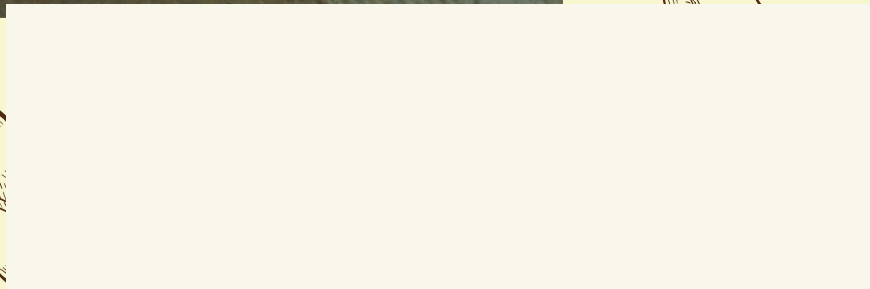


Primary Point



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Winter Kyol Che 2014/15

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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 2,800 copies.

The views expressed in *Primary Point* are not necessarily those of this journal or the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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Cover: Zen Master Su Bong and Zen Master Seung Sahn in Korea. Date unknown. Courtesy of Kraków Zen Center.

International School Zen Master's Note



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

Did They Pass On?

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Zen Master Seung Sahn's passing and the 20th anniversary of Zen Master Su Bong's passing.

What huge gifts they both are to our sangha and the world. No past tense for those two! They are alive and well in all of the important bodhisattva ways. Actually, all they have done is turn in their rusty rental cars and taken off to continue the great work of life and death.

So we will eternally thank them for all their gifts, their strong practice, and of course wisdom and generosity. Their humor, lack of pretentiousness and their sometimes unorthodox behavior enable them to always make me smile when I think of them.

The biggest tribute we can give to them is for each of us to aspire to emulate their great effort and compassion. Three bows to them both.

4] Not Just a Human World

Zen Master Seung Sahn

This world is changing very fast. Recently, I went to Moscow to take part in a large conference called the Global Forum. The idea of this conference was very interesting: How can we save this world? Soviet President Gorbachev had invited over six hundred people—prominent religious, political, scientific and business figures—from many countries. Gorbachev perceives that this world is in danger. His mind is very wide. He isn't attached to the idea of Communism.

Human beings have proven themselves to be very stupid animals. We have broken the natural world—broken the air, mountains, rivers; killed animals; fought each other. We don't understand our own correct situation or the correct way. In human life, keeping the correct way is very difficult. People get money, become famous, have this possession or that, but

when old age and death approach, there is much suffering. In a way, if you have much money, there is more suffering;

if you have no money, there is no suffering. Also, if you have too much thinking, too much understanding, then there is more suffering; if your mind is simple, there is no suffering, and it is possible to accept old age and death as a natural process. This simple mind is don't know mind. The don't know mind does not check, does not hold, does not want, is not attached to anything. It only keeps a one-pointed, simple direction.

But if you are holding your opinion, your condition, your situation, then this world attacks you. First, your mind attacks you; then your family, your friends, all the people you meet attack you; your society, your culture, time and space, everything attacks you. If you put it all down, this world and



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

time and space cannot touch you. Then you can control this world, you can control time and space.

Human beings always want something, and this wanting never ends, so our life is always complicated, always suffering. Putting it all down means making life very simple, like a clear mirror. The name for this mirror-mind is Great Love, Great Compassion and the Great Bodhisattva Way. Originally everything is very simple, very harmonious. Only when “I” appears do things get complicated and suffering begins. When “I” disappears, this whole world is yours. When “I” appears, you lose Us world.

For instance, in West Germany some people are wary of unification. Why? Because East Germany is very poor. So “I don’t like” appears. That’s animal mind, not human being’s mind. East Germany has had much suffering; West Germany is prosperous. We must put down our prejudices and live in the world with the sky, the trees, the air and other people.

At this conference in Moscow, the religious and political leaders of the world got together and talked about how to save this world. Now they are all concerned about ecology, about the environment, about pollution in the air and in the water. They talked about how to fix the problems of the world, how to raise enough money, things like that. In my talk to them, I explained that this is not just the human beings’ world; our universe includes animals, birds, plants, air, sky, everything. When there is harmony in all these things, the world is harmonious. When there is no harmony, there is a problem. So the problems of this world are only a result; this result is from primary cause. If you don’t understand primary cause, you cannot fix the results. What kind of primary cause?

Today there are five billion people in the world. In 1945, at the end of the war, there were only two and a half billion people. So since the Second World War, the human population has grown very fast. Also, there has been an economic revolution. Now many people in the West are comfortable: good house, good car, good situation. But how many people have happiness? Every day twenty-five thousand people die of hunger in the poor countries of the world. But in the rich countries of the world, there is much leftover food thrown into the garbage. So there is



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

imbalance in this world. Who made this imbalance? Human beings holding on to their opinion, condition and situation have made this imbalance, this suffering in the world.

Only a short time ago, everyone was afraid of nuclear war. Now everyone is afraid of AIDS. Always, everyone is afraid of dying. But if you keep your correct function, correct situation, correct relationship moment to moment, you can never die. Then you make harmony and balance in this world; that’s how you help this world—not only human beings, but the entire universe. That’s a very wide mind.

Western history always talks about change from the outside, so Western societies have many revolutions. Eastern mind means inside revolution,

not outside. It means sharing our world with the sun, animals, trees, all of life. Many Western people have been attracted to meditation because of these ideas. When your life becomes correct, you become harmonious with the rest of the universe.

The Buddha always talked about this idea: love and compassion, harmony with everything in the universe. He talked about equality and love. Everything in the universe has its job: tree has tree’s job, bird has bird’s job, human being has human being’s job. Only human beings don’t understand their correct job.

So any kind of Zen practice means making your mind very simple, which means don’t know mind. Don’t know mind means understanding human beings’ original job. The Buddha practiced unceasingly for six years. Bodhidharma sat for nine years. Why? He already had enlightenment, so why did he sit for nine years in the cave at Sorim? He realized that the time was not ripe for his teaching, so these nine years were a time of waiting for him. This waiting was not for himself but for all beings. So his waiting was his practice.

Bodhidharma’s waiting mind is also your mind. Putting down your opinion, your condition, your situation, while keeping correct function, correct situation, correct relationship is also Bodhidharma’s waiting mind. This is the bodhisattva mind; this mind’s job is never finished, because this mind is only for all beings.

I hope you continue to keep this Bodhisattva Way. Don’t make anything. Moment to moment, just do it. ♦

How Can You Answer?

Zen Master Su Bong

Editor's note: The following article is edited together from transcriptions of two talks by Zen Master Su Bong. He visited Bosnia during the combat in the early 1990s, and these talks are about his experiences during that time. He gave one talk at what was then the Hong Kong Zen Centre—and is now Su Bong Zen Monastery—on November 8, 1993. The other talk was given at the Cambridge Zen Center on March 1, 1994.

In Europe, I always ended my dharma talks with one line: “Great love and great compassion is not a thing to do in order to do a good thing. Great love, great compassion, reciting Amitabul, or asking ‘What am I?’—that is human beings’ original job.” So do you have any questions?

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Zen Master Su Bong

Zen Master Su Bong was born in Hawaii on January 7, 1943. His mother was Korean and his father was Hakka Chinese. He studied industrial design in the United States and was also an artist.

In 1974, he met Zen Master Seung Sahn and soon became one of his most dedicated and keen students. Between 1975 and 1981, he assisted Zen Master Seung Sahn in establishing Dharma Zen Center in Los Angeles, and he also helped to build many monasteries and pagodas in North America. In 1980, he received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn to become an authorized Ji Do Poep Sa teacher. He started teaching kong-an practice and also served as abbot of Dharma Zen Center. In 1983, he was ordained a monk and named Mu Deung Sunim. Between 1983 and 1994, he led thirteen 90-day Kyol Che retreats in the United States and at Shin Won Sa, Hwa Gye Sa and Su Duk Sa temples in Korea. He also traveled frequently to give teachings throughout Europe, especially Poland and Russia.

In October 1992 at the Providence Zen Center, he received dharma transmission from Zen Master Seung Sahn and became Zen Master Su Bong. His enlightenment name means “Extraordinary Peak.” Zen Master Su Bong was the guiding teacher of Zen Centers in Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia and the Seoul International sangha. Between 1990 and 1994, he also accompanied Zen Master Seung Sahn on teaching trips to China, Singapore and Malaysia.

Zen Master Su Bong entered nirvana on July 17, 1994, while giving an interview to a 14-year-old student.

Question: This world is full of suffering, so how should we help people who are suffering and who are in danger?

Zen Master Su Bong: That’s your job. You must find that. The sutras cannot tell you. Buddha cannot tell you. Zen Masters cannot tell you.

We all have some idea on how to help the suffering in this world, but it is all only an idea. If someone were to ask, “How would you help this world?” then maybe if you are a Zen student, you would answer, “May I help you?” That’s a very wonderful heart and a very wonderful mind, because the direction of “May I help you?” is great love and great compassion, and save this world from suffering.

I went to Bosnia-Herzegovina because I was teaching in Bratislava, and Bratislava is very close to Bosnia. We have a student in Zagreb, which is quite far from the fighting area, who asked if I could come. When I got to Zagreb, they said that a soldier, Ivoca, who liked Zen meditation, wanted to meet me.

The fighting is done by young soldiers—all young men. At 17 years old they are told to go to war. Ivoca was 27 years old, and he was unusual because he was vegetarian. For four years he’d been a total vegetarian. I said, “You don’t like meat but you are killing people. Why?”

Ivo said, “At this time, that’s my job, but when this is over I want to come to Korea and practice Zen with you. I want to become a monk. I really want to do that and will never go out from the temple until I know what a human being is. But now, I must kill people.”

I said, “I will wait for you and hope that you will come soon. But how is it possible that you don’t eat meat? All the soldiers love meat and alcohol and those things.”

He explained, “That is no problem because I am a very good fighting soldier. I am a killer. So, they understand that, and the mess hall understands; they give me extra bread, fruit and vegetables.”



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

Because Ivoca is a leader for the special forces, I was able to go to many places few people could go. So I spent three days with him and his killers. He said, when he introduced me to his soldiers, “These are my killers. They are my family.”

So I told my friend that I wanted to go to this town of Mostar. That’s where the heaviest ethnic fighting was. Then he said, “OK. I can take you anywhere.” Then he said, “Just a moment please.” And he entered his room



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

and put on a special uniform. Outside the house, there were other soldiers, but their uniform was a little different. The color was the same, the camouflage was the same, but the fashion and the cut were different. So I asked him: “Why is it that your uniform is different from theirs?”

And he said, “My uniform is brown and green.”

That’s like a Zen answer. The other soldiers’ uniforms were also brown and green. But at that moment I understood he couldn’t tell me why. Later I learned that it was because he was a special kind of killer. So we went to the top of a hill overlooking Mostar.

It was a very difficult situation because there was so much gunfire and bullets. It wasn’t just one or two shots, but continuous gunfire and small bombs exploding everywhere in the air. Everything was very loud. They shot off grenades, and on the other side of the mountain, a large number of people were fighting in the town. We were on a hill watching the fighting when other soldiers came to us and said, “No, no. Don’t stay here because the snipers are very good. They have guns that can shoot more than 4,000 yards. So if you stand up, they’ll shoot you. They don’t care who they shoot. Even the fact that you have no hair and funny clothes does not matter. They don’t care, they’ll shoot you.” So I said, “OK, OK.”

So my friend said, “OK, you want to go to the front line?” Somehow the front line was safer than on top of the hill. So we went down the hill.

On the street behind some broken buildings were a few small shops. These shops sold coffee and Coca Cola, ice cream and potato chips and of course cigarettes. Because the soldiers walked across this boundary line, fought each other, and then they came back and drank coffee and smoked cigarettes. It’s a little funny, because it’s like they were sitting in an outdoor café in France. Of course it’s not like France, but my friend said, “Let’s eat ice cream and have some soft drinks.”

Next to us were two soldiers with all their weapons on the ground next to them. One of the soldiers asked me through a translator, “Where are you from?”

I said, “I am an American. I live in Korea.”

Then he looked at me and he asked, “How can you help us?”



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Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

If you had been there, how could you have answered the soldier? What would you say? Would you say, “May I help you?” Or would you say, “Amitabul, Amitabul . . .” If you are a Zen student, then what? Would you say, “The sky is blue; the tree is green?” Not possible.

Already, I am a Zen student. I already answered many kong-ans. But this question by a soldier in a real life-and-death situation—“How can you help us?”—hit my mind and hit my soul. Of course being a good monk, I gave him a correct answer. I gave him some answer. But that answer, you yourself must find alone.

If you find that answer, then you will discover correct function and correct human being’s life. If you cannot find that, then our whole life is lived in a dream. A Zen dream, a “Don’t-know” dream, a Buddha dream, a Pure Land dream, a Nirvana dream, a Samadhi dream. Ten million, million Buddha lands: ten million, million dreams. If you want to help this soldier who asked “How can you help us?” then we human beings must wake up.

If you don’t understand, I hope you only go straight, don’t know; or recite “Amitabul, Amitabul, Amitabul . . . Amitabul. What am I?” Then attain your true self, get enlightenment, become one of ten thousand Buddhas, which means become this universe and save all beings from suffering.

Thank you very much for coming here this evening.

You are very kind. If five and a half billion people have your mind and your heart, even if we didn’t attain anything, this world will be at peace. Thank you very much.

Again, great love and great compassion is not something to do for the sake of doing good. Great love and great compassion is not a thing to do for the sake of doing a good deed. Great love and compassion is our original job. So I hope all of the people in this world can find their correct and original job, get enlightenment and save all people from suffering.

Epilogue: Six weeks after this talk was given, Zen Master Su Bong was teaching in South Africa. Every day he read the newspaper to find out about the world situation and how the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was progressing. When the war is over, he thought, Ivo would soon join him in Korea. One day Zen Master Su Bong picked up the paper. The headlines read “Severe Street Fighting in Mostar.” He thought, “I must call Ivo.” Two hours later he received a fax at the Dharma Centre in Cape Town—Ivo had been killed in street fighting a few hours before.

Transmission Ceremony Excerpts

October 1992

*Do Mun Sunim JDPS:*¹ Richard Shrobe JDPSN² gave the opening dharma talk about three kinds of transmission, and today we have three transmissions. So I would like to ask you, are you the tail, the family shame or the blind donkey?

Zen Master Su Bong: You have head, body and feet. What is it doing now?

DMSN: Standing in front of you.

ZMSB: Isn’t that enough?

DMSN: No!

ZMSB: Arrow has already passed downtown.

DMSN: Thank you for your teaching.

Mu Ryang Sunim: Zen Master Seung Sahn is a very great Zen master. Do you feel any awe in stepping into his shoes?

Zen Master Su Bong: Zen Master Seung Sahn is a very great Zen master. Many people in Korea wear white rubber shoes, so no problem. What kind of shoes do you wear? [*Laughter.*]

Notes

1. Do Mun Sunim JDPS is now Zen Master Dae Bong.

2. Richard Shrobe JDPSN is now Zen Master Wu Kwang.

What If I Am Unable to Pay the Rent?

Zen Master Ji Haeng

It has been ten years since the passing of our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, and yet the heart of his teaching legacy continues to beat strongly all around the world. Unveiling the great teacher's memorial at Providence Zen Center evokes poignant memories for me of Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching and the lasting effect it had on me personally.

It was auspicious meeting Dae Soen Sa Nim when I did. It was the late 1980s, and I was a five-precepts student traveling regularly to Dharma Zen Center in Los Angeles to sit their bimonthly Yong Maeng Jong Jin. It was there that I had the privilege of meeting Dae Soen Sa Nim, practicing with him, and hearing his marvelous dharma talks.

At that time, Las Vegas was home to one of the premier Asian doctors in the western United States, Dr. Ju Cheon Lee. Whenever Zen Master Seung Sahn came to Los Angeles to teach, he would also make the hour flight to Las Vegas to see Dr. Lee for acupuncture and moxibustion treatments. During his visits to Las Vegas, I would meet Dae Soen Sa Nim and his entourage at the airport, drive them to their hotel, and be their chauffeur for the visit. It was also my good fortune to have regular kong-an interviews with Dae Soen Sa Nim in his hotel room.

One day I received a phone call and was asked to meet with Dr. Lee. When I arrived, he gave me a set of keys to his office, a schedule of office hours, and told me that I could use his medical practice facility to offer meditation during the off hours and weekends. Much later I learned that Dae

Soen Sa Nim had convinced Dr. Lee that I could be trusted with this responsibility.

Three times a week, for two years until I became a dharma teacher, I moved all the waiting room furniture into the hallway; set up mats, cushions and an altar; conducted practice, and then packed everything up again; and moved the furniture back into the waiting room.

Then, during one of Dae Soen Sa Nim's visits, while driving him, Mu Shim Sunim (now Zen Master Dae Jin) and Mu Sang Sunim from the airport to the hotel, the conversation drifted to practice at Dr. Lee's office. I said that there were enough people practicing now that we were thinking of making the leap from Dr. Lee's office to a new location in an industrial strip mall. But I was concerned: "What if I'm unable to pay the rent?"

Dae Soen Sa Nim listened politely and then turned to Mu Shim Sunim and said, "Tomorrow you call Providence and tell them that if Thom needs extra money for his rent, that they send it to him from my personal account each month." Even now, after so many years, this brings tears to my eyes. He didn't know me so well, yet he had no reservations about my intentions. The best part was that I never once needed to call Providence. Dae Soen Sa Nim's unwavering commitment to the dharma inspired complete try-mind, 100 percent "just do it." Our beautiful Las Vegas Zen Center today requires a significantly larger monthly overhead, but there are no qualms. Just as in the old days, we "only go straight."

Another time I was in Los Angeles right before Buddha's Birthday. Dae Soen Sa Nim sent me over to Tal Mah Sah to help hang prayer lanterns on the ceiling in the Buddha hall. I was given a tall ladder, many lanterns, and some basic instructions. While I worked, all the women were in the kitchen downstairs, laughing and talking as they prepared food for the ceremony.

After a while, one of the bosalnims came back upstairs. I looked down at her from the ladder, smiling to indicate, "Well, what do you think?" Her face turned ashen and her own smile disappeared. She began yelling for the other women to come back upstairs to see what I had done,



Photo: Zen Center of Las Vegas

just as Dae Soen Sa Nim's car arrived and he walked in the door. One woman pointed at the ceiling and shouted, "Look, look what he has done!" Apparently all the lanterns were hung upside down! They expected Dae Soen Sa Nim to deliver a strong reprimand. Instead he just smiled at me, then turned to the women, dismissing the whole thing by saying, "No problem. This is just Zen style!"

Here again, Dae Soen Sa Nim was able to cut through any attachment to the external trappings of Buddhism, focusing only on a student's pure intentions and sincere try-mind. On another occasion Dae Soen Sa Nim arrived in Las Vegas on a tight schedule, needing to fly out again the next day. After checking in at the Las Vegas Hilton, we drove immediately to Dr. Lee's for a moxibustion treatment. Rather than returning to the hotel to rest, we then had to meet Dr. Lee and his family within an hour for dinner at a fancy Chinese restaurant. I mentioned to Dae Soen Sa Nim that one of our Zen center's practitioners, Ken, had recently suffered a stroke, leaving him paralyzed and deeply frightened by his impairment. His only wish was to have Zen Master Seung Sahn visit him.

Although by now very tired, Dae Soen Sa Nim instructed me to drive first to the medical facility even if it meant

arriving late at the restaurant. He presented my friend Ken with a 108-bead mala, encouraged him to keep practicing, and spoke comfortingly to him, holding Ken's hand throughout the entire visit.

For me this was the most wonderful example of great love and great compassion in the face of need. Despite the distractions of a tight schedule, social obligations and great fatigue, Dae Soen Sa Nim made himself fully available to a suffering person he had never met, giving him his wholehearted attention.

Unveiling our great teacher's memorial no doubt evokes similar memories for each of us who had the good fortune either to meet Dae Soen Sa Nim personally or to encounter his teaching. Surely many of us recall some time in our life and in our practice when some aspect of Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching made all the difference—awakening our great faith in the dharma, sustaining our great determination to follow the bodhisattva path and evoking the great question of our life.

And so, ten years after his passing, we celebrate Dae Soen Sa Nim's living legacy—his clear direction, tireless dedication to the dharma, his Great Love, Great Compassion, Great Bodhisattva Way. ♦

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You have a big nose! That's enlightenment."

Ty Koontz

About 30 years ago (I don't remember the exact year), I was working as a writer/editor for a small press and had the pleasure to interview Master Seung Sahn for a magazine article we were publishing. I did quite a few interviews during that time, and the one with him was the most delightful and unconventional of them all. I had done my homework and prepared a list of questions to ask. When a fellow editor and I showed up for the interview, he took us into his office in the Berkeley Zen Center and sat us all down on the floor in the middle of the room. Then he treated the "interview" like a teaching session, taking our questions and turning them back on us to our confusion and delight. He also took some time to explain how the interview process with a Zen teacher worked, including the use of the stick, shouting and a few other things I can no longer recall. Despite the instruction, we persisted in our role as editors, and the interview was often quite hilarious and had us laughing much of the time. Also, there were many taps for each of

us with his stick—probably more gentle than those his dedicated students received, but still serving as wake-up calls—and also several shouts. He was wonderfully happy throughout the interview and a total pleasure to be with. Sadly, I don't remember much detail about the content (probably because of getting the mind bogged so many times), but I do remember one exchange: I asked him "What is enlightenment?" hoping for a simple definition for our readers. His response: "What is enlightenment? You have a big nose! That's enlightenment." Then he tapped me with his stick. ♦



Ty Koontz has worked in various aspects of publishing since 1982, ultimately specializing in indexing. He has been a lifelong spiritual student. While not aligned with any particular tradition, he has been fortunate to receive the guidance of several fine teachers, most especially Dr. David R. Hawkins. He currently lives a contemplative life in Tucson, Arizona.

Encounters with Zen Master Su Bong

Zen Master Dae Kwan

“Nice to meet you! My name is Mu Deung.”¹

“Nice to meet you! My name is Sudhamma.² I practice in Thailand, but originally I am from Hong Kong.”

This was the first time we met at Hwa Gye Sa Temple in Seoul, Korea, in 1991. Later, I found out that Zen Master Su Bong was to be our guiding teacher for the three-month winter retreat at the 1,700-year-old Shin Won Sa Temple in Gye Ryong Mountain.

In a very small Zen hall deep in the mountain, there were 26 people from all over the world practicing together at that retreat. It was not easy at all. I had lived mostly alone in the Chang Mai forests of Thailand for 10 years, but now I had to share a very small room with six other women. I could not even stretch my arms because I might hit the person sleeping next to me. Not only that, we had to do everything together, and we were not allowed to go outside the temple grounds.

After a few days, I was a bit agitated with the situation. During a kong-an interview with Zen Master Su Bong, I told him about my agitation. He said, with both palms facing up, “Give me your agitation.” He signaled me to put my agitation into his palms, and then continued, “I will light an incense to burn down the agitation.” When I heard that, I burst out into laughter.

All the agitation disappeared. This was my first encounter with a great Zen Master. I met him even before I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. He helped me to understand that a Zen kong-an was not merely a legend or a story in a book. It can happen moment to moment in our daily life.

He also taught us what it means to follow the situation. When we went to China, he would follow 100 percent the Chinese way of practicing, not holding on to his own way. One time during a tea break at the retreat, the group started laughing. When he saw this, he did not say anything. He hit the floor with his hand. The sound of his hit was very loud, and all of my thinking disappeared. He would use all situa-

tions to bring you back to who you really are and not who you think you are. Our true nature has no ego, so everything we do is not about “me” or “for me.” It is so important to attain this quality of mind in this fast-changing world.

Zen Master Su Bong became the first guiding teacher of the Hong Kong Zen Center when it opened in 1992. Despite being a teacher, he did not like to be special. Instead, his character was such that he easily connected with people of all ages and backgrounds, young or old, educated or illiterate, lay or monastic. His charisma and gift of skillfully presenting Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching in a humorous way, yet retaining the originality

of his teacher’s style, won the hearts of many students. When an elderly Chinese nun entered the room for an interview with Zen Master Su Bong for the first time, he bowed to her. This action moved her so much that she immediately wanted to become his student. His action taught us true equality—a rare trait in Asian Buddhist communities where traditionally a monk will never bow to a nun.

On July 17, 1994, Zen Master Su Bong gave his last kong-an interview to a 14-year-old girl at the Hong Kong Zen Center. He asked her, “How do you perceive the sound of the world?” After she answered, he indicated that she was correct and

then entered nirvana while sitting up in his full dharma robe and kasa. His bodily age was 51 and his monastic age was 11.

Zen Master Seung Sahn said, “Su Bong Soen Sa is giving us the teaching: coming and going, no hindrance.”

KATZ! Thank you for your teaching, Zen Master Su Bong. Where is Zen Master Su Bong now? Where did he go? If you find that, you are walking hand in hand with him. ♦



Photo: Su Bong Zen Monastery Archives

Notes

1. Zen Master Su Bong’s name before transmission.
2. Zen Master Dae Kwan’s ordination name in Pali.

TRANSMISSION CEREMONY FOR

Zen Master Ji Haeng

April 5, 2014, at Providence Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Zen Master Ji Haeng: Mu Sang Sunim.

Mu Sang Sunim: Thom.

ZMJH: Good afternoon.

MSSN: So. Not so long ago, you were in a terrible auto accident. Now, at that time, as I'm told, after the accident you didn't remember what happened. You were completely unconscious. So at that time, when you were unconscious, your true self, where did it go?

ZMJH: You already understand.

MSSN: I don't, please teach me.

12] ZMJH: Your head is shaved and your eyes are blue.

MSSN: I don't accept that.

[Laughter.]

ZMJH: You want more?

MSSN: I want more.

ZMJH: Go drink tea. Already here.

MSSN: Thank you for your teaching.

ZMJH: Great abbot Carlos.

Question: Hi Thom.

ZMJH: Hi.

Q: Congratulations.

ZMJH: Thank you.

Q: So, before Zen Master Seung Sahn got transmission he sat a 100-day retreat. Last night you told me you sat a 50-day retreat. What happened to the other 50 days?

[Laughter.]

ZMJH: You already understand.

Q: I'm asking you.

ZMJH: Ten more days after today will make 100.

Q: OK, thank you.

Question: Rrrrrrrrr! *[On all fours, acts like a dog.]*

[Laughter.]

Q: Raarrrr! *[Sniffs around, lifts leg, as if peeing on a tree.]*

ZMJH: Dharma already complete.

Q: *[Returns to seat.]*



Photo: Karen Resnick

DHARMA SPEECH

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

The stick is the table, the table is the stick.

This is opposites world. Everything is changing moment by moment. Who can know it or define it?

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

No stick, no table.

This is absolute world. It requires no explanation, no faith and no understanding.

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

The stick is brown, the tablecloth is red.

This is complete world. Not reliant on knowledge, not giving rise to grasping or rejecting.

Each of these statements represents three worlds: Opposites—Absolute—Complete

Which one do you like?

KATZ!

Right now, we are all present in this dharma room for a ceremony.

The precision and intelligence of each moment flows freely only when we are not judging and evaluating our experience.

In 2008, as some of you may recall, I was involved in a near-death automobile accident on my way home from Zen practice one evening. An intoxicated driver hit my vehicle from behind. Five eyewitnesses testified his speed to be near 100 miles per hour. My vehicle rolled over three times. In addition to multiple other injuries, my neck was broken, which is often fatal or results in paralysis. The driver who hit me subsequently was found guilty of felony drunk driving and sent to prison. As for me, I spent the better part of a month in the hospital: initially the trauma ward, followed by intensive care and then rehab.

When I was sufficiently capable to take calls, Zen Master Wu Kwang telephoned me with well wishes. It took a moment for the nurse to fit the telephone handset through the metal bars of the halo device that was attached to my skull, keeping my neck in place.

He asked me “How are you doing?” Not wanting to miss an opportunity to engage him, even under those circumstances, my response was, “Right now I’m lying here in bed looking up at the ceiling and talking to you!” Sort of a “dharma convalescence combat.” Without hesitation Zen Master Wu Kwang replied, “What choice do you have?” His mind sword pierced me that day, his Zen stick hitting me from clear across the country. In this life, we are guaranteed nothing.

Upon his enlightenment, Zen Master Man Gong composed this poem:

*Empty Mountain, true energy without time and space.
White cloud and clear wind come and go by themselves.
Why did Bodhidharma come to China?
Rooster crowing in the morning, sun rising in the east.*

Zen Master Jun Kang’s commentary said, “If you attain this poem, you attain the meaning of all the sutras. The last two lines are the most important: Rooster crowing in the morning, sun rising in the east. If you find that point, then you find Bodhidharma’s heart and Buddha’s head.” He finished by saying “Thorny jungle everywhere.”

Oftentimes we set up some idea in the road of prac-



Photo: Karen Resnick

tice of gaining something. We entertain a linear vision of practicing to purify something, eliminate something or transform something into something else.

The truth, however, can only be found in the present moment. This moment has no birth and no death. Birth and death, coming and going, are all based on some type of conceptual framework. We make attempts to anchor ourselves in a system of rationale and theoretical space at first, but only by stripping away all the props and constructs can we arrive at a place of not knowing that is truly profound. Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, “no meaning is great meaning.”

A novice monk once asked Zen Master Joju, “Master, each day you and I wake up at the same time, bow together, chant together, eat together, and meditate together. What differentiates us that elevates you to the high seat?” Master Joju replied, “There is only one difference.” The young monk, eager to learn what this one difference could be, implored the Master to reveal this single element. Joju replied, “It is really quite simple. I use the twenty four hours and you are used by the twenty four hours.”

Everything is no problem as long as we are not attached to our thinking and the resultant thought streams that control our actions, speech and emotions.

Observing the comings and goings of our mind without rejecting or grasping anything allows us to see all situations with a clear mind. We can give up being competitive, and settle into an intelligence that responds rather than reacts to life situations. When this happens, our founding teacher’s legacy stands there like a mirror to remind us that our true inside job is to help this world and save all beings from suffering.

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

If you say that sound is liberating, you have already lost it.

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

If you say that sound is binding, you are trapped in a world of opposites.

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

Liberate or bind, how do you resolve this dilemma?
KATZ!

In a little while, we will all pose for a group photo. ♦

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Terence Cronin

April 6, 2014, at Providence Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Q: You nervous?

Cronin PSN: You know it.

[Laughter.]

Q: You should be.

[Laughter.]

Q: So, where I come from, anytime there's a celebration or some great event, the Southern people have this tradition of a rebel yell. Would you like me to demonstrate?

Cronin PSN: Sure.

Q: YEEEEEEHAWWWW! What does that mean?

[Laughter.]

Cronin PSN: You already understand.

Q: One more step is necessary.

Cronin PSN: YEEEEEEHAWWWW!

[Applause.]

14]

Hedgpeth PSN: It's so good to see you in this seat. So you're a hospice chaplain, yeah, this is your work? So you counsel people, and their families, who are dying.

Cronin PSN: That's right.

Hedgpeth PSN: How will you be able to counsel yourself when you die?

Cronin PSN: You already understand.

Hedgpeth PSN: I don't understand.

Cronin PSN: *[Falls over dead.]*

[Laughter and applause.]

Q: We sat together the last week of Kyol Che. It was very wonderful. I did the morning bell chant, and you did the evening bell chant. It's a lovely bell. It's sometimes tricky to get the right tone. If you hit it the wrong way, it clangs, and I had trouble with that. For two weeks, I had the privilege of hitting that bell. How do you hit it just right?

Cronin PSN: You already understand.

Q: I'm not so sure of that!

Cronin PSN: What color is the floor?

Q: The color is brown.

Cronin PSN: Do you like that tone?

Q: It's a wonderful tone, thank you.



Photo: Brenton Sheehan

DHARMA SPEECH

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

A good answer is a bad answer; a bad answer is a good answer. That's a mistake.

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

No good answer; no bad answer. That's a mistake.

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

A good answer is a good answer; a bad answer is a bad answer. Another mistake.

So, how can you not make a mistake?

KATZ!

Today is Sunday, April 6, 2014. The candles on the altar burn brightly.

Thank you for being here today. It dawned on me recently that, with just a few exceptions, most of you here didn't know who the inka candidate was going to be. I think that is great, because it emphasizes not the individual, but the role of teacher. Or perhaps even more, the teaching itself, this timeless dharma taught by the Buddha, down through the generations to Zen Master Seung Sahn and the Kwan Um School of Zen. Moment by moment, we are all responsible

to continue that teaching just as we are all responsible to be lifelong students. Identifying some as formal teachers is just one skillful way to help us all do that.

I am eternally grateful for this life-giving teaching, as I am for Zen Master Seung Sahn, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, my guiding teacher who nominated me for this role, the teachers on my inka committee, and for all our school's teachers and sangha members, whose wisdom has guided me over all these years.

I'd like to share four Zen stories that have been life-giving for me and inspire me still.

The first is a saying I heard when I first started practicing over thirty-four years ago: Goats are just goats; people are goats trying to be goats.

Human beings can't just be ourselves. We are so self-conscious, which is what we sometimes call checking mind. We're goats trying to be goats. We don't believe in ourselves. We're always wondering, "Am I . . . enough." Am I tall enough, pretty enough, smart enough, talented enough, wealthy enough, clever enough? Did I get the right answer often enough? Other times, we're busy checking other people: Why is she like that? That's not right! Why can't he do it the correct way? On and on and on. Goats are just goats; people are goats trying to be goats. Buddha taught that everything is perfect, just as it is; but none of us believe that. And so, we suffer and we create all kinds of suffering for everyone and everything around us.

I've been doing a lot of checking in the past few days: "What are they thinking, making me a Ji Do Poep Sa? They must be crazy; they're making a big mistake! I'm way too introverted, much too anxious, certainly not charismatic enough . . ." On and on. Truth be told, thirty-four years ago when I first started practicing Zen, I really, really wanted to believe that if I could just get enlightened, of course then I'd be calm in the face of any adversity. I'd be confident and decisive in all my decisions. I certainly wouldn't be standing here today feeling anxious. Well, guess what? It doesn't work that way. And that's OK; it doesn't have to. Anxious goats are just anxious goats—perfect, just as they are.

Our good fortune is to have our practice: Who am I? Don't know! Who is anxious? Don't know. And through that don't know, to awaken to the truth that, as one Zen master put it: it's all perfect just as it is, and you could stand a bit of improvement. We can see both sides of the coin, and use our karma to help bring compassion to this moment.

My next story is from my first contact with the Kwan Um School, which was a retreat I attended here at Providence Zen Center led by Mu Deung Sunim JDPS, who later became Zen Master Su Bong. This was probably in 1986 or so. During a talk he gave, he referenced the kong-an Hyang Eom's Up a Tree. For those of you who may not be familiar with it, it goes like this:



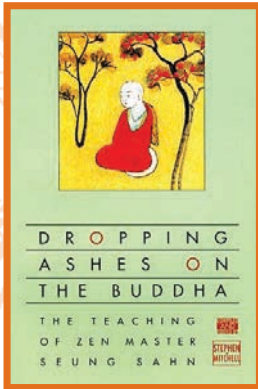
Photo: Brenton Sheehan

It is like a person high up in a tree, clenching a branch between their teeth. Their arms and legs are bound; they can't grasp a branch or touch the tree. On the ground, someone approaches and asks, "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?" If the person answers, they fall to their death; if they don't answer, they fail in their duty as a bodhisattva and will be killed. If you were up in the tree, how could you stay alive?

What Mu Deung Sunim then said touched me to the core: "In our school, most everyone passes this kong-an. But, do any of us every truly attain this kong-an? Fully realize it?" And I thought, "This is a Zen school I can find my home in." As it was, I had already "passed" that kong-an, but I knew I had not come close to passing it in the only way that even mattered: being able to embody it in each and every moment. I still haven't. To be part of a school that doesn't make passing kong-ans anything special, but emphasizes "Try, try, try, for ten thousand years nonstop"—that was just the teaching I needed to hear.

This next story has been important to me because it connects my Zen practice with the religion I was raised in, Catholic Christianity. Though by choice I haven't practiced that religion for many, many years, the fact is that the Christian contemplative tradition became the doorway through which I found Zen. There's actually a short story within the story here: after finishing at Yale Divinity School in 1981, I thought I might have a vocation as a Trappist monk, so lived at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Lafayette, Oregon, for a time. There, two of the most important teachers in my life, the abbot, Bernard, and the novice director, Peter, were diligently trying to reclaim and deepen the Western contemplative spiritual tradition being practiced by their

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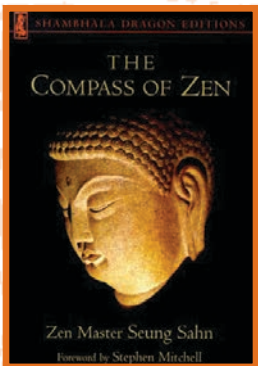
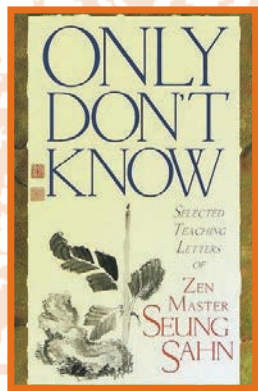
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16]

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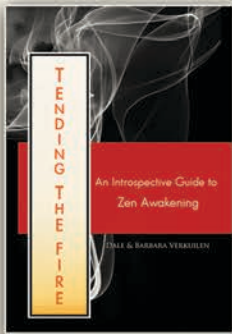
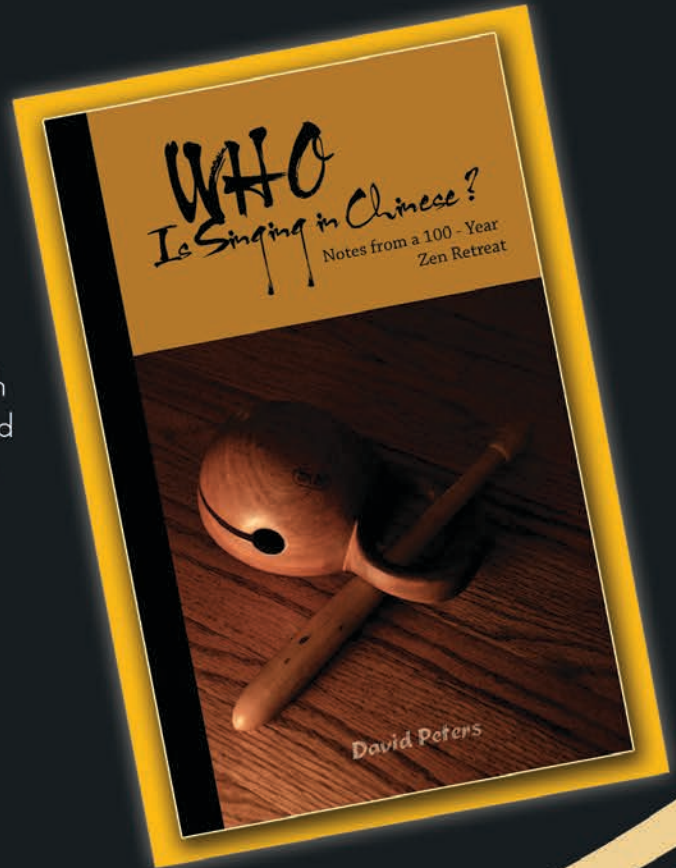
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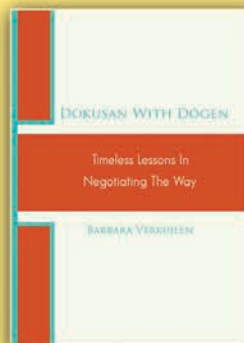
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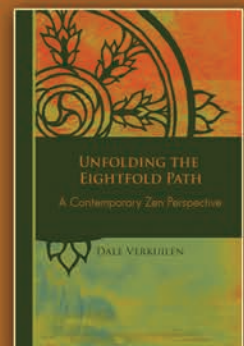
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**Unfolding The
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monks. Recognizing the importance of a skilled teacher, they were open-minded enough to have forged a relationship first with Robert Aitken and then with Willigis Jäger, both teachers in the Sanbo Kyodan Zen tradition. My first Zen retreats were sesshin led by these teachers and, when I left the abbey to return to Maine for good, they said, “You should check out Zen Master Seung Sahn at the Providence Zen Center. We hear good things about him.” I did (the retreat with Mu Deung Sunim that I just referenced) and I’ve been coming here ever since.

Anyway, I digress. The story is of a fellow called Zen Master Bird’s Nest, from the T’ang dynasty in China. He gets his name because he did his meditation high up in a tree. One day, the governor of that province, who was himself one of China’s great poets known for his expressions of Zen Buddhism, came to consult Bird’s Nest. Calling up to him, probably expecting some profound or esoteric teaching, he asked, “Tell me, what is it that all the Buddhas taught?” But in reply, Bird’s Nest, quoting from the Dhammapada, simply said, “Always do good; never do evil; keep your mind pure—thus all the Buddhas taught.” The governor, who perhaps had travelled some distance and made significant effort to reach Bird’s Nest, was not happy, and replied with anger and impatience, “Always do good, never do evil, keep your mind pure: I knew that when I was three years old.” To which Bird’s Nest responded, “Yes, any three-year-old child may know it, but even an 80-year-old cannot put it into practice.”

When I first heard that story, I immediately thought of this passage from the Christian scriptures: “And someone came to Jesus and asked, Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?” And Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Do this and you will live.”

If we’re not attached to any idea about God, or person, or salvation, these two stories are the same story. It really is so simple: love each other, love everything! In each and every moment, ask “What is this, right now?” And then, “How can I help this situation?” “What does compassion look like at this very moment?” In our teaching words, how do I keep correct situation, correct relationship and correct function, right now?

Bird’s Nest’s insight—even an 80-year-old cannot put it into practice—certainly rings true for me. My beloved wife and son, Linda and Sam, as well as my brothers and close friends here today, can attest to that. Unfortunately, it’s usually those closest to us who see us at our worst—hopefully they see us at our best as well—but, either way, these stories remind us that unless enlightenment means enlightened behavior, it’s not worth very much.

And finally, perhaps my favorite teaching phrase of all

because it really brings all these others together in such a practical way, is Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching, “Make mistake—just make correct.” I can’t tell you how important that teaching has been for me. I don’t know about you but, for me, so many of the Zen stories seem to end with, “Then the person got enlightenment, all the kong-ans were clear, and they finished this great work of life and death.” Or, some version of that. Well, that certainly hasn’t been my story to date. So many kong-ans—both in the interview room and, much more important, those real-life kong-ans in our marriages, our families, our sanghas, our communities and workplaces—they don’t resolve themselves quickly and easily. We do our best to see the moment clearly, we respond with what seems correct function . . . and the next moment reveals that whatever we did didn’t seem to work. Perhaps the person is still angry or the suffering hasn’t been eased or the problem is still there. Are we willing to stick with it, “to stand in the fire and not shrink back,” to return to the situation, over and over again, for as long as it takes, until it feels like “it’s correct.” That has been one of the great values of kong-an study for me: teaching me to stay with the situation, mistake after mistake after mistake, until it becomes clear—and then to just put it down, because the next moment, a new situation is right there. Equally important, am I able to put down my preconceived notions of what “correct” and “incorrect” might even be?

Then:

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

Do you see this?

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

Do you hear this?

This stick, this sound, and your mind, are they the same or different? If you say they are the same, that’s a mistake, and the stick will hit you; if you say they are different, that’s also a mistake, and the stick will hit you; if you say they are both the same and different, that’s an even worse mistake and the stick will hit you even harder.

So what can you say? How can you not make a mistake?

KATZ!

Outside, bright sun; in this room, many bright faces. When I make a mistake, please help me make it correct. That’s sangha. ♦

Terry Cronin JDPSN started practicing Zen and Christian contemplation in 1980 while a student at Yale Divinity School. Since 1986, he has trained in the Kwan Um School of Zen. He is head dharma teacher at the Northern Light Zen Center in Topsham, Maine, and received inka from Zen Master Soeng Hyang in April 2014. For the past 21 years he has worked in a variety of roles for hospice programs, currently serving as a hospice chaplain. He and his wife live in Maine and have one adult son.

Wisdom Is Not Something You Carry Around in Your Head

Zen Master Dae Bong

Editor's Note: The following article is taken from a longer talk given by Zen Master Dae Bong on what it means to be a dharma teacher. Zen Master Seung Sahn had a very direct, live and spontaneous quality to his talks and his teaching. Underpinning this was an organized foundation of the essentials of Zen practice and tradition. Dae Bong Sunim's talk gives a particularly cogent and clear exposition of these elements.

Here are some important points of Dae Soen Sa Nim and our Kwan Um School of Zen's teaching. First, what is a dharma teacher? Dharma means truth, attaining truth. Truth is before speech and words. In our practice, first we must attain this point before speech and words. Then, we can attain truth and correct human being's life. That's one meaning of dharma. Teacher means someone who helps others. Human beings are unusual because we have teachers. Some animals teach each other a little bit, but most animals—most things in the world—have their program already set inside. But we human beings have learned from each other, so teachers are very important. So a dharma teacher is someone who teaches truth. Anything we do in our life is a kind of teaching. So if we try to live by truth, then we are teaching truth to others.

For a dharma teacher, sincere practicing is very important. This sincere mind is already a great teaching. Next, it's important to see my karma, and try to fix that. In the Bible, Jesus asks, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" That means it's very easy to see other people's karma, but difficult to see our own karma. So the Sixth Ancestor said: "What I see are my own faults. What I do not see is the good and bad of others." Most important is to see my karma,



Photo: Barry Briggs JDPSN

control my karma, make my karma disappear, attain my karma, then use my karma correctly.

In Buddhism, they say there are four ways to help others, that is, four kinds of bodhisattva action. Buddha talked about this. The first kind is giving people things they need or want. Maybe somebody needs food, somebody needs clothing, somebody needs medicine, or somebody really wants something very badly. If we give those things to this person, then their mind relaxes.

The second kind of giving is giving encouraging speech. This means speech that helps people believe in themselves. For example, maybe a three-year-old child makes a drawing. It just looks like a scribble to us, but we ask the child what this is, and they say, "Oh, that's an elephant." Then, if you say to them, "Oh, that's not an elephant, that's terrible, that just looks like a scribble," maybe they would get a bad feeling and they won't try anymore. But if you say to them, "Ah, that's wonderful! Wow, that's a big elephant! Draw another one, please," then they get this mind of encouragement. They believe in themselves and they want to try. So, this kind of good speech, encouraging speech, really helps people.

The third kind of bodhisattva action means teaching truth, talking about the nature of this world: "If you do good things, you get good results. If you do bad things, you get bad results;

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you get suffering. So, what do you like?” This kind of talking—teaching dharma, teaching truth to others—this helps people very much.

But sometimes, people cannot hear these three things. They are still suffering and holding their desire and anger and ignorance. Then there’s a fourth kind of bodhisattva action, which we call together action. Buddha sometimes called that identity action. That means only acting together with them. If they like dancing, then dance together. If they like eating, then eat together. If they like stealing, then steal together.

Buddha also said that in life, there are three kinds of giving. Giving is a great virtue; it’s the first of the six paramitas, generosity. First is giving things: giving things that people need, material things, money, things like that. That’s wonderful and brings a very good result. Also, it helps others.

Next, a higher giving is giving your life. That’s like soldiers or firefighters or police, sometimes doctors—anybody in a situation who acts without regard for their own life, only to help somebody else. That’s a very high form of giving.

The third kind, the most high, is giving dharma. This means if we learn to practice correctly and really attain our true substance and truth and correct function, then we can give dharma to others. That’s the highest form of giving.

20] Zen Master Seung Sahn always talks about four kinds of mind problems: wanting something, attaching to something, checking something, holding something. These four things are a kind of mind disease. These things make suffering for ourselves and for others. So we always say: don’t want, don’t attach, don’t check, don’t hold. If you want something, don’t attach. Then, no problem. If you attach to something, don’t check, then no problem. If you check something, don’t hold, then no problem. If you hold, then you have a big problem. So very important is to perceive our wanting, attaching, checking, holding mind and take away these things.

Being a dharma teacher means wanting to understand our true nature and save all beings from suffering. That’s our life’s direction; that’s the dharma teacher’s job. If that’s clear, then any kind of dharma teaching situation doesn’t matter. The direction is the same. Being a layperson, monk or nun doesn’t matter. If we just try to understand our true self and want to save all beings from suffering, then that’s being a true dharma teacher.

The second point is, what is meditation? In this world, there are many kinds of meditation: Christian meditation, divine light meditation, yoga meditation, relax-your-body meditation, fly-in-the-sky meditation, get-some-psychic-power meditation. Even in Buddhism, there are many kinds of meditation: Tibetan styles, Theravada styles—even different Zen styles.

In Zen we say meditation means when you’re doing some-

thing, just do it. When you’re driving in the car, just drive. That’s driving meditation. When you play tennis, just play tennis; don’t think “How do I look?” When you eat, just eat. When you talk, just talk. When you wash dishes, just wash dishes. When you’re doing something, 100-percent just do it. Then your mind, your body and the situation all become one. The name for that is meditation. That’s a not-moving mind. Your mind and the situation completely become one. That’s meditation.

This is very important. In Zen, our meditation is not special, not separate from everyday life. When you’re doing something, just do it. That’s very hard for people to do, so we have simple forms of formal meditation: sitting, bowing, chanting. We use these simple forms to take away our karma. Finally, when we’re doing something, we can just do it. At that point, our meditation and our everyday life aren’t separate. Then our whole life becomes a spiritual practice. In this world, many people understand the word meditation, but they think it’s something special, and they don’t understand true and correct meditation. Zen teaching is very wonderful, very clear.

The third point concerns formal meditation: bowing, sitting, chanting, walking. Bowing practice means very quickly your body and your mind become one. It’s also a good way to take away lazy mind, desire mind and angry mind. When you’re sleeping, your body’s lying in your bed, but your mind flies around and goes someplace. Maybe you go to Las Vegas or you go to the ocean or you go to New York, or some monster is chasing you. Even though your body’s in bed, your consciousness already went someplace. Often, when we wake up, our consciousness and our body don’t quickly connect. So you wander around your house, drink coffee, bump into things. Slowly, slowly, your consciousness and your body come together again. That’s why, first thing in the morning, we do 108 bows. Through these 108 bows, our body and our consciousness quickly become one. Then, being clear and functioning clearly is possible.

We always bow 108 times. One hundred and eight is a number from Hinduism and Buddhism. There are 108 defilements, or compartments, in the mind. Then each bow takes away one defilement; it cleans one compartment in your mind. Bowing practice is like a repentance ceremony every morning. In the daytime, in our sleep, our consciousness flies around. Also we make many things in our consciousness. Then, we repent! When we do 108 bows, that’s already repenting of our foolish thinking, taking away our foolish thinking.

There are some people who cannot sit. Maybe they have a little crazy mind or too much thinking. If they sit, they cannot control their consciousness. For them, bowing is very

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good. Using your body some way is very important. Further, having a clear direction about bowing is also important. I want to put down my small I, see my true nature and help all beings. Exercise can help your body and mind become one, but with just any exercise, the direction is often not clear. Sometimes it's for my health, sometimes it's for my good looks, sometimes it's to win a competition; but in Buddhism, everything's direction is the same point—how to perceive my true nature and save all beings from suffering. Bowing means to take our karma mind—our thinking mind—and return to this moment very clearly. I want to find my true nature and save all beings from suffering. So bowing practice is very important. If somebody has much anger, or much desire, or lazy mind, and they want to address this, then if they do 300 bows, or 500 bows, or 1,000 bows, every day, their center will become strong, they can control their karma, take away their karma, and become clear. So bowing practice is particularly good for this.

Next, sitting practice. Sitting practice simply means three things: body, breath and mind.

The next point is how to keep your mind. Buddha had one big question: What is life? What is death? What is a human being? What am I? He searched, and finally, he only didn't know. So he went straight, don't know for six years. Correct mind practice means this big question, "What am I? Don't know." But holding this kind of question in our minds is can be very difficult. Deep inside our minds we must have this question, but holding the words is not necessary. Although we have many kinds of mind practice techniques, correct mind practice means only go straight, don't know: Have this big question, wanting to understand my true self and save all beings.

Next is chanting. Chanting is very important and is also a wonderful practice. If you keep your energy in your head, then there is much thinking and desire and suffering. If you keep your energy in your chest, then there is too much emotion, then incorrect thinking appears. "I like this, I don't like that, this is good, this is bad." This thinking dominates your life and your actions. If you return your energy to your lower belly, then it is easy to become clear and for wisdom to appear. If people have too much emotion, or don't like emotion, then chanting practice is very good for them.

We talk about three kinds of mind: lost mind, one mind and clear mind. When you do chanting practice, it's easy to

experience clearly this lost mind, one mind and clear mind. Lost mind means that you're doing one thing but you're thinking something else. For example, in chanting, your mouth is chanting, but your mind is thinking about the many things you have to do that day, or some conversation that happened, or something that you want. When you're chanting, put all your energy into the sound. If there is any kind of thinking, any kind of feeling, or any kind of thing going on, take that energy and put it into the sound. Then finally your mind will become one mind, only the sound—ma-ha ban-ya ba-ra mil-ta—only sound. That's what we call one mind. Then there's no thinking at all, only the sound. It's also called samadhi. That's a very good feeling. So it's important not to attach to this samadhi mind. One more step is necessary: hear your voice, hear other people's voices. That's what we call clear mind.

Chanting actually is more than 50 percent listening. You also have to open your ears. First, put all your energy into the sound, then hear your sound, and hear all people's sound. That's correct chanting practice, clear-mind practicing. If someone has too much emotion, too much thinking, too much bad karma, then chanting practice really helps this lost mind become one; then one mind becomes clear. That's the importance of chanting practice.

We don't talk so much about walking meditation. Walking meditation is often seen as just a break from sitting practice. It's more. It's very important, when you're walking, to return your energy to your *danjoen*, your lower belly, and feel your feet touching the floor. In our walking style, the hands are interlaced. In some styles the left hand is inside the right

hand; in other styles, the right hand is inside the left hand. Dae Soen Sa Nim said one time, "Yeah, that's OK, but then maybe this right hand or this left hand has a bad feeling." So we interlace our hands. Then both hands are equal; both hands are happy. We hold our hands over this *danjoen* area and walk at kind of a normal pace: not too slow, not too fast. In that way, our walking meditation is also kind of an everyday life practice—not special.

That is bowing, sitting, chanting, walking. That's our formal meditation style. Then we try that every day, every day, every day, and then this center appears. This before-thinking center appears. Then we can experience what is meditation mind, and in our everyday life turn our everyday-life action into correct meditation. Then our spiritual practice and wis-



Photo: Kateřina Grofová

dom will really grow.

The fourth point: substance, truth and function. A central point of our teaching is making substance, truth and function very clear. This is one of the activities of our correct kong-an practicing. Substance means our before-thinking nature. Sometimes we call it primary point. This cannot be expressed in words or speech because it's before thinking. Guji always raised one finger. Lin Chi always shouted "KATZI!" Zen Master Duk Sahn always hit people. Our school's style is to hit the floor. First, return to your before-thinking nature, then if you correctly attain your original substance, you can see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly, taste clearly, feel clearly. Everything is clear. The sky is blue; the tree is green. The dog goes "woof woof"; sugar is sweet. Everything is just reflected in your mind. We say, if you keep this hit-point, then your mind is clear like space. Clear like space means clear like a mirror. The mirror just reflects. Red comes: red. White comes: white. So when you see the sky, just blue. When you see a tree, just green. When you hear a dog barking, just "woof woof." That name for that is truth. So everything in this universe is truth, just the way it is, not dependent on our thinking or our opinions.

Attain truth. Then, one more step is necessary. How does truth correctly function to make correct life? We say, "helping others." That means, when you're hungry, eat. When you're tired, sleep. When somebody is hungry, give them food. When somebody is thirsty, give them a drink. When somebody is suffering, help them. The name for that is correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. Buddhism also calls that great love, great compassion, the great bodhisattva way. That's our practice. That's correct life. That's Zen. So, substance, truth and function all become very clear.

Number five: Sometimes I heard Dae Soen Sa Nim say that in practicing, two things are very important: correct direction and try mind. Correct direction means wanting to find our true nature and save all beings from suffering. Try mind means try. Do it, just try. One day he said to us, "If you have try mind and correct direction, then you have correct practicing. Then one day you realize that try mind and correct direction is enlightenment." Correct direction we can get from our dharma teachers. It can be pointed out to us by our dharma teachers, by our Zen master. But try mind, only we can provide. So it's important for everybody to try.

Sixth is kong-an practice. This is distinctive to Zen practice. Kong-an practice has two main functions. First, to help us always return to our correct practicing direction. Some people practice to feel better. Some people practice to take away problems. There are many kinds of reasons, and all those reasons can be very good, but our practicing's original direction is very important: Don't know—only go straight,

don't know. So when you can't answer a kong-an, already your mind returns to don't know. This helps us keep our practicing direction. Some people just want quiet for meditation. That's OK, but that cannot really help your life. So kong-an practice helps you keep this correct practicing direction of don't know.

A second point is that kong-an practice helps us to find correct function. As we go through kong-an practice, we begin to see clearly substance, truth and function, and then we can find the correct function in our life. There are basically two kinds of kong-ans. One kind checks our meditation mind—how much our mind is unmoving. It's like sword fighting; the teacher attacks, you go back, then the teacher, then you, then the teacher, then you. Then you can see how long you can keep not-moving mind. The second type of kong-an checks our wisdom. That means our functioning. It is very important that our kong-an practice connects with everyday life. So the three main aims of kong-an practice are to help us keep our correct practicing direction, which is don't know; to find correct function; and finally, to attain no hindrance.

Number seven: If meditation, cognition (or correct view), and everyday life connect in our practice, then our spiritual life is complete. With some people, their religious life and their everyday life don't connect; then this can never be satisfying or complete. Meditation means not-moving mind: when you're doing something just do it. Correct view comes from kong-an practice and correct study. How do I connect my practice with everyday life? If we understand correct meditation, then that will already help us connect with our everyday life. We can make our everyday life meditation. Then wisdom appears, and we are actually able to help our life from our practice. Also, our life will teach us how to practice better.

Number eight is about form. First, the purpose. The purpose of form is to help us put down our opinion and attain original mind. Anything we do in life has some form. By making a simple form and simply doing it together, it gives us a chance to see our opinion moment to moment, put it down, and then suddenly attain our original mind, which is open, wide and free. Most people who like freedom, especially in America, are attached to freedom, and they're not really free. When they're in a structured situation, their like and dislike mind appears and they can't follow the situation. But if you're really free, that means that you're also free of your likes and dislikes. Even if you have likes and dislikes, you're not controlled by them. So it's possible to follow any kind of form to help others. So the first purpose of form is to help us put down my opinion and attain original mind.

The next purpose is to help us function together harmoniously. Dae Soen Sa Nim often said, “Follow the situation, then get happiness.” So in each situation, our teaching is always to follow the situation. If you go to a Tibetan temple, practice Tibetan style. If you visit a Japanese temple, follow the Japanese style. If come to a Kwan Um School of Zen temple, then follow the Kwan Um School of Zen style. If you learn this way and can live this way, then in any situation you can make harmony, put down your opinion, attain original mind, get wisdom and be of great help to people. This means keeping our great direction.

Learn to use your eyes, ears, hands, your whole body. If you go to another Zen center and you watch what they do, soon you're able to follow them. Then often they're surprised, because most of the time we have to tell people over and over what a particular form is. Most people are not able to really use their eyes, ears and hands clearly. If we Zen students learn to use our eyes, ears and hands correctly, then we're able to connect with others and other situations much more quickly.

Finally, we always talk about together action. Together action makes harmony. By doing together action, I put down my opinion and am able to follow others. Then, others will follow you. So Dae Soen Sa Nim sometimes said, “If you want to help somebody, then you must follow them, follow them, follow them. Then, turn around and go the correct way; then they will often follow you.”

The ninth point is practicing. One day at the Cambridge Zen Center, a student asked Dae Soen Sa Nim during a formal dharma talk, “I have been practicing for three days. Can you give me some advice that will help my practice?” Dae Soen Sa Nim said, “How many days have you been practicing?” The student said, “Only three days.” Then Dae Soen Sa Nim said, “Too long!” Then he said, “Three days, twenty years—doesn't matter. Very important is this moment. What are you doing right now? If this moment is clear, your whole life is clear. If this moment is not clear, your whole life is not clear. So don't check, 'I've been practicing three days, one year, ten years, twenty years.' Only, what am I doing right now? That's very important.” This kind of approach really helps students because it's true and very clear.

Another thing about practicing is that often, after about three years, and sometimes between seven and ten years, people who are practicing have some problem in their practice. When you first begin practicing, often you get some kind of rapid result. You get some relief from a problem in your life, or some ability to see yourself better. Then you often start to feel like, “Well, I'm doing more thinking than before.” But all that's happening, really, is that you're beginning to see your thinking. But sometimes after about three years people begin to feel that they're not making any progress and they don't

understand why their practice isn't helping them anymore.

I always say that our karma is like a ball of ice. When you first light a fire under it, right away some spot begins to melt and you get the satisfaction of actually making some progress. But after a few years, you've melted the outside surface, but the insides are very hard, and the same fire will not melt more, so you begin to doubt your practice and doubt yourself. At that point, it is important to simply practice harder and persevere. Simply continue. Don't check yourself. Don't check your practicing. Don't check the results. Then, you'll pass that point and again realize some change and some progress. Also, often between seven and ten years a similar situation or problem will appear. So again, it's important simply to continue to try. Then you will always get the result.

Another topic that Dae Soen Sa Nim would talk about occasionally, in relation to practicing or karma, is what he calls lingering karma. Lingering karma means something deep in your consciousness. Even if your practice is going well and you feel very clear, sometimes some situation will appear, and boom! Your karma appears—some desire, some opinion—and suddenly you can't control yourself. This is called lingering karma, and it usually catches you by surprise. Well, the medicine for this is simple: strong practice. If you've been practicing strongly, then your practice energy will carry you through this karma and suddenly your mind again will become clear and you'll be able to break free. If your practice hasn't been strong, and this lingering karma appears, it's important to practice strongly. Then you can pass through this without creating problems and obstacles for yourself and others.

One further point: Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching about meditation and wisdom. Meditation means a not-moving mind. When you're doing something, just do it. If one practices that way, one is able to get a strong center. But sometimes people have some deep experience in practice, then they take this experience, turn it into some kind of understanding, then it's very difficult to teach them and they don't really get wisdom because they're just holding their understanding.

We say wisdom comes from correct kong-an practice and together action, and especially important is correct kong-an practice. If you have a big question, not holding on to your understanding, but having a big question, returning constantly to don't-know mind and having the direction of saving all beings, then wisdom will appear. In our teaching, these points are explicit and clear: substance, truth, function, and also, meditation and wisdom. Wisdom is not something you carry around in your head. It's the ability to respond in a situation automatically that saves all beings from suffering. ♦

Song of Dharma Nature

Zen Master Seung Sahn

*The nature of the Dharmas is perfect.
It does not have two different aspects.
All the various Dharmas are unmoving
and fundamentally still.
They are without name and form,
cut off from all things.
This is understood by enlightened wisdom,
and not by any other sphere.
The One is in the many, the many are
within the One.
The One is many the many are One.
Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment.
One moment is the same as numberless kalpas.*

This is an excerpt from a long teaching-poem based on the Avatamsaka Sutra. It was written by a very famous master, Ui-Sang, during the golden age of the Shilla Dynasty in Korea. These verses are chanted every day in most temples in Korea. They point directly to the nature of dharma. Many



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

people say, “Dharma is this. Dharma is that.” But what is dharma exactly? Originally, true dharma has no name. Dharma has no form. Even calling it “dharma” is already a big mistake. Dharma is not dharma, OK? You must understand that. So, dharma or dharma-nature are just names for your universal substance. This substance, of which everything in the universe is composed, does not have two different aspects. It does not even have two different forms. It also does not have one aspect or form. It is not one and not two. It is also not a “thing.” It takes every form of every thing in the universe, and yet it takes no form, because form is completely empty. It is like electricity. Sometimes electricity appears to us by making fans move and radios emit sound. It produces air-conditioning. It can freeze water and heat a room. It can move a long, heavy train, and yet you walk around with it in your body. It can completely disappear into space. So if you say that electricity is just one thing, you are wrong. If you say that it is all these things that it does, all these actions that it performs, you are also completely wrong. Electricity is none of these things, and yet it is all of them. Similarly, rain, snow, fog, vapor, river, sea, sleet, and ice are all different forms of the same substance. They are different things. But H²O is unchanging, and composes all of them according to their situation. They are all water. The same is true of dharma-nature. It is not one and not two. That is a very important point.

So dharma-nature is universal nature, and it takes many, many different forms. Sometimes it is a mountain, or the rivers, or the sun, the moon, the stars, this cup, this sound, and your mind. They are all the same, because they are all the same universal substance. When any kind of condition appears, dharma-nature follows that condition, and then some form appears. But when condition disappears, then name and form disappear. That is the meaning of “everything is complete” in these lines. “Complete” is this dharma-nature, this universal substance that goes around and around and around with no hindrance. It never lacks anything, anywhere. Sometimes it is a mountain, and sometimes it is a river, or trees, or rocks, clouds, humans, air, animals. But originally it is complete stillness. Even while taking form as everything in this universe, it is completely not moving. It takes these forms, but it is none of these forms and is not touched by these forms. Dharma-nature

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is the same as your true self. It cannot be understood with conceptual thinking. Books and learning cannot give you this point. One hundred PhDs will not help you attain it.

The One is in the many, the many are within the One.

The One is many, the many are One.

Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment.

One moment is the same as numberless kalpas.

Everyone believes that time and space exist. Ha ha ha ha! That's very funny! Your thinking makes time, and your thinking makes space. But no one really understands this. So these lines state that time and space are the same, and they are one. They are also not one. This One is completely empty. "The One is in the many, the many are within the One. The One is many, the many are One." That is talking about space. Everything is one point, and that one point is everything. There are not two separate things. We can think of it this way: Empty space is only one—indivisible—but in space there are many individual things: mountains, rivers, human beings, trees, dogs, cats, the sun, the moon, the stars. All of these "things" comprise space. Everything is part of space, but that space is not two, because everything is contained within it. There is nothing "outside" space.

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This poem has very interesting teaching about the true nature of time, too. "Numberless kalpas are the same as one moment. One moment is the same as numberless kalpas." Time is not long or short. As we saw earlier, since our thinking minds make time, we also make it either long or short. If you practice meditation, however, you can actually perceive that in one moment, there is infinite time. In one moment, there is infinite space. In one moment there is everything! One moment is endless time and space. To most people such a statement must be describing some special realm or experience. So how big is one moment? If we want to imagine this, we can illustrate one moment as being one second divided by infinite time. That is a very short time! A camera can teach you this. There are some special cameras with very high shutter speeds. This kind of camera can photograph a speeding bullet. A moving bullet is invisible to the naked eye. When this camera shutter opens, very quickly, it "catches" the bullet on film. You can see the bullet stopped in midair, not moving. But if you look closely at the photograph, you can tell that this bullet is still moving, though it seems stopped in space. The same is true of our minds, just as they are. If you take your don't-know camera—your mind before thinking arises—and perceive just one moment, very deeply, very clearly, you see this bullet not moving. You see everything not moving. This

whole world is not moving. That's very interesting! Your mind and this whole universe have the same nature. Originally everything is completely still and not moving. This sutra says, "All the various Dharmas are unmoving and fundamentally still." This is the same point. Stillness simply means our moment mind: one second divided by infinite time. We sometimes call that moment world. It is infinite in time and space, which actually means that it has no time or space.

So this *gatha* has very interesting poetic speech about dharma-nature and universal substance. But this is only beautiful speech, and even the Buddha's speech cannot help your life if it does not completely become yours. Then where does universal substance come from? Where does universal energy appear? It comes from complete stillness. "The One is in the many, the many are within the One. The One is many, the many are One." So everything has it. [*Hits the table.*] Everything comes from complete stillness. [*Hits the table.*] Everything comes from this one point. Sometimes this point is called universal substance or energy, or Buddha, or God, or consciousness, or holiness, or mind, or the Absolute. [*Hits the table.*] These are all names, and names come from thinking. But originally, this complete stillness point has no name and no form whatsoever, because it is before thinking. Yet it is present in all things, and all things have it. In Zen there is a famous kong-an, "The ten thousand things return to One. Where does the One return?" If you attain that point [*hits the table*], you attain One, and you attain everything. That means you attain moment. You attain complete stillness and extinction. But mere intellectual understanding of this cannot help you. Only meditation practice can give you this experience directly. [*Hits the table.*] When this experience completely becomes yours, you attain your wisdom. That is the teaching of the Song of Dharma Nature. ♦



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-Zen Master Seung Sahn

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