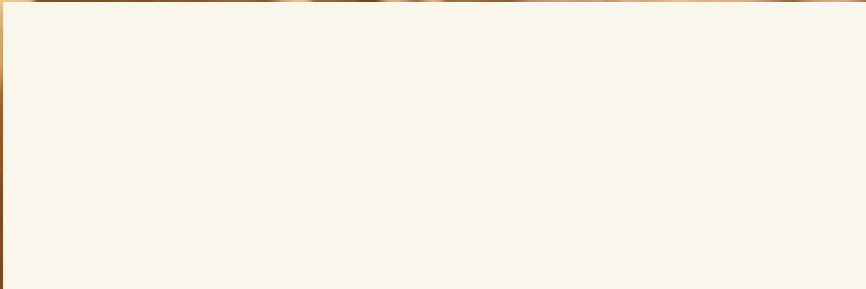
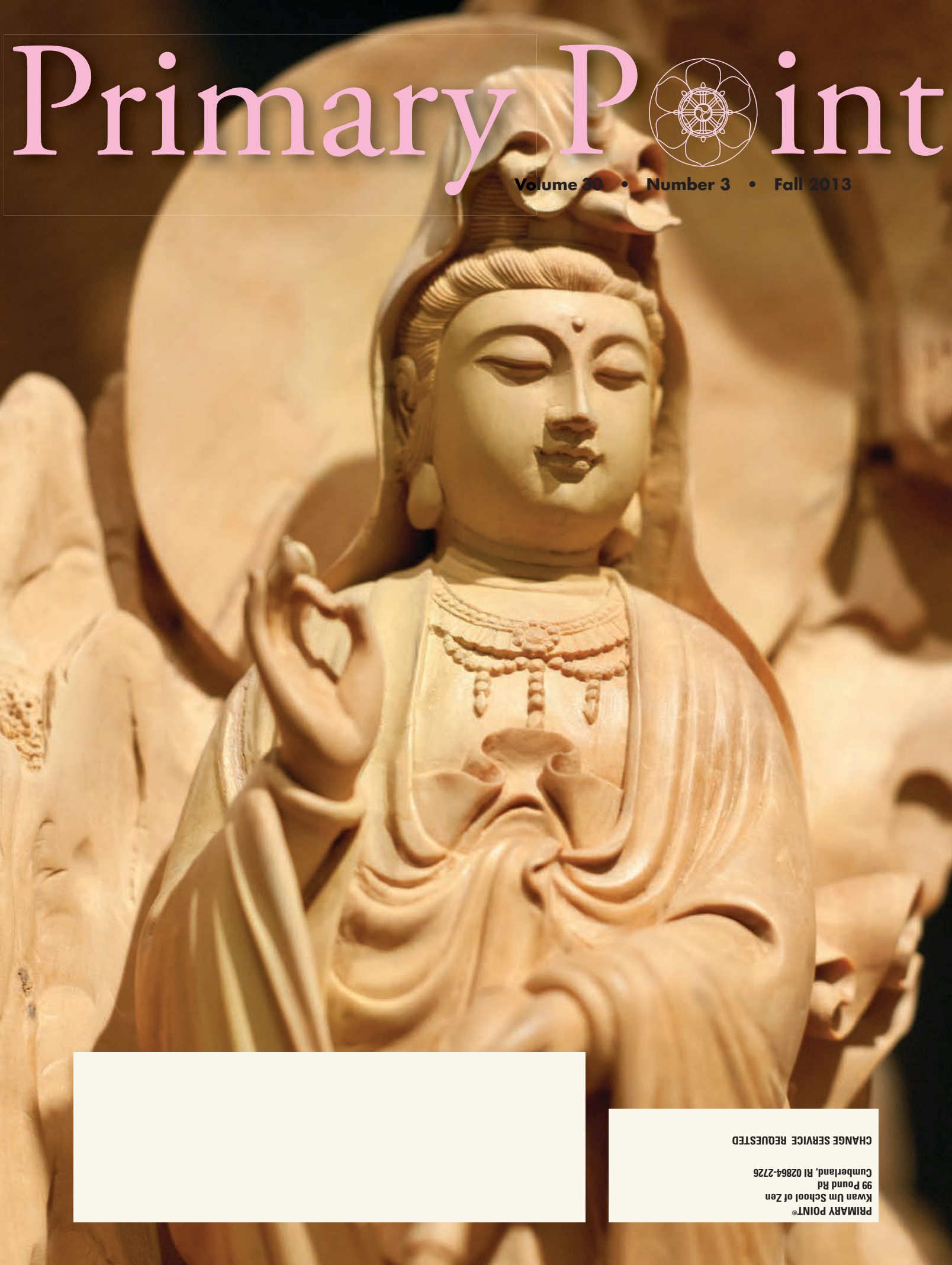


# Primary Point



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# Winter Kyol Che 2013/14

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## 佛 如是 PROVIDENCE ZEN CENTER



**WINTER KYOL CHE 2014 JAN. 4 - APRIL 4 - ZEN MASTER SOENG HYANG, ZEN MASTER BON HAENG, ZEN MASTER BON SHIM, NANCY HEDGPETH JDPSN, BARRY BRIGGS JDPSN.**

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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 2,800 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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Cover: Statue of Kwan Seum Bosal, Seoul, South Korea.  
 Photo by Kateřina Grofová.

## TRANSMISSION CEREMONY FOR

# Zen Master Bon Hae

On April 6, 2013, Judith Roitman received transmission from Zen Master Dae Kwang at Providence Zen Center and became Zen Master Bon Hae.

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Tim Lerch JDPSN:** Hi, Judy.

**Zen Master Bon Hae:** Hi.

**Lerch PSN:** Congratulations.

**ZMBH:** Not yet.

[Laughter and applause.]

**Question:** So, a long time ago, at the Providence Zen Center, maybe 33 years ago, our wonderful Zen Master Seung Sahn was asked a question by one of his first students, whose name then was Bobby. Many teachers at that time were coming from Asia and they were *all* men. Bobby said, “Dae Soen Sa Nim, can a woman become a Zen master?” So here you are, and if not yet, but maybe soon, and you’re a *woman*—

**ZMBH:** I am?

[Laughter.]

**Q:** Well . . . only that?

**ZMBH:** Finished.

**Ken Kessel JDPSN:** I’m looking for an ox.

**ZMBH:** I see one.

[Laughter.]

**Kessel PSN:** Moooooooooooo!

**ZMBH:** That’s a cow.

### DHARMA SPEECH

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

Sosan Taesa said there is only one thing from the very beginning, infinitely bright and mysterious in nature. It cannot be described or given a name.

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

But fundamentally there is no thing, there is no beginning, there is no name, and there is no one to name it.

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

And yet zero equals zero, one equals one, two equals two, each thing is each thing, each name is each name. Which one do you like?

KATZ!

The sun is shining, the Buddha behind me is gold.

So when I was a kid, people told me I was very smart. And I was very stupid because I believed it when they told me that I was smart. So I thought that I was very smart and I thought that I knew everything. I thought that if I didn’t know something then I could figure it out really quickly and, if necessary, maybe actually go learn it from somebody. But I thought everything was in my mental grasp. And then I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. And he said, “Is this a stick?” And he said, “Is this a watch?” And he held up a glass of water and he said, “What is this?”



Photo: Brenton Sheehan



Photo: Brenton Sheehan

And I realized that *yes* was bullshit. And *no* was bullshit. And *stick* was bullshit, and *watch* was bullshit and *glass of water* was bullshit. I realized that I didn't know anything. That everything that I thought I knew was completely, 100 percent worthless.

So that's the beginning of our practice. That mind. Not trying to grasp, not trying to hold, not trying to describe, not trying to name. That mind. Only the great question, "What is this?" Just that. What is this? Not "it's a stick." What is this? I know many people here have passed that kong-an, but just, what is this? And to continue asking this of everything in our lives. So that's the first step.

We earlier heard a reference to See Hoy Liau, who became Mu Deung Sunim, got inka, got transmission, and become Zen Master Su Bong. Back when he was See Hoy Liau, he was kind of a wild man. He'd write these letters, very challenging letters, to Zen Master Seung Sahn. He'd write these very short letters, and one of them was, "What is the fast road to Zen?" Zen Master Seung Sahn replied, "Not for me."

This means our direction. You have to be very careful

because if you say, "oh, the fast road to Zen is 'not for me,'" then people think "oh, I don't have to practice, it's not for me, it's for somebody else." But no, that's not what it means.

Everyone here understands what it means. It means that my life is not lived for me. Why do you eat every day? Why do you sleep? Why do you get up in the morning? Not for me. So that's our direction, that's our great direction. So, first, substance, then direction.

Su Bong Soen Sa Nim, when he was in his early fifties, he was giving an interview to a twelve-year-old girl in Hong Kong, and suddenly he fell down with a massive heart attack and died instantly. Also, many of us knew Myo Ji Sunim, a wonderful, wonderful nun and Ji Do Poep Sa, infinite energy, a real force in this world. And one day, she said goodbye to some friends who had left her temple, went into the kitchen to make some tea, and fell down with a massive cerebral hemorrhage. She lost consciousness instantly. They kept her alive so her family could come and see her and then she died.

Zen Master Seung Sahn lived for many years with diabetes, a heart condition, kidney failure, and eventually these conditions overcame him and eventually, he, too, died.

Sosan Taesa—*taesa* means "great teacher"—Sosan Taesa was one of the greatest teachers in the Korean tradition. The legend goes that he was giving a dharma talk in the temple, and he looked up at a portrait of himself and said, "That's what I used to look like. I don't look like that now." (This is a free translation.) And he died right then.

Zen Master Seung Sahn used to talk about great Taoist masters up in the mountains of what is now North Korea. They would live in these caves and they would have one drop of dew a day, and that's what they would survive on. He said, "They can live five hundred years." And then he would get this big smile: "But then—dead!" [*Laughter.*]

Can we live in a way so that we really attain that nobody guarantees our life? Can we live in a way that, when something has to be done, we completely embrace and absorb that nobody guarantees our life?

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

Where are you going? Watch your step.

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

Water flows down to the sea, clouds float up to the heavens.

Thank you, everyone, for your practice. ♦

## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Koen Vermeulen

March 9, 2013, at the Warsaw Zen Center

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Chon Mun Sunim JDPS:** When I was born, my parents gave me the name “Darek.” When I took Buddhist precepts I received another name. And since I became a monk people call me Chon Mun. How do you call me if you don’t use any name?

**Vermeulen PSN:** I love you!

**Question:** As from today you will be a teacher in our school. I wonder, what is the taste of your dharma?

**Vermeulen PSN:** [*Stands up and takes an apple from the altar.*] Please try!

**Q:** [*Takes a bite.*] Hmm. Good taste! Thank you for your teaching.

**Vermeulen PSN:** You are welcome.

**Zen Master Wu Bong:** Your name is Son Ung, which means First Harmony. But I’m not interested in first harmony. What is last harmony?

**Vermeulen PSN:** You tell me what comes just before last harmony. Then I will tell you what is last harmony.

**ZMWB:** You are very clever.

**Vermeulen PSN:** You are my teacher!

### DHARMA SPEECH

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

Mountain is water and water is mountain.

This is opposites world. Everything is changing, changing, changing, and suffering is everywhere. You and I cannot make it disappear.

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

No water. No mountain.

This is emptiness world. In emptiness, suffering never appeared. How could it disappear from here?

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

Water is water. Mountain is mountain.

This is truth world. At this point everything is clear. And the truth is only like this: suffering is suffering.

Which world is correct?

KATZ!

The mountain is blue. Water is flowing.

So our teaching is clear: there is opposites world, emp-

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Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland

tiness world, truth world and finally function world.

Some years ago, a woman was enjoying a holiday at the beach with her two little children: a nice little girl of three and a boy of five. They had a great time together. That very same day the tsunami hit the coast. At first the mother could hold both of her children. But she was not strong enough. She had to let go one child if she wanted to save at least one of them. She thought that the boy had maybe a little better chance of surviving on his own, so she let go of him, knowing that he actually didn't have any chance at all of surviving. Saving her girl meant killing her little boy. Saving the boy meant killing the little girl. This choice is so cruel: there is simply no solution.

The sun and the moon don't have to make this kind of choice. The sky doesn't have to make this kind of choice. This is our human condition: I think, so therefore I make opposites like life and death. Therefore I suffer. But if there is no I and no self-centered thinking, do you also have opposites and suffering? Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "All questions come back to one point: What am I? Don't know!"

I remember the first time I became interested in this question.

In my mid-twenties I had a hard time. Life was one big struggle. I couldn't sleep at night and I had a lot of doubts about myself. This went on for two years and I was completely exhausted. One evening, I went out for a walk in the fields and I realized I was about to break down. But then, in the midst of all that, I perceived something deep, deep inside. Something where suffering cannot go.

Something that cannot break down. Something that cannot be killed.

If you attain this point completely, then you transcend the world of suffering and you attain peace. However, even if *you* attain peace, this world is still suffering. So, you cannot stop there.

I am very grateful that I could pursue my Zen training under Zen Master Wu Bong and Zen Master Bon Yo as my guiding teachers. Zen Master Bon Shim's teaching was also essential. I found a few points in our teaching tradition that are very useful for my life. I already mentioned don't know. Then there is also try mind and direction. I have a story about that.

A few years ago, an elderly woman came to our Zen center. I told her that our practice is based on don't-know mind. "Oh, I see what you mean. A few years before my husband died, he became sick. He couldn't communicate anymore. So, I had to find another way to communicate. So, I always had to keep don't-know mind to understand his needs." Then she told me a story about how she used don't-know mind in her life. She was standing in the line in a supermarket. There was a man standing behind her with a very big mouth. He was talking loudly about his life as a mercenary in Africa: very vulgar and racist talk. It was clear that he was ready to attack anybody who would go against him. Just like our cigarette man, whatever you would say, he would hit you. People were shocked, and there was a real tension in the air, but nobody dared to say something. Our elderly woman also didn't know what to do, but suddenly, without thinking, she turned around

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Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen–Poland

and said: “If you want, you can go before me in the line.” This really hit the mind of this man. He got a red face and stammered, “No, no. Thank you. I’m sorry.”

If you clearly perceive the current situation of our world, there is no time to waste. You have a job to do: help this world. One point must be fully clear though. Where will you do it?

*[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with*

*the stick.]*

If you say you will do it in the suffering world, emptiness world or truth world, this stick will hit you 30 times.

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

If you say you will do it in neither of these worlds, this stick will also hit you 30 times.

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

If you say you will do it in all of these worlds, this stick will hit you 90 times.

So, where is the correct place to help?

KATZ!

Thank you for coming to this ceremony and listening. ♦

---

Koen Vermeulen began practicing in the Kwan Um School of Zen in 1992. He participated in a seven-week retreat in 1995 and a three-month Kyol Che in 1998. Koen lives with his wife and two sons below the Brussels Zen Center. In his free time he loves to play piano.

In his current job as Secretary General of the Belgian Buddhist Union he is actively involved in the recognition of Buddhism in Belgium, in prison work and in the development of training programs such as Buddhist philosophy and counseling in the health sector.

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## INKA CEREMONY FOR

*Igor Piniński*

March 9, 2013, at Warsaw Zen Center

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Piotrowski PSN:** I’m very happy to see you at this place.

**Piniński PSN:** I’m also very happy too see you, Poep Sa Nim.

**Piotrowski PSN:** I have a question for you. I think it may be close to your heart. I know that professionally you’re an actor . . .

**Piniński PSN:** It’s not true.

**Piotrowski PSN:** OK, but the rumor was that you’re an actor. I know that you have studied acting and it happens that in Zen we often say that Zen means being a good actor. You have been studying acting for so many years,

what does it mean to be a good actor?

**Piniński PSN:** What are you doing now?

**Piotrowski PSN:** Sitting and talking with you.

**Piniński PSN:** Very good actor!

**Piotrowski PSN:** But what about you?

**Piniński PSN:** Not enough?

**Piotrowski PSN:** No.

**Piniński PSN:** A dog chases a bone.

**Piotrowski PSN:** *[After a moment of hesitation . . .]* OK.

**Schaefer PSN:** Dzień dobry! [*“Good day” in Polish.*]

**Piniński PSN:** Guten Tag! [*“Good day” in German.*]

**Schaefer PSN:** So, Igor, it looks like you are getting something today and I’m losing something. You are becoming a Poep Sa Nim, and for the last three years I had the title of “baby Poep Sa Nim.” The youngest Poep Sa Nim. That’s what’s going to be your title now. And I will enter a very difficult stage now, called puberty. So I wonder, you are becoming a beautiful, just born, new Poep Sa Nim and you probably need no guidance anymore. How would you help me with my puberty?





Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland

**Piniński PSN:** You already understand.  
**Schaefer PSN:** Yeah, that's why I ask you.  
**Piniński PSN:** Please, teach me.  
**Schaefer PSN:** Oh, please, teach me!  
**Piniński PSN:** I already did.

**Question:** So Igor, I'm Jewish and they say that Jews like to bargain. So here I have some money. [*Hits the floor.*] Let's bargain. How much would it cost to have your dharma?

[*Piniński PSN hits the floor.*]

**Q:** Only that?

**Piniński PSN:** Not enough?

**Q:** No.

**Piniński PSN:** A dog is chasing a bone.

**Q:** But I said I want to bargain!

**Piniński PSN:** The bargain is over.

### DHARMA SPEECH

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

This hit means that the teacher is a student and the student is a teacher.

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

This hit means there is no teacher, there is no student.

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

This hit means the teacher is the teacher, the student is the student.

Which of these statements would you like to follow in your practice?

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Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland

KATZ!

Today is Saturday, the inka ceremony. I thank all my teachers for their teaching.

Because two new teachers appeared at our school today I thought it's a good occasion to take a closer look at what appeared, what is a teacher and what is a student.

We were all brought up in the world, which is full of names and forms. In our school we also have a lot of names and forms. Today me and Koen received titles: Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. A new name. We also received beautiful kasa, sticks. Different kinds of forms. But if we become attached to these names and forms or if any one of you becomes attached to these names and forms it will be very bad. The teacher's work will not be possible.

So what is a teacher? What is a student?

A while ago we had a dharma combat here. Everybody could come up and ask his or her questions. Candidates answered these questions. In this situation, who was the teacher and who was the student? At the end everybody said "thank you for your teaching." That would imply that the candidates were teachers. But everybody who came tested the candidates, they gave it a try, and the Zen Masters noted down their remarks, which would imply that the candidates were students. So this is that relative world, where everything changes constantly. The teacher

is a student and the student is a teacher. In fact, a teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen does the teacher's work in the short intervals of time. All of his or her time a Zen teacher is a student. And if he's a good Zen teacher, he's a beginner-level student. We keep coming back to the beginning. Everybody in the dharma hall does that. Everybody tries to accomplish this in their lives. When we sit in the dharma hall, everybody—Zen masters, Ji Do Poep Sas, senior dharma teachers, dharma teachers, people with five precepts, people who have come here for the first time—everybody does the same thing. We all try to perceive this moment. We all try to perceive this primary point. [*Claps his hands.*] This very point. Just now. In this point there is no teacher, no student. Everything is one. Everything is complete. The whole universe is made up of this point. The whole universe is made up of this moment. This moment is the only substance you can find in this universe. That's why from this point [*claps his hands*] comes the world of truth. The teacher is the teacher, the student is the student. This looks like returning to the world of name and form. But the essence is this primary point from which this world of truth emerges. If we truly perceive clearly [*claps his hands*] this moment then we can correctly perform our functions as a teacher or as a student.

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Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland

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

Can you see it?

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

Can you hear it?

If you say you understand this teaching this stick will hit you thirty times.

If you say you don't understand this teaching this stick will also hit you thirty times.

If you say you understand and don't understand then this stick will hit you sixty times.

So what did you understand?

One mouth finishes talking, many ears continue listening. Thank you. ♦

---

Igor Piniński JDPSN graduated in acting from a famous film school in Łódź, Poland. Right now he is working in his own film studio in Łódź, focusing on educational films. He lives with his wife in the countryside near Łódź.

He has been the abbot of the Łódź Zen Center for last 14 years and is a member of the Polish Zen Kwan Um Sangha Council. He started practicing in Łódź Zen Center in 1995 and has participated in more than 120 Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreats in Łódź led by Kwan



*Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen—Poland*

Um School of Zen teachers. He also participates every year in the Kyol Che in Falenica.

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## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Barry Briggs

*April 7, 2013 at the Providence Zen Center*

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Question:** Yesterday, you told me about your blog, Ox Herding. You said you're going to put it to rest, probably. So I ask you: if you're not herding the ox, where will it go?

**Briggs PSN:** Please return to your seat.

**Q:** Thank you very much.

*[Questioner turns and crawls back to his seat on hands and knees, mooing, accompanied by laughter from the audience.]*

**Lerch PSN:** You know, you're doing really well, your teaching is—

**Briggs PSN:** I was.

*[Laughter.]*

**Lerch PSN:** Your teaching is very clear and gentle, but I've got to tell you, man, I was hoping for some action.

**Briggs PSN:** You were?

**Lerch PSN:** Yeah. So what's the correct action?

**Briggs PSN:** I love you, Tim. *[Hugs him, and the audience laughs.]*



*Photo: Brenton Sheehan*

**Lerch PSN:** I love you, too, Barry.  
[Applause.]

**Zen Master Bon Hae:** Hi, Barry.

**Briggs PSN:** Hi, Zen Master.

**ZMBH:** So, what do you think you're doing?

**Briggs PSN:** I'm just sitting here with you right now.  
Why is thinking involved?

**ZMBH:** Oh, not bad. Good!

## DHARMA SPEECH

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

Yes means no and no means yes.

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

No yes and no no.

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

Yes means yes and no means no.

Which of these statements is correct?

KATZ!

Outside, pale sun. Inside, bright faces.

A long time ago in China, Zen Master Un Mun went into town one day with one of his monks. As they walked down the street, Un Mun looked ahead and saw a shop with a sign that read DRAGON'S TREASURE CHEST.

On seeing the sign, Un Mun turned to the monk and asked, "What kind of treasure comes from a dragon's treasure chest?"

The monk couldn't answer, so Un Mun said, "A flattened toad!" The monk still didn't say anything, so Un Mun spoke again: "A fart!" When the monk still didn't

reply, Un Mun tried one more time and said: "Steamed buns!"

We can imagine the two of them walking down the street and coming across a flattened toad on the road; then Un Mun cuts a fart, as people do; and then they pass a bakery display of steamed buns.

We can also imagine the monk's mind. Anyone who has done kong-an interviews can imagine the confusion, embarrassment and resistance in the monk's mind as he walked down the street with his teacher.

Perhaps we can also imagine Un Mun's incredible kindness and generosity as he repeatedly tried to bring the monk to the reality and aliveness of the moment as the two of them walked down the street.

That's our job as human beings: to bring others and, of course, ourselves, into reality, even when reality is a dried toad, or a smell, or a meal. That's what I wanted to talk about today. How do we come into reality in each moment?

Some years ago, I studied aikido, the Japanese martial art. I was a spectacularly poor aikido student, ungainly and awkward and resistant. That's probably why I remained a white belt. But I did have a certain kind of dedication and persisted in trying to learn the forms.

One time, during a weekend workshop, I was partnered with a black-belt practitioner who I had never met. He was an imposing, nearly immovable man who had clearly trained for many years, and I was quite nervous about working with him. I couldn't move him—I was like a stone bouncing off a wall.

In one exercise, I was the attacker and he was the defender. Of course, I was my usual inept self and couldn't really execute the attack properly, and both of us were frustrated after my first few attempts. Then he grabbed my arm and pulled me right up against his chest and whispered in my ear, "Come closer. When you're close to me, I can't hurt you."

This man was almost certainly referring only to the aikido exercise, but of course his words have a resonance that goes beyond the martial arts studio. And I understood them in that larger sense.

I took the words home with me and really tried to examine what they meant in the context of my own life. And the truth is, beyond thinking, I couldn't really bring this teaching alive at

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Photo: Brenton Sheehan

that time.

There might be good reasons for this, of course. This teaching about *coming closer* is deeply counterintuitive, in part because we have genetic heritage that causes us to move away from things we view as unsafe. It's a useful impulse at those moments when we encounter a Siberian tiger.

But most of us don't regularly meet tigers—we only encounter our partners, friends, coworkers and ordinary strangers. And in these situations, *pulling away* doesn't usually produce good outcomes.

In our teaching tradition, of course, we have a wonderful tool for working with our tendency to move away—really it's the only thing we have to offer—which is don't know. And it's through the practice of don't know that we can discover a genuine way to be safe in the world. Don't know brings us closer to whatever the world presents, moment to moment.

Often, we respond to life's demands by saying to ourselves, "I don't know what this is and I don't like it," or we say, "I know what this is, I've been here before, and I don't like it." And we move away.

And so separation appears, and with separation comes a tremendous loss of safety and intimacy. We pull back from the great love that we so much need.

We chant about Great Love in our chants every day: it's the *dae ja in dae ja, dae bi*. Traditionally in Buddhism we say that Great Love is the vow to help all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness. That's what we commit to when we begin our practice, and every day, when we chant, we renew the vow to manifest Great Love.

About eighteen months ago, during the height of the Occupy Movement, I saw an online interview with a young economist associated with Occupy Wall Street. During the interview, the economist said:

*Economics means: the more for you, the less for me.*

*But love means: the more for you, the more for me.*

When I saw this interview, it hit my mind very strongly. And it caused me to look again at how I live my life and how I relate to other people in this world. And I discovered, once again, that I didn't live, day to day, as if the more love you got, the more love I got; the more contentment you had, the more I had.

And once I began to get a sense of my failure to manifest love, I became really uncomfortable. I couldn't live that way any longer.

So I developed a little exercise. I said to myself: Start saying yes.

Start saying yes to the world. Now, this was not the yes of acquiescence; rather, it was the yes of acceptance. So when someone would ask me to give or do something, I would try to find a way to respond with a yes, even though, to be honest, yes was often not my first response. And sometimes, even when I did say yes, I often didn't feel it inside.

As I worked with this practice, I noticed something. People got really happy when I said yes. Others got what they wanted and that made me happy. Oddly enough, that's how the world works. That's what Un Mun was trying to help his monk understand: that the whole world is right here and present with us if we can just say yes—even to a flattened toad.

So that was an incredible teaching for me, and over time it became almost second-nature to say yes to all kinds of situations—until one day last year when my guiding teacher and dear friend, Tim Lerch JDPSN asked me to consider receiving inka.

And then I said, without hesitation, no.

Of course, I offered Tim a really good reason why I could not accept inka. And Tim, in his own exercise of Great Love, gently set aside my reason. I didn't like that, so I offered another *no* and another reason, which Tim also set aside, and this continued for a bit until I agreed just to sit with his request.

I did sit with this possibility for several days and still couldn't get to yes. Then one day a friend of mine asked, "Why does your teacher want you to receive inka?"

And that simple question cut right through my defenses. In a moment, I realized that inka had nothing to do with me. Tim wasn't asking for me to receive inka. Instead, he was asking for the sangha to receive inka through me. Inka was about you, the sangha, and of course I could say yes to the sangha. I could immediately say yes to the sangha. So I picked up the phone, called Tim, and said yes.

That's our work as human beings: to find ways to say yes to life, as it arises moment to moment. Sometimes a *yes* can present itself as *no*, and that also can be a manifestation of Great Love. But however it manifests, each of us has to find and offer that kind of Great Love. Everything depends upon it.

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

Dionne Warwick sang, "What the world needs now, is love sweet love. It's the only thing that there's just too little of."

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

And the Beatles sang, "All you need is love. All you need is love. All you need is love, love. Love is all you need. Love is all you need. Love is all you need."

Where can we find the love we need?

KATZ!

Yes. Yes. Yes. ♦

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Barry Briggs JDPSN began training in the Kwan Um School of Zen in 1990 and took bodhisattva teacher precepts in 2001. In 2005 he retired from a career as a senior manager in the software and Internet industries. He received inka from Zen Master Soeng Hyang in 2013. He travels widely to lead retreats around the world.

# Perspectives on the Paramitas: Finding the Other Shore Right Here

**Editor's Note:** This issue is dedicated to the practice of the paramitas. At their foundation, the paramitas are all an expression of our fundamental nature, which we can't know, and has no essential shape, quality or name. A good jewel can be described by its hue, luster, color, brightness and so forth. Some of us see one of these qualities more readily, some others, but before we see that, we only behold the jewel. Without the jewel, it is meaningless to speak of its qualities. Likewise, each of us already contains all of the paramitas. One aspect may glow more brightly for one person, and a different aspect for another. It is the same as one face having more prominent cheekbones and another more prominent eyes. These qualities also do not exist outside the person. So to practice the paramitas is not to practice at all. They are each contained in the other. True generosity also embodies wisdom. True samadhi also embodies patience, and so forth. To trust our own nature is already to practice the paramitas. If one aspect comes more naturally, let that shine forth. It is the voice of your own true self. So they can't really be practiced. But if you suffer, please take heed of them, and take refuge in them. You may find something of value there. And if you want to practice something, practice seeing them in the person next to you.

We asked the European teachers group to offer their views, and they generously responded with the following essays. We offer them to you, in support of the dharma.

## 1. Generosity

Arne Schaefer JDPSN

*The Chinese Emperor Wu from Liang asked Bodhidharma: "The Buddha has taught that one will go to heaven if one donates robes and bowls to a monk. But I gave countless monks food and clothing. I have paid many times for copies of the sutras. Also I have founded many, many temples. Tell me sir, how much merit have I earned?"*

*Bodhidharma answered: "None."*

This is a very famous story in the Zen tradition, talking about generosity. It shows the ordinary understanding of what we think that generosity is: giving money for a charity or at least giving something of material value to somebody in need. This is not wrong, but it is a very limited aspect of generosity.

First, generosity is not limited to money or material goods. You can be generous with anything you have and that you can give. As Shantideva taught, nothing is of any use unless it is for the wellbeing of others.

If we want to practice generosity, then we make sure that those around us have everything they need to live and work. So we give material things, give compassion, give wisdom. If we want to be happy, we should refuse to tolerate suffering, injustice and inequality. We should take personal responsibility to create change. And we should learn how to eliminate anger and violence in our life and in our thoughts. If we want to have harmony we

should learn to share resources and especially we should learn to share power, since trying to control others will fail anyway. So we can be generous with the time we spend with someone who is lonely or in need of someone to care about him. We can be compassionate when we feel with someone who is suffering. It can be the ear we open for someone's request. It can be our thoughts, thinking about how to help others. It can be the hands, feet, body and mind we are willing to offer for somebody's welfare.

To sum this up, there are four kinds of giving:

Giving material things

Giving protection or freedom from fear

Giving love and compassion

Giving wisdom or teaching

Second—and this is what makes the teaching of that story about the Chinese Emperor so much more precious—if you are giving because you want to get something in return, then it is not really giving anymore. It becomes wanting, and thus exactly the opposite of generosity.

For example, I work as a life coach, and I have some clients that have a Buddhist background and that want to apply Buddhist ethics to their work or businesses. Most of these clients are familiar with the concept of karma, which is basically saying that every effect has a cause. So for "getting" something (effect) you have to create the right conditions (causes) first, and this will make it more possible that your wish might come true. For instance, it is said that if you want to experience prosperity you have to give

first. Or to look at it the other way: people that experience material welfare must have planted the appropriate conditions before in this or another lifetime. That understanding of karma is very basic and does not take into account the complexity of how karma truly functions, but let's keep it so simple to get the point of cause and effect. One big problem is: even when you plant a seed you do not know when it will ripen and grow. If we would experience all karmic results right away—for instance for stepping on an insect and killing it with intention, so that in reaction we would feel our chest crushing right away—then this lesson would be easily understood. But it can take this lifetime or even more until a karmic seed ripens. Since we often do not experience results right away, it can become something like a point of faith whether karma works or not. We can only investigate this thoroughly and examine our experiences.

I had clients that really wanted to be good Buddhist businesspeople and who were very generous to their employees and customers, hoping their generous actions would benefit them and their company. But if there were not such great results or even when something went differently than expected, they got annoyed, as if somebody had betrayed them. Then they did not want to believe in cause and effect anymore. This means they should look closer at the intentions behind their actions and the seeds—the causes—planted by those actions. This thinking is like wanting to make a deal with the universe: I pay and you pay me back ten times, OK? This is what the Chinese emperor had in mind too: I have supported so many monks. Where will your place be when you get to heaven if you have only supported one monk? So he needed some strong medicine because he was not acting truly out of generosity, but rather out of greed. So that is why Bodhidharma hit him by saying: “None!”

*Bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings,  
But do not see any sentient beings.  
This is indeed a very difficult point,  
Superb and ungraspable.<sup>1</sup>*

So what makes generosity “true generosity”?

The Brahmaviśeṣacintipariṇchāsutra declares: “Not reflecting is generosity.”<sup>2</sup> That means to act spontaneously for the benefit of all beings without thinking or meditating about it. If we are in a state of mind where we are not attached to anything, our true nature can appear



and express itself in so-called virtuous actions as the six paramitas. Our true nature shows naturally when we are not caught in dualism and we are not making any difference between “me” and “others” or between favorable or unfavorable conditions. In our tradition we call this correct situation, relationship and function. That means also that there is no such thing as the three spheres of the giver, the recipient and the act of giving, as it is taught in Buddhist scriptures explaining the action and function of generosity.

If we act like this spontaneously and without thinking then this is what is called “perfection of wisdom” or “perfection of insight”—that is, Prajnaparamita.

So we have to try, try, try for ten thousand years to just do it and stop checking for any personal results.

## 2. Ethics: In Order to Help

*Ja An JDPSN (Bogumila Malinowska)*

The sila (ethics) paramita is not separate from the other paramitas; in fact, all paramitas support each other.

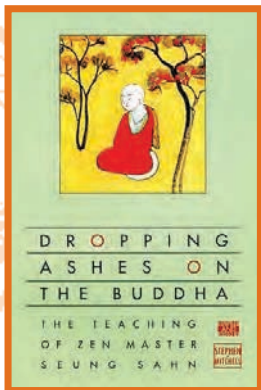
In Buddhist practice we often hear about a Middle Way, staying between extremes. This goes back to the story of the historical Buddha. In his pursuit of enlightenment, the young Prince Siddhartha gave up a life of pleasure and took up a life of extreme asceticism. He fasted nearly to the point of death. Eventually he realized that his correct path actually was between these extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial.

This example shows us that we should take care not to become too rigidly attached to precepts. Attachment to rules can obscure the larger purpose of morality, which is benevolent care for others. Focusing only on the rules can hinder rather than help. We see how this hindrance is a danger in our modern life. It is very clear it can become a cause of many conflicts in the family, in communities and among countries. Blind attachment to the rules can ruin the whole world.

Buddhism—and Zen particularly—encourages us to respond with compassion to the suffering in front of us. And sometimes, that requires breaking rules. Buddhism teaches that our actions should be guided by wisdom and compassion, with no trace of selfishness, not even the urge to do good to “feel good about myself.” For example, this selfishness might mean you want to help others in order to feel holy, perfect or clear.

The sila paramita is about ethical behavior, morality, self-discipline, personal integrity and harmlessness. The bone of this paramita is that through our love and compassion we do not harm others; we are virtuous and harmless in our thoughts, speech and actions. This practice of

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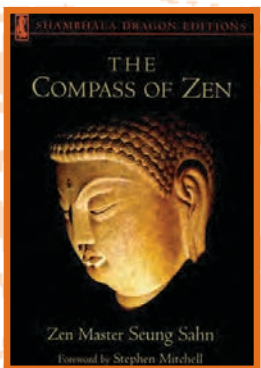
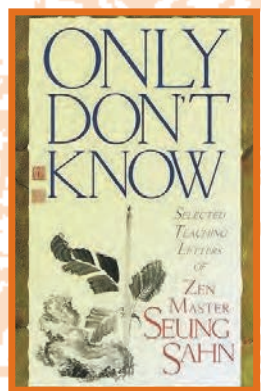
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ethical conduct is the very foundation for progressing in any practice of meditation and for attaining all higher realizations on the path. We should perfect our conduct by eliminating harmful behavior and following the bodhisattva precepts. We abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants, divisive speech, harsh speech, greed, malice and wrong views. Following these precepts or guidelines is not meant to be a burden or a restriction on our freedom. We follow these precepts so we can enjoy freedom, happiness and security in our lives, because through our ethical behavior we are no longer creating suffering for ourselves and others.

At some stage we realize that unethical behavior always causes suffering and unhappiness. Practicing the perfection of ethics, we are free of negativity, we cause no harm to others by our actions, our speech is kind and compassionate and our thoughts are free of anger and wrong views. When we are strongly committed to the practice of ethics we are at ease, naturally confident, without stress and happy because we are not carrying any underlying sense of guilt or remorse for our actions; we have nothing to hide, we can be *ourselves*.

Self-honesty is very important. What we think can make us happy can also make us miserable. If our direction is to help and our mind is clear—before thinking—then we don't need to worry about precepts. "Good" and "bad" are created by mind; if our mind is extinguished, then our karma is extinguished—it works both ways. So we try to keep our correct direction: Why am I doing something? If I am not sure, then precepts give us an obvious answer.

Some of our actions are not visible to others, and the results will only appear in the future, but inside we know already what we are doing. Our true self—our intuition—is guiding us. If we are aware of this guide—in touch with it, hearing it—then there should be no problem deciding what to do. There should be no problem in quickly understanding the situation, choosing the correct action, keeping the correct action from moment to moment.

In Zen stories we have many examples about keeping and breaking precepts, and we know that the most important is to keep a correct direction and then to choose the correct action. We see this again and again in the familiar stories about the greedy monk; the rabbit and the hunter; the Zen teacher who admitted his affair with a girl from a village, took responsibility for her baby for one year, and was shunned by his village; and another teacher who decided to have an intimate relationship with a very ill woman to give her great feelings of love and acceptance. We see that sometimes the effect of "wrong" action may

not be understood by other people for a long period. It may look like we did something terribly wrong, society may reject us and exclude us, we may even face death. In that time great faith, strong center and not-moving mind is necessary.

These stories teach us to be flexible, open-minded, honest, careful and quick. In everyday life we do not usually have time to think through our decisions—we need a very clear and sharp mind. Sometimes our actions will be in opposition to common beliefs and traditions. We have to be brave. Sometimes the price of keeping clear, of keeping the sila paramita, is to give up our money, position, fame, health, love and even our life. We take this risk and accept the loss in order to help. So we are actually not losers at all.

Correct direction is not something we are born with. Some of us have less, some have more. But we can develop this ability and make it strong. When we hear about direction we understand: "Yes, this is good, this makes sense," but it takes time to find direction and to make it work. It involves hard training. So we need tools to develop clear direction in order to *skillfully* use ethics and all the other paramitas for others. These tools are great question, great courage and great faith, which we learn step-by-step; but that is a topic for another essay.

Buddha said:

*All happiness comes from desire  
for others to be happy.  
All misery comes from the desire  
for oneself to be happy.*

### 3. Patience

*Zen Master Ji Kwang*

Does the path of cultivating certain virtues (Sanskrit: *pāramitāyāna*) lead indeed to perfection and attainment? Does this Buddhist path differ from our practice of Zen? Or is it the same or part of it?

If you say it differs, I will hit you. If you say it is the same or part of it, I will also hit you. If you say nothing, I also hit you.

Then what is the meaning of cultivating virtues for us Zen students?

I will here focus on the third of the Mahayana paramitas, which is called ksanti paramita, the perfection of patience or forbearance or tolerance.

When I came to Korea in 1993 to live and work, I was so happy that I had found a place where I could live with my Korean wife, work as a cultural scientist and, most of all, that I could practice Zen with our Korean sangha and be close to Zen Master Seung Sahn, who at that time mostly stayed and taught in Korea. Soon I became a regu-

lar visitor at our Hwa Gye Sa Temple in Seoul, and met and listened to Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma teachings.

However, I soon discovered that many foreign Zen monks and nuns, including some of my dear dharma friends from Europe, wouldn't stay long in Korea, and that many of them disrobed and left the school. One time I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "It looks like this traditional environment here in Korea makes it very difficult for our Western Zen students. How can we help them to stay and practice here?" Then he answered me in a strange way: "The first rows in Napoleon's army used to be only drummers. They walked on the battlefield right in front of all the other soldiers, and so they were among the first to fall."

I am sure that Zen Master Seung Sahn was sorry for all those Western monks and nuns in Korea who endured difficulties and hardships, and he tried to help them. But he knew that Korean Buddhism would not change in a short time, and that all those who really wanted to practice with him in Korea needed to accept this.

This ability to accept is what the Buddhist scriptures call *ksanti paramita*, or patience. It has several dimensions: first, the ability to endure personal hardships, at least temporarily; second, patience with others; and third, accepting whatever appears and what cannot be changed right away. In short, the *ksanti paramita's* meaning is: "No problem!"

In order to do this, we must get clear. Which means that we must first accept and believe in ourselves. Then we can develop trust. If we are clear, the situations we face and our relationships become clear. We experience truth and can accept whatever appears, just as it is. No doubts. No battle. No despair. Only then can we do what is necessary and help this world.

This is Zen. And this is the practice of cultivating the virtues of perfection.

Today we have a wonderful and growing sangha with monks and nuns and laypeople from East and West in our temples in Korea. Thank you to our teachers. And congratulations to all of you who have struggled hard and have finally attained the *ksanti paramita*: no problem!

#### **4. Effort: My Father Walking to the Other Shore**

*Koen Vermeulen JDPSN*

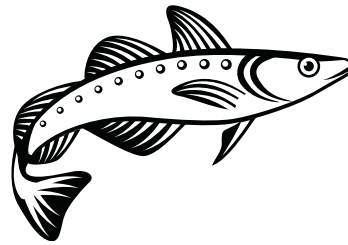
When I started meditation I was very determined. So, when I was sitting in meditation I was giving all I had. After some time I noticed that there was something not in balance. So I started to check: "Maybe I'm putting in too

much effort. Maybe I should fine-tune my effort." We call that checking mind. That's a big mistake. But how can we avoid this checking mind?

Once, my father told me a story. When he was a kid he lived on the coast of Belgium. Of course the sea is very dangerous for children. There he learned a very effective way to avoid any risk: just don't swim! And indeed, he never got in danger. Later, he fell in love with my mother and they decided to go to the Italian coast. So they spent a good time at the beach. And the sea was so inviting, the water was so calm. So he used a big inner tube and went into the sea.

He closed his eyes and started to doze off. He was in heaven. After a while he opened his eyes and noticed that the beach was very far away. He started to swim back to the beach, but there was a strong current. No matter how much he tried he only got farther and farther away from land.

Now heaven was far away. He got really worried and started to wave his arms and shout for help. After a while somebody swam out to meet him. This man tried to pull



my father back to the beach, but it just wasn't possible. Now both of them started waving their arms: "Hey! Help us!" Soon they saw another man approaching very fast. Right away, he said, "Don't worry, I'm

into competitive swimming. I will get you back." But no matter how hard he tried, the current was too strong. So he said, "You are too heavy. I will swim back to the beach and get help." But after some time he was back, completely exhausted. Luckily my father had this very big inner tube to help these two men, so that they could rest a bit. Again, the three of them started to shout for help. This time, it was the lifeguard who jumped in the water. When he arrived, he said, "Guys, you are swimming in the wrong direction! Just follow me." They swam about ten meters to the right, and then—big surprise—they could stand on their feet! The current had made a sandbar, so they could simply walk back to the beach.

Our mind is always making something, and then we enter the ocean of suffering. So we want to go back to the shore. And if we see somebody who is about to drown, naturally we want to help. We all have this direction. Everybody in this story has a clear direction and understands his job. Sometimes, just relax. Sometimes, ask for help. Sometimes, help others. From moment to moment, just do it. That is

correct practice. That is correct effort. We call it try-mind.

In this story, everybody has this try-mind. Everybody trains in the paramita of effort, and also generosity, ethics or precepts, perseverance and unmoving mind or meditation. This does not happen by accident. We all have something precious in our heart: How can I help you? This is what drives us on this path.

However, even if our direction is OK, we still have a problem. We make “I,” and as a result we perceive the ocean as suffering. Within this I-view, we cannot see clearly and we think that the other shore is far away. Then it is impossible to see that the way out of suffering is nearby. No matter how much effort we put forth, we cannot reach the other shore. The paramitas, which are an expression of our true self, are blinded by our ignorance, by our small “I.” Only when our wisdom sword cuts through the wall of *I-my-me*, then the sandbank appears clearly.

This “I” is created by our thinking. So, only cut off your thinking and return to *before thinking*. Then you can see clearly and walk the bodhisattva path on the sandbar, transcending the ocean of suffering. This is called the perfection of the six paramitas.

## 5. Meditation

Igor Piniński JDPSN

*Zen* means meditation. *Dhyana* also means meditation. So practicing the dhyana paramita means perfecting our Zen practice. How can we perfect our Zen practice, how can we perfect our meditation?

When the eighth patriarch, Ma Tsu, was a young monk, he tried to perfect his meditation by sitting Zen for many hours every day. His posture was straight, his body never moved. One day, his teacher, Huai Jang, who was the seventh patriarch, asked him:

“Why are you sitting Zen for so long every day?”

“To become a Buddha,” answered Ma Tsu.

Hearing this Huai Jang sat in front of him and started to polish a roof tile.

“What are you doing, Master?” asked Ma Tsu after a while.

“Making a mirror,” answered Huai Jang.

“How can you make a mirror out of a roof tile? That’s impossible.”

“It’s the same with you. How can you become a Buddha by sitting Zen?”

That was a perfect hit. Ma Tsu’s mind stopped. He bowed and asked, “Please, show me my mistake, Master.”

“If you want a horse to pull a cart, do you whip the cart?”

Hearing this Ma Tsu attained enlightenment and became a Buddha.

In Lodz Zen Center I often hear from my co-practitioners about their meditation frustrations. “My mind is almost never still and I’m trying so hard. What’s wrong?” “I feel this mantra stopped working for me. Should I try a new one?” “How can I make my meditation better?” “Maybe I’m not really meditating at all. Maybe I’m only wasting my time on a cushion.” Most of our teachers’ answer for such questions is “Don’t check. Just do it.” So how can we practice the dhyana paramita? How can we perfect our meditation without checking?

For me it is putting down the concept of perfecting at all and starting every day from the very beginning. If I start every day from the very beginning then I have no chance to perfect my meditation. I’m in the same situation as a newcomer who just received an orientation talk, only my legs feel better. I don’t know how to meditate, I have no meditation skills. There is only one thing I have: it’s a decision. The decision to meditate, the decision to put everything down, the decision to return to this very moment with a wordless question. It’s only because of this decision that I can meditate. I never perceive a moment when my mind catches something and starts to move. I can only perceive a moment when it stops. It’s like finding myself on a crossroads. Should I continue to follow this thought? Should I continue to nourish this feeling? Well, I could, and sometimes it would be very nice to, sometimes it feels so important to, but there is a decision. So I let go, so I put down whatever my mind is holding at the moment and for a short while I’m a newborn baby buddha. *Dooooon’t know.*

Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say: “One more step is necessary.” How can I make one more step from don’t know? How can I go deeper into the primary point? How can I make my great question greater? How can this baby buddha grow? How can I perfect my meditation? Oh! I’m on a crossroads again! Should I continue this very tempting thinking about meditation practice? Maybe I will discover something important? Well, I could, but there is a decision, so I’m putting it down and finding myself again at the very beginning of my meditation practice. Can’t make it bigger. Can’t make it better. One more step is necessary? Yes, but it’s a step back to the starting point. The same step again and again. I’m not whipping a cart, I’m not whipping a horse. The whip falls down on the ground, the horse can go free, the cart stays still. There’s nowhere to go. Oh! I’m on a crossroads again! Decision. Don’t know. Crossroads. Decision. Don’t know. Forever.

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Photo by Sven Mahr

## 6. Wisdom

*Muchak JDPSN (Nambhee Chon)*

What is wisdom? Is wisdom something that we can attain? Or is it our inherent original nature that we only need to return to?

Zen Master Lin Chi says if you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha. With his dramatic statement he is urging us not to create something in our mind, not even “not Buddha,” and not to become a slave of our thinking. It is the same with wisdom. Once we have an idea of the perfection of wisdom (prajna paramita), we strive to attain it using every possible means. Are we aware where this idea of perfection of wisdom comes from? Where can we look for this wisdom? If it is outside of us, where is it? If it is inside of us, where is it to be found? There is nothing either outside or inside of us that we call wisdom. Yet it appears spontaneously as an answer to a question, situation or problem. So it seems not to be something static, but rather a dynamic response to a concrete situation. What can we do in order that this dynamic response can appear unhindered?

As soon as we think of perfection, the idea of no perfection appears in our mind. Yet we cannot even say definitely what perfection is. We only can declare what is no perfection. So what do we do? “Kill” the idea of the perfection of wisdom in order to go beyond this dualistic thinking? What happens, if we let go of any kind of ideas like wisdom and perfection completely? The mind before thinking reveals itself. Out of this before-thinking mind all wisdom actions appear spontaneously, moment by moment, like a tree responding to the wind with rustling leaves. What is the way to live according to that? Zen Master Lin Chi says again: “Followers of the way, the dharma of the Buddhas calls for no special undertakings. Just act ordinary, without trying to do anything in particular. Move your bowels, piss, get dressed, eat your rice, and if you get tired, then lie down.” This “without trying to do anything in particular” makes the ordinary acts extraordinary! It is indeed more a matter of how we are doing something than what we are doing: drop all ideas and just do it!

Recently I was teaching in a retreat. There was one woman and one man who did not like each other. Both of them were sincere and dedicated Zen practitioners and



worked in this retreat as head dharma teacher and kitchen master. The kitchen master, a twenty-year-old young woman, said, “The head dharma teacher hates me. He is looking at me always critically and stern. He is like my mother, looking grim and rigid. This kind of person makes my life so sad.” The head dharma teacher, who was in his fifties, and in fact usually very kind outside retreats, complained, “The kitchen master is selfish and arrogant, exactly like my daughter. I cannot bear this kind of person.” Since they came together for the first time to this retreat from different countries and never talked much because of the rule of silence that we practice during retreats, it is hard to say they knew each other well. Yet they were suffering due to their strong negative feelings toward each other.

Like in this story, we unconsciously make pictures of others or ourselves according to our ideas or past experiences. The consequence is that we suffer and blame others for our suffering. But once we notice that we are trapped in our own thinking and it causes us suffering, we get to know the nature of all problems. This thinking makes us act and react in a conditioned and predictable way, so we end up repeating the same behavioral pattern, which we call karma. The karmic acts of comparing, judging and assuming hinder us in perceiving the uniqueness of the very moment and the person with whom we interact. The incomparable uniqueness of this very moment can reveal itself only when the attachment to thinking stops. As Zen Master Seung Sahn says, our mind becomes then like a mirror, clear like space. Red comes, it reflects only red, and yellow comes, only yellow. That means, red doesn't have to become yellow and yellow does not need to be changed into red. And also yellow itself is enough and complete without depending on red at all. Only out of this hundred-percent mirrorlike mind can clear action appear.

The above-mentioned kitchen master wrote me a short message soon after our talk: “Now I understand. The problem is not between the head dharma teacher and me. The problem is that we are following our karma. He is OK. I am OK.” This OK-mind is the seed out of which great love and great compassion mind emerge. The other name for this is supreme wisdom or prajna paramita. Without attachment to thinking our mind can perceive clearly. Then it is possible to just do it for all beings without distinction.

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### Notes

1. Nagarjuna, Bodhisambhara, verse 72, quoted in Karl Brunnhölzl, *The Heart Attack Sūtra* (Boston: Snow Lion, 2012).
2. Quoted in *Heart Attack Sūtra*, p. 26.

# Mind Revolution: The Twentieth Anniversary of Su Bong Zen Monastery

*Dharma talks given in Hong Kong, November 17–18, 2012*

## **Slow Is Fast**

*Zen Master Wu Bong*

Thank you for your introduction. First of all, congratulations to the Su Bong Monastery family and to everybody here. Thank you for coming. We were asked to talk about Mind Revolution, so I would like to talk about a little bit of my experience. Before I met Zen Master Seung Sahn, actually before I even knew what Buddhism is, I had just finished high school and entered into university in the United States, and it was during the Vietnam War. So, like many young people at that time, I wanted to be useful to the world and do something for everybody. I believed the way to change the world was through the political system, so after I entered the university I began a lot of antiwar activities. Actually what we wanted was a revolution. So, for us, revolution meant change, and of course we believed the change we wanted was to make the world better. So we organized many demonstrations and I did a lot of marching, and we also did a lot of shouting, and made speeches.

At one point we organized the biggest event ever. It was quite a sizable demonstration and many people joined this protest. But while this was going on, something happened. At one point, when we were in this big garden in the center of the city with many, many tens of thousands of people, I looked at my coworkers and friends with whom I had organized this event, and suddenly I felt very deeply relieved. If my friends were in charge of this country, then I wouldn't want to be there! All of a sudden it became clear. We are protesting the government, we are protesting the people because of their desire, anger and ignorance, but my friends and I were not any different. Actually that was not so bad, but then I looked at myself and all of a sudden it became clear: if I were in charge of the country, then I wouldn't want to be there. That one moment of realization was the end of my political activity, because at that moment I turned around and left the demonstration.

After that I have only one question: How can I change myself? So, like many intellectual individuals, I read a lot of books—philosophy books, psychology books and religion books. And I found something called Buddhism, and I also found something called Zen, and all of a sudden—wow, it is possible to do it! And it is not necessary to believe in something mysterious or special. I can do it through my own experience. And not only myself, but anybody can do it in their own life. They just have to do something called practice. So I thought that was wonderful. Then I also wanted to do something called practice.

Of course in Buddhism there are many kinds of practice. In America at that time, the most famous kinds of Buddhism were Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. But somehow I met somebody who practiced Zen. He was not a teacher in any formal sense, but he became my first teacher.

So I started to practice and that was a great revelation because, looking at the world as a young man, I was always thinking, "I am OK. The world is screwed up!" It was revolutionary to me to realize that maybe the world is not so screwed up, and that maybe it was just me! So, this is my little experience of Mind Revolution.

There are two kinds of revolution: fast and slow. (And the slow kind is sometimes called evolution.) As a young person I was most interested in something fast, but I discovered fast is not fast! This is just another kind of desire. When I practiced, I practiced in this style, with very hard training and then giving up, and then again very hard training and then giving up. Eventually it became clear that this is not the best way to do things. This Mind Revolution may be something that happened instantly, but we have to make careful and steady cultivation. So in other words, sometimes slow is fast.

But why do we have to talk about Mind Revolution? If you read the newspaper or watch the news, then you know there are many problems in this world. Who is responsible for fixing these problems, who is going to help this world? Is it God? Is it Buddha? Maybe it's us! Maybe you and I! But we all know the blind cannot lead the blind, so if we

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want to be able to help this world, we have to wake up.

In the welcoming speech, Andrzej Stec JDPSN, the second guiding teacher of Su Bong Zen Monastery, explained this Mind Revolution, this Waking Up. I hope that everybody in your life makes correct practice, and that you save yourself from much suffering, practice steadily and don't do it my way. Then finally this Mind Revolution can become yours. And of course please don't stop there: *one more step* means please help this world, take care of your family, your society, this whole world and all beings. Thank you for your attention.

### The Five Desires

*Zen Master Dae Bong*

We were introduced as “Zen Master Dae Bong is sitting on the right and Zen Master Wu Bong is sitting on the left.” From up here it is true, but from where you are sitting, Zen Master Wu Bong is sitting on the right and Zen Master Dae Bong is sitting on the left! That is a very good example of what we face every day. Everybody is faced with this every moment of our life. From up here, I am on the right and he is on the left; but from down there, he is on the right and I am on the left. So the way we see things depends on our situation. If we are attached to our situation, we won't understand other peoples' situations. Which is correct? I am on the right and he is on the left? Or he is on the right and I am on the left? What do you think? *[Applause.]*

Clapping? Which one is that? This is not just a lecture; this is interactive. Our life is an interaction. Every day, all the time, you are in some situation—with your family, with the people you work with, with the citizens that you live with, with the shopkeepers that you deal with, the people you pass on the street. Everyone has a different perspective according to their situation. Which one is more correct? Even your mouth and your stomach often have a different opinion according to their situation.

Tonight is Saturday night. When I was growing up, on Saturday night you went out. I don't think I ever went to a talk about religious practice on Saturday night. So you people are very interesting. Either you have some big questions in your life or you have nothing to do. But on Saturday night most people are constantly having a fight between their stomach and their mouth. After some time of eating and drinking, the stomach says, “OK, that was good. Stop!” But for most people, their mouth has a very different opinion. Most people's mouths say, “I am having a good time. Let's continue!” Then there is a fight. If the stomach wins, then the mouth is unhappy. If the mouth

wins, then later the stomach is unhappy. So if we live our life that way, there is always suffering.

When humans are born, we have two main concerns: eating and sleeping. And we are not thinking about them either; we just do it. Then when we are not satisfied, we scream. We have no thought of you and me. As we grow, the other desires appear. Buddha said very clearly that humans have five main desires: food, sleep, sex, money, fame. As we grow these five desires all become stronger.

One thing we should consider about fame: fame is not only that I want to be on television or in a magazine; fame means I want attention from others. So everybody has fame karma, even if we don't care about the television, magazines and so on. Still we want attention from others. Probably the last desire to really appear in our life is money. Nowadays that is the number-one desire in the world. Human society now has no direction. Doesn't matter what system we have, everybody wants money.

I was born in 1950, the same year as Zen Master Wu Bong, but in a different part of the world. At that time, many people in the United States had good situations. Europe and Asia both were still recovering from wars. So Asia and Europe were in difficult situations. Zen Master Wu Bong and I were talking the other day. He mentioned that in the 1950s in America, many families had a house, they



*Photo: Francis Lau*



had cars and anybody could have a job. And most parents assumed that their children will also have those things.

I remember going out on the street where I lived, just outside of Philadelphia. Looking down the street that I lived on, everybody had a house, and each house was different from the other. They weren't just copies of each other. Every family had one or two cars. I remember thinking that we have a very good situation; it is beautiful and comfortable, with no worries about jobs. But I know that inside the houses there were many kinds of suffering: relationship suffering, emotional suffering, mental suffering, self-doubt.

Then a big question appeared in my mind. "Even though we have this social comfort, economic success and security, still there is plenty of suffering. Then suffering is not dependent on the situation. So what is the cause of suffering?"

In my city there were many black people and many white people. In America, black people had been free since 1863, but even 100 years later, they were not equal. They didn't have the same opportunities. There was still lots of prejudice, limitations and hindrances. I also wondered why black people and white people couldn't make a healthy and good relationship. So even though there was a kind of freedom and social success for some, still there

were many kinds of suffering.

If you went to a Christian church they said to believe in God and then afterward you go to heaven. That was a little confusing to me. People talked about heaven as if it were some place like Hawaii that you go to when you die, and it will be wonderful forever. But I remembered reading in the Bible that Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within. To me, that meant that heaven is inside. So how come nobody looks like they are in heaven now?

When I was eleven, I happened to go to an international summer camp in Japan. We got to play baseball and all the usual eleven-year-old things, and we went around the country as well. There were kids from ten different countries. We went to Kamakura. There is an outdoor Buddha there, maybe 20 to 30 meters high. I had never seen Buddha and I had never heard about Buddhism, but for some reason when I saw that statue I felt, "He understands! He understands where suffering comes from and how to take away suffering. Not only did he look like he did it himself, but he knows how to teach me." After that, I didn't want to read about it in books, I wanted to meet a living teacher. It took about 15 years more before I met my teacher.

The first night I met Zen Master Seung Sahn in America, he had already been in the United States for about

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five years. He was giving a public talk at a Zen center that his students had started near Yale University. His teaching style was to have one of his students give a talk, and then he answered questions. That night someone asked him, "What is sanity? What is insanity?" I had studied and worked for almost 10 years in the field of psychology, and even though I quit, I was still very interested in what the Zen master was going to say. His English was so-so, and he turned to his student and said, "This man, what say? What say?" He didn't understand the English words *sanity* and *insanity*. His student said, "This man asked, 'What is crazy? What is not crazy?'"

Then Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "If you are very attached to something, you are very crazy. If you are a little attached to something, then you are a little crazy. If you are not attached to anything, that's not crazy."

I thought, "That's better than my 10 years of studying psychology! Then even if you are a big successful businessman, if you are very attached to something, that's crazy. Even politicians, even religious persons, if they are very attached to something, that's crazy." That was very clear, not dependent on our situation or our condition or anything, just dependent on our mind.

But he continued talking. He said, "In this world, everybody is crazy because everybody is attached to 'I,' but this 'I' doesn't exist, it is only made by our thinking. If you don't want to attach to your thinking 'I,' and you want to find your true nature, you must practice Zen." At that moment, I knew, "That's my teacher!"

So, first we have to recognize that we only really understand our own point of view. If we only function from our own point of view, our life will have many ups and downs, nonstop, forever, and we cannot truly help others. If we can understand the other person's point of view, that's better.

But that is the real mind revolution, because the cause of suffering is this idea I have: "I." Unless we see through that, we will never get out of suffering. It doesn't matter whether you get a wonderful government, a successful situation or anything, the root of our suffering comes from the false idea of "I." If you are not sure of that, conduct your own experiment: spend some time every day and investigate "I." Ask yourself "What am I? What am I? Am I this body? This mind? These emotions?"

Someone already said I met Dae Soen Sa Nim when I was young. So that body was young and this body is older, but who met Dae Soen Sa Nim? And who is talking to you now? Look at your own body and ask, is that me? Is my consciousness me? Is my emotion me? What am I? You don't know! If you look into that, you will have a

mind revolution. Then in any situation you can suddenly see things differently.

One time one of our Hong Kong students drove me from Lantau Island back to Causeway Bay. There was a big, long traffic jam. I cannot speak Cantonese and his English is simple. During the ride I asked him how many children he has. He said three. I said, "How old are they?"

"Seventeen, 14 and 4." I was shocked—17? I thought he was 28, but he was really about 40. So I asked, "How's your 17-year-old?"

He said, "Good."

"How's your 14-year-old?"

"No good."

I asked, "Is it a girl?"

"Girl."

I said, "How's the girl's relationship with her mother?"

He said, "bang-bang," pretending to hit his two fists together. Sometimes you don't need a lot of words to communicate. Then I asked, "How's the girl's relationship with you?"

Then he said, "Before, bang-bang. Now, OK."

I asked him what happened, what changed. He said he had been doing meditation about two years, then one day the thought appeared in his mind, "I don't like the relationship I have with my daughter, but I don't know how to change it. I don't know what to do about it." So he told me that time he stopped saying anything to the daughter, because every time he talked, soon it was bang-bang. He said then a very strange thing happened. His daughter suddenly understood his mind! She understood he doesn't want bang-bang with her, but he doesn't know what else to do. Their relationship just stayed at that point for a few months, with not so much talking. Then one day his daughter came home and started to tell him about her experience in school with her friends, with her teachers. Now every day she talks with him about her life and her problems.

So the real Mind Revolution comes from looking back at ourselves. Looking into "I." Don't worry about finding anything. Just by looking into "I," things change. You don't have to believe in Buddhism. It is not Buddhism; it is just a human being having a big question. That's all.

The five desires are important to satisfy, but if that is all your life is, you will never be happy. Look back at yourself. What am I? Don't know. That is the true treasure—so valuable. Then you can change your relationship with the five desires and even use them to help all beings. That is the real Mind Revolution. I think it is what Buddha was trying to teach us. Thank you. ♦

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