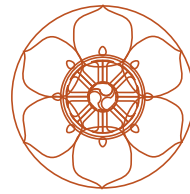
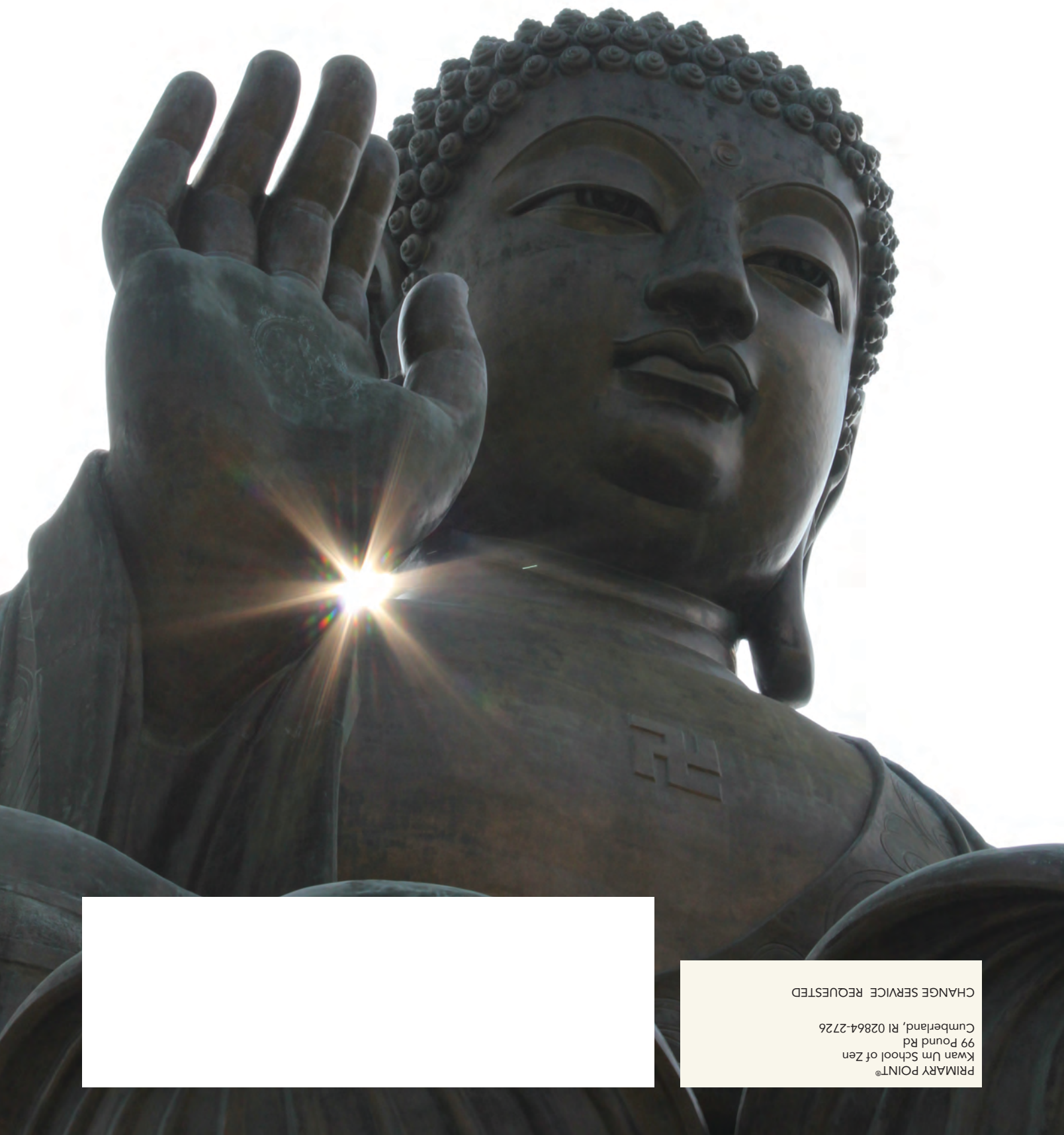


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Volume 34 • Number 3 • Fall 2017



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Published by the Kwan Um School of Zen, a nonprofit religious corporation. The founder, Zen Master Seung Sahn, 78th Patriarch in the Korean Chogye order, was the first Korean Zen Master to live and teach in the West. In 1972, after teaching in Korea and Japan for many years, he founded the Kwan Um sangha, which today has affiliated groups around the world. He gave transmission to Zen Masters, and inka (teaching authority) to senior students called Ji Do Poep Sas (dharma masters).

The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 2,100 copies.

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Cover: *Big Buddha on Lantau Island, Hong Kong. Photo by Gerry Botha, who adds: "This was captured as a sunbeam appeared briefly on a cloudy and overcast morning. It gives the sense of bright and clear teaching and it highlights the imprint of the dharma wheel on the palm of the Buddha."*

Where Is Its Master Now?

Excerpt from a Baekjung (Ulambhara) Kido Ceremony at Musangsa Temple, August 2015*
Zen Master Dae Bong

Most of you know the famous story of the seven sisters from India. They were seven sisters who practiced very seriously. One day, they all went to a funeral. On the way home after the funeral, they passed by a cemetery. In Korea, when someone dies, we bury the body in the ground or we burn the body. They also do that in India. Sometimes they even throw the body into the river for fish to devour, but sometimes they just leave the body on the ground in the cemetery. That time, the seven sisters passed by a cemetery and saw a skeleton on the ground. One of the sisters pointed to the skeleton and said, "Where is its master now?" The youngest sister tapped on the skeleton and said, "What is it? What is it?" In English we also say, "Just this. Just this." The sisters heard that, and all seven simultaneously got enlightened. At that time, a great light appeared and up in heaven, the Heavenly King saw this great light coming up from the earth. He was very curious, "Where is this light coming from? What's causing this light?" He went down to earth and found the light was coming from the seven sisters' minds as they simultaneously attained enlightenment. The Heavenly King bowed

to the sisters three times and said, "I'm the chief god in heaven and I have great powers, and in honor of your enlightenment I would like to offer you anything you want. I have the power of granting anything you want. What do you want?" One of the sisters said, "We want three things: We want the valley without echo. We want the tree that has no roots. And we want the ground with neither dark nor light." The god of heaven was completely stumped. He had no idea where they were. So the sisters said, "Only go straight don't know."

Can you find the valley without echo, the tree that has no roots, and the ground that has no dark nor light? A great master taught us that if we find these three things, we realize there is no life and death, and it's just our attachment to things that makes us think there is coming and going. Speech is not enough. Even understanding this point cannot save us from suffering. If we go to a restaurant and read the menu and leave, we are still hungry. In the same way, even if we understand the truth of no life and no death from Buddha's teaching, it still won't take away our suffering mind. It means if you're hungry, you have to eat. Then your stomach is comfortable and full. If you have concerns about life and death, then you must do some kind of practice. Then your mind will be free and full, and not frightened by suffering from this changing body or the coming and going that we see in the world. Practicing is not only sitting meditation. We always say, "Only keep don't know, don't make I." When you're doing something, just do it. If we keep this mind in every situation, then when we're chanting for our family members and they hear the sound of our chanting, they will go to nirvana.

It was the summer of 2001, and very, very hot in Korea. There was a drought that summer. The whole village below us lost their water supply. I remember the army brought in water for the rice fields. The pond in front of Musangsa went dry. At that time, we didn't have this lovely road coming up to the temple. We just had one broken dirt road. Some places had some concrete, some places only dirt. One day, I was walking down the road after lunch. It was so hot that most people didn't go out, but I enjoyed the heat and took a walk. That time, the

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Photo: Sven Mahr

road was very dry, very hot, even the pavement, even the dirt. When I got quite far down the road near the railroad tracks, I saw one dead frog on the road. It was a big frog, and it looked like a few cars had run over it so it was very flat, and from the sun it was baked, toasted like a slice of bread from the toaster. Then, like in this story of seven sisters, I looked at it and thought to myself, “Where is its master now?” Suddenly I felt myself, my body and this whole universe filled with so much energy. “Just that, Just that!” Nothing came or went; nothing went away at all. Its master didn’t go anywhere. Just toasted flat frog. I felt so happy, beyond the usual. Just happy, completely happy.

I hope one day when we look at our sick body, “Oh! Just that, just that! That’s all!” Isn’t that important? Isn’t that worth spending some time considering? Maybe our loved ones who passed away have already attained that. Maybe when we are chanting and they hear the sound of our voices, they’ll come and help us. Or maybe they are suffering and lost too, and when they hear the sound of our voices, we will be helping them. Never separate!

A poem says,

The blue mountain of many ridges is the Buddha’s home
The vast ocean of many waves is the palace of stillness
Be with all things, always without hindrance
Few can see the crane’s red head atop the pine tree
Vowing openly with all beings, together entering
Amita Buddha’s ocean of great vows
Continuing forever to save all sentient beings, you
and I simultaneously attain the way of Buddha
Namu Amitabul
Namu Amitabul
Namu Amitabul

*The *Baekjung* (or *Ulamhara* in Sanskrit) kido ceremony is a traditional 49-day Jijang Bosal kido for the dead offered in Korean temples every year during the summer Kyol Che period. Many Buddhists offer this kido for ancestors and loved ones and is considered one of the most important chanting offerings in Korea.

Sitting Zen: Questions and Answers with Zen Master Dae Kwan

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Learn to Relax

A group of social psychology professors from different universities in China visited Zen Master Dae Kwan. They asked many questions about practice.

Professor: I joined a retreat in China, and they taught me to meditate by counting my breath from 1 to 10. I followed the instruction and put all my strength into counting each breath from 1 to 10 without any thinking for half an hour. At the end of the retreat, I got a headache and a hemorrhoid. Now I am afraid to sit again. What shall I do?

Sifu: Have you ever sat down to watch a movie and half an hour later you get a headache and a hemorrhoid?

Professor: Never, Zen Master.

Sifu: Same as that. If you watch your breath like watching a movie, then you will solve your problem.

Upon hearing that everyone started laughing.

Commentary: One of the most important parts of practice is to relax and be natural. It is like playing a stringed instrument: too tight, the string will break; too loose, the string cannot make the correct sound. Counting our breaths is a means to regulate our mind so that it can return to its original not-moving, relaxed and natural state, which means clear and centered. Most important is that we breathe naturally. If the breath is clear, our mind is clear. Applying this clear mind moment to moment to help ourselves and others is the true meditation.

Just Open Your Eyes

After the introductory class on sitting meditation, everyone tried to apply what they had just learned to the sitting session. Many students were experiencing the same problem.

Student: Zen Master, you taught us to sit with eyes half closed, looking down at a 45 degree angle. After a few deep breaths, my eyelids just closed very naturally in a split second. How do I stop myself from closing my eyes? I don’t want to close my eyes during meditation.

Sifu: [*pointing to the blinds in the dharma room*] Please go open the blinds halfway.

Student: Do I really have to do it?

Sifu: Yes.

The student couldn’t stop laughing while pulling up the blinds halfway.

Sifu: From now on, every time that your eyes close, please remember how to roll up the blinds halfway. This will surely help you. You don’t have to stop yourself from closing your eyes; just roll up the blinds halfway.

Commentary: The Platform Sutra says, “Inside our mind we have delusive, ignorant and suffering beings. We use right views to save them.” It further says: “Let the fallacious be delivered by correctness, the deluded by enlightenment, the ignorant by wisdom and the malevolent by benevolence.” So if we close our eyes and fall asleep, we just open our eyes again—that is already training us to wake up! Very simple. ♦

At the End of the Line Is No Line

Zen Master Wu Kwang (Richard Shrobe)

From a dharma talk given on April 20, 2007 at Chogye International Zen Center

Zen Master Wu Kwang: For those of you who are here for the first time, this is not a formally organized talk. Usually we have a question-answer-discussion format. Tonight, though, I do have a few poems that were sent to me by Ken Kessel, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim [*now Zen Master Jok Um —Ed.*]. Ken, as most of you know, is one of the teachers in the Kwan Um Zen School and was for a long time a resident teacher in New York. He took to writing poetry some years ago and whenever he leads a retreat he writes a series of poems, one for each student on the retreat. Right after one student leaves the interview room and before he rings the bell for the next student, he writes a short poem trying to capture something of the essence of the person as he felt them to present themselves in the interview, or of the interchange between them. This series of poems comes from the New Haven retreat of January 20, 2007. He usually includes the names of the people he writes the poems for, but in this series, he omitted them. So I'll read some of them and then perhaps we'll talk about them.

At the end
Of the line
Is no line
No line
Has no end
No end
Has no hindrance
Leaves fall in Autumn
Snow in Winter

No eyes
No ears
No nose
Who cares
Vaster
Than anyone knows
Sunlight dancing
On Autumn leaves

What we have
Isn't what we think
It is
Close
Close
Close
Look!
Didja see?

Here's one for just now:

Great joy
Great joy
Snow
Melt
Flower
Breeze
Ahhhhh

Nowhere to go
Why can't escape
Sentient beings
Are waiting
Shhhh
Listen

Fiercely gentle
Intensely relaxed
Dangerously stable
Breathe in
Breathe out

Simple
Simple
Like touching
Your nose
When washing
Your face

The great flood
Swallows everything
All fish attain
The place
Of no water

Where is the distinction
Where is the distinction
People killing people
In this whole world
Where is the distinction

So the first poem says, "At the end / Of the line / Is no line / No line / Has no end / No end / Has no hindrance / Leaves fall in Autumn / Snow in Winter."

Part of this is similar to a section of the Heart Sutra: "Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form. Form is not different from emptiness. Emptiness is not different from form." Here it says, "At the end of the line / Is no line." So there's form; there's a line. But at the end of the line, if you get to the end of the line, then

there's no line. If you take the train out to Brooklyn, to New Lots Avenue, that's it. There's nothing there after that. At the end of the line is no line. But then the second permutation of "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form" is "no form; no emptiness." If form truly is empty and emptiness truly is form then those designators don't really apply to anything. Why say "form"? Why say "emptiness"? No form; no emptiness. So he says, "No line has no end." The first part says, "At the end of the line is no line," but the second says, "No line has no end." Also no beginning. No beginning, no end. No coming, no going. No purity, no impurity. No line has no end. But then he goes one step further: "No end has no hindrance."

There's a short poem that comes from the Avatamsaka Sutra. It appears in the *Compass of Zen* that we use. "If you want to understand the realm of Buddhas, keep a mind that is clear like space." So a mind that is clear like space has no line and no end, no opinion, no conception, not holding anything, not making anything. So if you want to understand the realm of Buddhas, keep a mind that is clear like space. Let all thinking and all desires, all conceptualizing and all grasping, fall far away, and let your mind go anywhere with no hindrance. So the mind of no hindrance, the no end that has no hindrance, is the bodhisattva way. If you have no hindrance then you can connect with anything. Then compassion arises freely and easily in interaction because you're not hindering, you're not holding back, you're not interfering with the free flow of give and take. No end has no hindrance; you're not impeding anything. The first three of our four great bodhisattva vows are: "Sentient beings are numberless; we vow to save them all. Delusions are endless; we vow to cut through them all. The teachings are infinite; we vow to learn them all." Because if you're not thinking of an end, an end result or an end gain of some kind, then there's freedom; there's no hindrance. You don't care. There's just living your life and being helpful in any way you can. Someone is hungry, you give them something to eat. No end. Not looking for an end. Even with practice: "What am I going to get from practice?" If you let go of having some gaining idea, an end gain, then there is no hindrance, no problem.

And with that mind, you clearly perceive the last two lines of the poem, "Leaves fall in Autumn. Snow in Winter." There's a poem after one of the kong-ans in the Mumonkan, a famous interchange between Joju and his teacher, Nam Cheon. Joju at this time is a young student. He approaches Nam Cheon and asks, "What is the true way?" Nam Cheon responds, "Everyday mind is the path." Joju asks like a good beginning student, "Should I try to keep it or not?" Nam Cheon says, "If you try, you're already mistaken." So Joju is really confused and says, "If I don't try, how can I attain the true way?" Nam Cheon retorts, "The true way is not

dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion; (If you think you're going to grasp something with mental concepts, that's an illusion.) Not understanding is blankness. (But here "not understanding" does not mean "don't know" or "don't understand." Here it just means being in a torpid state of mind.) Not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the true way of no thinking (not grasping, not holding, not attaching, not making anything, the true way of no thinking), then it's clear like space. So why do you make right and wrong?" Suddenly Joju woke up; he attained something. That's the kong-an. After the kong-an there is a short, four-line poem by Zen Master Mumon. "Flowers in springtime, moon in autumn / cool breeze in summer, snow in winter. / If you don't make anything in your mind / for you it's a good season." So here Ken's last two lines, "No end / Has no hindrance / Leaves fall in Autumn / Snow in Winter."

The next one to some degree is also based on the Heart Sutra. In the Heart Sutra it says, "No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind; no realm of eyes and so forth until no realm of mind consciousness." Those are all delineations of our experience of the world through the various senses and how we ordinarily are dualistically oriented. There's the seer and, over there, the seen. There's the hearer and, over there, what's heard, and so on. But the Heart Sutra gradually takes away each one of those: no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. The sutra also takes away the objects: no color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind. Object of mind means thoughts, things that go on in the mind. No realm of eyes refers to the consciousness that would recognize color. In the same way, no realm of ears refers to the consciousness that recognizes sound. When the bell is heard—bong . . . [*pauses for a moment*] So the Heart Sutra takes away each one until finally it gets to "and no attainment with nothing to attain." That's like "no end with no hindrance." But here he starts by

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Photo: Sven Mabir



Photo: Sven Mahr

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saying, “No eyes, no ears, no nose.” He starts with the delineation of the Heart Sutra. He says, “No eyes, no ears, no nose. Who cares?” That’s a slap in the face to formal Buddhism. Then he says, “Vaster than anyone knows / sunlight dancing on autumn leaves.” So the second half of the poem, that’s the realization of “No eyes, no ears, no nose.” “No eyes” doesn’t literally mean that there are no eyes; “no ears” doesn’t literally mean there are no ears. A Japanese Zen master said, “These ears were originally just two flaps of skin.” That means if there is no consciousness that recognizes sound, then there are no ears. That’s one version of no ears. But the complete version of no ears means when you hear the bell ring, there’s just—bong. When you see sunlight dancing on autumn leaves, there’s just [*softly*] “Ohhhhh.”

Does anyone have a comment or a question?

Question: “Who cares?” also has a double meaning.

ZMWK: What is the double meaning?

Q: Who cares? Who is it that cares?

ZMWK: Yes, that’s right. Who is the one who cares?

And then he says “Vaster than anyone knows.” Because if you ask sincerely, “Who is the one who cares about all this?” then you’re left with . . . [*pauses for a moment*] There’s no knowing at that point. It’s just not knowing. Not knowing is quite vast. What you know is quite small. What you don’t know is quite wide and open. It covers galaxies and galaxies. Vaster than anyone knows, but the vastness of the universe at that moment is “sunlight dancing on autumn leaves.”

The third poem says, “What we have / Isn’t what we think / It is / Close / Close / Close / Look! / Didja see?” So “What we have / Isn’t what we think / It is.” Again, he’s playing with the phrase “It is.” “What we have isn’t what we think it is.” The other way is “What we have isn’t what we think. It is close, close, close.” “Look!” That’s an injunction, encouragement. If you look and see clearly then that is wisdom. If you don’t see clearly then that is ignorance. You’re ignoring something. Out of ignoring something usually we begin to grasp at something that we think is going to make us better some-

how, feel better, and we get angry or reject what we think is going to take something away from us, bother us.

“Great joy / Great joy / Snow / Melt / Flower / Breeze / Ahhhhh.” I don’t think that needs any commentary. [*laughter*]

Q: That’s not polar-bear consciousness. It’s very limited.

ZMWK: Do you want to say a little more? [*laughter*] Being of the polar bear clan yourself. [*laughter*]

Q: There you go.

ZMWK: What do you mean, sir?

Q: This is like and dislike.

ZMWK: Like and dislike?

No. Great joy, Great joy. Not joy as compared with sorrow. Snow. Melt. Flower. Breeze. Where’s like and dislike? Or as Joju said, “you bumpkin, you.”

Q: Sounds like you’re talking from experience.

ZMWK: Exactly.

Talking about this last part, “Ahhhhh.” Once I was in the Museum of Modern Art. I was walking through looking at different paintings. I turned and there was a small painting by Jackson Pollock called “White Light.” I turned the corner and “Ahhhhh,” I just stood there transfixed—looking.

“Nowhere to go / Why can’t escape / Sentient beings / Are waiting / Shhhh / Listen.” That is an encapsulation of the bodhisattva path and bodhisattva ideal. Years ago there was a program on the radio every Sunday morning called “In the Spirit.” It was moderated by Lex Hixon, who was quite an avid practitioner of Zen and a few other traditions as well. He died of cancer some years ago. Every Sunday he would have someone on the program who he would interview. Zen Master Seung Sahn was on there many times. One particular time Roshi Bernie Glassman was the guest. This was shortly after Bernie Glassman had come from Maezumi Roshi’s Zen Center in Los Angeles and opened his own center here in Yonkers. Bernie gave an example of what he thought the bodhisattva ideal was. He said, “A bodhisattva is a person like this: There is a well that needs filling. It’s dry and the only implement that the bodhisattva has is a teaspoon and the only supply of water is a snow-capped mountain far away. So this person goes with the teaspoon and gets one teaspoon of snow and brings it back and—*ptchb*—puts it in the well. Then he goes again.” Now that’s a thankless task and from a certain viewpoint, pretty stupid. But from the standpoint of the bodhisattva ideal where no end is no hindrance and where there is nowhere to escape to, because we are all in this together, raising the mind of bodhi—the mind of wisdom—to make a firm decision to attain enlightenment

and help others. Those two together are the bodhisattva ideal. Not just to attain enlightenment myself but to attain enlightenment and help others. So from that viewpoint there is nowhere to escape to. Enlightenment is not some escape because enlightenment means I wake up to the fact that we are all interconnected. So “Nowhere to go / Why can't escape / Sentient beings are waiting / Shhhh / Listen.” They're waiting.

Today I was waiting for the bus and near the bus stop was a bar with a happy hour. It was one of those bars where the front windows open up and you can hear everything that's going on. A few people had spilled out onto the street, and by the sound of their voices and the level of decibels, they had already chugged down a few tall ones. And I was thinking to myself, “This is their Friday night and this is our Friday night. What is possessing people to do that?” And then I also remembered when I used to do that. So sentient beings are waiting. Shhhh. Listen.

And of course the image of the bodhisattva of compassion is intimately connected with listening. In Chinese, Korean and Japanese the name of the bodhisattva means the one who hears the sounds of the world. Perceive universal sound—perceive the sounds of the universe. So if you listen then you can be attuned and you can resonate with it, but if you're not listening, then you're in the realm of absurdity. Nothing makes sense and you can't hear anything. You can't let anything in or out. Here just as before in another poem where he exhorted everyone to “Look!”—here he exclaims “Shhhh / Listen.”

You could see the next poem as a reference to formal meditation. Or it could go beyond just formal meditation. It's a nice encapsulation. It says, “Fiercely gentle / Intensely relaxed / Dangerously stable / Breathe in / Breathe out.” Fiercely gentle. What is fierce gentleness? What is the intensity of relaxation? And what does it mean to be dangerously stable? A gyroscope is dangerously stable. From the standpoint of Zen and Buddhism there is nothing fixed. Everything is dangerously stable, because there is nothing to hold on to. Each thing is—*ptchh!*—flashing into its fullness. So dangerously stable. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in; breathe out. Without making anything, without attaching to anything, without holding anything. Then the fierce gentleness arises. The intensely relaxed condition arises and you will find your stability in the midst of dangerousness.

But “breathe in breathe out” doesn't just mean [*loudly inhales and exhales*]. “Breathe in” means inspire. Take in what's in front of you. And “Breathe out” means let go and connect. If we live from that point of view, moment by moment, as much as we are able, then there's fierce gentleness and intense relaxedness and dangerous stability. “Simple / Simple / Like touching / Your nose / When washing / Your face.” It's all very simple. So why am I talking so much then?

For two reasons: First I'm reminding myself over and over again that it really is simple, simple like touching your nose when washing your face. And I'm also doing my job and reminding all of you. Sometimes I get worried that none of us quite remembers this.

Q: It's easy to get your face dirty again.

ZMWK: Yes.

“The great flood / Swallows everything / All fish attain / The place / Of no water.” Where is the place of no water? A Zen poem says, “Fish don't know the water; birds don't know the sky.” Another poem says, “Birds fly, feathers fall. Fish swim, the water gets muddy.” So in this world, swimming in the ocean of life and death, the water gets muddy. And even in the vast openness of the sky, still feathers fall.

His last poem: “Where is the distinction / Where is the distinction / People killing people / In this whole world / Where is the distinction”

Questions? Answers?

Q: What is the word *distinction* referring to?

ZMWK: What do you think it's referring to?

Q: It's referring to making opposites.

ZMWK: Yes.

Q: So any opposite? Because it's a very general word. All opposites?



Photo: Sven Mahr

ZMWK: Yes, that's true, but it depends on how you want to take the line "People killing people." If you want to take it quite literally like the situations we seeing going on right now, or "As soon as you make distinctions, people are killing people." You are killing your true personhood as soon as you make distinctions. That's why the third ancestor's poem says, "The great way is not difficult. Only don't make distinctions." But there is a problem when countries and races and ethnic groups make distinctions and then get caught by the distinctions. What's inside my sphere is good, correct, right, on God's side, and so on, and what's over there is a threat. And from that, people kill people and then it raises the question "In this whole world where is the distinction?" The great way is not difficult. Only don't make distinctions. That doesn't mean don't see that the wall is white and the floor is brown. It means don't get caught by that.

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Q: Isn't he making a play on Joju's poem where he says "Country bumpkin where's the distinction?" I know he liked that kong-an. I have a feeling he is playing with that because it's very different within that context than in the way Joju used it.

ZMWK: He's taking a line from there, just like this other one, "Simple, simple, simple like touching your nose when washing your face." That comes from Layman Pang and his family. There is some set of interchanges where one of them says, "Practice is very difficult," and he gives some analogy. Then the other one says, "No it's not difficult, it's very simple. It's just like touching your nose when washing your face." The third one says, "Not easy, not difficult" and gives another image. You can see his roots in the Zen tradition in these poems, in how he uses Zen poetics in ways he wants to. Which is a kind of maturity to be able to use your influences in the way you want to.

Q: I have a question that I've been carrying around. It pertains to the last poem and I guess it appeals to you both in your Zen master hat and your psychotherapist hat: There are a couple of places in our formal teachings where it says there are actions and you have to mind your actions, but even thought processes are things that have a reality to them so if you have these negative thoughts toward them then maybe it is something you should look at. Years ago I heard Dr. Cornel West speak. He was sort of just ad-libbing, but he came to a point that he and a lot of other speakers from all backgrounds have made, specifically talking about race. He said you always have to be aware of racism within you. (It was a predominantly white audience, just to give some context.) He said, "I



Photo: Sven Mahr

know there is a little bit of a racist in you because I know there is a little bit of a racist in me." It was a very powerful statement, first sounding like he was pointing the finger, but then saying "Hey no, no: Me." So I've carried that around, and more and more you hear all these people talk and fewer and fewer people say that they think they are racist and yet there is still something. So it's been a big, long, ongoing meditation, and I find that the more I look the more I find that things work on a cognitive level that is way beyond my consciousness, down to the point where I'll see something, some people, and have these impulses. I have these thoughts. Or maybe I'll feel a certain way after I see a certain person. My question to you is: Our practice would initially say, "Be aware of it; let it pass through." But on another level—this is where maybe as a psychotherapist you can help me—what are your thoughts about how to confront that? Is there any active way other than just being open and trying our best to take in each person as they come with an open mind? Is there, maybe not a technique, but perhaps some mindful way of dealing with that?

ZMWK: Well, that's what you just said: if you're cultivating awareness and looking, then you will keep in touch with that. That was his point. His point seems to be don't go to sleep on that fact and many other facts that are divisive. Of course Cornel West, for those of you who don't know him is, a Christian theologian. I forget from what sect, some Protestant sect, and he's a professor, these days at Princeton, used to be at Harvard. Very bright guy, and he usually comes from some point of religious humanism. So it doesn't surprise me that he would first challenge the audience and then say, "Yeah, I know I have it." There is some line that Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount about seeing the mote in your own eye as well as in somebody else's eye. So that's an encouragement to "Look!" Don't go to sleep on these things. Stay active, stay awake. That's enough. I'm sure you could devise some techniques that would bring that up in some dramatic form, but I don't know that you need to do that. ♦

Put It All Down

Zen Master Dae Kwang

Every enlightenment story is about putting it all down and waking up to our original nature. Here in Singapore it's cloudy this afternoon, but I know if it clears up the sun will be shining brightly. That's my experience, and that's your experience too. Very simple! When the clouds lift the sun shines. It's the same for the mind.

One day a Brahmin came to the Buddha to make an offering of flowers. He had a flower in each hand. The Buddha said, "Put it down." The man placed the flower in his left hand in front of the Buddha.

The Buddha said, "Put it down." The man then laid the flower in his right hand down.

Again the Buddha said, "Put it down."

"I've put down the flowers, what else is there to put down?"

The Buddha said, "I'm not referring to your flowers. You should put down the six roots, the six dusts and the six consciousnesses, then you will be free from life and death."

"Put it all down" means to let go of your opinion, your condition and your situation. If you don't attach to any idea about yourself or the world then you are free. Your mind becomes like space. Then you can see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think clearly. The sky is blue; the trees are green.



Photo: Myong Hae Sunim JDPS

In the Zen school this teaching comes down to us through the Diamond Sutra. The founder of the modern Zen style of teaching was Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch. He died in 713 CE. He's famous for getting enlightenment after hearing just one sentence from the Diamond Sutra: "When thinking arises in your mind, don't attach to it." This is the easiest way to understand "put it all down" and nonattachment. It means letting go of your thinking.

Here's a famous story from Tang Dynasty China. Tan Shan and a novice monk were traveling around together when one day they encountered a beautiful woman in very fine clothes standing beside a swollen and muddy creek. She was stuck! Han Shan offered to carry her across, for which she was grateful. He set her down on the other side of the creek and the monks continued on their way. Later in the evening Han Shan and the monk stopped at an inn to rest. But the young monk was very agitated. Finally, he blurted out, "We are monks! How could you pick up a woman like that?"

Han Shan replied, "I already put the woman down, but you are still carrying her."

Our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, wrote many letters over the years responding to student's questions about Zen. He would always end his letters by saying, "I hope you only go straight, 'don't know,' which is clear like space, soon get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering." This teaching style has three parts: The first part is "put it all down." "Don't know" is another term for our original mind, the mind that is not attached to anything. It is clear like space. The second part means that when you put it all down, you naturally wake up from your attachment dream. We call that enlightenment. And the last part refers to Buddha's getting up from under the Bodhi Tree and helping all beings get out of suffering. That is the original job of someone who has put it all down. Love and compassion is the job of our original nature.

Here is a kong-an for you:

A monk asked Joju, "I'm not carrying anything, how should I practice?"

Joju said, "Put it all down."

The monk said, "But I'm not carrying anything. What is there to put down?"

Joju replied, "Then carry it along!"

So, what did Joju mean when he said, "Then carry it along"? ♦

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Questions and Answers with Zen Master Jok Um: What Is Your Root Community?

Question: I'm interested in residential training, but I can't live in New Haven or Cambridge or Providence. I have to remain in Connecticut. Any ideas?

Zen Master Jok Um: What is your root community?

Q: Just regular everyday family life.

ZMJU: Yes. That's also Kwan Um community. Living in a residential Zen center means taking upon yourself the rhythms of the community to strengthen your practice and deepen your wisdom. If we could do it only in a Kwan Um Zen center, the world would be in even worse shape than it is. Because we have a relatively finite number of Zen centers with a relatively finite number of rooms, people who have the opportunity to live their lives in a place like that are relatively rare.

They are relatively rare for two reasons. One reason is, in the flow of a person's life, it's not often that you have the time to live that way. Maybe right after college, maybe during graduate school, maybe when you get your first job, but as you mature as a layperson, and start to do other kinds of things, then you have requirements or circumstances that can't be met in that kind of environment, because we don't have the kind of environment that accommodates those circumstances. But the intention to use the place where you're living to deepen your practice and strengthen your wisdom—you can take that anyplace.

In his talk a moment ago, Garrett said the original mala is the earth, so part of the question is, "Where do you find sangha?" One kind of sangha means the community of Zen Buddhists who practice in your tradition, right? That's a very useful kind of thing. People who practice together are called *do-ban* in Korean. *Do-ban* just means dharma friend, and you can find a dharma friend anyplace. Miles (the questioner's son) is a very good dharma friend. Garrett's daughter, he and his other Buddhist friends used to call her the *tulku* (reincarnate lama), so Miles is a little bit like that. When they say your true teacher is right in front of you, they don't necessary mean your six-year-old, but in your case your true teacher won't let go of your pants legs.

Buddha taught there are four rare things in this world. One is being born human. Second is encountering the dharma. The third is finding a keen-eyed teacher. And the fourth is getting enlightenment yourself. Those four rare things have two strings to them. One is in terms of formal intentional Zen practice that has that form, and the second is in terms of how that relates to our daily circumstances. They are rare not only because they are statistically rare, but also because people don't take the opportunity to take

advantage of them, even though they are before us all the time.

Being born human has two parts. One is this kind of mammal, because there are more kinds of mammals than this kind of mammal, and there are more kinds of living animals than this kind of an animal, and there are more kinds of living organisms than this kind of organism, and there are more kinds of sentient beings than sentient beings that take this form. So statistically there are relatively few people compared to other kinds of things that live and breathe, and so it's rare to be born human, in that most things that are born are not human. And if you look at the way that Buddhist cosmology looks at things, it's a certain kind of achievement. If you have accumulated certain merit, then you get to be born human, and if you lose it then you're born as something else. So it's rare in the sense that it's the current appearance of something that took a long time to produce. Even if you are not thinking in terms of the accumulation of merit, it took a long time to produce this species, and of course every particle of dust took a long time to produce, and every particle of dust simultaneously has been around for a long time.

Even if we have this form, to really be born human is unusual, because it's very easy to be distracted from the heart of our humanity. So it's good to have the kind of reminders that Garrett was so clearly talking about: this moment, this moment, this moment, this space, this shape. To perceive "Oh, original sound appears"—it's rare to have that concern. We have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of mind, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling, thinking—so eighteen perceptual realms, which means that we have a very large number of things that can seduce us. Visually, or something that has a nice odor, or something that has a nice taste or something that creates a pleasant sensation. We want more of that, and it is very tempting, very easy, and may be easier nowadays to guide our life toward getting more of those things that are pleasant and acting to avoid unpleasant things. When we don't look very deeply at what that entails there is a certain blindness that follows along. Nonetheless, without our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, we cannot make any contact with the world. So if we use sensation as our teacher, then we participate with the six gates; if we don't, then we cultivate the six poisons. So to have some intention to let sensations be our teacher is to start to be born human. People don't recognize the suffering that comes from doing things the other way, so that's rare to see it, and it's rare to

want to sustain it. So being born as human is difficult.

The second rare thing is hearing the dharma. In the narrow sense, it means something that can happen in a place like this—words that are used to help clarify the purpose of life, whether they are Buddhist words or words from another tradition. It's rare in that sense since most of our conversations and most of what we hear isn't intentionally about that. However, again, as Garrett pointed out, the sound of a hawk flying over your car, if you can actually hear that, maybe the noise the hawk makes, or the creak of the stairs in the Zen center as you go up and down, or the truck going down the street, or the sound of the match when the incense is lit, or Miles asking for one extra cookie please, no, two extra cookies, no, that whole bag of extra cookies—that's the dharma. The shape of things that appear before us just this moment is truth. How can it be anything else? To intentionally encounter the color, and the luster, and the weight, and the texture, and the balance, and the shape, and the smell of every moment is to hear the dharma moment by moment by moment, and to take that as your teacher—that's rare. And that somebody would even want to do that, and then to really do it requires a certain amount of effort. That's also rare.

The third element, to meet a keen-eyed teacher, is also rare. In the narrow sense, this means somebody who is a lineage holder in some tradition: statistically there aren't that many of those. And you'd have to find them, and then they would have to be a good match for your needs, so that narrows it down too, if you're looking at it that particular way. We want to find somebody with that talent, who would have the ability to engage with you in a way that quiets the mind, to engage with you in a way that helps you perceive things more clearly. In a broader sense, the plant is a keen-eyed teacher, the clouds are keen-eyed teachers, polluted water is a keen-eyed teacher, pain in your knees as you sit is a keen-eyed teacher, so if your eyes see that, then you take the shape of your life as your keen-eyed teacher.

And then finally to get enlightenment yourself. It's rare to have an experience that opens your heart to the fullness of what we are and transforms you right then and there. It's rare to have a guide to help you know what to do with this experience. In the broader sense of things, to wake up means to wake up to this moment. "Two cookies, Miles, not eleven. I know, you want eleven cookies, but Mommy says two, because she is older and she knows that when you have eleven, you get sick. So we'll put aside eleven and you can have two today and two tomorrow and two the next day maybe if we do that, on the last day you can have three, maybe, we'll see how the other days go . . ." Something like that.

We want to learn to see other people's mind light, because if we learn to see other people's mind light, they

become our teachers, and if we let that light become our teacher, the mind of a student is receptive, curious, grateful, kind, generous, engaged. Then your circumstances become your Zen center.

This Zen center is set up on purpose to support all those things. In your life's flow, take advantage of a place like this. In your life's flow, do something in your own residence that's a formal practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn would say that's very low class practice. If you do those two things, then you can start to see that you have a residential Zen center everywhere, because you're living and you're breathing and you're walking and you're eating and you're engaging. The purpose of this physical space is to help us learn to use the whole world as our Zen center. If you engage to use the whole world as your Zen center, he might call that a very high class practice. See your circumstances clearly, and do something intentional to make that support practice. Look at the opportunities you have, as opposed to what



Photo: Oriol Casnovas

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you're lacking, OK? Other questions?

Question: When I practice at home I have to do lying-down practice, because it's such a stressful time for me. But then I get caught up in thinking "right now you need to be sitting" or "you need to be doing something else." I get stuck in this idea of "this is practice and that is not." So it doesn't seem like I have the right conditions at home for practice.

ZMJU: How do things arise from conditions? Look into that. If you look at how things arise from conditions, then you can create conditions that support your wish to see that clearly. If you become the victim of conditions, then you're constantly fighting to make things better, which would include "I want to make my practice better but conditions aren't letting me." That's not so unusual. "My conditions aren't giving me what I want, and if my conditions were better I'd get what I want, but I can't make my conditions better because my conditions are prohibiting me from

making my conditions better, so now I'm really stuck."

We look for ways to soothe ourselves. Sometimes these are neutral, in the sense that when we're done, we feel better, and then we can go on and do something else. And then we find "Oh that's soothing to lie down for a while" or "That's soothing to pray" or "It might be soothing to have a jelly donut." Then it might be more soothing to have 15 jelly donuts, but it might not be so soothing when you're done. Sometimes the things we use to soothe ourselves become toxic, and then we end up liking the flavor of it and forgetting why we did it in the first place. We end up with this hungry-ghost kind of craving. That means that all I want to do is find stuff to soothe myself, and then you're never sufficiently soothed.

One way to use practice is to make a space where things quiet down, so that you have more energy. Then after things quiet down some, you can better enter into circumstances that may be difficult. Now, practicing that way is better than not practicing at all. At least, instead of going up and down all the time and never finding quiet, you find some quiet space. But since circumstances change, if circumstances are difficult for you, you'll always end up craving quiet and needing more soothing.

A practice that allows us to engage intimately with circumstances can help us stop seeing circumstances as the things in our lives that victimize us. We can then allow our circumstances to become our teachers. One way to do that is to engage with precepts. Precepts affect our thoughts, behaviors and feelings. They are guides to behavior that supports our intentions. If we understand that doing certain things supports our intentions better than doing other kinds of things, then we take precepts as our guide and use them to shape our lives that way. So having something to shape our behavior allows us to start to engage our life in a more kind, compassionate and wise way. It's a strong external support, which we gradually internalize.

Another way to practice is to do something that shapes our consciousness. Shaping our consciousness means if I see things more clearly, then I'm more likely to move toward things that are nurturing for myself and others, and less likely to engage in things that are toxic for myself and others. Looking at the paramitas, for instance, or having interviews, are ways of doing that. We use a supportive circumstance to take care of a difficult circumstance. That's also better than not doing it, and better than just looking for soothing.

Zen practice means my circumstances become my support, which includes formal practice, because you start to see, "Oh I really need this." Normally you eat, even though you're really busy. Maybe you skip a meal periodically, if you're *really* busy, but at some point your metabolism tells you that you'd better eat something.

If you have a practice intention, it's the same way. If you recognize how that feeds you, you'll do it, even if sometimes the circumstances mean you have to do it a little differently. There is something that moves it along because you recognize the value of it, and when you really recognize

that value for yourself, you find a way to do it—not because somebody told you, and not because you think you should, but because you know that's what you do. So that's a more helpful way to engage with practice: "That's what I do." I breathe, I eat, I clean the house, I use sangha to support my practice, I recognize the wisdom in others—those things become natural.

Q: You have a new name. It means Serene Sound?

ZMJU: Yes.

Q: To me you sound more serene and sound than before. I wonder if you feel differently?

ZMJU: It's a little bit like this: There's this big ceremony you get, and all this energy comes this way, right? [*points toward himself*] Afterward people were talking about me publicly, and also my two sons were there, so they were telling my children things about me, or they were hearing it. When I got home, I remembered that when my father died, people started telling me things about him. Nothing that they said seemed deeply out of character, but I didn't know it. "Oh he did that, oh really?" It didn't surprise me, but they were things I didn't know. Then, I thought, "Oh, how fortunate, my children got to hear these stories before I died." It's a little bit like being at your own funeral.

Maybe *Zen Master* means something dies so something else can appear. Somebody came for an interview with me, a little while ago, who had just taken five precepts. They were trying to figure out what it did for them, but they asked the question by asking whether becoming a Zen Master did something for me. I said it's like you have a little voice in your head, that says, "OK, so now how about *your* practice?" I feel I must be in good company, because So-eng Am Eon used to wake up every day and say "Master!" "Yes!" "You must keep clear!" "Yes!" "Never be deceived by others." "Yes! Yes!"

When Zen Master Wu Kwang got transmission, the first letter he got from the Kwan Um School of Zen office was addressed: "Zen Master Wu Kwang, care of Richard Shrobe." So he is looking at it saying to himself, "Zen Master Wu Kwang, care of Richard Shrobe . . . so Richard Shrobe has to take care of Zen Master Wu Kwang. He must be his attendant." So it's a little bit like that for me too. Now maybe that's available every moment, like Garrett said, [*mimes counting mala*] but doing something that emphasizes the seriousness of what you are undertaking periodically is not such a bad thing.

So thank you all. Sangha is the fruit of practice. Without sangha, your own Buddha nature has nothing to do, and without sangha, dharma has no particular function. I'll tell a story that Rusty Hicks once told. He used to be both the abbot and the only resident here for years. He said that there was a Catholic monastery where the brothers were constantly in conflict over minor things—somebody left a bread crumb in the kitchen, or the sanctuary wasn't properly cleaned. It was endless; they couldn't solve it, and they couldn't find anybody who knew how to help them solve it.

But one day they heard there was a famous rabbi who was passing through town to meet with his congregation. They thought maybe they should ask him to visit. So they invited him to stay there for a while to see what their life was like, and hopefully to tell them what they ought to do. He came to stay, but didn't say anything. As he was leaving, they said, "Wait, wait, wait, you know you haven't told us anything." He said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I don't know what to do about your circumstances. But one thing is really clear to me: one among you is the next messiah." And then he leaves.

Everybody starts thinking, "Hmm, Brother George—he is lazy, but he is unflaggingly kind all the time. Is it Brother George?" "Well, Brother William never helps with anything, but he is really bright, and if you need to solve something, he will dig into it for you. So maybe it's Brother William." "Brother Andrew is always working, and he never rests. Maybe . . ." So they start to look at each other, like, "maybe that's the one," and somehow everything gets very quiet, and some kind of harmony appears. When you only look at everybody else's mind light, that happens for you.

There's a story about Ikkyu, a monk poet, a Zen master from a long time ago in Japan. He had a brother, and the brother had a son who was unkind and disrespectful and very irresponsible. The brother asked Ikkyu, "Can you come live with me? Maybe you can straighten out my son." He goes and he lives there for a week or so, but he and the son never say anything to each other, and Ikkyu doesn't give the brother any advice. When it's time to leave, Ikkyu stands at the doorway, and the son, irresponsible as he is, at least knows what he's supposed to do then. He gets Ikkyu's shoes for him, washes the shoes and holds them so Ikkyu can put his feet in his shoes. Then the boy feels this water on his head, and he looks up, and Ikkyu is crying, and then he leaves. The son gets this strong feeling of remorse; and from then, something changes.

Typically, we don't recognize that we have all these rare things: being born human, hearing the dharma, meeting a keen-eyed teacher and attaining enlightenment yourself. The stories that we tell to emphasize that are about particular moments that feel like they're rare, but that's just to inspire us, to open up the possibility of seeing that ordinary moments are like that too. If all we talked about were ordinary moments, people would wonder, "Who's this crazy guy?" So you have to tell a better story than that.

But I'll tell one ordinary story and then I'll stop. My day job is as a mental health consultant in federal Head Start preschools. In one classroom, two boys are at a table. One of them is sitting at the table like this, hunched with his arms around a pile of bristle blocks. The boy

on the other side only has six or seven blocks, and he's trying to grab more from the first boy, who responds by closing himself more around the blocks. I say to the first one, "You have a lot of bristle blocks, you want to have them all, and you want to use them all by yourself." Then I turned to the other boy. "You only have a few bristle blocks. You want to make something, and you don't have enough. You want more. He has a lot more, and he wants to use them all by himself. He wants all that he has, and you want more than you have."

They look at me funny, as if to say, "What's wrong with this guy, he didn't yell at us and tell us that we're supposed to share. Who is this crazy adult?" So the boy with a lot of them looks at me, and I say, "You have a lot of bristle blocks. You want to make something." "Yeah I want to make a boat."

So I said to the boy who has fewer, "He wants to make a boat." Then, this other boy says, "I'm making animals."

"Oh so you're making a boat, and you're making animals, so maybe when he makes the boat, your animals can go on the boat." The boy with the animals gets a look as if to say, "Yeah that's a great idea—we can do that." So the boat boy get this look like, "Hmm, that's kind of interesting." And I look at him and say, "You want some help to make your boat?" "Yeah." "Maybe he can help you make your boat." So they look at each other, like that's a really interesting idea. Then, that's it. Then they just start working together on their own, without any direction from me.

Grownups always tell children *share*, but what we want them to share is attention on something that is interesting to both of them, because then they'll figure out how to share the objects of their attention. If they're sharing a project together, it's a little bit easier. So that's my ordinary story. Nobody got enlightenment; nobody bowed to anybody; nobody said anything profound. I just said what I saw, and that made sense to them, so they took care of it. We can all look at the world that way. Practicing helps that, so thank you everybody for practicing together. ♦

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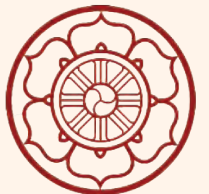
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Buddha's Enlightenment Day 2011

José Ramírez JDPSN

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

Every day people are born. Every day people die.

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

The Buddha understood this point and realized there is no life, no death.

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

Life is life, death is death.

KATZ!

Happy Buddha's Enlightenment Day!

We all know the story. Siddhartha Gautama was sitting under the Bodhi Tree, he looked up, saw the morning star and *boom!* he got enlightenment. And ever since then this story has been an inspiration to spiritual seekers because, let's face it, we believe the Buddha got something and we want to get what he got. Did he really get anything? Even before he saw the morning star he already had a taste of enlightenment at the banks of the Niranjana River.

Siddhartha had been practicing very hard for many years. He had been following the advice from different teachers who told him that in order to find the answer he was looking for he needed to give up worldly pleasures and subjugate his body. To this end, he exposed himself to the elements, endured many trials, and brought himself almost to the point of self-destruction. He was really, really thin and weak, nothing but skin and bones. It was so bad that he almost drowned when he bathed in the Niranjana River. In one version of the story, Sujata, a girl from the nearby village, seeing how famished he was, said to him, "It looks like you are really hungry. Can I bring you some food?" Siddhartha asked what her name was, and when she told him he replied, in a Zenlike style, "Sujata, I am very hungry. Can you really appease my hunger?" Perhaps he was not only referring to his physical hunger but also to his spiritual hunger. Sujata nodded, offered him milk and rice pudding, and told him, "Yes, this will appease your hunger." I like to imagine that what Sujata offered him was a delicious bowl of kheer, the nice rice dessert that you can find at an Indian restaurant.

The moment Siddhartha tasted Sujata's offering he had a profound realization: he had been too hard on himself. You can imagine how good that kheer must have tasted after eating very little for many years. He probably felt good, happy, thankful. He felt his strength coming back. At the first taste he understood cause-and-effect; he attained just like this: when hungry eat; when tired sleep. That, for me, was Siddhartha's first taste, literally, of enlightenment.

Today we celebrate Buddha's enlightenment. But what

did he attain? Under the Bodhi Tree Buddha realized that the body has life and death but original nature has no life or death. After six years of strong practice he understood himself 100 percent. The Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng, on the other hand, lived a simple life and attained enlightenment after hearing one sentence from the Diamond Sutra: "Do not become attached to any thoughts that arise in the mind." At that moment, he also understood himself 100 percent. He told the Fifth Patriarch, "Human beings have north and south, but in Buddha nature is there north and south?" Buddha saw a star and got enlightenment, Hui Neng heard a sentence and got enlightenment. Are these the same or different?

In Zen we talk a lot of talk about life and death, and sometimes we may take this literally. But life and death happen in this moment, right in front of our eyes. "Life and death" point to the never-ending appearance and disappearance of phenomena. If you pay attention when you are sitting in meditation, and even sometimes in your daily life, you will notice that thoughts appear and thoughts disappear, that feelings appear and feelings disappear, that impulses appear and impulses disappear, that sounds appear and sounds disappear.

In the Wake-Up sermon Bodhidharma said, "Sages don't consider the past. And they don't worry about the future." At some level we understand that yes, the past is gone and the future is not yet here, and that all we have is the present, or so we think. Bodhidharma continues, "Nor do they cling to the present." That is a very interesting point: we have to let go even of the present! How do we not cling to the present? He concludes, "And from moment to moment they follow the Way." Moment to moment. Sounds familiar? If we keep a clear mind then each moment is enough, each action is complete. Moment by moment there is no life, no death. Moment by moment, just like this is the truth.

The star that the Buddha saw is still up in the sky. I hope that tonight you remember to look up and, without thinking, see it as for the first time.

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

A star appears. Is that birth?

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

A star disappears. Is that death?

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

The sky itself is beyond birth and death.

KATZ!

Watch your step on the way out. ♦

Every Human Being Is Completely Diverse in Their Own Way

Carlos Montero JDPSN

From a dharma talk given at the Chogye International Zen Center of New York, April 13, 2016

Question: We have been discussing in our sangha, and this last sangha weekend, the idea of continuing the effort to create a situation in our sangha where we can be welcoming so that people of a diverse background and cultural, personal and racial identity can feel welcome. It is a very big issue and there are many ideas and plans.

Montero JDPSN: How did it become a big issue?

Q: Even that is a big question. It's maybe the biggest question. And there are many ways to slice that up and address it directly. You have to be careful, because each one of those ways has its own good and bad aspects, its own problems and its own solutions. But something we keep coming back to is how to be proactive. Should we have a night that is just for people of color or whatever group you are trying to promote? That may have its benefits, but it is a little artificial in some way. So the issue I keep coming back to is that it starts with us. We take a look at ourselves and what we are doing moment to moment. Are we even thinking about other people and our relationship to them? Can you say anything about that?

Montero JDPSN: I think everyone here has had that first interview with a Zen teacher when you read "The Human Route," which is part of our tradition and kong-an training. After the student reads the poem, we ask a very simple question: What is the one pure and clear thing? Usually the student doesn't know what to say. So then the teacher gives some simple teaching: "When our

minds are thinking, our minds are different. When our minds are not thinking, our minds are the same." If you really attain that, then your question will answer itself.

This body is just a conglomerate of atoms, karma, energy, aggregates. It appears to look like this [*points to himself*] and it also looks like that, like that, like that [*points to different people in the audience*]. If you look closely, every human being is completely diverse in their own way—in their karmic thinking, their physical attributes and their cultural background. Every single person is absolutely unique. There is a diversity of however many billions of people there are in the world. At some point, we make something in our minds that says "Oh! We are somewhat alike so we belong to the same group," so we are this or we are that or that. That is called making something. That means already our minds are separate.

But one thing that is clear about our teaching is that it points to something that is before thinking. Something that recognizes that we are not this body. That we are not this external look and shape—black, white, gay, straight, man, woman, gender-fluid—we are not any of that. That is what our teaching keeps pointing to.

So you say, let's have a night for people of color. My question is, "What color?" Maybe my scientific background interferes and wonders if you are going to measure the wavelength of the light that is absorbed by someone's



Photo: Allan Matthew

skin to decide who can come or not? And which part of the skin will you measure because, at least for me, some areas of my body are definitely different skin tones than others—trust me on this one. Focusing on our outside form is not where it is at.

All that our sangha can do is continue to be loving and open, and also serve as a mirror to anyone who visits our sangha, so that they can see not their external appearance but their true self. If they are really attached to their outside form, to their thinking, to their idea of what they are, we can help them investigate that which is before all of those attachments. We can give them tools to explore that. After all, what color is your mind? [*Hits the floor with zen stick.*] What color is that?

This reminds me of a famous story in our school. Perhaps most of you have heard it already, but since it connects with this issue it is worth retelling. The story is from when Zen Master Seung Sahn had this conversation about feminism with Bobby Rhodes (Zen Master Soeng Hyang), who is currently the head of our school. Back in the mid 1970s the issues were a little different, and many students wondered about the patriarchal nature of historical Zen. All ancient Zen masters that anyone knew were men, so naturally modern American women were skeptical of such a tradition.

20] During this conversation, and glossing over its every detail, Zen Master Seung Sahn told Bobby, “Yeah! A woman cannot get enlightenment.” Bobby angrily said, “WHAT? What kind of patriarchal bullshit is this? How can you say that? That is wrong! Where is your sense of equality?” And the Zen master calmly said: “Oh, I am sorry—Are you a woman?”

At that time, Bobby had been practicing for some time and recognized the master’s response as a big hit to her mind. The moment your mind says “I am a woman” you are far away from enlightenment. “I am a man”: farther away from enlightenment. If you make yourself anything—a man, a woman, a dog, a cat, a Democrat, a Republican—you are far, far away, because our true nature is before all of that. So a man cannot get enlightenment; a woman cannot get enlightenment. Any attachment to anything puts you far away from it, yet letting go of all of it brings you right back to enlightenment. So this is my approach to this situation.

People always tell me, “Your sangha in South Florida is so diverse. What are you doing to achieve such diversity?” We are not doing anything! People just come, we say hello, we give them some teaching and we practice together. So I ask the questioner, “Why do you want this diversity, and what does diversity look like to you? Is diversity limited only to some type of outside look?”

I wonder if the Zen teachers in old China ever wondered, “Oh these monks and nuns all look pretty similar, not so diverse.” In that case, you are not look-



Photo: Allan Matthews

ing closely enough. I would encourage you to see that when there are two people, then two different karmas appear. That is already diversity.

Don’t get hung up on this group or that group, because then you become part of the dividing process. Our practice points to [*claps hands*] completely become one with everything. Some may say that is easy for me to say because I am very diverse. I guess they say that because I have Hispanic karma and gay karma, Buddhist karma and other traits people may associate with being diverse. I am not any of that. That is actually one of the greatest things that practice revealed for me, that I am not my karma. My body is just my karma, my preferences, my opinions, they are just my karma and I can be free from their coming and going.

How we use that karma is most important. How can we use all of it to help this world? So be very careful not to be trapped by your “I am different” karma, as this keeps other people’s “I am different” karma alive as well. If you are a dharma teacher, try to help others realize how originally we are one. That is more important. Then use these outward differences to help this world, whichever way that is. Just be careful not to force it. That is my view on this matter. ♦

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6

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2



BOWS (DAILY)

108

BEGINNER INTRO (WEEKLY)

1

DHARMA



KONGAN INTERVIEWS

2

KWAN UM ZEN TEACHERS

13

DHARMA TALKS (WEEKLY)

1

NEW BEDS

10

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搜尋

Soeng Hwa Sa Opening Ceremony Poem

In 2003, Zen Master Wu Bong attended the opening ceremony for the new Zen center in Israel, Soeng Hwa Sa (Nature Flower Temple). For this special event he wrote the following poem:

Soeng Hwa Temple is not a place
Its light casts no shadow
Its sound has no echo
If you find it, you will go to hell
If you do not find it, you will be lost in blankness
What can you do?
KATZ!
On the altar, the jasmine is white and
The lavender is purple



Photo: Sven Mahr

22] *How to Turn Coal into Diamonds*

Igor Piniński JDPSN

From a dharma talk given at Wu Bong Sa Temple, Poland, August 2017.

Question: If somebody likes suffering, does this person have a reason to practice?

Piniński PSN: How do you know he likes it?

Q: Because there are so many amazing artworks.

Piniński PSN: If you like suffering, it's not really suffering. I don't think this artist you mention likes suffering. He made a really big effort to get rid of it. The suffering was really heavy, and once he even had a brush with suicide. But it's a bit like coal. Sometimes depression seems like something oily and black. Coal is like this. Dark and dirty. But if you work on coal, under the right pressure, out of this coal a diamond can appear, which is clear and beautiful and bright and very expensive. And it's still coal. It is the same with with depression.

I had an opportunity to know, and still know, a couple people who have been suffering from depression all their lives. And they indeed did a lot of work related with it. And still they suffer from depression. But this depression did change into a diamond that shines and inspires others.

For me, Leonard Cohen is a wonderful example of how you can use your heavy circumstances and conditioning in order to change it into something precious. In his artwork, you can observe how this develops. Later, his

songs from older years are even more profound than the ones from his youth. But even despite that, he never experienced this cheerfulness.

I have a friend who was practicing with him in the monastery. In his experience, and in his story, this guy always had a very sad face and kept his head down. But when somebody was approaching him to have a conversation, he always lifted up his head and brightened up, naturally.

The last time I saw him, a couple years ago, this 80-year-old man jumped about like Tinkerbell, very light, very light. Cheerfully thinking how hard life is. And how, inevitably, death will take us all. That's interesting that you can think about it in such a pleasant manner. I believe it's beyond like and dislike.

If we stop approaching everything we have in life with this like/dislike mind, just [*hits floor with the stick*] what's the reality right now? [*hits floor*] What am I right now? What do I have? This is the condition of my soul; these are my feelings; this is my body; that's my situation. I'm free with all this, having what I have, I can do whatever I want. The sole trick is what do I want? What is worth doing with this freedom? With this pathetic sentence? ♦

Central Park Fall

John Holland

Master Seong Am Eon used to call himself every day, “Master!” and would answer, “Yes?”
“You must keep clear!” “Yes!”
“Never be confused by others, any day, any time!” “Yes! Yes!”

We are fortunate to live under the Atlantic flyway, along which birds migrate twice a year. In May I was out early in Central Park in search of those remarkable, beautiful colored birds called warblers, in which birders take such delight, when in a moment of inattention to my footing I tripped on a rock and fell hard. Even though I didn’t hit my head, I was badly stunned and lost consciousness. As I lay on the ground I drifted in and out of consciousness. In moments of lucidity I watched my mind thinking, “I am a practitioner of Zen. Why am I not calm?”

During one moment of wakefulness, I was conscious of a dog licking my face. I heard his companion say, “He needs more than the love you can give him.” Later I learned that these were visitors from Nova Scotia. Shortly thereafter some of my fellow birders came upon me and called 911. Then another bodhisattva appeared in the form of a runner from France. He was a trained alpine rescuer. I heard him say, “Talk to him! Talk to him!” as my companions waited for an ambulance. Two bodhisattva birders accompanied me to the emergency room.

Zen Master To Sol asked his monks, “Monks, you leave no stone unturned to explore the depths, simply to see into your True Nature. Now I want to ask you, just in this moment: Where is your True Nature?”

I could have wished that in my lucid moments I might have heard To Sol ask his monks this question—and realize that my ordinary mind was intent on pointing itself at the sun instead of recognizing my true nature.

“Delusions are endless; we vow to cut through them all” is one of the four great vows we make each day—I should know because our founding Zen master gave me the Buddhist name of Dae Won (Great Vow) a name that I obviously have some difficulty in living up to.

The psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan once remarked that in the end “all of us are more human than otherwise.” It sounds obvious, but somehow most of us end up preoccupied with “being otherwise.”¹

In our practice we strive to dissolve the dualism of subject and object. We attempt to trust our own resiliency in the face of our life as it is. Zen offers us a

counterbalancing insight into our essential wholeness, a wholeness to which nothing need be added or subtracted. “We are like water which can’t—and doesn’t need to—get any wetter.”²

To Sol challenged his monks with two more questions:

“If you realize True Nature, you are free from life and death. Tell me, when your eyesight deserts you in the last moment, how can you be free from life and death?”

And: “When you set yourself free from life and death, you should know your ultimate destination. So when the four elements separate, where will you go?”

The four elements, of course, are fire, wind, water, earth—and are represented on the altar. They are what comprise existence. On the lower level of the altar, there are two candles which, when lit, represent fire. Between the two candles is an incense burner. Incense, when lit, represents air. On the second level there is a bowl containing water. The altar itself represents earth.

[23



When the four elements separate, where will you go?

Hsin Shin Ming, the Third Patriarch of Zen warns us:

Outside, don't get tangled in things,

Inside, don't get lost in emptiness.

Be still, and become One,

And confusion stops by itself.

“Inside, don't get lost in emptiness” is an important injunction. The function of what we call the Three Treasures—the Buddha, the Dharma (that is, the teaching), and the Sangha (that is, you)—is to lead one to a direct attainment of emptiness. Then you can help all beings. This is true liberation.

“But when the four elements separate,” Tou Shuai asked, “Where will you go?” Zen Master Seung Sahn says speech and words cannot describe this point. Only demonstration can express it. If you can attain that point, it is always possible to keep this mind. So, he says, you must practice every day, for at least ten minutes a day: What am I? Don't know . . . Where is my true nature? Don't know . . . How will I be reborn? Don't know . . . When the four elements disperse, where will I go? Don't know . . .

The Diamond Sutra says “All things that appear in the world are transient”—just like us. Just as cyclones are. I'd like to pause here for a moment to commiserate with all sentient beings—that includes animals—who have suffered or died in the terrible devastation wrought by the recent hurricanes and earthquakes.

I'd like us also to remember the fleeing and the murdered Rohingyas.

The truth is we do not know what happens to us when we die. The Buddha taught that originally there is no life and death—our true self is infinite in time and space. Don't-know mind doesn't have a beginning or an ending. Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching is to wake up this moment and attain our true nature. When we keep a don't-know mind we are addressing the big question of life and death moment to moment.

We don't actually have a thing called a “life.” When we talk about our lives we are usually referring to what happened in the past or speculating about what will happen in the future. But that is only *thinking* about what has already happened, already gone, or what may never happen. In Zen we say, “The past is already dead,



Photo: Barrie Raik

and the future is just a dream.” So, my lying in shock in Central Park is already dead.

In the midst of all that talking and thinking about our so-called lives we overlook something: this moment. This moment is the only place where anything that we might call “our life” is actually happening.

Be still, and become One,

And confusion stops by itself.

Is this enlightenment?—Be careful, wanting enlightenment, as Zen Master Seung Sahn said, is a big mistake.

A man lies on the rocks in Central Park.

A dog licks his face.

Wake up! ♦

Notes

1. See Barry Magid, *Ending the Pursuit of Happiness: A Zen Guide* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), xiii.
2. *Ibid.*, 64.

John Holland is a long-time member of the Chogye International Center of New York. After training in the New Haven Zen Center, he became a dharma teacher in 1995. In 2008 he took the vows of a bodhisattva teacher. John has taught meditation at Union Theological Seminary of New York, Columbia University, and for extended periods at the Institute of Omega for Holistic Studies, as well as at New York Chogyesa. For many years he was an active member of the Buddhist Council of New York. John was the coeditor of *Don't-Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen* and *Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans*, both by Zen Master Wu Kwang. In addition to Zen, John also practices tai chi and bird-watching.

Book Review

Stars at Dawn: Forgotten Stories of Women in the Buddha's Life

By Wendy Garling

Shambhala Publications, 2016

Review by Zen Master Bon Hae (Judy Roitman)

We know the women in the Buddha's life, right? There's his mother Queen Maya, who died 10 days after giving birth. There's her sister, Mahaprajapati, who in the time-honored tradition of marry-your-dead-wife's-sister became his stepmother, the only mother he actually knew. There was his wife, the beautiful Yasodhara, whom he left in the middle of the night to pursue awakening. There was the milkmaid who gave him milk or rice gruel (depending on who you're talking to) when he was near death from excessive self-denial. And then, much later, after Mahaprajapati convinced him to create a women's order, there were the women disciples. And that's it, right?

Well, not exactly. Wendy Garling presents, as the subtitle says, forgotten stories of *women* in the Buddha's life. More to the point, both remembered and forgotten women in the Buddha's life. And also not just forgotten but deliberately unremembered aspects of the Buddha's life. Her sources are various sutras (Mahayana) and suttas (Theravada), few of which people read nowadays—*Pathamasambodhi*, *Abhinishkramanasutra*, *Malamkaravathu*, *Lalitavistara*, and so on. You might say that she read them so you don't have to.

Garling is a serious longtime student of Tibetan Buddhism—she took refuge with the Karmapa in 1976—with an MA in Sanskrit languages and literature from Berkeley. Someone should grant her a PhD for this book, which expertly pulls together vastly disparate and largely obscure sources, but of course that won't happen.

Garling has two main theses in this book and two basic techniques.

The first thesis is that female figures—both human and superhuman—are important, are powerful, and cannot be ignored. Goddesses associated with Shakyamuni's birth are discussed. At least some of the women in Buddha's life—especially Maya, Mahaprajapati, and Yasodhara—have supra-human aspects. The deep strain of sexism and misogyny that runs through many of these stories is acknowledged, but the record is corrected by giving powerful female figures, both divine and human, the foreground.

The second thesis is that palace life back then was very different from palace life now. Shakyamuni had a large harem, many of whose members later followed Mahaprajapati into monastic life—84,000 women according to one source, and if you believe that I've got a bridge across the Kansas River to sell you. The harem was not a brothel, but rather it was a complex society of women and children; as the son of a king, Shakyamuni would have grown up in one. Yasodhara was the chief wife but far from the only one. It's not even clear what wife would mean in such a household. Being a wife or consort of Shakyamuni was a great honor, and there are charming stories of how he met this or that wife or

consort and convinced her to become part of his household (or convinced her father to let her). In at least one case, Kisa Gotami—no, not the woman of the same name whose baby died and was sent looking for a mustard seed—the wife/consort chooses him and confirms this by boldly walking up to him and putting a wreath around his neck. In such a large harem, relationships can get complicated—for example, Garling presents evidence that Ananda was not Shakyamuni's cousin, but actually his son by this very same Kisa Gotami.

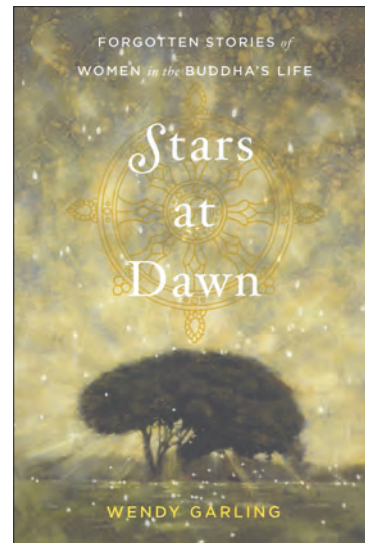
Those are the theses. Now for the techniques.

The first technique is to carefully examine the cultural references and complexity of various aspects of the Buddha's story—for example, what's with the elephant piercing Maya's side? Auspicious, yes, everyone knows that, but Garling traces down exact references. Did the elephant actually impregnate Maya or was it King Suddhodhana? In some versions the elephant, in some versions Suddhodhana, in some versions both. Was Maya supposed to be a virgin? Definitely not—virginity was not in itself a virtue; chastity in the context of monastic life was the virtue.

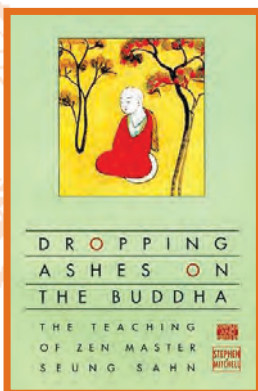
The second technique is an extraordinary sympathy with the humanity of the people in the Buddha's life, as well as Shakyamuni himself. Garling takes the semi-formulaic words of the texts she cites, and points to the deep humanity they express: the sorrow and anxiety and fear aroused by the thought of Shakyamuni possibly leaving the palace; the tensions and fears among women and children in a large polygamous household; Suddhodhana's concerns for his son and kingdom; Shakyamuni's own worries; and so on. This in itself is a wonderful contribution.

If I have a quibble about this book, it is Garling's attempt to settle things. For example, why try to prove that Ananda was Shakyamuni's son and not (the version we're used to) his cousin? It is a great service to present the variants. But to decide among them is not possible. The sources are not historical records, they are legends (remember the 84,000 consorts?), and they were created far away in space and time from what actually happened. There are many places in the text where Garling tries to establish fact where no fact can be established, dissipating the considerable energy of the book into an argumentative tone.

That said, Garling brings us the lives of the women in Shakyamuni's life, points to the power of both normal and supranormal women even in those misogynistic times, enlarges our sense of the society in which Shakyamuni lived, and provides liberating options to the standard tales we are used to telling. *Stars at Dawn* is a welcome addition to contemporary scholarship, with the added virtue that it is easily accessible to any reader. ♦



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

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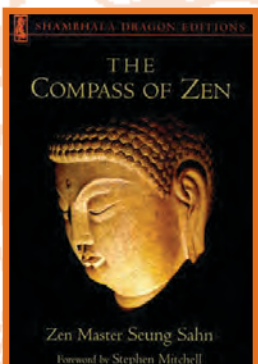
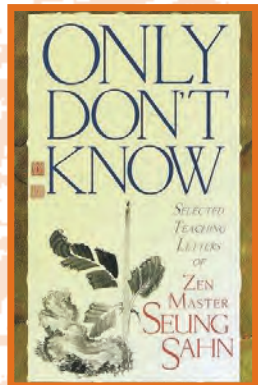
Wake Up! On the Road with a Zen Master. An entertaining documentary that captures Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy and presents the core of his teaching. 54 minutes. *Primary Point Press, 1992. VHS: ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00 DVD: ISBN 0-942795-14-8. \$30.00*

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

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

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