

road was very dry, very hot, even the pavement, even the dirt. When I got quite far down the road near the railroad tracks, I saw one dead frog on the road. It was a big frog, and it looked like a few cars had run over it so it was very flat, and from the sun it was baked, toasted like a slice of bread from the toaster. Then, like in this story of seven sisters, I looked at it and thought to myself, “Where is its master now?” Suddenly I felt myself, my body and this whole universe filled with so much energy. “Just that, Just that!” Nothing came or went; nothing went away at all. Its master didn’t go anywhere. Just toasted flat frog. I felt so happy, beyond the usual. Just happy, completely happy.

I hope one day when we look at our sick body, “Oh! Just that, just that! That’s all!” Isn’t that important? Isn’t that worth spending some time considering? Maybe our loved ones who passed away have already attained that. Maybe when we are chanting and they hear the sound of our voices, they’ll come and help us. Or maybe they are suffering and lost too, and when they hear the sound of our voices, we will be helping them. Never separate!

A poem says,

The blue mountain of many ridges is the Buddha’s home  
The vast ocean of many waves is the palace of stillness  
Be with all things, always without hindrance  
Few can see the crane’s red head atop the pine tree  
Vowing openly with all beings, together entering  
Amita Buddha’s ocean of great vows  
Continuing forever to save all sentient beings, you  
and I simultaneously attain the way of Buddha  
Namu Amitabul  
Namu Amitabul  
Namu Amitabul

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\*The *Baekjung* (or *Ulamhara* in Sanskrit) kido ceremony is a traditional 49-day Jijang Bosal kido for the dead offered in Korean temples every year during the summer Kyol Che period. Many Buddhists offer this kido for ancestors and loved ones and is considered one of the most important chanting offerings in Korea.

## *Sitting Zen: Questions and Answers with Zen Master Dae Kwan*

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### **Learn to Relax**

A group of social psychology professors from different universities in China visited Zen Master Dae Kwan. They asked many questions about practice.

**Professor:** I joined a retreat in China, and they taught me to meditate by counting my breath from 1 to 10. I followed the instruction and put all my strength into counting each breath from 1 to 10 without any thinking for half an hour. At the end of the retreat, I got a headache and a hemorrhoid. Now I am afraid to sit again. What shall I do?

**Sifu:** Have you ever sat down to watch a movie and half an hour later you get a headache and a hemorrhoid?

**Professor:** Never, Zen Master.

**Sifu:** Same as that. If you watch your breath like watching a movie, then you will solve your problem.

Upon hearing that everyone started laughing.

**Commentary:** One of the most important parts of practice is to relax and be natural. It is like playing a stringed instrument: too tight, the string will break; too loose, the string cannot make the correct sound. Counting our breaths is a means to regulate our mind so that it can return to its original not-moving, relaxed and natural state, which means clear and centered. Most important is that we breathe naturally. If the breath is clear, our mind is clear. Applying this clear mind moment to moment to help ourselves and others is the true meditation.

### **Just Open Your Eyes**

After the introductory class on sitting meditation, everyone tried to apply what they had just learned to the sitting session. Many students were experiencing the same problem.

**Student:** Zen Master, you taught us to sit with eyes half closed, looking down at a 45 degree angle. After a few deep breaths, my eyelids just closed very naturally in a split second. How do I stop myself from closing my eyes? I don’t want to close my eyes during meditation.

**Sifu:** [*pointing to the blinds in the dharma room*] Please go open the blinds halfway.

**Student:** Do I really have to do it?

**Sifu:** Yes.

The student couldn’t stop laughing while pulling up the blinds halfway.

**Sifu:** From now on, every time that your eyes close, please remember how to roll up the blinds halfway. This will surely help you. You don’t have to stop yourself from closing your eyes; just roll up the blinds halfway.

**Commentary:** The Platform Sutra says, “Inside our mind we have delusive, ignorant and suffering beings. We use right views to save them.” It further says: “Let the fallacious be delivered by correctness, the deluded by enlightenment, the ignorant by wisdom and the malevolent by benevolence.” So if we close our eyes and fall asleep, we just open our eyes again—that is already training us to wake up! Very simple. ♦