

Soeng Hwa Sa Opening Ceremony Poem

In 2003, Zen Master Wu Bong attended the opening ceremony for the new Zen center in Israel, Soeng Hwa Sa (Nature Flower Temple). For this special event he wrote the following poem:

Soeng Hwa Temple is not a place
Its light casts no shadow
Its sound has no echo
If you find it, you will go to hell
If you do not find it, you will be lost in blankness
What can you do?
KATZ!
On the altar, the jasmine is white and
The lavender is purple



Photo: Sven Mahr

22] *How to Turn Coal into Diamonds*

Igor Piniński JDPSN

From a dharma talk given at Wu Bong Sa Temple, Poland, August 2017.

Question: If somebody likes suffering, does this person have a reason to practice?

Piniński PSN: How do you know he likes it?

Q: Because there are so many amazing artworks.

Piniński PSN: If you like suffering, it's not really suffering. I don't think this artist you mention likes suffering. He made a really big effort to get rid of it. The suffering was really heavy, and once he even had a brush with suicide. But it's a bit like coal. Sometimes depression seems like something oily and black. Coal is like this. Dark and dirty. But if you work on coal, under the right pressure, out of this coal a diamond can appear, which is clear and beautiful and bright and very expensive. And it's still coal. It is the same with depression.

I had an opportunity to know, and still know, a couple people who have been suffering from depression all their lives. And they indeed did a lot of work related with it. And still they suffer from depression. But this depression did change into a diamond that shines and inspires others.

For me, Leonard Cohen is a wonderful example of how you can use your heavy circumstances and conditioning in order to change it into something precious. In his artwork, you can observe how this develops. Later, his

songs from older years are even more profound than the ones from his youth. But even despite that, he never experienced this cheerfulness.

I have a friend who was practicing with him in the monastery. In his experience, and in his story, this guy always had a very sad face and kept his head down. But when somebody was approaching him to have a conversation, he always lifted up his head and brightened up, naturally.

The last time I saw him, a couple years ago, this 80-year-old man jumped about like Tinkerbell, very light, very light. Cheerfully thinking how hard life is. And how, inevitably, death will take us all. That's interesting that you can think about it in such a pleasant manner. I believe it's beyond like and dislike.

If we stop approaching everything we have in life with this like/dislike mind, just [*hits floor with the stick*] what's the reality right now? [*hits floor*] What am I right now? What do I have? This is the condition of my soul; these are my feelings; this is my body; that's my situation. I'm free with all this, having what I have, I can do whatever I want. The sole trick is what do I want? What is worth doing with this freedom? With this pathetic sentence? ♦