



MEMORIAL FOR DAE AN SUNIM (1959-2009)

Dae An Sunim was born in 1959 in a rural town in the Cholla Namdo Province of South Korea. From the time she was five years old, her parents would regularly take her to Songwangsa to hear Dharma talks from the great Zen Master Kusan Sunim. Kusan Sunim was one of the first Korean monks to ordain foreign disciples and support their practice in Korea. Dae An Sunim's childhood impressions of this monk and the temple greatly influenced her decision to become a nun.

In 1982, Dae An Sunim began her monastic life at Hwa Un Sa temple. Her teacher was Sang Kyeong Sunim, the attendant to Ko Bong Sunim for over twenty years. Ko Bong Sunim was the teacher of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Dae An Sunim sometimes talked about how her teacher would take her as a young nun around Korea to receive Dharma teaching from the many great Zen Masters living at that time and keep her up late into the night telling stories of her life with Zen Master Ko Bong.

After graduating from Bong Nyeong Sa Gangwon, a training temple for novice nuns, Dae An Sunim took Bhikkuni precepts in 1989. Since 1990, she participated in twenty Kyol Che retreats in Korean Meditation Halls, including the famous Gumdang Soenwon in Soknamsa, (known for their three-year retreats,) and served several seasons as head nun. She also participated in retreats with the Kwan Um School at Shin Won Sah and Hwa Gye Sah, as well as doing solo retreats and countless extended chanting kidos.

In 1997, Dae An Sunim and her teacher moved to Hwa Gye Sah at the invitation of Zen Master Seung Sahn. While living there, she often traveled with Zen Master Seung Sahn and visited many foreign Zen centers. After Zen Master Seung Sahn passed away, Dae An Sunim stayed briefly at Mu Sang Sa International Zen Center before becoming abbot of her own temple, Boep Ryon Sa, in 2006.

As abbot of Boep Ryon Sa, Dae An Sunim was active in organizing Dharma programs for soldiers at local army bases, giving annual scholarships to local children and nuns to attend school, holding Buddhist children's camps twice a year, and taking Korean children and adults abroad to experience Buddhism in other contexts. The most important job for her as abbot, however, was making her temple a place that any person—lay or monastic, foreign or Korean—can stay for free and do their own practice comfortably. One Korean monk described Dae An Sunim's practice as "Wol Lyok", which translates as "vow power", as she was able to accomplish impossible tasks with the force of her great faith, great vow and strong practice.

In November 2009, Dae An Sunim passed away following a car accident. She was given the post-humous name, "Jong Oh" which means, "Correct Enlightenment."

Dae An Sunim shared Zen Master Seung Sahn's vision of a world united in the dharma. Foreign Zen centers in need of Buddha statues, altar paintings, bells, moktaks or other practicing tools could always feel comfortable asking Dae An Sunim for assistance. She often traveled to foreign countries to help Zen centers with opening ceremonies or kidos. In Korea, she helped both foreigners and Koreans with advice about different kinds of practice, gaining admittance to Korean meditation halls, and finding places for kidos or solo retreats. Dae An Sunim was eager to help anyone who wanted to become a monastic by either taking them on as her own student or helping them find a home in a Korean temple. Zen Master Dae Kwan said that Dae An Sunim had lit a dharma torch during her lifetime and that, now, it is our job to continue to carry that torch. One Kwan Um School student described well many of our feelings about Dae An Sunim by writing:

"Big heart, great personality, strong Zen practitioner. I'm so much grateful for the chance in my life to meet Dae An Sunim and be a part of this great family." 