

whole idea of ignorance. We say we shouldn't destroy the earth. Well, we can't destroy the earth. The earth will outlive us, undoubtedly. But we can destroy the earth as a place for us to live. So, we are actually destroying ourselves. Talk about anger, ignorance and desire. We're destroying ourselves, but we think we're just squirting something into a river somewhere. So, we have to take care of our mala. Look at your basic mala: The beads are earth elements. Sandalwood, stone—they all come from the ground. Every time you touch a mala bead, you're touching the earth. And, helpfully, each bead is shaped like our planet! Each bead is a little earth. To talk about "engaged Buddhism" is another whole academic conference somewhere. I'm not going to get into it today. I'm just going to say that I was rereading *The Compass of Zen* recently and I came across some of Zen Master Seung Sahn's thoughts. When he talks about enlightened people—and he has various phrases for people who have attained something—he writes that it's not that the desires vanish, but that we get a handle on them. Going forward, what's important is: Are you using those desires for all beings? So, if you have a desire or anger around what's being done to your primary mala bead, it can help as long as it's for all beings. Does it help you fulfill your vows? Or is it just "I, me, mine?"

So, taking care of the mala, we come to understand that we need to be ready—ready for that touch, ready for whatever it might be. A mala could be a sound. It could

even be a "serene sound." A mala could be a sensation, a word, anything. Thich Nhat Hanh has this whole thing about making things into mala. If you're at the office and the phone rings, you take a breath. If you're at a stop-light, you take a breath. If you start thinking about all of these opportunities, it's clear that the universe wants you to wake up; it's waiting for you to wake up. It's tapping you on the shoulder. It's ready. It's reminding you; it's touching you.

When I shared a boiled-down version of this with the student I mentioned earlier at Trinity College, like you he was not too impressed. He said an interesting thing, of course. He asked, "Could you become attached to your mala?" I said, "Sure, you can become attached to anything. Trungpa Rinpoche wrote a whole book about being attached to various spiritual things, so yeah. That's why the technique with your mala should be your technique for life: Hold it lightly. Hold everything lightly. Firmly, but not too firmly. Hold it lightly. Just because something is ultimately empty, that doesn't mean you don't need it. That's a famous Alan Watts quote along the lines of "Just because it's illusion doesn't mean you don't need it." That's very true. We need all of the elements of our relative existence.

Be ready, hold it lightly, understand that everything can be a mala—and build that into your whole life. Everything we do here is practice, so that we can go to the marketplace with helping hands, to use that image from the ox-herding pictures. It's not for us. It's for all beings. ♦

## *I Had a Dream . . .*

Yesterday I had a dream . . .  
 Master! Master! Where have you gone?  
 I woke up and felt relieved when . . .  
 Your laugh I found in the children's laugh  
 Your wide mind in the vast blue sky  
 Your determination in the thunder fall  
 Your meticulous action in the spider weaving its web  
 Your compassion in a flower offering its pollen to a bee  
 Your wisdom in the baby trying to walk, falling and  
 standing up countless times  
 I remember . . . You and me  
 Sitting together in front of a font near Majorca Cathedral  
 How much I enjoyed being with you!  
 Just in silence listening the water fall . . .  
 I find this silence still present  
 In the fall of a single leaf from the plane-tree

—Eduardo del Valle Pérez  
*In memory of Zen Master Seung Sahn, April 24, 2017*

## *I hope tomorrow*

I hope tomorrow  
 And tomorrow  
 And the day after  
 I'll do things right  
 So that Liam  
 Will smile often  
 Commentary:  
 Does the tree worry, "Will my offspring be happy?  
 Am I blowing in the wind correctly?"  
 Happiness or smiles.  
 Sadness or frowns.  
 Behind it all,  
 Liam's luminous mind  
 Will always remain eternally pure.  
 But does he know that?

—Jerome Moore