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ZEN MASTERS BON HAENG AND BON YEON

> JI DO POEP SA NIMS ANDRZEJ PIOTROWSKI DENNIS DUERMEIER AND MERRIE FRASER

OPENING CEREMONY FOR KYE RYONG SAHN INT'L ZEN CENTER/MU SANG SAH

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Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah. Photo by Mu Sang Sunim.



PRIMARY POINT

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and 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 26. The circulation is 5000 copies.

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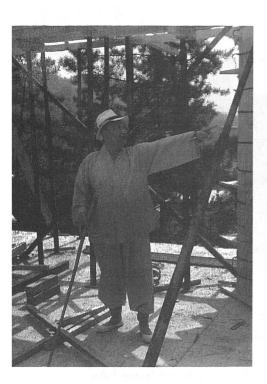
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gathering our great merit

A dharma speech by Zen Master Seung Sahn about Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah. The speech was given in Korea by Zen Master Seung Sahn, and is translated from the Korean. Zen Master Seung Sahn's western students, used to his original and simple English style, will find this talk rather different, perhaps suprising. In Korean, his language is quite sophisticated. (Korean Americans tell us we don't know what we are missing.) Also, this speech was aimed at a Korean audience, so it has a slightly different tone, and different content, from talks which Zen Master Seung Sahn gives to Westerners. It does, however, have a beauty of its own, as well as a strong direction, and for that reason we are presenting it here.

The Patriarchs and eminent teachers have always taught that true form is silent and truth is not moving. However, in the materialistic culture of today's industrial society, reality is changing so rapidly that "yesterday" and "today" are completely different. People are so attached to making money that they seek freedom, happiness, peace and equality primarily from the external world. But because everything in the world is impermanent, even if someone attains what they want, it eventually must disappear.

Today's westernized cultures try to find solutions exclusively in the outside world. Social reformation and revolution appear endlessly. Despite this, human beings are becoming ever more confrontational and hostile; fighting and killing each other more and more, ultimately disregarding and disrespecting even human life itself. At the same

time, they do not hesitate to destroy the natural environment which is the basis of all life. Though many call out for world peace, the law of cause and effect is always very clear. We are afraid of the end of the world, yet still we cannot awaken to the fact that our own self-destruction is imminent. This is simply because we are attached to name and form.

In order to enter this gate, simply do not give rise to thinking.

All of us together, therefore, must let go of our "I." We must put it all down. Only when we return to our before-thinking mind is it possible to eliminate the confrontation, hostility, fighting, and killing which are destroying the world. If your mind becomes clear like space then it is possible to attain the absolute world, then everything you see and hear will be the truth.

Mountain is blue, water is flowing. The dog barks, "Woof, woof!" Salt is salty. Sugar is sweet.

This is "truth world." When we perceive clearly that the absolute and truth worlds are not different but one with our true nature, then we attain correct life, which means attaining the correct situation, relationship and function. This we call "complete world," world peace. That is Zen.

Zen is not just for Buddhists. Rather, it is a bright ray of hope to restore the humanity of our world, a compass pointing us back toward true world peace. The original Zen tradition disappeared in China a long time ago. In Japan, Zen has became more secularized. Only Korean Buddhism has inherited the tradition of Bodhidharma's patriarchal Zen and now Zen practitioners from all over the world recognize this. In some thirty countries of the world, in over one hundred and twenty Zen centers and groups, the number of people devotedly practicing Korean Zen has increased to number in the thousands. Many of these practitioners want to come to Korea to train, but regrettably we do not have adequate facilities to support them in their practice.

Inspired by countless Buddhists' deep sincerity and earnest vows, our Mu Sang Sah will become a great international Zen temple. It will became a place where practitioners from all over the world can come together and practice to attain enlightenment. Then they can return to their respective countries to open the mind's eye of sentient beings and save them from suffering.

So, I implore all of you to consider these words and contribute generously to help build this great temple. May all beings, at the same moment, attain enlightenment.

zen master bon haeng dharma combat

Zen Master Bon Haeng: Here comes my Kyol Che brother.

Student: You bet! Last week at an interview you said you needed my help today, so here I am.

ZMBH: Interesting how that got interpreted. [laughter] Student: You also said at that same time that you wanted me sitting next to you, but that's not correct. As a Zen Master, are you going to give incorrect teaching?

ZMBH: Bring your mat and cushion and come on up here.

Student: Thank you very much.

ZMBH: Oh! Great woman!

Dyan Houghton (Zen Master Bon Haeng's spouse): Great man! An eminent teacher once said, "behind every great man is a great woman." [laughter] I have a question for you. Zen Master Seung Sahn taught you many things. He taught you correct meditation and correct dharma, but I taught you correct life. [laughter] So, I ask you: which one of us is your true teacher?

ZMBH: You already understand.

DH: So I ask you.

ZMBH: Thank you for your continuous teaching. [laughter]

DH: That's a stupid answer!

ZMBH: Not enough? Student: Not enough!

ZMBH: The dog runs after the bone.

ZMBH: Great head dharma teacher!

Student: It's good to see you. I have a question for you. If you're going to help somebody, you have to be able to put it all down. How can you put it all down?

ZMBH: You already understand.

Student: So I ask you. ZMBH: Put it down.

Student: Thank you for your teaching.



On April 8, 2000, Mark Houghton JDPSN received transmission from Zen Master Seung Sahn at Providence Zen Center and became Zen Master Bon Haeng.

Student: Congratulations, great teacher!

ZMBH: Thank you.

Student: A wise woman said, "Let it be, let it be." My question to you is, in this suffering world, how can we let it be?

ZMBH: You already understand.

Student: Please teach me.

ZMBH: Let it be.

Student: Thank you very much.

Student: You're a family man; your wife is here so you can't deny that...

ZMBH: My daughter too...

Student: Also, I'm a family man. The other day I got an e-mail from a dharma teacher who was asked to become a bodhisattva teacher. He asked, "What is required of me to become a bodhisattva teacher?" So I said, "Zen Center first, family second." Then he replied, "Unless my wife divorces me and my kids go to an orphanage, I guess I cannot!" So now you're becoming a Zen Master...

ZMBH: This is a little long, you know... [laughter]

Student: Just listen, OK? [laughter] So once you become a Zen Master, will it be, "Sentient beings first, then Kwan Um School of Zen, then Cambridge Zen Center, then family?"

ZMBH: What can I do for you right now?

Student: I don't need any help.

HSPN: I think you need a lot, brother!

zen master bon haeng dharma talk

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Ready?

If you want it, go get it.
If you don't want it, it will get you.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Return to the place of not wanting, not getting.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Getting is only getting, Wanting is only wanting. That's all a big mistake. What can you do?

KATZ!

It's nice to be here together with you.

Thank you Dae Soen Sa Nim for your teaching, thank you sangha for your support, and thank you to my family for your patience. Many years ago, I arrived at the Zen Center to only practice with my friends, my dharma brothers and sisters. Somehow during this process an unusual thing happens to us. When we start practicing, there's a "me" and a "you." However, as we continue to practice, we are naturally transformed into an "us." That's the most important point of our teaching.

In Buddhism, we talk about four important things. First, getting a human body... most of us have that. Second is hearing about the dharma. Next is finding a keen-eyed teacher, which we have in Zen Master Seung Sahn. Finally, attaining the same realization as the Buddha. That's our practice. All of us here—without even knowing it—have already completed three-quarters of this project. So now, our only job is to continue on the path.

Recently, Dae Kwang Sunim mentioned to me that Zen Master Ma Tzu had over one hundred and thirty dharma heirs, and that Zen Master Man Gong, our great grandteacher, gave inka to over fifty people. When they were alive, there weren't six billion human beings on the planet, but they still recognized that many worthy successors.

Remember, all of us have an obligation to this world; that's the central point of our teaching. This obligation means, attain these four things and save all beings from suffering. Everyone is capable of doing this. Why not?

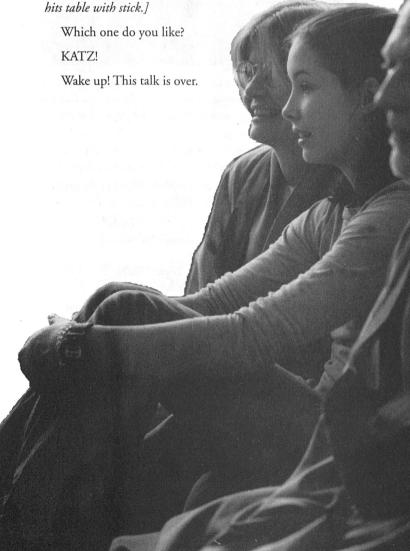
[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

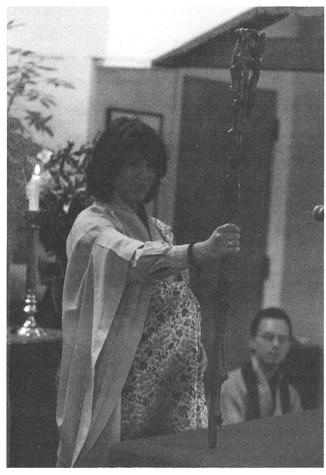
Hurry up, time won't wait.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No time, no waiting.





On April 9, 2000, Jane Dobisz JDPSN received transmission from Zen Master Seung Sahn at Providence Zen Center and became Zen Master Bon Yeon.

zen master bon yeon dharma combat

Student: The sutra says all Buddhas dwell in a single sound. If there is no sound, where do the Buddhas dwell?

Zen Master Bon Yeon: [Makes "shhhhh" gesture with a finger over her mouth.]

Student: Only that?

ZMBY: [waves goodbye silently]

Student: I thought they dwell at Cambridge Zen Center.

ZMBY: Don't be attached to Cambridge Zen Center!

Zen Master Bon Yeon: Great doctor, I'm glad you're here.

Student: You're becoming a mother very soon, and I think all of us in some ways are always searching for mother. So, what is mother's mind?

ZMBY: You already understand.

Student: Please teach me.

ZMBY: What are you doing now? Student: Sitting on the cushion. ZMBY: That's a mother's mind. Student: Thank you very much. ZMBY: Take care of your true self.

Student: Hello.

ZMBY: How are you today?

Student: Good, thanks. Congratulations!

ZMBY: Not yet.

Student: Over the years, you've given me many hard questions, and I'm wondering if you can give me the one question that can't be answered.

ZMBY: Who are you?

Student: You already understand.

ZMBY: I ask you.

Student: Sitting here talking to you at your transmission ceremony.

ZMBY: There, you've answered it!

ZMBY: Mu Shim Sunim! How are you today?

Mu Shim Sunim JDPS: Very good, wonderful to see you here.

ZMBY: You, too.

MSSN: You and I, besides being in the same Zen school, have something very much in common. We're both born in the same year, the year of the dog, according to the Chinese calendar. This dog tends to follow others and tends to be very loyal to just a few people, and sometimes follows blindly. Sometimes runs after a bone. So you're a dog year person.

ZMBY: I'm a what?

MSSN: You're born in the dog year, today become a Zen Master. How will you not run after the bone?

ZMBY: You already understand.

MSSN: So I ask you.

ZMBY: [Growls loudly and makes clawing action.] Get out of my territory!!

MSSN: Thank you for your teaching, thank you very much.

zen master bon yeon dharma talk

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

You are the universe, the universe is you.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

In this sound, you and universe disappear.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

You are just you, the universe is just the universe. Three worlds, which one is correct?

KATZ!

You and the universe together make it happen. Moment to moment, just do it.

Transmission really just means giving something to someone. I feel tremendously grateful for everything that I've received from all of you here, particularly this gentlemen sitting up here in the bright orange robe with the glasses on, known as Dae Soen Sa Nim. He's given every one of us so many gifts—you couldn't begin to count them. We heard a wonderful story this morning from Morgan about Zen Master Seung Sahn and the "birthday cake sutra." Each of us who has been fortunate enough to spend time with him have our own stories like that, don't we? It's quite extraordinary, actually. He's taught us very much, even how to pick up this big stick and hit the table. That's a wonderful, wonderful present! Who else could put three thousand years worth of spiritual training in such a nice and simple package that we can access, right here in our own lives? Today, I would like to share two major transmissions I think we've all gotten from Zen Master Seung Sahn for which I am particularly grateful.

The first one occurred at the first dharma talk I attended here at Providence Zen Center. Zen Master Seung Sahn was speaking, and during the talk he pointed to the cup and said to the audience, "Here is a cup. If you say this is a cup you are attached to name and form, and this stick will hit you thirty times. If you say it's not a cup, you're attached to emptiness, and this stick will also hit you thirty times. What do you call it?"

Everyone was silent. Probably all of us were stuck at the same time, wondering, "What can I do? What is it?" Then he poked the student next to him and said, "Show them."

The student, of course, picked up the cup and drank from it. I remember sitting there and just smiling, thinking, "That's right! How perfect." This one action encapsulates all the wisdom of all the sages through many thousands of years of human practice. What does it teach us? Correct situation, correct relationship, correct function and just do it. Throw away all opposites; cup/not cup, form/emptiness, good answer/bad answer, explaining something... throw it all away and just do it! In this one small teaching we all get a profound transmission: a way that we can take the metaphysical truth of the universe and bring it right into our life in this moment. This teaching is extremely important for us. Whenever I get lost I think of it: "What is the situation? What's my correct relationship? What's my job, or correct function?" Then just do it. You can be sure if one of those things is off, there's something that's going to go wrong. When that happens, you make it correct and try again. So that's the first really excellent teaching that he's given us that I'm grateful for.

The second main teaching which is also emphasized in our school is direction: Why? Why do something? Only for me? Only to be some sort of a Zen Master or something? That's not going to help anyone. Zen Master Seung Sahn's whole emphasis is always, "For you." For you, for you, not for me. Over time, if we practice hard and we try, this "for you" teaching grows on us. When you combine a clear direction with the means to implement it (correct situation, relationship, and function), and the ability to "just do it," well, that's quite a powerful combination. It's a recipe for saving all beings. I don't know of any other teacher who has managed to boil it down to such a simple and accessible practice like our teacher has. In addition, he's tossed in a little bit of fun, the "potato theory," hard training, a big dash of humor, and a little bit of kimchee... very spicy!

We've all gotten transmission from the ancient Buddhas through many, many generations, from Zen Master Seung Sahn, down to each of us.

How will we transmit Buddha's mind to others?

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Somebody asked Un Mun Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" He said "Dry shit on a stick."

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

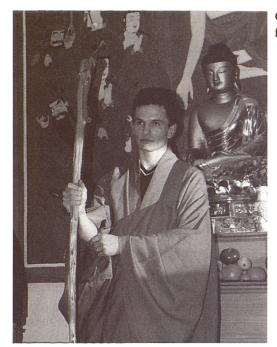
Somebody asked Seung Sahn Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" He said, "Who are you?"

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

If somebody asks you, "What is Buddha?" What will you say?

KATZ!

On the altar the gold Buddha is smiling.



On March 5, 2000, Andrzej Piotrowski received inka from Zen Master Wu Bong at Warsaw Zen Center.

andrzej piotrowski jdpsn dharma falk

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Coming empty-handed is going empty-handed. Going empty-handed is coming empty-handed.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Originally—no coming, no going.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Coming empty-handed is coming empty-handed, going empty-handed is going empty-handed.

Which of these three statements is true? If you find it this stick will hit you thirty times. If you don't find it you will also get thirty blows.

What can you do?

KATZ!

We've come here today to take part in this ceremony and when it ends we'll leave this place. Thank you all very much for coming.

I'd like to express my gratitude to my teachers; above all Zen Master Seung Sahn, who founded the Kwan Um School of Zen and infused it with the spirit of his teaching; Zen Master Wu Bong for his guidance and protection and Aleksandra Porter JDPSN who has always been an example of practice, wisdom and clear teaching. Also I would like to thank Grazyna Perl JDPSN and all the other teachers with whom I've had the opportunity to practice.

This ceremony today points to the great work of life and death. Our life is very short. I could say that yesterday I was a child, today I'm an adult, tomorrow I'll be an old man and the day after I'll have to return this rented car (my body) to nature. When we enter this world we have only empty hands and when we leave it's also with empty hands. This isn't a special discovery of Buddhism, it's the fundamental truth of our human existence. Everybody understands this. But understanding isn't enough, so the core of our practice means using our empty hands, giving them work and making use of our life. That means attain enlightenment and help our world.

Our practice is something very rare and valuable because it takes up this work by dealing directly with the deepest anxiety and question of our life, "What am I?" Usually our world diverts our attention from this question. In our Temple Rules we find, "If you don't open your mind in this life you won't be able to digest even one drop of water." Human beings can't get true happiness without understanding themselves. I also strayed for many years led by this anxiety and came very close to the point of destroy-

andrej piemovahi idean

Student: How do you save the Buddha dharma? Piotrowski Poep Sa Nim: Thank you for your smile today.

Student: But this is only your dharma.

PPSN: Not enough? Student: Not enough.

PPSN: Dog runs after a bone.

Student: Oh, thank you for saving Buddha's dharma.

Student: I have a present for you. It's a beautiful mala, but I'd like to know how much it weighs? PPSN: [takes the mala] Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal.

Student: Once a student finished Kyol Che, and just as she was leaving the Zen Center you said to her in parting, "Don't lose it." What was "it"?

PPSN: Don't lose it.

Student: There's a question which bothers me. Clear mind is like a great, round mirror. But what is on the other side of this mirror?

PPSN: Your trousers are blue.

Student: Now you're Andrzej, but soon you'll be Piotrowski Poep Sa Nim. What is going to change?

PPSN: You already understand. Student: But what about you? PPSN: How may I help you?

ing my life completely. I came to understand that the only thing that could really help me was a profound transformation in how I lived my life. Then I came to the Warsaw Zen Center and heard Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching. It was a great discovery. There's an old Polish saying: "It's like being lost in a big city and suddenly you meet your grandparents on the street." I had a similar experience. I felt like a car which after a crash was taken to the best repair shop.

We can look at Buddha's dharma as a kind of medicine which can bring about a cure. Its function is to transform the mind of ignorance and suffering into the mind of happiness and enlightenment. Today these empty hands receive a Zen stick, which means new work. This also means I'm again becoming a student because Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching is that all things are our teachers. Our work isn't finished as long as sentinent beings suffer.

The goal of our practice is never seperate from what we are just now and yet it's independent of time and space. One commentary on a kong-an in the *Mu Mun Kwan* says, "Before he even took one step he had arrived; before he opened his mouth he already had finished speaking." *The Compass of Zen* also states that without cultivation you are already complete. Yet we all experience waves of karma which obscure our original clear mind, so continuing to practice is necessary. Its fuel is eagerness.

Once during an interview with Zen Master Wu Bong I poured out all my problems. He listened patiently then after a moment of silence held out a plateful of chocolate cookies—a good way to soothe children and in this case very effective. Then he said, "I don't know a shortcut but I know our practice works. You must be patient and persevere." This perseverance is like heating up ice which is our karmic mind. As our practice matures the ice block becomes smaller and smaller until it becomes water, then steam and finally disappears. Then the one, clear and bright thing not dependent on life and death emerges. We call that our true self. Then helping this world becomes possible. We don't have to worry about our empty hands any longer. They always have plenty of work.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

If you have great faith you attain the Way.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

If you have great courage you attain the Truth.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

If you have great question you attain Correct Life.
The Way, the Truth and Correct Life—are they the same or different?

KATZ!

Outside the window the last rays of day. Inside, many bright friendly faces. What can I do for you?

WINTER KYOL CHE

at Providence Zen Center

JANUARY 6-APRIL 6, 2001

with Zen Master Dae Kwang

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99 Pound Road Cumberland RI 02864 401/658-1464 fax 401/658-1188 info@kwanumzen.org www.kwanumzen.org/pzc On April 9, 2000, Dennis Duermeier received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn at Providence Zen Center.

dennis duermeier jdpsn dharma combat

Student: In the transmission ceremony yesterday there was five minutes of meditation. Just now, we only had three minutes of meditation. Which is correct, the three minutes or the five minutes?

Duermeier Poep Sa Nim: You already understand.

Student: So, I ask you. DPSN: [sits in meditation]

Student: Good.

Student: There was a radio skit where one actor playing a robber goes to another one and says, "Your money or your life!" There's silence, and the robber waits, waits, waits, and then the other one says, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking!" So, if you were that robber, how would you clear this guy's mind?

DPSN: You already understand.

Student: So, I ask you.

DPSN: Yeah—boom! [points hand like gun and shoots]

Student: This picture above the altar here, somebody said that these guys are the protectors of the dharma. I don't find that very interesting. What I am interested in is, how are *you* going to protect the dharma?

DPSN: You already understand.

Student: I don't, I don't.

DPSN: What are you doing right now? Student: Just sitting here, talking to you. DPSN: The dharma is already protected.

Student: Oh!!

Student: I have here the great sword of Ahimska, ready to cut off your fingers and your toes. Without violence, how can you disarm me?

DPSN: I'm sorry, what did you say? Student: [has nothing to say]

[loud laughter and applause from audience]

Student: You're this great man from Kansas, which is known as the Great Plains State, right?

DPSN: Right.

Student: A long time ago, there were great numbers of buffaloes that used to roam in the great plains. Where have all the great buffaloes gone?

DPSN: [Imitating a buffalo] RRRRRGGGHHH! Student: This buffalo not roaming too much!

DPSN: Not enough? Student: Good enough.



dennis duermeier jdpsn dharma talk

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
Zen Master Seung Sahn always teaches "Just do it!"
[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Lao-Tse in the Tao Te Ching teaches the wisdom of non-doing.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
So, just doing, non-doing, are they the same or different?
KATZ!

What are you doing right now?

I'm so grateful and relieved. Now I'll always know where to sit when I come here. A while back I was reading about a practice which is based upon the idea that everyone who comes into this world has twelve teachers. The practice requires you to figure out who your twelve teachers are as you go through your life. Who are my teachers, my twelve teachers? It doesn't take much of this sort of practice to open up your mind very wide, very fast. Who's my teacher, is this person my teacher, is that person my teacher? You begin to relate to everyone in a much different way. Is this dog my teacher? Is that cat my teacher? Is the guy cutting me off in traffic my teacher? It really changes your mind.

Of course, all of us start out with our families as our first teachers. In my family I had a brother ten years older than me, whom I idolized. He had a wastebasket in his room which had all sorts of college pennants printed on it, many little colorful pennants with college names printed on them. I used to sneak into his room when I was young and just look at that wastebasket and think "Oh man, there's someplace where you can go, universities where you can go and figure out things. You can get an answer." I had such a strong aspiration that someday I would be able to follow in his footsteps and go to college and figure out things, figure out life, understand everything. Over time, this aspiration evolved into something else. As I grew older, I began to have an idea about something I thought of as the "True University." It seemed, in my heart of hearts, that there must be some thing, some place, the real university where real knowledge must be available. I really wanted to go there.

Finally I went to the university, but that wasn't it. So for years afterward I continued to secretly wonder, "Where is the true university? Where is true learning?" I didn't tell many people about my question. I was a little shy, it seemed very personal and maybe a little odd, my idea, but a while back I told my wife Carol about the wastebasket and the Real University. Two days later she went out to a garage sale and came home with a wastebasket, exactly the same wastebasket from my childhood. It's sitting by my desk at home now, and still I look at it and think, "Ahhh."

When I was growing up, my mother was a very avid reader and she imparted to me her love of reading and of books. One thing we always had around the house was *Reader's Digest*, usually in the bathroom. When I was maybe eleven or twelve years old, I read a particular article and the title stuck in my mind for years—I have no idea why. The title was "Make Way for the No Problem Guy!" You have to hand it to those *Reader's Digest* title writers—"Blank, the Sleeping Giant on our Doorstep." "The No Problem

Guy."

But finally, years later, I met him. And in meeting Zen Master Seung Sahn, I learned that the true university is on the tips of a hundred blades of grass, and I could quit looking, quit wondering. Encountering Zen Master Seung Sahn was a wonderful gift, a gift of clarity and direction, the perfect antidote to the aimlessness of most of my early life. Of course, in becoming part of our school, I encountered many other teachers and many other teachings. I'd like to thank all of our teachers, everyone who has kept this tradition alive and passed it on for the benefit of all beings. It's a wonderful, remarkable and rare thing.

Twice since joining our school, I've gotten teaching or inspiration outside of formal situations which has changed the course of my life. Both instances occurred in restaurants. About ten years ago, I was having a cup of coffee with Zen Master Su Bong, and he talked to me about someday becoming a teacher in our School. I'll always be grateful to him for that encouragement and carry his memory

in my heart.

Zen Master Hae Kwang is the other person who encouraged me to consider becoming a teacher. Several years ago, I got very angry with the Zen Center and decided "I've had it with this, it's too much trouble dealing with all these people and their karma." I left and quit practicing. I had a very tenuous relationship with the Zen Center and the School for maybe two and a half years. After a time, maybe because I was getting so unhappy, I decided I'd better try going back to practice. So, one Sunday morning, I went to the Zen Center, got to the door, and was too late. Practice had already begun, so I thought "Aww, I'll go have a cup of coffee instead." I went to a local bakery, got some coffee and the paper, and sat down to read. Almost immediately Zen Master Hae Kwang came in and sat down with me. He had also been late to practice, and in the course of a wonderful conversation about practice and the Zen Center, he also encouraged me to think seriously about becoming a teacher. I'm very grateful to him for his kindness and will always remember his encouragement.

So, this teaching is very wide and teaching doesn't always occur in the dharma room. I hope we can all keep our minds wide open and receptive so we can receive the moment to moment teaching as it appears before us.

One of the things that has always attracted me to Zen practice has been that so much of our teaching comes to us in the form of stories. I've tried to read sutras, but they just don't penetrate somehow. My mind doesn't work that way. But if I hear a story, it stays with me, so I would like to

close this talk with two of my favorite stories. They really hit me

The first story is about a famous and eccentric Zen Master in old China who was known as Bird's Nest Zen Master because he lived in a tree and practiced high up on a limb. He was known far and wide for his wisdom. It happened one day that an imperial courtier, tiring of the intrigue and superficiality of court life, and having heard of the famous old teacher, determined to seek him out and get some good teaching. Accordingly, he dressed in his best robes, mounted his finest horse, and rode out to find the old teacher. Eventually, he found the tree, and sure enough, its famous occupant is sitting up on his limb, meditating. The courtier dismounts and waits far longer for recognition than anyone of his august station should have to. Finally, irritated, he shouts up "Old man, you're in a very precarious position up there!" Immediately comes the reply, "Not half so precarious as your position down there." Somewhat taken aback, the courtier remembers hearing that to get anything out of a Zen Master, you have to ask a question, so he shouts up "So old man, what is it that all Buddhas have taught?" Again, the immediate reply, "Do all good, avoid all evil. Thus have all Buddhas taught." Now the courtier is really mad. He shouts up "Do all good? Avoid all evil? I've known that since I was four years old!" "Yes," says the old man, "A four year old may know it, but even an eighty year old cannot do it.'

So that's our practice, that's our teaching. Do it! We all understand, everyone-understands how to live, what to do, but, do it, can you do it—just do it—that's our practice.

The other story is about a famous warrior who had been feared throughout the land all of his life because he was such a skillful and ruthless swordsman. He had killed many, many people. But he is becoming old, and he realizes it is only a question of time before someone a little younger, a little more skillful, a little quicker comes along and takes care of him. He thinks "Oh, I've killed so many people, I've been bad all through my life, what's going to happen to me after I die?" He's heard of a famous and wise teacher living nearby and determines to visit him to gain some insight into heaven and hell. He dresses up, arms himself, and heads to the temple. Upon arriving, he stomps right into the dharma room, very proud and ignoring all the formalities. He sees the old master sitting practicing, walks over to him and waits for acknowledgment. Ignored, he waits, becoming angrier and angrier, until finally he shouts "Old man, I want something from you. I want you to tell me about heaven and hell!" The Master looks up at the warrior and exclaims, "What? Me, teach an ignorant, smelly lout like you about anything? Impossible. Quit wasting my time. Get out of here!" Stunned and enraged, the swordsman whips out his blade to lop off the old man's head. Just as the sword reaches the top of its swing, just as the blade is about to descend, the old teacher says calmly, "Here open the gates of hell." Pow! The warrior is stuck, he can't move, he doesn't know what to do. Slowly, very slowly, he lowers and resheaths his blade. In the same calm tone, the old man says "Here open the gates of heaven."

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.] So, hell.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.] Heaven.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.] Which one are you making? Be careful.



On April 9, 2000, Merrie Fraser received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn at Providence Zen Center.

merrie fraser jdpsn dharma combat

Student: Two people come into a room, one rings a bell and the other one bows. What's your correct action?

Fraser Poep Sa Nim: You already understand.

Student: I ask you.

FPSN: [bowing] Ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling.

Student: Mmmmmmm...

FPSN: Not enough?

Student: No.

FPSN: The dog runs after the bone. Student: Thank you very much.

Student: For many, many years you lived in the Providence Zen Center. Then you packed everything up and you moved to Phoenix. My question to you is, where is your true home now?

FPSN: You already understand.

Student: So I ask you.

FPSN: Sitting in front of you.

Student: Thank you for your teaching.

FPSN: You're welcome.

Student: I have a question for you. How long is Buddha's finger?

FPSN: You already understand.

Student: So, I ask you.

FPSN: [holds up a finger, and wiggles it]

Student: That's not Buddha's finger, that's your finger.

our miger.

FPSN: Not enough? Student: Not enough.

FPSN: Dog runs after the bone.

merrie fraser jdpsn dharma talk

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Don't know mind is compassion mind, compassion mind is don't know mind.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No don't know mind, no compassion mind.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Don't know mind is don't know mind, compassion mind is compassion mind.

Three statements, which is correct?

KATZ!

How may I help you?

While we dwell in the realm of opposites, suffering is always with us. We can pick it off the shelf everyday. As we continue to practice, we find ways of relieving our own suffering, but that's just for us. So we practice more, seeing the suffering of everybody else, and as we see that suffering, we think, "What can I do? I can see them suffering, but I don't know what to do." Practice, practice, practice, then true compassion appears, and it knows what to do.

A long time ago, on a trip to Korea, we went shopping for trinkets in some Buddhist supply stores. They would let us in the back room where there were more items—drums, statues, lots of beads. On one shelf was a wooden Kwan Seum Bosal statue. It was almost life size and had no paint except for the eyes. Looking down on us was the saddest, most compassionate look I have ever seen. If I could have shipped it home, I would have, but I never forgot those eyes or that expression.

This statue's expression is don't know's child, compassion mind. So cut off all thinking and all attachments of "I like" and "I don't like," and then true compassion appears. All of us have heard these words many, many times and we all think we know what they mean, but to really

cut off all attachments and to walk free—completely free—is very difficult. It's especially difficult to cut off the part that says, "My life, my practice is correct."

We all have hidden ideas of ourselves. It has taken a while to discover this, but we all have them. The problem with this hidden idea of ourselves is that we base our actions on it. We cause suffering for ourselves and others because of it. It is the primary cause for everything we do in life. If you find your hidden idea and get rid of that hidden idea, then you can truly be free and understand what "don't know mind" and "true compassion mind" means.

Don't know knows its job. It doesn't require any opinions or ideas from us. If we are really clear, compassion appears. So trust that. Don't add legs on a snake by making extra stuff. When this true compassion mind appears, correct action also appears. Then it's possible to help anybody. It may not seem to be the sort of thing that we would do if we were thinking about it, but whatever appears really helps them. Our everyday life—working, socializing, playing—is the platform from which we can help other people. Correct function, correct situation, correct relationship appear magically out of don't know.

Some of the best teachers are the ones we get along with the least. They show us our blind spots by their actions. Only when we have moved on can we realize how they have helped us and how we have been changed. This is compassion in disguise. So be thankful for all of your teachers—even the ones you think you are not learning from. You are learning something or they would not have appeared for you. Nothing happens by accident, so cultivate a connection with them.

It is possible to walk free and unencumbered throughout the universe.

In the beginning of this speech there were four statements about don't know mind and compassion mind.

All were mistakes. What is the truth?

KATZ!

Providence has a waxing moon and an inka ceremony.

Phoenix has a bright moon and prison letters, back and forth.



FIND YOUR TRUE SELF!

WINTER KYOL CHE IN KOREA

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Zen Master Seung Sahn

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The teacher for the retreat at Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah will be Zen Master Dae Bong, who received transmission from Zen Master Seung Sahn and is the resident guiding teacher for Mu Sang Sah.

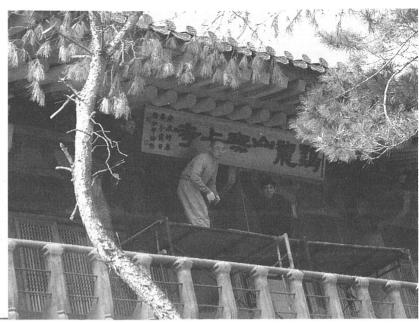
The teacher for the retreat at Hwa Gye Sah will be Mu Shim Sunim Ji Do Poep Sa, who received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn and is the guiding teacher for the Seoul International Zen Center.

Oh Jin Sunim Ji Do Poep Sa will also be teaching at one of the retreats.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Seoul International Zen Center, Hwa Gye Sah 487 Suyu 1 Dong, Kang Buk Gu 142-071 Seoul, Korea

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tying a rotten rope

to a cloud

Talk by Zen Master Dae Bong at the opening ceremony for Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah, on March 19, 2000.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

This point means open is closed, closed is open. Everything is changing, changing, changing. This is the world of impermanence, the opposites' world.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

This point means originally nothing. Never open. Never closed. This is true emptiness, the absolute world.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

This point means open is open, closed is closed. Everything is true just as it is. Sky is blue. Trees are green. This is truth, the complete world. Three worlds. Which one is the correct world?

KATZ!

Today is the opening ceremony of Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah. The shining faces of bodhisattvas from around the world fill this mountain hall.

An old Korean book, *Chung Gam Rok*, said that when seven hundred great dharma teachers come to Guk Sa Bong, the dharma light of Kye Ryong Sahn will shine throughout the world. So today we are opening this International Zen Center. This is the result of the great vow of our teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, and of the dedicated and tireless efforts of sincere Buddhists from Korea and many foreign countries. Opening this temple is very important and very wonderful. But most important is opening our minds. How do you open your mind?

First you must cut off your thinking and return to before-thinking. This is our true nature, universal substance and absolute world. At this place, there are no differences. All people, all things throughout the universe are the same. Everything becomes one. If you do not attach to this place, then when you open your eyes you can see clearly. You can hear, smell, taste and touch clearly. The trees are green. The valley in front of the temple is filled with mist. This is the truth world. Everything is truth. Finally when you attain that the absolute world and the truth world are not two, then correct action appears. This is correct human life. We call that Great Love, Great Compassion and the Great Bodhisattva Way.

Our grandteacher, Zen Master Ko Bong, said if you want that, even good education and social position cannot help you. You must tie a rotten rope to a cloud. That will help your true self. Do you understand that? If someone doesn't understand, then I will help you.

Six hundred years ago, King Yi Tae Jo, the founder of the Yi Dynasty, drank water at Dragon Water Well very near here. Then he carried water to Guk Sa Bong to pray for the prosperity of the nation. Today we place water in front of the Buddha with the desire to attain our true nature and save all beings. So King Yi Tae Jo's water and our water, are they the same or different? If you say same, this stick will hit you thirty times. If you say different, this stick will still hit you thirty times. What can you do?

KATZ!

After this ceremony, please have a drink of water. Outside the door, the road leads to Om Sa Dan Ji [the local town] and the whole world. Only how may I help you?

Talk by Mu Sang Sunim at the opening ceremony for Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah, on March 19, 2000.

Yorabun anyonghashimnika? [How are you, everybody?] Welcome everyone to the opening ceremony for Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center. As foreigners we have come here to learn the ancient wisdom of Korean Buddhism. We are especially grateful for the untiring efforts and wonderful, clear teaching of our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn; also for the teaching and the efforts of great monks, teachers and Buddhists in Korea, Asia and the whole world. This center would not exist without all of their efforts.

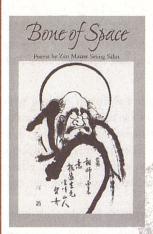
Buddhism is very old—maybe some people in Korea think it is too old and out of date. They like computers and the internet. But in the west, people who have grown up with no knowledge of Buddhism, when they encounter Buddhism for the first time, it seems very new, very mod-

ern—more modern and more helpful in dealing with modern problems than our western thinking. Because this modern world, which is so fascinating and interesting, does have many problems. We are all threatened by pollution, nuclear and biological weapons and the unknown effects of technology. And we are in danger of losing our true human nature.

Our Buddhism is not old, not new. It is simply a return to our true nature, which is before thinking, science and philosophy and beyond all opposites thinking. So I hope we can all come together and practice here in this wonderful new temple—people from east and west alike—find our true nature, and save this world. Komsahamnida [Thank you].



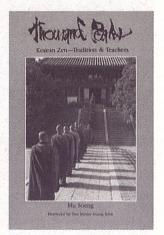
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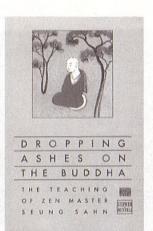
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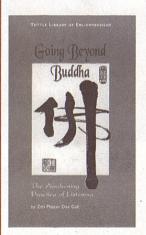
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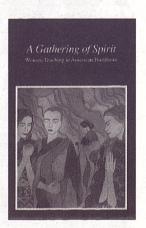
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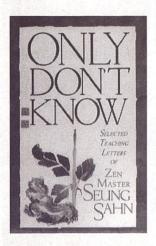




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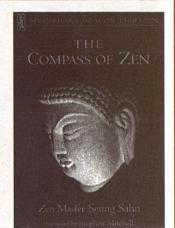
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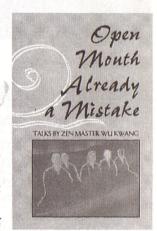
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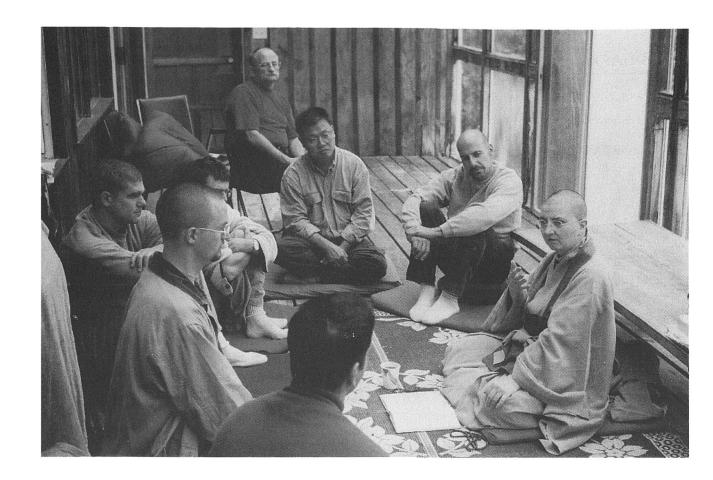
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solving our life problems with the dharma

Myong Oh Sunim JDPS, Gdansk Zen Center, excerpted from a workshop at the Whole World is a Single Flower conference.

When we encounter problems we should know how to work with them so we can solve them. I myself have had lots of problems and obstacles and thus I became a sincere, genuine student of all possible methods to cut through all these hindrances. Since these methods have worked very well for me as well as for many other people, I'd like to share some hints about them with you.

First of all, in Zen we say that we cannot change past karma. This has already been created and has determined the conditions of our present life a long time ago. But we can define our future conditions by what we do now.

So if we keep clear mind and act accordingly moment to moment we are actually building our future happiness and we are contributing to our future joy. (It does not have to be only a distant future. As time is relative and depends on the mind it can be just the

next moment, and that's what people mean by "changing karma.")

To be able to keep clear mind we should keep before thinking mind and use it with correct compassionate direction.

Now, maybe we are already Zen students and we are making our efforts to keep clear while at the same time we encounter troubles with our mind which gets forgetful, confused or fearful. Or we have problems with our body getting sick, money problems or family-relations problems.

The first advice is: do not give up your practice efforts! If you try, try, try, then you will be able to change the way you experience your karma. This means that although the seed of your karma stays the same, the way the result manifests in your life will change. If we don't practice, our karma controls our lives. When we cut off our thinking, our true self controls our karma and our whole life as well.

It's like when we drive. Usually, we follow the traffic lights. But sometimes there is a policeman standing at the intersection directing the traffic—then his signals override the traffic lights. Maybe the light is green, but if the policeman says stop, we must stop. So this policeman is like our true self. Our true self is the ultimate force which overrides any other layer of karmic forces.

So we must continue practicing until we can live moment-to-moment as our true self. That doesn't mean that roadsigns and traffic lights aren't useful—we have to use them, especially if we are not totally clear.

Here is a story about that, maybe you have heard this. Once in a small town there was a big flood. The rescue workers were asking everyone to leave, but one man said that he only depended on God, that he knew God would save him, so he refused to leave with the others. After a while the waters got higher, so the man went up on his roof. A boat came by, and the people said to the man, "Get in! Get in!"

"No," he said, "God will provide for me," and he let the boat go on. The waters got higher, the man got further up on the roof. He was beginning to worry. Then a helicopter came, the pilot shouted at the man, "Get in! Get in!"

"No thank you," he said, "God will provide." The helicopter left. Finally the waters covered the house, and the man drowned. When he reached heaven, he asked God, "I believed in you all my life. Why didn't you help me?"

"What are you talking about," said God. "I sent you a group of rescue workers, a boat, and a helicopter!"

God doesn't mean just the Christian or Jewish God—it is the Absolute, the Mind, the World, our True Self, if you wish to call it that. So this story means, when you call on your true self to help you, by practicing strongly, keeping don't-know mind, and using techniques like sitting, bowing, chanting, mantra practice, you may expect that some helpful conditions will appear. Don't discard them only because they don't have a big label like "Zen" or Kwan Seum Bosal" on them.

Kwan Seum Bosal may manifest itself as a friend, a book, a TV program, a rabbi, even as a good idea in your mind. Pay attention, remain unprejudiced and open-minded. Then you will understand Kwan Seum Bosal's message and you will be able to shake one of its ten thousand hands that are extended to you. Be alert.

So our basic, original practice of tapping into the energy of primary point, of our true self, is the spine of our practice. We should never abandon it. This is our absolute practice. Then all techniques, synchronicities, opportunities, and relative practices, such as dharma play, tai chi, self-help courses, therapy, university studies, can become the flesh, dress and makeup. They will organize themselves around our spine, creating the strong, straight and healthy body of our life, containing everything you need to the smallest detail.

This way we do not have to reject anything useful. We can gather up all the abundance of this world, as long as we use it to help us in our correct direction. If we don't keep our correct direction, and rather get ensnared by desire, life will usually give us some instant, rather unpleasant feedback on the matter.

Here are some basic techniques for practice. We can call bowing, chanting and sitting absolute practices, which cut off all thinking and help us keep don't know mind. We can call these the practices which lead to the final goal, or the spine of our practice. Then we have relative practices, which smooth our way. For example, dharma play, soen yu, tai chi, acupuncture, good actions, Buddhist medicine in general, correct exercise and diet. This the the flesh and makeup of our practice. For basic teaching about all of these practices I would refer you to our Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, or to any qualified Buddhist teachers.

If you cut off all thinking, any technique can lead you towards enlightenment. Besides that, each technique has specific helpful effects on our karma.

We can say briefly that the most important practice in all cases is bowing, which removes karmic results very quickly, and which should be used in most cases of life-confusion. Sitting cultivates your wisdom, but is not so helpful for people with psychosis or strong mental confusion. Chanting is very effective for soothing wounded emotions and sending energy to someone in need.

Mantra is a great tool to keep clear mind in any demanding situation, so it's the best technique for keeping don't know mind in daily life. It's also a powerful means for sending people energy. Soen yu refuels people with life energy, improves health and mood, and can prolong life. Dharma play is a self-suggestion technique which can bring the mind and body together, calming the mind and allowing one to make positive suggestions to oneself to reinforce one's practice.

If you need to make a big change in your life, it's good to make a schedule to practice these techniques intensively. If you have a big problem, then for many people it's helpful to do a hundred days of midnight practice, practicing for one or two hours in the time between midnight and 3:00 a.m. This practice has a special effect if you can do it without a break for a hundred days in a row. It can make a major, positive change in your karma, almost as powerful as doing a hundred-day solo retreat.

Over the years I have seen these practices make fundamental changes in the lives of myself and my friends. I can testify that they really work! Stay open to all possible forms of help that will appear along your practice. Most important is not to give up—only try, try, try and you will get it.

I wish you the best of luck on your dharma path.

report from mu sang sah

Myong Haeng Sunim, January 2000

Hello from Kye Ryong Sahn mountain, South Korea! I've been living down here with Zen Master Dae Bong at the site of our new Zen Center since last September. As everybody knows, we've decided to call this place Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sah. Since many members of the Kwan Um School around the world have generously contributed their time and resources to this project, I thought it would be interesting to relate a little of what we've been up to these last few months.

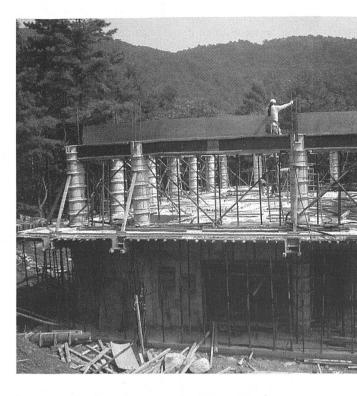
It's been quite an experience watching the building take shape and seeing more and more people becoming interested in what we're doing. We've been staying in a temporary house—read, mobile home. It's actually quite nice; we have a mini dharma room with a mini Buddha, also a heated floor, running water and electricity. The toilet is outside, which is fine except when it's extremely cold or dark. Sometimes, Korean people climbing the mountain will see us running to the outhouse and shout "Miguk Sunim! Miguk Sunim!" [American monk] Then we all have a good laugh.

Our two full time companions here are Hyon Am Go Sa and the construction boss, whom we call Jon Sajang. Hyon Am Go Sa is a strong practicing layman from Pusan, who has been Zen Master Seung Sahn's student for over ten years. Living together with him has been an amazing experience because he doesn't hold any idea about himself or his personal situation. For example, in Pusan, Hyon Am Go Sa is a successful building contractor, who is rather well to do, and lives in a large house with his wife and four kids. Out of his deep loyalty to our teacher, he has donated a year of his life to oversee this project. He doesn't live in our mobile home, but instead insists on staying in a small container box which has no heat or running water.

Using an electric heating pad he can keep warm at night, but in the morning he always tells us-laughing-how everything around the heating pad is frozen solid.

Our other compatriot, who also insists on living in a

container box, is Jon Sajang, also from Pusan. Jon Sajang was a construction worker himself before he became company president, so he's kind of a tough guy, but very sweet inside. He takes his



job very seriously, and seems to be under a lot of pressure, as he chain smokes smelly Korean cigarettes, and has been trying to break a 2-liter a day coffee habit. When you drive with him down the narrow one lane dirt road that leads to our place, he clearly lets everyone know who's boss, refusing to back up for anyone except Zen Master Dae Bong and Hyon Am Go Sa. But he does his job very well.

When I arrived here last fall, Zen Master Dae Bong had been living by himself for about two months. Since he cannot speak Korean, and Hyon Am Go Sa and Jon Sajang do not speak any English, they had to use body language to communicate. But a surprising amount of communication can still take place.

For the first few months they were eating three times a day at a local restaurant called the Bo Kwang Sik Dang. After I arrived, I started cooking in our house, so Zen Master Dae Bong and Hyon Am Go Sa stopped going to the Bo Kwang Sik Dang and now eat at the Myong Haeng Sik Dang. Jon Sajang refuses to, however, because we serve only vegetables and rice.

This winter we had a three-month retreat here, along with Hwa Gye Sah, Shin Won Sah and every other Zen temple in the country. When we began, Zen Master Seung Sahn said this would be a "working Kyol Che." At first I wasn't really sure what that meant, but after a while I realized it means anything is possible. We've set up a schedule here, the same as Hwa Gye Sah and Shin Won Sah, with lots of bowing, sitting and chanting. Of course, sometimes



during sitting huge machines roll by the window and jackhammers are rumbling, so this is a kind of "construction Kyol Che."

My job here is basically to do household chores, talk to people and serve tea. When Zen Master Dae Bong is around I help him talk to guests and our co-workers. Also, at any time during the day people appear and want to come inside. So my job is to be very nice to them, serve them tea and explain what we are doing here. Nowadays more and more people are becoming interested in what we are doing, due to both Hyon Gak Sunim's book and the fact that the word is spreading that a couple of Western monks are living over on Kye Ryong Sahn. One family drove down five hours from Seoul just to visit us after reading Hyon Gak Sunim's book. They stayed an hour or two, gave us a large donation, then headed home smiling. Also, we've made friends with many residents in the local town, so sometimes the picture-shop lady or the Buddhist gas

station lady will drop by for tea and chatting.

Hyon Am Go Sa has emphasized to me many times the importance of "injeong" to Koreans, which means basically the "human love" feeling or relationship-energy between people. The best thing we can do here to make a good relationship with our community is invite everyone in, and then with a very sincere and devoted mind serve them tea and show them the new building. This has become my practice.

Our closest neighbor, whose house is a mere fifty meters away from the construction site, is an old Korean bosalnim who lives with her eldest and youngest sons. She has eight children. All the daughters are married and her other two sons are in the army. The husband, who was a very serious Confucian scholar, died a few years ago, but trained his family very well in Confucian ethics and practice.

They support themselves by operating a deer farm, and harvesting the antlers once a year to make men's virility medicine, so we affectionately refer to her as the "Deer Bosalnim." The eldest son drives a school bus, and the youngest son drives a sweet potato truck, so they manage to make ends meet.

You might think that this family would be disturbed to have construction going on so close to their house, not to mention the fact that within a few months twenty to thirty (at least!) strange foreigners will be moving in. However, they seem extremely pleased by the whole project, and have told me several times how happy they are that our temple has appeared next to their property. The Deer Bosalnim seems concerned that Zen Master Dae Bong and I have enough to eat, so she is always cooking delicious side

dishes for us and putting them in our refrigerator when we aren't looking.

For the past few months the whole family has been coming to morning and evening practice every day. And whenever the Deer Bosalnim's other children or grandchildren visit, she brings them to practice too, so we've packed up to six or eight people in our tiny dharma room, sometimes making it more like Romper Room than a temple. They've really embraced our style of practicing, and it's a wonderful sight to see the Deer Bosalnim's shining face every night after evening chanting saying "Aigo! Sugo Hashyushamnida!" [Good job!]

I noticed that every night around the same time the sound of Buddhist chanting was coming from near the Deer Bosalnim's house. One night I asked her what it was. She said "Oh, it's the deer's meal time." These are Buddhist deer, so every night while the youngest son is giving them their grass gongyang [offering], they play a tape of the Heart Sutra for them in the deer pen. He told me, "The deer have to get enlightenment, too!" Also, Zen Master Dae Bong has been going over and chanting the Great Dharani to them, so perhaps in their next lives these deer will come to practice here at Mu Sang Sah. I asked the youngest son if he had ever thought about becoming a monk, and he said "I used to think about it, but now that a temple has appeared next door to my house there is no need!"

By the time you read this the first building will have already been finished, and a group of westerners will be living here full time, forever changing the face of this small village in Chung-Chong Nam Do—we hope for the better. For all of us involved, both westerners and Koreans alike, this is a learning experience and a wonderful new opportunity.



my father's death a great vow

Heila Downey JDPSN, The Dharma Centre

Coming empty handed
Going empty handed
That is human.
Life is like a floating cloud which appears,
Death is like a floating cloud which disappears...

Tuesday the 16th of November, 1999, a beautiful, bright sunny day; crisp, clear mountains and blue sky. Our drive into the countryside was breathtaking. Bougainvillea in all possible shades lined the roads. Vineyards as far as the eye could see, were bright, clear green—with bunches of grapes hanging heavily beneath their canopies of leaves. This is life in the countryside! Unfortunately, a visit to the dentist was to follow!

Modern technology in hand, Rodney thought that the cellular phone (for emergency use only!) would surely not be needed at this point in time—who would phone us at the dentist? Just as I put the phone in my handbag, it rang! It was my brother-in-law's voice: "You obviously have not heard...?"

Heard what? My question to him. He asked if Rodney was with me (in a flash a feeling of dread appeared), then he said: "Dad was murdered!"

The sun was still shining, the sky still brilliantly blue—but just at that moment I could not see it, everything came tumbling down—in a flash! Our world was turned upsidedown. In tears, torn apart by grief, not understanding the full ramifications of this news, we drove home.

At home, we had time to hold each other, to hug and cry, before Rodney started the onerous task of phoning our sangha, family and friends—Annie was first on the list. She must have jumped in her car as she put the phone down after talking with Rodney, because she was with us literally within minutes! Annie lit a candle for Dad. His light was shining bright! More phone calls made, shopping and preparation for our "padkos" (as only Annie can



prepare). A couple of hours later Ish and Cathy Patel arrived from Cape Town—we all hugged, cried, laughed and cried some more. It is this immediate support from our sangha and dear friends that enabled us to cope in the early hours after receiving the news of Dad's death.

As we lay in bed that night, unable to sleep, Ji Jang Bosal, Ji Jang Bosal, Ji Jang Bosal... why, how, who?—like a record that was stuck.

The journey to Kroonstad was long and hard. It was at this time that we fully appreciated the value of our cellular phone, because it enabled our immediate family and sangha to stay in touch, to feel connected and support each other in grief. Many a call was made and received to just ask: "How are you?"

Arriving at my parents house was dreadful—three months ago when Mum passed away, at least Dad was there to greet us. Our first night in the house—brothers, sister, their spouses and children—a family united in grief, sharing a pain that goes way beyond words. We reminisced. We laughed and cried a lot. But through the tears, for each of us the question "why?" was pounding in our heads. The bedroom where Rodney and myself would sleep on our visits remained closed. The mattress and bedding was removed by the forensic team. The finality of Dad's death was slowly dawning upon all of us as we started planning for a funeral service, and dealing with the practicalities that often and inevitably follows death.

One month prior to Dad's death, I was able to spend a week with him in Kroonstad. I will forever remain grateful for this very precious time that we were able to share. Dad's deep need to share his pain and grief, the loneliness and suffering, that he was experiencing after Mum's death, and which was part of every moment of the days and nights that followed her death, was woven into each day that I was with him—it was almost unbearable! He cried so much!

He was so very lonely! After some days I managed to convince him that a visit with us in Robertson would be therapeutic—we'd show him around, do things and have him do things at the Centre, etc., etc. Off to the travel agent we went and his trip to the Cape was booked finally! He even bought a new handbag to hold all his personal documents. Dad felt so excited and alive. He collected his tickets from the travel agents, the day before he was murdered, just four weeks before he was due to travel to be with us. The time that we were due to share with Dad in Robertson was incredibly hard, and both Rodney and myself repeatedly caught ourselves saving: "Ah! Dad would have been with us now. Dad would have loved this so much." Silent repetition of the mantra Ji Jang Bosal at times helped to ease the pain, enabling some moments of clarity and peace in our loss; other times overcome by emotions, it was just too much, and the question "WHY, WHY, WHY?" triumphed.

Death is the only certainty in our human existence! Our teaching and practice serves as a constant reminder and support of this fact. Why, then, is it that we struggle so much when death comes knocking at our door?

Rodney, my one brother and myself were able to be with Dad's body just moments after the State mortuary had released it, following the autopsy. Cold, pale and scarred—but at least stitched up and cleaned—yet, not an easy experience, but incredibly powerful. I was able to silently talk with Dad—not his body—and in a small way release my own pain, knowing that now he was truly free.

The sorrow and pain that I felt—looking down on Dad's body, was compounded by the fact that soon after Mum's death I asked Dad how he felt about dying? He replied that he was ready and that he had made peace with the Lord, but was very scared of a painful, drawn out death. He made me promise that if it were possible, we would not let him suffer. He nursed and cared for Mum during the last months of her life, and found it very hard to see her suffer so much right up to the last hours of her life. Alone, with his killer(s), he was set free from his physical body—how much did he suffer? How long did he suffer? But a few of the many questions that afflict us and linger on. Ji Jang Bosal, Ji Jang Bosal!

The priest from Dad's church came to visit. After prayers, a reading from the Bible and some words of encouragement—urging us to forgive and forget, he admitted to his own pain upon Dad's death. He told us that Dad was a member of the family, not just a member of the church, and that the last funeral that he conducted, was Mum's funeral. This funeral would be very difficult for him, and he asked us for our support and understanding at this difficult time. My heart truly ached for him.

Three days after Dad's death, we went to court. This first hearing was in the Magistrates Court for the first

appearance of the two people arrested in connection with Dad's death. Proceedings only started at 10:15, not 9:00 as we were told. Forty five minutes into the hearings—a recess! Packed, restless court room, some prisoners in chains, shuttled into the holding cell next to the court—then the two accused. Their court-appointed legal assistance, with not much seating available, came to sit directly behind us. He recorded their personal details, and informed them of the charge. How did we as a family feel? I surely cannot say how my brothers and sister were feeling. As for me—I felt tense, mantra surfacing occasionally between the emotions, looking directly into the two accused's eyes, probing, questioning—looking for an answer. None were forthcoming. Only empty, lifeless eyes—no emotions. They looked confused, not sure what was happening. Just in that moment I was filled with an awareness of what is happening throughout our country. It screams at us from the media. Yet, it's far away. Another rape, another murder. Hundreds, even thousands of cases unresolved. Suffering, suffering, suffering! Suffering for the victims, their relatives and family. The perpetrators of these heinous acts, too, are victims, they too have friends, family and relatives. The sad fact is, that my Father's death is now one of the recorded statistics in the history of violence in our country.

The case was remanded to the Regional Court a few days later. One accused signed an admission of guilt, the other denies any involvement, and reports from the witness stand that she was an observer. One accused has her mother in court. Nervous, and in pain she gesticulates to one of the police officers on duty, that that is her daughter. She started crying as bail was denied and had to leave the court room. I wondered at the time if our pain was any greater than hers? Outside the Court a stranger from the community approached us and expressed his condolences. He told me that we were not the only ones suffering, even though he understood that this was terrible for the family. His uncle (a man the same age as Dad) who worked in Dad's garden once a week, now has no job! Emily, who has done some domestic work, once a week since Mum and Dad moved in seven years ago, was devastated. Since Mum's death, she would come to the house every morning, even if she was not working—she'd ring the door bell, and when Dad appeared, she would say: "Oupa, hoe gaan dit vandag?" [Grandpa, how are you today?] If she didn't feel happy with his response, she would ask him to remove his spectacles, enabling her to see his eyes. It was Emily who alerted the neighbors and police, when she didn't get a response to her morning call. I can't even imagine her shock and pain when the police found Dad's mutilated body.

The "nitty-gritty" stuff of packing, cleaning, selling the house was a stark reminder of the reality facing us. Seventy-four years—a good ripe age and full life. Teaching, working, encouraging—coaxing, setting an example,

accumulating... preparing to "leave something for the children," and in the short space of one week, packed in boxes—the work of a lifetime!

Through the tears and sadness, we did share some moments of light and laughter. We reminisced, told stories, reminded each other of things long forgotten, and were comforted in the thought that though death took away our beloved Father, we could find strength in the memory of his love, honesty and integrity.

Aided by hundreds of messages of support, flowers and offers of Ji Jang Bosal chanting from across the globe, Dad's direction is clear and we, as a family, are humbled and sustained by the overwhelming support and outpouring of love throughout this period of mourning. Even now, more than two months after his death, we still receive messages of hope and condolences. One very recent one read: "I was so sorry to hear of your Dad's tragic death, and am very sorry not to have written sooner, but I was just so shocked, I didn't know what to say!" A supplier to Kensho Krafts—from the United States, whom we haven't even met, planted a miniature orange tree in a children's park—in memory of my parents. The list goes on and on. Thank you! Thank you!

Zen Master Seung Sahn, during his first visit to South Africa, in 1989 said: "Good situation, bad practice. Bad situation, good practice!" These words were a constant reminder to us in these days, weeks, months following our parents death. Our work continues. Our job ever bigger. The question *even* bigger: How do we as a family and sangha stop this cycle of violence? Dad's very violent death was a wake-up call to all of us. We only have this moment, this moment, this moment!

Our first vow:

Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all.
Delusions are endless; we vow to cut through them all.
The teachings are infinite; we vow to learn them all.
The Buddha way is inconceivable; we vow to attain it.

May we live this vow.

May we have the courage and depth of insight to grasp this moment and maximize the treasure of the dharma. May all beings be well. May all beings be at peace. May all beings be free from violence and the results of violence. May we all attain the great heart of compassion and free this world from further suffering.

a trip to vietnam

Mu Shim Sunim JDPS

In December 1999, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Zen Master Dae Bong, Hyang Um Sunim and myself traveled to Vietnam to visit Dae Won Sunim Ji Do Poep Sa and do some teaching and sightseeing there.

Vietnam has very long Buddhist tradition going back almost 1700 years. Buddhism first came from India through Cambodia and then to Vietnam. Vietnam is interesting because it has both the northern Mahayana tradition and the southern Thervadin tradition of Buddhism. Some monks wear a Mahayana style robe-gray or dark brown—and some monks wear a yellow robe, like the monks wear in Thailand. The two groups also observe the precepts differently. The Therevadin style monks will not eat after noon and they beg for food. Even though there is influence from the north and the south, still every Vietnamese temple we went to had a big statue of Kwan Yin, the Chinese name for Kwan Seum Bosal. The Vietnamese Kwan Seum Bosal is always holding a child.

There is a very intesting story as to why the Vietnamese Kwan Yin is always portrayed with a child. A long time ago there was a young woman from a very good family background who eventually got married. She was always eager to please her husband. One time he came home from work very late and because he was tired he soon fell asleep. Looking at her husband she noticed he had one long hair on his cheek. Maybe he didn't shave this hair today so she thought, "Well, I have to cut this hair off of his cheek." So she took a scissors and approached her sleeping husband. Just as she held the scissors near his neck, he suddenly woke up. He was so startled he thought she was trying to hurt him. He got very worried and called his parents. "My wife she has gone crazy, she is trying to kill me!" Since she was a very shy girl she didn't say anything to defend herself. The husband got very angry and said, "You don't really respect me." Then he told her to leave the house.

When she left the house she had nobody to turn to. She always believed in Buddhism, so she cut her hair and disguised herself as a man. She went to a monk's temple and was ordained. Meanwhile there was a very flamboyant young dancer who frequently went to this temple to pay respects to Buddha. She soon met the new handsome young "monk" and immediately fell in love with "him." She brought him many gifts. Even though she was very nice to him the new young "monk" showed her no affection. Finally she became very angry and left the temple.

Soon thereafter the dancer took up with a local farm boy and found herself pregnant. Since she wasn't married she had a problem. She thought, "...ahhh, I know what to do, I'll get back at that cold monk in the temple." She went back to the temple and said to all the monks there: "Now, I'm pregnant with a child! The handsome monk got me pregnant." Then the handsome "monk" had a big problem. They told "him" to live outside the temple gate. Soon the dancer brought the new baby and said, "You made this baby, so you can take care of it."

The "monk" only said, "Yes, I understand. If that's the case I'll take care of it." Under very difficult conditions she took care of the baby for three years. Finally, it was just too difficult for her so she wrote a letter to her parents telling them what happened. Soon after that she died and it is said she became Kwan Seum Bosal. So that's a Vietnamese style Kwan Seum Bosal story.

Dae Won Sunim JDPS, who originally came from Vietnam, went a few days before we did to arrange our schedule in Vietnam. In Hong Kong, even though it's now part of China, it is still possible for people to get together for a dharma talk and to practice. But in Vietnam that is not the case. In Saigon or Hoh Chi Min City, as it is now called, you need a permit from the government to do that. These permits are not easy to get. You have to make payments to many different people. So, as it turned out, we could not have a dharma talk in Saigon. We were told that, even if you didn't talk about politics, if you had more than ten people you would have a problem with the police, and they are everywhere. In Vietnam, and also to some extent in China, when you go to a temple not all the monks there are really full-time monks, some are government monks. During the day they wear robes and do everything that the other monks do, they chant, they read sutras, but at night-after "work"-they go home to their families. [loud laughter] Their job is to report to the government about the temple. So one thing we made sure of when we went to a Vietnamese temple was never to talk about politics. We just went for the dharma, to teach people.

However, we were able to arrange a talk outside of Saigon. Everybody wanted Zen Master Seung Sahn to come to give the dharma talk at a large temple near the ocean. But he could not go, because of his health, so he stayed in the city. So, Zen Master Dae Bong and Hyang Um Sunim JDPS and myself went. To our surprise about five hundred monks and nuns came to the talk. They all were very hungry for our teaching. At first we had reservations because we







were all, except for Hyang Um Sunim JDPS, not Asian people. We're western white people and we are going to give a dharma talk to all these Asian monastics? But they showed us wonderful hospitality. They gave us a special VIP escort into the temple and did all the chants formally requesting the dharma. Zen Master Dae Bong went up on the high seat and gave a formal dharma speech. Many of the nuns had very sincere questions. One of the nuns, who was abbot of the temple, asked Zen Master Dae Bong, "What is the Patriarch?" He said, "Come closer."

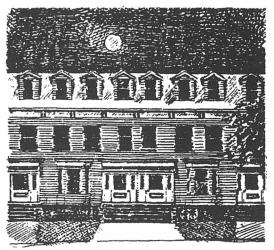
Then he lifted his Zen stick and said, "I hit you,

She was a little confused.

Then he said, "I hit you, then what, what do you say?"

Then she said, "Sokamunibul" and made a big bow to him. Then he said, "Bowing, that's good, but that's not the correct answer. Somebody hits you, then what do you say?" I was sitting next to him so he said, "I hit Mu Shim Sunim JDPS... what does he say?" Then he hit me hard, BAM, "ouch!" Then everybody was very surprised and happy. After the dharma talk was finished, one of the older monks got up—he was one of the sutra teachers there—and said that they were very pleased to have us; it felt like a visit from the old monks of China.

A prominent Vietnamese monk, the abbot of three or four temples there, likes our school very much and wants to become Zen Master Seung Sahn's disciple. He has told Dae Won Sunim JDPS that he will give him a parcel of land of about three acres where he can build a Zen Center. So, it looks like soon the Kwan Um School of Zen will have a center in Vietnam.



The Cambridge Zen Center is a residential meditation center under the direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Students from various countries and backgrounds participate in this innovative combination of monastic training and an urban setting. In addition to morning and evening Zen practice, the majority of residents work or are students in the Boston area. Cambridge Zen Center offers a variety of programs, including weekly talks, interviews with Zen teachers, monthly retreats, and meditation classes. Cambridge Zen Center welcomes visitors and new house members.

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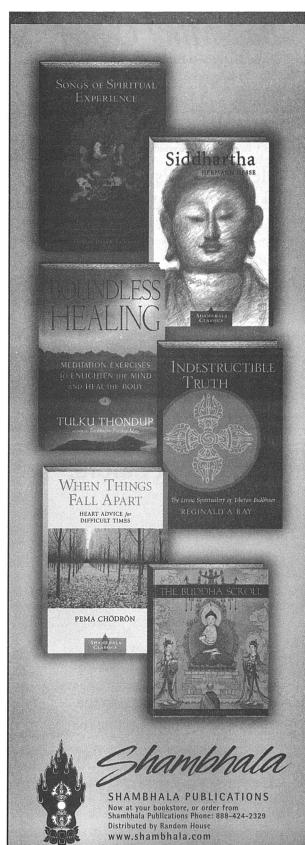
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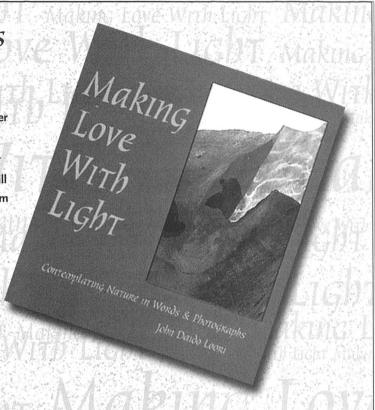
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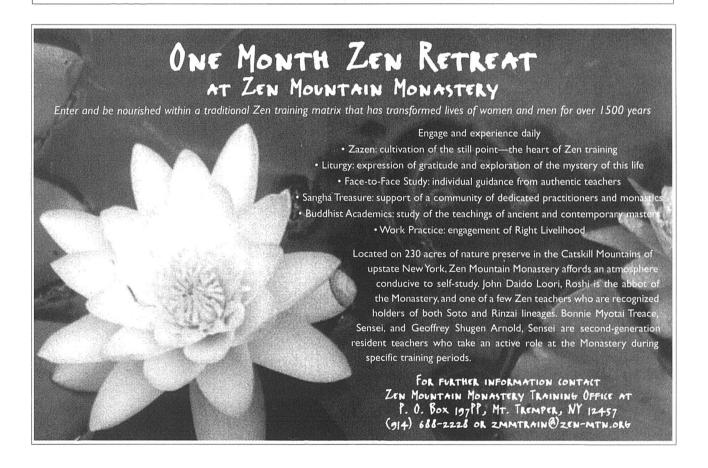
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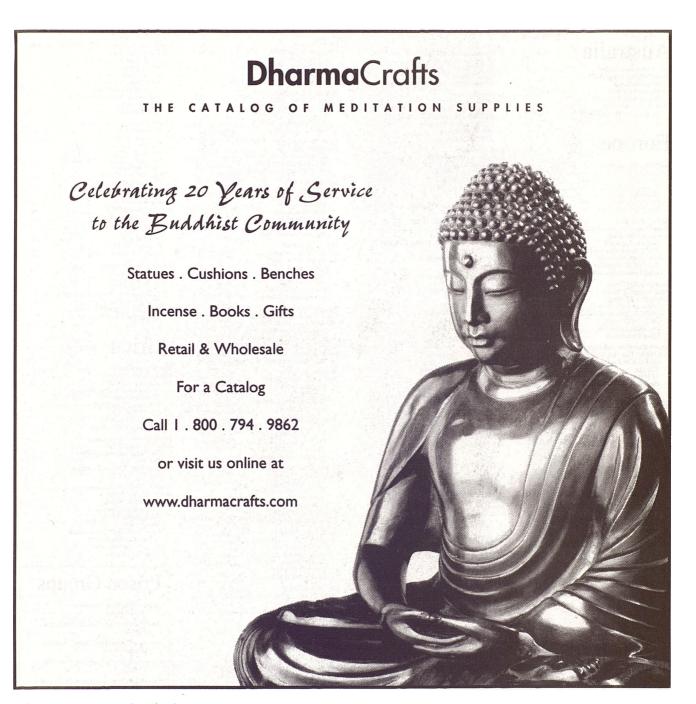
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