Master Su Bong has been a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn since 1974. He was given inka, the authority to lead retreats and teach kong-an practice, in 1981. In 1983, he was ordained a monk. A native of Hawaii, Zen Master Su Bong is an accomplished industrial designer, sculptor, artist, and carpenter. In the United States, he was the abbot of a temple in Los Angeles for several years, and helped construct Zen centers in Providence and Cambridge. He has led many 90-day winter Kyol Che retreats in the United States and Korea, living and studying in Korea for the past several years. His recent activities include extensive teaching trips to South Africa; he is also the guiding teacher for the new Hong Kong sangha.



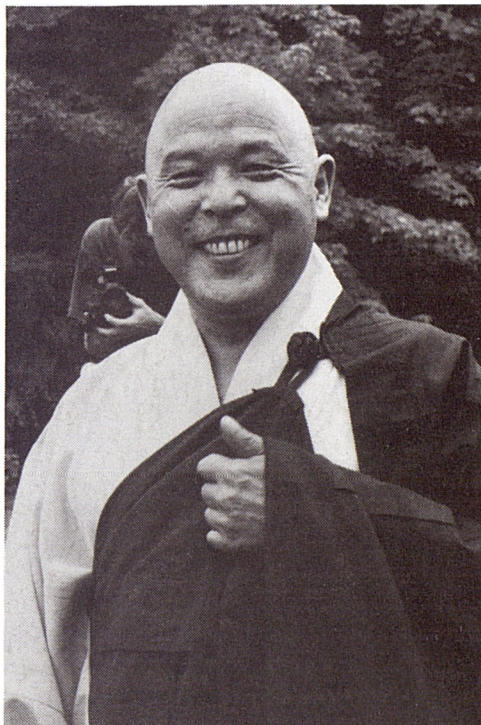
### Dharma talk

*(HITS the platform with his Zen stick.)*  
Originally Buddha and eminent teachers never gave transmission  
*(HIT)*  
One sound takes away attainment and no attainment  
*(HIT)*

Sky and ground complete stillness  
Zen Master Seung Sahn already transmission: all transmissions to birds and trees  
Nothing left for you and me  
Then what is this?  
Me facing you, you facing me  
You ask the sky, you ask the tree  
Rocks head talking to rocks head wake up wake up  
Why?  
KATZ!  
Nice to see your face, how are you?



### Interview by Mu Ryang Sunim



Zen Master Su Bong

**MRSN:** Zen Master Seung Sahn is a very great Zen Master. Do you feel any awe in stepping into his shoes?

**ZMSB:** Dae Soen Sa Nim is a very great Zen Master. Many people in Korea wear white rubber shoes. So no problem. What kind of shoes do you wear? More questions? *(laughter)*

**MRSN:** Many people nowadays talk about American Zen. What does this mean to you?

**ZMSB:** In America we say good morning, in Hong Kong they say ni hau ma, in Korea annyang hashimika. That is Zen, that's just moment to moment, what are you doing now? What is your correct situation just at that moment? So if you say American Zen, that means what is your correct situation? If you say Korean Zen, that means what is your correct situation? What is your correct function in that place where you are? But when you say American Zen means this kind of practicing, or American Zen means we do ten hours of sitting, or Korean Zen means we can talk at retreats, that's not correct. American Zen, Korean Zen, European Zen—that is all opposite worlds. That is “making something.”

**MRSN:** In the future how do you think the Western students in the Kwan Um School of Zen will connect with Korean Buddhism?



ZMSB: Over the past ten years Dae Soen Sa Nim has been slowly introducing us to Korea. Many of the monks have spent time in Korea, and now we have the very successful International Kyol Ches at Shin Won Sah. We've had two Whole World is a Single Flower conferences in Korea, and a third one is planned for 1993.

Now, when Zen Masters like Won Dam Sunim visit America, they talk about Koreans and Westerners together as "our family." Other Korean people hear this speech, and this family feeling grows. So Dae Soen Sa Nim has fertilized these seeds and now the bond is taking root. I think it will continue to grow stronger even after he passes.

MRSN: Where and when did you meet Zen Master Seung Sahn?

ZMSB: In 1974 I attended a small lecture about Buddhism, where I met a Korean monk. He asked me, "Why did you come here?" I said, "I want to understand Zen." He told me it was not a Zen discussion group, and asked if I wanted to meet a great Zen Master. I said "O.K." So two days later, he introduced me to Dae Soen Sa Nim, who shouted at me, "WHO ARE YOU?" BOOM! My mind stopped and I couldn't articulate an answer. But inside an answer was there, "You are my teacher."

MRSN: Did you have any idea at that time that you would become the next Zen Master?

ZMSB: (laughter) No idea. No Zen Master.

MRSN: Thank you. □

# Zen Master Bo Mun

## (George Bowman)

Transmission name Bo Mun  
(Wide Gate)  
Dharma name Song Hae  
Original name George Bowman

*Everything follows the law of appearing  
and disappearing.  
All dharmas originally stillness.  
In no form, no name  
Bright moon appears over mountain.*

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*



Zen Master Bo Mun studied anthropology and biology at Brown University, and attended Duke University on a Ph.D. program in anthropology of religion in 1969, until he left to study Zen full-time. He has studied extensively with other Zen Masters living in America, received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1977, and led the first three Winter Kyol Che retreats at Providence Zen Center. A longtime runner, he has done extensive racing, including a number of marathons. Zen Master Bo Mun is a skilled carpenter and worked on major Providence Zen Center building projects. He was ordained a bodhisattva priest in 1982. Zen Master Bo Mun is guiding teacher of the Nashville Zen Group. He is also guiding teacher of the independent Cambridge Buddhist Association. He has a private practice in contemplative psychotherapy and lives in Cambridge with his wife, Trudy Goodman.



### Dharma talk

One fall day, a day very much like this several hundred years ago, a monk asked Zen Master Un Mun, "How is it, old Master, when the tree withers, and leaves fall?" And Un Mun said to the monk, "Body exposed to golden wind!" So I ask all of you, where is your golden wind? (*Hits the platform with his Zen stick.*) Outside a fall breeze scatters golden and crimson leaves.

I will tell one short golden wind story. It involves Zen Master Seung Sahn and it takes place twenty years ago, when I first met my teacher. It has a lot to do with our practicing and bringing this wonderful clear presence to this moment, and meeting life as it is—this really is what our practice is about. In a sense it is no practice at all. We were sitting Zen and Zen Master Seung Sahn had just come. In those days he was very poor; he was fixing washing machines. We lived in a very poor section of town, and the street noises were very loud when we practiced. Every night at exactly seven o'clock when our evening practice began, a rock and roll band would start playing upstairs. Plaster would fall from the ceiling. I remember asking myself, "What in the world am I doing here?" Zen Master Seung Sahn looked at me and smiled with those bright and vivid eyes—only this.





## Interview by Mu Ryang Sunim

**MRSN:** Zen Master Seung Sahn has a unique teaching style, but he allows his students great freedom to find their own way. How has this been for you?

**ZMBM:** I met Dae Soen Sa Nim when he first came to Providence in 1972. It started out very informally; we used to sit around the breakfast table and he would tell Zen stories. Then came robes, bowls, and a more formal practice discipline evolved.

In those early days Dae Soen Sa Nim would say, "I want you to follow my say and just do it, just put away your opinions." He said that if you do that and practice hard, then later on any teaching style would be okay. If you want to teach in a Burger King, great. If you want to teach in a Zen temple, okay. But in the early days and for many years thereafter, we really followed his way. And although there is a certain amount of freedom that he's given us now, a great deal of training and discipline preceded it.

**MRSN:** Can you elaborate on how you've been able to adjust your teaching style to suit the needs of individual students?

**ZMBM:** Students come from different backgrounds and have different capacities. Some students want to do formal kong-an practice. If that's a dharma door or a way that opens them to practice, I'll use that. There are other people who can't relate to traditional kong-ans and really need to use mindfulness as the gate. Some people want a very formal relationship with a teacher, while others are looking more for a dharma friend. I'm comfortable in either role; it really depends on the needs of the person.

**MRSN:** What do you see as the future for lay Buddhists in the West?

**ZMBM:** When I first began practicing in the late sixties, I studied with Suzuki Roshi. He would joke with us, saying that we weren't really monks and we weren't really lay people. And Dae Soen Sa Nim used to call us

"bat monks"—not quite mammals and not quite birds. Certainly, in the seventies and early eighties, many of us who practiced together lived like monks but remained laypeople.

I think it will take some time before a monk sangha develops here. There is an enormous need now for lay practice and as it becomes more established, it will be able to support monasteries and monks' practice as is done in Asia.

**MRSN:** Is there any story about Dae Soen Sa Nim that sticks out in your mind?

**ZMBM:** Actually, there are four vivid images I'm fond of that I'd like to share.

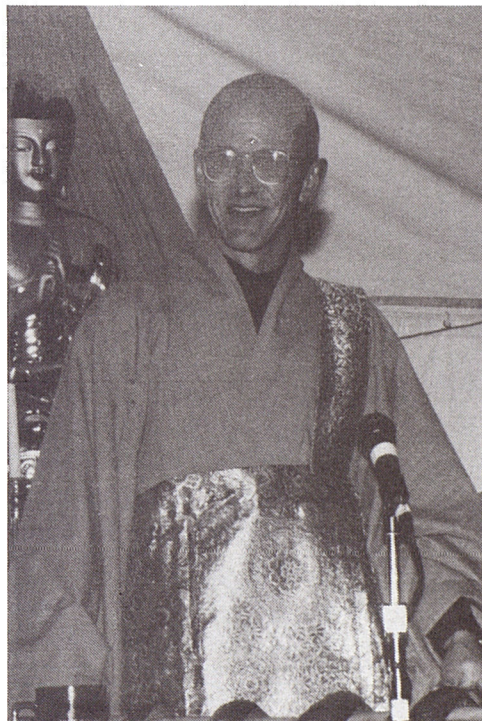
The first was in the early seventies. We were driving through the Pennsylvania countryside, looking for a site for a rural retreat center. Dae Soen Sa Nim, in his great Zen Master's voice, sat in the car singing Italian operas at the top of his lungs.

The second was when we were building the main dharma room at Providence Zen Center. I was one of the lead carpenters, and Dae Soen Sa Nim came out to help. I handed him a large electric drill which, I didn't realize, had a blunt bit. I showed him where to drill a hole. When I came back in five minutes there was smoke coming up from the wood and of course he hadn't made much progress—but there he was, still one-pointedly trying.

The third was one spring at the Diamond Hill Zen Monastery. The path was lit with sunlight filtered through the new leaves. He was walking up to the monastery with Maha Ghosananda, hand-in-hand.

Finally, an image from the first Providence Zen Center on Doyle Avenue. Dae Soen Sa Nim was sitting on the front steps about mealtime. He used to refer to his stomach as "Star Market"—his English was a little basic in those days. So he held his hand to his stomach and said, "Star Market empty . . . time to go shopping!"

Here is Dae Soen Sa Nim's enormous enthusiasm for life, his unending try mind, his gentleness in the midst of great strength, and his great bodhisattva humor. □



*Zen Master Bo Mun*



# Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Barbara Rhodes)

Transmission name Soeng Hyang  
(Nature Smell)  
Dharma name Poep Um  
Original name Barbara Rhodes

*Before Heaven and Earth separate  
True nature completely bright.  
Originally—nothing happening.  
Spring comes, many flowers blooming.*  
Zen Master Seung Sahn



Zen Master Seung Hyang (Barbara Rhodes) was one of Zen Master Seung Sahn's first American students and has been studying with him since 1972. She was given inka in 1977, and is guiding teacher of Bultasa Zen Group in Chicago and Cypress Tree Zen Center in Tallahassee, Florida. A registered nurse since 1969, she works for Hospice Care of Rhode Island. She helped found Providence Zen Center, and lived there for seventeen years, serving in a number of teaching and administrative capacities. She has two teenaged daughters, and lives in Providence.



## Dharma talk

I have been appreciating the smell of grass in the tent all weekend, so Soeng Hyang (*Nature Smell*) is a good name for me. When the Buddha gave transmission to Mahakasyapa he said, "I have the utmost profound exquisite teaching, a special transmission outside the dharma that I give to you, Mahakasyapa." I thought that that was wonderful until I started studying with Zen Master Seung Sahn. One day he said "You know, Buddha made a big mistake when he gave that kind of transmission." So I ask you, if you are the Buddha and you are holding up a flower, a stick, or anything, and your wonderful student who has been practicing for many many years looks at you and smiles, how would you give that student trans-

mission?

KATZ!

Only don't know. I can't give you the answer.

I also have a short story. When we first moved to Cumberland, many people were worried because they were afraid we were some kind of bad cult. They were afraid of us. The local newspaper interviewed a neighbor down the street and asked what the people were like who moved in. The neighbor said, "I think they are OK. I only know one man, and he stopped to help me fix a flat tire." Then the neighbor observed, "They must leave their religion at home." So I hope that you all find your home—your true self—and leave your religion there. Thank you.



## Interview by Mu Ryang Sunim

MRSN: Is there is any specific story about Zen Master Seung Sahn that you would like to share?

ZMSH: I was driving Dae Soen Sa Nim back from a dharma talk in Boston, and it was very late; we were very tired. It was summer time and the bugs were out. I was going about 65, and suddenly a big bug hit the windshield. It was still moving, but I figured it must be dead and kept driving. How could a bug survive a collision with a car going that fast? But it kept making these sporadic movements.

Suddenly Dae Soen Sa Nim said "pull over." I had to pull over three lanes into the breakdown lane. He got out of the car, picked up the bug, examined it and finally said "Yes, it's dead." There was so much caring. We were tired and wanted to get home, but he just wasn't sure it was dead. So much caring—that really got to me.

MRSN: For a long time you were the only woman teacher in our school. How do you see the role of women teachers in the West?

ZMSH: Occasionally people ask me to do retreats exclusively for women, but I've never been particularly interested. After a day or two of sitting it's not men or women, just dharma friends. I don't feel any sexual energy or sexual discrimination in that setting. It's nice that there are more women teachers and it encourages women to know that they are given the same status as men, but ultimately we all have to not attach to that and



be ourselves. Some people are more masculine and some people are more feminine but ultimately you just have to be who you are and believe in yourself. Believing in yourself means you understand your vow to help others.

**MRSN:** I could see the value of a same-sex retreat if you're discussing a lot, but for practices like sitting and chanting it doesn't seem so important.

**ZMSH:** I agree. If you're working on certain issues it could be really useful, but when you're just sitting and chanting, everything becomes one.

**MRSN:** How do you see the relationship of nuns, monks and lay people in western Buddhism?

**ZMSH:** It's nice to be talking to you now; I don't see you that often.

**MRSN:** It's nice to be talking to you, too.

**ZMSH:** Yesterday we were chanting "Kwan Seum Bosal" in the dharma room. It was very crowded, so I stood with some other people on the porch, which is separated from the dharma room by a glass wall. I noticed how those of us in the porch would end our chants just a little earlier and couldn't quite stay in tune. We had to listen really hard. Just one thin wall of glass caused this disharmony. I saw this as a metaphor for how we separate male and female, monastic and lay person. We just have to listen a little more closely. I think the more we practice together and talk to each other and respect each other's points of view, the more we are one family.

**MRSN:** How did you first meet Dae Soen Sa Nim?

**ZMSH:** I had read a little about Zen and was thinking about doing a retreat with Kapleau Roshi. I was living in California and thinking about moving to the east coast to

be closer to my family. I literally just stumbled across Providence Zen Center while looking for a place to stay.

A friend of mine had noticed an apartment for rent in the same building as the Zen center. I checked it out, but it was too expensive. I thought of knocking on the Zen center door, but hesitated. After all, the books said if you meet a Zen Master he will hit you or make you wait outside! So I was afraid to go in, but finally got up the nerve. Dae Soen Sa Nim was warm and friendly, and said "We have a talk next week, please come." So I came and liked the teaching; soon after, I moved into the Zen center.



*Zen Master Soeng Hyang*

**MRSN:** Was there a turning point at that time, something he said or did?

**ZMSH:** No, I just liked his warmth and eye contact, and the way he was just so unpretentious.

**MRSN:** Why did Dae Soen Sa Nim choose to give transmission to three people at this time?

**ZMSH:** I don't know why he does the things he does. He's really driven and really wonderful. A real missionary—he wants to get things done as fast as possible.

**MRSN:** He's not going to wait around for people to feel that they're ready.

**ZMSH:** Oh, no!

**MRSN:** It's already too late if you feel you're ready to do something.

**ZMSH:** I told a friend how I was nervous about this transmission because I know my own shortcomings, and she said "Well, that's good because that will help your teaching."

**MRSN:** Thank you.

**ZMSH:** You're welcome. □



# How will you carry the sangha?

## *Dharma combat with the new Zen Masters*

**Do Mun Sunim, JDPSN:** Richard Shrobe, JDPSN gave the opening dharma talk (*opposite page*) and talked about three kinds of transmission, and today we have three transmissions. So I would like to ask you: are you the tail, the family shame, or the blind donkey?

**Zen Master Su Bong (Mu Deung Sunim):** You have a head, body, and feet. What is it doing now?

**DMSN:** Standing in front of you.

**ZMSB:** Isn't that enough?

**DMSN:** No!

**ZMSB:** Arrow is already passed downtown.

**DMSN:** Thank you for your teaching.



**Ken Kessel:** Yesterday I had a small job. I carried the Buddha from Do An Sunim, JDPSN's room to the altar. That was a small job, but you have a big job. You are going to be a Zen Master. So I want to ask you, how are you going to carry the sangha?

**Zen Master Bo Mun (George Bowman):** You already understand, Ken.

**KK:** I don't know how.

**ZMBM:** Sitting here smiling at you.

**KK:** How will that carry the sangha?

**ZMBM:** Not enough?

**KK:** Hmmm... I don't know.

**ZMBM:** Go drink tea.

**KK:** Ohhhh, thank you.



**Questioner:** My sword sometimes kills beings and sometimes saves beings. The sutra says in the whole world there was one nirvana palace. So, where can you see the nirvana palace?

**Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Barbara Rhodes):** You already understand.

**Questioner:** No, that

is not the correct answer.

**ZMSH:** Over in the tent is a lot of cake and ice cream.

**Questioner:** You have two holes in your nose and you are breathing through the back.

**ZMSH:** Thank you very much.



**Grazyna Perl:** I have a question for all three of you at the same time. An eminent teacher said, "The whole world is a single flower," and yet the world is so mixed up. Now we have the three of you. Three Zen Masters, please demonstrate to us how the three of you can make the whole world a single flower.

**ZMSB:** Don't mix up the world.

**GP:** The world is already mixed up.

**ZMSB:** Already mixed up in your mouth.

**GP:** I don't think so.

**ZMSB:** Arrow already passed downtown.

**GP:** But that is what Mu Deung Sunim does. What can the three of you do for us?

*The three candidates embrace and hold hands.*

**GP:** Thank you very much, that was very nice. □



*Ji Hak Sunim and Edward Kwan Rim*



# Revealing the family shame

## *The tradition of Zen transmission*

Opening talk at the transmission ceremony by Richard Shrobe, JDPSN

In the Zen records there are a number of cases that give us an example of dharma transmission. The first is the root transmission coming from Shakyamuni Buddha to Mahakasyapa. One day on Vulture's Peak, Buddha was going to give a dharma speech and the whole assembly was there. He mounted the rostrum and sat silently for several minutes. Everyone waited, expectantly. What will the Buddha talk about today? Finally, he held up a flower. No one understood except Mahakasyapa, who smiled. And Buddha said, "I have the all pervading true dharma, incomparable nirvana, exquisite teaching of formless form. This I give to Mahakasyapa."

Zen Master Mu Mun writes a poem about the case and comments: "Holding up the flower, tail already appears." "A tail already appears" is like an animal with something trailing behind. Like a turtle who crawls up on the beach, digs a hole, plants its eggs—and as it walks back to the sea, inadvertently leaves traces of where it has been.

The second example of transmission is from Mahakasyapa to Ananda. Ananda was Buddha's cousin and had spent many years studying under him, but never got enlightenment and thus never got transmission from him. After Buddha's death, he studied with Mahakasyapa. One day he asked Mahakasyapa, "Besides the brocade robe the Buddha gave to you, what else did he give?" Mahakasyapa immediately called out, "Ananda!" And Ananda, without thinking, said "Yes, sir!" Then Mahakasyapa said, "Cut down the flag pole in front of the gate." At that time in India, when a dharma talk was given they would raise up a pennant, and at the end of the speech take it down. So "cut down the flag pole" means it is already complete now.

Again, Zen Master Mu Mun has a comment: "Older brother calls, younger brother answers, the family shame appears." Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to reveal the family shame. "Family shame" is an example of a Chinese form of paradoxical humor, and refers to the Zen transmission lineage. So we have to appreciate Zen Master Seung Sahn's courage and wideness of vision, in again revealing the "family shame."

One more example of transmission: When Zen Master Lin Chi was about to die he called an assembly and said, "Soon I will enter into nirvana, please take care of my dharma. Do not let it die out." San Sheng, one of the senior monks, stepped forward and said, "Master, how could you ever imagine that we would let your dharma die

out?" Lin Chi responded, "If someone in the future should ask you about it, what will you say?" San Sheng immediately shouted "KATZ!" Then Lin Chi said, "Who would have dreamed that the future transmission of my dharma is dependent on this blind donkey?"

So we have three examples of dharma transmission: tail appears, family shame appears, and a blind donkey. That is the *what* of dharma transmission; now to the *why*.

One day when Lin Chi was still in Huang Po's monastery, the two of them were together planting pine trees. Huang Po said to Lin Chi, "What is the use of planting so many pine trees here, deep in the mountains?" Of course, deep in the forest, there are already many trees of all kinds growing naturally. So this is like saying, "If everything already has Buddha nature, or original enlightenment, why make something special like transmission and a teaching lineage?"

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*These three have been a  
guide, a record, a standard,  
and an inspiration.*

---

Lin Chi responded, "Firstly, it will improve the scenery of the temple; secondly, for future generations it will act as a guide, a record, and a standard." Having said that, he took his hoe and banged it into the ground three times—whack! whack! whack!—and said "Phew!" Huang Po saw this and said, "Our school will flourish greatly with you."

All of us who have visited mountain temples know the scenery is sometimes very inspiring, and so encourages us to practice and find that wide open mind. Scenery is not just nature scenery, but also the people we come in contact with who inspire us to practice and who act as a support and encouragement in our efforts. For those of us who have known Ji Do Poep Sa Nims Mu Deung Sunim, George Bowman and Barbara Rhodes for many years now, it is clear that they have served this function for us already.

Surely, we can say with Zen Master Lin Chi, that these three have been a guide, a record, a standard and an inspiration, and will continue to be so in the future. This is a very wonderful day. Thank you very much. □



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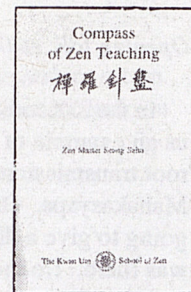


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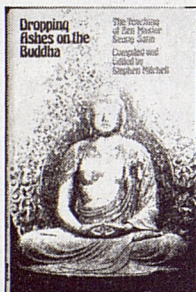
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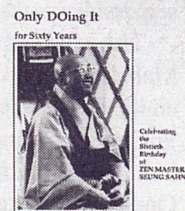


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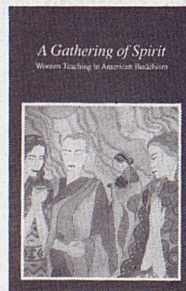


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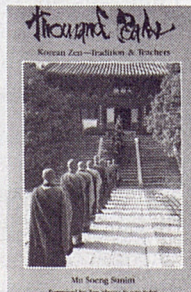


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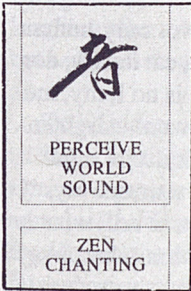
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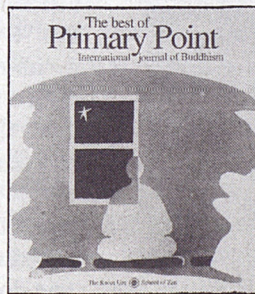
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# Leave your mind alone

*Excerpted from a dharma talk by Jacob Perl, JDPSN in September, 1991*

**Q:** I have a friend who has amnesia. Could you explain this in Buddhist terms?

**PPSN:** In Buddhist psychology, we speak of eight kinds of consciousness. The first five are sensory—sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. The sixth is mind consciousness, which controls our body, and the seventh is “discriminating consciousness,” which enables us to distinguish white from black or good from bad. The eighth consciousness is that which controls memory.

Sometimes these last three consciousness are split apart and don’t function together. The result might be amnesia, or perhaps a split personality. In extreme cases one personality doesn’t know what the other personality is doing. If you are practicing, however, you return to “before thinking.” Before thinking there is no first, second, third consciousness, etc. It is before any consciousness. If you keep this “before consciousness,” then amnesia and even a more serious kind of dysfunction can heal. The sixth, seventh and eighth consciousness can work together.

Practicing means you don’t use your consciousness; you let it rest. When your arm is damaged, you put it in a sling and let it heal. Otherwise you will damage it more and more. It’s the same way with your mind; if you leave it alone, it will heal. Leaving it alone means returning to before thinking. This is the purpose of Zen meditation.

**Q:** I have trouble deciding things. Is there some way practicing can help?

**PPSN:** I have a secret technique which I’ve been teaching for several years now. Take a coin (laughter) and throw it up in the air. By the time you catch it, you usually know what way you want it to come up. You don’t even have to look. Just do it.

From the vantage point of distance, most decisions are not so important. Either way will be O.K. Why you do what you do is most important—is it for me or for others? If your direction is clear, then your choice is also clear. But sometimes you cannot decide what is helpful, so flip

a coin. It’s OK.

**Q:** My desires seem to come in two varieties: low class, like “I want that cheesecake” or “I want that woman in a bikini,” and high class, like “I really want to see peace in this world” or “I want to see my family flourish.” Is this the difference you’re talking about?

**PPSN:** Not exactly. We talk about desire versus aspiration. Every morning at our Zen centers we recite “Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all.” That vow’s direction is for others. That is aspiration.

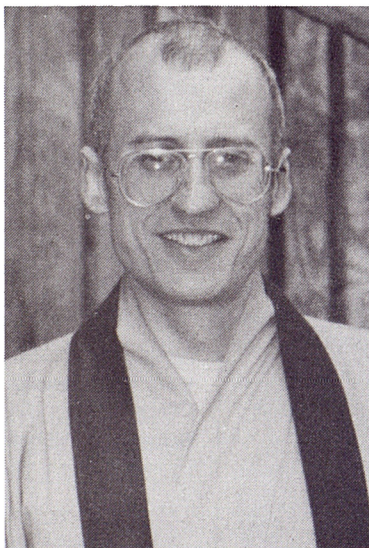
Desire means “for me.” You said, for example, “my family will flourish.” Why only “my family”? That is desire mind. But, “May all families flourish.” Not only human families. Tree family, cat family, dog family . . . Then there is no I, my, me. Or someone says “I want enlightenment.” That, again, is desire mind.

But suppose someone says “I don’t understand my true self, what is this ‘I’?” That question takes away desire mind. If you cultivate desire, desire will grow. If you cultivate Great Question, thinking calms down and desires disappear.

Thinking itself is not a problem, but if you let your desires and thinking control your actions, then you do have a problem. Let’s say a feeling or an idea appears, and you

know it’s not correct to act on it. If you’re practicing, you’ve learned to let what appears in your consciousness pass. If you’re not practicing, it’s harder to control your actions. Even though you know something’s not correct, you still do it. Or something should be done, but you don’t do it. Later you say, “Why did I do that?” But the next time is not any different. When I was a university student, I remember vowing after each exam that the next time my preparation would begin well ahead of time. I was never able to keep that vow, which means that my laziness thinking was quite strong. I wasn’t practicing hard enough, so this lazy mind controlled me.

**Q:** You said “don’t check yourself, don’t check others.” What does this mean?



*Jacob Perl, JDPSN*



PPSN: When you are practicing, uncomfortable thoughts and feelings often arise. We are accustomed to running away from these things. One way we try to escape when we're alone on the cushion is to check ourselves: "Oh, I am no good. I should not be thinking. I am a lousy Zen student." Thinking about thinking is like putting a head on top of your head. Another way of escaping is to look at and judge others. It is much more amusing than dealing with our own predicament.

Q: I saw a book named "If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him." What does this mean?

PPSN: Zen means becoming independent. That is the Buddha's teaching. Many people, however, become attached to teachers, attached to ideas, attached to words. It can be a kind of sickness. I heard a story about two friends walking down the street. One friend fell down, and the other one started to laugh. So the one who fell down said, "Look, that's not very nice. In the Bible it says that even if your enemy falls into adversity, you must not laugh, or rejoice. His friend responded, "Yes, of course I read that in the Bible, but it doesn't say anything about laughing when your friend falls down." That's a joke of course, but sadly we do attach to words, usually missing what they point at.

To be independent means that you find for yourself what the truth is. Don't just take someone's word for it, no matter how famous a person it is. If you attach to someone, you attach to someone's ideas, judgments, opinions. So if you meet the Buddha on the road you must kill him. Those are good words! However, even more importantly, when you meet your own I, my, me, kill them. Think of your life as a kind of a laboratory. You hear of a good formula. Don't accept it automatically. Test it in your life. If it really works, then use it, and teach it to others. If it doesn't, throw it out. Kill the Buddha, because you are the most important authority. That means that you must become Buddha. That means that your practicing is most important.

Q: Do you mean practicing, as you people do here in this room?

PPSN: Earlier this morning I asked you "What are you?" You were stuck, and unable to answer. That is our practice. Formal practice, which is what we do twice a day in this room, is only a technique, albeit a very important one. We can easily talk about keeping a don't know mind, but it is not always easy to actually do it. Even ten or fifteen minutes a day of formal practice can help us carry that practice into the rest of our life.

In your daily life, when you are doing something, do it one hundred percent. Then you are completely awake. If you are dreaming, wake up. Good dream or bad dream, dream of the past, the present, or the future, it does not matter. Become awake! Become an awakened one. Become Buddha. □

## Longmen Grottos

The Longmen Grottos, carved from fine hard stone between 495 and 750 A. D., were once perhaps the most beautiful Buddhist site in China. Over the centuries, however, they were first defaced during Buddhist persecutions, and then looted to sell to Western museums and collectors. Now the caves remain a tourist attraction, but more than ninety percent of the images are either broken or missing.

Raining so long  
a brash new waterfall bounces down  
past empty niches  
where sharply chiseled  
slender Bodhisattvas  
once meditated silently  
before the swift Yi River

Raining so long  
the tourists have left,  
and the huge Tang Buddha  
(too large to have been stolen)  
sits brooding  
over a wet courtyard  
empty but for one single stubborn old woman  
who still hopes to sell her bottles of orange soda

Raining so long  
the river roars past the caves  
where of all the thousand images  
once carved to bring peace  
to the souls of nuns, courtiers, merchants, soldiers  
and to their ancestors—  
now only the damaged,  
the smashed, the headless  
remain, slick and glistening

It may be raining  
in Europe and America  
where the perfect statues  
sit in cases and on pedestals,  
rest in changeless light and temperature,  
never getting wet—  
but here in Longmen  
the ugly and misshapen lurk in their caves,  
breathe with the wet and cold  
welcome crows and sparrows  
and listen to the river

Stephen Addiss



# Tales from Shin Won Sah

## Bowing with mountain gods

Neil Bartholomew

During the winter of 1990-91 I joined the sixth international Kyol Che, held at Shin Won Sah in central South Korea. This article is condensed from a collection of memories and stories from that time, written after I returned to the United States.

The retreat numbered twenty-one people, including Zen Master Su Bong (then Mu Deung Sunim, JDPSN), who was the retreat leader. There were eight monks and one nun; the rest were lay people. For the duration of the retreat, however, we all adopted a monastic appearance: shaved heads, traditional gray clothing.

The participants came from seven countries: eight U.S. citizens, three Polish, two German, two Korean, two Canadian, one Soviet, one Malaysian, and one Czech monk with a German passport who now lives in Taiwan. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to live with such a diverse group of people. There were many times when simple interactions in daily life brought to light the different perspectives with which we approached situations:

... There is a panel missing from the bottom of the door

to the men's changing room. While walking by, as a joke, I stick my head through the hole with an inquisitive look on my face.

Immediately, Oh Jin Sunim (our head monk, from Poland) exclaims, "Go away! We have no bread today! Get back in line!" We all laugh, but I will never forget what that taught me about his life . . .

This retreat reflects both the Korean tradition in which Zen Master Seung Sahn was trained and the adaptations he has made to it in the West. Our school's Kyol Che is considered quite revolutionary in Korean Buddhism. For instance, it is nearly unheard of in Korea to have men and women, or monks and lay people, practicing together. Some people in the established tradition welcome these innovations, and some are opposed to them. We were often reminded that many eyes were on us, that if we practiced hard and showed that the situation could work, we could have a profound effect on the future.

...It's 4:00 a.m. Hyon Gak Sunim is beginning to ring the great temple bell, as he does each morning at this time

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## Sticking your head in ice water

Patsy Talbot

From a talk given during the 1990-91 International Kyol Che at Shin Won Sah temple in Korea

I'll start in Australia.

Several years ago I left my home in Canada to do some world traveling. After a year and a half in Australia I decided to go to Thailand. I didn't know who Buddha was or what Buddhism meant, but I knew I was on my way to a very Buddhist country. I recall writing to my Canadian boyfriend, reassuring him that I wouldn't do something crazy like shave my head or go sit in the mountains.

Six months later I had to write him back from Korea and tell him I was sitting my first Kyol Che (*long retreat*), and that my head was shaved. (*Lay people are asked to shave their head before the retreat begins.*)

He was shocked and didn't understand.

I had come to Korea as a tourist, but soon after I arrived I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. When I met the Zen Master and monks here, I had a very big question: why do you

shave your head? Why not just live in society with the rest of the people? Why do you have to hide up here in the mountains? And I had such an anger mind as well: why all this bowing to a silly gold Buddha statue? And who is this eccentric Zen Master? The guy doesn't know what he's doing. I didn't know what a Zen Master was, but what I saw didn't seem very correct.

About a week or two later, after hearing Zen Master Seung Sahn's talks and being around the few monks that I had met, I moved into Hwa Gye Sah. Soon I heard about a three day Yong Maeng Jong Jin, which in Korea means an intensive retreat—all day, all night; no sleeping. Now I had never done meditation before, hardly knew what it was, and so I asked one of the monks whether I should try it or not. And he said "Oh, you should talk with the Zen Master."



and each evening at 5:00. Each of the thirty-two strikes of the bell resonates from the village below to the temples further up the mountain.

As the bell rings, the many dogs in the village answer, and they, the roosters, and the single cow keep up a discussion for up to half an hour. When the big bell finishes, I begin ringing the small bell in our hall, as I hear a monk doing the same in the main Buddha hall seventy-five yards away. This is the beginning of our morning chanting . . .

Shin Won Sah is in the shadow of Kyeryong San, traditionally one of Korea's most important mountains for spiritual practice. Almost every day, in the middle of mundane activities such as returning from the outhouse, I would look up, catch a glimpse of Kyeryong San, and stop to marvel at it. On sunny days I marveled at the striking blue of the sky, a hue which I have seen nowhere else, and the ragged beauty of the rock outcroppings on the mountain. On misty days I marveled at the play of the mist with the various peaks and valleys, as in an old Chinese painting. On rainy days I marveled at the sight of storms passing across Kyeryong San and out of sight. On snowy days came the greatest marvel of all, for which I have no words.



*The Zen hall at Shin Won Sah*

When I asked him, he said "Yes. Try necessary!" So I tried it. I didn't know what I was doing most of the time. I was in severe pain and constantly fell asleep. But I did the retreat. Then I heard about the three month retreat, Kyol Che. I had heard that they don't like to take beginners, preferring people with solid experience. But again I talked with Zen Master Seung Sahn. Again he said "Yes! Try necessary!"

I began with a real "beginner's mind" about everything. They shaved my head and I thought "this is interesting; I finally get to see the shape of my head!"

But our teachers always warn that if you're holding on to your opinion, your condition, and your situation, then retreat is a nightmare. Well, my first Kyol Che was a nightmare! I was doing really hard practice—a thousand bows a day, midnight practice every night. But I was following and holding on so strongly to my ideas that all this good training could not help me.

In retrospect, my antics during that first Kyol Che

The temple complex consists of several buildings. The central courtyard, with a stone pagoda in the middle, is bordered by the Jijang Bosal hall (where funeral ceremonies were held), the main Buddha hall (where the Shin Won Sah monks did their daily practice), the building with the kitchen, dining room (for the Shin Won Sah monks; we ate in the Zen hall) and office, and a small building for solo practice.

On the hill above the courtyard is the Mountain God Temple, which was built by the emperor in the late nineteenth century as an imperial shrine. It is a temple to the spirit of Kyeryong San, which Koreans have considered a holy spot for many centuries. It's a very powerful place, and many of us used it for extra practice. Set off from all of these was the building where we stayed, the traditional Zen hall.

The food was simple and nutritious. It was prepared by the same lay women who prepared the food for the resident monks of Shin Won Sah. The heart of each meal

was white rice and kimchee. Generally the rice was accompanied by either a soup or a curry. Most of the protein came from soy products: tofu, soybean sprouts, miso. Most meals also included a variety of vegetables, marinated in

seem utterly ridiculous. But it was a completely innocent mind. For instance, it is important to stay awake, but I was petrified to fall asleep. I

would put a pail of freezing cold water on the end of the porch, and dunk my head into it during the walking period. The head monk used to get so angry! Sometimes I'd have to break through the ice that formed on top of the water to stick my head in there. Or I'd walk around with snow packed on my head during walking meditation. Or get Tiger Balm and put it around my eyes and forehead; with those fumes I'd never fall asleep. Anything to stay awake.

I haven't done any of that the last couple of years. But by the second year I could start to see how my actions affect other people. Every dharma talk that was given seemed intended to hit me. I felt completely naked, as if people could see right through me. How could I erect a wall to feel a little bit more protected? Not possible.

It has been very difficult for me to accept the tradi-



various ways and set out in small dishes on trays which we shared, two or three to a tray. This is a feature of Korean cuisine everywhere—lots of little dishes set out around the table, and everyone's chopsticks poking around sampling everything. I liked it; it gives a relaxed, friendly, collective feeling to the meal, whether in a small family restaurant or eating a silent formal meal at the temple.

Throughout the retreat, supporters donated food to us to supplement the normal temple food. There was often peanut butter to mix into our morning gruel, or fruit and crackers for our tea break after work period. Sometimes, particularly at special occasions such as the lunar new year or when Zen Master Seung Sahn came down from Seoul, we had a party in the mid-afternoon with lots of food, and the rule of silence was relaxed during these times.

Toilet facilities were simple: a pee-house for the men which drained into a pit, a bucket serving a similar function for the women, and a divided outhouse about a hundred yards away for anything else we needed to do. The outhouse had cement walls and floor, with a two-foot gap between the top of the walls and the roof, and no doors on the stalls, so we were quite exposed to the elements while squatting over the pit. I found that refreshing most of the time, except when it was quite cold.

For washing our bodies or clothes, there was a building behind the Zen hall which consisted of two washrooms, one for men and one for women. While these had hot water, the rooms themselves were not heated. I heard

that the women's washroom had a tub which could be filled for baths; the men's washroom had only a faucet with a hand-held shower installed in it. The air and floor were cold, so showers were not a leisurely affair. Laundry was done by hand in the same room, in plastic tubs filled from the faucets. The good result of doing laundry by hand is that you tend to be more mindful about how you use clothes. It's an aid to paying attention.

The resident teacher of Shin Won Sah is Byok Am Sunim, who is the precepts master for monks in our school. Byok Am Sunim has been a friend and colleague of Zen Master Seung Sahn for over forty years. His sincerity is his most striking quality. Each time he passed the stupa in the central courtyard of Shin Won Sah, he bowed several times with such complete attention that it reminded me of why we practice. His joy is also striking. One time as I walked toward the Jijang Bosal hall, I saw several huge flocks of geese flying north very high in the sky. As they passed, Byok Am Sunim emerged from the dining hall across the courtyard; I caught his attention and pointed to the geese. His face broke out in a huge smile and with the excitement of a child he called wildly to bring everyone out of the dining hall to look at the geese. Another time during a particularly extravagant party when Zen Master Seung Sahn was visiting, Byok Am Sunim turned to him, pointed to the spread of cake, ice cream, fruit, nuts and other goodies, smiled, and said (in Korean), "If you have no defilements, great Zen Master cannot appear."

tional women's roles in Korea. It's a different society, and I resented that. Invariably I'd find myself beside the men at temple work period, sweeping and digging, physical activities like that. Never in the kitchen helping the women. Or doing any "women's stuff." Someone would ask me to make a cup of coffee and the rage would erupt: I'd think, "You have two hands, make it yourself!"

Slowly, slowly, we all change.

After the first Kyol Che I went to Shin Won Sah to do a short solo retreat. At that time there was only one bosalnim to take care of all the cooking, cleaning, washing, and gardening at the temple. She was seventy years old. There was no way I was going to let her do all those chores herself while I was sitting and bowing in the Buddha hall. So I began to help her. Even though I was doing but a fraction of her chores, I was completely exhausted. Later, these words appeared in my mind: "Men's work/women's work doesn't matter, just do it." I don't know where the thought came from, but all my life I never had liked doing women's work. I didn't even like being a woman. I equated it with weakness, with being someone's "slave." But here was this insight—there is a

correct time for everything; it has nothing to do with whether I like it or not. And although I still often display a strong, aggressive, "masculine" nature, I am more balanced. I am learning what it means to be a daughter, a sister, a woman. I am learning what it means to possess feminine qualities, and when and how to use them.

In the fall of '89 I went home for the first time in three years. There had always been friction with my parents—I always "knew best." This time around I really tried to let go of my opinions; and because helping out had become second nature, I did the same at home. My parents still don't understand what I'm doing, but they aren't as afraid as they used to be. And neither am I.

This past summer I came back to Hwa Gye Sah, and was asked to be Zen Master Seung Sahn's attendant. For some reason I thought that this would provide opportunities to chit-chat and stuff like that—NO! Just bring him his breakfast, hang up his coat, open his door, wash his shoes, serve his guests, O.K. We rarely sat down and talked. That was my job. It's a different culture, which isn't good or bad—just different.

Zen Master Seung Sahn's role and style, and therefore



In the middle of Kyol Che, we followed the traditional practice of Zen temples of doing extra practice during the week leading up to Buddha's Enlightenment Day. On the last day of this week, we sat all day and night. We were joined at midnight by thirty bosalnims, Korean lay women of all ages. Until 4:00 a.m. we alternated fifteen minutes of sitting with fifteen minutes of walking; almost nobody slept. When we finished sitting, the bosalnims left for the dining hall where they had breakfast, while we ate as usual in the Zen hall.

... It's about 5:00 a.m. Breakfast is over. We have a day off before resuming the regular Kyol Che schedule. I can't sleep—have too much energy. I do lots of laundry, and head up to the Mountain God hall to do some bows. During my second hundred, tears begin flowing down my face. Where do they come from? Joy? Sadness? Only don't know. Only bowing and crying, and feeling unspeakably grateful for the opportunity to practice. After three hundred bows, I return to the Zen hall and fall asleep.

I wake a couple of hours later to find a lunch of special rice and seaweed soup made from

those of his attendant, are different in Korea than in America. In the West he's on a more friendly and "equal" basis with people. But in Korea custom and tradition dictate that he play the "Great Zen Master" almost non-stop. Guests come and go from his room at all hours, and Hwa Gye Sah itself is continuously busy with tourists, ceremonies and religious groups. To be a good attendant, I was told, one must "say nothing and do everything." That's really a test of "I, my, me!" Accepting my function has been a challenge; what has helped has been seeing the people around me as my family, and learning how to respect and care for them.

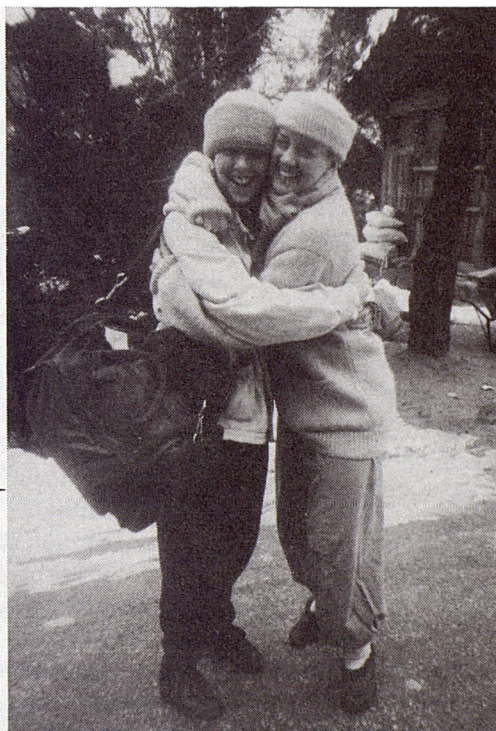
Do my comments about the woman's role sound like subservience? To the Western mind, it is subservience. To the Korean mind it is duty, humility and respect. I continually need to choose how I want to see things. If I choose to see my actions as subservience then I create a lot of suffering for myself and others. If I choose to act

seaweed that the bosalnims picked themselves out of the ocean. My body responds to the nourishment with joy and gratitude. Outside is a clear, warm, spring-like day. After lunch, another retreatant and I use the free afternoon to do what we usually don't have time for—hiking to the summit of the mountain. We climb steadily for about an hour and a half, and emerge to a 360 degree view. After seven days of extra practice and little sleep, our minds are receptive and calm. We sit for a long time looking out over the peaks rising into the distance and the clear blue sky, feeling the warm breeze. Finally it is time to return for evening practice.

Taking a wrong turn almost immediately after leaving the summit, we are over half way down the wrong side of the mountain before we realize our mistake. (Clear mind? What's that?) After running uphill for 45 minutes and tumbling down the correct side, we arrive happy and exhausted just as the big bell rings to call us to evening chanting . . .

Neil Bartholomew is a senior dharma teacher and practices at the Providence Zen Center.

□



Jane McLaughlin, JDPSN and Patsy Talbot.

out of duty and respect, then life and relationships are smooth, and people are helped.

This teaching about correct situation, correct relationship and correct function has helped my life immensely. It's astonishing how smooth your relationships can be when you keep these three things.

Many people ask me, what are you going to do, you've been in Korea for so long. Don't you want to do something different? Don't you want to get married? Have kids? Become a monk? I don't know. Really don't know. For now, I'll just do my practice and help other people. That's my job.

Since giving this talk, Patsy Talbot helped establish the new Hong Kong Zen Center, and is now living in Vancouver. □



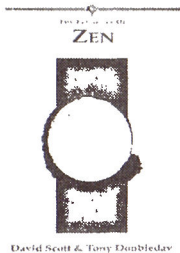
# Book Reviews

## The Elements of Zen

by David Scott and Tony Doubleday

Element Inc., Rockport, Massachusetts, 1992

Reviewed by Mu Soeng Sunim



This book is not likely to cause a revolution in Zen circles. At best, it is a sincere attempt at repackaging various elements of Zen, done more as a reconfigured recipe of a well-known dish rather than to offer any original insights. It is a charmingly produced book and indicative of the ways in which some people still see Zen as a novelty and try to fit

it into their own special areas of interest. David Scott, the principal collaborator of the book, is interested in Japan, martial arts, health and cookery, and his interests are reflected in the structure of the book: we get chapters on “Zen Food” and “Zen and the Martial Arts,” in addition to the by now routine ox-herding pictures and Zen in daily life. A somewhat novel feature of the recipe here is “Common Questions”: a personal culling of responses from various teachers, dead and alive, to questions most frequently asked by novices. Also included are various Zen vows and sutras chanted during services at Zen temples. In short, a helpful book for the first-time inquirer into Zen, especially the Japanese version.



**Freeing the Goose in the Bottle:  
Discovering Zen through Science,  
Understanding Science through Zen**  
by Debra Jan Bibel

Elie Mietchnikof Memorial Library, Oakland, 1992

Reviewed by Mu Soeng Sunim

The author, Dr. Debra Jan Bibel, is a microbe research scientist and a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn. She has written a book which is hard to quantify. As she notes, “I am attempting a grand synthesis; my tactic is a pincer maneuver. This book covers the major scientific disciplines: yes, physics, but also chemistry, cosmology, biochemistry, molecular biology, evolution and development, ecology, immunology, and psychoneuroscience.” Throw in an attempt to understand Zen Buddhism through

these scientific disciplines and vice versa, and the reader has a handful!

Dr. Bibel focuses on the central question of Zen Buddhism, “What is this thing called ‘I’?”, and attempts a synthesis of ancient Eastern wisdom and current scientific research which is at once personal and grandly ambitious. She writes, “The phenomena but ultimate fiction of self and individuality is the focus of this book . . . while the feeling or sense of individuality is real, self is a jovial illusion and sometimes a hazardous delusion of consciousness-mind.” Since she is a trained scientist, Dr. Bibel notes, “Now, at the threshold of a new century and through noetic science (*noetic* refers to mind), the priest, the scientist-philosopher, and the physician-scientist are striving for a reconciliation or synthesis, a ‘reenchantment of science.’ Note that it is science that is opening to mysticism . . . By the mid twentieth century, the mounting paradoxes, the weirdness of subatomic behavior, and the fusions of once parted scientific disciplines had impelled even the most practical researchers into philosophical thought, philosophies that bear strong resemblances to those of the mystic. Today the world, increasingly more a global village, allows a dedicated student with either Western or Eastern training to follow both paths, seeking their union, or at least intersections.”

The title of the book comes from the old Zen story of how a man once put a baby goose inside a bottle. There it grew and grew to the point that the bottle became too small for it. The challenge for the Zen student is to free the goose without breaking the bottle. Using this metaphor, if the author’s attempt is to discover Zen through science and science through Zen without diminishing either, she has blazed a pioneering trail, one likely to be watched closely by others who might attempt a similar synthesis.

The book contains samples of Chinese calligraphy by the author which she learned from the noted calligrapher Kazuaki Tanahashi. As she writes, “I am fascinated with the poetic and artistic qualities of the Chinese language.” This appreciation of Chinese language infuses her understanding of Zen and Taoist traditions with a grace and sensitivity all too rare among Western scientific researchers.

The book contains a thoughtful foreword by Daido Looi Sensei, abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery at Mount Tremper in New York. He correlates the discovery of *hologram* and the “holographic reality” to descriptions in *The Flower Garland Scripture (Avatamsaka Sutra)*, “which describes a universe in





which everything interpenetrates everything else, in identity and causal interdependence; where everything needs everything else and there is not a single speck of dust that does not affect the whole.”

By focusing on the intersection of the two paradigms of religion and science, Dr. Bibel offers a holographic way of perceiving our world in which everything impacts everything else through interpenetration and interdependence; a new way indeed of looking at oneself and at others both for the Zen student and the scientist!

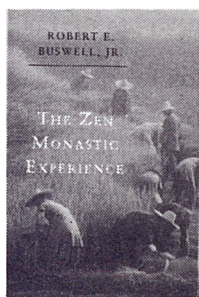


**The Zen Monastic Experience:  
Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea**

by Robert E. Buswell, Jr.

Princeton University Press, 1992

Reviewed by Mu Soeng Sunim



In the West, our understanding of Zen monasticism is rather limited. A primary difficulty in such an understanding is the fact that no Asian Zen monastic insider has found it useful to describe life in a Zen monastery. To them, life in a monastery is to be lived and not described. Dr. D. T. Suzuki's *The Training of*

*the Zen Buddhist Monk* was one of the first attempts to give outsiders a glimpse of what goes on inside a Zen monastery, but his book is focused more on anecdotes and exchanges between Zen master and students, in the style of kong-an collections from medieval China, rather than the daily struggles and joys in the life of a modern Zen monk.

As with a general trend in available literature on Zen Buddhism, information on Zen monastic life in Korea is almost non-existent. Professor Buswell fills this gap most admirably. Buswell belongs to an exclusive group within the transmission of Buddhism in America: American academics who have been Buddhist monks earlier in their careers and are now teaching and writing about Buddhism from the perspective of insider training. Buswell trained as a monk at Songgwang-sa, the premier Zen monastery in Korea, and is now a professor of Asian studies at UCLA; he is also the leading clarifier of Korean Buddhist tradition to the West.

The style of *The Zen Monastic Experience* is sober and considered, rather than racy, as Zen literature sometimes tends to be. Buswell has skillfully interwoven his personal experiences during five years of monastic training

at Songgwang-sa in such a way that his book transcends the limitations of an anthropological field study, yet is likely to remain our primary source of understanding about Zen Buddhism in Korea and the training of its monks for some time to come.

One of the most fascinating sections in this book deals with the struggles of contemporary Korean Buddhism, specifically the long-range impact of the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1911 to 1945 and its attempts to remold the ancient Korean Buddhist tradition to its own political needs. The major impact of the policies of occupation was to create a sangha of married monks in Korea; the tension between the married monks and celibate monks, in the years since liberation from Japan in 1945, has been the major focus of reform and readjustment within contemporary Korean Buddhism. At times this struggle has turned violent, and Buswell gives an excellent account of two decades of internecine strife among Korean Buddhist monks. A major casualty of this strife was Korean Buddhism itself, for Buddhist monks paid scant attention to the wider Korean society during these years and allowed militant Christian missionaries to gain many converts.

The life of Zen Master Ku San and his impact on Korean Zen's opening to the West is the central piece of Buswell's book. In the process, he gives us an exhaustive and observant insider's look at life inside Songgwang-sa, where Zen Master Ku San was resident teacher. The rhythms of daily life at the monastery in the 1970's had remained practically unchanged since its founding in 1198. These rhythms of life were the last remaining links with daily life in Ch'an (Zen) monasteries of China in the eighth to the tenth centuries, the so-called golden age of Ch'an. In recapturing these rhythms in his book, Buswell allows us to wander into the Middle Ages with a sense of ease and wonder.

Buswell pays equal attention to postulants, novice ordinations, Bhikshu ordination, post-ordination career, family ties after ordination, etc. Nor does he forget mundane things like monk's clothing and food. The administrative infrastructure of the monastery is dealt with in great detail, as is the economic support of the monastery by the laity. The formal training of the Zen monk occupies, appropriately so, a major segment of the book.

With little variation, daily life and formal training of a Zen monk at Songgwang-sa differs little from the life and training of monks and nuns at other Korean temples. Buswell's book thus offers us a wide-angle lens to look at the Zen monastic experience in Korea, and makes a lasting contribution to our understanding of Korean Zen.

□



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# Glossary

**beads:** a string of beads resembling a bracelet or necklace, used for counting bows or repetitions of a mantra in various sects of Buddhism.

**Bhikshu (Sanskrit):** fully ordained monk.

**Bhikshuni (Sanskrit):** fully ordained nun.

**bodhisattva (Sanskrit):** a being whose actions promote unity or harmony; one who vows to postpone one's own enlightenment in order to help all sentient beings realize liberation; one who seeks enlightenment not only for oneself but for others. The bodhisattva ideal is at the heart of Mahayana and Zen Buddhism.

**bosalnim (Korean):** in Korea, a lay woman who helps at a temple

**Buddha (Sanskrit):** an awakened one; refers usually to Siddhartha Gautama (sixth century BC), historic founder of Buddhism.

**Buddha-nature:** that which all sentient beings share and manifest through their particular form; according to Zen, the Buddha said that all things have Buddha-nature and therefore have the innate potential to become Buddha.

**Chogye order:** the major order in Korean Buddhism, formed in 1356 AD by the unification of the Nine Mountains Schools of Zen.

**Dae Soen Sa Nim (Korean):** title used by Zen Master Seung Sahn's students in referring to him; "great honored Zen Master."

**dharma (Sanskrit):** the way or law; the path; basically, Buddhist teaching, but in a wider sense any teaching or truth.

**dharma room:** in Zen Master Seung Sahn's centers, the meditation and ceremony hall.

**enlightenment:** awakening.

**hapchang (Korean):** literally, "palms together"; a hand position used in various practice situations.

**hara (Japanese):** the vital energy center of the abdomen; in many Zen traditions it is considered to be the seat of the heart-body-mind.

**HIT:** the sound of a palm or stick hitting a table or floor; used to cut off discriminative thinking.

**inka (Korean):** "public seal"; certification of a student's completion of, or breakthrough in, kong-an practice.

**interview:** a formal, private meeting between a Zen teacher and a student in which kong-ans are used to test and stimulate the student's practice; may also occasion informal questions and instruction.

**Ji Do Poep Sa Nim (JDPSN) (Korean):** "dharma master"; a student who has been authorized by Zen Master Seung Sahn to teach kong-an practice and lead retreats.

**karma (Sanskrit):** "cause and effect," and the continuing process of action and reaction, accounting for the interpenetration of all phenomena. Thus our present thoughts, actions, and situations are the result of what we have done in the past, and our future thoughts, actions, and situations will be the product of what we are doing now. All individual karma results from this process.

**kasa (Korean):** brown piece of cloth worn around the neck or over the shoulders, symbolic of Buddhist vows and precepts.

**KATZ! (Korean):** traditional Zen belly shout; used to cut off discriminative thinking.

**Kido (Korean):** "energy way"; a chanting retreat.

**kimchee (Korean):** spicy pickled cabbage.

**kong-an (Korean; Japanese: koan):** a paradoxical or irrational statement used by Zen teachers to cut through students' thinking and bring them to realization.

**Kwan Seum Bosal (Korean; Sanskrit: Avalokitesvara; Chinese: Kwan Yin; Korean: Kwan Um; Japanese: Kanzeon):** "one who perceives the cries of the world" and responds with compassionate aid; the bodhisattva of compassion.

**Kyol Che (Korean):** "tight dharma"; in Korean Zen tradition, an intensive retreat of 21 to 90 days.

**Mahayana (Sanskrit) Buddhism:** the Buddhism practiced in northern Asia; encompasses schools in China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet.

**mantra (Sanskrit):** sounds or words used in meditation to cut through discriminating thoughts so the mind can become clear.

**moktak (Korean):** fish-shaped wooden instrument used as a drum to set the rhythm for chanting.

**patriarch:** the founder of a school and his successors in the transmission of its teaching.

**sangha (Sanskrit):** in the Mahayana and Zen traditions, the community of all practitioners; may refer to a family of students under a particular master.

**senior dharma teacher:** in the Kwan Um School of Zen, one who has met certain training requirements, usually over at least nine years, and has taken sixteen precepts.

**sutra (Sanskrit):** Buddhist scriptures, consisting of discourses by the Buddha and his disciples.

**transmission:** formal handing over of the lineage succession from teacher to student.

**Yong Maeng Jong Jin (Korean):** literally, "valorous or intrepid concentration," paraphrased "to leap like a tiger while sitting." In the West it is a short silent retreat of two to seven days involving thirteen hours of formal meditation practice a day. Participants follow a schedule of bowing, sitting, chanting, eating, and working, with an emphasis on sitting meditation. During the retreat each participant has interviews with a Zen Master or Ji Do Poep Sa Nim.

**Zen (Japanese; Korean: Son; Chinese: Ch'an; Sanskrit: Dhyana):** meditation practice.

**Zen center:** meditation communities which may include a residence. All the Zen centers in the Kwan Um School of Zen are under the spiritual direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn, and each offers regular practice and periodic retreats. □

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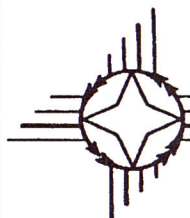
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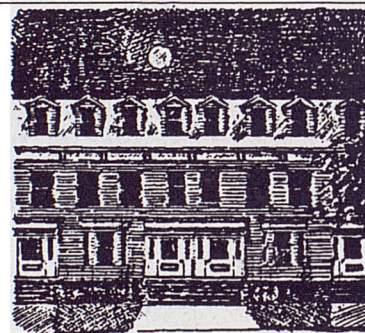
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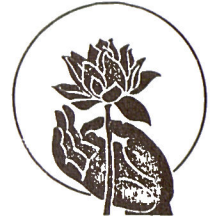


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