

like
the
blink
of
an
eye

Kyol Che at Mu Sang Sa 2002/2003

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[The floor is yellow, the wall is white]

One quiet spot in the dharma room and four bowls filled with good food—that is Kyol Che at Mu Sang Sa.

When we arrived at Mu Sang Sa, near the Korean city of Daejon, we were welcomed by a group of monks and nuns. After a matter-of-fact introduction, we were driven to a public bathhouse. After soaking luxuriously in an herb-filled hot bath, we were all ready to start practicing.

During our stay at Mu Sang Sa, the directors took care of us with a simple “just do it” and “how can I help?” mind, a very comforting atmosphere. Once, a friend of my mother said, “A good government is one that you don’t notice.” It was like that here; we were not bothered with anything, we could practice peacefully. All the temple directors and staff, starting with the abbot Mu Shim Sunim JDPS and ending with the Haeng Ja Nims, worked very hard. One of the participants said, “There is nothing to do and nothing to worry about here, just practice.”

[Meditation]

Sitting silent and still

One sees the flow of mind’s creations.

You understand that you were following phantoms.

From now on, what will you follow?

KATZ!

The branches are dancing
as the wind blows through the trees.

[White cloud over a blue mountain]

Mu Sang Sa is situated at the foot of Kuk Sa Song peak. Looking out from the temple, one sees a valley vista: small lakes, rice fields, and scattered farmhouses; a vast panorama of mountains on the horizon. One feels embraced by the surrounding landscape.

Zen Master Seung Sahn said that there is very strong Manjushri and Kwan Seum Bosal energy here, the energy of wisdom and compassion.



How can one not be motivated to practice in such an inspiring environment? It’s quiet, but not too quiet. There is construction going on here as the new Buddha Hall is being built, so your mantra sometimes takes on the rhythm of a hammer and a saw. After the workday is finished, only the sounds of the small temple bells interrupt the evening silence. Zen Master Seung Sahn said “It’s easy to find quiet in a quiet place, true silence is not dependent on anything.”

[Watch your step]

During the breaks, after having tea, you can hike in the surrounding mountains. The mountains welcome each of us with different paths: steep ones and easy ones, or you can just sit by a mountain spring and let your mind follow the shimmering water.

As the fall progresses and the snow comes, everything becomes white and silent. The cold freezes the mountain stream into wondrous sculptures. Every day nature brings new experiences, every day the mind brings new challenges, and every day the small bells outside the temple ring: ding-dong, ding-dong... wake up, wake up!

[Everything is coming and going]

The three months passed in the blink of an eye. The Kyol Che is finished and suddenly time, problems, and opinions seem so unimportant. Where did it come from and where did it go? Everybody wants something... what do you want? If you do Kyol Che with a “put it all down” mind and let go of your situation and opinions, you will get everything.

[In the mountains]

Standing on the top of a mountain,
Between the high sky and the low ground.

There is no this or that.

Then, why is the temple bell
being rung every morning?

KATZ!

When the baby cries, mother comes.

