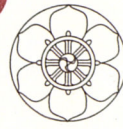
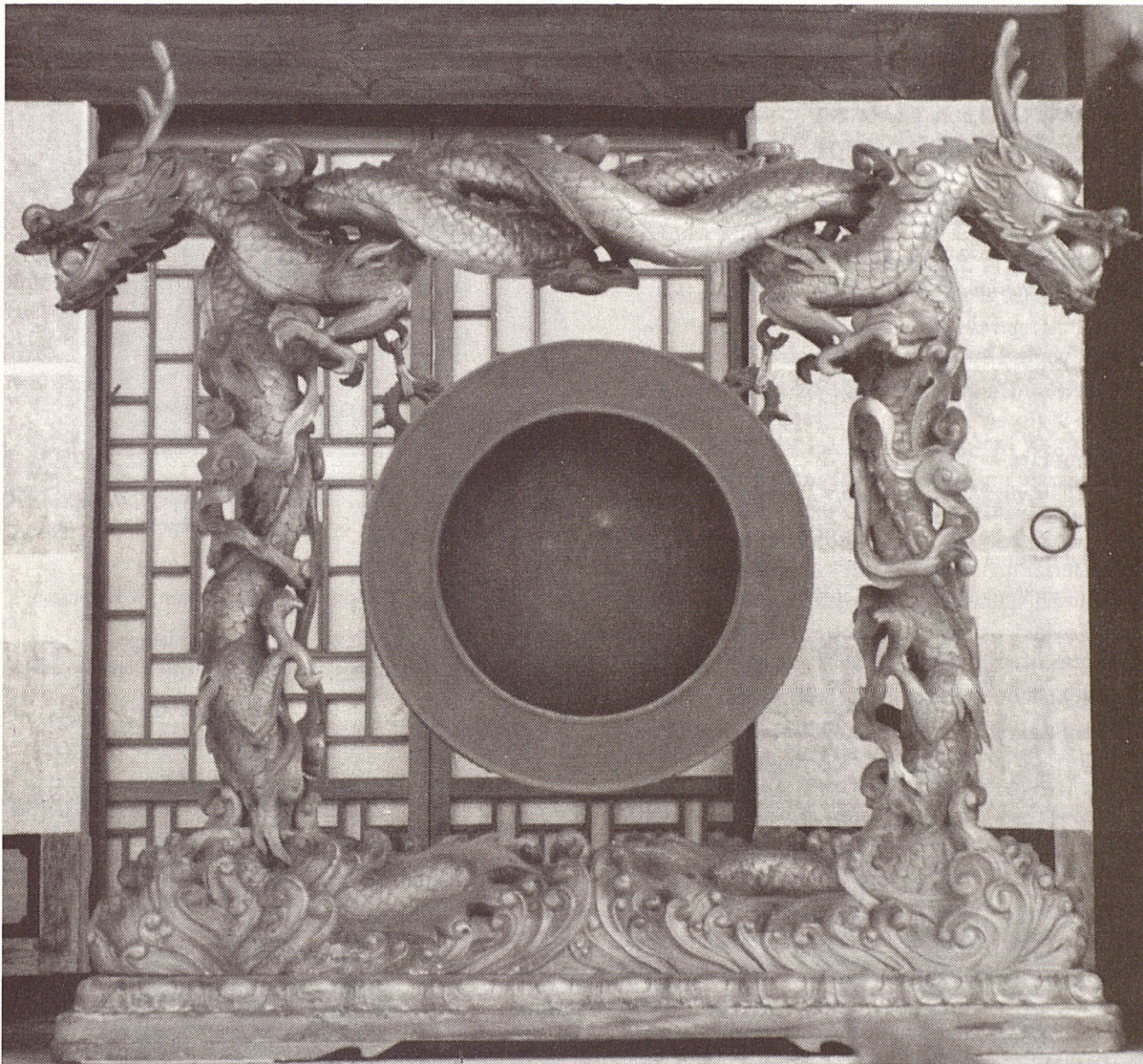


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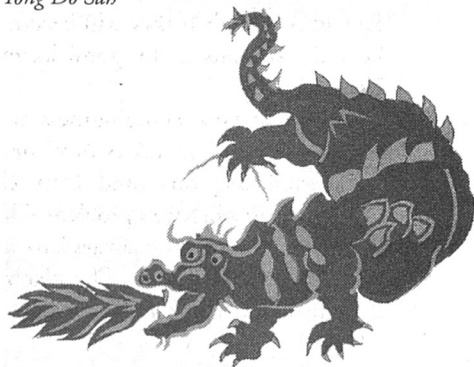


**DO KWAN SUNIM RECEIVES INKA
HOMAGE TO THE THREE JEWELS
FINDING YOUR INNER GYROSCOPE**

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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 4500 copies.

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BONES

*Excerpted from a talk by Zen Master Seung Sahn
at Seoul International Zen Center*

Student: During Hae Jae, I did a short Ji Jang Bosal kido. I did extra chanting of Namu Amita Bul and bowing for my mother, but I still have this question: Where is my mother's consciousness now?

Zen Master Seung Sahn: Don't check anything, only do it. If you are checking, you will have a problem. So, your consciousness and your mother's consciousness, are they the same or different? [*student hits the floor*] Keep this mind, OK? Then there will be no problem!

Student: Sir, a while ago you did Namu Amita Bul chanting here at Hwa Gye Sah over some Japanese bones which had been discovered. When Korean people found these bones, they wanted to destroy them, but you said no, bring them here to Hwa Gye Sah. Then for many days you chanted Namu Amita Bul. Were you chanting for these dead Japanese people?

ZMSS: Of course, why not? At one time the Buddha and Ananda were traveling together when they encountered some animal bones laying on the ground, partially buried. The Buddha started chanting. Ananda said, "Buddha, these are animal bones, why chant over them?" Buddha said, "Before, these creatures were my mother, also my father." Everything is always changing and in the end moving up. So, any set of bones will become your mother and your father. Understand? That mind is the Buddha's mind. No matter what the animal, no matter what the being, they are always moving up, up, up. We are always practicing together, your parents, my parents, all beings, up, up, up. One day soon you will die, then you too up, up, up. Many generations, many thousands of generations, up, up, up together. There's only one mother and one father; understand? Keep this mind. That's Buddha's teaching. Any more questions?

Student: Buddhism teaches that if human beings do bad things, then they will become animals. But how do animals make good karma to become human beings?

ZMSS: Is your consciousness an animal's or a human being's? [*student hits the floor*] Good! Wonderful! Keep this mind. Don't check. If you're checking, you will have a problem. Checking, checking, checking, then you always have a problem. Up, up, up... only one thing. Christianity calls it God, Buddhism calls it Buddha nature. Don't check! That's all. OK?

One day, a nun visited Zen Master Song Sahn.

“What is dharma?” she asked.

“No hindrance.”

“Then what does ‘no hindrance’ mean?”

Song Sahn replied, “why do you wear clothes?”

At this, the nun stripped naked and walked to the door.

1. What is dharma?
2. If you were Zen Master Song Sahn, at that time what would you do?
3. The nun stripped naked. Is that no hindrance?

COMMENTARY: A tree understands tree's job, and water understands water's job. What is a Zen Master's job? What is a nun's correct job? If you are attached to speech, you will go to hell like an arrow. If you digest speech you can kill all Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Which one do you like? Put it all down. Go to the store and drink iced tea.

This nun doesn't understand correct “no hindrance.” What is true no hindrance? At interview time if a teacher asks you, “What is no hindrance?” maybe you hit the floor. Not good, not bad. Maybe someone else says, “Ah, sky is blue, tree is green.” Not good, not bad. But one more step is necessary. What is complete no hindrance? No hindrance means, only help other people. That is true no hindrance.

In the eighteenth century, the French Revolution completely overturned society. All the French people said, “Ah, I am free, I am free!” At that time some people were in a restaurant where there was no smoking allowed, but one man was smoking. A man came up to him and said, “Why are you smoking inside?”

The smoking man said, “Ah, no hindrance—free, everything is free.”

Then the first man hit him. PTCHEW!

“Why did you hit me?”

The first man said, “I am free!”

So that's not free, OK? If you are attached to free, then freedom will kill you.

If you completely keep the rules, then you're truly free. Completely free means freedom from life and death. If life and death are no hindrance for you, then complete

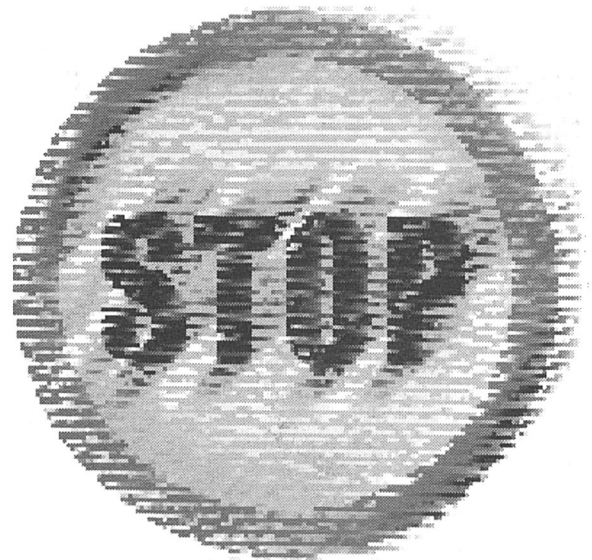
freedom is possible. This kind of freedom is not for me, but for all beings. If hungry people come, give them food; thirsty people, give them drink—only help. That is the bodhisattva way.

First question. What is dharma? Dharma means everything; when you see, when you hear, when you smell, everything is the dharma. That is 100% dharma.

Second. If you are Zen Master Song Sahn, at that time, what would you do? This nun is not correct! How do you hit her mind?

Third. The nun stripped naked. Is that no hindrance? That is not no hindrance. No hindrance means not holding anything. Not holding anything means, help other people. That is no hindrance, OK?

If you still have like/dislike mind, then you are not free. Take away like/dislike mind, then there are no opposites. Then you can see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly, taste clearly; everything is clear. Then you can understand your correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. Then do it! Only do it, OK? If you are checking, then you have a problem. So, completely put it down. Then do it. That is freedom.



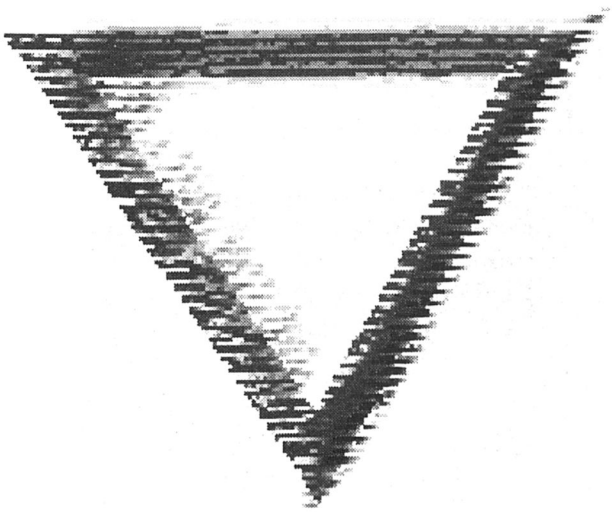
SPIRITUAL GROWTH

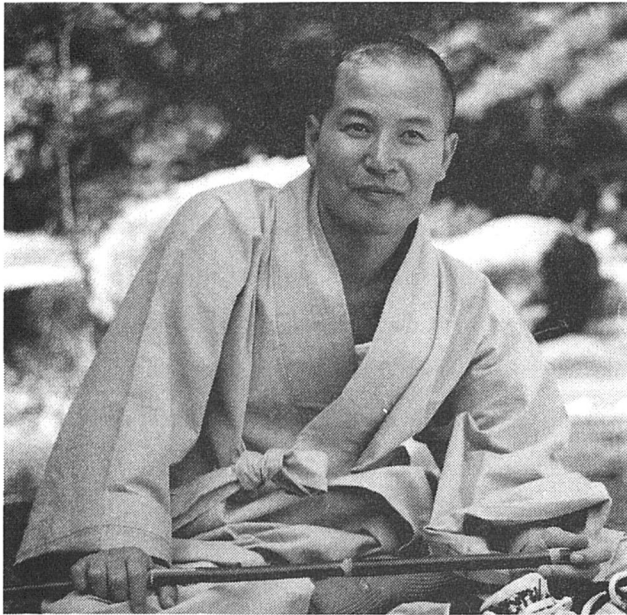
Zen Master Seung Sahn

Student: The aim of Zen practice is awakening. As a doctor who treats cancer patients and gives them advice about Zen meditation, I wonder what can we do for patients who are just beginning to practice in our hospital? They start using Zen as a “meditation technique,” which is OK, but what happens on the “spiritual level”? What does this beginning mean?

Zen Master Seung Sahn: Most important is that these cancer patients who are beginning to practice meditation have a vow that even if they cannot get enlightenment and practice the bodhisattva way in this life, they will continue to practice in their next life. If this vow is strong, then they will be reborn as a human being in a country where the dharma is taught and practiced. They will encounter great teachers and have the chance to get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering.

Also, if they attain their original nature, then there is no life and no death. Their original nature is clear like space, clear like a mirror. At that point they can die peacefully and their great vow will naturally lead them to a bodhisattva rebirth. Even if they are born in a non-human body, or under difficult circumstances amidst people who are not sympathetic to the dharma, their strong vow can change that birth and situation into a bodhisattva birth and situation. So, most important is a strong decision to get enlightenment and a great vow to save all beings from suffering. This vow comes from looking deeply into the great question “What am I?” and keeping a don’t know mind always and everywhere. That is correct Zen practice and correct spiritual growth.





On November 8, 2000, Do Kwan Sunim received inka ceremony from Zen Master Seung Sabn at Seoul International Zen Center.

dharma combat

Student: Good morning, Do Kwan Sunim. My question has to do with the movie “Little Buddha.” In it they showed Buddha practicing very hard with his five friends. He was eating one grain of rice a day and his hair was very dirty and he was practicing very hard, and then he heard someone say, “If you tighten the string too tight it’ll break. If you don’t tighten it enough you can’t play it.” At that point he attained something. He then ate some rice porridge and started to practice the middle way. So I ask you, what does that mean?

Do Kwan Sunim JDPS: You already understand.

Student: So I’m asking you.

DKSN: What are you doing now?

Student: Sitting here having a—

DKSN: Take it easy.

Student: Thank you very much.

Student: So I came here and I can see that our Kwan Um School is very different than the Korean Zen tradition. You’re a Korean monk and you’re also practicing in our school. So my question is: what is the difference between Korean dharma and western dharma?

DKSN: You already understand.

Student: Please teach me.

DKSN: Sky is blue, tree is green.

Student: Thank you for your teaching.

DKSN: You are very welcome.

Zen Master Dae Bong: Today you’re getting inka. Inka means seal. What kind of seal did you get?

DKSN: You already understand.

ZMDB: I ask you.

DKSN: How may I help you?

ZMDB: Oh, that’s a big seal. Thank you for your teaching.

Student: In a dream, somebody is holding their hwadu, their question. And it’s very important that they completely break through this dream, that they awaken from it and finish this hwadu in the dream. So, how do you finish this hwadu in a dream?

DKSN: Wake up.

Student: OK, that’s all? I can’t believe your answer.

DKSN: You’re still in the dream.

Student: Do Kwan Sunim, I have a question. Can you please tell me what is my question?

DKSN: Already appeared.

Student: Thank you.

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

Attainment is no attainment.

No attainment is attainment.

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

No attainment, also no “no attainment”.

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

Attainment is attainment.

No attainment is no attainment.

Three statements – which one is correct?

KATZ!

Today is Wednesday, November 8th.

When I was nineteen years old, a very close friend of mine died. At the funeral I had a very strong experience. That experience had a great effect on my life. At that time I didn't understand what had happened, but all of my thinking disappeared for a short time. I didn't intend it to happen like that, but naturally, automatically, the experience appeared.

After that I had many questions. He was a very good friend, he had good abilities, but he died. What he practiced, what he studied, what he did became nothing. Because of that, I began to think about myself. What is the purpose of my life? What's the meaning of life? What am I? What should I do? Many questions. But still sometimes the thinking naturally disappeared. At that time, there was no life, no death, no thinking. Just very calm and clear. At that point there is no meaning. But again thinking and feeling would appear and then I would begin to worry again. What do I want to do? What's my life? If I try very hard to get money or anything, if I die, what is the use of it?

For almost ten years these two things would happen: one, thinking disappears, the other, a lot of thinking and worrying appears. I was really confused—which one is correct? Which one is my true mind? So, I had to live, on the one hand, like a regular person—go to school, go into the army and then get a job. But on the other hand, there was always that moment of experience before thinking. I became very unclear about my life...

As the years went along it became more and more serious. Then I moved to Toronto. I thought that maybe there was something in Toronto, in western society, worth striving for... something. But when I got there I soon realized my hopes were wrong. I was even more disappointed. There's nothing, no place to find answers to my questions. So my life became more and more miserable. Outside, things were OK, but inside I couldn't believe myself at all.

Then I began looking for a teacher, somebody who could help me. I met a few teachers, but nobody could connect with me, until I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. Af-

ter the Ontario Zen Center was founded in 1976, he would come to Toronto every year and stay two or three days teaching at the Zen Center. I also met a Korean nun at that time and would go to her temple and read books about Buddhism.

When I met Zen Master Seung Sahn the first time he really drew me in, his energy was so clear and strong. You already understand that. When he'd come to Toronto I would always try to follow him around and stay with him as much as I could. One day after a dharma talk at a Korean temple, after everyone had left he looked at me and said, “You! Do you want to learn from me?”

I said, “Of course! Yes, sir!”

Then he said, “Come.” He sat in the dharma room and told me, “Bow three times.”

It was just like an interview situation—I never had an experience like that. Then he opened the kong-an book and tried to teach me. Soon I understand how to answer. One kong-an... passed, two kong-ans... passed, three kong-ans... passed. Finally he asked me the cigarette man kong-an. I tried to answer it in many ways, but he kept saying, “No. No. No.” I was very upset and frustrated.

“I have to answer,” I thought.

Then he smiled, “That's your homework. When you get an answer, come and tell me.” He had to go back to the United States the next day, so I just had to find the answer before he left. From that time until the next day I couldn't do anything. “Oh, what's the answer? What's the answer?” Thinking, thinking, thinking, but I couldn't find the answer. The next morning we had breakfast alone together. During the meal I tried to give an answer.

He said, “Don't be deluded. Don't make a stupid idea.” I was very embarrassed and quite upset.

“What can I do?” I couldn't think of anything else. That morning a lot of people come to the temple to see Zen Master Seung Sahn, but I couldn't stay in the room. My mind was spinning, “I must find the answer. I must find the answer before he leaves.” And then very soon, it was time for him to leave, but my mind was only saying, “I must find the answer.” Then a large group of people were saying goodbye and bowing to the Buddha. The people went outside to see him off, and he and I were left alone in the dharma room. He too bowed and tried to go, but I couldn't stand not being able to answer. So I grabbed him. “Sir! What should I do?!”

Quickly he turn around and said, “You got it!” And then he walked away leaving me there. What did I get? *[laughter]* Then I was really stuck, I couldn't do anything! That was almost eighteen years ago. He said “You got it.” So I ask everyone here, what did I get? Do you understand? That was almost eighteen years ago. If he gave me that same answer today, I'd hit him back thirty times. Why?

KATZ!

Today we have an inka ceremony. Thank you very much for your teaching, Dae Soen Sa Nim.

RESPECTING
OUR
ANCESTRAL
PRACTICE:
**HOMAGE
TO THE
THREE
JEWELS**

Zen Master Hae Kwang
Kansas Zen Center

The Homage to the Three Jewels is a chant in which we acknowledge our deep connection to and respect for the tradition of our practice. The chant is structured around the Three Jewels (Buddha, dharma, sangha). Each of the chant's nine sections contains certain easily learned Chinese-Korean words and phrases that we can focus on to maintain the spirit of the chant as we do it. The complete translation of the chant can be found in the Chanting Book.

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Five Fragrances

▶▶ 1

**GYE HYANG JONG HYANG HYE HYANG
HAE TAL HYANG HAE TAL JI KYON HYANG
GWANG MYONG UN DAE JU BYON BOP KYE
GONG YANG SHI BANG MU RYANG BUL BOP SUNG
HON HYANG JIN ON: OM BA A RA TO BI YA HUM (3X)**

HYANG means *smell, fragrance, incense*. The chant begins with our direct experience—through the sense of smell, our most primary emotional sense—of our *precepts* (GYE), our *meditation* (JONG), our *wisdom* (HYE), our *liberation* (HAE TAL), and our *knowledge and perception* (JI KYON) of our liberation. All of this—the incense itself and our experience of our practice—forms a bright, cloudlike pavilion that permeates *without limit* (MU RYANG) the *dharma world* (BOP KYE) in the *ten directions* (SHI BANG) and supports the *Buddha* (BUL), *dharma* (BOP), and *sangha* (SUNG). The incense spreading our practice through the universe is like the sound of the bell spreading our vow through the universe at the beginning of the Morning Bell Chant.



JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
SAM GYE DO SA SA SAENG JA BU
SHI A BON SA SOK KA MO NI BUL

The opening line of this section also begins the next six sections. The traditional meaning of this line is to take refuge, dedicate our lives. JI means *ultimate*; SHIM means *heart-mind*. Together JI SHIM represents the whole-heartedness of our dedication to our practice and our respect for our teachers—here our *root teacher* (BON SA), *Shakyamuni Buddha* (SOK KA MO NI BUL).

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
SHI BANG SAM SE JE MANG CHAL HAE
SANG JU IL CHE BUL TA YA JUNG

Here we pay homage to *all* (IL CHE) *Buddhas* (BUL TA) in the *ten directions* (SHI BANG) and in the *three worlds* (SAM SE).

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
SHI BANG SAM SE JE MANG CHAL HAE
SANG JU IL CHE DAL MA YA JUNG

This is the same as the preceding section, except that DAL MA (*dharma*) replaces BUL TA.

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
DAE JI MUN SU SA RI BOSAL
DAE HAENG BO HYON BOSAL
DAE BI KWAN SE UM BOSAL
DAE WON BON JON JI JANG BOSAL
MA HA SAL

This section honors four great bodhisattvas:
Great Wisdom (DAE JI) *Manjushri* (MUN SU SA RI) *Bodhisattva* (BO SAL);
Great Action (DAE HAENG) *Bodhisattva* (Samantabhadra in Sanskrit);
Great Compassion (DAE BI) *Perceive World Sound Bodhisattva* (KWAN SE UM BOSAL);
Great Vow (DAE WON) *Earth Storehouse Bodhisattva* (JI JANG BOSAL).
 And all *Great Beings* (MA HA SAL).

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NAE
YONG SAN DANG SHI SU BUL BU CHOK
SHIP TAE JE JA SHIM NYUK SONG
O BAEK SONG DOK SU SONG NAE JI
CHON I BAEK JE DAE A RA HAN
MU RYANG SONG JUNG

The last phrase in this section—MU RYANG SONG JUNG—means *without limit holy all* and sums up the various disciples and *great arhats* (DAE A RA HAN) who heard the Buddha on the *divine mountain* (YONG SAHN), Vulture Peak, where Buddha often taught.

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
SO GON DONG JIN GUB A HAE DONG
YOK TAE JON DUNG JE DAE JO SA
CHON HA JONG SA
IL CHE MI JIN SU JE DAE
SON JI SHIK

This section honors all our *ancestral teachers* (JO SA) who have brought the dharma from *West* (SO) to *East* (DONG). The dharma crosses the *ocean* (HAE), and the perspective on our tradition has now become global. The phrase CHON HA (“*heaven under*”) means the whole world.

JI SHIM GWI MYONG NYE
SHI BANG SAM SE JE MANG CHAL HAE
SANG JU IL CHE SUNG GA YA JUNG

Just like sections 3 and 4, but now honoring *sangha* (SUNG GA), the third Precious One.

YU WON MU JIN SAM BO DAE JA DAE BI
SU A JONG NYE MYONG HUN GA PI RYOK
WON GONG BOP KYE JE JUNG SAENG
JA TA IL SHI SONG BUL DO

The concluding section asks the *Three Jewels* (SAM BO), who are identical with *Great Love* (DAE JA) and *Great Compassion* (DAE BI), for spiritual *strength* (RYOK). The last two lines, which are also in the Morning Bell Chant, express our *vow* (WON) that together with the *many beings* (JUNG SAENG) we will *attain* (SONG) the *Buddha Way* (BUL DO).

FINDING YOUR INNER GYROSCOPE

Zen Master Wu Kwang

Chogye International Zen Center of New York

From a talk at Providence Zen Center on August 6, 2000

First, congratulations to all of you who took precepts today. And second, congratulations to all the rest of us who reaffirmed our commitment to these precepts once again during this ceremony.

These precepts provide us with something of a roadmap, leading to an ethical, moral life. In our world today, following that kind of life—while declining to resort to some rigid fundamentalism or to hedonism—can be tricky. One bit of advice on how to meet that challenge was offered by the Sixth Patriarch when giving instruction to a monk. He said, simply, “Don’t make *good* and *bad*.”

“Don’t *make* good and bad,” of course, does not mean there *is* no good and bad. Don’t *make* good and bad means don’t construct some idea of good and bad in your mind, then paste it on the nose of the situation in front of you—and then fabricate some story to substantiate how you are going to react to your construction. That becomes a big problem. If you don’t make good and bad, if you don’t make anything, and if you return to [*hits floor with Zen stick*] this original empty mind, then this empty mind will perceive what is correct in that situation, based on what appears in front of you in the moment, and based on time and place and the nature of your relationship to that event and person and situation.

And that means finding your inner gyroscope, so you can hold your balance moment by moment by moment and act correctly. If, fundamentally, you are coming from a place of cherishing all existence, while feeling your connection with each and every existence you encounter, then that gyroscope will appear. As we practice it appears more and more frequently.

However, what also appears is our sticky areas. While some karma immediately [*hits floor with Zen stick*] goes, there is also sticky karma, which reappears and reappears and reappears. It behooves us all to be patient with ourselves and to look into that sticky karma and see what we are holding.

Some time ago I attended a talk by the Dalai Lama. He, too, suggested the need to practice and progress, while recognizing that occasional backsliding is part of the process. The talk was given at a Mongolian monastery in New Jersey. This monastery, sitting up on a hill, has been there for a long time. There were probably a couple of thousand people there, mostly Tibetan Buddhist students, all sitting on the grass and listening to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama’s subject, Vajra sattva purification, was one of special meaning to that audience.

I’m going to report on just a bit of his talk, so you get an idea of how it went, because the part that relates directly to my subject actually appears in his comment after the talk. The process, he said, begins by visualizing this particular Buddhist deity. You could visualize the deity in front of you, up in the air above your head, sitting on your head, or on your head then moving down into your body and heart. It doesn’t matter. Next you were to do a particular kind of breathing exercise, visualizing yourself taking in truth and light, then breathing out black smoke representing all your impurities. However, he added, if you were practicing the kind of yoga where you were conserving energy, you were not to breathe out, but to imagine a fire lit inside your very being, a fire that consumed all your impurities. After his talk, we all chanted this mantra together; it was very long.

Finally, the Dalai Lama thanked everyone for coming. Then he said—this was something that surprised and delighted that whole audience, and it is what brings me to my point—“Now that you have all purified yourself with the Vajra sattva mantra, please go out and do some more mischief.” My recollection of his exact words may not be altogether correct, but you get the idea. He, too, was recognizing that even though his audience had just chanted a lengthy mantra—even as you have just taken precepts—the process is not complete. We do not always live up to our own highest intentions.

Bodhidharma said, “Fall down seven, get up eight.” So, just as you must know when the precepts are open and when they are closed, and when to keep them and when to break them, also know when to forgive yourself. Taking the precepts is an important step. Thank you for being here.

*Adapted from a talk during a Christian-Buddhist retreat
at Providence Zen Center.*

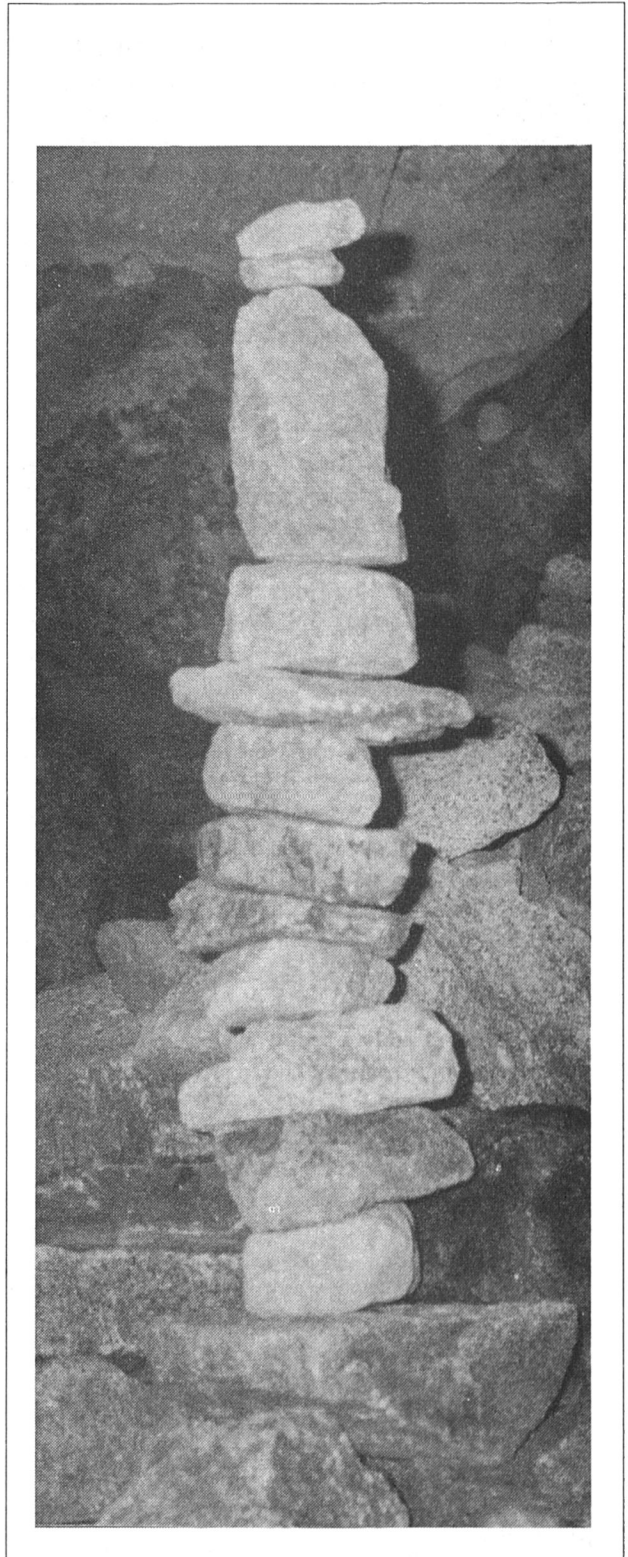
NUNC CAEPIT, DOMINE, NUNC CAEPIT

*Father Kevin Hunt, OCSO
Saint Joseph's Abbey*

I come from a Christian background, and from the Catholic Christian tradition which is not generally thought of as the most avant garde of Christian traditions. For many Christians the idea of meditation appears as something foreign or new. It might be a good idea for those of you who do come from a Christian background to have some idea of the tradition of Christian meditation so that this particular way of practice can be integrated into your own history.

When Jesus appeared on the scene two thousand years ago the four Gospels tell us that one of the first things he preached was “the Kingdom of God is at hand” or as some have it “the Kingdom of God is within you.” The whole of Christianity, the whole of Christian practice, is basically a way of life that works to realize this “Kingdom of God.” Now, the phrase “Kingdom of God” is a circumlocution because at the time of Jesus, as it is still in the Jewish tradition today, the name of God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai was never spoken. The “Kingdom of God” is just a way of saying that God is in us, God is present to us. From the earliest days of Christianity, therefore, there has been an urge toward realizing these words of Jesus concretely. Who is God? How can I realize God dwelling within me? How do I experience God right here and right now? This urge is what brings us here today, no matter how you may have articulated it.

Today we are going to teach you a way or method of meditation or contemplation so this urge can be realized. If you already have a practice then it will be a day of encouragement to go more deeply into your practice. We all need to be encouraged in our practice. The practice itself is not difficult, but it does demand patience. Patience in our effort to meditate is one of the keys to growing in this work. The founder of the Western monastic tradition, St. Benedict, says in his Rule for Monks that the monk or practitioner of meditation can “by patience... participate in the Passion of Christ.” More generally, it is held that all human beings have this desire for the absolute, or transcendent, or God, not just monks. Today, many have difficulty with the word ‘God.’ We must always be aware that whatever word we use to indicate that or for whom we



strive, that word must always fail. As one brother in my community is wont to say: "The word 'God' is the most meaningless word in the English language because we can not comprehend what it stands for." As the medieval theologians used to say: "Any affirmation of God is a denial of God."

For a minute I want to point out some differences between Christianity and Buddhism. Buddhism has had, since the time of the Buddha, a strong monastic element. The Buddha himself left home to become a monk, practicing the traditional Indian form of the monastic life. However, within Christianity monasticism did not come into existence until the latter part of the fourth century. Traditionally the first Christian to become a monk was Anthony of Egypt. The dates generally accepted for him are 250CE to 350CE, for he was said to have lived for over a hundred years. The earliest Christians, those before the time of Anthony, were not monks but ordinary people living in the cities and villages of Rome and the fertile crescent. Yet we have a large number of writings that come down to us from Anthony's time and before it, that are considered part of the tradition of Christian mysticism and contemplation. These writings, most of them sermons preached by bishops, were aimed at ordinary Christians, those which we today would designate as 'those sitting in the pews.' The largest part of these texts were homilies or commentaries on the Scriptures in what we would call a reflexive or meditative mode. They, as I have mentioned, were directed toward ordinary people who had ordinary lives. They were not aimed at esoterics who lived apart from the mass of human beings. The Christian people were throughout their history a people of prayer and contemplation. Indeed, the Bishops gathered at Vatican II made it a definition of what it means to be a Christian: "The Christian people are a contemplative people."

I say all this not to create a distinction that separates Christians from those of other religions or beliefs, rather, I say it to encourage those of my own tradition. We need to reclaim our own great tradition of contemplative prayer which has come down from past ages and make it part of our lives.

The contemplative life is a way, and as a way it is going to take time and effort. That is why it is called a practice. The time part is where the patience comes in. There is a tendency for those who are begging to merely project great effort to say to themselves: "I will get an hour every morning for my meditation or, at least twenty minutes." Suddenly a pipe beaks in the basement, or a child gets sick

and lo... days pass and one realizes that there has been no time for meditation. The temptation is then to say: "Oh! I just don't have the time I ought to for meditation, it must not be for me." But that is not what perseverance and patience are about. If days or even months pass and you realize that you haven't been meditating—begin again. Perseverance is 'begin again,' no matter if you begin again five times, or five thousand times. Begin again!... and again, and again. That is what perseverance is: Begin again. There is a phrase in the Old Latin psalter that says: "Nunc caepit, Domine, nunc caepit." "Now I begin, O Lord, now I begin." This phrase has helped many Christian monks throughout the ages to go on in their practice to persevere. There is also a well known book on Zen, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, which tells us the same. We must always consider ourselves novices and begin again each day, each moment.

We must also be aware that this practice, or any other practice of meditation takes time and a certain amount of effort. This is not something that you can achieve in "three easy lessons." We are a society that looks for the easy way, we want to get where we are headed as fast as possible. But there is one good thing about meditative practice, especially this one: if you stick with it, persevere, then it will achieve its work in you. You will gain enlightenment. The way of Zen meditation looks hard and takes a certain amount of physical effort, but it is the persevering in the practice that is hard.

Also, a special manner of life is not of great importance. Meditation can be practiced anywhere and at any time. It is true that many religious traditions have developed special ways of life and special settings which are helpful for meditation, but such things are only aids... something like a person who wants to be a great golfer. It is a big help to be able to devote your life to playing golf, but there are many who never achieve professional status but who are great golfers. A setting such as this meditation center, or a monastery can be a great help if you can survive such a life. It provides the space and setting and time for intensive practice. But the monastery or meditation center can be a horrible situation if it is not for you. It's not necessary.

Any situation can be the setting for intensive practice. When I speak of intensive practice, I am not speaking of the amount of time that a person can devote to actual meditation. A mother of children cannot have the same quantity of time that a monastic has to give to meditative practice, but she can make great strides in meditation by

getting whatever amount of time that she can spare out of her busy schedule. Indeed, many non-monastics make greater advancement than some monastics because the monastics can be lazy in practice despite the fact that their life is set up for meditation.

The fact that you have come here today is a sign that you are drawn to meditation. You may also decide that this particular way of practice is not for you at this moment. There are many ways of doing meditation: ritual practice, chanting practice, mantra practice, intellectual practice and other ways. Sometimes religious traditions form specific schools centered on individual practices. The vast majority of traditions usually have a mixture of all these practices. Each of us has to find what particular practice is most suitable for us. And even that can change. I was told when I first entered my monastery that generally one's practice tended to become more simple as it grew. So don't be surprised if things change.

I am a Trappist monk who has practiced Zen meditation since the early 1970s. I find that it fits in very well with my ordinary life in my monastery. This year I received permission to live outside my monastery to do koan practice with a Jesuit who lives and teaches in Jersey City at St. Peter's College, by the name of Robert Kennedy. He is a Roshi accepted in Maezumi Roshi's lineage of Japanese Zen.

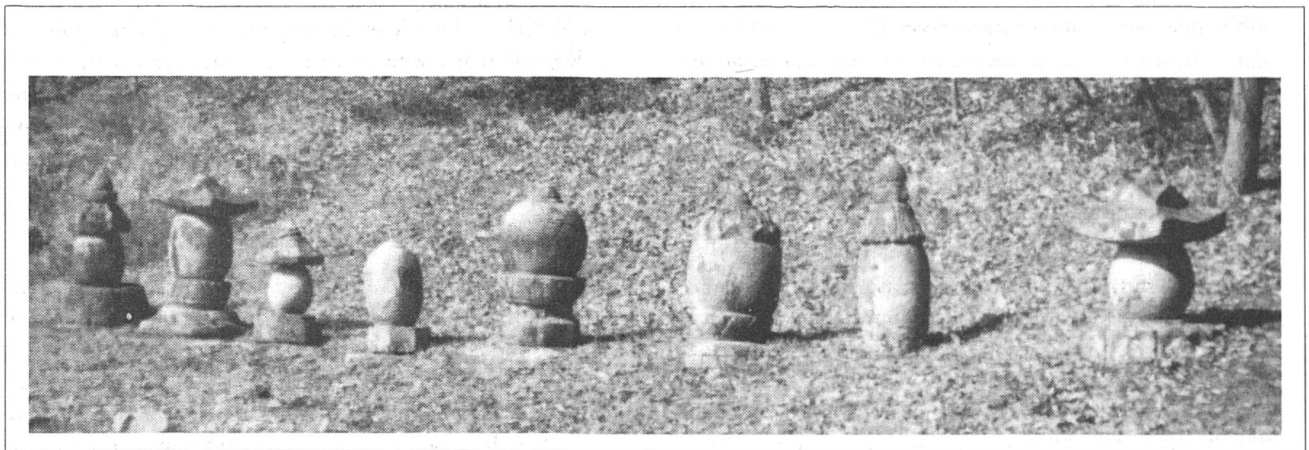
It was easier for me to get permission to work with a fellow Catholic priest than it might have been otherwise. Actually my daily life is not that much different than what I would be doing in my own monastery except that I don't have to go to work every day. I get a little more time for study.

Just to show you that one can always learn more, I found that I had a tendency to sit bent over to the side.

I thought for all these years that I had been sitting straight. I did find that I had a significant amount of back pain but always thought that was the price I had to pay. My posture was corrected so that I was sitting in the correct way: up straight, back with a proper curve and tummy out. Even after thirty years I still needed help.

One common problem with meditation is that frequently people come to Zen practice having read books on Zen. They have been impressed with a story like the one where a newly arrived monk goes for his first interview with the teacher. "Where have you come *from*?" asks the teacher. "From such and such a monastery" is the reply. "How did you leave?" he is again asked. Boom—sudden enlightenment! We come to our practice with many ideas, most of them having to do with enlightenment, especially thinking that enlightenment is going to solve all our problems. Maybe even I'll walk six feet off the floor. (I can remember when I first entered my monastery how disappointed I was to find that none of the old monks could do that. In my humility, I understood that a newcomer like myself would not be able to do that... but the senior monks?) Meditation is very ordinary, very common. In my tradition we say that the best monks are always the most ordinary. And my experience is that that is true.

So I encourage you in your practice of meditation; persevere, don't worry. It will bring with it its own suffering, but nothing you will not be able to bear. If it brings crucifixion, it also brings resurrection. It doesn't matter about your age or what life you are leading. If there is any contradiction in your life, meditation with change that. So don't worry. Just practice, start today... persevere.



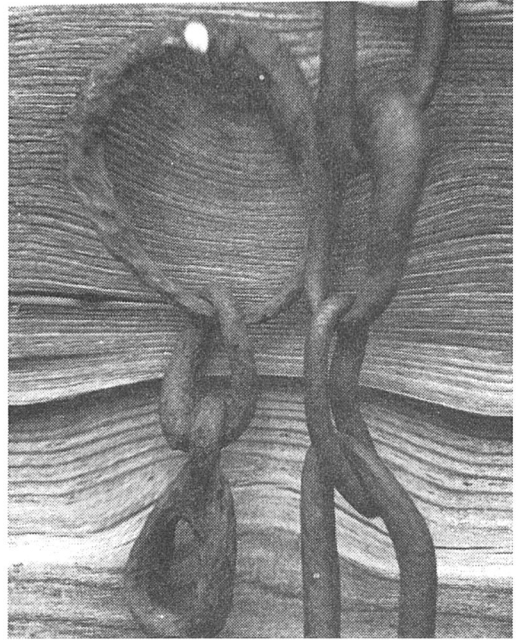
B R E A K I N G F R E E

Kerry J. Greenwell
Michigan City Prison Group

Imagine standing in the middle of a large auditorium filled with three to four hundred people who are incessantly shouting, coughing, sneezing, snoring, and flushing toilets. Imagine the smell of unwashed bodies, human defecation, urine, tobacco, marijuana, and garbage all mingled together—so intense that sometimes these smells permeate even your dreams. Imagine all the different personalities, moods, emotions, and phobias these people have and exhibit to varying degrees, some stable—some not so stable.

Now imagine that you are in a house, or out for a walk, and that you are subject to be confronted by someone in uniform, handcuffed, searched and/or harassed at any given time, day or night, without even the slightest provocation. But most of all imagine your privacy being so limited that it is actually a blessing to be housed in a cellhouse where you can be locked alone inside a six-by-eight foot concrete cell (as opposed to an open dorm), just so you might enjoy a few precious hours of solitude each day, away from the daily chaos and insanity which are the norm of prison life.

Now again I ask you, to imagine trying to build and maintain a daily meditation practice which is both meaningful and beneficial in such an environment. Can such a practice be accomplished? Yes! There are many prisons around this country, as well as the world, that allow devotees of Buddhism to maintain a well-balanced practice. What I said above was to illustrate what the daily environment of a prison can be like. The following paragraphs will, I hope, convey what a daily practice can be like for the incarcerated.



My own experience has been one of good fortune because I live alone in a cell. Some of our sangha brothers are not as fortunate because they must live and try to practice in an open dorm. The dorms are a hindrance to practice because there is virtually no privacy—not even when one goes to the toilet. There are no walls to sit behind or to use as a sanctuary; and there are always some elements of humanity who can't stand to see you doing anything positive. It's their nature to constantly interrupt and harass you. So I applaud our brethren who are forced to practice—and find ways to practice successfully—in a setting like this.

The next obstacle we have to overcome is the lack of quiet. I tried to illustrate earlier how the noise level can at times be maddening. It definitely takes getting used to. In this environment quiet is—without a doubt—as much of a luxury as privacy. It usually begins to quiet down around 10:00 pm and the quiet lasts until 5:00 am. We know that ideally we should rise early and begin our practice then. But sometimes, depending on outer circumstances, we are learning to modify our expectations. Let me use myself as an example of how we can use our time in our current situation to cultivate a practice of mindfulness, loving kindness, and compassion.

My day usually begins around 9:00 am. I rise from bed, wash, dress myself, and clean up my cell a bit. Around 10:00 am I will begin my day with a short morning practice. First I bow, then I will go for refuge and recite the five precepts. After this short preliminary practice, I will then sit quietly for between twenty and thirty minutes. Last, I will recite the Four Great Vows. After I have cleared the cobwebs from my head with this short practice, I am ready to begin my daily interactions with the rest of the prison population. Since I attend college classes, I have the opportunity to be out of my cell walking for long periods of time. This gives me a chance to practice walking meditation.

We walk everywhere behind these walls. There are no cars, cabs, or buses. There isn't really that much space in which to walk, let alone to justify vehicles. When I walk to and from different buildings I try to keep a quiet, focused mind. When the weather is nice I like to go out to the recreation yard and find a spot where I can practice walking meditation for about an hour or so. I can also do walking meditation in my cell, though the space there is extremely limited.

I also enjoy practicing silence. I usually try to maintain my silence throughout the day by only speaking when necessary. Silent meals are kind of haphazard because it is easy to be drawn into conversations about one thing or another. I know that my mind stays fairly clear when I am able to practice in this way.

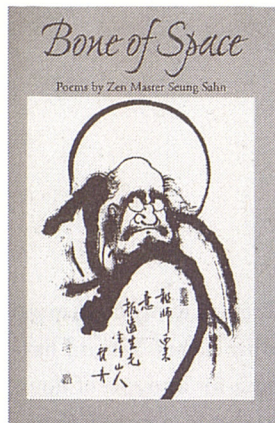
I have also taught myself a simplified form of T'ai Chi, also known as moving meditation. This practice complements my sitting practice in many different ways—such as relieving the stiffness one feels after sitting for long periods of time. And I can practice these simple movements just about anywhere, anytime.

At the end of the day when I return to my cell I spend most of the evening studying for my classes. When I have finished my studies I like to sit back for a couple of hours and wind down a bit. This means that sometime between 12:00 pm and 1:00 am I am finally ready to do my formal practice. This I begin by doing the 108 bows at the foot of my bunk. Then I do the various chants. When I have finished chanting I will sit zazen for about one hour. At the conclusion I will once again recite the Four Great Vows. Now my day is complete and I retire.

As you can see by this short presentation, practice inside of these prison walls isn't much different from the way you yourself may practice. Some of the questions that I like to ask myself as a way of exploring my practice is: Do I feel less stressed than usual? Am I growing as a human being? Does my practice benefit others besides myself? Does my practice bring or give more meaning to my life? If I can answer yes to these questions on a regular basis then I know that I am doing well. But as my teachers Ron Kidd or Tricia Teater might remind me, "It's not good; not bad. It's all in the doing, in this moment, at this time." It doesn't matter who we are or where we are—our situations are still the same. Some people are in more of a prison on the outside that we are on the inside. These prisons come from our own thinking minds. We are always making, making, making. Zen Master Seung Sahn offers us many teachings that can lead us out of this predicament. But we have to do the work ourselves. As the Buddha has passed down to us, we are all responsible for our own salvation. The fruits of our practice are measured by the diligence of our effort. So, if our practice is regular and strong then we will break free of the fetters that bind our minds. We will then realize our true nature—our Buddha nature. The point then is to practice. Practice, practice, and practice. That is our correct situation. That is our purpose.

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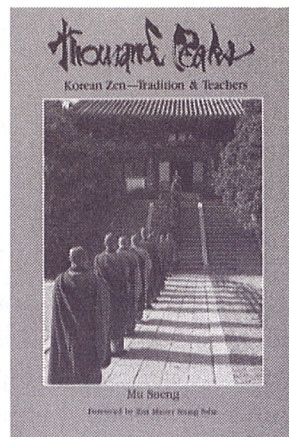


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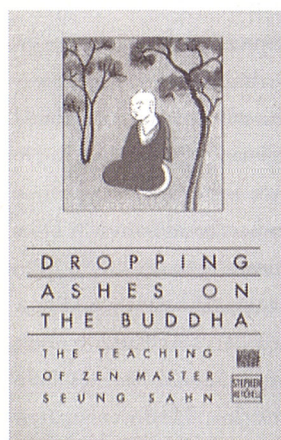
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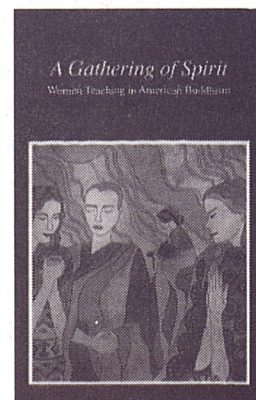
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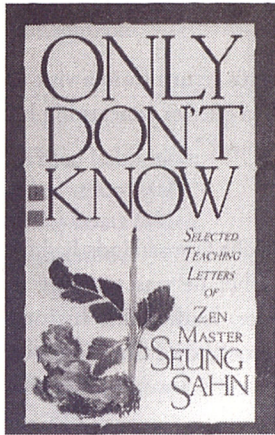
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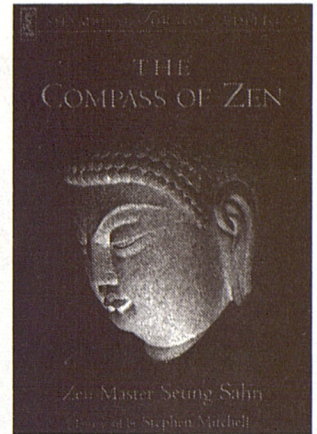


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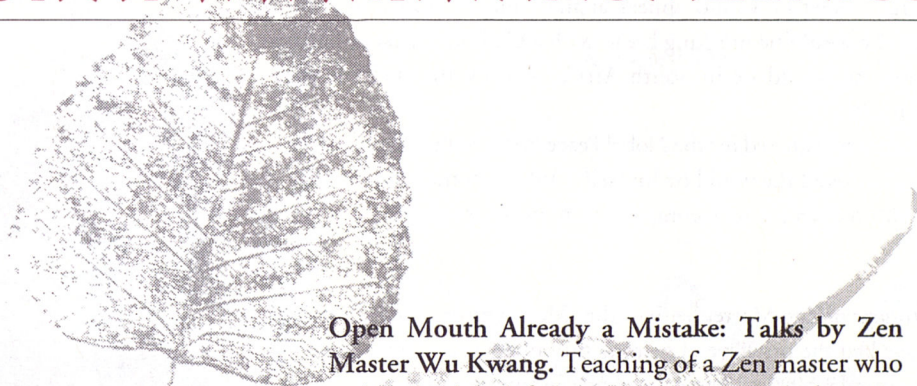


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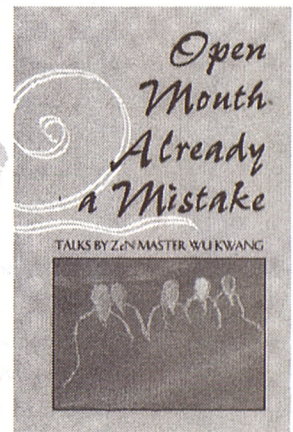


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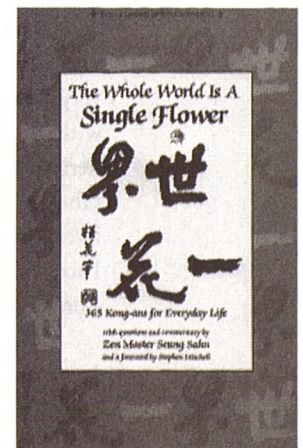


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Charles Tuttle. ISBN 0-8048-1782-0. \$16.95





THE DALAI LAMA'S TEACHER

Bruce Blair
New Haven Zen Center

Recently, I accompanied Maha Ghosananda on his return from a visit to the Dalai Lama. I asked him how I should respond to queries concerning his whereabouts. He replied simply, "Only say, 'Don't know!'"

After leaving the solitary life of a forest monk, Maha Ghosananda had for decades made it his practice to travel alone. Whether he was teaching in refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, leading his historic Dhammayietra peace walks across his devastated homeland of Cambodia, or being an ambassador of peace and reconciliation around the world, he would always travel between events unaccompanied.

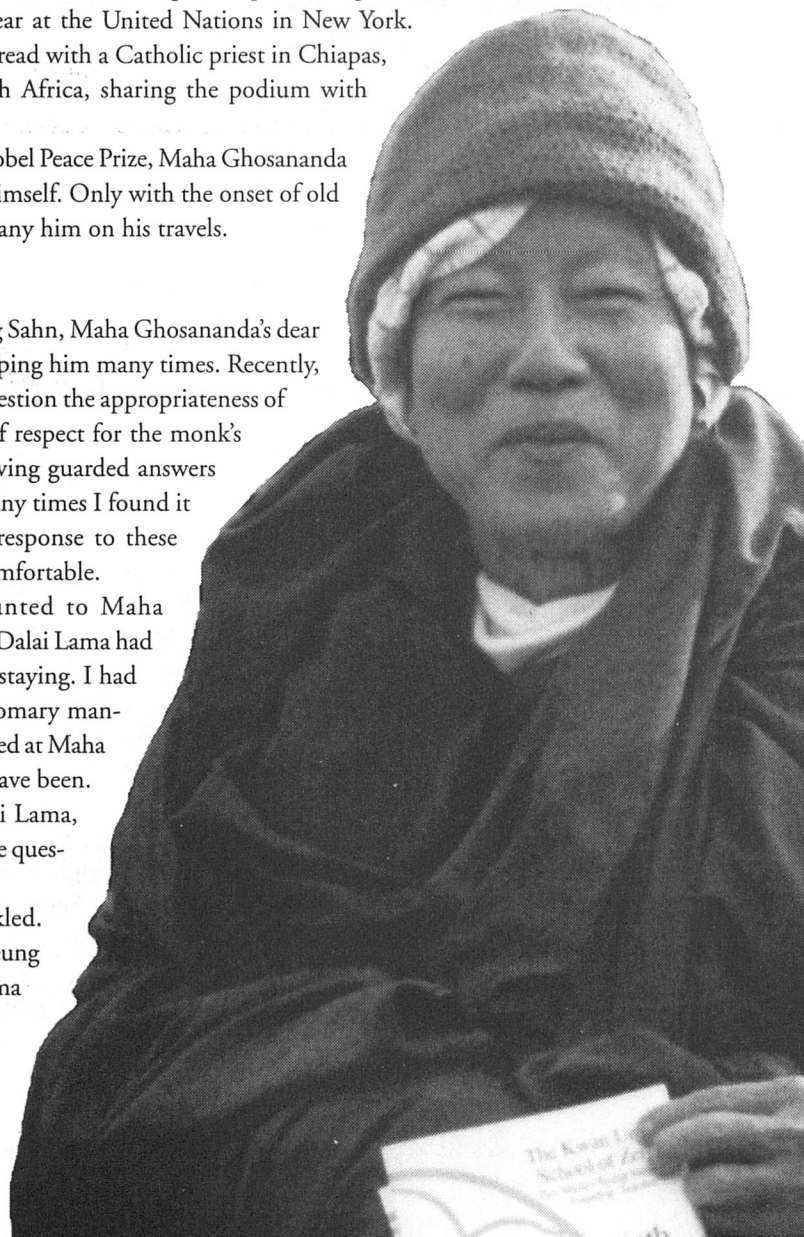
To those of us responsible for tracking his travels, he seemed to be practicing a veritable art of appearing and disappearing. One day he'd be at the Vatican lifting the Pope off the ground in a warm embrace. Next he would appear at the United Nations in New York. Another day, he would be breaking bread with a Catholic priest in Chiapas, and the next, he would be in South Africa, sharing the podium with Nelson Mandela.

Seven times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Maha Ghosananda for decades wandered the world by himself. Only with the onset of old age has he allowed people to accompany him on his travels.

As a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn, Maha Ghosananda's dear friend, I have had the privilege of helping him many times. Recently, an event occurred which made me question the appropriateness of my behavior as his attendant. Out of respect for the monk's safety, I had become very good at giving guarded answers about his whereabouts and plans. Many times I found it necessary to be less than polite in response to these queries; this made me feel very uncomfortable.

Looking for counsel, I recounted to Maha Ghosananda how, the day before, the Dalai Lama had very directly asked me where he was staying. I had without thinking replied in my customary manner: "At a temple in the woods." I looked at Maha Ghosananda and said, "How silly I have been. Even with your dear friend the Dalai Lama, I acted like a guard dog, and evaded the question about where you were staying."

Maha Ghosananda's eyes twinkled. In a perfect imitation of Zen Master Seung Sahn's voice, he said, "When Dalai Lama ask where I come from, only say, 'DON'T KNOW!' Then you become the Dalai Lama's teacher." We both laughed with delight.



Furnace Mountain Poems

Tree upon tree.
Vision fooled.
Against rock wall.
Imaginable.

Titled habitation.
Iron upon itself.
Like boats folded.
Limestone.

Stone = leaf = spider.
Rock = pool.
Below road.
Under foot.

Each step forgets previous.
Suspended in air.
Ether.
Leaf.

Memory of the seat-rock.
The raw-face.
Memory of long rails.
The unknown bird.

The moon red.
Only its lower half showing.

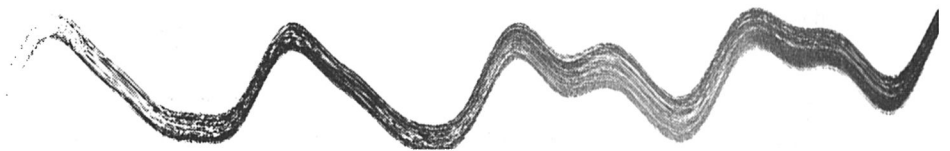
If she knew the names of trees.
Forgotten.
Species succession.
After other.

Unreachable petroglyphs.
Known direction.

In rock, metal.
In metal, ardor.

One hand.
Above/below.
Reaching to.
Not after.

Judy Roitman JDPSN



THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS
a Poem for Roger

even as I watch the petals are falling

& nothing has ever been found

to hold them back

Diane diPrima

Walking the mountain before dawn,
tree trunks and shadows blacken the path.
The temple is found only by flowing
with the mottled river of morning stars.

Sitting in silence in a mountain temple on a quiet morning
the nodding monk is oblivious
to the kasa of fresh sunlight
as it gently hangs on his back
and drapes down his shoulder
onto the hardwood floor.

During an outdoor interview on a clear day,
wasps build their home
in the great temple pillar
over the unflinching Zen Master's shaved head.
The student's attention brightens,
wary of a sting.

When the western wind shakes the forest,
sitting perfectly still is the only refuge.
A tree falls
and the old barn
cracks wide-open,
inviting daylight in.

Following the white-stoned path back to bed,
the feet are heard but not seen.
An infinite number of fireflies
dance down the mountain.
Stars visit the trees.

Catherine Pfeifer
Furnace Mountain, Kentucky

A willful tolerance infuses neither man nor beast
until it thaws — at least
a month away
in mild and mildewed March.

Alan Davies

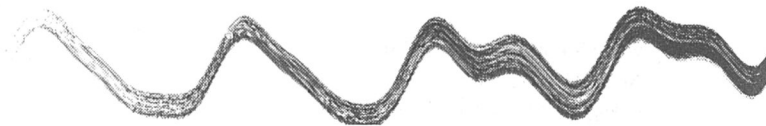
A few late leaves fall
onto my red car
on Kemble Avenue —
my mind doesn't do a thing
it doesn't have a job to do.

Alan Davies

The Tokaido Road

Oh, long years! Yes, long!
Or many, perhaps, not long.
Up and down, up and down
the Tokaido Road, begging
for enough to live, sleeping
as the guest of strangers.
Writing on strips of cloth
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU, giving
them to passers-by. Give
what you own away, my
teacher said, then look up
at the night full of stars.
Nephew, I am dying. We
met only once. My life
has been good. This is
my farewell to you.

Glenn Shea



r a i n - w h i p p e d

cloud-bursting
pleasure and pain
skin rain-whipped
till pink
grass hungrily licks
each drip

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w a r m a n d h u m i d

even the moth
habitually drawn
to the porch light
at night
skipped his rounds
his wings
like my thoughts
folded
under the weight
of the warm and humid air.

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Transmission of the Lamp
— The Lost Volumes

Wu Kwang
Was a man of New York
But he was not born in New York
His family name was Shrobe
And while he resided for over 30 years on 14th Street
He had no fixed abode

He attained the way
Sitting on a cushion
And realizing that he was
Sitting on a cushion

Thus is it said
“The man who is sitting
Is already sitting
Though they are never separate
He truly knows
His ass from his elbow”

It is said that on occasion
He would retreat
Deep in the Northern mountains
While this may be so
Few saw him there
And despite the remoteness
He never lacked for comfort

In his youth
His breadth was immeasurable
Near the Millennium
He discovered his health
And thenceforth
According to legend
Dined solely on green tea
And barley soup
His memory improved with age
And his beard never grayed

He mastered first the tantric pulses
Of Thelonious Monk
And next the pranic forces
Of Vedic traditions
But let go of both
To enter the Main Stream

And preached,
“My miraculous power is that
I pay my taxes by April 15th
And my rent
On the first of the month”
(Truly he had pierced the ineffable)



He also once said
“Don’t write a check
You can’t cover,”
And on another occasion,
“If you can’t pay me now,
Pay me later”

Students today
Still discuss this

A student once asked
“How can I enter the way?”

The master said
“Tokens”

The student persisted
“Tokens are subject to coming and going
Appearance and disappearance”

(This was no ordinary person)

Wu Kwang responded
“Then get a Metro Card”

(He reveals his sword
Only when challenged)

The student was speechless

(Who wouldn’t be?)
But tell me
Is this the silence of Vimalakirti
Or of Elder Ting?

Another student remarked
“Already swiped”

The Master hit him

The student bowed

Wu Kwang demanded, “What is it?”

The student couldn’t answer
So Wu Kwang sent him
To buy bagels for the sangha

(Removing frost from snow)

When he lectured
Students gathered like clouds
But when he finished
He left no trace

Gatha:

The way from Union Square
Is clearly marked
But few can find it
Out of ten million
Not no one
But only a few
When you arrive
Press 2E

*Ken Kessel JDPSN
In observance of the Zen Master’s
Birthday, November, 1999*

AMERICAN
MONK'S
BEST-SELLER
HIGHLIGHTS
OUR
SCHOOL'S
PROGRESS
IN KOREA

*Mu Sang Sunim
Dharma Zen Center*

Our Kwan Um School of Zen is suddenly becoming famous in Korea, not the least because of the publication of Hyon Gak Sunim's best-selling book, *Cloud Path: from Harvard to Hwa Gye Sah*, which appeared in November 1999 in Korean. The book introduces Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching to a contemporary Korean audience and addresses a number of controversial issues in Korean Buddhism today. It also tells Hyon Gak Sunim's story, how he (formerly Paul Muenzen) grew up in New Jersey, searched for a spiritual path, found the dharma and Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching and became a monk in our school (the autobiographical part of the book ends with his taking monk's precepts at Nam Hwa Sah temple in China). The story is not so different from that of many American Zen students but it is certainly new, and even shocking, to Koreans, who up to now have had little knowledge or understanding of Zen Master Seung Sahn's work in the west. The book has sold over 500,000 copies—it is a best seller in Korea and in Korean communities throughout the world. Korean people find the book fascinating: as the Abbot of Un Mun Sah said, "Once you pick it up, you cannot put it down."

Hyon Gak Sunim originally did not want to write this book. He had been translating Zen Master Seung Sahn's *Compass of Zen* into Korean but found publishers loath to take it on, afraid that it wouldn't sell. Finally one publisher told him that they would publish *Compass of Zen* if Hyon Gak Sunim would write his own book first—they had been interested in him because of columns on religion and spirituality he had written in several national newspapers and magazines. Also, he had been the subject of a TV documentary, and was well-known as a foreign monk in Korea. So Hyon Gak Sunim, who had previously refused many offers to write a book of his own, agreed to do it. But the book's huge success surprised everybody.

Myo Ji Sunim, Korean nun and abbot of the Chogye Temple in Woodside, New York, explained to me why young people like this book very much. For Korean people

Harvard University is a new Mecca—almost every Korean family dreams that their child can go to Harvard and attain success and the best of what the west has to offer. When they hear of someone who in their minds could have had everything they dream of but decided instead to throw it away and become a monk in their own Buddhist tradition in Korea, it strongly hits their minds. They can hardly believe it.

Last April, the abbot of Dong Hak Sah Temple told her students, "Since Song Chol Kun Sunim died six years ago, Korean Buddhism has sadly lost its reason to feel proud about itself. We seem to have lost our role in influencing our own society... The appearance of Hyon Gak Sunim's book has awakened our Korean Buddhism to have a role again in society. This book has made Buddhism important for Korea again... How sad that we must have a foreigner re-introduce Buddhism to our country."

A young Korean monk, Hae Tong Sunim, explained, "This book is very new, fresh and impressive. It's a great introduction to Zen, giving people who know nothing of Zen the opportunity to think again about their lives."

In a conversation last March in Pusan, Soen Hae Sunim, a respected senior student of Zen Master Jin Jae, said, "All the fighting in front of Chogye Sah caused many people to turn away from Korean Buddhism like an old pair of shoes, but this book is causing many people to come back to Korean Buddhism." A friend of his added, "*Cloud Path* is making a revival of Korean Buddhism. That's Zen Master Seung Sahn's clear-eyed way."

Since the book's publication, phones at the Seoul International Zen Center have been ringing with young people calling to say they have read the book and want to learn more about practicing. Our last Winter Kyol Che at Hwa Gye Sah became swelled with new students as a result. Korean-American readers have also been calling and coming to our Zen Centers all over United States. At Dharma Zen Center in Los Angeles we get several calls a week.

One feature of the book is its willingness to deal with controversial issues in Korean Buddhism and Korean society. Chapter 50, "Is it About Conversion?" criticizes Christian oppression of Buddhism in Korea. It is the first time that Christians have been openly criticized for either committing the hundreds of arson attacks against Buddhist temples, such as one at Hwa Gye Sah in 1996, or else contributing to the atmosphere where those attacks have been implicitly encouraged. This chapter has drawn a lot of attention and praise from Buddhists and Christians alike.

Chapter 57, "What You Get by Throwing It All Away," describes the international significance of Zen Master Seung Sahn's life and teaching, and brings Koreans, who have sometimes been isolated in their own tradition, up to date on the spread of Buddhism to the West, Buddhism's effect on the modern world, and the modern world's influence

on the traditional forms—for example, in the new equality of women as Buddhist teachers and administrators.

As a result of all this, Hyon Gak Sunim himself has become something of a celebrity in Korea. Korean people enjoy his gregarious personality and dynamic style. Recently, the abbot of Hwa Gye Sah took him to give a dharma speech at the Korean West Point, bringing along 500 copies of the two-volume book. The talk was a great success. Hyon Gak Sunim is currently besieged by invitations to give talks throughout Korea, but is trying hard to stay mostly at Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center, and just practice. Hyon Gak Sunim also mentioned to me that he has no interest in an English translation of the book, since it was written to address Korean people quite specifically about issues close to them. All the profits from the book are being dedicated to the dharma.

The appearance of the book and its success have provoked a new and great interest in our school throughout Korea, also a new interest in Zen Master Seung Sahn's books and teaching. Zen Master Seung Sahn's books are now bestsellers in the Buddhist section for the first time in Korea, and publishers are demanding rights to re-publish his works. All of our foreign monks and nuns living in Korea now feel a closer connection to the society as a whole—they feel that they can have a positive influence on Korean life and on Korean Buddhism and finally participate there in a more significant role than just that of a student.

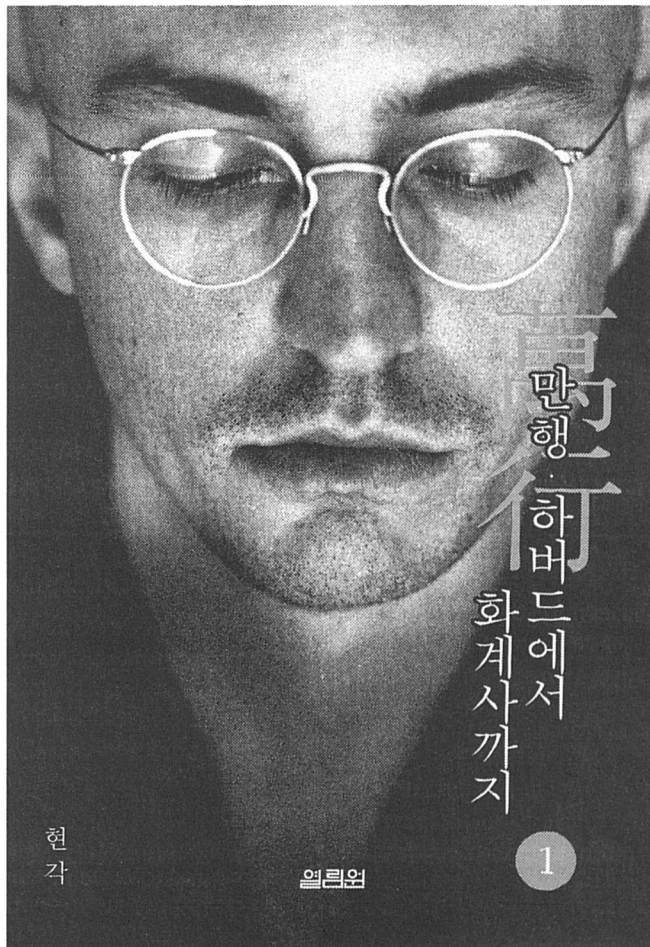
Korea itself is vastly different from the way it was in 1975 when Zen Master Seung Sahn first began taking his Western students there. At that time Korea was a totally Confucian-style society—unique, but very isolated from the rest of the world. Young people only wanted to be like their parents, dress and manners were very formal and, to our Western eyes, perhaps a little strange. When our Sunims and lay people, including this writer, first established the Seoul International Zen Center in 1984, the Korean

monks at Hwa Gye Sah had no idea why we had come. We were perceived as very foreign and not so useful! But with the Seoul Olympics in 1988, a wave of western influence spread throughout Korea, and in the last several years great cultural changes have appeared. Young people can be seen kissing in public, many dye their hair orange, play rock and roll, and eat western-style fast food. People are enjoying western delights; they are also having western-style problems—which means they are now also more open to Zen Master Seung Sahn's "International Zen" teaching, with its emphasis on moment-to-moment practice connecting with everyday life. Blue-eyed followers of the way are in demand! So things have come full circle, since the time in the United States in the seventies when Zen Master Seung Sahn, seen as a fascinating Asian visitor, was eagerly followed by Americans hungry for eastern teaching.

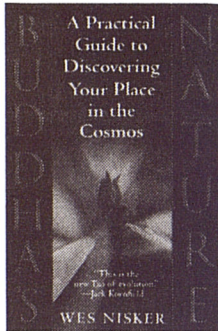
Our Seoul International Zen Center, in addition to running rigorous 90-day meditation retreats for serious practitioners, now has a Sunday dharma class that draws fifty people a week, both Koreans and foreigners. Our monks and nuns have been able to sit retreats at traditional Korean temples and make their own connections with the

Korean sangha.

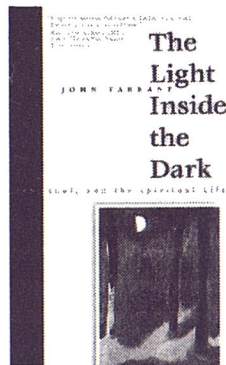
Last Buddha's Birthday MBC TV presented a documentary on Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching and our whole international school entitled "Zen Master Seung Sahn—The Korean Bodhidharma." The Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center is attracting numerous Korean visitors and dharma-seekers. Even the opening of Mu Ryang Sunim's mountain temple, Mountain Spirit Center, in Tehachapi California was celebrated by newspapers in Korea. The long years of patient efforts by Zen Master Seung Sahn; by our late friend and teacher, Zen Master Su Bong; by Zen Master Dae Bong, Mu Shim Sunim JDPS and many others in building our International Zen Center are bearing fruit. We hope everyone will enjoy the feast!



Review: Tony Somlai
Original Root Zen Center



*Buddha's Nature:
A Practical Guide to Discovering
Your Place in Cosmos*
Wes Nisker
Bantam Books, 2000



*Light Inside the Dark:
Zen, Soul, and the Spiritual Life*
John Tarrant
Harper Collins, 1999

Over the last 2500 years Buddhist history reveals innovative constructions of relationships between the Buddha's teachings and the culture of each country it visits. This Buddhist "sociology of religion" is filled with examples of how the "new" belief affected societal aspirations, values, and ideology. For example our school, the Kwan Um School of Zen, has the strong flavor of the Korean people and influences as brought by our founder Zen Master Seung Sahn. To this day, many Korean flavors (like kim chee!) have a positive valuation in defining the identity of our practice.

Unlike our Korean spiritual parents, we Western students are in the infancy of this process of Buddhist acculturation. Two important points need to be addressed as we look at Buddhist teaching through "American" eyes. First, the power of our technological culture translated Buddhist teaching at an incredibly rapid pace. Where Buddhist teaching may have taken centuries to move from one region to the next, in our culture (with the internet, publishing, radio and TV) we are looking at much shorter times. Second, we Americans cannot discuss Buddhism without a focus on contemporary social life. The American field, in which Buddhism is being planted, is deeply entrenched with a strong belief in the power of the social sciences. Thomas Szasz, the eminent American psychologist, once suggested that psychology had become the religion of America and psychologists were now the high priests.

The Light Inside the Dark and *Buddha's Nature* are two of the current genre of books attempting to marry Buddhist teachings with American social life and sciences.

In *The Light Inside the Dark*, John Tarrant brings the Asian tradition of inquiry and experience to the Western method of exploring the life of feeling, thought, and stories. Wes Nisker in *Buddha's Nature* draws on several of the social sciences (neuroscience, evolutionary biology, and psychology). He views the Buddha as a spiritual scientist of the self.

In *Buddha's Nature*, Nisker draws upon the works of other people who have tried to bring science and meditation practice together. He finds that the "modern self lives in a 'culture of narcissism,' with very little sense of being part of either a grand cosmic design, the unfolding processes of nature, or even a communal or historical destiny." Nisker finds the Buddha's Third Noble Truth a significant biological insight where "nature has given us the ability to train our minds to bring us new levels of satisfaction and freedom." The remainder of his book follows four foundations of mindfulness (body and breath, first impression, states of mind, and thinking) as a guide to help "fully realize our human condition and develop its potential."

Perhaps the most interesting insight provided by Nisker is his interpretation of how the Buddha's teaching on the law of karma works in our lives and is related to our current understanding of evolution. He finds that our ignorance of the twelve links of "dependent co-arising" are the root cause of human suffering. For Nisker, the evolutionary process offers a new idea of reincarnation in that the human condition can be seen as "our shared incarnation, part of our common 'evolutionary karma.'" Through the study of life reincarnating "form after form" Nisker believes that we can clearly see the forces that have come together to create this temporary life.

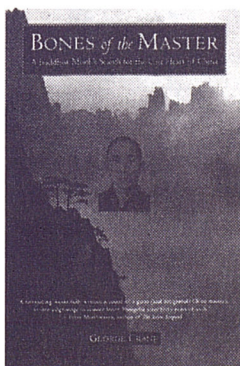
While investigating similar ideas to Nisker, Tarrant in *The Light Inside the Dark* relies more heavily on the field of psychology to provide insights into Buddhist teaching. He finds that human existence at times loses "the upper levels of consciousness," sinking into personal grief. He finds that the inward and outer voyages have a heroic aspect to them in which they both make new connections that help achieve many ends. He begins this journey into "a life of awareness" at the "moment of helplessness." For Tarrant, when life goes well there is not much need to change things. However, the belief in a good life falls apart and breaks away whenever a personal crisis appears. Tarrant believes that this crisis is the "gift" that begins a new life.

Tarrant investigates the mysterious, that place where nothing is said directly. Yet he believes that this is a place where everyday, "we move into it and through it and are sustained by its graces." He finds that in not-knowing we begin to trust our blindness and therefore are not blocked

by seeing. He finds this ability to let go as important so that “we can embrace whatever comes.” This is one of the many ways that Tarrant attempts to help the reader find the light inside the dark.

It is important to remember that these two authors did not write definitive text books on Buddhism or science. Instead, they brought together several fields and theories reflecting their own individual beliefs. These two books, as well as the genres they represent, attempt to enlarge the reader’s understanding of these fields rather than provide valid explanations for them. Both books have a sense of urgency, of hurrying us through the marriage of Buddhism and American social science, never giving us a complete picture. At times, their stories lack precision and depth in translating Buddhist teaching and practice.

Buddhism in America is a baby in the first few moments following birth. It arrived in the delivery room of the behavioral sciences. However, we are still left with a simple question: has the marriage of Buddhism and the social sciences given birth to a healthy baby? Yes, or no? In some ways it’s like trying to solve a problem—how does it fit? All generations have believed that theirs is the one in greatest crisis. This generation has added Buddhism to its repertoire of responses to the crisis of mind suffering. For Americans today the puzzle pieces of life’s suffering fit into a Buddhist social science paradigm. *The Light Inside the Dark* and *Buddha’s Nature* will help future American Buddhists understand how the baby took its first steps.



Review: Ted Mehl
Kansas Zen Center

*Bones of the Master:
A Buddhist Monk's Search
for the Lost Heart of China*
George Crane
Bantam Doubleday Dell, 2000

This is a wonderful book, in the sense of *wonderful* used by Zen Master Seung Sahn in his letters when someone is practicing hard in the right direction. This is the story of Tsung Tsai, a Chinese ch’an monk, teacher, healer, and more, who left his monastery in Inner Mongolia in 1959 fleeing from the Red Army troops. Tsung Tsai meets George Crane, a poet, and serious sensualist and hedonist, in Woodstock, New York in 1987—at one point when considering sexuality and lust, George declares “Desire is all

that I am, maybe all that I will ever be.” These unlikely friends travel to Mongolia in search of Tsung Tsai’s master’s grave and the cave where he lived; Tsung Tsai wants to honor his master, conduct a proper funeral ceremony and build a shrine. I can’t adequately describe the poignant suffering, the profound teaching, the sagacious poetry, the haunting shamanism, the endearing humor, and engaging characters in this ch’an adventure story.

In October of 1959, the translated names of Tsung Tsai’s brother monks are Ancestor Vigilance, Joy, Dharma, Reality, Aspiration, Dignity, Greatness, Witness, Work, Practice, and Miracle; he is Ancestor Wisdom, the third son of a third son, a mystical incarnation according to his father. All but Tsung Tsai escape toward Nepal and India; he heads south through the heart of China, and witnesses enough horror to break the mind of many. His Master, too old to go along, told him as he left, “Everywhere are hungry ghosts. Go quickly. Keep a strong mind.”

When George, affectionately called Georgie, wonders how Tsung Tsai had found the will to survive, he is told, “Ch’an is like mountain. Does not move. Ch’an you cannot move.”

Tsung Tsai’s meditation instruction is plain and to the point, “Sit or walk. Natural and simple. Don’t think too much. Attachment very strong. Don’t worry. When you go away, just come back. Stand up. Walk a little. Sit again.

“Meditation have mind and emotion mixed. Emotion is every human being’s roots. Difficult to control. Very good monk have deepest heart. So very sad for world. Highest pity. Buddha nature, so kindness.”

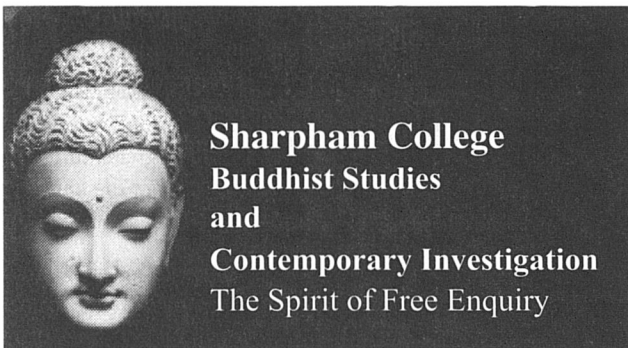
When George fails to complete a frightening climb to the Master’s grave and frantically apologizes, Tsung Tsai cuts him off, “No talking. Talking doesn’t work.”

George finds it difficult to practice and when he explains himself at one point, Tsung Tsai replies, “Doesn’t matter. Buddhism, the real Buddhism is practice. Any moment must be practice. Any moment must be true.”

After a near impossible ten hour climb to the Master’s cave, Tsung Tsai sits in meditation, very sick, but fulfilled, and George sees a white light emanating from his head; George shoots two rolls of film and when Tsung Tsai is finished exclaims, “A white light, like a flashlight, came from your head.”

“Ahh, that’s Buddha’s light. Actually everybody have that light. Natural. Nothing special.”

The book is filled with such unhindered teaching. George struggles with desire and fear, practices some, and is a loyal friend. Tsung Tsai shows us what he calls monk-power, don’t-know-mind in each moment of everyday life: clear mind, open heart, strong center. This book will take you beyond what you think Zen is and inspire you to practice. You’ll see the ch’an monastic within yourself. Natural and simple.



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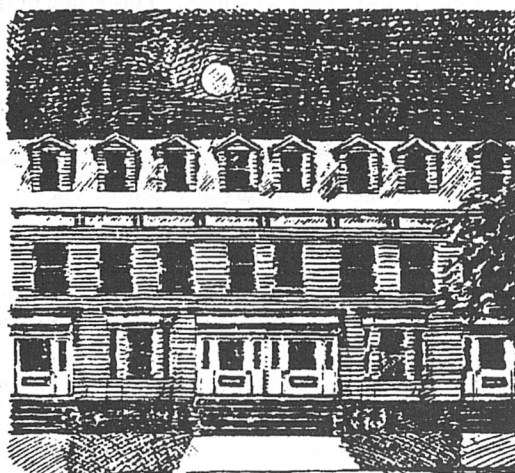
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Zen Master Seung Sahn

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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.

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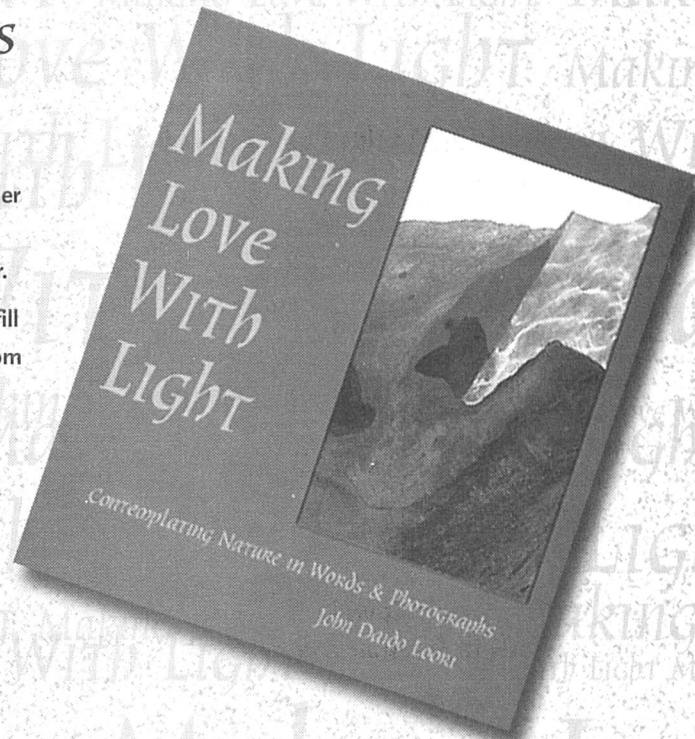
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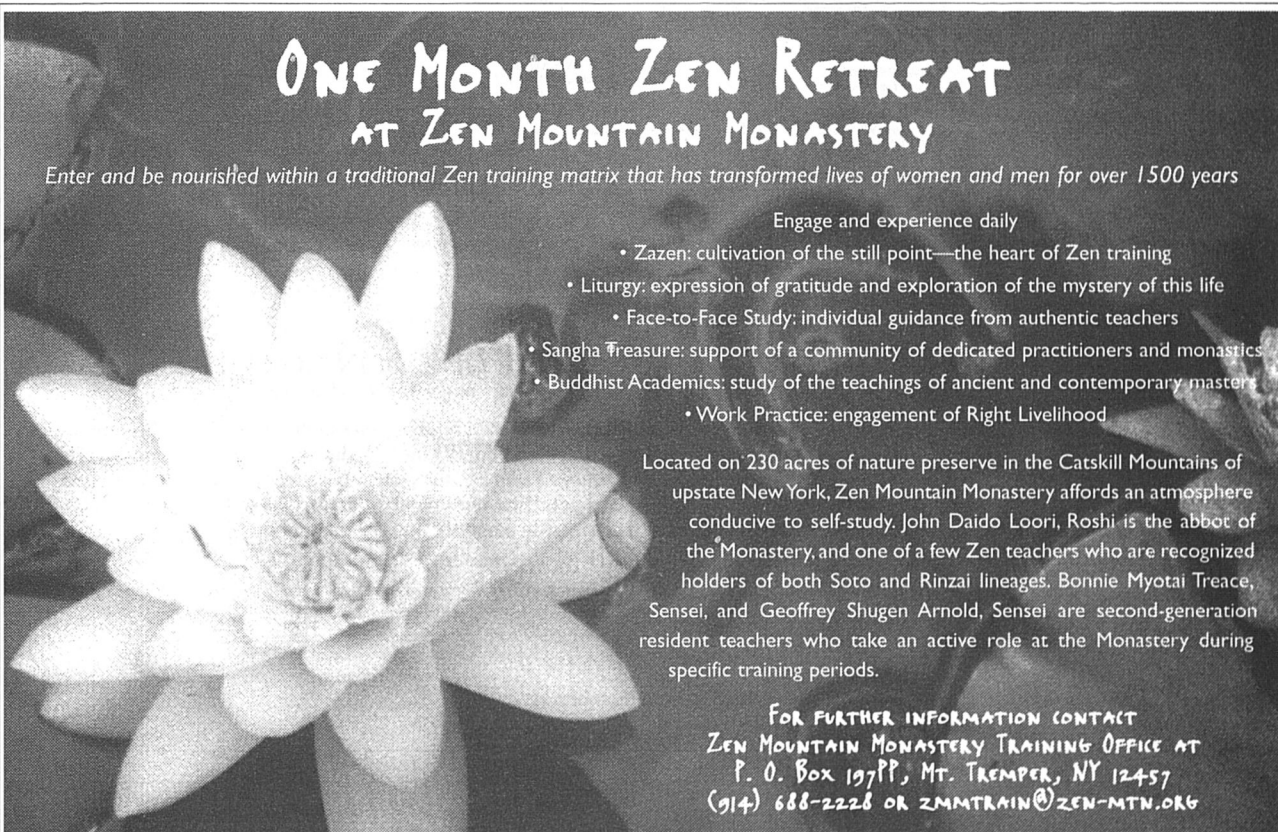
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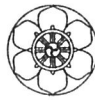
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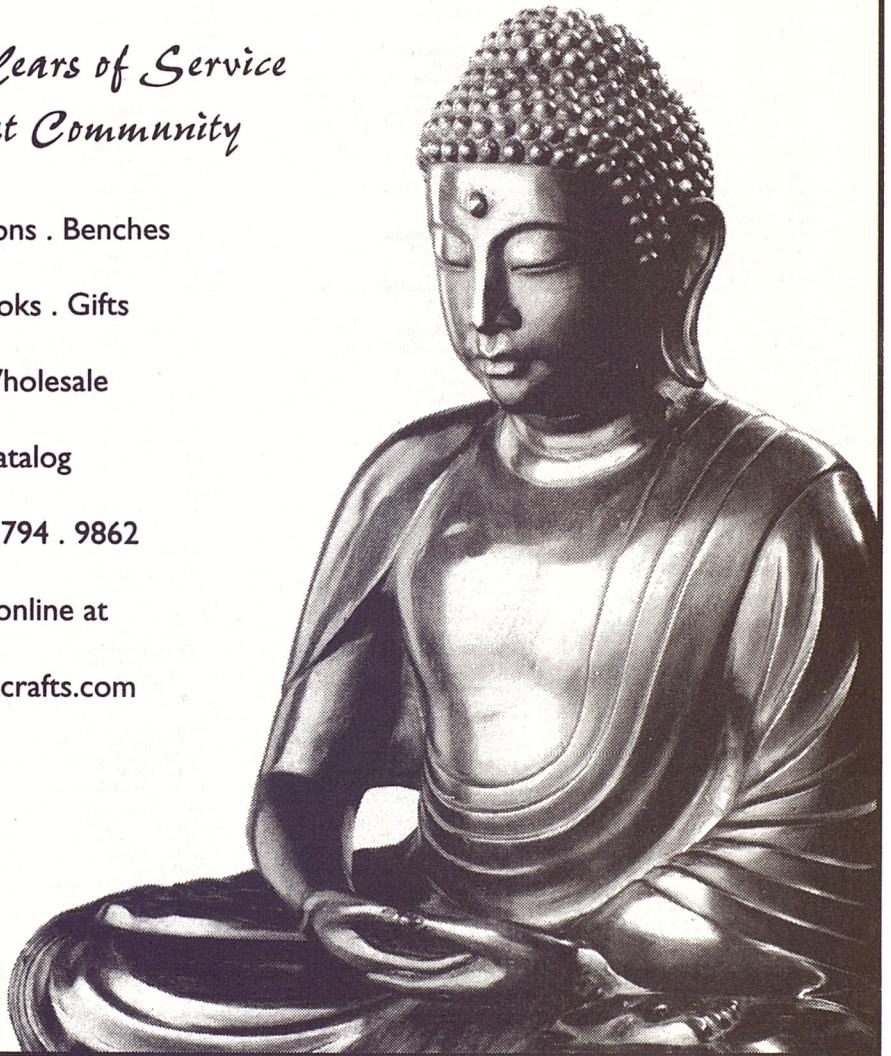
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