



**HWA GYE SAH
THIRD YEAR
MEMORIAL CEREMONY**

Zen Master Dae Kwang

Thank you all for coming from around the world to this third year memorial ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn. I believe the reason people loved Zen Master Seung Sahn so much, and followed him, was because he understood our minds. He knew how to help us while at the same time encouraging us to connect with people all around the world, helping them. Now we come to a memorial ceremony. The true meaning of a memorial ceremony is more than just the shared memories and feelings. It carries with it an obligation. Because of our connection to a great teacher, we have a big responsibility. His teaching was always very clear; find your true self, and help the world. His life was an example of this. Because of our love connection, his life planted a seed in our hearts, helping us to find our true way and help the world. This is the job of the bodhisattva. This is not just some abstract philosophical principle, but the true reason for our being, moment to moment. So, I hope that the example of Zen Master Seung Sahn's life will be a motivation for us all—this moment—to start taking care of our original job. Thank you.

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P. Limchee & Karaoke

Jean Murphy

The trip to attend the Third Year Memorial Ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn was my first visit to Korea and to Asia. So to “prepare myself” I read a guide book, visited web sites, and learned seven essential Korean phrases such as “Hi, how are you?” I was good to go! The flight from San Francisco to Seoul was long but comfortable since the three seats next to me were empty. We landed at night and stayed at a hotel near the airport that had beautiful elevators with mirrors and silver doors embossed with large elegant egrets. The room itself was simple but it took my roommate and me fifteen minutes to figure out how to turn out the lights in the room (a console on the night table.) Some of our fellow tour members never figured it out and slept with the lights on all night. Breakfast in the hotel was buffet-style, about a mile long with dinner-like food,

including a big salad which contributed to the feeling of “what time is it?” Almost every meal on this trip had a million vegetable dishes I couldn’t identify. They were at times soft, crunchy, gushy or sticky, and often peppery. One example of a dish I couldn’t figure out, but was told, was a gel made of chestnuts. The flavors generally were fresh, clean, and delicious.

At mid-morning on this windy, cold day we arrived at Chogye Sah in downtown Seoul for the opening ceremony of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s memorial exhibition. It was extremely well attended (i.e. crowded). That, along with a bit of disorientation (where am I?), made it difficult to focus on the displays and speeches. However, my overall remembrance from the exhibition was a photo of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s big, happy face.

That afternoon we were launched onto our two-and-a-half hour road trip on a bus with purple tasseled curtains to the southern part of the Korean peninsula to tour several famous temples. We were herded around temple grounds, jetlagged and cheerful. It was great to be outside in the beautiful weather, with brisk air and bright winter sunshine. The temple buildings and grounds took us back in time, to some date from the sixth century. The Unification Great Medicine Buddha statue at Dong Hwa Sah stood white and 65-foot tall against the blue sky, with fabulous white stone arhats (disciples and protectors) surrounding it in a semicircle. These white bodhisattvas seemed to be springing alive right out of the wall behind him. The Buddha statue was built in hope of reunification of North and South Korea. Inside the temple, instead of a statue on an altar, the giant Buddha gazed down at us through a large window at the front of the hall.

On another day we visited the Seokguram Grotto, a very important Buddhist and historical site in Korea. The grotto, near Bulguk Sah, contains one of the most famous Buddha statues in all of Asia. We traveled there before dawn to see the sun rise over the East Sea from a mountain ridge below the grotto. The air and wind made for frigid conditions., but there we were, looking at the sun (and maybe a smidgen of sea). Some people chanted the Morning Bell Chant while others (perhaps not as inspired) simply viewed with teeth chattering. In between our historic explorations, we spent quality time traveling on four tour buses. I was on the now legendary Bus #2, which soon became infamous for its loud karaoke singing and very funny (and very bad) jokes. After visiting these historic temples we arrived with anticipation at Mu Sang Sah, our School temple, for a three-day retreat. None of the other temples, were as wonderful to me as Mu Sang Sah, which is lodged right into a gorgeous mountainside. Filled with our international sangha, and in a way home to us all, it was both exotic and familiar. We did three days of gentle Kyol Che (modified to handle so many people); the temple was so full, people were napping in the hallways. During the afternoon breaks, I would go into the woods and sleep in the leaves.

After the retreat we returned to Seoul to attend Zen Master Seung Sahn’s third year memorial ceremony at Hwa Gye Sah. In some strange way it reminded me of a funeral I attended recently of one of my relatives where I, as an ex-Catholic, found myself in the front pew of the church under the watchful eyes of the parishioners. It had been so long since I had attended a mass, I awkwardly didn’t know when to stand, kneel or sit down. The

memorial for Zen Master Seung Sahn was similar in that it was a formal occasion where we weren’t sure what the rules were, but knew, as Zen Master Seung Sahn’s foreign students, we had an important role to play. It was also quite a media event! News cameras were continuously pointed in our direction, rolling and clicking (this was notably unlike my prior experience.) There were numerous Buddhist monks, nuns, and laypeople there to commemorate Zen Master Seung Sahn’s life. The final day of the tour was back in Seoul for shopping, restaurants, sight-seeing, and subway exploration. We newcomers tagged along fixedly on the heels of those who knew their way around this city of over ten million people.

I really appreciated the opportunity to go to Korea with our School members from around the world and to experience Buddhism in Korea.

And then we came back home.

Things go round and round. 

THANK YOU, ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Joe Robichaud

This was my second trip to Korea, having attended Zen Master Seung Sahn’s second anniversary memorial ceremony the year earlier. That first trip a year ago made me feel vaguely reminiscent of my childhood. Although I had never been to Korea before, I grew up in a “Korean” household. My mother emigrated from Korea after marrying my father, a U.S. Army Medic stationed outside Paju-Ri, late in the Korean War. That first visit to Korea was filled with tastes and smells that reminded me of my childhood (the smell of kim chi is rather distinctive), and sights that reminded me of those rare, but treasured, visits to the Korean/Japanese grocery as a child (why do all of my memories seem to involve food?). A side trip to the Demilitarized Zone and the town of Paju also provided an opportunity for me to visit the place where my mother had come from, augmenting the stories I had heard in my youth with my own experiences of this place (albeit from two very different perspectives).

This past year’s trip had a very different feeling for me, the novelty of seeing Korea for the first time having worn off. The group’s first stop was at the Opening Ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn’s Memorial Exhibit at Chogye Sah, and from that moment on the trip was filled with a tremendous feeling of thankfulness for Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching and his seemingly limitless energy in spreading this teaching throughout the world. Zen Master Seung Sahn’s students from around the world had gathered here to honor the memory of this great teacher. Books, photographs, and videos from around the world chronicled his years traveling the globe, spreading the dharma everywhere he went. I really felt so grateful to be touched by his teaching, and as the group continued to tour around Korea, and later around Hong Kong, I felt so fortunate to be surrounded by so many caring and compassionate sangha-mates from around the world. We were able to see some really amazing sites on this

tour, the Great Medicine Buddha at Dong Hwa Sah, the historical Seokguram Grotto, relics from the Shilla Dynasty, and temple, after temple, after temple (if it's Tuesday this must be Hwa Gye Sah), but the most precious thing I saw in Korea was the worldwide sangha putting Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching in action, putting down individual likes and dislikes, working hard at together-action, being open and generous with each other, and simply looking out for one another. Ultimately this is how we can thank Zen Master Seung Sahn for all that he has given us, by ensuring the traditions he has given us live on, by treasuring and strengthening this amazing worldwide sangha, and by putting the practice into action in our everyday lives. 