

# Primary Point

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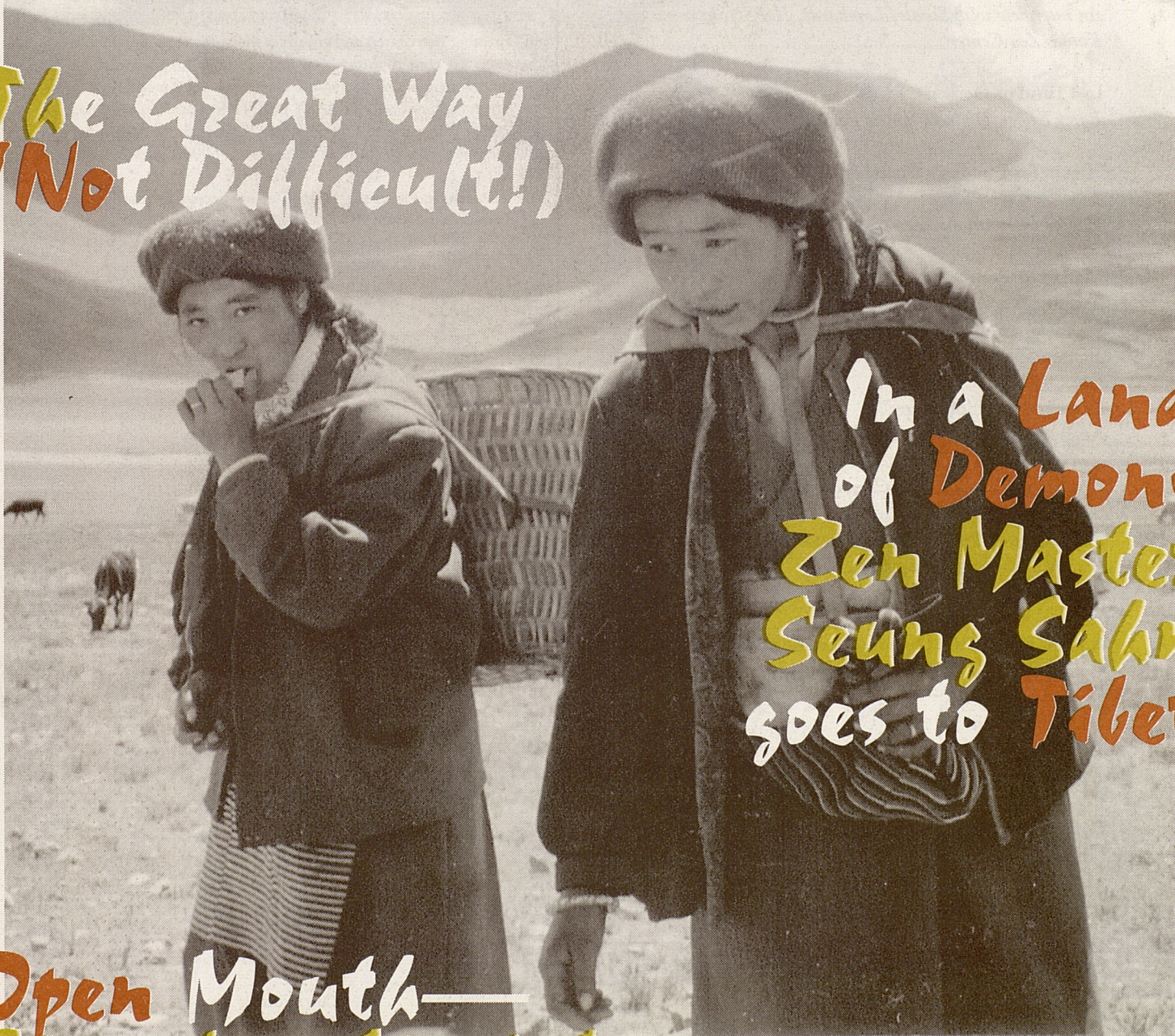


The Compass of Zen

The Great Way  
(Not Difficult!)

In a Land  
of Demons  
Zen Master  
Seung Sahn  
goes to Tibet

Open Mouth—  
Already a Mistake



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## PRIMARY POINT

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# The Song of Dharma Nature

The nature of the Dharmas is perfect. It does not have two different aspects.

法性圓融無二相

All the various Dharmas are unmoving and fundamentally still.

諸法不動本來寂

They are without name and form, cut off from all things.

無名無相絕一切

This is understood by enlightened wisdom, and not by any other sphere.

證智所知非餘境

The One is in the many, the many are within the One.

一中一切多中一

The One is many, the many are One.

一即一切多即一

Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment.

無量遠劫即一念

One moment is the same as numberless kalpas.

一念即是無量劫

# THE

## Song of Dharma Nature

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

This is an excerpt from a long teaching-poem based on the *Avatamsaka-sutra*. It was written by a very famous master, Ui-Sang, during the golden age of the Shilla Dynasty in Korea. These verses are chanted every day in most temples in Korea. They point directly to the nature of Dharma. Many people say, "Dharma is this. Dharma is that." But what is Dharma exactly? Originally, true Dharma has no name. Dharma has no form. Even calling it "Dharma" is already a big mistake. Dharma is not Dharma, OK? You must understand that. So, Dharma or Dharma-nature are just names for your universal substance. This substance, of which everything in the universe is composed, does not have two different aspects. It does not even have two different forms. It also does not have one aspect or form. It is not one and not two. It is also not a "thing." It takes every form of every thing in the universe, and yet it takes no form, because form is completely empty. It is like electricity. Sometimes electricity appears to us by making fans move and radios emit sound. It produces air-conditioning. It can freeze water and heat a room. It can move a long, heavy train, and yet you walk around with it in your body. It can completely disappear into space. So if you say that electricity is just one thing, you are wrong. If you say that it is all these things that it does, all these actions that it performs, you are also completely wrong. Electricity is none of these things, and yet it is all of them. Similarly, rain, snow, fog, vapor, river, sea, sleet, and ice are all different forms of the same sub-

stance. They are different things. But H<sub>2</sub>O is unchanging, and composes all of them according to their situation. They are all water. The same is true of Dharma-nature. It is not one and not two. That is a very important point.

So Dharma-nature is universal nature, and it takes many, many different forms. Sometimes it is a mountain, or the rivers, or the sun, the moon, the stars, this cup, this sound, and your mind. They are all the same, because they are all the same universal substance. When any kind of condition appears, Dharma-nature follows that condition, and then some form appears. But when condition disappears, then name and form disappear. That is the meaning of "everything is complete" in these lines. "Complete" is this Dharma-nature, this universal substance that goes around and around and around with no hindrance. It never lacks anything, anywhere. Sometimes it is a mountain, and sometimes it is a river, or trees, or rocks, clouds, humans, air, animals. But originally it is complete stillness. Even while taking form as everything in this universe, it is completely not moving. It takes these forms, but it is none of these forms and is not touched by these forms. Dharma-nature is the same as your true self. It cannot be understood with conceptual thinking. Books and learning cannot give you this point. One hundred Ph.D.'s will not help you attain it.

*The One is in the many, the many are within the One.*

*The One is many, the many are One.*

*Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment.*

*One moment is the same as numberless kalpas.*

Everyone believes that time and space exist. Ha ha ha ha! That's very funny! Your thinking makes time, and your thinking makes space. But no one really understands this. So these lines state that time and space are the same, and they are one. They are also not one. This One is completely empty. "The One is in the many, the many are within the One. The One is many, the many are One." That is talking about space. Everything is one point, and that one point is everything. There are not two separate things. We can think of it this way: Empty space is only one, indivisible, but in space there are many individual things—mountains, rivers, human beings, trees, dogs, cats, the sun, the moon, the stars. All of these "things" comprise space. Everything is part of space, but that space is not two, because everything is contained within it. There is nothing "outside" space.

This poem has very interesting teaching about the true nature of time, too. "Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment. One moment is the same as numberless kalpas." Time is not long or short. As we saw earlier, since our thinking minds make time, we also make it either long or short. If you practice meditation, however, you can actually perceive that in one moment, there is infinite time. In one moment, there is infinite space. In one moment there is



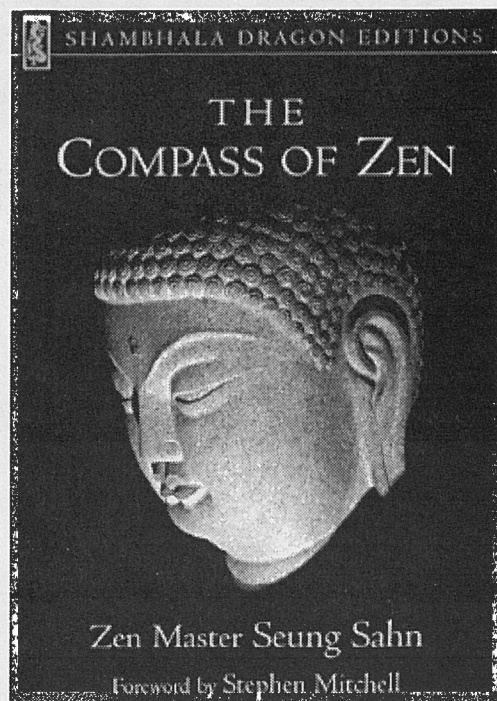
everything! One moment is endless time and space. To most people such a statement must be describing some special realm or experience. So how big is one moment? If we want to imagine this, we can illustrate one moment as being one second divided by infinite time. That is a very short time! A camera can teach you this. There are some special cameras with very high shutter speeds. This kind of camera can photograph a speeding bullet. A moving bullet is invisible to the naked eye. When this camera shutter opens, very quickly, it “catches” the bullet on film. You can see the bullet stopped in midair, not moving. But if you look closely at the photograph, you can tell that this bullet is still moving, though it seems stopped in space. The same is true of our minds, just as they are. If you take your don’t-know camera—your mind *before* thinking arises—and perceive

just one moment, very deeply, very clearly, you see this bullet not moving. You see everything not moving. This whole world is not moving. That’s very interesting! Your mind and this whole universe have the same nature. Originally everything is completely still and not moving. This sutra says, “All the various Dharmas are unmoving and fundamentally still.” This is the same point. Stillness simply means our moment mind: one second divided by infinite time. We sometimes call that moment world. It is infinite in time and space, which actually means that it has no time or space.

So this *gatha* has very interesting poetic speech about Dharma-nature and universal substance. But this is only beautiful speech, and even the Buddha’s speech cannot help your life if it does not completely become *yours*. Then where does universal substance come from? Where does universal energy appear? It comes from complete stillness. “The One is in the many, the many are within the One. The One is many, the many are One.” So everything has it. [*Hits the table.*] Everything comes from complete stillness. [*Hits the table.*] Everything comes from this one point. Sometimes this point is called universal substance, or en-

ergy, or Buddha, or God, or consciousness, or holiness, or mind, or the Absolute. [*Hits the table.*] These are all names, and names come from thinking. But originally, this complete stillness point has no name and no form whatsoever, because it is *before* thinking. Yet it is present in all things, and all things have it. In Zen there is a famous kong-an, “The ten thousand things return to One. Where does the One return?” If you attain that point [*hits the table*], you attain One, and you attain everything. That means you attain moment. You attain complete stillness and extinction. But mere intellectual understanding of this cannot help you. Only meditation practice can give you this experience directly. [*Hits the table.*] When this experience completely becomes *yours*, you attain your wisdom. That is the teaching of the Song of Dharma Nature.

“The Song of Dharma Nature” and “Clear Mary” are excerpted from *The Compass of Zen* (Shambhala, 1997), compiled and edited by Ven. Hyon Gak Sunim



# Clear Mary

DHARMAS ARE  
WONDERFUL  
PICTURES

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

The stories of Zen Master Dok Sahn and Zen Master Guji are very interesting. They tell us about the purpose of Zen practice and Zen teaching. Both of these monks were great sutra masters. Both of them completely understood all the Buddha's speech. They understood the whole Buddhist tradition, they understood various profound philosophies, and they understood all the eminent teachers. But when someone asked them for their own true speech, they could not say anything. They could not show their true nature to anybody. Understanding is not good and not bad. But what are *you*? This is very important. That point is beyond the reach of understanding. That point cannot be read

in some book. Even Buddha himself cannot give you that point. The reason for this is because our true nature is *before* thinking. If you do Zen meditation, that point becomes clear, and is shining everywhere. It can do *anything*.

In Florida they have dog races. It is a very popular betting sport. People go to the dog track and bet money on the greyhounds, and if their dog wins, they win a lot of

money. It is very simple. Everybody understands how the greyhounds race, yah? The dogs come out of a starting gate, and start heading around the track. Meanwhile, there is an electric rabbit that is carried along the inside rail of the track. Actually this is not a real rabbit. It is a fake rabbit with real rabbit fur on it. Dogs have very keen noses, and they follow a good smell. So this rabbit fur leads them around the track. All the dogs think they can catch the rabbit if they just run a little faster. Meanwhile, some man

# FOR SHOWING A HUNGRY MAN

is watching the dogs and controlling the speed of the rabbit. If the dogs are very fast that day, he speeds the rabbit up; if they are slow, he slows it down. He always keeps this rabbit just within range of the dogs so that they think they can catch it. Every single day, the dogs go around and around and around this track. Race after race after race, the dogs just follow this rabbit.

One day, a very interesting thing happened at the races in Florida. There was a certain dog named Clear Mary. She was a very fast greyhound, and usually always won her races. But Clear Mary was also a very clever dog. One afternoon, she ran out of the starting gate with the other dogs, as usual. The rabbit hummed around the track, and the dogs sped after it. Running, running, running, running—around, around, around, around. Every day, sometimes several times a day, these dogs did the same thing, over and over and over again. And today they were doing it again, as usual. Chasing the electric rabbit.

But in the middle of the race, Clear Mary suddenly stopped. Many of the people in the grandstand stood up, fixing their binoculars on this dog. “What is happening?” they said. “What’s wrong with that dumb dog?” Some people had placed lots of bets on Clear Mary, so they were very angry. “Run! Run! You dumb dog! What’s wrong with you?”

But Clear Mary did not move for a few moments. She looked up at the grandstand. She looked at the tail ends of the other dogs scampering around the bend. And she looked at the rabbit, whirring around the bend and over to the other side of the oval track. Everything was completely still and silent for that moment at the races that day.

Suddenly, Clear Mary leapt over the guard rail that kept the dogs on the track. She sped straight across the big center infield like a flash. Leaping at just the right moment over the other guard rail, she caught the rabbit! *Boom!* Ha ha ha ha ha!

So that is a Zen mind. Everybody wants something in life. Everyone only follows their karma. They follow their ideas and their opinions, and believe that this is a true life. But Clear Mary is like a high-class Zen student. She was trained very strongly for many years only to follow the rabbit. Every day, she was taught to go around the track—around and around and around. But one day she stops and takes a close look. That is just like Zen practice: stopping and taking a close look at what is happening in life. Then she perceives something clearly, and just does it, one hundred percent. She doesn’t check inside or outside. Inside and outside—boom!—become one. That is a Zen mind. It’s very simple, yah?

# WHAT A BANANA ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE.

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# Trusting In Mind

The Great Way is not difficult,  
Just don't pick and choose.  
If you cut off all likes or dislikes  
Everything is clear like space.

Make the slightest distinction  
And heaven and earth are set apart.  
If you wish to see the truth,  
Don't think for or against.

Likes and dislikes  
Are the mind's disease.  
Without understanding the deep meaning  
You cannot still your thoughts.

It is clear like space,  
Nothing missing, nothing extra.  
If you want something  
You cannot see things as they are.

Outside, don't get tangled in things.  
Inside, don't get lost in emptiness.  
Be still and become One  
And all opposites disappear.

If you stop moving to become still,  
This stillness always moves.  
If you hold on to opposites,  
How can you know One?

If you don't understand One,  
This and that cannot function.  
Denied, the world asserts itself.  
Pursued, emptiness is lost.

*A new translation of "Hsin Hsin Ming," the classic poem  
by the Third Patriarch of Zen, Seng Ts'an*

*Translated by Stanley Lombardo, JDPSN,  
Kansas Zen Center*

信心銘





The more you think and talk,  
The more you lose the Way.  
Cut off all thinking  
And pass freely anywhere.

Return to the root and understand.  
Chase appearances and lose the source.  
One moment of enlightenment  
Illumines the emptiness before you.

Emptiness changing into things  
Is only our deluded view.  
Do not seek the truth.  
Only put down your opinions.

Do not live in the world of opposites.  
Be careful! Never go that way.  
If you make right and wrong,  
Your mind is lost in confusion.

Two comes from One,  
But do not cling even to this One.  
When your mind is undisturbed  
The ten thousand things are without fault.

No fault, no ten thousand things,  
No disturbance, no mind.  
No world, no one to see it.  
No one to see it, no world.

This becomes this because of that.  
That becomes that because of this.  
If you wish to understand both,  
See them as originally one emptiness.

In emptiness the two are the same,  
And each holds the ten thousand things.  
If you no longer see them as different,  
How can you prefer one to another?

The Way is calm and wide,  
Not easy, not difficult.  
But small minds get lost.  
Hurrying, they fall behind.

Clinging, they go too far,  
Sure to take a wrong turn,  
Just let it be! In the end,  
Nothing goes, nothing stays.

Follow nature and become one with the Way,  
Free and easy and undisturbed.  
Tied by your thoughts, you lose the truth,  
Become heavy, dull, and unwell.

Not well, the mind is troubled.  
Then why hold or reject anything?  
If you want to get the One Vehicle  
Do not despise the world of the senses.

When you do not despise the six senses,  
That is already enlightenment.  
The wise do not act.  
The ignorant bind themselves.

In true Dharma there is no this or that,  
So why blindly chase your desires?  
Using mind to stir up the mind  
Is the original mistake.

Peaceful and troubled are only thinking.  
Enlightenment has no likes or dislikes.  
All opposites arise  
From faulty views.

Illusions, flowers in the air—  
Why try to grasp them?  
Win, lose, right, wrong—  
Put it all down!

If the eye never sleeps,  
Dreams disappear by themselves.  
If the mind makes no distinctions,  
The ten thousand things are one essence.

Understand this dark essence  
And be free from entanglements.  
See the ten thousand things as equal  
And you return to your original nature.

Enlightened beings everywhere  
All enter this source.  
This source is beyond time and space.  
One moment is ten thousand years.

Even if you cannot see it,  
The whole universe is before your eyes.

Infinitely small is infinitely large:  
No boundaries, no differences.  
Infinitely large is infinitely small:  
Measurements do not matter here.

What is is the same as what is not.  
What is not is the same as what is.  
Where it is not like this,  
Don't bother staying.

One is all,  
All is one.  
When you see things like this,  
You do not worry about being incomplete.

Trust and Mind are not two.  
Not-two is trusting the Mind.

Words and speech don't cut it,  
Can't now, never could, won't ever.

*Seng Ts'an was the third Chinese patriarch of Zen, having received transmission from Bodhidharma's successor, Hui K'o. The poem attributed to him, the "Hsin Hsin Ming" (lit., "Trust Mind Inscription"), is one of the earliest and most influential Zen writings, blending together Buddhist and Taoist teachings.*

*The translator, Stanley Lombardo, teaches Zen at the Kansas Zen Center and Classics at the University of Kansas.*

# The Mind Behind the Words

Stanley Lombardo's translations of Hesiod's *Works and Days* and the *Tao Te Ching* have been praised by critics for their poetic immediacy and deep loyalty to the spirit of the original. His recent translation of Homer's *Iliad* (Hackett Books) has been hailed by *The New York Times* as "daring," a "vivid and sometimes disarmingly hardbitten reworking." His translation of the Third Patriarch's "Trusting in Mind" is being published by Primary Point Press, in conjunction with DharmaCrafts, Inc. The *Primary Point* interview, conducted by Ven. Hyon Gak Sunim, follows.

*What is translation?*

Every time you say anything you are translating, translating some original experience into words. "Trans-late" means "carry across." When we speak we use words to carry across something that we perceive or intend to someone else. This carrying across is always imperfect. We can never completely express our experience with words. That's why we say, "Open your mouth, already a mistake." Literary translation is like that too, and even worse if you only translate the words, because then you have two layers of words between the original experience and the reader.

*Then what does a translator do?*

You have to translate the experience behind the words of the text, the guts of the text. So my job as a translator is to perceive the original meaning behind the words and translate that, carry that over. It's just like in a *kong-an* interview: don't be caught by the teacher's words, perceive instead the teacher's mind. Then how do you bring that mind forth and make it really clear? When I was working on the

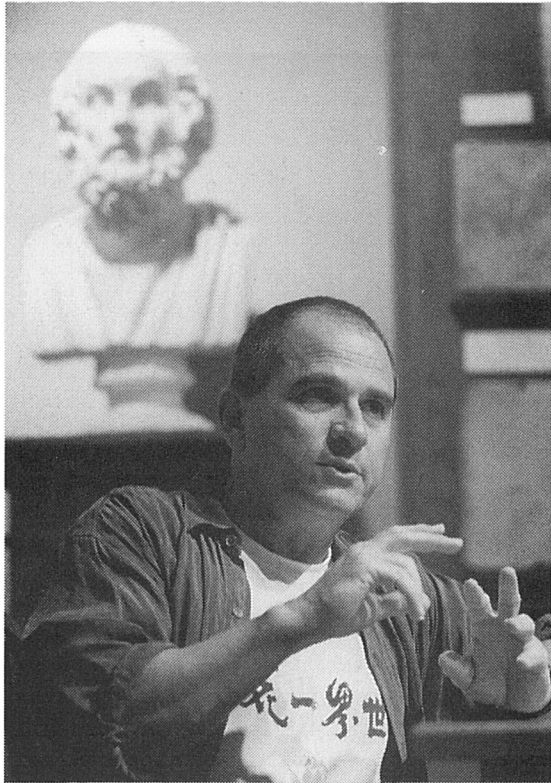


Photo of Stanley Lombardo, JDPSN, by Earl Richardson

*Iliad* I kept thinking of the phrase “locking eyebrows with the masters of old.” Every time I started to translate I would go out on Troy’s dusty plain with Homer and try to lock eyebrows with him, to see with his mind. When I could do that, the words were no problem; it was like I was behind the Greek and translating Homer’s mind rather than his words. Then I was free to use live words. When words are really alive they become poetry. Then there’s a chance that the poetry of the translation will measure up to the original poetry.

*On an academic level, that makes sense. But you are a teacher of the dharma. Can you be a professor and especially a translator and still not be attached to words and speech?*

If you can go beyond words and speech, then you can use words and speech correctly, to point to the just-now, just-this quality of experience, the immediacy and directness of it. Great poetry can do that—Homer’s poetry is very much like that—and that’s the sort of poetry I like to teach and translate.

*Would you give an example of the just-now, just-this quality of Homer?*

Sure. Here’s Homer describing the Myrmidons, Achilles’ crack troops in the *Iliad*:

*Think of wolves  
Ravenous for meat. It is impossible  
to describe their savage strength in the hunt,  
But after they have killed an antlered stag  
Up in the hills and torn it apart, they come down  
With gore on the jaws, and in a pack  
Go to lap the black surface water in a pool  
Fed by a dark spring, and as they drink,  
Crimson curls float off their slender tongues.  
But their hearts are still, and their bellies gorged.*

Just that moment when the wolves are drinking, and the whole world is brought to that one, completely still point. Speech and words can do just that—bring everything to one point and clarify the great matter. The German philosopher Hannah Arendt once said that speech is our insertion point, our point of entry into this world. Keeping that point sharp and clear and alive is very important.

*Is translating a dharma text different from secular literature?*

Not really, not for me. But I’m pretty selective in what I translate. If a text is not alive—and some dharma texts aren’t—why translate it? It’s like giving acupuncture to a dead cow—no matter how good you are with the needles, the cow will never say “Moo.” Still, I really admire the great dharma translators, like Marpa the Translator, who translated the sutras into Tibetan, or Kumarajiva, who was responsible for translating so much of the Pali canon into Chinese in the fourth century. Kumarajiva went beyond literal translation, finding Chinese words that really brought Buddhism over to Chinese culture. In fact you could say that he *created* Chinese Buddhist culture by creating its vocabulary. This kind of translation carries a lot of responsibility with it and tends to be conservative; but even when you have to be conservative lexically and syntactically you still have a responsibility to the life-force of the text you are translating.

*What about Zen poems? Are the esthetic criteria for translating Zen poems different than for “regular” poems?*

With Zen poems—and with a work like the *Tao Te Ching* as well—it’s even more important to translate the mind behind the words, and this does create a different esthetic. I don’t mean just minimalism: it gives the poem a different kind of power because the speech is so closely connected to direct perception, that function of mind, rather than thinking. There’s nothing extra in a good Zen poem, so the translator has to be careful not to add anything. You have to work right down to the bones and make them chime and not worry too much about fleshing things out. Working with Zen poetry has influenced my translation of other poetry and has helped, I think, to keep my work lean, rapid and to the point.

# JM A LAND OF DEMONS

by Barry Briggs,  
*Dharma Sound Zen Center, Seattle*

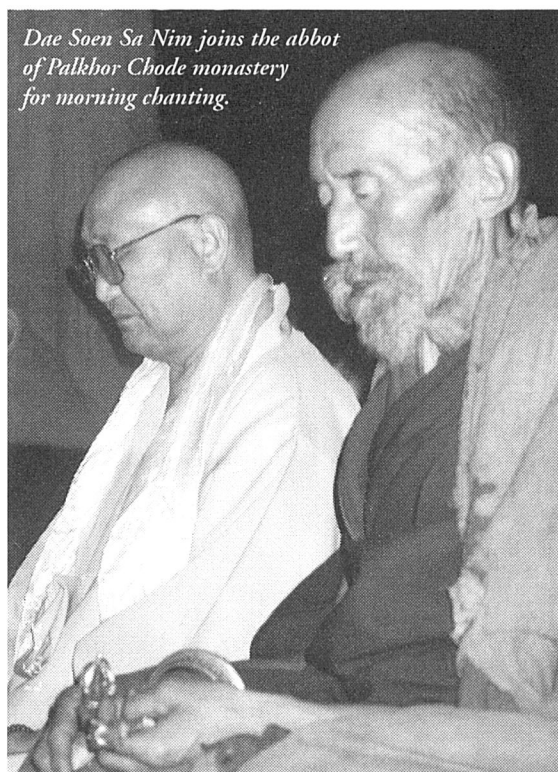
The day before we left Hwa Gye Sah for Tibet, Do Mun Sunim, JDPS, asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "Sir, why do we make this trip to Tibet?" Dae Soen Sa Nim immediately answered, "For you." "But sir, that's not necessary," replied Do Mun Sunim. Without hesitation Dae Soen Sa Nim responded, "Then you don't go!"

Everyone laughed loudly. And, on the bus early the next morning, Do Mun Sunim joined monks, nuns and lay people from Hong Kong, Hungary, Korea, Norway and the United States for the journey to the ancient Buddhist land of Tibet.

Our flight from the Chinese city of Chengdu to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, gave new meaning to the traditional Zen phrase "mountains and waters without end." In eastern Tibet, our beautiful planet folds deeply into canyons and each canyon feeds one of the great Asian rivers—the Salween, Mekong and Yangtse. Above the canyons, diamond peaks capture warm monsoon rains, locking the moisture away in ice. For two hours we flew beyond ridge, valley and peak and over the steep and increasingly barren uplands of Kham.

Central Tibet, a treeless plateau hollowed by broad river valleys, rises more than two miles above sea level. We landed in one of these valleys, forty miles from Lhasa, and gasped as we saw the arid, rounded hills rolling and surging four thousand feet above us into the sun.

We gasped because lungs that work perfectly at sea level don't work quite as well at 12,000 feet. Within hours, many in our group were reeling from altitude sickness—hurting heads, tumbling tummies.



*Dae Soen Sa Nim joins the abbot of Palkebor Chode monastery for morning chanting.*

But the altitude didn't prevent us from responding with joy to traditional Tibetan culture as it unfolded just a few miles beyond the airport. Green barley fields. Buddhas painted on boulders and cliffs. Small villages with ten, maybe fifteen buildings, each house white-washed with black-outlined windows.

At the corners of every house, bundles of sticks held aloft prayer flags that fluttered vigorously in the stiff wind. Over and over mantras permeated the heavens. *Om mani padme hum.*

Over and over, walking among traditional people, we repeatedly heard this mantra as practice merged with daily life.

*Om mani padme hum.*

*Om mani padme hum.*

*Om mani padme hum.*

We also practiced. Awakening early after the first night in Tibet, I cleared a space in the hotel room for bowing. I began slowly, mindful of the high altitude. After nine faltering, wheezing bows, I decided that perhaps it was time for sitting meditation. Later Ji Soen Sunim told me that she managed a remarkable twenty-seven bows that morning.

Our first stop in Lhasa was the Jokhang temple, the spiritual heart of Tibet and the center of Tibetan Buddhism. Established in the 7th century, this ancient but recently restored sanctuary forms the hub of old Lhasa. Market stalls selling tourist and household items now sur-

round the temple but in the old days the shrine, with its venerated statue of Jowo Shakyamuni, was the focal point of a sacred precinct devoted to practice.

Generations of pilgrims have performed countless prostrations in the front courtyard of the Jokhang and we saw deep grooves worn into the stone paving by this great effort. Today, the tradition continues in the evening after the market has closed. Several of us went to the Jokhang one night and saw the courtyard packed with bowing people. Many wore knee pads and used a long narrow mat to cushion their bodies. Plastic or cardboard skids were strapped onto their hands. They went down onto their knees and slid their hands out until they were completely prostrate on the ground. Then they would return to standing and repeat. And, of course, each person quietly chanted “Om mani padme hum.”

That same evening we joined in clockwise circumambulation of the Jokhang. Traditionally, there were three circumambulation routes around the temple. All were once closed but now the innermost ring is open for practice and we walked slowly, shoulder to shoulder, with thousands of practicing people. We joined with Tibetans taking turns at a giant prayer wheel—8 feet in diameter—in a small side temple, walking it around, around, around. A solitary monk kept a steady drum rhythm and a small bell pealed with every revolution of the big wheel.

Sometimes the most revealing experiences occurred away from the main tour group. One day, several of us visited an extensive monastery and met a young English-speaking monk. He invited us to his bedroom with its small window, low pallet, stack of silk-wrapped texts and photographs of the Dalai Lama. He then took us through a darkened room to his sitting area, a simple room with a bench along one side. Because this large monastery now houses only a tiny fraction of the monks who once lived there, this young monk has the “luxury” of two rooms.

Our friend courteously offered refreshments and we had the pleasure of traditional yak butter tea. Opening a cabinet, he withdrew a large block of butter wrapped in red plastic, cut off an inch-thick slab and dropped the piece into an electric blender. He then added equal parts of brewed black tea and boiling water. *Whhhrrrrrrr*. We drank and then drank a second cup and talked about practice.

Zen was unknown to him—he trained in Tibetan “debate” practice, perhaps a kind of dharma combat. I offered him a copy of *The Whole World is a Single Flower* and slowly read number 295, “Bell Sound and Seven-Fold Robe”. Although schooled in a very different Buddhist tradition, his sincere “don’t know” puzzlement cut off all history and form. Deep smile.

To culminate the visit, our host joined us in singing “Happy Birthday” to Sonya, a member of Chogye International Zen Center, who was celebrating her birthday in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama images we saw in this young monk’s room were virtually the only photographs of Tibet’s spiritual leader we encountered on the entire trip. But at another monastery, when a few of us were again by ourselves, we entered a very large Buddha hall. The monk who lived in and maintained the hall

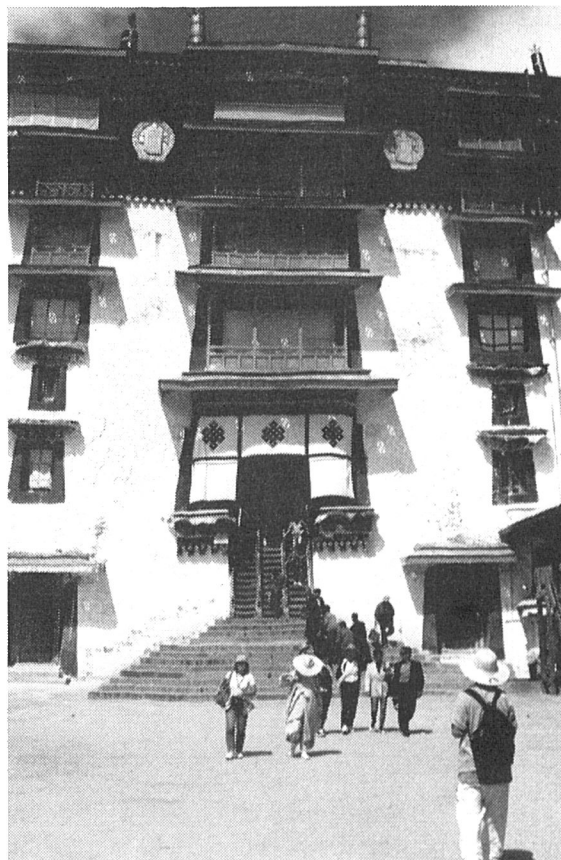
spoke a few words of English and painstakingly asked if any of us had met the Dalai Lama. Several of us had seen him in America and this made the monk very, very happy. He then guided us to a large column wrapped in heavy silk brocade and, slipping his hand deep into a seam of the fabric, pulled out a beautiful color photograph of His Holiness.

Leaving Lhasa, we traveled south for eight hours on the graveled Friendship Highway to Gyantse, the mid-point on the way to India. Our route took us over two 16,000 foot passes adorned with prayer flags, alongside Yamdrok Tso, a remarkably blue lake situated at 15,000 feet, and past several glacier-clad peaks.

Gyantse remains a predominately Tibetan town where horse-drawn carts seem to outnumber motorized vehicles. Young children walk the streets selling yak dung for cooking and heating fuel; older people walk along counting mantras with strands of 108 prayer beads. In Gyantse, we visited Palkhor Chode monastery, one of the most important surviving centers of Tibetan Buddhist art.

As he always did when visiting a monastery or temple, Dae Soen Sa Nim presented books and gifts to the abbot at Palkhor Chode. The abbot draped a *khata*, the traditional long white offering scarf, around each of our necks and

*The inner courtyard of the Potala, the Dalai Lama’s Winter palace in Lhasa.*





then invited us to join the monks in their mid-morning chanting. Dae Soen Sa Nim sat next to the abbot in meditation while our monks, nuns and lay people joined the Tibetan monks on their low cushioned benches. The monks began fast chanting as the abbot rang a hand bell and beat out crescendos with a hand drum. Various monks played cymbals, bells, and larger drums. We practiced for nearly 30 minutes and, when it was time to go, we slipped out as the ancient chants continued.

Older monks, like the abbot of Palkhor Chode, sustain the Buddhist traditions of Tibet. Once a young monk took a few of us to meet his teacher, a 75 year-old lama who ordained at age 4. This lama today trains a young new generation of monks in traditional Buddhist texts and practices. Just as the Dalai Lama and other teachers transmit Buddhism to people throughout the world, the older lamas nourish the traditional ways within Tibet.

Tibet remains a traditional culture profoundly dedicated to Buddhism. On the streets of Lhasa, Gyantse and Shigatse, young and old Tibetans walk along spinning hand-held prayer wheels, repeating their mantras. Outside monasteries, pilgrims spin long rows of large prayer wheels. On mountain passes, travelers add stones to huge rock cairns. Once, traveling through a vast and empty valley far from any settlement, I saw a single person circumambulating a *chorten*, or traditional stupa, placed high up a barren mountain slope.

The fruits of these efforts manifest throughout the land. Imagine a country where nearly the entire population has practiced for over 1,000 years. Imagine.

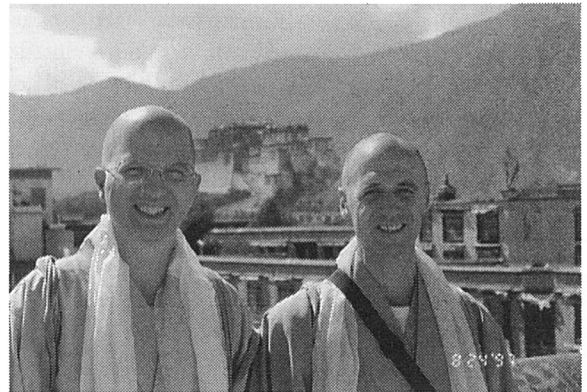
- Ready smiles.
- Clear eyes.
- Open faces.
- Quick laughter.
- Easy strides.

This is Buddhism in Tibet, a place where hard conditions have nurtured hard training.

Dae Soen Sa Nim told us that many demons live in the high mountains of Tibet, so the Tibetan people have learned the necessity of constant practice. I asked him if high mountains were the particular abode of demons. He replied, "High mountains have many demons. Also, lowlands have many demons. Don't make demons, OK?"

Our teacher continued, "Tibetan people only believe in their tradition, in Tibetan Buddhism, in their way."

In the most difficult conditions imaginable, Tibetans have kept their direction alive. *Om mani padme hum, om mani padme hum, om mani padme hum.*



*Do Mun Sunim, JDPS (right), and Mu Shim Sunim, JDPS, on the roof of Jokhang Temple in central Lhasa. The Potala sits on the distant hill.*

We left Tibet early one dark morning. After a brief pause at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Lhasa, our buses headed south down the long valley road. In the distance, the dawning sky was heavy with rain and soon a steady drizzle began to fall. We drove for over an hour. Then, as we turned into the valley leading to the airport, a single rainbow appeared. Suddenly a multitude of rainbows began arching across the sky, extraordinary single and double rainbows, glimmering with iridescence, embracing the land in every direction.

The Tibetan people, sheltered by rainbows, continue to follow their correct direction, just as they have for over 1,000 years. *Om mani padme hum.*

*Mani*, the jewel.

*Padme*, the lotus.

Where can we find this precious lotus?

*Om!*

What kind of jewel is this?

*Hum!*

And what kind of practice can help the Tibetan people?



## Poem for Buddha's Birthday 1997

---

Before Buddha came  
The sky was already blue  
All this stuff and nonsense  
About "Only I am holy"  
Pointing up, Blue.  
Pointing down, solid earth.

When Buddha lived  
The sky  
Was still  
Blue  
Forty years of teaching, traveling  
Didn't change that.

When Buddha died,  
Where did he go?  
Burning Buddha's body  
Sent smoke to  
Blue sky.  
How unoriginal!

Unoriginality  
Is our original nature  
What did Buddha teach?

Before your birth, now, after you die,  
The sky  
Is still blue.  
Same as Buddha.  
Same for us all.  
Whose sky is it?  
Yours, mine, Buddha's?

When the sky is gone  
When you are gone  
When Buddha is gone  
What then?

Look up!

Blue sky!

Do you get it?

*Ken Kessel, JDPSN, May 14, 1997*

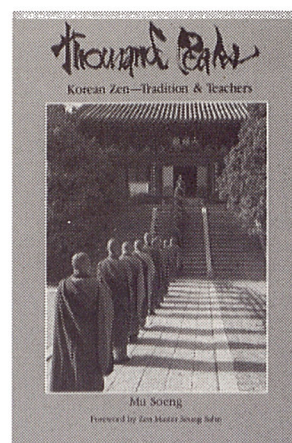
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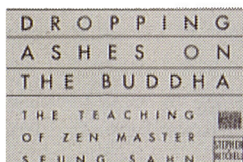


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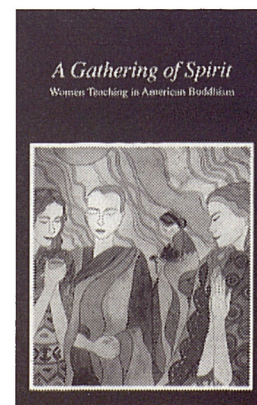
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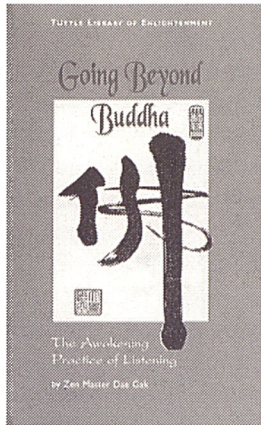
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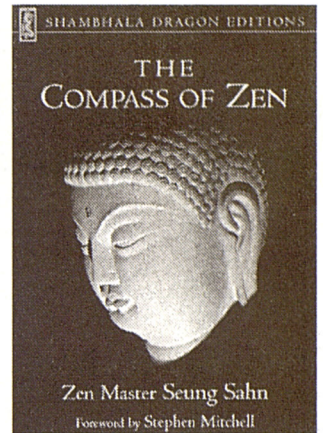






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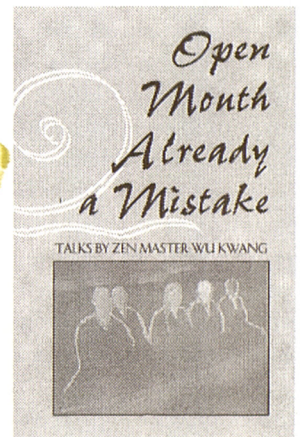
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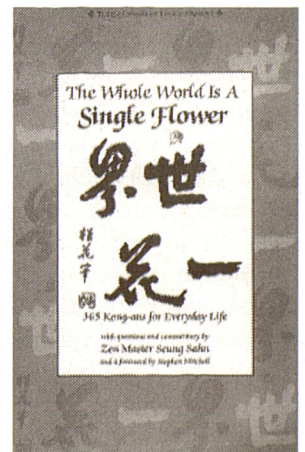
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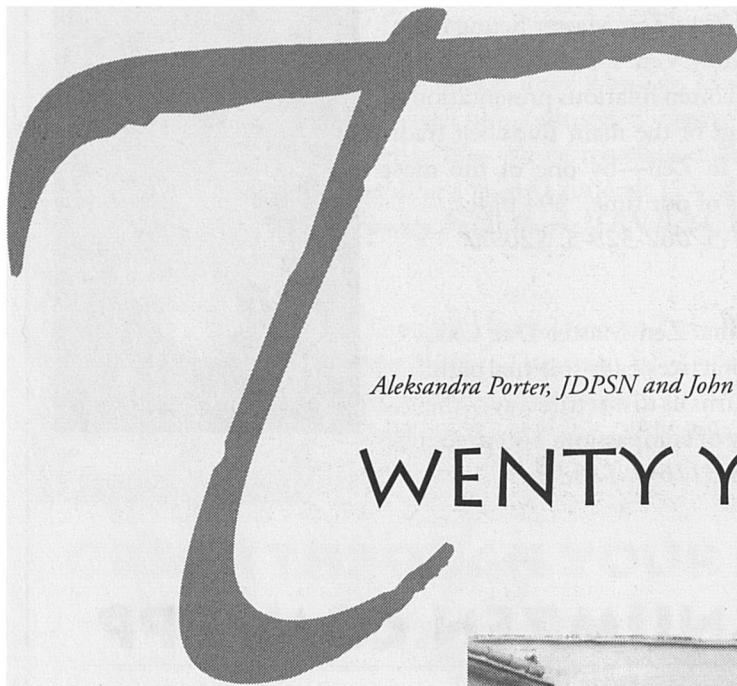


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*Aleksandra Porter, JDPSN and John Porter, Warsaw Zen Center*

## WENTY YEARS LATER...



Zen Master Seung Sahn first came to Poland in 1978 accompanied by eight American students. Together, we all crushed into a private house on the outskirts of Krakow—a city not unused to dragons—and *experienced* our first Yong Maeng Jong Jin intensive retreat and precepts ceremony in Poland. Still high on the surge of inspiration, we started to meet regularly to try meditation together. Nobody really knew what was going on (only *don't know*), but despite the numerous and spontaneous improvisations during chanting and generally getting it all mixed up (try mind), we gradually grew into an increasingly active and tight-knit group. Practice was a very bright light in the murky-grey era of hard-line communism.

The sutras started sounding better, practice forms were learned and our practice became stronger. We remember the wicker-basket lamps, North Korean tea-set and endless cups

of Chinese Republic green tea (the only touch of the Orient available to us) in the midst of our evening conversations! New family. Soon we had our first Yong Maeng Jong Jin (without a teacher, which was normal for almost the next ten years as we didn't have any resident teachers yet in Poland). It was very serious—lots of pain and lots of doubts.

Zen Master Seung Sahn came once a year to teach us. Our annual dharma kick! There was always a crucial lack of space and everyone crammed into whatever building had been arranged. Never enough bathrooms and always a miserly small kitchen. When one person turned over in their sleep, the whole dharma hall had to follow suit; hence the oft-quoted saying that practice in Poland is “like practicing in a matchbox.” This created a very intense atmosphere where no one complained and we all felt incredibly close to each other—conditions being favorable.

Zen Master Seung Sahn's hectic and tornado-like visits to this day greatly inspire and mobilize us, so it was no surprise that our sangha started to spread out into other cities such as Gdansk, which became one of the most important School centers with very involved members (to say nothing of producing two Ji Do Poep Sas). Zen groups sprang up between Gdansk, Krakow, Katowice, Lodz and Warsaw, in an almost "missionary" situation, bringing Zen to small, conservative Catholic towns. Not an easy ride.

Eventually it was decided that Warsaw should host the head temple, and a house was bought on the edge of Warsaw in Falenica. Later the neighboring house was purchased, a dharma hall built and that's how it looks today. Winter and summer Kyol Che are held in this house, the only place in the Kwan Um School in Europe at present, attracting Zen students from Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Russia, Yugoslavia and the United States.

As with every Center, it has its fair share of stories to tell: policemen taking off their rather large boots to come inside to "ask a few questions," new-born babies, multi-sangha picnics, our ten-year ceremony, the teaching visits of Zen Master Seung Sahn (nearly always with Ven. Mu Sang Sunim), Zen Master Su Bong (who was always a special favorite), Wu Bong Soen Sa Nim (our Guiding Zen Master), Jane McLaughlin-Dobisz JDPSN, and many others who have either taught, or helped through the years.

Now we have Polish Ji Do Poep Sas who teach on a regular basis throughout Eastern and Western Europe, even reaching the shores of the United States once in a while.

During the last twenty years it is interesting to note how our sangha is a constant reflection of our rapidly-changing society, especially since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Some members drop out, totally absorbed in their new-found freedom of material advancement, while new mem-



bers come along searching for answers that Poland's traditions or new situation do not provide or are not clear to them at present. Katowice and Lodz Zen Centers are a good example of this. They are located in areas of large unemployment where young people have formed centers that grow stronger and more ambitious each year. They're the new wave in our ever-changing School. During Zen Master Seung Sahn's last trip to Poland there were so many people in our dharma hall that it resembled a human-limb and wood construction that looked like it would run away at any moment, what with all the heads poking through the windows, too! Upon seeing this Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Oh, new dharma hall necessary! Ha, ha, ha, ha!" The sudden burst of laughter that exploded in the Dharma room at those words could have been disastrous, from a structural point of view!

And it becomes a fact. The building of our new dharma hall coincides with twenty years of the Polish Kwan Um School of Zen, to quote Zen Master Seung Sahn again, an anniversary inspired in his customarily one-pointed way: "Twenty year ceremony necessary!"

KWAN UM SCHOOL OF ZEN IN POLAND  
TWENTY YEAR ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY  
OFFICIATED BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup>, 1998  
FALENICA, WARSAW, POLAND



# Zen & Psychotherapy

*Zen Master Wu Kwang,  
Chogye International Zen Center of New York*

Dharma Talk given at Dwight Chapel,  
Yale University



**Q:** An issue rather than a question has come up lately in discussions about Zen meditation practice and psychotherapy which seems to be a different way of getting at the same things. Do I just sit with something and let it dissolve or is it better to sit and talk about it in a psychotherapy situation?

**A:** People have often asked me this question. Sometimes in the middle of a retreat, this question has come up. I wondered at first if they were asking just because I'm a psychotherapist. Were they just indulging their intellectual curiosity in the middle of a retreat? It felt counterproductive to me if that was the reason. But I began to realize later on that the question really, in some cases, was: What is the place of my emotional life in Zen practice? Or, is there any place for my emotional life in Zen practice? Of course, practice may have different kinds of leanings or attitudes connected to it. For instance, there is a fierce approach in Zen practice which is about stripping something away and having the courage to have the props knocked out from under you in order to face certain things. This is to fiercely face the rawness of things without any props. On the other hand, some people approach Zen practice from the viewpoint of acceptance, melting, letting go, warm embracing, and appreciation. That has a different flavor and attitude. The direction of the practice is the same in either case, but the nuance is stated differently.

If someone does not have enough confidence in their direction, and in what they need and how they should proceed, they are influenced by messages such as fierceness or openness or warmth. One teacher may say, "Take hold of the big question fiercely and hold it as if your life depended on it. There is nothing more important than this one big question, 'What am I?' or 'Who am I?' Grab hold of that and do not let go." That is the samurai-like attitude of fierceness. On the other hand, another teacher might say, "As soon as you raise the question, already that is enlightened mind." Just let yourself be. What am I? Don't know. That is it!

Zen practice can be therapeutic, but it is not the same as therapy. A lot of therapies deal with shifting around attitudes, whereas Zen practice primarily heads toward wiping everything clean and seeing what is. Sometimes, people need the help of a therapist to talk things out. If what they are holding is very subtle and specific to a "set-up," a specific limiting way of being in the world, then they might need someone fairly skilled in spotting "set-ups" and in helping someone to let go at a pace that is workable and reasonably comfortable. They might

also need help in facing why they even feel the need for that set-up! That is what psychotherapy is about. There are many kinds of psychotherapy just as there are many different strains of Zen practice.

**Q:** In the Kwan Um School of Zen, we emphasize that Zen is everyday mind, nothing special. But there seems to be a style of Zen that tries to encourage profound enlightenment. Could you comment on the difference?

**A:** What is profound enlightenment?

**Q:** I don't know but other schools seem to emphasize finding enlightenment. That I do not understand. Can you comment on it?

**A:** When you get out of bed and put your foot on the floor, that is the first moment of enlightenment. Then you go to the bathroom, and you look at yourself in the mirror. That is the second moment of enlightenment. (That is what you call a "rude awakening"! ) Then there is the brushing your teeth moment of enlightenment. That is, be careful, and polish, polish, polish. At my age the samadhi of tooth brushing becomes very important! But that is no more important than the next step which becomes the samadhi of putting the tea kettle on. I heard that the poet Gary Snyder wanted to visit Japan during the Korean War, and the Japanese officials gave him a hard time. They wanted him to prove that he was an American poet, so he sat down and wrote a poem for the immigration officer:

*Making a cup of green tea  
I stop the war.*

I believe that this poem served as his passport into Japan. So, the samadhi of putting the kettle on is also very important!

We emphasize the moment of profound enlightenment, but every experience is an opportunity for profound enlightenment. If every experience is profound enlightenment, then why use the word "profound" anymore? That is like adding a head on top of your head, or, as the old Chinese Zen Masters used to say, it's like painting feet on a snake. Even though you may think that a snake looks as though it might need feet, it does not! Likewise, the word "profound" originally is not necessary. It is extra.

The Lotus Sutra stresses the point of skillful lying. Throughout its three hundred or more pages, there are several parables in which the main character tells a lie, or tricks the people into doing something that they would not ordinarily do. There is a parable of the skillful physician whose sons took some of his powerful medicine when he was away. When he returned, they were all rolling on the floor poisoned, and he made a remedy. Some of them took the remedy quite readily and returned to normal. His other children refused to take it. "I don't like the smell of it. I don't like the color of it." They are in delusional toxicity! They

think that it is important that it smells bad or that they do not like the color! He told them, "Children, I am going to die soon. I am leaving. I have some last business to finish. I leave the remedy here with you." He went away and sent a messenger back who told the children, "Your father has died." He was not dead. So that was a lie and he was breaking one of the five precepts. Hearing this lie about their father's death, they were shocked and in anguish. They felt that they should take the medicine of their father. So, they took it, and then he returned. Likewise, the phrase "profound enlightenment" or "satori" or "kensho," or any of these phrases are big lies. But they are skillful lies. If people are stubborn as a mule, you have to beat them and then they practice! Or if others like candy, candy is offered. "Enlightenment" is only a teaching word. "Enlightenment," that's bull shit. "Profound enlightenment," that's elephant shit! "Deep, profound enlightenment," that's rhinoceros shit! But it helps some people, so it is medicine. The problem is that if you get too attached to the notion of it, or think that practice has to always be fierce and hard and difficult in order to get some moment of profound breakthrough, then that stands in your way like a big iron gate.

In the Zen tradition there are sayings like, "A golden chain still binds," or "Gold dust in the eyes, still blinds you." If you pick up dust off the floor and rub it in your eyes, it will blind you. The same with gold dust; but it's worth a lot of money! The Buddha in our Providence Zen Center is gold leafed. That means that it has gold dust all over it. Someone decided that the Buddha needed to be cleaned and they started to rub it. Some of the gold dust came off. They had to replace it and it was quite expensive. Expensive enlightenment! So gold dust is more valuable than floor dust, but get either of them in your eyes and you still cannot see. If you become too attached to some notion of enlightenment, then that also blinds you.

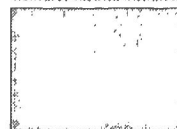
Sometimes hard training practice is the correct medicine. Sometimes easy does it, or just let it be is the correct medicine. Sometimes not talking about it at all is the correct medicine. Just making a cup of tea to stop the war is the correct medicine. Talk about profound enlightenment is a particular technique. So is telling someone that they have to sit down and dig into the kong-an and experience it. While you may gain something valuable from it, it is a mistake to think that that is the only true way of practice. That can become deeply problematic.

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"Zen and Psychotherapy" is excerpted from *Open Mouth Already a Mistake* (Primary Point Press, 1997).

*Open  
Mouth  
Already  
a Mistake*

TALKS BY ZEN MASTER WULIHWANG



# PILGRIMAGE TO PUTUO SHAN MOUNTAIN IN CHINA

*Wendy Ma*

*Translated by Patrick Ng*

*Su Bong Zen Monastery, Hong Kong*

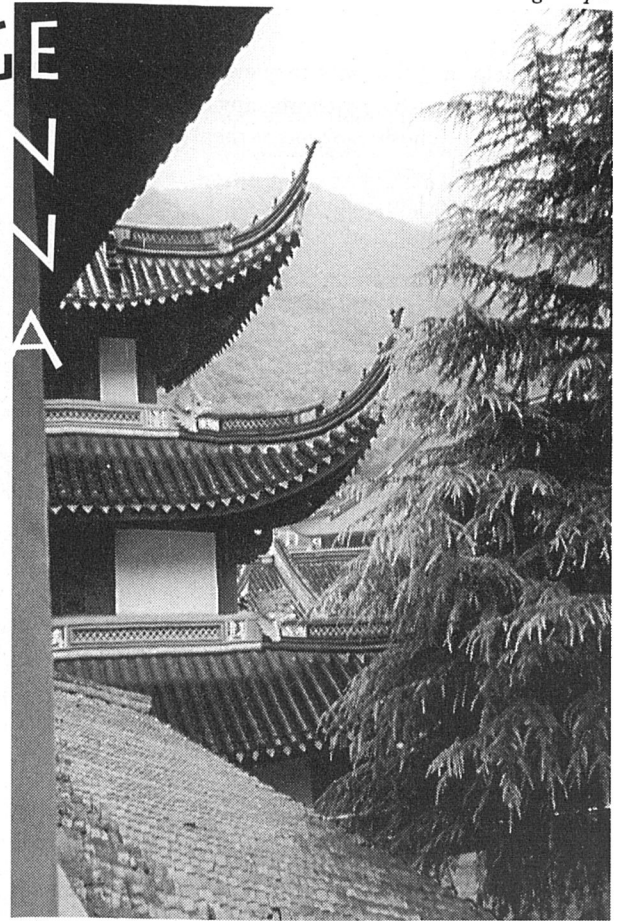
My heart is as light as the plane as it flies serenely against the blue sky and its wings gently embrace each white cloud as it passes by. The four months of hard work and planning have come to an end. We are on our way back from a pilgrimage to one of the four sacred mountains of China. Finally, I can put it all down.

When the idea of a pilgrimage was first conceived, Hyang Um Sunim, Ji Do Poep Sa and I had a common goal of organizing a trip around practice. We would visit the famous island mountain in the East China Sea which is associated with Kwan Seum Bosal, the bodhisattva of compassion.

We would not follow the usual tourist itinerary. Instead, we would focus primarily on practice—meditation, chanting, and vegetarian meals. The central theme for our trip would be “three steps one bow,” a ritual Buddhist practice. To our surprise, this combination attracted slightly over a hundred serious participants.

We flew from Hong Kong to Ningpo, the Ming Dynasty seaport just south of Shanghai. It was at Ningpo that Dogen, the famous Zen Master who founded the Soto school in Japan, landed during his pilgrimage to China in search of the dharma. Among our stops during our five-day pilgrimage were such famous sites as Seven Pagoda Temple, a 1400-year old temple in Ningpo; Tiantong Temple, north of Ningpo, where Dogen got enlightenment and which is the head temple of the Ts’ao Tung (Soto) school in China; and the Dharma Rain and Fan Um Cave Temple on Putuo Shan. Even though our trip was somewhat hectic, we were deeply touched by the profound peace of the surroundings.

The grounds of the Dharma Rain Temple were unexpectedly cleaned by an overnight rain, as though heaven knew that we were going down on our hands and knees to pay respects to Buddha. Most of us were skeptical about



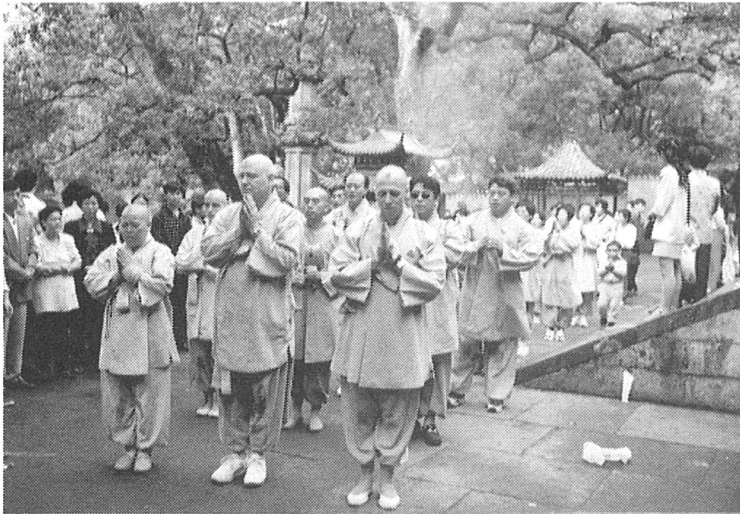
bowing on the dirty wet ground, yet at the same time intrigued by this tradition. Hyang Um Sunim’s teaching still rings in my ears about putting yourself down totally when you are kneeling on the ground, even though it seemed far-fetched at that time.

The sound of the moktak dispelled all our thoughts. In the mist of our chanting “Kwan Seum Bosal,” I stepped out on my right foot, then my left foot, then my right foot again, then down on my hands and knees with my forehead kissing the smooth and wet cobblestones. At this moment, all my original worries and hindrances suddenly evaporated and the movements became as natural as if I were jumping into my own bed.

After the initial set of three steps and one bow, the rest became automatic. My feelings became completely different. Finally, the ego surrendered; I was totally involved with a 100% don’t know mind. Chanting, walking and bowing. “Just do it.” Hyang Um Sunim said if you put it all down, one would have a glimpse of clarity and peace—the open state of mind. Is that what it’s all about?

My legs, unexpectedly, seemed stronger than usual and my hands and feet never felt so well co-ordinated. The ritual bowing was completed smoothly in just over half an hour.

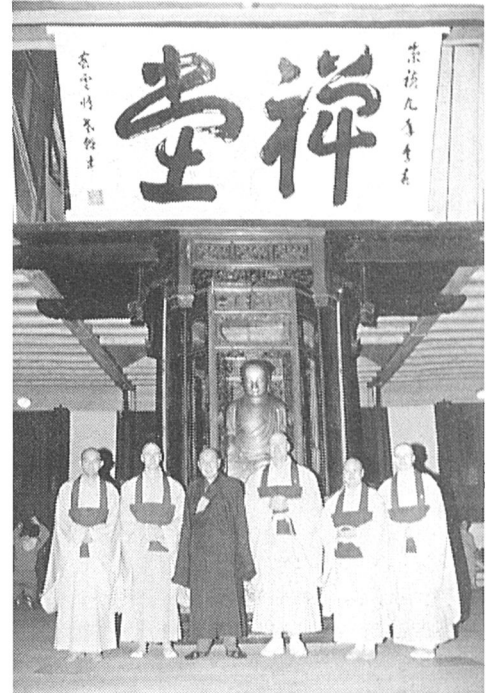
*Hyang Um Sunim, Dae Kwang Zen Master and Do Mun Sunim at the head of the Three Steps, One Bow procession*



Dripping with sweat and with an awakened state of mind, I stood in the main hall of the Dharma Rain Temple as we chanted the Heart Sutra with all our might. The familiar sutra sounded quite different and all of a sudden it took on a new meaning. I was deeply touched; tears cascaded down my face like water from a broken dam. Words are not enough to portray the feelings deep within me. As we left the main dharma hall, the sun suddenly broke through, glittering off the wet cobblestones and reflecting tears of gold on our elated faces.

Later that day we visited Fan Um cave temple at the base of Putuo Shan mountain. Putuo Shan has been famous for more than a thousand years as the place in China where Kwan Seum Bosal appears. We, along with hundreds of tourists from Taiwan, China, and Japan, crowded into the small ocean cave to try to get a glimpse of her. One of our party, Gloria Wong, suddenly found herself in the middle of this tourist crowd. She saw a blurred shadow, like a person, appear in the cave. She realized that this phenomenon was probably caused by light reflecting off

*Kwan Um monastics with the head  
Zen monk of Tiantong Temple*



the variously-shaped rocks. Extracting herself from the crowd, Gloria walked to the mouth of the cave and found Do Mun Sunim JDPS looking out at the sea. She asked him, "Sunim, what are you doing? Why not go see Kwan Seum Bosal?" He said, "The sky is blue and the waves are singing. The people in the cave are full of desires. They wish to see Kwan Seum Bosal appear. If they can see her, they feel happy. If they can't, they are disappointed. Actually, Kwan Seum Bosal is here. Listen! Kwan Seum Bosal is singing, non-stop."

Pilgrimages are a special kind of trip. What we acquired on this trip was far more than just souvenirs. Even though there were over a hundred travelers following a rigorous itinerary, everyone treated each other with respect and compassion. This grew out of our concern for practice more than sightseeing. As Zen Master Dae Kwang said, "you don't have to look for Kwan Seum Bosal in a cave or some special place, she is everywhere when your mind is clear."

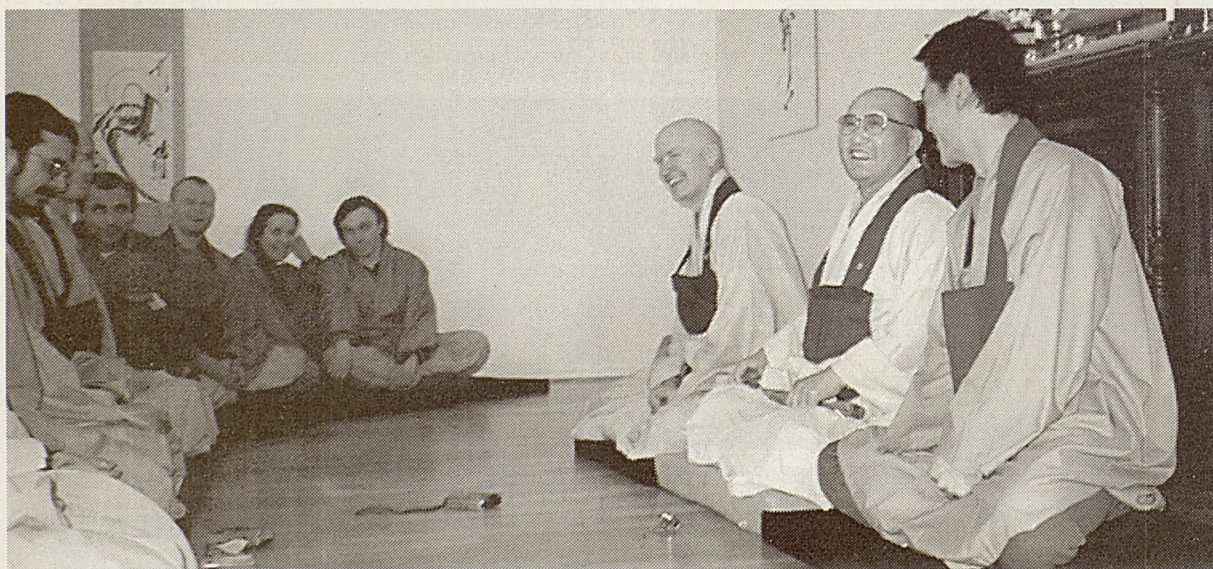


*Corrin Chan, George Liu, Sheila Cheung, Zen Master Dae Kwang and Henry Wong at Tiantong Temple*

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**APRIL 12-13, 1997**





# L.A. Zen Man

Ven. Mu Sang Sunim

I'm a bad old rapper  
 Who's got some fight,  
 I won't make a deal  
 Less I know it's alright.  
 The guys in the hood all know my name,  
 But nobody around can play my game.  
 I'm a Zen Man—*hoo hoo hoo hoo*  
 I'm a Zen Man—*put that in your pipe and smoke it.*  
 I'm a Zen Man—*is that good enough for you?*  
 I'm a Zen Man—*what you gonna do?*

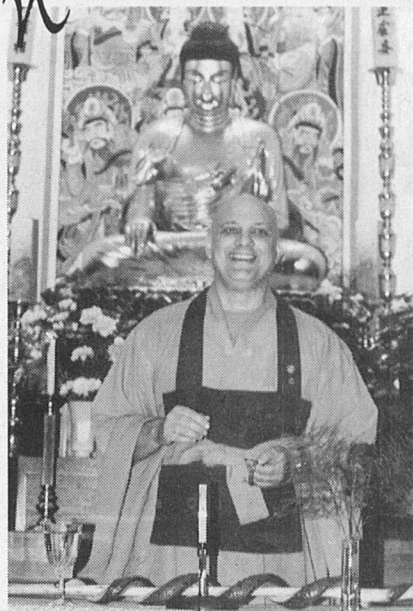
Everybody's trying to get their share.  
 Everybody wants but nobody dares  
 To forget the whole world and go it alone,  
 Caring 'bout nothin but Daddy's Zen bone.

*It's here!*

*It's clear!*

*It's what you always wanted to hear!*

It's the sound in the street  
 That's awful sweet  
 But the girls don't know it  
 And the boys can't show it  
 And the money can't buy it  
 And the suits they won't try it  
 And if you deny it  
 It'll come back to haunt you  
 While you're trying to flaunt your  
 Extravagances  
 Latest dances  
 Success and excess  
 That you bought with the stress



Of trying to forget  
 That the sky it's blue  
 (It could have been for you)  
 And the grass it's green  
 You can see it between  
 The spaces in your day  
 While you're chasing the pay  
 That always eludes you  
 While you delude your  
 Self into thinking  
 You'll never be a stinking  
 Corpse that's just a-rotting  
 Having given up the ghost  
 And become some kind of toast  
 For millions of creatures  
 Who've never seen your Features—  
 Mr. Movie Man!

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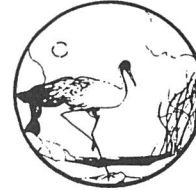
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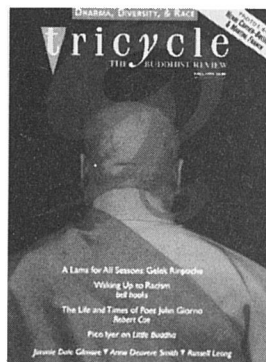
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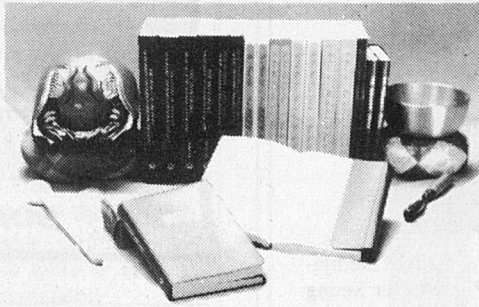
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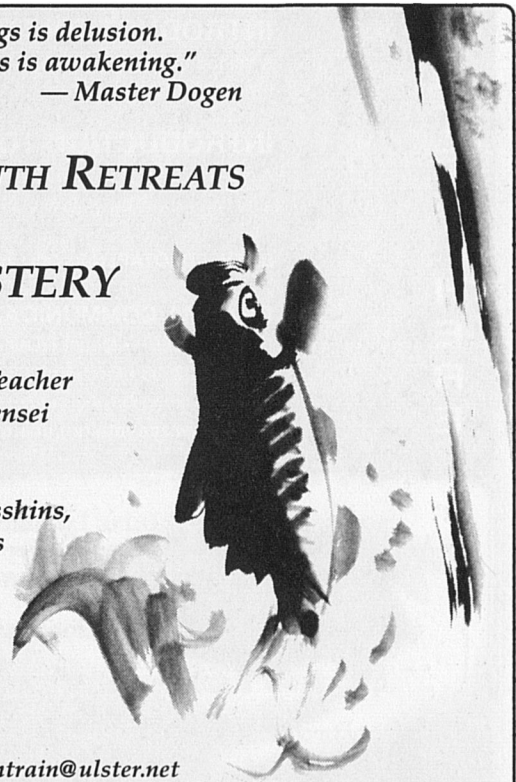
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That myriads things come forth and experience themselves is awakening."  
— Master Dogen*

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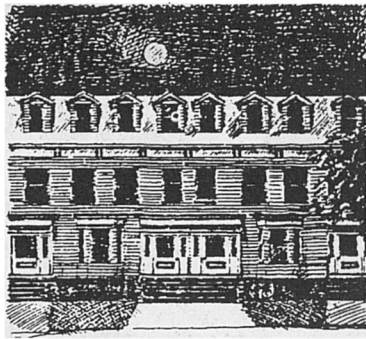
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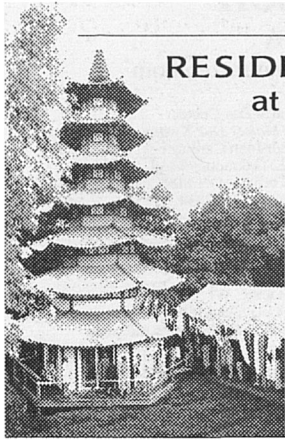
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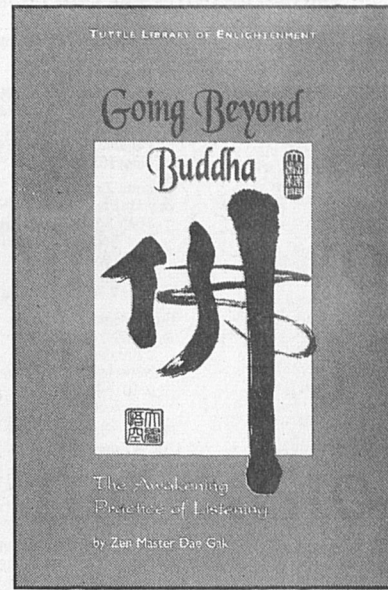
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