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# Primary Print





## Primary Point

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 28. The circulation is 5000 copies.

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2]

# Standing Up!

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

Standing up to accept the title of School Zen Master, there was a warm applause. As I stood there, waiting for the clapping to stop, an old familiar warning went off in my head. Approval and affection are nice, but are not what is needed most. The real, indispensable gifts are regular doses of feedback and clear criticism. Zen Master Seung Sahn often said, "People who give you good speech are not your friends. It's the people who give you bad speech that really help you."

In the realm of Zen practice, your ultimate teachers are the people who can honestly be a mirror for you and help you to see what you are not yet able to see. How can we develop and mature our practice to the point where we are able to graciously and gratefully receive our sangha's teaching? Our sangha will never flourish if we have a line of successors who are not practicing with humility and curiosity. In our School, this curiosity is called many things: "Don't Know", "What is this?", "What am I doing just now?", "How is it just now?"

As I write this, I am on a plane, returning from The Whole World is a Single Flower Conference and Tour. This was quite an interesting event. We started out in Warsaw, and somehow (it wasn't easy) managed to visit Prague and Budapest... all in about nine days. At times the sangha felt like a river of love, mixing and meandering. We enjoyed the food, the talks, and the jokes. We enjoyed meeting and seeing each other. But of course, there came the inevitable moments of dissatisfaction. Sometimes everything wasn't just right. Some people tired of the potato salad, cheese, and eggs. There was no kimchee, no Chinese food, and no pizza! Some complained about this person or that person. Everyone complained about the long bus rides. But again, all and all, I think most of us were glad we came. It was a very worthwhile effort. I think if we had just had a dharma room in each hotel, it would have been perfect.

I met someone on the trip who gave me the "bad speech" that I so value. He is a strong practitioner who has a history of doing several Kyol Che's and numberless retreats. What I appreciated so much about our time together is that all that was said was said honestly and directly. There was no accusing or blaming, no hurtful finger pointing. There was just a rich bringing forth of opinions, observations, and frustrations. What he said, and whether or not I agreed with all that was said, doesn't matter. What does matter is that he made himself available in such a generous way.

I would like to respectfully share some of his criticisms.

One: The Kwan Um School of Zen teachers don't penetrate their student's minds.

Two: The teachers often only use Zen slogans, without noticing what the student really needs.

Three: The teachers' samadhi is either non-existent or certainly does not go deep.

More was said, but that was what I most valued. Again, to me it is not so much what was said, but that it was said directly. It was those long bus rides (another slogan: a bad situation is a good situation) that gave us that chance to listen to each other. As the trip went on, I felt some trust and appreciation developing between us. That trust and appreciation is everything that I could want from our relationship. That is the Single Flower. Our struggles, fears, and confusion are the flower's sun, soil, and water.

So I thank this dharma brother and I trust that his vow, direction, and patience will allow him to continue to keep showing up at our retreats and gatherings. There can be no "penetration" of minds without both teacher and student being totally astute and aware of each other's presence. The teacher can't penetrate a student's mind any more than the student can penetrate the teacher's mind. True penetration only occurs the moment the idea of teacher and student disappears and there is only clear perception.

There can be no complete understanding of the magnificent teachings of our lineage without both the teacher and the student digesting their true meaning. The slogan that I find the most obnoxious when it comes out of the mouth of someone who has no understanding of what it really means is, "Put it all down." We might get some slight idea of what putting it all down means, and then we start running around telling other people to do it. I suggest that the only time we ever say put it all down is to ourselves each time we notice that we might be holding, checking, or making something. Putting it all down is not a command, it is a skill. Here's another slogan that's sometimes tossed around a little too much: "How may I help you?" If we really want to help, perhaps we can stop asking how, and just "Do it" (oops, another slogan.)

Lastly, what is samadhi? How can we possibly know about its depth? Again, it is up to each one of us to learn about meditation. It up to each one of us to practice letting go of all that tethers us to our false concept of "I". We can't judge our teacher's samadhi, but we can expect our teacher to be kind and perceptive. We can expect them to inspire us and we can vow to inspire them. All the Buddha had to do to inspire Mahakashyapa was hold up a flower. All Mahakashyapa had to do to inspire Buddha was to smile. Was deep samadhi on their minds at that time?

A true sangha must unconditionally, with consistent patience and wisdom, learn what it means to help each other. We all must own and take full responsibility for our own effort and endurance. We must have the courage and insight to look into our own misperceptions and break out of them, using all the magnificent tools Zen has to offer.

What it means to me to have the honor of being the present "School Zen Master" has everything to do with trying to be vigilant about my vow and direction. This world is full of greed and confusion. So many human beings are lost. The Kwan Um School of Zen sangha has a chance to honor Zen Master Seung Sahn's memory by trying to whole-heartedly digest all that we have not yet digested. We can do this by showing up and encouraging each other. The great and deep samadhi is all about attentiveness. This can't be measured, can't be weighed... WAKE UP! Pass the potato salad, don't miss the bus. ☸

Someone once asked me what the Kwan Um School was actually like, and I said, “Look around.” One time David Klinger, who’s an old student here, and I were talking about the school and I asked him, “What’s our school really like?” He said, “What are you doing now?” Those are interesting teaching ideas about what a school is and, of course, they point to what it really is, but that’s for a dharma talk. So, even though you already understand, I’ll say a few more words.

When Bodhidharma, the Indian monk who brought Zen from India to China, gave transmission to his top student, Hui Ko, he gave him a picture of himself, and a sutra. Inside the book was a poem which said, “Originally I came to this land to transmit the Dharma and to save all beings. A flower with five petals will open and by itself the fruit will ripen.” This is Zen talk which means that in China five schools would appear, which did happen.

So now it’s 1,500 years later and you can see, today, how ripe the fruit is. Of those five schools, three disappeared almost immediately—one didn’t even last one generation. Two of them, though, are still in existence today, the Lin-chi School and the Tsao Tung School. Also, where Bodhidharma came from, there were many schools. If you read about traditional Buddhism in South Asia you’ll know there are and were many schools. There’s the Theravadins, the Sarvāstivādins... many of them. There were probably also different meditation-style schools, but we don’t know much about them. What we do know about is Bodhidharma’s transmission to China and then our inheritance of this teaching tradition.

All of these teaching traditions can be called schools. They also are usually associated with some kind of organizational principal. Our school was founded by Zen Master Seung Sahn, who “came to the West” in 1972. He came to transmit the dharma and save all beings.

Interestingly, he only had a single flower and it only had one petal on it... that’s us! We owe an incredible debt of gratitude to him for all that he’s given us. He gave us a very clear teaching style. And, over the years, he also was able to organize us to perpetuate our dharma and allow it to spread. Over the years, things developed. It started out very small, just a few people in an apartment, and then it got bigger, and now, this morning, we had all these people giving talks from Zen Centers all around the world.

If you go out into the woods you will see that there are many kinds of animals, but there’s one thing that they all have in common, they all have a head, they have a body and they have a tail. Even we had a tail, originally. Very important for animals to function, then, is to have at least these two parts, the head and the body. Zen Master Seung Sahn established our school so well that we are here today, the body, but he also set up a system so that we could have a head, so that we could function correctly to spread the dharma.

Today we’re very fortunate to have one person, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, who is very capable of taking this position as the head. It’s kind of interesting because she has a five-year term—that’s our style—and at the end of that five years there will be an election of her again, or somebody else. Anyway, she’s already been the School Zen Master for three years but today she actually becomes it. So I was thinking, “Wow, wouldn’t it be great if presidents operated like that?” If they had to like spend three years of actually doing it and then they got stamped OK! We already know what she is like, so this is our stamp of approval for her leadership abilities. So now we have our very first School Zen Master Installation Ceremony.

A long time ago in China, there was a famous Zen Master named Judi, in Korean we call him Guji, just like the bag, Gucci. He’s historically renowned because no matter what kind of question was asked of him he would just stick up one finger. Of all the stories I’ve read about Guji Zen Master, they never say which finger he stuck up. Conventionally, it’s considered he probably stuck up this finger: *[sticks up his index finger.]* That’s the way the story is told, at least when we’re in polite company, but we don’t know for sure, perhaps it was another finger. But, luckily for our school, today there will be a different finger sticking up: *[sticks up his thumb.]* Thank you. ☸



1,500  
years



*Zen Master Wu Bong*



Beyond the obvious congratulations to Zen Master Soeng Hyang, I want to talk a little bit about the past.

When we started, we were just a group of people practicing together with our teacher, and then we made, officially, a Zen Center. And at that time it was just one Zen Center, Providence Zen Center. Then, soon, other people appeared, and they started groups which later became Zen Centers and this teaching started to spread out in the United States. And then somebody appeared first from Spain and took the teaching to Spain and then Poland appeared, and so on and so on, and finally all over the world.

At some point, a school was formed. In the early days, the School was totally dependent, really, on just one person, and that was Zen Master Seung Sahn. Actually if he walked away, everything would have disappeared at that time, both in terms of motivation, and in terms of money. We were very dependent on his effort.

I think it's really interesting also that, now, three years after his death, three years actually since Zen Master Soeng Hyang has been the School Zen Master, we are doing the ceremony, and as Zen Master Dae Kwang said, now it's kind of officially approved. Actually, Zen Master Seung Sahn never had the ceremony. I guess we never officially approved him as the School Zen Master. So this is the first Zen Master Installation Ceremony in the history of our school.

What this means is that the school doesn't depend, actually, on any one person anymore. I remember in the early days we already made the School, and we had the Board of Directors, and were trying to make a very simple decision, which was the School logo. And after two years of meetings and discussing for hours and hours various proposals and having committees, doing drawings, and so on, after two years of this, one of the students went to Zen Master Seung Sahn, and in less than one minute we had a logo. So we were not so capable, and again, if at that time we didn't have him, we probably would have dissolved.

I think it's a sign of great maturity that we can have this installation ceremony today. So the congratulations is not just to Zen Master Soeng Hyang, but the real congratulations is to all of you, to all of us for making the School a reality. Because, from now on, I think it's a very viable organization which can continue, and it doesn't matter who will be the School Zen Master in the future, it will continue even after that and after that and after that. That's my wish for all of us. Thank you very much. ☸

Later...

When I first came to the Providence Zen Center, some thirty-odd years ago, I didn't know anything about the Zen tradition. I didn't even know who the teacher was. I just heard that there was a Zen Center in Providence. I drove up, hunted around the town, and somehow found it. It was a Sunday night, and when I came in, evening chanting had already started.

Somebody showed me to a cushion. There were some people on either side of me and they gave me the chanting book. I think that at that time, we were just starting the Korean Heart Sutra. I was trying to chant the Korean pronunciation of a Chinese text, and here we are in America, and I'm going, "Ma Ha Ban Ya...". Meanwhile, the person next to me had this strange—to me, very strange, voice. I grew up in Philadelphia and I'm thinking, "There's a cowgirl singin' Chinese stuff next to me," and I'm kind of expecting that it's gonna be, "Ma Ha Ban Ya, get along little doggie," and it's like, "Wow, this is a really weird place".

But I enjoyed the chanting—the feeling, the sounds coming out, and not knowing what it meant, and the English Heart Sutra went by too fast to figure out what it was talking about. Afterwards, they announced that there was going to be a dharma talk by the housemaster. So I'm thinking, "Okay, now I'll get a feeling for what this teaching is." But it turns out to be the cowgirl again! She got up front—the Zen Master's not there—but it didn't mean anything to me 'cause I wasn't thinking about anything, just, "what is going on here?" She started by saying how we all have ideas about things and how we all think we know how to do things. That day she was working at a nursing home and peeling a banana for an old patient. All of us peel the banana from the stem end. But this old guy says, "That's not the way to peel a banana." And she says, "No. Come on, this is the way everybody peels it." And he says, "No, no. It's much easier from the other end." (This is not deep sutra stuff.) Then she tells him again, "No, no, no. Everybody peels it this way." So he says, "It's easier from the other end." Finally, he convinces her to try the other end and she says, "So I try it. And guess what? It's easier!" And that's the only thing I remember from my first dharma talk and visit to the Providence Zen Center.

The next great talk I heard from Zen Master Soeng Hyang was when I had moved into the Zen Center. I was cutting a cabbage in half and looking at the leaves inside. She came up to me and said everyone is an individual like the leaves of this cabbage, but the whole thing made this cabbage—together—and you can make soup and all kinds of wonderful things from it. I'm looking forward to her book because I'm sure I missed a lot of good fruit and vegetable dharma talks.

We talk about Zen as everyday life—there are all kinds of great poetical things you can say about it—but unless our everyday life really is our practice, and not even our practice anymore, just our life, you haven't completely digested Buddha's way. For our new School Zen Master, Soeng Hyang, it really is her everyday life and the two have digested each other. There are a lot of schools out there whose teaching is perhaps

better organized and their speech is perhaps more beautiful, but unless our practice really does connect completely with our everyday life, it's just a nice hobby.

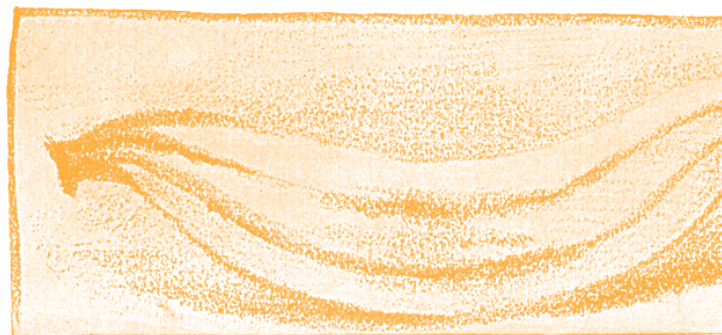
When our school first started, we tried to have our Zen Centers together with Korean temples. Ultimately, it didn't work out so well. I remember Zen Master Seung Sahn telling one Korean monk who wanted to do that about ten years ago, "We tried that. Not possible." I'm sure that over the years we drove them crazy and they drove us crazy. Now, it's interesting, because everybody's changing and soon we might not even know the difference between us, but it was always fun to ask Zen Master Seung Sahn about it. One time we asked him, "What's the difference between Korean people and American people?" And he immediately said, "Korean people have two horns. American people have no ears." We might all want to think about that—that was his comment about us.

Zen Master Soeng Hyang has, luckily for us, two horns and two ears. That's really good. The thing about the two horns that's beneficial is it gets things done. People poke you and you sometimes get motivated to do something. If you also have two ears, that's really great—in fact, it's crucial.

The relationship between the head of a school and the rest of the school is just like the relationship between our head and body. If they don't fuse and become one, there's a lot of suffering. If it really becomes one, then even if the head is setting the direction, the direction is coming from everything else.

So when Zen Master Seung Sahn died, the first question any Korean person asked me was, "Who's the head of your school?" I had always thought of Zen Master Seung Sahn as the best student, so I wasn't really thinking of him as some kind of dictator-leader of some organization. It's just that he knew how to learn better than any of us and he could show us how to learn. So I said, "Oh, you know, we have teachers' groups and they make the decisions." And they'd say, "Oh, that's cool. Who's the head of your school?" But I found out in the last few years that it's important to have a head, and it's important for the head to hear the body, then things can function very well.

Zen Master Soeng Hyang, I'm very glad that you are the one doing this job right now, and I think a lot of other people are, too. That is good for you and a benefit for everybody else. We are all very lucky, and thank you for doing this job. Thank you! 🌀



In front of 200 people at the first-ever installation of a School Zen Master at 1:30 pm on April 5, 2008, Zen Master Dae Kwang pointed out that Zen Master Soeng Hyang has already served three years of her five-year term. Teasingly, he suggested that perhaps other great institutions, like the United States, might emulate the Kwan Um School of Zen and have its presidents complete a three-year probationary term. Of course, in reality we followed Korean Buddhist protocol in waiting three years until after the death of our Founding Zen Master to officially appoint his successor.

In her inaugural speech Zen Master Soeng Hyang spoke of the importance of Try Mind and the need for encouragement from a teacher. I was reminded that she led my first Yong Maeng Jong Jin. After energetic bows, we launched into the Morning Bell Chant with such a lack of energy that the Ji Do Poep Sa Nim (as Zen Master Soeng Hyang Rhodes then was) halted the four of us saying sternly, "Even if you are new to this, you must do better." After our second attempt at chanting more or less passed muster, we began meditation. But little time elapsed until she admonished one of us for nodding off to sleep. Another ten minutes, and noticing the reemergence of torpor, Zen Master Soeng Hyang violently shook the person next to her. As a newbie I found all this intimidating. And later, at my first-ever interview, she may have detected obstinacy lurking within my nervousness, for she was very firm with me and unforgiving of my ignorance and lack of perception. (In her talk Zen Master Soeng Hyang said that "If you feel discouraged that's the demon in the corner. It's not a bad thing to be discouraged." "Believe in yourself," "Embrace what is difficult.")

I like to think that some of my less-than-passive obstinacy to the formalities of our practice wore away because in subsequent visits to the Providence Zen Center I was often hugged by Zen Master Soeng Hyang, who stood outside on the verandah to welcome morning arrivals on the Buddha's birthdays. I was very impressed that a teacher of her stature would do this.

Over the years, I have cherished the warmth of Zen Master Soeng Hyang's generous affection as well as her teaching. A year ago I was her attendant in New York. We went to the Japan Society to admire exquisite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When she said that she had had enough of them, we went to the Zen Center where we sat side-by-side for forty minutes. I ascribed the samadhi that I experienced to being in her presence. (At her installation ceremony, Zen Master Soeng Hyang quoted Zen Master Seung Sahn's admonition to her, "This is NOT a school of samadhi, OK? This is not about feeling good. It's about 'How may I help you?'" ) Later, over dinner at a nearby Korean restaurant, she listened with great empathy to my account of my son's demise. On the Sunday following the retreat led by her, we had one of the heaviest rainfalls that the city has ever endured. Zen Master Soeng Hyang arranged to meet me in my local coffee shop on the Upper East Side. When I saw her there, enveloped in a rain cape talking on a cell-phone, I was taken aback because the barista fiercely forbids the use of phones. When I thanked him later for not causing a rumpus, he replied, "Oh, I saw that she was *una persona speciale*." We brought our coffee to my apartment where our stray, neurotic cat Parker jumped onto the sofa to sit beside Zen Master Soeng Hyang. Now, this is a Kiplingesque cat who walks by herself and is a non-greeter. Zen Master Soeng Hyang, however, said that she perceived her Buddha-nature, something that Parker has hidden from me for fourteen years. Explaining as she did, that Zen Master

Seung Sahn had given her the Buddhist name of Nature Smell because he knew of her delight in nature ("I am the compost queen... I love being outside") Zen Master Soeng Hyang insisted that we slither across Central Park in the pouring rain to our appointment at New York Chogyesa.

\* \* \* \*

At Zen Master Soeng Hyang's installation, some of the teachers from the United States, Europe, and Asia, made attempts at addressing aspects of this deceptively simple (special) person who has a penchant for leading with her weak suit and then turning it into trenchant teaching. I am reminded that Alan Watts explained in *The Way of Zen*, "This is like encouraging the growth of a hedge by pruning, for obviously the basic intention is to help, but the Zen student does not really know Zen unless he [or she] finds out for himself [herself]." Zen Master Bon Shim, from Warsaw, described asking Zen Master Soeng Hyang for advice on her relationship on her first visit to Providence Zen Center. Zen Master Soeng Hyang replied that she couldn't give her any because she didn't know why people fight instead of loving each other. At first Zen Master Bon Shim was disappointed in Zen Master Soeng Hyang's answer, but on reflection, came to overlook her own problem and focused instead on that kong-an. "We have," said she, "a strong, compassionate head."

Zen Master Dae Kwan from Hong Kong told us:

I remember Zen Master Seung Sahn said one very important thing. It's not so much the person; who is holding the light that is very important. This head is somebody who is holding the dharma light. We are looking at the dharma light; not-so-much the person. So don't check the person. [Zen Master Soeng Hyang] is very frank to tell her things to all of you... usually [Zen masters] don't talk about their shortcomings, but Zen Master Soeng Hyang tells you everything. But behind is the dharma.

This morning I saw something that really touched me, when we woke up very early. We have one monk here who has been a monastic for thirty years and Zen Master Soeng Hyang walked right up to him and bowed to him. It's not so much what you say as your action, how you relate to people. How would you relate with a sangha student? Are you hearing what they are saying to you? This is very important. Also, harmony is very important. If we are in harmony, our school will be very strong.

It doesn't matter what people say about us. We look funky, I must say, from a Chinese angle. But, if you see behind this funky thing, actually there is a lot of good stuff inside. We need each other to help. We need all of us to help this school, and turn into this dharma light. Our mission is to share this dharma light, so all beings have this light and they don't live in darkness.

I want to congratulate Zen Master Soeng Hyang and congratulate our school. So let's become one: head and body, hands and feet become one, not for ourselves but for all beings.

Spring comes, grass grows by itself.  
The blue mountain does not move.  
White clouds float back and forth.





8]

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

Zen means to be free from life and death.

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

The Heart Sutra says: there is neither old age nor death nor attainment, for there is nothing to attain.

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

If there is nothing to attain, what should we be free from? What do we have to attain?

KATZ!

The sky is blue and we are sitting here together. Thank you for coming to the ceremony.

I first came into contact with Buddhism when I was 19 years old. At that time, I had been attending university for just a few weeks. One evening, I ran into a friend of mine on campus. She said she and some other young women whom she knew from her Buddhist circles, also students, were planning on going to a temple that evening. They were planning to eat dinner, and have a pleasant time chatting together. So I thought I'd come along. We went to this temple near Seoul on top of a mountain. After dinner the temple's abbot called us into the dharma room. As soon as the young women were assembled in the dharma room, the venerable abbot said: "It's so wonderful that you young people are interested in Buddhism. Tonight, there is a full moon. And as you know, on nights with a full moon, the effects of practice are twice as strong. So I suggest that tonight

# Inka Ceremony

for  
Namhee Chon  
Berlin Zen Center  
May 3 2008



we do 3000 prostrations together.” The others didn’t dare to contradict him. But first they had to show me how you do these “prostrations.” The abbot also told us that each time we bent down, we should say loudly: “Please take us to the other shore.” By the time dawn came, I had finished all 3000 prostrations. Then I crawled down from the temple’s mountain on all fours and went home. For over a week I couldn’t walk a single step without feeling pain. I could have said after just the twentieth prostration at the latest, “No, I’m not going to continue, this is much too stressful.” But I was adamant and even, if necessary, could have done more—for just one reason, this sentence: “Please take me to the other shore.” I didn’t really know what the other shore meant. But I knew enough to understand that I would meet something unusual, extraordinary, and new there, something for which I had a great longing.

In my youth, and after, I was a very depressed person. I had basically already thought through my life from beginning to end. I believed it was all a repetition of the same thing and that existence had no meaning. So I seriously considered taking my life. Then, something occurred to me that I had never tried out before. In films and literature, erotic love was highly prized. I thought, before I die, I’ll give that a try. A few years later, I learned about yoga and Hindu meditation practices in India. They say that if you want to achieve the absolute, you should practice asceticism and restraint. My husband and I lived together for a long time as brother and sister. All of this was an expression of my desperate search for meaning in life.

I don’t know how I earned all the goodness and beauty in my life. In any case, I met Zen Master Wu Bong and, shortly afterwards, Zen Master Seung Sahn. His “put it all down!” was like a sharp sword to me, cutting through all my fantasies, notions, and desires. Soon thereafter, my husband and I turned our apartment into a Zen Center. Above the Zen Center lived an old woman. Actually, I hardly ever saw her. I only saw her eldest daughter, who visited her from time to time. One day, as I was passing the door to her apartment, I heard a soft whimper, “Let me out of here!” I asked her “What’s wrong? Did someone lock you in? How can I help you?” But she didn’t respond to my questions at all and just kept repeating this one sentence, like a mantra. After a while, she stopped. But the next day, I heard banging and hammering coming from her apartment. It seemed she was hitting her door with a stick. As she did so, she screamed, wailed, and sobbed loudly: “Let me out of here!” I was about to call the police. I thought something terrible must have happened to her. When I saw her daughter hurrying up the stairs, I yelled at her: “How could you have locked your old mother in her apartment?” She looked at me blankly and retorted, “You can’t lock anyone behind this door.” The door had a clasp-lock, the kind that can only be opened from inside. If you want to open the door from the outside, you need a key. So the old woman had locked herself in! A few days later, she was taken to a psychiatrist.

Once during meditation, I realized that during my constant search for the absolute, I wasn’t so different from this old woman. I wanted to get to the other shore; my 3000 prostrations were like this old woman’s cries.

When you look closely, this world is like a huge insane asylum. Everyone creates his or her own prison. We double- and triple-lock ourselves in and cry out for freedom. As soon as we create ideas and concepts of freedom, we become unfree. In the moment when we begin to think about completion, or about enlightenment, we become incomplete and unenlightened. A process of chasing after our own ideas begins. What we have created with our minds becomes so real that we must achieve and realize it. But Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching is very simple. He taught us to put everything down. When we put everything down, everything is as it is: whole and complete. So we don’t even have to rush from one Kyol Che to the next and do thousands of prostrations. We just have to put down our ideas and concepts. Then the prisons disappear, the doors open, and we see clearly. This is the best help we can give to the world. We don’t even have to ask “How can I help you?” This is the greatest contribution we can make to our world.

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

At this point there is freedom from life and death.

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

At this point there is neither freedom, nor life, nor death.

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

Zen Master Ko Bong said, if you go one step forward from this point, you are dead. If you go one step backwards, you are dead. You can’t stay at this point. Nobody can help you. How can you stay alive?

So, how can we stay alive?

KATZ!

Now my talk is over. Thank you for listening. ☸

## DHARMA COMBAT

**Zen Master Soeng Hyang:** Sometimes when people become a teacher, even more karma appears. What can you do with this karma?

**Chon JDPSN:** You already understand.

**Zen Master Soeng Hyang:** Teach me.

**Chon JDPSN:** How may I help you?

**Zen Master Soeng Hyang:** Is that all?

**Chon JDPSN:** Not enough?

**Zen Master Soeng Hyang:** No, not enough.

**Chon JDPSN:** A dog is running after a bone.

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** *[does a bow and sits with his back toward Chon JDPSN and says nothing]*

**Chon JDPSN:** *[strong]* One more step is necessary!

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** *[keeps sitting and says nothing]*

**Chon JDPSN:** Next question please!

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** *[does a bow and leaves]*

**Tara:** I have one question. Mummy, why did you become my mummy?

**Chon JDPSN:** You already understand.

**Tara:** Hum...

**Chon JDPSN:** *[bugs and kisses her daughter]*

Oh, my darling!

# Inka Ceremony

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

Kindness and cruelty are opposite sides of one form.

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

Originally no kindness, no cruelty, and no form!

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

Kindness is kindness.

Cruelty is cruelty.

Which do you choose?

KATZ!

Thank you for your loving kindness  
to be here this sunny Berlin morning!

for  
Jo Potter  
Berlin Zen Center  
May 3 2008



10] About 15 years ago, I took the five precepts here in Berlin Zen Center. One of the precepts was especially important to me: I vow not to kill. It was the beginning of a salvation adventure. I went home and began to save everything; I would carefully pick up every insect which I found in the house, take it outside and set it free. Then my life-partner Sush started to do the same thing, grumbling at the start. Sush is German, which meant that we started to save every single snail in the garden with great Prussian discipline. We don't boil them or cut them in half or otherwise torture them like the neighbours do. We take them to the park late at night and release them. We catch every sentient mouse that the cats bring in at 4:30 in the morning and save them along with every bird and every spider. Gradually, out of this saving action, a direction for our life started to form. Today I am extremely grateful to my Zen practice for the appearance of this direction, which is evolving into establishing a foundation with the purpose of helping to alleviate the suffering of animals upon our earth.

A few years ago I was chilling out neck-deep in a swimming pool in sunny Arizona. Suddenly, a wasp came barrelling into the pool and landed upside down right in front of me. It was struggling ferociously but couldn't get its wings out of the water. My work was clear, save the wasp, and so I carefully pushed the wasp towards the edge of the pool. This was dangerous because I am extremely allergic to wasp bites. Upon arrival at the edge of the pool, I firmly flicked the wasp over the edge of the pool. What I did not see, was that there was a bird practicing Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the edge of the pool. We call our Zen retreats Yong Maeng Jong Jin, and it means something similar to, "Sitting like a tiger before it leaps on its food!" I saved the wasp and the bird immediately ate it!

It was good insight into the teachings of the Buddha. Actually, it is the little things in life that teach us so well. I realized that I had better open my eyes when helping others because maybe my help might make their life hell.

This means cultivating awakened eyes, ears, smell sense, taste and tongue, touch sense, and becoming aware of our thinking processes—in short, all six gates, as we call them in Zen.

When I was about thirteen years old, my father would come home after work and tell my brothers and me really dumb jokes. We were his captive audience! I loved his dumb jokes and stories because something would awaken in me when listening. He once told us a story about Don Pedro. Don Pedro was sobbing one day when his neighbour came by. The neighbour asked; "Don Pedro! Why are you crying? Is your wife sick?"

Don Pedro replied: "No! It is worse than that! My donkey has died!" The neighbour looked at the donkey and said; "Don Pedro, it looks to me like your donkey died of starvation. He is so skinny!"

Don Pedro said; "Ya! That is the point! I was teaching him how not to eat and then he went and died!"

Buddha taught that everything—just as it is—is complete. But is this how we live? How much do we really notice as our lives pass away? Our lives starve away without us realizing our true nature or acting out our work as true human beings.

A short time ago, we received a letter from Animals' Angels, an organization whose members accompany animals like cows, pigs, horses, and other animals to slaughter, and check to make sure that the animals receive the minimum of care during the

transport, like water and rest periods. The letter was about one woman in Canada who was asking for donations. She needed money to bring to the public attention the plight of the male boars in the forests of Canada called “boar bashing.” The boars would be injured by their human captors before transport, so that the boars would not fight with each other during transport, because they were in such pain. So we sent a donation, and later she wrote back telling us that she had successfully brought the situation to the public and to officials. The public was extremely upset. As a result of her efforts, the situation had stopped.

That was the work of one true human being. It only takes one person. Who is this person? Whose suffering was stopped? Did she only alleviate the suffering of the boars or didn't she also alleviate the suffering of the people who were hurting the boars?

Once, I was explaining to Zen Master Bon Shim about our wish to help animals. She asked me the following very wise question: “Jo, which is more important to help: a human being or an animal?”

So how can we help? How can we develop skillful means to work with the people who were hurting the boars? For sure, those people don't want to be judged as being bad or wrong by us, the “good Buddhists.” Surely helping those people would also help the boars! How can we be more attentive to what our tongues say?

I would like to share with you my favorite Zen story, which illustrates the use of skillful means. Long ago, in the deep forests of Korea, a young man and a young woman fell deeply in love with each other and decided to marry and start a home together. They were happy, and everyone benefited by their radiant love. One day, a knock came on the door. It was the groom's mother, the bride's mother-in-law. The mother-in-law asked if she could live with them because she was old and alone. They agreed.

But as soon as she moved in, she began to make the young bride's life hell. Nothing was good enough for her son: a long list of complaints began, including the food being terrible and the house not orderly enough. The young bride became extremely unhappy and decided she would kill her mother-in-law. She ran to the temple and pleaded to the abbot to help her to kill the old woman. The abbot agreed to help her. He ran into his personal room and brought out a small pot. “This is poison lotion,” he said. “Every night, take some lotion and massage your mother-in-law's feet thoroughly with it. Do this for one month, and without fail, she will die!” The young woman was extremely grateful and began that very night with the foot massage. She massaged each of her mother-in-law's feet with complete attention. Then, suddenly, a strange thing started to happen. After a few days, the mother-in-law started to help make the meals. And after two weeks, the old woman started to make special tea and cake and praise her daughter-in-law. And after three weeks the young bride began to realize that she cared deeply for the old woman. Horrified, she ran to the abbot. “How is the lotion working?” he asked. “You must help me again!” she gasped. “My mother-in-law has become the most wonderful person. I don't want her to die!” So the abbot calmed her down and said: “Don't worry, there was no poison in the lotion. It was the love and kindness in your actions. It was what you made.”

To me, that abbot was a very good abbot. He could have been judgmental and angry with the young woman and her wish to kill. He could have condemned her by saying: “You will break the precepts! It is wrong and immoral to kill!” We all know that abbots take precepts seriously. But in this case, the abbot used very skillful means, and responded to the real cry of this young woman's pain and desolation, and he truly helped her.

This story points to awakening to our everyday situation and developing the skillful means to really help each other in a clear way. There is a great Arabian saying: “When the mind is blind, the eyes cannot see.” So please, let us awaken our minds, so that we can see clearly, and let us develop our practice to help us go in that direction. I end this dharma talk by expressing my gratitude to Zen Master Seung Sahn, and to our very good teachers, to my beloved sangha, and to my life partner Sush. Thank you for listening!

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

A human being is an animal. An animal is a human being.

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

Originally no human being and no animal!

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

A human being is a human being and an animal is an animal!

So I ask you: which is more important to help?

KATZ!

After the ceremony, there is food and drinks for us. Later, our cats are waiting for us to feed them. 🐾

## DHARMA COMBAT

**Sven:** Jo, this ceremony is so touching. How do I know that I am not dreaming?

**Potter JDPSN:** WAKE UP!

**Sven:** Oh! Thank you!

**James:** I think I am so smart, but really I am so stupid. I don't know any answers. I am very jealous of you because you know all the answers. So help me and make me feel better by asking me a question you don't know the answer to.

**Potter JDPSN:** You already understand.

**James:** No. I really don't understand!

**Potter JDPSN:** How can YOU help the world?

**James:** Ahhhh! Thank you! *[hugs Potter JDPSN]*

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** I have been to Berlin twice and have always heard about the love parade, but as I walk around Berlin, I can't find the love parade. Can you tell me: where is the love parade? *[laughter]*

**Potter JDPSN:** You already understand!

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** Please teach me!

**Potter JDPSN:** I WILL! *[stands up, dances wildly; laughter]*

**Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS:** Thanks to you, I can tell all my friends I saw the real Berlin love parade!

# Why

Dusan Silvasi

## Did Bodhidharma Come to Slovakia?

In our Slovakian Sangha, a great event happened on the 8th of May in Kosice. After publishing the first original Zen book in Slovakian history ever, *True Zen for True Life* or *Why Did Bodhidharma Come to Slovakia?* we held a big ceremony with an exhibition of pictures from the book to introduce it to the public.

In the spirit of together action about 130 people took part in the ceremony, led by Chong An Sunim JDPSN chanting the Homage to the Three Jewels and the Slovak Heart Sutra together with us. After the dharma talk, the ceremony continued with the Evening Bell Chant followed by a concert. Contemplative sounds opened the musical performance given by the Polish group "Ubu Experyment" by brilliant pianist and composer Ula Kisiel who had lived in Kosice Zen Center for two years.

During the following jam session performed by one of the most popular Slovak musicians Marian Cekovsky, together with Ula Kisiel, Chong An Sunim JDPSN joined by playing the drums. While fabulous music inspired by the present spirit of Zen was played, the artist Oleg Suk, the Slovakian national abbot, drew several large calligraphies of Bodhidharma. This spirit of creativity and spontaneity filled every heart in the room.

The program continued with a slide show from three months of Winter Kyol Che in Mu Sang Sah (Korea) in which Dusan Silvasi, abbot of Kosice Zen Center, and Oli Silvasi, participated two years ago. After that, there was a break when people could try vegetarian-style sushi and other vegetarian delicacies that our sangha members prepared by themselves for behalf of all guests.

Then the next round of music followed and lasted till night because nobody wanted to leave this warm and lovely happening. At the end, everybody left with a big smile on their faces.

It was an excellent inauguration ceremony for the book which will finally introduce Zen to Slovaks as being the real and true practice which can bring lots of positive and compassionate aspects to our everyday lives. Before in Slovakia, there were only translations of Zen books about ancient stories and Buddhist history. That was the reason why many people thought Zen is quite interesting but obsolete, and thus not the real path for us in this modern society. Our book will definitely dismiss this myth because you will not find there anything older than fifteen-year-old dharma talks, dharma combats, and live dialogs of our teachers during their visits in Slovakia. There are recorded encounters with ten teachers of our school answering a lot of questions from different visitors of Yong Maeng Jong Jins, and public talks about contemporary human problems.

Also, I would like to thank everybody who has helped with the book financially or by his or her own work on the book. Much work has been done so that we could publish this beautiful 320-page book with fifty artistic photographs from Oleg Suk. Thanks also to the Eastern European Dharma Fund of the Kwan Um School of Zen for their support.

Finishing with the words of Chong An Sunim JDPSN when ending the ceremony, "Great ceremony, great together-action, great music, great people, great food, and great book." I hope that all of this, especially the book, will help many Slovakian and Czech people to find their correct direction and true compassion in their everyday lives for all beings. ☸




# Creating harmony between yourself and the world

Ground-breaking ceremony of Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Center— a new Zen Meditation building in Singapore on May 20, 2008

*Zen Master Dae Kwang*

Thank you for coming to this auspicious event. Auspicious means special or important. Why is this event special or important? Why is it important to open this Zen Center?

Buddha was born into this world because of the suffering of all beings. That is also the purpose of the Zen Center. The Zen Center is a place of practicing, and for people to come practice together to help relieve the suffering of all beings. So how many places in the world can you go to make harmony between yourself and all beings? Unfortunately, there are very few. So this Zen Center is important because it is a place for us to come and find our true self and help the world. This is what the Buddha did. This is what many human beings after Buddha have done, and that is also our job as human beings.

I want to thank you for supporting this Zen Center. Please come here and practice together, and together we can help this world. Thank you. 



*Gye Mun Sunim, JDPS*


On May 20, 2008, Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Center had its ground breaking ceremony at its new location, Number 21 Lorong 25 Geylang. The ceremony was graced by Zen Master Dae Kwang, Dr. Ong Seh Hong, MP for Marine Parade GRC, Mr. Ang Mong Seng, BBM, MP for Hong Kah GRC, and sangha from various parts of the world.

The purpose of having a meditation center is to make a provision for people to come and practice together, find our true self, and help the world.

The abbot of Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Center, Gye Mun Sunim JDPS, said the meaning of ground breaking is to act together, and ultimately every one of us can attain happiness. He further added that the Zen Center does not belong to an individual in particular. It belongs to every one of us; and it is important for us to come and practice, to understand what we really are, attain our true self, and help the world. The Buddha taught us that there is actually no true “I”, every one of us has the same substance, and every one of us can attain our true self—our true nature and true substance. “When we attain our true selves, the earth has not an inch of soil”—only when we attain our true substance is it then no longer necessary to build this Zen Center.

Today, the world is full of disasters. The recent twin disasters in Myanmar and Sichuan exemplified that we are in a world of impermanence, where lives and homes are destroyed. To help the world, we need to have energy, and the Zen Center provides the place for us to recharge, so that we can extend our hands to help the world.

To build a Zen Center requires an auspicious cause and conditions. Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Center has organized an ongoing fundraising campaign “3650 Great Bodhisattva Vow” for its building funds, to appeal to 3650 kind donors to simply save a dollar a day, for a three-year period. In a year, there are 365 days, and by doing a good deed each day, every day is a good day. The current estimate of the construction fee is five million dollars.

The abbot added that when the Zen Center is completed, Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Center’s next task is to prepare a group of people to help those in need, and through this together-action the true meaning of the groundbreaking ceremony is manifested. We hope that through shared effort from every individual, the new Zen Center can be completed soon, to provide a place for practice so as to find our self and the true purpose of life. 



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# Motivation for Practice

*Diana Starr Daniels*

My motivation for practice is best explained by my personal history. I do not think the family in which I was born was an accident, nor the circumstances that brought me to this point. I do not have a clear understanding of karma, but I believe karma is why I have chosen this direction, or the direction has chosen me.

Although my mother hauled the four of us to Mass every Sunday, my family was not religious. I didn't particularly like to go to Mass except on the few occasions when we arrived early, before the lights were on and before people began to file into the church. There was silence then in the beautiful, old church, and the flames in the red votives would cast shadows from the statues across the pews and along the floor. Sometimes, on the way home from school, I would stop in and sit in that silence. If God existed, he was certainly present here.

I learned in catechism that God was a loving father who would condemn a person to burn in hell for eternity if they died with a mortal sin on their soul. Missing Mass on Sunday without a good reason was a mortal sin. I also learned that if a baby died before it was baptized it would never see the face of God.

Vatican II arrived as "a breath of fresh air" and blew out the elegant Latin Mass and me along with it. I left the church, never to return, but somehow I knew I had lost something significant. I would carry that void within myself for a long time.

My father was the biggest influence on my life. He was an immigrant from the Azores, one of thirteen children, and a socialist. My father was a wonderful historian. We grew up hearing stories of strikes and picket lines. We listened with rapt attention as my father told of a general strike in the city, of workers marching through the streets chanting "The people united will never be defeated," while bashing in the windows of the factories. He told us of the police calling in reinforcements of club-wielding police arriving on horseback and beating the striking workers. He told us of the unionizing, the communists who were a part of this, and who he saw as friends of working people. My father believed the solution to the suffering in this world was Universal Socialism. He was wrong, but I grew up with a strong sense of social obligation.

We grew up in the tenement district of New Bedford's South End and attended the infamous Roosevelt Junior High School. There were fights in the school, on the grounds, and on the bus. One boy died from injuries caused by a blow to the head during a fight. Another boy sustained a broken arm when the boys were so intent on fighting that they fell into a six-foot construction ditch right around the corner from the tenement in which we lived. I remember a nerdy boy, the kind of kid who gets bullied at school, sitting behind the bus driver, where he must have thought he was safe. As soon as the bus began to roll, his school papers were snatched from his hands, ripped in half, and he was knocked to the floor by a punch to his face. He picked up his papers, and sat quietly

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back in his seat, with blood dripping from his mouth onto his shirt, while the bus driver looked straight ahead. I still can see the embarrassed smile frozen on his face as we stared at each other from across the aisle.

As an adult I became involved with a Marxist-Leninist organization, and wrote for an underground newspaper, *For the People*. The focus of the organization quickly shifted from the oppressed working class, to who was sleeping with whom, and nobody much cared why. The organization eventually collapsed under the weight of its own internal contradictions, and I wandered off, abandoning all hope of political solutions to the world's problems.

My first exposure to Buddhism was watching in horror as Buddhist monks set themselves on fire, and sat motionless and burned to death in protest of the carnage that was Vietnam. I began to read Thich Nhat Hahn, Matthiessen, D.T. Suzuki, and others. There were no Buddhist groups locally, and I had no outlet for my interest, so I put it aside as I divorced the man to whom I had been married since I was a teenager, and struggled to raise my three children alone while working my way through a four-year university education. But the seed had been planted.

To escape from the stress of my unraveling life, I decided to take a trip to Southern California to visit my sister and her family. They were involved in the Nichirin Daishonin Buddhist sect, and so I took the five precepts with the Soka Gakkai International. The organization was largely based on the West Coast, and there were no active groups in my area. My practice in isolation was brief and superficial, and I soon stopped altogether as I became more and more involved with the details of my everyday life.

Sometime later, a Buddhist group, New Kadampa Tradition, with a Tibetan spiritual leader came to my town. I wasn't just excited, I was ecstatic. I joined, again took the precepts, and became a member of the Foundation Program (equivalent to a Dharma Teacher in Training.) I did everything from press releases and changing the offerings, to sweeping the floor and cleaning the toilet.

I learned so much and made many friends, for which I am still grateful. The emphasis wasn't on meditation in this tradition, but on study and talks. The practice was all in English, and I found myself focusing on the odd use of the English language, a common problem with translated material, rather than the sound of the chanting. I was struck by the opulence and literal interpretation of Buddhism by the Tibetan tradition, and by the sangha members who sat in chairs and not on cushions. The practice revolved around a dharma protector, and the Heart Sutra was not the center of the practice. I eventually left the sangha because the practice did not feel right for me; my interest had always been with the austerity and discipline of Zen.


A member of the New Kadampa Tradition happened to mention the Providence Zen Center in passing, and I tracked it down on the internet. The Zen Center wasn't what I had expected. I found the very things that attracted me to Zen, the emphasis on intuition, lack of book study, and the precision in performing daily tasks, challenged and annoyed me. I slammed headlong into my own inner demons—my lack of discipline, impatience, overinflated ego, problems

with authority, and my attachment to the pleasures of the senses. The experience was often painful and frustrating, but I found myself learning and growing and changing in ways I had never had expected.

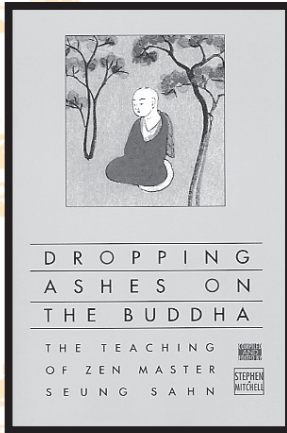
My work history has been in the helping professions. I have worked in domestic violence, child protection, and currently in a substance abuse treatment program that is a step up from incarceration. I have seen a 21-year-old who went into cardiac arrest after overdosing on heroin, and a 32-year-old whose belly was so distended from the effects of advanced cirrhosis that she appeared nine-months-pregnant and had to be sent to a hospice to die because the doctors could no longer help her. Some women, barely out of their teens, would relapse and die of an overdose, or in some cases, tainted drugs. There were others who have never been parented properly, who had not been taught basic values, with no sense of themselves or goals in life. They filled the void with shopping at the mall, listening to TV, and crack cocaine. It's as though there is a war going on, not in Iraq, but on the streets of cities and towns in this country.

I volunteer with a local environmental group where I am out on the shoreline at 6:00 am from spring to fall, performing tests and recording data for that organization. It feels good to smell the ocean and feel the sea breezes on my face as I work. It gets me back in touch with the honesty and reality of the natural world. I have begun volunteering at a local prison teaching techniques to prisoners on stress management, dealing with such issues as anger, how people change, how to function in the world in a nonviolent way, and Zen meditation.

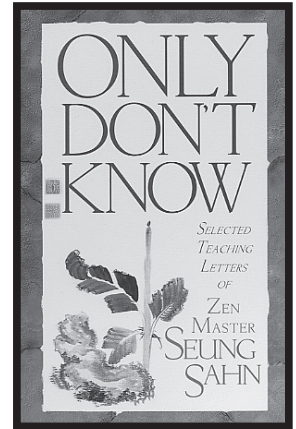
I am fortunate to have not experienced any major trauma in my life. Life in and of itself is trauma enough. I still cannot wrap my mind around the reality that when people die they are never seen again. Ever. I still struggle with the realization that I cannot control everything or fix everyone; that I can not even control myself. I try mightily to reconcile the fact that all emotions are pain, even my love for my children, and my eight, beautiful grandchildren. I try to live with my own angst by trying to share what Buddhism has attempted to give me, and which I am trying to absorb—an acceptance of the suffering in life; the fact that I am the originator of my own suffering; that how I perceive things is not how they are; a slowly dawning realization that I am part of a larger whole and not so special as I originally thought—and especially the gentleness and nonviolence of Buddhism.

I have found solace in becoming an engaged Buddhist; it matters to me that I work to make a difference, to live nonviolently, to not eat animals, and attempt to face the many forms of violence, by working with people who are often steeped in it. I have learned that it takes more than good intentions. I have learned that sometimes what may seem to be helpful can be unintentionally harmful unless it is based on wisdom and compassion. I also know that sometimes my energy and enthusiasm get in the way of my commonsense. I have come to accept that I do not know anywhere near what I thought I knew and that how I perceive the world is part of the problem. I recognize that I need direction, and structure from experienced teachers. I think I can only find the direction I need in formal training. 

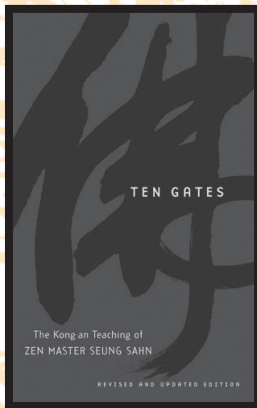
# A fresh approach to Zen



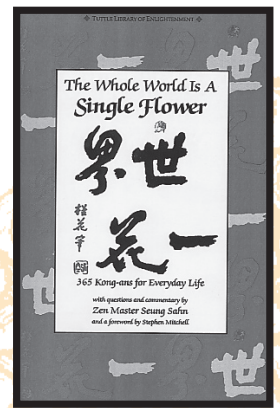
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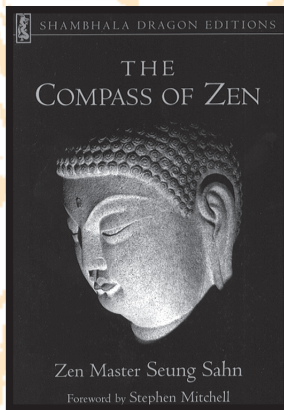
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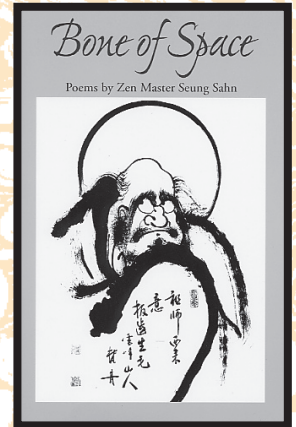
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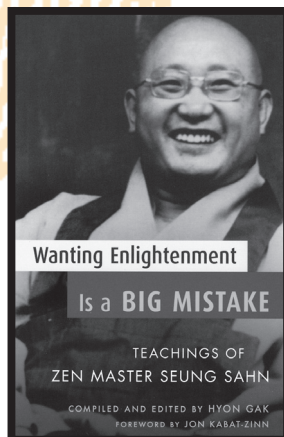
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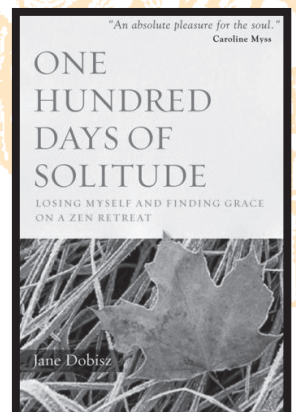
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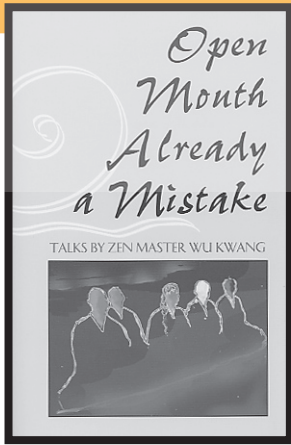


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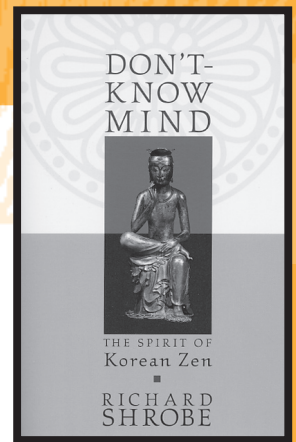
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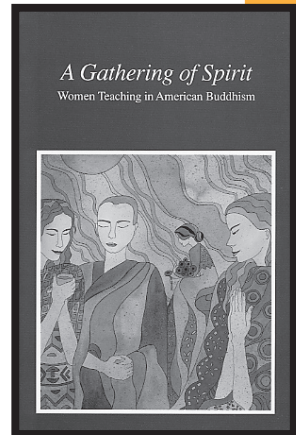


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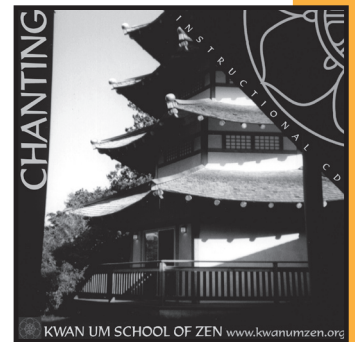


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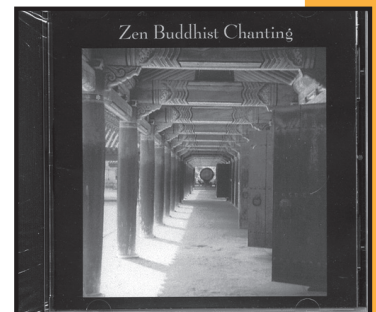
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*Mistake.*

*Failure.*

*These designations come from where?*

*Haahh!!*

*Why do you make all that? What are you doing just now?*

# The Elegant

Looking into Zen Kong-ans from the Blue Cliff Record and the Wu-men-kuan

It is possible to look at failure in a variety of ways. In the *Wu-men-kuan* (*Mumonkan*; *Mu Mun Kwan*), Case Forty-two is based on a fable derived from a Buddhist scripture. Zen Master Wu-men takes this story and uses it as a kong-an:

Once, long ago Mun Su Bosal (Monju: Manjushri) went to a gathering of all Buddhas. Just then, all the Buddhas returned to their original seats. Only one woman remained, seated near Shakyamuni Buddha, deep in samadhi. Mun Su Sari asked the Buddha, "Why can a woman sit so close to you and I cannot?" The Buddha told Mun Su Sari, "You wake her up from samadhi and ask her yourself." Mun Su Sari walked around the woman three times and snapped his fingers. Then, he took her in the palm of his hand, carried her to heaven and used transcendent energy on her, but could not wake her up. Buddha said, "If one hundred Mun Su Saris appeared, they also could not wake her up. Down below, past twelve hundred million countries, there is Ma Myung Bosal, who will be able to wake her up from samadhi." Immediately, Ma Myung Bosal emerged out of the earth and bowed to the Buddha, who gave him the command. Ma Myung walked in front of the woman and snapped his fingers only once. At this, the woman woke up from samadhi and stood up from her seat.

That is the case. Then there is a short poem:

*Come out, not come out,*

*both are already free.*

*God's head and demon's face.*

*The failure, how elegant.<sup>1</sup>*

As you can tell, there is a cast of characters here. One is Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha. Another is Mun Su Sari Bosal, also known as Manjushri Bodhisattva (Skt). He represents the enlightened nature of universal, primordial wisdom. Then there is another character, Ma Myung Bosal. Since *Bosal* means Bodhisattva, he too is an enlightened being. *Ma Myung* translates as *Ensnared Light*. His name, then, is Ensnared Light Bodhisattva. He

is nowhere near as lofty and celestial as Manjushri, but emerges from earth. Finally, there is a woman sitting in deep meditative absorption. In India at that time women were generally regarded as second-class citizens. This is why the question appears, "Why can a woman sit so close to you and I cannot?"

A long time ago, according to the story, in some distant, far-off land not of our realm, all the Buddhas had a convocation. But, although Manjushri was traditionally called the teacher of the seven Buddhas, he had not been invited to this gathering. Because Manjushri represents wisdom, it follows that the teacher of all Buddhas is clear wisdom. Of course, all of this is allegorical, so actually we are being represented here.

At first we are told that Manjushri is not invited to this convocation of the Buddhas, but that finally he is allowed to enter. Just as he does so, all the other Buddhas return to their original places, wherever the original place of all Buddhas may be. (Maybe we will find that sometime in our Zen meditation.) As they return, only a woman remains. Seated near Shakyamuni, she is in deep samadhi, deep meditation. She does not know anything; she does not hear anything; she is just at one with everything. Manjushri asks the Buddha, "Why can this woman sit so close to you and I cannot?" The Buddha replies, "Why don't you wake her up from samadhi and ask her, yourself?" Manjushri tries to do so, using all of his powers, but the woman does not move at all.

Now, of course, the reason she does not move is because Manjushri is representative of the realm of equality, total equality, absolute equality. In total equality, there is no going into and no coming out of; there is no before and no after. Of course, he cannot wake her, because he is immersed in total equality. Then the Buddha says in effect, "Even if a hundred of you, even if a thousand of you appeared, still you wouldn't be able to wake her up," because Manjushri represents the zero point. Even if you have a hundred zeroes, they still equal zero; even if you have a thousand zeroes, they still equal only zero.

"But down below," Buddha continues, "past hundreds of millions of countries [meaning not in this celestial realm, but on earth] there is another Bodhisattva. His name is Ensnared Light [another translation of his name is Deluded Consciousness]. He can awaken her." You see, he understands about coming and going, entering into and leaving out of, all of these things that are not of Manjushri's realm.

# Failure

Book excerpt by Zen Master Wu Kwang

Just then, Ensnared Light Bodhisattva emerges from earth. This is a wonderful image: From out of earth emerges a Bodhisattva. (And our practice, of course, always has to be rooted in this solid earth.) When the Bodhisattva emerges, Buddha gives him the command. He walks up, snaps his fingers once and the woman awakens.

After the case and poem, there is Wu-men's prose comment:

Buddha acted out a complex play having nothing in common with minor trivia.

Now tell me: Manjushri was the teacher of seven Buddhas; why couldn't he get the woman out of absorption? Ensnared Light was a bodhisattva of the first stage; why was he able to get her out?

If you can see intimately here [that is, in first-hand experience], you will attain the great dragonic absorption even in the flurry of active consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

The last line is particularly interesting. If you can see intimately here, into this point—why one could get her out and the other could not—then you will attain great samadhi, a great absorption, like a powerful dragon, even in the flurry of active consciousness.

There are other translations that give different versions of the last line quoted above. If you combine them, the nuance of the comment emerges more strongly. A second translation says, "If you can see into this intimately, then in the flurry of karma and discrimination you are a dragon of great samadhi."<sup>3</sup> Then, a third one, "If you can grasp this completely, you will realize that surging, delusive consciousness is nothing other than the greatest samadhi."<sup>4</sup> And the last one, "If you can firmly grasp this point, then for you this busy life of ignorance and discrimination will be the same as supreme satori."<sup>5</sup> I like this last one best, because it relates to *this busy life of ignorance and discrimination*, which we all know only too well.

The poem's different versions also show interesting nuances. Our version says:

*Come out, not come out,  
Both are already free.  
God's head and demon's face.  
The failure, how elegant.*<sup>6</sup>

Another version of this same poem reads:

*One can awaken her, the other cannot;  
Both have their own freedom.  
A god-mask here and a devil-mask there;  
Even in failure, an elegant performance.*<sup>7</sup>

In this one, the second line says, "Both have their own freedom." Yamada Roshi, who was the translator, writes in a little comment here, "Take the example of a jet plane about to take off. A hundred thousand Manjushris might not be able to get it started, but a jet pilot could do so very easily."

Then another translator says:

*One can bring her out, the other cannot;  
both of them are free.  
A god mask; a devil mask—  
the failure is an elegant performance.*<sup>8</sup>

The fourth translation, by Zen Master Shibayama, has similar lines, except that the last line says:

*The failure is wonderful, indeed.*<sup>9</sup>

This kong-on focuses us on the various forms of failure. When we read Zen stories, the usual focus is one of success; someone usually gets enlightened. But there is often another aspect; for example, there is the famous story of Buddha holding up a flower on Vulture Peak. This recounts how, once, a long time ago, Shakyamuni Buddha was about to give his dharma speech on Vulture Peak, where 1,200 people were assembled, including: monks, nuns, laywomen, laymen. They waited and waited for Buddha to give his talk. But Buddha did not say anything. He just sat silently on the rostrum. The audience waited in expectation. Eventually, the Buddha picked up a flower and held it up. We are told, "No one understood, except Mahakashyapa, who smiled. Then Buddha said, 'I have the all-pervading true Dharma, exquisite teaching of formless form and incomparable nirvana, a special transmission outside the sutras, not dependent on words and speech. This I give to you, Mahakashyapa.'"

That is a story of success for Mahakashyapa who understood the Buddha's gesture. But what about the other 1,199? They also attained something, sitting there wondering, "What is the Buddha's speech?" When he held up a flower, no one understood, so they all attained

“Don’t understand—*Don’t know*.” That was their success. Mahakashyapa got the transmission. He got a very hard job! The rest of them got *don’t-know mind*. Who succeeded and who failed?

On a recent visit to China, I went to the temple of the Sixth Patriarch in the south. On my return I reread *The Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Patriarch, which contains the teachings he gave in the town where the temple is located. In the *Platform Sutra* there is the story of a poetry contest. It describes how the Fifth Patriarch, realizing that he was aging, decided to give his robe and bowl, along with succession of the Dharma, to the monk who could write a poem demonstrating true understanding of the essence of mind. When the head monk heard that challenge, he thought to himself, “I know that the other monks are not going to write poems because they assume that I am the best qualified. I wonder whether I should try to write a poem or not. If I don’t write a poem showing my mind to the patriarch, then how will he know whether my understanding is superficial or deep? If I write a poem with the intention of just getting the Dharma, then my motive would be pure. But if, on the other hand, I write the poem trying to get the patriarchy, then I’ll be no different from a common, materialistically-minded person who’s just interested in name and fame. That wouldn’t be good. If, however, I don’t try, how will I get the Dharma?” He thinks about this repeatedly and works himself into an agitated state.

This is an interesting dialogue he has with himself. He questions motive and weighs sincerity of effort. He is very penetrating and honest in asking himself these questions. For most of us, of course, motivation is rarely a pure thing. But from a Zen perspective, there is a difference between purity and clarity. If one has purity, then everything is simple—like white paper. But most of us have mixed, complex motives when we set out to do something. If, at the root of our various complex motives, there is a sense of clear direction about the essential reason we are pursuing something, then our direction and motive are clear, even if not simple. That is an important point in Zen practice: Our sense of direction should always be clear. Even if the motive is not always completely pure and simple, the direction should be, answering the question, “Why do I do this?”

In our story the head monk finally wrote a poem, then went to the patriarch’s room to present it. But when he reached the door, he became agitated and broke out in a sweat. He could not knock on the door and go in. According to the story, he went to the door thirteen times in the course of four days and could not bring himself to go in. Finally the head monk thought to himself, “I’ll go to the corridor in front of the patriarch’s room in the middle of the night, and there I’ll write my poem on the wall. If the patriarch sees it and approves it, I’ll come out, pay homage to him and let him know I wrote this poem. If, on the other hand, he doesn’t approve it, then I’ve wasted years practicing at this temple, getting the respect of all the other monks. What a sorry condition.” At midnight, carrying a candle, he arrived in front of the patriarch’s room and wrote this poem:

*The body is the Bodhi Tree* [historically, the tree under which Buddha sat and got his enlightenment experience],  
*the mind is the clear mirror’s stand.*  
*Constantly we should clean them,*  
*so that no dust collects.*

After writing the poem on the wall, he returned quickly to his room so no one would see him. He sat, again in a state of agitation, thinking, “I wonder whether the patriarch will find any merit in my poem. If he does, I’m ready to receive the Dharma from him. If he doesn’t, that means that I’m not a good vessel to receive the Dharma because my mind is still clouded and befuddled with bad karma from previous lifetimes.” He sat the whole night like that, without sleeping, wondering what was going to happen.

Now, the patriarch’s room faced an area with three corridors. The patriarch had commissioned an artist from the imperial court to paint the corridors with portraits of the different patriarchs and images representing stories from the Buddhist sutras. In the morning the patriarch came out of his room with the artist and saw the verse on the wall. The patriarch told the artist, “Better to not paint these hallways at all. I’m sorry that I brought you all this way, but the *Diamond Sutra* says all forms are empty, so why put anything on the walls. We should just all look at this verse and pay homage to it.”

The patriarch instructed all the monks to learn this verse, saying that practicing it would help them get enlightenment in the future. But he did not say, “This verse demonstrates the essence of mind.” The verse, you may notice, talks about purification: The body is the Bodhi Tree / the mind is the clear mirror’s stand / Constantly we should clean them / so that no dust collects. That’s not bad. Better than making a mess. But it has the notion of time in it, before and after, impurity moving toward purity—a kind of self-improvement campaign.

At midnight the Fifth Patriarch sent for the head monk and asked, “Did you write the poem?”—knowing full well that he had. He also knew that the head monk had not really attained enlightenment. The head monk said, “Yes, I wrote the poem. I don’t dare seek your patriarchy, but please tell me whether this poem has any merit to it or not.” The patriarch told him, “You have gotten to the door of enlightenment, but you have not gone through.” And he added, “The essence of mind is to be spontaneously realized as something which is before coming and going, cleaning or not cleaning. My suggestion to you is that you return to your room and ponder this more deeply for a few days. If you see into the true nature of your being, then write me another poem and I will transmit the Dharma and the patriarchy to you.” The head monk went back to his room and tried very, very hard to write another poem, based on his intuition. But he just got more and more perturbed and could not produce anything.

Then, we are told, the Sixth Patriarch-to-be had *his* poem written on the wall:

*Bodhi has no tree.*  
*Clear mirror has no stand.*  
*Originally nothing.*  
*Where is dust?*

He succeeded where the head monk failed. But we should recognize the head monk’s effort and be inspired by his honesty and humility. These qualities are very, very important in pursuing practice.

Failure is, actually, a most important aspect of Zen practice, because when you truly fail, at that moment you stop relating to practice as something that is going to get you somewhere. And even in the midst of your failure, if you continue to practice rather than giving up and throwing the whole thing out the window, then practice becomes your



way of life. In fact, practice *becomes* your life. Practice, itself, just becomes practice, itself. Out of that, the spirit of compassionate activity also is born. Because if you truly embrace what failure is, the heart of kindness begins to emerge. If you cannot face your own failure, then it is difficult to face the failings of anyone else.

Eido Roshi tells a story about a monk whom he once observed in a temple in Japan, whose decorum was impressive in its ordinariness. Roshi watched this monk sweeping the courtyard every day and going about his simple activities. Roshi was taken by the nonspecialness of all this. Finally, he approached the monk, thinking that he must be really advanced in kong-on practice, and asked, "What kong-on do you work on?" The monk replied, "Well, to tell you the truth, all these years I've never passed the first kong-on, 'Mu.'"

We find another inspiring failure in the Christian story of Easter. When Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane with all his disciples, he tells them that one of them will betray him that very night, and soldiers will come and arrest him. Peter, his foremost disciple, speaks up and says, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Jesus answers him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."<sup>10</sup> Then the soldiers come. They arrest Jesus and take him to the prison. Peter follows along behind to see what is happening. While he is standing outside the prison, he is asked three times, "Aren't you one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth?" "I know not the man," he declares. "And immediately the cock crew."<sup>11</sup>


What follows after the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus is very interesting: Peter goes on to become the successor. He becomes the first pope. Imagine what that must have felt like, to have completely denied knowing your teacher, and then to have the fortitude to be able to carry on his tradition. It is a wonderful example of not being daunted by failure and weakness.

There is one more poem connected with this case. It comes from a later Zen master, who is commenting on the case:

*The woman, Manjushri, and Ensnared Light:*

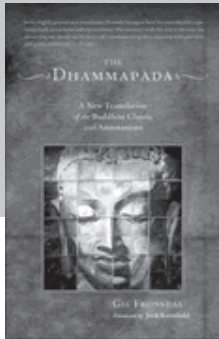
*Ultimately how do Zen followers understand?  
Only if you harmonize subtly, beyond convention,  
Will you believe the waves are basically water.*

—Zen Master Langya<sup>12</sup>

I hope that we all fail miserably and perceive clearly that the waves were never separate from the water. 

1. *Mu Mun Kwan*. Trans. by Zen Master Seung Sahn.. Cumberland, RI: Kwan Um School of Zen, 1983, 49-50
2. *No Barrier*. Trans. by Thomas Cleary. New York: Bantam, 1993, 186
3. *Gateless Barrier*. Trans. by Robert Aitken. San Francisco: North Point, 1991, 257
4. *Gateless Gate*. Trans. by Koun Yamada. Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2004, 200
5. *Gateless Barrier*. Trans. by Zenkei Shibayama. Trans. into English by Sumiko Kudo. Boston: Shambhala, 2000, 294
6. Seung Sahn, 50
7. Yamada, 203
8. Aitken, 257
9. Shibayama, 294
10. John 13:38
11. Matt. 26:74
12. Cleary, 186

# Book Review



***The Dhammapada:***  
***A New Translation of the Buddhist Classic with Annotations***

Gil Fronsdal, foreword by Jack Kornfield  
Shambhala, 2006  
Review by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

In 1988, a violent prisoner on death row in Arkansas named Frankie Parker was thrown a copy of the *Dhammapada* by a contemptuous prison guard when Frankie asked for a Bible. It changed his life, and by 1996, when Frankie's execution was moved to an earlier date by then-Governor Mike Huckabee, he was regarded by those who knew of him as a remarkable example of the power of dharma to liberate us in even the most difficult conditions. Buddhists from many traditions around the world chanted for him both before and during his death.

If you're going to have a Buddhist sutra thrown at you while on death row, you couldn't have a better one than the *Dhammapada*. Written in short, simple verses with clear imagery and a sense of urgency, it is in large part a description of how things work, coupled with instructions on how to live. It's not hard to imagine the impact of the first verse on someone who, like Frankie, had murdered in a state of drunken rage and was now waiting to be killed by the state:

*All experience is preceded by mind,  
Led by mind,  
Made by mind.  
Speak or act with a corrupted mind,  
And suffering follows  
As the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox.*

Unlike many Buddhist sutras, the *Dhammapada* has no location—no Deer Park or Vulture Peak. Buddha is not speaking to particular people—no Ananda, Subhuti, Sariputra. In fact, it is not clearly stated who is speaking—no “thus I have heard”—and, as Fronsdahl's excellent notes and commentary point out, in other suttas (to use the Pali term) Buddha attributes some of the verses in the *Dhammapada* to other speakers. It is a loosely organized (emphasis on “loose” rather than “organized”) compilation of verses, rather than one continuous work, such as the *Diamond Sutra*, or a compilation of long chapters, such as the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

Where it is firmly situated is in the strand of early Buddhism that flowered into contemporary Theravada. Merit and evil are clearly distinct; good companions are to be searched out and bad companions to be avoided; fools are fools and sages are sages. Of course the point of the *Dhammapada* is that fools can become sages by attaining the truths it speaks and by following the guidelines it sets forth for correct conduct and correct practice.

Much of it is directed towards people living a monastic life, who are exhorted to live a life free of anger, lust, and attachments in order to attain “happiness, the stilling of formations, the state of peace” and, ultimately, to be liberated from birth and death. But while the rhetoric is not the Mahayana rhetoric of compassionate bodhisattvas, it is clear that self-absorption is not the point:

*Engaged in the Buddha's teachings,  
Even a young bhikku  
Lights up this world  
Like the moon  
Set free from a cloud.*

Despite the prominence of prescriptions for a monastic life, the *Dhammapada* has been, fairly continuously, perhaps the most popular of all sutras. It remains so to this day, with over fifty translations. One reason for its popularity may be the simplicity and directness of the language. Another is its classic formulations of truths that everybody knows but would rather ignore: that anger begets only anger, that nothing protects you from death, that it's better to do good than evil... It makes it clear that you must change your life, and tells you how to do it. It presents classic formulations of particularly Buddhist ideas, such as the truths of impermanence, suffering, and not-self, but these do not dominate. And then there are the images, precise, quietly powerful, and to the point. For example:

*As long as even the slightest underbrush of desire  
Between man and woman is not cut away,  
For that long, the mind is bound  
Like a suckling calf is to its mother.*


*Destroy attachment to self  
As you could an autumn lily in your fist.*

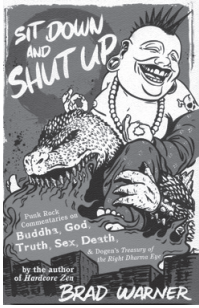
So you can approach the *Dhammapada* simply as poetry. Whether you take it further is up to you.

My first experience of the *Dhammapada* was not, as Frankie Parker's was, a life-changing event. What I saw was a coffee table book with lush photographs that seemed designed to create a serene mood rather than any kind of wisdom. I never actually read it; the person who owned it considered it somewhat dull. I had no idea of its importance over thousands of years of Buddhist culture. It seemed a kind of popular offering, nothing like the real thing, whatever that was. Just one of those things that the counter-culture had grabbed on to. I guess I belonged squarely in the chapter called *The Fool*.

I could not have been more wrong, and Gil Fronsdal's version does a wonderful job of disabusing anyone inclined to dismiss the *Dhammapada* as mere pleasant popularizing. First of all, there are Fronsdal's credentials. He has practiced for decades in both the Soto Zen and Theravada traditions. He received dharma transmission in the Soto lineage; he also was a Theravada monk for many years and now is a Theravada lay teacher at Spirit Rock and at a center in Redwood City. And he has a Ph.D. in Buddhist studies, so he has the scholarly credentials to approach an ancient Pali text and its commentaries. With full knowledge of the impossibility of his task, he seeks to present the *Dhammapada* on its own terms, that is, without the subtle distortions that come naturally when you see through modern Buddhist eyes. And he wants to do all this in English that is as clear and direct as the original Pali.

He has succeeded admirably. While his translation can be read through on its own (and I recommend this on a first pass), his excellent and unobtrusive end-notes let the reader know of alternate textual readings and give important background information—who was that elephant Matanga anyway? His short introduction guides us through the structure of the text, and his shorter afterword situates the text in the vast continent of classical Buddhist texts. Finally, for the dedicated scholar, he has an appendix which cross-references the many verses which appear, either as is or in parallel form, in other Buddhist sutras.

In short, an exemplary book, a classic work given its just due. One of the blurbs on the back cover says, "A book to be treasured." Exactly. 



*Sit Down and Shut Up: Punk Rock Commentaries on Buddha, God, Truth, Sex, Death, and Dogen's Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye*  
Brad Warner, New World Library, 2007  
Review by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Brad Warner's first book, *Hardcore Zen*, made him a celebrity in the western Zen world. He wrote it while living in Japan, fulfilling one of his life's dreams by working for a maker of Japanese monster movie films, and also seriously practicing and studying Zen with Gudo Nishijima, who authorized him as a teacher. After writing it, he became popular on the American Zen lecture circuit, and eventually moved to the Los Angeles area where he still works for a Japanese monster movie company, has a Zen center in Santa Monica, keeps up with music and musicians (he started out in punk rock), travels around teaching Zen, and maintains a popular blog ([hardcorezen.blogspot.com](http://hardcorezen.blogspot.com)). His persona comes off a little as in-your-face (in most of his pictures he tries mightily to scowl), but the impression I always get is of a kind of sweetness born of idealism and hope. In 2007, Nishijima named him president of Dogen Sangha International, Nishijima's organization, which has a number of groups both within and outside of Japan.

I highly recommended his first book and I highly recommend this one. It has a dual structure: a narrative of his adventures filming (and playing in) the reunion concert of his old punk band Zero Defects, intertwined with a commentary on Dogen's *Shobogenzo*. Somehow it works. Furthermore, his commentary on Dogen is remarkably clear. Since Dogen is a notoriously difficult writer, whether in translation or in the original Japanese, this is quite an accomplishment. And, under the punk rhetoric, Warner turns out to be quite scholarly, commenting carefully on Chinese characters, etymologies in Chinese and in Sanskrit, and how the Chinese affects the interpretation of the Sanskrit.

His language and imagery owe a lot to pop culture, especially punk rock culture. That's one of the strengths and (I'm not sure if he'd appreciate this word) charms of the book. Buddhist practice and Dogen's teachings don't belong to ancient India, China, or Japan (unfortunately, Korea isn't on his radar screen). They belong to us, all of us, right here, and right now.

You can start with the title. "Sit down and shut up" is not ordinarily a nice thing to say to someone. It's not polite. It's (almost) shocking. But it is exactly where meditation practice starts; it's the heart of what we do in the dharma room. How better to say it?


An extended example of his rhetorical strategy is in the chapter on the Hyakujo's Fox kong-an (Hyakujo is

the Japanese name for Pai Chang). He quotes Dogen's commentary: "Great Buddhist practice is just great causes and effects themselves. Because these causes and effects are inevitably perfect causes and complete effects, they can never be discussed as falling or not falling, or as unclear or not unclear. If the idea of not falling into cause and effect is mistaken, the idea of not being unclear about cause and effect must also be mistaken."

How can we deal with this kind of conundrum? After all, when you parse the logic (itself not that easy to do), Dogen just said, in effect, "if *this* is false, then *not this* is also false." Warner gives a number of illustrations to contrast what he calls the subjective, or thought, interpretation ("Either the new Beck album sucks, or it doesn't") and the action interpretation ("If I hit the low E-string real hard... in terms of thought we can say that it's the right note or it's not. But in terms of action, it is just what it is."). After using a hapless TV weatherperson to discuss how cause and effect really work, he concludes, "What we call cause and effect and real cause and effect are two different things. Just like you can't drink your Kool-Aid out of the word *cup*."

For another example, here's how he deals with the notion of interdependence: "... it's just like how when you poke a safety pin through your nose you feel pain in your nostril and not in your left big toe, even though both your left big toe and your nostril are part of one single human body. The universe may feel pain, or joy, ... or whatever, in that part of it called 'Bob Canastaberry' and not in that part of it called 'Amy Logenbottom.' Yet in ways you can't possibly hope to notice, as well as in ways that are hopelessly obvious, whatever affects one part of the universe affects the whole thing."

He goes on to talk about how hard this was for him to really take in, describing his teenage self: "The idea that I might be one and the same as all the idiots of the world who I despised so vehemently made me gag." And goes on to point out the moral consequence, that interdependence is not a soft and pretty idea but a truth difficult to live by and impossible not to live by: "See, for one thing, when you see things this way, it's im-fogging-possible to blame anyone else for what's wrong in your life... I could no longer point a finger at the Republicans or at the NRA... or at the System or anyone else... Don't make any excuses or exceptions for any reason whatsoever. Accept all responsibility yourself..."

Somehow, through the loopiness (literally—arguments are not straightforward and digressions abound), the in-your-face rhetoric, the pop and punk culture imagery, the personal stories about his life and the lives of his friends... Buddhist teachings that may seem abstract and hard to understand begin to seem like common sense, absolutely inevitable, no big deal. And because he continually loops back to his experience as a practitioner, it becomes very clear that these teachings are not ideas you learn with your brain, but truths you perceive through your practice and, because of the grounding in practice, your life. 



# Poetry

40th Street

I'd like  
to say

that when  
I change  
coffee

the pot  
doesn't know  
it for  
a few  
days

it's awaiting  
the tempo  
of French  
espresso &  
suddenly  
El Pico  
is back

it's inexplicable  
the glass pot

is dulled  
speechless

so wake  
me up  
with your  
confusion

in a few  
days you'll  
be shaped  
like this  
& a new  
strong  
meaning  
will  
come.

Be patient  
pot. Advance  
the parade.

*Eileen Myles*

Winter Wind

Leaf-laden lately, beech limbs once reached  
the ground, swaying. Lightened now, choreic, bare,  
they twitch. An abandoned wasp nest  
scuds across the yard. The nest is dashed  
against the garden shed and drops to rest  
among discarded flowerpots, each smashed  
to shards so long ago the sun has bleached  
them gray. It totters, then lodges there,  
gray, too, and trapped among the shards, held fast  
and peeled: Its catacombed, translucent skin  
is flung away in layers, drifting like ash,  
catching on bark, raised roots, spent tufts of grass  
until the labyrinth within  
floats ply by tight-wound ply away, at last.

*Mark Bauer*

*seeing the morning sun  
being reflected  
in each dew-drop  
I don't feel the need  
to search the infinite happiness  
and perfection of all things  
anymore*

*there is nothing else  
to be found*

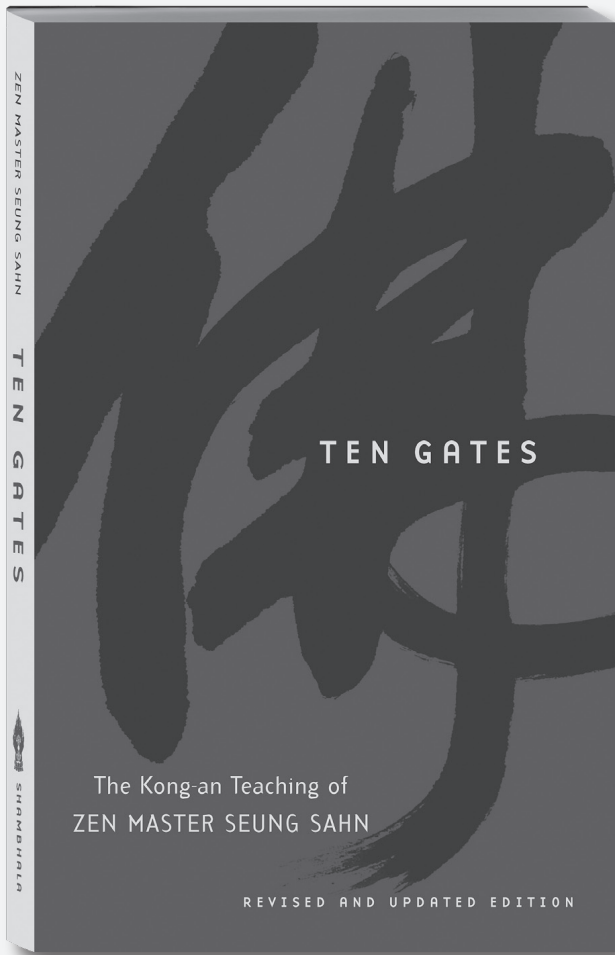
*just  
this*

...

*Katka Grofova*

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