

# Primary Point



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Kwan Um School of Zen  
99 Pound Rd  
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# 2018 Summer Kyol Che at Musangsa



*"Inside work is keeping clear mind.  
Outside work is cutting off selfish desires and helping others."  
- From the Temple Rules by Zen Master Seung Sahn*

## Experience a new style of Summer Kyol Che in 2018

Summer Kyol Che 2018 at Musangsa is on a new schedule that includes formal practice, working, hiking, together action and experiencing Zen temple life. The first 2 months will be a modified practice and work retreat and the last month will be a full practice schedule. It's a unique opportunity to benefit from practicing together with monks, nuns, international practitioners, and receiving regular teaching from the guiding teachers. Kyol Che at Musangsa can be a valuable experience in making a foundation for Zen practice when returning to your respective home countries.

## Entry dates

**May 27 (SUN)** Start of Summer Kyol Che - new schedule  
**June 9th (SAT), June 23rd (SAT)**  
**July 7th (SAT), 21st (SAT),**  
**July 27th (FRI)** First entry - for full sitting schedule  
**August 4th (SAT), 11th (SAT), 18th (SAT)**

## Guiding Teachers

Zen Master Dae Bong  
 Hye Tong Sunim JDPS  
 Guest Teachers from the KUSZ



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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 2,100 copies.

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**School Zen Master**  
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Cover: Photo by Sven Mahr.

# You Make, You Get

## Dealing with Fear, Anger and Depression in These Difficult Times

Zen Master Wu Kwang

Dharma talk given at the Integral Yoga Institute of New Jersey on March 3, 2018

The subject of this talk is dealing with fear, anger and depression in these difficult times. The reason I made notes for the talk is that I was afraid if I came here and tried to wing it I would bumble, and then I could get angry at the directors for inviting me to come and embarrass myself, and when I went home afterward I could feel dejected and depressed. “What kind of Zen teacher are you?” So I made notes. If it were only that easy to deal with anger, depression and fear in other situations.

We can approach working with fear, anger and depression from three different angles. The first is awareness (you could also call it wisdom perspective or clear seeing). The second is cultivating a steady, not-moving center, as one does in formal meditation practice, and the third is selfless action in the world.

In one of the Buddhist scriptures, the *Hua Yen Sutra* (in English, the *Flower Garland Sutra*), there is a short passage that is often quoted: “If you want to understand all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, then you should view the nature of the universe as created by mind alone.”

“Created by mind alone” is not a philosophical point about whether everything is inside or outside or whether outside even exists. The point is that we experience everything in our minds, nowhere else. Our feelings are registered in our minds; sounds are registered in our minds. If there were no consciousness, ears wouldn’t be functioning, eyes would not be functioning and so on.

Everything occurs in our minds and unfortunately most of the time we are coloring reality with our own mental constructions, imagination and fabrication. We make things. And when we’re making things we are very far away from reality as it is.

Some friends of mine went to Korea and were traveling around to various Buddhist temples. At one temple the abbot wrote them a Chinese calligraphy. It said, “You make, you get.” (I believe that in written Chinese the pronouns are inferred. Literally the characters were “Make, get.”) In the Indian tradition, both the Indian Buddhist tradition and the Yoga Vedanta tradition, an example given for how we make or imagine something and ignore reality is of someone walking down a country dirt road at twilight and suddenly seeing what ap-

pears to be a snake right in front of them. The person jumps back in fear, but then as the snake is not moving at all, he gets a little more courage and investigates until he says, “Oh! This is not a snake at all. It’s a piece of rope. The snake only existed in my imagination.” But even after I perceive that the snake is only in my imagination, there is still my heart beating fast and the fear that doesn’t subside immediately. All this has to do with the activity of ignorance. Ignorance is not so much a thing as an active ongoing process of ignoring things as they are and generating my own version of them.

Once, the Dalai Lama was answering questions and someone began to ask, “Your holiness, I know the self doesn’t exist . . .” The Dalai Lama stopped him immediately, saying, “It’s not that the self doesn’t exist. It’s that it doesn’t exist in the way you think it does.” (That gives new meaning to the question “Who do you think you are?”) We create a small “I,” which is a construction based on images we hold of ourselves, conceptions and ideas we hold of ourselves. In some way we imagine this I-ness, this constructed self, as being totally independent and self-sufficient and of course none of us are totally independent and self-sufficient.

As soon as I generate this notion of myself, this “I,” I also quickly generate a notion of other. So there’s self and other, subject and object, inside and outside. As soon as we have inside versus outside, the possibility of threat or distrust begins to arise. The threat that arises can be toward external things—for example, “I don’t trust you.” It can also be toward parts of ourselves, like our emotions. And sometimes we relate to our emotions as if they were something other than our self, and that becomes problematic. So as soon as we have inside, outside, self and other, there is the possibility of fear and anxiety. Usually when we have self, other, inside and outside we start to make good and bad as well. And with good and bad, self-judgement and comparisons arise—for example, “I’m good, you’re not so good” or “I’m not so good, you’re great.” Expectation and disappointment also arise when we make these things. Depression is to some degree based on these mental constructions and the emotions that go with them. Anger is in many instances a reactive emotion, on top of fear, disappointment or hurt. If you come over here and

step on my toe suddenly, I may get angry at you and bark like a dog, but fundamentally the problem is that my toe hurts. Sometimes, however, we experience a righteous anger that arises from some perceived unfairness going on in the world.

This raises the question of what kind of attitude we should cultivate to investigate all of this, and how we should keep our mind. Zen Master Seung Sahn's English was limited, and many times he would make up short aphorisms with which to teach. One of the aphorisms he had about meditation was simple: "Don't make anything. Don't hold anything. Don't attach to anything."

First, we start making something, then we begin holding on to it. There is a book by a Japanese Zen master, Kosho Uchiyama, titled *Opening the Hand of Thought*, which is an interesting idea. We make something and we hold it. If we really hold it we start clinging to it and getting attached to it. It's easy to say "Don't make anything," but we're always making something with our mind. So there really is a prior step to "Don't make anything," and that is to ask ourselves "What are you constructing, what are you holding, what are you clinging to?" We can begin to see through what we've made and let go of it. But this is something we would need to cultivate on goingly: Look clearly. As it says at the railroad crossing: "Stop, look and listen." Your life depends on it. The quality of your life depends on it.

To really perceive and see clearly, you need to cultivate some sense of a not-moving center. To be able to see clearly, you need to slow down; you need to steady your attention; you need to have some degree of quiescence. There are two metaphors that are sometimes given to represent this unmoving center. I remember the example given by Swami Satchidananda of a pendulum. The pendulum is swinging back and forth but there is one point that is never moving. That is one example

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Calligraphy: "You make, you get," Byok Am Sunim

of this not-moving point. If you are going to watch the swinging and not get swung off at some moment, you need to have a not-moving point. Another example sometimes given in the Zen tradition is of a wooden doll that you might see in a store in China, Korea or Japan that sells practice items, malas and incense, and so on. This wooden doll is in the form of the first Zen patriarch, Bodhidharma, sitting in meditation. The bottom of the doll is rounded and its center of gravity is in the belly. In the United States we used to have blow-up dolls in the shape of Bozo the Clown or some animals. Each of them had a sandbag or some kind of weight at the bottom of the doll. The Bodhidharma dolls are also weighted at the bottom in the way they're carved. If you push Bodhidharma over this way, he comes back to center quickly. If you push him that way, he also comes back. No matter which way you push him, he quickly comes back. As much as you move the doll, there's one point at the center of the movement that's never moving.

These images can be helpful as metaphors for meditation practice and cultivating that kind of unmoving center. If you are the kind of person who frequently gets too flooded and

inundated by things (thoughts and feelings) and easily begin to lose your balance, then the idea of the pendulum point may be a helpful image: pull back a little bit from things and see them from your unmoving center.

For me the Bodhidharma doll is a more helpful image because I am by temperament a little removed, a little aloof, a little shy. So most of the time it's helpful to know that when I step into the world I'll still have a feeling that no matter how the world moves me and I move in the world I can still keep my balance. Of course, none of us is all one way or the other, so for any of us either of these images can be helpful at times.

There is a story in one of the Buddhist scriptures.



In the story there are two characters who are called bodhisattvas. In the Buddhist tradition the term *bodhisattva* has two meanings. If you go to a Buddhist temple, you'll sometimes see three figures on the altar. The Buddha is sitting in the middle. The Buddha represents the original, not-moving, pure and clear consciousness or mind. On either side of the Buddha you'll see two other figures that represent the different qualities of the enlightened mind. For example, one might represent compassion, or skillful activity, and the other might represent primal nondual wisdom. These figures are called bodhisattvas. They represent universal qualities of enlightened being, the way in the Hindu tradition, the Ishtadevatas are viewed as qualities of self-realization or divinity. But a bodhisattva can also mean anyone who is practicing the dharma path of cultivating selflessness. A bodhisattva can even be someone who is very much a beginner if their intention is "My practice is not just for myself but for all beings."

Back to the story: All the buddhas come together for a meeting, and the bodhisattva of nondual wisdom, Manjushri, shows up to come to the meeting, but he can't come in for some reason. Just at that moment all the other buddhas disappear, returning to where they came from, and Manjushri enters. Close to Shakyamuni Buddha is a woman sitting in deep samadhi. Manjushri says to the Buddha, "Why can a woman sit so close to you and I couldn't even come in?" The Buddha responds, "You wake her up yourself and ask her." So Manjushri walks around her three times, snaps his fingers and nothing happens. He then takes her in the palm of his hand and goes up to some heaven somewhere and again nothing happens. The Buddha says to Manjushri, "Even if a thousand Manjushris appeared here they still wouldn't be able to wake this woman up from samadhi, but down below, beyond a thousand thousand thousand worlds, is the bodhisattva Ensnared Light." Now usually we think of spiritual light as radiating and illuminating in every direction, but this bodhisattva is called Ensnared Light and the Buddha

says he is the one who can wake her up. Just at that moment the bodhisattva Ensnared Light emerged out of the earth and the Buddha asks him to wake the woman up. The bodhisattva Ensnared Light goes in front of her, snaps his fingers once and the woman wakes up.

A Zen poem referring to this story says:

One can awaken her, the other cannot;  
Both have their own freedom.  
A god-mask here and a devil-mask there,  
Even in failure, an elegant performance.

A brief commentary to the same episode by Zen Master Seung Sahn says:

Head cannot hold a pen, eyes cannot hear sound,  
mouth cannot see the clear sky. Man cannot give  
birth to a baby. Hands have hands' job, legs have



Photo: Jiří Hazlbauer JDPSN

legs' job. Understand your correct job. When the rooster crows in the morning the body wakes up.

A commentary by another Zen master is much more brief: "Manjushri can't ride a bicycle." An ancient Zen master posed a question.

Now tell me: Manjushri was the teacher of seven buddhas. Why couldn't he get the woman out of samadhi? Ensnared Light was a bodhisattva of the first stage; why was he able to get her out? If you can see into this intimately, then in the flurry of karma and discrimination, you are a dragon of great samadhi. If you can grasp this completely, you will realize that surging delusive consciousness is nothing other than the greatest samadhi. If you can grasp this point, then for you, this busy life of ignorance and discrimination will be the life of supreme samadhi. What does it mean to be a dragon of great Samadhi? What is it to live a life of supreme samadhi?

Swami Satchidananda says:

The world itself is God. All that is outside us is God. When we dedicate our lives to the benefit of humanity, we have dedicated ourselves to God. Whatever we do can easily be transformed into worship by our attitude. We can do anything and everything as long as we do it with the idea of serving the world at large. We can serve our tables, our chairs and everything around us. As long as we don't pull them mercilessly. Everything should be handled gently.

I received the following teaching from him directly one time. When I was a teenager I used to borrow the family car, and when I would park it in our driveway I was in the habit of slamming the car door. My father would get on my case quite unmercifully about slamming the car door, and I thought he was making a big deal about nothing. So I would ignore him, saying nothing and stewing inside. When we lived at the Integral Yoga Institute, Swamiji had an old Chrysler that Felix Cavaliere of the rock band the Rascals had given him. One day he took a few of us out for a ride in this car. He was sitting in the front passenger seat and I was sitting behind him. The driver pulled up at the Yoga Institute, and when we got out I inadvertently let my door slam. Swamiji said, while pointing to his ear, "I can hear it crying." I took it in. This was my guru, but a minute later it dawned on me, that's the same thing my father used to tell me but I couldn't appreciate it from him. OK, so his delivery was not so good, but he was trying to teach me the same things.

Swamiji continues:

Many of us are interested in instant samadhi. Well,

we can have it right here and now, without waiting for the kundalini to be aroused and move to the crown chakra, if we dedicate ourselves completely.

Once we give ourselves to God we are renunciates; we have nothing to possess. And when we have nothing to possess, we have nothing to worry about. All worry is due to attachment and clinging. The attachment I mean is a mental attachment. And of course worry and clinging is the stuff of either depression or anxiety. So if you have no attachment, you have no worry and you aren't clinging.

And he says this kind of practice is continuous samadhi. "We shouldn't think samadhi means sitting in a corner, forgetting ourselves and keeping the body still like a rock. Real samadhi means tranquility of mind, which is possible only when we dedicate everything to others and are free from all attachment."

One time he told a small group of us, "After you stretch yourself to the limit and bend yourself into pretzels doing asanas and then practice pranayama holding your breath till you burst and can sit in meditation like a rock for a long time, still, in the end, you will just have to surrender." The act of self-surrender is samadhi.

Because this talk was to have an ecumenical focus I will give you the Zen version of this. In the *Compass of Zen*, Zen Master Seung Sahn says

An important part of our practice is our effort. In most Mahayana Buddhist traditions, every morning is begun by vowing aloud together, "Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all." This means that from moment to moment, my life is only for all beings. The name for this is perseverance. It means that whether good feelings or bad feelings appear, in a good situation or a bad situation, whatever condition appears, whether suffering or well, I only try to help all beings.

If one could do that, that is the cure from depression and anxiety, and at any moment where you do that, you are free of those things. He says, "Practice is not only what we are doing in the meditation room. Rather, from moment to moment, what are you doing now? That is correct practice. If you practice with this kind of direction and determination, you attain a not-moving mind. In any condition or situation, your mind is clear like a mirror. The clear mirror never holds anything, and it is never moved by what appears in its infinitely empty face. Then when you see, when you hear, when you smell, when you taste, when you touch, when you think—everything, just like this, is the truth. The name for this is samadhi, or deep meditation. ♦

## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Elizabeth Coombs

March 24, 2018 at Providence Zen Center in Rhode Island

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Briggs PSN:** If I remember correctly, you worked as an art conservator?

**Coombs PSN:** Is that your question? *[Laughter.]*

**Briggs PSN:** No.

**Coombs PSN:** Yes.

**Briggs PSN:** Thank you very much.



**Question:** So you're sitting down and going through all these processes to go up higher and higher. What is your end goal? What is your achievement?

**Coombs PSN:** You already understand.

**Question:** But I'm asking you.

**Coombs PSN:** How may I help you?



**Zen Master Wu Kwang:** Dae Soen Sa Nim would always teach primary point *[hits floor]* like this. How can you show it without imitating him?

**Coombs PSN:** You already understand.

**ZMWK:** I ask you.

**Coombs PSN:** *[Hits floor and her mala breaks, making a loud sound as the beads scatter on the floor.]*

**ZMWK:** I was going to challenge you, but that's enough for me.

### INKA SPEECH

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

Falling down is rising up. Rising up is falling down.

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

No rising up, no falling down.

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

Rising up is rising up. Falling down is falling down.

KATZ!

Snow falls down, waves rise up.

Hokusai's *Great Wave* is a very famous painting. In it a giant wave is curling over three boats that are racing across Edo Bay, carrying fresh fish to market as the sun rises. In the background is Mount Fuji. Foam from the wave appears to be falling on the mountain as snow.

In our house, we have a *Great Wave* apron in our kitchen, *Great Wave* drink mats in our dining room, and a *Great Wave* cushion in our living room. They're all gifts to my husband, Roger, who is a scholar of Hokusai's work. Over the years of living with this picture, I've come to see how it's a very good teaching about how a life of practice can help us in even the most challenging situations.

Three and a half years ago, Roger was diagnosed with a brain tumor. One minute we were out walking happily in the sunshine, and the next minute his foot started to drag and he sort of collapsed. By the time he got to the hospital his right foot, right leg, the right side of his body and right arm were all completely weak and useless. So it was a sudden change of situation. What are you going to do? That's like the

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Photo: Brenton Sheehan



giant wave in the image representing a sudden change of situation coming at you, and all the emotions that come up around that.

Roger underwent brain surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, and was given powerful steroids and other drugs to control his seizures and other effects of the disease. This was quite a challenge because we had been two healthy people just going along living our normal lives and suddenly we were in this world of sickness and death. Hospital, surgery, you name it, all the different things that can go along with disease. How do you deal with that?

The last three and a half years have been very much like being on a nonstop retreat. In fact I have come to see, as we probably all know, that our whole lives are actually a retreat anyway. But now it really hit home for us.

I began to look at the *Great Wave* closely. The three boats each have oarsmen in them all bending forward with their oars interlocked. They're acting as one and just trying to get through the waves. They're seasoned professionals, and they do this job every day, yet Hokusai doesn't tell us what's going to happen next. But they are just trying and they're all sticking together and keeping going as best they can. That is the power of sangha. Roger and I have certainly experienced it in many forms. First of all, there is the sangha of the two of us, Roger and I, going through this situation. Then there are all the medical professionals we encounter, and the drug manufacturers, the reflexology person, the acupuncture person, you name it: the many, many people who've all been taking care of Roger and me too. Then you realize that each of them also has their own network of connectedness: an infinite sangha that goes out in all directions. We aren't alone in this situation because we're completely supported by all these people doing their jobs and being supported in turn by other people doing their jobs. We even had a friend in California who arranged for Roger to be the beneficiary of a Hindu avoidance-of-death ceremony in India. She sent us photographs of priests in white, chanting and offering prayers and libations over the course of a long day. So the power of sangha transcends space and time.

Like us the men in their boats are just going forward, with a clear direction and shared pur-

pose: "We have to get through this water if we can. We don't know if we're going to make it but we're going to try." While Hokusai doesn't tell us what's going to happen next, there is clearly a lot of really strong try mind. Perhaps he's saying the trying part is more important than the outcome.

The boats themselves are like our practice. Like the Zen forms, the boats are sturdy and fit for purpose, and they see us through. So sometimes bowing is helpful, sometimes chanting is helpful. Sitting, retreats, kong-an practice, all those things along with our clear direction have really helped Roger and me. I don't know how we could have stayed in this situation the way we have without that strong practice support. I know we both feel this way.

In the background of the picture is Mount Fuji. It looks small, so most people just relate to the wave part. But for Hokusai Mount Fuji was the center of his own Buddhist practice life. So it sits there, the still point in his picture: a stable embodiment of Buddha nature. For us it is don't know, our don't-know mind, which may flicker in and out of our awareness throughout the day but is always there. The foam from the giant wave appears to fall on the mountain as snow, so although the mountain looks like it's far away from the drama, actually Hokusai is very clearly connecting them. From moment to moment we go forward with our practice, with our life. Sometimes the waves come and swamp us. Sometimes we get really angry with one another, for example, but we just try to stay connected to practice and to our don't-know mind.

Also in the picture dawn is breaking. The dawn is illumination. Moment to moment, because this is very much the moment-world that Hokusai is showing us, moment to moment you just stay with what is, and



keep sticking with it and when illumination comes, it's like, "Oh! Well, we're just angry. So we'll just be angry until we're not angry." If we are frightened, then we're just frightened and we hold one another. Or if there are tears, tears come, you know that's OK, we hug one another too.

Roger doesn't label his disease, he doesn't use fighting words about it, like "I'm going to conquer this thing," or "I'm going to beat it," or "I'm going to overcome it." In fact, he really doesn't use words about it at all. He just is with it, and he stays as curious as he can be in the face of the situation. I do more checking than he does, actually. I say, "How are you feeling right now?" He replies, "I'm all right." Or "I'm fine," or something like that. It's interesting to see someone in the face of a situation like this be so completely with it. Without trying, he's a really good teacher.

Hokusai's not using labels either. He's actually saying, "be careful about speech labels." There's a mountain-shaped wave in the foreground that echoes the mountain in the background; the foam from the giant wave appears to fall on Mount Fuji as snow; and the real mountain, Mount Fuji, is actually a volcano with the potential to

become liquid and erupt as dramatically as the giant wave. And the foam, snow, waves and clouds are all just forms of water. Everything just stays fluid and you go with it. I think that's true for Roger. To the extent that he doesn't get stuck everything is pretty OK. That's really what Hokusai is teaching, too. Just go with it: keep flowing, keep rowing. Keep just trying as best you can and see what you can do.

So it's been three and a half years now, and the other day Roger's oncologist told him, "hey go ahead, make another exhibition, write some more books, just carry on." The prognosis had been for a much shorter time to live, so for the oncologist to say, "whatever you're doing, you're doing it just fine, just keep on going," is just a wonderful validation of Roger and his practice and his life.

So that's what Hokusai has been teaching me with this picture.

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

Being with is going through, going through is being with.

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

No being with, no going through.

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

Being with is being with. Going through is going through.

KATZ!

Well, I've been through this speech and now we're about to go out the door and have some cake.

My gratitude to our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, for bringing us his great teaching, to Zen Master Soeng Hyang, my first teacher, and to Barry Briggs JDPSN for his teaching and guidance this last year. Thank you. ♦

---

Elizabeth Coombs received inka at Providence Zen Center on March 24, 2018. She started sitting with the Kwan Um School of Zen in America in 1987 and practiced mostly at Providence Zen Center. In 2010 she moved back to the United Kingdom, her country of origin, and lives in York with her husband, Roger. She is a member of the Peak Zen Group in the U.K. and has sat long retreats in the U.K., Poland and Hungary, as well as the United States.

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*Photo: Mary Kay Salvias*



# True Practitioner

During a dharma talk at the New York Zen Center, one Korean monk shared that now Vipassana is getting more and more popular in Korea. And at the same time, Zen Buddhism is receiving lots of criticism.

**Monk:** Zen Master Dae Kwan, you've practiced in Thailand before. How do you see this?

**Zen Master Dae Kwan:** True practitioners never criticize other traditions that are different from their own. People who do not practice in their mind only see the differences. Methods are like finger-pointing to our original mind, that's all.

**Monk:** So why are they fighting?

**Zen Master:** Because they are not practicing! The assembly all laughed.

## Commentary:

After I joined the Zen tradition, Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to visit my teacher, Phra Ajahn Pongsak in Chiangmai, Thailand. When they met, they bowed to each other as if they were meeting good friends. Phra Ajahn told Zen Master: "If I were younger I would also like to learn and practice Zen. I am very happy that Sudharma\* is studying with you." When we were moving into the bungalow, Zen Master Seung Sahn asked, "This place is very beautiful, but why no electricity?" Then I

told him this forest was far from the village and was in a jungle, so we wanted to keep it in its natural state, without electricity. Zen Master seemed unhappy with my answer. When we all settled down, Zen Master Seung Sahn went to see Phra Ajahn again; they met outside Phra Ajahn's hut. Zen Master asked, "Can I see your hut?" Then he went inside. After a few seconds, he came out and said, "Your hut has nothing inside. You are a true monk. Your dharma is high, my dharma is low! No electricity is very good!" Everybody laughed.

These two great teachers are practitioners of the Buddha Way. They only see the nice things about each other and respect each other. This is a real-life example for us!

Buddha used different skillful means only to help free us from suffering and help us wake up to our great love and wisdom, so that we would help each other rather than argue or fight with each other.

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\*Pali name of Zen Master Dae Kwan when she was a *maechi* in Thailand.

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From <http://www.subong.org.hk/en/content/true-practitioner>.

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## Correspondence with a Student

A student wrote to Zen Master Jok Um with questions for a college paper.

**Student:** What is peace?

**Zen Master Jok Um:** What are you? If you find your true self, then you find peace.

**Student:** What is forgiveness?

**ZMJU:** Don't eat toxic mind food. Greed, hate and delusion poison the mind.

**Student:** What is compassion?

**ZMJU:** All sentient beings are your teachers. Perceive their mind-light and be guided by it.

**Student:** What is the importance of compassion and forgiveness concerning oneself and others around them?

**ZMJU:** Don't make self and others. Then you see your true nature everywhere.

**Student:** What methods do you use or teach to help people implement these qualities in their lives?

**ZMJU:** These qualities only come to life when you find that they already reside in you. Meditation practice is body practice—intentionally making a time and space to be fully with your own nature without being seduced by mind-hindrances helps you anchor in the

mind-ground. Find this mind-ground in simple activities—grooming, folding laundry, cleaning, walking. Things that don't require figuring out can be used as practice anchors throughout the course of the day. This is mind practice. Recognizing the shape of circumstances around you and following its flow is life practice. Eat when hungry; sleep when tired; know how to give and how to receive. Then seeing that all sentient beings are your teachers is student practice. The mind of a student is generous, grateful, curious, engaged, kind, receptive and responsive. Finding a guide for this is very important.

**Student:** What is the process one goes through to accept forgiveness?

**ZMJU:** Why would someone reject forgiveness?

**Student:** How does a community prosper when its citizens have a compassionate and forgiving nature?

**ZMJU:** Buddha taught that a peaceful heart makes a peaceful person. A peaceful person makes a peaceful family. A peaceful family makes a peaceful village. A peaceful village makes a peaceful country. A peaceful country makes a peaceful world. ♦

# *We're All Going to Die*

*Harold Rail*

We're all going to die.

I know that conceptually, but do I really comprehend it? Until death comes to us face to face, it remains just an idea. Eventually, it does come to face us directly . . . and then what? Through sincere Zen meditation practice, an understanding of death—or, better, impermanence—becomes more than just an idea.

I want to write about three things—cancer, Zen and photography—because at this moment they define my life. Relationships form a fourth element, more of a sweet result of these three.

One perfectly average March day I had a colonoscopy at my local hospital. After the procedure the doctor walked into the room and said “You have colorectal cancer and

needed to be done. For most of my working life I owned an independent photography and video production company. A year ago, at the ripe age of 65, I jettisoned all that and went back to my college delusion of just making photographs. I called it “letting go.”

I started practicing Zen around 1990 with Ron Kidd, a senior dharma teacher from Chicago. Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Bobby Rhodes) was my guiding teacher for many of these years. Eventually some understanding about the practice took root. I admire our teachers for the challenges they face trying to teach the experiential by using the conceptual. So few of those who first come to practice can make this transition, and it is probably one reason why so few stay with Zen.



*Photo: Harold Rail*

you'll be wearing a colostomy bag the rest of your life.” Just. Like. That! My partner, Jacky, and I were stunned. My first reaction was “No, I won't do that. I'd rather be dead.” This was followed by recognizing the selfishness of that for the people in my life. Plus, I didn't want to be dead just yet.

I went home and searched for the best hospital in the area dealing with this malady. I found Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago and immediately called them.

I found that their bedside manner was much more sympathetic and a treatment plan was quickly created. This plan included six weeks of radiation and chemotherapy, every day in downtown Chicago, 61 miles away. The train rides were 90 minutes each way, the bus rides 30 minutes each way, add a few blocks of walking, and I had over four and a half hours of travel for my twenty-minute radiation treatments.

In college I delusionally majored in fine art photography. The wakeup call came after bills piled up and real work

For me, photography is closely aligned with Zen practice. There is the act of being in attendance when seriously making images. It has been said that the difference between a good photograph and a great photograph is a single centimeter. In that space lies attention presence. When we hit the floor in an interview, for just a minuscule moment before thinking there is only that sound. Likewise, in pure photography, before thinking there is the instantaneous recognition of the scene—a visceral connection between true self and the process of taking a photograph.

After my cancer diagnosis and the accompanying six-week daily travel schedule to the hospital in Chicago, I decided to photograph the experience. I photographed from the bus and train, on the street, in the hospital . . . just about everywhere. On days when I had extra time to catch the train back, I'd walk to the station taking different and interesting routes each time.



I captured the images as a way of seeing and documenting how the treatment and pain drugs were affecting me. As a Zen practitioner for so many years, my mind's moment-by-moment state was an important gauge of seeing how I was changing—and the process of photographing seemed the best way to comprehend and communicate that.

These three elements—cancer, Zen and photography—created my new world. Cancer is the situation. Zen is the relationship. And photography is the function. These three worked together in finding my momentary true self and in finding a way of helping the world. I then created a short video from these photographs and posted it on social media.

Throughout this experience manifested two lessons learned from years of sitting and my many teachers' support: letting go and don't know. I often think of letting go like standing in the middle of a rushing creek, unable to move forward or stand still. The only thing to do is to trust, lie back in the water and let the current carry me.

Don't know is reality now. When I was twelve some friends and I crawled through new sewer pipes, knowing that eventually they would empty into a creek. As we lay prone and crawling through inch-deep water we left birthday candles lit behind us. (Remember, we were dumb kids.) The pipes continued to close in on us as we crawled—until I reached a point where I could barely breathe and my bones turned to claustrophobic stone. In total darkness and in deep distress I finally managed to crawl out backward.

Similarly, at one point in my treatment I found myself in an MRI tube. I was shackled to the sides of the bed, rolled into the chamber and the imaging device came to just a fraction of an inch above my face. I felt the same shortness of breath as in the sewer so many years ago, but this time I was able to observe and oversee the workings of my mind. Without thought or any wish to change the situation, "Kwan Seum Bosal" began to repeat from the recesses. I was simply there, listening to the MRI's banging sounds intertwining with Kwan Seum Bosal, and all with no desire or need for anything to be different. It was just an occurrence—nothing more.

One more experience that has given me some insight into life and death was when I finally went into surgery. The night before and the morning of prep work was awfully uncomfortable. Because of practice, a fight between good or bad never really appeared, but I nevertheless hated the reality of it.



Photo: Harold Rail

I was fully aware as they pushed me down the many hallways toward the operating room. It still plays in my mind like a slow-motion movie—walls floating by, voices and sounds coming in and out, turning into new hallways, descending deeper into the hospital until finally two large doors opened into a room full of blue-clothed doctors, nurses, students, specialists. I still can see the three or four large surgery lights hanging from the ceiling as if they were set for me going on stage to act—which in many ways I was.

The blue people were bustling all around me, actually not paying me much attention. At that moment I understood—this is my primary point—soon they will anesthetize me, and following that I will go out. And from there I would either come back with a different body or I'd be dead. This was the

moment to lie back in the creek; this was my manifestation of complete don't know. And this is where all that talking about Zen, all the conceptualization and ideas, all those clichés hit the wall and either stuck, or they slid down empty of reality.

It all turned out fine. I woke in recovery with the people I love and who love me, watching apprehensively to see how I might reappear. I trusted their love, I trusted my teachers, I trusted my doctors, I trusted Zen practice, but most of all I trust life and death.

Most of my experiences with this life-threatening disease and treatment aren't negative at all, but amazingly they include so much humor, love and grace. These photographs, in a very small way, try to communicate this adventure with cancer as experienced through my deep relationship with Zen practice.

The video made from my photographs can be seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIPVII3uPVA>. ♦

Harold Rail is a senior dharma teacher and the abbot of Dharma Flower Zen. Born in Germany, he emigrated to the United States at seven. His fierce lifelong opposition to any form of discrimination was molded by early prejudices he encountered. When he was drafted into the military during the 1970s, he became an Army photographer in Alaska. After he left the military he attended Columbia College Chicago to major in art photography. Married with three sons at that time, he began to work as a photographer, soon starting his own independent video and photography business, working mostly for nonprofit social service organizations. He met senior dharma teacher Ron Kidd in the 1990s and has practiced with the Kwan Um School since then. He continues his photography business and now concentrates primarily on art photography.

# Retreat at Desaru

Anne Low (Shimso)

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Having spent parts of my life in different places across the globe—Singapore, the United States, Canada, Europe—the notion of home has evolved and come to take on different meanings for me. In the midst of these frequent moves there is, however, a place that has become like a home to me. That is the Pengerang/Desaru Zen retreat center in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, which is run by Gye Mun Sunim (also known by his Chinese title of Sifu), who is the abbot of Kwan Yin Chan Lin in Singapore. Over the years, whenever I return to this part of the world, I would take the boat bound for the other side. In the past few years, I had gone to Pengerang, but this March the retreat was held at Desaru. Whether the retreat is held at Pengerang or Desaru, there are always a few constants I could count on: the sincere practice of regular and new practitioners who lift themselves from their busy lives to just sit and ask “What am I?”; the ever-inspiring guidance of Zen Master Dae Kwang and Gye Mun Sunim JDPS, who teach by example, year after year, what it really means to do our job and to stay the course; the dedicated community of volunteers who turn up just to cook for us; and, last but not least, the trees, the sky and the sea.

At Pengerang, the monkeys drumming the rooftop would accompany us for breakfast, black and white birds fill the gardens, and koi fish nestle in the pond with the salamander—a long-time resident. At Desaru, just a half hour away from the Pengerang retreat center, nature man-

ifests itself yet more differently—and Gye Mun Sunim took full advantage of that on the day we fasted.

One of the special features of the seven-day retreat at Desaru is an all-day fast on the fifth day. I had done the fast before, and each time, come evening I would feel so depleted and weak that my legs felt like jelly. The memory of that returned as I weighed whether to sit it out this time round. But the strength of together action once again overcame the tiny self chattering inside my head. On that day, after the last afternoon sitting at 4:30, a dozen of us rode out in three cars toward the ocean. In less than ten minutes, we arrived at the edge of the South China Sea. The undulating coastline, fine sandy beaches and big, magnificent waves have made Desaru one of the most popular beachfronts in Malaysia. At the sight of the vast expanse of sea and sky, all worries about an empty stomach and depleted energy dropped away. I cheered up and felt confident that I could survive the evening after all.

“We only have to conserve enough energy to get through the evening,” I said. And in this spirit, I added to another long-time practitioner, “Good thing we don’t do the 108 bows tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow, there’s 108,” came the response.

Oh. That was news to me. My face paled. Doing 108 bows after a day’s fast! No way! Can’t do! The tiny self started chattering in my head again. If I had known, I wouldn’t have gone for it. Too late! In the midst of those doubting voices, I heard another voice: “Just do it.” OK, I thought to myself, trying to be brave.

We scattered along the beach. Some walked, others napped under coconut trees, and some others went scouting for seashells. My feet caressed the sand and water, and all worries instantly left with the outgoing waves. I watched the waves, mesmerized by each effort to gather their energy for the long haul toward the shore. Strung like long white ribbons, each wave curled and rolled like a sprinter bound for the finishing line, not letting go until it had reached its destination.



Photo: Anne Low



Watching their dramatic wash up the shore, I was filled with marvel. Desaru truly deserves its reputation as one of the best beaches in Malaysia.

The sea beckoned. Unable to resist, I rolled up my shorts and went in, thinking I would go only knee-deep. But the sea had other plans. A big wave came marching in and knocked away my legs and tossed me headfirst into the sea. In that royal dunk, there was no time or space for a single thought. There was only don't know. After that, it was just following the situation, moving in and out with the incoming and outgoing waves.

Conserve energy? Nah! After the initial shock, I jumped back into the water and rolled with the waves.

Zen Master Seung Sahn once said that if you want enlightenment, you just have to go to the tree and stand before it. To the tree, I would add the sea. Before the vast oceans, even the small nagging mind stands at awe and can't help but shrink and wilt. All of nature is our teacher, and at Desaru and Pengerang, nature sits in abundance. Only mind, ears and eyes need to be emptied to receive their teachings.

When we returned to the retreat center, our faces were bright and bristling with energy and smiles as big as the gifts each had received from nature. And sure enough, the next morning, when it came to bowing, it was just bowing, 108 times, no more and no less. As I went out to the garden to cool off, I found myself still brimming with energy, elated at having completed the day of fasting followed by morning bows, in spite of earlier reservations. As I took deep breaths, aware that nature was just waking up, it occurred to me then that this mind truly makes everything! Yes, no, can do, cannot do—this mind shapes our entire world, and when we fail to see that, this checking

mind becomes our master. “Just do it” had to be the single best antidote to the “cannot mind.”

From this, a further insight emerged. The 108 bows we just did weren't just bows, but were actually energetic affirmation of our resolve to fulfill the four great vows we had chanted together before bowing: “Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all. Delusions are endless; we vow to cut through them all. The teachings are infinite; we vow to learn them all. The Buddha Way is inconceivable; we vow to attain it.” And when the compass is thus set in that direction, the mind's constant gyrations and checking become mere ripples. Whether we want to or not, whether we feel like it or not, just put it down. Just do the bows, even when you don't feel like it. Just chant, even when you feel like skipping it. Just enter into retreat when you find yourself looking for excuses not to go. And as the tumbling waves had shown, help is always on hand. When the direction is clear, the universe conspires to help: the waves become our teachers; the trees talk; the sky is dharma; fellow practitioners are our sangha. When we surrender our small selves, we become one with it and all of nature.

The geckos and butterflies beckon at Pengerang. The sea at Desaru and the uncountable waterfalls await you. Each is complete and sings its own perfect song. It has become a place where I can retreat when things get too hot outside. Over the years, it has become home. But don't take my word for it. Please come and experience it for yourself. ♦

Anne Low is a writer and is currently looking for a publisher for her first novel. She grew up in Singapore but now resides in Toronto. She leads a small meditation group in downtown Toronto on Wednesday evenings. She can be reached at [anne1505@gmail.com](mailto:anne1505@gmail.com).

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Photo: Anne Low





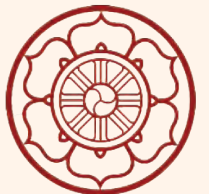
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# Summer

Avital Sebbag

To see the beauty of the universe  
Between Earth and Heaven  
A bud appears  
After the rain  
Contains the essence of life  
So pure and fresh  
Seasons go  
Seasons come

Understanding and obeying the laws of nature is the magical and wonderful secret of creation, which unfortunately most of us have abandoned for the sake of pursuing material greed. We are created into the universe, and nature is our host for the limited time we are here. I call us “time travelers.”

We are on a magical journey where we learn to experience ourselves and become familiar with our wonderful qualities and with what we would like to give back as a gift to Mother Nature, for the abundance she gave us during our time on Earth.

A person aspires to live a healthy and sound life at any given age, which is possible under a few very important conditions, which we must stop, observe, and contemplate: Did you stop for a moment and ask yourself what

season it is now? Should I change my eating habits accordingly?

When we give awareness its rightful place, the information comes to us naturally.

Our body requires energy that can fuel us, just like a plant requires nourishment, water, and sunlight.

The primary basic energy we get is from healthy food that is organic and free of toxins and pesticides. The farmer chooses which crops are best suited for the season, tills the soil so that the seeds have the best chance of growing, irrigates, prunes, pays attention to changes and takes care of damages. This already teaches us about how the farmer’s intent may affect the quality of the crops that are sown.

In summer, nature presents itself in all its glory. It is a time of expansion and abundance. Breathtaking spectacles of blossoms and fruits express the potential stored in seeds. We are drawn outdoors to spend time with friends in an atmosphere of sharing, joy and freedom. Summer has the following characteristics:

- Color: red
- Taste: bitter
- Foods: cherry, watermelon, plum, peach, olives, celery, lettuce, leaves, all types of sprouts, coffee, green tea

Summer is associated with the element of fire, the dominant flavor of the element is bitter (or burned), like toasted bread or grilling tofu and vegetables on the barbecue. Food is simpler, less cooked, more raw, more cooling. The summer days are hot and accompanied by humidity in some parts of the world. The heat and humidity combined create dense air that makes us feel weary. It’s important to prepare our body for the summer so that we don’t suffer from edema and humidity.

This is a time of vacations and trips, outdoor picnics, spending time in water like the beach, streams, lakes, time for the family to spend together. During the hot summer days, it’s important to eat fresh food. Some people can grow their own food in the garden. I obviously recommend organic food that hasn’t been grown in soil with chemical fertilizers and that hasn’t been sprayed with pesticides. These chemicals harm the nervous system and create inflammation in the body.

Until the invention of the refrigerator, the only way to keep food cold was by snow or ice taken directly from nature. In the past, it was customary to bury food in the ground after covering it with a layer of ice and straw as insulation and as a barrier from the mud. Later, this tech-



Photo: Michal Lenart

nique was refined and food was stored inside wooden crates along with chopped ice chunks and piles of straw. The ice chunks could be bought from an ice merchant that passed through the town and offered his goods by crying out, "Ice! Ice!" Wealthy people had special huts with an underground cellar. They used this cool cellar to store food on large blocks of ice, enabling them to store food for a prolonged period and enjoy ice even during the hot summer.

Another food preservation method that existed in every region and food culture and tradition was to pickle vegetables. Pickling is a food preparation and preservation process that uses water with the addition of vinegar or salt, with the main purpose of preserving most of the nutritional ingredients while rendering it edible for longer than usual. The process is also accompanied by characteristic changes in flavor and smell, like the famous kimchi that can be found in every traditional household in Korea, sauerkraut in Germany and Austria, pickled cucumbers and vegetables in the Middle East. The pickles were the ultimate solution for sailors who were out at sea for long periods of time without a refrigerator. Pickling can be done during any season of the year.

Joy is the emotional characteristic of summer. When we are balanced, we are joyful. When we are not balanced and are out of sync with the laws of nature, we may suffer from depression.

How can we protect our *joie de vivre* using nutrition? It's important to consume food that provides our cells with as many enzymes, chlorophyll, and antioxidants as possible. I call these three nutrients "nature's triangle." We are constantly surrounded by these nutrients, and all we need to do is to open our awareness to them, like we do when we practice Zen. Opening our awareness is to take responsibility for our physical and mental health. When the body is balanced, the mind can develop and practicing will be more profound.

In the summer we need to eat less and drink a lot of fluids. We can get these fluids through nutrition that is rich in seasonal fruits and vegetables. It's unnecessary to drink a lot when we eat fruits and vegetables that are rich in water, such as watermelon, grapes, melon, leafy greens.

### Sprouts

We can find enzymes in sprouts originating from seeds and legumes. When we make sprouts, we want all the enzymes to break out. The body uses these enzymes to enable healing to occur naturally in its cells. Sprouting is a simple, easy, fun process that anyone can do in their own kitchen.

The Chinese have been eating sprouts for thousands of years. The type of Chinese sprout we are most familiar with is *nga choy* (or *nga choy*). Sprouts can differ in length from short to long.

Making sprouts is fun, easy and healthy. During the

sprouting process, the starch (carbohydrate) turns into a sprout, and is more easily digested than seeds. When the seed turns into a sprout, the vitamins, minerals and enzymes in it become more available to the body. The amount of vitamins in the seed increases tenfold during sprouting. Sprouts reach the optimal amount of vitamins usually 50 to 100 hours after sprouting has begun.

The ten commandments for novice sprouters:

1. Only use fresh legumes for sprouting. I recommend starting with mung beans and lentils.
2. The sprout should be at least as long as the seed.
3. It's best to sprout in a dark and shaded area (exposure to light affects the bitterness of the sprout).
4. Some seeds like the pressure method.
5. Those with sensitive stomachs should lightly steam the sprouts before eating them.
6. In the summer and in hot dry regions, the sprouts should be rinsed and refreshed more than twice a day.
7. A foul odor indicates a failed sprouting. If that's the case, discard it.
8. You can keep the sprouts in the fridge for several days.
9. Some legumes are easier to sprout (mung beans) than others (chickpeas).
10. Never ever despair if your first sprouting attempts fail.

To make sprouts, soak the legumes for four hours. Transfer to a colander and rinse every two hours under the tap,



*Photo: Michal Lenart*



three times a day. It's important that the legume be damp and not soaking wet, otherwise it won't sprout. After 24 hours the sprout should appear, and then it's important to store in a hermetically sealed dry glass container in the fridge. You can add the sprouts to rice, cooked dishes or even a salad.

### Chlorophyll

Chlorophyll is found in all leafy greens, as well as freshwater algae such as spirulina and chlorella. Chlorophyll is no less important to us than the sun! There's no life without the sun's light and no life without chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is the liquid form of the sun's energy. Consuming as much chlorophyll as possible is akin to exposing our inner organs to the sun's light. Chlorophyll molecules are surprisingly similar in shape to the iron-rich heme molecules in human blood.

Chlorophyll takes care of our body like a loving and devoted mother. It heals and cleanses our internal organs, and even destroys some of our internal enemies, such as pathogenic bacteria, fungi, cancerous cells and more.

Chlorophyll also regulates the levels of "good" and "bad" bacteria in our gut. In order to enjoy optimal health, we need 80 to 85 percent "good" bacteria. Friendly bacteria generate many nutritional components that are essential for our bodies, including vitamin K, B vitamins, numerous beneficial enzymes and other essential substances. Such aerobic or "good" bacteria proliferate in the presence of oxygen. And if we don't have enough oxygen in our cells, the "bad" bacteria take over our gut and start to multiply there and cause infections and disease. These pathogenic bacteria are anaerobic bacteria that cannot tolerate oxygen. Caring for our intestinal bacteria is extremely important! "Good" bacteria may be easily destroyed by many factors, like antibiotics, poor nutrition, overeating and stress. In such a situation, we may have 80 to 90 percent "bad" bacteria filling our body with acidic and toxic waste. I believe that too many anaerobic bacteria in our intestines is the main cause of all diseases.

Chlorophyll has long been used as a wonder drug. Chlorophyll contains significant amounts of oxygen and therefore fulfills a vital role in supporting aerobic bacteria. Therefore, as long as we consume a large amount of chlorophyll, the balance of our intestinal bacteria will improve and result in overall improved health as well. In light of the fact that leafy greens are an important source of chlorophyll, it's hard to find a better way to consume chlorophyll than drinking green shakes. Chlorophyll has been proven to help prevent and heal many forms of cancer and atherosclerosis. Scientific studies show that chlorophyll may help with most diseases. If I wanted to describe all of chlorophyll's healing properties, I would need to devote an entire book to it. This is only a partial list of this amazing substance's medicinal properties. Let's enjoy it by consuming fresh leafy greens throughout the year, and especially during the summer months.

### Antioxidants

Antioxidants can be found in foods year-round, especially in berries, cocoa beans, maca root, algae such as spirulina and chlorella, and in various seasonal fruits and vegetables. Antioxidants help heal the body's cells and to clear them of toxins. The highest concentration of antioxidants is mainly found in superfoods such as berries, cocoa beans, chlorella, spirulina, ginger, and miso—to name a few. In one of my lectures, a client asked me, "Avital, the superfoods that are so popular today—how will I know what's best for me?" I smiled and responded, "Mother Nature is not concerned with trends, time or school of thought. The superfoods have been around for billions of years. We are surrounded by them and they can be found in numerous foods, all we have to do is open our awareness and enjoy the bounty nature provides us with each season."

### Guidelines for Awareness in the Kitchen

- In the kitchen, as in life, do not say, "I'm not skilled enough to be in the kitchen" or "I won't succeed."
- The negative has no place in a healthy kitchen and healthy life.
- I will do the best I can for myself and for my surroundings.
- I will enjoy this exact moment, because it won't return.
- I will be present in the moment in every aspect of my life, including in my thoughts on what I will prepare to eat, how I will prepare it so that it will suit this moment with regard to the season and time of day.
- I will approach the recipe and the ingredients with a smile and with a great deal of love, so that the positive energy infuses the food and affects how it tastes.
- While preparing the food I will be fully present in the moment and not conduct any unnecessary conversations. I won't let thoughts take over the creation of the moment.
- I will be focused on the goal and enjoy each stage, simply being present in the moment.
- I will pay attention when using a knife or any other kitchen utensil so that I don't injure myself or others. ♦

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Avital Sebbag has practiced in the Kwan Um School of Zen in the Israeli sangha for 12 years and is a dharma teacher at the Hod Hasharon Zen Center in Israel. She has served as a vegan kitchen master for numerous retreats in the Kwan Um School around the world. The author of the cookbook *Five Seasons in the Kitchen: Zen Inspired Vegan Cooking*, Avital is also the mother of five sons and a certified natural therapist, specializing in nutrition and ancient Chinese medicine. You can purchase her book online at <http://www.avitality.co.il/english>. Find Avital on Facebook at FiveSeasonsintheKitchen or on Instagram at avitalsebbag.

# Recipes for Summer

Avital Sebbag

## Endive Boats Stuffed with Macadamia Feta

Serves: 3

### Boat ingredients:

12 endives, preferably with broad leaves

### Stuffing ingredients:

100 grams macadamia nuts

6 Kalamata olives, pitted

4 sun-dried tomatoes

¼ cup chopped coriander

Water, as needed

### Garnish ingredients:

¼ cup sesame seeds

8 basil leaves

8 beet juliennes

1 Tbsp olive oil

Rinse endives thoroughly. Gently separate leaves.

20] In a food processor, combine all stuffing ingredients into a coarse, thick paste. Add water, as needed. Form stuffing into small balls using a Parisian spoon or tablespoon. Roll balls in sesame seeds. Place a basil leaf in each endive boat, followed by a ball of stuffing. Garnish with beet juliennes. Drizzle with olive oil (optional).

rounds. Soak herbs in lukewarm water with 1 tsp salt for 15 minutes. Rinse, dry and chop. Peel kohlrabi and julienne using a julienne knife or food processor. In a mixing bowl, combine noodles, kohlrabi, scallions and herbs. Grate ginger into a separate bowl. Add soy sauce, sesame oil, lemon juice and pepper. Whisk until fully combined. Pour over noodles, mix and serve.



Photo: Michal Lenart

## Black Rice Noodles and Kohlrabi

Serves: 4

### Noodles ingredients:

1 package (250 grams) black rice noodles

2 kohlrabies or carrots

1 cup of sprouts, any kind

2 scallions

1 cup mixed herbs (cilantro, parsley, dill)

1 tsp coarse Atlantic sea salt

### Dressing ingredients:

1 piece ginger root (to taste)

1 Tbsp organic soy sauce

Juice from 1 lemon

1 Tbsp soy sauce

Juice from 1 lemon

1 Tbsp sesame oil

1 tsp black pepper

Cook rice noodles according to manufacturer's instructions. Drain, rinse and cool. Cut scallions into

## Lady Fingers

Serves: 4

### Ingredients:

500 grams sambal Asian okra

1 large onion

6 cloves garlic

6 tomatoes

1 tsp coarsely ground black pepper

1 tsp turmeric

1½ Tbsp coarse Atlantic sea salt

1 Tbsp coconut oil

Stem and rinse okra. Place on paper towel and dry in the sun for 30 minutes. Chop onion, garlic and tomatoes. In a wok or deep pan, stir fry onion with coconut oil until browned. Add tomatoes, garlic and spices. Stir fry for 5 minutes. Add okra and bring to a boil. Cover partially, lower flame and simmer for 1 hour.

Serve on a bed of whole grain rice, quinoa, or pearl barley.



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### Nut Ice Cream Nuggets

Equipment: 26-cm pie dish

#### Shell ingredients:

3 cups assorted nuts (macadamia, Brazil, walnut, pecan, almond)  
20 dates, pitted  
½ cup coconut oil

#### Filling ingredients:

Juice and zest from 1 lemon  
2 cups cashews, soaked in water for 12 hours  
3 Tbsp maple syrup  
1 cup water  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 Tbsp cocoa powder

In a food processor, coarsely chop all ingredients. Press mixture into the bottom of the pie dish. The base should be about 1 cm high and even.

In a blender, blend all filling ingredients until smooth. Pour filling onto base. Freeze for 3 hours to stabilize. Cut pie into small nuggets. Serve.

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### Kimchi

#### Ingredients:

1 Chinese cabbage

1 cauliflower  
4 celery roots  
4 carrots  
1 head celery  
1 bunch fresh thyme  
1 bunch oregano  
1 bunch tarragon  
1 Tbsp “four seasons” peppercorns  
8 Tbsp coarse Atlantic sea salt  
10 cloves garlic  
4 Tbsp Korean chili, hot paprika or chili pepper  
5 bay leaves  
4 liters water

Cut cabbage into medium size pieces. Cut carrots and celery stalks on an angle into thin strips. Clean celery root and cut into medium size slices. Divide cauliflower into florets. Place all vegetables in a large bowl, add herbs, spices and water. Mix and transfer mixture to large glass jars or a pickling kettle (sealed clay kettle, designed for pickling). Mark the preparation date on an adhesive label and label kettle jars. Put in a warm place (preferably in sunlight) for 3 days. Transfer to a shaded area for an additional 10 days.◆

Photo: Michal Lenart

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Life is like a dream within a dream.  
In our worldly encounters, who is who?  
Before I was born, who am I?  
After the last breath, what am I?



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# Wake Up and Garden Your Life

*Sophie Vandenkerchove*

You probably recognize the feeling when you open up the news or walk around the city and become aware of so many people suffering. Global problems are more life-threatening than ever, and still no one is doing anything! It feels very discouraging. But you have to see that there is also a wonderful opportunity inside this: all of our problems have the potential to become great stories of love, abundance, understanding and peace.

As a young member of the Kwan Um School of Zen, I'm concerned about social and environmental issues. I am aware of the consequences that my daily actions have upon the existence of many other beings on Earth. I know my privileged position as a Western, white, middle-class woman. At the same time, I feel that my love for the Earth and its inhabitants is so strong that I want to step into my responsibility and leadership, and inspire others to do the same.

In the Brussels Zen Center, we decided last year to begin a permaculture garden experiment. With this project, we want to create a link between sitting and together-action in our sangha, connect with the neighborhood and explore interrelations between spirituality and ecology. We started the project after I spoke with Koen JDPSN about my willingness to act around ecology inside the Zen Center. Soon, we organized a first meeting with the sangha to explore these ideas a little further. One meeting became several; we found a common vision and started to plan the project. By now we have a wonderful garden, with a schedule of regular working days; we have organized a successful crowdfunding walk and a first workshop for growing edible plants. Most of the grown veggies are shared among helping neighbors, but will also be used to cook food for homeless people who are living in the city. In the future, we would like to organize exchange circles around the theme of Zen and engagement for young people, propose cooking and fermenting workshops, and much more.

## **Everything Gardens**

Permaculture, which stands for “permanent culture,” finds inspiration in nature on how to live sustainably and offers tools on how to work together as humans. Nature has an incredible amount of experience on how to live resiliently; she has been around for 4.5 billion years on our planet! So, almost all of the testing has already been done. Permaculture started as a philosophy in the late 1970s and found its application in many garden projects around the world. Nevertheless, it is not purely a land-based practice: social interactions are considered equally important. Through the techniques and principles of permaculture, it becomes possible to “garden” your life, your projects

and even your own culture. It is not a rigid system, but rather a holistic practice. Therefore it has an almost limitless amount of meanings and understandings: its core aim is to create harmony within ourselves, between people and with our planet, so that abundance can arise.

Behind permaculture lies a long tradition of indigenous, earth-based practices that have enriched the lives of our ancestors during many generations on Earth. These traditions already see the inherent importance of Earth as a teacher. So, permaculture didn't have to reinvent the wheel, but it did adapt this ancient wisdom very well. Its principles and ethics respond directly to the actual existential problems of our human species and they offer useful pathways toward a more sustainable future. Generally, a garden is a great experimental ground of awareness; since we spend some time in it every day, it becomes easy to observe the interactions that are going on. A garden can be a great teacher and show us how to live without harming other beings. A garden is also a great mirror that directly shows the consequences of our actions. In our garden, we observed it for a long time before taking action, and then we worked with what was already available on the land. We set in renewables, trying to create as much wealth and diversity as possible, so as to give less chance to pests. When we work together as a group, we do our best to stay mindful of others, opening our hearts and keeping conscious of blocking patterns that emerge inside us. Inside the Zen center we are mindful of our energy and plastic consumption. We only buy necessary items (secondhand, if possible), fair and organic food in bulk, use self-made, natural cleaning products and allow ourselves to be more happy than before.

In Zen, we use our don't-know mind and “just do it” actions to eradicate the root of suffering. This is a simple and powerful teaching because of its direction to save all beings and its power to solve a lot of problems. It is important though that not only do we say, believe and understand those things, but also act upon them. We need courage, and we need to reach out to our sangha, because we can't do it all alone. If we want to offer a solution for the problems of our times then we need to wake up and find out who we truly are. Climate change, wars and famine are consequences of our collective ignorance. So we need the collective power of together-action to understand and cut the roots of this karma.

Through our permaculture experiment, we learn important skills as a sangha on how to work together for the world: we learn to communicate clearly, divide tasks, take up responsibilities and listen deeply to each other. At the



same time, we are learning to grow beyond our fears, taking up responsibilities that we would normally not dare to do. We also become aware of the gifts of others, what each person is good at, or what they love to do. As a dharma-teacher-in-training, the possibility to lead this project helped me to become much clearer about my direction, claim my own path and share my gifts with others. It is just wonderful to see people from our sangha opening up, coming to the events and having the opportunity to get to know each other better and even become friends.

I believe that projects like our permaculture one are a good response to important challenges in the Kwan Um School: working together like this offers a pathway for a younger generation toward the school; it makes us more aware of what works and what doesn't; and it motivates us to integrate all we learned in order to realize meaningful change inside ourselves. Through adaptable projects, we learn a lot about what our future students need. And they will understand our vow to try, try for 10,000 years and longer, to help and offer them a wonderful life of abundance, clarity, wisdom and compassion, now and in the future.

### Earth As a Lover, Earth As a Self

Ecology and spirituality are interrelated, just as Zen and permaculture are. The problems and conflicts we experience now arise from our fundamental belief in the separateness of life and an inner distinction inside ourselves. A large part of our problematic behavior happens unconsciously inside of us, so we need to continue our practice to become more awake and alert. Our suffering and the Earth's suffering are one and the same. If we allow ourselves to see our world as our lover, then we cannot harm her. If you start with "Who am I," then you can see that you are already the Earth and that she is you. When you eat, you can see the farmers that produced the food, the bees that pollinate the flowers, the love that radiates from your bowl.

Each of us has something unique to offer to the world, our greatest gift and most authentic, true self. Every Zen center has a melting pot of wonderful individuals that can make it work together. Many hands can make work more challenging, but also more interesting and valuable. Each of us can help in endless ways: you can start an ethical company, travel less by plane, become a monastic, teach meditation to kids, offer cooking classes about vegan food for your family, organize exchange circles around white privilege, and so on. You can help the planet we live on by using your head, heart and hands right now.

### Blueprint for Initiating a Sangha Project

*These reflect the processes and conversations that we had in our local sangha to bring the permaculture project into life.*

Abbots, guiding teachers, and dharma teachers: Allow opportunities for people to speak about how they would like to engage in practice in their daily lives, making the most of their special gifts and qualities. If someone al-

ready has an idea, give them an opportunity to test it out, follow up with them and give them useful feedback. There are many hidden gems in our sanghas, people who are burning to do something and those who need a just little help to become aware of how they can contribute.

Members and dharma-teachers-in-training: Tell the sangha about your dreams, passions and visions; propose ideas to the abbot, senior dharma teachers or guiding teacher, and experiment. You have so much wonderful things to offer that can help others.

Organize a meeting(s) with the sangha: Which social or environmental issues are we interested in? What is specifically needed in our sangha? What can we do together as a sangha? What does each of us want to do? How can we enable people to do more what they would love to do? Work out a common vision for your sangha, or a vision for each person individually. Ideally, choose what you want to focus on *before* you organize the meeting.

For a together-action project: After a couple of meetings of exploring the vision, work out a strategy on how you are going to realize that vision and what is needed for that. Make a yearly plan and a list of tasks, and divide responsibilities. Plan a first, concrete together-action event, or test out some first ideas and give feedback of your experiences to the group. Continue to clarify the vision and the tasks list during regular monthly meetings, while having more together-action moments. Celebrate your achievements regularly and have fun together. Reclarify the vision and strategy, or have evaluation meetings every couple of months.

For an individual project: Choose a dharma friend to exchange ideas with on your journey. Work on fears and blockages together, do extra chanting, bowing or other practices, exchange ideas, give each other feedback and celebrate achievements together.

To learn more about the permaculture project visit PermaSource on FaceBook, or visit <https://permasource.wordpress.com> on the web. ♦

### Resources for Further Reading

Stefan Gey. *Zen in the Art of Permaculture Design*, Permanent Publications, 2016.

Thich Nhat Hanh. *Love Letter to the Earth*. Parallax Press, 2013.

Stephanie Kaza. *Dharma Rain*. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

Llewelyn Vaughan Lee. *Spiritual Ecology*. Golden Sufi Center, 2014.

Looby Macnamara. *People & Permaculture*. Permanent Publications, 2012.

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Sophie Vandekerchove is a dharma-teacher-in-training and a practicing resident of the Kwan Um School of Zen since 2012. She holds a degree in philosophy and moral sciences, is a huge nature lover, and gives back to the world through her spiritual ecology activism and inspirational writing. Currently she is working on a permaculture project at the Brussels Zen Center, which explores and integrates the confluences of dharma, permaculture, deep ecology, nature connection and together-action. Contact her at [vandekerchove.s@gmail.com](mailto:vandekerchove.s@gmail.com).

# Book Review

## *No-Gate Gateway*

### *The Original Wu-Men Kuan*

Translated by David Hinton

Shambhala Publications, 2018

Review by Zen Master Wu Kwang (Richard Shrobe)

My wife and I once gave a birthday gift of a new recording of J. S. Bach's Saint Matthew Passion to her church's choir director. My wife expressed to the choir director, "I hope you don't already have this one." He replied, "You can never have too many versions of the Saint Matthew Passion." Likewise, we could say that you can never have too many translations of the kong-an collection, Wu-Men Kuan.

Wu-Men Kuan (K. Mu Mun Kwan) is a collection of 48 kong-ans that was compiled in the thirteenth century by Zen Master Wu-Men (K. Mu Mun). Most of the cases are interchanges between Zen masters and monks or short anecdotes about various Zen masters. Wu-Men also makes use of a few sutra stories and Chinese folktales, which he turns into kong-ans. Wu-Men adds a short comment and poem to each kong-an in the collection.

Most of the previous translations have additional commentaries by modern Zen masters or translators. These commentaries are for the most part taken from formal talks given by Zen masters during group retreats. Zen Master Seung Sahn's translation, however, has no commentary, and he chose only to include the kong-an itself and Wu-Men's poem, leaving out Wu-Men's comment. Later, when Zen Master Seung Sahn included some of the kong-ans from the Wu-Men Kuan in his kong-an collection *The Whole World Is a Single Flower*, he wrote his own brief commentary to each kong-an, as well as questions for the reader to ponder. Zen Master Seung Sahn once told me that he considered the Wu-Men Kuan the clearest of the various classical kong-an collections, and the most helpful for students.

The translation by David Hinton differs from previous translations in a few respects. The subtitle is "The Original Wu-Men Kuan" and this reviewer wonders whether Hinton views the previous translations as other than "original." In his introduction Hinton says that however valuable the commentaries of other translators are, "they dwarf the text itself, domesticating it and diluting the immediate poetic impact." Further, "By presenting only the text itself in its native philosophical context this translation tries to respect the book's inherent value as a self-sufficient literary work."

The jury in my head is still deliberating as to whether some of these comments are subtly pejorative. When Hinton refers to the "native philosophical context" of the text, he is primarily referring to Taoist thought. It seems as if he views Buddhist thought as secondary or ancillary. Zen Master Seung Sahn would sometimes say that when Indian Buddhism met Chinese Taoism, Zen was born, but he seemed to view Buddhism as primary and the nature imagery of Chinese Taoism as a down-to-earth way of representing what In-

dian Buddhism had portrayed through vast cosmic images.

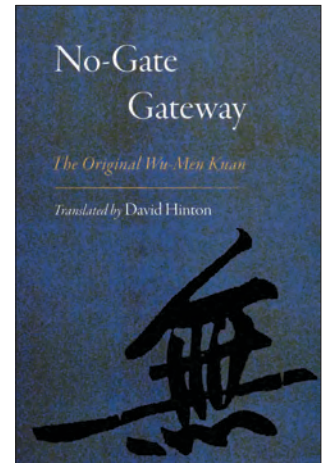
The fact that Hinton seems to put Taoist thought first might also influence some of the choices he has made in translating certain terms. Having compared parts of Zen Master Seung Sahn's translation with the five or six other translations that I have looked into, I find that the differences are not particularly significant. With Hinton's translation, however, at times the flavor does seem somewhat different. To cite a few examples, let's start with case 1 of the Wu-Men Kuan, "Jo-Ju's Dog."

"A monk asked, Jo-Ju, 'Does a dog have Buddha nature?' Jo-Ju said Mu!" (C. Wu). In Zen Master Seung Sahn's translation, he has "Mu!" and in parenthesis "(No)." Thomas Cleary just has "No." Literally mu or wu means "no" or "nothing," which is similar to the Sixth Patriarch's phrase "originally nothing" (not a thing). Hinton, on the other hand, translates wu or mu as "absence." Does a dog have Buddha nature? Jo-Ju said "Absence." Hinton also insists on translating personal names literally, so that Master Jo-Ju, for example, appears as "Master Visitation-Land."

In case 2, "Pai Chang's Fox," an old man asks Zen Master Pai Chang for help. Yamada Roshi translates this as "Now I beg you Master please say a turning word on my behalf and release me . . ." Aitken Roshi also has "Please say a turning word for me." The term "turning word" has the meaning of suddenly pointing the mind to see clearly. Hinton by comparison translates this as "a hinge-phrase that will liberate me."

One final example, in case 8, "Gye Chung's Cart," the poem translated by Zen Master Seung Sahn begins "Where the wheel of mind activity turns, even a Master falls into ignorance." Hinton's translation is "There where the loom of origins wheels around . . ." This is not to say that the other translations are better or more accurate, or truer to the "original" than Hinton's. The process of translation is a difficult art, many Chinese characters are open to a variety of interpretations, and it is clear that Hinton has given much deliberation to his choices.

Although Hinton has no commentary to each kong-an in the original text, he does have an extensive introduction, 31 pages to be exact. If one reads the introduction, one could be influenced to see the kong-ans and Wu-Men's comments and poems from Hinton's perspective, which might "domesticate and dilute" the impact of the text, similar to how Hinton accuses the extensive commentaries of previous translations of doing. Putting that aside, why not take a look at David Hinton's *No-Gate Gateway*, and see if it opens any gates for you? ♦





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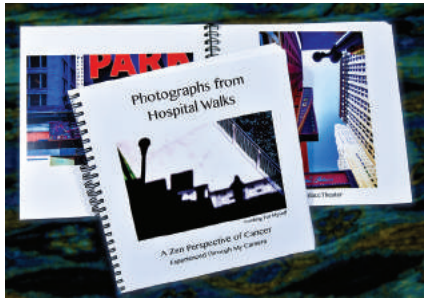
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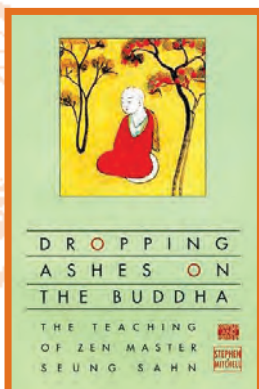
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**Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake: Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn.** Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn. 199 pages. *Shambhala, 2006. ISBN 1-59030-340-7. \$15.95*

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**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. \$29.95*

**Ten Gates: The Kong-an Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn.** This book presents the system of ten kong-ans that Zen Master Seung Sahn came to call the "Ten Gates." These kong-ans represent the basic types one will encounter in any course of study. 152 pages. *Shambhala, 2007. ISBN 978-1-59030-417-4. \$20.00*

**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. *Reprinted by Primary Point Press 2015. ISBN 978-0-942795-17-2. \$17.95*

**Butterflies on a Sea Wind.** Anne's compelling narrative describes both the physical and mental demands of retreats and the challenges of integrating Zen concepts into modern day life. 179 pages. *Andrews McMeel ISBN 0-7407-2721-4. \$12.95*

**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*

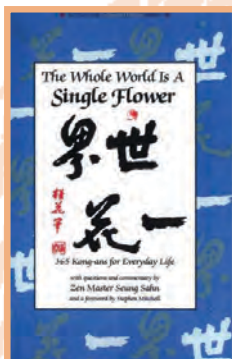
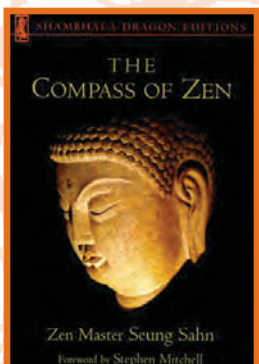
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**The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life.** Zen Master Seung Sahn. CD-ROM version for Mac and PC. Audio recordings of Zen Master Seung Sahn's commentaries together with the full text of the kong-an collection. 2 discs. *Primary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

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**Perceive World Sound CD.** Historic recording with Zen Master Seung Sahn of the morning and evening bell chants and the daily chants done at Kwan Um School Zen Centers. *Primary Point Press ISBN 0-942795-12-1. \$15.00*

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kwanumzenbsas@gmail.com

### Alaska

Cold Mountain Zen Center  
*Zen Master Bon Soeng*  
c/o Cary de Wit  
P.O. Box 82109  
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907/378-6657  
dewit@fastmail.net

### Arizona

Bisbee Lotus Sangha  
*Barry Briggs JDPSN*  
info@bisbeelotussangha.org

Myung Wol Zen Center  
*Merrie Fraser JDPSN*  
P.O. Box 11084  
Scottsdale, AZ 85271-1084  
480/947-6101  
fraser.mnoel@gmail.com

### Arkansas

Little Rock Zen Group  
*Zen Master Hae Kwang*  
1516 W. 3rd Street  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
501/661-1669  
lucyhauer@gmail.com

Morning Star Zen Center  
*Zen Master Hae Kwang*  
1599 West Halsell Road  
Fayetteville, AR 72701-3902  
479/530-1098  
btaylor@uark.edu

### California

Dharma Zen Center  
*Paul Park JDPSN*  
1025 South Cloverdale  
Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90019  
323/934-0330  
info@dharmazen.com

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*Zen Master Jok Um*  
193 Mansfield Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
203/787-0912  
info@newhavenzen.org

### Delaware

Delaware Valley Zen Center  
*José Ramírez JDPSN*  
P.O. Box 240  
Newark, DE 19715  
302/533-8819  
dvzinfo@gmail.com

### Florida

Cypress Tree Zen Center  
*Zen Master Jok Um*  
647 McDonnell Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32310  
ctzg@webdharma.com

Gateless Gate Zen Center  
*Zen Master Jok Um*  
P.O. Box 12114  
Gainesville, FL 32604  
352/614-0512  
gateless.gate.zen.center@gmail.com

Orlando Zen Center  
*Zen Master Jok Um*  
515 S. Crystal Lake Drive  
Orlando, FL 32803  
407/897-3685  
orlandozencenter@gmail.com

South Florida Zen Group  
*Carlos Montero JDPSN*  
7110 SW 182nd Way  
Southwest Ranches, FL  
33331  
954/324-3925  
southfloridazengroup@gmail.com

### Idaho

Empty Gate Zen Center—Boise  
*Zen Master Bon Soeng*  
660 N 9th St  
Boise, ID 83702  
208/661-6277  
clintonjamesmith@gmail.com

### Illinois

Chicago Kwan Um Zen Center  
*Zen Master Jok Um*  
28025 N. Lakeview Dr.  
McHenry, IL 60051  
608/405-2436  
info@isthmuszencommunity.org

Dharma Flower Zen Center  
*Zen Master Hae Kwang*  
861 Clay Street  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
815/236-2511  
dharmaflowerzen@gmail.com

Ten Directions Zen Community  
*Zen Master Jok Um*  
c/o Craig Coatney  
1020 Ceder Avenue,  
Suite 216  
St. Charles, IL 60174  
director@tendirectionszen.org

### Indiana

Empty Circle  
NW Indiana Zen Group  
*Lincoln Rhodes JDPSN*  
497 Main St.  
Hobart, IN 46342  
dharmainc@aol.com

Indianapolis Zen Center  
*Lincoln Rhodes JDPSN*  
3703 North Washington  
Blvd.  
Indianapolis, IN 46205  
317/921-9902  
director@indyzen.org

### Kansas

Kansas Zen Center  
Nam Pung Sa  
*Zen Master Bon Hae*  
1423 New York Street  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
kansaszencenter@gmail.com

Prairyerth Zen Center  
*Zen Master Ji Haeng*  
c/o Rebecca Otte  
8000 SW 23rd Street  
Topeka, KS 66614  
785/224-4678  
prairyerthzen@gmail.com

Tallgrass Zen Center  
Solar Addition, UFM, 1221  
Thurston St, Manhattan, KS  
785/537-8713  
tallgrasszen@yahoo.com

### Maine

Northern Light Zen Center  
Buk Kwang Soen Won  
*Terry Cronin JDPSN*  
202 Meadow Road  
Topsham, ME 04086  
207/729-6013  
northernlightzencenter@gmail.com

### Massachusetts

Cambridge Zen Center  
Dae Gak Sa  
*Zen Master Bon Yeon*  
199 Auburn Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Office 617/576-3229  
Fax 617/576-3224  
director@cambridgezen.com

Cape Cod Zen Center  
*Terry Cronin JDPSN*  
169 North Main Street  
South Yarmouth, MA 02664  
508/760-1814  
capecodzencenter@yahoo.com

Open Meadow Zen Group  
*Zen Master Bon Haeng*  
212 Marrett Road  
Lexington, MA 02421  
781/512-2518  
openmeadowzen@yahoo.com

Plymouth Zen Group  
*Terry Cronin JDPSN*  
26 North Street  
Plymouth MA 02360  
781/733-9361  
plymouthzen@gmail.com

### Mexico

Mexico City Zen Centre  
*Zen Master Bon Soeng*  
Tajín #617-1  
Colonia Narvarte  
Mexico Distrito Federal  
C.P. 03300, Mexico  
+52 555 6051489  
kwanumzendf@gmail.com

### Nevada

Zen Center of Las Vegas  
Dae Myong Sa  
*Zen Master Ji Haeng*  
Chaiya Meditation  
Monastery  
7925 Virtue Court  
Las Vegas, NV 89113  
702/293-4222  
zencenteroflasvegas@gmail.com

### New Mexico

Deming Zen Center  
*Zen Master Bon Hae*  
200 South Nickel Street  
Deming, NM 88030  
575/545-7613  
info@demingzen.org

### New York

Chogye International Zen Center  
of New York  
*Zen Master Wu Kwang*  
400 East 14th Street, Apt. 2E  
New York, NY 10009  
212/353-0461  
info@chogyezencenter.org

Three Jewels Binghamton  
Zen Group  
*Zen Master Wu Kwang*  
c/o Michael O'Sullivan  
14 Wayman Drive  
Otego, NY 13825  
mklllo@stny.rr.com

Three Treasures Zen Center  
of Oneonta  
*Zen Master Wu Kwang*  
c/o Michael O'Sullivan  
14 Wayman Drive  
Otego, NY 13825  
607/988-7966  
abbot@thethreetreasures.org

### Oklahoma

Red Earth Zen Center  
*Zen Master Bon Hae*  
Windsong Innerspace  
2201 NW I-44 Service Road  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
405/401-9055  
contact@redearthzen.com

### Rhode Island

Providence Zen Center  
*Hong Poep Won*  
Head Temple, North America  
*Zen Master Bon Haeng*  
*Nancy Hedgpeh JDPSN*  
99 Pound Road  
Cumberland, RI 02864  
401/658-1464  
director@providencezen.org

### Washington

Ocean Light Zen Center  
Hye Kwang Sa  
*Tim Lerch JDPSN*  
9131 California Avenue SW  
Seattle, WA 98116  
info@oceanlightzen.org

## Wisconsin

Great Lake Zen Center  
Dae Ho Soen Won  
*Zen Master Dae Kwang*  
1721 S. 81st St.  
West Allis, WI 53214  
info@glzc.org

Isthmus Zen Community  
*Zen Master Ji Haeng*  
715 Hill Street, Room 170  
Madison, WI 53705  
608/405-2436  
info@isthmuszencommunity.org

## Asia

**Seung Sahn International  
Zen Center**

**Mu Sang Sa**

**Head Temple, Asia**

*Zen Master Dae Bong*  
*Hye Tong Sunim JDPS*

Chungnam Gyeryong-shi  
Eomsa-myeon  
Hyangjeoksan-gil 129  
32816 South Korea  
Office +82 42 841 6084  
Fax +82 42 841 1202  
info@musangsa.org

Desaru Zen Meditation Center  
*Gye Mun Sunim JDPS*  
No. 13, Jalan Belian 5, Marinea 2  
Taman Desaru Utama  
81930 Bandar Penawar  
Johor, Malaysia  
kyclzen@singnet.com.sg

Haeng Won Zen Centre  
*Zen Master Dae Kwang*  
*Myong An Sunim JDPS*  
11 Solok Bukit Belah 2  
Emerald Park  
11920 Bayan Lepas  
Pulau Pinang  
Malaysia  
+60-10-3739886  
haengwonzc@gmail.com

Hoeh Beng Zen Center  
*Zen Master Dae Bong*  
*Chuan Wen Sunim JDPS*  
18-A Jalan Raja Bot  
50300 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
+60 3292 9839  
Fax +60 3292 9925  
hoehbeng@hotmail.com

Kwan Um Seoul Zen Group  
Yolrin Zen Center  
*Andrzej Stec JDPSN*  
*Kathy Park JDPSN*  
Jongno-gu Suseong-dong 51-1  
Dusan We've Pavilion 8FL #826  
03150 Seoul, South Korea  
+82 10 2031 8813  
info@kwanumseoul.org

Kwan Um Daejeon Zen Group  
*Andrzej Stec JDPSN*  
*Kathy Park JDPSN*  
Seo-gu Shingalma-ro 262  
Dae Op Bldg. 3FL  
35227 Daejeon, South Korea  
+82 10 2031 8813  
info@kwanumdajeon.org

Pengerang International  
Zen Center

Kwan Yin Chan Lin  
*Gye Mun Sunim JDPS*  
Lot 109 Telok Ramunia  
81620 Pengerang Johor, Malaysia  
+60 7 826 4848  
kyclzen@singnet.com.sg

Singapore Zen Center  
Kwan Yin Chan Lin Meditation  
Center  
*Gye Mun Sunim JDPS*  
No. 21, Lorong 25 Geylang  
Singapore 388299  
+65 6392 0265  
Fax +65 6392 4256  
kyclzen@singnet.com.sg

Su Bong Zen Monastery  
Gak Su Temple International Zen  
Center  
*Zen Master Dae Kwan*  
32 Leighton Road  
5/F Starlight Hse  
Causeway Bay, Hong Kong,  
China  
+852 2891 9315  
Fax +852 2575 0093  
info@subong.org.hk

## Australia

Brisbane (Retreat & Residential  
Centre)  
Phoenix Zen Centre  
3 Albury Street,  
Deagon QLD 4017  
Queensland, Australia  
+617 32697393 (Peter-Dae  
Haeng)  
daehaeng@gmail.com

Gold Coast 1  
Gold Coast Zen Group  
23 Sundance Way  
Runaway Bay, QLD 4216  
Gold Coast,  
Queensland, Australia  
+61 435 249 330 (Julie-Bup  
Wol)  
goldcoastzengroup@hotmail.  
com

Gold Coast 2  
(Retreat Centre)  
106 Bonogin Road  
Bonogin QLD 4213  
Gold Coast,  
Queensland, Australia  
+61 755 289 923 (Julie-Bup  
Wol)  
kwanumzen.oz@hotmail.com

## South Africa

Jung Shim Zen Group  
*Zen Master Dae Bong*  
P.O. Box 690  
Wilderness 6560  
Republic of South Africa  
+27 823 773 280 (Gerry)  
alreadyone@webmail.co.za

## Israel

Haifa Zen Group  
*Zen Master Ji Kwang*  
c/o Ofer Cohn  
Bikurim 50  
Haifa, Israel  
+972 53 4319816  
(Ofer Cohn)  
ofercohn@gmail.com

Hod Hasharon Zen Center  
*Yuval Gill JDPSN*  
c/o Rowena Gill  
16a Ha Tchelet Street  
Hod Hasharon,  
Israel 4526446  
+972 54 4831122 (Yuval Gil)  
hasharonzencenter@  
gmail.com

Pardes-Hanna-Karkur Zen Group  
*Zen Master Ji Kwang*  
c/o Boaz Franklin  
Derekh Pica 14/5,  
Pardes Hana-Karkur, Israel  
+972 54 6522812 (Boaz  
Franklin)  
zen.pardeshanna@gmail.com

Tel Aviv Zen Group  
*Zen Master Ji Kwang*  
c/o Einat Rogel  
24A reines St, 2nd floor Apt 3  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
+972 50 4321501  
(Avichai Ornoy)  
+972 54 7289466  
(Yael Bar Levy)  
telavivzen@gmail.com

## Europe

### Austria

**Kwan Um School of Zen Vienna**  
*Knud Rosenmayr JDPSN*  
Kwan Um Zen Schule Zen  
Zentrum  
Kolingasse 11/4  
1090 Wien, Austria  
+43 680 55 396 11  
(Knud Rosenmayr)  
info@kwanumzen.at

### Belgium

Brussels Zen Center  
*Koen Vermeulen JDPSN*  
Rue de l'Oiselet. 16A  
1080 Molenbeek  
Brussels, Belgium  
+32 497 596 659  
(Koen Vermeulen)  
kwanumzenbe@gmail.com

### Czech Republic

Brno Zen Group  
Dae Gak Sa  
*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Zenové centrum školy Kwan  
Um v Brně  
Výletní 7  
62300 Brno, Czech Republic  
+420 775 988 882 (Ondráš  
Příbyla)  
kwanumbrno@gmail.com

Liberec Zen Center  
*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Dr. Milady Horákové 1  
Liberec 46001, Czech  
Republic  
+420602756401  
(Jakub Kopecký)  
zen.liberec@gmail.com

Litoměřice Zen Group  
*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Osvobození 19, Litoměřice  
(Tearoom house, back entry,  
1th floor)  
Czech Republic  
+420 721 674 455 (Viktor  
Matys)  
+420 774 122 543 (Václav  
Kubíček)  
zen@grumpa.net

Olomouc Zen Group  
*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Zen group školy Kwan Um v  
Olomouci  
c/o Petr Klásek  
P. Bezručů 4  
783 35 Horka nad Moravou  
Czech Republic  
+420 603 449 959 (Petr  
Klásek)  
olomouc@kwanumzen.cz

Prague Zen Group  
Seong Kwang Sa  
*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Zen centrum školy Kwan Um  
Praha  
Kwan Um, Shambala center,  
Varsavska 13,  
Prague 2, 120 00, Czech  
Republic  
+420 728 836 211 (Vera  
Hrusova)  
kwanumpraha@gmail.com

Tábor Zen Group  
*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Centrum ŽIVOTA  
Dobrovského 729/2,  
Tábor, Czech Republic  
+420 776 148 494  
derossi@email.cz

**Vrážné Zen Center  
Head Temple, Czech Republic**

*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
c/o Vrážné Zen Center  
Vrážné 3  
Jevíčko 569 43, Czech  
Republic  
+420 608 169 042 (Jiří  
Hazlbauer)  
abbot@vraznezen.org

Zlín Zen Group  
*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Zen group Kwan Um ve  
Zlíně  
Lhotka 44  
763 02 Zlín  
Czech Republic  
+420 739 672 032 (Kamila  
Karlíková)  
krmila@email.cz

### France

**Paris Zen Center**  
*Koen Vermeulen JDPSN*  
c/o Carine Nottin 1,  
allée Edouard Quincey  
94200 Ivry France  
+ 33 613 798 328  
(Eanjo Kim)  
contact@kwanumzen.net

### Germany

Bad Bramstedt Zen Group  
*Arne Schaefer JDPSN*  
Warnemünde-Ring 19  
245767 Bad Bramstedt,  
Germany  
+49 419 2306 8360  
(Uwe Schmidt)  
bad-bramstedt@  
kwanumzen.de

**Berlin Zen Center****Chong Hye Sa****European Head Temple***Zen Master Gu Ja*

Gottschedstraße 4  
Aufgang 5  
13357 Berlin, Germany  
+49 304 660 5090  
berlin@kwanumzen.de

## Cologne (Köln) Zen Group

*Zen Master Ji Kwang*

c/o Michael Chung  
MAINDO Akademie  
Maarweg 141  
50825 Köln, Germany  
49 170 456 5432  
koeln@kwanumzen.de

## Dresden Zen Center

## Oh Sahn Sa

*Arne Schaefer JDPSN*

Rieser Strasse 32  
01127 Dresden, Germany  
+49 176 7008 2636 (Ronny Herzog)  
dresden@kwanumzen.de  
www.kwanumzen.de/dresden

## Hamburg Zen Group

*Arne Schaefer JDPSN*

c/o Shambhala  
Meditationszentrum  
Hansastraße 19  
20149 Hamburg  
Germany  
+49 162 690 0684  
(Sung-Yon Lee)  
hamburg@kwanumzen.de

**Great Britain****London Zen Centre****Ja An Sa****Head Temple, Great Britain***Ja An JDPSN (Bogumila*

*Malinowska)*  
Ilex House, Crouch Hill  
Holly Park  
London N4 4BY, Great  
Britain  
+44 774 297 9050  
zen.london@hotmail.co.uk

## The Peak Zen Group

*Zen Master Ji Kwang*

c/o Kubong-Sa  
High Tor Road  
Matlock DE4 3DG  
Great Britain  
+44 7400 028488 (Peter)  
jibul@kwanumzen.org.uk

**Hungary**

## Budapest KUSZ Zen Group

*Jo Potter JDPSN*

+36 70 457 0486 (Tamás Mészáros)  
mesztamas@gmail.com

## Szeged KUSZ Zen Group

*Jo Potter JDPSN*

+36 30 5864090  
(Kasza Péter)  
szongdzsin@vipmail.hu

**Latvia**

## Jurmala Zen Group

## Kwan Ji Sa

*Oleg Šuk JDPSN*

c/o Tatjana Tračevska  
Raina Street, 83  
LV-2016, Jurmala, Latvia  
+371 29191137 (Tatjana Tračevska)  
kwanumzen@inbox.lv

**Lithuania**

## Kaunas Zen Center

## Kam No Sa

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*

c/o Tomas Stonis  
Verkiu 25c  
LT-44466 Kaunas, Lithuania  
+370 601 56350  
+370 698 29299  
108tomas@gmail.com

## Šakiai Zen Center

## Son Kwang Sa

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*

Šakių KC, Nepriklausomybės  
7/7  
LT-71122 Šakiai, Lithuania  
+370 686 56392 (Vytautas Smirnovas)  
smirnovas.vytautas@gmail.com

**Vilnius Zen Center****Ko Bong Sa****Head Temple, Lithuania***Zen Master Joeng Hye*

Mokyklos 21A  
LT-08413 Vilnius, Lithuania  
+370 675 16008 (Modestas Kazlauskas)  
songji108@gmail.com

**Poland**

## Gdańsk Zen Center

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*

ul. Sztormowa 9,  
80-335 Gdańsk Żabianka,  
Poland  
tel. +48 507-587-532  
(Emilia)  
gdansk@zen.pl

## Katowice Zen Center

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

ul. Zagrody 22  
40-729 Katowice-Ligota,  
Poland  
+48 501 430 062 (Waldek)  
kwanum.katowice@gmail.com

## Kraków Zen Center

## Do Miong Sa

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

ul. Stradomska 17/4  
31-068 Kraków, Poland  
+48 530 677 081 (Slawek)  
krakow@zen.pl

## Łódź Zen Center

*Igor Piniński JDPSN*

Lodzki Osrodek Zen  
ul. Piotrkowska 93/14  
90-423 Lodz, Poland  
+48 509 241 097 (Alicia)  
lodz@zen.pl  
opole@zen.pl

## Plock Zen Group

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

ul. Antoninów 1  
09-520 Łąck, Poland  
+48 607 317 084 (Alicja Pełkowska)  
alap7@gazeta.pl

## Rzeszów Zen Group

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

c/o Artur Sikora  
ul. Korczaka 4/69  
35-114 Rzeszów, Poland  
+48 539 771 140 (Artur)  
rzeszow@zen.pl

## Toruń Zen Group

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*

c/o Piotr Iwanicki  
ul. Prosta 28/5  
87-100 Toruń, Poland  
+48 609 696 060  
torunskagrupazen@gmail.com

## Wałbrzych Zen Group

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

ul. T. Chalubińskiego 17/2  
58-301 Wałbrzych, Poland  
+48 502308996 - Marek  
+48 511968917- Grażyna  
walbrzych@zen.pl

**Warsaw Zen Center****Wu Bong Sa****Head Temple, Poland***Zen Master Joeng Hye*

ul. Małowiejska 22/24  
04-962 Warszawa-Falenica,  
Poland  
+48 (22) 872 05 52  
+48 515 100 273  
kwanum@zen.pl

## Wrocław Zen Group

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

ul. Jastrzębia 11/1a  
50-247 Wrocław, Poland  
+48 606 940 686 (Elżbieta)  
zen.wroclaw@gmail.com

**Russia****Saint Petersburg Zen Center****Dae Hwa Soen Won****Head Temple, Russia***Oleg Suk JDPSN*

The Buddhistic Temple in  
Saint Petersburg  
Kwan Um School of Zen  
Datsan Gunzechoinei  
Primorsky pr. 91  
197374 Saint Petersburg,  
Russia  
+7 (921) 373-95-35  
contact@kwanumzen.ru

## Rostov Zen Group

*Oleg Suk JDPSN*

c/o Leonid Kosmynin  
"Dromtonpa" Buddhist  
Dharma center.  
pr. Sokolova, 85,  
Rostov, Russia  
+7 904 504 2111  
(Leonid Kosmynin)  
poephaeng@gmail.com

## Veliky Novgorod Zen Center

*Oleg Suk JDPSN*

ulitsa Bolshaya Moskovskaya  
86, kv. 30  
Veliky Novgorod  
Russia 173000  
+79816016567 (Myong Gong Sunim)  
sunim@zendao.ru

**Slovakia****Bratislava Zen Center****Myo San Sa****Head Temple, Slovakia***Oleg Suk JDPSN*

c/o Peter Košút,  
Hanulova 5  
841 01 Bratislava, Slovakia  
+421 905 368 368 (Lubor Košút)  
bratislava@kwanumzen.sk

## Košice Zen Center

## Shin Jong Sa

*Oleg Suk JDPSN*

c/o Dušan Silváši  
Letná 43  
040 01 Košice, Slovakia  
+421 903 134 137  
(Dušan Silváši)  
kosice@kwanumzen.sk

**Spain**

## Barcelona Zen Center

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

Bori Centro Zen  
c/o Mauro Bianco  
c/Beates 8, 3º, 2ª  
08003 Barcelona, Spain  
+34 690 280 331 (Mauro Bianco)  
boricentrozen@hotmail.com

## Bori Sa, Retreat Center

*Zen Master Bon Shim*

c/o Bárbara Pardo  
Mas Puli, Sales de Llierca  
17853, Alta Garrotxa (Girona)  
+34 655 033 018 (Bárbara Pardo)  
+34 872 005 192 (Bárbara Pardo)  
boricentrozen@hotmail.com

## Granada Zen Group

*Jo Potter JDPSN*

c/o Sergio Romero  
c/Monte 8, Bajo B,  
18140 La Zubia (Granada), Spain  
+34 671 284 810 (Sergio Romero)  
granadazen@gmail.com

**Palma Zen Center****Head Temple, Spain***Jo Potter JDPSN*

Centro Zen Palma  
Plaza Bisbe Berenguer  
de Palou n° 1, 1º, 2ª  
07003 Palma de Mallorca  
Illes Balears, Spain  
+34 686 382 210  
(Tolo Cantarellas)  
palmacentrozen@gmail.com

**Prison Groups**

Arizona State Prison Florence  
East Unit

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means in each moment we open unconditionally to all that presents itself to us. By doing this, our innate wisdom and compassion will naturally breathe and flow into our lives.

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