

Primary Point



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Zen Master's Dae Bong and Dae Jin Sunim's will be the Guiding Teachers for the Kyol Che and will give weekly Dharma talks and regular kong-an interviews.



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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, 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 31. The circulation is 3,500 copies.

The views expressed in *Primary Point* are not necessarily those of this journal or the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Why We Chant
Zen Master Seung Sahn 4

Mind to Mind
Zen Master Dae Kwan..... 5

The Monastic Flower in Today's World
Zen Master Dae Bong, Zen Master Dae Jin..... 6

The Deer Came to Us
Max Schorr 10

Tribute to Myo Ji Sunim JDPSN..... 11

Inka Ceremony for Anne Rudloe JDPSN 18

Roots to Branches: Zen Blossoms in Europe
Fernando Pardo..... 22
Zen Master Bon Shim..... 24
Mukyong JDPSN (Roland Wöhrle-Chon)..... 25
Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN..... 25
Bogumila Malinowska JDPSN..... 27

Kwan Um School of Zen Centers 28, 29, 30

Membership in the Kwan Um School of Zen–America..... 31

[3



Cover: *The Bodhi Tree at Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, India, by Allan Matthews.*

Why We Chant

ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

One Sunday evening, after a dharma talk at the International Zen Center of New York, a student asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, “Why do you chant? Isn’t sitting Zen enough?”

He replied, “This is a very important matter. We bow together, chant together, eat together, sit together, and do many other things together here at the Zen Center. Why do we practice together?”

“Everybody has different karma. So all people have different situations, different conditions, and different opinions. One person is a monk, another is a student, another works in a factory; one person always keeps a clear mind, another is often troubled or dissatisfied; one person likes the women’s movement, another doesn’t. But everybody thinks, ‘My opinion is correct!’ Even Zen masters are like this. Ten Zen masters will have ten different ways of teaching, and each Zen Master will think that his way is the best. Americans have an American opinion; Asians have an Asian opinion. Different opinions result in different actions, which make different karma. So when you hold on to your own opinions, it is very difficult to control your karma, and your life will remain difficult. Your wrong opinions continue, so your bad karma continues. But at our Zen centers, we live together and practice together, and all of us abide by the temple rules. People come to us with many strong likes and dislikes, and gradually cut them all off. Everybody bows together 108 times at five-thirty in the morning, everybody sits together, everybody eats together, everybody works together. Sometimes you don’t feel like bowing; but this is a temple rule so you bow. Sometimes you don’t want to chant, but you chant. Sometimes you are tired and want to sleep but you know that if you don’t come to sitting, people will wonder why; so you sit.

“When we eat, we eat in ritual style, with four bowls; and after we finish eating, we wash out the bowls with tea, using our index finger to clean them. The first few times we ate this way, nobody liked it. One person from the Cambridge Zen Center came to me very upset. ‘I can’t stand this way of eating! The tea gets full of garbage! I can’t drink it!’ I said to him, ‘Do you know the Heart Sutra?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Doesn’t it say that things are neither tainted nor pure?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Then why can’t you drink the tea?’ ‘Because it’s filthy!’ [Laughter from the audience.] “Why is it filthy? These crumbs are from the food that you already ate. If you think the tea is dirty, it is dirty. If you think it is clean, it is clean.’ He said, ‘You’re right. I will drink the tea.’ [Laughter.]

“So we live together and act together. Acting together



*Vowing openly with all world beings,
Entering together Amita’s ocean of great vows,
Continuing forever to save sentient beings,
You and I simultaneously attain the way of Buddha.
Become one: infinite time, infinite space Buddha.*

—from the *Morning Bell Chant Translation*,
the *Kwan Um School of Zen Chanting Book*

means cutting off my opinions, cutting off my condition, cutting off my situation. Then we become empty mind. We return to white paper. Then our true opinion, our true condition, our true situation will appear. When we bow together and chant together and eat together, our minds become one mind. It is like on the sea. When the wind comes, there are many waves. When the wind dies down, the waves become smaller. When the wind stops, the water becomes a mirror, in which everything is reflected—mountains, trees, clouds. Our mind is the same. When we have many desires and many opinions, there are many big waves. But after we sit Zen and act together for some time, our opinions and desires disappear. The waves become smaller and smaller. Then our mind is like a clear mirror, and everything we see or hear or smell or taste or touch or think is the truth. Then it is very easy to understand other people’s minds. Their minds are reflected in my mind.

“So chanting is very important. At first you won’t understand. But after you chant regularly, you will understand. ‘Ah, chanting—very good feeling!’ It is the same with bowing 108 times. At first people don’t like this. Why do we bow? We are not bowing to Buddha; we are bowing to ourselves. Small I is bowing to Big I. Then Small I disappears and becomes Big I. This is true bowing. So come practice with us. You will soon understand.”

The student bowed and said, “Thank you very much.”

Editor's note: We asked School Zen Master Soeng Hyang to choose an article by Zen Master Seung Sahn and to say why she chose it. We will be continuing this format in future issues. Here is her response:

This article by Zen Master Seung Sahn is already available right in our chanting books. Those of us who have them can read it easily. I wanted to highlight it publicly and suggest that we all read it again. I vaguely remember when he was writing it. Zen Master Seung Sahn never did any-

thing without a lot of enthusiasm and effort. As good as his writing is, his chanting was even better than the way he wrote about it. That is really saying something. Please read this piece as if you were reading it for the first time. Read it and know that Zen Master Seung Sahn embodied that teaching. We are all so blessed to have a CD on which we can hear his chanting. Even more so, we are blessed to have opportunities to get together and practice listening to each other with ears that embrace don't-know.

Mind to Mind

Reproduced from the December 2010–January 2011 edition of the bimonthly newsletter of the Su Bong Zen Monastery.

One time, a visiting nun expressed that she felt she could not relate to kong-ans, that kong-ans have nothing to do with Zen meditation and could not help her in her life. Later, during teaching, Zen Master Dae Kwan placed the Zen stick in front of her.

Zen Master Dae Kwan: This Zen stick's true nature and your true nature: are they the same or different?

Nun: Zen stick is over there and I am sitting over here, not same or different.

ZMDK: So is this your attitude toward life?

The visiting nun suddenly woke up, hapchanged and bowed to Zen Master Dae Kwan.

Commentary: *When you see there is garbage, place it in the garbage bin; when you see a blind person crossing the road, go and help him.*

Kong-ans guide us in how to relate and respond to people and situations in our daily life.



Zen Master Dae Kwan (Hyang Um), a Zen nun, studied sutras at the Kwok Kwong Buddhist College in Hong Kong in the 1970s and was ordained at Ajahn Chah's International Forest Monastery in Thailand in 1981. She practiced in Chiang Mai for a decade, including two years of intensive solo retreat in Tu Boo Cave. As a Theravada nun she went to Korea in 1992 for the first time and met Zen Master Seung Sahn during a three-month winter Kyol Che. Thereafter she became his student and returned to Hong Kong to help establish the Hong Kong Zen Center (now Su Bong Zen Monastery). In 1995, she received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn, and in April 2001 she received dharma transmission from him and was named Zen Master Dae Kwan. Zen Master Dae Kwan is the abbot and guiding teacher of the Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong. She has translated several of Zen Master Seung Sahn's books into Chinese, including *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, *Only Don't Know* and *The Whole World Is a Single Flower*.

The Monastic Flower in Today's World

From talks given by Zen Master Dae Bong and Zen Master Dae Jin at the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference 2011 in Lumbini, Nepal on October 25, 2011

Zen Master Dae Bong

I'll say a few things about the current situation in our school, our relationship with monastics (sunims) and how we might proceed to develop the monastic realm in a way that benefits everybody, both sunims and laypeople.

On a personal note, it means a lot more to me to be a sunim than to be a teacher. Being a monk is really the heart of practice for me. Perhaps other sunims feel this way too. Being a sunim is a little like being married: your relationship, obligations and responsibilities are open and public, so our direction and our actions must become clear. If your direction is not clear as a sunim, you will feel pain until your direction becomes clear. There are both difficult and wonderful things about this path, just as for a layperson.

Being a sunim is perhaps also like having a baby: your "I, my, me" has to go out the window, because you get a nonstop reflection of your attachments. A sunim is not a symbol or a role. It means having an obligation and responsibility to the universe with consequences, whether anyone else notices or not. As Zen Master Seung Sahn once said to me, "Even if nobody is there, Buddha sees you," which means cause and effect always function.

In Buddhism, there are currently four sets of the original monastic precepts. These have existed since the time after the Buddha passed away. There were about twenty schools that were acknowledged as carrying the correct precepts, though they each had a slightly different number of precepts. Four of these collections still exist today. One is followed by the Chinese and the Koreans, another by the Tibetans, and two by the Theravadan Buddhists. The basic precepts are the same, but some minor details are different. Only the Chinese and Korean tradition has an unbroken nuns' precepts line. There are people working to bring the nun's full ordination back into the Tibetan and Theravadan traditions.

The precepts that Zen Master Seung Sahn gave us are directly from the Korean tradition and are the same as the Chinese precepts. In our school right now, there are about 26 monks and 20 nuns who we can say are active as sunims. And

there are numerous sunims from other traditions who come and practice with us. Of those we might call Kwan-Um-School sunims—direct students of Zen Master Seung Sahn or one generation removed—some have taken precepts only with the Kwan Um School of Zen; some have taken precepts only with the Chogye order; some that have taken precepts both with the Kwan Um School and the Chogye order; some have taken precepts in one of the numerous schools of Chinese Buddhism; and some have taken precepts in Korea in a different order than the Chogye order. So we have sunims who have taken precepts and presumably have some accountability to a lot of different groups, although the precepts themselves are the same.

To give the Buddhist precepts requires a "platform" of a certain number of bhikkus of a certain monastic age. When Zen Master Seung Sahn gave precepts in the West, he did so under a condition that allows a monk who has gone to a country that has no tradition to give precepts even if there isn't the required platform. It has been suggested to us that one of us go through the precepts school program, which is two years, and then we should have enough bhikkus, and eventually bhikkunis, to create our own correct precepts' platform. But that is a longer-term project. We should be aware that we have some sunims who have taken the same precepts, but with different Buddhist orders, even if we are not closely associated with those groups.

My next point is about communications among our sunims. As our school becomes more developed and organized, we increasingly see the value of good communication. For example, in Korea right now, after each Kyol Che, we invite all the sunims practicing in Korea who are at all related, directly or peripherally, to the Kwan Um School to a big sangha meeting. At recent meetings, we make a circle and go around the room one by one, and each person says what they did during the recently ended retreat season and how their practice and life are going. Then we discuss any issues we are dealing with, issues in relation to temples, precepts, visas, or any other sort of problem or concern. We have been having these meetings



for two or three years; everyone finds them quite valuable, so we'll continue with them in the future.

We also started having similar monastic sangha meetings at Mu Sang Sa for the resident sunims.

In addition, for the last year we've had a Google e-mail group for the international sunims. We've had discussions about some of the issues the lay school has brought up, such as, "What can we expect from monks and nuns when they come to the West?" and "What are the Western laypeople's obligations to sunims?" and so forth. So we have a way of communicating with each other through the Internet.

Next I want to talk about being a sunim and following precepts. I tried to make a list once of all the people who Zen Master Seung Sahn gave monastic precepts to since he started doing so in 1974. I estimated it is about a hundred people. Zen Master Wu Bong one time asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "You have made many monks and nuns, and you've brought many to Korea, and most disappear." And Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "In a war, the front line always dies." So, those that have survived may be either strong or wounded, but either way they're still alive and doing it! I think that in any tradition there are a lot of people who disappear, especially early on, but Zen Master Seung Sahn certainly didn't worry about that.

Our sunims come from many different backgrounds and have been through many different experiences as sunims. In the beginning of our school, everyone took precepts directly from Zen Master Seung Sahn and was accountable directly to him. When we did something wrong, even break a major precept, Zen Master Seung Sahn was clear: he was responsible for correcting us. Generally somebody who broke an important precept or caused a serious problem for others quickly understood, "I made a mistake," and then followed Zen Master Seung Sahn's instructions to correct it. Or simply disrobed.

As time went on, people became sunims and became close to the Chogye order in Korea while Zen Master Seung Sahn was alive. Some picked up the ethos of sunim life as followed by some sunims in the Chogye order. For example, in Korean culture there is a distinction between public and private. If you do your public job well and correctly for others, then as long as you do not disturb anyone, no one checks what you do privately. There is respect for private time and individual karma. There is a kind of humanness to this approach. In America there is usually no distinction between public and private. What you do in private is also offensive to people who just hear about it, even if no one else is involved. So when we move between two cultures, there can be problems; what is acceptable in one culture is not accepted

in the other and vice versa. What may be acceptable sunim behavior in Korea, may be disturbing in other cultures.

Now we have younger students who are becoming sunims who have never known Zen Master Seung Sahn and never received teaching directly from him. Many of them are going through the training for novices currently given by the Chogye order. These younger monks and nuns are often actually going through a more rigorous traditional training than any of the rest of us have. They are learning valuable things that they will be able to share with us. But who are we all accountable to, now that Zen Master Seung Sahn is no longer with us?

The greatest hindrance for Zen practitioners, whether lay, monk or nun, is arrogance. The great Korean Zen Master Seo Sahn often wrote about this. If we are not attached to culture, to our experiences and preferences, and we are not arrogant, then we can quickly adapt to different cultures and different situations. If we are attached or arrogant, this is not possible. Hopefully we will train ourselves to be free of attachments, preferences, arrogance and the limitations of our experience.



Soon, as a sangha of sunims, we must consider the matter of accountability. When Zen Master Seung Sahn was alive, all our monks and nuns were accountable to him. But now, who are we accountable to? We often took the precepts in many different places. Perhaps we should make a group of senior monks and nuns, bhikkus and bhikkunis, to whom all sunims functioning within the Kwan Um School of Zen will be accountable. Among the lay students and in regard to teachers,

we have the Ethics Committee and procedures. Maybe we can give it a different name, like, "Increase the Benefit of Your Sunim Practice and Life for All Beings Committee," or something.

I was able to continue as a sunim while living in the West—in Cambridge, Berkeley, Providence, Los Angeles and Paris—because I had a strong personal relationship with Zen Master Seung Sahn. Even if I didn't see him for months at a time, I could call him up, and I trusted the communication we had. I think most younger monks and nuns won't survive as sunims in the West unless they have had a strong experience of sangha family, sunim sangha family. Laypeople get a lot of emotional nourishment out of personal relationships, job and family—and sunims can also get that from the sunim sangha. I don't think we've been able to create that in the West yet. It will take time. It is not simply following rules or working and practicing hard. You can set up all kinds of rules, but that is not enough. It's not simply about financial support and kind words. How can a sunim sangha appear

that emotionally supports and nourishes sunims? Of course, it is primarily up to our sunims to create that. But if lay-people are aware of this—if they appreciate and are sensitive to it—it will help a lot.

Here is a simple example of the importance of sangha for sunims. In 1985 I went to Paris for three days; I ended up staying for three years. I was the only monastic in our school in all of Western Europe. At one point we were 17 people living together at the Paris Zen Center, with three bedrooms, two toilets, one shower. It was great, but I was the only sunim there. When one of our sunims showed up for three months it was great for me. How to explain it? We could talk about anything, and I was understood. So there's something important about sunim sangha for the survival of sunims. Someone like Zen Master Seung Sahn, who can go straight on his own in any situation, is extremely rare. Of course, he was already a monk for 20 years when he came to the West. Zen Master Seung Sahn said novice sunim training means becoming a master at community living and practicing. I believe that takes more than four years. But all novices, Western, Korean, Chinese, have told me the same thing: what they learn most from the traditional training is not certain sutras or forms but together action—together living and together practicing. So we need to provide training for our sunims that helps them learn that, that lets them know they are not alone and that there are people who understand them at a very basic level. It takes more than structure and rules to make a sunim sangha. So it will take time. But I think we are heading in the right direction.

Here is some vocabulary that is useful when speaking of monastics and precepts in the Buddhist world. *Bhikku* means a fully ordained monk (male). *Bhikkuni* means a fully ordained monk (female). *Sami* means a novice monk; *samini* means a novice nun. If we get used to the same vocabulary, just four simple words, it will be helpful. These terms are known throughout the Buddhist world.

One of the younger bhikkunis told me that in her sutra school, from which she has graduated, they had many courses on the precepts. She said a very interesting thing: originally Buddha didn't make any rules. A specific situation appeared, it was brought to him as a problem, and he made a rule. So she suggested that we do a similar thing. This is just something to think about. So everything came out of specific situations. You can read about the precepts and find out the exact story of what happened, what rule Buddha made, how to determine when the precept is broken, and what the consequences are. It's quite involved, a kind of legal code.

She told me something else interesting: when they study the precepts, there are two categories: *yul*, which means the vinaya; and *wei*, which means etiquette or behavior. The vinaya, the precepts themselves, never change, even with changing culture. But the *wei*, the etiquette, changes according to the culture. And whenever vinaya and etiquette have a conflict, etiquette wins. Historically sunim behavior and guidelines have been somewhat adaptable by culture. This is

a very interesting point that maybe we do not understand.

Here's an example. The Chinese tradition is very strict about the precepts. However, there is no original precept against eating meat. In the Buddha's time, Buddha taught sunims to receive whatever offering was put into their bowl. The exception was if somebody kills that animal for you, or if you saw it killed. Then you are not to accept it. In the Chinese tradition this was changed to a strict rule against eating meat, fish, or fowl at any time—anything that has a face or will try to get away if you attempt to catch it.

The prohibition against eating meat is not in the original vinaya. In this situation, cultural etiquette and expectations trumped the rule given in the vinaya.

Another example is the precept against singing. But in the sutra schools in Korea, the *saminis* (novice nuns) sing together a lot. It is a group activity done to make harmony and to connect, to bond with each other. Korean people love singing; it is how they become friends.

As our school develops and grows, we will have to become clear on issues for sunim life and practice such as accountability, guidelines for behavior and responsibilities of the sunim and lay sangha to each other. Then we can grow in a way that benefits all beings. ♦

Zen Master Dae Jin

Good to see everybody here, and I'm happy to be with you at this Dae Sung Suk Ga Sa temple. Thank you, Dae Bong Sunim, for interesting insights into precepts and how we live as sunims. I happened to take the main precepts, the bhikku precepts, with Korean monks at Bo Ma Sa temple in 1986. At that time, Zen Master Seung Sahn actually encouraged me to receive the precepts in the Chogye order. In the West we have rigid ideas about rules, and when I first took the precepts in Korea, I had a narrow, rigid idea. It was difficult, but after I took the bhikku precepts, somebody came to me—actually it was one of the precepts teachers—and gave me a calligraphy that said, “Where the water is clear and pure, there are no fish.” And I looked at that calligraphy and was thinking about it and thinking about it: What does it mean? I really wanted to get these precepts down correct. At that time, I wanted the discipline of precepts so much. I wanted to be Moses, who goes up on the mountain and gets the Ten Commandments, and they're encased in gold, and they're a beautiful treasure. But it wasn't like that. Then somebody gave me this calligraphy that said, “clear water, no fish.” That's an interesting point.

I later showed it to Zen Master Seung Sahn, and I asked him what it meant. He said, “Too tight, then cannot practice. Then, no friends.” Too tight, you have no friends. It was a really good point for me that helped me in my monk's life, because I often found myself getting tight and trying to be too disciplined. I think that's the kind of Judeo Christian thing. It's like, “I'm going to tighten up, make more rules for myself, and eliminate my problem that way.” But it doesn't

always work. So the water sometimes is a little muddy, it's not completely clear, but many beings can swim and live in there. But if the water is too pure, if it's too clear, sometimes nothing will live there.

Zen Master Man Gong said that a practicing monk needs three vital things: First is a good teacher. Second, dharma friends. And third, a place to practice, a secure and quiet refuge. In building and developing Mu Sang Sa, we have always tried to keep that in mind, that Mu Sang Sa is not supposed to be just another Zen center. It's also supposed to be a refuge from the difficulties that people have in society. We hope that sunims also find refuge there, and that people can get some peaceful tranquility, some clarity, just being in the presence of one of our sunims at Mu Sang Sa. I know that's aiming high, but that's the way we hope it will be. Many times, Dae Bong Sunim and I have tried to get closer to the younger sunims by not asking for so much formality. Dae Bong Sunim especially has been teaching a lot about that. Unlike many other Zen centers that insist everybody bow to the Zen master every day, at Mu Sang Sa we only bow during retreats. And we don't insist that the Zen master always lead the special chanting. We have the novice monks lead the special chanting sometimes. Novices often do kidos and help with leading practice. So we're trying to lower the barriers between us that way.

One experience that I had is that building a monastery is not so difficult, but running a monastery is really hard. Anybody can build a monastery: You don't need any precepts, you don't need much; you only need a lot of money, some good material connections. Of course, that's not always easy to get, either. Sometimes having money is not so easy. On the other hand, running a monastery is much harder. It requires real wisdom. Usually it requires the kind of wisdom that monks specialize in. And we also have the kind of wisdom that our laypeople have for our Zen centers in Europe and in America, and that kind of wisdom is also useful. Often our monks don't have that: they can't go out to work every day and come back and practice and do that kind of thing so well. But our laypeople in the Kwan Um School do that well, they can quickly shift gears, multitask, balance a whole bunch of relationships—with their parents, with their lovers, with their teachers—with everyone. Monks are not so good at that. But monks have some wisdom about living together as monks. And we have to learn to trust that as a real, tangible sort of wisdom. Rather than shutting that out, we can also soak some of that up.

So we are trying to open up many doors to wisdom, not just the practicing door. Living in Korea, we can benefit a lot from monks' education. Korean monks are always ask-

ing, "What is harmony? How do we harmonize between elder brother and younger brother? How do we harmonize between this kind of monk and that kind of monk?" And in our retreats we have many kinds of monks with many kinds of ordination, and we have to harmonize among them. It's not easy. Sometimes it is very difficult and we have to be flexible. And yet, we have certain rules that apply during Kyol Che, and other rules that apply outside of Kyol Che. We don't need more rules. Maybe if we develop more rules, we also have to develop comparable customs for laypeople in relating to monks.

Asian people are lucky in that sense, because they see monks and nuns as a refuge. They really feel like they can take refuge and trust the dharma through the sunim. It doesn't matter if it's Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma or somebody else's dharma. They feel like they can trust, and take a refuge in a sunim. There's something fundamental there that we don't yet have in the West. Maybe it will happen slowly. But that trust means that we can allow the sunims in a monastery to run the monastery themselves. We don't have to micromanage it. Even if we give donations to them, we don't



have to micromanage it. There are many stories in Korea about how we should give donations without any conditions, without any conditions at all. Many times we hear that. One story I remember well is of an old grandmother who went to a temple and said to the abbot, "You see that pillar over there? That's my pillar." The abbot said, "What do you mean, that's your pillar?" And she answered, "When I was a young wife, many years ago, I gave the donation for that pillar, and that's my pillar." The abbot said, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear you're still carrying that pillar around with you after all these years."

So there are many stories about that. If you're going to practice generosity, do it unconditionally and it will help you more. It's not easy to do. We all want to micromanage. We all want to give, and then . . . a little management. That's not correct Buddhism. Correct Buddhism means 100 percent unconditional: just give.

Many times that is difficult. I know for myself that was difficult to accept. Because when you get a donation to build something or to do something, there are three parts: there's the person who's giving; there's the object that's being given; and there's the mind of the person who's receiving. And if one of those three is tainted, or has some condition, then there's suffering. If all of those are pure and they all match, then everybody is happy—the giver, the receiver, and even the thing that was given, because it's not being held. Like the old woman carrying around the pillar: that's a heavy thing to carry around for all those years.

We need to be reminded of this delicate balance because it doesn't come naturally. Maybe a few people, like our teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn, can be generous without holding on to anything at all. That's what we encourage our monks to do. I'm sorry if our monks haven't been so good at that yet. It's not that simple to receive with no conditions. Because we sunims are often on the receiving end of generosity, our practice also, as sunims, is to receive with no condition. Not "this is my gift," but "this is a gift to the sangha." And "easy come, easy go." That means that our practice, our center, has to be simple and clear and strong. Then we understand, "that gift isn't mine, it wasn't given to me personally, but to all the sangha, to everybody." This way of thinking requires some retraining. Our whole mind has to be retrained because we tend to say, "That's my thing. That's mine! It was given to me, and now I'm going to make it mine." So it requires a lot of retraining, it's not easy, and it takes practice. But it's possible, and keeping this selfless mind will help our sangha to grow. But we also need the givers to be unconditional. There are so many benefits to be had from giving unconditionally.

Yesterday, our Korean group of people went to the Jetavana Monastery, or what remains of it. There are only archaeological ruins at this point, but still it has the feeling of a monastery. This is where the Buddha stayed for 24 Kyol Ches, 24 rainy-season retreats the Buddha stayed there, in Sravasti. There were many sunims from many different traditions, all practicing—chanting, bowing, walking. There were many different colors of robes, many different colors of faces. And the atmosphere was just one of tranquility. Yeah, there were some people trying to sell all kinds of stuff, tourist guides and trinkets, but the overall feeling of the place was that you could relax, that you could rest there. You could be a refuge. I hope that our sunims become like a refuge, that they don't have opposite mind, with two opposite political agendas going on inside. The world is already so full of that. If our sunims can be a refuge, I hope that our lay practitioners and teachers don't forget that, and help our sunims to be a tranquil refuge that people can find peace with.

Thank you for your attention and your listening. ♦

The Deer Came to Us

10]

Impressions of the Whole World is a Single Flower trip.
Max Schorr

At the end of World War II, Zen Master Man Gong plucked a petal from the Korean national flower, the Rose of Sharon, dipped it in ink, and wrote a rough calligraphy that read: "The whole world is a single flower." Zen Master Seung Sahn founded the Whole World Is a Single Flower (WWSF) conference as a way to bring people from many different countries and traditions together in the spirit of unity and harmony. In October 2011, the ninth triennial WWSF conference was held in Nepal, with pilgrimages to major Buddhist sites in India. The talks above by Zen Master Dae Bong and Zen Master Dae Jin were given during this conference. Below is an excerpt from recollections by Max Schorr, one of the conference participants. Further material is planned for the upcoming issue of Primary Point.

After dinner, wander around Varanasi with my roommate James from Kansas. A hectic, frenzied evening scene with no sidewalks and tuktuks, bikes, cars, trucks, cows, motorbikes vying for space on the road. This is not Kansas.

Breakfast with the Hong Kong Sangha. Corrin, completely generous, unfolds a world. Stories of joining the practice clearly translated by Shirley. An offering from the tea master. An invitation from Crystal to exercise on the courtyard lawn. Who knew it would be Bodhidharma's original moves? Secret energy invigoration movements that transcend time and would serve many of us

on bathroom bus stops across Bihar.

Off to the market. Off to Deer Park in impossible traffic. Twenty minutes to turn out of the hotel driveway. Twenty more minutes to drive down the block. Looking ahead at gridlock as oncoming traffic swells into our lane. Honking, stuttering, stopping in the mad Varanasi streets. And then the revelation of Sarnath, more welcome than shade in summer or sun in winter. Wide open calm recess. Monument to teaching. Open your mind just to walk in. We walked around the stupa and chanted. Then we chanted Kwan Seum Bosal and the deer came to us.

Arriving at the Chinese Temple there was no power. The beds were firm, wood boards with a thin pad. Live upright. Get over to the Mahabodhi temple. Walk around the stupa. See that tree. See the pilgrims. All the different robes. Hear the sacred chants.

It is all ordinary, but there is no place like here. Open your mind. Pay attention. Be where you are. Fully. Now. One hundred percent. Around and around with barefoot steps, one by one, and hands clasped.

We walk to the Burmese Vihar, where I lived 10 years ago while studying abroad. Siddaram! My barber from 10 years ago. Shanti Deva! who did my laundry 10 years ago. We remember each other with recognition-gaze beyond words.

Happening. Happening. The sweet somber death town Kushnigar. Reclining Buddha. That heaven of a birthplace, Lumbini. A long silent walk. Plenty of shade and quiet energy. A tear goes down your cheek when you hear these beautiful dharma talks from our masters. You can have a silent breakfast forever. ♦

Tribute to Myo Ji Sunim JDPS



Myo Ji Sunim JDPS died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage on November 4, 2011. She practiced, taught and traveled tirelessly in Europe, Asia and North America. In recognition of the many lives she touched, we present the following tributes from her students and family.

TALK GIVEN AT MYO JI SUNIM'S 49-DAY CEREMONY

Zen Master Wu Kwang

In the temple rules of the Kwan Um School of Zen, it says that if you have received the precepts then you should know when to keep them and when to break them, when they are open and when they are closed. If one firmly and rigorously keeps the precepts, one is practicing the way of the saints, but if one clearly understands when to keep them and when to break them, when they are open and when closed, then one practices the way of the bodhisattvas. Now Myo Ji Sunim was no saint, but she surely was a great bodhisattva.

If we look at what we chant during the 49-day ceremony, a couple of elements stand out. There are several dharma speeches emphasizing the teaching that there is essentially no birth or death, no coming or going, and we entreat the deceased to listen to this teaching. Second, we chant mantras, dharanis and the name of Amita Buddha so that the deceased can hear them. If we were performing this kind of ceremony for a family member or close friend who was not a strong dharma practitioner, the hope would be that through hearing the teaching of no birth or death and through the mystic power of the mantras and the Buddha's name, the deceased might get a glimpse of their original mind and, in the next life, be inclined to take up practice. But for someone like Myo Ji Sunim, who was already strongly established in practice and certainly had opened to the original mind ground, the purpose is somewhat different. You could say that this ceremony is just a gentle reminder—"Myo Ji Sunim, hold firmly to your great question and great vow, rest in the

pure land of your original mind, recollect your nature as the Buddha of infinite time and infinite space, Amita, and come back soon to continue your work."

But even if you don't believe in the traditional Buddhist view of rebirth, if you want to see Myo Ji Sunim, just go for some walks in Central Park. An ancient poem by Zen Master Mumon says,

*Flowers in springtime, moon in autumn,
Cool wind in summer, snow in winter.
If you don't make anything in your mind,
For you it is a good season.*

If you understand this poem, then you will meet Myo Ji Sunim's great wide original body that speech and words cannot hinder. Additionally, if you want to encounter Myo Ji Sunim's function body, then just look for a place in the world where "outrageous" acts of generosity and kindness are being performed. Look for fearlessness and unwavering determination. Look for the spirit of inclusion



and a correct understanding of obligation. Myo Ji Sunim definitely understood the meaning of obligation to one's teacher. But if you are one of Myo Ji Sunim's students or sangha members, then you don't even need to look that far. Just look within for the spark that Myo Ji Sunim ignited in you and help it to burn brightly and nurture it continuously through your practice. That is your obligation.

I had three different relationships with Myo Ji Sunim. She was a close friend, a colleague and I served as her guiding teacher. As colleagues we would sometimes have lunch and share what it was like to run a temple or a practice center, and we would talk about the difficulties of being a teacher. You can only discuss these things with another teacher. When Myo Ji Sunim returned from Korea to become the abbot of Chogye Sa Temple, she had not yet finished her kong-an practice and had not received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn. At that time, Zen Master Seung Sahn had "retired" and passed on the responsibility of kong-an teaching to his successors. So Myo Ji Sunim continued her kong-an practice with me. She would come regularly to the Zen center for interviews. Kong-an prac-

[11

tice was not always easy for her, but with her well-known determination, she persisted and eventually received inka and started to teach.

Even after her inka, we would sometimes get together in a Korean restaurant and after lunch we would take out Zen Master Seung Sahn's book, *The Whole World Is a Single Flower* and I would ask her questions. The owner of the restaurant would sometimes walk by and see us looking into the kong-ans and he would say to me, "So you are studying the dharma with Myo Ji Sunim" and as many times as Myo Ji Sunim would tell him that she was in fact the student, he could not fathom that a monastic was studying with a layperson. Then she and I would smile

at each other about this somewhat narrow view. Myo Ji Sunim certainly knew how to be a proper monastic, but she was not bound by that and had a wide and open approach. But in fact in many ways I was studying with her. I admired her strength and especially her instantaneous warmth and friendship to all. I will try to emulate that for the rest of my life.

Myo Ji Sunim, have a blissful rest and then soon come back.

As the old Zen masters said,

We will meet again in five hundred years.

12]



There was a bright blue sky over Donghwa Sa Temple and its huge white Medicine Buddha. I was sitting in the meditation space in front of it. Korea, in December 2007, on the third-year Seung Sahn memorial trip.

A voice came from behind my back:

"What color is the sky?"

I turned around and saw Myo Ji Sunim laughing at me.

"The sky is blue!"

Obviously. Ha.

"How do you know?"

I was stuck.

I had found my teacher.

Martin Roell, Berlin

A few weeks before her death I walked in to the basement meditation Room on 96th Street. Myo Ji Sunim was working in the kitchen and humming Buddhist mantras. When she saw me she smiled and said: "How nice to see you, Ziggy! Long time no see. You have to keep coming. You know there is not too much time left, so don't waste it for chasing desires."

Ziggy Chodor, student of Myo Ji Sunim

The last time I saw Myo Ji Sunim I was visiting her at her temple. She was showing me all the work they had done. After viewing every room, I asked her where her room was. She laughed and showed me the altar again. She then opened a little wooden door on the side of the altar, I bowed down to look inside and saw a lamp and a sleeping bag and a picture of Kwan Seum Bosal.

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

EULOGY FOR MYO JI SUNIM

Given at the 49-Day Ceremony for Myo Ji Sunim on December 18, 2011

Grace Kim Kanoy (Myo Ji Sunim's eldest daughter)

I had the unique and intimate position of being a witness to my mother's transformation. The story of Myo Ji Sunim is at once both tragic and triumphant.

Understanding who Myo Ji Sunim was before becoming Myo Ji Sunim will explain many of her actions and the challenges she faced to become who she was.

When Myo Ji Sunim first arrived in Canada, she was a newly married, beautiful, highly energetic, petite woman with long, flowing black hair, who had an appetite for high-heeled shoes, fancy



clothes, 1940s glam and Elvis Presley. She had a quick temper, could be incredibly obstinate and impatient, and she loved people.

When I was about 10 or 11, my mother met a Buddhist nun. They became fast friends, often singing together as they walked arm-in-arm through parks. And through this friendship, she discovered Zen Buddhism. And through this nun, my mother met Zen Master Seung Sahn.

When I was 12, she decided to visit Providence Zen Center and the New York Zen Center. It was not to be her last visit. By that time, she had begun to bow every night.

When I was in my teens, my mother partook in her first retreat, which I believe took place here at Providence [Zen Center]. That retreat made a profound impact on my mother.

During this retreat, she would wake up one hour before everyone else in the morn-

ing to put on her makeup, so no one would see her without it on. When she first experienced communal eating in silence, and had to wash her bowl with water and drink it at the end, it took all her willpower to stop from vomiting.

She returned home to Hamilton humbled and ashamed of the woman she had become.

My mother left our family in 1991. I was 21, my sister was just shy of her 15th birthday and my brother was 13.

There are many ways to look at her departure:

From a child's point of view, her departure was abandonment;

from a husband's point of view, it was betrayal;

from a community's point of view, it was shameful.

Her departure was all those things.

But from a woman's point of view, it was a mad and desperate crisis of identity.

Who am I? The most fundamental question of life.

My mother was 45 years old.

Her departure was met with anger, frustration and sadness. The community vilified both her and her family. Few people understood her, and even fewer showed her compassion.

My mother knew that leaving her children and her husband was wrong. She loved her children; she loved her husband. But what was worse is that she knew her children loved her, and her husband loved and adored her.

She had no real good reason to leave.

My mother carried this guilt for a long time. And I believe that initially, it served as the fuel that propelled her insane zeal for bowing. She needed to correct her action in the only way that she knew how. Through bowing.

I enjoyed visiting my mother at the temple. She told me stories of her training as a nun, and the guilty pleasure of receiving beautiful nun's clothes from the abbess [of the temple] where she trained. And with childlike, mischievous glee, she recounted how she was given her own private room to sleep in because her snoring kept all the other nuns-in-training awake at night. She was still the same woman, and I found great comfort in that.

I visited my mother every few years, and I made sure to visit during days and times when no one would be around so as not to complicate her new life. Despite her strong ideas and obstinacy, she loved to learn new things, and to learn new English words. She wanted to know better English words to help her accurately define not only Zen, but how she viewed life. She often used the Korean word *in-yon*, as she tried to explain life and Zen in half-English and Korean. "It was like destiny and fate, but not really," she would say.

The last time I saw my mother, it was three years ago. She agreed to watch my two sons for three weeks while I was away on a work assignment. Even though she was a Buddhist nun, I personally felt that she still had obliga-

tions as a grandmother, so I was delighted to have my boys spend that time with her. It was also the last time that my brother, sister and I were all together with her.

And for the first time, I felt that she no longer carried guilt for the decision she made many years ago. She had finally forgiven herself.

When I returned to pick up my boys in New York, I was happy to see that the boys and Myo Ji Sunim had had a grand adventure together. And of course, she was excited to tell me about a new word she had learned that "explained everything."

Myo Ji Sunim's final departure was equally as sudden as her first one.

A few days later after she died, I received a message from a Reiki-master friend of mine. She said, "Your mother has left you a message. I don't know what the message means, but she said you'd know."

So, I went over to visit my friend. She excitedly told me, "Your mother said to tell you exactly what happened, to tell you exactly what I was doing when she visited me. So here's what happened:

I'm growing cayenne peppers in my greenhouse. All my organic farmer friends tell me it can't be done in the winter. Well, I'm proving them wrong. I went into the greenhouse. It was an unusually still day, and I only noticed this because it had been crazy windy the last few days. For some reason, I decided to use the back door and not the front. I never use the back door. As I was handling my cayenne pepper plant, the back door of the greenhouse suddenly slammed. I was surprised, but not scared. It was your mother. She said, "tell her what you are doing now in detail."

I said, "I don't understand."

The back door slammed again. "Observation. Tell her what you are doing now."

My cayenne pepper plant was full of tiny new blossoms. I was tying string from one pepper branch to another to create support for the peppers. And then your mother said to tell you, "All-encompassing."

Three years ago was the last time I saw my mother. She was excited to tell me about her new word that *explained everything* . . .

"All-encompassing."

This is a quote from Jack Kerouac:

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue center light pop and everybody goes "Awww!"



There was a homeless woman who was living on the streets near Chogye Sa Temple. This woman used to wander by the temple sometimes, and from time to time she would randomly rip out some of the flowers Myo Ji Sunim was so carefully cultivating in front of the building. Myo Ji Sunim saw her doing this and asked her to stop a few times, but the woman didn't stop. After that, whenever Myo Ji Sunim saw this woman, she would give her whatever change she had in her pocket, a quarter or whatever. The woman never ripped any flowers out of the Chogye Sa flower boxes again.

Myong Haeng / Dave

I once brought my large black and white tomcat to her temple for an evening meeting. He had been sick, and I did not want to leave him alone. He was heartily welcomed and even signed in as a representative of our temple. Sunim accepted and loved all beings.

Swamini Sri Lalitambika Devi

FOR MYO JI SUNIM



(1)

After millions
Of bows

Flesh and bones
Become dust and air

What persists?

Blue sky
White clouds

Tears of love
And gratitude

Aigo! Aigo!
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

(2)

Who said
You were done?

Nobody told us
You were going

And we think
You didn't know

Where did you go?
Why did you leave?

Bowing is easy
Wondering hurts more

(3)

Wondering is easy
Practicing is hard

How did you learn
Not to complain?

This gift of mind light

Buddha's face is gold
Human eyes are wet

(4)

Human eyes are wet
Human flesh is warm

What do
Dust and air
Become?

Sun and moon
Bow to each other
Cannot wake up

That's people's job

Eye to eye
Face to face
We only build something
Together

Ken Kessel JDPSN



We argued constantly, but who could win an argument with such a saint? She focused her laserlike energy on my sad excuses, well-polished weakness and misplaced values. The poor "mountain monk" with her insurmountable energy could outlast us all, even in death. Frequently, when she saw the frustration in my being, she would say: "Binsentu, you are angry at me now, but someday you will miss me, right?" Well, I think she got that one wrong. I can't miss her because she is now and ever will be in my spirit, a little voice saying, "Don't think too much. If you know it is the right thing to do, just do it. All we can do is try . . . isn't it?"

Vince Conte

You came to one of Zen Master Seung Sahn's memorials and brought with you lots of goodies from Korea (apples, pears, persimmons, traditional Korean cakes), more than you could carry—that is a very touching teaching to us: Not-for-me teaching.

Yours in dharma,

Sister Dae Kwan and all the sangha members

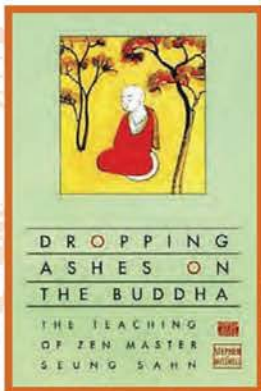
To say that the death of Myo Ji Sunim has affected me is an understatement. But her life—her life transformed me.

Alyson Arnold

[15



A FRESH APPROACH TO ZEN



The Teachings of Zen Master Man Gong. Translated and edited by Zen Master Dae Kwang, Hye Tong Sunim, and Kathy Park. Zen Master Man Gong (1872-1946) received transmission from Zen Master Kyong Ho, and is one of the truly towering figures in modern Korean Zen. He and his students played a central role in re-establishing the Buddhist tradition in Korea after centuries of suppression during the Chosan dynasty. Zen Master Man Gong was the grand teacher of Zen Master Seung Sahn. 56 pages. *Kwan Um School of Zen.* ISBN 962861015-5. \$10.00

Don't-Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen. Zen Master Wu Kwang uses stories about Korean Zen Masters from Ma-tsu to Seung Sahn to present Zen teaching applicable to anyone's life. 128 pages. *Shambhala.* ISBN 1-59030-110-2. \$14.95

One Hundred Days of Solitude. The story of Zen Master Bon Yeon's solo retreat is threaded through with Zen teaching and striking insights into the human mind when left to its own devices. 144 pages. *Wisdom Publications.* ISBN 0-86-171538-1. \$14.95

Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Stephen Mitchell. A delightful, irreverent, and often hilarious record of interactions with Western students. 244 pages. *Grove Press.* ISBN 0-8021-3052-6. \$14.00

Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake: Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn. 199 pages. *Shambhala,* 2006. ISBN 1-59030-340-7. \$15.95

Only Don't Know: Teaching Letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Issues of work, relationships, and suffering are discussed as they relate to meditation practice. 230 pages. *Shambhala,* 1999. ISBN 1-57062-432-1. \$16.95

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

Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans. Drawing on over 30 years of practice and teaching, Zen Master Wu Kwang has selected 22 cases from *The Blue Cliff Record* and *Wu-men-kuan* that he finds deeply meaningful and helpful for meditation practice. In *Elegant Failure*, he provides a wealth of background information and personal anecdotes for each koan that help illuminate its meaning without detracting from its paradoxical nature. 256 pages. *Rodmell Press,* 2010. ISBN 1-93048-525-5. \$16.95.

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

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

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

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

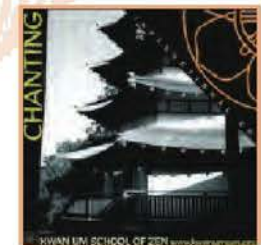
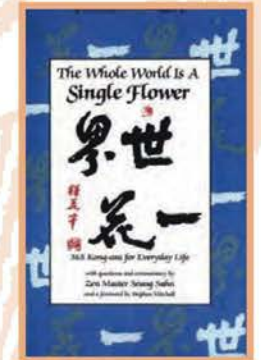
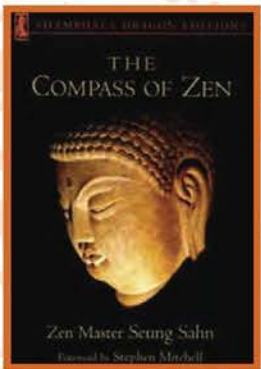
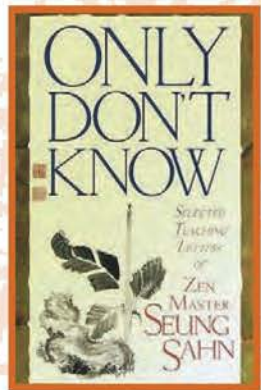
Wake Up! On the Road with a Zen Master. An entertaining documentary that captures Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy and presents the core of his teaching. 54 minutes. *Primary Point Press,* 1992. VHS: ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00 DVD: ISBN 0-942795-14-8. \$30.00

Chanting Instructional CD. The morning and evening bell chants, daily chants, plus special chanting. If you're ordering this CD to learn the chants, we suggest that you also order a copy of the chanting book if you don't already have one. *Primary Point Press* ISBN 0-942795-13-X. \$10.00. *Chanting book: \$12.00.*

The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life. Zen Master Seung Sahn. CD-ROM version for Mac and PC. Audio recordings of Zen Master Seung Sahn's commentaries together with the full text of the kong-an collection. 2 discs. *Primary Point Press,* 2006. ISBN 0-942795-15-6. \$30.00

Zen Buddhist Chanting CD. Chanting by Korean monk Hye Tong Sunim. Includes Thousand Eyes and Hands Sutra, Kwan Seum Bosal chanting, Sashi Maji chanting, Homage to the Three Jewels, The Four Mantras, and an extended version of Kwan Seum Bosal chanting. *Primary Point Press* ISBN 0-942795-16-4. \$15.00

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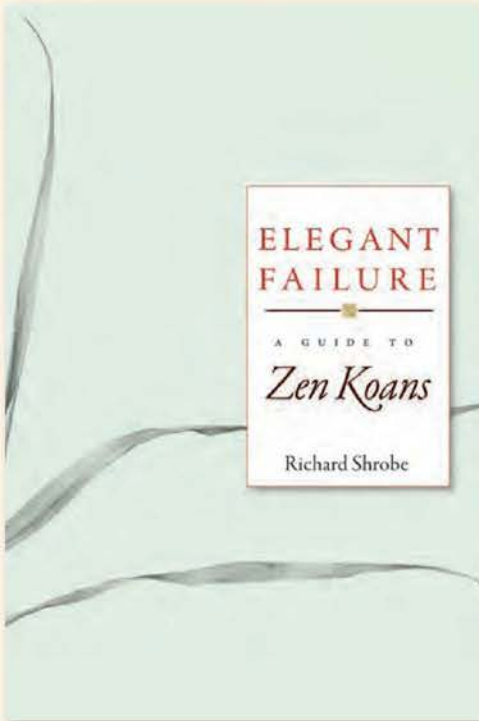
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ELEGANT FAILURE

Richard Shrobe (Zen Master Wu Kwang)

Zen koans are stories of exchanges between Zen masters and their disciples. These stories have long fascinated Western readers because of their wisdom, humor, and enigmatic quality. In *Elegant Failure*, author Richard Shrobe has selected twenty-two cases from *The Blue Cliff Record*, *Book of Serenity*, and *Wu-men-kuan* that he has found to be deeply meaningful and helpful for meditation practice.

Drawing on over thirty years of practice and teaching, he provides a wealth of background information and personal anecdotes for each koan that help to illuminate its meaning without detracting from its paradoxical nature. As Shrobe reminds us, "The main core of Zen teaching is the bare bones of what is there. In a certain sense, embellishing a story takes away from the central teaching: Don't embellish anything, just be with it as it is."

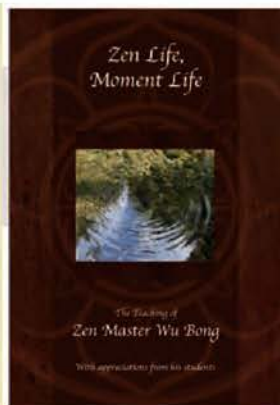
PAPER, 256PP, 6X9, ISBN-13: 978-1930485259, \$16.95



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[17



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Zen Life, Moment Life

The Teaching of
Zen Master Wu Bong

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INKA CEREMONY FOR

Anne Rudloe

April 2, 2011, at Providence Zen Center, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

18]

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: I'm actually not so focused on this particular ceremony. I'm much more interested in after the ceremony, when we have three exciting activities: croquet, or soccer, or possibly ping-pong. And I'm wondering as a dharma teacher and Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, which would you suggest that the sangha participate in, in order to awaken?

Rudloe PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Rudloe PSN: In this moment, which ball are you hitting?

Q: Oh, my! Thank you for your teaching.

Question: You and I sat a retreat together in Colorado. And I slept in a dormitory, and you slept in a tent. Now you're a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, and I'm not. Did we sleep the same, or did we sleep different?

Rudloe PSN: You already understand.

Q: I don't.

Rudloe PSN: Close your eyes and see what happens.

Q: [Snores]

Rudloe PSN: There you go.

Question: I don't understand this dharma combat that well. I would really like to win this combat. Can you teach me one thing that will help me win this combat?

Rudloe PSN: You already understand.

Q: I really don't understand.

Rudloe PSN: Then you've already won.

Q: But I feel like I lost.

Rudloe PSN: That's your mistake.

Q: So, I lost, right?

Rudloe PSN: Don't make win, and don't make lose, OK? Only, what are you doing right now? ♦



DHARMA SPEECH

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

Zen is about experience, and yet it uses many words.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

Speaking is an experience, yet experience transcends words.

Words are words, experience is experience.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

When should we speak, and when should we be still?

KATZ!

Inside today, many, many words; outside the sun shines silently.

Zen is also a storytelling tradition, so I have several stories I'd like to share today.

First is a very old story from ancient China, about a young Zen Master and an old Zen Master. Tu-Ja was a famous Zen Master in China, and at the time of this story he was a very senior teacher. He'd been teaching for years; he had his own temple; he didn't have to prove anything to anybody. But as has already been pointed out, young teachers, when they're just starting out, visit other teachers to test their minds against the more senior people. So one day, on the doorstep appears a young man named So-Sahn. And he's invited in and they sit down together. Tu-Ja asks, "Where are you coming from?" The young man says, "Sword Mountain." Tu-Ja leans back (probably) and says, "Then did you bring your sword?" "Yes, I did," the younger man responds. "Then show it to this old monk!" So-Sahn just points one finger at the ground in front of the old monk. Tu-Ja jumps up and leaves the room, which means he got flustered and lost the exchange. Well, he did—he made a big mistake. Later that day, Tu-Ja asked his attendant to invite the young man back for a cup of tea. His attendant reported that So-Sahn had left right after the first exchange. "For thirty years I have ridden horseback, and today I was kicked from the saddle by a small donkey!" exclaimed Tu-Ja.

This is a story about how to respond when things happen unexpectedly. Sometimes, in each of our lives, something comes up, and we need a fast response: *boom, boom!* And we don't have time to think it over, and we don't have time to call in a committee and debate and reach a consensus—we just have to act. So, this is a story about how can we do that, how our practice can cultivate that ability.

Tu-Ja's comment about being kicked from the saddle was a good one. I've kept horses for over thirty years, off and on, and I've fallen off horses lots of times—*Thump!* And every single time I've fallen off a horse it was because I wasn't paying attention. All of a sudden, the horse decided that some funny-looking bush was going to eat horses, reared back, and off I went. The horse was teaching me, "Pay attention! Pay attention!"

The other story is a little bit more recent. It happened just a couple of months ago, down in Florida. My husband, Jack, and I were driving on a little country road in central Florida, State Route 19, not too far from Orlando and Disneyworld and so forth. It's a little, narrow, country road, two lanes. This is in an area right on the edge of a national forest, an area that was all farmland and pasture just a few years ago. But Florida has an astronomical rate of growth (or it did until the recession), and what used to be rural land now has subdivisions everywhere. And those subdivisions mean that there's lots of traffic. So this little tiny road that was never meant to carry much traffic was

practically bumper to bumper with cars, and they were going 60 miles an hour. We were headed up the road and I was in the passenger seat. Suddenly Jack said, "There's a horse coming!" I was looking off to the side.

"A horse? Where?"

"No, no, it's in the road!" he said.

"It's in the road?! Stop the car!" He stopped, I opened the door and jumped out as a black horse came galloping up the center line of the road. The cars were barely avoiding the horse on either side. It had a bridle; it had a saddle. Evidently, somebody was trail-riding in the forest, a horse-eating bush appeared, and the horse did its job.

Zen Master Seung Sahn always used to say, "Every creature knows its job; only humans don't know their job." Well, the horse knows that its job, when it's about to be attacked by a horse-eating bush, is to panic, rear and run away! The rider was probably not paying attention, and off she went.

So, I leaped out of the car, the horse was galloping at me, with cars on both sides, and I jumped in front of our car, waving my arms and shouting "Whoa, whoa, whoa!"

It sounds kind of crazy, and maybe it was, but I knew from experience that if you do this in front of a running horse, it will usually stop or veer; it's not going to run you down . . . usually. By this time the traffic coming at us had stopped too, so everybody had stopped and the horse and I had quite an audience.

Then the horse stopped, still in the middle of the road, and I held my arms toward the horse, stood still and began sweet-talking the horse: "Come on, it's OK, it's OK." This animal's body language made it clear that it was absolutely terrorized. I mean, imagine it from the horse's point of view—it's in the woods, it's riding along, it knows what it's supposed to do, a horse-eating bush leaps out at it, it reacts the way a horse always reacts and suddenly it's in this insane reality that it's never been in before with these huge things going by. So I started walking slowly toward the horse, still saying "It's OK, it's OK, it's OK," trying to get close enough to get the reins. The horse looked at me for a second and then it looked off to the side. It was about to bolt back into the traffic. So I just froze, still saying "It's OK, it's OK, it's OK." The drivers would just have to sit in their cars for another few minutes. Finally I started walking toward it again, "It's OK, it's OK—I'm going to help you!"

Well, horses aren't stupid. They're four-leggeds, and they know that female two-leggeds know what to do, and know how to fix insane situations, so it stood there and let me catch it. The traffic now was backed up five miles in both directions. I stood there a minute, still in the road, and rubbed the horse's nose, and did horse-whisperer stuff, and then I led the horse off the road.

In reality, all this happened so fast that it takes me longer to tell the story than it took to catch the horse. It was an example of “Just do it!” as Zen Master Seung Sahn always liked to say. There wasn’t any time to think. It was just reflex, and knowing about horses.

I got the horse off to the road shoulder, the cars were starting to go by again, and Jack had pulled off the side of the road. Then the thinking mind kicked back in and said, “You’re standing beside a road in the middle of nowhere with a horse! Now what?” And probably there was somebody hurt out in the forest, God knows where. We moved the horse a little bit farther away from the road, rummaged out a cell phone, and called 911.

“We’re a mile north of Groveland, on Highway 19, with a riderless horse, and there’s probably somebody hurt out in the woods, and you better do something.” And the 911 dispatcher’s response was, “Now what?”

They were going to have to find a horse trailer somewhere, get out here, and it was probably going to take all day. Fortunately, about that time, the owner of the horse came stomping up the road! You could tell that she was the rider. *Stomp, stomp!* And she had a dog, and she was still in the middle of traffic with her unleashed dog bouncing about her feet. She finally got to us.

“Is this your horse?” “Yes.” “Oh, thank goodness. Are you OK?” “Yes, I’m fine.” So, we sent her and her horse and her dog on their way. Their stable was only a few blocks away and she stayed well off the road.

That’s the end of the story, except that once it was all done, I felt so alive. It was that teaching of “only just do it!” really come to life, in a wonderful way. We go through so much of our lives half asleep, or thinking about something else, and then suddenly something happens and we’re 100 percent right there, and then we can wake up and we can function at a level that we’re all capable of, and mostly don’t do. I certainly don’t; I spend a lot of time just zoning out. It was a good feeling.

So right now, we’re sitting here in this ceremony, and you know what? It’s that same good feeling right now. It’s being alive for all of us. That’s what our practice is about; learning how to do that. Sitting cross-legged on a cushion staring at the floor—it doesn’t seem like that would have such an effect, but it does. I don’t know how it does it, but it does it. It’s a really amazing practice. So, I hope that if you see a horse running down the road at you, you’ll know what to do. If you do, it will come from your gut, not your thinking mind. I hope that we can all reach the point where we can be awake—it’s not just moments of emergency or dharma combat when we wake up; we can be awake like that in



every moment if we choose to be. It’s something we can train ourselves to do, and that’s the purpose of retreats. It’s not something we have to force or to make happen; if we sit long enough, it happens. It really does.

After the ceremony, the schedule says we’re going to have games and things. So I hope that everybody is able to be fully alive in that moment and really enjoy the games, and with the energy that comes from that, to go out and do your job, and I’ll do my job in this world, and we can save all beings. That’s what it’s about.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

Horses live in fields, and cars go up and down roads.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

If you’re riding, a field is a road, and road shoulders have great grass for the horses to eat. But a road is a road and a field is a field.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick]

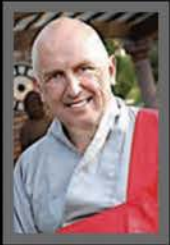
Be very careful, don’t mix these things up.
Can you find your way home?

KATZ!

If you go out the door and to the end of Pound Road, there are several black horses quietly eating grass. Thank you. ♦

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Roots to Branches: Zen Blossoms in Europe

BEGINNINGS IN SPAIN: THE KWAN UM SCHOOL IN EUROPE

Fernando Pardo

It was 1969 when I bought a copy of *Desolation Angels* by Jack Kerouac. In those years, when I was still a high school student, the book made a great impact on my adolescent mind.

I wanted to read more books by Jack Kerouac, but no others had been published in Spain. Above all I longed to read *On the Road*. A few months later, after I had given up on finding it, by chance I entered a small bookstore. I noticed that in addition to the books on the display tables, many were also arranged on shelves in alphabetical order. I looked under *K* and I almost jumped out of my skin when I found three books by Jack Kerouac, published by a company in Argentina—*On the Road*, *Dharma Bums* and *Lonesome Traveler*—on which I invested nearly all my savings. I can say that *Dharma Bums* was the book that introduced me to Buddhism.

Shortly after that, I approached the same bookstore, after accumulating a little more money, and I bought the three volumes of *Essays in Zen Buddhism* by D. T. Suzuki. Suzuki's translations of Buddhist texts captivated me, especially the fragments from Master Rinzai's sayings.

In a way, Kerouac's books and the few books that I read about Buddhism influenced me to major in philosophy. After reading Kerouac, I felt a great affinity for the hippies and psychedelia, which, perhaps in an intuitive and somehow confusing way, I managed to connect with Zen Buddhism.

In 1972 I started to spend time in another small book-

store, and one day when I was browsing around I found the book that would change my life radically. It was called *Entretiens de Lin-Tsi*. It was a French translation of the sayings of Zen Master Lin Chi. The book fascinated me, and I cannot even say that I understood it (though, as Zen Master Seung Sahn later clarified to me, Zen is not about understanding). For me it was a book that would be just as interesting and enigmatic in a thousand years as it was in the ninth century.

Eventually I completed my degree in philosophy, but I decided Zen was more interesting. After reading Lin Chi I realized that to understand—or better, to attain—Zen I needed the guidance of a true Zen master. Were there still authentic Zen masters? What chance had a young Spaniard with meager means of studying with a Zen master? I made a plan: I decided to write to a Japanese Zen master then living in Paris. I was ready to go to the

French capital to study with him.

Meanwhile, while visiting yet another bookstore, by chance I came across a book in English titled *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn*. It was a delightful book in which a contemporary Korean Zen master spoke about Zen in way that resonated with me in the same way as Zen Master Lin Chi. It was as if in a magic way there was an unbroken stream from past to present, which had not disappeared after several centuries. I decided to write also to Zen Master Seung Sahn, who was then in the United States, and ask him for advice on the practice of Zen.

Months passed and I received a reply from the Zen master in Paris. I was totally disappointed: it was a



cold, impersonal letter with an unattractive brochure showing some of the activities they did in France. And, while awaiting a reply from Zen Master Seung Sahn, I found that I had sent my letter to a totally wrong address, so I resigned myself to not receiving a response.

So it was with great surprise that I eventually received a letter from the Providence Zen Center, where Zen Master Seung Sahn lived at the time. In his own handwriting he described with precision and enthusiasm everything that, in my clumsy English, I had tried to express in my letter. He gave me valuable advice on how to practice true Zen. I also began to receive the regular newsletters from the Providence Zen Center. One of these newsletters mentioned a guy from Majorca (Joan Insa) who was studying art in New York and was also a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn. And he was planning to return to Spain. The article also gave his address in Majorca, so I wrote him. He was amazed that someone in our country knew about Zen Master Seung Sahn. We corresponded for a while and he told me that, if we worked together, we could invite Zen Master Seung Sahn to lead a retreat in Majorca.

Zen Master Seung Sahn's visits to Europe started mainly because of Zen Master Wu Bong's Polish background, and also because of Joan Insa, his first Spanish student. In the beginning nobody knew the school or this style of practice. The Japanese style was more well known, mostly because of the Zen master in France. Following to Zen Master Seung Sahn's visits to different places in Europe, the first groups of practitioners gradually began to appear.

In the spring of 1981, Zen Master Seung Sahn led his first retreat in Spain, at a Catholic monastery in Majorca that was rented for the occasion. About twenty people attended. Of course, there I was.

It was a strong, traditional-style retreat. The practice was hard, but the presence of Zen Master Seung Sahn—and his interviews and his lectures—was unforgettable. In this retreat I became friends with Enric Mus, a Majorcan who had come to sit the retreat. It turns out he worked as a forest ranger, living in a hermitage in the mountains, preventing forest fires just like Jack Kerouac in *Desolation Angels!*

A year later Enric wrote to me to tell me he was living in a hippie commune, the Ahaba Community, out in the country, and they wanted to invite Zen Master Seung Sahn. That year we did two retreats, one in Majorca and another one in Catalonia.

The Ahaba Community, in Gerona, was located in an isolated valley and had no electricity. The water had to be pumped up from a nearby river. Broadly speaking, the conditions were pretty tough, but the retreat in Ahaba was a great success, attended by more than sixty people. Enric and I started to think about opening a Zen center affiliated with the Kwan Um School

in Barcelona.

Also, one night during this retreat, while having a well-deserved cup of tea after a hard day of long hours of sitting meditation, talking about some of my recent readings, which were almost always in English or French, we agreed that it was a pity that these books were not published in our country. Suddenly we got a crazy idea to publish them ourselves, and so we founded a publishing house specializing in Zen, meditation and other topics that excited us. Thus was born La Liebre de Marzo, a small publishing company where we publish Spanish translations of the books we love, including *Tirando cenizas sobre el buda* and *La brújula del Zen*, both by Zen Master Seung Sahn, *La barrera sin puerta* (the Mumonkan), *Las enseñanzas del Maestro Zen Lin-Chi*, and many others.

Zen Master Seung Sahn visited Spain six times while he was touring Europe. Often he was accompanied by wonderful students, who would later become wonderful teachers themselves, including Zen Masters Su Bong, Dae Bong, Dae Kwang, and Bon Yeon, as well as Mu Sang Sunim. I was appointed as his translator, and when I protested that my English was very bad Zen Master Seung Sahn replied: "Wait to hear mine!" And when once we did find a good translator for a dharma talk, a philosophy professor who used to live in the United States, Zen Master Seung Sahn complained at the end. He had perceived that this man tended to use too many flowery words and didn't translate well his direct style, so he confessed he preferred me as his translator: "I want you here to be my tongue and my ears, because you understand the teachings better, that they are not something to decorate with beautiful words." Anyway, people keep complaining about not passing kong-ans because of my bad translations, but it's not true!

After the third year, Zen Master Seung Sahn was accompanied by a colleague, whose charisma, he may have hoped, would attract more practitioners. While this worked initially, it soon became clear that their teaching directions were different, and there was a traumatic split in the sangha. Barcelona Zen Center (Bori Centro Zen) disappeared, and Majorca Zen Center almost disappeared. For some years I attempted to reopen a Zen center in Barcelona, but it was very difficult. Besides, at that time Zen Master Seung Sahn had stopped coming to Spain. Actually, after the rift, many people didn't want to hear anything more of Korean Zen, as they felt betrayed by what had happened. Also, as Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, "in Spain, too-good situation." Not many people feel compelled to do hard training.

Slowly, with lots of patience and great effort, and helped by my wife, Rosanna, and later by my daughter, Barbara, we finally reopened the Barcelona Zen Center. But instead

of having as many as 60 people at Yong Maeng Jong Jins, as in the beginnings with Zen Master Seung Sahn, now retreats had three or four people. We started by doing one Yong Maeng Jong Jin a month. Gradually we had a bigger sangha and we were able to invite teachers to lead some of the retreats, from Zen Master Wu Bong to Zen Master Bon Yo, and our keen-eyed guiding teacher Zen Master Bon Shim, who nowadays visits us two or three times a year. Some students started attending retreats and Kyol Ches in several temples in Paris, Germany, Poland, America, Korea, and so on, and their practice became stronger.

Currently, Barcelona has a core group of about twenty practitioners. We have daily practice in Barcelona and a monthly Yong Maeng Jong Jin in our center in Torredembarra, a village 100 kilometers from the city, near the beach.

The story of the Kwan Um School in Spain has been quite complicated: a strong start with visits by Zen Master Seung Sahn, then it almost disappeared. But thanks to a small group of students we could gradually rebuild our Zen center again.

Despite all the problems, it has been a fun and exciting time. Memories of the retreats in Ahaba will remain in the minds of all who participated. Nobody can forget the common bathrooms—men and women showering together, to the astonishment of the monks who accompanied Zen Master Seung Sahn!

The story of the Barcelona Zen Center is proof that in spite of all the trials and tribulations, so long as a small group of people wants to practice seriously, they can rebuild their center from scratch. More important than quantity is the quality of practice, and the intention. Zen centers can exist only with a good direction and a deep sense of practice. We don't know the future of the Barcelona Zen Center or the Kwan Um School in Spain, but the important thing is to keep working, moment to moment, in the right direction.

FINDING THE WAY BACK HOME

Zen Master Bon Shim



For as long as I can remember, I've been looking for some guidance, something that could help me to understand life, my self and this scary world. Living in a Catholic family, I had only one choice, so I used to go to church almost every day to pray for some help. Finally, a friend of mine, whom I met accidentally and who knew that I was looking desperately for answers to my existential questions, told me that a great

Korean Zen master was coming to Krakow in two weeks, so I should come to the airport to greet him. I was very excited and couldn't wait, imagining what a great Zen master would look like. When the day finally came, I went to the airport to wait for him an hour before his arrival, holding a bunch of flowers. The Zen master appeared with eight American students, and at first I was disappointed because he looked ordinary, like any other Korean person. Only later, when we went to my friend's house and he started talking, did I know I had just met my teacher.

I can't describe how happy and grateful I felt: just like finding the way back home after being lost for a long, long time. We had our first Yong Maeng Jong Jin with interviews, and a precepts ceremony, with the precepts burn done with little wax strings instead of the incense sticks that we use nowadays. From that time on Zen Master Seung Sahn used to come every year, always so powerful, laughing a lot and always taking care of people. Whoever came and needed any answers from him, or just a little attention, he was there for them. His great compassion was the most striking thing about him, and there were thousands of situations I observed during all those years when I was so amazed by his unconditioned love.

Foremost was that he came to our country, which was still communist at the time. That time was very hard for Poland, the last years of communism, with martial law and no food in the shops, and so Zen Master Seung Sahn's visits were extremely important for Polish people. He gave us hope and helped us to see things from a different perspective. The path to liberation had a deep meaning for us, living in an oppressed country, so our sangha grew quickly. We had so many people for Yong Maeng Jong Jin and kido retreats that we could hardly manage. Every time he arrived there was a public dharma talk. Once six hundred people attended his talk. He also used to travel a lot, and any time students invited him he didn't hesitate, but just went there, gave a talk and a new group appeared.

Personally, I also benefited greatly from him on many levels. He would stay at my place whenever he came to Poland. It was inspiring to see him getting up at three o'clock every morning. My baby used to wake up around this time. When the baby was three months old it cried a lot. When Zen Master Seung Sahn noticed it, he did a beautiful ceremony for the baby. Every time he came, he looked at my little boy with his keen eyes. And when my older son was a teenager he had many teenage problems, so once Zen Master Seung Sahn had a serious talk with him. I've never known what this talk was about, but since then my son has been getting up at 5 a.m. for morning practice.

Our great teacher saved many lives. We will always miss him.

DOGS MEETING AT A CROSSROADS

Mukyong JDPSN (Roland Wöhrle-Chon)



My wife, Namhee, and I met Zen Master Seung Sahn for the first time in spring 1991. We were both 30 years old, and after many efforts to meet teachers and gurus in India and elsewhere, the time was finally ripe to meet our great teacher. So far we had

learned yoga and meditation in Asia, and we started our Zen practice in the Japanese Soto school. In 1989 we joined our first Kyol Che in the Kwan Um School of Zen in Falenica, which is part of Warsaw, Poland. It had a strong impact on us, and thus we continued to visit parts of each Kyol Che in Poland for the following years. The retreats were led by Andrzej Czarnecki and sometimes by Zen Master Wu Bong, with whom we developed a close student-teacher relationship.

In early 1990 we opened our home in Berlin for regular Zen practice on Tuesdays and Sundays. Slowly people joined us and eventually our flat became the first location of the Berlin Zen Center.

Then in spring 1991 we received this remarkable phone call from Zen Master Wu Bong announcing that Zen Master Seung Sahn and his entourage could come to Berlin, if we wish, because the scheduled retreat in Paris had been cancelled. They would arrive in two weeks or so, which left us almost no time for preparations and organization. However, the hotels were all full due to a number of conventions going on in Berlin right then, so we couldn't get any hotel rooms for our important guests on such short notice. That's why they all had to be accommodated in our student apartment, which was also the Berlin Zen Center. We had a well-off Zen student who offered his home for the guests, but Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "We stay at the Zen Center, no problem!" So our great Zen Master Seung Sahn stayed in our bedroom and slept in our bed. Zen Master Wu Bong, the monks, and everyone else stayed in the dharma room. It didn't seem like Zen Master Seung Sahn had any problem with the situation, even though we students had little space or comfort, and not even proper showers. Still everything went smoothly. Every two days we went to the public bath together. During this time I heard Zen Master Seung Sahn often say, "You like, I like." So he just followed the situation. That was a great teaching!

But the climax for me was this unforgettable private

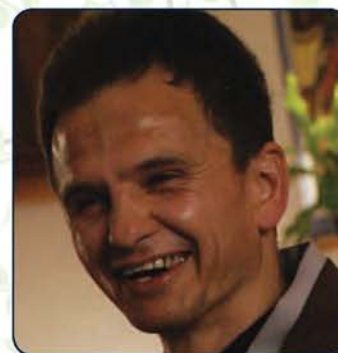
conversation I had with him at the Berlin Zen Center. I told him that Namhee and I planned to get married later that year, and I asked for his teaching. Then he took off his glasses and looked at me with his dark, sharp eyes and said, "One time a dog started from point A to have a walk on a road. At the same time another dog started his walk from point B on a different road. There was a junction where both roads met. There the two dogs had a good time together for a while." You must understand that I am quite a romantic person, and that this kind of teaching did not impress me at first. I thought, why would he say this to a couple who loves each other and is about to get married soon? But I had to admit that he is right, and that it is just that simple! This message of being simple and not holding anything has been Zen Master Seung Sahn's most important teaching to me until today.

A few weeks later we met Zen Master Seung Sahn again in Warsaw, where we joined the Yong Maeng Jong Jin and became dharma teachers. During our stay I once approached him in his room and told him with great sincerity: "Zen Master Seung Sahn, I want to follow you!" This determination was of great meaning and significance to me. So far I was proud to be independent and my own master. Now after I made this decision I expected something special. But Zen Master Seung Sahn only said, "Please rub this ink stone." He was about to make calligraphies and needed ink. So I sat there alone with him in his room rubbing ink. He said almost nothing. No verbal conversation. Only calligraphy and ink rubbing. From time to time I asked him: "Is it enough?" And he would say: "No! More!"

These were my important first encounters with Zen Master Seung Sahn. On both occasions I made heavy and important decisions for my life, and on both occasions I received Zen Master Seung Sahn's simple, profound and clear teachings. Unforgettable!

MATCHBOX PRACTICE

Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN



There is an old saying: "When the student is ready the teacher appears." But in my case it was a teaching that appeared first, and I had to wait some time to experience the true source of it. What made me ready was long years of traveling without any clear direction, getting through risky psychedelic and chemical experiments, which resulted in confusion and per-

sonality disintegration, hurt my mental and physical health and caused social alienation.

Since the early years of my life I was driven by a burning question: "What is the most valuable, essential thing in my existence? I want to find something of utmost importance. What is it?" The question was good but there was no direction in it, no compass to show me the way. The result could be summarized in Zen Master Seung Sahn's words: "You want to go to Krakow but in the end you find yourself in Gdansk." The result may still be interesting, and in this case not so bad, but my situation was really critical and alarming, so I needed completely new guidance and genuine transformation. Finally I decided to spend some time in a therapeutic community under professional supervision. It was helpful but my intuition told me that it was not, as we say, the last word. The therapy helped me to clarify some problems, hidden habits, and deficiencies, but I still felt no power to overcome them. Also my original question was still a big hole of anxiety and uncertainty. It was both inspiring and dangerous. By that time I had read many books about meditation and so-called spirituality. The horizon was hazy but I felt the urgency to follow this inner call, which with time became stronger and stronger.

One day a guy joined the community whom I remembered from the past, when I was a member of a theater group. I knew he was one of the first students of the mysterious Zen Master Seung Sahn, who had been visiting Poland regularly since 1978. This man's name was Andrzej Czarnecki and he worked in the clinic as one of the therapists. I immediately experienced an affinity with him. I felt he could be the bridge leading me to Zen Master Seung Sahn. Under his guidance I started regular meditation in addition to therapy. He also gave me a book that became my Bible, the source of the clear water of wisdom. Contrary to the title, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* actually washed away the ashes from my original Buddha. Each page shone with light and clarity that filled my being with the happiness and transparency I had longed for. It was like finding an old forgotten truth, or like suddenly meeting your grandparents while lost in a big, alien, crowded city. My only wish was to meet this great Zen master in person and become his student.

One day Andrzej Czarnecki suggested I attend a retreat at the Warsaw Zen Center. There I experienced the "washing-potatoes practice" recommended by Zen

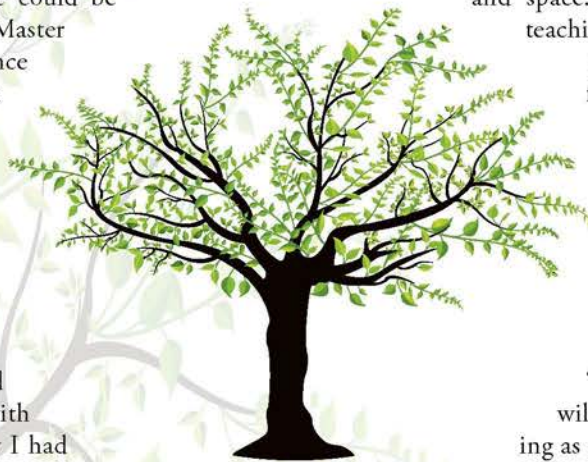
Master Seung Sahn was the strong push. The power of sangha and organized practice broke through the wall of my resistance, and I realized I had found my new home and family. But I was still looking forward to meeting the head of this great family. It was 1986 and I learned that Zen Master Seung Sahn would visit Poland in the fall. His visits and retreats were so popular that the relatively small Zen center could barely contain all the people. That's why we called it "matchbox practice."

Zen Master Seung Sahn was surrounded by love and admiration. Everybody who was seriously interested in the dharma wanted to hear his unusual and simple teaching, to experience this famous sword of wisdom in action.

When he finally arrived the box was full of matches, and one of them was me. It was breathtaking to hear the sound of the bell in the dharma room announcing the arrival of the great Zen master and seeing him appearing in the door. This was the moment I'd waited so long for! He sat on the mat and greeted everybody with a few simple words. I saw him as a combination of power, wisdom, compassion, joy and openness. A pure embodiment of enlightenment! I had the impression that Buddha didn't die twenty-five hundred years ago but was sitting in front of me and smiling. He was completely devoted to his dharma work and how-can-I-help-you was the substance of everything he did. Retreats in Poland must have been difficult for him. Giving interviews to over a hundred people demanded energy that could only have come from beyond the limitations of I-my-me mind, from infinite time and space. And that was just what his teaching was all about.

Once during a dharma talk a frustrated student asked him: "Soen Sa Nim, I've come here to practice meditation but it seems almost impossible, because of such a huge crowd of participants and so little space. It disturbs and stresses me. What can I do?" The simple answer was: "Put down I-my-me and you will have a lot of space." The teaching as usual was a precise shot into the heart of ignorance. Brilliant! I realized that

I had found my destination, my true teacher. After the Yong Maeng Jong Jin, we held a precepts ceremony. Taking the precepts should be a mature decision to follow the dharma path and the teacher. I had no doubts or hesitation. As Zen Master Seung Sahn used to teach, "don't check, just do it." During the ceremony I was asked to approach the table to receive my dharma



name. Zen Master Seung Sahn started to read my certificate: “Your name is Song Sahn . . .” and he stopped for a while: “Oh, perhaps we have common karma?” “Yes sir, I’m sure we have.” May this good karma last forever.

A FEW TREASURED MOMENTS WITH ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Bogumila Malinowska JDPSN



I met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1981 in Warsaw. It was before the Warsaw Zen Center was founded, in a small house rented for Yong Maeng Jong Jin. The atmosphere I felt there was extraordinary. I was 20 years old, and never before in my life had I met a

person so *different* as Zen Master Seung Sahn. Some older students told me that the Zen master was doing some practice in the middle of the night, fighting with demons and visiting other planets. I didn’t participate in the retreat that time, but this experience was different from anything I’d encountered before, so it was like a seed was planted.

Two years later that seed came to fruition, and I decided to sit my first seven-day retreat in Warsaw, at what is now the head temple for Poland.

I met Zen Master Seung Sahn many more times over the years, and I had several private interviews with him when he came to my hometown of Pila in 1986 to give a dharma talk.

I gave the introductory talk then, and spoke in Polish. I wasn’t even a dharma teacher, so he asked the dharma teacher who came with him to give me a long robe, and he asked me to wear a long mala. He couldn’t understand anything we said, and from a photo someone took he looked bored. But when my talk was over he said “Oh! Great talk!” and everybody laughed. Later on we went to a restaurant and he was still answering esoteric questions using lots of technical Zen language. My close friend then asked the Zen master to paint calligraphy on the wall. When my friend, who was a mathematician, saw it, he was overjoyed. He said he stopped thinking and experienced an extraordinary excitement, something he described as an “Einstein state of mind.” He was very happy and looked so peaceful, even though he had never practiced Zen before.

The next day we went to do morning practice and eat breakfast at a beautiful castle in Tuczno, where I had grown up, and where my mother is still living. Zen

Master Seung Sahn gave group kong-an interviews for all of us in one of the large castle chambers. My two teenage brothers were there, as well as one of my former schoolteachers. The Zen master asked some simple kong-ans. My brothers were young and responded well with their beginners’ mind. But my former teacher’s intellect got in the way, and he was baffled by the exchange. Zen Master Seung Sahn laughed and told him he should learn from the younger students, and not make “difficult.”

During breakfast at a restaurant I was still very excited, so he gave me a fork and said, “Eat!” It was helpful for me to relax in that situation, because I was kind of stuck.

I will always remember how comforting he could be. When I was pregnant in 1989 I went to his room to ask for advice. I was scared of how my life would be changing. He said with his big smile, “Oh, wonderful! I will give your baby a gift!” And he gave me a necklace with a Kwan Seum Bosal pendant.

Many times I asked him about practice, and once he advised me to go for a hundred-day solo retreat. He gave me instruction, helped me plan the retreat, and he even recommended a place, even though I had been his student for no more than six years. He said, “you must do a thousand bows every day, and midnight practice every night, and make sure you don’t open the door.”

Another time I asked him what kind of practice to do during pregnancy and he said prostrations. Some people disapproved of my doing prostrations while I was pregnant, and said I was not a good mother-to-be. But despite their talk, I felt this practice really helped me and my baby son.

When my son was about five years old we went to the airport to say good-bye to Zen Master Seung Sahn. As we sat in the airport café in Warsaw, my son asked if Zen Master Seung Sahn would give him a present: a mala with a miniature moktak on it. He replied, “Of course, if you cut your hair.” At that time my son had long hair, and he said yes, he would get a haircut.

There was many a situation in which I witnessed his spontaneous loving energy and his ability to communicate and talk. He never put up any barrier with any kind of person. He also could understand and accept different men and women, of all ages and cultures, and from every walk of life. He had patience and understanding for many things that others found strange or annoying or stupid.

One time I told him I wanted to be a dharma teacher. I was very young at that time. Zen Master Seung Sahn turned to a monk who was there in the room with us and said, “Look at her: she is very strong—wonderful!”

I wish I could see Zen Master Seung Sahn. I am sure I will meet him again. He is always in my heart, and I miss him so much. ♦

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[31

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