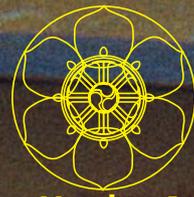


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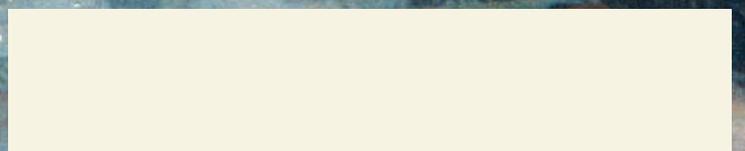


Volume 28 • Number 1 • Fall 2011

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核心根本
關鍵基礎
保證全面
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信仰道風
人才教制
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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 28. The circulation is 3,500 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: Doorway of the Chan tang (Zen hall) at Un Mun's temple in northern Guangdong Province, China

Editor's Note



We would like to thank Zen Master Dae Kwang for his many years of service both as the Kwan Um School of Zen abbot and as editor-in-chief of *Primary Point*. His international travel, teaching and many hours of work in the school office were central in promoting the teaching and vision of Zen Master Seung Sahn and the international character of the Kwan Um School of Zen. The long hiatus in the publication of this first issue with a new editorial board reflects both the magnitude and complexity of the task he undertook, which we've only

come to realize as we've tried to move forward. We want to acknowledge both his efforts in this regard as well as those of the previous editorial staff: JW Harrington, Dorota Streitfeld, Alan Davies, James Kopcienski and Jayne Harrington. We apologize if we have inadvertently left off any names; this was a large undertaking. As for his future endeavors, Dae Kwang Sunim said simply, "I retired from these positions and am now focusing on practicing and teaching."

Ken Kessel JDPSN, Editor-in-Chief 

Overwhelmed

Dear Zen Master Seung Sahn,

I feel like I'm going crazy. I'm working for the Legal Aid Society, and the maximum caseload at any one time is supposed to be 75. I have more than 75 cases right now. Starting this Friday, one of the attorneys is going on vacation, which will mean even more new cases for each person (there are three other lawyers). I am quite new to the job and feeling totally overwhelmed. As the number of cases increases, I can do less and less for each person. Weeks go by in which there is no time to devote to some of the cases I already have. I am very worried about this because I'm forced to keep doing a more and more sloppy job. I want to help people, and I like to do a beautiful job. I fear what this will do to my health (pains, ulcers, etc.) I try to have a good attitude, but I am being completely overwhelmed by all this. I am feeling very desperate.

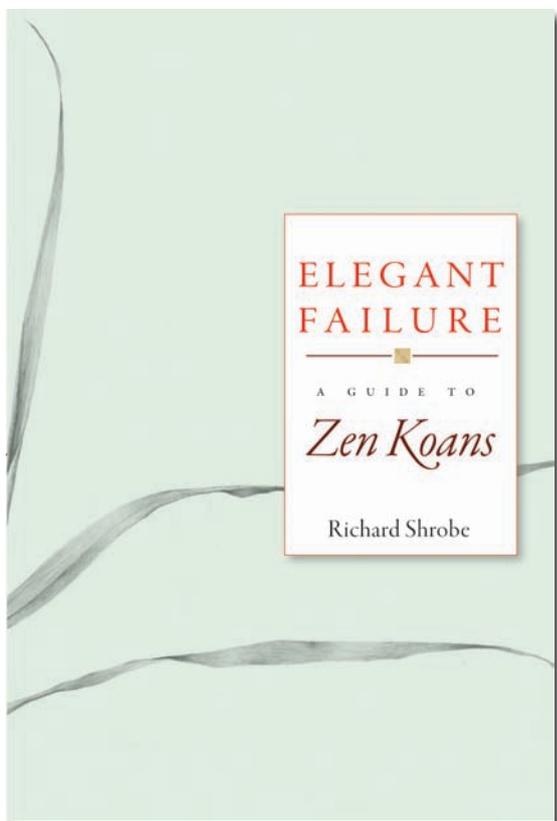
Hapchang with love,
Michael

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? You are very busy and are helping many people—that is wonderful! If your mind is busy then the whole world is busy. If your mind is complicated, the whole world is complicated. If your mind is quiet, then the whole world is quiet. So, an eminent teacher said, "Everything is created by the mind." Do you know an elevator's job? Many people can push the button wanting the elevator, but the elevator only comes when the proper floor and direction appears. When the elevator is going up, it only stops for up-buttons and coming down it only stops for down-buttons. The elevator understands its correct action sequence. That is only going straight. If you put your mind in order, then it works the same as a computer. Then you will understand your correct action sequence. That is correct opinion, correct condition, and correct situation—Zen mind. Also, that is great love and great compassion mind. If you want that mind you must make your "I, My, Me" disappear. If you don't hold your opinion, your condition or your situation, then your original high-class computer will work correctly. So, you must practice every day.

I ask you: What are you? If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. This don't-know broom will sweep your consciousness computer clear of "I, my, me" dust. Then clear moment-to-moment working is possible. That is the correct way and the great bodhisattva way. I hope you only go straight—don't know, which is clear like space; don't make complicated, don't make busy, soon get Enlightenment and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,
Zen Master Seung Sahn 



Excerpted from *Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans* by Richard Shrobe. Copyright © 2010 by Richard Shrobe. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission of Rodmell Press (www.rodsmellpress.com)

Chapter 6

Te-shan Carrying His Bundle

.....
If you attain the fundamental point, then you perceive the meaning of a pure white cow on open clear ground.

If you don't stay here but move beyond this scene, then you perceive the meaning of a relaxed old cow who lies in the grass and chews its cud.

*Going beyond these two, you arrive at a realm where concepts like form and emptiness have no meaning and subject and object are no longer a hindrance. But what is the meaning?
 Haabbh!!*

If someone is thirsty, take them to the kitchen and kindly offer them a glass of milk.

Case 4 in the *Blue Cliff Record* is “Te-shan Carrying His Bundle.” The story says:

When Te-shan arrived to visit Kuei-shan, he carried his bundle with him into the dharma room, where he crossed from east to west and from west to east. He looked around and said, “There’s nothing, nothing.” Then he went out.

Hsueh Tou added the comment, “Completely exposed.”

But when Te-shan got to the monastery gate, he said, “I shouldn’t have been so brash.” So he composed himself properly to meet Kuei-shan. As Kuei-shan sat there, Te-shan held up his sitting mat and said, “Master!”

Kuei-shan reached for his whisk.

Then Te-shan shouted KATZ!, whirled with his sleeves trailing, and left.

Hsueh Tou added the comment, “Completely exposed.”

Te-shan turned his back on the dharma room, put on his grass shoes, and left.

That evening, Kuei-shan asked the head monk, “Where is that newcomer who just came?”

The head monk answered, “At that time he turned his back on the dharma room, put on his grass shoes, and left.”

Kuei-shan said, “Hereafter that lad will go to the summit of a solitary peak, build himself a grass hut, and go on cursing the Buddhas and slandering the Patriarchs.”

Hsueh Tou added the comment, “Adding frost on the snow.”¹

A teaching of Zen Master Fo-yan relates to this case. He called it the two diseases. The first disease is to ride an ass in search of an ass. You look for something outside yourself that you already have near at hand, that you are already at one with. That’s a very important point, or attitude, in terms of Zen practice—formal meditation practice and even informal meditation-in-action practice. If you are practicing

sitting meditation with an attitude that you want to become something other than what you already are, that is a disease. But if you are sitting just to wake up to the fact that you are already complete, then your practice direction is clear. So that is the first disease, to ride an ass in search of an ass.

The second disease is to ride an ass and refuse to dismount. In this case, you're clear about what you've got under you, what you're at one with. You've already perceived or attained some degree of stillness and have entered into this fundamental point, but you've become attached to that, and in that attachment you've begun to lose your way. That's what he means by the second disease. Fo-yan then stated the final attitude or correct direction as to not ride at all. That means you are already the ass. The whole world is also the ass. The whole world then becomes your playground or the manifestation of the field of practice, everywhere in everything at all times.

There are two characters here: Zen Master Kuei-shan (Isan; Wi Sahn) and Zen Master Te-shan (Tokusan; Dok Sahn). Kuei-shan (771–853) began to study the sutras as well as the texts connected with a monk's discipline when he entered a monastery at age fifteen. But then when he was about 23 years old, he felt that this direction was not getting him where he wanted to go. So upon hearing about Zen Master Pai-chang (Hyakujo; Baek Jang), he made a journey to meet him. Pai-chang perceived Kuei-shan as a good vessel and accepted him as his student.

One night when Kuei-shan was attending the master, Pai-chang asked, "Who are you?" Kuei-shan replied, "I'm Kuei-shan." Then Pai-chang said, "Poke the firepot and see if there's a bit of live charcoal in there." Kuei-shan went to the firebox and took a poker or tongs and poked around but couldn't find a glowing ember, so he said to Pai-chang, "The fire is completely out." You may realize that Pai-chang was not talking about charcoal and fire here, but Kuei-shan did not consciously recognize that his teacher was trying to point him toward his own fundamental aliveness.

Pai-chang then stood up, dug deep in the firepot, pulled out a small piece of glowing charcoal, and held it up in front of Kuei-shan and said, "Is this not it?" (Some translations say, "Just this, you see?") And at that moment—*ptchh*—Kuei-shan had a realization.

Kuei-shan was then in his mid-twenties and, after this experience, having realized some live fire within himself, nevertheless he stayed on at Pai-chang's monastery for another 20 years. That's an important point in terms of one's attitude toward practice, sincerity, and not being in a hurry.

In Pai-chang's monastery, Kuei-shan served as head cook, or rice steward, a highly responsible job.

When Kuei-shan was in his forties, a diviner came to the monastery and said to Pai-chang, "If you were to establish a monastery on Mount Kuei, that would be a very good practice place, and many people would come and attain to the Zen dharma. But that practice place on the high peak of Mount Kuei is not suitable for you yourself, Zen Master, so you should pick somebody else to go."² Everybody thought that the head monk would get the job. And the head monk himself thought that he was entitled to the position.

Pai-chang said to the assembly, "Anyone who can pass the test will become the abbot of Kuei-shan." He took a urine bottle and set it down on the floor saying, "This is not a urine bottle. What then can you call it?" The head monk stepped forward and said, "It can't be called a wooden block."

Then Kuei-shan came forward and—*plaff!*—kicked over the urine bottle and walked out. Pai-chang said, "The head monk has been defeated by Kuei-shan." Kuei-shan would become the abbot of the monastery.

In his mid-to-late-forties, Kuei-shan went to Mount Kuei, but he didn't build a temple there. He didn't gather any students around himself, nor did he teach anything. He just built a small hut and practiced. It is said that he just practiced for seven or eight years. Gradually some people began to notice him there, and a congregation developed around him. Then a government official donated money to build a temple. Kuei-shan eventually had a community of over fifteen hundred monks. He went there and built himself a little hut, nothing spectacular, nothing to grab anyone's attention, and just practiced for some time. Gradually the sincerity and energy of his practice drew people to him.

Much later, when Kuei-shan had grown old, he said to his assembly, "When I die, I will be reborn as a cow, at the foot of Mount Kuei. And you will see on the side of this cow, if you look closely, the Chinese characters that say, 'This is the monk Kuei-shan.' But if you call me Kuei-shan, you will miss the cow. On the other hand, if you call me a cow, you will miss Kuei-shan. What then is my correct name?"

If you find that name, even now you can meet Kuei-shan eyebrow-to-eyebrow.

Te-shan was originally a teaching monk, well-versed in the Diamond Sutra. When he heard about Zen monks in the south of China who weren't studying the sutras but were just sitting facing the wall and claiming to get enlightenment, he decided he would go to the south and teach them the correct way. Te-shan had a rather fiery spirit and a very strong intention.

In the south of China, he met Zen Master Lung-t'an (Ryutan; Yong Dam). One night he stayed up talking to Lung-t'an until Lung-t'an said, "It's late. You should retire." Te-shan started to go to his room, but it was pitch dark outside. He came back in and said to Lung-t'an, "It's dark outside." Lung-t'an lit a rice-paper candle and handed it to him. As Te-shan stood in the doorway, pulling back the curtain to go out, Lung-t'an suddenly—*pitch*—blew the candle out, and at that moment Te-shan was greatly awakened. The next day he burned all his commentaries on the Diamond Sutra in front of the assembly.

It is some time after this experience that we encounter him in the current case. All fired up with his newfound freedom and enlightenment, he had been traveling around China, calling on various Zen masters, and he heard about Kuei-shan's community.

Before the actual kong-an, an introduction by Zen Master Yuan-wu (Engo) says, "Under the blue sky, in the bright sunlight, you don't have to point out this and that anymore; but the causal conditions of time and season still require you to give the medicine in accordance with the disease. But tell me, is it better to let go, or is it better to hold still?"³

This is a question that Zen students are always struggling with. Should I make a strong effort and direct myself toward one point like a great samurai warrior? Or should I release and open up and just let be? Here Yuan-wu says the medicine has to fit the particular situation in the moment.

The first paragraph of the kong-an is very interesting

When Te-shan arrived to visit Kuei-shan, he carried his bundle with him into the dharma room, where he crossed from east to west and from west to east. He looked around and said, "There's nothing, nothing." Then he went out.

Hsueh-tou, who was the commentator and organizer of these stories, writes a short comment, saying, "Completely exposed."

The first point is Te-shan carrying his bundle into the dharma room. In fact, that is the title of the case. Today we might say he brought an awful lot of baggage with him. In China around 700 or 800 CE, they already understood this psychological attitude.

At that time, monks usually adhered to a certain formality, although occasionally some wild and free spirit might ignore it. The custom was that when you came to a new temple, you would put on your ceremonial robe, enter the main dharma room, spread out your sitting mat, and bow to the abbot or the master of the temple. But here, Te-shan comes

into the dharma room still carrying his pack from the road, his bundle. Then he walks from east to west, from west to east, proclaims, "There is nothing, nothing," and walks out. By holding on to his bundle, it appears that he is clinging to something. Some hindering attitude is preventing him from connecting with his situation.

Of course, we all find ourselves frequently carrying some bundle along with us. Either we are making ourselves too exalted, or we are belittling ourselves too much. We are carrying some coloring attitude toward self and the world we encounter, and it obscures what is clear and present. A well-known Zen phrase is, "Put it all down." But if you're going to put it all down, then you first have to perceive what you are carrying. What is it that I am coloring everything with? What kind of attitude is getting in the way? Is it negative? Is it positive? If you perceive that, then you can put it down. Sometimes you have to put it down many, many times. Ultimately, you even have to put down the putting down.

Te-shan is carrying a big nothing bundle with him. Nothing, nothing—he's got plenty of nothing.

Sometimes the image of carrying a bundle implies the attitude of obligation. Te-shan seems to feel a compelling obligation to walk in and proclaim, "Nothing, nothing" and wake everybody to that fact. Christianity has an injunction, "Take up the cross, and follow me."⁴ That's a statement of practice obligation. One Zen master said, "It's as if our true self wants us to do that, wants us to become clear."

At the Buddhist precepts ceremony, we make the request of ourselves, "May we cast off our obligations and involvements and enter into the uncreated, and by so doing fulfill our greatest obligation." This phraseology comes from a Buddhist monk's or nun's renouncement of worldly affairs in order to realize their (and our) spiritual being. But the notion of the homeless life, or the monk's life, is not limited to monks, because each of us has an obligation to wake up to our true being and our true self. That becomes—if you are a Zen student and practicing the Zen way—your central obligation, to wake up. In so doing, you enter the nonattachment path. When we practice the path of nonattachment, at that moment we are not carrying a bundle. We are not clinging to anything. We are not holding on to any concept or idea.

In Zen there is another familiar image of someone carrying a bundle. This one is quite different from Te-shan's bundle. This character holding a bag, often depicted in Zen brush paintings, goes by the name of Pu-tai (Hotei). He is usually pictured as a chubby guy with a big round belly who is laughing or smiling. He is often surrounded by a group of

children, and he is reaching into his sack to dispense gifts to the children. In China, Pu-tai is considered to be an incarnation of the Buddha of Loving Kindness, Maitreya. So carrying something in a self-centered way is transmuted into carrying something in a selfless, generous, and compassionate way.

Several hundred years ago in Korea there lived a monk who had a very sincere practice spirit. The people in his village looked up to him and admired him. Whenever they needed a ceremony performed, they would call on this monk, knowing that, because of his purity and sincerity, the ceremony would have great merit to it. At first he would be given the small customary donation for his services. But little by little he began to ask for larger and larger donations from the people, until he started to appear not very sincere and not very pure of heart but quite greedy. The villagers began to say disparagingly that he was making his living from the *moktak*. (The *moktak* is the wooden instrument monks use to accompany their chanting.) But the monk seemed impervious to the criticism. He just kept asking for bigger and bigger donations and socking away the money.

Then a big flood came and destroyed many homes in the village, washing away the crops. It was a bad time for everyone. One day the monk appeared in the center of the village with a cart and a big chest. He opened up the chest and began to dispense money to everyone according to their need. So sometimes what might appear to be avarice or miserliness is not.

In the commentary to this case, after Te-shan walks into the dharma room and proclaims “There is nothing, nothing” and walks out, the commentator writes, “He has a lot of Ch’an (Zen), but what for?”⁵ That means that his spirit and energy are quite strong, but has his wisdom ripened enough for him to really know what to do with it?

There is another point here: He walks into the dharma room carrying his bundle. Besides the formal dharma room, the place of practice, there is the original dharma room—the space of truth. Dharma means truth, or true way. We all have that space of truth from the beginning. That space is pure and clear and includes relative and absolute. It includes all phenomena and noumena and the perception that each thing is already complete.

In that space, there is essentially no coming into it or going out of it, and also no staying. So there is no coming, no going, and no staying, because terms like *coming*, *going*, and *staying* all are relative terms, and in this fundamental space of truth, there is no one thing relative to another. Each thing is just as

it is. But if you carry a bundle of some kind into that space and parade it back and forth from east to west and west to east, then that space, which is originally wide and open and clear, begins to become very, very narrow. Thus our practice is to perceive when and how we are doing that and just let go of it, put it down!

At that point, Hsueh-tou comments, “Completely exposed.” What is it that is completely exposed? That kind of comment is sometimes called a “phrase that comes down on both sides,” like a double-edged sword; it cuts both ways. On one side, Te-shan reveals the fundamental point: nothing, nothing. But simultaneously he also reveals where he is stuck. Someone might say to him, “If there’s nothing, then how do you even open your mouth to say ‘nothing?’” So “completely exposed” means he shows, at that moment, just where he is and where he is not.

Then the next part of the story says, “When Te-shan got to the monastery gate, he said, ‘I shouldn’t have been so brash.’ So he composed himself properly to meet Kuei-shan,” which means he put on his ceremonial vestments and then came back into the dharma room.

Kuei-shan sat in place.

That’s a very interesting image. It’s the manifestation of not-moving mind. There is a lot of commotion going on: east to west, west to east, nothing, nothing, going out, coming back with a new set of clothes on. But Kuei-shan, being the old cow that he is, sits in place, just watching.

Sometimes in Zen we talk about host and guest. A guest is that which is coming and going. A host is that which is never moving. In the Lin-chi (Rinzai) tradition—one of the main schools of Zen in China shortly after this time—Zen Master Lin-chi would often use the teaching device of host and guest. The host-and-guest meditational attitude means that you hold the position, as Kuei-shan does, of just perceiving what is coming and going, coming and going, coming and going. Thinking appears; thinking disappears. Sensation appears; sensation disappears. Emotion appears; emotion disappears. You just perceive, sitting there quietly, like an old cow lying in the grass chewing its cud. There may be a big commotion going on, but you don’t care. You don’t try to get rid of it; you don’t try to push it away. Kuei-shan doesn’t call out to the attendant, “Carry this lunatic out of here and show him the gate!” So you don’t try to push anything away.

On the other hand, you don’t get caught by it. You just perceive coming and going, coming and going. Fundamentally, host and guest are not two separate things. They are like waves and water. The waves are moving, moving,

moving. The water is always there. But you can't talk about waves as something separate from the water or water as something separate from waves. If there is water, there are waves. If there is mind, there will be thoughts. So don't be bothered by your thinking when you practice.

Te-shan reentered to meet Kuei-shan, and Kuei-shan just sat there. Then Te-shan held up his sitting mat and said, "Master!" Monks used to carry some kind of mat or cloth with them so when they came in front of the teacher they could make a formal prostration. But here Te-shan doesn't make the formal prostration but instead holds up the mat. Then he yells out, "Master!"

Kuei-shan just reaches for his whisk and casually raises it—not a very dramatic response to Te-shan. At that time in China, Zen masters would have a horsehair whisk that was a symbol of their position. The whisk would usually be at the side of the seat. Then Te-shan shouted "KATZ!" to take away everything again, whirled around, and left. The Zen shout (KATZ! Or Ho! Or Haahh!) was used by Zen monks to reveal fundamental empty mind.

Hsueh-tou comments a second time, "Completely exposed." What is completely exposed there? Has Kuei-shan completely exposed Te-shan? Has Te-shan completely exposed Kuei-shan? Has Hsueh-tou, the commentator, completely exposed both of them? And what is being exposed? Host and guest—coming and going, and not moving?

Then the story says that Te-shan turned his back on the dharma room, put on his grass shoes, and left.

The commentary says, "Te-shan won the hat on his head but lost the shoes on his feet."⁶ Now, if you're going to make a long journey, you need both a hat on your head—especially if you're a monk and your head is shaved—but probably more importantly you need the shoes on your feet, which are not as obvious as the hat on your head. It says he won the hat on his head, which means he looked pretty good, but Kuei-shan very quietly took away his shoes. Through his calm demeanor, Kuei-shan revealed that Te-shan was not yet fully mature as a Zen adept.

Kuei-shan still didn't make much of a commotion, but later he asked the head monk, "Where is that newcomer who just came?" The head monk answered, "At that time, when the two of you got into all this, he turned his back on the dharma room, put on his grass shoes, and left."

So Kuei-shan said, summing up the whole business, "Hereafter that lad will go to the summit of a solitary peak, build himself a grass hut, and go on cursing the Buddhas

and slandering the Patriarchs." That means that even though he's way up high somewhere, he has essentially lost his way.

Hsueh-tou adds one more comment: "Adding frost on the snow."⁸ You don't need to add frost on top of snow, it is already there, so the comment means, "Isn't it obvious?"

After the case, there's a poem.

One "completely exposed"
A second "completely exposed"
"Adding frost to snow"—(Te-shan) has had a
dangerous fall.
The General of the Flying Cavalry enters the
enemy camp;
How many could regain their safety?
(Te-shan) hurriedly runs past—
(But Kuei-shan) doesn't let him go.
On the summit of a solitary peak, he sits
among the weeds;
Bah!

The penultimate line is also translated as, "Alas! He is seated among the weeds / On the isolated mountaintop."⁹ In Zen poetry, weeds are usually an image of complications and of being all caught up in something. So even though he has gone to an isolated mountaintop, Te-shan still is not free.

Zen practice is to attain the mountaintop and return to the valley. One side is the absolute point. The other side is, "just now, how can I help you?"

We hope that we will put down our bundles over and over again, untie ourselves from the weeds that we get caught in, and practice the way of openness and compassion.

Notes

1. See Seung Sahn, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record* (Cumberland, RI: Kwan Um School of Zen, 1983), 4.
2. Actually, Kuei-shan was not Kuei-shan's real name. That was his Zen master's name, which was taken from the mountain on which he eventually built his temple. Shan means "mountain" in Chinese, so his name means Mount Kuei.
3. Thomas Cleary and J. C. Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 22.
4. Mark 10:21.
5. Cleary and Cleary, 23.
6. Ibid.
7. Cleary and Cleary, 27–28.
8. Seung Sahn, 4.
9. Katsuki Sekida, trans., *Two Zen Classics: The Gateless Gate and the Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambhala, 1977, 2005), 155. 

Blue Sky, White Clouds:

A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH GYE MUN SUNIM JDPS

Reproduced from the January–February 2011 edition of the Zen Mirror, a bimonthly newsletter of the Kwan Yin Chan Lin (Singapore Zen Center).

Editor's note: *The editorial team had a rare chance to have a candid talk with the abbot of Kwan Yin Chan Lin. Below is the transcription. The Chinese title "Shifu" means roughly "Master" or "Respected Teacher" and is the title by which Gye Mun Sunim is known there.*

Questioner: What is the vision of Kwan Yin Chan Lin?

Shifu: To revitalize Zen practice.

Q: What is the teaching of Zen? How to begin Zen practice?

Shifu: To enter this gate, do not attach to your understanding and concepts.

Q: What is your view of the students today? Are they more difficult to teach compared to students, say, 10 years ago?

Shifu: The students 10 years ago saw that the sky is blue, clouds are white. Students now also see that the sky is blue, the clouds are white.

Q: What is your wish for Kwan Yin Chan Lin?

Shifu: My wish is that everybody can always live among blue sky and white clouds, and find their correct life.



Gye Mun Sunim JDPS, is the abbot of Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Centre in Singapore and the Pengerang International Zen Centre. He shuttles between Singapore and Malaysia teaching Zen meditation and leading retreats. In 1971, Gye Mun Sunim took the Buddhist refuge under Ven. Hong Choon. He practiced under the guidance of his teacher Ven. Zhu Mo for five years and was ordained as a monk by him in 1985. Since then, he has traveled to Penang, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan and India to pursue in-depth studies in Bud-

dhism. In 1988, he started practicing Zen meditation and did a three-year retreat at Songkwang-sa monastery in Korea. Later he met Zen Master Seung Sahn and began practicing under his guidance and teaching. In 1991, Gye Mun Sunim started the Kwan Yin Chan Lin at Pulau Ubin in Singapore. On November 8, 1998, he received inka and the authority to teach Zen as a Ji Do Poep Sa from Zen Master Seung Sahn. In 2000, he started the Kwan Yin Chan Lin Pengerang International Zen Centre in Johore, Malaysia. ☸



MEMORIAL FOR DAE WON SUNIM JDPS (1950–2011)

Early Life

Dae Won Sunim JDPS, born Ban Le in 1950, was from the small village of An Ngai, in Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam. His parents, Tra Le and Tam Thi Tran, raised him along with his four younger siblings in the tradition of Buddhism.

Dharma Path

Dae Won Sunim entered a Buddhist temple at the age of nine, learning under the venerable Thich Tam Tinh. He was fully ordained

a monk at the age of 20 in 1970 in Da-Nang Province. He studied at Nguyen Thieu Monastery and at Tô Đình Long Khánh (Long Khanh Temple) in Binh Dinh Province. After receiving his bachelor's degree, he attended Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon until he left Vietnam in 1975.

Dae Won Sunim was sponsored by the venerable Thich Thien An, the founder of the International Buddhist Meditation Center in Los Angeles, which was the first Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in the United States. Dae Won Sunim came to Los Angeles and lived there for two years. From there, he traveled to many temples in the United States in his path of learning, practicing and teaching. One notable stop was the City of 10,000 Buddhas in Ukiah, California. In this place he made the vow to sleep upright, which he continued to do until his death. Dae Won Sunim never stayed in any temple for too long, traveling where he could in order to help others. He also practiced in remote, forested and mountainous locations and has traveled to Myanmar in his path of learning.

In 1990, he became a student at the Kwan Um School of Zen, under Zen Master Seung Sahn. Dae Won Sunim received inka in March 1999.

Death

In 2004, Dae Won Sunim founded the Dai Bi Quan Am Temple in the San Bernardino Valley in California. Dae Won Sunim chose this remote area, surrounded by mountains and deserts, as the seat from which he practiced and taught until his passing on July 7, 2011.

Literary Legacy

Dae Won Sunim translated many works into Vietnamese and was also involved in the translation of Stephen Mitchell's compilation of *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn*. Dae Won Sunim also leaves behind the original work *Liêu Quán Thien Tông Pháp Môn Tu Chung*, a discourse on Zen Master Lieu Quán's path to enlightenment. ☸



During Zen Master Seung Sahn's funeral, Dae Won Sunim stood near the coffin, out in the rain all by himself. Most of that time he was crying. He told me that Zen Master Seung Sahn saved his life, saying "he treated me with more compassion than I have ever experienced. He believed in me." —*Zen Master Soeng Hyang*



At Dae Won Sunim's funeral, we asked a monk friend of his how Dae Won Sunim had actually come to die. His answer: "Leaves turn yellow and then fall down." —*Mu Sang Sunim*

[1 1



During one of Dae Won Sunim's talks at Kyol Che at Mu Sang Sa in 2007, he said that one day as a young person in Vietnam, he toiled in a muddy field. He looked up at the blue sky and prayed to have enough to eat and to become a monk. —*Lesley Eisele*



When I stayed with Dae Won Sunim in a hotel room during Zen Master Seung Sahn's memorial tour, he would wake me up 5 in the morning to do 108 bows on the floor! After bowing, he looked out the window and said, "Suffering does not take a rest, so we do not rest from practicing." —*Jason Quinn*

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Arne Schaefer

April 3, 2010, at Won Kwang Sa Temple, Hungary

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: You told me that one and a half years ago you were told that you can do this job and you said, "Yes!" Why?

Arne PSN: You already understand, Michael!

Q: No, I don't!

Arne PSN: For you!

Q: Thanks.

12] Question: Arne, you are becoming a teacher; so I understand you will be giving lots of Dharma talks, right? I have a problem. Always when I hear Dharma talks I get really sick. But when I don't hear Dharma talks I also get really sick. So what can I do?

Arne PSN: You already understand!

Q: No I don't understand!

Arne PSN: Just listen!

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Question: Hallo Arne!

Arne PSN: Hello Namhee!

Q: I am a bit nervous . . . for you.

Arne PSN: Thanks for your compassion!

Q: Today at six o'clock we came by bus from our hotel to Won Kwang Sa Temple and we passed many lakes, very beautiful with the morning fog. And I asked myself, "What a beautiful lake, how deep is it?" Then I thought, "Maybe I ask Arne." *[Long and loud laughter from the audience.]*

Arne PSN: You already understand!

Q: No I don't.

Arne PSN: On our way back to our hotel by bus we stop at the lake and you jump in the lake and find out. *[Loud laughter and applause from the audience, but the questioner didn't like the answer.]*

Not enough? Go and have a bath! ☸



DHARMA SPEECH

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

Zen is rooted in Buddhism and in Taoism.

Buddhism teaches first get enlightenment, then instruct all beings.

Taoism teaches to live a life in perfect harmony with the universe.

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

The Sixth Patriarch of the Zen Lineage, Hui Neng, said, "Originally nothing." That means originally no Zen, no Buddhism, no Taoism, no roots.

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

But aren't roots very important? Without roots how do we know where our place is? Without roots, how can you get energy and grow?

KATZ!

Look outside: After a long, cold winter, all the trees are at their place and new green leaves are growing.

Standing here in front of you and giving my first Dharma speech as a JDPSN is something special. Coming to that point was a long way somehow. There were two incidents in my life that were very important and that I would like to share with you.

First, I grew up in a small town in the middle of Germany. Everything was fine as far as I could understand it. A few months before my eighteenth birthday, I learned that my mother had blood cancer and was to die soon. Although my mother had had the disease already for several years, I didn't know it, because my parents thought it was better not to tell me when I was a child. Then, when it got serious I had to learn that my mother might die from it soon. Rationally of course I could understand, but my heart could not. She was always there and I could not imagine a life without her. I remember that I talked with my mother about death and she said she was not afraid of death, but rather of all the pain that might be caused by the metastases. My sister, my father, and I were sharing the times at her bed when the doctors told us it was going to be very critical. On the night she died it was my time to be there at the hospital, a one-hour drive from home. I called my father and sister to come. I felt it was OK to let her go. She would finally find peace after all the pain she had endured. My family came and we stood around our mum. I was holding her hand and I could feel her pulse getting weaker and weaker and then vanished. At that moment my heart completely fell apart. That was a kind of pain I have never experienced before, one I even didn't know about! Leaving the hospital and my dead mother behind it felt like I had completely lost the ground under my feet—I felt completely uprooted.

Dae Soen Sa Nim always taught, “A good situation is a bad situation; a bad situation is a good situation.” At that time of course I didn't know that: I just felt this tremendous suffering and I was looking for help. I needed an answer for the purpose of life. Everything had become meaningless for me.

So I started to look around. After a while I made a decision to go on a longer journey and travelled to Asia. My family was not so unhappy. They were afraid letting me go so far away, but also accepted my strong wish, although I could not explain well why I wanted to go. In Indonesia I visited Buddhist Temples like the Borobudur and in India I stayed a while in McLeod Ganj, a village up the hills of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama and many Tibetans are living in their Indian exile. I attended some lectures and got some basic teachings about Buddhism and meditation. Back in Germany I was seeking for a sangha and started with the Tibetan Kagyu Tradition. But soon it felt like this is not yet my practice and I continued looking around.

Then I moved to Berlin and started to study religious studies and philosophy. A friend said to me there would be a Zen talk nearby at a museum and asked me if I would

join him there. So there I was sitting in the audience and for the first time meeting people from the Berlin Zen Center and a teacher of the Kwan Um School of Zen, Dharma Master Poep Mu (who would later become Zen Master Wu Bong). Poep Mu JDPSN was talking about the famous kong-an of an old woman burning a hermitage. Most of you know this story: this old lady was supporting a monk for ten years and after ten years she wanted to find out what he had attained. So she sends her beautiful daughter in beautiful clothes to test this monk. This daughter presented all the nice gifts her mother had given her to the monk and he was very grateful. Just when he said “your mother is such great bodhisattva supporting me for such a long time” the young girl sat on his lap, embraced him, and asked him: “How do you feel now?” He said “rotten log on cold stone, no warmth in winter.” So this young girl thought, “Wow, this is a great monk!” She went back to her mother and told her: “He is a great monk, he has a strong center, his mind is not moving, and he must have attained something!” Her mother just said, “I am not interested if he has a strong center. I want to know what he said.” The girl told her what he had answered. Upon hearing it the mother got very furious, ran up the hill to the hermitage, and beat the monk with a stick out of the hermitage, yelling at him: “Get out of here! I was feeding a demon for ten years,” and burnt down the hermitage.

When Poep Mu JDPSN told this story he of course asked the audience, “What was the mistake of this monk? Why did this old woman get so furious and beat him out of the hermitage?” I was sitting in the audience thinking, “I don't understand! Why did she do this? He was practicing so strongly; he had a not moving center!” This case caused a big question in my mind. So there was the hook and I swallowed it. Poep Mu JDPSN had talked about this *don't know* and the summer I met him I did the summer Kyol Che in Warsaw and several YMJJs—I really wanted to find out about this *don't know*. The following winter I went to Korea to sit Kyol Che at Shin Won Sa Temple. It is very wonderful that today there are several friends present with whom I spent the Shin Won Sa retreat. Even Zen Master Dae Bong (who at that time was called Do Mun Sunim JDPS, and who was leading his first Kyol Che) is here!

The beginning of the three-month retreat was very difficult. You did not have mobile phones or Internet connection, as I can see nowadays everyone has and uses during Kyol Che. We all had to stay for the whole three months. There were no people coming and going. After a while I got used to the daily schedule. Looking at the calendar and seeing how many days we still had to go became less and less painful. There was an everyday routine and each evening I was surprised another day had gone. In the middle of the retreat we had the intensive week before Buddha's Enlightenment Day. We would have only

three hours of sleep and on the last night we would sit all night through. During this intensive week there was suddenly a moment where thinking was completely gone. There was silence and peace inside of me that I had never experienced before. I got a taste of *don't know*—finally I got a taste of our true root, the root of all of us and the root of the whole universe. Until then the teachings just made sense to me, but that moment was hitting me. With that moment came a wish that everyone could have this kind of experience for just a part of a second. Then the whole world would be different! We all want to be happy, but we don't know where to find true happiness and we do so many things that don't help us. That is our tragedy! If everyone would just get a glimpse of it, would connect with its true roots for a millisecond, then we would know where to find true happiness. It is always there, it is always available. That moment was the very strong mind medicine I got from this retreat and it was the answer to my questions. Actually I was thinking of becoming a monk at that time, because I was so grateful for this experience and wanted to encourage others to make the same experience. At the end of the retreat I was asking Dharma Master Do Mun Sunim about becoming a monk and he said that I have to understand my karma. Becoming a monk might be a great mistake. That was really a very good answer for me! I went back home to Germany and thought, "If I have the karma, then it will happen. If not, then not." And, as you see, it didn't. But the wish to support others to start and continue practicing has always been with me.

During the past two weeks while I attended the winter Kyol Che here in Won Kwang Sa I did consulting interviews, and some older students, even Dharma Teachers in long robes, asked me, "How did it happen that you did not stop practicing? Why did you continue?" I guess all of us know these doubts about practicing, when our checking is very strong and we think that our efforts should bring more results than only *don't know*. This experience of stillness and happiness, connected with the strong wish that everyone could have a little taste of it, kept me going. Whenever I was back in the land of suffering from my thinking I remembered that moment of perfect stillness and unlimited compassion. So I really believe in our practice and in what we are doing. And since that moment the challenge has always been to keep a balance in life, spending the right amount of time with practicing, with sangha, with family, with friends, and with work. With time everything comes together.

So I am very pleased to have this great honor to become a teacher in this tradition, and I feel very happy to continue to practice with all of you. And as many have already told me, this is just the beginning for me. I want to thank you all for helping me so far and for continuously practicing together and doing it with the right spirit for all sentient beings.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to my teach-



ers and especially to Wu Bong Soen Sa Nim, who has guided me until today and has always helped me. If I had a question, I always got good advice from him. I want to encourage you all, if you ever have a question, please be openhearted and address your teachers and sangha friends. (Just before my dharma speech I was told to keep it short and so I forgot to express my gratitude to my wife. I want to catch up on this opportunity now: Thank you Irmi, for all your love and support.)

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

In Zen we say everything is already complete, everything already has it.

That means harmony is complete and also disharmony is complete.

Harmony is disharmony, disharmony is harmony.

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

In this hit, no harmony, no disharmony.

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

Harmony is harmony, disharmony is disharmony. So which of these three statements is correct?

KATZ!

I am very happy to see you all from all over this world sitting here together in harmony in this dharma hall. Thank you. ☸

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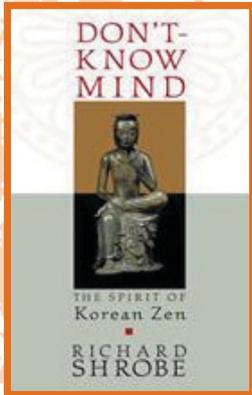
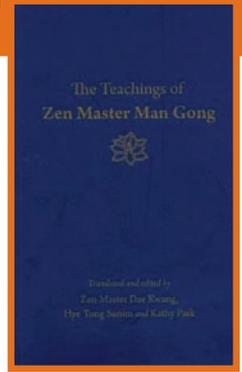
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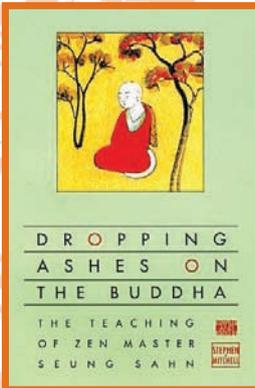
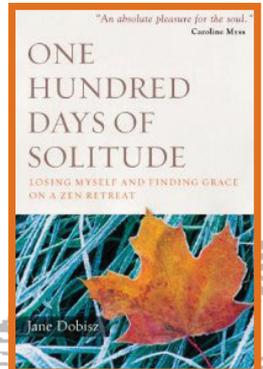
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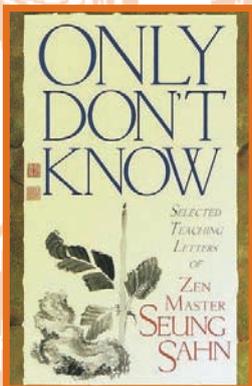
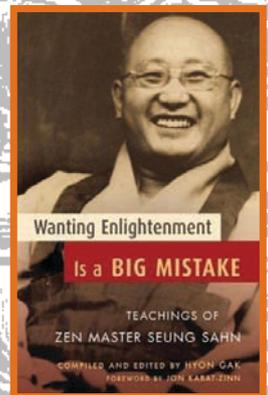
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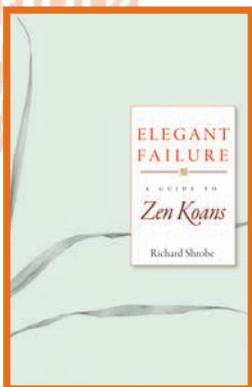
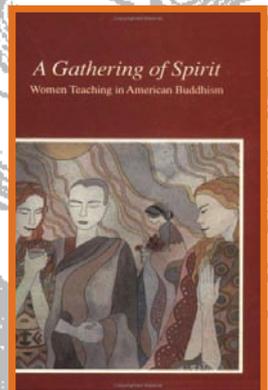
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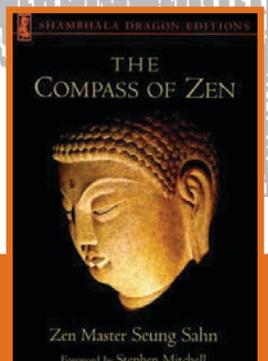
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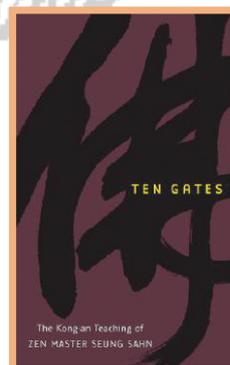


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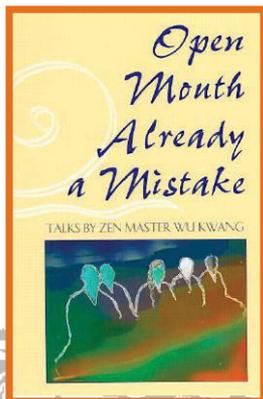
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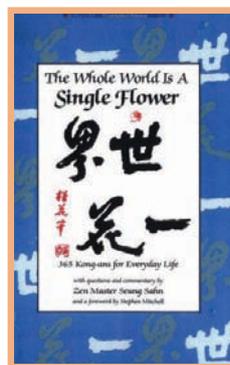
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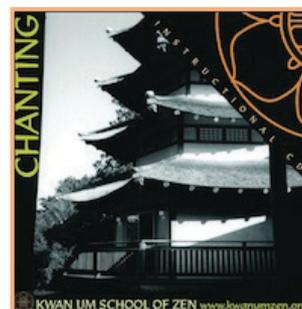
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Wake Up! On the Road with a Zen Master. An entertaining documentary that captures Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy and presents the core of his teaching. 54 minutes. *Primary Point Press, 1992. VHS: ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00. DVD: ISBN 0-942795-14-8. \$30.00*



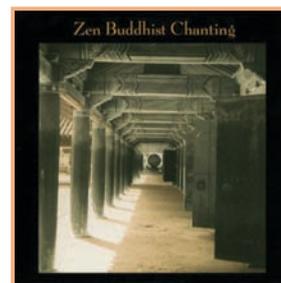
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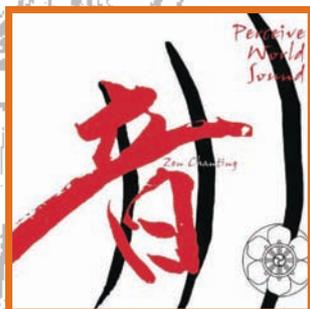
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Dragons and Snakes

David Ledeboer

Mu Chak asked Manjusri, “How is (the Dharma) being carried on hereabouts?”

Manjusri said, “Ordinary people and saints live together; dragons and snakes mix.”

—*Blue Cliff Record*, Case 35



I remember he never took the coins from the change I would bring after shopping for him. “Too heavy,” he would say. “You keep.” I’m remembering him more these days as he’s left us, left his body behind in a temple in Korea, dressed in his monk’s robes, with a smile on his face as if to say, “All done for now!”

18]

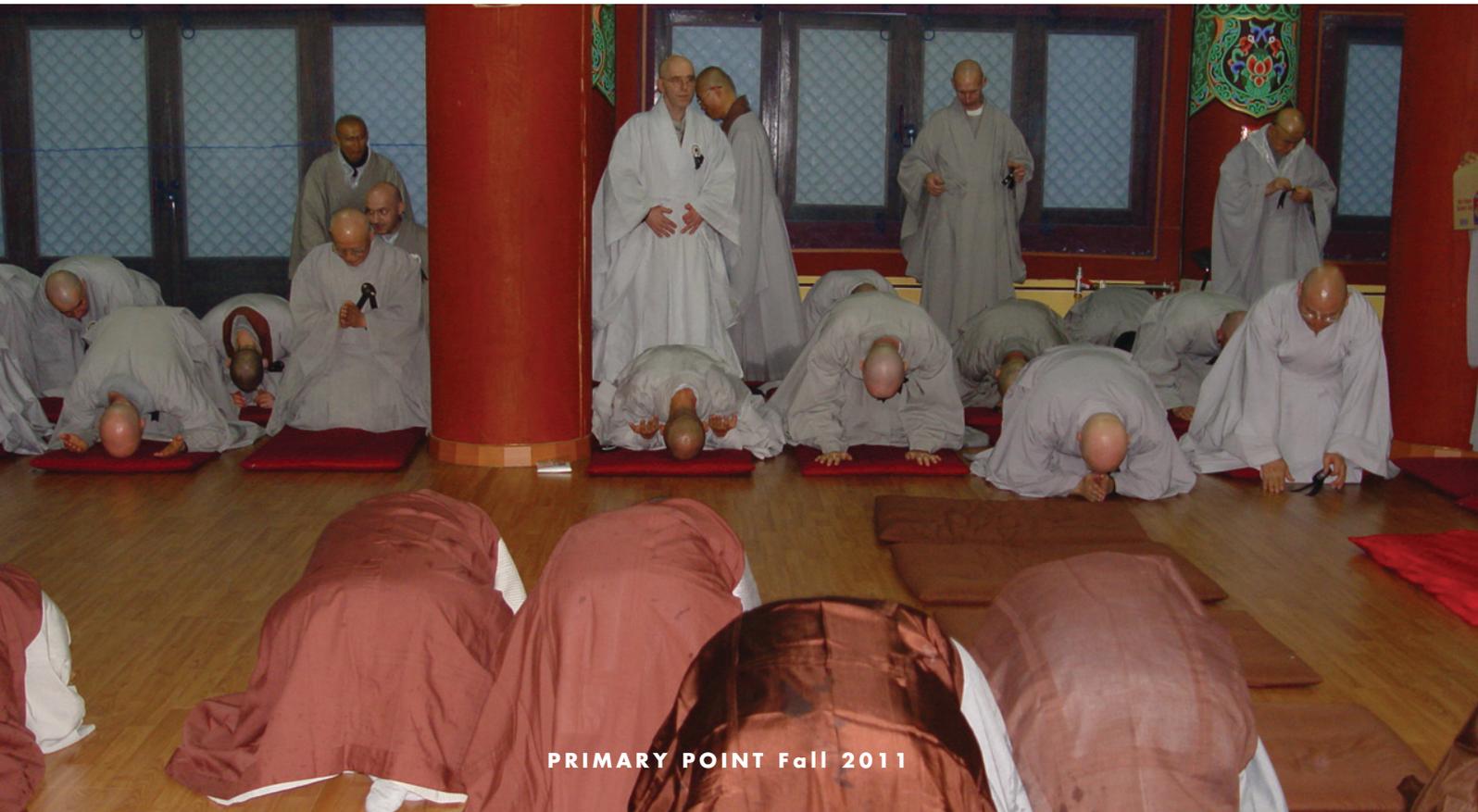
In the winter of 2004, my Zen teacher died. I attended his funeral in the mountains of Korea. This is the story of that trip.

It’s early December. I am picking up my coat and bags to head off to Ring of Bone Zendo in the California mountains for a retreat. It will be a week of sitting Zen to commemorate Buddha’s Enlightenment Day. The phone rings,

and it is my old friend Mu Sang Sunim calling from Korea. He’s just gotten off a flight from Los Angeles and tells me that Zen Master Seung Sahn, our Zen master, has passed away. I get the bare details and the schedule for the funeral and hang up, stunned. I haven’t seen him in years, and have even given back my robe and bowls and returned to lay life, but I’m still stunned. It’s like someone turning off music that I was listening to without knowing I was still listening. I feel like I’m 14 years old again, orphaned again. The thought comes, “Now I am alone in this world.”

After I hang up, a sudden change of plans and I am off to Berkeley and REI instead of the mountains, buying some long underwear and warm clothes for a trip to Korea. Koreans dress well and a layman would be expected to wear a nice black suit and tie to a funeral. Clothes. I gave up my monk’s robes when I left Korea all those years ago, and I’ve never owned a suit. What am I going to wear to my teacher’s funeral? Once again I’m in the middle ground dancing between worlds and I get a wave of grief, feeling lost and alone as I look at shirts on a rack.

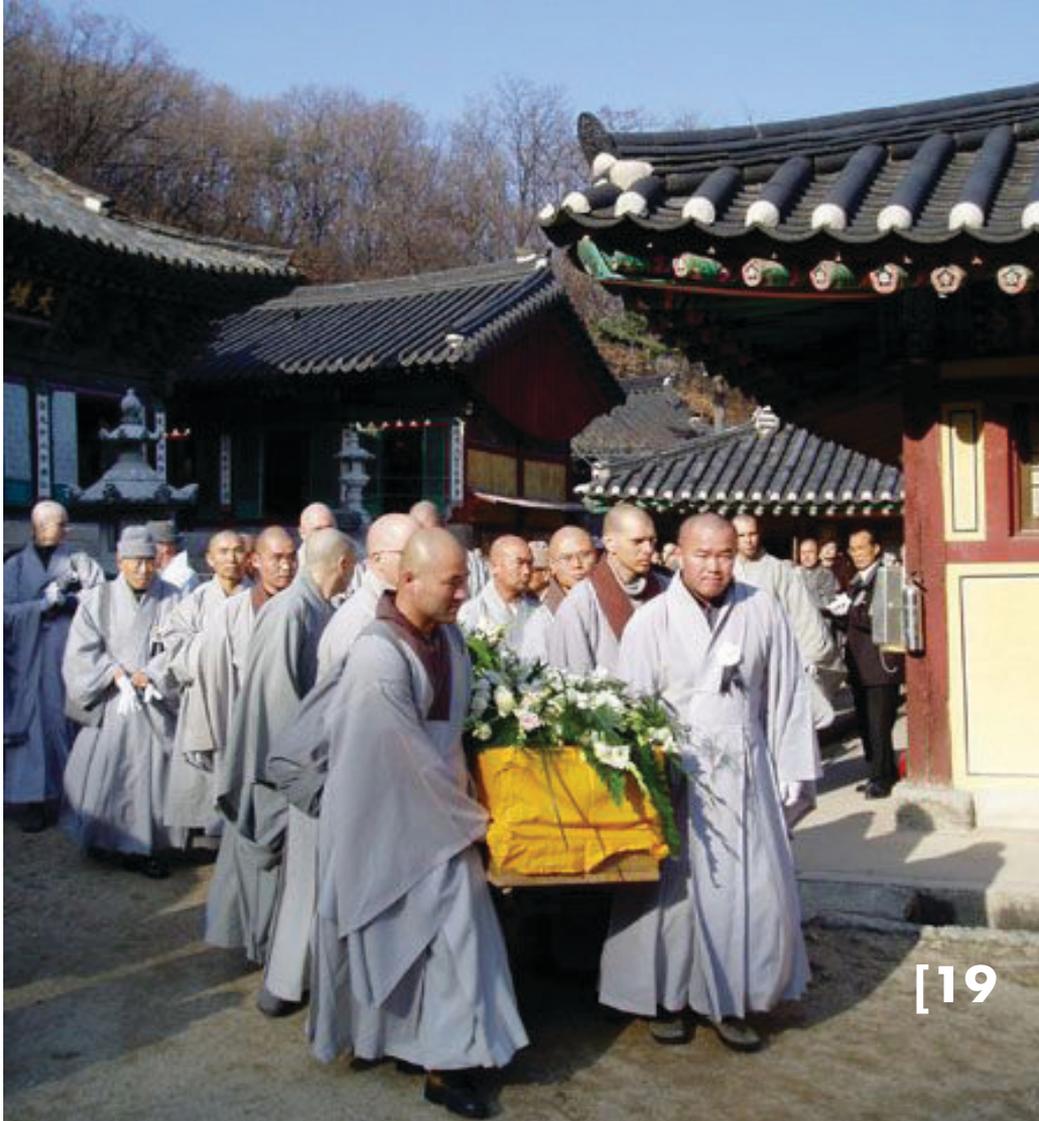
After a late night packing and an early morning ride to the airport, I’m in line to check in when I see Diana, the person who welcomed me to the first of many of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s Zen centers I would live in over the



years. It's good to see her. We fly together. A segment of Korean national news is shown after the movie and there is a piece on Zen Master Seung Sahn's death. He had become famous in his old age back in his homeland. We arrive in Seoul late at night, taking a taxi all the way across the city, which fills the granite mountains and valleys up to our teacher's temple in what used to be the edge of town. I no longer recognize Seoul, which has grown huge, with freeways where streets used to be and sleek, fast cars. It's been 24 years since I first came here and the change is amazing. As we drive I remember all those rides through Seoul in taxis and buses. Going to temples and language school and tea houses. I find myself wondering if I'll ever come back here again and that catches in my heart with an ache. Lose one thing and lose them all.

We are met at the temple by a foreign monk and nun and go to the *kun bang* or big room. In the small old building that was the temple that I lived and practiced in an altar has been set up. It is covered with food offerings and white flowers (white is the color of death here, not black) and candles, all set around a large official portrait of Zen Master Seung Sahn. There are a few monks and nuns sitting along one side of the room. We go in and offer incense and one white flower each and bow to the altar, then we bow to the monks and nuns. And sit with them for a while. Some are friends from the old days. Such a strange mixture, the deep sadness I feel in my heart looking at the painting on the altar mixing with the joy at being back in the temple with old friends. They have stayed on and on here while I'd gone back to America long ago and traveled round and round. Seeing them and being back in the temple, I go in and out of a meditation of sorts on my life and the choices I've made. Have I been true to my teacher and his teaching? Am I on my path? Could it have been different or is it right just as it is? All these thoughts and feelings appear and then resolve back into just sitting on the warm heated floor in the winter night.

They've already taken his body down to Su Dok Sa, his home temple, where he started his dharma practice in the years just before the Korean War. Most of the monks and nuns are already there and that's where the funeral will be. That's my other temple too, where I was a *haeng-ja* or monk-in-training, and where I did several of the traditional long winter retreats. It was my last temple before disrobing and leaving for America. I decide I want to go alone, take



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the train and have time to be alone. There will be ten thousand people or more at the funeral.

The train is new and fast and clean. It takes forever to pass out of Seoul and its environs, spread out like a potted plant gone wild. I remember this train as a rattling creaky old one, with the view out the open back door in the spring, the tracks and rice fields all receding behind, all falling away from the rearward view. It always felt like an elegant metaphor of the conceptual mind looking at life, all retrospect and review. I go to look out the back but the window is sealed and the view is blocked by schoolboys in blue blazers going home for the weekend.

I think about funerals, the most inconvenient and uncompromising of events. A call comes, perhaps from far away, and one ends up buying a ticket and getting on a plane, going somewhere unexpected at an unexpected hour. And here I was, alone on a train heading south through a landscape I recalled like a dream, trying to dredge up my lost half-remembered words of Korean, going to say goodbye to the teacher I had left but who somehow hadn't left me. One last teaching on impermanence and liberation, on fire and snow.

I arrive at the hotel where the foreign students are staying and meet Mu Sang Sunim. He is an American monk

and we've known each other since the old days. We take an amazingly expensive taxi up to the temple through what has become a resort around the mountain. Again we come into a large Buddha hall, much bigger this time, with many monks and nuns sitting on one side with their shaved heads, pressed gray robes and brown great kasas, their formal monastic robes. There is a large altar at one end of the room set up in front of the body. Again we each offer incense and a white flower and then bow three times to the monks and nuns. They look exhausted, having been sitting up in turns night and day since he passed, bowing to all the visitors. I turn to leave and then an old friend, a Korean monk, comes after me and has me join the end of the line of students sitting along the side of the room. The energy is formal and heavy and deep.

People continue to arrive at the temple, each coming and bowing. The President of Korea has sent a floral wreath, and the *kun sunim*, the "great monks"—teachers from all over the country—start to arrive for the funeral tomorrow. Some people will stay up all night, sitting in shifts, meditating and bowing, meditating and bowing. I remember being a haeng-ja at this temple when I was 25.



They said to always keep *ha shim*, "low mind", and to bow to everyone I met. Just bow. It's a long time ago now, but I remember as I keep bowing to everyone here. A group of us slip out and go into the cavernous cafeteria in the basement underneath the administration hall. I see old friends from all over the world. It's fun and exciting to see everyone, to trade stories about what we've been doing in life all this time. The food is both spicy and salty and tastes amazingly good. We go back to the hotel for the night, where I lay out my futon on the heated paper-coated floor and fall asleep.

It is the day of the funeral.

It is gray and cold. We travel up to the temple in another taxi. They have the roads blocked off to deal with all the people who are expected to attend, but when they see the monks with me in the car they let us pass all the way up to the main hall. A thousand people are inside and waves of well-dressed Korean worshipers are walking up the temple steps. There is a final preparatory ceremony inside and then the casket is taken out to the large courtyard where

the ceremony is to be held. It is placed within another wooden coffin covered with white paper lotus flowers and rests on a gold colored wooden frame with hundreds of crystals hanging on cords overhead. The crystals represent Indra's Net, the interrelation of all things in the universe. A gentle rain begins to fall, like tears from heaven. More and more people arrive, along with TV cameras, photographers and reporters. Later people say that ten to fifteen thousand people attend. I sit in my chair with all the foreign students and remember all those retreats and dharma talks, all the energy my teacher gave us. I remember driving him to Chinatown in Manhattan in a rented van one crazy day, and going to afternoon kung fu movies in L.A. There are prayers and chanting and eulogies in Korean.

It rains harder. Someone gives me a rain poncho. It is well organized chaos. I am part of a huge strange family, all woven together by the man now in this box under the paper flowers and crystals.

Finally the elegies and the prayers are completed. A group of senior monks in shaved heads and robes, wearing formal white gloves, step to the funeral bier and lift the casket, and we begin the procession to the cremation ground. Everyone is chanting, reciting the name of the Buddha of Limitless Light. “Namu Amitabul, Namu Amitabul,” over and over. All the meditation students are given long prayer banners hung on bamboo poles and we slowly follow in a long sinuous line, like a snake, like a dragon. Up and over the ridge to a clearing in the pine forest. There is a huge pile of wood upon which the casket has been laid. Finally the ten thousand or more of us are all circled round, chanting in the haunting, solemn, disjointed Korean style I remember. One of the monks comes out and lights the pyre and the flames grow and sizzle in the rain. Only now do I really believe that he’s gone. “Gone, gone, gone beyond. Gone completely beyond.” The chanting goes on and on. It will continue all night, until the sun rises and the fire burns itself to ash and we gather our things to walk down the mountain.

Coming empty-handed, going empty-handed—that is human.

When you are born, where do you come from?

When you die, where do you go?

Life is like a floating cloud which appears.

Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.

The floating cloud itself originally does not exist.

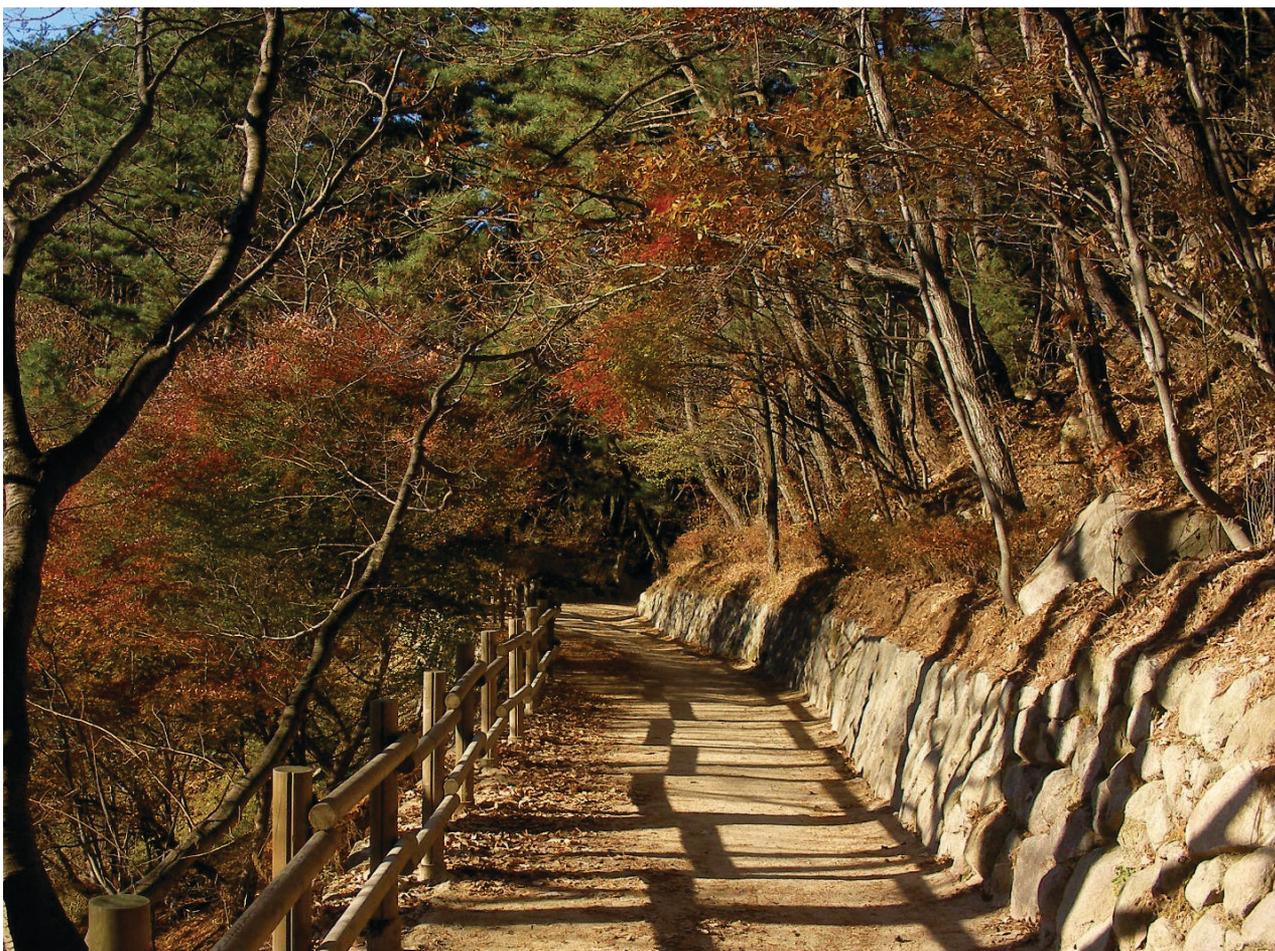
Life and death, coming and going, are also like that.

But there is one thing which always remains clear.

It is pure and clear, not depending on life and death.

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?

—ancient Zen poem ☸



Grief

When I first read the letter that follows from Jan to his friend, I was very moved by its eloquence, warmth and sincerity. I want to thank Jan. His willingness to share a part of his process after Gisela's death is a wonderful gift for our Sangha.

Jan lost his wife, after she had gone through a very long illness. He no longer sees her. He no longer hears her voice. He has been left with his bereavement, his life without her. What he says about his current process is very open and raw. I get the sense that he has found a way to be comfortable with his discomfort, to be comfortable with his loss, his grief. Comfort with discomfort, great sadness with great love, these are some of the gifts of a strong practice.

Last week I was walking around a state park by myself, surrounded by water, rocks and trees. A spontaneous feeling of grief came rising up, and memories of JW's death brought me to tears [*JW was the late director of the Kwan Um School of Zen.* —Eds.]. I miss him, I honor and love him and chant for him. Jan does this for his wife. We don't know. We can only enter our bereavement in this open state and learn from our daily experience.

My father died in 1988. The day he died I was called from my work and told to go to my parents' home as soon as possible. When I arrived my father's body had already been taken away . . . no time to say good-bye, no last look.

I had an altar and moktak in my parent's attic and went up and

began chanting Ji Jang Bosal. My mind was going all over the place. I had always had doubts about the value of chanting for the dead, and as I chanted, I also was thinking . . . "What good is this? Am I supposed to be directing my father in some way? He was so depressed, so unhappy, how is chanting going to help him, what am I doing? And so on.

But I just kept on chanting, kept on going in and out of "just chanting" and "just checking." Suddenly, I had the experience of feeling like my heart completely went out to my dad, an experience of complete, unconditional love shot from my heart straight to my father, an explosion of love. I've never written this down before, because it was an experience completely beyond words. I write it now because I want to encourage us all to never hold back on using our practice to help others, do it even when you don't completely trust it will "work."

We need to cultivate great faith, great courage, and great question. This faith, courage and question can only come from having an unconditional commitment to practice. An unconditional commitment to practice comes from just showing up, over and over again, even when you have your doubts; those doubts will lead the way, have no doubt about it.

Zen Master Soeng Hyang



Hi Alise,

Thanks so much for taking the time to gently open this territory up again, for it has faded a bit amid the rapid pace of the last few weeks.

It's not that I want to get on with it. But my job at the moment is so easily prone to thousands of things that demand attention, slicing my life into dozens of pieces even as I have to travel all over Europe and beyond. So it's almost as if I am not consciously choosing but feel like a feather swept on a raging current. I wished to gently verge back into regular work life, but immediately I got tied in to three big proposals on top of my regular duties in research. I have actually consciously stepped back from some things, which is new to me. But it is not enough, and I will have to work with great determination to simplify my life.

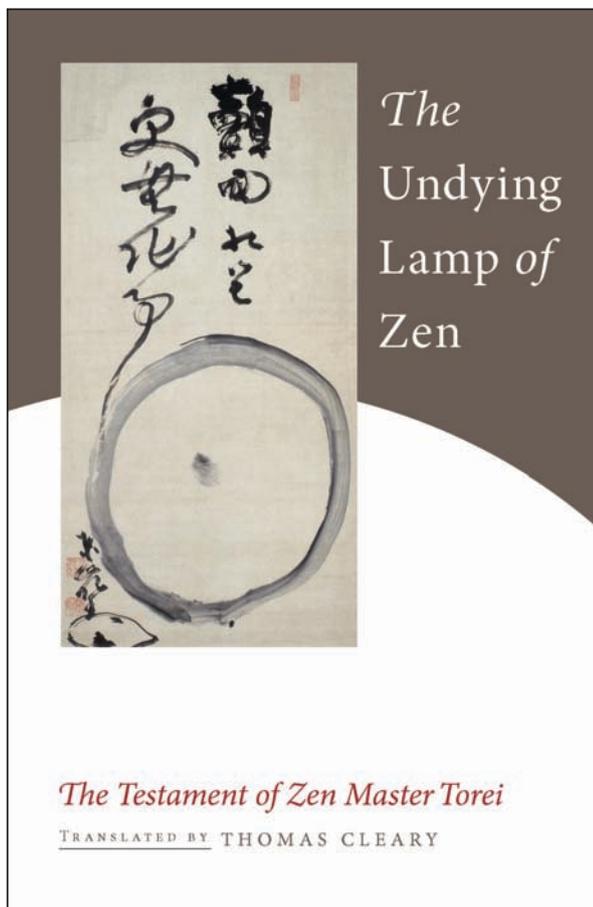
My grieving does surface at times, though not as spontaneously as before. Often I have to evoke it, by playing music or touching Gisela's clothes or harkening back to things we did. But every now and then it surprises me, leaping out of nowhere. It is not something I shy away from. I welcome it when it comes, for the flat emotional landscape when I am out of touch with her makes it seem like everything fades to meaninglessness. But I feel that I need to tune in more consciously, not bounce between the flatland and the sadness.

And it seems a foolish dead end to feel any shame about surges of joy and enthusiasm. Things in many ways are shaping up well now, even if some days I feel totally inadequate and half-a-man without her. I would simply like life to seem natural—letting the feelings come and go like flowers emerging in springtime, not being forced out by this therapy or that notion. Let the tears and laughter fall where they may. Because the landscape often has appeared bleak, as if I woke up in a land where there's no moisture in the air and it feels thin, eerie and dreamlike. So I do not want to adopt some attitude or philosophy that will cramp my life, squeezing off that spontaneity in exchange for some illusion of control. Control is a natural aim, but it becomes a sickness when we cling to it. And our loss shows that need for control big time.

Occasionally an insight returns about how healing can start from within by recognizing my links with all around me and to nurture those links with a loving attitude, just living in the grace of listening and appreciating all around me. So it's not some waiting game for a love ship to come in, but just doing it, loving those around you until it's nothing special, it's the river you swim in. That's not controlling the situation. It's simply something I can do, even if it means sitting still and listening hard. It's a loving intention and attention. It's a good way for now, though no doubt there is no end to what we have to learn, and a whole new way could appear tomorrow.

Jan Sendzimir 

Book Review



The Undying Lamp of Zen: The Testament of Zen Master Torei, translated by Thomas Cleary, is a pre-modern Japanese guidebook to Zen practice from the Rinzai perspective. The author, Zen Master Torei Enji (1721–1792) was a direct successor of Hakuin Ekaku. Hakuin was responsible for the reformation of Rinzai Zen and for the creation of the kong-an (Japanese: koan) system that is still used in Japan today. Torei helped systematize Hakuin's teachings.

The tone of the teaching in this book is energetic to say the least. It has the spirit of "rousing the troops to battle", that is, being extremely serious, sincere and diligent in one's efforts to practice the Zen way. There is a particular teaching style in the Zen tradition that makes use of admonishing the student and railing against what is considered as misguided or inauthentic teaching approaches. This approach goes back at least as far as the Tang-Dynasty Chinese Zen Master Huang Po, addressing his monks as "You are all eaters of dregs." Zen Master Dahui frequently made reference to what he considered the misguided approach of "silent

The Undying Lamp of Zen *The Testament of Zen Master Torei*

Translated and edited by Thomas Cleary

Shambhala Publications, 2010

Review by Zen Master Wu Kwang

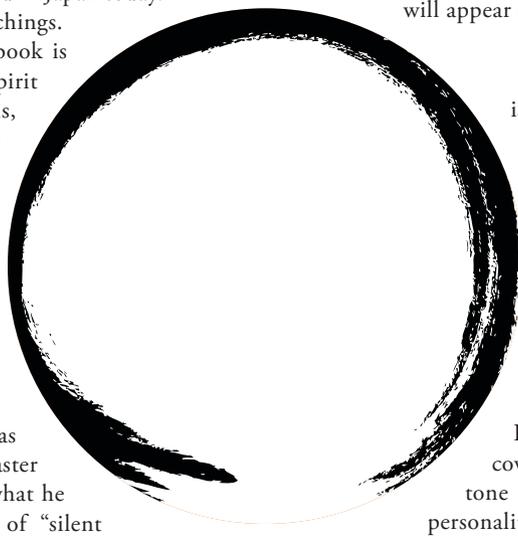
(Richard Shrobe)

illumination" among the Chinese Soto practitioners of his time, and Hakuin frequently admonished students for what he considered lukewarm efforts. He railed against a particular Chinese master who had attempted to integrate Pure Land practice and Zen. We find some of the same in this book and, relevant as it might have been in its time, it can be redundant as you read through the teaching.

Torei begins his preface with these remarks "If you want to read this treatise, do so from start to finish thoroughly penetrating each point. Don't just pick out a saying or a chapter that conforms to your own liking and consider that right." He then lays out a tenfold schema of practice, which he elaborates on in each chapter. The chapters include teachings on faith and practice, true realization, progressive transcendence, and working application, to name a few.

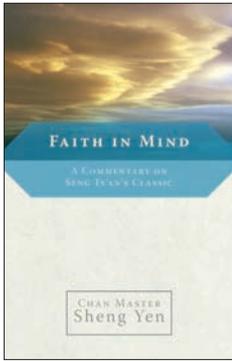
Here is an example of Torei's approach to having a big question, what he calls "congealing a mass of wonder."

Right now, what is this? What is it that sees?
What is it that hears? What is it that moves?
What is it that sits? At all times, in all places,
focus your mind and see how it is. Without
conceiving of being or non being, without
thinking of affirmation or negation, without
discriminating, without rationalizing, just
observe in this way. When the time comes, it
will appear of itself.



One of the points emphasized by Torei is that after the realization of one's true nature, one must continue to practice to refine one's perception and application to the various situations of one's life. Torei sees this as being the purpose of working through the many kong-ans that facilitate the expression of compassion and clarity.

In Japan the book is considered an indispensable aid to the practice of Rinzai Zen. As the remarks on the back cover say, "Torei is a compelling guide; his tone is energetic, no-nonsense, and full of personality." 



Book Review

Faith in Mind
A Commentary on Seng Ts'an's Classic
Chan Master Sheng Yen
Shambala Publications, 2006
Review by Zen Master Hae Kwang
(Stanley Lombardo)

Chan Master Sheng Yen (1930–2009) combined in his life serious practice, academic study (he had a doctorate in Buddhist literature from Rishi University in Japan), rigorous teaching and administrative responsibilities in Taiwan and New York. He believed that a Chan master should have a sound intellectual understanding of Buddhist teaching and impart it to his students as fundamental to the correct practice of meditation. Institutionally he realized this goal in founding Dharma Drum University in Taiwan as well as other centers for Buddhist education that functioned in tandem with his retreat and practice centers. His many publications (more than 50 books, and numerous articles in Chinese and English) have served to broaden his educational outreach. His autobiography, *Footprints in the Snow* (Doubleday, 2008), is a compelling account of his early life, training and later accomplishments.

Faith in Mind, his commentary on Seng Ts'an's Hsin Hsin Ming, is based on talks he gave during a series of four retreats in 1984 and 1985. The poem's 146 lines, taken in order a few at a time in the book's 20 chapters, are interpreted as a practical guide to meditation practice rather than simply as a philosophical discourse on such themes as unity, emptiness, interpenetration and suchness (which is how the poem is usually treated). So, for instance, the following two lines,

Merely stagnating in duality
How can you recognize oneness?

are explicated in this way:

Whenever you make distinctions, your mind is in opposition. How is this relevant to practice? . . . You must have faith in the fundamental unity in order to truly begin practicing. . . . Many of you are practicing counting the breath. The goal of this practice is to reach a, unified, single-minded state. After you get to the point where there are no thoughts other than counting, eventually the counting just naturally stops. . . . The only thing left is a sense of existence. (pp. 31–32)

This approach, going to the guts of actual meditation practice, is eminently useful, coming as it does from Master Sheng Yen's deep experience both as a teacher and practitioner, and it is in consonance with what seems to be Seng Ts'an's original intention (putting to one side some scholars' doubts about the poem's authorship). Overall Sheng Yen's comments work well simultaneously as an explication of the poem's meaning and as a guide to meditation, with emphasis sometimes shifting more to one or the other of these two complementary purposes. But he is at his best when using the text of the poem to shine light directly upon meditation practice. Following up on the notion of one mind suggested in the passage above, Sheng Yen continues apropos of the lines:

Two comes from one,
But do not keep even this one.
When one mind does not arise
Myriad dharmas are without defect.

[T]here are two meanings of "one" referred to in this line: "yet do not keep even the one." The first is samadhi and the second is the great self. . . . From the point of view of Ch'an, even though a person may reach samadhi or the great self, he will still be in samsara, the cycle of birth and death. The liberation that he feels is only transitory; it is not ultimate liberation. But "When one mind does not arise, myriad dharmas are without defect." That is to say, a person in the state of one mind still has problems, but when he loses even that one mind nothing can cause him any trouble. (p. 55)

Sheng Yen provides his own translation of the poem, one which, as he says himself, is by and large similar to other published English translations but also offers somewhat different interpretations of certain lines, interpretations that often came to him as he taught the poem to students on retreat. For instance, he translates "One thought for ten thousand years," in place of the more typical "One moment is ten thousand years." Both are valid translations. The Chinese word at issue here, *nien*, combines the characters for "now" and "mind." Sheng Yen wisely directs our attention not to the nature of time, but, as he does throughout this book, to the nature of mind as experienced in meditation. One can only feel that Seng Ts'an would have approved. ☸

Motivation for Practice: Why I'm Taking 10 Precepts

John Parker

Since I took five precepts, my practice has gone well. I meditate daily, respond to chanting requests, show up for group practice, do one-day retreats, work on kong-ans and read what is recommended by the Kwan Um School. There seems to be “no problem.” So, why would I want to complicate things and make more work for myself by embarking on dharma-teacher training?

On reflection, I have two basic reasons for taking 10 precepts. First, I want to make my teachers happy. Second, I want our local Zen center (and the Kwan Um School as a whole) to be available for anyone who wants to use it. I'll elaborate a little on those reasons.

When I say “happy,” I don't mean getting teachers' approval. I don't think that approval and disapproval are issues for them, and I don't think it would be helpful for me to get hung up on the idea of being a good student. What I mean is that those teachers have shared something that has brought deep happiness to my life, and I'd like to show my appreciation and respect by widening that circle of sharing. I know my teachers would enjoy that.

On the whole, I've lived a fairly selfish and in some ways solitary life. Until recently, aside from a few close relationships, I haven't given much attention to other people's happiness or suffering. That attitude has some basis in my early experience, and I won't apologize or make myself wrong about it, but it has become unsustainable as an approach to living.

As a child of eight, I became suddenly and profoundly aware that I would one day die, along with everyone and everything else, and that this personal extinction would be for keeps. That realization, among other things, led me to search for anything that would seem to fill up or hide the emptiness that I felt and feared. “Anything” came to include more intoxicants, more books, more philosophy and religion, more money, more sex, more status and recognition—on and on and on. However, even before starting Zen practice, I always had the nagging sense that all this striving was actually leading me down a rat hole to nowhere. I began to question the nature and purpose of this “me” that was trying so hard to escape—and failing so badly.

Zen practice—other than on the occasions when it has exasperated me—has helped me to calm down. I've stopped worrying so much about the fate of this “me” thing (whatever it is) that I've been lugging around all my life. I appreciate the natural world far more. I find that I'm more effective with other people because I'm less attached to my opinions about them or what I imagine they think about me. What a wonderful relief! How could I not be grateful?

As my awareness clears a bit, however, I'm also more acutely aware of how much other people are striving and struggling in the same way that I have. Being less self-involved and more open to other people seems to result in caring more about their experience of life, even if I disagree with them about specific issues or find their behavior off-putting or unpleasant. Maybe that's just a natural consequence of Zen practice and of getting older.

In any event, it hurts more to see the suffering in the world, and I can't seem to ignore it as easily as I once did. Even if I *could* ignore it, what would be left of my own practice? Would I wind up attaining some kind of personal enlightenment and hanging out in a private nirvana where everything is just fine? To me, that sounds suspiciously like another kind of dream world, but even if it really was possible to live that way, what would be the point? These kinds of questions bring me to my second reason for taking 10 precepts.

I don't know how Zen practice or the teaching of it really works. I don't know how chanting for someone who is sick or in trouble will help them. I know that *something* happens during kong-an interviews, but I don't know how to define or explain it. A lot of the readings and teachers' comments sound good and feel good, but when I try to repeat or explain them to family or friends I feel as if I'm missing something essential, so I don't do that often, and usually only if I'm asked. In short, I don't know how much use I'd be as a dharma teacher.

What I do know is that there is a building in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, called the Cape Cod Zen Center, and another, larger building in Rhode Island called the Providence Zen Center. Inside are cushions, interview rooms, altars, calligraphies, robes and other objects. All these forms originate in teachings passed down over centuries by human beings like me, and without that human chain neither the physical forms nor the opportunity for liberation they represent would exist.

I also know from experience that without regular access to the Zen center and participation in what goes on there, my solo spiritual practice would disintegrate pretty quickly. What is true for me is almost certainly true for other students. Besides, there are many other struggling, curious individuals out there who want and would benefit from practice if they only knew that there was a Zen center nearby.

My childhood self was right: Everything *does* change and pass away. I can't forever count on others to do the work. In order for the opportunity for Zen practice to continue, somebody will need to learn the forms, internalize the teachings and be ready to step up when it's time to facilitate a retreat, lead group practice or give a dharma talk. Ignorant and lazy and fearful though I may be, I've run out of plausible excuses for not being that someone. ☸

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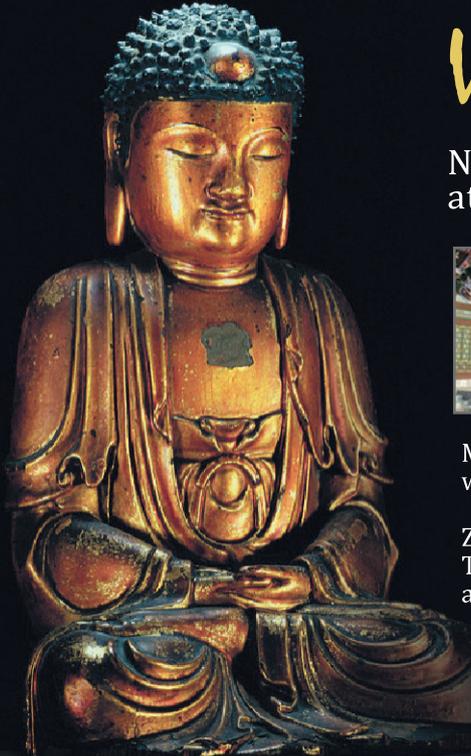
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