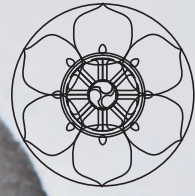


Primary Point



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2020 Summer Kyol Che

May 7 to August 4, 2020

Kyol Che means 'tightening'. It is done by limiting our habitual tendencies and restricting our scope of activity that are not beneficial for our life. We do this by gathering the practitioners who commit in coming together in one place to follow a set schedule of focused meditation for three months.

During Buddha's time, the summer monsoon months of heavy rain in India restricted monks from traveling. Naturally, those rainy seasons became the time to stay in one place and focus deeply in meditation. As this tradition crossed over to China and Korea, the northern climate brought an additional 3 months of intense meditation retreat over the winter season.

Rooted in this deep kyol che tradition, Zen master Seung Sahn created a unique practicing situation at Musangsa, with both Korean and multi-cultural elements to support the international group of practitioners who participate each year. Kyol Che at Musangsa is a precious opportunity for monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen to come together as a community from all part of the world. Beyond race, nationality, or gender, all gather to do the formal practice of meditation, 108 bows, chanting, work practice and kong-an interviews, to attain their true self and find the purpose in life.

Due to the global Covid-19 situation, Sumer Kyol Che from May 7 to June 6 is a closed retreat for Musangsa residents only. For the possibility of participation from June 7 onwards, announcement will be made late in May as the situation changes in Korea. For further information, please write to office@musangsa.org. Stay safe and be well. Musangsa Hapjang

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July 25-Aug 1st	Paul Majchrzyk JDPSN
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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 1,800 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: Painting by Sven Mahr. Ink on paper, 2020.

Practicing for the Planet: Julia Fiedorczuk Interviews Zen Master Bon Shim

Editor's note: Continuing our approach with a revised editorial process, the content for this issue was generated by the European sangha. We would like to offer thanks particularly to Zen Master Ji Kwang, Barbara Pardo JDPSN, Veronique Struis, Kelly Safreed-Harmon, and Gaspër Sopi.

The world is in a deep crisis: I am thinking primarily of the ecological crisis, which is progressing at such a pace that it is difficult not to feel despair. I would like to talk about how Zen practice can help us overcome despair and react adequately in this unprecedented situation.

We possess great power that we are not aware of. This mind of ours is really powerful, especially when you practice, because dharma is a strong thing. In Zen practice there is no room for joking around. As we observe, this mind can either free us or destroy us. As Zen students, we do not train in mindfulness to feel a little better. Zen practice reaches far more deeply, which is why it is a great method to watch out for.

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Sometimes we experience something that can cause despair. It is essential to accept it; we cannot pretend that it just doesn't exist. We do not want to feel despair; we have a tendency to run away from unpleasant experiences. But running away from the reality won't solve anything.

Despair that we feel now is a great force that we could use to do something positive. We should shift it to look into ourselves and then implement in action—for the good of others. We cannot give in to despair.

We should also realize that tough experiences—times when we don't succeed, crises, all the painful experiences—they all have their good side, because this is what awakens us. It is sad that human beings need such strong signs—otherwise, we dwell in our habitual thinking, actions, and reactions—that we need some kind of a shock to knock us out from our fixed patterns and closing oneself off. It is unpleasant, but it's just the way it is. We need a shock.

Could ecological crisis become a stimulant to awakening?

Indeed, as with personal crises, the process is the same, but the scale of the problem is huge. It's no longer about individual awakening. Most people have to wake up, at least to the extent of what needs to be done. Everyone should be involved. Only then can we dispel and avoid the crisis. We ought to listen to the scientists—after all, these are all serious people that talk about climate change, and not some lunatics spreading unnecessary panic. Scientists from all over the world are putting out hard facts, evidence, and calculations.

No other issue has such unambiguous scientific consensus as anthropogenic climate change.

We can observe how many forests have been burned, what weather anomalies have happened. We cannot just turn our back and pretend that nothing wrong is going on. We cannot pretend that it's going to get better, because it won't. Unless we take responsibility for the human race and the crisis of our existence, it will be much worse. It's a special situation. Maybe we need such a strong stimulant to wake up to reality. In this moment we need to change our bad habits. That is extremely hard—no one wants to give up self-complacency.

Usually in life first comes the shock, and after, the awakening. What's happening right now is shocking for everyone who is showing even a little bit of interest in it. What is happening is simply horrifying.

Paralyzing at first . . .

Indeed, because the catastrophe has already begun. The worst is yet to come, which is why people are constantly trying to turn around and choosing not to know, but ultimately this knowledge cannot be ignored.



Photo: Damian Porter

The crisis is affecting our mental health—psychologists are talking more and more about mental disorders caused by climate change. Other beings also suffer—animals whose living space is shrinking dramatically. We live in the age of the sixth great extinction.

More sensitive people feel the magnitude of the suffering that is already happening. This is also felt by children who are experiencing severe global imbalances. But no one can completely cut themselves off from reality. This cannot be done, since we are all connected with each other and with the environment. This is not a Buddhist principle; it is a universal truth. Since animals experience fear and panic, it also reaches us. People who practice every morning repeat the vow, reminding us that we practice for all sentient beings. Now we must really put this vow into action, implement it in every field. Everyone must do whatever they can. Everyone has some skillful means; everyone can do something. Now it's time to use that to wake people up. There is no time to lose. Maybe my generation will live through the rest of the world in a fairly stable condition, but our children will experience terrible things happening—we don't even know what will happen. We only know that changes are progressing faster than science assumed until just recently.

How can we divert this shock into action, when we cannot look away from it anymore?

Nothing will come of despair. Despair is human, so we must survive, accept, and recognize it, but we cannot stop at that. We must act while we can, even to the smallest extent. Everyone knows that one of the biggest sources of pollution is cattle breeding. You can read the scientific reports. To feed only one person on a carnivorous diet for a year, you need a piece of land the size of two football fields. From the same piece of land, we can feed several thousand people on a plant-based diet. We should strive to give up eating meat. It is not easy for everyone, but you can at least reduce the consumption of animal products. Changing habits is extremely difficult; I know that. But there is no other way. People must understand that they are hurting themselves. People must see that they are the cause of what is happening in the world.

You talked about taking responsibility for the fate of other beings. Can you say how to do it so that this responsibility does not paralyze us, that it won't turn into a feeling of guilt, which is not helpful anyway?

We have to start with the smallest steps, look closely at our life. How can I live more ecologically friendly? What can I change? These are basic and simple things. First you have to feel it in your heart—understand that it is really bad, feel the need—the necessity—to join together to save the earth. And it needs to start from our own life. Interestingly, people now intuitively feel that practice is needed. Lots of people meditate these days. It doesn't have to be Zen; it doesn't have to be any religious path. People are

just looking for a moment of focus during the day. It is worth taking advantage of this trend. Look at ourselves as just one of many beings living on this planet. We are all connected. If the effects of this catastrophe haven't reached me yet, they will very quickly. It will happen. You have to make an effort to see what world we live in, even if it is painful to realize. Responsibility for this also falls on me.

Part of this responsibility is to know the truth—not to look away from reality, to become familiar with the state of knowledge about the climate and the effects of progressive changes.

Yes. Hopefully we will be shocked awake before it is too late and nothing can be done. Unfortunately, human beings tend to be guided by ignorance, anger, and greed—until we make the effort to change it, open our eyes, see the suffering of others. We look narrowly: this is my life, my situation. We wander through life guided only by our selfish motives. Fortunately, at the moment a lot of people are already recognizing the seriousness of the problem. It's mostly young people and even children who feel that adults have let them down, falling into a dream of ignorance.

I am interested in the relationship between Zen practice and ecology. Sometimes people have the impression—I know it is wrong—that meditation is a kind of escape and is contrary to any action, and now the time has come to act.

Yes, I know that there is such impression about Zen practice; it is not correct. It's exactly the opposite. You meditate to see reality clearly. Hear, see, think, feel, and act clearly. This is Zen practice. To see clearly means to see things as they are, not to live in some dream or fairy tale, not to create wishful scenarios. The role of a Zen teacher is to wake people up from sleep—it's difficult because people live in deep ignorance and don't want to wake up. The Buddha already said that this world is like a burning house. There was no ecology problem back then, but there was always a problem with the ecology of the mind. What pollutes it? Ignorance, lust, and anger. If we get rid of ignorance and see in reality what is happening in the world, then we will want to help—this is a natural reaction. Everyone has this natural good in themselves. That's why you meditate: that the veil of ignorance will fall, or at least become thinner, so you can see the situation as it is. You don't have to sit on a cushion for twenty years to feel this compassionate impulse to want to act. Zen meditation is not a pleasant path, because it strips us of delusions, for example, the illusion that we live in a pleasant world. We want to feel good; we want to see what is beneficial to us—it is a very strong defense mechanism that blurs our perception.

I think that consumer culture also works like a dumb drug. Recently, there has been more and more talk about sugar addiction. But I think that we're also addicted simply to consumption, to buying, to enjoying ourselves, to the rich market

offer of products and services that are to further increase the comfort of life.

Yes. Consumption dulls and numbs us. The market works to enslave people. Everyone has such experience—you go to the store, do some stupid shopping, then you just ask yourself—what was it for me? Unfortunately, we are in a deep sleep, and awakening is difficult. Even Zen practice does not guarantee that we will wake up.

The problem with consumerism is that it turns everything into a commodity—even meditation and ecology. There is currently a trend for wellness. You can choose the right meditation from a whole range of options. We are told that freedom is free use of whatever the market has to offer, which also includes various spiritual practices and ecological products, and even—this is the biggest paradox—zero-waste products. So, to be eco-friendly I should replace my toothbrush with a bamboo one. So again: buy, buy buy.

This is not freedom; it is a trap. It's very easy to get caught. People often have the impression that they live properly, because they use only organic products. In this way they calm their conscience, thinking that further changes are unnecessary. Meditation helps us to be vigilant, not to be manipulated, not to be deceived by offers that seem to provide us with ethical well-being, such as zero-waste products. I don't know another way. If people don't put effort into working with their mind, which is the source of everything, then it's really easy to be fooled, because marketers are very intelligent people. As for the meditation offer—very fashionable now—mindfulness meditation can be used in various contexts. For example, soldiers practice mindfulness to be more effective on the battlefield. The Buddha talked about “wrong mindfulness”—wrong, or practiced for incorrect reasons.

Corporations encourage employees to practice mindfulness to be more effective corporate drones.

Yes. It's all true. But if a person really focuses and actually maintains mindfulness, then consciousness begins to awaken—and a question about the direction of this practice. Direction, motivation is the absolute basis. We do not practice for ourselves. Sure, at first you need to work on yourself, but proper practice is directed to the good of all beings. This is human work: caring for others, caring for this world. And mindfulness is just one aspect of the eightfold path described by the Buddha. The eightfold path is a basic science, fundamental, leading to freedom from mental enslavement—from every kind of it. The path consists of (1) right understanding, (2) right intentions, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right life, (6) right effort, (7) mindfulness, and (8) proper meditation. Zen meditation is not about inner peace, about some nice form of relaxation. The effort is put into understanding yourself and your mind, along with the question of direction. Why do I want to feel better? To take responsibility for this world and help others. It's not for me.

Although, in essence, whatever I do for others, I do for myself.

Yes, but it requires some insight—after all, only by helping others can you really help yourself.

And what does it actually mean: the right direction, the right understanding?

A lot of people have an issue with this term, *right*. It is not about any dogmatism or Buddhist ideology, about proclaiming that we know exactly what is right. Right means simply not selfish. Not entangled in my personal calculation. It is difficult to explain in an abstract way. To understand it, it takes experience.

Only by helping others can you help yourself—it is a deeply ecological principle.

Two years ago, we had the conference, “The Whole World Is a Single Flower,” dedicated to ecology, and we had scientists participating, working in teams. The next one in Singapore will also be devoted to the ecological crisis. The crisis often shows us that we can do more than we think. It releases resources and forces that we would not have suspected.

Is crisis a chance to transcend yourself?

On a really large scale. In fact, this situation never happened before—a global crisis that affects absolutely everyone.

As you said, the first step is to overcome ignorance . . .

Yes. In general, our thinking, acting, and feeling are distorted by prejudices, preferences, willingness, and unwillingness. Such distorted perception is ignorance. Someone could have a lot of knowledge and at the same time sink into ignorance, not understanding their self and their relationship with the world. Understanding oneself is a great matter. Understanding others is wisdom. Understanding oneself completely is enlightenment. We think we know what we are doing and why. But unfortunately we usually don't. Clinging to your worldview is ignorance. With age, this clinging often becomes stronger, unless we make the effort to work on ourselves. It's easy to see that our mind is changing quickly. Let's say you get up in the morning and you feel great—you will see the whole world in bright colors. After a bad night, if something bad happened to you, you couldn't sleep, you are tired, you feel bad—you will see the same world in a completely different way. You can't rely on it. A clear mind reflects exactly what it is.

Now it doesn't reflect a joyful image.

No, it does not. But it shows us that we are facing a huge challenge. This is the biggest test humanity has ever faced, which is why this practice—understanding our job—is so important now.

Julia Fiedorczyk has been practicing with the Kwan Um School of Zen since 2014. She is a writer, poet, translator, and lecturer at Warsaw University, where she teaches poetry and environmental humanities.

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Tolo Cantarellas

August 31, 2019 at Bori Sa Temple, Catalonia, Spain

DHARMA COMBAT

Rosenmayr PSN: Tolo, good to see you. You live on this wonderful island. There are so many tourists who come to this island, and many of these tourists only come to drink! When you are a teacher, how are you going to teach these tourists?

Cantarellas PSN: You already know, Poep Sa Nim.

Rosenmayr PSN: I ask you.

Cantarellas PSN: PROST! [*Lifts up a glass and slurps down a drink.*]

Rosenmayr PSN: I like your teaching.

Cantarellas PSN: I think I'm going to like this job. [*Laughs.*]



Myong Hae Sunim JDPS: Hello, Tolo! I listen to many questions from people, and maybe you can help me. People are always wanting to know about their place in this world. In my life I face so many difficulties, and I don't know where my place is. Can you help me?

Cantarellas PSN: You already know, Sunim!

MHSN: No, I don't know.

Cantarellas PSN: Please stand up, Sunim. I will take you to your place. [*Tolo PSN accompanies her back to her cushion along with much laughter and applause.*]



Schaefer PSN: Great to see you, Tolo! You know, recently the president of the United States wanted to buy Greenland, but it was not possible. Now I hear he's thinking about buying Mallorca. So, what can you do?

Cantarellas PSN: You already know, Poep Sa Nim!

Schaefer PSN: No, I'm asking you as a Majorcan.

Cantarellas PSN: Well, since half of my island already belongs to the Germans, the president should talk to the German chancellor and come to an agreement.

INKA SPEECH

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

Truth is our original nature!

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

Truth. Lies. Who can distinguish between them?

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

Why the confusion then? Truth is truth and lies are lies.

KATZ!

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Photo: Oriol Casanovas

Many shining faces all around, even in this heat.

I wish to extend special gratitude to the following supporters of my Zen journey: To Gabriella, my wife, who has been with me unconditionally through the highs and lows of my life. To all teachers—especially to Alma-Jo Potter JDPSN, guiding teacher for the Palma Sangha, and to Knud Rosenmayr JDPSN, Barry Briggs JDPSN, and Arne Schaefer JDPSN. And to the wonderful Palma Sangha.

I want to start with a tra-

ditional Majorcan tale. There once lived a man in a mountain village. He lived in an isolated cabin and did not have relationships with anyone. He lived by gathering wood and making charcoal. Since he never went to town, he also never went to Mass. Because of this, he was viewed with suspicion by the others, even though he behaved correctly in all situations.

One day, the priest approached him and asked him why he did not come to church. He answered by saying that he did not believe in anything. The priest said that this was impossible, because everyone believes in something even if might not be the best of things.

The man thought and then said that he did believe in something. He believed in death. The priest was taken aback and said, "My son, how can you say that? No one in his right mind believes in death! Why should it be death that you believe in?"

The man said, "Because death does not create distinctions. It treats everyone in the same impersonal manner."

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In the same way, truth does not create distinctions, no matter who it is that insists on attaching to distinctions. Truth—like clear mind—is not anyone's possession.

Buddha said that there are three things that cannot be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth. Truth is independent of whether one sees it or not. In these times of disinformation and false news, the sky continues to be blue and the trees continue to be green.

Our Zen practice continually points to the truth so that it always dwells in our hearts. In times like these, when confusion seems to be the norm, it enables us to perceive clearly and distinguish the truth from lies.

Every summer for the last ten years, some friends and I have sailed together across the Mediterranean Sea. The following happened to us during one of those trips.

We were sailing toward Corsica, and we knew that we needed to cross the tail end of a storm in progress. Everything was going well, even in the turbulent storm, until one of the three of us became seasick and could no longer help with the work. At that point, we noticed that the storm had turned to move in our direction, and we would not be able to avoid it. Everything changed: it became extremely difficult, heavy, and gray, and our attitudes



Photo: Oriol Casanovas

matched the conditions.

We needed to steer and control the boat and take care of our sick partner at the same time. We needed to accomplish everything with only two of us doing the work of three.

In these moments, one thinks, "Did I do my work well? Did I consult the weather reports correctly? Was it really wise to take the boat out in such conditions?" And above all I asked myself, "Who got me into this trouble?"

But actually, in these kinds of situations, we don't have time to think. We can only act! Just do it! Fear appears when we start thinking about the situation we are in.

Nevertheless, many wild thoughts did appear. I remembered that a friend once told me that if I sail a



Photo: Oriol Casanovas

boat but never experience a storm, then I haven't sailed enough. He also said that if I did not believe in God but continued sailing, not to worry. I would inevitably end up believing in God.

The vast sea is powerful and puts us to the test. It is the moment of truth. In that moment, the sea is not interested in the cosmetic appearance of the boat. What matters is the importance of strong construction, of tolerance, of being able to face the great challenges of the sea.

We spent two-and-a-half very rough days in that storm. Finally the sun broke through and the clouds began to disappear, along with the clouds in our minds. The outline of the island appeared on the far horizon. The winds calmed down, and our confidence returned.

We were tested by the sea, and we responded. Peace appeared in our hearts. Pride was irrelevant. Instead, wisdom and humility grew within us.

Good omens appeared: a whale dove in front of the bow just as we came within sight of the bay of Ajaccio. I wrote the following poem when we arrived:

*In the midst of the storm
The raging of the sea
Overpowers us.
Any error can be fatal
I ask myself: What am I doing here?
But nevertheless
How would I have known
the power of the wind and the waves
and the incredible tonality of the colors
of the sea
If I had been elsewhere?*

This summer turned out differently. I sailed with my friends, but after only five days Gabriella called me to tell me that my older sister—the last of my siblings—had fallen into a coma after suffering a cerebral vascular attack.

I needed to return urgently. My sister passed away shortly afterward. I faced the truth of the dharma principle of impermanence.

I recently was looking through old issues of *Primary Point* and found an article written by Fernando Pardo, a very senior student, describing how the Kwan Um School came to Spain. The first retreat was in 1981 with Zen Master Seung Sahn. The early years were turbulent, and after some very unfortunate events, the sangha divided and the center in Barcelona ceased to exist. The center in Palma also almost

disappeared.

But slowly, with perseverance and through hard times, the Kwan Um School began to flower again. Now the Zen center in Barcelona functions well, and this great temple, Bori Sa, has appeared. The same is happening in Palma. After moving the Palma Zen Center often, we recently settled into our very own Zen center.

The results of perseverance and practice are clear in this ceremony and sangha meeting!

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

All human beings are aboard the world ship that sails through the Milky Way.

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

The exit port is always left behind.

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

Our lives are a journey toward our home.

No before us and no behind us! Then what?

KATZ!

After this ceremony, first cakes and tea, and then afterward, we will head for home! ♦

Bartolomé Cantarellas Socías JDPSN met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1981 at a retreat that was held in a monastery in Palma de Mallorca. In 1983 Bartolomé moved to Girona, in Catalonia, where he lived at Ahabah, a community that organized retreats and therapies for groups. In 1986 he was resident for a time at the Zen center in Paris, where he lived with Zen Master Seung Sahn for a few months. He has visited Korea several times, first in 1987. Bartolomé has been abbot of the Palma Zen Center for the past twenty-five years and has attended retreats in France, Poland, Germany, the United States, and Spain. A nurse by profession, he works in rural areas as a specialist in occupational health and out-of-hospital emergencies. He received inka in September 2019 from Zen Master Bon Shim. He and his wife currently live in the countryside on the outskirts of Palma.

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Barbara Pardo

August 31, 2019 at Bori Sa Temple, Catalonia, Spain

DHARMA COMBAT

Question [*mother with baby*]: Hello Barbara. I would like to ask you, how can I teach her “don’t-know mind”?

Pardo PSN: You already understand.

[*Baby starts babbling—ba-ba-ba.*]

Pardo PSN: Already appeared [*plays with baby*].

Question: Thank you!



Schaefer PSN: Hello, Barbara. Serious question.

Pardo PSN: [*gulps*] Serious question? OK.

Schaefer PSN: When I was here last time, you may remember we were discussing politics, Catalonian independence and politics. Hmm, it’s always risky to enter that field . . .

Pardo PSN: So, why do you go there? [*Laughter.*]

Schaefer PSN: [*stuck*] Done! [*Hugs Barbara.*]



Question: I live nearby, and the other day when I was walking in these mountains I met some local hunters who had killed three magnificent mouflon, or wild sheep. I became very upset, and I felt great helplessness. I was left

heartbroken. Such a beautiful animal! And so I want to ask you: what attitude does Buddhism propose in this situation?

Pardo PSN: You already understand.

Question: No, I don’t.

Pardo PSN: [*chants*] Namu Amita Bul, Namu Amita Bul, Namu Amita Bul . . . [*Questioner joins chanting and then everybody chants together.*]

INKA SPEECH

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

Mountain is you, you are the mountain.

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

No mountain, no you.

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

Mountain is mountain, you are you.

Three statements, which one is correct?

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Photo: Oriol Casanovas

KATZ!

Outside on the mountainside, many trees. Inside in the Dharma room, many smiling faces. Thank you all for coming to this inka ceremony.

I want to thank all of the teachers for coming from far away to our first sangha weekend, especially Zen Master Soeng Hyang—it's a great honor to have you here. Thank you, Zen Master Bon Shim, my guiding teacher, for so many years and for being the person who changed my life. Thanks to all of the sangha and friends who are here today, and very special thanks to my beloved husband and *doban'*, Tonda, and my parents, Fernando and Rosanna, who not only gave me my life but also gave this practice to me, and to many of you who are here today.

Many people call me Baru. My husband gave me this name because it seems Barbara is too long for him! At first I thought it was a silly name, but I had to settle with it, until one day a Korean person came to Bori Sa Temple and said, "Wow, you have a great name! It means dharma bowl." *Baru* is the name of the bowls we use for formal meals (*barugongyang*) during retreats and, literally, *baru* means "bowl that holds exactly as much as needed." No more, no less. So, I have a bowl story for you.

A long time ago there was a king in India who had a palace, concubines, servants, jewels, gold, silver, silk, horses—all of the nice things kings have. The king also had a guru, a teacher who was extremely ascetic. The only thing the teacher owned was a small bowl that he used for begging. One day, the king and his guru were sitting under a tree at the end of the big garden, and the guru was giving a teaching about impermanence, nonattachment, renunciation, and so on, when suddenly the ser-

vants came running and shouting, "Your Majesty, come quickly! The palace is on fire, we must do something!" The king got up, alarmed, but then reconsidered and said with irritation, "Don't bother me! I'm studying the dharma with my teacher. This is most important; you deal with the fire!" But the guru, who had turned red, jumped up and yelled, "What are you talking about? Let's go! My bowl is in the palace!"

Having many or few things doesn't matter. Things in themselves are not good, not bad. It is when we attach to things that we have problems. And I'm not talking only about material goods. We also attach and hold to everything that appears in our minds: our thinking, desires, ideas, opinions, likes, and dislikes. Worst of all, many times we don't even realize it, and these things control us. We act upon our attachments, causing suffering for ourselves and others. Zen Master Seung Sahn said that sometimes seeing your karma, finding your attachment, is more important than attaining enlightenment.

When I came to live here at Bori Sa with my husband many years ago, I thought that I did not have many attachments, and that I could see my karma. I thought that my karma was very good because we had found the perfect place to practice and, of course, to attain "enlightenment." Everybody wants to practice in a place like this, in the middle of the mountains, completely quiet, surrounded by nature, with nobody around to bother you. But this kind of practice is also attachment: attachment to practice. If you attach to a good situation, if you want to practice only in peace and silence, or in a beautiful environment, you are missing the true direction of Zen practice. Yes, we practice to attain enlightenment, but attaining enlightenment is not enough. We practice to at-

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Photo: Oriol Casanovas



Photo: Oriol Casanovas

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tain a clear mind and a strong center, but then what? How do you use your clear mind in your everyday life? How do you use your strong center to help others? How do we share our practice with others? This is the true job of enlightenment.

Actually, thinking that you have good karma is very bad karma! And thinking that everything is fine is very dangerous. Fortunately, the universe always helps you. This delusion about being a hermit in the mountains and just sitting around practicing all day long ended very soon. Even though Bori Sa is in the middle of nowhere, many people started coming here from the very beginning—not only Zen students, but also neighbors, people from the village, from the city, farmers, hunters, woodcutters, hikers—all kinds of different people, with different karma from mine, different opinions from mine, different ideas, different likes and dislikes. Then it is very easy to perceive your own likes and dislikes and your karma. You can really see yourself!

And just seeing already makes you a little less attached, not so caught up in your karma. During this Kyol Che, Zen Master Bon Shim talked about four steps we can take to work with our habits and attachments: see it, accept it, work with it, and let it go. It's not easy or quick—usually you need to see it many times before you can put it down, but better you put it down! Because if you can put everything down, and if you can make harmony with others, everything becomes very easy and smooth. If you cannot let go, everything remains very difficult and you are in hell. Even in a paradise like this.

I thought I had found a place that was perfect for practice, so quiet, with nobody around me, but it's rather the people who make this a perfect practice place. That's why I am so grateful to everybody who comes here, who actually are this mountain and are part of this harmony. All of you are my good teachers. We are already teaching and learning

everything from each other. We are like mirrors that show each other our karma, how many attachments we still have, our hindrances and limitations, and we have this great opportunity to share this practice, to do it together, to let it go. Because if you put it all down, your bowl becomes big. If you attach and hold, your bowl shrinks.

When we practice together, we make our bowl bigger. If our bowl is small, not much can go into it. If we make our bowl big, it can hold a lot and we can help many people—not only ourselves and our friends and our families, but everybody around us. If we practice and make our bowl big and our center strong, we can see, accept, understand, and digest everything that appears, and we will not only not be controlled by it, but we can use it to help all beings.

So, I ask you: how can we use everything that appears to help all beings?

KATZ!

Are you hungry? Please, after the ceremony let's share a bowl of *paella*².

1. *Doban* is Korean for a person who walks the path with you.
2. *Paella* is the traditional Spanish rice dish that was served for lunch.

*Barbara Pardo JDPSN received inka from Zen Master Bon Shim in 2019. Barbara's father, Fernando, was one of Zen Master Seung Sah'n's first students in Spain, and has been the abbot of Bori Sa Temple in Barcelona since the 1980s. Her mother, Rosanna, also was a strong practitioner. Barbara started practicing soon after meeting Zen Master Bon Shim in 1994, sitting many Yong Maeng Jong Jin and Kyol Che retreats since then, and serving in many roles in the Bori Sa sangha in various locations in Catalonia. In 2008 she reestablished a permanent home for the sangha in Barcelona. Later, in 2012, she and her husband, Tonda, moved to the Pyrenees mountains to help establish Borisa Retreat Center. Barbara is a graphic designer who works for the publishing company La Liebre de Marzo, which has published many Buddhist books, including the Spanish edition of Zen Master Seung Sah'n's *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, titled *Tirando Cenizas sobre el Buda*.*

One Zen Practitioner's Response to the Climate Emergency

Lizzie Coombs JDPSN

*This dewdrop world is a dewdrop world.
And yet. And yet.*

—Issa (lay Buddhist priest and poet 1763–1828)

Rain, rain, rain. Flood defenses are being increased along the river that runs through our home city of York in northeast England. In Berkeley, California, my sister-in-law closes her windows against the smoke from the Sonoma fires. Now we can really see how everything is changing, having moved from global warming to global heating, from climate change to climate emergency.

Thirteen years ago, I saw Al Gore's documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, about climate change, predicting what is now appearing in the world. In York, I can see children leaving school on Fridays inspired by Greta Thunberg's schools climate strike. And now I'm learning of the environmental advocacy of indigenous and nonwhite teenage activists: Mari Copeny (age eleven), and teenagers Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, Autumn Peltier, Leah Namugerwa, Chaitali Shiva Gavit, and India Logan-Riley, among others.

So I went to London on October 7 for the Extinction Rebellion Autumn Uprising around the Houses of Parliament and government ministries in Westminster. (Extinction Rebellion, or XR, is a global environmental movement begun in the United Kingdom in 2018.) Arriving by train from York, I followed the crowds with their tents and sleeping bags to the various sites surrounding the center of government. Before I'd even got to the Northern UK Rebellion site, I'd handed over my spare waterproof trousers to someone who'd forgotten hers. "That's why I love XR," she said. "There's always someone there to help you when you need it." Later, three of us joined together to go to the nearest supermarket and buy sandwiches for the protesters, because the police had already confiscated all food, cooking equipment, and even portable toilets from the site.

At our site, we were buffered at each end by other XR groups preventing traffic crossing Westminster and Lambeth Bridges, so we didn't encounter any angry and frustrated drivers. In the middle of London we just had birds singing, trees rustling their leaves, pedestrians walking in the road, cyclists swishing by—and no smell or sound of traffic. Tamsin and Melissa held their wedding ceremony on Westminster Bridge, and later a *ceilidh* with bagpipes broke out on the same spot. Among the thousands of protesters were many members of faith groups. A seventy-seven-year-old rabbi knelt in the road and prayed before being arrested and removed by police. The bishops of Liverpool and Col-

chester spoke. XR Muslims, XR Buddhists, XR Christians, XR members of the Jewish faith came together, chatted, prayed, meditated, and, in some cases, were also arrested. I saw disabled people in wheelchairs, and a blind man with a white cane, and some of these also chose to be arrested.

Everyone made their own call as to whether or not to take arrestable action (such as not moving on when ordered to by the police), depending on their circumstances. Although I was in the majority who'd decided not to be arrested, I was surprised at how afraid I felt once close to the lines of police, whom previously I have experienced only as a benign or neutral force. How intimidated I felt by both their numbers and expressionless faces—as well as by the police helicopter hovering overhead. I felt how comforting it would be to walk away, back to "feeling safe" and "in control," but managed to stay put for the day. Being surrounded by the police reminded a protester friend of being in prison for political protest in Madrid in the early 1980s. At mealtimes, the guards with their machine guns would watch the inmates eating from overhead walkways. He remembered he'd been issued an oversized wooden spoon with which to eat his prison meals and that holding it took him back to being a child at mealtimes in his Christian Brothers school.

Sometimes we think we've settled something: "I won't be acting that way anymore" or "I'm not going to feel like that again." But then we can experience something that brings it right back. That's why we have the vow to see delusions as endless, and so we vow to cut through them all. And hence the following Zen story.

A monk decided to go for a long solo retreat to rid himself of anger. He would practice diligently all alone until there was no more anger. One day, on his way up to his mountain retreat, he passed a farmer who asked him what he was up to. He told him his mission and the farmer said that he looked forward to seeing him after the retreat to learn how he'd got on. The monk completed his retreat and was pleased to notice he no longer experienced any anger at all. His retreat had worked! On his way home he passed the same farmer who asked how he'd got on. The monk replied, "Oh it was great. No more anger."

"Really?" asked the farmer.

"Yes, absolutely."

"Gosh, amazing, but are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure," said the monk, starting to get a little peeved.

"Really? No more anger?"

"Yes, no more anger!"

"So, you really don't get angry any more?"

The monk grabbed the farmer and screamed, "THAT'S RIGHT, NO MORE ANGER!"

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What does it mean to be a complete human being? Can we keep our center and direction, staying resolute and not completely overwhelmed when challenged? “How may I help you” sometimes means just remaining, with the strength of practice keeping us in place as witnesses, not turned away, even while afraid or angry or sad or depressed.

About twenty years ago some trees were going to be cut down across the road from our house, because neighbors said they partly obstructed their view of the water. My husband and I, among many others, didn’t want the trees to be killed, and I became quite distressed. We tried to save them, but nothing worked. Very unhappy, I told Zen Master Soeng Hyang, and she suggested I be present for the felling. I really didn’t want to watch, or be seen to be watching after how bad things had gotten in the neighborhood.

But I took the moktak to the edge of the site and chanted Kwan Seum Bosal as the chainsaws began and the birds flew away. The energy of the felling and the energy of the chanting came together as the trees crashed down until finally there were no more trees, just mounds of branches and logs and sawdust all around. When the men took off in their truck there was just quiet and the air smelled of fresh-cut wood.

Other times we take a particular action, keep trying, and never give up. From the Jataka Tales (Lives of the Buddha) comes this story. A little bird flying along saw that the forest was on fire. So it flew to the nearest water, took what it could in its beak, flew back, and dropped it on the fire. Then it flew back, got a little more water, went back and dropped that on the fire. It did this many times and never gave up even though it could not succeed. The fire raged on and eventually the little bird dropped exhausted into the flames, having done all it could. Also in the story were the gods watching from their heaven realm, detached and not inclined to lift a finger, laughing at the bird’s folly and the anguish of life on earth. Certainly our practice direction does not lead that way. If we perceive clearly that we are not separate then turning away from suffering is not possible.

By the time I was Greta Thunberg’s age now—in the 1960s—the effects of human beings taking carbon compounds from the earth and spritzing them into the atmosphere were already known, just not by most people. Now cause and effect are clear to more people, only, just as we’re waking up, we’re being told it’s already almost too late to avoid suffering for millions.

How might we as individuals, Zen practitioners, Zen centers and groups, regions and the whole Kwan Um School of Zen respond? The Buddha told Ananda that admirable friends are the whole of the path—a part of and a reflection of each life—so how can we work together, supporting, giving inspiration and sharing resources?

Some Possibilities

First, it’s complicated, and we’re all in this together, so no blaming. Keep a wide and open mind and don’t waste energy checking others. Remember that just by being in the

world we create suffering even when we’re trying not to.

Allow our Zen practice to guide us. We have the precepts, temple rules, four great vows, and paramitas. We can do extra practice: kido, extra bows, night practice, retreats. Practice has a great impact.

Bogomila Malinowska JDPSN has suggested **kido** for the situation, so we encourage sanghas and individuals wherever they are to do Kwan Seum Bosal chanting on Fridays (to coincide with the schoolchildren’s climate strikes). Those who can’t manage Fridays of course can chant at another time. Zen Master Bon Shim is leading a Friday kido at Cambridge Zen Center in the United States.

Have lots of **conversations**. More important, listen, and then listen some more, especially to those who have a different perspective from your own on what’s happening. I was inspired to write this article after having one-to-one conversations with several teachers in our school.

Part of the conversation could be to **challenge** one another to try changing a habit that has environmental consequences for an agreed-on length of time. Then one can also see that what might be easy for one person or sangha might be very challenging for another due to local conditions. So we can also use this practice to grow in wisdom and compassion. Myong Hae Sunim JDPS and I have pledged to each other that we would not accept any new plastic bags, me in the UK and she in Hong Kong. While rather easy to do in my situation, her new challenge is how to avoid causing offense when refusing plastic bags while still teaching others. Recently she went to buy flowers with a sangha member and the flower seller tried to put them in a plastic bag. When she asked not to have one, the sangha member could do the same. Now we’re asking what to do about plastic packaging . . .

Among many other possible challenges are flying less, taking more public transportation, giving up or eating less meat, and planting trees. Of course many are already taking some of these actions while others may not be able to. Yesterday, while Igor was planting twenty Korean Evodia trees in his village in Lodz, Poland, I was helping to plant oak, alder, rock maple, and birch trees in York. Although my husband and I would like never to use a car, he cannot walk far, nor easily use public transport, so driving or a taxi are sometimes necessary.

Igor has developed a **Green Dharma workshop** for his sangha and is starting to share it with others. (*See the accompanying article in this issue: “Green Dharma Workshop” by Igor Piniński JDPSN. —Ed.*)

Be with suffering. Myong Hae Sunim JDPS suggests that if we tried going someplace where environmental change has caused suffering, and if we spent time helping, then we would experience how life is for those affected and we would be motivated to make change in our own lives. After helping in refugee camps a friend also has people hoping for political asylum and recovering from torture staying in her house. For example, someone who helps out in refugee camps might then invite into her home some asylum seekers who are recovering from being tortured.

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Compassion in a Pita

Uri Kita

It's the height of summer. I leave my air-conditioned office to get lunch. It's so hot that my shadow is trying to hide in the shade under my feet. A bus passes. A car honks. Everyone is rushing. Maybe even faster in the summer.

My hunger takes me to Falafel HaNassi in central Carmel. The place is packed as usual. Behind the counter, Dror, the owner, hands off three falafels to a woman wearing a broad-brimmed hat, receives payment for two others, and begins working on two more for a couple of construction workers.

"Take a drink from the fridge," he tells a kid who seems to be looking for something. A second employee deals with a young woman, and when he finishes with her, I ask for the usual: "One falafel with all the extras. Yes, hot sauce. Yes, to eat here."

The pita is opened from the top. With deft movements, hummus is spread, tongs dart quickly through the salads from right to left, the warm falafel balls are arranged neatly on top, a final flourish of tahini is added like a signature, and my falafel is ready, wrapped in a paper bag on the counter.

Maybe one day I'll write a haiku about that first bite of a falafel. That moment when you look at the pita, calculate the ideal angle of attack, squeeze it slightly, compress your fingertips, rearrange a falafel ball before it falls, and then . . . the bite.

Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi: supreme and perfect enlightenment. Maybe just a bite of falafel?

I love watching people take this bite. Some close their eyes. Others stare at an indeterminate spot on the counter, somewhere between the salads and the bottle of curry sauce. Everyone feels it. It's one of those moments when our bodies actually take us for a brief foray into a spiritual zone. At that moment there is no inner or outer, no past or future, no thoughts. The perception of tasty or not only kicks in afterward.

But not at that moment.

After that first bite, it's just falafel again. I'm busy with mine. I survey the lay of the land to see how I can get through the crush for more hot sauce. Across the way, I see the young woman who'd been served ahead of me. She's battling with a torn pita and looks decidedly unhappy. Other customers are checking out the situation. The guy behind the counter also notices. He sets aside the portion he'd just begun preparing and then slowly, without a lot of questions, he takes her pita and tosses it in the bin.

"No big deal, maybe too much tahini," he says, almost as if talking to himself, all the while preparing her another falafel. "Here you are—*b'tayavon!*" (Bon appetit!).

The woman takes the second falafel and begins eating. I manage to get to the hot sauce.

Minutes later it happens again. The pita is in tatters, tahini is everywhere, and the same woman is standing despairing in the middle of the small restaurant with tears in her eyes. One by one the other patrons stop eating to watch, still hunched over their pitas. The two construction workers are watching in the mirror behind the counter. The quiet is so unnatural that the guy at the counter raises his eyes from the deep fryer.

"Your pitas are no good," the woman sobs. "It's fallen apart again!"

Someone clucks their tongue. The rest are silent. We all saw what happened the first time, and something is wrong, but it's not the pita.

This time, Dror, the owner, gets involved. He drops everything. The register drawer is left open.

"What happened, honey? Why are you crying?" he asks.

"It doesn't matter!" she says angrily. "Take it, I don't want it anymore!"

Dror doesn't give up. He reaches over the counter, takes the falafel and throws it in the bin, cuts a third pita in half, and grasps the salad tongs:

"Everything's all right, I'm with you now," he says to her. "Look at me. I'll put in whatever you want, but keep your eyes on me."

The woman raises her eyes and looks at him, mesmerized. We're also mesmerized.

"Hummus?" She sniffles a quiet "yes." "Tomato?" "No." "Pickles?" "Yes." "Salad?" "Yes, a little." "Hot sauce?" "No." She wipes her nose with the back of her hand.

Dror adds the falafel balls to the pita and the falafel is ready. Holding the bottle of tahini, he says: "Now, I'm putting just a little bit. Take the tahini with you and put as much as you want, but a little bit each time. Don't put on a lot at once because it makes the pita wet and it'll tear. OK?"

The woman nods her head silently. She grasps her falafel and heads out into the heat to find someplace to eat it, maybe further away from us.

With a collective sigh of relief, everyone gets back to eating their falafel. I finish, pay, and leave.

"Right, and what can I get for you, fella?" I hear Dror ask a new customer.

Thank you, Dror, for a lesson without teaching, a wordless Dharma conversation, and delicious falafel that's always fun to eat. ♦

Uri Kita has been practicing at the Kwan Um School of Zen for about five years. He practices friendship and marriage with his wife, Carine, and parenthood with his two daughters, Shabar and Carmel. He lives in Haifa, Israel, and hosts the local practice group in his office.

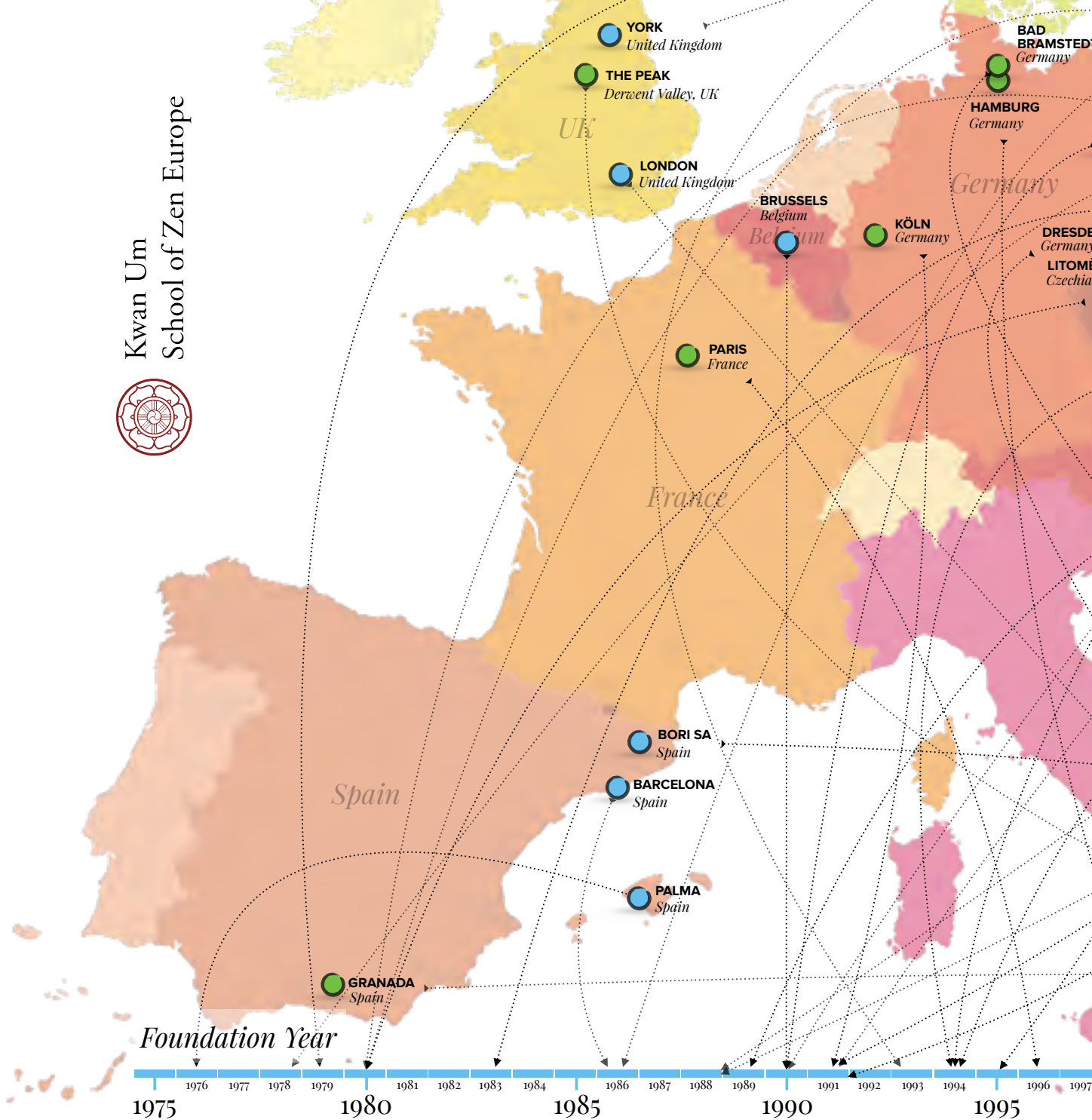
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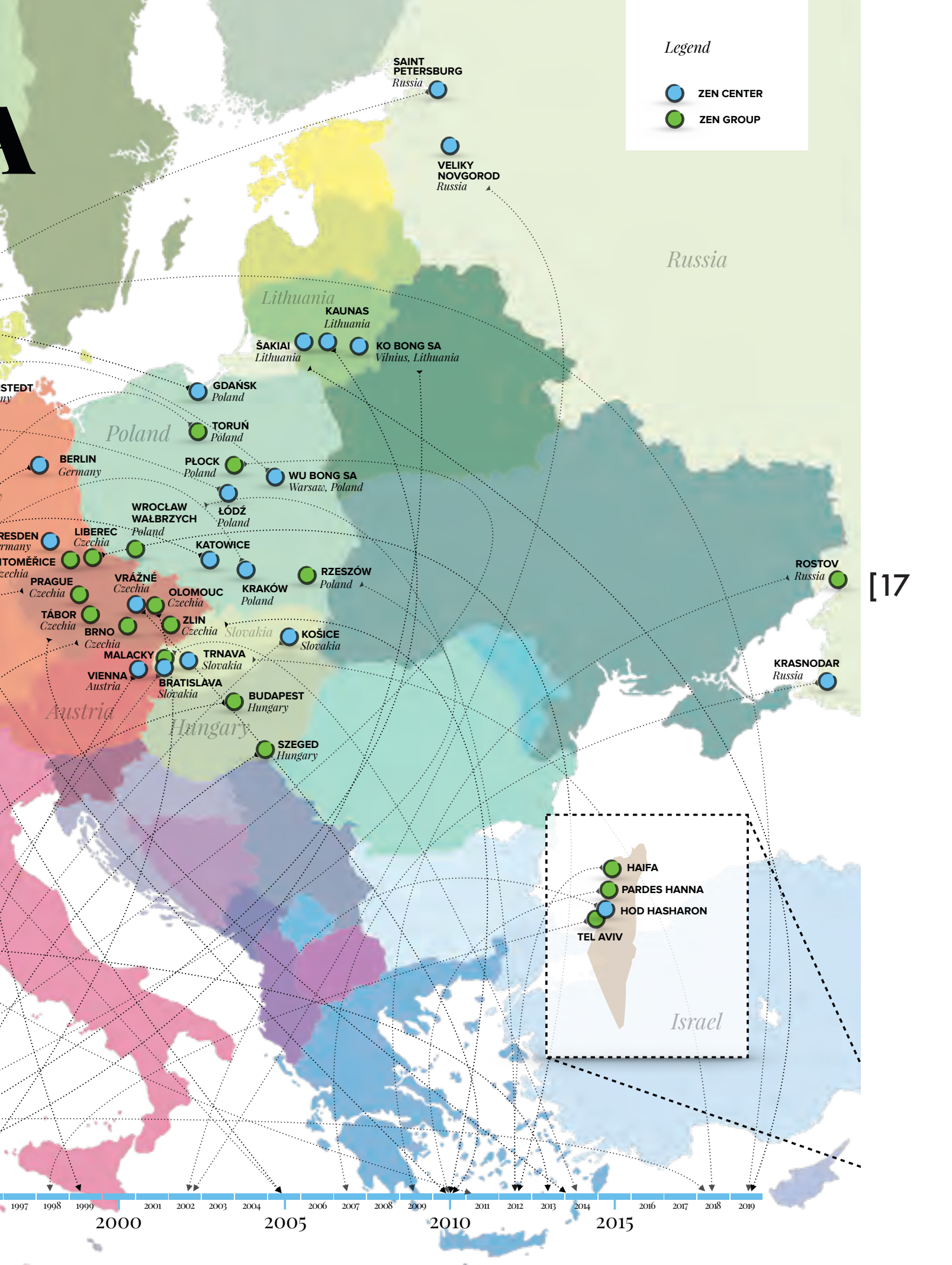
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Kwan Um
School of Zen Europe





Spring in Israel

Varda Bar Nir

For as long as I can remember I have liked to paint. In grade school my teacher always encouraged my creativity, assigning me projects for decorating our school. I am a self-taught artist, and during the last few years I have been a member of a group of painters in my hometown.

Being able to free myself through art is a gift. So is meditation. Both actions give me the opportunity to look inside and reflect on my state of mind. They also give me the opportunity to practice “just do it,” which is the medicine to cure me of doubt, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and thoughts that paralyze me.

Through painting I practice Zen meditation. That moment of action frees me from myself. When I paint I am

ment in its simple existence, in its clear evidence—a true mirror of me. Then when the right moment appears, the painting is finished and I come back to reality.

I would like to share with you a very special time when I participated in a project that joined families who had lost loved ones serving in the Israeli Army together with artists who would create artwork for the families, to commemorate those who had died. The idea of visiting one of these families filled me with self-doubt about my ability to face them. What would I say? How would I translate what I heard and felt into the artwork?

But as I learned from my Zen practice, you just do it and be in the moment. Then the situation is simple.

When I visited, only the mother agreed to talk to me at first. Then slowly the father joined the conversation. Together they told me about Aviv, their son who had lost his life in action sixteen years ago, when he was only nineteen years old. After listening to them carefully, learning about Aviv’s life, his hobbies, his friends, what he liked and disliked, I went home to digest this experience.

It was not an easy process. Time passed and nothing came up. Finally, loyal to “just do it,” I started to sketch some ideas on paper. Then I started painting on the canvas, then painting over the painting, trying to bring out my true feelings by asking myself who Aviv was and how could I best portray him. What image would present hope, love, light, and compassion?

By getting completely into the process of painting for the family, my clear mind inspired me to create this painting. The family loved the image

of a field full of red anemone flowers, and it is now hanging in their home. The name Aviv means spring. The action of painting allowed me to touch this family’s heart, arriving at this moment. ♦

Varda Bar Nir was born in Israel in 1950. She is married to an Israeli and is the mother of three daughters and grandmother of four sons. She started practicing Zen about ten years ago when she joined the Kwan Um School of Zen’s Hasharon Zen Center, which is led by Yuval Gill JDPSN. She took ten precepts in 2018 and is now a dharma-teacher-in-training.



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totally in the action. I am the painting. I enter a special state of mind through which I can express my creativity and experience serenity. I become unaware of time, without drinking or eating, not knowing who I am, not asking what am I, just doing: the movement of the hand, the angle of the body, the sharpness of the eye, moving forward and backward in front of the canvas, sometimes for hours. Often, my hand moves by itself, and what appears on the canvas is something not planned. My artist’s knife scratches, sweeps, touches gently, trying to catch the mo-

Green Dharma Workshop for Dharma Teachers

Igor Piniński JDPSN

The motto for the workshop was one of the five basic points of our ethics policy: “Respect the planet and the web of life upon which all beings depend.”

I started with this line and asked people what is our direction. Everybody of course replied “How may I help you?” Then I asked them to imagine that they are meeting a nonhuman sentient being living on this planet, the first one that appears in their mind, and they ask this being “How may I help you?” And let’s imagine that this being can understand and give an answer. What would that answer be? Most people said “Go away,” “Disappear,” or something like that.

Next step was to ask people why they answered like this. They were giving examples of how humans harm the environment: heating the atmosphere, pollution, plastic in the oceans, destroying ecosystems and habitats, genocide of species, and so on.

Then I asked them what can we do? What can we do as dharma practitioners, dharma teachers and leaders of Zen centers and groups? I reminded them about the dharma teachers’ compact, which says that we should be “silent examples of practice.” Most people said, first of all, that we should reduce our negative impact on the environment. I asked them if it is possible to reduce our individual negative impact to zero, or even make it positive, and nobody could see such a possibility.

So for the next step, I shared with them my own experience with this matter, focusing on my influence on the global heating situation. I referred to Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching: clear situation, clear relationship, proper function. I also talked about the rule: when you take something, you must give back; when you cause damage, you must repair it. So knowing that there is too much carbon dioxide in the air, I cannot produce more if I can’t remove it. So, to paraphrase the teaching “A day without work is a day without food”: A day without reducing CO₂ must be a day without producing it.

Then I presented the calculation of my annual CO₂ emissions: car, flights, electricity, food, and other goods and services. I talked about how I try to bring it to a minimum in all areas where it’s reasonable.

Then I presented my way of reducing CO₂, my individual reforestation project, which I’ve been working on for the last thirty years. I gave the basic details: how many trees; how much CO₂ they’ve absorbed and stored so far; what is my estimation for the next twenty years; what kind of trees I’ve planted; which trees are most efficient in CO₂ reduction, but also the longest living, adaptable to climate change, and drought resistant. I also talked about how I take care of biodiversity, so the forest is a habitat for many different forms of life, especially bees and similar insects. And perhaps most important, I talked about about the joy

I take in planting these trees and living in this forest.

There are at least three times more trees in my village than in other nearby villages, and I have never had a single conversation about it with my neighbors. The neighbor next to me decided to cover half of his property with forest ten years after I started doing it. At the moment, my forest is not the biggest one in the area. Thirty years ago there were none, except for national forests.

This project offsets my greenhouse gas emissions three times over at the moment, but it’s not the only thing I do. I also buy Certified Emission Reduction units (CERs) from the UN Carbon Offset Platform (offset.climateunneutralnow.org), which is co-funding greenhouse gas reduction projects in developing countries. The CERs are cheap so I cover my greenhouse gas emissions five times over and it doesn’t hurt my budget at all.

Then I talked briefly about my personal waste and water management, which is based on the same rule.

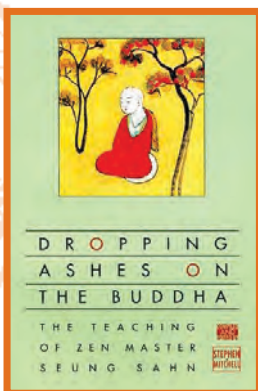
Finishing my sharing, I said that it’s not something to copy and paste into everybody’s life. I believe in the middle way, which is taking care of our own needs and the needs of all other beings equally. My way of doing it is rooted in my personal situation, my lifestyle that works best for me, and my personal relationship with the world around me. Everybody has to find their own middle way and their own way of living responsibly.

I also said that I personally find focusing on my own life and how I can be of no burden to the environment more efficient than fighting and arguing with people with a different attitude. I also find it more in line with the teaching of our school.

The next point was to have been working in groups on the question “How can I find the middle way in my own life?” but my time was finishing, so I had to skip this point and go to the next one, which was working in groups on the question “How can our wish to respect the planet and the web of life upon which all beings depend be implemented into our Zen centers and groups?” And this point concluded the workshop.

As a result, people have started talking about changes in their Zen centers and groups. Wu Bong Sa Temple near Warsaw is now thinking about increasing the number of trees on their grounds; they are checking the possibility of covering the roofs of the buildings with solar panels; they also have an idea of adding a voluntary climate fee to the price of the retreats and using that to purchase CERs. And in the Łódź Zen Center we are working on implementing a zero emissions, zero waste, and zero wastewater policy. Along these lines, we are beginning to explore a project for promoting forestry on our temple grounds called “The Original Buddha Temples Project.” A description can be found at originalbuddhatemple.org. ♦

A FRESH APPROACH TO ZEN



Don't-Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen. Zen Master Wu Kwang uses stories about Korean Zen Masters from Ma-tsu to Seung Sahn to present Zen teaching applicable to anyone's life. 128 pages.
Shambhala. ISBN 1-59030-110-2. \$14.95

One Hundred Days of Solitude. The story of Zen Master Bon Yeon's solo retreat is threaded through with Zen teaching and striking insights into the human mind when left to its own devices. 144 pages.
Wisdom Publications. ISBN 0-86-171538-1. \$14.95

Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Stephen Mitchell. A delightful, irreverent, and often hilarious record of interactions with Western students. 244 pages.
Grove Press. ISBN 0-8021-3052-6. \$16.00

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

Only Don't Know: Teaching Letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Issues of work, relationships, and suffering are discussed as they relate to meditation practice. 230 pages.
Shambhala, 1999. ISBN 1-57062-432-1. \$16.95

Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans. Drawing on over 30 years of practice and teaching, Zen Master Wu Kwang has selected 22 cases from *The Blue Cliff Record* and *Wu-men-kuan* that he finds deeply meaningful and helpful for meditation practice. In *Elegant Failure*, he provides a wealth of background information and personal anecdotes for each koan that help illuminate its meaning without detracting from its paradoxical nature. 256 pages.
Rodmell Press, 2010. ISBN 1-93048-525-5. \$16.95.

Compass of Zen. Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. Simple, clear, and often hilarious presentation of the essential teachings of the main Buddhist traditions—culminating in Zen—by one of the most beloved Zen Masters of our time. 394 pages.
Shambhala, 1997. ISBN 1-57062-329-5. \$29.95

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

Open Mouth Already a Mistake: Talks by Zen Master Wu Kwang. Teaching of a Zen Master who is also a husband, father, practicing Gestalt therapist and musician. 238 pages.
Primary Point Press, 1997. ISBN 0-942795-08-3. \$18.95

The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life. Zen Master Seung Sahn. The first kong-an collection to appear in many years; Christian, Taoist, and Buddhist sources. 267 pages.
Reprinted by Primary Point Press 2015. ISBN 978-0-942795-17-2. \$17.95

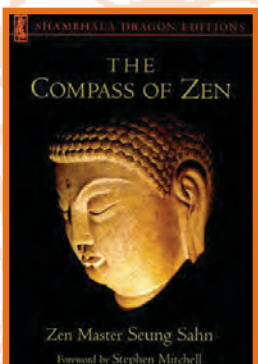
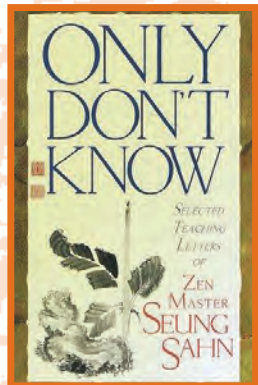
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Primary Point Press, 2006. ISBN 0-942795-15-6. \$30.00

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Out of the Dharma Room, Into the Park

Dušan Silvasi

Košice Zen Center was founded in 1990 in the city of Košice in the Slovak Republic. Several years ago, we noticed an absence of young people at our regular dharma talks and practice sessions. Thinking about current lifestyles, we decided to integrate some meditative physical exercises into our practice in order to encourage new people to attend. Together with my wife, Oli, we started a project called Moja Pohoda, which means My Equilibrium.

It was a new way for our sangha to introduce Zen practice to a wider public through events that combine our usual practice with yoga and *soen-yu* (breathing exercises). To our surprise, these activities have proven to be popular also among young people. We are very happy about that.

We launched Moja Pohoda almost seven years ago. We began by contacting the organizers of a well-known local summer festival, Summer in the Park, organized by a cultural center run by the government. We proposed having a free hour-long Zen and yoga event, thinking that it would be a great opportunity to share the dharma and introduce the Košice Zen Center to like-minded people. The first response was no—the organizers said that their festival is for culture, not sports.

We didn't give up! Oli found a student cellist who was happy to accompany us with live music during practice. It took more communication with the organizers, but a few weeks later they said yes. So we got ready and prepared printed handouts with information about Zen practice and the Košice Zen Center. To the organizers' surprise, many people came to our outdoor practice. Since then, they have invited us to join the summer festival every year. We offer free events, including yoga, *soen-yu*, a short dharma talk, and sitting Zen meditation. Usually about a hundred people attend each event. Such a strong together action every time creates a wonderful mind of togetherness.

This activity has caught the interest of local radio and television stations, and every year they interview us and ask participants for their comments. The feedback from participants is wonderful and inspires others to join. The purpose of this event is to provide the somatic experience of a calm, quiet mind, deep, relaxed breathing, and the awakened, peaceful, tranquil presence that comes with Zen and yoga practice. The psychological aspect of Zen seems to be a welcome added bonus for young people, and distinguishes our events from practices focused mainly on physical exercise and well-being. Based on the success of these summer events, we started to offer regular weekly Zen and yoga practice sessions, drawing more new people to come and join us.

To spread the word, we print new handouts for the festival each year. These have helped us build our mailing list and our online community on Facebook. Some of the new people gradually became regular sangha members and also participate in retreats in our newly

built retreat center in the beautiful countryside near Košice.

We also organized other special events such as Zen and yoga in the Slovak National Fine Art Gallery, artistic workshops, and outside-the-Dharma-room events. As the first event of this nature, we had a public mandala painting with practice in the Fine Art Gallery.

More than thirty young people attended and tried painting mandalas. The event included yoga and then Zen sitting. Another time, about twenty people came at 7 a.m. to practice Zen and yoga in the Fine Art Gallery. It was an extraordinary experience indeed!

Another special event was a dharma Q&A with our guiding teacher, Oleg Šuk JDPSN, with whom we presented photos from visits to Korean temples and shared a taste of Korean temple food.

To provide some brief information about this project, we also created a new website, linked to our Kwan Um School of Zen–Slovakia website. The new website has a more personal look, and dharma is shared there in personal stories and experiences with Zen practice in a blog format.

In March 2019 we were invited to give a one-hour Zen and yoga program at a major international competition for young computer programmers from thirty countries, Hack Kosice 2019. The feedback was amazing, and we hope to share the dharma again at Hack Kosice 2020. Recently, I gave a talk about Zen practice at the small software company where I am employed. Everybody attended, and now we have short morning meditation sessions three times per week, with nearly all of my colleagues joining. I am planning to give similar talks in other software companies here in Košice.

We keep on trying and we are still looking for new ideas to share the wonderful and powerful teaching of our great Zen Master Seung Sahn. Each exercise with Zen practice brings a new audience. Currently, in addition to the Zen and yoga program, we are offering a new somatic movement practice based on principles of Body-Mind Centering® combined with Zen meditation. In our experience, some somatic movements help the mind to settle down for Zen meditation, especially for people new to Zen practice.

What new approaches are you trying in your sangha? We would appreciate if you share your ideas and experiences, and we look forward to your responses. Please email us at kosice@kwanumzen.sk. Thank you! ♦

Hapchang,
Dušan Silvasi
Abbot of Košice Zen Center
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Dušan Silvasi has practiced in the Kwan Um School of Zen since 1993, is a senior dharma teacher, has served as abbot of the Košice Zen Center since 2000, works as an IT specialist, teaches karate, and is the father of two daughters.

Like Potatoes in a Pot

How Relationships in Sangha Affect Individuals' Practice

Lucie Votrubicová

When I came to the Zen center and started practicing, I had a feeling that as far as the direction of practice was concerned, I naturally followed what I had known for a long time. Since childhood I have adopted the direction of our practice—"How can I help you?" I joined the Scouts at the age of ten, and at the age of twelve I made a Scout promise, part of which says "By soul and body to be ready to serve my homeland and my neighbor." The motto of the Rovers—Scouts over fifteen years of age—is "Service." Helping others was part of our mission, and I had all my adolescence for learning this fact naturally and nonviolently.

Our Scout activity consisted mainly in spending time with children we didn't know, and hence were strangers, and in our free time we prepared programs for them and went on trips and summer camps. Scout leaders not only are not paid, but many sacrificed their own annual leave from work for these activities. It may seem that we did not get anything out of it, but our great benefit was that we created a community of people where we were accepted and supported, we could rely on each other, we were always willing to help each other, and children from dysfunctional families could find examples to follow that they didn't have at home.

When I started attending the Zen center, I unconsciously felt there was a similar potential as in our Scout troop. In Liberec our sangha consists of laypeople who do not live together in the Zen center. We meet for collective practice and organize retreats, but we also eat together, go to help build a new Zen center in Vrážné, or go for walks and trips together. While doing all this we are learning and getting to know each other. We interact and have a positive effect on each other. We create a community. Communities are rare nowadays, but also necessary. A lot of people live alone and lack close relationships with other people. Previously, it was common for neighbors to help each other, to lend tools, even to go and help for free with some specialized activity. Today, when living in a city, the maximum we do for our neighbors is that we greet them. But knocking on their door asking if they have an egg they could give us is quite a substantial step out of our comfort zone. In the past, people lived surrounded by family members, and many relatives gathered to celebrate various occasions, but today we often see only the nuclear family model—father, mother, and children, ideally. The family often lives far away from grandparents or other relatives who could help each other.

For most people, being a part of a community is valuable. They may not feel it straightaway, but over time one

always gets tired of loneliness and independence. In our community, we share a common interest in practice, but at the same time we are different, with different experiences. We all come from different backgrounds. Sometimes working on relationships is difficult. What makes one person laugh makes another person upset. What is annoying for one will pass almost unnoticed by another. If a dispute arises or someone gets us angry, then the first thing we think about is to give up on everything, crawl into our shell and never show up at the Zen center again. But if we do not do this and instead communicate and resolve the dispute, it will strengthen not only each of us, but also the whole sangha. Our practice provides big support for us and helps us in looking at situations that arise from a non-attached point of view, exploring them in more detail and thinking a bit more deeply about them. Sometimes we do not realize that a well-functioning relationship between two people can have a positive effect on a third person. It also positively affects the sangha as a whole, newcomers who may have difficult personal situations, and the other people around them.

Some people need to deepen their ability for compassion and humility; for some the hardest is to learn to say no, or "I need this differently," or "This hurts me." Some people manage everything by themselves and do not need help from others. Then they do not understand why they should help someone else. In a sangha these attitudes appear very clearly. By practicing and increasing our perceptiveness to others and to the whole world, we can give honest feedback to each other. We learn to put our ego aside and receive feedback, even if sometimes it's unpleasant. But we also learn not to hurt others unnecessarily when communicating our perspective to them.

In our daily lives we often find it difficult to find time to practice. We steal it at the expense of our families, hobbies, leisure time, or sleep. And probably nobody wants to spend this hard-earned time among people they are not comfortable with. For some, their practice is so important that they are able to deal with it. There are people who can follow their vision; they make a practice that makes sense for them, and they stick to it. But even this is sustainable in the short term only. Often, through practice, relationships are cleansed and made healthier. When Barry Briggs JDPSN visited us, he told us that Zen Master Seung Sahn compared people in a sangha to potatoes in a pot—in Korea potatoes are washed by putting them in a large pot and stirring them with a stick. And as they bump into each other they knock the dirt off and thus clean each other.

On the one hand, it is easy to practice alone. On the

Continued on p. 26

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First European Sangha Convention 2018

Listening to the Voices of the Sangha

Veronique Struis and Agata Sobiecka

In the beginning we have a provocative question. What is correct, tradition or change? Where does Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma end and his cultural karma appear? What is the core of our tradition and what is just its relative surrounding landscape? The Kwan Um School of Zen is said to adhere to its Korean legacy, but Zen Master Seung Sahn was a great revolutionary himself. He not only changed the Korean *ganhwa soen* (observing *hwadu*) method and introduced a system of various *kong-ans*, but he also brought gender inequality in Korea to light and allowed women to give others precepts and transmission. It seems that our tradition is only forty years old. So how can we continue our founder's tradition of functioning in accordance with a changing situation, while making sure its core is accessible to a contemporary mind?

24] It's been more than forty years since Zen Master Seung Sahn came to the United States and shared with us his teachings. We are now facing new challenges, especially the beginning of a dialogue with a new generation of students dealing with very different life demands and values in our fast-changing world.

During the 2017 Meeting of Members, the European sangha was presented with the results of the Millennial Dharma Report, based on a global sangha survey undertaken in 2016 and interviews among the youngest generation of Kwan Um practitioners in America. In order to start a discussion about the challenges of the younger generation within the dharma regarding—as the report puts it—“diversity, education, religion, values, health, environmentalism, social justice, and technology” as well as other important topics raised by sangha members, the Meeting of Members decided to call the first European sangha convention. One of its objectives was to check whether the report's findings are also valid within Europe.

This was done in the first convention on September 18, 2018, at Wu Bong Sa Temple in Warsaw, Poland. According to European sangha bylaws, the sangha convention is a legal vehicle to “exchange views regarding innovations or changes, or in respect to new inputs or unresolved topics.”

Our European sangha members were consulted, with the previous worldwide surveys as a starting point, and four topics were identified. These became the basis for the convention survey, recommendations and discussions during the convention event and online.

- About twenty-five members participated in preparing the convention's topics and case studies.
- There were 103 members who responded to the convention survey.

- About forty senior dharma teachers and sangha delegates came to Warsaw.
- There were 161 people who joined the convention online, including sixteen members during real-time streaming, along with 480 Facebook reactions.

Topic 1: New Forms of Together Action for Community Building

At the core of topic 1 was finding approaches to encourage new ways of together action outside the dharma room, such as social gatherings, work fests, child care for meditating parents, and opening up to socially or scientifically engaged Buddhism. The outcome was that through discussions in local work groups and the creation of a community director position (both locally and centrally in the European office) we may be able to build a stronger, more diverse, and inclusive community.

Topic 2: Zen Practice for Beginners

The recommendations for topic 2 focused on finding ways to introduce beginners to our school and eliminating possible hurdles that prevent them from becoming regular practitioners. The impression was that access to the core teachings may be too difficult, too odd, or not adequate to contemporary social values. This included a request from the sanghas to reconsider some of the cultural, religious, and hierarchical aspects of our practice forms, such as bowing on the floor to teachers or wearing robes. There was also a suggestion for a beginners' program and for setting up a system for collecting membership data.

Topic 3: More Education

A growing need for dharma study as a form of valid practice in our current culture was identified, and topic 3 addressed the sangha's need for education. The recommendations involve cultivating a more open attitude toward various kinds of education and sharing, instead of responding to honest dharma discussions or sutra study with quotes from Zen Master Seung Sahn, for example, “You are attached to thinking,” or “This is only your idea,” which sometimes can be perceived as judgmental and condescending. This can both trivialize our founder's message and undermine the personal experience and expression of a new generation of teachers. Other suggestions included a standardized certification program for dharma teacher training, new methods of explaining basic Buddhist doctrine other than standard Q&A, which would encourage more open sharing and discussion, and the promotion of podcasts and webinars on Buddhist subjects prepared by students and teachers.

Topic 4: Empowerment of Students

This topic looked into the hierarchical structure of the sangha and professionalization of administration, so it can become based more on skill than on rank, through shifting less dharma-related tasks from teachers to students with adequate formal education or experience. The resulting recommendations suggest promoting the culture of acknowledging volunteers, for example by developing a credit/loyalty system, enabling employment within school structures, and introducing a trusted person in ethics from among students. It also looked at including a dharma friend (mentorship) program in the Dharma Mirror and considering changing the dharma teacher title to one of several other options, including senior student, senior dharma student, meditation instructor, or dharma instructor.

Organic Changes Appear by Themselves

The voices of the sangha were summarized in the report together with case studies, which were to track the organic trends and changes that are already happening in our Kwan Um Zen centers and groups. The trends we observed (including Zen-Yoga days in Slovakia, Zen days without robes and sutra studies in Poland, London Diversity Multi-faith Organization) show that these bottom-up cultural processes are already in full motion and as such don't need any seal of approval other than the enthusiastic response among new and old practitioners.

Don't Know, Just Listen

The convention resulted in further refinements and ob-

jections for the topics or the process in general. This was documented for future organizers so they will learn from this "pilot study." The next step was evaluation of the recommendations by the European teachers group, which approved of most of the recommendations. And currently we are awaiting the official response from other regional groups and the international council.

In summary, throughout the whole sangha convention process, we heard clearly the voices of many of our members. Some are open to change, and others are reluctant to change. We are looking to safeguard a strong dharma in modern society, which offers many ways to deal with suffering and personal growth. It's important that we act skillfully and listen carefully in order to provide relief, instead of insisting we already know what is good for the times to come.

For the full report please visit kwanumeurope.org/2019/06/22/convention. ♦

Veronique Struis has been practicing with the Kwan Um School of Zen since 2013. She started her practice at the Cambridge Zen Center and is now a member of the Online Sangha. She works for a company that educates and raises awareness for HSPs (highly sensitive persons). She is also a member of the European office and lives with her two children in the Netherlands.

Agata Sobiecka (Hae In) has been practicing Zen for twenty years with four years of retreat experience and years living in Zen temples. After four years in Korea, she rested her monastic vows and lives now in Warsaw Zen Center as a bodhisattva teacher and European office director. She works as a psychotherapist.

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Poetry

On Age

I'm not the one I used to be
But you are the one I
Always knew
Fast and slow and
Standing still
Time plays this game
Wakes me up and asks
Who are you?



Living the way we
Feel is good
Breaking past rules
Of should and must
The flowers still bloom
The sun still shines



Sun changes
Moods
Cooler mornings



First rains
Grass and trees
Freshly green
Once more



The thoughts
Then the words
No thoughts
No words
Just be



Full moon
Seen through
Black branches
Outshines the streetlight

Rowena Gill is a longtime student in the Israeli sangha and the mother of Yuval Gill JDPSN. During her time in Japan she connected to Zen poetry, and now she writes her own in her garden after morning practice.

CLIMATE Continued from p. 14

Or a wealthy man who just managed to save his wife and small child from their house going up in flames from one of the fires near Los Angeles might go from denying the climate crisis to helping.

If moved to act, use **skillful means**. A desire to try and fix things is natural, but perceive when to reach out and when to stay put. If you become or already are an environmental activist, remember that anger hurts us first—keep practicing and going on retreats. Igor Piniński JDPSN said that when Zen Master Seung Sahn came out of the army, his teacher, Zen Master Ko Bong, sent him on a long retreat to take care of his “army eyes.”

We are most fortunate to have encountered the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn. We are most fortunate to be practicing people. How do each of us choose to live out our bodhisattva vow now? ♦

*Everything is impermanent, but there is truth.
You and I are not two, not one:
Only your stupid thinking is nonstop.
Already alive in the Prajna ship.
—Zen Master Man Gong (1872–1946)*

POTATOES Continued from p. 23

other, it is easy to succumb to the self-deception that we have achieved something. It is like the story of the ascetic who practiced alone in a cave for ten years and then claimed to a farmer to have completely mastered anger. When challenged about this, the ascetic ends up screaming at the farmer in rage. (See “One Zen Practitioner’s Response to the Climate Emergency” in this issue. —Ed.)

Therefore, I wish all of us that we find the patience to work on relationships within sangha—and outside of it too of course—and that we can find time to listen to others; to be able to help another selflessly and devote our time and energy to them. I hope we all achieve enlightenment and save all sentient beings from suffering. ♦

Lucie Votrubcová has been practicing with the Kwan Um School of Zen since 2015 at the Sam Bo Sa Zen Center in Liberec, Czech Republic. She took five precepts at the Vrážné Zen Center. She lives with her two small children in Liberec and works as a librarian and proofreader.



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The heart of the Kwan Um School of Zen is our practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn very simply taught "Don't Know". This

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The Zen centers of the Kwan Um School of Zen around the world offer training in Zen meditation through instruction, daily morning and evening meditation practice, public talks, teaching interviews, retreats, workshops, and community living. Our programs are open to anyone regardless of previous experience.

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