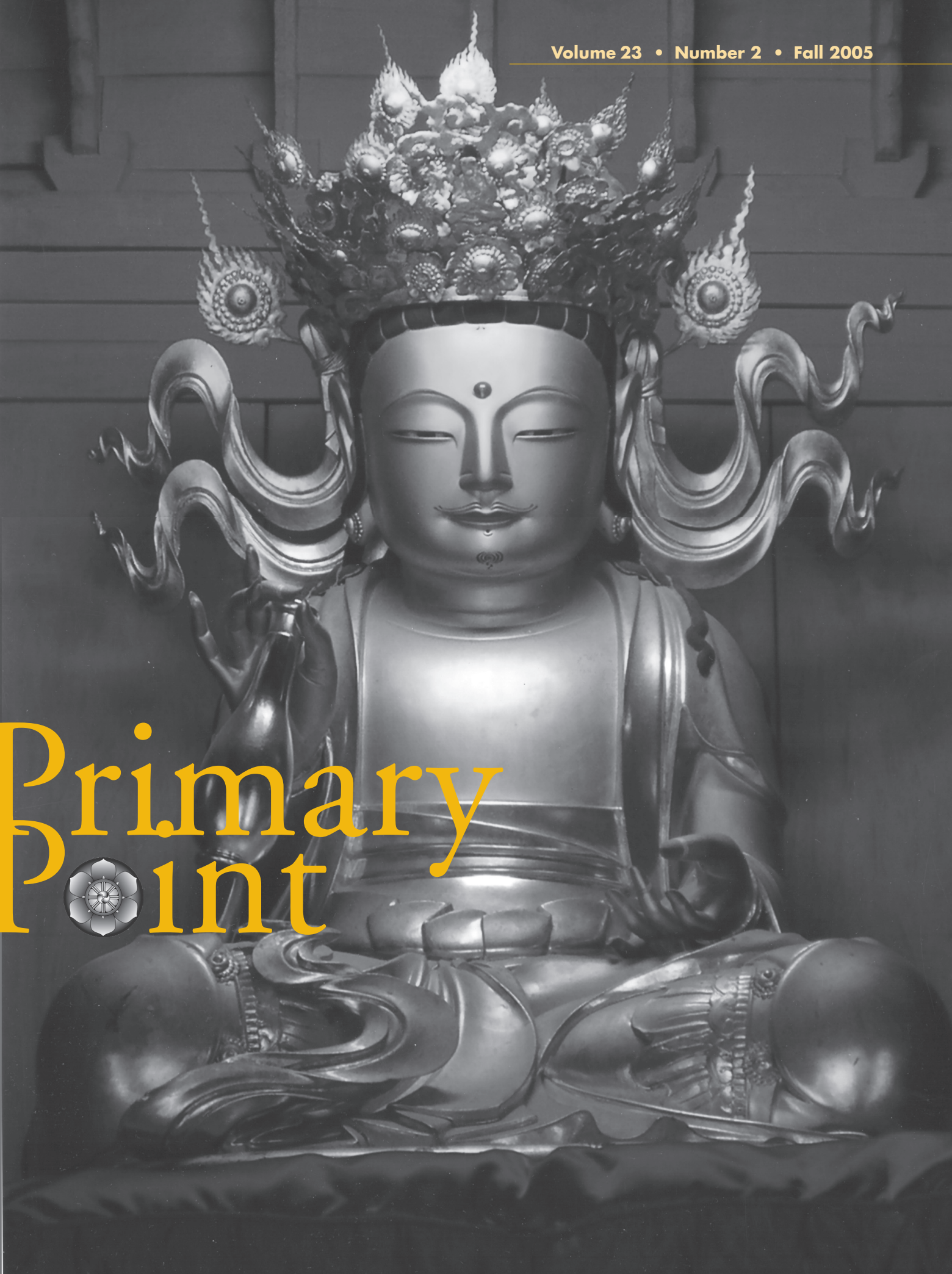
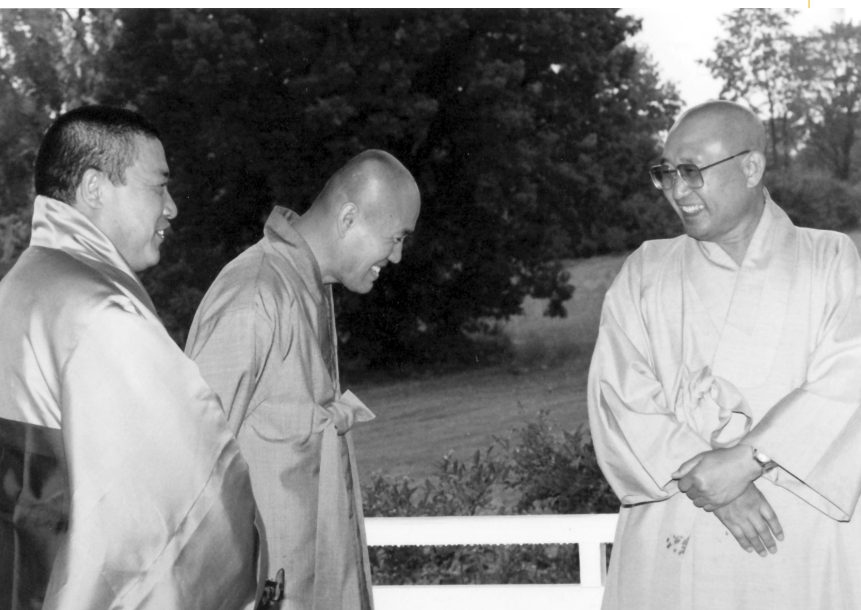


# Primary Point





## Primary Point

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 29. The circulation is 5000 copies.

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LET'S ► ► ►  
SPREAD  
THE  
DHARMA  
TOGETHER

*Seong Dam Sunim  
Dharma Talk at the 49th Day Ceremony  
for Zen Master Seung Sahn  
at Hwa Gye Sah in Korea*

Seong Dam Sunim is well known for his complete adherence to the Zen saying, “Not dependent on words and speech.” Among Korean monks and nuns who practice Zen, he is highly respected and referred to as “Northern Seong Dam,” as contrasted with “Southern Jin Jae,” which refers to Jin Jae Sunim, who lives in the south. Seong Dam Sunim is famous for being very difficult to meet in person. His public appearances were limited to monthly dharma talks at Yong Hwa Zen Center in Incheon. Throughout his life, he has refused to meet any outside people, especially journalists, give interviews, or give dharma talks at other temples. Even his attendants don’t respond to requests for interviews from the news media. He has dedicated his life to Zen cultivation and has encouraged his students to practice likewise. For this reason, he even disappeared from his temple on occasion, in order to keep away from fame and position. A few years ago, he declined to be the official resident Zen Master of Yong Hwa Zen Center and of Bong Am Sah Zen temple. Seong Dam Sunim has refused to allow any books to be published about his dharma teachings, and his students are not permitted to transcribe his dharma talk tapes. All of this shows Seong Dam Sunim’s ferocity in seeking after the truth, and his determination not to be dependent on words and speech, or any external form.

Seong Dam Sunim was born in 1929, and in 1945 he became a novice monk under the guidance of his teacher, Zen Master Jeon Gang. After a ten year silent meditation retreat, he attained enlightenment and received transmission from his teacher, Zen Master Jeon Gang.

*Ending a hundred years of illusion  
Dream of a friend appears in black ink.  
Na Mu Amita Bul*

*Going around all day long, not knowing for what are you so busy?  
Na Mu Amita Bul*

*If in the midst of a busy world  
The clear truth is attained,  
That is a single lotus flower  
Rising in the midst of a fiery boiling stream.  
Na Mu Amita Bul*

That was an old wisdom.

To commemorate the 49th-day ceremony of Seung Sahn Dae Soen Sa (Great Zen Master), there are many eminent teachers and great monks here today. Then why is this mountain monk at this seat? Actually, a while ago, one of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s students came in person and said to me that it was the wish of his teacher. So why would Zen Master Seung Sahn want me to be here today?

There is a story which gives a good reason. In 1979, with an invitation from New York State University at Stony Brook, I visited the United States. Zen Master Seung Sahn greeted me at the airport. He also took me to some places to give dharma talks. At that time he explained to me that Western people are very high class; that they are very innocent and pure and follow the teaching sincerely. He said to me, holding both my hands, “Let’s spread the dharma together.” After that, Zen Master Seung Sahn went to Canada to give a dharma talk and while he was away, I was invited to give a talk at a gathering of some of his Korean students, who were a group of doctors living in New York. I said to them, “Zen Master Seung Sahn is hanging up lamb meat but selling dog meat in America.” An old Chinese saying. Why would Zen Master Seung Sahn, who received transmission of the dharma that comes all the way down from Kyong Ho Sunim to Man Gong Sunim, and to Ko Bong Sunim, why would he sell dog meat pretending it to be high-class lamb meat?

No matter how sophisticated the Western material culture might be, when it comes to the practice of finding one’s true self, and especially when it comes to our particular Zen practice using kong-ans, many skillful means are necessary and used in order to help people digest it. So I said to his Korean students, “Maybe Western people need this kind of teaching, but for all of you Koreans who have over 1600 years of Buddhist history through Paekche, Shilla, Koguryo, and in whom Buddhist blood flows through—why do all of you also buy dog meat? Go and tell your teacher you don’t want dog meat and beg him to please sell you lamb meat immediately!” At this, the students were shocked. They recorded the talk and passed it around. Soon Zen Master Seung Sahn returned from Canada and I told him how I talked to his students. He exclaimed, “Well done, well done!” and with the Pyong An Do accent of a true man of no hindrance, he laughed heartily.

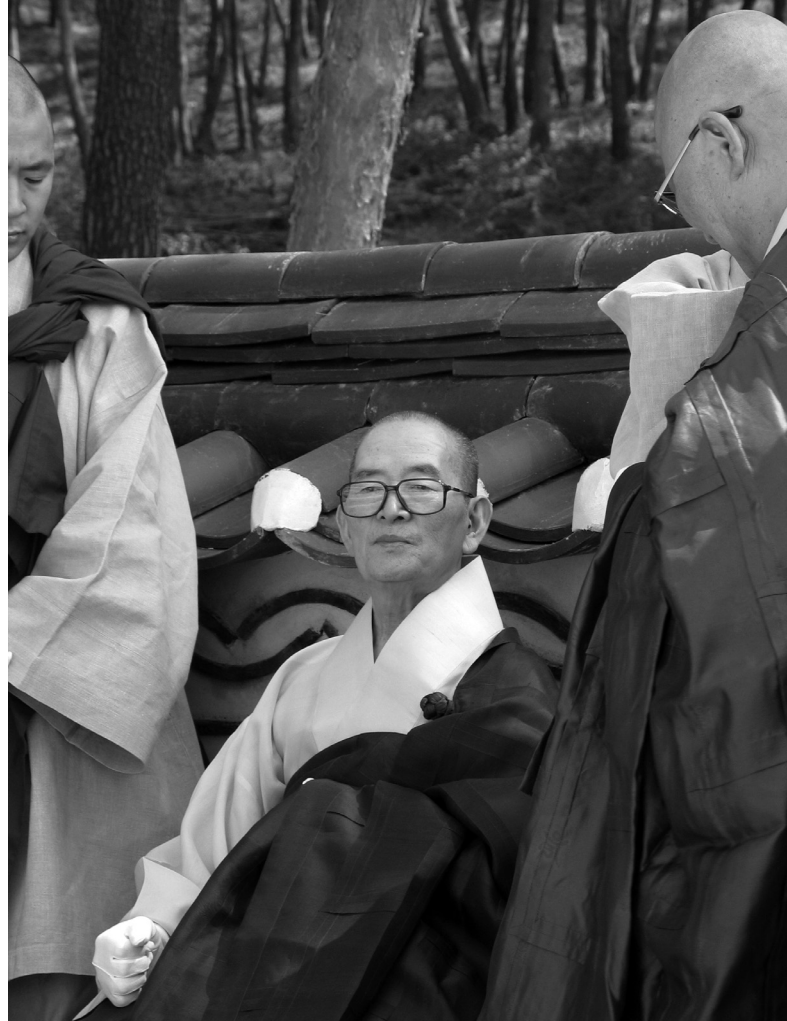
We just heard earlier about the great life work of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Through Japan, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, and the world over, he not only spread Korean Buddhism, but made eminent our Zen practice worldwide. He was also recognized as a “Living Buddha.” Calling someone a “Living Buddha” is an expression of the highest esteem. However, the next “Buddha” will only appear in 56,700,000,000 years when Maitreya Buddha will appear. Until then, Shakyamuni Buddha is the only true “Buddha” of our time. Until then, for any eminent teacher or patriarch who

appears however great, it would be correct to call them great bodhisattvas. I say this not because there is any lack of enlightenment, sincerity, faith or compassion in Zen Master Seung Sahn, but because this is our correct responsibility to the teaching. If we are calling Zen Master Seung Sahn a “Living Buddha,” then all of us here at this assembly, except for this mountain monk, are also “Living Buddhas.” That’s because the Vairocana Buddha light is residing inside each one of your bodies. Whether man or woman, clever or stupid, educated or illiterate, all of you are unmistakably “Buddhas.” It is only with that kind of great faith and vow in following the buddhadharma and commitment to practice correctly that we can truly attain enlightenment.

Bodhidharma came to China and transmitted the dharma to Hui Ko, then down to the Sixth Patriarch, and finally the five schools appeared: Imje (Rinzai), Jo Dong (Soto), Poep An, Un Mun, and Wi Ahn schools. The Zen masters of these schools had their different styles and methods of teaching. Those of you following Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching and hearing his dharma understand that he taught the practice of attaining the great way, and many students appeared. He also offered the teachings in the form of *Compass of Zen* in Korean, English, Chinese characters, and other languages. In this way, he made the teachings available and easily understood even for the less educated—so that all beings without distinction, no matter what the circumstances of their birth or education, if they apply themselves, can attain the correct path.

One of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s students said to me that Zen Master Seung Sahn is very well known and respected in the world, but less so in Korea. There are two reasons. Firstly, it is because the practice of Hwal Gu (the Zen practice of kong-ans and keeping don’t know), which is handed down from Kyong Ho Sunim and Man Gong Sunim, is still not deeply embedded in our (Korean) practitioners’ hearts. Cham Gu (hwadu practice) is more commonly known. Secondly, there is a Western proverb that even the most famous of heroes merely appears as an ordinary man to his everyday attendant. We also have a Korean proverb: “the light is dark directly under the lamp,” and the Chinese saying is that even Confucius, who is one of the most well-known and respected philosophers of China, was simply known as the “old man living on the east side” in his home village. This means that however great one is, often those closest are ignorant of one’s true greatness. Zen Master Seung Sahn is called a “Living Buddha” in the rest of the world, but not necessarily in Korea. Here, some do know and respect him, of course, but not as deeply.

Forty-nine days ago, Zen Master Seung Sahn left and today is the 49th-day ceremony. Although his body has left our world and we cannot perceive him with our six senses, his sincere faith, great vow and many skillful means are all deeply transmitted into his students, more so into blue-eyed Western students than Koreans. If his blue-eyed



students can truly uphold his great vow and sincerity and attain great enlightenment, they will become the great Byok An Jong Sah, lineage holders of the dharma for the whole world. All of the bodhi seeds that Zen Master Seung Sahn has sown in the world, these enlightenment seeds, will one day bloom, and Zen Master Seung Sahn will live on, just as perished life on this earth transforms to new seeds and flourishes as blooming flowers. Zen Master Seung Sahn will then live on through his students vibrantly, and this world will be filled with millions of Zen Master Seung Sahn.

I could not refuse to come here today as a way to sincerely beg all of his students to continue as Zen Master Seung Sahn has done. Many great teachers, practitioners, brothers and sisters have appeared here today. All of you, please take on wholeheartedly Zen Master Seung Sahn’s honored example of great vow and sincerity and attain his direction, following the great and deep intention which comes down from Man Gong Sunim, Kyong Ho Sunim, the Sixth Patriarch, Bodhidharma, and from Shakyamuni Buddha himself. In Korea and the whole world, material and scientific civilizations are always fighting non-stop, and any moment, with one nuclear explosion somewhere, the whole world can be pulverized. For ourselves, our families, and our countries, a moment will surely come when Zen Master Seung Sahn’s deep faith and great vow of intention will surely be needed. If we attain this vow and realize this direction, Zen Master Seung Sahn’s life will be an eternal one, which spreads throughout the universe. ☸



# Transmission Ceremony for Zen Master Bon Yo

April 9, 2005

## D H A R M A C O M B A T

*[Zen Master Bon Yo bites her nails while Zen Master Wu Bong rises and bows.]*

**Zen Master Wu Bong:** Hello!

**Zen Master Bon Yo:** Hello darling!

**ZMWB:** Today you are receiving transmission from Zen Master Dae Kwang. This is dharma transmission, but for this dharma, you are mostly a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn, so this teaching came to you through him. So, I am just curious what kind of dharma did you receive from Zen Master Seung Sahn?

**ZMBY:** How can I help you?

**ZMWB:** I was hoping to hear that. I'll tell you later. Thank you.

**ZMBY:** Thank you... for asking.

**Chong An Sunim JDPS:** Hi, Grazyna.

**Zen Master Bon Yo:** Hi, Szabolcs. *[laughter]*

**CASN:** You know... oftentimes we wondered how easy it is for you. You have been a Zen master's wife so long. But now you are becoming a Zen master yourself. So, let me ask you, will you be the Zen master or the wife?

**ZMBY:** When we go back home, I will show you, OK?

**CASN:** Soon is necessary.

**ZMBY:** If you insist... *[Zen Master Bon Yo stands up and goes to kiss her husband, Zen Master Wu Bong; applause.]*

**ZMBY:** And... how can I help you, Chong An Sunim?

**Chong An Sunim:** When we get home, I will tell you. *[laughter]*

**ZMBY:** Soon is necessary. *[laughter]*

**Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN:** Congratulations on becoming a Zen master.

**Zen Master Bon Yo:** Thank you very much.

**PPSN:** But, I have a question. In the Zen tradition, we have this radical teaching: "When you meet Buddha—kill Buddha; when you meet a Zen master—kill the Zen master." So, truthfully, you will soon be in danger. How can you cope with this danger?

**ZMBY:** Well, suddenly I have a very important appointment. *[Zen Master Bon Yo stands up as if to leave; laughter.]*

**PPSN:** I am afraid it doesn't help.

**ZMBY:** What can I do for you?

**PPSN:** I think you are saved now.

**ZMBY:** Oh, thank you for saving me!

**PPSN:** Thank you for your teaching.

**Student:** Poep Sa Nim!

**Zen Master Bon Yo:** Nam-Hee! *[student laughs]*

**Student:** All Zen Masters, all Masters, they always teach with good speech, with bad speech. They teach with clear actions and they teach with mistakes. So, with which kind of mistake do you teach us?

**ZMBY:** How can I help you?

**Student:** Is this a mistake?

**ZMBY:** Not enough?

**Student:** No, not enough.

**ZMBY:** The dog runs after the bone.

**Student:** Ha!



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

Coming empty handed,

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

Going empty handed,

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

This is a human.

What does that mean?

KATZ!

A newborn baby cries WAAAAaaaa!!!! WAAAAaaaa!!!!

**ZEN  
MASTER  
BON YO'S  
DHARMA  
SPEECH**

In the last century, a young man from the United States visited a very famous rabbi in Poland. When he entered the quarters of the rabbi, he was surprised to see how simple the room was. There was only a shelf with books, a bench, and a table. He looked and said: "Rabbi, where is your furniture?"

The rabbi asked, "Where is yours?"

The young man said, "Mine? But I'm just a visitor here."

"So am I," answered the rabbi.

From the moment we are born, we collect. The first thing that is given to us is our body from our mother and father. Then day after day, year after year, we collect more: things, ideas, possessions, religions, titles. And most of us, most human beings, identify themselves with those things. "I am a woman..." or "I am a man...", "I'm tall...", "I'm an artist...", "I'm a doctor...", "I'm rich...", "I'm poor...", "I..." and "I...", and "this" and "that."

Can the true "I" be rich or poor, or tall or short, thin or fat...? Can the true "I" be a man, or a woman, or Asian or Western, or have any such identification?

This world and this universe already gave us everything. Everything is already ours. Buddha said: "Everything has Buddha nature." So, Buddha nature is already ours.

This world nowadays is quite sad, and I really appreciate Zen Master Dae Kwang's tear drop transmission. It is sad and true.

Who creates this world the way it is now, and who can undo it?

*[Pointing at the audience]* You... and you, and you, and you... It is in all our hands.

And for that I have a story, a story which these past years has been my guide. It is a story about a preacher who was traveling from town to town. He was teaching, and staying in each town for a few days. In one of the villages, he stopped on the main street and started to preach, and many, many people came to listen to his teaching. He gave the most passionate teaching. And with great hope, he came the next day to exactly the same place, and again gave the best talk that he could. On the second day, there were already fewer people listening to him, and on the third day, even fewer people. The following day this trend continued, and an even smaller group came. By the end of the week he was standing there all alone, there was nobody listening to his teaching, but he kept on talking. Then a passerby saw this man standing there teaching and talking to himself, so he asked: "Why are you standing here talking, nobody is listening to you. Why do you do that?"

The teacher answered, "When I started the first time, I hoped to change this world. Now, I keep on talking to not let the world change me."

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

No coming.

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

No going.

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

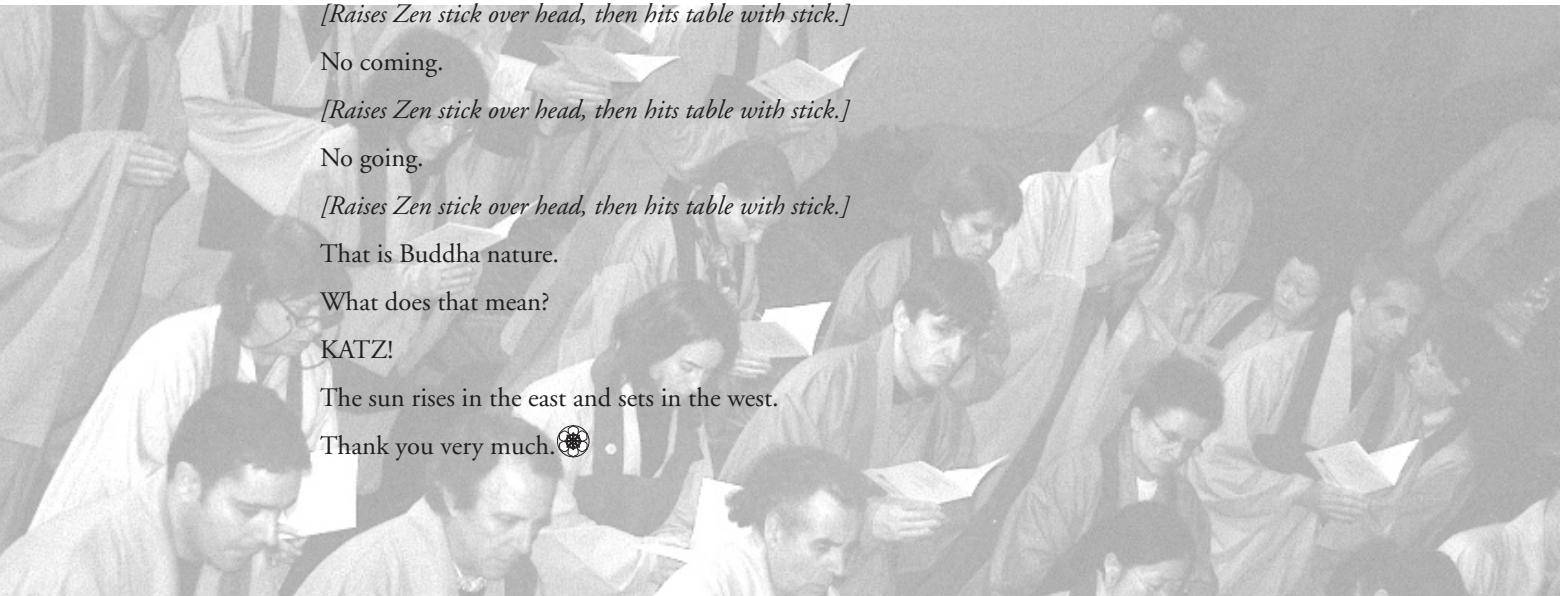
That is Buddha nature.

What does that mean?

KATZ!

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

Thank you very much. ☸





# In Memory of Zen Master Seung Sahn

NO BIRTH  
DAY  
NO DEATH  
DAY  
BEEP .  
BEEP .

*Zen Master Soeng Hyang*

As most of you know, the three important things in the Buddhist teachings are the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. Zen Master Seung Sahn was all three of those things, and so are we. That's the good news.

Before the abbot mentioned that beeping sound from the alarm panel, I was listening to it earlier and it started to kind of annoy me. But then I thought, well, it's the universal heartbeat. Beep. Beep. It sounds like an intensive care unit, really.

As our practice deepens, and we continue to sit Kyol Ches and Yong Maeng Jong Jins, and just do it in our life, we begin to get that sense of the universal heartbeat, perhaps. Zen Master Seung Sahn was always famous for talking about the teaching that there is no life, no death, no coming and no going—so don't make a big deal. No birthday, no deathday.

One time, Stephen Levine was here to give a workshop on death and dying with Zen Master Seung Sahn. I went to get Dae Soen Sa Nim, up in his room. Tons of people came to the workshop because Stephen Levine was very popular; he had lots of books out about death and dying. I was walking Zen Master Seung Sahn down the stairs and he said, "What's this conference about?" There were a lot of people here—more than come to our Yong Maeng Jong Jins. I said, "It's about death and dying." He said, "What are we going to talk about? That's not important! In Korea, that's nothing. Dying is not important." I said, "Well, it's really important in the United States, so say something about it."

One thing he said was that when you die, that's how you've lived—you can't just get a special mind in the last ten minutes of your life. If you have a vow, a direction, some training, and some kind of a sense of wanting to be fully human, then death is just like flipping into life. When you die, with your last expiration, you take your vow and just say, "How may I help you?" That's all. Then there's no fear, no perverted view—just how may I help you?

Today we are honoring that very simple teaching. We don't really have to direct Zen Master Seung Sahn in our chanting and in our ceremony. It's part of the tradition of waiting these seven weeks, seven times seven is 49 days, there's a Buddhist idea about rebirth happening at that time. Then we send the light of our chanting to that person. All of us in this room have some kind of connection to Zen Master Seung Sahn, some kind of gratitude. When we're chanting, we don't have to think about the person or the photograph, or even the teaching that much. Each one of us has gratitude in our hearts for the work Dae Soen Sa Nim did. Send that gratitude. Everybody likes to be thanked. So thank you very much for coming. ☸



## REFLECTIONS

*Zen Master Dae Kwang*

On November 30, 2004, Zen Master Seung Sahn died. At that time, I had just arrived in Korea for a visit, so I was fortunate enough to be able to see him the day before he died. Zen and Buddhism teach us that there is nothing special, that only our like and dislike mind creates special. Death is also not special, however, it is our great teacher. Just before he died, Zen Master Seung Sahn was doing just what he had always been doing, teaching us. The prospect of death can lead some people to a life of self-concern, but he would use his illnesses as teaching for us. During the more than twenty-five years that I knew him, his body was quite ill, but this never hindered him. His job was to give, and he gave himself completely to us. No monument or sentiment can memorialize that.

Whenever a teacher dies, many feelings arise in people. Some feel grief at the loss; some feel remorse because of what they didn't do; some feel a sense of indebtedness or gratitude for what they have received. The most basic of these from a Buddhist point of view would be gratitude and indebtedness. The gratitude we feel at this time is for our teacher's clear teaching and for the giving of his whole life to us. This is the greatest gift that anyone can give. Any time we receive the gift of good teaching, it comes with a responsibility—a kind of debt. That means we have a duty to do something with it.

A few hours before his death, the Sixth Patriarch taught his students this way: "After my passing away, do not follow the worldly tradition and cry or lament. What you should do is know your own mind and realize your own Buddha-nature, which has neither motion nor stillness, neither birth nor death, neither comes nor goes, neither affirms nor denies, neither stays nor departs. After my death, if you practice according to my instructions it will be as if I were alive. However, if you go against my teaching, no benefit will be obtained, even if I were to remain with you."

So, what are the instructions? Our School's teaching has always been very simple and clear. Zen Master Seung Sahn only taught one thing—don't know. Sometimes this "don't know" meant "just do it," sometimes it meant primary point, sometimes correct situation, relationship and function, sometimes "put it ALL down," and sometimes great love, great compassion, the bodhisattva way. It came in many boxes, with a wide variety of wrappings, but the question was always the same, "What are you?" As he said many times, "I hope you only go straight don't know, which is clear like space; try, try, try for 10,000 years non-stop; soon get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering"—OK?" 🌀



*Poland 1982*



## EVERYTHING NO PROBLEM

*Zen Master Wu Kwang*



Last December, I traveled to Korea to attend Zen Master Seung Sahn's funeral. While there, I had a conversation with Dae Soeng Sunim, one of the monks who had served as Zen Master Seung Sahn's attendant and caregiver during the last year and a half. He told me of Zen Master Seung Sahn's last words. As Zen Master Seung Sahn was lying in his bed shortly before he began to slip into unconsciousness, Dae Soeng Sunim asked him if he was uncomfortable, or in pain. Zen Master Seung Sahn replied, "Everything no problem." These were his last words and his last teaching to us. They also exemplify a basic attitude that we saw him demonstrate repeatedly throughout his teaching. In observing Zen Master Seung Sahn and learning from him, I would say that "Everything no problem" has two main aspects. The first is being able to actualize acceptance, or as Zen Master Seung Sahn would say, "follow situation." He certainly did this repeatedly with his chronic health

problems. Years ago, I remember reading his reply to a person's letter who was sympathizing with his plight of "having such a terrible disease as diabetes." Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "No, no, diabetes is very good." He meant that all things are our teachers, perhaps especially sickness and difficulty. Even now, I can hear his aphorism, "A good situation is a bad situation. A bad situation is a good situation." The other aspect of "Everything no problem" was his immense openness to the new, his spirit of adventure, and his great and tireless energy. This he also passed on to us through sayings like, "Try, try, try, for ten thousand years nonstop," and "We try that—O.K., why not!"

By way of illustration, let me cite just one example. In the mid-1970s, a Polish man who was in New York for a year, began coming to the Chogye International Zen Center of New York. During that year, he copied many of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching letters that were read at the end of daily practice. When he returned to Poland, he shared these letters with friends, and the Kwan Um Polish Sangha was born. Shortly thereafter, Zen Master Seung Sahn was invited to teach in Poland. At that time, Poland was under Communist rule and had no diplomatic relations with South Korea. Zen Master Seung Sahn's first trips to Poland could never have occurred if not for his strong intention, "We try that, O.K.—why not!" I'm still not sure exactly how he was able to travel into Poland. From that adventurous endeavor arose many Zen centers in both Eastern and Western Europe. One might say that the Chogye International Zen Center of New York served as the soil from which the seed of the European sangha was gestated, but the sprouting, growing, and cultivating was due to Zen Master Seung Sahn's amazing "just try" mind.

I would like to address a few words to Zen Master Seung Sahn's spiritual presence. Even though, fundamentally, there is no coming or going in true nature, please Dae Soen Sa Nim, keep your great vow to save all beings and soon return to the world to continue teaching the dharma. ☸

Chinese practitioners are in an unusual situation. We come from the country which founded Zen. But we only encountered Zen-style teaching in books... until we met Zen Master Seung Sahn. His whole life was a demonstration of the live words of Zen. Zen was no longer just a legend. His moment-to-moment teaching of how to respond to each situation with great love and compassion was a living example of the bodisattva way.

His last visit to Hong Kong was in 2001, at the invitation of Venerable Wing Sing, the abbot of Western Pure Land Temple in Hong Kong. Zen Master Seung Sahn was one of four teachers before an audience of three thousand. One of the speakers from China was the highly-respected 97-year-old monk Venerable Bon Won. During the program, Zen Master Seung Sahn acted as the junior person, even helping him put a shawl over his shoulders to make sure that he was warm. The old monk was very impressed by this and said, "I really like you!"

Before I joined the Kwan Um School of Zen, I practiced in the forest in Northern Thailand, near Chiangmai. Our temple was deep in the forest. We had to climb three mountains and cross three rivers before arriving at the meditation hermitage. Zen Master Seung Sahn had heard so much about my Thai teacher, Ajahn Pongsak, that he insisted on visiting him in the forest, without any concern about his own health situation. When they met, they both bowed to each other with full prostrations. Later, Ajahn said to me, "Your Zen master is very compassionate."

When we showed Zen Master Seung Sahn around the forest, he saw Ajahn's kuti (small hut.) Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to go inside and see it himself. When he came out of the kuti, he said to Ajahn Pongsak, "You are a real monk! Your room is very simple, but my room is complicated. Your dharma is high, whereas my dharma is low." In fact, the way he said that is high class dharma.

He would respond to those whom he respects in a humble way, even though he had never met them before. He always taught us that private and public have to be clear. For a public issue, everything has to be very clear, with no mistakes. Not even as small needle is allowed to pass through. As for private matters: big mistakes, even as big as a car, are forgivable. He always showed us where true wisdom lay. He also taught us that a mistake is not for us to get attached to, but to learn from, and grow in wisdom. He always taught us to apologize, if necessary.

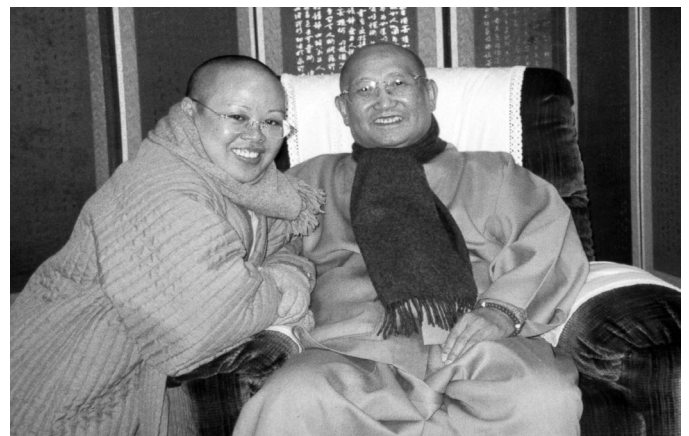
One time when Venerable Cheung Wai, the abbot of the Library of China in Hong Kong, invited Zen Master Seung Sahn to give a talk on Zen Buddhism, he praised Zen Master Seung Sahn as one of the best Zen teachers in demonstrating Patriarch Zen. The following day, while we were having lunch together, Venerable Cheung Wai said that Zen Master Seung Sahn was an enlightenment monk because his talk came from his practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn bowed to him and said, "You are my teacher, because you have given me inka!" We all laughed together.

When he taught sincere people, he would always give very gentle advice, even if they were not Zen students. He would explain to them that life is impermanent, things will change, don't worry—no problem, just continue to practice. Students who heard that would feel very encouraged, even though they couldn't solve their problems right away. Sometimes a mother would push her child to join the retreat at Hwa Gye Sah. Zen Master Seung Sahn would invite the child to his room, talk to them, and give them some money to buy ice cream. When he met arrogant visitors, he would shout at them and send them away. Zen Master Seung Sahn was a mirror to us; he only reflected what was in front of him. As Zen teaching says, "Buddha's eyes see Buddha, shitty eyes see shit."

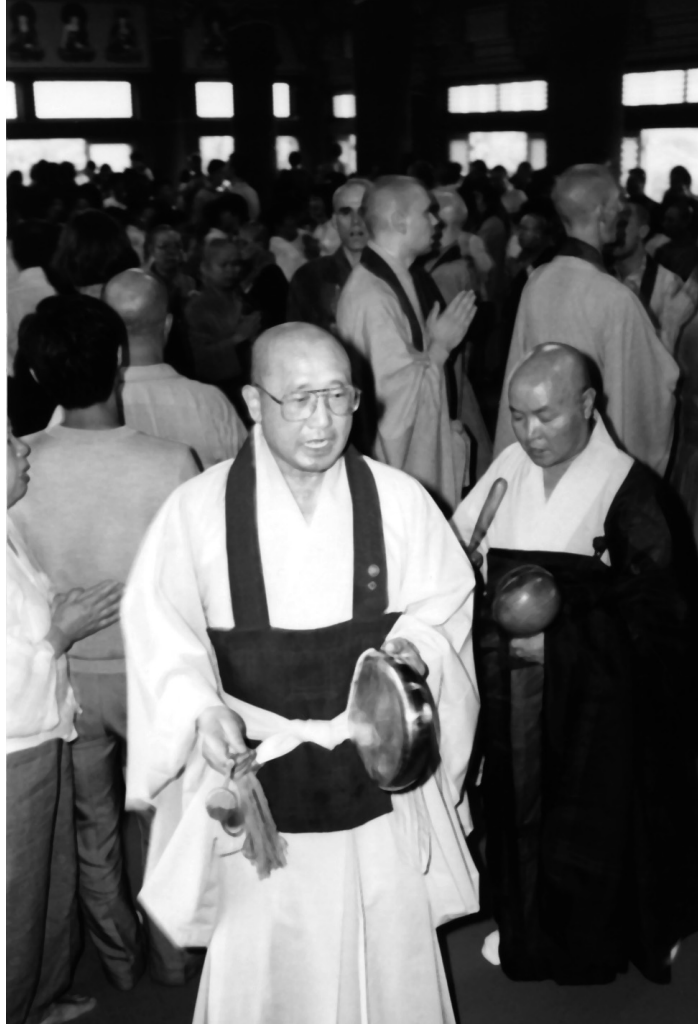
Before Zen Master Seung Sahn got really sick, he would visit each Buddha Hall at Hwa Gye Sah. He would bow three times, put his palms together, and pray in silence. One time I asked him, "What was your prayer, sir?" Without hesitation, he said, "Wishing all students practice together, get enlightenment, and save all beings from suffering." This is his wish for us. Even my Thai teacher Ajahn Pongsak liked this teaching. When one of our students asked Ajahn, "Do you know Zen Master Seung Sahn?" Ajahn Pongsak stood up, put his palms together, and said, "How may I help you?" Zen Master Seung Sahn used his body, mind, and speech to teach us the correct situation, correct relationship, and correct function. Almost a year before he died, we were walking through his garden, when he pointed to a plant with many flowers which was about to die. He said to me, "I'm like these flowers, I too will soon finish my job." We looked at each other and smiled.

*Blue sky and deep ocean don't know blue,  
Seung Sahn (High Mountain) didn't know high,  
Haeng Won (Action Vow), come back to this world life after  
life,  
After the spring rain, early summer comes.*

On behalf of Su Bong Zen Monastery and all Chinese, we want to thank you deeply for the last thirteen years of your life. You have shown us live Zen, and we hope this kind of Zen teaching will once again bloom in the Eastern Land. ❀







## GREAT DHARANI

*Andrzej Stec JDPSN*

When we think of Zen Master Seung Sahn, we remember him as a teacher. We are all his students.

Just before watching the video of his funeral, we were chanting the Great Dharani. Zen Master Seung Sahn said many times, “I don’t teach any technique, I only teach don’t know.” But, actually,

the Great Dharani was his technique. That was his practice. He got enlightenment by chanting the Great Dharani and later he kept this Dharani all of the time.

Being around Zen Master Seung Sahn in Poland or America or Korea, any Zen Center, any temple, he was always the most strongly practicing person in the place. I remember at Hwa Gye Sah temple where we had wake-up at 3:20 am, many of us woke up a little earlier, and whenever any of us looked at Zen Master Seung Sahn’s windows, his lights were already on. Then some of us wanted to wake up a little earlier—at 2:30 am, we looked at his windows, and still, the lights were on. 2:00 am—still! He was the first person in the temple who woke up and practiced.

One time I went to him and said, “I have this and this problem, lots of thinking.” He said, “How many bows do you do?” I said, “Oh, maybe 100 or 200.” He said, “That’s not enough. Myself, I’m sixty years old, and every single day, 1000 bows.” He would wake up at 2:00 am and, first thing, do 1000 bows straight. Zen Master Seung Sahn was not only a teacher, he was also a great practitioner himself. He was always trying to practice and give us this gift of formal practice.

The last conversation I had with him—well, the last one maybe wasn’t so important, but the one before that was again about his practicing. Somehow, I ended up being with him by myself in a hotel room. Everybody disappeared and it was only the two of us in the room. Whenever I was with him, he would never start talking to me first. He would always keep silent. He was doing his Dharani, of course. We were sitting there for five or ten minutes, not talking. Finally, thinking about how to start a conversation, I said, “Dae Soen Sa Nim, are you doing the Great Dharani right now?” He said, “Yes, of course. I do it all of the time.” I said, “Even in your sleep?” He said, “Yeah, even when I’m sleeping I’m doing it. Even right now while I’m talking to you.”

From other sources, we found out he could do this Great Dharani, if he wasn’t tired, three times a minute. When he was a little tired, only two times a minute. He was doing this 24/7. He told me, “For fifty years, for fifty years, I never change.” Fifty years. Never change. Then he said, “All my life, I never look back, even for one second.” That was the last teaching I got from him.

So now, whenever we are chanting this Great Dharani, I think he’s doing it wherever he is. If you want to meet him face-to-face, just chant it one more time. ☸

[ 1 ]

## I AM GOING TO CRY ON TUESDAY

*Myo Ji Sunim JDPS*

Some people say that monks and nuns should not cry. I am a nun, but I am a human being, and I am crying because I miss Zen Master Seung Sahn. I miss him in my bones. I will cry; I want to cry. I miss his shout. I miss his laughter. Every time I chant “shin-myo jang-gu dae-da-ra-ni,” I remember him and it makes me cry. I knew, “I’m going to cry on Tuesday.” Now the tears come out. In your lifetime, you will have many kinds of problems. At those times, the best thing is to cry out, and then feel better. Maybe somebody says, “You don’t have a strong tantien.” It doesn’t matter if you have a strong tantien or not. I’m crying anyway. So, join me please.

Also, I’m doing “bulsa” practice, which means meaning making a temple. In all these many, many years, Zen Master Seung Sahn always helped me stand up right this moment. When I was at Hwa Gye Sah in Seoul, he asked me several times to take the abbot’s job at New York Chogye Sah temple in Queens. Each time I said, “Oh no no no, no abbot’s job for me—I’m too old a nun! I have to practice and get enlightenment.” Finally he said, “That’s the point! That’s your togul.”

In Korea, at big temples, sometimes a monk or nun has their own practice place, called a “togul.” It can be a big place like a monastery, or it can be a little hermitage or cave. When he said, “This is your togul,” something that had been pushed down just released and I felt so happy. I thought, “Yes! Togul! I need a togul!” And I said, “Okay, I’ll go.” That was ten years ago.

Ten years later, he asked us to move to Manhattan. We paid two and a half million dollars for a building. Two and a half million! I don’t have two and a half million dollars, I don’t even have ONE dollar myself. I still don’t know how we did it. I must be crazy. You already understand crazy-mind, though—all you Providence Zen Center people know. Manhattan Chogye Sah owns a two and a half million dollar brownstone because of Dae Soen Sa Nim’s incredible energy and clear direction. You already understand. Thank you. ☸



# joining in

## THE CRIES OF THE UNIVERSE

*Zen Master Soeng Hyang  
Reprinted with permission  
from Buddhadharma  
Summer 2004*

In January 2003, I began a hundred-day solitary retreat. It was my third such retreat and I had waited seventeen years for the opportunity to practice this way again.

The silence and the retreat schedule were the two pillars that supported me for the hundred days. My cabin sat among evergreens and oaks and they generously sheltered me. I felt grateful for the silence, a silence which included sounds such as the ticking from the wood stove, the hoots of owls, a squeaking pump, the crunch of footsteps, and the wind. These types of sounds were all I heard for one hundred days. The schedule was divided into five sessions. Each session included 108 prostrations, hatha yoga, chanting and meditation.

Another vital support was the simple diet I ate every day—seaweed, squash, beans and rice, fruit, nuts, spice tea. These foods were much more than enough and reminded me again how unnecessary and burdening is excess.

Before entering this retreat, many people asked me, “Why?” To my Zen friends I would say, “To strengthen my practice.” If I was speaking

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to one of my coworkers at the hospice, I would say, “I need to pull off the road and rest” (nurses understand that metaphor). For myself, I completely trusted the practice handed down to me by Zen Master Seung Sahn.

The first twenty-one days were the most difficult physically. I started out with thirty extra pounds of body weight and was not in a condition to do all those prostrations and the hours of sitting, cutting and chopping wood, cleaning and washing clothes, hauling water and cooking. (Those are the activities that make up my version of pulling off the road.)

But after twenty-one days, my legs stopped aching and my effort felt like it started to carry me, instead of my carrying it. The hardest thing for me—it always has been—was the sitting. I wanted to get up and do something: wash the floor, do more yoga, find another dead oak to saw down. I knew one of the reasons I sent myself to the cabin was to learn to sit quietly and let go of the restlessness.

One of the five sessions started at midnight. The alarm would go off in the dark silence. I'd put on socks and pants, stoke the fire and start bowing. All warmed up, I'd then do yoga. A single candle lit up the entire cabin. At midnight, it seemed to take less effort to sit than during the other sessions, probably because I thought there was nothing else to do. My practice was to ask, “What am I?”—to relax and allow the “not knowing” to be enough. The key to awakening is just allowing and resting. Just this.

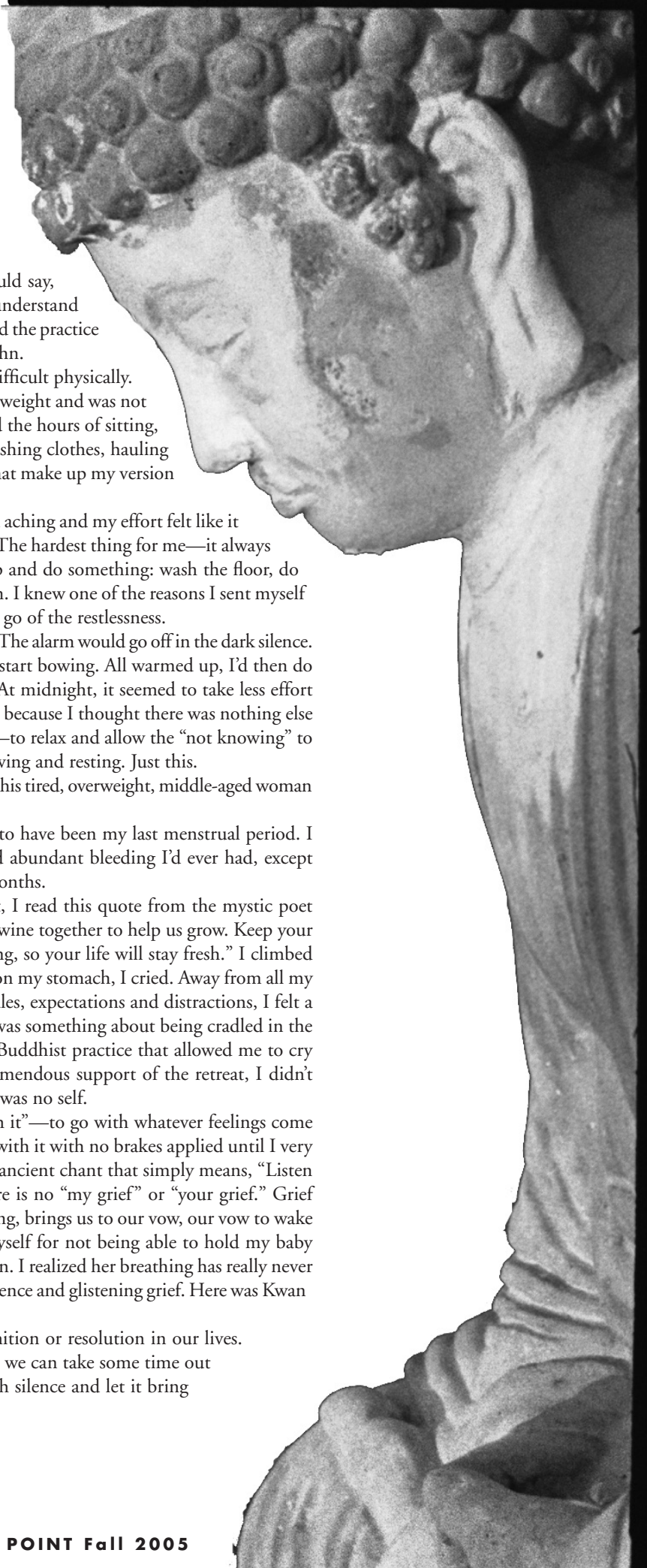
So practicing in that way every day allowed this tired, overweight, middle-aged woman to remember to have gratitude for it all.

During the third week, I had what seems to have been my last menstrual period. I experienced the most severe contractions and abundant bleeding I'd ever had, except for the time my first baby miscarried at six months.

At 2 a.m., forty-nine days into the retreat, I read this quote from the mystic poet Rumi: “This rain-weeping and sun-burning twine together to help us grow. Keep your intelligence white-hot and your grief glistening, so your life will stay fresh.” I climbed into my sleeping bag, and with a warm brick on my stomach, I cried. Away from all my family and responsibilities, away from schedules, expectations and distractions, I felt a depth of grief I have never felt before. There was something about being cradled in the sleeping bag, the cabin, the woods, and this Buddhist practice that allowed me to cry until my heart ached. But because of the tremendous support of the retreat, I didn't need to protect myself or anyone else—there was no self.

We have all heard the directive to “go with it”—to go with whatever feelings come up for us in our lives. Well, that night I went with it with no brakes applied until I very naturally coasted into Kwan Seum Bosal, the ancient chant that simply means, “Listen to the cries of the universe.” Just listen. There is no “my grief” or “your grief.” Grief becomes just grief. Grief brings us to awakening, brings us to our vow, our vow to wake up and listen. That night I finally forgave myself for not being able to hold my baby until she was old enough to breathe on her own. I realized her breathing has really never started or stopped. Here was white-hot intelligence and glistening grief. Here was Kwan Seum Bosal. How may I help?

We can't “make” these moments of recognition or resolution in our lives. But we can practice with the difficulties. And we can take some time out of our entrenched, habit-forced life to sit with silence and let it bring us home to our wisdom. ☸

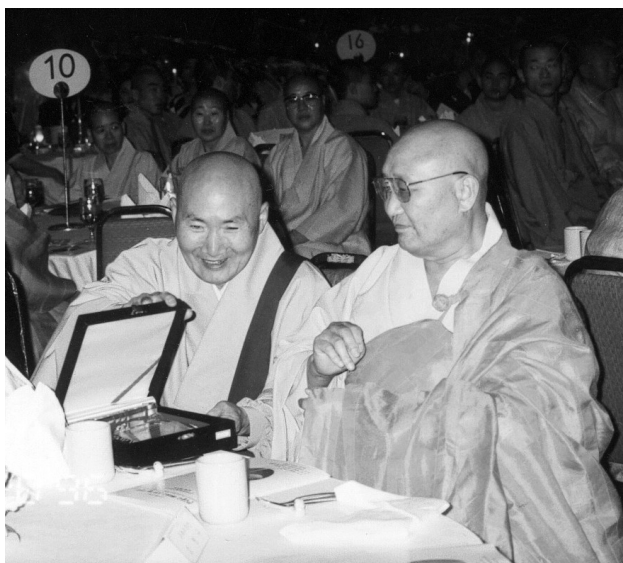


# patience is not enough

## IN MEMORY OF BYOK AM SUNIM

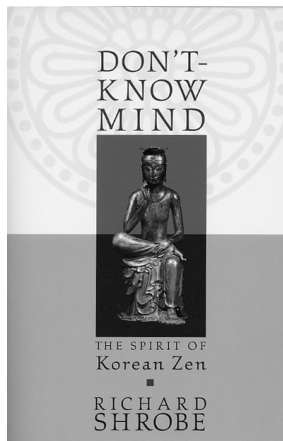
*Maya Opavska*

I had the good fortune of meeting Byok Am Kun Sunim at Shin Won Sah in Korea in 1998. He was living at the temple and I was there for ninety days sitting Kyol Che, so I crossed paths with him many times during my stay—on the temple grounds as well as in the dharma room. I have so many fond memories of him from that short stay that it's hard to pick one or two to share! My most vivid memories are from his visits during intensive week, when he sat with us for a couple of hours every evening and gave us wonderful dharma talks. His relationship with Zen Master Seung Sahn was clear to all of us. Even with Zen Master Seung Sahn miles away in Seoul, Byok Am Kun Sunim took all of us under his wing and treated us like family while we were there. I had heard stories about what a stern old master he was, and had been warned to be on my best behavior whenever I crossed his path, but my experience of Byok Am Kun Sunim was warm and welcoming and often humorous. He shared his own experience in a way that a grandfather might. One night he gave a short talk about endurance and patience. I don't remember the details of his talk but I do remember him telling us that this was the meaning of life, and that old people understand this. He also made a point to tell us that patience is not enough—that you must try, try, try. Every talk he gave us he made a huge point of the importance of trying. One day he brought us a cake from Zen Master Seung Sahn that he carried back from Seoul. He told us that when Zen Master Seung Sahn asked him if he would mind taking it to us, he told Zen Master Seung Sahn, "I can hardly carry this body back!" But then he said, "OK, since they're practicing so hard I will." When he finished this story, he laughed along with the rest of us. I'll never forget how one night he talked about habit, and told us that until ten years earlier he had forgotten how to laugh, and that this was just a habit. It was almost unbelievable that the warm and entertaining man in front of us was talking about himself! He said it took a lot of time and effort to change this habit, but clearly he could laugh again! The picture I still have of him in my mind's eye is of his smiling face. ☸



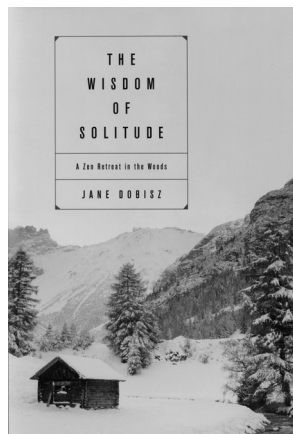


# A fresh approach to Zen



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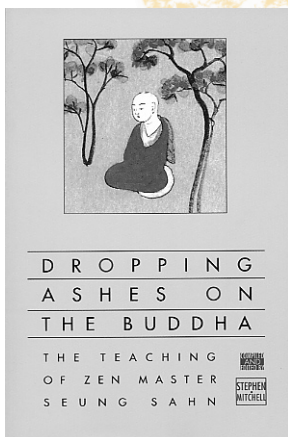
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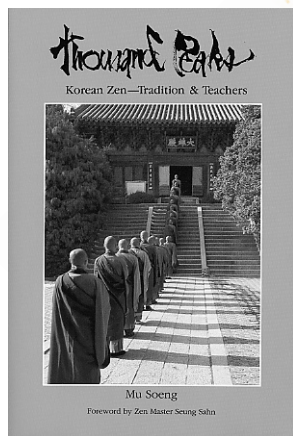
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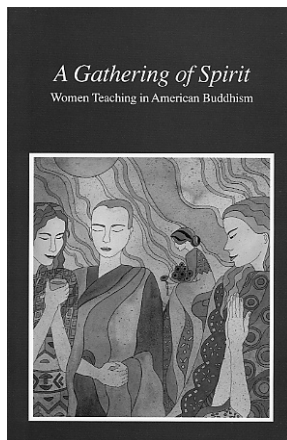


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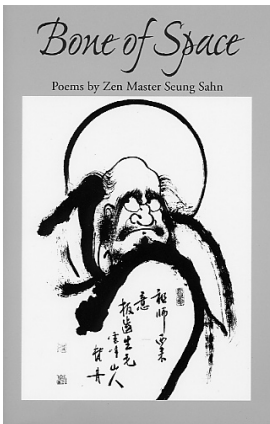
**Thousand Peaks: Korean Zen—Traditions and Teachers.** Mu Soeng. The spirit of Zen's golden age survives in Korean Zen. Primary Point Press edition, 1991. 256 pages. *Primary Point Press. ISBN 0-942795-02-4. \$15.95*



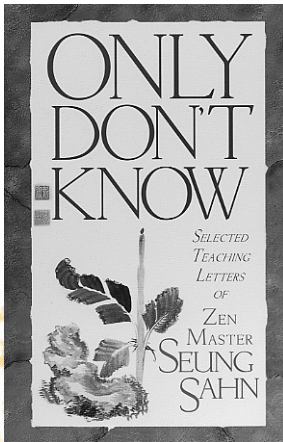
**A Gathering of Spirit: Women Teaching in American Buddhism.** Edited by Ellen Sidor. Talks and discussions from three landmark conferences at Providence Zen Center. Third edition, 1992. 156 pages. *Primary Point Press. ISBN 0-942795-05-9. \$11.95*







**Bone of Space: Poems by Zen Master Seung Sahn.** This collection captures a master's thoughts during everyday life—while traveling, talking on the phone, attending a friend's funeral. Primary Point Press edition, 1992. 128 pages.  
*Primary Point Press. ISBN 0-942795-06-7. \$15.00*

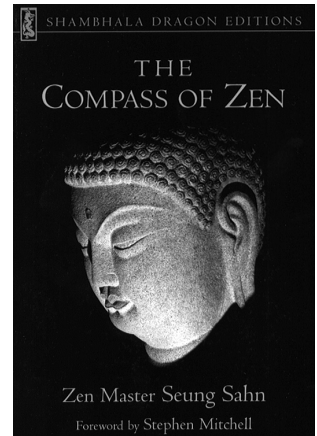


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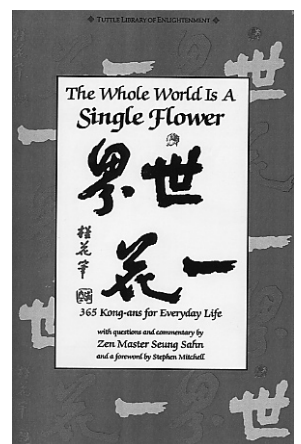
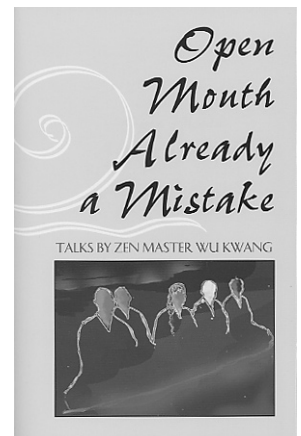


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*Primary Point Press. ISBN 0-942795-08-3. \$18.95*

**Wake Up! On the Road with a Zen Master.** An entertaining documentary that captures Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy and presents the core of his teaching. 1992. VHS. 54 minutes.  
*Primary Point Press. ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00*



**Compass of Zen.** Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. It is a simple, clear, and often hilarious presentation of the essential teachings of the main Buddhist traditions—culminating in Zen—by one of the most beloved Zen Masters of our time. 1997. 394 pages.  
*Shambhala. ISBN 1-57062-329-5. \$24.95*



**The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life.** Zen Master Seung Sahn. The first kong-an collection to appear in many years; Christian, Taoist, and Buddhist sources. 1993. 267 pages.  
*Tuttle. ISBN 0-8048-1782-0. \$22.95*

# GIVE US A HOUSE

## CRY THE DEFEATED BUT COURAGEOUS

*Gye Mun Sunim JDPS*

### TSUNAMI KILLER WAVES

Dec 26, 2004. The world was shook to its core by the enormity of the destruction in the wake of the tsunami disaster that struck across Asia. The death toll was a staggering 300,000+. This devastation has affected millions of lives and caused untold suffering and tragedies.

Three weeks after the tsunami, a small group consisting of Bhante, a German monk, a Chinese physician Guo Zhen Xin, Yan Choo, and Li Zhen, left for Sri Lanka. Bhante had travelled from Sri Lanka. His connections with a doctor in Sri Lanka who had been helping in the relief efforts gave us an opportunity to offer support and help. The journey began...

We touched down in Sri Lanka and were met by the doctor. It was 4 am. After a short rest, we set off with a small number of other volunteers in a rented van and headed toward the worst-hit coastal areas. Several stops were made to assess the tsunami aftermath.

### THE MOST HORRIFIC SIGHT: THE DEATH TRAIN

We arrived at Telwatte Village. The scene of utter destruction was unimaginable. Part of the railway track was completely swept away, thus putting a halt to the train services. What used to be a home for these 450 local families had turned into a flat land of desolation. Most of these families had lost their livelihoods to this tragedy. It had cast a pall over this once-peaceful village. Where we stood, it was calm—suffocatingly calm. The natives were subdued. We saw a badly damaged train. Its presence seemed to serve as a poignant reminder of the horrific event. As we explored inside the train, a bad stench permeated the stale air. We saw moldy baggage and torn clothing, strewn and scattered among the debris. Remnants of broken glass lying jaggedly in the windows seemed to show a desperate struggle to escape the raging waters crashing into the train. It was a heart-wrenching sight. Eyewitness reports said that an estimated 1500 people on board the passenger train “Queen of the Ocean” were all killed. The jam-packed train, filled to its capacity, was leaving Colombo and had travelled ninety kilometers. It was chugging along some two hundred meters from the coast when the disaster struck. Panic drove many in the vicinity to clamber onto the train to escape the relentless tidal waves. But alas, this ill-fated train became a death trap for these hapless people.





## NATURE'S WRATH CONFOUNDS MANKIND

As we travelled on, we met Lieu Quan, a Vietnamese monk who came of his own accord from the United States to help in the relief efforts. Through him, we met other international volunteers: medical personnel, engineers, teachers, et cetera. He had also set up a fund for the Perlaya Relief Camp; we made a monetary contribution to this worthy cause. A female doctor-volunteer then told us that some wretched villagers with foot injuries needed slippers, as they were barefooted when they came for treatment. We saw to this small request. The courageous spirit and sacrifice of these volunteers touched us deeply, because regardless of race, religion, or status, they cast aside preconceptions and prejudices, put it all down, and "only did it" with the sole purpose of helping to rebuild fractured lives. These selfless acts moved us beyond words.

One hundred kilometers up north, once-sturdy brick houses now lay in ruins. A big question arose. Where had the people gone? The search began the following day. We came upon derelict schools and temples that had been turned into temporary relief camps. Scores of women and children made homeless by this disaster were taking refuge in the shelters. The plight of these people had never seemed more real as we went about offering assistance and donations to every family, after ascertaining their needs. These gifts were received with gratitude. The villagers were not beggars, but they were turned into refugees overnight because of the brutal killing waves. It had been three weeks since the disaster and they had yet to rise above this tragedy *and* recover from the painful loss of their homes and families. It is our fervent hope that despite losing their loved ones, these stricken villagers will find the strength and will to carry on living for the sake of their remaining relatives. And, that they will regain their smiles once again.

The ensuing days were filled with a myriad of feelings. As I walked toward boulders marking the coast line, only breathing, I offered a wholehearted prayer that the lives of these survivors would settle into normalcy. As we left the heartbreaking land steeped in Buddhist traditions that is Sri Lanka—I vowed to return.

Nature's destruction had made us realize the transience of humankind. How can we not cherish our existence? In this all-encompassing world, human beings are indeed insignificant and vulnerable. Surrounded by innumerable deaths, we all the more felt life's impermanence. We are blessed. We are alive today. Each day draws closer to death, yet, death is merely a debt that everyone has to pay. Life, with its fragility, must be treasured. Human beings only live once. Life is fleeting—and death is only transitory.

We are fortunate to be alive. Grasp the present and live in the moment—give it all that you can. While we cannot determine our lifespan, we can direct our lives. There is no knowing what tomorrow brings, but we can seize today. In spite of life's ups and downs, strive for the best.

Discern life's true meaning and find your correct direction. Let us work together and help the survivors reconstruct their homes and soon find peace.

The merciless tsunami has left countless people without a home, but love and hope have prevailed. With great faith in the human spirit, we can help them rebuild their lives. Let's shine a ray of hope for every tear in the Indian Ocean. 🌍

**Kwan Yin Chan Lin continues to raise funds for the relief efforts in Sri Lanka. Please make your checks payable to:**

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# our true situation

Chong An Sunim JDPS

## ONE: LANDING IN THE OLD WORLD

Living among gypsies is a lot of fun. Never thought I would do that, though. But after landing in Hungary from Asia with a little help, what do you do? Rentals are tough, the owners have lot of say in what you can do. Unless you own what you use, you may be in for a lot of unpleasant surprises, with a ninety-day notice to leave always hanging above your head.

So I started to search for something we could buy. I looked at several apartments, big and small, and one in District VIII, the gypsiest of all quarters, just fit. It was 43 sq.m. (390 sq.ft) with a kitchenette, and a bathroom so small you could hardly take a shower.

Yet we did live there for three years, with some spicy and really run-down girls just over the courtyard, who were high most of the time and kept their music at disco levels for their clients. Just next door, the Shooky family holed themselves up: mother, father, three kids and a dog lived in just half of the area that we owned, shouting and screaming most of the time.

A few burnouts, alcoholics, a poor family, and a lot of retired women on the second floor made the scene absolutely colorful. The grannies loved us, the addicts did not care so much, and we could start our Zen life there just opposite a small but lively Protestant temple on the other side of the street, frequented mostly by Christian Chinese.

We had a good time, though life was hard training. We had to keep our conduct, as well as our direction, very clear. Once, I was stopped by a young gypsy man and he asked, "Are you some kind of martial artist, or what?"

He was not aggressive, only strongly inquisitive.

"Yeah," I said, "but this may not be the martial arts you expect. We do this with our minds, not with the body."

"How do you do that?" he asked.

"You know, in physical martial arts, your opponent tries to make you weak by kicking and punching. In mental martial arts, your opponent wants to make you angry, or arouse some desire, or force something stupid on you. If you let any of these happen, you lose."

"Well, that sounds a little strange," he

scratched his head and said, "but you could defend yourself if you wanted to, right?"

"I probably could. But if you win the mental part, you do not have to fight the physical part."

"Interesting. Good luck, and see you sometime later," he said, and went on his way.

All of these encounters went smoothly, probably because everyone kept cool. Sometimes a group of two or three people would stop me, and leave with a little disappointment, as well as some respect and curiosity, "What is this guy really about?"

More than a year into living in the district, we were walking home after giving a dharma talk at a Tibetan center about 1.5 miles away. Just before midnight, we reached the square next to our block, and right in the middle of the square, there was a gang of fifteen people, hanging out after a long summer day, having some booze and making very little noise, being almost peaceful. One of them caught sight of us, and a loud swear shattered the lull—he thought we were skinheads. Almost immediately, another member cooled him down, "Leave it alone, I know them."

While this brief exchange took place within the gang, we were briskly walking, neither looking at them, nor running, nor talking—just doing what we had to do. We knew that in the jungle, jungle laws rule. And as long as we followed them, we suffered no harm. When we did not, we learned better very soon.

We used to go to the courtyard for walking meditation. This was especially good during a hot summer dawn. One time, the Zen Center residents were circling on the concrete slowly. I was somewhere away on a journey, and an early client of the spicy girls was sitting on the threshold, smoking pot into the rising sun.

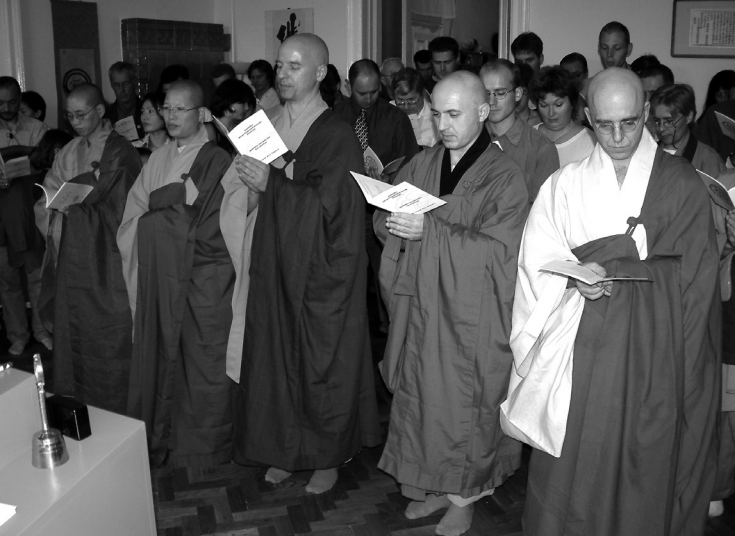
He asked one of the haeng-jas, "What are you guys doing here anyway?"

The student answered, "I have no time for this right now."

The guy went on smoking and staring, without saying a word. But the following night, some people quietly broke into the small Zen center, and while we



At the gate of the old Zen Center



were sleeping inside, they took what they found in the kitchenette. From this experience, we learned that that was no way to talk to them.

When the burglary repeated itself a few weeks later without any precursor, we put up our defenses. Until then, there were no bars on the doors or windows, despite the fact that all the neighbors had had them ever since they had moved in. We also reported the burglary to the police, but the young officer said, "Look, unless there is blood on the floor, not much is going to happen." Yeah, the D8PD had harder things to deal with.

What they did with the next case, I cannot even guess. Fortunately, this happened in the other house, whose courtyard was adjacent to ours, but separated by a wall. The residents there were far more violent, and on one winter day we heard an enormous scream, fading into a weak whimper, then silence. A man died there that night, because he kept molesting his step-daughter, and the girl's boyfriend threatened a few times to cut his throat if he did not stop. Apparently, he did not. The youngsters had no chance to make a move and start a life on their own, and when the anger of the young man reached critical density, the step-father ended up lying in his own blood. This happened about halfway through our sojourn there.

That event just made my resolution stronger that the moment we could, we would move, but I had to do some serious reconstruction of my old family apartment that I inherited. The day of relocation finally came, and almost exactly three years after we opened the first Zen Center, the second threw its gates open, this time in District VI, where you can find it today.

Even in that old, tiny apartment, we had several Yong Maeng Jong Jins, teachers visited us, and five of us lived there. As early as 2001, two haeng-jas appeared, who are now Won Hyu and Won Oh Sunims, doing hard training in Korea. Yet the way there was rough for all of us. Won Hyu Sunim took the dharma to her home town quite early, and I was hosted by her parents any time we had a dharma talk in Debrecen, a town some ten miles from her place in eastern Hungary.

Won Hyu Sunim's parents knew what was coming. Her mother asked me once, looking straight into my eyes: "So,

you are taking my daughter away?"

"No, madam, she is following her own way," I said.

The father chimed in, "Just let her do what she wants."

We left it at that. Five of us, including the two haeng-jas, went to Korea in 2002 and sat Winter Kyol Che there. Two of them remained there. When they do return home, I am not sure what they will find. I just know this: it is very risky for anybody to land right in the middle of their home karma which they left behind, still smouldering, waiting for the home-leaver to return. I wrote to Zen Master Seung Sahn about it, and he just replied, "That's not your true situation." When I read this, I could look beyond the horizon and make the next step.

**TWO: SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE**

As our plane takes off from Vienna Airport, we leave one of the oldest European cities behind, with its distinct flavor for opera and strudel. Cruising at 35,000 feet and looking at the white wisps of clouds, I recall some locations I have taught at: small but dedicated groups of practitioners, scattered throughout the countries of central and eastern Europe.

What is it that links Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, Warsaw, Vilnius, and Budapest together? Only history? The common European karma we had to share, with the upper classes shaping our political and economic destiny for centuries? The underlying Christian establishment, which, though mostly indirectly by now, still permeates most walks of life? No one can say for certain.

My general impression of Europe, after a year in the United States and nearly six years in Asia, is that the Old World is still holding onto ideas that cannot help its future. It has a mixed heritage of Greek philosophy, Judeo-Christian religion, Roman law, a few centuries of the Dark Ages and whatever appeared after the Renaissance—science, secular art, and extreme political systems. All of this is based on opposites thinking, and anybody



Memorial ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn



trying to defuse it would face some serious resistance. This is called conservatism.

A culture which establishes itself on opposites thinking is bound to foster imbalance and injustice. Europe has been plagued by many social and financial problems—all stemming from some strong thought systems which take opposites qualities for granted, as if created by someone else, not us. As a result, the twentieth century witnessed unprecedented grief and sorrow during the two world wars and their aftermaths.

The middle way seems the only path to achieve balance and anything sustainable for human society—not just in Europe, but anywhere else on this Earth. For this, the West has to reestablish itself spiritually, the need for which is not on many people's agenda. Most people only want a quick fix for their problems, and do not want to dig deep inside for the primary cause—then they would inevitably see the true situation.

Those who do want to go deeper, gather in small apartments or try to build larger meditation centers, and the penetration of Buddhism and Zen is still pretty slow here compared to the United States or Australia. In the satellite countries, many people are interested, but very few stick with the sangha. But those who do, stay on for years, so there is a core group of a few dedicated people everywhere, and less committed members hover around them. It can take many, many years for these groups to reach critical mass, being able to practice in any kind of situation.

It is prevalent that most people take Buddhism and Zen to be another religion, although this approach is far from correct. Yet most non-Buddhist Europeans have no other pattern to use, so for them, if it is spirituality, it must be operating more or less in the same way as mainstream Christianity—or it must be something really weird and harmful like a “cult.”

The inhabitants of Belá, Czech Republic, a village so small that it does not appear on most maps, first thought that we were Jehovah's Witnesses, walking in a straight line

along the road every afternoon. We heard this from the dentist in Yevichko, the town nearby, and we saw this in the eyes of the villagers, but anybody who came into personal contact with us was nice and friendly. The shopkeepers were especially happy, as the cash flow must have brought them a mini-boom for the new year—a surplus of close to one hundred consumers for three months makes a lot of difference.

All rentals end one day, and as you read these lines, we are getting ready for our third and last Winter Kyol Che at Byela. The next one will be in Hungary, in one of the most blessed places I have ever seen, which I had the fortune to find and initiate the construction of a temple there.

### THREE: WON KWANG SA

Sometime in 2002, Steve Makszi walked into the Budapest Zen Center straight from Las Vegas and said, “Why don't you guys build something like a small house in the forest, you know, for retreats in nature, things like that.” I said, “Maxi, my friend, if we had anything even resembling a good piece of land close enough, I would gladly do that. What was offered so far is in Poland, called Wisla, way up north in the Beskid Mountains nearly 200 miles from here, and I cannot commute there. And nobody else is interested in starting anything there.” “Yah,” he said, “my relatives have some land in the Pilis Mountains. That's close enough, I guess.”

Umm, I mused, that can be pretty good unless it is too near some village or small town.

I checked out what Maxi had. It was a 1/119 share of a 52-acre tract, joint and indivisible ownership, given as reparations to those who were ripped off by communists more than half a century ago. If even one of them would not sell, there would be no deal. After some consultation, I did not get into it.

The Budapest sangha took frequent walks to the Pilis, but I did not leave the finding of a place to impressions only. I bought military maps so detailed that even large trees were





marked, stitched them all together, and pasted the paper monster on a big board. I looked at it every now and then, trying to find the next target for the walks.

Sikáros, the heart of the Pilis, opened itself for us and we could feel the flow of some wonderful mountain energy. If only this could support our practice! I inquired through helpers and learned the brutal truth: it was state-owned, protected by the national park authority, and used exclusively for hunting. "You know," my helper said, "I can take care of a lot of things. I would grab this for you if I could. But looking at the conditions, I have to ask you: Forget it."

In turn, he offered a piece of his land, and when I visited it near Esztergom, the seat of the Catholic Church just in the northwestern nook of the Pilis, I saw it as the least suitable land for anything but a small weekend house. "How do you get here?" I asked. "Maybe if I come here from another direction, I will have a different impression."

"We came in on the lakeside road," he said, "but that's a long way." I took that long way the next day and found his land just as unsuitable for anything meaningful as the day before. I became totally empty, as a year of arduous search did not bring any results. I took the same way out as I went in, and a mile before the lakes, in the line of the brick house which we now own, something stopped me.

I got out of the car, walked to the center of the valley, and looked around in a circle slowly. Breathe in, breathe out, feel it out, feel it out, what is this, what is this... THAT'S IT. It took less than five minutes, and though we visited numerous times later, the result was always the same. On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, the senior officials of the Hungarian sangha visited the land, and unanimously agreed. We would

go for it! The first inquiries were made in March, the first deposits were made in May, and the first property became ours in August 2005.

The valley has a perfect north-south alignment, wonderful mountains all around, and a zoning which gives proper legal framework for the construction we want. As you can see from the pictures available from wonkwangsa.net, there is a dirt road intersecting the area. West of this, in the small orchards, we will build small houses for guests, who can come for dharma holidays alone, with friends, and even with their whole families. They will take part in practicing and temple life to any extent that they want, then spend the rest of the day hiking, sightseeing, and having fun.

East of the road on 12 acres of land, the temple site will unfold in the coming years. Intended as the location for the International Winter Kyol Che of our School in Europe, we will first fix the houses which will hold us in 2007, then we'll start construction with the help of those who dare to stay there longer.

We already own 60% of the 12 acres, a small garden on the western side, and maybe more by the time you read this. As support streams in, we will eventually own 100% of the temple grounds and many more gardens. The buildings we need to reconstruct immediately are already ours. Preparatory work begins in earnest not later than spring 2006, with an official ground-breaking ceremony in the fall. We are creating something which will help this world, help our lives, and help our true situation.

This includes you to the extent that you want to be involved. With all aboard, let us share all that is involved: practice, work, and fun. Everyone's invited! ☸

Won Kwang Sa

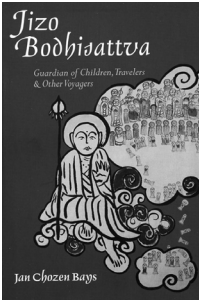
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# Books



*Jizo Bodhisattva  
Guardian of Children,  
Travelers and Other Voyagers*  
by Jan Chozen Bays  
Shambhala, 2003

reviewed by Zen Master Wu Kwang

Jan Chozen Bays is a Zen master in the White Plum lineage of the late master Taizan Maezumi Roshi. She is a Zen priest and teacher at the Jizo Mountain—Great Vow Zen Monastery in Clatskanie, Oregon. She is also a pediatrician who specializes in the evaluation of children for abuse and neglect.

Her work focus suggests why she may have chosen the subject for this book, *Jizo Bodhisattva, Guardian of Children, Travelers and Other Voyagers*.

Jizo Bodhisattva (in Korean, Ji Jang Bosal), whose name means Earth Store or Earth Treasury, is the bodhisattva of great vows—in Sino Korean, Dae Won Bosal.

The vows of Jizo are: “Only after all the Hells are empty will I become a Buddha. Only after all beings are taken across to Enlightenment will I, myself, realize Bodhi.” It is because of the saving power of these vows that Jizo’s name is often invoked during memorial services for the dead.

This book is both an informative overview of the cultural history and evolution of the worship and practices connected with Jizo in Japan up to the present, as well as a study of the iconography connected with this bodhisattva, and how the various iconographic images relate directly to the living practice of Zen, in formal meditation as well as daily life. The contour of the book could be said to be expressed by the author in a chapter entitled, “The Pilgrimage of Jizo Bodhisattva”:

For over fifteen hundred years, Jizo Bodhisattva has been a spiritual pilgrim, traveling from India to Northern Asia and now to America and Europe, fulfilling her original vow not to rest until all beings are saved from hell. As she travels, her body and dress transform, according to need. As she enters new countries, new forms of practice develop that make her more accessible and are most suited to the suffering particular to each time and place. Whatever her external appearance, male or female, monk or royalty, Asian or Western, she always can be recognized by the benefit that appears in her wake.

In the sections of this book that deal with the evolution of Jizo worship in Japan, there are many interesting folk tales and miracle stories related to a simple and clear faith in the power of the vows of the bodhisattva. A recent form of worship connected with Jizo is called the Mizuko ceremony. Mizuko literally means water baby. In actual use it refers to both the unborn who float in a watery world awaiting birth and the infants up to one or two years of age, whose hold on life in the human realm is still tenuous.

The Mizuko ceremony is a memorial service for infants who have died either before birth or within the first few years of life. The author explains that this ceremony is not an ancient rite, nor was it originally a Buddhist ceremony. “It arose in Japan in the 1960s, in response to a human need, to relieve the suffering emerging from the experience of the large number of women who had undergone abortions after World War II.” In the book, there is an explanation of the form of service as practiced in Japan, as well as how this ceremony has been recently offered to people in the United States. Included is a model of the ceremony, as well as suggestions about modifications for different groups and needs. Descriptions of the benefits that people have experienced from participating in this form of service also are offered. These include the releasing of grief and acceptance of loss, as well as the gaining of comfort and support.

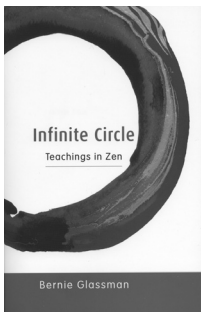
Pictures and statues of Jizo most often represent her/him as a monk who holds a pilgrim’s staff, with six jingling metal rings atop it in one hand and a wish-fulfilling gem in the other. The author comments, “Jizo Bodhisattva has been a pilgrim for two thousand years. What can we learn from Jizo’s pilgrimage about our own spiritual journey?”

Using this theme of spiritual journey, the book elucidates the inner meaning of Jizo’s staff, the meaning of the six rings, and the jewel he holds, as elements of practice and as ways to view the workings of our mind and inner processes.

The book concludes with a chapter, “Practicing with Jizo Bodhisattva,” which enumerates and explains such practices as reciting the name of the Bodhisattva as a mantra and reciting the Jizo dharani. It also supports the efficacy of making and renewing vows to establish a sense of direction. Sections from *The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* are included.

In all, this is a well-organized and comprehensive book, emphasizing practice rather than a theoretical or scholastic undertaking. ☸





*Infinite Circle: Teaching in Zen*

by Bernie Glassman  
Shambhala, 2003  
Reviewed by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Bernie Tetsugen Glassman is a dharma heir of Maezumi Roshi. Not your standard Zen master, he has led street retreats (serious practice under the conditions in which the homeless live), and founded a number of spiritual/social projects. The Greyston Mandala community includes Zen practice, community development, work among the homeless, and a highly successful bakery (which in turn employs the homeless and recently homeless.) The Peacemaker Order (including the Zen Peacemaker Order) is an ecumenical organization dedicated to peace and social activism within a spiritual framework. Most recently, he has been involved in constructing the House of One People, envisioned as an organizational and event center in rural Massachusetts.

In keeping with this focus, his previous books were *Instructions to the Cook: a Zen Master's Lessons in Living a Life that Matters* (with Rick Fields)—a book about cooking in only a metaphorical sense; and *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace*. Before striking out on his own, he also co-authored or edited more standard books about Zen practice with his teacher, Maezumi Roshi.

Published just recently, *Infinite Circle* actually belongs to an intermediate period, when Glassman was teaching solo in New York, but before he had begun his distinctive projects. While a chapter is added to bring in his later concerns, fundamentally the book has its roots in a series of lectures he gave, before the Greyston community appeared, on three basic texts: the Heart Sutra, Shih T'ou's eighth century poem *The Identity of the Relative and the Absolute* (a.k.a. *Sandokai*, traditionally chanted in Soto services), and Soto Zen's sixteen bodhisattva precepts (the triple refuge, the standard ten precepts, and the three admonitions to cease from evil, to do good, and to do good for others.)

The book has an outwardly conventional form but is deeply idiosyncratic in its content. In the very beginning, three pages into the discussion of the Heart Sutra, on page 7, we are introduced to Glassman's key concept of One Body, which permeates the book. This is introduced through the Sanskrit word *maha*, conventionally translated as "great." To Glassman this actually means "One Body." We get there by the image of a circle which becomes bigger and bigger, so that it finally encompasses everything (this is where the title comes from), hence great = One Body. This notion of One Body is returned to frequently throughout the text, and provides the background for Glassman's intensely social vision of practice.

The language is largely abstract and philosophical, in which statement and definition transmute into each other. For example, consider the following (in the section on the Heart Sutra):

*We are nothing but prajna wisdom itself, which is the functioning of emptiness, of this as it is. Emptiness is the state of One Body, the state in which there are no concepts or notions of what is, just the one thing.*

There is also a focus on terminology and meaning of the sort usually found in philosophy texts, e.g. (also in the Heart Sutra section):

*Appropriateness is not a matter of right or wrong. If the hand of a demented person catches on fire, he might cut it off. Is that right or wrong? According to our conceptual ideas of what should be, it's wrong... That might be valid in the realm of separation and knowing, but I'm talking about appropriateness that is the functioning of no-separation.*

The general form of this section of the book is a close reading in which focus on individual words expands into stories, images, and other forms of teaching.

Since we do not chant the *Sandokai* on a regular basis, it's worth talking about it a little before discussing Glassman's discussion of it. Shih T'ou was a contemporary of Ma Tsu (our Ma Jo); they were the most prominent Zen masters of their time. The questions this poem is concerned with are: how do things come to be, and what are they really? Theistic religions have no problem with these questions—God made everything, and everything is what God made it—but for Buddhism, especially Mahayana, with its emphasis on sunyata (usually translated as "emptiness") these are more difficult questions. Shih T'ou's poem, in the translation Glassman uses, has only 47 lines, but those lines cover a lot of territory. The first two lines are: "The Mind of the Great Sage of India/ Is intimately conveyed west to east," and from there we quickly move into the basic concerns of the poem. The language in some places is quite abstract:

*Each thing has its own being  
Which is not different from its place and function*

*In other places it is concrete:*

*Fire is hot, water is wet,  
Wind moves and the earth is dense.*

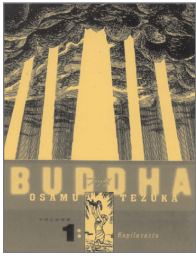
*In other places the two meld almost magically:*

*The four elements return to their true nature  
As a child to its mother.*

The last ten lines are directions on practice ("Hearing this, simply perceive the Source...") and admonitions to practice hard—the last line is "Do not waste your time by night or day!"

Glassman situates the *Sandokai* squarely in the philosophical notion of the Five Positions: the relative alone, the absolute alone, the relative in the absolute, the absolute in the relative, and what he calls no-position. But while he expands on these notions as they appear in the text, he does not limit himself to them, and his discussion ranges quite far. He talks about a number of kong-ans, and his interpretations are quite different from ours. For example, in his discussion of Gye Chung's cart, the cart becomes a metaphor: one wheel is the relative, the other the absolute, and the axle is one-ness. Again, the notion of One Body infuses this section.

The section on the precepts is relatively brief, and of the ten precepts, he only discusses the first one, don't kill. In the final chapter, written more recently than the rest of the book, he uses the kong-an, "Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?" as a springboard, along with the notion of One Body, for his emphasis on bearing witness and commitment to action. ☸



*Buddha, Volume One: Kapilavastu*

Osamu Tezuka

Vertical, 2003

Reviewed by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Osamu Tezuka was a master of manga, the Japanese art form incarnated both in graphic literature (a.k.a. comics) and animation (the latter known as animé). Writing his first manga story as a young child, he went on to become one of the most influential manga artists of the twentieth century, introducing cinematic techniques onto the page and, inevitably, moving into animé, where he was equally influential. His most famous creation is *Astro Boy*, but his work is extraordinarily rich and varied.

As a teenager he founded an animal-lover's club, so it is not surprising that he created an eight-volume life of the Buddha. The first volume appeared in Tokyo in 1987, two years before Tezuka's death at the age of 61. Vertical, Inc., a publishing house specializing in translating Japanese books into English, has published the first six volumes, with the next two scheduled for the fall and winter.

The art is extraordinary, and the narrative is bold and unconventional. Few of the first volume's pages have anything to do with Buddha (this changes in later volumes.) Instead,

they focus on a young slave boy Chapra, his mother (never named), and a street urchin and bandit, the seven-year old Tatta, who off-handedly exhibits both mystical powers and astounding compassion. These three make their ways through a cruel society in which caste means everything and violence is everywhere. Only gradually do we meet the Buddha's future parents and their peaceful kingdom of Kapilavastu, which seems immune to the calamities—from locusts to drought to ravaging armies—of the kingdoms around it.

The other volumes continue this blend of Tezuka's imagination and more conventional aspects of the Buddha's life, including an episode in which young Siddhartha, before marriage, falls in love with a woman bandit. This stuff is not in your standard versions of the Buddha's life, but so what? I'll take this version over Herman Hesse's any day. Tezuka is a master of his art with a deep respect for his subject, which is not really Buddha, but the question that drives human beings to practice, the question of how to live in this world. ☸

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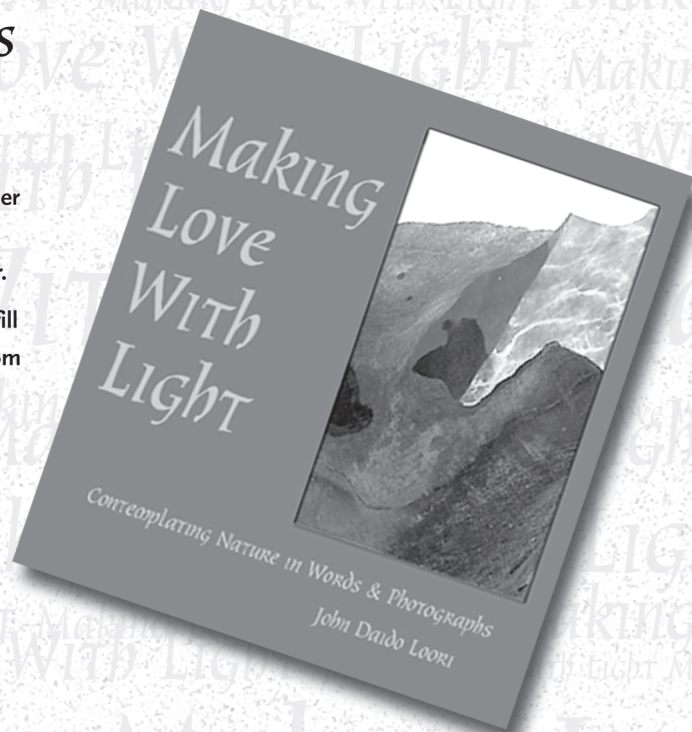
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