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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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Cover: A courtyard gate at Bul Guk Sah, one of the temples visited on the tour held in conjunction with the third year memorial ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn. Above: Zen Master Dae Kwang at the exhibition on Zen Master Seung Sahn at the Chogye Order Headquarters in Seoul.

Ninth Gate: Nam Cheon Kills a Cat

An excerpt from the expanded and revised edition of Zen Master Seung Sah's classic Ten Gates, published by Shambhala.

One day Nam Cheon Zen Master was in his room when he heard a big commotion outside. The 250 monks of the Western Hall and the 250 monks of the Eastern Hall were fighting over a cat. Nam Cheon became very angry, picked up this cat and said, "You! Give me one word and I will save this cat! If you cannot, I will kill it!"

Here Nam Cheon is checking the students' minds to see if they truly love the cat or if they are only attached to the cat. If they are only attached to the cat, they cannot answer. If they are not attached to the cat—if they love the cat—then saving the cat's life is possible. But none of the monks said anything. There was only silence. So finally Nam Cheon Zen Master killed the cat.

In the evening, JoJu, Nam Cheon's top student, returned to the temple. Nam Cheon told JoJu everything that had happened. When he was done speaking JoJu took off his shoes, put them on top of his head, and walked away. Nam Cheon Zen Master then said, "If only you had been there, I could have saved the cat."

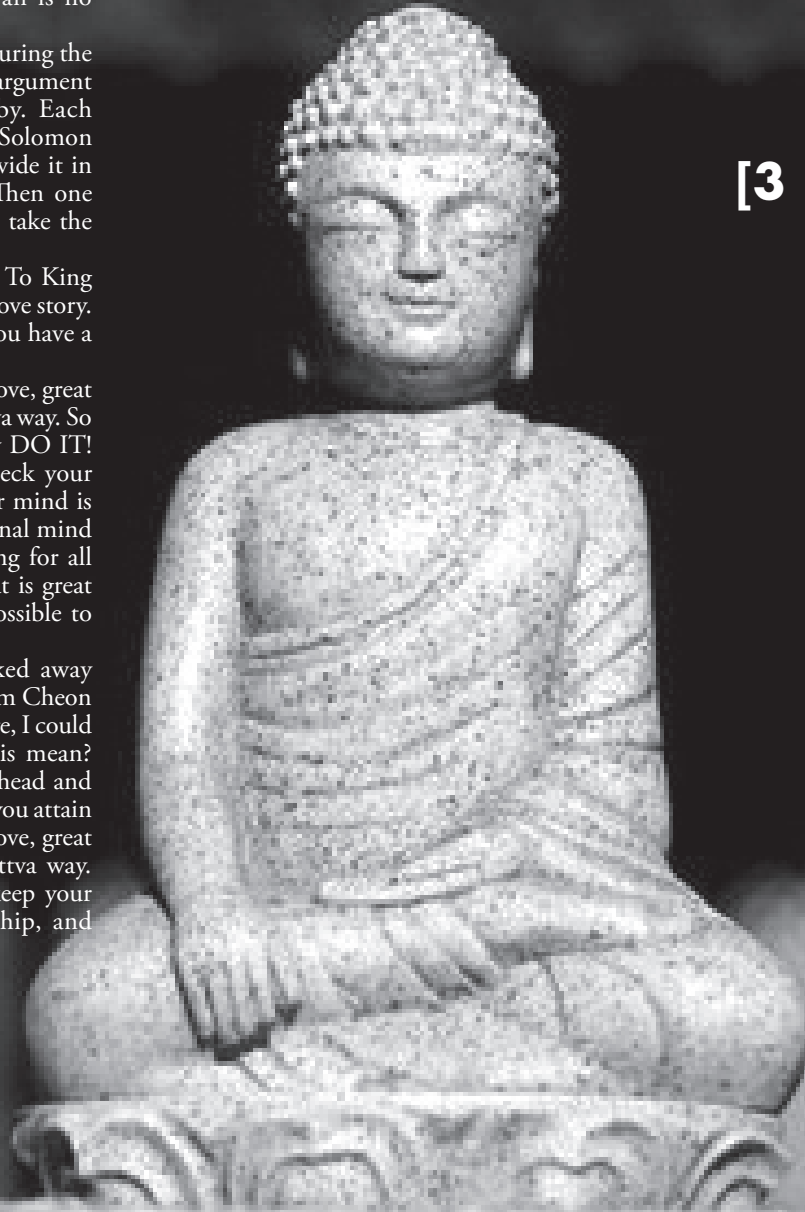
The first question: When Nam Cheon Zen Master holds up the cat and says, "Give me one word and I will save the cat. If you cannot, I will kill it!"—what can you do? This is a love kong-an. If you have great love and great compassion, then this kong-an is no problem.

Here is a hint: A long time ago, during the time of King Solomon, there was an argument between two women about a baby. Each claimed it was her baby. So King Solomon said, "Bring this baby, and I will divide it in two. Each of you can take half." Then one woman said to the other, "Oh, you take the baby. It is yours."

Then who was the true mother? To King Solomon, it was very clear. This is a love story. If you have great love inside, then you have a Zen mind.

Unconditional love means great love, great compassion, and the great bodhisattva way. So unconditionally sit; unconditionally DO IT! Unconditionally practice. Don't check your condition. This is great love. If your mind is unconditional, then this unconditional mind has no I, my, or me. I do everything for all beings—for husband, for wife—that is great love. If you have this mind, it is possible to save the cat.

The second question: JoJu walked away with his shoes on his head. Then Nam Cheon Zen Master said, "If you had been here, I could have saved the cat." What does this mean? Why did JoJu put his shoes on his head and walk away? What does this mean? If you attain this kong-an, then you attain great love, great compassion, and the great bodhisattva way. This means moment to moment, keep your correct situation, correct relationship, and correct function.



Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Today I will take the precepts at Providence. I am writing you, though, because soon you will travel to Korea, and I will return to school. So for a long time, I won't see you. I had planned to sit during the Labor Day retreat at Providence Zen Center, but that weekend my father is getting married, so I must be with him.

Maybe you will check my homework anyway, "Nam Cheon Kills a Cat." To master Nam Cheon, I would say, "It's theirs!"

Thank you very much for giving the New Haven Zen Center so much of your time this summer. Since you came those two weeks in a row, we've had many new people come to practice, including many of my classmates. Perhaps when school starts again the Zen Center will be very busy.

See you in December.

Yours truly,
Erik

Dear Erik,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? Congratulations on taking the five precepts.

You wanted to come to the retreat but you cannot—that's OK. What is most important, moment to moment, is keeping your correct situation and relationship. Your father is getting married, so you will stay with him. That is the correct situation and correct relationship. That is Zen, not special.

To Nam Cheon's kong-an you say, "It's theirs." If only you and someone else (two people) are present, that answer is possible. But at the time there were 500 people together, 250 from the eastern hall and 250 from the western hall. The other students don't like your speech; they say, "NO!!!" Then what? You cannot act.

One more step is necessary, then you will correctly understand great love and great compassion and attain them. This answer is not your idea—you are a thief because you took this answer from the story of King Solomon.

Again I ask you: Zen Master Nam Cheon, holding up the cat, says, "You! Give me one word, and I will save this cat. If you cannot, I will kill it!" What can you do? Tell me, tell me! If you don't understand, only go straight, don't know, OK?

I think that in the future the New Haven Zen Center will become stronger and a wonderful Zen Center, because you are strong, very clear and have many friends.

I hope you only go straight, don't know, which is clear like space, soon finish Nam Cheon's kong-an, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the dharma,
S.S.

Busy Beloved Soen Sa Nim,

Not knowing where you are, hopefully this reaches you before your world trip. Thank you for your helping answer letter.

Now Nam Cheon's cat was saved from the beginning, but to save the cat and all cats, my one word is *meow*.

—MEOW
Yours truly,
Patricia

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for your letter. How are you and your family?


Your answer is not good, not bad. We say 90 percent. There is 10 percent missing because our kong-an has two kinds of answers: "subject just like this" and "object just like this." For example, when you are hungry, then what? You must eat. This is subject just like this. When someone else is hungry, then what? This is object just like this. That is called the correct situation. When you are hungry, what is your correct situation? When someone else is hungry, then what is your correct situation?

So Nam Cheon's kong-an is not subject just like this. If it were, your answer would be 100 percent. But it is an object just like this kong-an, so your answer is not enough. Somebody is hungry and you say, "I am hungry too." You are not keeping your correct situation. You must have great love, great compassion, and the great bodhisattva way. Then this kong-an is no problem.

If you don't understand, you must see a cowboy movie. You can find two kinds of cowboy stories: money and love. Money stories are not interesting. You must check a love story. Then you will see that this love is without conditions. That is true love. If you find that, then this kong-an is no problem.

Only understanding cannot help you. You must be without conditions and find true love, that's great love, great compassion and the great bodhisattva way. That is also everyday mind and Zen mind.

I hope you only go straight, keep a clear mind, attain Nam Cheon's kong-an, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the dharma,
S.S. 





**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

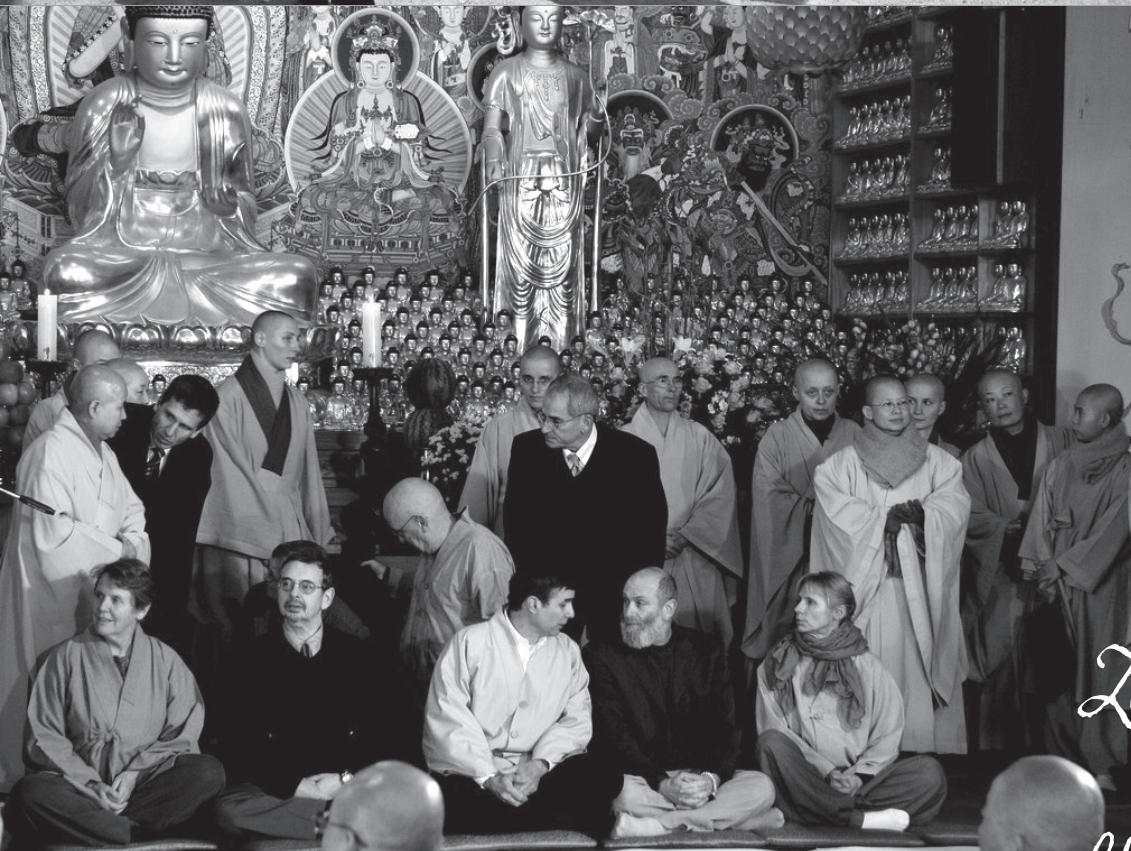
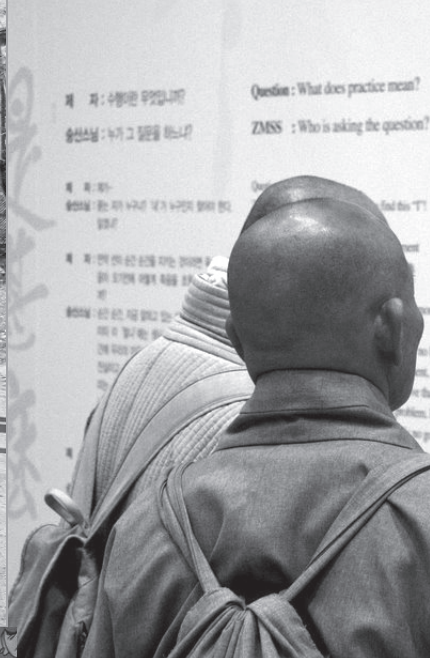
Joe Robichaud

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. 



*Zen Master Seon
Third Anniversary
Memorial Ceremony
Korea November*



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Practicing Together Our Karma Becomes C



Seung Sahn's
Anniversary
Pilgrimage and Tour
October 2007



Baek Jang's Principles of Sitting Zen

Translated by Jess Row

Translator's Note: Principles of Sitting Zen is a section of the Baizhang Qinggui, or The Clear Rule of Baizhang, a twelfth-century (Yuan dynasty) version of the original temple rules written by Zen Master Baizhang Huaihai (Baek Jang) in the ninth century, near the end of the Tang dynasty. The original text no longer exists.

Baizhang was a disciple of Mazu Daoyi (Ma Jo) and the teacher of Huangbo, who gave transmission to Linji. According to Zen Master Seung's Sahn's lineage line, our Kwan Um tradition passes through Baizhang, Huangbo and the Chinese Linji school, entering Korea with Zen Master T'aego in the twelfth century. The Baizhang Qinggui, however, is the source of temple rules not only for one lineage line but for all Zen practitioners, in China, Japan, and Korea. It helped create the "Zen school" as a distinct tradition and institution within East Asian Buddhism. Most famously, Baizhang emphasized that monastics in the Zen tradition should engage in physical labor, including the cultivation of food, which was an enormous cultural shift away from the earlier Buddhist emphasis on surviving entirely through donations from the lay population. Baizhang was also the first to insist that Zen temples should include separate dharma halls for meditation, and that monks should adhere to a fixed schedule of practice, labor, chanting, and formal meals, with as little sleep as possible—the same kind of schedule we use today in our retreats.

The Baizhang Qinggui is markedly different from other well-known Chinese Buddhist texts of this era (such as The Blue Cliff Record or the Mumonkwan) because it is concerned not with biography or teaching stories but with concrete instructions for day-to-day life. "Principles of Sitting Zen" is, to my knowledge, one of the earliest texts offering explicit directions for sitting meditation practice in the Zen tradition. Although there are many translations of Baizhang's biography, speeches, and dialogues, as far as I know, this particular text has never before appeared in English.

P r i n c i p l e s

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Now, to study the Prajna-paramita means to take up the great heart of compassion and expand our vows and intentions.

This is the precious practice of samadhi we vow to undertake for all beings.

Don't conceive of the body only as a way to seek to solve or alleviate problems, or as a means of escape.

Abandon all reasons of wanting to rest; let go of your ten thousand thoughts.

Use the body and mind together as a means of paying attention, in an undivided way, without quantifying, even while drinking and eating; pay close attention even while sleeping.

When you are sitting, seek a point of tranquil, thoughtful attention over all present phenomena.

Sit cross-legged or half cross-legged. Put the left palm over the right. Put the two thumbs together.

Sit with your body upright. Square your ears with the tops of your shoulders. Align your nose with your navel.

Your tongue should be propped on your teeth. Your eyes should be slightly open. Avoid falling asleep.

If you attain Zen practice your strength will increase to the utmost.

The great practicing monks of old always kept their eyes open. Zen Master Faxu laughed at people who closed their eyes while sitting Zen. He called this a black mountain spirit cave. Heed this deep and profound statement.

Don't concern yourself with good and evil. Set out to achieve attainment just now.

Lasting attainment has no taste, does not fall away, does not scatter.

Ten thousand years with one intention: not short, not long. This is the only technique needed for sitting Zen.

Sitting Zen is the dharma-entrance to peace and joy.

There are many who fall ill and fail to realize their intention.

To realize your intention and self-nature is the fourth great serenity. It is to have a brilliant spirit, clear and hopeful.

The flavor of the dharma is natural stillness and constant illumination of the spirit. It is to awaken from a deep sleep and realize that life and death are exactly the same.

But you must control your mind without the intention of gaining anything. Otherwise, I fear that along the Way great devils will distract even the strongest practitioner.

If you keep these thoughts foremost in your mind, nothing will detain you.

N o t e s

Abandon all reasons of wanting to rest; let go of your ten thousand thoughts.

This can also be read as "abandon all reasons of wanting to put the ten thousand thoughts to rest."

Pay close attention even while sleeping.

Literally this translates as "investigate even while sleeping."

Black mountain spirit cave.

In his translation of Dogen's *Shobogenzo*, Thomas Cleary calls this a "ghost cave in the mountain of darkness."

Fourth great serenity.

This line can also be read as "four great serenities." In either case, it's not clear what Baizhang is referring to. ☸

WITHOUT WORK IS

WITHOUT EATING

At the retreat for dharma teachers last year, Jess Row presented his translation of a section of Zen Master Baek Jang's temple rules. What follows emerges from a dharma talk that I gave later at the Chogye International Zen Center of New York about Jess's translation.

Zen Master Wu Kwang

Baek Jang (Baizhang), 720-814, is well known for a story about work practice. Until his edict, Chinese monks and their monasteries were supported mostly by a patronage system relying on donors or by begging. Baek Jang established work in the fields as part of the monastic practice. It is said that everyday when the signal was given for the work period, Baek Jang was the first to run into the fields with his tools, leading the charge, so to speak. When he became old his attendants thought he shouldn't work anymore; they hid his tools from him because they knew that he wouldn't stop voluntarily. When Baek Jang saw that his tools were gone, he sat down and refused to eat. After a few days the attendants realized that the old boy was going to starve himself to death so they returned his tools to him. This story gave rise to the Zen maxim attributed to Baek Jang, "A day without work is a day without eating."

Our temple rules posit that there are two kinds of work: inside work and outside work. Inside work is keeping clear mind; outside work is cutting off desires and helping others.

Baek Jang's rules include what is believed to be the first formal presentation on sitting Zen. Because this section is very short, you might zip through it and miss a lot of what is being alluded to.

I would like to group the stanzas into sections. It seems to me that the first two stanzas go together: They say, "Now, to study the Prajna-paramita means to take up the great heart of compassion and expand our vows and intentions. This is the precious practice of samadhi we vow to undertake for all beings." You could say that these two sentences are an overview to explain why we practice Zen meditation.

In Mahayana Buddhism the Bodhisattva path is comprised of six paramitas. The word paramita usually connotes transcendental acts, but transcendental here doesn't mean something otherworldly or above it all. If you are practicing correctly, what is transcended is the notion of a separate subject and object or practitioner and practice.

The first of the paramitas is called dana paramita, which is the practice of generosity—generosity of spirit or giving. The last of these six is prajna paramita. *Prajna* literally means wisdom. When Baek Jang says, "Now, to study the prajna paramita," by "study" he doesn't mean, "We'll take a look in

the Heart Sutra and study it intellectually line by line." That is not his intent. From a Zen standpoint to study means to become one with something.

Some people say that all six paramitas are really only one but that six are mentioned because they are different aspects of one unified practice.

Sometimes the paramita of generosity is said to be the main one. Others say the wisdom paramita, the prajna paramita, is the main one. But actually the two go together. For example prajna, wisdom, means to see into things as they are. As we say in the Heart Sutra, "Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva when practicing deeply the Prajna-paramita perceives that all five skandhas are empty and is saved from all suffering and distress." "Five skandhas" refer to the ways we usually conceive of ourselves as being individuals. In practicing deeply, looking into, investigating, Avalokitesvara (Kwan Seum Bosal) perceives that there is really nothing that we can call a solid self, a substantial individual. Because of that, later in the sutra we recite, "no fears exist." If you perceive that what you usually hold on to tightly—your conception of yourself as an individual—does not really exist the way we tend to think it does, then you have nothing to lose and nothing to guard. If you have nothing to lose and nothing to guard, then generosity of spirit manifests itself. So prajna paramita and the great heart of compassion are really two aspects of the same thing. Baek Jang says, "to study the Prajna-paramita means to take up the great heart of compassion and expand our vows and intentions." Then what are our vows and intentions? They are to realize our true self and to do something to help—the heart of compassion and seeing clearly.

Baek Jang then says, "This is the precious practice of samadhi we vow to undertake for all beings." Samadhi is interpreted differently in various traditions. The usual connotation of samadhi is a kind of deep, deep concentration. According to some traditions, if you are in that deep state of concentration you wouldn't hear that [*points outside where there is a siren in the street*]; you wouldn't see this [*points to the floor*]; you wouldn't know anything.

Once, I remember Zen Master Seung Sahn saying, "Zen is not so much interested in samadhi." What he meant is that our practice is not really focused on developing a deep, deep state of absorption and interiorization. In *The Compass of Zen*, Zen Master Seung Sahn says:

True beauty comes from our not-moving mind. In Sanskrit, it is called samadhi. . . . Samadhi is simply our pure, original nature. If your mind is not moving, everything is beautiful, just as it is. . . . When you keep a strong not-moving mind in any activity, you can perceive the true beauty of this ordinary world because you can see things exactly as they are. You can digest your understanding so that it becomes wisdom.

The most important thing, according to Zen Master Seung Sahn, is to keep a not-moving mind, from moment to moment. Actually, that is the true meaning of samadhi.

At the recent Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference held in Singapore, a Theravadan monk was invited to be a guest speaker. In one of his talks he described the various levels of absorption that are delineated in his scriptures: "You go

[1]

deeper and deeper into your mind; you don't hear anything; you don't see anything; the sense of an individual self dissolves . . ." and on and on until, "in the end there is just the sense of contentment." At that point in his talk, Zen Master Soeng Hyang leaned over to me and said, "Is that all?"

Baek Jang says, "This is the precious practice of samadhi we vow to undertake for all beings." That is the direction of our practice as he sets out here.

In the next three sentences he says, "Don't conceive of the body only as a way to seek to solve or alleviate problems, or as a means to escape. Abandon all reasons of wanting to rest; let go of your ten thousand thoughts. Use the body and mind together as a means of paying attention, in an undivided way, without quantifying, even while drinking and eating; pay close attention even while sleeping."

In his first sentence he says, "Don't conceive of the body only as a way to seek to solve or alleviate problems, or as a means of escape." In our temple rules it is said, "Though you may eat good food all your life, your body will die." How is the body related to spiritual practice? From this vantage point the body is viewed as a raft, as something that helps us cross over the ocean of life and death.

Then Baek Jang says, "Abandon all reasons of wanting to rest; let go of your ten thousand thoughts."

"Abandon all reasons of wanting to rest." In the evening before going to sleep, you made the intention to practice samadhi for all beings, but early in the morning as the alarm clock goes off, you have several reasons why you need more rest. Here he says abandon them.

An alternate translation of this line would be, "Abandon all reasons of wanting to put the ten thousand thoughts to rest." If you hold on to an idea such as, "I should put my mind to rest," you taint or color the purity of your practice. You have to let go of any conceptual reason for practicing.

At their first kong-an interview, we often have beginning students read a short paragraph from the Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) Sutra. The paragraph is printed in *The Compass of Zen*. It says, "If you want to understand the realm of Buddhas, keep a mind that is clear like space. Let all thinking and external desires fall far away. Let your mind go anyplace with no hindrance." If you abandon all reasons of wanting to put the ten thousand thoughts to rest, then the ten thousand thoughts are no hindrance. This is a very important point.

The third sentence about the body says, "Use the body and mind together as a means of paying attention in an undivided way, without quantifying, even while drinking and eating; pay close attention even while sleeping."

To "Use the body and mind together" means that, from the point of Zen practice, body and mind are not two separate things. In some spiritual traditions the body is viewed as your enemy, but here Baek Jang says, "Use body and mind together."

The full sentence is "Use body and mind together as a means of paying attention in an undivided way." Jess writes in a footnote that the word he translates here as "to pay attention" may also be read as "to investigate." Paying attention means to really look into, to investigate, to mobilize your curiosity. You should try to do that in an undivided way without quantifying. That means don't make good and bad. Don't make better and worse. As Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, "Don't check your practice." The usual

tendency is to think, "Oh, today my meditation was not so good. Yesterday it was better. Maybe tomorrow . . ." Don't quantify or qualify. The Sixth Patriarch said to the monk Hae Myung, "Don't make good and bad." At that time what is Hae Myung's original face?

Here Baek Jang says that this practice of paying attention or investigating, looking into, is not only done while sitting. Do it "even while drinking and eating; pay close attention [investigate] even while sleeping." Some Zen schools, like the later generations of the Linji tradition, make a big deal about this: "Can you keep your kong-an even while dreaming or when you are in deep sleep?" Some people become rather obsessive about this: "Can I do that? Has my practice matured that much yet?" Don't make a big deal out of it. Essentially, what Baek Jang is saying here is that if you practice something over and over again for a long time—paying attention, investigating, and looking into things—then little by little that practice permeates your consciousness on deeper and deeper levels. (After a while, something of that practice is going on even while you are asleep.) This happens no matter whether you practice trying to be present and aware, working on a kong-an, or repeating a mantra. You may observe this phenomena in a fellow-practitioner who has done mantra practice for a long time. When your conversation with him or her ends, his or her lips begin to move silently. It's not that they have purposely picked up the mantra. It's that they have been doing it for so long that when their mind isn't doing anything else—pchhht!—the mantra reappears. It's the same with kong-an practice or questioning. So don't make a big deal about "Can I keep my kong-an while I'm asleep?"

We now come to the part about the actual form of sitting. There are several sentences here that go together: "When you are sitting, seek a point of tranquil, thoughtful attention over all present phenomena. Sit cross-legged or half cross-legged. Put your left palm over the right. Put the two thumbs together. Sit with your body upright. Square your ears with the tops of your shoulders. Align your nose with your navel. Your tongue should be propped on your teeth. Your eyes should be slightly open. Avoid falling asleep. If you attain Zen practice your strength will increase to the utmost. The great practicing monks of old always kept their eyes open. Zen Master Faxu laughed at people who closed their eyes while sitting Zen. He called this a black mountain spirit cave. Heed this deep and profound statement."

The first sentence says, "When you are sitting, seek a point of tranquil, thoughtful attention over all present phenomena." Baek Jang is emphasizing two things: Find some degree of tranquility, calmness, and stability, but also there has to be thoughtful attention. By "thoughtful" he doesn't mean thinking about things. He means that while on the one hand you should seek to calm down and become tranquil, you ought at the same time to pay attention and look into all present phenomena carefully. "All present phenomena" refers to whatever is occurring moment by moment by moment. Just let that appear with a certain sense of tranquility and openness. Be awake. Pay attention.

The advice offered about this by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, is, "To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is the way to control him." So give your thoughts some space, allow yourself to calm down, attend, perceive.

Then Baek Jang enjoins us to, “Sit cross-legged or half cross-legged. Put the left palm over the right. Put the two thumbs together.” You could say this is as much yoga as you are going to get in Zen practice. He is essentially talking about what in Sanskrit is called asana: how to assume the correct posture for sitting. He tells us, “Sit cross-legged or half cross-legged.” That probably means sit in the full lotus pose or the half-lotus pose.

“Place the left palm over the right and the two thumbs together.” Some people emphasize exactly where your hands should rest but he doesn’t specify that here. If you were sitting in the full lotus pose your hands would rest on your heels so they would probably be touching your lower abdomen. This hand position is sometimes referred to as the cosmic mudra. It represents a kind of round completeness. From a yoga standpoint mudra has to do with mind and energy. Whatever part of your body you place the *mudra* on receives energy and mind-attention from it. Baek Jang may be implying that your attention rests in your lower belly, but he doesn’t state that overtly.

In the next sentence he says, “Sit with your body upright.” This is probably the main point. Whether you can achieve the full lotus pose or the half-lotus pose or no lotus pose at all or you have to sit in a chair, the main thing is to keep your body upright, take charge of yourself. Sit as if you were a big mountain that is solid and not moving.

He continues, “Square your ears with the tops of your shoulders.” Some people even say tuck your chin in slightly, but he doesn’t say that here.

“Square the ears with the tops of your shoulders. Align your nose with your navel.” It is all very obvious; if you are sitting upright these things happen naturally. You don’t have to make a big deal about them.

“Your tongue should be propped on your teeth. Your eyes should be slightly open.” Tongue propped on your teeth means that the tip of your tongue touches the place where the roof of your mouth and the teeth come together. If you are sitting still and paying attention with your mouth closed, your tongue will pretty much find that place naturally. You will see this mentioned both in instructions for Indian yoga and in Chinese Taoist yoga. It has something to do with connecting energy circuits in your body. But even if your tongue is not touching the inside of your teeth and your mouth is hanging wide open, if you are paying attention your energy will be unified. So really these are aids more than the heart of the matter. But we can use all the help we can get.

Baek Jang informs us, “If you attain Zen practice your strength will increase to the utmost.” Here he does not mean that you will become King Kong. By “strength” he probably means that if your practice of Zen meditation matures you will have a sense of patience and confidence and, as it says in the Vimalakirti Sutra, you will attain tolerance of the inconceivable. What is tolerance of the inconceivable? When you resolutely keep “Don’t know,” you have to have a certain inner support to be with not knowing, to be with uncertainty, and to exercise curiosity towards that. A certain kind of strength of character develops from that.

In his last directive about sitting it wasn’t enough for him to say, “Your eyes should be slightly open.” Instead he says, “The great practicing monks of old always kept their

eyes open. Zen Master Faxu laughed at people who closed their eyes while sitting. He called this a black mountain spirit cave. Heed this deep and profound statement.” I think he is again emphasizing the point that Zen practice is not particularly interested in cultivating an obsessive, indrawn tranquility that loses touch with the actuality of things. What we are more interested in is that somehow [*hits floor with stick*] inside and outside are recognized not to be two, not to be separate.

Sitting Zen is sometimes referred to as keeping a not-moving mind. At the end of the Platform Sutra the Sixth Patriarch mentions this business about not-moving mind:

*Sentient beings can move;
Inanimate objects are stationary.
If you want to find true “not-moving”
It’s a non-moving mind in our everyday life.*

...

*If we don’t practice this way we are like an inanimate
object and cannot become Buddha.
Those who can distinguish all forms without at-
tachment have attained the highest form of not-
moving.*

The Sixth Patriarch is making the point that Zen is not just about attaining something in the meditation posture. True “not moving” is actualized in every activity of daily life.

He says the highest form of this “not-moving” is to distinguish all forms without attachment. If you think about what is meant by distinguish, you might find that there a number of aspects to it. The first would be that if you [*hits floor*] attain this mind then “Sky is sky; ground is ground.” That’s a wide kind of seeing or distinguishing. But if you go further, then sky is not just sky and ground is not just ground—sky is blue; ground is brown. There is another aspect of distinguishing which the Japanese teacher Dogen emphasized. He said, “That we like flowers and don’t like weeds is also Buddha’s activity.” What he means is that to have preferences is not unnatural. Human beings have preferences. So to like flowers and not to like weeds is also Buddha’s activity. But then he says something else, “Even though we like flowers, still they will fall. Even though we don’t like weeds, still they will spring up.” If you can distinguish in that way, then that is the highest form of not-moving mind. Rather than grasping and tightly creating suffering, you accept everything as it is: changing, changing, changing.

After Baek Jang has made his statement about not closing your eyes and entering into the dark cave, he says, “Don’t concern yourself with good and evil. Set out to achieve attainment just now. Lasting attainment has no taste, does not fall away, does not scatter. Ten thousand years with one intention: not short, not long. This is the only technique needed for sitting Zen.”

“Don’t concern yourself with good and evil. Set out to achieve attainment just now.” “Just now” means moment mind. Don’t add anything to it. We all have this tendency. Something emerges in the moment and then we begin to

add something to it. As soon as we begin to add something to it, we start making a sense of before and after, better and worse, or inside and outside. Then we are no longer just in the moment experiencing things as they are. Baek Jang urges us to set out to achieve attainment just now, without making comparisons.

“Lasting attainment has no taste, does not fall away, does not scatter.” This sentence is very interesting: Some forty years ago a friend of mine was studying martial arts when, one day, the Sensei took his students to an Asian restaurant. At that time the students were unfamiliar with Asian food, so when the Sensei ordered tofu they asked, “What does it taste like?” The Sensei answered by saying, “Taste it and see.” Someone tasted it and said, “Sensei, it has no taste!” “No,” replied the Sensei, “It has ten thousand tastes.” As Baek Jang says, “Lasting attainment has no taste.” That means it is like clear water. But it can mix with everything and anything.

I think what he is emphasizing here is that practicing is not about having a particular experience. A particular experience will have taste: blissful taste, calm taste, peaceful taste, exciting taste, some kind of taste. If you are just practicing then you are not interested so much in any particular experience as compared with any other particular experience. You are cultivating a way of being, a way of relating to yourself and to the world you find yourself embedded in, moment by moment by moment. He says this kind of attainment has no taste, does not fall away, and does not scatter. “Does not fall away and does not scatter” is a way of saying it is reliable.

Now Baek Jang makes another very interesting statement: “Ten thousand years with one intention: not short, not long. This is the only technique needed for sitting Zen.”

Ten thousand years is [*hits the floor with stick*] this moment just now. And this moment [*hits floor again*] is ten thousand years. Not short; not long. As soon as you start relating to practice as, “It will take a long time to get somewhere,” you are not keeping one intention anymore. You are making something else. “Ten thousand years with one intention,” is similar to Zen Master Seung Sahn’s short but famous maxim: “Try try try for ten thousand years nonstop—why not?!”

The next three lines go together: “Sitting Zen is the dharma entrance to peace and joy. There are many who fall ill and fail to realize their intention. To realize your intention and self-nature is the fourth great serenity. It is to have a brilliant spirit, clear and hopeful.” This is a brief advertisement from our sponsor: “Sitting Zen is the dharma entrance to peace and joy.” But “there are many who fall ill,” go off somehow, and don’t “realize their intention.” If you stick to your intention and realize your intention and self-nature, this is the fourth great serenity. In his footnote Jess opines, “‘Fourth great serenity’ can also be read as ‘four great serenities.’ In either case, it is not clear what Baek Jang is referring to.” There must have been some classification of serenities, but it has been lost. In any case, if you practice you will find a certain kind of serenity; your spirit will be bright and clear; there will be a certain kind of hopefulness, because if you are not holding onto anything there is nothing to be despairing about.

Toward the end Baek Jang says, “The flavor of the dharma is natural stillness and constant illumination of the spirit. It is to awaken from a deep sleep and realize that life and death are exactly the same.” The point that he is emphasizing is that in original mind there is already the quality of natural stillness and brightness or illumination or clarity. The aim of any practice we take on is not to create some kind of stillness or illumination or clarity. Our practice is really just to reconnect us, to recollect what we already have, which is natural stillness and a continuous clarity or perception or illumination. To recognize that is to wake up from a deep sleep and realize that appearing and disappearing, coming and going, life and death, are all of the same fabric.

He concludes: “But you must control your mind without the intention of gaining anything. Otherwise I fear that along the Way great devils will distract even the strongest practitioner.” The most important part is to practice with an attitude of non-gaining, to practice with a not-gaining mind. If you set up an idea of something you want to gain through practice, then you will miss what is already emerging moment by moment by moment. You must control your mind but without the intention of gaining anything. You could add here, maybe, “of gaining anything in particular.” “If you keep these thoughts foremost in your mind, nothing will detain you.”

Does anyone have a question?

Question: When you said, “You must control your mind but without the intention of gaining anything,” and that one can add “gaining anything in particular,” are you saying that a bit of a feeling of wanting to gain something in general wouldn’t be contradictory to the spirit of what Baek Jang is saying?

A: What is it you want to gain?

Q: [*hits floor*]

A: Then you already have it.

Q: Well, that and some other things too!

A: Yes. No doubt. [*Laughter*]

Question: I think that she wants to gain a clearer understanding of what Baek Jang is saying.

A: Yes. He starts with “Now, to study the Prajnaparamita [which would be a clear understanding means to take up the great heart of compassion and expand our vows. This is the precious practice of samadhi we undertake for all beings.” That is what we want to gain. And maybe, secondarily, a good job and a good relationship and, you know, the rest of it. But what is foremost is “I want to understand myself and realize my connection to everything else.” If you attain that over and over again, then many other things fall into place. But if you try to gain something in particular, especially if you keep what you are trying to gain in mind as you are practicing, you will be deterred from clear and pure practice. You won’t have the “no taste.” You will have a particular thing you want. On the other hand, with this point [*hits floor*] there is nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Gaining and losing are concepts, opposites. If you [*hits floor*] return here, then you perceive that you already have what you need. ☸



BOOK REVIEW

Each Moment Is the Universe: Zen and the Way of Being

Dainin Katagiri, Shambhala, 2007

Review by Zen Master Wu Kwang

This is a wonderful collection of talks given by the late Katagiri Roshi (1928-1990) at various times during the last twenty years of his life.

Katagiri Roshi came to the United States in 1963 to help with a Soto Zen temple in Los Angeles. Later, he joined Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at the San Francisco Zen Center where he taught until the latter's death in 1971. Katagiri then founded a center in Minneapolis at which he remained for the rest of his life.

The style in many of the chapters, especially the shorter ones, in this book bear some similarity to *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* albeit with a more intellectual/philosophical bent—but not so much of one to be off-putting to Zen practitioners. He makes it a point to always bring the subject under discussion back to the concrete issues of Zen meditation and everyday practice.

Andrea Martin, the editor and student of Katagiri, served periodically as his attendant and secretary from 1978 onward. She writes about her difficulty in transcribing these talks, "To coax from these talks the structure required by the printed page, I reorganized them and made them more concise." In fact, she confesses that in some instances the talks were taken apart and combined with others, but she was at great pains to preserve his manner of speaking and vocabulary, "always listening to hear his voice through the words." Although I never heard him speak, I believe that she has succeeded admirably.

The theme that runs through the various sections of this book is the real nature of time and what Zen Master Seung Sahn sometimes called "moment world" or "moment mind." The first of the five parts looks at time itself and the fundamental nature of impermanence. Part Two relates these subjects to the first two Noble Truths: Suffering is inherent in human life and there is a cause of suffering. Part Three connects with the Third Noble Truth: There is freedom from suffering. Katagiri, in Zen style, relates freedom to perceiving the moment. It is notable that a statement used on occasion by Zen Master Seung Sahn appears in this section, "Moment is the interaction of time and space." Katagiri Roshi says, "At that precise point—the intersection of time and space, which is called right now, right here—all sentient beings come together into the moment and a vast world comes up; past, present, future, earth, trees, plants, moons, and suns.... That is called interdependent co-origination. Life is always the pivot of nothingness; it is always right now, right here the eternal moment of the real present."

Part Four is influenced by the Fourth Noble Truth: The path of action in which freedom relieves suffering. The Roshi puts emphasis on fully devoting oneself to whatever activity one is involved in. He connects this Truth with the notion of time, "Time has no solid form—time is activity itself." The practice suggested here is at one with Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching, "Just do it!"

Part Five concerns itself with karma and emphasizes a positive view of life and hope for the future. Katagiri Roshi says:

Freedom from causation means oneness of cause and effect.

When you act with wholeheartedness, cause and effect are absorbed into your activity.

Freedom from causation is emptiness. Anytime, anywhere, you can be free from your karmic life, because your karma life is going on in Buddha's world. That is the reality of one step.

To live your life freely, in peace and harmony, all you have to do is wholeheartedly take care of one step in every moment. In that moment you reach the other shore, because one step is not separate from life.

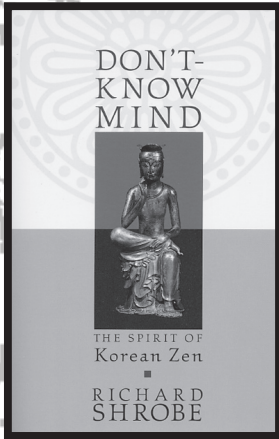
One of the great benefits contained in this book is that, in the longer chapters, which are commentaries of sections from Dogen Zenji's *Shobo-genzo* such as "Being Time," Katagiri Roshi explicates some of Dogen's idiosyncratic language. This is a blessing in itself!

About prayer and devotion in Zen practice Katagiri Roshi has this to say:

Silence is full devotion—your self-centered life is thrown away to wholeness. A whole life is characterized by commitment in love, wisdom and prayer. Prayer is not something directed from a particular subject to a particular object with the expectation of a particular result. Prayer is egolessness supported by deep love for all beings—a profound aspiration extended to all lives. It is the very basic, very deep energy of life. We must take best care of this energy and extend ourselves fully and deeply toward it.

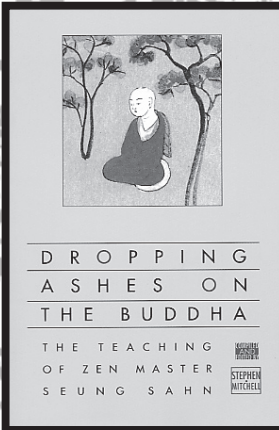
Good book, well worth reading! ☸

A fresh approach to Zen



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Shambhala. ISBN 1-59030-110-2. \$14.95

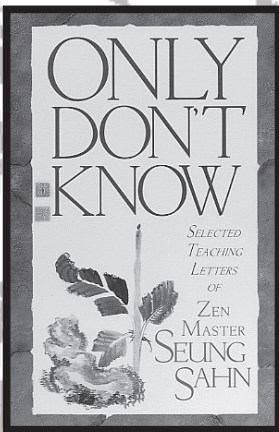


Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake: Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn. 199 pages.

Shambhala, 2006. ISBN 1-59030-340-7. \$15.95

Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Stephen Mitchell. A delightful, irreverent, and often hilarious record of interactions with Western students. 244 pages.

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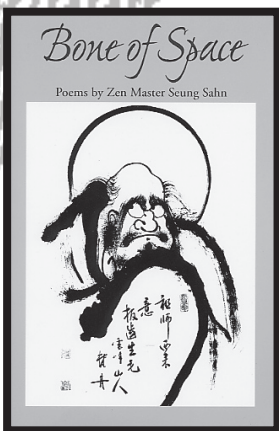
A Gathering of Spirit: Women Teaching in American Buddhism. Edited by Ellen Sidor. Talks and discussions from three landmark conferences at Providence Zen Center.

156 pages. *Primary Point Press, Third Edition 1992.*

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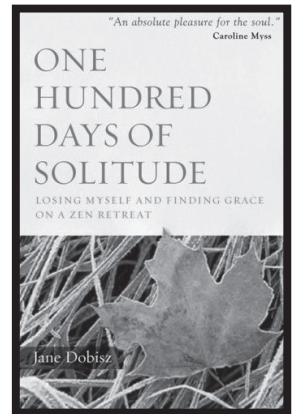
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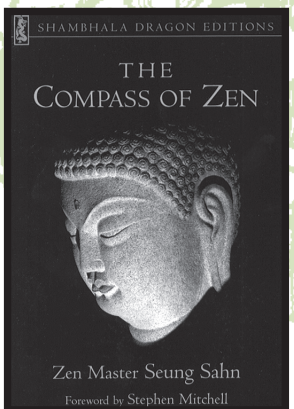
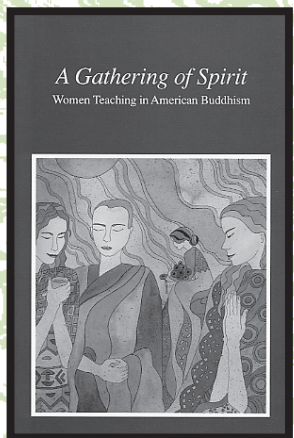
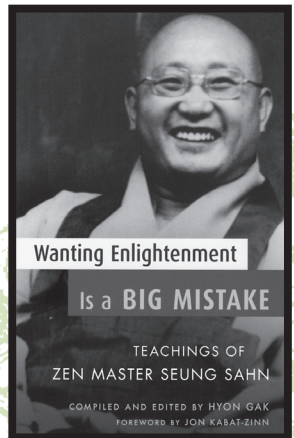
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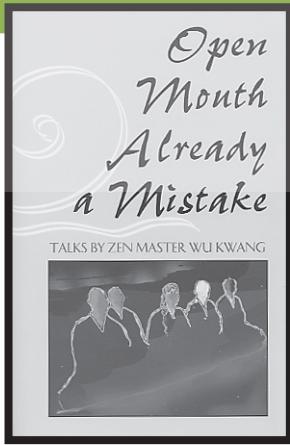
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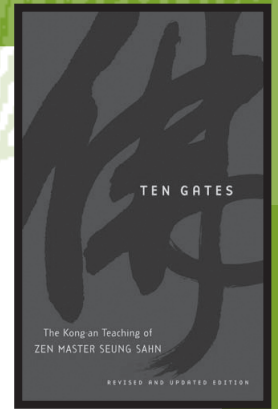
Harper San Francisco. ISBN 0-06-008595-9. \$21.95





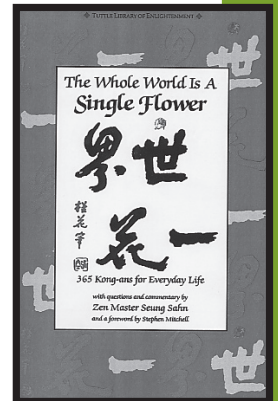
Ten Gates: The Kong-an Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Zen Master Seung Sahn. Presents kong-an practice in action, through real interactions between the beloved Korean Zen Master and his students as they work via letters. 152 pages. *Shambhala, 2007. ISBN 978-1-59030-417-4. \$14.95*

Open Mouth Already a Mistake: Talks by Zen Master Wu Kwang. Teaching of a Zen Master who is also a husband, father, practicing Gestalt therapist and musician. 238 pages. *Primary Point Press, 1997. ISBN 0-942795-08-3. \$18.95*



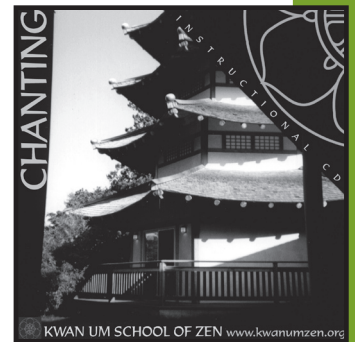
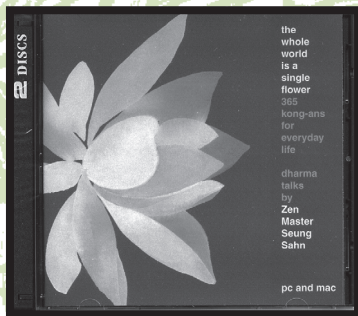
The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life. Zen Master Seung Sahn. The first kong-an collection to appear in many years; Christian, Taoist, and Buddhist sources. 267 pages. *Tuttle, 1993. ISBN 0-8048-1782-0. \$22.95*

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. 54 minutes. *Primary Point Press, 1992. VHS: ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00 DVD: ISBN 0-942795-14-8. \$30.00*

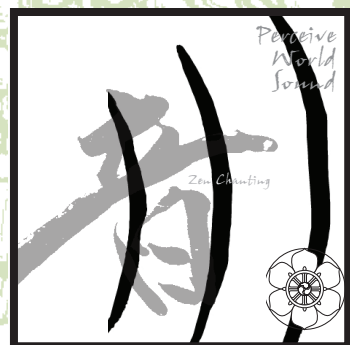
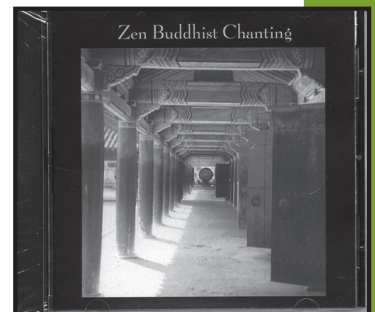


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Zen Master Bon Soeng

*Adapted from a one hundred day baby ceremony
at Cold Mountain Zen Center*



It is a pleasure to be here with you all today, celebrating the new life of Gabriel. Look around the room and see the face of Gabriel's community. Each of us has a different and important connection to Gabriel and his parents. We come together today and represent the community into which Gabriel has been born. None of us are really alone in this world. It is easy to get lost in our notion of individuality, but in truth we are each connected with, and dependent upon, the community of beings that supports us.

The Buddha taught that all things, all of us, are completely interconnected. Nothing remains outside the web of life. The tree cannot grow without soil, sunlight, and rain. Without rain falling to the ground there is no tree. Without the sun's heat evaporating water from the earth there can be no rain, and without trees dying and decomposing there can be no soil. This building that we are meeting in today would not exist without the efforts of

many labors to turn the raw materials used in its construction into building materials. Trees need to be turned into lumber, lumber fashioned into cabinets. The metal used in nails and pipes needs to be harvested from the earth.

So, too, is Gabriel a part of this web of life. We say he is born into this world alone, but actually, without the combination of his parents' genes there would be no Gabriel. Now, at two-and-one-half months, Gabriel is totally dependant on his parents for food, clothing, love, and nurturance. In turn, Gabriel's parents, Cristina and Rich, are completely interconnected with their own communities. Without the support of friends and family, they would be crushed under the new burdens of parenthood. Without the love and support of all of us, their family cannot thrive and prosper.

Our belief in the myth of our individual independence leads us to the fundamental mistake of separating the world into self and other. This mistaken view creates many negative consequences for ourselves and others around us. Our ego-centered view of the world leads us to feel alone and afraid. In order to deal with this fear, we not only separate ourselves from others, but we also objectify the world around us. Survival is our primary goal and, we use the people and things around us as tools to ensure that survival. We manipulate the objectified world in order to satisfy our own perceived individual needs.

Because I believe that I am separate from the whole, my needs seem more important than your needs. Once you have become merely an object in my world it is easy for me to justify using you to get what I want. If you have what I want, I can take it. If I have more power than you, I can use that power for my personal advantage. And, I will rationalize my behavior to justify my actions. The name for this is delusion. The result of this delusion is suffering.

While we are celebrating Gabriel's birth I would like to offer a cautionary note for all parents. In my work with people over many years, I've seen something I believe is universal and very important. It is clear that the correct relationship between parent and child is that it is the job of the parent to take care of the needs of their child. Often though, parents are still struggling under the burden of their own unmet needs. The wounds of childhood still haunt us in adulthood. Unconsciously, we too often use our power over the child in ways that hurt the child. These hurtful parental demands range from the seemingly benign emotional support that a child can offer a distressed parent to the painful, but not uncommon, use of physical or sexual abuse. This incorrect relationship very often leads to psychological and spiritual problems for the child, and for the future adult he will grow up to be.

The heart of this hundred day ceremony is the placing of water on Gabriel's head three times. As I placed the water on Gabriel's head I chanted great love, great compassion, and the great bodhisattva way. Living the Great Bodhisattva Way means leading a life in which these values of Great love and Great Compassion are the intention behind our behavior. It means meeting each of the millions of moments of our life with this intention to bring love and compassion into the world around us. These are the tools we use to break the stranglehold of the selfish self-centeredness that compels us to use the world to satisfy our needs. Love and compassion are the well-known antidote to the suffering in our world.

this?

18]

They allow us to treat the world as our self. Each of us, moment to moment, can bring love and compassion into our everyday activities. By living this kind of life, world peace becomes not a distant fantasy, but something we can create in each moment of our lives.

In order to pass on these values to Gabriel we must all find a way to manifest Great Love and Great Compassion. So easy to say, so hard to do. Almost all religions and life philosophies hold these same values at their core. The golden rule, “do unto others as you would have others do unto you,” is the well-known biblical example of this. “As ye sow so shall ye reap” is another. If we are honest with ourselves, we know how difficult it is to manifest these simple truths. Because our fears and desires overwhelm us, we end up being slaves to our passions, causing us to behave in ways that are the exact opposite of these important values.

The beauty of Buddhism is that it offers us a path of practice. Buddhist practice helps train our mind and heart in order to work with our tendency to separate ourselves from the world. Meditation practice offers us a direct way to see ourselves. With calm awareness we can see the ways that our passions cloud our view. We catch glimpses of our true self that shines just beneath the fog created by our desires and fears. The practice of living mindfully allows us to be present and aware of our own actions and the actions of the people around us. Just as the actions of our ancestors have created the world in which we live, our own actions will help establish the course of the future for our children.

May we use this celebration of Gabriel’s birth to rededicate ourselves to these essential qualities of Great Love and Great Compassion. May we treat Gabriel and each other with love and compassion. May Gabriel learn the joy of a life of service to others. And may Gabriel attain the wisdom that love and compassion will lead to a better life for all beings. ❁



wel of life

10.

My experience

Book Excerpt
Zen Master Bon Yo

During one dharma talk in Korea a monk asked me a question: "I'm a traditional monk in the Chogye Order, and I also respect very much Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching, so I'm here practicing in his temple. But it is difficult for me to find a balance because I feel like his teaching is putting things upside down. You are from the West, how do you practice his teachings? Is it easier for you?"

This question made me smile, and I told this monk that Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching turns the Westerner's life upside down, as well, and that is the most precious thing. He understood and smiled, too.

In fact I should say that Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching puts things in the right place, because as it is now, human life is upside down. Human beings are lost, confused, and unhappy.

In one of his dharma talks, Zen Master Wu Bong said “This universe is giving us everything, what are we giving in return? When we go to the shop and take things without paying, we are taken to jail. Do we want to be thieves? Do we want to be in jail? So it’s better to pay.”

We refuse to pay, or don’t recognize the fact that we should, and so we stay in the jail of desire, anger, and ignorance and we cause so much suffering around us, and for ourselves.

Zen Master Wu Bong added: “Who is going to fix all the problems that human beings have caused? God? Buddha? No. That is *our* job.” Raised a Catholic, I was not satisfied with what my priest offered as teaching, so I spent many years looking for a spiritual practice that would help me to understand more about this world, this life, our human life, and that would give me help with finding solutions. I met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1983, first through his book, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* and then, later that year, personally during a three-day retreat. I fell in love, if I may say so, with him and his teaching. I had been looking for a spiritual path for some time already, but at the same time, being quite skeptical, I was not satisfied with what others had to offer.

First reading and then hearing Zen Master Seung Sahn, I received very down-to-earth teaching, filled with good humor, directing me to self help and genuine strength, filled with freedom, wisdom, and compassion. His was the kind of teaching that helps us to live correctly and follow the right direction.

So I started to practice in the Kwan Um School of Zen, and in time with many other teachers, where the spirit and teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn was always present.

I began in Poland, in the Gdansk Zen Center, with a wonderful group of dharma friends. We had practice a few times a week and once a month we had a retreat, but only once a year the Zen Master came to lead a retreat. So, just once a year we met Zen Master Seung Sahn, and once a year had a retreat with kong-an interviews and direct teaching. Otherwise it was just practicing on our own and reading the teachings at the end of each session.

When Zen Master Seung Sahn visited for a retreat, there were usually over a hundred people practicing and that meant very little private time with the teacher. For the interviews, we went four or five students at a time and had a translator with us. With so many people, it was always very fast, and most of the time I had no idea what had just happened. Somehow, though, we all went forward and progressed. And we had so much fun with each other and the practice, even with the bad conditions and all the pains that came from sitting and thinking. That was a very important part, for having joy in practice and not mortifying oneself is what keeps us going forward.

After four years of practice, I went to Providence Zen Center in the United States, where a completely new era started in my life and practice. I married Zen Master Wu Bong and started living at the Zen Center.

Providence Zen Center is a great place with woods and lake, a main Zen Center building, and a small Monastery. The practice there is strong: every morning and evening there is daily practice. There are monthly retreats, yearly Kyol Ches, and regular interviews. Beside Zen Master Seung Sahn, there were other teachers there at that time, and receiving so much teaching was almost overwhelming.

There, for the first time, I had a one-on-one kong-an interview with Zen Master Seung Sahn, without a translator. This was a great and important moment, and I felt very nervous. My English was not so good, but neither was his, and with his easiness and warm smile, my nervousness disappeared quickly. I went through many ups and downs during the kong-an practice but the regular training was precious.

Zen Master Seung Sahn was strong and uncompromising when it came to practice and training, but very warm, loving, and understanding at the same time. He always pushed us to strong practice and did it himself, too, but the strong practice in his teaching was not the “body punishment” that some take for strong training.


During one of the Kyol Che retreats at the Providence Zen Center, some of the participants were angry with the head dharma teacher for letting it be too relaxed, so they went to Zen Master Seung Sahn and asked him to talk to that student and make him lead the practice in a more severe style. That afternoon, Zen Master Seung Sahn asked the head dharma teacher to come to his room. When the student came, he hugged him and said, “I heard that you do a great job leading this Kyol Che, that’s wonderful.”

After twenty years of practice, I was able for the first time to attend the whole three month Kyol Che in Korea at Mu Sang Sah in the Kye Ryong mountains. I had traveled to Korea several times before, but mostly for ceremonies and meetings. This was the first time I had gone for the long retreat. It was a great experience. The place is a wonderful practice place, a temple in the middle of mountains, with a strong practice schedule and good care from the hosts.

Last year, I went there again to attend Kyol Che. Before going to Mu Sang Sah, I spent two days in Seoul at the Seoul International Zen Center, and had the opportunity to spend time with my teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn. It was a very quiet time as he was already very sick. We did not talk much: I shared some of the news from Europe and the Paris Zen Center, and he was happy to hear that the practice is growing. Most of the time, though, we spent just eating or just being together. Sometimes he fell asleep in his armchair and I silently left; sometimes he just looked at me and we smiled to each other; and sometimes he ground to a halt and I knew that he was tired and I was dismissed. Nothing special happened; I had no questions and he had nothing to say, for everything had already been said in the past years.

A few days after I left, I learned that Zen Master Seung Sahn had passed away, and the next time I saw him was as his body was prepared for the funeral ceremony. He lay there in his quarters, on the floor of his room in his robes. We went inside to pay our last respects, and when I bowed, I looked at his face. We were all very sad. We, his disciples, had spent the previous night in his rooms chanting and keeping vigil with his body, so everybody was exhausted. Then I saw his face, peaceful and smiling, as if wanting to say: “Don’t worry, everything is fine,” and “See you soon.”

The whole ceremony took a few days, with part of it in Su Dok Sah. After the funeral was completed, we went back to Mu Sang Sah to continue the Kyol Che. We arrived very late and everybody went straight to sleep. After about an hour of sleep, I woke up from a dream and couldn’t sleep that night anymore. In the dream I saw Zen Master Seung Sahn’s face, smiling and full of energy, and I heard him saying: “Get up and go! Carry on!”

Today, I write these words, and wish to have him around to ask for advice and teachings. He is no more, but his teachings are alive, so I, as well as his other disciples, will carry on. 

During a discussion with Zen Master Wu Kwang, a bunch of students at our Zen Center said what they wanted from their practice: peace, less anger, clarity. I asked Zen Master Wu Kwang what he was hoping to get. "After this," he said, "a glass of orange juice."

Once a student asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "If everything is already one, why do you practice?" Zen Master Seung Sahn smiled and said, "For you."

Zen Master Bon Haeng once told me, "We practice in order to become comfortable with not knowing."

At Chogye International Zen Center in New York, we tell new students, during meditation instruction, that we practice "to experience the clarity of our original mind."

Which answer do you like?

The great question—What am I?—came to me early in my life. Psychiatrists tell me that it is because of early tragedy: a baby brother whose heart stopped beating and a much loved uncle who blew his brains out with a shotgun. "You learned that life was not as simple as it seemed to some," psychiatrists told me.

When I got older, around the time that I graduated from college, I felt paralyzed by the choices that lay ahead of me. Do you try to make money? Do you travel? Do you become a social worker? Do you become an artist? I felt keenly aware that I was going to die. If I am going to die, what is the point of living only for myself and making money? But if everyone else is going to die, what is the point of living for them and trying to help?

A lot of people in my life told me that asking these questions would only make me crazy. They told me to put those questions behind me. They said there were no answers. For some years, I pretended those questions did not exist, but finally they grew like weeds through the concrete and would not leave me alone.

I started reading lots of spiritual books, but what I didn't like was that I could not believe any of the answers. "Why should I believe you?" I always thought. Then, I encountered the Kwan Um School of Zen, where teachers began to tell me things like: "Don't believe any words. Only believe your eyes and ears and nose and tongue and body." If that wasn't enough, they told me, also, that I *had* no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue and no body!

For the first time in my life, instead of being told that I should let go of the great question, Kwan Um teachers told me I must hold onto it day and night. Everything they said, they said not to give me answers, but to take them away. Until then, I had been lost for trying to find a thinking answer. Finally, someone was telling me that "not knowing" was not the curse that I thought it was. Not knowing was my greatest blessing.

"The great way is not difficult," wrote the Third Patriarch, "only put down your ideas and opinions."

"Moment to moment, everything is just like this," said Zen Master Seung Sahn.

Up until now, what I've written explains why I like Kwan Um teaching. But it does not answer this question: What is this "I" that likes Kwan Um teaching? Or, what is it that makes this body bend over 108 times early in the morning and sing silly-sounded out Korean words after dinner? Why is it that this body practices?

Don't know. Yet, on retreat, when the chugpi sounds, this body sits, and when the dinner bell rings, it eats without talking.

Before this body started doing these things, there was always thinking, thinking, thinking. When angry thoughts came, I shouted. When sad thoughts came, I cried. Shouting and crying is, as I've read Zen Master Seung Sahn say, "not good, not bad." But being caught in thinking and crying and shouting because of thinking has often meant that I could not fulfill my correct function.

When a hungry man comes, thinking sometimes says, "I've worked hard for my money, why should I give him something?" When my wife is hurt and angry and she shouts, my thinking sometimes says "I should shout back."

For so long, I thought that, if I could just find a thinking answer to this question "What am I?", I would find the correct way of living. But actually, if I reject all thinking answers and just keep don't know, then the correct way of living appears all by itself. Without thinking, Big I automatically feeds the hungry man when he comes. Without thinking, Big I automatically hugs my wife when she is hurt and angry. Without thinking, correct function is clear.

I am you and you are me and there is no defense or offense and without thinking our feet move to the sound of the universal music, and the name of the song, without it ever needing to be said, is simply "How can I help?"

All of these words are, of course, a great and horrendous mistake.

Already I am a senior dharma teacher. I am a dharma teacher because everything I say or do teaches the world what to do next. I say I am a *senior* dharma teacher because the effects of my teachings are so terribly serious. I have a little girl, and a wife, and friends and family and people who like me and people who dislike me and, through them, my dharma is washing over the planet, just as their dharma teachings wash over the planet through me.

When you think what the difference is between the effects of my teaching when I'm attached to my thinking—shouting at my wife—and the effects of my teaching when I keep don't know—hugging my wife—you can see why I practice. I practice, of course, to stop the suffering of everyone who hears my dharma. I do this even though, before thinking, there is no suffering. I practice to save the world, even though, before thinking, there is no world. I practice, also, because it is my correct direction.

How do I save the world just now? What is my correct direction just now?

Hi Bobby. Hi Richard. Hi anyone else who reads this. Hope you liked my essay. Would you mind too much giving me permission to be a dharma teacher in training? 🌀



Dharma Teacher Retreat

Robert Blender

Carrying three heavy pieces of luggage, I struggled, in the dark, up the muddy incline to Diamond Hill Zen Monastery. It was cold outside. I had forgotten my flashlight, and I had a good case of traveler's irritability. Four of the Indianapolis Zen Center dharma teachers were attending the yearly dharma teacher weekend sponsored by the Kwan Um School of Zen at the Providence Zen Center. The weekend includes seminars about important ancestors in the Zen tradition, about practice forms, and about the role of dharma teachers in our school. It also offers an opportunity to meet and speak with many of the teachers in our school, and with other dharma teachers. But, as I slogged through the mud in the dark, hoping not to walk into the pond, I wondered to myself: Why do I have to come all the way out to Rhode Island for this? Don't we have a Zen Center and practice in Indianapolis? Isn't daily practice the core of Zen—not seminars and networking?

Most of the Zen lineages in the West do not have an international organization such as the Kwan Um School. The White Plum Sangha, made up of Maezumi Roshi's heirs, is a loose association of independent Zen Centers, each of which is run by a particular teacher in a particular way. Suzuki Roshi's dharma heirs do not have an over-arching organization that I am aware of. The other major lineages have only a few centers each. But, when we hear from those who were present for the beginnings of the Kwan Um School, we understand that Zen Master Seung Sahn's vision was to establish many centers around the world. He was always traveling, and he communicated with his students by letter-writing. He did kong-an practice through correspondence. Zen Master Seung Sahn established more than one hundred centers, and, with our guiding teacher's help, established the international Kwan Um School of Zen.

Zen Master Seung Sahn established these many centers, and then left them to run on their own, returning infrequently. Finally, he went back to Korea to live out the last few years of his life. To me, this is a manifestation of Zen Master Seung Sahn's great faith in his students, in the practice, in his dharma heirs. He established practice centers that did not depend upon him as an individual. In addition, the Kwan Um School emerged—with a practice manual, and policies, and many teachers, and international gatherings—to provide stability and consistency after he was gone.

During last year's dharma teacher retreat at the Providence Zen Center, the school ethics policy came up. In the policy there is a procedure for conflict resolution within the sangha. First, we are to try to resolve the conflict with the individual that we are having a problem with. If that doesn't help, then the two in conflict are to sit down with the abbot, then, maybe involve the guiding teacher, then, the School Zen Master, then, maybe the School ethics committee. Many levels are possible, depending on the nature of the problem. Would this be possible without a Kwan Um School of Zen? What about resolving difficulties between teachers and students? To whom would you appeal if the guiding teacher was the pinnacle of the organizational chart?

Apart from having a procedure for resolving conflict within the sangha, the Kwan Um School offers consistency in practice forms, and many places to practice around the world. If you travel to Kansas, the practice is the same. If you travel to Barcelona, the only thing that will differ, is that the Heart Sutra will be chanted in Spanish and Sino-Korean. We have many potential practice "families" around the world, and many centers at which it is possible to reside for some time. If you look at the School calendar, there seems to be a retreat happening somewhere at all times. These many practice opportunities and extended sangha are manifestations of our international Kwan Um School of Zen.

My little traveler's annoyance at having to walk through the mud in the dark to the monastery was resolved when early morning chanting began. There were more than seventy dharma teachers present, five to ten teachers, and several monks. The great bell in the dharma room at Providence Zen Center rung, and the chant began: "WON CHA, JONG SONG..." My questions about why I had traveled there, why there is a Kwan Um School, etc. disappeared into the strong feeling of sangha and the together action of this beautiful practice. ☸



(unfilled)

break camp?

or leave it

as is?

for whoever

comes this way

Diane DiPrima

Eyes eat color
Ears eat sound
Nose eats smell
Tongue eats taste
Body eats feeling
Mind eats thought
Hungry or full?
Blue sky for miles
Cool autumn breeze

Many streams
One ocean
Don't say Atlantic
Don't say Pacific
Wave on the shore
Mist in the air
Ahh! Wet!

One mind
No mind
All minds
Eyes in the front
Ears on the side
Me too

Sharp as butter
Smooth as a knife
When it's sliced
Is it
Knife through butter
Or butter through knife?
Pass the bread, please

*Ken Kessel JDPSN
New Haven Yong Maeng Jong Jin
September 22, 2007*



drawing on sky

wd it be
cross hatching?
contour drawing?
a one minute
gesture drawing?
wd it be
ink wash?
charcoal
& white chalk?

Diane DiPrima

joy

this pattering of rain.
this dream of dusk,
the dull colors graying
before our eyes.

where are we lost to
in this world?

what distances do we run
to know ourselves?

i, left at home, wonder,
“where am i now?”

i do ask these questions.
where is the joy?

this pattering of rain.

David Jordan

Poetry

Lilac Light

Shovel digs grass and gravel.

I work peat and loam by hand,

bury the bush roots in the ground

as sun settles toward the trees.

Wind whips the lilac, branch and bloom.

Sun flash on petals, a lilac light

whips the moment to a peak—

lilac, framed in vision,

wind, blossom, sun.

Darkness settles toward the trees.

David Jordan

Moment to moment
Everything's changing
There's nothing to keep
Not even the mind
That has nothing to keep

• • •

If we are brave enough
To accept that
Then the whole universe
Opens up it's treasure
Of the very single moment
When there is nothing to keep

• • •

Red poppy in green fields
Beneath the blue sky
We walk together

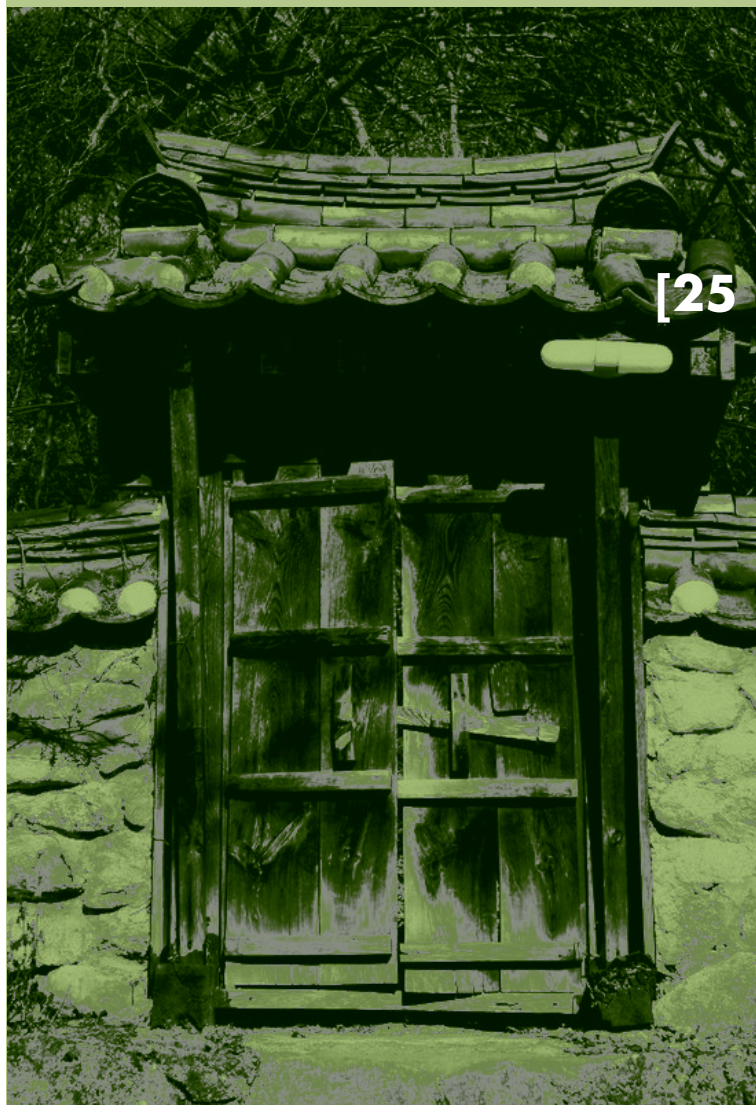
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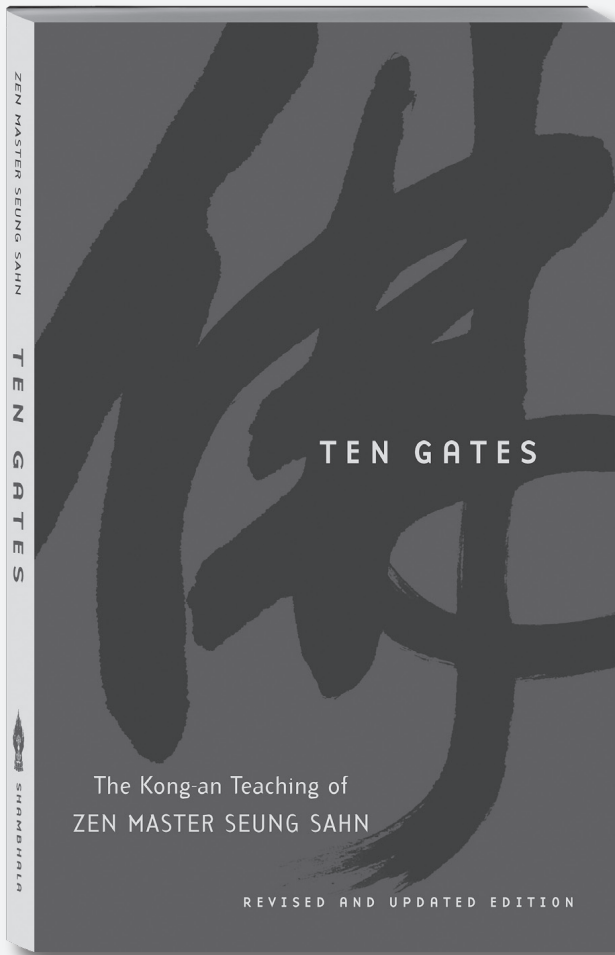
Katka Grofova

Schulchan Aruch
*For Paul Bloom's
Abbot Installation
Ceremony*

No problem
Big hindrance
Big problem
No hindrance
Roof above
Floor below
Always keep
The table set

Ken Kessel JDPSN





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