

# Primary Point



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• *First Inka Ceremony in Asia* • *The Five Precepts* • *Teaching Without Knowing* •

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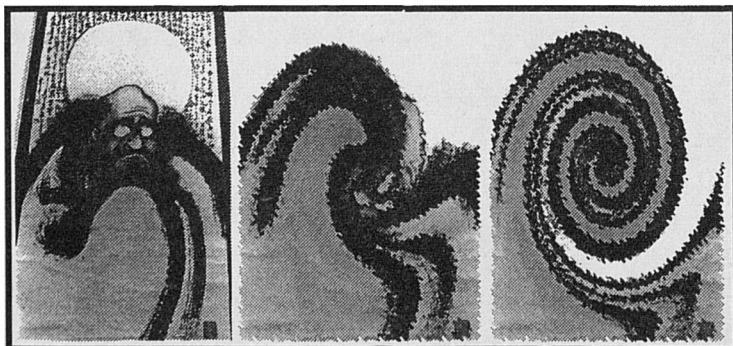
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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the world-wide teaching schedule of Zen Masters and the Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among 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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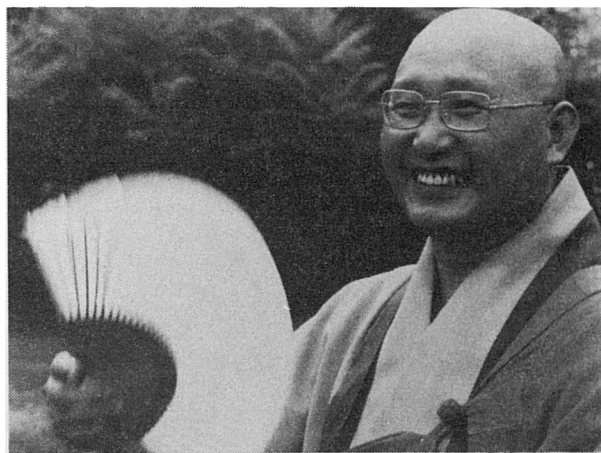
# Get the Gold

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

Traditionally Zen uses seventeen hundred kong-ans. Korean Buddhism also uses these original kong-ans. Other Zen schools made their own special collections from these, which they felt were of special importance for teaching. For example, one collection, the *Blue Cliff Record*, uses one hundred kong-ans; the *Mu Mun Kwan* is a collection of only forty-eight cases.

But, this is still too complicated, so our school made a collection of only ten kong-ans, the *Ten Gates*. Very simple! If you pass these ten gates, then you will understand what a kong-an is.

If you understand what a kong-an is, then you will understand how to practice correctly. Then, do it! But, if you only understand kong-ans and don't practice, don't try, you will have a big problem. Some people can answer many kong-ans, but they don't try. Then the kong-an never becomes theirs. So, the purpose of the kong-an is to give us correct direction so our life can become correct. "If you go south ten miles you will find gold. Go over there and find it!"

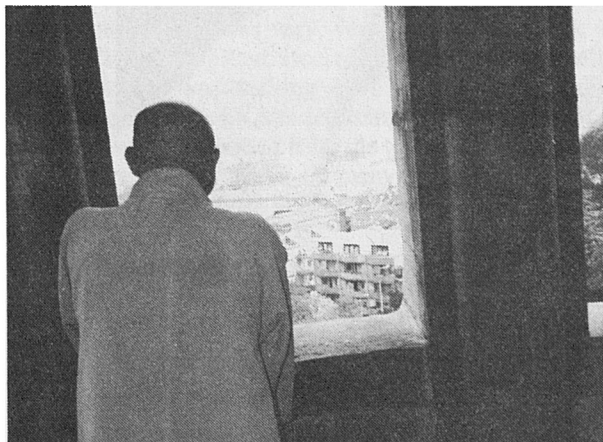


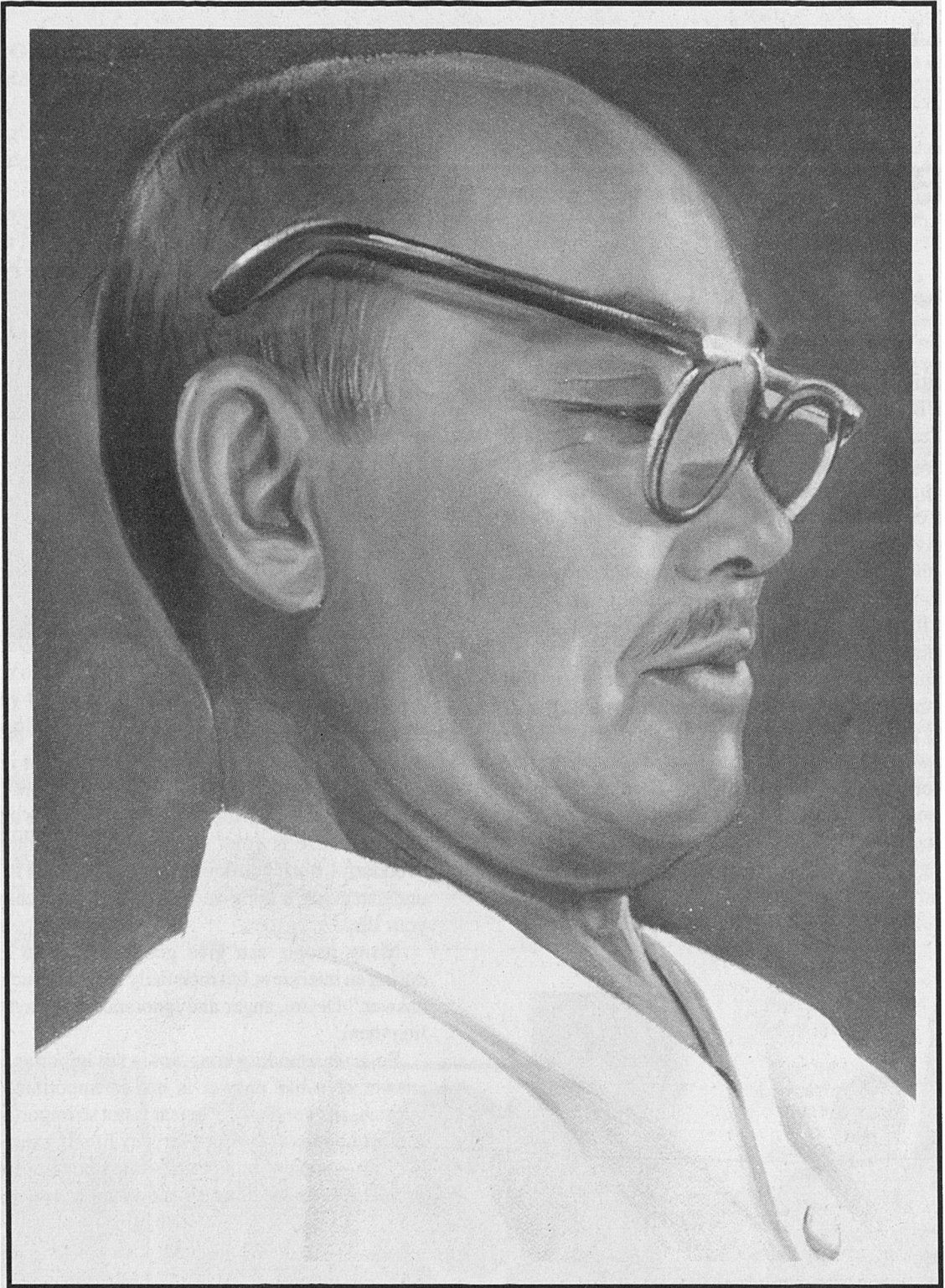
Anyone can understand these directions, but if they don't actually walk ten miles south they will never get the gold. "I understand that ten miles south of here there is a mountain. Inside the mountain there is a cave and inside the cave there is gold. I understand that completely." Wonderful, but if you don't do it, you don't get it. So, only understanding a kong-an cannot help you; cannot help your life.

Many people can give good answers to kong-ans during an interview, but their daily life is not such a "good answer." Desire, anger and ignorance is always controlling them.

So, understanding kong-ans is not important. A good answer or a bad answer is not so important. Answer appears, answer doesn't appear is not so important. What is most important is your everyday life. If your daily life is clear—moment to moment—then kong-ans are not a problem. Then the kong-an and your life really connect.

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





*Zen Master Ko Bong*

# Ko Bong's Try Mind

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Zen Master Ko Bong (1890-1962) was one of the greatest teachers of his time. He was renowned for refusing to teach monks, considering them too lazy and arrogant to be Zen students. He was also very well known for his unconventional behavior.

Ko Bong Sunim didn't like chanting. He only did sitting meditation, no matter what. That was his practice. One time, as a young monk, he was staying in a small mountain temple. The abbot was away for a few days, so Ko Bong Sunim was the only one around. One morning an old woman climbed the steep road to the temple carrying fruit and a bag of rice on her back. When she reached the main Buddha Hall, she found Ko Bong Sunim seated alone in meditation.

"Oh, Sunim, I am sorry to bother you," she said. "I have just climbed this mountain to offer these things to the Buddha. My family is having a lot of problems, and I want someone to chant to the Buddha for them. Can you please help me?"

Ko Bong Sunim looked up. Her face was very sad and very sincere. "Of course," he said. "I'd be happy to chant for you. No problem." Then he took the bag of rice off her back and they went to the kitchen to prepare the food offering. As they started to wash the fruit he said to her, "I don't know how to cook rice. You cook the rice, and I'll go start chanting."

"Yes, Sunim. Thank you very much."

Ko Bong Sunim returned to his room to put on his formal robes. But, because he never chanted, he didn't know any Buddhist chants. So, he dug out an old Taoist sutra from among his things and brought it back to the Buddha Hall. Then he picked up the moktak and started hitting it while reading out of the Taoist book. Usually it's appropriate to do certain chants for different occasions, like the *Thousand Eyes and Hands Sutra*, but Ko Bong Sunim didn't know about this. He only banged the moktak and chanted the Taoist sutra out loud, right from the book. After an hour or so of this, he finished.

The old woman was very, very happy. "Oh, thank you, Sunim. You are very kind. I feel much better now!" She left the temple. As she was walking down the mountain road, she passed the abbot, who was returning to the temple. "Hello, Mrs. Lee, are you coming from the temple?"

"Yes," she said. "There are many problems in my family right now, so I went up to pray to the Buddha. Ko Bong Sunim helped me."

"Oh, that's too bad," the abbot said.

"Oh, why?"

"Because Ko Bong Sunim doesn't know how to do any chanting. Maybe someone else could..."

"No, no," she said. "He did very well. He helped me very much!"

The abbot looked at her. "How do you know how well he did? These are very special chants! Ko Bong Sunim doesn't know how to do them—he doesn't know chanting."

"Yes, I understand." This woman used to be a nun, so she was quite familiar with all the various chants. She knew that Ko Bong Sunim was only chanting a Taoist sutra. "What is correct chanting? He did it very well. He only chanted one hundred percent. Words are not important. The only important thing is how you keep your mind. He had only try mind—only do it."

"Oh, yes, of course," the abbot said. "I suppose mind is very important." They said goodbye and went their separate ways. When the abbot reached the temple, he found Ko Bong Sunim, seated in meditation. "Did you just chant for Mrs. Lee?"

"Yes."

"But you don't know anything about chanting."

"That's right," Ko Bong Sunim said. "I don't know anything about chanting. So I just chanted."

"Then what kind of chants did you do?" the abbot asked.

"I used an old Taoist book."

The abbot walked away, scratching his head.



This is a very interesting try-mind story. It means, from moment to moment only "do it." Only keep a try mind, only one mind: do it mind. When chanting, sitting or bowing, only do it. Practicing will not help if you are attached to your thinking, if your mind is moving. Taoist chanting, Confucian chanting, Christian chanting, Buddhist chanting: it doesn't matter. Even chanting, "Coca Cola, Coca Cola, Coca Cola..." can be just as good if you keep a clear mind. But, if you don't keep a clear mind, even Buddha cannot help you. The most important thing is, only *do* it. When you only do something one hundred percent, then there is no subject, no object. There's no inside or outside. Inside and outside are already one. That means you and the whole universe are one and never separate.

The Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God." When you are still, then you don't make anything, and you are always connected to God. Being still means keeping a still mind, even if your body is moving or you are doing some activity. Then there's no subject, no object, a mind of complete stillness. That's the Buddha's complete stillness mind. When sitting, be still. When chanting, be still. When bowing, eating, talking, walking, reading or driving, only be still. This is keeping a not moving mind, which is only do it mind. We call that try mind. ☉

*Inka Ceremony for Hyang Um Sunim  
Su Bong Zen Monastery, Hong Kong  
July 2, 1995*

## Talk by Zen Master Seung Sahn

This is an Inka Ceremony. In Buddhism, it is a very important ceremony. If we do not have an inka ceremony, Buddha's mind cannot get transmitted today. One day a long time ago, Buddha sat in front of the pagoda of many children. Twelve hundred assembled waiting for Buddha to give a dharma talk. But Buddha didn't give a talk; he was waiting for somebody. After a few minutes, an old monk appeared. Although this monk's bodily age was old, his monk's age was new. His name was Mahakashyapa.

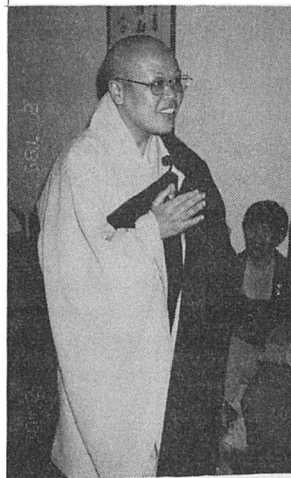
According to the rule of the sangha, monks should sit according to seniority. Mahakashyapa and Buddha looked at each other, then Mahakashyapa walked to the front of Buddha and sat next to him. Everybody was surprised; how can a new monk sit next to Buddha? That was the first transmission from Buddha to Mahakashyapa.

The next transmission was on Vulture Peak. Buddha held up a flower. Of the twelve hundred assembled, only Mahakashyapa smiled... Ha! Ha! Buddha said, "My true dharma is transmitted to you." This was the second transmission. Then Buddha died. At that time in India, people usually died at the age of 100 or 120. But Buddha died at the age of 80.

Many people didn't understand why Buddha died at an early age. Many disciples went to the place where he died to cry. Buddha's body was put in a golden coffin on top of a huge pile of firewood. The golden coffin was very strong.

Seven days had passed since Buddha's death, and everybody was waiting for Mahakashyapa. Finally, he appeared. He looked at them; they were all sad and had this big question in their mind, why Buddha had died early. Buddha had said, "No life, no death." Mahakashyapa walked around the coffin three times. Then, "BOOM!," the coffin was broken. Buddha's feet appeared. Then everybody understood: "Ah! Buddha's body died, but true Buddha was still alive." That's the last transmission.

Today we have an Inka Ceremony. That is a kind of transmission ceremony. So we must understand this point of Buddha holding up the flower; also, Buddha and Mahakashyapa sharing the same seat; and Buddha's feet appearing from the coffin. If everybody attains that point, everybody can become a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. Today, Hyang Um Sunim has attained that point and becomes a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim.



## Dharma Combat

**Jobic:** Many people said we can practice in any posture, be it sitting, standing, walking and lying down. But when we come to this Zen center, we just sit. So my question is, how can we keep practicing mind when we are sitting, standing, walking and lying down?

**Hyang Um Sunim:** What are you doing now?

**Jobic:** I'm using this microphone and talking to you.

**HUSN:** So, already you are practicing.

**Jobic:** Thank you very much for your teaching.

**Teresa:** Good evening Hyang Um Sunim!

**HUSN:** Good evening!

**Teresa:** Hyang Um Sunim, why are you a teacher and not a student?

**HUSN:** How do you call me?

**Teresa:** Hyang Um Sunim.

**HUSN:** So, the name is Hyang Um Sunim.

**Maggie:** How are you?

**HUSN:** Fine, thank you.

**Maggie:** More and more people are coming to the Zen center to practice, but there are not so many here yet. What will you do?

**HUSN:** Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal...

**Maggie:** (*joined in the chant Kwan Seum Bosal*) Thank you very much for your teaching.

**Nancy:** Good evening, Do An Sunim said your practice now bears a very big fruit. I would like to know what kind of fruit is that?

**HUSN:** How may I help you?

**Nancy:** Thank you!

**Sister Ann, a Catholic Nun of the Columban Order:** Good evening, Hyang Um Sunim.

**HUSN:** Sister Ann, good evening.

**Sister Ann:** Last week, Zen Master Seung Sahn said if we want something, we have suffering. But do we have suffering—or is it wrong—if we want something which is good?

**HUSN:** So I ask you: "What do you want?"

**Sister Ann:** I'm sitting here.

**HUSN:** Already you have attained.

# Fifteen Years a Nun

*(Hyang Um Sunim holds the ceremonial Zen stick above her head, and then brings it down and hits the table.)*

Life is death, death is life.

*(Hit)*

No life, no death.

*(Hit)*

Life is life, death is death.

KATZ!

Today is July 2, 1995. How may I help you?

Fifteen years ago before I became a nun, I had three very deep insights and experiences within a few months. The first experience was a car accident in Hong Kong. One of my colleagues had just gotten his car license. We were going to a picnic; nobody wanted to ride with him and I felt sorry for him. So I said, "I'll go with you." After I said that, two more friends joined in. After fifteen minutes on the road we had to take a turn, but my friend drove his car to the opposite lane. A big lorry was coming toward us at full speed. All the friends in the car were very afraid and screaming. But I was very calm because I was already a Buddhist, so I started chanting Kwan Seum Bosal in my mind. The car bumped to the side of the road three times, and finally was back in the correct lane again.

During the accident, the only insight that came into my mind was, "When I die, where do I go?" Deep inside there was no fear at all. Only in my mind I had this big question. Oddly enough, at that time, I couldn't feel my body. I could only see that there was brightness in front of me. At the same time, I also asked myself, is there anything which holds me back from dying? And the answer was no. The whole accident happened very fast, but the experience was very clear and slow. It was like a film; only one frame at a time.

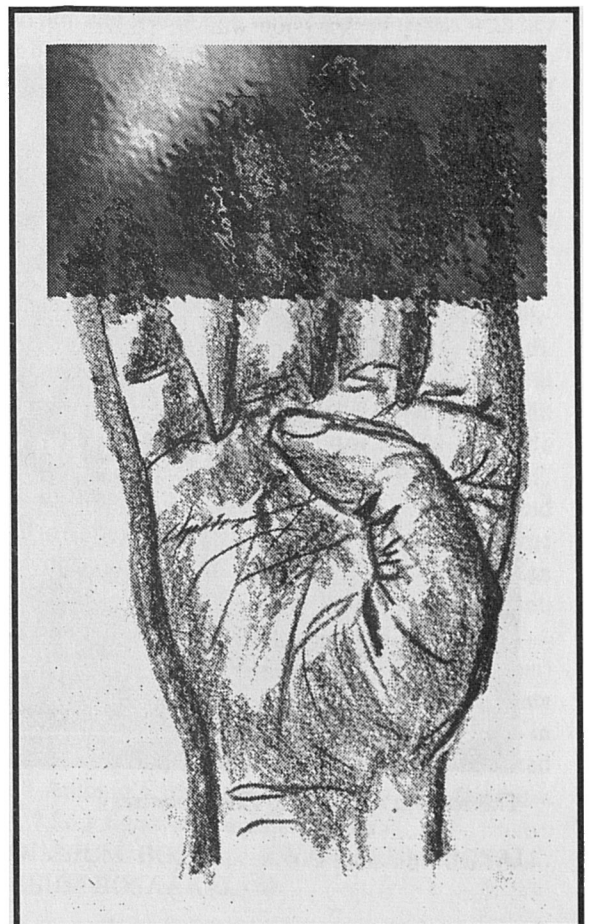
When the accident was over, none of us were hurt, but the car was badly damaged. And I could feel my body again. Ever since, my practice has been very easy. Naturally my character has also changed. I don't have to fight with myself. Sometimes when you are practicing you have to fight with many emotions inside, such as food, desire, etc. I feel at ease inside. Life became very easy.

Two weeks later, another insight also changed my life. I was working in the Central District at the Prince Building, which has many prestigious shops. It was lunch time, and as I was passing, I could see that it was under renovation. The ceiling was torn down, exposing many wires and pipes of different colors. At the very moment when my eyes caught sight of this, I felt that if I tore my skin off, it would be exactly the same as the uncovered ceiling. Before this experience, I liked beautiful clothes, shoes, perfumes and classy things.

After this experience, I became very simple.

Two months later, I went swimming with some friends. We were between the shore and a raft when suddenly my friend's leg began to cramp. I tried to help her, but instead she was pulling me down to the bottom of the sea. I called "HELP!" for her, but she drowned. After that I felt very sad because I know how to swim, but I could not rescue my friend when she was in danger. I had been studying Buddhism for four years, yet my wisdom and compassion had not matured enough to equip me to help my friend. Deep inside my mind, I desperately wanted to practice, so that one day I could help myself and the people around me.

Because of these three incidents, I became a nun. Over the last fifteen years, I spent eleven and a half years in Thailand, and almost three and a half years under the guidance of Zen Master Seung Sahn. In Thailand I spent most of the time living with nature, in the forest and caves. I spent almost two years by myself in a cave and stopped all contact with people. I was very happy and enjoyed practicing with nature.



All these years of training taught me that there is just a fine thread between life and death. When you attain "before thinking," there is no life, no death. Just like the car accident fifteen years ago. Next, life is life, death is death. Everything as it is.

After Thailand, I joined the Kwan Um School of Zen and learned from Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching. He said that just to perceive life is life, and death is death, is not enough. One more step is necessary. This step is how to use our situation and karma to help all beings. That is great love, great compassion, the great bodhisattva way. That is our direction. So if we practice, then we can use—and even change—our situation and karma for ourselves, as well as for the people around us. If we are not practicing, then we will be controlled by our karma and situation. We have no freedom from life and death. This is the most precious teaching I ever received. I have a good example.

In January, 1992, I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn. I had to go to Japan to get a visa in order to go back to Korea to finish the ninety-day retreat. A Korean monk came and asked me to get some books for him in Japan. I said no problem. But later, I discovered that the books were very expensive and he hadn't given me enough money. So I asked

one of my Korean friends what to do. She asked the monk for money for the books, and he was angry. Finally we went to Zen Master Seung Sahn and asked him for his advice. He gave me some money for the books. (He gave me a bit more, and said I could buy candy with whatever was left over!) But I was not to tell the monk that the money was from Zen Master Seung Sahn; I was to tell him that the money was collected from all the students participating in the winter retreat, as a present. So a good teacher not only can give good dharma talks, but is always teaching us great love, great compassion and the great bodhisattva way through his actions.

This is a very good teaching, because Zen Master Seung Sahn and the Korean monk became monks at the same time and they are almost the same age. So if we practice, we become a Zen Master and help many people. But if we don't practice, we will be like this old monk; anger and desire will control our life. Which one do you like? You decide.

HIT!

If you are not practicing, everywhere you go is hell!

HIT!

If you are practicing, everywhere you go is paradise. ☸



*The sangha of Su Bong Zen Monastery.*



# Gloria

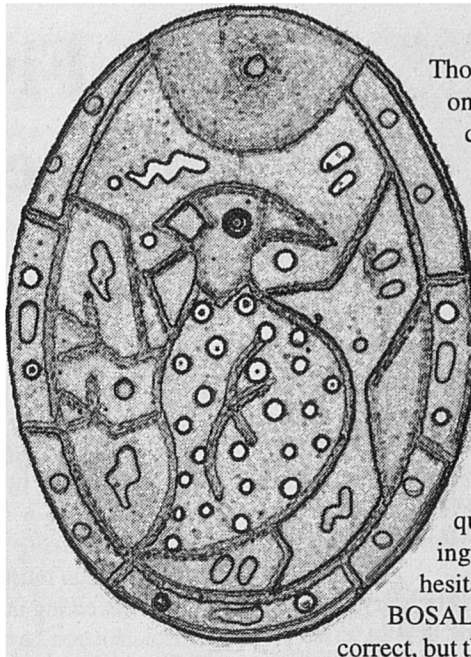
Heila Downey

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.

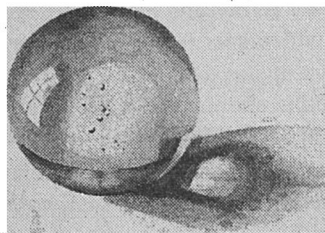
On July 17th, 1995, we held a memorial service commemorating the first year after Su Bong Sunim's death. Gloria chanted with gusto! Prior to the service, she came and asked me if we were going to do some bows for Su Bong Zen Master. When I said that it was not likely, she said, "That's fine, I will bow, 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! ☸

# Taking Five Precepts: What Does it Mean?

Neil Bartholomew



What does it mean to take five precepts? First of all, it's a wonderful way to make a statement that you are interested in practicing Zen; it means that you are willing to look at who you really are and who you thought you were. You're stating an intention to inquire into the true nature of this world, which is your own true nature, and to develop the direction of the Buddha. The direction of offering yourself, to helping all sentient beings. It is a great thing.

The implications can look intimidating or scary, because training with rules tends to make us look at it in terms of, "What won't I be allowed to do?"

The precepts aren't rules that say you're allowed to do this, and you're not allowed to do that. The precepts are guidelines against which we reflect our behavior and against which we reflect our minds. They reflect back to us what our intention was in a particular situation, so that we see what it is that we want to do and also what the situation asks of us, which may not have been our first impulse before we bounced it off of this precept mirror.

Keeping the precepts actually doesn't limit your behavior any more than not keeping the precepts. Actually what keeping the precepts does is that it liberates you from the very confined behavior of following your desire, anger, and ignorance. In fact, not keeping the precepts means staying with a way of behaving which is repressed, self destructive; not sound of self or in relations. Keeping the precepts means turning away from tunnel vision, a very wide range of behavior; and not keeping the precepts means keeping a very, very narrow range of behavior, because you're just stuck in the same habit of "I, my, me."

It becomes evident after sitting just one Zen retreat. If you hold tightly to some particular thinking that appears during sitting, and you're stuck with it, then it gets very painful, or consuming. But if you let it go, and just look, "what is this?" then as a difficulty it dissolves. Situations in life are like that. If you hold to your desire, anger or illusion, then it gets very painful and constructed. But if you let that go, and enter into the situation, which means following the precepts, then you're free. This willingness to have the precepts guide us means our trust is strong and our direction is clear—we call this "try mind." Then little-by-little you accomplish *your life*, practice blossoms, and the emotions and conditions that once controlled you are under control. The kernel of compassion ripens; the great sadness and suffering which Buddha saw as characterizing this world becomes yours; "how may I help?" appears.

This isn't a burden you're taking on. In fact, you're letting go of a burden: all of your impulsive, habitual ways of making problems for yourself and other people.

**The first precept:** "I vow to abstain from taking life." For a lot of people in our school and for a lot of Buddhists, that means being a vegetarian. For some Buddhists, that doesn't mean being a vegetarian. Vegetarianism is not a strict rule which must be followed, but a great many people find that not eating meat or eating it very rarely makes a lot of sense. But you have to decide what makes sense for you; if you're a parent and you have children, you have to be sensitive to that condition in a way that works. It is like visiting our parents on Thanksgiving and being served turkey—the wisdom and love that allows a vegetarian offering to eat turkey often makes a parent very happy.

For some people, this precept has implications for a whole wide range of behaviors which affect life on this earth. A guy who is not a Buddhist, the singer/songwriter Utah Phillips, union activist, old-time Socialist, was traveling around in his van doing gigs when the Gulf war broke out a few years ago. He pulled his van off the road and found a place to leave it for a while. I forget just how he traveled (as a union activist he wouldn't take a Greyhound bus), but he decided for the rest of the war he wouldn't drive his van, because, he said, "This van doesn't run on blood." This was his decision. He felt that a lot of people were dying for him to be able to buy cheap gas.

It comes down to each person deciding what makes sense, not what's convenient. Just to live, just to continue living in this body, you must take life. That's the nature of life, that it requires other life to sustain it. So, you have to decide how far you're going to go. I'm vegetarian except when I visit my parents or some other together action demands otherwise. The main reason for me has to do with staying low on the food chain, because the lower you are on the chain, the less life you have to take in order to sustain your own. Also it uses fewer resources and allows more resources for others. That's my conclusion. We all have to look at the effects of our actions and make our own decisions.

**The second precept:** "I vow to abstain from taking things not given." Interesting wording—not "I won't steal things." Here again, there are implications in our daily interactions with other people; there are implications in our relationship to the earth, to our society. It's a good example of how keeping the precepts really widens our possible behavior.

It you long for something which isn't yours, then maybe you don't need it. Maybe you have some habit which causes you to desire it. If so, then consciously not taking it can start to free you from that habit and introduce you to some new experience. Most likely the experience will involve a more attentive relationship with the world, because you will choose it consciously. So you are brought back to don't know, back to your correct relationship with the world and the things and people of the world. And in the end, that will probably be a lot more enjoyable than snatching whatever it was that you wanted.

What about the situation when you want something which isn't yours and you really do need it, or it's in that gray area where maybe you need it and maybe you don't, but pursuing it wouldn't be harmful. Well, pursue it. But pursue it openly, not, "Well, nobody will know if I..." If you are compelled to do it surreptitiously, then ask why this is so. It's an opportunity to look into your own intention. Does this thing actually have significance or am I just pursuing it as a symbol of something else?

What is your relationship to the other people, beings, things in this situation? That's really what all of the precepts are about: your relationship to what's going on, inquiring into that relationship, into the way in which you don't have "enough mind" in this situation. Maybe when you inquire, you will realize that what you have really is enough. Maybe you will conclude that you need something from that situation which isn't coming. So, pursue it. Don't check, only do it, but own your actions. Do it consciously, by choice, openly, and by developing or changing your relationship with the other beings who have relationship with whatever you want. That means you're transforming something, which is liberating to you and others. Some karma is somehow going to shift, some habit is going to have to change.

**The third precept:** "I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust." Again, interesting wording. Some Western Buddhist schools translate it differently and make it much more specific, but in our school we say it this way, "What does that mean?"

First of all, the word lust can be very broad. The original precept was referring to sexual behavior, and I'll get back to that specifically. You can lust after money, power, food, all kinds of things. So, what is misconduct done in lust? Basically, what it means is vowing not to do harm. This does not mean, "Oh, well, it's not hurting anybody." Usually, that's an excuse for hurting somebody. Maybe not yourself, but somebody. So, this is a view not to do harm. With lust after something like food, the question may be one of doing harm to yourself. This isn't a guilt thing, saying you're bad because you ate that ice cream. Maybe it was good for you to eat that ice cream. Maybe it was a really good idea. Holding the precept, attaching to the precepts, is a mistake. Using the precept as a mirror: if you pig out, you feel lousy. Cause and effect are clear. Very simple. Or maybe you have wild reactions to sugar, so you eat ice cream, and you crash later and have a headache and beat up somebody. Cause and

effect are clear. If the desire for ice cream causes you to bulldoze your way over other people's needs, then something is not right. If you just eat ice cream, and enjoy the ice cream (because otherwise there's not much point to it), then it's finished.

So, looking specifically at sexual behavior, what is misconduct done in lust? If you're a monk, certain things are very clear. If you're married, certain things are very clear. But for anybody, what it means is a vow that you are not going to manipulate others because of your sexual desire, and you are not going to use anybody else's sexual desire as a tool to manipulate them, and you are not going to allow anybody to use your sexual desire as a tool to manipulate you. So, if you're a monk, if you're married, if you're single, what is misconduct done in lust? A lot of manipulative stuff happens, not necessarily sexual acts, just people using the sexual energy to get what they want. This is a vow to put an end to that.

So, how does this precept become a liberation to a wider behavior? If there was this impulse to do some sexual behavior or to use sexual energy to get some other results, that means that there's some kind of relationship there. Probably some kind of relatively close relationship with some other human being. What is the nature of that relationship? If I choose not to behave in this manipulative way toward which I felt compelled, what is it that I need from this relationship, and what is it that this relationship asks of me? Why am I in this relationship with this person? What is the purpose of this karma that we're making together? If I choose not to do this manipulative acting, how do I use this relationship to help us both? How do I deepen the bond, whatever it is?

It's really an opportunity to discover how to relate to people, how to build relationships that help this world. Maybe it means having a sexual partner and a strong bond, not based on manipulating each other to get what you want, but based on challenging each other to become your true self, and taking the energy from that to help the world. Maybe it means none of that. Always inquire, "What is this?"

**The fourth precept:** "I vow to abstain from lying." Someone said that this precept was the one they found most difficult to keep. Afterwards, I thought about that. Why is that? I think it is because, of the types of behavior described by these five precepts, lying is the one that is most accepted. We all basically know that you don't kill people, that you don't steal, that you don't mess with people over weird sexual stuff, and it's not a good idea to get drunk and abuse people either. But, somehow, lying is the one that's accepted. "Well, everybody does it." In one sense, this is also the most central of the five precepts, because our practice is all about the truth and being honest. Right from the start, "The wall is white, the floor is brown." That's the truth. That's what our practice is about. Our practice is about waking up from our dreams and perceiving the truth, acting the truth, and speaking the truth. So this is a very important precept.

We say in the temple rules: know when the precepts are closed and when they are open—when to keep them and when to break them. This is Zen style precepts, which we talk about in the Precepts Ceremony. With Zen precepts, the purpose of the precepts is to ask why you are doing what it is that you are doing. It's not necessarily that this particular action is good and this action is bad; it's why do you do it? If it's "I want something," then return to your practice at that moment. Practice is just paying attention. Return to your practice and ask, "What is this?"

So, the mouth opens and you see a lie coming out. Why is it that you feel this need to violate the truth? It may be that upon looking closely, you'll see that it's a situation where it's appropriate to break the precepts. That's probably several orders of magnitude more rare than we like to think. In that moment, inquire, "Why do I feel this need to violate the truth?" Which means, to violate my practice, my commitment to the truth. Why do I feel this need to abandon that?

It's a great moment, because that's your practice right there. Perceive your karma. If you just perceive it and see, and probably struggle with it for awhile, and stay with it through the struggle, and then let it go... in that moment, you're Buddha. What a great liberation.

The precept says, "I vow to abstain from lying." So, start with the person you spend the most time with. You're vowing not to lie to yourself anymore, which is a great gift to give yourself. It may sometimes be painful. It's a lot easier to abstain from lying to others than to abstain from lying to yourself. Someone once said to me that, since there isn't really a self, you have to make up a self in order to lie to yourself, so how can you lie to yourself? Well, we say in the Precepts Ceremony, if you're not thinking, you don't need the precepts. If you have no mind, then you don't need the precepts. But if you have a mind, if a little bit of thinking appears, the precepts are necessary.

**The fifth precept:** "I vow to abstain from intoxicants taken to produce heedlessness."

Once again, what does that mean? A number of senior people in our school have no problem with a glass of wine with dinner. Some abstain completely from alcohol. What is the intention? Why have a glass of wine? Well, why eat good-tasting food? Why not just rice and beans every day and a few plain vegetables? Why add the pleasurable aspect which doesn't add anything to the ability of the food to sustain your practice? The answer lies in the fact that allowing yourself simple pleasures like good food actually can add something to

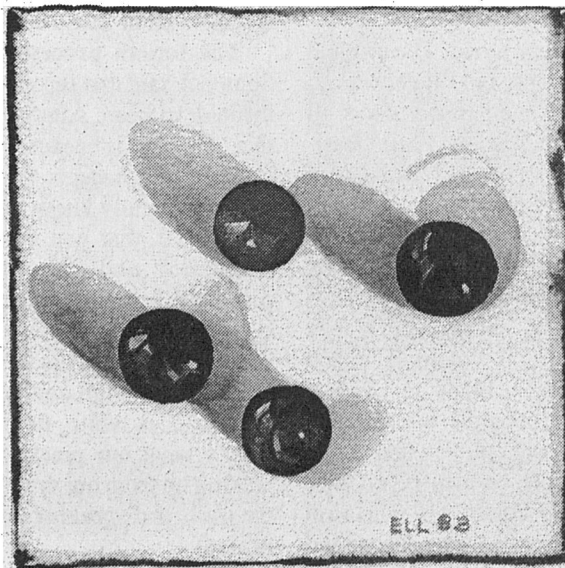
supporting your practice. Buddhism is called the middle way, which means not too tight, not too loose. If we are too strict with ourselves for too long, our desire mind can actually get stronger because we are forcing it into submission and it is fighting back. If we are not strict enough then our desire mind controls us, and we follow it around without direction or purpose.

So, sometimes enjoying the pleasure of delicious food can help to quiet the food-desire demon so that it will not distract us from the needs of the moment. Also, putting too much energy into the procurement of good food draws us away from the needs of the moment and into breaking the precepts. Similarly, for some people, a moderate amount of alcohol may provide a simple pleasure which stills the voice of desire or inhibition without indulging it to the point of giving up the power of decision. But that line is very thin, and it is easy to delude ourselves into thinking that we are keeping things in balance when we are pushing toward the edge of "heedlessness." So, we must always pay attention.

For some people, abstaining from intoxicants includes making changes to their consumption of sugar, tobacco, and caffeine. What is your relationship with other people? Just pay attention and see, and decide for yourself whether any change is necessary.

The precepts are all interrelated. Most behaviors that break one of the precepts break at least one of the other precepts, because what it all comes down to is intention. If your intention is a genuine response to the situation, then you're probably keeping the precepts. If it is not genuine, at the very least you're lying, and you're probably doing something else. Misconduct done in lust often involves taking things not given, as well as lying, and might easily include intoxicants. Taking life is often done out of greed, which violated the second precept. Stealing and lying are closely related.

Finally, taking the precepts means that you are officially becoming Buddhist. It doesn't have to mean leaving behind any other religious or ethnic affiliation. You can still be a Jew or a Christian or a neo-pagan or whatever. But in addition, you have taken a vow to follow the teachings of Buddha, which means a vow to become Buddha. You can be a Muslim Buddha or an ecofeminist Buddha or a Jewish Buddha or a Catholic Buddha. These five precepts were first set down by Sakyamuni Buddha for his lay disciples. And, as I said at the very start, that's making a powerful statement to ourselves and to the Sangha about your commitment to become Buddha. ☸



# Family Practice

An Interview with Barry Briggs by Pamela Gang Sherman

*Barry Briggs is director of Dharma Sound Zen Center in Seattle. He is married to Ellen Ziegler. Their daughter, Susannah, is eight years old.*

**Pamela Gang Sherman:** Barry, would you come at the first question backwards? How did practice affect your parenting?

**Barry Briggs:** I didn't see my daughter very much during the first four years of her life. I had a job which usually took 70-80 hours a week, minimum 60; I was an executive at Microsoft. I saw the family on the weekend, sometimes, and was usually too tired or distracted to be there fully. At that time, I thought that was fine. I liked my work. My wife's concern that I wasn't spending enough time with the family seemed irrelevant to me.

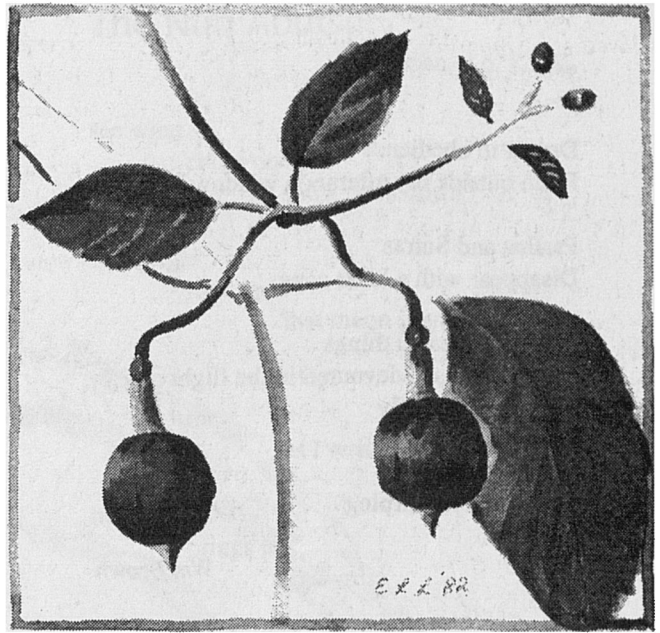
Then in 1990, my best friend said, "What would it take to get you to go to a Zen retreat?" I basically went out of friendship for him. I didn't have any big question that I needed to address. During that first retreat, nothing too dramatic happened. But I was able to spend some time with my life, and it became clear that some things needed attention. Up until that retreat it was as if my life were a nice, fancy car—comfortable, fast, stylish, smooth-driving. But in the course of the retreat, I had the chance to pop open the hood of the car and things were not so nice inside. The fan belt was coming apart, the wiring was frayed—some work had to be done. I realized that although my life looked fine from the outside, on the inside it was terribly unbalanced. One of the imbalances was that I was not involved in raising my daughter.

One year later, I quit Microsoft. I'm now a marketing consultant, and I work as much or as little as I want. I can go to retreats. Most importantly, I am involved in my daughter's life—I just dropped her off at school. My family situation is much better; though I didn't think anything was particularly wrong before I started practicing.

For me, practicing has made it possible to begin functioning more correctly in my life. It hasn't been easy: as my center began to get strong, everything in my life was called into question. After I left Microsoft, my wife and I separated for one year to make adjustments in our relationship. There was no way these could be made when we were still living together. It was like taking the car into the garage for major servicing. Now we are back together and even though that year was hard on our daughter, she has benefitted from it; I can see it in her behavior. If we hadn't separated, we probably would have ended in divorce by now. And that would have been really hard on our daughter.

**PGS:** How do you share practice with your daughter?

**BB:** My daughter is not exposed to my concrete practice because I do it before she wakes. Our family says a blessing before meals that I found in one of Robert Aitken Roshi's books. Susannah has images of Kwan Seum Bosal in her room. She also knows that chanting Kwan Seum Bosal will make the world a better place and she likes doing it with me and at ceremonies at the Zen center. But I do not think she actually does it on her own. My wife is a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and her group meets at our house once a week. My daughter likes to practice with them and she knows all the chants. Even if she doesn't practice with them, she likes to be in the same room with them playing with toys. She always comes to the various ceremonies at the Zen center; she especially likes the kido chanting and hearing the stories



during the talks. We tell and read stories specifically for the kids at our ceremonies.

**PGS:** How does your sangha support your needs as a parent?

**BB:** We have a really child-oriented sangha. It started as residential, but then people had families. Most of the long-time students have families with children and virtually all the kids come to the ceremonies. Some of the "kids" are adults and their parents have brought them to our "Introduction to Zen" workshops. Kids are particularly welcome at ceremonies; we'll usually have half a dozen from ages four to ten. So I think many of the kids feel like they're part of the sangha and this supports the families. Our ceremonies are always followed by potluck dinners, so the kids get to spend time in the community. The kids really seem to like that. There's been some talk lately about starting a Sunday School one day each month—but our center has taken on a very active schedule this year, and we may need more administrative volunteers before a Sunday School is possible.

We have sometimes called our retreats "family-style" retreats. We hold retreats on Vashon Island in Puget Sound off Seattle, so there's not much coming and going; when you're there, you're there. In the past when people have brought kids, the parents and even non-parents have shared in child-care. People's situations have changed in the last couple of years, so families aren't coming so much anymore. But our sangha is very welcoming of kids—and parents.

Not everyone in the sangha is a parent and some non-parents sometimes struggle to keep their focus with kids around. Kids are always tugging at our center—sometimes they can pull us off our center, sometimes this makes our center become stronger.

At Kyol Che this year, I asked Jane McLaughlin, who was leading it, about the traditional Buddha story. Did Buddha really have to leave home, his family? Jane's really coming into her own as a teacher. She said, "Yes! You just be homeless—have a homeless mind. That doesn't mean you have to leave home." That's really true—we must cultivate a homeless attitude, especially with children and family.

**PGS:** Thank you Barry.

*Pamela Gang Sherman lives in Gold Hill, Colorado with her husband and two year old son. ☺*

\*\*\*

Drawn to obedience  
From outside my afternoon window

Psalms and Sutras  
Disappear with a birds song

Sound infixes all things  
Time and space devoured in the flight of a  
dragonfly

Complete life  
Chirp, chirp, chirping

*Wm Brown*

## Death Poems in August

1.

Picking my way  
thru the words & papers  
is too slow—

I'm outa here

2.

Spin off in a spiral  
like smoke  
but it's just a sigh, really.

Final breath.

3.

Sorry to leave this mess.  
Maybe you can sell it.

I bow once more at the door.

*Diane Di Prima*

## Evening Sitting

At the mouth of this cave,  
a pile of three stones  
makes a Buddha;  
the smoke from a pinch of herbs  
curls gracefully.  
A single candle,  
a cup of water,  
the night drifts...  
Somewhere in the deeper caves of sleep  
a female kestrel nestles in my hair,  
brushing with soft feathers,  
and says,  
"She loves us all."  
Later  
the boulder  
at the mouth of the cave  
blushes  
with the first kiss of dawn.  
Then the rich man from the east  
drenches the tree tips  
with yellow gold.

*Chris Hoffman*  
copyright © January 1990

## It's Just There

The hiss of the radiator,  
Sound of the cars on the street,  
They come & go to us meditators  
Like the sound when we eat.

It's just there  
It's just there  
It's just there

Cat watches birds  
Airplanes fly by,  
Kids playing in herds,  
Noise that really dosen't matter, just goes by.

It's just there

*Tommy Hendrix*

# The Nun Abutsu

(Japan, d.c. 1283)

## Sukka

from the Therigatha c. 80 BCE, Pali Canon

The spirit of the tree  
walking the streets of the city speaks:

What's wrong with you men  
of Rajagaha?  
You're acting drunk, stupid, lazy  
Don't you want to hear the woman Sukka  
teach the precious Dharma?

The wise drink it up  
it's irresistible, quenching,  
An inexhaustible elixir she pours into you

Her words are sweet  
Travellers drink them like rain

And hearing what the tree-spirit said, people were  
excited and flocked to Sukka.  
At the end of her life, Sukka declared her realization:

I'm named Sukka because I am a "child of light".  
I subjugated desire, focused my mind  
Conquered Mara and his temptors  
Ah, my little frame breaks  
but it's the last body I speak in

sea wind  
chilly on me  
snow rides down  
each night  
look up  
that moon is smaller!  
I wane  
too  
as I write  
not sadness  
brings me  
to words  
but everything  
resembles something else  
is an exultation  
enormous waves  
rise:  
flowers! Flowers!  
The road  
East  
is a song

Anne Waldman

Anne Waldman

*Sukka was a great preacher, attended by five hundred bhikkhunis. One day after begging alms in Rajagaha, she returned to the nuns' settlement and began to teach "with a great company seated around her." Her words were so powerful and sweet (like mead and ambrosia) that they inspired a tree spirit (devata) that stood at the end of the Sisters' terrace to go and walk the roads and squares proclaiming Sukka's excellence.*

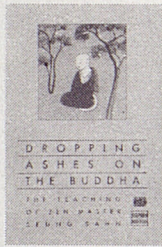
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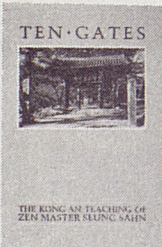
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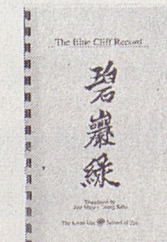
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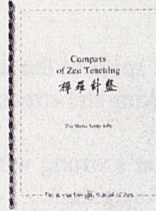


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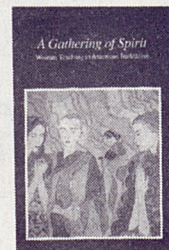
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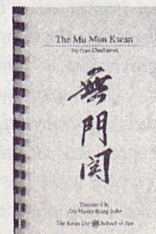
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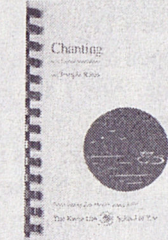
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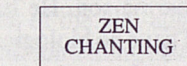


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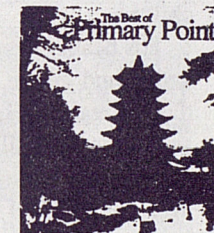
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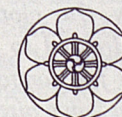


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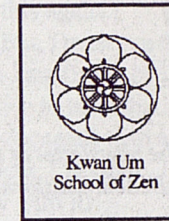


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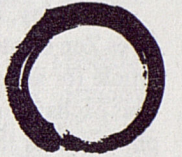


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# Teaching Without Knowing

Bridget Duff

*Reprinted from Only Go Straight, the newsletter of the Ocean Eyes Zen Center in Huntington Beach, California.*

On Friday, August 11, my friend and abbot of Ocean Eyes Zen Center, Paul Lynch, asked me to knock out an article for an issue of his newsletter, Only Go Straight. This exchange and the perceptions I describe below takes place in less than a minute as I am pulling up into the Dharma Zen Center driveway.

Paul and Morgan are piling meditation cushions into Paul's jeep for the anniversary ceremony and meditation retreat of Ocean Eyes Zen Center, which Paul (in his only-go-straight zealously) founded single-handedly

two years ago. He is dressed smartly—straight from work some thirty miles away. He looks handsome and happy and not the least bit worn down. Whenever I see Paul, I see a Try-Mind. This big bear of a man never forgets to open his arms wide and give me a hug whenever he sees me. And I am always afraid his size and strength will break my spine; it has never happened. I am surprised at how tender this intensely assiduous fellow can be.

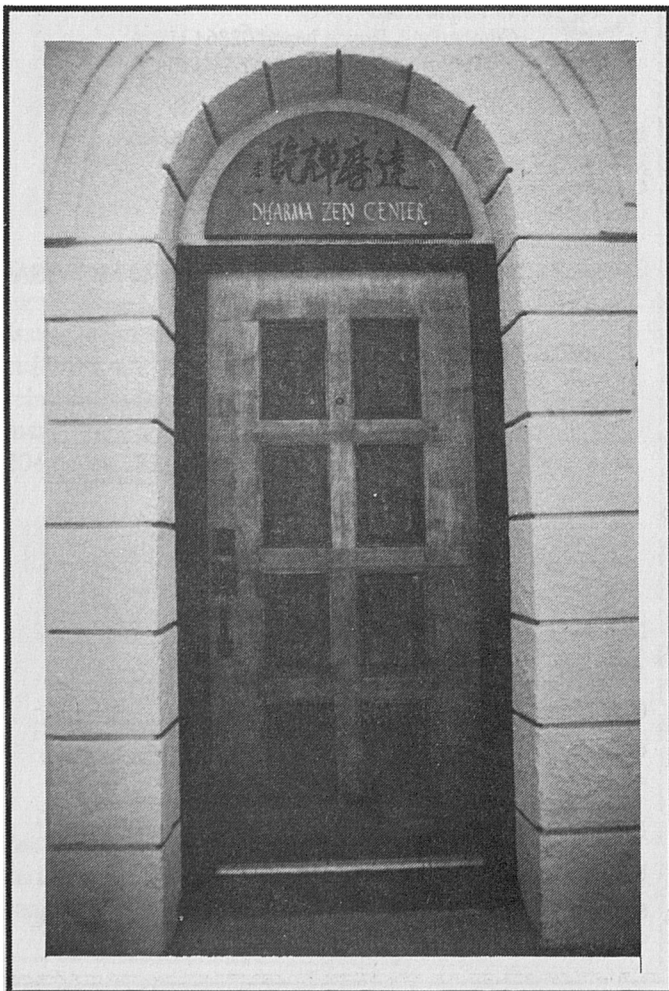
This is his particular beauty. It touches my heart; and me, being a Zen student for almost twenty years and him being one for only five and accomplishing so much in such a short amount of time... well, I am humbled, a mandatory ingredient of true Zen practice. This man with his white-hot passion for everything he does, but especially his passion for helping others, teaches me, without knowing.

Morgan, I have adopted as my dharma-son. He has generously agreed to the "adoption." I have no biological children.

His beauty is in those clear blue eyes, brilliant white smile, and gentle, yet firm way of instructing as head dharma teacher. He is young enough to be my son, and yet sometimes he will be the only person in the world I feel comfortable enough with to confide my innermost feelings. He is one of the few men I have met in forty-three years who genuinely, and without discrimination loves and appreciates women. All of us. Wholly democratically.

I flash back to a Sunday afternoon a few weeks ago when Morgan and I were visiting Dharma Kai Zen Center in Whittier:

*After a morning of long sitting meditation and interviews with Bob Moore, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, a group of us gals decide to go out to lunch together. We are in a Thai restaurant; about seven women, and Morgan seated smack dab in the middle of all of us—the only man. Most of us are at least twenty years older than Morgan; some of us are overweight, and none of us are wearing a stitch of make-up. Our hair is not coiffed. It is over 102 degrees that day. We are all hot and sweaty. Our clothes are baggy and shapeless. We are not dressed to seduce, entice, or impress. We are dressed for comfort. For meditation. For our labor in trying to "give birth to the Buddha within us..."*



*Morgan sits next to me quietly listening to our girl-talk. He is beaming. Delighted. And ever so discreetly, he leans over and whispers in my ear, "I just love women. Old, young, fat, skinny. Short, tall. Black, white, brown, yellow or red. ALL WOMEN!" There are no words to describe what I experience when he tells me this. But he has carved a deeper niche for himself into the chamber of my heart.*

He also teaches me, without knowing.

Now at this point, ironically, in the nano-second of my mental ruminations on seeing these two men as my car comes to a halt in the driveway, Paul leans in the car window and asks, "Ya feel like writing an article for me on 'Women in Buddhism'?" His smile is irresistible.

I have been rushing and rushing and rushing... for weeks. My mother has recently died from liver cancer. We reconciled after a fifteen year estrangement. I have spent every one of the last forty-nine days with her, watching her disintegrate before my eyes. The morphine, lots of it, was not enough to kill the pain sometimes. The mental anguish I watched her go through as her whole life was reviewed for her before she could pass on... The tears. The laughter. The memories. The endless preparations for memorial services. The phone calls, non-stop. The last gift we exchanged between us: the gift of forgiveness... She died peacefully. Finally. And perhaps part of the old, angry, and resentful ME went with her. And something new is in the process of being born. I have to push, push, push... indeed, it feels like being in labor... It's imminent, amazing, alarming... and it hurts like hell! What is this? Metaphorically, I can describe it as feeling like being in labor, or having open heart surgery without any anesthesia. Completely raw and exposed. But, let's get real here. Let's look at the other side of the coin: it's not as dramatic as it sounds. It's something to experience. To practice with. To learn a little bit more about myself. How my thoughts and emotions come and go. Stay awake with it, and it becomes clear: it's nothing more or less than just this.

And in the past week since my mother's passing, I have been trying to catch up on my life that had to be put on hold. So much to do. Piles up. The apartment buildings I manage; Mario, the man I have lived with for twelve years; my three cats; the Zen Center; cleaning my house; cooking meals; watering the grass and sunflowers; all of them have had to endure being neglected by me. Not a moment to waste.

And tonight, I must run a discussion group at the Zen Center; our first such endeavor. We have decided not to have a formal talk by a student, followed by questions answered by a senior dharma teacher. Instead we will experiment with sharing. Sitting in a circle, all being handed the "Talking Stick," as some Native American

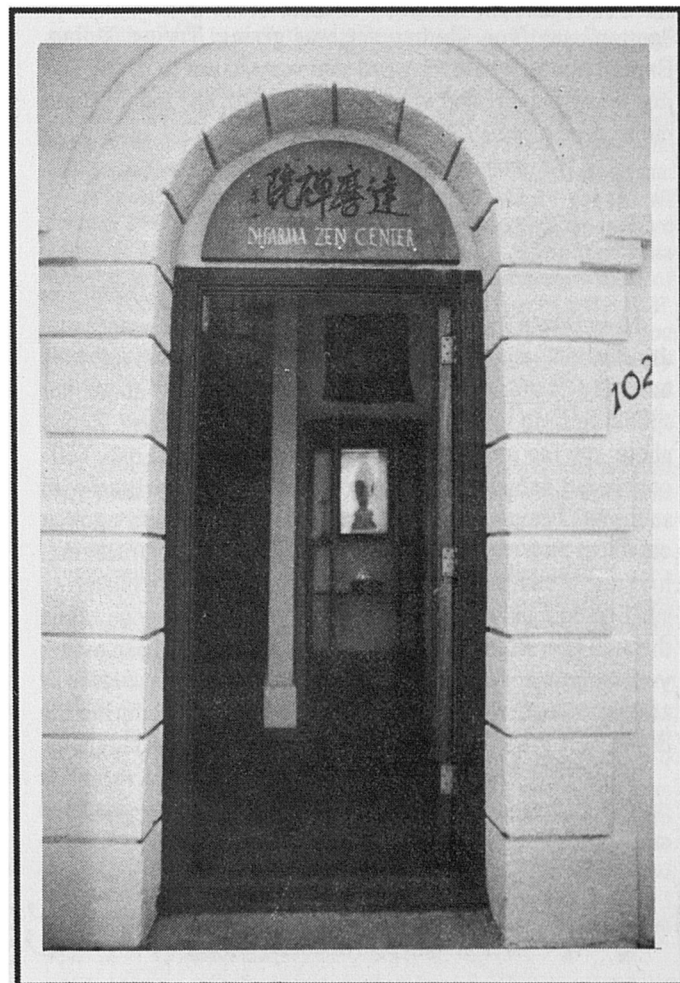
tribes may call it. Cate, whom I have "adopted" as my dharma-mother, has made this suggestion. It rings true in my "guts" as being an excellent and exciting new idea. Yes! Let's try it. (As it turned out, it was a great success. We decided, both men and women, that we would like to do this again.)

But, I must run this discussion group tonight and I feel like I am flying by the seat of my pants. I don't know, and I have to trust that... see what happens. But still... I am preoccupied with all this when Paul asks me to write this article. I hesitate. I'm too busy. Too tired. Too... ah, to hell with it!

"What's my deadline?" I ask. "Tuesday? Wednesday?" he laughs.

"WHAT?!" I virtually scream at him. I can't possibly do it in that amount of time. I have another memorial service to attend for my mother on Sunday. New tenants are moving in tomorrow. Bank deposits. My mother's sister, my aunt, is in orbit with grief and life's pressures... she wants me near her... SHIT!

"Okay, I'll have it to you by then," I yell at him testily. He doesn't miss a beat, doesn't get insulted and defensive



at my instant bad temper. He just smiles that smile. It speaks more than ten thousand words. It says, "I know. I understand. But I believe you can pull it off. TRY."

Try. What does it mean to try? I am reminded of something my friend and teacher of so many years, Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Barbara Rhodes) once said about effective Zen practice: "Trying means to just do your best in each moment, and then... do a little extra." I seem to remember her smiling, encouragingly, as she said this. I don't remember when or where I heard this from her. I just never forget she said that. It's a simple distillation of how to go about The True Way. It's not thinking about trying, it's about just doing. It's about not being afraid to make mistakes (because we will).

Bobby is a Woman In Buddhism (one of many). But that sentence bothers me somewhat. I prefer to say she is a woman involved, in relationship, with this moment. She's very busy (and happily so) with doing, doing, doing. She has very little free time on her hands, yet she's always been one of the most free people I know. She was an example for me over the years. I'd ask myself, how does she do it all and remain so enthusiastic, and at the same time so at ease? Whatever it is she's got, I want to get some of "that" for myself. It was many, many years before I began to realize she hadn't "gotten" anything. Rather, she was giving. Trying, Doing, Experiencing, whatever word you want to put to it, she was just being herself and without knowing it, she has inspired me to do the same. To at least try.

*We never know how high we are  
Till we are asked to rise.  
And then if we are true to plan  
Our statures touch the skies.*

—Emily Dickinson

Now here's Emily Dickinson who has said the exact same thing about trying, but her personal expression of it is uniquely her own. I don't recall ever hearing about her spending time in a Zen Buddhist Temple. However, Zen is about staying awake—waking up from our feverish, self-concerned delusions. Emily could never have written with such vital beauty, such undeniable truth, if she hadn't gotten out of her own way: quieting, sitting still a moment; listening, looking, breathing, hearing, feeling the breezes (or blistering sun) on her skin; and letting something marvelous come through her. At the very moment she wrote this, I can assure you she was not thinking about it. Perhaps she was before or after it was put down on paper, but certainly not during the doing of it. And without even knowing it, she has taught us.

Women in Buddhism. What exactly does that mean? Is there a difference in quality or heartfelt sincerity between the smiles of Paul, Bobby, Morgan, Emily Dickinson, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Bob Moore, Cate? Is there variation or

disparity, in the truth of the teachings I have received from them? Ultimately, we all must just become completely comfortable being ourselves. Isn't that what we all want? Just to be completely at home with ourself? Right now? Here? Not to feel separate? All us men and women? In this moment, can we not receive as much from a blade of grass that has pushed its way through the concrete? Such a soft, delicate and tentative thing that has, without knowing, made its way up to the light, through a tunnel of dark, hard stuff. Our life is the same as that of the little blade of grass. The baby bird that pecks its way out of its shell. The clouds giving us all rain so that we may drink and stay alive. The sun shines also, that we may stay alive. The baby that comes out of its mother's womb. To be alive. Why are we alive? To do our best? To do our worst? Which one do you choose?

Here is a gift for you: "It has been said that to give birth to a baby is the most miraculous thing. The first most miraculous thing is to give birth to your Buddha-Nature." These words came out of the mouth of a man whose wife had just given birth to their child the day before and he seemed to be overjoyed with becoming a father. He is Dennis Genpo Merzel, a dharma heir of the late, great Taizan Maezumi Roshi. I have never met Mr. Merzel in person, but when I read this in his book, *The Eye That Never Sleeps*, without knowing, he taught me something.

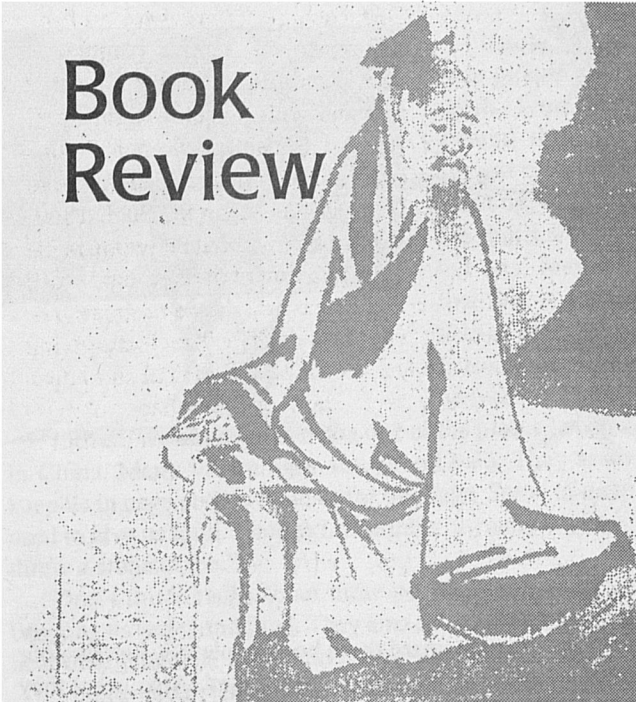
As you might have noticed, I keep referring to without knowing, or, as some of us are used to saying, "Don't Know." From this before-thinking-mind—before anger, greed and ignorance—without knowing, we are giving birth to True Knowing. Any man, any woman can do this great labor of love. This work of life and death. I know this. But, don't take my word for it, find out for yourself. It's quite a game. As a good monk and friend of mine, Do An Sunim, JDPS, has said, "It's the only game in town." But the stakes in this game are, you put your ass on the line. You give up getting and start giving. You throw down your weapons and march right the hell into enemy territory unarmed. It sounds severe and unsafe. Downright horrible and frightening. Hey, it is... sometimes. But that's the way of the warrior—warrior women and men alike.

But here's the payoff: you will meet your antagonist—you. And you will also meet your own best eternal playmate and chum—you. And in this moment, no matter what the condition, situation or relationship may be, the war is over. Opposite thinking disappears, and lo and behold, so does opposition. You're free to give and receive. The winner of this game doesn't mind in the least that she/he is losing, because we are not losing anything of any value. We are just losing all the crap that kept us from winning in the first place.

Women in Buddhism. Men in Buddhism. Forget all that! Let's just play the game with all our heart. ☉



# Book Review



## **The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism (Revised Second Edition)**

Edited by Fred Eppsteiner, Parallax Press, 1988.

Reviewed by Edward R. Canda, Ph.D.

*The Path of Compassion* is a powerful call to join insight and compassion with action. The book was developed by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, California. According to the organization's statement of purpose, it was founded in 1978 in order to promote "peace and protection for all beings." "Compassion" and "saving all beings" are common refrains in Buddhism. But a common criticism of Buddhism throughout history has been the tendency of some practitioners to become "other worldly" or reclusive because of a preoccupation with seeking personal enlightenment. In such a case, the vow to save all beings becomes a platitude, while social injustice and personal suffering go unattended. *The Path of Compassion* is a collection of essays by contemporary Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay people from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, both East and West. The essays suggest that a Buddhist movement is growing to become more actively engaged in action for social service and social justice.

All of the essays emphasize that compassion is a natural expression of a clear mind. Nelson Foster recounts the 89th case of the Blue Cliff Record: to paraphrase, Ugan asked Dogo, "How does the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Kanzeon (Kwan Seum Bosal, Korean), use the thousand hands and eyes?" Dogo's answer: "It is like someone asleep adjusting the pillow in the middle of the night." Compassion is the natural and reflexive response arising from clear mind.

But this can be tricky. Jack Kornfield cautions us to see through the masquerade of egoistic feelings: love is not attachment; compassion is not pity; equanimity is not indifference. Joanna Macy, drawing on her study of Theravada social action, explains key

interrelated terms. "Metta" means having loving kindness for all beings. "Karuna" means compassionate joining in the suffering of others. "Muditha" means having joy and creative involvement with others. "Upekkha" means a stance of equanimity from awareness of one's interdependence with all else. These qualities must all be cultivated together.

As the Dalai Lama points out, truly compassionate service is not just a matter of concepts. It is a fruit of mindfulness and self-awareness. Mind must be clear in even the harshest of circumstances for compassion to manifest. The Dalai Lama speaks from the perspective of an exiled religious leader of oppressed and colonized Tibetan people. Similarly, Maha Ghosananda emerged from the "killing fields" of genocide in Cambodia to pray, "The suffering of Cambodia has been deep. From this suffering comes great compassion. Great compassion makes a peaceful heart." He prays that the effects of the peaceful heart continue out to make peace in the family, community, nation and world.

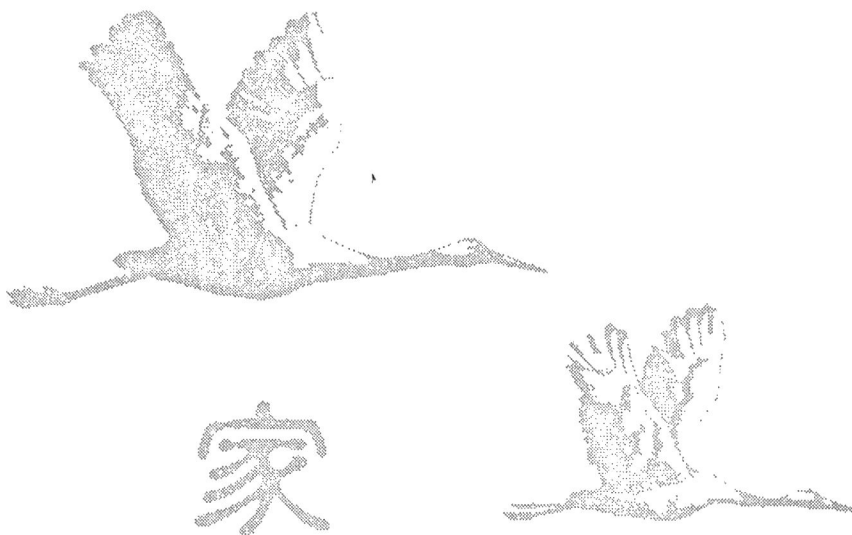
The Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh writes in his poem, "Please Call Me By My True Names," that he is mayfly, bird, frog, starving Ugandan child, raped refugee girl, pirate who commits atrocity, and politburo member; he wants to hear all his laughs and cries at once. He writes, "Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up, and so the door of my heart can be left open, the door of compassion."

Compassion leads one to attend to the personal suffering of oneself and others. The Vietnamese nun, Cao Ngoc Phuong, recalls her sister nun's act of self-immolation to protest the war in Vietnam. Judith Ragir points out that taking care of oneself is also compassion. She recounts how Buddhist practice gave her "the staff with which to walk through this experience" of having been raped.

Compassion also leads one to attend to societal problems and injustice. Robert Thurman summarizes how Buddhist principles have offered guidance for governing society. For example, the Indian emperor Asoka, in the third century BCE, issued edicts that advocated for cultivation of morality, nonviolence toward all sentient beings, religious pluralism, institution of social welfare activities, and delegation of government authority. Sulak Sivaraksa links traditional Buddhist precepts to the contemporary ideal of "small is beautiful," proposed by the Buddhist economist E. F. Schumaker. Sivaraksa says, "World dukkha (suffering) is too immense for any country, people, or religion to solve. We can only save ourselves when all humanity recognizes that every problem on earth is our own personal problem and our own personal responsibility."

I believe this is an important book, especially for American Buddhists, because it sounds a clarion call for compassionate action while American Buddhism is still in a formative state. It is a reminder to avoid the pitfalls of subtle egotism or escapism. Compassionate service is itself practice of the dharma. It is not a mere add-on to meditation, chanting, or kong-an practice. Right now, at this moment, compassion is a matter of life and death for countless beings!

The famous Korean monk Wonhyo said in the seventh century that the individual's predicament of suffering is like a person being trapped in a burning house with little time to escape. So Wonhyo exclaimed about finding a way out, "Isn't it urgent?! Isn't it urgent?!" Our contemporary planetary situation is one in which we are all literally trapped in a world burning with personal and societal violence, exploitation of poor by rich and destruction of the ecosystem. The fire is all around if we have eyes to see. So if someone says, "Why should Buddhism be socially engaged, isn't that just a distraction?," just point anywhere and say, "Isn't it urgent?!" And ask the person to read this book. ☸



# The Birds' Tale

*Chong An Sunim*

"Did you see them?"

"No. I am tired of humans."

"Please look. These are doing something weird. They hardly begin to walk when they just stop and start looking for something on the ground. Together. All of them."

"Hmmm, let me see. Ouch, careful. They put us into these cages pretty tight..."

"They are up again. Hands together, walking, one step, two, three, but here they stop again and crouch in this funny way."

"I know what they are doing. Before they got me in China, I had flown over many places where humans were doing the same thing every morning, except that they never walked, just stood in one place. They were bald and outside they looked the same."

"Well, these beings have been walking and bowing uphill for over an hour and a half. Apparently, they cannot fly. For us, going up this mountain wouldn't be a problem."

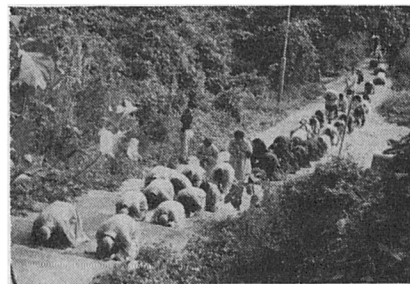
"Have you lost your senses? How could we fly, locked up in these cages?"

"Now somebody is carrying us. We are passing by this group of almost two hundred people. I should say they're having a rough time."

"I never asked them to do this. Also, I have seen humans being escorted and locked up in buildings by other humans. What about those guys, walking along the line with striped, shiny skin, with the black things in their hands?"



"They seem to guard these bowing people, just like our elders in the flock did when we migrated. Also, what they have in their hands are much shorter than those black, long branches that spit fire and make us fall from the sky. The striped ones are talking into these things. I am saying this is something different."



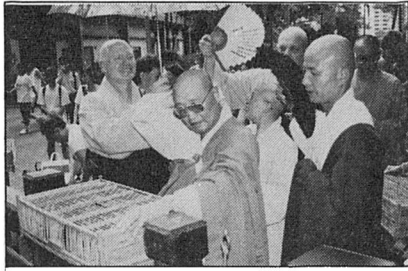
"You're young and trust them too much. A cage is a cage, no matter whether it's moving or standing. On the way here, I have seen many tall and big cages. They are taller than our forests, thicker than the oldest of the trees. Many, many humans live in them. My nephew had to coexist with a family in one of those cages. He suffered a lot, but eventually got free by mistake."

"How?"

"A child opened the cage to clean it and forgot to lock it afterwards."

"Do you think this could happen to us? I have seen at least forty youngsters here."

"I don't think so. This activity seems to be organized all too well. They got up early and met in town. Then they came over the water, to the foot of this mountain. All of them. The children, the adults, the black ones, the gray ones, some of them with bald head, and the striped ones. They started walking and bowing together. A tall gray one began to hit a split branch, and everybody was following that horrible sound. I'm telling you, these people won't make mistakes easily."



“Uncle, you have picked more seeds from the ground than the amount of breaths I have drawn in my life, but I feel under my feathers that this is something different. Look, we have arrived.”

“Indeed, we have. This is like one of the places I visited in China. Many brown ones around, all bald. They never keep us in cage and never hunt for our eggs. Some of them used to give us food. Though I remember, a young one once threw a stone at me.”

“Don’t think badly about these people. Look, they are bringing us water and food. They also eat and drink. Do you hear their laughter? They must be very happy.”

“I don’t understand them. They have gathered and will disperse, they have come up to the mountain and will go down, back to their own cages. Now they laugh, just watch them cry the next moment.”

“Uncle, I have never seen this before! They give presents to each other, clap their hands, and are happy for each other.”

“This is fairly unusual. Hold on, they are carrying us.”

“One of the bald ones is speaking. I wonder what she’s saying.”

“I am not interested. Humans’ way and birds’ way are different. We don’t walk, they don’t fly. They bring us down from the sky with long branches that spit fire—we do not harm them. They lock us and themselves up in cages—we just nest and fly. We gather only to migrate at winter and spring solstice, they form groups at all times for purposes I could not see. When we meet with other groups, we keep distance if it is not of our kin. When they do, they mingle, shout, sometimes fight. Many of them remain lying on the ground and never get up. Then the ravens eat them. There are many things about them I could never understand.

“Uncle, if we ever get free, you’ll surely be the wisest of the elder. I am young and know very little about human beings’ job. But just now, can you hear this? It’s like our relatives, the woodpeckers. It comes from that round, wooden thing.”

“Yes, it sounds like that. And the humans are chanting together. I don’t like that.”

“Why? We say ‘cheep-cheep’, they say ‘Kwan Seum Bosal’. What’s wrong with that?”

“I don’t know what they mean. They caught me with a net, gave me food, put me into a cage a long time ago, and smiled all the way through. They are happy to have me in their homes, and do not realize that I am not happy to be with them. They don’t understand us, yet rule us, and we suffer. That’s why I don’t like them.”

“But these humans are not like that. Look, look! They opened up a cage in front! Old Tony, Pat, Jonathan, Matthew - all flying!”

“This must be some mistake. There are eight hundred of us. This cannot happen to everyone.”

“No, no! They are coming closer, opening up all the cages! Cynthia, Susan, John, Henry—all gone!”

“I hope they’ll have the mind to gather somewhere close. I am stiff and want to hold council on a comfortable, big tree nearby.”

“Uncle, please! Our door is open! Come and fly! We are free!”

“Fly, nephew. But don’t forget the council.”

“I’ll be there. Cheer up and fly!”

“May you never fall from the sky.” ☉



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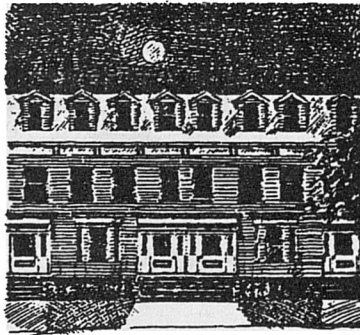


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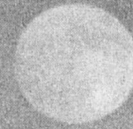


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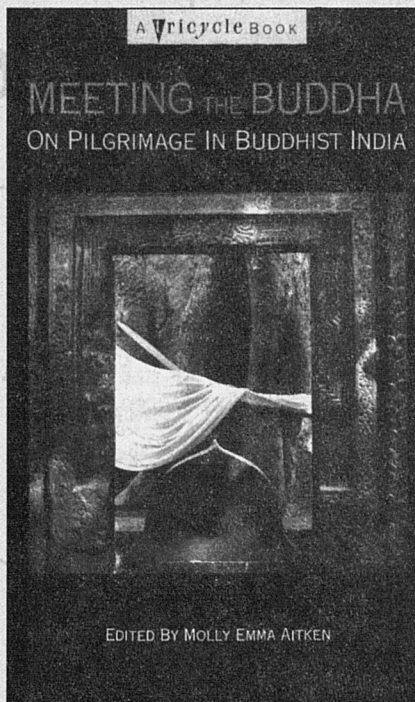


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—Jim Harrison,  
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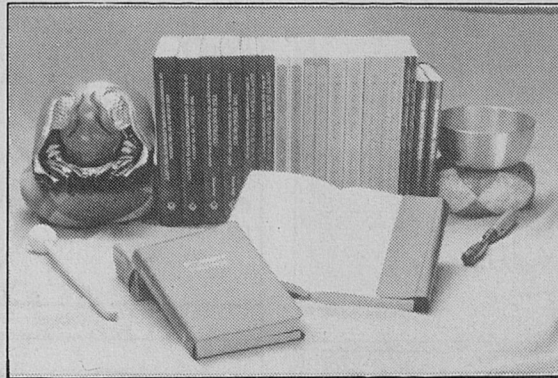
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# Glossary

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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