

# Gloria

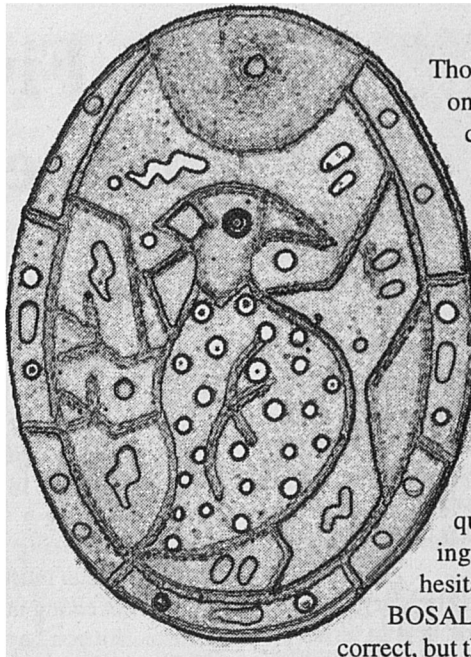
Heila Downey

Some four and a half years ago, a little girl was born. When she was six hours old, her mother carried her into the dharma room at The Dharma Center in South Africa, where participants of a four-day retreat circumambulated both mother and baby, chanting OM MANI PADME HUNG! This is her story.

From a very early age, little Gloria, a Xhosa by birth, had a very strong affinity for the dharma room, and quite frequently the tiniest pair of little slippers or shoes were to be found placed very neatly together, at the entrance to the room. Before Su Bong Sunim's death, the two of them cut quite a dashing pair—two shiny heads and pairs of bright, sparkling eyes!

Very soon after Gloria started sounding words, she also started "chanting": "Bosal, Bosal, Bosaaal!" She is now four and a half years old, can often be heard singing "Kwan Seum Bosal," and joins the formal practice sessions at every opportunity. Soon after Su Bong Sunim's death, while watching the video of his funeral service and cremation, repeating "Ji Jang Bosal, Ji Jang Bosal..." she suddenly stopped and said: "Babam [Heila], you know what? I LOVE KWAN SEUM BOSAL!" Also: "Su Bong Zen Master is dead now... that is very good, because now he can be new again!" All of this at just three and a half years of age!

On Tuesday and Thursday, when she doesn't go to school, she often spends time doing "practice" in the dharma room. Putting on bowing robe, she sets herself up with a clock, chugpi, chanting book, moktak and book of teaching letters. First, she will do bows—sometimes as many seventy-five! Then without taking a break, the chugpi will be hit three times. Meditation time! Some minutes later—chug, chug, chug! End of sitting. The moktak roll is unmistakable. It is time for special chanting. Kwan Seum Bosal and



Thousand Hands and Eyes Sutra merge into one, with verses from each, making up the chanting service. After completing her routine, she places everything back on the altar, bows leaving the dharma room, and asks her Mummy or Babam to hang her bowing robe. No fuss, *nothing special!*

One such day after practice, I approached her as she was leaving the dharma room, and asked her if she loved Kwan Seum Bosal. She exclaimed without hesitation: "Yes, Babam, I LOVE Kwan Seum Bosal!" To which I posed the question, "Gloria, do you know the meaning of Kwan Seum Bosal?" Again, without hesitation... "Yes, Babam, KWAN SEUM BOSAL!" Slightly taken aback, I said, "That is correct, but the 'word' meaning was, 'Please save this world from suffering!'" Gloria's response left me speechless. She said, "Oh, that's wonderful Babam, you mean save all beings for Jesus Christ—I love that."

Last March, Wu Bong Zen Master visited The Dharma Center to lead a seven-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreat. Gloria would frequently join us for sitting practice, and more often than not, she would join us for formal meals with her own four bowls, and barely a word from her lips. After the meal, it was her job to roll up the mat and store it, then... off to Wu Bong Soen Sa's room for sweets! It was during this retreat that I found her crying in the bathroom, shortly before the dharma talk was to begin. The cause of her distress? Mummy said she should go to bed, and she wanted to listen to the dharma talk! And so she did, from then on. Sitting for an hour, sometimes more—totally enthralled.

On July 17th, 1995, we held a memorial service commemorating the first year after Su Bong Sunim's death. Gloria chanted with gusto! Prior to the service, she came and asked me if we were going to do some bows for Su Bong Zen Master. When I said that it was not likely, she said, "That's fine, I will bow, to say Happy Birthday to Su Bong Soen Sa!" She promptly placed her mat in front of the altar, and proceeded to do bows. Then later whilst having tea she came up to me with a question: "Babam, when can Su Bong Zen Master be FIXED again?" When I inquired what she meant, she said: "So that he can be like us again!"

Very puzzled by all of this, someone (who is a Christian) asked Antonio, Gloria's Mummy, how on earth she "puts up" with us Buddhists, allowing Gloria to participate in practice so freely, since she herself is a very committed Christian? Antonio's response was: "How can this be a problem...? So long as we can help people!"

KWAN SEUM BOSAL... KWAN SEUM BOSAL... KWAN SEUM BOSAAAAL! ☸