

Primary Point

Volume 13, Number 1 Summer 1995 \$4.00

Zen Master Dae Gak Receives Transmission



High Ground Temple Dedicated in Kentucky

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PRIMARY POINT

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Published by the Kwan Um School of Zen, a non-profit religious corporation under the spiritual direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Zen Master Seung Sahn is the first Korean Zen Master to live and teach in the West. He is the 78th Patriarch in the Korean Chogye order. In 1972, after teaching in Korea and Japan for many years, he founded the Kwan Um sangha, which today has affiliated groups around the world. He has given transmission to Zen Masters, and "inka"—teaching authority—to senior students called Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, "dharma masters."

The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the world-wide teaching schedule of Zen Masters and the Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive PRIMARY POINT free of charge, see page 30. To subscribe to PRIMARY POINT without becoming a member, see page 31. The circulation is 5000 copies.

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Same Day, Same Time Together Become Buddha

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Question: Recently I traveled in India. Everywhere I went, people were suffering because of a lack of food. I wanted to help them but I had nothing to give them—there were too many people and so much suffering. I realized I could do nothing.

Zen Master Seung Sahn: You have everything. You say “nothing,” but that isn’t correct. You don’t understand “you,” so you say “nothing.”

Q: But I had nothing to give them.

ZMSS: You are only attached to “outside”; you don’t understand “inside.” Outside you have nothing, but inside you have everything. If you have nothing on the outside to give them, then everywhere you go bow and chant Kwan Seum Bosal. Also, in your mind keep “I can!” Then this helps them, and also helps you. You have “that,” yeah?

Everything happens from primary cause, condition and results. Our world has a problem. So Buddha said this is a suffering world. In the United States, we have a lot of food. And every day we throw a lot of food in the garbage. It’s the same in Korea. But in India, there isn’t enough food. So, our world is unbalanced. Who makes things unbalanced? Human beings make this.

Nowadays there are too many human beings. Also, humans do many bad things. For example, humans kill a lot of animals and eat them—eat their meat. Then cause and effect are very clear. All suffering comes from cause and effect. If two religions are fighting—like Hinduism and Islam—then many people will be killed. Then these people reappear again. The suffering goes around and around. Everything is from primary cause, condition and effect.

Q. Right now there is a lot of fighting going on in Bosnia. In a situation like that, is merely practice enough or should we do something more?

DSSN. A cat and a dog are fighting in front of you. What can you do?

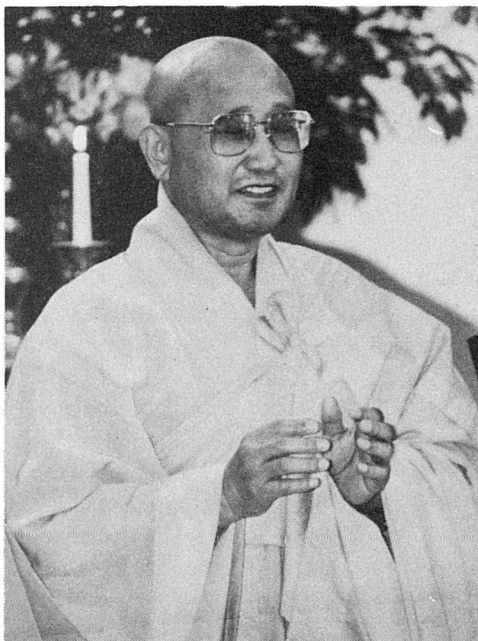
Q. [Action of pulling them apart.]

DSSN. Correct! But, in Bosnia you don’t have any power so you can’t do that there. If you don’t have any power, what can you do? Buddha teaches us that if you don’t have power you should borrow Buddha’s power. So, every day you should do special chanting—Kwan Seum Bosal—for this country. If you do that every day for one hour then your power appears. That is very important because your Kwan Seum Bosal energy is absolute energy. Their fighting energy is opposites energy. Absolute energy shines in your consciousness. O.K.? That helps this world. So, what’s our job?

Our job is to practice hard and perceive this world. Humans do more bad actions on this planet than any other living thing. How can we help? Our consciousness

and suffering people’s consciousness must connect. Then we can help. If you only practice for yourself, that’s not correct practicing. Our practicing means attain your true self. Attain your true self means Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. In other words, moment to moment keep correct situation, correct relationship and correct function. If we don’t have enough money to help people, then we chant for them. Chant Kwan Seum Bosal many times and say, “Please may all suffering human beings and all suffering animals be relieved of suffering. Same day, same time! Together become Buddha.” That’s our direction. This direction never ends, lifetime after lifetime. That’s our great vow. So, if we see suffering people, then we chant for them. That’s our job. O.K. ?

Zen Master Seung Sahn is founding teacher of the international Kwan Um School of Zen. ☸



Zen Master Seung Sahn

Diamond Paramita

Zen Master Ko Bong

Taking the high seat, Zen Master Ko Bong held up his Zen stick and said:

“Inside it is bright
Outside it is also bright
Wherever it is, it is bright
What is it?”

Everyone was silent. “That is the Diamond Paramita.” He then laid down his Zen stick.

“When gold is in the ground it is bright. If you put gold into a hot furnace, it is also bright. After being in the furnace, gold is still bright. Before it went through the furnace it could not be used to make anything. Also, when in the furnace it cannot be used. But after it comes out of the furnace, we can use it to make many things: a ring, earrings or a hair pin.

“Then what is the ‘furnace’? The furnace is giving, morality, patience, practice, meditation and wisdom. Whenever you give something, whether it’s spiritual or material help, do not discriminate between subject and object, man/women, old/young... Forget that kind of thinking. Forget these three things: I, you and give.

“Next: morality. Whether giving or receiving, only do what is correct, then good and bad will become clear. Then your clear action will ‘kill’ good and bad. But, do not attach to good and bad. This is the morality paramita.

“If something is bothering you, then be patient and forgiving. A patient mind will make you happy. Then

inside you will feel pride and want to try harder. This is the patience paramita. Pride is like a pond plant which has no roots—it comes and goes freely. Fear only that you will fall into indulgence.

“If you are always discriminating between people and things (for example looking at them) but your mind is not moving, then this is the meditation paramita.

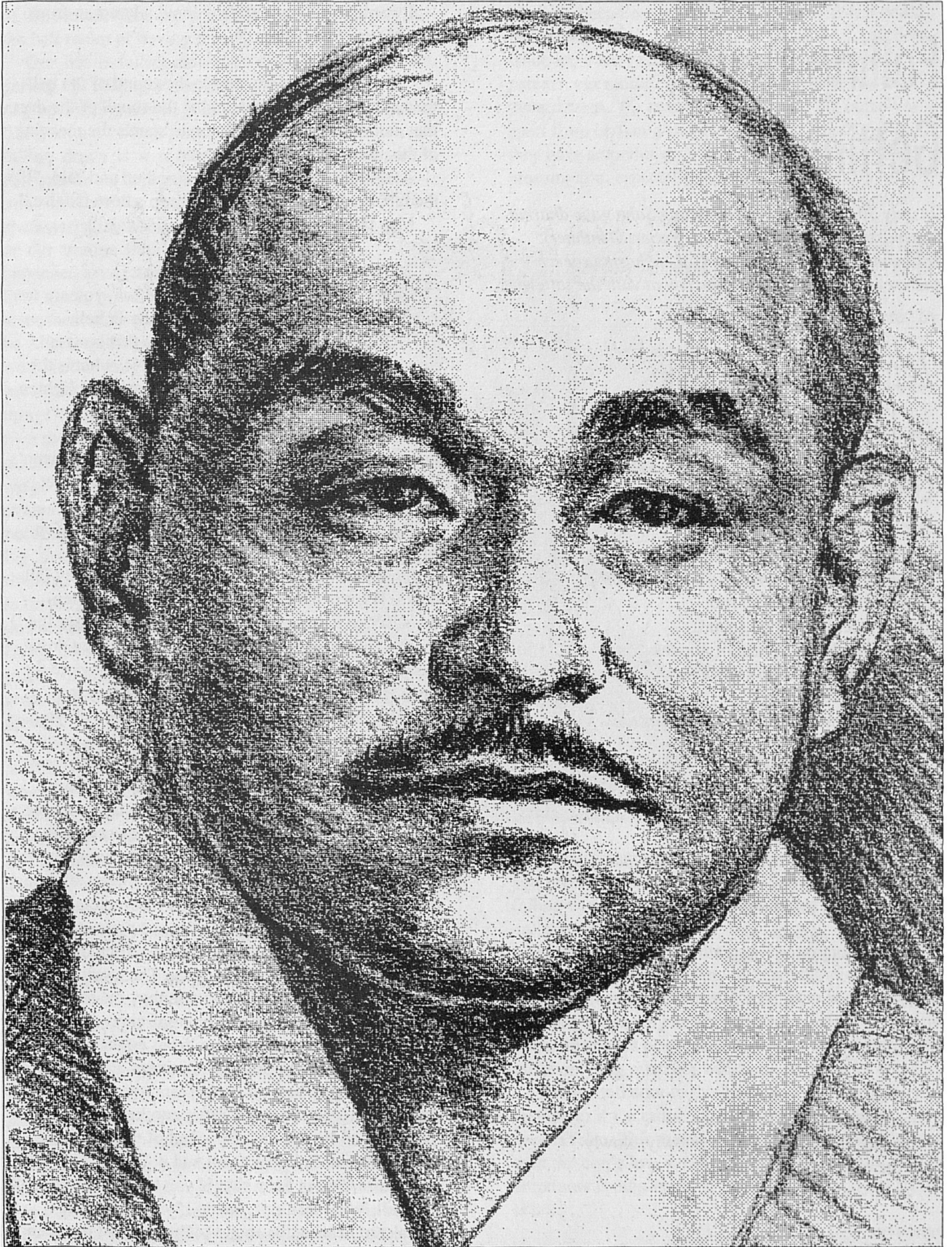
“If something comes—do not be happy. If something goes—do not be sad. When you cry, just cry. When you laugh, just laugh. Things are created, linger... decline, empty. Feelings change from happy to sad, from joy to anger. Countries arise and prosper and then they decline and are destroyed. If you perceive this without attaching to it, this is the wisdom paramita.

“The sun is in the sky whether it is clear or cloudy. Gold is gold whether it is in the ground, in the furnace or on your hand. The Diamond Paramita is just like that—not dependant on life or death, coming or going, or time and space. So, can you see it or not? If you can see it I will hit you thirty times. If you cannot see it I will also hit you thirty times... what can you do?

“6 x 6 = 36.”

Zen Master Ko Bong then got down off the high seat.

Zen Master Ko Bong gave dharma transmission to Zen Master Seung Sahn—the only transmission Ko Bong ever gave . ☸



Falling Down, Getting Up

On July 30, 1994 Zen Master Seung Sahn gave dharma transmission to Dae Gak Sunim (Robert Genthner). Following is Zen Master Dae Gak's dharma speech and excerpts from his dharma combat with the sangha.

Zen Master Dae Gak at his transmission ceremony

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

True perception has no root.
Clear listening has no sound.
When you hear the beat of hooves
Don't say zebra, don't say horse.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

One ear appears
all sounds appear.
One ear disappears
all sounds disappear.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

If you have ears
I will hit you thirty times!
If you have no ears
I will hit you thirty times !

Why?

KATZ!!

The roar of the great river
transforms heaven and earth.
The bald eagle rises slowly, slowly, slowly
In the clear blue sky.
Aiee, Aiee... Aiee

I would like to talk tonight about a kong-an from Zen Master Man Gong:

"All Zen Masters say that in the sound of the bell they attain enlightenment, and at the sound of the drum they fall down. Anyone who understands the meaning of this, please give me an answer."

A student named Song Wol stood up and said, "If the rabbit's horn is correct, the sheep's horn is false." Man Gong smiled.

Zen Master Seung Sahn's comment:

If you cannot hear the bell or the drum, you are free. If you hear both sounds you are already in hell.

There are three points of entry into this kong-an, three doors into the kong-an. The first is, what is the meaning of "all Zen Masters say they attain enlightenment in the sound of the bell and fall down at the sound of the drum?" The second is, what is the meaning of "when the rabbit's horn is true, the sheep's horn is false?" And the third point of entry is, what is the meaning of Man Gong Sunim's smile?

Taking up the first door. Man Gong said, all Zen Masters say in the sound of the bell they attain enlightenment, and at the sound of the drum they fall down. What is the meaning of attaining enlightenment? What is the meaning of falling down? Are the meaning of attaining enlightenment and falling down the same or are they different? If you say they are the same, you are lost in oneness. If you say they are different, you miss the very point. How then do you reconcile these?

At the sound of the bell, all great Zen Masters say they attain enlightenment. Notice that they are not saying, because of the sound of the bell, but in the very sound of the bell itself, all great Zen Masters attain enlightenment. At the very sound of the drum, they fall down. What indeed is the difference between attaining and falling down? Does he fall down completely without leaving a trace? Is this the complete attainment of falling down? The falling down of falling down. The enlightenment of falling down. The sound of the bell and the sound of the drum: are they the same or are they different? From one point of view, they originate from the same source, from no sound at all. Sound arises from no sound. Emptiness. From one perspective, the sound of the bell and the sound of the drum are exactly the same. From another perspective the sound of the bell and the sound of the drum are quite different. Enlightenment and delusion. And yet, Zen Master Seung Sahn says if you hear either you fall into hell. What then can you do if you make the mistake of hearing the sound of the bell and the sound

of the drum? What can you do if you find yourself in the hell realm of having heard?

Our life is falling down, getting up. Falling down, getting up. Falling down, getting up. Falling down, getting up. Falling down, getting up. And when we see our life from a certain aspirational perspective, we see that falling down is a response to certain circumstances. Perhaps we are in psychotherapy and we want to get over our anxiety or our characterological nuances or our trauma that has happened to us early on. It is stuck in our consciousness and seems to be affecting things that we do in our daily life. If we could get over some things... we want to get over the falling down of our life, the mistakes. So we go about examining, evaluating, considering becoming a way, working through, de-conditioning, extinguishing, resolving our falling down. And yet here Man Gong says that at the sound of the drum all great Zen Masters fall down.

We have all heard an encouragement when we are talking about our own craziness. Zen Master

Seung Sahn says you must become completely crazy. Then falling down is complete. And there is no falling and getting up.

This kong-an points to how our linear mind wants to see things in a relative way. Something happens and something else occurs because of it. That somehow, the sound of the bell will bring about a state called enlightenment. It will call enlightenment to come into being. When we are in a particular state of mind that is not very becoming to us, not very satisfying, not complete, we seek something outside of ourselves, like the sound of the bell, to bring us into another state. To create something different from what we are experiencing. To enlighten us. To lighten us. And so there is hope that there will be some kind of intervention that we will be saved from our suffering in some way. We look to certain groups of people like Zen

Masters, because our karma is Zen Buddhist; it could be Desert Fathers, gurus, PhD's, whatever... teachers when we were young, elementary school teachers, parents, our mother and father, our friends. We look toward them. We tend to automatically set ourselves apart from certain groups of people and presume that they have something we don't. And sometimes this presumption, especially in regard to parents, is so

subtle and so unconscious that we don't even have a sense that we are doing it. There isn't even awe involved. It is covered by our feelings while we are growing up.

All Zen Masters say at the sound of the bell they fall down and at the sound of the drum they get up. Falling down, getting up. Attaining falling down. Losing. Having, not having. Coming and going.

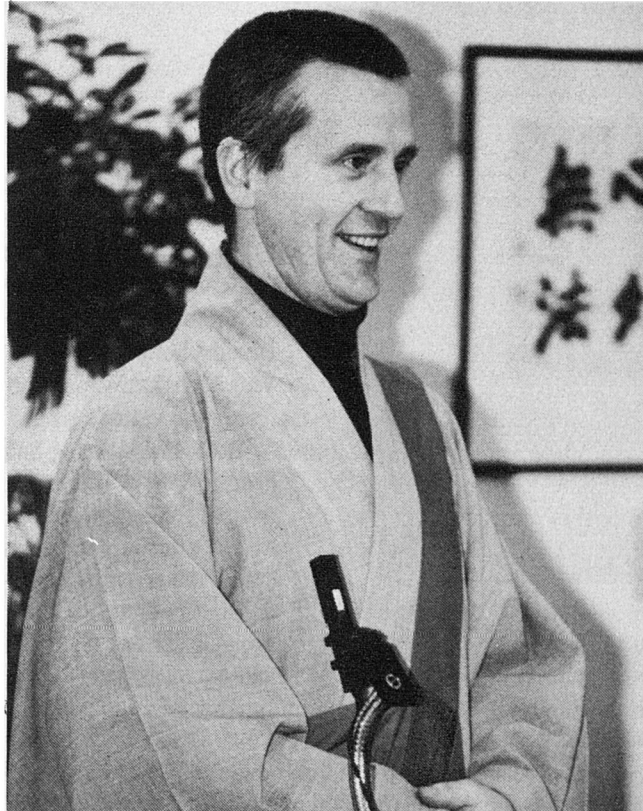
There are two mountains. Which one is the true mountain? All Zen Masters say at the sound of the bell, attain enlightenment. At the sound of the drum, fall down. Bell and drum. Which one is best? Would you rather

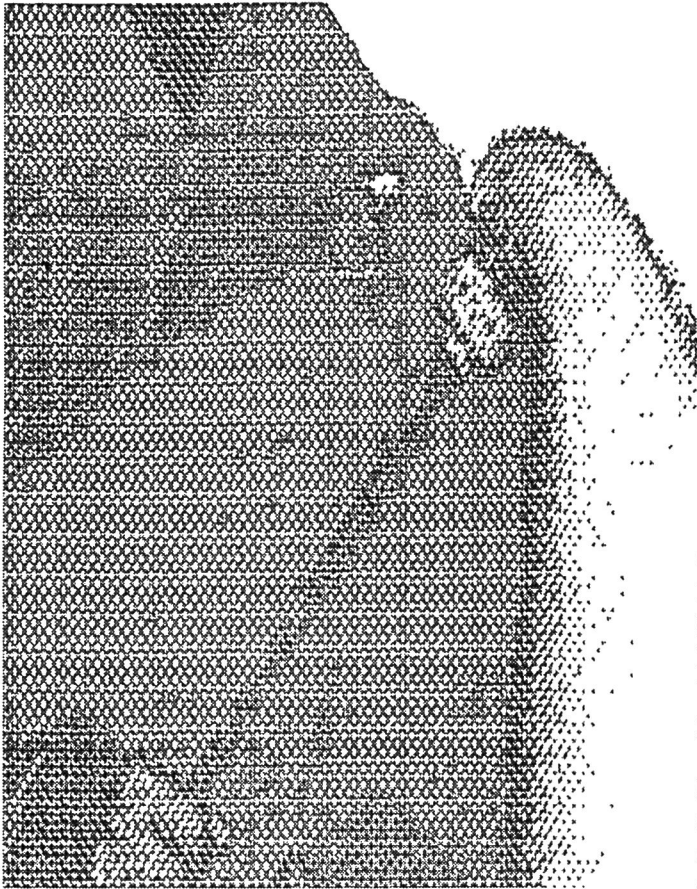
attain enlightenment or falling down? Which would you prefer? Would you choose enlightenment over falling down? Or do you choose falling down over enlightenment?

Man Gong is saying the true Zen Master both attains and falls down. And in that attainment of falling down, there is no attainment. And there is no mistake. It is only when we are worried about our particular life that a mistake is possible. When we live our big life we make only big mistakes which are only for all beings.

The second door to this kong-an is the monk's comment: if the rabbit's horn is true, then the sheep's horn is false. This means: if the turtle's hair is correct, then the lion's hair is not correct. Form is form, emptiness is emptiness. If the fist is so, the open palm is not.

continues





And the third door is, "what is the meaning of Man Gong's smile?" Is Man Gong approving or placating? Does Man Gong approve of this monk's statement or is he placating him? One time on Vulture Peak, the Buddha held up a flower. Only Mahakashyapa smiled. Was Mahakashyapa's smile the same as or different from Man Gong's smile?

Zen Master Seung Sahn's comment: "If you cannot hear the bell or drum, you are free. If you hear both sounds you are already in hell." When your consciousness is discriminating this from that, comparing, how could you possibly know God. It is our tendency to constantly think one thing is better than another. Is it possible for us to be free from our conceptualization and our suffering?

Master Seung Sahn's comment: "If you don't hear either sound, you are free; but if you hear either sound, you fall into hell."

But what if you make the great mistake of falling into hell? What can you do? Human beings do not understand their job. Of all the animals on earth, humans don't know what they are supposed to be doing. We have technological advancements that exceed our wildest expectations. We can walk on the moon. But, in the history of man there has never been a period without war. We live in conflict. We are attached to our opinions and ideas, the result being that our fellow beings are in a constant state of suffering. So if you fall into hell and are confronted by demons every day, what can you do?

This whole world is turning, turning, turning.
Before this world existed, there was only silence.
After this world disappears, only silence

Silence before, silence after,
Then where does sound come from?

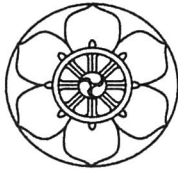
KATZ!

Thank you for listening.

Please enjoy refreshments in the
next room. ☺

Dharma Combat

Zen Master Dae Gak (Robert Genthner)



Q: Hi, thank you for your hard training. Last night you said that you liked simple questions. I think that's a good idea. But I need your help. Can you please tell me, what's the simplest question?

ZMDG: You already understand.

Q: No, please tell me.

ZMDG: You want more?

Q: That's a very simple question. Thank you.
.....

Q: Dae Gak Sunim, I grew up in Kentucky near your monastery. Someday I may come to your monastery looking for some good ol' down home Kentucky dharma. So please teach me the good ol' down home Kentucky dharma.

ZMDG: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

ZMDG: Y'all come back, please.
.....

Q: What is it in the rain that never gets wet?

ZMDG: You already understand.

Q: So I ask you.

ZMDG: *[sprinkles water on the questioner]*

Q: Not enough.

ZMDG: The dog chases after the bone.

Q: Thank you.
.....

Q: Lin Chi Zen Master usually has very short speech. And he said, "If you understand after one word, you are a teacher of Buddhas. If you understand after second word, you are a teacher of gods and human beings. If you understand after the third word, you won't be able even to save your own ass." What kind are you?

ZMDG: You already understand.

Q: So I ask you.

ZMDG: I don't understand. ☉

Two New Ji Do Poep Sa Nims Appear

On July 31, 1994, Zen Master Seung Sahn certified two teachers in a public ceremony which included the speeches and dharma combat that follow. Nancy Brown, JDPSN is now in residence at New Haven Zen Center, and Grazyna Perl, JDPSN is now in residence at the new Paris Zen Center.

Human Beings Come From Where?

Zen Master Seung Sahn

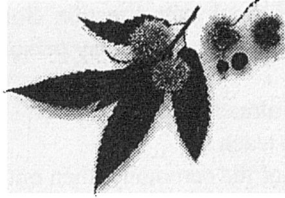
These ceremonies are very important for our school. If we didn't have them, our school would die. Today there are two ceremonies, an inka ceremony and a transmission ceremony, meaning our school is still alive. And for infinite time, our school will live—that's a very important point.

A long time ago on Vulture's Peak, Buddha held up a flower. Mahakashyapa smiled. One thousand two hundred others in the assembly didn't understand. Only Mahakashyapa smiled. So Buddha said, "My true dharma transmission I give to you." That is the beginning. Then the dharma developed in India, China, Korea, and finally is coming to America. So that is very clear, and this line is very strong.

Today there are too many human beings living on our earth. These human beings come from where? Throughout history humans have killed many animals. When they are reborn, even if they now appear as humans, they still have animal consciousness. And because of this, they want to have revenge on other humans for killing them. In Korean culture we insult people by calling them a dog, a snake, or a rat. Many times the face is that of a human, but the action is that of an animal. Your action is *very* important. Whether the face is yellow, red, or white doesn't matter. But our action must be human, like the Buddha, or like other great teachers. That is what is important. And that means helping all beings.

Today two new teachers appear. That means that our school is still strongly alive. And in the future, these teachers will teach in our school, and many great masters will appear. The Buddha said that the Buddhism dharma wheel is always spinning around, around, around non-stop. Continuing for infinite time, because inside there is truth and correct direction and correct life. ☉





What Will We Do With Our Time?

Nancy Brown, JDPSN

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

Is this a good place or a bad place?

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

Is this no place? Is this a magic place? Is this a special place?

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

If we make any of these kinds of places, then we're lost.

So how can we find our place?

KATZ!

Providence Zen Center, large dharma room.

These weekends are wonderful. We come together three times a year, and we usually have precepts ceremonies. This always reminds me of a conversation I had with my parents when I first decided to take five precepts. They asked me, "What are these precepts?" I listed them, and they said, "But we taught you these already." "Yes," I said, "But this practice helps me to live them."

All of us have had many, many teachers: our parents, school teachers, our family and friends. Zen Master Seung Sahn and all of these wonderful teachers sitting here. One another. The clouds. The sky. How we live all of this teaching we receive is very important.

One of my teachers while I was growing up was the minister of our Congregational church. He was a wonderful man—dedicated, gentle and with an artist's mind. He was quite well-read and always brought to his sermons stories he had been reading that inspired him.

One story this minister told was of a man who drove a trolley car. At the end of this man's work day, he would leave his trolley car at the end of one track, and he would wait 42 minutes for the next car to come, pick

him up, turn around and take him on his way home. At first he simply sat at the end of the track and was restless for 42 minutes. But day after day passed, and he began to notice his surroundings and noticed that it was a junkyard, with old broken-down trolley cars and car parts and litter and weeds. One day he not only noticed these, but acted. He started to pick up and stack litter; he'd bring a rake; he'd bring a plastic garbage bag and haul it away full: 42 minutes every day. Then an occasional Saturday. Then others began to notice the change and began to pitch in—time or money or tools or a truck load hauled away or plants. Slowly, slowly this place began to be a park. In his mind, it had already been a park.

So what will we do with our time? With our hands and with our money and with our energy? What kind of place can we make? And with what kinds of entrances? What kinds of gates?

We come into this world: birth gate. We leave this world: death gate. We have phases of life. We have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind. Many gates. We have the dharma gate and the gate to the meditation room. Precepts. Relationship. Nature. Friends. Family. Work. Desire. Anger. Ignorance. Many, many gates. Moment to moment, which gate do we go through? Which direction will we take? I want this; I don't want that? Up, down, good, bad, right, wrong—opposite directions? Become one direction? Save all beings from suffering direction?

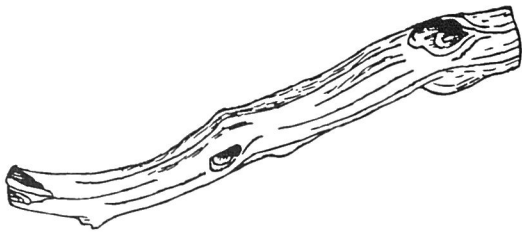
So which way will you turn?
What kind of gate do you like?

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]
If we find our gate, then what?

KATZ!

After this ceremony we have one, two, three, four, five, six doors. How will you leave?

Thank you. ☸



Dharma Combat

Nancy Brown, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

Q: When you moved into the Zen Center you established yourself as the mother of two cats. Your two little children, whom I'm allergic to, have a habit of running right into my room, spreading their fur everywhere. So these kong-an answers are really flip. Everyone's good at giving a really snappy answer. But please teach me my correct relationship to your cats.

NB: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

NB: Ahchoo! Ahchoo!

Q: Yesterday three people took novice monk precepts: Hyon Mun Sunim, Chong Do Sunim, and Chong An Sunim. Do An Sunim said at the precept ceremony that this is the end of the "Hyon" family. But "hyon" means infinite, so how can there be an end?

NB: You already understand.

Q: I ask you.

NB: So after Hyon Mun, then Chong Do Sunim appeared.

Q: So where is the end?

NB: Not enough?

Q: Not enough.

NB: The dog runs after the bone.

Q: Thank you for your teaching. Congratulations.

NB: Thank you.

Q: Well I'm no longer worried about Grazyna's direction. I no longer worry about her center. But I'm very worried about your direction. Sometimes you were a nun, then you were a lay person. Where are you going?

NB: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

NB: End of the ceremony, then out the door.

Q: Is that all?

NB: Not enough?

Q: Not enough at all.

NB: The dog runs after the bone.



Nancy Brown, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

Q: Since fourteen years ago you've been my dharma sister. And now you're becoming my teacher. So what has changed?

NB: You already understand.

Q: I don't. Please teach me.

NB: It's very good to see you today.

Q: Thank you.

Q: So I have a very simple question. This is my hand. I understand this finger and this finger and this finger. But these two fingers [*thumb and index*], are they the same or different?

NB: You already understand.

Q: So I ask you.

NB: [*Makes shape of gun and "shoots."*]
[applause] ☺



Enough Mind

Grazyna Perl, JDPSN

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

No attainment is attainment and attainment is no attainment.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

No attainment. No no attainment.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

Attainment is attainment. No attainment is no attainment.

Which one is the truth?

KATZ!

Outside, birds are singing; inside, fans are humming.

A long time ago in Japan, one Zen Master was receiving a scholar; a university professor. At their meeting the Zen Master invited the scholar to drink tea with him. They sat together and the professor was talking and talking and talking about his understanding of Zen. In the meantime, the Zen Master started to pour tea into the cup. He was pouring and pouring and pouring and pouring. When the cup was full he kept on pouring and the cup overflowed. The professor was talking but finally noticed the overflowing cup and said, "Stop! It cannot take any more. It's already full." The Zen Master put the teapot aside and said, "Just like your mind. Always filled with opinions. How can I teach you anything?"

So that's what mind is mostly all about. Since the moment we were born we started to learn. But not just to learn. We started to have opinions about everything. More and more and more opinions about everything. Like and dislike. Good and bad. Nice, not nice. So on and so on. How can we really attain when the cup is so full? The same with giving. How can we give anything when we're holding too much? Not possible. You cannot do anything. Open your hands and you can give and you can get. Open your mind, and you can give and everything can come. So it's very important to have enough mind. Enough mind, then maybe half a cup, maybe two thirds of a cup. Maybe completely full cup. Maybe empty cup. Doesn't matter. What are you doing right now? Today just one quarter of a cup of tea. Wonderful.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

The sky is blue.

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

The grass is green

[Raises Zen stick overhead and hits table]

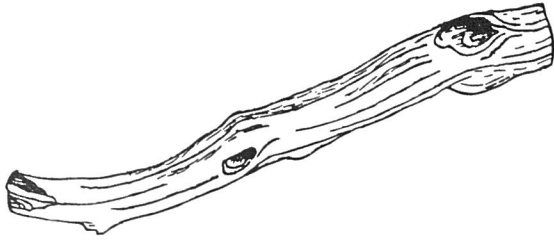
Flowers are red.

Is it enough mind or not enough mind?

Today is Sunday, July 31st. ☺



Grazyna Perl, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim



Dharma Combat

Grazyna Perl, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

Q: So busy now. You're a wife and a mother and an artist and now soon to be a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. So my question to you is :What's most important?

GP: You already understand.

Q: So I ask you.

GP: How can I help you?

Q: Lots of people are congratulating you. This must be something special, because not very many people get this. You'll be a teacher in our school now. So what I'd like to ask you is: what have you attained that makes you so special that you get this stamp?

GP: You already understand.

Q: I'm asking you.

GP: Sitting here talking with you.

Q: Only that?

GP: Not enough?

Q: No.

GP: The dog runs after the bone.

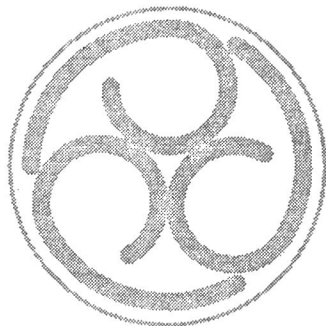
Q: You lived in Poland. You understand that. And you've lived in the United States. You understand that. But now you're moving to Paris and I don't understand Paris. What is Paris dharma?

GP: You already understand.

Q: I ask you.

GP: In the morning croissant. In the evening a glass of wine. ☉





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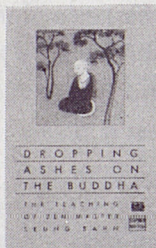
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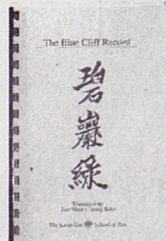
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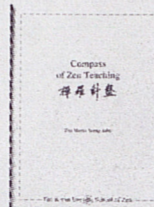
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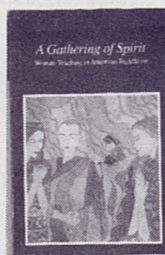
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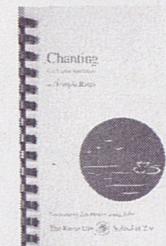
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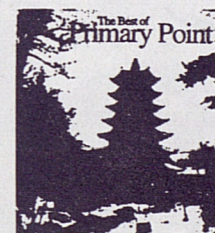
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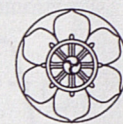


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In Memory of

Zen Master Su Bong Soen Sa

*On the first anniversary
of his death
July 17, 1994*



On Mystic Peak East and West embrace shamelessly.
Without opposites, true nature appears freely;
In life and in death, he shows us "Human Being."
In gratitude, with folded hands:

Ji Jang Bosal
Ji Jang Bosal
Ji Jang Bosal

Wu Bong
Cumberland, Rhode Island
July 17, 1994

See Hoy, Mu Deung, Su Bong
Son, Father, Friend, Teacher:
Why so Soon?
How like you
to leave us with a question.
Mountain peak ascends to sky;
Roots hold the earth.

Ken Kessel
July 18, 1994

Stern-faced teacher laying down the law,
Naughty boy with his finger in the pie,
Smiling friend looking you in the eye—
Which Su Bong Sunim was the one you saw?

Su Bong Sunim, you didn't really die.
We're not through with you yet!
But you always had to be first, had to win each bet.
So now you are laughing—should we also cry?

Mu Sang Sunim
July 21, 1994

In L.A.

Mu Ryang Sunim opened a package
that contained a silk-covered box
that contained a porcelain jar
that contained your ashes.

Sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha.
In the midst of life, what?

Judy Roitman

Goodbye, old dharma friend,
You've left without a trace
Though in the trees today
Did I not see your face?

So sad the moktak sounds,
Ji Jang Bosal for you;
But in the morning bell,
Your voice is in there too.

And at the break of day
I almost hear you call,
"Now, don't forget Kyol Che.
I'll see you there this fall."

Bob Powers

Opening Ceremony of Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sal

Kwang Myong Sunimn
Furnace Mountain, Kentucky
24 January 1995

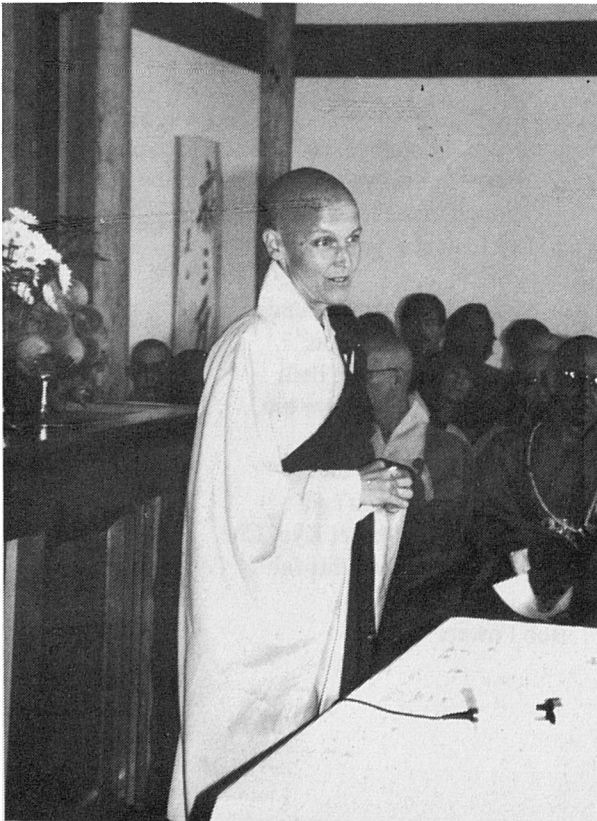
Walking to Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sah on this snowy January morning it is hard to believe that this temple hasn't always been here. There is a startling familiarity that one has when seeing this building. Not the kind of familiarity that one has seeing another person, a parent or a child. But the recognition that one's bones, flesh and blood are standing right there in front of you. Perhaps it is because I have a deep abiding love for the land on which it stands. Or perhaps this experience of familiarity arises from the eternal, that which we recognize in our teacher and our teacher's teacher; that one determining factor that cannot be named or touched. The temple's flood lights beam. Six of us come out of the darkness into its warmth.

Dreams of the Powell County temple began when Zen Master Seung Sahn and Zen Master Dae Gak walked on the newly purchased piece of property, soon to be called Furnace Mountain. They climbed to the

highest point of the 110 acres, what is locally known the State Rock, for a better view. When Zen Master Seung Sahn caught his breath, he looked down the valley and exclaimed, "This is the best geomancy I have ever seen. You must build a temple there!" Zen Master Seung Sahn was pointing to an area about 100 feet below where he was standing. It was the center point in a bowl-like configuration of the State Rock and it's surrounding limestone ridges. Zen Master Seung Sahn said the new temple would be called Kw Se Um Sang Ji Sah, which means Perceive World Sound, High Ground Temple. Zen Master Dae Gak immediately began the arduous task of doing as his teacher asked, making real what was a dream.

Inspired by traditional oriental temple architecture and the undeniable fact that this temple was to be located in rural Kentucky, an American version of a Korean-style temple was born. This effort at design and building was fondly dubbed by all those who participated in this project as "Temple 101." No one had done this before. With the exception of the foundation and the superstructure, there were no working plans. Design and intent were verbally communicated and sketched on scrap pieces of wood and paper. Willing craftsmen were able to interpret what was needed and to create exactly what was required. Every detail was agonized over before a decision was reached. What color should the tile roof be? Blue. It was what Zen Master Seung Sahn recommended. But what if the temple looks like Howard Johnson's to those driving up the road below? Should they come, we'll invite them in for tea and fruit. And where exactly is the center of the building relative to the land? One at a time, with eyes closed and arms extended, three of us "scientifically" walked across the platform, ending up in exactly the same spot. "This must be it," someone said.

Looking back over this two-year building project, there were choices that one seemingly controlled such as painting the temple's interior walls Swan's Wing White or using recycled Douglas Fir for siding and trim. But there were other decisions that were not decisions. In creating anything, whether it be a child, meal or a temple, that which is being created, creates. The thing that is being created has its own resolve. The birthing process is the practice of not-knowing. A mother may not expect her baby to be a boy. She may not anticipate her baby to be a girl. She can not know that when her baby grows up he may become a famous doctor and help many people. Birthing a baby or building a temple is like riding a horse with rotten



reins; one cannot know the direction it will go.

Nearly everyone who has come to Furnace Mountain has commented on the quietude and peace they experience on the land. Upon entering Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sah, these responses seem to amplify. These reactions have been totally unexpected. Whether children are playing a make-shift game of soccer or students are sitting zazen, harmony appears. In the divine union of pure mountain energy entering this wooden structure, the temple becomes a house filled with the treasures that one seeks. This building was not created by human hands alone.

A date was chosen. Then another. Then finally, the date was set for the temple opening celebration to be on Saturday, August 6, at eleven o'clock in the morning. Invitations were sent. Members began arriving a week in advance to help with the preparations of food, lodging and transportation. On August 5, with the exception of a shoe rack, the temple was finished. The rack arrived an hour before the ceremony was to begin.

On the morning of the temple dedication, the previous day's rain left the air cool and crisp. The storm also left large quantities of rain in huge puddles. The new construction site looked like a swamp, not unlike the images seen in the movie, *The Piano*. Mud. It was an unavoidable mess. With mud on our shoes, robes and clothes, one hundred and seventy people gathered to celebrate the opening of Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sah. Among our honored guests were: Taizen Maezumi Roshi; Maha Ghosananda; Zen Master Bo Mun, Zen Master Wu Kwang, Brother Anthony from the Abbey of Gethsemani, Charles Tenshin Fletcher, Sensei; Do An Sunim, Ji Do Poep Sa; and Jeffrey Kitzes, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. The mood was festive and the congratulatory speeches gracious. Zen Master Dae Gak gave the formal dharma talk. He encouraged each person who had come to the ceremony to practice hard and attain enlightenment, creating a critical mass to transform the world. Zen Master Seung Sahn followed with a brief speech about the marvelous geomancy of the temple location and how many people would come to enlightenment here. The mud forgotten, the sun shining brightly, a lotus blossomed. All settled into an afternoon of vegetarian food and conversation, Southern style!

Zen Master Seung Sahn comments: *Everything is impermanent. Why make a temple? If you attain "Everything is impermanent," you attain the true temple.*

Zen Master Seung Sahn's "Why?" echoes across a thousand kalpas. "Why build a temple?" There is a story of a monk who was standing in a public square giving a discourse on the dharma. Hearing his words, a

fruit vendor entered into the crowd that had gathered for a closer look. In front of him, he pushed his wheelbarrow, which was filled with pears. As the monk spoke, the pear merchant became increasingly agitated. Unable to contain his disapproval for another minute, the vendor called out to him, "All this talk, talk, talk. Your Buddha performed miracles. You call yourself a Buddhist. Let's see what you can do!" The monk responded, "Although the Buddha did perform miracles, he never taught the way of magic as a correct practice." The heckler responded, "More talk. Show us something!" The crowd nodded in agreement and said, "Yes. Show us!"

Without hesitation the monk demanded, "Clear a space." He raised his arms and then thrust them towards the ground. From the earth sprouted and grew two magnificent trees. The boughs were heavy with ripe pears. The monk quickly picked several armfuls of fruit and distributed them to the dumb-struck crowd. Then he vanished. As the vendor gained his composure and turned to leave, he saw that his wheelbarrow was empty. The two handles that he used to push it with were also gone.

Whether it is sticking a blade of grass in the ground, magically creating a pear tree, or framing a building on an auspicious spot, the question remains the same: "why?" Why did Zen Master Dae Gak buy this particular land? Why do students live and practice here? Why do people come and contribute time and money? Why? This question is at the heart of every creation. It is the heart of Zen practice. It is this "why?" that built Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sah. It is this not-knowing "why?" that is the foundation of all true temples.

To build this temple and have an opening ceremony was an experience in magic. What began in response to a need took a direction of its own. For two years I watched in amazement at the sincere effort of my teacher and fellow sangha members as they turned truckloads and wheelbarrow loads of raw materials into a building that has inspired all who have seen it. The opening ceremony and the events surrounding it also seemed to spring forth in an unforeseen way. One happy guest left after the ceremony with a car load of food to feed forty house guests who were cycling for an AIDS benefit in Cincinnati.

The striking of the bell shatters the silence of this frigid January morning. Ten thousand voices rise and fall with the crowing rooster and the braying donkey in the valley below. Temple construction and the opening ceremony are finished, but the work has just begun. ☸

Kwang Myong Sunim, a nun, is the abbot of Kwan Se Um Sang Ji Sah and has lived at Furnace Mountain for five years.

Everything is impermanent. Why make a temple?

Bodhisattva Zen

David Ledebor

To understand bodhisattva action we must first understand bodhisattvas. A common definition of a bodhisattva is one who vows to postpone her complete liberation in order to help all sentient beings realize enlightenment. This is usually taken to mean that the practitioner aspiring to the bodhisattva path vows to return to samsara lifetime after lifetime until all beings have been completely liberated. At first glance, this seems like the ultimate sacrifice and self negation—kind of a Super Suffering Grandmother (Q: How many Suffering Grandmothers does it take to screw in a lightbulb. A: “Never mind me, I’ll just sit here in the dark”) who takes on the enormous task of universal salvation to remain in the darkness of samsara for an eternity. This bodhisattva’s action also seems dualistic. We imagine there are countless beings here at point A in samsara. I, the bodhisattva, will get them over there to point B in Nirvana, but then they will be free and I the bodhisattva will remain bound.

As we imagine the bodhisattva doing her job, it seems that it will take quite a while, æons in fact; not quite the instantaneous quality of which the Zen Masters speak. As we see our model bodhisattva going about her job, we can imagine oceans of thoughts, discriminations, choices and judgements about just how to go about one’s task. Even the largest supercomputer would lack the capacity to store all these pieces, let alone put them together. If we then hear Zen Master Seung Sahn say, “just do it” or “put it all down,” we might assume that he couldn’t be using such simple direct words to teach this seemingly complex task. And so we might decide that Zen and bodhisattvas or bodhisattva action have little to do with each other. Perhaps being a bodhisattva is some preparatory phase of practice, perhaps Zen is just something done to oneself—a one-seat rocket to the moon of peace and tranquility. But of course this isn’t true, for the heart of Zen practice is nothing other than

the bodhisattva path. And the ultimate fruit of Zen is the salvation of *all* beings:

“...someone who has set out in the vehicle of bodhisattva should think in this manner. As many beings as there are in the universe of beings... as far as any conceivable form of beings is conceived: All these I must lead to Nirvana, into that Realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind. And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvana, in fact no beings at all have been led to Nirvana. And why? If in a bodhisattva the notion of a ‘being’ should take place, he could not be called a bodhisattva, in whom the notion of a self or of a being should take place, or the notion of a living soul or a person.”

The Diamond Sutra

We can see from this quote that while a bodhisattva engages in the paramitas or virtues of generosity, morality, patience, vigor and meditation again and again in thousands of ways, she “seals” all of these actions with the sixth paramita: wisdom that perceives the emptiness of self and other. One thus avoids what we call the “Suffering Grandmother Syndrome” of self-abnegation and deprivation. The combination of compassion, which acts in countless ways, and wisdom, which is “not doing,” provides a perfect balance between the extremes of “is” and “is not.” The bodhisattva poised here at this middle point is not thinking that by helping all beings, she herself is being neglected or left “in the dark.” Here, form (compassion) is emptiness and emptiness form.

If we look at the wisdom of emptiness a bit more deeply, the non-self of bodhisattva actions and of sentient beings all seem more and more of one piece.

Our concept of samsara and nirvana or bodhisattvas and sentient beings as separate begins to dissolve. It begins to seem that we all breathe together, suffer together, and we are liberated as one body. The bodhisattva here is not thinking that by helping all beings she is left behind in anyway. Nirvana is not “over there,” nor is samsara “over here,” and there is no real coming and going between them. As the bodhisattva continues down this convergent path, she comes to an experience without form (i.e. compassion or bodhisattva action) and without emptiness. Just HIT.

“One evening... a student asked Seung Sahn Soen-Sa, ‘When you say you are here to help save all people, does that mean only to help them get enlightened or also to save them from hunger, war and pain?’

Soen-Sa said, ‘I have already finished saving all people.’

There was a long silence.....

‘Do you understand what this means?’

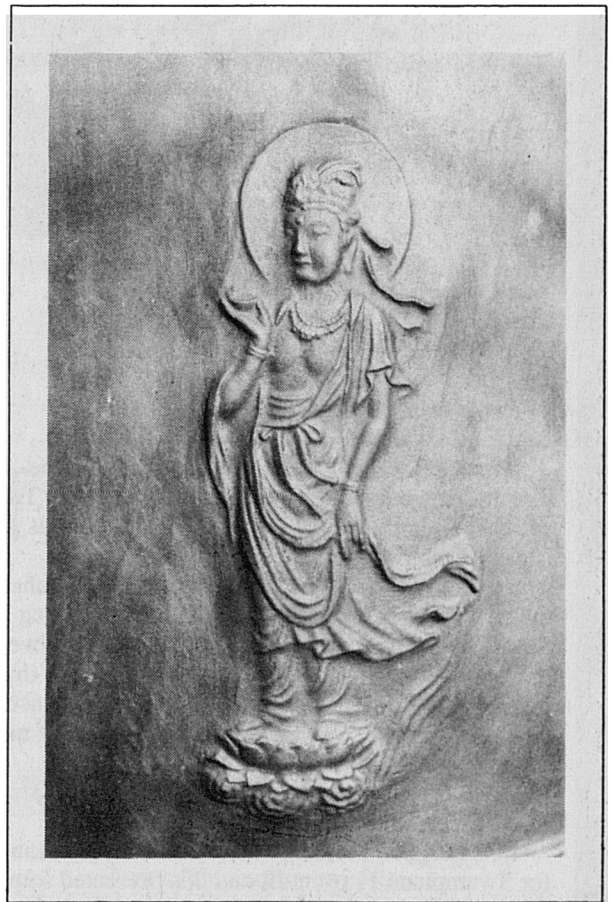
Another long silence.....

‘Put it all down. Okay?’”

Here Zen Master Seung Sahn is showing the face of a Zen bodhisattva. There are no æons of time spent in bodhisattva action here. There is no need to sift discriminations or judgements, no need to decide intellectually how to best help.

This is the pinnacle of bodhisattvahood—as completely natural and spontaneous as the growth of an apple on a tree or the falling of spring rain. By remaining completely one’s true self, benefit naturally arises—benefit has already arisen. By letting one’s mind remain clear like a mirror, one’s actions naturally reflect the situation one is in. Not holding to any concept of self, the bodhisattva rests in the “big I” that

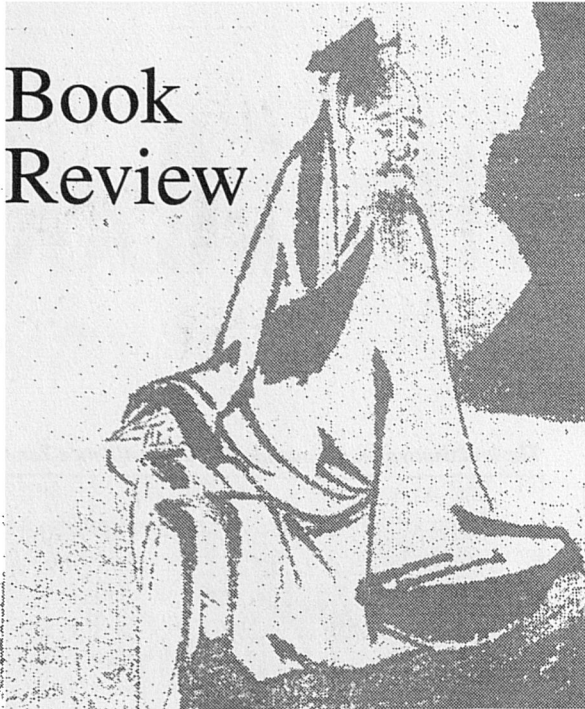
The bodhisattva on the outside bell at Providence Zen Center



already saves all people. So here simple words work best: “put it down,” “just do it,” “only go straight.” These phrases point directly to the deepest and most direct bodhisattva action—the action of Zen. ☸

David is a bodhisattva teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen, lives in Seattle with his wife Kiah, and is a member of the Dharma Sound Zen Center .

Book Review



Zen Letters: Teachings of Yuanwu

Translated by J. C. Cleary and Thomas Cleary, Shambala, 1994.

Reviewed by Zen Master Wu Kwang

Some years ago, I was fortunate enough to be directed to a book of Zen letters by Zen Master Tahui entitled, *Swampland Flowers*. The translator was J.C. Cleary. Tahui was the successor of Zen Master Yuanwu (1063–1135 AD), a Sung Dynasty teacher in the Lin Chi line. I greatly benefitted from reading *Swampland Flowers* and have gone back to it several times over the years. I subsequently discovered that Zen Master Tahui had been an important influence on the great Korean Zen Master Chinul, who never met Tahui personally, but had obtained some of his writings. So it was with some excitement that I started reading *Zen Letters: Teachings of Yuanwu*.

In retrospect, I realized that I was subtly looking for *Swampland Flowers II*, and this presented some problems for me in taking the current book on its own terms. The teaching tone of Yuanwu, while similar to his successor, is also somewhat different, and needs to be digested and assimilated on its own. I found the latter parts of the book more compelling and interesting than the beginning sections, but this might have been due to the coloration of my initial expectations. Yuanwu is best known for his authorship of a famous kong-an collection of one hundred cases entitled, *Blue Cliff Record*.

The current book is a grouping of teaching letters, written by Yuanwu to a variety of Zen practitioners,

including fellow teachers, disciples and lay students. Included are letters to both men and women; people with families and worldly careers, as well as monks and nuns, advanced adepts, and beginning students. To give a taste of Yuanwu's style, I will summarize a few of his letters.

In "The Original Person," Yuanwu begins by saying that the "Great Teaching is basically quite ordinary," but usually we are

"[O]verloaded with conditioned knowledge and arbitrary views... If you are equanimous toward everything, including the ultimate ungraspability of mind itself, and your conditioned mind fades away and spontaneously comes to an end, then the perfect illumination of inherent nature appears whole without needing any contrived efforts to make it."

I find this wonderful and skillful advice, especially for those who are inclined to try too hard and haven't recognized that "letting go" is equally important. Further, Yuanwu says that "if you always let this naturally real essence appear amidst your daily activities, then how can you not be settled and secure?" He ends this letter with this piece of advice: "You must continue this way without interruption forever—this is best."

In the letter, "Make Enlightenment Your Standard," Yuanwu discusses sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation. I find this letter to have many similarities with the Korean teaching tradition of Zen Master Seung Sahn's style. Yuanwu says,

"If you want to pass through easily and directly right now, just let your body and mind become thoroughly empty, so it is vacant and silent, yet aware and luminous. Inwardly, forget all your conceptions of self, and outwardly, cut off all sensory defilements. When inside and outside are clear all the way through, there is just one true reality."

Further on he says that one should awaken to this mind first, and afterward cultivate all forms of good. This is likened to the eyes and feet depending on each other.

"Go on gradually nurturing this for a long time, perhaps twenty or thirty years. Whether you encounter favorable or adverse conditions, do not retreat or regress—then when you come to the juncture between life and death, you will naturally be set free and not be afraid."

As the saying goes, "Truth requires sudden awakening, but the phenomenal level calls for gradual cultivation."

Zen Letters is a welcome addition to the growing body of ancient teachings that are now being translated into English. It falls into the category of teachings that might be called "encouragement talks," and is both direct and timely. Its message is as relevant now as it must have been in Sung Dynasty China, and we are lucky to have access to it. ☸



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*"Deep in the mountains, the great temple
bell is struck."*

Zen Master Seung Sahn

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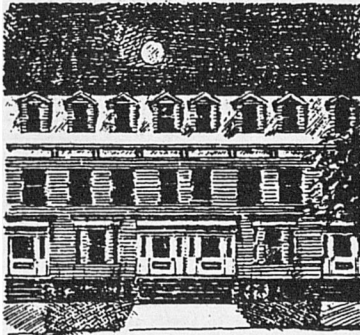
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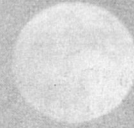


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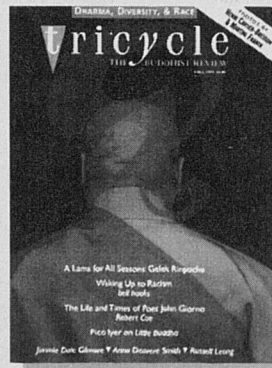
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Glossary

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.

bodhisattva teacher: in the Kwan Um School of Zen, one who has met certain training requirements, usually over at least ten years, and has taken sixty-four precepts.

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 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/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 considered 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. The title is "Ji Do Poep Sa" for teachers who are monks or nuns.

kalpa (*Sanskrit*): an endlessly long period of time.

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. 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.

samsara (*Sanskrit*): the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

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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