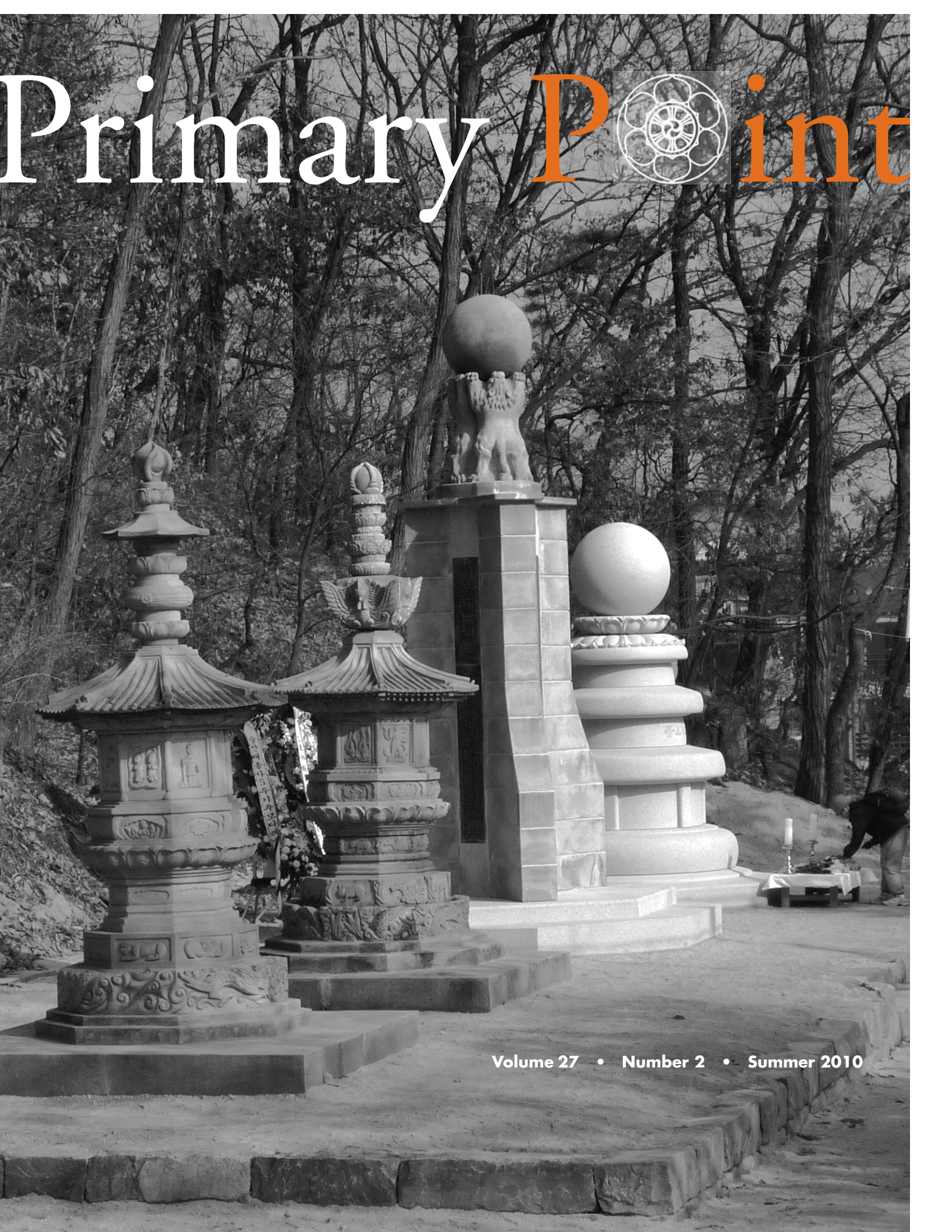


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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive Primary Point, see page 25. The circulation is 4000 copies.

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Cover: Zen Master Seung Sahn’s memorial pagodas at Hwa Gye Sah



*From the book: The Teachings of Zen Master Man Gong
Translated and edited by Zen Master Dae Kwang,
Hye Tong Sunim and Kathy Park*

CHAPTER 6

MONKS AND NUNS

1. Monastics exist before name and form appear, did you know that? They are the host for all beings, teaching even those in heaven.
2. Monastics, whose life it is to practice, must give up their families (parents, mates and children), all their possessions and even themselves.
3. Monastics should not let their lives be controlled by fate. They should not fear hell or have their happiness be dependent on others.
4. Monastic discipline means keeping your true nature pure as a white lotus, don't attach to worldly things.
5. The completion of even worldly study can take half a life-time, so how can we say it's boring to study for 10,000 years to find the way to infinite life.
6. Many feel the need for a worldly education, which isn't even concerned with the wheel of life and death; imagine how much more we need the lessons of Zen practice, which cut the hold of life and death forever and allow us to realize our true nature.
7. Worldly people adopt the dharma as a "doing", but monastics learn the dharma by "not doing."
8. Worldly people do everything with attachment, while monastics act through cutting attachment. Monastics should not even attach to Buddha or patriarchs.
9. The inheritance of worldly people is through blood lines, while the inheritance of monastics is through enlightened mind, which is the Dao. The biggest sin for a worldly person is to interrupt the inheritance from their ancestors. For monastics, who are the students of the Buddha, there is no greater sin than not inheriting the dharma.
10. In ancient times, older lay women who understood the dharma would often test monks. But these days, even monks who lead assemblies do not understand the Buddha dharma. This is truly a time of darkness! How will we ever escape?
11. The fortune and misfortune of mankind are the result of the ups and downs of buddhism.
12. World peace always goes together with the flourishing of buddhism.
13. The tattered clothes of practicing sunims are very precious, even the clothes of a king can not compare. The clothes of a king cover a lot of bad karma but a sunim's tattered clothes take away karma and allow wisdom to grow.
14. If a monastic still envies a lay person's wealth and fame or is lonely and still feels sorrow, this is truly shameful.
15. A monastic is a person who has attained becoming one with the whole universe.
16. Monastics should not use anything for themselves even if it is gained through their own effort, because everything they have is the property of the three jewels (buddha, dharma, and sangha.)
17. If you receive an offering as a monastic and use it without practicing, you are a swindler.
18. If you are a monastic and do not function correctly, then you sin against your family, country, and sangha.
19. If a person becomes a monastic when they are young—before their true nature is tainted—and they function correctly their whole life, then the virtue they create will cover both heaven and earth.
20. There are many monastics who waste lay people's offerings and don't practice sincerely. Because of this there are very few lay people these days to support monastic life. The effort that one makes for the Dao becomes the Dao, so you must practice bravely, even in very difficult situations.
21. The direction of your thoughts is determined only through practice. When you are able to choose the direction of your thoughts then you can take the correct path, and infinite life is guaranteed.
22. Worldly life allows for lapses of attention, but monastic life requires that practice be continuous, even in a dream. Even a small gap allows for all kinds of hindrances to appear.
23. Even a murderer of 10,000,000 people who repents, pays homage to the Buddha, and becomes a practicing monk, can take away the hatred of their victims and remove the bad karma they've created for infinite kalpas.
24. Because people attach to the false "I", everything they see, hear, and do becomes impermanent.
25. Sentient beings can not escape the samsara of the six realms controlled by time and space because they are attached to living only in time and space. ☸

ELEGANT FAILURE

A GUIDE TO

Zen Koans

Richard Shrobe

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Chapter 18

Tou-shuai's Three Gates

Can you attach long or short to the journey?

Is the path wide or narrow?

Is this within time and space or not?

If you digest all of this, then what becomes clear?

Haahh!!

The whole world is one gate, why not come in?

Case 47 in the *Wu-men-kuan* (*Mumonkan*; *Mu Mun Kwan*) says:

Zen Master Tou-shuai made three gates to test his students.

Cutting ignorance grass and sitting Zen is wishing to see nature. Then where is your nature now?

You already understand your nature and pass beyond life and death. When you die, how then will you be reborn?

You already have freedom over life and death and also understand where you return to. When the four elements disperse, where do you go?¹

Those are Tou-shuai's Three Gates. Then Zen Master Wu-men (*Mumon*; *Mu Mun*) follows with this short poem:

Truly perceived one mind numberless kalpas
[eons].

Numberless kalpas, these are just now.

Just now see exploded one mind,

See exploded those who just now see.²

Wu-men also writes a commentary:

If you can utter three pivotal sayings here, you can be the master wherever you are; whatever circumstances you encounter are themselves the source. [That means in all situations you are in close contact with the essence, no matter what you are doing.] Otherwise [meaning if you have not yet reached this stage of development], it is easy to fill up on coarse food, hard to starve if you chew thoroughly.³

Another translation says, "Gulping down your food will fill you up quickly, while chewing well will make it more difficult to become hungry again."⁴ Clearly he is not talking about rice and beans and french fries here—he is talking about dharma food, sustaining spiritual food. If you get some experience quickly and just gulp it down, perhaps that won't sustain you for long. The essence of practice is slow chewing—slow development, slow cultivation, and slow unfolding.

Tou-shuai (Tosotsu; To Sal) was a Zen master who lived around the year 1000. In the lineage of Zen masters stemming from Lin-chi (Rinzai), he comes toward the end of what is considered the classical period of Zen in China. Because he died at the early age of forty-eight and left no successors, his teaching was not passed down to other teachers. We do, however, have his three gates through which we attempt to enter.

Each of the three gates is of great interest, but the gates should not be interesting to us just for the sake of philosophical knowledge. Rather, each one ought to inform our practice from moment to moment, from day to day.

Tou-shuai's first gate begins by saying, "Cutting ignorance grass and sitting Zen is wishing to see nature." This expression, cutting ignorance grass, literally refers to the hair one shaves off when one becomes a monk or a nun. It means that we are all very attached to appearance and the superficialities of life, and by clinging to appearances we miss something that is more fundamental. So when a monk or a nun shaves off their hair, they are saying, I want to cut my attachment to this narrow, limiting view of myself and perceive something more profound.

In the Zen tradition, you find images like grass, weeds, vines, and creepers. These are metaphors for our habit of getting wrapped up in fixed patterns of perception or behavior as we cling to what we consider to be our egos. For example, Zen Master Ching-ch'ing (Kyosei; Gyeong Cheong) said to a monk who had missed the point in what Ching-ch'ing was saying, "You too are a person caught up in the weeds," meaning that you are caught up in your ideas and don't see what is right in front of you. Actually, even the kong-an collections are often referred to as vines and creepers, suggesting that they might also make complications where originally everything was pure and simple.

In a broader sense, cutting ignorance grass has the connotation of cutting through delusion. That is why the second bodhisattva vow says, "Delusions are endless, I vow to cut through them all." In the case, Tou-shuai says, "Cutting ignorance grass and sitting Zen." Sitting Zen is one side of our practice, but if you think that practice is just sitting Zen, then you are attached to the formality of meditation. Tou-shuai is encouraging us to cut through ignorance and delusion moment by moment in every situation—not just while sitting. In the same way, when we are standing, we should see clearly; when we are eating, we should see clearly; when we are conversing, we should see clearly. Cut ignorance grass moment by moment and sit Zen.

Then he states that these two, cutting off ignorance and sitting

Zen, are wishing to see nature. This is a very important sentence. *Nature* here means our fundamental or essential nature. True nature and buddha nature are the same thing. There is an old saying, "Just seeing is buddha nature." Not that you are going to see buddha nature, but the very act of just seeing is buddha nature. When you just see, just hear, just sit, just walk, or just eat, then true nature is already manifested. The word *just* here is important. It sounds simple, but to become simple is not so simple.

Also here, "wishing to see nature" refers to aspiration, our aspiration, toward practice. Why practice? We aspire to perceive our true nature and to understand our correct job in the world. Sometimes we express this by telling ourselves to make a firm determination to attain enlightenment and help others. We frequently hear it said that at the very moment one gives rise to a sincere aspiration for practice, one has the first moment of enlightenment. That is why the phrase "Zen mind, beginner's mind" is so apt.

The term "beginner's mind" comes from the Hua Yen Sutra. The sutra tells a long story about a young pilgrim named Sudhana who goes seeking enlightenment from fifty-three different teachers. When he starts on his journey, the first teacher he comes to is Manjushri (Monju; Mun Su Sari), the Bodhisattva of Primal Wisdom. Manjushri then sends him on a journey to the other fifty-two teachers. After he has passed through all this refinement of practice, he again meets Manjushri. The meaning of this is clearly that where you begin is where you end. The path of practice is the expression of compassion and wisdom as they come together in our activity at the moment. Wishing to see true nature is to give rise to the kind of aspiration that sustains our practice and upon which our practice is based.

After asserting that cutting ignorance grass and sitting Zen is wishing to see nature, Tou-shuai challenges us: "Then where is your nature now?" How is it manifesting just now? This true nature is everything's true nature. It is something that we all share and participate in together. How that is expressing itself is unique and different moment by moment with each one of us. This is why Tou-shuai asks, "Where is your true nature just now? This is his first gate."

In the second gate, he goes further to state, "You already understand your nature and pass beyond life and death." You could say, first you understand, then you attain, then you digest and assimilate your understanding and attainment. Since you

already understand your true nature, you pass beyond life and death. What does it mean to pass beyond life and death? Some translations say, “You certainly are free from life and death.”⁵ Tou-shuai goes on to ask, “When you die, how then will you be reborn?”

Life, death, and rebirth: What do those terms mean? There are various ways to look at them. The purpose of the examination is not an intellectual pursuit but one that should strengthen your practice, for we all have to face the moment of death sometime. To pass beyond life and death means you transcend life and death. When you come to the moment before thought, you and the universe become one. To become one doesn't mean that before you weren't one and now you have become one (already from the beginning you were one with the universe), but at that moment you recognize that you and the universe are completely one, never separate. If you and the universe are already one, there is no life and no death. Life and death are like putting on your clothes in the morning and taking them off at night or driving your car for a long time until it won't go anymore and leaving it in the junk heap and getting a new car. Fundamentally there is no coming and no going. But lest you make the assumption that no coming or going means there must be something permanent, another sutra says, “No coming, no going, and no abiding.” That means no staying either.

Transcending life and death means in one sense transcending the distinctions we make, the artificial demarcation line we make between something we call life and something we call death. In the Zen tradition, to pass beyond something or to be free of it does not mean that you have escaped it—you don't go to the pure land or some heaven where there is no life or death. To transcend life and death means at the moment of life, there is just life, and at the moment of death, there is just death.

Sometimes in the Zen tradition we talk about life and death or birth and death as the moment-to-moment appearing and disappearing of things in our mind. If you sit meditation and watch your mind, you see that thinking comes, thinking goes, feeling arises, feeling passes away, sensation appears, sensation disappears. All this coming and going moment by moment is sometimes called birth and death. To pass beyond birth and death means to not be caught up and cling to the momentary forms of your mind's fluctuations. It also means you don't push them away or reject them. When you can just be with whatever is, moment by moment, you transcend life and death.

Also in Zen, life and death refers to holding and clinging versus letting go. There is a famous Zen saying: “The act of a great person is, when hanging over a cliff a thousand feet in the air, to let go.” You let go into open boundless being that is clear like space. Is that life or is that death? Sometimes what looks like death is becoming alive, and what looks like dying is being born. Also, to die refers to the moment when we let go of our small, contracted, egocentric view. At that moment, we achieve what is referred to as the Great Death, which means we have an enlightenment experience. In that experience, one side is like death, but the other side is like emerging into something new—rebirth.

In Zen poetry, you often find expressions such as:

Flowers bloom on a withered tree in a spring beyond
kalpas;
you ride a jade elephant backwards, chasing
a winged dragon-deer.⁶

The first line refers to death and rebirth: letting go of small self, becoming big self, open self, becoming more than you conceived of yourself as being.

I have a friend who is fond of the saying, “You're not just your story.” We tell ourselves a story about who and what we are so much of the time, and then we identify with that story line. We believe it and begin to fabricate a whole universe around ourselves to substantiate it. But when you come into the clarity of this moment, you recognize that you are not just your story—there is more to it than that. If you experience that kind of freedom, then being occurs without hindrance. In the Lotus Sutra, it says the Bodhisattva of Compassion appears in many different forms—man, woman, layperson, householder, monk, nun, dog, cat, demon. If you understand your true position, and you can connect with the situation moment by moment without holding on to your patterns, then you can adapt and appear according to what is needed.

In the early days of the Providence Zen Center, a small group of people lived in a house in the city with Zen Master Seung Sahn. It was in a very poor neighborhood. In this neighborhood lived a boy around eight years of age who would periodically sneak through the window of the Zen Center and pilfer things. One day Zen Master Seung Sahn was in the garden when this little boy appeared. Suddenly Seung Sahn howled loudly and charged at the boy. The boy was petrified and ran away.

Later one of the students said to the Zen master, “I don’t know if that was the right kind of action to do.” Seung Sahn replied, “Sometimes a demon is necessary.” His point was that he saved the boy from being a thief by scaring him away. When you die, how will you be reborn? Not just when you leave this body, but moment by moment how will you manifest yourself according to situations, according to circumstances, according to time and place, and how will you supply what is needed?

This whole notion of dying and being reborn brings up the issues of karma and reincarnation, which are fascinating subjects for some people when they first come in contact with Buddhism. If, however, you are too focused on the notion of reincarnation and rebirth, then the focus of your practice may lean into the future, rather than being directed toward this moment.

Many stories about death are told in the Zen tradition. You can read stories where a Zen master announces to the assembly, “Tomorrow I’ll be leaving you.” The next day he puts on his robes, shaves his head, sits up in meditation, and quietly dies. But there is also a story of Zen Master Lung-t’an (Ryutan; Yong Dam) who, when he was dying, repeatedly yelled out in agony on his deathbed. His students tried to ease his pain in some way. One version of the story claims that he kept shouting, “It hurts! It hurts!” and so the students tried to stop his pain. Lung-t’an stopped his yells and said, “Don’t think that my agony now is in any way different from what my joy and exuberance was.” Then he died.

A man said to Zen Master Bankei, “I’m getting on in years. What kind of preparation should I make for my death?” Bankei replied, “No preparation is necessary.” The man was surprised because the common Buddhist viewpoint would be that you practice something to get ready for your death. Often laypeople in East Asian countries repeat the name of the Pure Land buddha, Na Mu Amita Bul, to get ready for death. But Bankei said, “No preparation is necessary.” So the man asked why, to which Bankei stated, “When you die, just die.” This is Bankei’s practice connected with death and rebirth.

Tou-shuai’s third gate says, “You already have freedom over life and death and also understand where you return to.” If you can be reborn in the moment according to circumstances, letting go of self-centered ideas and becoming one with the situation, then you have complete freedom. Moment by moment, everything reveals true nature. Emerging and returning are only superficial changes. As is stated in the Heart

Sutra, essentially there is no origination. The process of coming from and returning to is called nature origination. This is why Tou-shuai asks, “Where is your nature now?”

“You understand where you return to. When the four elements disperse, where do you go?” The four elements, according to ancient Indian ideas, are earth, water, fire, and air. From a narrow viewpoint, the four elements mean your physical body, so when your physical body falls apart, where do you go? But the four elements appear in gross and subtle form—we all are constructing our own versions of reality moment by moment and making them out of elements of imagination. When you cut through delusion and the clinging quality of opinion, conception, and idea, at that moment—*ptchb*—the elements disperse. At that point, where do you go? What is your direction? What is your true job? Tou-shuai encourages us to see, perceive, and practice that.

Zen Master Wu-men’s poem connected with the kong-an says:

Truly perceived one mind numberless kalpas.
Numberless kalpas, these are just now.
Just now see exploded one mind,
See exploded those who just now see.

The language of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s translation is somewhat unusual. A different translation, given by Japanese Roshi Shibayama, elucidates the kong-an a little differently:

This one instant, as it is, is an infinite
number of kalpas.
An infinite number of kalpas are at the same
time this
one instant.
If you see into this fact,
The True Self which is seeing has been seen
into.⁷

If you grasp this moment, then you grasp just what you are. This poem is based on the philosophy of the Hua Yen Sutra, but it is very practice oriented, because what is emphasized is moment, this instant, just now. Moment means experiencing something wholly and completely. At that point, there is just this moment, no coloration by some idea of the past through memory, no coloration by some imagined sense of what the

future is going to bring, but just wholly and completely doing something now, at this instant.

We operate in two kinds of time, but unfortunately we usually only identify and relate to one of them. There is chronological time, with past, present, and future, which we use as demarcations. But where is the past? Where is the present? Where is the future? It is something like watching action on a film strip move from the past to the present to the future. If, however, we look at just one frame, that one mind instant, that one frame of experience just now is complete. Each frame is a complete picture and is related to everything that has preceded it. It also contains everything that will emerge out of it. Without thinking of past or future, in that moment we become completely unified. We just do something. We just act completely. Unfortunately we usually identify ourselves with notions of past, present, and future. But when we bring past, present, and future into our activity, our activity is never clean and complete—it is always colored or tainted.

8] A friend of mine once sat a retreat with Robert Aitken Roshi in Hawaii. One day, as the bell was hit to end the sitting period, when one is expected to stand up for walking meditation, Aitken Roshi said, “Now, get up and walk with nothing sticking to it.” Nothing sticking to it means moment time—don’t drag along some memory with you as you walk just now. That is a very important point for practice, because if you look at practice as having past, present, and future, then you can also make comparisons such as, “Yesterday my meditation was pretty good; today it didn’t feel so good. Maybe tomorrow it’ll be better, and next week I’ll get enlightenment.” Bringing in these ideas orients your practice toward getting someplace (which is not the place you are now) at some time in the future, or attaining some state that is different from your most immediate state. That becomes a big obstacle to just being and expressing yourself. That is why the Buddha said, “From the beginning, each and every thing already has the awakened nature.” He did not say that you will get somewhere sometime, as if practices will manufacture the awakened nature.

If you don’t generate time as an idea, then you just act completely. Just sitting, just questioning, just walking, whatever you’re doing is not colored by ideation. Practice should be rooted there. In truth, the only freedom we have is there, because as soon as you have an idea of past and future and somewhere to get to, you can never be free. You are always bound by some attempt to move toward something that you are not now. But at the point


when you are being in this moment, cleanly and clearly, you find true freedom—not freedom to get away from something or to get away with something but the true freedom of your essential being. At the moment that you act cleanly and clearly you perceive the true relationship of things and understand your connection to the immediate situation.

A poem that is read during the death ceremony in the Korean Zen tradition distills many of the essential points of Hua Yen philosophy:

In one is all
In many is one
One is identical to all
Many is identical to one
In one dust particle is contained the ten directions
And so it is with all particles of dust
Incalculably long eons are identical to a single thought
instant
A single thought instant is identical to incalculably long
eons
The nine times and the ten directions are mutually
identical
Yet are not confused or mixed but function separately
The moment one begins to aspire with their heart
Instantly perfect enlightenment is attained
Samsara and nirvana are always harmonized together.

Someone asked Zen Master Pai-chang (Hyakujo; Baek Jang), “Does the enlightened person come under cause and effect or not?” Pai-chang said, “Cause and effect are not obscured. Cause and effect are clear.” It is important to see that past, present, and future are not obscured. Equally important is to see that this moment of freedom is also not obscured.

Notes

1. See Seung Sahn, trans., *The Mu Mun Kwan* (Cumberland, RI: Kwan Um School of Zen, 1983), 55.
2. Ibid.
3. Thomas Cleary, trans., *No Barrier* (New York: Bantam, 1993), 204.
4. Koun Yamada, trans., *The Gateless Gate* (Boston: Wisdom, 2004), 220.
5. Zenkei Shibayama, *The Gateless Barrier* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), 316.
6. Robert Aitken, *The Morning Star* (Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2003), 152.
7. Shibayama, 316 



MEMORIAL FOR DAE AN SUNIM (1959-2009)

Dae An Sunim was born in 1959 in a rural town in the Cholla Namdo Province of South Korea. From the time she was five years old, her parents would regularly take her to Songwangsa to hear Dharma talks from the great Zen Master Kusan Sunim. Kusan Sunim was one of the first Korean monks to ordain foreign disciples and support their practice in Korea. Dae An Sunim's childhood impressions of this monk and the temple greatly influenced her decision to become a nun.

In 1982, Dae An Sunim began her monastic life at Hwa Un Sa temple. Her teacher was Sang Kyeong Sunim, the attendant to Ko Bong Sunim for over twenty years. Ko Bong Sunim was the teacher of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Dae An Sunim sometimes talked about how her teacher would take her as a young nun around Korea to receive Dharma teaching from the many great Zen Masters living at that time and keep her up late into the night telling stories of her life with Zen Master Ko Bong.


After graduating from Bong Nyeong Sa Gangwon, a training temple for novice nuns, Dae An Sunim took Bhikkuni precepts in 1989. Since 1990, she participated in twenty Kyol Che retreats in Korean Meditation Halls, including the famous Gumdang Soenwon in Soknamsa, (known for their three-year retreats,) and served several seasons as head nun. She also participated in retreats with the Kwan Um School at Shin Won Sah and Hwa Gye Sah, as well as doing solo retreats and countless extended chanting kidos.

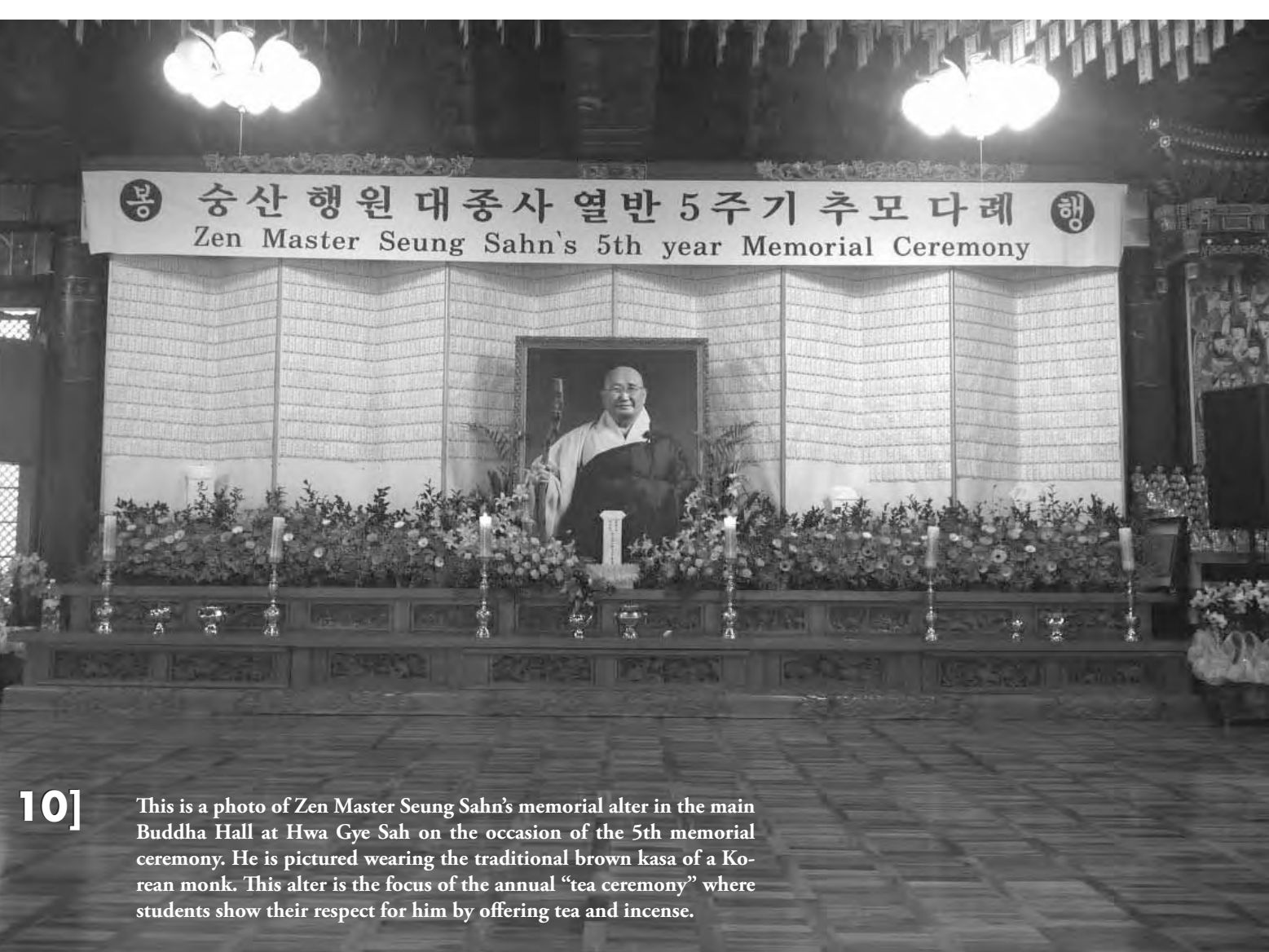
In 1997, Dae An Sunim and her teacher moved to Hwa Gye Sah at the invitation of Zen Master Seung Sahn. While living there, she often traveled with Zen Master Seung Sahn and visited many foreign Zen centers. After Zen Master Seung Sahn passed away, Dae An Sunim stayed briefly at Mu Sang Sa International Zen Center before becoming abbot of her own temple, Boep Ryon Sa, in 2006.

As abbot of Boep Ryon Sa, Dae An Sunim was active in organizing Dharma programs for soldiers at local army bases, giving annual scholarships to local children and nuns to attend school, holding Buddhist children's camps twice a year, and taking Korean children and adults abroad to experience Buddhism in other contexts. The most important job for her as abbot, however, was making her temple a place that any person—lay or monastic, foreign or Korean—can stay for free and do their own practice comfortably. One Korean monk described Dae An Sunim's practice as "Wol Lyok", which translates as "vow power", as she was able to accomplish impossible tasks with the force of her great faith, great vow and strong practice.

In November 2009, Dae An Sunim passed away following a car accident. She was given the post-humous name, "Jong Oh" which means, "Correct Enlightenment."

Dae An Sunim shared Zen Master Seung Sahn's vision of a world united in the dharma. Foreign Zen centers in need of Buddha statues, altar paintings, bells, moktaks or other practicing tools could always feel comfortable asking Dae An Sunim for assistance. She often traveled to foreign countries to help Zen centers with opening ceremonies or kidos. In Korea, she helped both foreigners and Koreans with advice about different kinds of practice, gaining admittance to Korean meditation halls, and finding places for kidos or solo retreats. Dae An Sunim was eager to help anyone who wanted to become a monastic by either taking them on as her own student or helping them find a home in a Korean temple. Zen Master Dae Kwan said that Dae An Sunim had lit a dharma torch during her lifetime and that, now, it is our job to continue to carry that torch. One Kwan Um School student described well many of our feelings about Dae An Sunim by writing:

"Big heart, great personality, strong Zen practitioner. I'm so much grateful for the chance in my life to meet Dae An Sunim and be a part of this great family." 



10]

This is a photo of Zen Master Seung Sahn's memorial altar in the main Buddha Hall at Hwa Gye Sah on the occasion of the 5th memorial ceremony. He is pictured wearing the traditional brown kasa of a Korean monk. This altar is the focus of the annual "tea ceremony" where students show their respect for him by offering tea and incense.



MEMORIAL FOR ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Zen Master Dae Jin

This photo shows the memorial pagodas for four Zen Masters who lived at Hwa Gye Sah Temple. The first from the left (looking down from Hwa Gye Sah) is for Zen Master Jeok Um (Quiet Sound), the teacher of Byok Am Sunim whom many of us knew well in Korea after staying with him at Shin Won Sah. The next pagoda is for Zen Master Dok Sahn (Virtuous Mountain), a disciple of Man Gong Sunim, known for his strength as a martial artist. The taller pagoda with the lions on top is for Zen Master Ko Bong (Old Peak), the teacher of Zen Master Seung Sahn. The furthest, with the large white sphere on top, is Zen Master Seung Sahn's pagoda.



Zen Master Seung Sahn's memorial pagoda sits on an octagonal base, representing the Noble Eightfold Path. The six small pillars on the second level symbolize the six paramitas of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are represented by the three large rings encircling the pagoda. The lotus petals and sphere on top stand for our clear pure mind which is not separate from the world. The pagoda is hollow and contains Zen Master Seung Sahn's writings, sutras and his relics (sarira). On the front the words "Great (Teacher) Master Seung Sahn" are inscribed in Chinese characters.

Question: My friend has given me an idea. We took the precepts together. Your dharma name is Ja An, your name is Bogumila [*Bogu=God, mila=favor*], so you are “Favor of God” and your surname is Malinowska [*maliny=raspberry*]. In Poland we often say, “to pull in the raspberry.” So, what does it mean, “to pull in the raspberry”?

Malinowska JDPSN: You already understand.

Q: I ask you.

MJDPSN: What are you doing now?

Q: I’m sitting and asking you a question.

MJDPSN: Very good.

Q: That’s how you are pulling me in the raspberry.

MJDPSN: But that’s a good raspberry!

Question: I know that you were born in Poland and we met when you moved to England. I want to know, how is the dharma in Poland different from the dharma in England?

Malinowska JDPSN: You already understand.

Q: What about you?

MJDPSN: During winter in Poland you need to have warm shoes, in England you always need to have an umbrella.

Question: How can you teach me if Zen is too difficult for me?

Malinowska JDPSN: You already understand.

Q: [*shakes his head: “no”*]

MJDPSN: Today is Sunday. After ceremony let’s go drink tea and eat cakes.

Q: That’s nice.

Question: Hello, Bogusia.

Malinowska JDPSN: Hello, Poep Sa Nim.

Q: You were always a great inspiration to me. When I came to my first session here someone pointed to you: “That is Bogusia, she does 1000 prostrations daily.” And I know you continue that, yes?

MJDPSN: Yes.

Q: So tell me, how many prostrations did you do today?

MJDPSN: You already understand.

Q: I ask you.

MJDPSN: [*bows*]

Q: Ooh, that’s it. Thank you for your teaching.

MJDPSN: Don't mention it.

Question: Good morning.

Malinowska JDPSN: Good morning, Sunim.

Q: I have a question—teaching and helping. How do they differ?

MJDPSN: You already understand.

Q: But I ask you.

MJDPSN: How can I help you?

Q: By answering the question.

MJDPSN: Isn't that enough?

Q: It seems it’s enough. Thank you.

Question: For a healthy human an average heart beat is sixty beats per minute. With what frequency does your heart beat?

Malinowska JDPSN: You already understand.

Q: No, I don't.

MJDPSN: Tick, tick, tick, tick.

Q: Oh, very fast.



*Dharma combat and Inka speech
of Bogumila Malinowska JDPSN,
September 20, 2009,
at Warsaw Zen Center in Poland*

Bogumila Malinowska inka ceremony

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Dirty is clean, clean is dirty.

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

Not dirty, not clean.

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

Dirty is dirty, clean is clean.

KATZ!

Where is the place, where there is no clean or dirty?

A long time ago, a wandering monk, Won-Hyo, realized that life is impermanent and decided to seek the answer to the meaning of life and how to deal with the sense of instability. Thus he started his journey to find a teacher. He traveled for many days and nights and at some point he was really tired. He lay down on the ground and, being exhausted, he slept. When he woke up at night, being very thirsty, he instinctively began to seek something to drink. In the dark he thought he had found a vessel with water, and being very happy, he drank from it. The water was very refreshing. Feeling satisfied, he went to sleep. When he woke up in the morning he wanted to drink that water again, but this time it was daylight, and he could see clearly that the vessel was a human skull with parts of the body and hairs on it. There were also a lot of bugs in it. Seeing this, the only thing he could do was to vomit strongly. At that moment he understood, that when he was thirsty at night, there was tasty water, but when he woke up in the morning his eyes could see what he had drunk, and he was disgusted. At that moment his mind—as we say in Zen—was opened. He understood that this thinking, and everything that he thought, comes from mind.

Not so long ago in Japan, during World War II, human mentality changed radically. I've never been to Asia, but from what I observe when I meet Asian people I know is that Asians pay a lot of attention to the aesthetics of eating. This aesthetics of eating is something very important to them. Therefore the meal preparation, the colors, the meal served in bowls of various sizes, and doing this in accordance with ceremony rules is very important. They wash the meal ingredients mindfully, they peel them, and everything is done very, very precisely. But many times during the war there was a lack of food. In such cases, every bit of food has the price of gold. So when those

people, being so dutiful and so much attached to meal aesthetics, were finding thrown-away peels, it was a wonderful meal for them.

I would like to refer to a movie we saw together last night. There was a moment in it where the main figure, the inventor of all these wonderful technology inventions, Apple and Blackberry, is saying at the end “be hungry and stupid.” I would like to talk about my life—how being stupid and having no understanding can help. Usually we think that our life should go straight and without hindrances—that is our human desire. But what I would like to say is, what has helped me most in my life were precisely the hindrances. When I became a single mother, I was very scared. But now, after many years, I know it was the best teaching. Also, about six years ago, I lost a very good job in Poland, a career I worked in for a very long time. When I lost it, I believed it was very hard and something I didn't want to happen, but in reality it has opened a new way of life for me. We often think—and this is also true in my case—that when we have a great title, good job and position, these things can give us full happiness. But what I realized is, whenever I lose something, it is the greatest happiness, because it opens the way for something else for me. Therefore I would like to add my words to the wishes spoken by the main character of yesterday's movie: please don't be afraid of losing something—use it.

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

Dirty is clean, clean is dirty.

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

Not dirty, not clean.

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

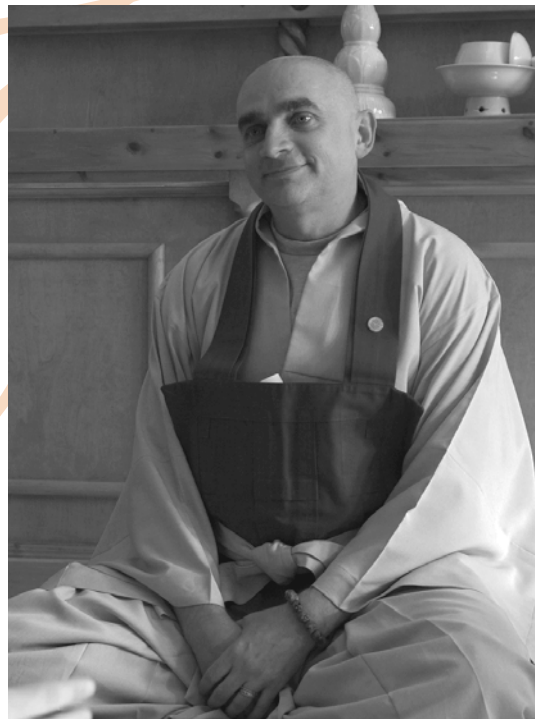
Dirty is dirty, clean is clean.

KATZ!

How can I help?

I thank my teachers for teaching me for years and having the patience for me. Thank you, Wu Bong Soen Sa Nim, thank you to my teacher Bon Shim Soen Sa Nim from Poland, thank you to my teacher Bon Yo Soen Sa Nim, who believed in me before I believed in myself. I thank all teachers, and I thank all of you that I have practiced and will be continue to practice with you. After this ceremony, we will drink tea and eat cookies. ☸

Oleg Šuk



14] inka ceremony

*Dharma combat and Inka speech of Oleg Šuk JDPSN,
September 20, 2009, at Warsaw Zen Center in Poland*

Question: *[in Polish language]* We already know you came from Kazakhstan, are living in Slovakia, and often come to Poland. You speak Russian, Slovak, Polish. Now you will become the teacher, and in the past, each teacher had his or her language of teaching. Holding up one finger, dry shit, and other things. Tell me, please, what will be your teaching language?

Šuk JDPSN: *[in Polish language]* How can I help you?
[mutual bow]

ŠJDPSN: *[in Russian language]* How can I help you?
[laughter]

Question: Some years ago you were practicing judo. So you understand martial arts a bit.

Šuk JDPSN: A little bit.

Q: Now you're becoming a dharma master. And one master is the same as the other, so I have a small gift for you from us—from karate practitioners *[gives a black karate belt to Oleg]*. I also have a question for you. The master of martial arts and dharma master, how are they different?

ŠJDPSN: They use one move. Stand up please, I'll show it to you.
[they both stand up and hug] [laughter and big applause]

Question: I have the dog and this dog lives all his life in the Zen center. When he was still young he often came to the dharma room, and once he went in front of the altar and started to bark at the Buddha. Why was he barking at the Buddha?

Šuk JDPSN: You already understand.

Q: And what will you tell me?

ŠJDPSN: Woof, woof.
[both hapchang]

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Our teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn said that through this hit, even just for a little while, everybody experiences enlightenment.

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

With this hit everybody loses enlightenment.

KATZ!

I see beautiful smiling faces here.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Buddha Shakyamuni, practicing many days, saw the first morning star and got enlightenment. Was this star in some way different from others? Was it some kind of special star for enlightenment?

Long ago, a monk was just sweeping a path by the temple when his broom threw a little stone against some bamboo. When the monk heard this sound, he got enlightenment. Was this sound different from others? Was that some kind of special bamboo for enlightenment?

Long ago, one Zen master practicing meditation just heard the sound of a bird, and got enlightenment. Probably, it also wasn't some kind of special bird. *[Laughter]*

So all of us are experiencing some kind of situations, we are meeting lot of stones, trees, and they aren't only cypresses in the garden. The moments we are experiencing are ordinary. Sometimes we make mistakes. But as we know from Zen stories, also, mistakes can lead to enlightenment.

As in the case of the monk who wrongly heard the answer to the question "What is the Buddha?" and instead of the answer of his master "Buddha is mind," he understood that "Buddha is grass shoes," and he kept this mistake for a long time. Then one day he stumbled—another mistake—and when he fell down and his grass shoe landed on his head—he got enlightenment.

We also experience a lot of moments when our minds can open. Also the moments which seem at first to be mistakes, can open our minds. We can experience every situation and find a correct solution in it.

When we have clear direction, than any situation—

good or bad—can help not only our lives, but also the lives of people and beings around us. But, as Zen Master Seung Sahn said, achieving enlightenment is losing enlightenment. Therefore, to keep clear mind is very important.

This ceremony is not only for me or Malinowska PSN only. This ceremony is for all of you. It is not only about receiving kasas or certificates. In fact, we are paying debts to many people who have thought us. Some people inspired us even by leaving the practice. While others inspired us because they stayed and continue in spite of everything. And I thank you all sincerely for all of this. I hope that you will stay and we will keep practicing together.

I would like to tell you one beautiful story. It happened at one of the Paralympic Games during the foot race. At the starting line there were people with all kinds of different mental disabilities. After the starting shot everybody started to run. Suddenly one boy fell down and begun to cry. All the competitors stopped, came back, helped him to stand up and then all together reached the finish line.

Such a stupid mind, we can say. But it is very similar to the Bodhisattva vow—until all beings get enlightenment, we will keep practicing. Perhaps it'll be necessary to always come back to those who fall down or stop practicing. We will have to help them to stand up, to help them all the time, until all the sentient beings achieve enlightenment.

But there is no need to be attached even to this. It is important to keep this stupid and hungry mind. And this kind of stupid and hungry mind will show us clear direction, without limitations.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head.]


This stick was held in the hands of many teachers before. And made such a sound:

[Hits the table with the stick.]

Is this sound *[raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick]* different from the sound of Zen Master Seung Sahn, or Zen Master Bon Shim, or Zen Master Wu Bong?

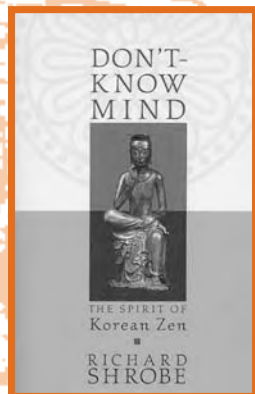
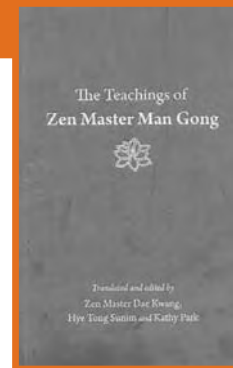
Only listen.

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

Thank you very much for coming to this ceremony and for supporting our practice. Don't lose this mind. And let us invite you to the celebration. 

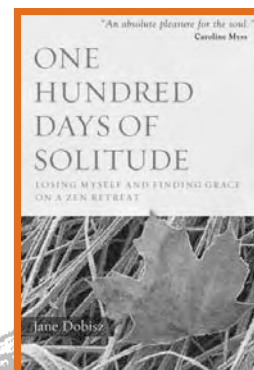
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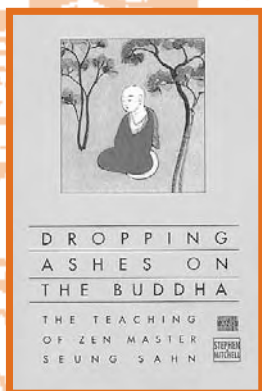


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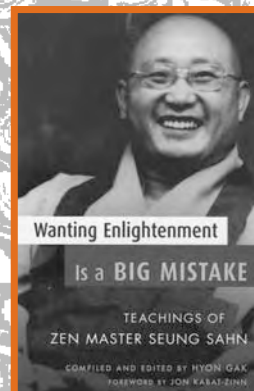
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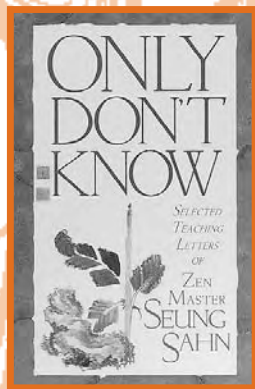
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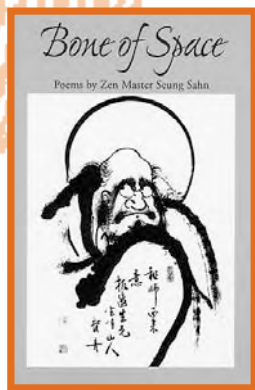
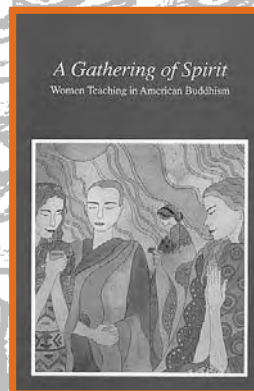
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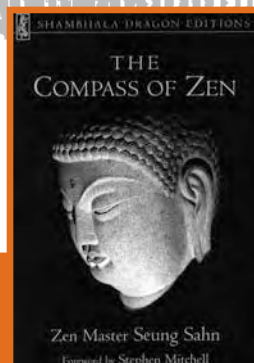


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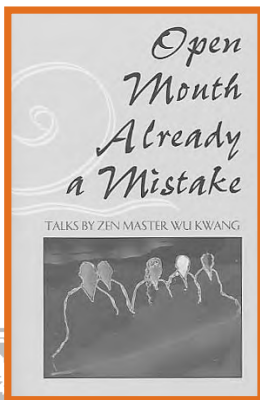
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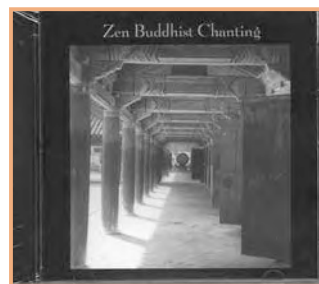


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GREAT QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH

Zen Master Dae Kwang

At the heart of Buddhism and Zen lies the great question of life and death: What am I? What is a human being? Why do we suffer so much? Why are we here on the planet earth? Are we here to make money? Are we here for sex, food, or fame? These are the questions which became the focus of the Buddha's practice and the reason why he left home. He left home to find the answer to the great question for all beings. He didn't leave home to find a better palace to live in or kingdom to rule; he didn't leave home to find a better job or a better wife. His intent was clear: why do we suffer so much and how can we get out of suffering? He faced this question not just for himself, but to help all beings get out of suffering.

Buddhist tradition teaches that suffering is the mother of Buddha. Without suffering there would be no Buddha. Suffering is the source of the Buddha's search. It's the same for us—we suffer. Now the H1N1 flu virus is with us; there's famine and war everywhere. We experience old age, sickness and death just like the Buddha. We experience pain when we have to be with people we dislike and we feel sorrow when we are separated from those we love. Everyone wants to escape these things, but few can find the way out. Fortunately, we have encountered the Buddha's teaching.

All of the Buddha's teaching is concerned with suffering and how to relieve suffering. In Zen we say that every human being's job is the same—find your true self and help the world. When the Buddha left home he didn't go to a library to try and find the answer to his great question. Instead, he started looking inside himself to find the answer. We are the same. Just like the Buddha, no outside source, even Zen teaching, can give us the answer. We must look inside—that's the meaning of practice and meditation—looking inside to find the answer to the great question of life and death by returning to our original substance, your true self.

One time, the famous monk Xuan Jue visited the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Buddhism, Hui Neng. After entering the great hall at Nan Hwa Ssu, he circled the Patriarch three times, hit the floor with his staff, and just stood there without bowing. The Patriarch admonished him for violating the rules of etiquette and asked him why he was so arrogant. Xuan Jue replied, "The great question of life and death is a momentous one. Death may come at any moment, I have no time to waste on ceremony." As Zen Master Seung Sahn says in the temple rules, in the great work of life and death, time will not wait for you.


The Patriarch said, "Why don't you attain the substance of 'no birth', then the problem of death and its coming will not concern you anymore."

Xuan Jue replied, "Since substance has no birth, the basic problem of death and when it comes is solved."

From a Zen point of view, it's the illusions of mind that keep us from realizing our true nature. These illusions are based on our likes and dislikes and we tend to be very attached to them. Desire, anger and ignorance are continually at work, through attachment, to cloud our minds. The great hope of Buddhism is that we can cut through these clouds and let the sunlight of our original nature shine through. How do we do that? How do we practice correctly to attain our substance, so we don't waste our time?

The Buddha always taught us not to attach to anything. Letting go of our attachments is the way out and the goal of all practice. The Sixth Patriarch got enlightenment when he heard one line from the Diamond Sutra, "When thinking arises in your mind, do not attach to it." This is the basic technique. In Zen, we call this style "I don't want anything" practicing. After all, if you want anything, even from meditation, you only create more suffering.

All the meditation techniques common to Buddhism have this as their basic ingredient. So, whether you are using a mantra, a hwa t'ou, or just following your breath, it's all the same. They are just techniques to allow you to let go of your thinking and return to your true self, your substance. This is why we look inside, because this is where the answer is. This is also why the great question and its answer lie before thinking, before attachment to like and dislike. OK... but why didn't I "get" something?

Interestingly, the only thing that separates those who get something from practice from those who don't is: who does it? The "doing" of meditation is based on a clear intention to help our world and a "just do it" mind. It doesn't require any special ability or special technique, just do it! All the different techniques point to your true self, you just have to look and have a clear intention. As the Sixth Patriarch pointed out, the original mind, which is pure and clear, can only be attained through the habit of practice. He further noted that a sage and a demon were the same, but the sage understands his true nature while the demon doesn't. So, as our founding teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn would always say, "I hope you only go straight don't know, which is clear like space, soon get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering." 



A portrait eulogizing the ancient Buddha, Jo Ju.

His sharp and bright word sword kills and gives life.
 His heroic and fierce attack breaks through all barriers,
 Making the whole world clear like a mirror.
 The battle's prize? White eyebrows facing the setting sun.

Nan Yue Zhu Qiong
 Spring, 1307

money buddhi

Zen Master Dae Bong

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your email. Zen Master Soeng Hyang and our school office forwarded your email to me. Perhaps as I have lived a large part of the past twenty-five years in temples in Asia, they asked if I would answer. This is not a definitive answer. Just my impressions and understanding from living in temples in America, Europe, and Asia.

You wrote in your email, *"I have a strong interest in Buddhism and a strong desire to practice. Unfortunately, I also have very little money. Due to personal life conditions, I have often found myself with time to practice, but no money. Twice, now, I have, despite my sincere intentions to practice, been rebuffed by both the American organization and the Korean organization to participate in extended stays at a temple because I had no money. I was willing to live in a tent by the Providence Zen Center, but I was informed that this would cost me a significant amount. And now, most disturbingly, I showed up at the actual Hwa Gye Sa temple in Seoul, Korea and was informed that it would cost me \$150 US dollars a week. I understand that several years ago, one could show up at temples in Korea and participate in the monastic life there without having to pay rent. For some reason that has changed. Why? I have stayed at temples in Thailand where no payment is expected, and I understand a similar situation exists in Sri Lanka. I do not know the particulars of the sutras on this point, but following what I understand to be the teaching of Zen, I have relied on first hand, physical experience. In relation to staying in a temple, this has suggested that, whatever sutra arguments I could produce, something is not quite right with the Chogye organization in terms of its monetary policy. Is the money because of three simple meals a day? Isn't rent paid, at least at Hwa Gye Sah? It seems that an indigent person willing to live simply, according to the precepts should be taken in. I also recognize that there are economic realities that might have to be met. I was struck in Thailand by the incredible amount of community support. Perhaps this does not exist in Korean Buddhism, but from the looks of it, a similar amount of people were participating."*

Again, thank you for your email. These are very fair concerns and questions. When you say no payments are expected, you are thinking primarily of the Theravada temples and meditations centers of South Asia. In Mahayana centers in the north, it is often different. Why is that?

As you probably know, when Buddha left home, many people in India were living homeless, literally on the ground outside, subsisting by begging for food as they pursued spiritual practices to overcome suffering. Buddha also lived this way, surviving on a little food, scraps of

cloth for a body covering, and living outside in all kinds of weather. While doing this for six years, he became enlightened.

He continued living this way as he began teaching. Gradually, other homeless practitioners gathered around him. Lay people with homes, families, etc, also became his students. When there were just a few homeless spiritual seekers in an area, being supported by the local population was no problem. When there were many, on what ground would they stay everyday? How could they all get the food they needed to live?

First, a wealthy lay student of Buddha offered a piece of land for the practitioners to stay on and food to eat. Later, a king also offered a large park and food offerings. It was possible to have a practicing place and practicing community.

Buddhism was usually spread by one or two monks going into areas where Buddha's teaching had not reached. Again, when only a few monks are traveling or living in an area, they can maintain themselves by begging. But when Buddhism moved into other areas and countries, it grew large only when it fell under royal patronage. Only a wealthy king could support many practicing people. Royal patronage has advantages and disadvantages.

The climate in South Asia, the Theravada countries, ranges from mild to tropical. Practitioners lived on one or two meals a day. A few pieces of cloth was enough for clothing year-round. Shelters, when necessary, could be built very simply. Heating wasn't necessary. There was not so much burden placed on a community to provide the necessities of life to practicing people. If someone became ill, medicines were offered. Or, if not offered, the person either got better or died. Life was pretty simple.

When Buddhism moved into the Asian countries to the north, the situation was much different. The climate is much harsher. The burden on others for the basic necessities of life is much greater. More food, warmer clothing, substantial buildings, heating in winter. Again, a few monks can survive or travel most anywhere without becoming a burden on the populace. But for practicing communities to exist, it was always necessary to have the patronage of rich people or of the king.

Buddhism spread to China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea and Japan this way through the patronage of the populace, the wealthy and often the king. In China, in the 700's, a Great Zen Master named Pai Chang appeared. The Buddha had made a precept for monks and nuns, "Do not dig the earth." However, in formulating the rules for Zen communities, Pai Chang made the famous rule, "A day without work is a day without eating." Zen communities moved away from the power centers of society. Monks and other practitioners cleared the land, built buildings, farmed. They provided for themselves the four necessities of life. Work became a meditation practice, "action" Zen. Often Zen communities worked during the day and sat meditation at night. Pai Chang's rule became a hallmark of Zen practice. Zen communities all over China and Korea followed this path.

In 841, a new king came to the throne in China. He turned against Buddhism. In 845, 40,000 temples were destroyed; 250,000 monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life. Practicing places for lay people and the ordained disappeared. The Zen temples were largely untouched. Why? They were not dependent on receiving patronage or offerings from others.

Korean Buddhism is a blend of Mahayana Sutra and Zen teaching, where Zen practice is viewed as predominant. The Chogye Order represents traditional Korean Buddhism. About 90% of Buddhists in Korea belong to the Chogye Order. Buddhism, after spreading throughout Korea starting in 372, eventually became the state religion for over 800 years during the course of three dynasties. In 1392, a new dynasty, the Chosun dynasty, appeared. The dynasty lasted until 1910. This dynasty favored neo-Confucianism. Buddhism fell out of favor. In fact, for 200 of those years, it was illegal for monks or nuns to enter the capital city under penalty of death. However, Buddhism was tolerated in the countryside. Temples received some support from surrounding communities, but the rule of "a day without work is a day without eating" was the guiding spirit of Zen practice and Zen life.

In 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea. Initially, the Japanese rule relaxed the regulations against Buddhism. But there were many other rules which caused Korean people great suffering. At one point, it was illegal to cut trees as the Japanese wanted these trees for their own use in Japan. The monks and nuns at temples could no longer cut wood for heat. It was necessary to get charcoal bricks which cost money to heat buildings. The Buddha Halls were not heated, only the sleeping quarters and the meditation hall, which are often one and the same. During and after the Korean war, the whole of South Korea was devastated. Everyone had a hard time getting food. Begging by monks and nuns was banned by all the Buddhist orders. Although South Korea is fairly prosperous now, this is still the rule today, except on special occasions.

Zen Master Seung Sahn grew up in this tradition. Perhaps you know his story. He was already a Great Zen Master in Korea, but when he came to America he got a job in a laundromat and rented an apartment. He didn't raise money from Korean or American people. He did it himself. He provided the basic necessities himself. He invited his lay students to live with him and supported the Center and everyone in it, until the students decided they would rather have him teaching full time than working in a laundromat. Everyone living in the Center contributed monthly to pay the expenses of living together—housing, food, utilities, government fees, etc. You can call this "rent" or "training fees," or whatever. It means not depending on others. This is Zen practice.

When we started a Zen Center in Paris, France in May 1985, we had a little seed money. We rented a small free-standing house. I was a monk living with a couple of French lay people. People often came in the evening and on weekends for practice. By winter we didn't have enough money to pay the rent for the building, heating, and food. I got a job painting apartments for two months and gave the money to the Zen Center. By the end of the winter, enough people were practicing together and helping with the expenses, that I could drop the painting job.

In 1989, Zen Master Seung Sahn sent me to Berkeley, California to be the abbot of our Empty Gate Zen Center. That summer, the Zen Center also did not have enough money for all expenses. I got a job in an Oakland marina

sanding and painting boats and gave the money to the Zen Center until, again, there were enough Zen students who helped support their practicing place. In our Zen centers, even monks and nuns must work hard to support the practicing place, usually inside the center, but outside if necessary.

You have a sincere desire to practice dharma. That is very wonderful! But I think your sensibilities are more in line with Theravada Buddhism than Mahayana and Zen. Theravada is more "myself" practice. Perhaps you ought to check out the Theravada centers in the United States. How have they adapted to the western culture and situation?

Mahayana is always for others. Zen practice is put down your opinions, don't check, just do it, help all beings. In Mahayana and Zen, accepting offerings is fine. But don't depend on others. Only help others. How can I help you?

In Theravada centers in Asia, usually people are not asked for money. Lay people are expected to give "dana"—to give money or offerings when they come to the temple or practice center. Asian people all understand this. Even Chinese nuns from Singapore, when they go to Myanmar to practice meditation, bring significant offerings because they come from a rich country. They understand this. Western people may not be asked, but are expected to give dana to help the others practice and to take care of their needs while they are in the temple. This is the correct way.

Before, in Mahayana centers in China, Tibet and Korea, people were not asked for money or offerings, again because Asian people already understand dana. Many westerners came with no idea about dana or anything, but only wanting something. They didn't understand one of the most basic teachings in Buddhism. Also the burden on others to provide the four necessities is not small in northern countries. Finally many temples set a fee. This is not just about money. This is teaching the correct spirit of practice—everybody help.

Zen Master Seung Sahn said, there are two kinds of religion: "I want something" religion and "Give to" religion. "I want something" religion means people want something—health, prosperity, peace, happiness, enlightenment, salvation, to go to heaven. Many kinds of wanting. "Give to" religion means don't think about "my" situation. How can I help you? If you want that, you must put down your opinion, your condition, and your situation. Then you can realize true nature. Just give to others whatever they need. Just do it! This is Zen practice. Then before you enter the meditation room, you are already practicing correctly. If you get great wisdom, skillful means will appear endlessly.

In this life, if you want something, you may get it. But you will meet hindrances everywhere. If you put down all your ideas and only follow the situation, you will have no hindrance anywhere. Which one do you like?

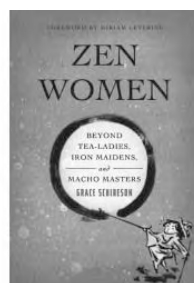
Finally, I ask you, What are you? This is the original Great Question. What am I? Don't know.

I hope you keep the Great Question—What am I?—only go straight don't know, put down all your ideas and opinions, just do it, attain the correct way, truth and correct life and save all beings from suffering.

Yours in the dharma,

Dae Bong 

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*Zen Women:
Beyond Tea Ladies Iron Maidens,
and Macho Masters*

Grace Schireson, foreword by Miriam Levering
Wisdom Publications, 2009

Review by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

In Buddhist contexts, it's easy not to talk about gender—why make man or woman? But both men and women exist, and somehow it is the women's lives and teachings that have largely been lost. This book is Schireson's contribution to ending that loss. The main teacher at three Zen centers and a retreat center, having received transmission from Soju Mel Weitsman in the Soto lineage of Shunruyu Suzuki and empowerment to teach kong-ans from the Rinzai master Keido Fukushima, she has the dharma chops to do it.

This is not the first book to talk about women in Buddhism or in Zen. And it will not — should not — be the last. The notion of the book about Zen women is as foolish as the notion of the book about Zen men. Not the first, not the last, and not the only one needed, *Zen Women* remains an essential book for anyone interested in Zen ancestors.

There are maybe a couple of handfuls of books on women Buddhist ancestors in English. I know of only two other non-fiction books focused on Zen women that reach out to the general public: *Daughters of Emptiness* by Beata Grant (poems of Chinese, mostly Zen, nuns collected from various sources, with brief biographies), and *Women in Korean Zen* by Martine Batchelor (her own life as a nun in Korea and the life of her mentor Songyong Sunim). Now we have three.

Schireson writes about a number of real women, in fact a very large number: five from ancient India, nineteen from (mostly ancient) China, ten from Korea, twenty-three from Japan — this alone makes her book invaluable. She organizes her discussion around status within the Buddhist community, e.g., founders and supporters, early Zen dharma heirs, convent nuns, and so on, with occasional reference to the tea ladies and iron maidens of the title. Refreshingly, she only occasionally segregates according to space or time: Korean, Chinese, and Japanese women of various eras jostle up against each other. Why not? After all, as we learn from *Zen Women*, the first Buddhist monastics to appear in Japan were Korean nuns, and the first Japanese person to take Buddhist vows was an eleven-year-old girl. In her final chapters, Schireson looks at the present, asking what we can learn from the women she has presented. And she sticks closely to the historical record.

This historical record has been reconstructed — heroically is the adjective that comes to mind — only recently by contemporary scholars. Besides Grant, these scholars include Paula Arai, Kathryn Blackstone, Eunsu Cho, Patricia Fister, Rita Gross, Susan Murcott, Diana Paul, Barbara Ruch, Kathryn Tsai (who translated the 6th century Chinese Mahayana *Lives of the Nuns*), and the exceptionally productive Miriam Levering. It cannot be stated too strongly how recent this work is. Levering's first scholarly paper on women and Buddhism appeared in 1982, and it took another nine years before anything on

Buddhist women appeared in English in book form: Susan Murcott's *The First Buddhist Women* (poems by and biographies of women in the time of the Buddha) was published in 1991; Rita Gross' *Buddhism After Patriarchy* (Buddhist attitudes and teachings about the female) appeared in 1992; as did the seminal compilation *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*, edited by José Cabezon.

The word "historical" is itself problematic. Outside of *Lives of the Nuns* (which predates Zen,) extensive and coherent evidence from China, Korea, and Japan was either not well preserved or not well known in the general Zen world. What we know of most of these women is generally recorded in writings of or stories about men. For example, we know of Lingzhao because she was the daughter of Layman Pang. Even someone like the great Ch'an master Qiyuan Xinggang, one of whose students did write her biography (and who is a major figure in Grant's *Eminent Nuns*), has largely been lost to the wider Zen world. And all too often, scholars must piece things together from scattered sources not primarily concerned with the women whose writing, lives and teachings they are trying to reconstruct. Schireson has absorbed and reconfigured what she has learned from her predecessors, and presented it accessibly and with integrity. Her book is indispensable.

Schireson does not restrict herself to restoring these women to us. She also looks at issues in contemporary western Buddhism, most notably male/female relationships (including sexual) within a Zen community, and lay practice. We may think of these issues as new to Buddhism, but they are not. Many of these women dealt with them, and the institutions they created were necessarily flexible. Restricted notions of the feminine paradoxically led to a broader permissible range of work for nuns than for monks. Women's temples sometimes responded to particular women's challenges (for example, sheltering abused women, or providing a legal means of divorce) that men did not have to face. Temples for upper-class women allowed them to become nuns within a culture of aristocracy they were otherwise not allowed to escape. Needing the permission of fathers, brothers, or husbands to become nuns, a number of accomplished women practitioners had to practice within the demands of lay life. For example, Miaozong received transmission from Ta Hui when she was the privileged wife of a high government official. As we, both men and women, grapple with dharma lives that don't resemble standard monastic training, we can find inspiration and examples from many of these women.

I am grateful to Schireson, and to the scholars who are her sources, for restoring these women to us. But the fact that this scholarship and this book are necessary (and they are) is saddening. As even a cursory familiarity with Zen literature makes clear, women were always part of the landscape. When, in Case 13: No Hindrance of *The Whole World is a Single Flower*, the nun strips off her clothes, the fact that a nun was having a kong-an interview with a male teacher is not considered remarkable. Similarly, it is not remarkable that the nun Shil Che appeared in front of Guji to challenge him (she's the one who wouldn't take her hat off). And all those tea ladies asking how various arrogant monks would clean their minds or with which mind they would eat their lunch — nothing remarkable there either.

So, once we absorb the lives and teachings Schireson is presenting to us, one more step is necessary: to integrate the teachings of and stories about our women ancestors with the teachings of and stories about our male ancestors. Nobody gains from marginalizing these women to the ghetto of "women's issues." In the project of restoring these teachings to their rightful place, *Zen Women* is an excellent place to start. ☸



MOTIVATION FOR PRACTICE

Oni Fullbright Woods

One thousand words or one word; it is too many.

Practice has been the thing that has kept me going on this path and also held me back. Moving forward on the path toward understanding the mind and compassion for self and other strengthens with my “try, try, try” in practice. Yet, there is a strange interplay between practice and not-practice. There are times when “not-practice” has dampened the “try, try, try.” This used to anger me greatly as I felt unaccomplished or lazy. This may have been true. Yet, what was also true was that this “not-practice” became a mirror—clear like space—to see the essence and beauty in practice. When considering motivation for practice, there comes the image of this “not-practice” into the mirror of mind and I remember that there is a path away from suffering again.

I asked once, “If this is a path with no traveler, then what makes it a path?” I have stopped looking for the answer to this. Practice is no longer a way out or up or through, it is just a way—nothing special, just a way. Practice became a chore when I tried to make something special of it. It became necessary when it was no longer special, but simply practice. I have observed the ways that my own life has been made too complicated and the lives of those I am close to as well. Yet with practice, we can live in a way that is harmonious and beautiful; even artfully lived. This is why I named the non-profit, arts organization that I helped to found “Living Art.” Sometimes our practice is Zen, sometimes it is mindful driving or walking, sometimes it is mindful listening or compassionate speech, but it is practice, nonetheless.

With cushion or without, we all practice something. Now is my only opportunity to practice mindfully and I will “try, try, try for ten thousand lifetimes.” Success and failure matter not. Coming to this conclusion has not been easy for me. I fought it, though realizing it intellectually.

Now I have begun to slowly put it all down. Slowly. Now opinions and ideas have less importance as I pay more attention to what it is I am choosing to practice.


One of the largest inspirations and motivations for practice that I have experienced has been at the Michigan City Prison. When with the sangha there, it is easy to forget that you are in a maximum security prison. The silence is just as expansive there. The concentration is just as engrossing there. The practice is just as strong there.

So I have no excuse for not practicing just as fervently “out here.” And I wonder about this for any of us on this path. In the comfort of our Zen centers we bow and chant, eat and sit, but what about practicing in our banks and groceries and in our community centers? What about practicing in our boardrooms and courtrooms and city halls? What if there was just as much mindfulness outside of the Zen center as inside? What is our excuse? Would that not-practicing and practicing could reconcile so that more mindful and artful living prevails.

What moves me to practice is not a sense of duty or obligation. I can admit now looking back that this may have been the case at one point. Duty and obligation to what, I am not certain, but some sense of “must do” was there. And this feeling of “duty” had a tendency to work for a time but then to backfire. The backlash was the “not-practice” time—the lull between serious efforts to form a lifelong practice in Zen. Now what moves me to practice is the practice itself: the power in its simplicity and its accessibility to various people in various places in the world and in their lives. I have changed a great deal, yet the practice remains steady in a way. Now there is a joy in practice that I can share with others. Obligation is no longer toil but a responsibility to open my life—the successes and struggles—for mindful examination as a teaching tool.

When does a path cease to be a path?—When I type and words fill the page. When does practice cease to be practice?—When its motivation transcends a need for explanation. These are just words, concepts, and ideas. Yet, they are some of the best vehicles we have for pointing to who we are beyond all of these words, concepts, and ideas. Practicing helps to clarify this, a little at a time, for me. There may be as many motivations for practice as there are people on the planet, yet there is one central question that all of these motivations attempt to address. Who we are, what we are, is such a beautiful mystery that I cannot imagine letting it pass me without stopping a moment to sit with it. This beauty is what moves me to practice, and what I believe moves us all to practice whatever it is that we feel is the path for us, to ask this persistent question about what we are beyond all thought and comprehension. What amazes me is that while the question remains answerless, there is an answer in experience. Practice, then, prepares the ground for experience—even if for a moment—of what, how, or who one may or may not be.

Practicing Zen is a beautiful experiment in answering the call to “know thyself,” as it has been echoed for ages. I can’t imagine changing so many minds as are present on the Earth with my fervent claims of “Zen for everybody!”, “Get to know yourself!” But I can imagine that, if only on my cushion, I can cease to be “I,” even for a moment, we may all get at least that small step closer to the experience of ourselves that we seek.

No attainment with nothing to attain—that’s motivation! 

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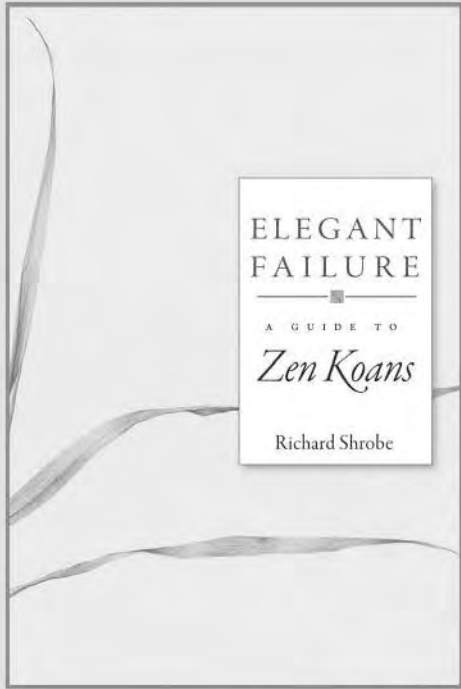
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PAPER, 256PP, 6X9, ISBN-13: 978-1930485259, \$16.95



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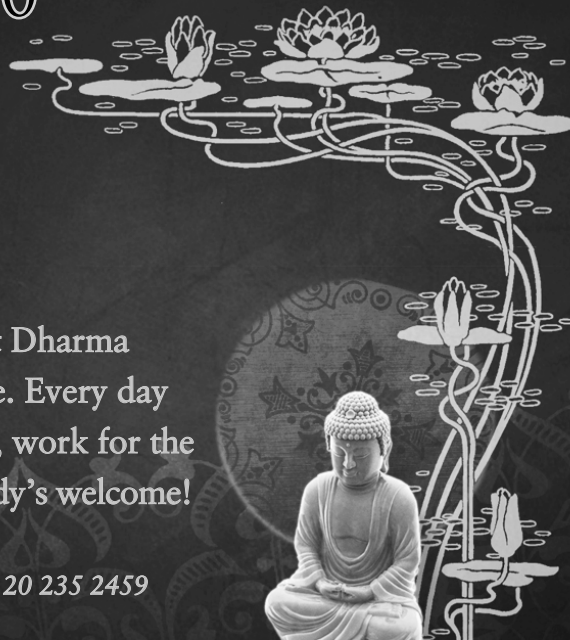
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[31**Prison Groups**

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Baker Correctional Institution, Florida
Bay State Correctional Center, Norfolk, Mass
Coleman Federal Corrections Complex, Florida
Florida State Prison
Indiana State Prison, Michigan City
Lowell Correctional Institution, Florida
Lowtrey Correctional Institution, Florida
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