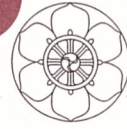


Primary Point



Summer 2001

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**ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN:
KWAN SEUM BOSAL'S HAT**

**ZEN MASTER HAE KWANG:
THE MORNING BELL CHANT**

**ALEKSANDRA PORTER JDPSN:
GOOD ACTORS**



IN THIS ISSUE

Kwan Seum Bosal's Hat <i>Zen Master Seung Sahn</i>	3
Respecting our Ancestral Tradition: Morning Bell Chant <i>Zen Master Hae Kwang</i>	6
A Return to North Korea <i>Mu Shim Sunim JDPS</i>	9
Good Actors <i>Aleksandra Porter JDPSN</i>	12
Around Dragon Mountain in Fourteen Days <i>Myong Haeng Sunim</i>	14
Vietnam Pilgrimage <i>Ray Lemoine</i>	19
Alexander and the Sixth Patriarch <i>Tony Somlai</i>	22
Poetry <i>Paul Bloom and Alan Davies</i>	23
Book Review Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism <i>Edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft</i> <i>Reviewed by Barry Briggs</i>	24
<i>Books in Our Tradition</i>	16, 17
<i>Subscription/Change of Address</i>	24
<i>Membership in the Kwan Um School of Zen</i>	30
<i>Kwan Um School of Zen Centers</i>	30, 31

Cover picture:
Hwa Gye Sa temple, Seoul, Korea
Photo by Zen Master Dae Kwang



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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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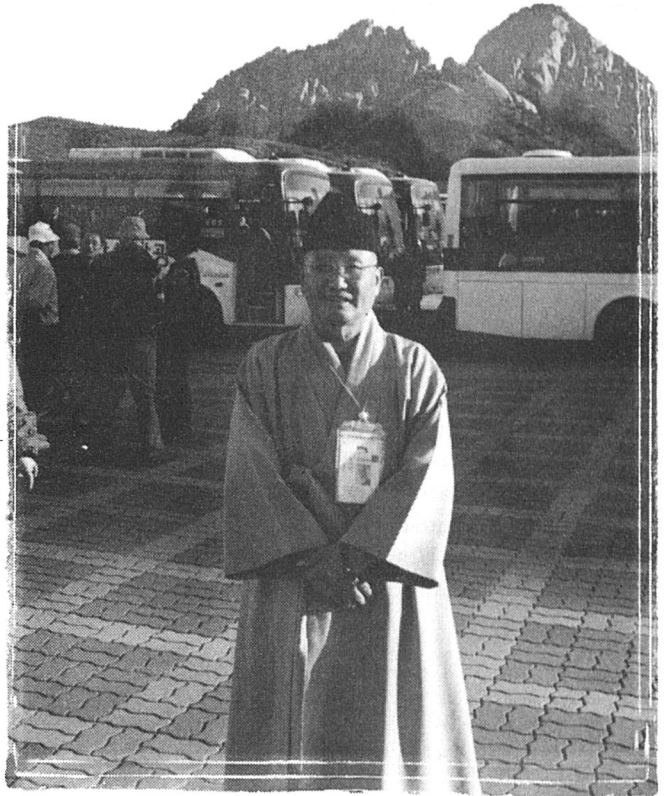
KWAN SEUM BOSAL'S HAT

Zen Master Seung Sahn's closing talk at Mu Sang Sa temple for the 2000 Summer Kyol Che

Thank you all very much for coming here and practicing for three months in our Kyol Che retreat. Kyol Che means "tight." Today is the end of the retreat and the beginning of a three-month period which we call Hae Jae. Hae Jae means loose, not tight. If you have mind, then tight-style practicing is necessary. But if you have no mind, then both Hae Jae and Kyol Che are not necessary. So, Hae Jae and Kyol Che mean you still have mind, you still have a problem. So, coming here to practice is very important.

Hae Jae and Kyol Che mean to practice together. Together action is very important. Among practicing people there are three types: Low-class: these people cannot practice by themselves. Outside conditions and situations easily control them, so they always have a problem practicing. That's low-class. Middle-class: This type of person has a problem when they are in a city. If they go to a mountain to sit, no problem. At that time they and nature become one. But a high-class student can go to a city—go anywhere—no problem. Any kind of action is no problem. That's a high-class student. You can understand for yourself if you are a high-, middle- or low-class student. I cannot say. Next, you must decide your direction. Deciding to practice is very important. Why do you come into this world? Human beings originally have no meaning and no direction. But if you can find your correct direction and help all beings, then great direction appears. That's your job. That's a human being's correct job. So what is a human being's correct job?

Human beings are originally nothing. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng said "originally nothing." But that's just an idea; you must attain "nothing" and find your correct job. This is very important. The Heart Sutra says no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind.



Zen Master Seung Sahn visited North Korea in October 2000; see the story on page 9

This is our practicing technique. See, not see. Hear, not hear. Taste, not taste. Only one mind. One mind means no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. Then Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi appears; this is truth. Open eyes. Open ears. Open mouth. Open your body. Open your mind. Then you can see: my job AAAAAAHHH... I understand my job! Understanding your job means Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. That's "truth." You must attain truth. Next, how does truth correctly function? Truth's correct function is to help all beings. That's a very important point. That's the meaning of gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha. Everyone attains nirvana together—together action. Nirvana is the place of together action.

So, our Kyol Che is also a together action place. Together put it all down: my opinion, my condition, my situation. Then correct opinion, correct condition and correct situation appear. Then do it! Don't check. Don't check inside, don't check outside, don't check any side. Only this moment, what is your job? Moment to moment what's yours? Your body is not yours—it will soon disappear. What is yours? This world has many things: sky, tree, animals,

house, everything. In your pocket, you have money. That's your money? No, haha!! That's not yours. What is yours? Everything is always changing, changing. Time and space always are controlling you. Time and space control everything. Then how can we take away time and space? Everybody understands primary point. BOOM! OK? So I ask everyone, where are you coming from? *[Everyone hits floor.]* Very good! You have already cut off all thinking. That's primary point. If you understand primary point, you understand the universe.

So first, you must become one. If you can become one then slowly your eyes open, then ears, tongue, body, and mind open. Open mind is Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi means that the truth appears. Sky is blue, tree is green, dog is barking woof woof, floor is yellow, cushion is brown—everything is the truth. What is not the truth? Everything is the truth! Before nothing—attain nothing. Nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing. Then next attain truth. If you attain the truth, then what? Then the Heart Sutra says: gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha. That means together action. Together action is to help all beings. And not only in this life; life, after life, after life continue to try, try, try. That's our direction.

This world is stupid. If you watch television, or listen to the radio, you will hear politicians say, "I am this and this and this. You choose me and I will do this, I have this and this." But what do they really have? Haha. "I, I, I, I," then "I, I, I, I." Haha. That's stupid! "I, I, I, I." But we have no "I." Very important is to take away this "I." Then WOW, I understand my job! Only help all beings.

Usually human beings are always checking: "I could become famous, I could have a lot of money." Then their "I, I, I, I" becomes stronger and stronger. That's a problem. Look at animals. Animals never help each other. Mother or father helps a little baby animal, but when they grow up, watch it! That's animal mind. A dog doesn't understand a cat's mind. A cat doesn't understand a snake's mind. A snake doesn't understand a bug's mind. They don't understand each other. It's like the Soviet Union: BOOM! it disappears. Then many countries appear with many countries

fighting each other. Many problems. That's our human world: only my opinion, my condition and my situation. Only holding, holding, holding—many problems.

Nowadays many human beings kill a lot of animals. Not only one by one. Then they eat them. So, today if you go to a city and look at the people they have a human being's face but their action and mind are not human beings'. Snake, lion or cat. Not so much human beings' mind. What percent human beings' mind do people have these days? But all of you came here to practice for three months or even just a short time—that's a very important mind. That's a correct human being's mind. That's a human being's correct direction.

If you look around this world you see that most people don't understand correct direction. They don't understand correct practicing. So everyone coming here to practice—that's very wonderful. That means: find my true self and find correct way, truth and correct life.

But this three months is a short time. Think about Buddha; he sat under the bodhi tree for six years! Only three months... not enough, haha. Look at the Buddha, sitting under the bodhi tree. He didn't eat so much. He didn't move so much—he only sat. Not moving, then finally one morning he saw a star and PTCHEEUU!! he got enlightenment. So everyone who came here to practice got some enlightenment, yeah? Small enlightenment, not big enlightenment, haha. Small enlightenment is OK; big enlightenment is OK, it doesn't matter. But if your direction is clear then someday you will be the same as Buddha. Everybody will be Buddha. Buddha's enlightenment is possible. That's our direction.

So today is Hae Jae day. Hae Jae means to take away your like/dislike mind. That means take away life and death mind, take away opposites thinking. Completely take "I" all away, then that is Hae Jae. Your minds are of many types: money type, desire type, so one by one take them all away... take away, take away. Sitting time is usually no problem, but when you come out your mind moves a lot. If you see or hear something, then your mind is moving—ah wonderful! I like this, I don't like that; many minds appear. Then you will have a

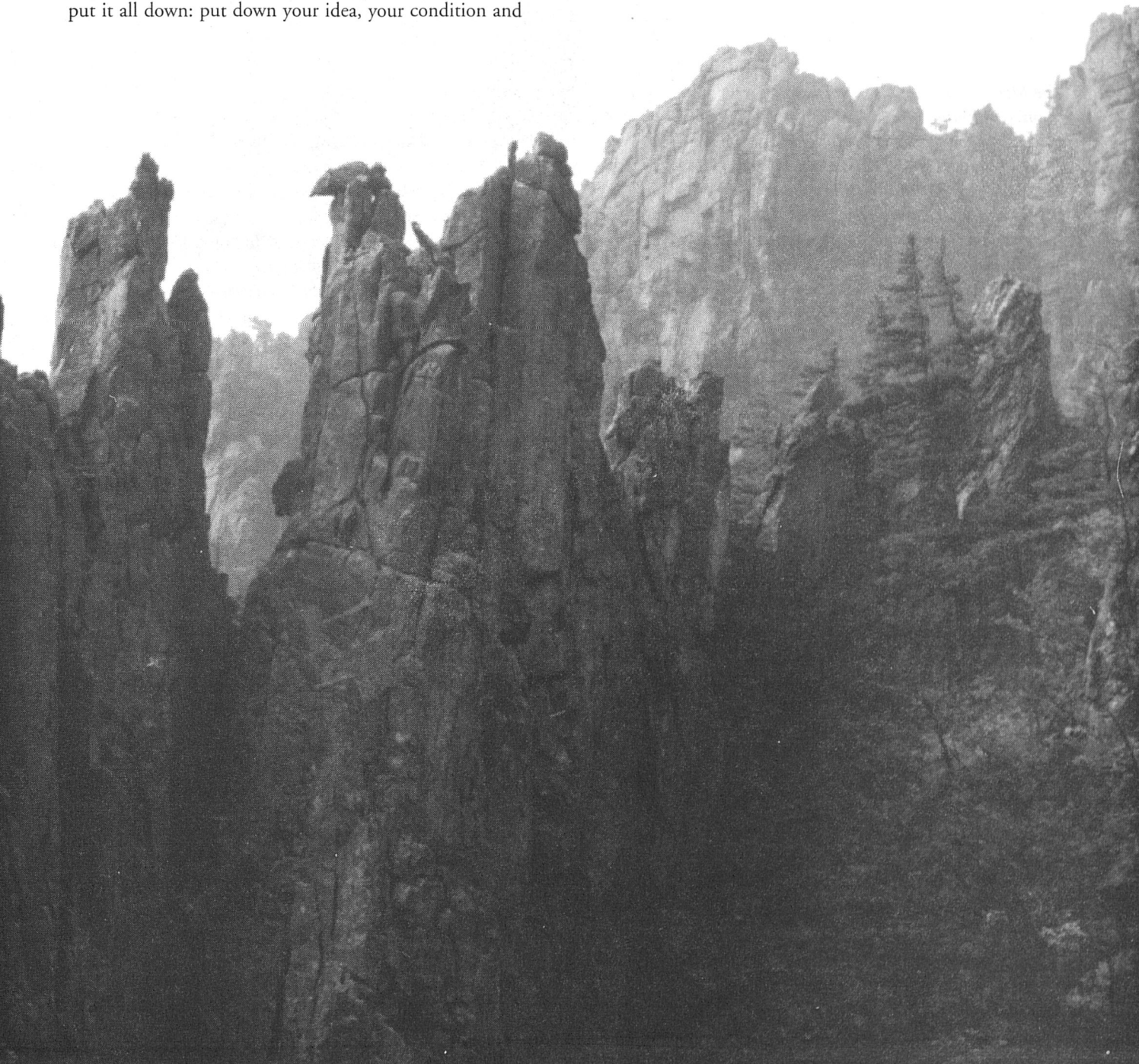
The Diamond Mountains of North Korea

problem. If your like/dislike mind appears, then you will have a problem. If your like/dislike mind becomes smaller, smaller, smaller... then nothing. No mind, then no problem. If you have mind, you have a problem. Our direction is to take away like/dislike mind.

The statue on the altar behind me is Kwan Seum Bosal. Kwan Seum Bosal means great love, great compassion, that's our great love and compassion mind. Our job is only to help other people life after life. If you look closely you will notice that Kwan Seum Bosal always wears a hat. Amitabul Buddha lives in this hat so he can control all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Amitabul doesn't believe in Kwan Seum Bosal, so he must live in the bodhisattva's hat; he's always checking Kwan Seum Bosal's action. Hahaha! So today is Hae Jae—be careful!—your true Amitabul in your hat is always watching you! Hahaha. So, moment to moment, put it all down: put down your idea, your condition and

your situation, then the correct way will appear right in front of you. The name for that is the great bodhisattva way. That is the meaning of the Heart Sutra's gate gate paragate parasamgate—we all go to nirvana together. That is the Buddha's teaching.

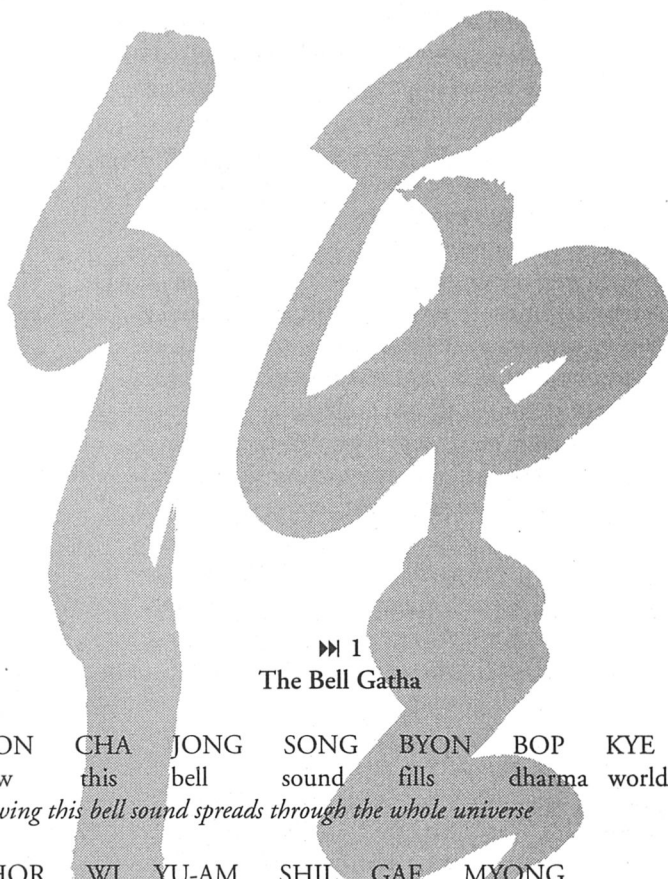
So everybody practiced strongly for a short time or three months. That experience is your treasure. Your treasure is very important. This treasure will grow, grow, grow, until it fills the whole universe; this is very important. Then on Hae Jae day return to your home or stay at the temple, but continue to practice. Continue practicing means don't forget your correct direction. Life after life after life continue the Bodhisattva way. That's correct direction. So, I hope everybody practices hard moment to moment, keeps your correct direction, and helps save all beings from suffering. Thank you.



RESPECTING OUR ANCESTRAL PRACTICE: MORNING BELL CHANT PART 1

Zen Master Hae Kwang
Kansas Zen Center

The Morning Bell Chant is an extremely rich chant, combining three major Buddhist traditions: Hua Yen (Hwa Om) Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism. Hua Yen Buddhism is based on the Avatamsaka Sutra, the most comprehensive of all the Mahayana sutras and one which presents the bodhisattva ideal of universal liberation in truly cosmic terms. Hua Yen Buddhism was both a philosophical school and a mass movement within Buddhism in China and Korea. Huge societies would form to chant the Avatamsaka Sutra, which runs to over 1600 pages in English translation. Pure Land Buddhism is still the most popular form of Buddhism in the world. The central figure in Pure Land Buddhism is Amitabul, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who, eons ago, established a Western Pure Land, an ideal environment in which to practice and get enlightenment, a land open to everyone who chants this Buddha's name. Original Pure Land Buddhism also involved meditation practice, and in China, around the year 1000 there developed a Pure Land Zen School. It was probably about this time or a little later that the Morning Bell Chant, or its ancestor, was created. The chant is here divided into sections to make its structure clear. The translation in italics is freely adapted from an early version used in the Kwan Um School of Zen. The literal meaning of each Chinese Korean word is given as an aid to understanding the meaning and experiencing the chant directly.



▶▶ 1

The Bell Gatha

WON CHA JONG SONG BYON BOP KYE
Vow this bell sound fills dharma world
Vowing this bell sound spreads through the whole universe

CHOR WI YU-AM SHIL GAE MYONG
iron wall dark fully all brighten
Making all the Hell of Dark Metal bright,

SAM DO I GO PA DO SAN
three ways ease pain shatter sword mountain
Relieving the three realms of suffering, shattering the Hell of Swords;

IL-CHE JUNG SAENG SONG JONG GAK
All many beings attain correct enlightenment
All beings become enlightened.

The chant begins with a gatha—a short poem that connects everyday occurrences in our lives to a bodhisattva vow. When I showed the Chinese text of the Morning Bell Chant to a monk from Taiwan, he said that he had learned this gatha when he was young, in exactly the same words as in the chant, but he had never seen the rest of the chant. He said he was taught to say the gatha whenever he heard the sound of any bell. The Evening Bell Chant is another such gatha. In the Morning Bell Chant our vow (or intention or wish) goes out with the sound of the bell through the whole universe, and the vibrations shatter the metallic hells that imprison us and perpetuate our suffering. Once these dark realms are broken open, the radiance of the universe pours through and all beings become enlightened. So the gatha expresses a vow to save all beings, but it also presents a metaphor for our own practice, the practice of opening our minds.

▶▶ 2
Vairocana

NA-MU BI-RO GYO JU HWA JANG JA JON
Namu Vairocana teaching master flower womb love lord
Become one with Vairocana, lotus world master, Great Love, Holy One.

Next the chant expresses our unity with Vairocana, the cosmic Buddha who presides over the assembly in the Hwa Yen Sutra although he himself never speaks (numerous, wonderful bodhisattvas do all the talking). Vairocana, like Amitabul, is also a Buddha of light—he radiates light like a quasar, and every photon contains countless Buddhas: he is constantly birthing Buddhas from the flower womb of the universe and he is the universe itself. This primordial Buddha is the Buddha of the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Flower Adornment Sutra.

▶▶ 3
The Avatamsaka Sutra

YON BO GYE JI GUM MUN
Expound treasured poem of golden text
Expound the treasured verses of the golden text,

PO NANG HAM JI OK CHUK
Open carnelian case of jade scroll
Open the carnelian case of the jade scroll:

JIN JIN HON IP
dust dust mix enter
Every dust particle interpenetrates,

CHAL CHAL WOL LYUNG
Moment moment completely fuse
Every moment contains every other.

SHIP JO KU MAN O CHON SA SHIP PAL CHA
10 10,000,000 9 10,000 5 1,000 4 10 8 words
100,095,048 words

IL SUNG WON GYO
One vehicle complete teaching
Are the complete teaching of the One Vehicle.

NA-MU DAE BANG GWANG BUL HWA OM GYONG
Namu great wide direction Buddha flower adorn sutra
Become one with the Great Wide Buddha, the Avatamsaka Sutra.

Next, we open the sutra itself, a golden text on jade scrolls that we take out of a carnelian case, and the opening of the case or the unrolling of the scrolls is another metaphor for opening our minds. As soon as the sutra is opened out comes its fundamental teaching: JIN JIN HON IP/ CHAL CHAL WOL LYUNG, literally “Dust, dust, mix, enter,/ Moment, moment, completely fuse.” Every particle interpenetrates every other particle; every moment contains every other moment. The text of the sutra contains millions of words and constitutes the complete teaching of the great wide Buddha, the cosmic Buddha and is identical with that Buddha.

The First Poem
and the Mantra of Shattering Hell

JE-IL GYE
first poem
The first poem:

YAG IN YONG NYO JI
if one wants fully understand
If you wish to thoroughly understand

SAM SE I-CHE BUL
three worlds all Buddhas
All the Buddhas of the past, present, and future,

UNG GWAN BOP KYE SONG
should view dharma world nature
You should view the nature of the Universe

IL-CHE YU SHIM JO
all only mind make
As being created by mind alone.

PA JI OK JIN ON
shatter earth prison true words
The Mantra of Shattering Hell:

NA-MU A-TTA SHI-JI-NAM
SAM-MYAK SAM-MOT-TA GU-CHI-NAM
OM A-JA-NA BA-BA JI-RI JI-RI HUM

Then from all these millions of words in the sutra one poem appears, the first of several which will appear in the chant. In the sutra, this poem is spoken by the bodhisattva Forest of Awareness, one of the many enlightening beings who speak in the sutra (it can be found on p. 452 of the Thomas Cleary translation published by Shambhala). This poem presents another fundamental teaching of Hwa Yen Buddhism: all things are created by mind alone. Another way of saying this is that everything is made out of consciousness; every particle in the universe is conscious and consists of consciousness. As soon as we get that, hell is shattered, and so the mantra of shattering hell appears next in the chant. A mantra is literally “true words” and comes from the depths of experience, as does a vow. This mantra takes us back to our vow to shatter hell that began the chant, and concludes this section. In the next part of the chant we will turn to Amitabul, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

▶▶ *Continued next issue*





Back row: Zen Master Dae Bong, Kwan Do Sunim, Mu Shim Sunim JPDS; Front row: Myo Ji Sunim, Do Kwan Sunim JPDS, and friends

A RETURN TO NORTH KOREA

*Mu Shim Sunim JPDS
Seoul International Zen Center*

The big cruise ship, *Hyundai Kumgang*, pulls into the Northern harbor at dawn after having departed the South Korean harbor of Dong Hae the evening before. Most of the passengers are either finishing their breakfast or staring out the big glass windows on the upper decks. For most of the Koreans, and other passengers too, this is the first time to be visiting reclusive North Korea.

But, for Zen Master Seung Sahn, this is a return to the days of his youth, when during breaks from school he left the city and went to the Diamond Mountains for hiking and visiting temples. The Diamond Mountains, or Kumgang San as they are known in Korean, are considered to be among the most scenic mountains in all of Northeast Asia. Even Chinese people said there were no mountains in China as beautiful. Some say that they were named after the Diamond Sutra of Buddhism; but one look at the many sharp peaks and jagged lines of these mountains and you can easily see, without the help of any sutra, the diamond-like characteristic of these mountains. Many of the rock cliffs are bone-white—they glisten in the sun like so many diamonds on a necklace.

For many years the North Koreans kept the Diamond Mountains for the exclusive use of political higher-ups or special guests from overseas. In 1998 that situation changed when they were suddenly faced with an extreme shortage of food and little foreign exchange currency. The North Koreans struck a deal with a large South Korean conglomerate, the Hyundai Corporation, to develop the region for tourism. The chairman of Hyundai, Jong Ju Hyun, is an aging multi-millionaire who, like Zen Master Seung Sahn and a whole generation of South Koreans who were born in the North, longed to once again set foot on their home soil. He was able to convince the North Koreans to let Hyundai develop the Diamond Mountains with an exclusive contract for thirty years. In return, Hyundai promised to pay for all the costs of development, and to pay the cash-strapped North in hard currency for every tourist who visited the mountains.

Our tour group included Zen Master Seung Sahn, Zen Master Dae Bong, the Hwa Gye Sa temple abbot, and several of our sangha members from around the world including Mu Ryang Sunim and Myo Ji Sunim from America, and Kwan Do Sunim from South Africa. Joining us were about seventy monks and nuns from the Chogye order, and also about five hundred lay Buddhists from other temples. All together there were about six hundred people in our tour group.

Twelve thousand peaks

Each of a different height.

Look, Sir, as the sun rises,

The highest one blushes first.

Soeng Sung-Nin (1338–1423)

As a young student, Zen Master Seung Sahn would sometimes go to the Diamond Mountains and stay at a hermitage to study. He recalls that, “Many dedicated monks lived in these mountains and practiced hard. In every nook and cranny there was a hermitage or a temple. The mountains were alive with a vibrant energy.” Nowadays

the temples are hidden from view, or in most cases have been destroyed. All that remains is a lonely pagoda here and there standing in a field, or the Buddha’s name, Amitabul, carved into a rock near a waterfall. As we entered the Diamond Mountains our guides told us, “Be careful not to wear or show your beads to the North Korean officials. Don’t put your hands together in hapjang. Any activity that can be construed as religious may be subject to investigation and you will probably be fined.” And they were not joking! Last year a group of Chogye order monks and their followers had circumambulated the pagoda at Shin-Gye Sah temple and chanted the Heart Sutra. The North Koreans promptly fined them \$5,000 (US) for doing this without first receiving formal permission.

Entering the Diamond Mountains, you are immediately struck by the awesome grandeur of the ancient pine forest. Our guide told us that these mountains were famous for their tall pine trees and the rich soil that nourishes wild ginseng and pine mushrooms. Of course, everybody was eager to forage for some wild ginseng or exotic mushrooms, but we were warned that picking these was not permitted.



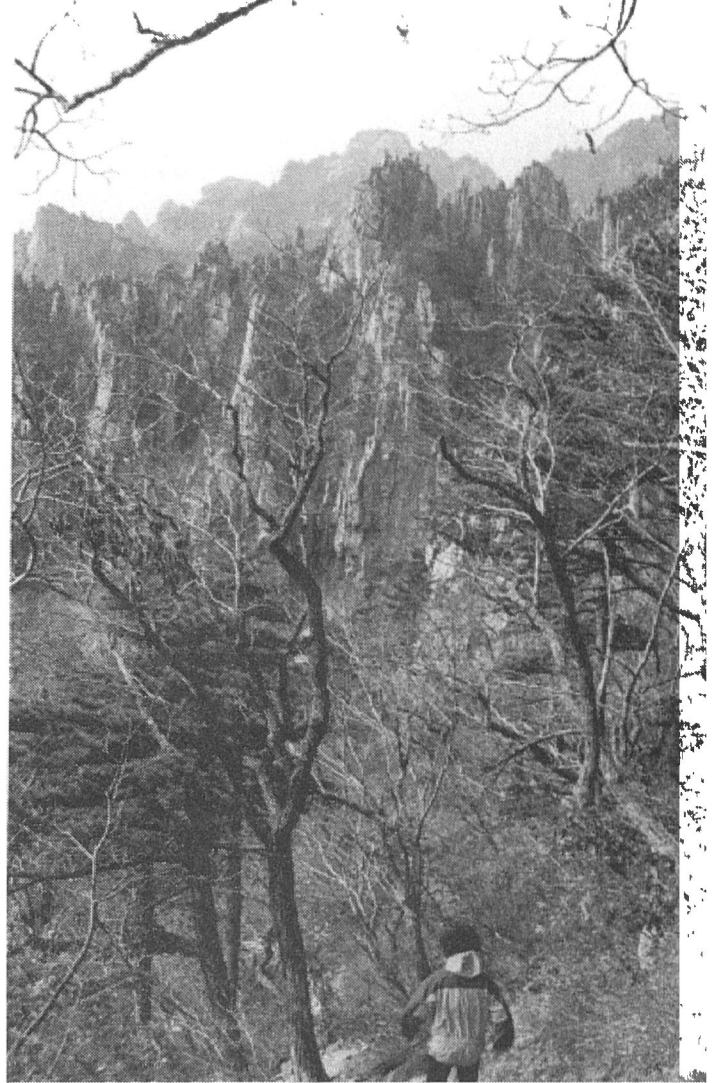
*Front row: Hyon Am Gosa, Pom Jo Sunim, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Hyon Soeng Sunim, Zen Master Dae Bong;
Back row: Do Kwan Sunim JDPS, Mu Shim Sunim JDPS, and Mu Ryang Sunim.*

The trails leading up the mountain are very well maintained and perfectly clean. There were no trashcans and we were told that any trash that we had brought in must be carried out with us. Even though more than a thousand tourists a day climb up and down these trails, we didn't see even one piece of litter. All along the hiking trails were North Korean officials who silently watched us. Occasionally we would talk to them: "How are you? Nice weather today!" and they would ask, "Where are you from?" They seemed happier to see a western face than just the usual South Koreans. One of them told us that they were expecting a visit by President Clinton any day. Each of them wore a small badge with a picture of their leader, Kim Jong Il. They all looked quite fit, but thin, compared to the people in our group.

The highest point of the hiking tour was 1,000 meters (3,300 feet)—the view is spectacular from this point. And, true to form, carved in huge bright red letters into the rock across from the lookout point was a political slogan: "Following Kim Il Sung, our Way is the best". We were told not even to point at it as that might be construed as a sign of disrespect. So, we snapped pictures of each other, enjoyed some snacks, and started back down. We encountered little wildlife there, which, combined with the lack of non-official North Koreans, gave the whole area a rather dead atmosphere. We were all relieved when we reached the Hyundai enclave below and could enjoy a hot spring bath together. The mineral water was very hot and worked wonders on our sore muscles. This hot spring is well known to Zen students familiar with the kong-an which asks the question: "You can clean your body in this hot spring, but how can you clean your mind?" Fortunately, we got a break because the old woman wasn't there any more!

After two days of hiking in the mountains we went to the Pyongyang circus and acrobatics display. The young people who performed for us were almost too perfect, but the skill required for the stunts was quite impressive. The audience not only showed their approval with applause, but some in the audience were moved to tears by the thought of these youthful acrobats devoting life to perform only for the glory of their country and their leader, Kim Jong Il. Here everything is a political event.

As we left North Korea, we had to pass through border control, customs, again with many North Korean soldiers and officials staring at us. Finally, we reached the Hyundai cruise ship and walked up the plank where the crew was waiting to greet us with big smiles and singing. Everybody was happy to have visited North Korea, but also very glad to be returning to South Korea and freedom!



The Diamond Mountains

*Sanggye Temple of Mount Chiri is great,
And the ten thousand falls in the Diamond
Mountains are extraordinary.
This body has not yet been to the famous mountains,
Yet I frequently write poems in farewell to monks.*

Paek Kwang Hun



GOOD ACTORS

A dharma talk by Aleksandra Porter JDPSN in Olomouc, Czech Republic

Here's a question for everybody: How can you get out of samsara, how do you get out of suffering? We're really lucky because we have a good practice situation. We can help and support each other, come here freely and nothing is stopping us from practicing except our "I, my, me" mind. But many times when you want to go for a retreat or do bows or sitting, there is a tiny little voice in the back of your mind: just a minute... I'll do it later... first I must wash the dishes... phone someone... or to do this or that. So in a way this situation is a good situation because a bad situation is a good situation, a good situation is a bad situation. The important thing here is that you want to practice. What is practice?

Sometimes we think, "Oh, we'll do thousands of bows, ten hours of sitting and then get something." It's not like that. If your direction is not clear, you can do millions of bows and sit all day and night but nothing will happen... maybe your legs will hurt a lot and after a while you'll just give up. "My legs are hurting, my body is aching, and I didn't get anything!" So if you have a clear direction then your practice will be non-stop, 24 hours a day. But for many people the question is, what do I want? Why do I practice? To get what?

Many times we want to get something from practice, but enlightenment means to lose everything—not to get anything. You don't get anything, you lose everything. You have to be prepared for that. You have to be ready to really lose everything, to lose all illusions about yourself. That's not easy. We don't like it. We want to keep at least a little illusion, to have at least something, some little thing to hold onto so we can feel secure.

I know lots of students who have ideal situations. They can practice as much as they want. Not so long ago we held a dharma teacher meeting in Warsaw. A dharma teacher is somebody who's been practicing for several years. This is a good test, because at the beginning you have inspiration and motivation, you want to get something, and after you practice for some years you can become a dharma teacher. So you already have some status; you get a long robe and have heard many dharma talks. You know the teachings very well—"Only Go Straight! Just Do It 100%!" This is a very dangerous time because you think, "Oh, no problem. Zen is very easy. I've already got something." We think that there isn't much more to get. Maybe if I become really desperate, I can become a Ji Do Poep Sa. But that's a lot of work, so most people think, "Maybe later. First I'll take care of my life, have children, build a house, buy a car, and then I'll think about it."

But let's get back to the meeting where I discovered that people tend to be lazy. They have faith in practice, motivation to become Buddha and get enlightenment. Great idea! Everybody wants that, but what you really need is discipline, and discipline is something many older students lose. Discipline means to get up every morning no matter what your situation is, no matter what your condition is—you just get up. This is because your situation, condition and question are coming and going, constantly changing. Sometimes your life is smooth—no problems. You fall into this lazy state of mind, OK, I'll do it tomorrow, I'll get up and do it... no problem... now I'll take a break. But life is very short—day, night—night, day—finish. Maybe you'll wake up because some suffering comes knocking on your door and then you think, I have to do my bows!

Last Sunday everybody came and we had a big Buddha's Enlightenment Day Ceremony. It's wonderful having these ceremonies because I get to see all the dharma teachers and older students. Now I know why we have these ceremonies! One student came to me, who was always very shy and never said anything, but this time he said, "I came here for this retreat but this is my last one. Zen is not for me. I've practiced for six years and nothing's happened."

I asked him, "When was the last time you came for a retreat?"

He thought for a while and said, "Four or five years ago."

"And what is your daily practice?"

"Well, sometimes I get up in the morning and do 108 bows and sit for fifteen minutes, but I can't do that everyday, just sometimes."

"So what do you expect? You only have what you make, which isn't very much as you're not doing very much."

Just try three simple things in your life: precepts, meditation and kong-ans. If you are doing these three practices, it's like being on three tracks simultaneously, then you grow

very fast because they're about discipline, which you need if you want to learn anything. Meditation can give you what we call samadhi, which is a clear mind. Meditation is like a wind blowing across the sky: the more you do, the stronger the wind blows, quickly clearing the sky of clouds. No meditation—no wind and it's just grey, like today. Then there's kong-an practice which is about wisdom. Just sitting isn't Zen. It's just about good feeling. After three days you might not feel it, but if you sit a retreat for a week or a few months there's a point at which your mind settles down and is like a calm sea, peaceful and quiet, the most wonderful experience of your life. The sutras call this stillness bliss. But you can't stop there. If you're a Zen student, you have to go for interviews and sometimes make a fool of yourself! This is the path of wisdom, which we don't always want because no one likes to feel stupid or have the feeling they didn't pass the exam. For many it brings back memories of school—bad marks, this unpleasant feeling... another bad mark again. I remember making a fool of myself so many times and feeling terrible!

I remember an interview with Zen Master Seung Sahn in which I did this crazy action to answer, and I'll never forget how he looked at me: what??? He couldn't hide anything, and it was like, what is she doing? Zen Master Seung Sahn is a great Zen Master, so the stress I was experiencing was intense. His teaching taught me not to take myself so seriously, "OK. I'm stupid, so what. He wasn't always so wise either."

Kong-an practice has many functions, one being that when you practice for some time you get the feeling you understand something, especially if you rarely have interviews and just practice at home. Then you go for an interview and get a big "don't know." Then we see that more practice is necessary. One time I had a student who knew the answer to her kong-an for over six months but she just couldn't get up and do it. At the last seven-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin she did it and we were both so happy. It was a wonderful experience.

Zen Master Seung Sahn teaches us that we must become good actors. This whole world is like an interview room and if we learn something in this intimate teacher-student relationship then we can use it in our everyday life. I remember once when I couldn't pass any kong-an for a long time and started thinking, who needs those old stories about ancient Zen Masters? They have nothing to do with my life. I didn't tell Zen Master Seung Sahn this, but he told me, "If you have problems with kong-ans, then you have problems in your everyday life."

Each kong-an is like a little gate which you open one by one. There is the emotional gate, the shy gate, the perceiving gate and many others. The situations in our lives are not the same as in kong-ans, you're not hanging onto a tree in your everyday life [*laughter*], well, maybe, sometimes. The point is that if you open this gate then it works for you in your everyday life.

Question: If kong-ans are like opening gates, is there anything there when they're opened. Does everything suddenly open?

PPSN: It can seem like this opening process is endless. I only have twenty-one years experience, and the more I practice the more gates I see to be opened.

Q: And is it always at the same tempo?

PPSN: Tempo is interesting because for a while you take big steps forward. I remember one particular Yong Maeng Jong Jin where I made real progress but then I felt as if I was walking round in circles. So the rate of progress is strange, but this is just the feeling you have. You're never going backwards, you're developing and growing if you keep practicing. If you have a strong expectation habit, then you'll want something to happen, some lights, some miracles, and then you think, yeah, I'm close to enlightenment!

There is a story about expecting which helped me a lot. In our Zen tradition there's a great duo of master-student, Nam Cheon and Jo-Ju, before he became a great master. Jo-Ju was sixty at the time, having already practiced for forty years. He had practiced very honestly with the question he constantly asked Nam Cheon, "Master, what is the True Way?" It's like asking, what's life about? It was a very serious question for him in his universe.

During this winter's Kyol Che at Warsaw there was a student I've known for a long time, and she asked me the same question: "We've known each other for so long, so what's the secret? You can tell me."

I started laughing and told her that the irony is that she already has this secret but only she can discover it. We often think that there's some hidden meaning when the teachers say, "The sky is blue." Nam Cheon replied to the same question saying, "It's everyday mind, nothing special." Changing the baby's nappies is the True Way, drinking beer with your friend is the True Way. Everyday life is the True Way.

But Jo-Ju couldn't believe this, so he asked, "Shall I keep it or not?"

Nam Cheon said, "If you try to keep it, this is already a big mistake."

"But if I don't keep it," Jo-Ju was still trying, "how can I understand?" He still had a strong habit of wanting to understand what it's all about. We all make this mistake so often, trying to understand through thinking.

So the last HIT Nam Cheon gave was, "If you want to understand... understanding is illusion, not understanding is blankness. If you truly want to understand the True Way, it is before thinking, clear, bright and infinite. So why do you make right and wrong?" Upon hearing this, Jo-Ju's mind completely opened.

In this story, there is a great teaching. When I first heard it, I thought, Jo-Ju's been practicing for forty years—this doesn't sound good. We all have this idea at the beginning that we'll practice strongly and finish, and then get back to our everyday pleasures or whatever. Jo-Ju's forty years of practice gives me a good perspective on what I'm doing. Nam Cheon said that everyday life is the True Way, and this is also good teaching because most of us want something special, some miracle. There is a miracle, the practice—we transform! That's the real miracle for me, seeing how people change. It doesn't usually happen suddenly, "Wow! I can fly in this dharma room," that's not what it's about.

So let's get back to the true miracle and continue these terrible kong-an interviews!

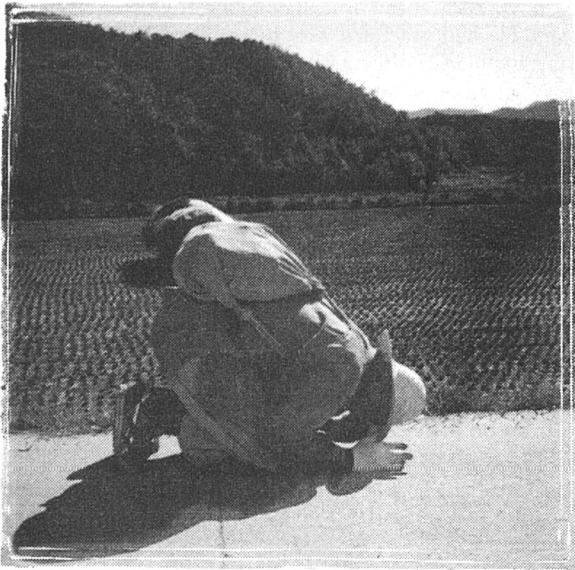
AROUND DRAGON MOUNTAIN

Myong Haeng Sunim, Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sa

In October 2000, Dae Soeng Sunim and I completed a three steps, one bow pilgrimage around Kye Ryong Sahn mountain here in Korea. We were inspired by the stories of Chinese monks in the past who had completed such journeys, especially Empty Cloud Zen Master, who bowed over three thousand miles throughout China. And after reading about the pilgrimage completed by two American

opening ceremony with Zen Master Dae Bong and the rest of our Mu Sang Sa family, we started bowing down the road at about 8:30 on the morning of October 13.

We decided to carry everything we would need on our backs, hoping to find lodging and food along the way. After two hours of bowing it was time for lunch, but we had made it only as far as the Bo Kwang Sik Dang, a



monks up the coast of California in the early 1970s, we decided to attempt a similar journey ourselves.

Our initial plan was to bow from the east coast of Korea to the west coast, following the demilitarized zone, for the reunification of the two Koreas. But when we proposed this idea to Zen Master Seung Sahn, he immediately said "Too long!" and suggested we try something shorter in length, about ten days or so. We contemplated many different courses, but eventually chose this route around Kye Ryong Sahn. This would allow us to stay in our own area, circling a mountain long associated with our lineage, and we would be able to begin and end the journey from our new Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center/Mu Sang Sa.

We had planned to begin on the full moon of the ninth lunar month, but Dae Soeng Sunim was still in America at that time, so we delayed the start by a day. Incredibly, after arriving back in Korea the evening before, Dae Soeng Sunim was able to start bowing the next morning! After a small

restaurant at the base of the road leading up to Mu Sang Sa, about one and a half kilometers. We were completely exhausted, and after lunch we lay on the floor of the restaurant, contemplating our journey and massaging our already raw and bloody knees.

The knee pads I had been using were especially designed by an elderly Hwa Gye Sa bosalnim for use on this journey, but I had to give them up in favor of the sleek models Dae Soeng Sunim brought back from America. Also, we found that the straps from the knee pads were chopping the backs of our legs, so we decided to wear them on the outside of our pants. Most importantly, I sent back about half of my stuff to Mu Sang Sa, which lightened the load but left only one or two changes of clothing for the trip.

We continued bowing again after lunch but by the evening we had made only about four kilometers. It was slow going, but there was little traffic and the weather and scenery were absolutely stunning. At the end of the day, Myong Do Sunim and Chong Won Sunim were there to

IN FOURTEEN DAYS

meet us with ice cream and bread, which we promptly ate too much of, making us feel sick and bloated. So, we decided to call it a day, and spent the night at a local inn, about ten minutes drive from where we had started in the morning.

The next day was even tougher, as our knees got



pockets, apologizing that they couldn't offer us more. Often it would take us ten or twenty minutes to bow by a particular field, so the farmers would stand by the side of the road, as if watching a road race—for turtles.

On the evening of day four we spent the night at "The Sacred Mother's Village" a Catholic convent which cares



bloodier, and we started bowing first along a rocky dirt road before we were forced onto a three-kilometer stretch of eight-lane highway. Cars and trucks were flying by at 80 km/hr, paying us little heed as we prostrated our bodies by the side of the road, noses in the dirt when we were lucky, broken glass and animal carcasses when we weren't. The worst were the cement truck drivers, who sometimes would pass within inches of our heads as they careened carelessly over the lane dividers, disobeying all of the completely optional Korean traffic laws. But by the end of the second day we were finished with major highways, at least for the moment, and spent the night at the apartment of a Korean Sunim with whom we are friendly.

The next few days we continued along back country roads towards Shin Won Sa. It was rice harvest time, so we passed many farmers and their wives working hard in the fields. They would invariably take interest in what we were doing, sometimes stopping their work to come over and talk to us. A couple of old ladies were moved to tears by our efforts, pulling 1000 won (about 80 cents) from their

for about 80–90 severely disabled people. The housemaster nun told us that if we wanted to spend the night there we should help take care of some of the residents; so we spent about two hours feeding some young men who couldn't feed themselves. In the morning we attended Mass, wearing our big kasas, and after performing three prostrations to Jesus, we tried to join along with the morning chanting (much to the surprise of the nuns and the French priest, who was saying the mass in Korean.) After a quick breakfast we continued down the road.

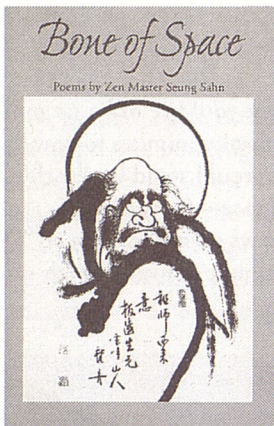
That night we experienced the opposite extreme, stopping at what we thought was a Buddhist hermitage, but which turned out to be a training center for shamans and fortune tellers. We were not so welcome, but they gave us a metal container box with sporadic heating to spend the night in. We hastily left before dawn the next morning.

As we progressed further, we started to receive more offerings of food. We had made a rule at the beginning of the trip that we wouldn't refuse any offerings, which turned

continued on page 18

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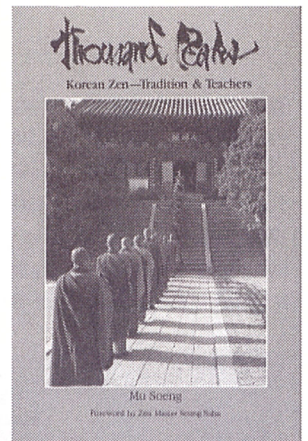


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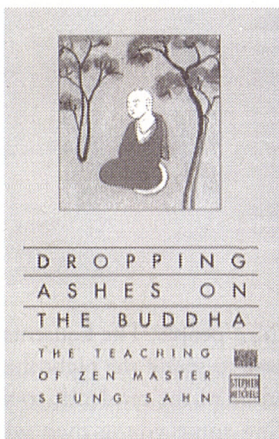
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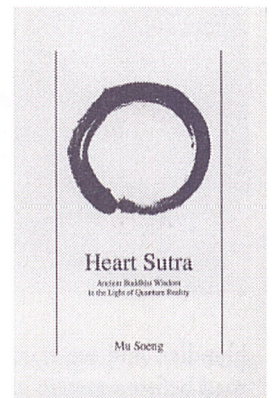


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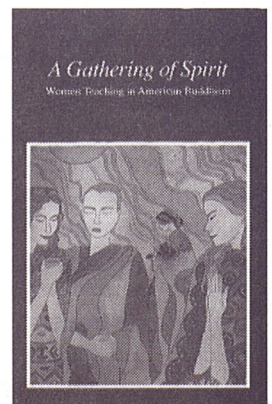
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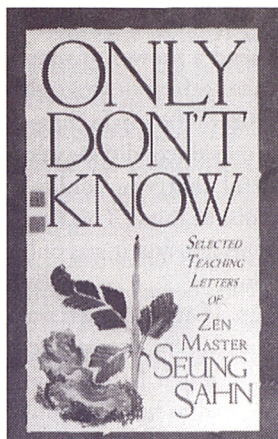
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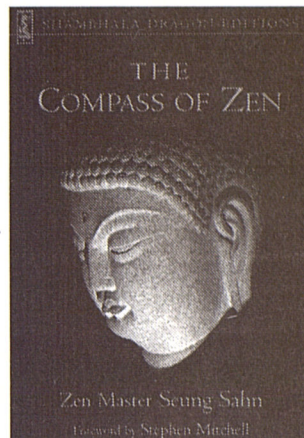
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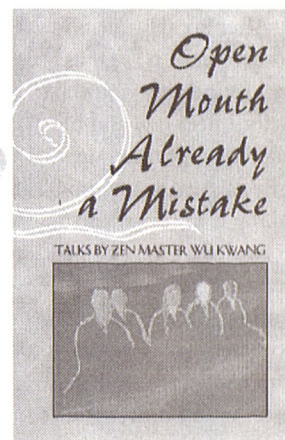
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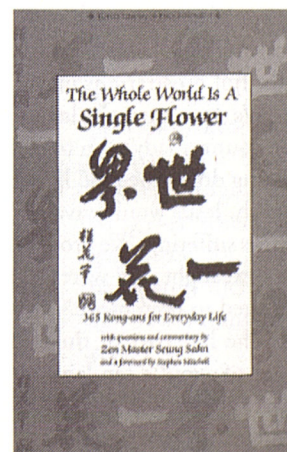


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continued from page 15

out to be challenging after a while. People would see us coming down the road, go in their houses and prepare a plate of fruit and drinks (there was plenty of time) which they would hand to us as we bowed by. Other people went out of their way to buy bread, cans of fruit juice, soda, milk, etc., and would track us down and offer the goodies. It was always welcome, of course, but sometimes our stomachs were already full, so we would put everything in our bags for later. And then it would happen again. Before long, our bags weighed almost twenty kilograms, so packed full of stuff that we would fall over sideways while trying to bow. We sometimes jokingly called these people “Christian saboteurs,” who were out to stop our efforts to make it around the mountain. To cope with this problem we started giving away most of what we received, usually to little kids or farmers we saw along the way.

One man who we met on the second day of the trip came and found us every day we were bowing, sometimes driving as much as an hour out of his way in his pottery truck to bring us acorn jelly, melon juice, tofu, eggs and other delicacies.

After six days of bowing we had gone 28 kilometers, and had made it as far as Shin Won Sa, which is almost half way around the mountain. We were completely dirty and smelly, knees raw and bloody, and totally exhausted, so we took a day off to recuperate in the hot bath. After bowing to Byok Am Kun Sunim, we continued down the road, making it as far as Kap Sa that night.

And that was the easiest part of the trip. The road became more winding and narrow, sometimes with no shoulder at all, and climbed sharply uphill for many kilometers. The trucks seemed to go by even faster and more recklessly, as if in an effort to see who could come closest without decapitating one of us. We were becoming quite a tourist attraction, with almost everybody slowing down to gawk or wave hello. We were worried we might even cause an accident. Any Buddhist follower who passed us would hapjang, and one admiral and his wife from the local military base actually got out of their cars and did three full prostrations in the dirt in front of us.

We encountered almost no hostility at all, except for one country lady who told us we looked like crazy people bowing down the road like this, and that if we came to her church, Jesus would save us without having to go through all this suffering. We promised to go to her church meeting the next night, but were unable to attend because we were too tired to even move.

The last part of the trip was by far the toughest. In order to avoid a ten-lane expressway, we chose a winding mountain road that took us six kilometers out of the way and about a day to navigate. As we were making our final

approach to Dong Hak Sa, we had our first rain storm of the trip. It started to pour, but we pushed through it and made our goal for the day, bowing for about an hour in the driving rain. People who passed us really thought we were crazy now, completely soaked to the skin, covered in mud, our faces duly planted in whatever pool of water we came to next. Buses that passed would send a shower of water raining down on us, soaking us once again. But strangely enough this was the most peaceful part of the trip for me—Dae Soeng Sunim says not—for the outside conditions were so totally crazy and out of control that you couldn't possibly hold your opinion or like/dislike mind. This kind of checking mind completely disappeared, and it was only rain and wet and three steps, one bow.

We had only two more days to go. That morning it was still raining, but we set off anyway, uphill for almost three hours. Bowing downhill is actually much harder than bowing uphill, so then of course we had to bow downhill for two to three hours. This particular day we had no idea how we would eat lunch. But just at lunch time our loyal friend and supporter appeared with a camping stove and some tofu, so we had a tofu lunch.

That night we slept at a temple in Om Sa Ri, where the resident monk and lay followers had prepared a big dinner in our honor. Luckily we managed to shower and shave before going there, thus preserving U.S./Korean relations. The next morning we began our final approach to Mu Sang Sa. As we bowed through downtown Om Sa we were stopped almost every 10 meters by people offering bread, coffee, etc. By lunch we made it back to the Bo Kwang Sik Dang, and were joined by most of the Mu Sang Sa family for a welcoming meal. After lunch we made the final stretch back to the temple, bowing all the way up the stairs and into our own Buddha hall. What a relief!

If you were to ask me the deep meaning of our trip, I would say “On the west side of Kye Ryong Sahn there are many dead snakes, and on the east side there are many dead frogs.” This practice was much more difficult than either of us expected, but also there were many benefits. Many people who saw us said they received inspiration from the determination it takes to do this kind of practice. One bosalnim told us she was tired of seeing monks who just sat around dressed in starched clothes drinking tea, and not practicing at all. Also, with Mu Sang Sa being a new temple in the area, we did this pilgrimage as a way to help support our family and do what little we can to make this dream of Kye Ryong Sahn International Zen Center a reality.

After thirteen nights, fourteen days on the road, and almost seventy kilometers later, our bodies were broken, but strong. Our minds were clear, though, for after so many days of putting continuous effort towards this kind of practice, a lot of complicated thinking disappeared. So, in the end, it was only three steps, one bow, for you.

VIETNAM PILGRIMAGE

Raymond Lemoine, Providence Zen Center

In early 1999, I decided to take a two-week trip to Vietnam. I had served in Vietnam with the 4th Infantry Division in 1966-67 and had not returned since I left in September 1967. Things have been changing rapidly there since the government opened up the country to foreign investment, so I wanted to see it again before it changed too much.

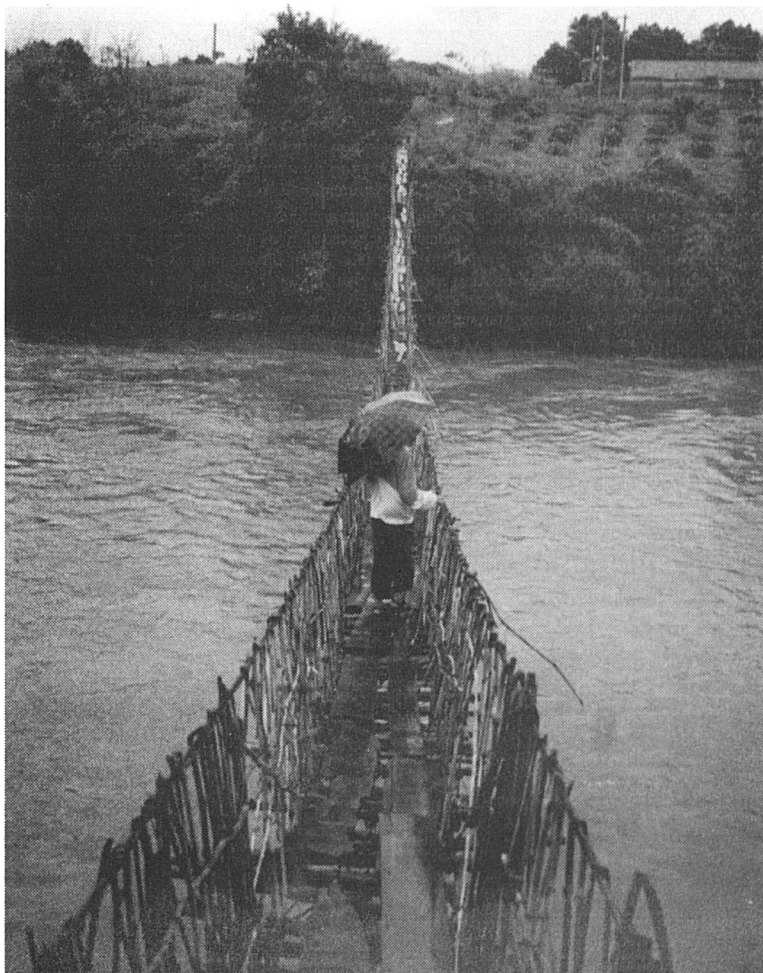
I arrived at Tan Son Nhut airport in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) on the 15th of October. On the flight over I was quite anxious—was this the right thing to do, would the people be friendly to me, would I be safe there? As we came in for the landing I was straining to see something after all these years, but all there was to see were big white fluffy clouds. Then suddenly the plane banked to the right and through the clouds what I saw was exactly what I saw when I left 34 years ago: rice paddies, water buffaloes, small clusters of thatched-roof huts connected by ancient trails. And most shocking of all, no military presence, just the remains of our protective perimeter around the airport. After clearing customs I was met by my guide Le Cong, Hoan. He took me to the Grand Hotel and told me that I could freshen up and rest and he would meet me in the lobby in two hours. When Hoan returned we took a tour around Saigon. This was all new to me, even though I spent over a year in Vietnam, I had never been in Saigon.

Near Saigon we visited the Cu Ci tunnels in an area formerly known as the Iron Triangle during the war. It is now a tourist attraction and I was able to go down

into the tunnels, although it was a tight squeeze—they were definitely not designed for large Americans. We also visited a veteran's cemetery located nearby in the Hobo Woods. At the entrance to the cemetery was a recently erected Buddhist temple honoring the North Vietnamese dead. It was a massive structure featuring a huge white bust of Ho Chi Minh and black granite walls with all the names of the dead. There were thousands of graves of those killed in this area. Seeing all these graves shocked me; it really brought home the reality of how many Vietnamese we had killed. At one point in our tour we attended a dinner with former North Vietnamese soldiers. Again I was quite apprehensive—these were the guys we were trying to kill and now we were going to dinner. But, everything changes! We had a wonderful time together with actually little talk about the war. They don't seem to be holding on to much.

A couple days later I flew to Pleiku City in the Central Highlands near Camp Enari, former home of the 4th Infantry Division at Dragon Mountain. The next day it was on to nearby Kontum City where I was introduced to my guide for this area, Nguyen Trieu, Thanh. North of Kontum we visited the former Dak To airfield. It was still in good condition—unbelievable after all these years. We could still see the revetments where they used to park the helicopters at night. Spent bullets and cartridges were lying everywhere. The guide said we should be careful; there were still booby traps in the area.

I will never forget the emotions that welled up in me when



Suspended bridge to Montagnard village, near Dak To



North Vietnamese veterans memorial at Dak To

I once again stood on the Dak To airstrip. Looking to the west were the Annamite Mountains on the border with Cambodia. This is where I had spent most of my tour of duty. These mountains had been a major infiltration route for the North Vietnamese Army, and had been highly contested throughout the war. I could only think of all the American and Vietnamese soldiers who had died here. How many remains of MIAs are still out there. What a waste!

Later we walked down to where the Army camp had been and found the locals tending tea and coffee bushes. Right in the middle of this “hot spot” was now a peaceful farm scene. How things change!

After leaving, I asked to go to a Montagnard village. This area is predominately inhabited by indigenous tribes. A short distance down the road, after passing an army post, we pulled over and walked a short way through the woods to a flimsy suspension bridge. I am twice the size of most people who use this bridge, and I wondered if it would hold me up. I set off across the bridge discovering that the planks I was walking on were not fastened to anything and the river below was wide, fast and deep. I made it to the other side and found few people in the village, just children and some women. Everyone else was out working

the coffee plantations. There was still evidence of B-52 bomb craters throughout the village. Thanh explained that during the war the village was accidentally bombed and the survivors merely returned and rebuilt their homes around the craters. I noticed that some of the buildings had metal siding, and closer inspection revealed that they had taken the metal cans from 155mm howitzer rounds and flattened them for siding. In front of another hut I noticed that they were growing onions in 50 caliber ammunition boxes.

After leaving the village I asked Thanh if there were any Buddhist temples we could visit. He asked me if I was a Buddhist and when I told him I was, he was surprised. Thanh was the first Buddhist I had met so far; everyone else told me they were Protestant. Thanh said that he had never heard of Buddhist people in the west. He agreed to take me to his temple when we got back to Kontum, and would ask if I could meet his master.

Upon arriving at the temple I waited outside while Thanh went in to inquire about my visit.. He returned to say that his master would be very happy to meet me. I went in and was greeted by the abbot, Master Thich Dong Tri. We bowed to each other and I went to bow to the Buddha. Master Tri also told me that he had never heard of



Master Thich Dong Tri and Ray Lemoine

Buddhists in America. He asked who my teachers were, and whether we were Mahayana or Theravada. He is a Mahayana Buddhist. We talked for about an hour and a half about the war and Buddhism. I could tell by his questions that he was checking to see if we are real Buddhists.

Later the abbot invited me to stay for dinner. Word had gotten around that I was there and when the young monks found out that I had been there during the war they all came to listen. Master Tri was the same age as me. When I was there in 1966–67 he was a novice monk at a school further south. Before the war ended he was sent to Kontum. I asked if he had taken sides during the war. He said that control of the city was always changing hands, so he took care of whoever needed help. He showed me a large room where he and the monks had taken care of 75 wounded North Vietnamese soldiers. He also told me that they had another smaller temple in the mountains. The North Vietnamese told him to camouflage it because if he didn't, it would be bombed and destroyed. The day after they finished camouflaging the temple it was bombed to smithereens. He now believes that the camouflaging made the site obvious and it was taken for an enemy target.

Following the dinner I told Master Tri about all the problems I still have because of what happened to me in the

war. He smiled and said, “The past is gone and cannot be changed. The future is just an illusion, you can only live in this moment.”

“But what about the karma I made by all the bad things I did here during the war?”

“Don't be worried about your past karma. Only concern yourself with the karma that you make in this moment,” was his reply. Here I was in the boonies of Vietnam hearing the same teaching that Zen Master Seung Sahn gives in the United States—I felt right at home.

He would like to rebuild the bombed-out temple, but does not have the financial support to do so. He told me that if I ever found anyone who would be willing to help finance the project it would be greatly appreciated. The people living in the Central Highlands are very poor. In fact it appeared to me that nothing between Pleiku and Dak To had changed at all since the war.

The time to leave came quickly. Unlike 1967, I found that I was in no hurry to go. The country is as beautiful as ever and is very peaceful. The people like Americans. Sixty-five percent of the population was born after the war, and to them it is ancient history. In many ways it was a healing experience, and I am looking forward to returning to Vietnam.

North Vietnamese veterans cemetery near Saigon



ALEXANDER AND THE SIXTH PATRIARCH

Tony Somlai, Original Root Zen Center

Alexander is the head breakfast waiter at the Astoria Hotel in Saint Petersburg, Russia. From the outside, it isn't possible to tell if he likes his job or not, if he feels good about himself, or if he is hoping to change the direction of his life. I've known Alexander for two years and have noticed that in a very meticulous way his "waiter" mind never moves. He elegantly orchestrates my befuddled movements through the intricate courses of breakfast at an opulent Russian hotel. There is a small ornate bowl for preserves, a small plate for bread, a larger plate for cheese and fruit, a special juice glass, and a cup and saucer for coffee. All these accoutrements are quite different from the usual breakfast (a styrofoam cup and wax paper wrapped around a glazed donut) I eat in the car on the way to work. And, oh yes, Alexander has trained me to recognize the difference between the small spoon for stirring coffee and the slightly larger cereal spoon. I always admire his ability to help others regardless of circumstances.

What attracts me to Alexander is his ability to be absorbed in the oneness of being a waiter as he makes movements effortlessly in one fluid, unified activity. Alexander does his waiting without hesitation or hindrance. He simply does his job. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng once said to his students, "Each of you work on your own, going along as best you can according to circumstances." Simple teaching, from a simple man, pointing straight to why our lives have become so complicated. For many of us, the problem is that we don't like our circumstances, we want something else. Our effort wanes as we refuse to go along as best we can. We come up with excuses and reasons for why our lives are not what we want. That means a lot of suffering will result from our lack of working on our own.

Underlying a meditation practice is a great celebration of joy in paying attention to what is in front of us. The constant practice of returning to the breath, paying attention, is our going-along-the-best-we-can nature functioning clearly. Alexander simply does what a waiter does. Hui Neng asked his students to go along the best they could. What do you do?



POETRY

PAUL BLOOM

dust and roots,
the sounds of logging;
purple lizard
 and iridescent flash
 of steller's jay:
second tier valley
 below treeline.

my home is a glacial meadow.
there is no ceiling.
the lights go on and off
with the clouds.
 there is no agenda.
 a blinding hot sun
 bounces off canyon walls
 and the world a bach cantata
 with the mysterious red lake
 in its center.
when the wind builds up
clouds cover the sun
 and the meadow turns gray
the vissta emits terror,
becomes kettle drums
that signal some unknown event—
the meadow itself unchanged;
 the symphony changed
 not so much by wind and clouds
as the unseen filters of mind.

ALAN DAVIES

A morning begins to elicit
some blue from the sky
people walk from the dreams
that fled
my bed.

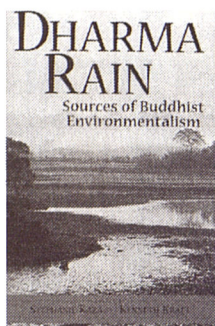
All night the sky hungers for a few herons
and the trees crack and stumble in the wind.
Some brute with four feet has knocked the
bird-feeders down.

Cumbersome night's quilt blanket
doesn't let day end
as I dream of you —
again and again.

Two drops of water
one clear one
just hued with pink.
Ocean —
bear me out.

You seem suddenly
to be thunderingly wondering
where you are —
everything is so cadenced
and pure, on a day like this.

BOOK REVIEW



Review: Barry Briggs
Dharma Sound Zen Center

*Dharma Rain:
Sources of Buddhist
Environmentalism*
Edited by Stephanie Kaza
and Kenneth Kraft
Shambhala, 2000

The Buddha, when she appears in the world, extends a nourishing rain to each of us, regardless of our condition and situation. As this rain falls, all the grasses, shrubs, and trees become fresh and glossy. But when we humans encounter this dharma rain, most of us simply unfurl umbrellas and continue along in our daily habits.

Why would we avoid this life-giving nourishment?

Perhaps we think umbrellas will shelter us from the world's many discomforts. Perhaps we think umbrellas add a certain stylish flair to our lives. Or maybe we fail to notice how our arms have frozen into position, umbrellas aloft.

It's hard work supporting an umbrella and, worse, these umbrellas—our mind-habits and self-concerns—hinder our ability to participate fully in the world.

Dharma Rain, Sources for Buddhist Environmentalism, addresses the urgent need to set aside our umbrellas and embrace the world with open hearts and clear eyes. As the 75 teachings gathered in this book make clear, Buddhism can play a unique and critical role in the environmental suffering that affects every being on the planet. Because Buddhist teaching clarifies the nature of suffering, it con-

tains the seeds through which humans can help end all suffering.

However, Buddhist teachings in themselves make little difference.

No matter how thoroughly we understand the "three poisons" of anger, ignorance, and desire, or how keenly we comprehend the principles of cause and effect, without practice we have little hope of transforming our lives. Through sincere practice our inherent compassion, wisdom, and truthfulness can emerge to guide our response to suffering. A rich anthology such as *Dharma Rain* can encourage the reader to practice deeply.

Just as the Lotus Sutra recognizes the diverse needs of plants, so *Dharma Rain* brings together Buddhist teaching from many sources to address diverse human interests and capabilities. The editors, Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, have organized these resources in ways that make it easy for each reader to identify subject areas that connect to their personal situation.

The first section of *Dharma Rain* reflects the environmental wisdom of ancient Indian, Chinese, and Japanese teachers, as expressed in sutras, poetry, and recorded talks. Following this section, modern teachers from Thich Nhat Hanh to Gary Snyder interpret and assess traditional Buddhist teachings on the environment. Two subsequent sections focus on Buddhist activism (sometimes called "engaged Buddhism"). The three remaining sections illuminate ways in which Buddhist practice can manifest in environmental awareness and responsibility.

Each of us will find nourishment in this book, according to our unique condition and situation. Although every section contains something of interest, I was most engaged by the first section, "Teachings from Buddhist Traditions," with its excerpts from the Lotus Sutra, the Hua-Yen Sutra, and poetry from Chinese and Japanese masters. For example, in a poem entitled, "The Coincidence of Opposites," the Chinese Zen master Shih-t'ou (700-790 C.E.)

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wrote directly about the importance of the engaged life:

If you overlook the Way right before your eyes,
How will you know the path beneath your feet?

We hear an echo of Shih-t'ou' toward the end of *Dharma Rain*, in a *gatha* by the modern Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh:

The mind can go in a thousand directions.
But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.
With each step, a gentle wind.
With each step, a flower.

In poems written 1,300 years apart, these great teachers remind us that the true way is right in front of us in every moment. As we stand from our cushion for walking meditation, Shih-t'ou guides us. As we leave the dharma room for breakfast, Thich Nhat Hanh points to our mind-path. Their words illuminate the question that arises naturally from meditation practice: *What is this?* This simple question connects us intimately with the world around us—our environment.

The writings collected in *Dharma Rain* originated because Buddhist practice inevitably reveals the great vow that resides within each of us: *I vow to help all suffering beings.*

Zen Master Seung Sahn calls this vow our "direction." As meditation practice clarifies the truth of our lives—our condition, situation, and relationship to this world—we can draw on our inherent wisdom and compassion to help end suffering. When we perceive the truth, cause and effect become clear and we see how action affects the environment. This teaching is not abstract, but is deeply rooted in our experience of every moment. Several years ago in *Primary Point*, Zen Master Seung Sahn wrote:

Starting from here, we need to fix this world, make this world a better place.

"Starting from here," means moment after moment, how can we help? This focus on beneficial action in every moment is the great gift of Buddhist practice. The gift of *Dharma Rain* lies in its ability to inspire both practice and action.

Through practice, we can let go of desires, ideas, beliefs, fears, and hopes; then we can use the stuff of everyday life to reach out and offer a helping hand. Through practice, we can realize that getting drenched with dharma rain isn't so bad. Long ago, the Japanese Zen master Daito (1282–1337) wrote about this.

No umbrella, getting soaked,
I'll just use the rain as my raincoat.

But we don't need to take Daito's word for it. Let's all get wet together.

An excerpt from the Lotus Sutra

You should understand that it is like a great cloud
that rises up in the world
and covers it all over.

This beneficent cloud is laden with moisture;
the lightning gleams and flashes,
and the sound of thunder reverberates afar,
causing the multitude to rejoice.

The rain falls everywhere,
coming down on all four sides.

Its flow and saturation are measureless,
reaching to every area of the earth,
to the ravines and valleys of the mountains and streams,
to the remote and secluded places where grow
plants, bushes, medicinal herbs,
trees large and small,
a hundred grains, rice seedlings,
sugar cane, grape vines.

The rain moistens them all,
none fails to receive its full share.

The parched ground is everywhere watered,
herbs and trees alike grow lush.

What falls from the cloud is water of a single flavor,
but the plants and trees, thickets and groves,
each accept the moisture that is appropriate to its portion.

All the various trees,
whether superior, middling, or inferior,
take what is fitting for large or small,
and each is enabled to sprout and grow.

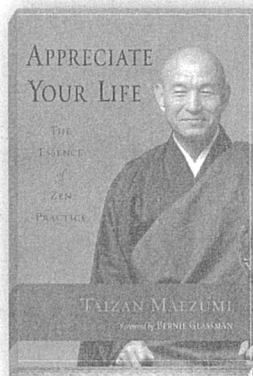
Root, stem, limb, leaf,
the glow and hue of flower and fruit—
one rain extends to them
and all are able to become fresh and glossy.

The Buddha is like this
when he appears in the world

(*Dharma Rain*, pp. 44-45)

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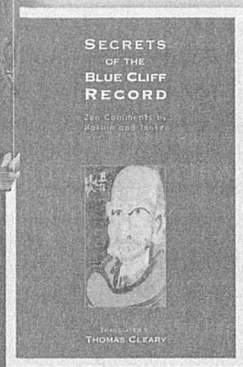
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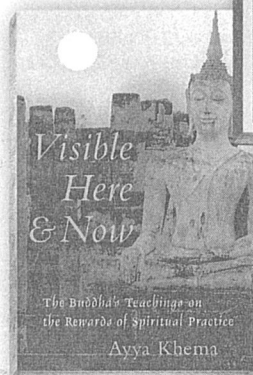
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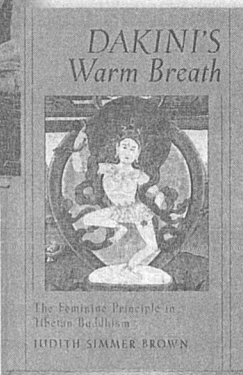
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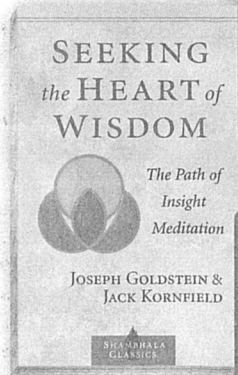
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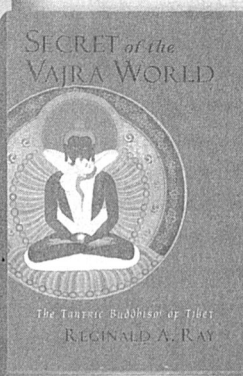
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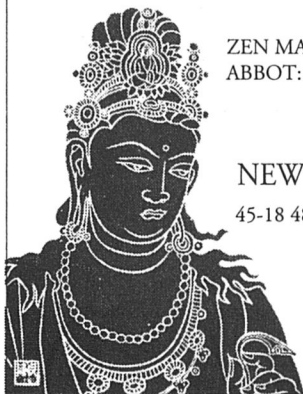
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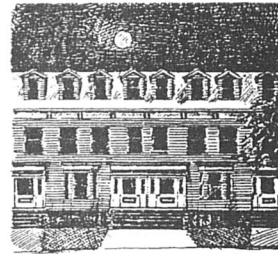


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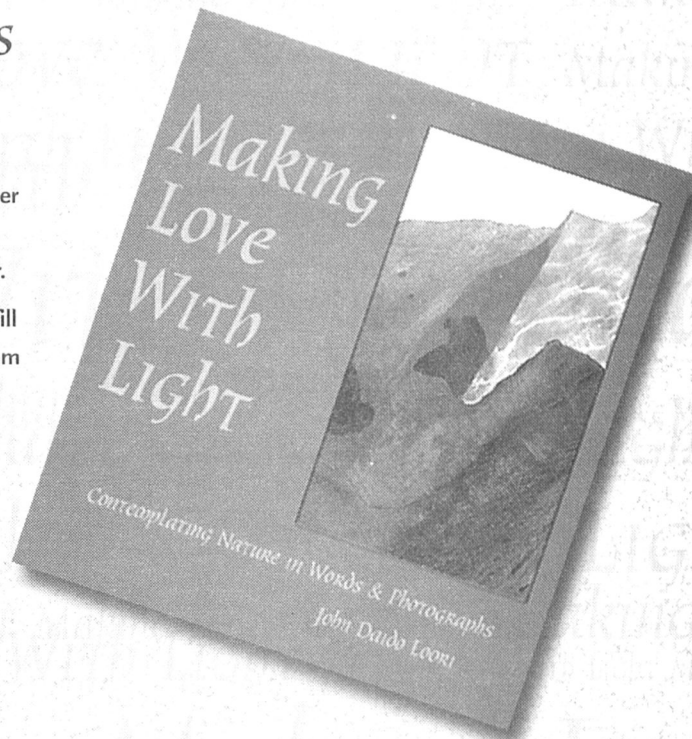
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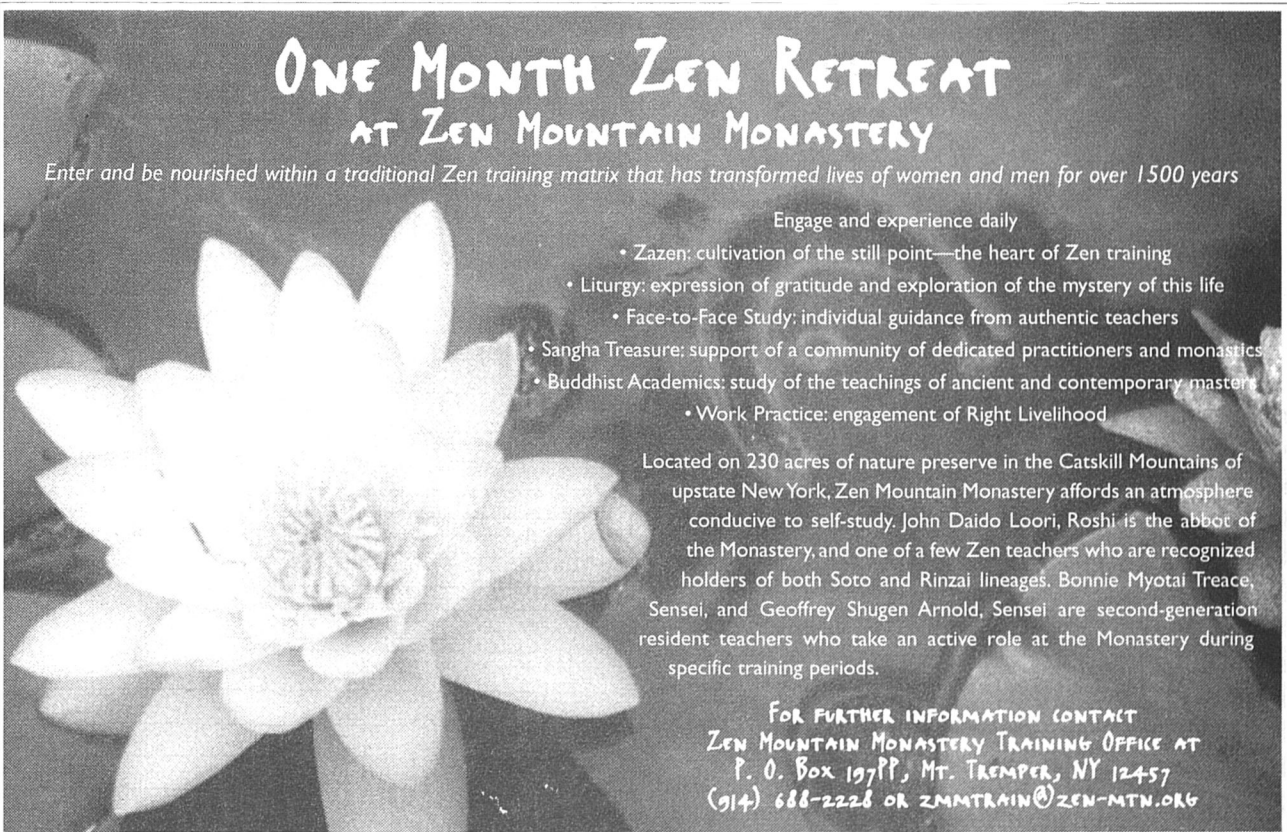
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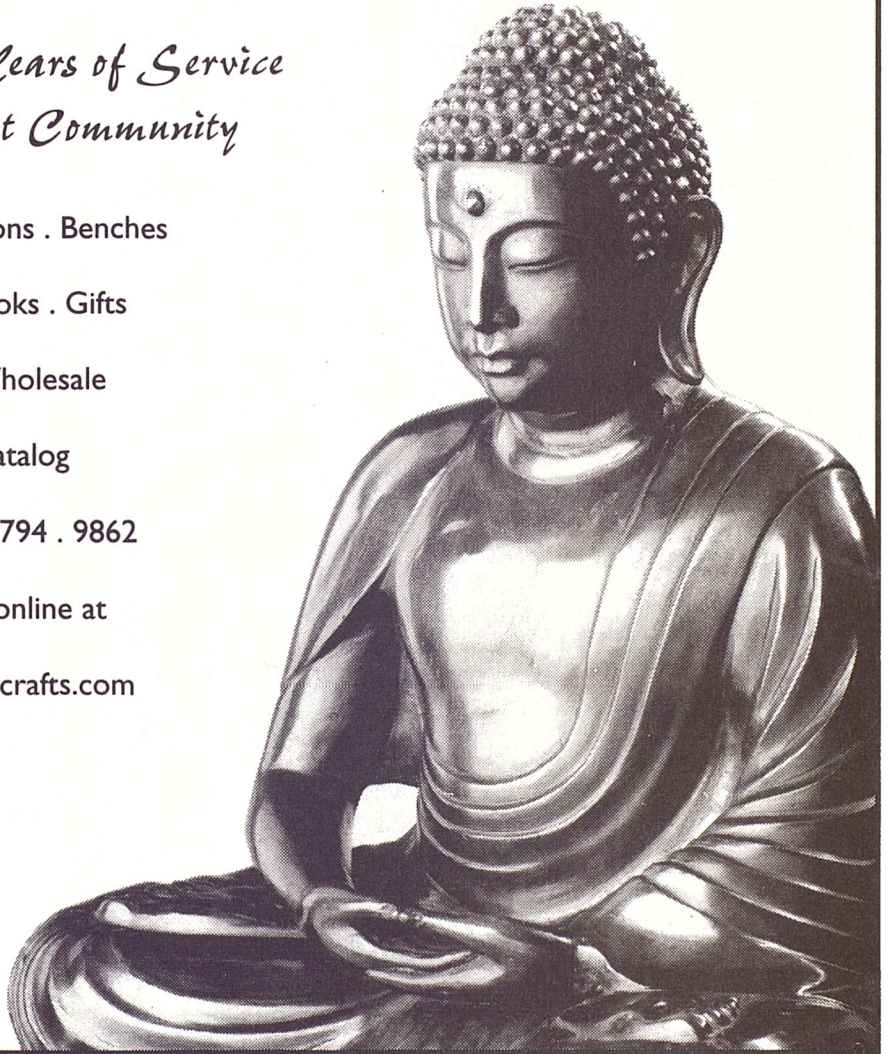
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