

# Dharma Teacher Training

BY ZEN MASTER DAE BONG

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

For a dharma teacher, sincere practicing is very important. This sincere mind is already a great teaching. Next, it's very important to see my karma, and try to fix that. The Sixth Patriarch said, "It's easy to see the dust in another's eye, but we cannot even see the log in our own eye." That means it's very easy to see other people's karma, but difficult to see our own karma. But most important is, see my karma, control my karma, make my karma disappear, attain my karma, then use my karma correctly.

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

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

Third kind of bodhisattva action means teaching truth, talking about the nature of this world. If you do good things, you get good result. If you do bad things, you get bad result, you get suffering. So, what do you like? This kind of talking, teaching dharma, teaching truth to others, this helps people very

much. But sometimes, somebody cannot listen to these three things. They are still suffering and holding their desire and anger and ignorance.

Then there's a fourth kind of bodhisattva action which we call together action. Buddha sometimes called that identity action. That means only together action with them. If they like dancing, then together dancing. If they like eating, then together eating. If they like stealing, then together stealing. Maybe your friend is a thief, then you really want to help him. But, he doesn't listen to you. Anything you try, he never listens. So, you decide, "Okay, together action." So, you begin to steal together with this person. Then they like you, they believe in you. Then maybe one day, you're both caught and sent to jail. At that time, your friend is really suffering. But you're not suffering because you only want to help your friend. Good situation, bad situation doesn't matter. Then at that time, your friend sees that you're not suffering, then they'll listen to you.

So this together action is a very high-class kind of teaching. But if you don't have a strong center, then this together action is not possible. If you try that, then you also get suffering, then you cannot help your friend. So, very strong practicing is necessary, then using any of these four kinds of bodhisattva action to help others is possible.

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

Next, higher is giving your life. That's like soldiers or firemen or policemen, sometimes doctors, sometimes anybody in some situation acts without regard for their own life, only to help somebody else. That's a very high form of giving.

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

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

So dharma teacher means wanting to understand our true nature and save all beings from suffering. That's our life's direction, that's the dharma teacher's

job. Then, any kind of dharma teacher situation doesn't matter, the direction is the same. Lay person, monk or nun, doesn't matter. Try to understand my true self and want to save all beings from suffering. That's true dharma teacher.

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

In Zen we say, “meditation means, when you're doing something, just do it.” When you're doing something, just do it. So, when you're driving in the car, just drive. That's driving meditation. When you play tennis, just play tennis **pop!**, don't think about “how do I look?” When you eat, just eat. When you talk, just talk. When you wash dishes, just wash dishes. When you're doing something, one hundred percent just do it, then your mind, your body and the situation all become one. That name is meditation. That's a not-moving mind. Your mind and the situation completely become one. That name is meditation.

So very important in Zen-style, our meditation is not special, not separate from everyday life. When you're doing something, just do it. But that's very hard for people to do, so we have very simple forms of the formal meditation: sitting, bowing, chanting. Then we use these simple forms to take away our karma, then finally, when we're doing something, we can just do it. Then our meditation and our everyday life aren't separate. Then our whole life becomes a spiritual practicing. So, in this world, many people understand the word meditation but they think it's something special, and don't understand true and correct meditation. So our Zen teaching is very wonderful, very clear.

Third point, formal meditation: bowing, sitting, chanting, walking. Bowing practice means, very quickly your body and your mind become one. Also, a very good way to take away lazy mind and desire mind and angry mind. When you're sleeping, your body's lying in your bed, but your mind flies around and goes some place. Maybe you go to Las Vegas or you go to the ocean or you go to New York, or some monster is chasing you. Your body's in bed, but your consciousness already went someplace. Then when we wake up, many times, our consciousness and our body don't quickly connect. So you wander around your house, and drink coffee, you bump into things. Then slowly, slowly your consciousness and your body again come together. So that's why, first thing in the morning, we do one hundred and eight bows. Then through these one hundred and eight bows, very quickly your body and your consciousness become one. Then, being clear and functioning clearly is possible.

We always bow one hundred and eight times. One hundred and eight is a number from Hinduism and Buddhism. That means there are one hundred and eight defilements in the mind. Or, sometimes they say one hundred and eight compartments in the mind. Then each bow takes away one defilement, cleans one compartment in your mind. So our bowing practice is like a repentance ceremony every morning. In the daytime, in our sleep, our

consciousness flies around someplace. Also we make something, we make many things in our consciousness. Then, we repent! So we do one hundred and eight bows; that's already repenting our foolish thinking, taking away our foolish thinking.

Also, some people cannot sit. Maybe they have a little crazy mind or too much thinking, then if they sit, they cannot control their consciousness. Then, bowing is very good. Using your body somehow is very important. Also, this bowing direction is very important. I want to put down my small I, see my true nature and help all beings. So, any kind of exercise can help your body and mind become one, but with just exercise, the direction is often not clear. Sometimes it's for my health, sometimes it's for my good looks, sometimes it's to win a competition, but in Buddhism, everything's direction is the same point — how to perceive my true nature and save all beings from suffering. So our bowing means take our karma mind, our thinking mind, and return to this moment very clearly, want to find my true nature and save all beings from suffering. So bowing practice is very important. If somebody has much anger, or much desire, or lazy mind, then every day, 300 bows, or 500 bows, or 1,000 bows, every day. Then their center will become very strong, they can control their karma, take away their karma, and become clear. So bowing practice is very important.

Next, sitting practice. Sitting practice means the three things: body, breath, and mind. First, the body position. So most important is our spine is straight. Usually we sit on the floor with a cushion. Then the legs can be in many kinds of positions. But most important is some kind of symmetrical position. Burmese style with both calves on the floor is okay, one calf on top of the other is okay, bringing one foot up onto the thigh in half lotus is okay, both feet up on the thighs in full lotus is okay. Also, kneeling is okay, on a seiza bench or with a cushion between your legs; those are all okay. Not so good is one leg in front of the other and another twisted off to the side, that will cause your hips and your spine to twist, and over a long time it's not good for you. So, first is leg position, some kind of symmetrical position. Also, if you cannot sit on the floor, sitting in a chair is okay; then, both feet firmly on the floor and sitting up so that your back is straight. Then sitting in a chair is also a good position.

Next, your back: imagine that a string is tied from the top of your head and pulled up towards the ceiling. Then, your spine will become straight. Then, relax a little bit so that you're not straining. Next, tuck your chin in slightly. This will straighten the spine and the back of your neck. Next, our hand position. In Zen style we usually use the maha mudra. That means the fingers of the left hand on top of the fingers of the right, and the thumbs slightly touching, making a kind of oval. Then this mudra is held against the body with your thumbs approximately at your navel so that the center of the mudra is on your dan jun, or tantien, which is about an inch or two below your navel. This mudra means holding the universe in my hands, also, all universal energy coming in.

Next, arm position. Don't flare your elbows out too much, don't press them tightly against your body. You can imagine that there is a raw egg in each

armpit. You want to be able to hold the egg there without it falling out and without crushing it. This position allows your chest and belly area to breathe very very freely. Eyes are pointed slightly down at about a forty-five degree angle, and are a little bit open. If you look at any Buddha statue, always the eyes are a little open. So in Zen practice we say keep your eyes a little bit open, just gazing down at the floor. Often we'll say look softly at the floor, not staring at one point, but just gazing down at the floor. My teacher always says, if you keep your eyes open, then already you're fifty percent present. So Zen means to wake up, so although closing your eyes is very comfortable sometimes, it's easy to go into a fantasy, into a dream. So Zen style is always sitting with your eyes slightly open. That's our body position.

Next is breath. In our life, one thing that we always do our whole life is breathing. So, during meditation we use this breath to help us stay present and become clear. If you want your body to relax, the number one way is to use your breath. Also, our breath helps our mind become clear. There are many ways to work with your breath, but our Zen style we call "dan jun ho." Dan jun, or tantien in Chinese, which means energy garden, is about one to two inches below your navel. That's what we call our body energy center.

So when you breathe in, push your lower belly out a little bit. When you breathe out, pull your lower belly in a little bit. Then, this center will appear. Imagine all your energy is returning to your center, to your dan jun. So, slowly breathe in. Slow, slow breathe out. Make your exhale about twice as long as your inhale. So, maybe three seconds in, then seven seconds out. Or five seconds in, ten seconds out. Or ten seconds in, twenty seconds out. So, slowly breathe out, then this breathing in is very deep and very easy. But don't be tight, don't be rigid. Don't just use a clock and time yourself. You must slowly relax your breath, watch your breath, and I believe the best way is to pay attention on your exhale, make your exhale a little longer, then the inhale follows quite smoothly. As you try this, you'll see that sometimes you can maintain a very smooth, deep breathing, while other times it won't be like that. So just observe your breathing and gently help it to become longer. But don't force it. If you try to force yourself, then your habit will fight against you and it will be more uncomfortable. So that's breathing.

Next, how to keep your mind. Buddha got a big question: what is life, what is death? What is a human being? What am I? Then he only didn't know. So he went straight, don't know for six years. So correct mind practicing means this big question, what am I? Don't know. But holding this kind of question in our minds is sometimes very difficult. Deep inside our minds we must have this question, but holding the words is not necessary. So we have many kinds of mind practice. Correct mind practice means only go straight, don't know, big question, want to understand my true self and save all beings.

But sometimes some kind of tool is needed to help us pay attention and see when our mind is going off and thinking. So the practice that we give to beginning students is, when you breathe in, say to yourself three times, "clear mind, clear mind, clear mind." And when you breathe out, say one time long, "don't knooooowww." So, breathing in: clear mind, clear mind, clear mind. Breathing out: don't knooooowww. Then, whenever this practice

disappears you'll notice yourself thinking, then you return to this practice. Gently return, return, return. Then this mind that is able to pay attention just now becomes stronger, stronger, stronger. So, that's our basic sitting practice: body, and breath, and mind.

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

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

So chanting actually is more than fifty percent listening. You also have to open your ears. So first, all my energy into the sound, then hear my sound, hear all people's sound, then that's correct chanting practice, clear mind practicing. So sometimes somebody has too much emotion, too much thinking, too much bad karma, then chanting practice really helps this lost mind become one, then one mind become clear. So chanting practice is very important.

Walking meditation we don't talk so much about, but walking meditation is often a break from sitting practice. But very important when you're walking is to return your energy to your dan jun, this lower belly, and feel your feet touching the floor. Also, our walking style is hands interlaced. In some styles the left hand is inside the right hand, in some styles, the right hand is inside the left hand. Dae Soen Sa Nim said one time, "Yeah, that's okay, but then maybe this right hand or this left hand has a bad feeling." So we interlace our hands, then both hands are equal, then both hands are happy. Also, we hold our hands over this dan jun area and walk at kind of a normal pace, not too slow, not too fast. Then, our walking meditation is also kind of an everyday life practicing, not special.

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

Number four, substance, truth, and function. Very important in our teaching is making substance, truth, and function very clear. This is one of the activities of our correct kong-an practicing. Substance means our before-thinking nature. Also, sometimes we call it primary point. This cannot be expressed in words or speech because it's before thinking. So Guji always raised one finger, Lin Chi always shouted "katz," Duk Sahn Zen Master always hit people, our school's style is to hit the floor. So first you return to your before thinking nature, then if you correctly attain your original substance, you can see clear, hear clear, smell clear, taste clear, feeling's clear, everything's clear. Sky is blue, tree is green, dog goes "woof woof", sugar is sweet. Everything is just reflected in your mind. We say, if you keep this hit point **hit!** then your mind is clear like space. Clear like space means clear like a mirror. The mirror just reflects, red comes, red. White comes, white. So when you see the sky, just blue. When you see a tree, just green. When you hear a dog barking, just "woof woof."

That name is truth. So everything in this universe is truth, just the way it is, not dependent on our thinking or our opinions. So, you attain truth. Then, one more step is necessary. How does truth correctly function to make correct life? We say, helping others. That means, when you're hungry, eat. When you're tired, sleep. When somebody is hungry, give them food. When somebody is thirsty, give them a drink. When somebody is suffering, help them. That name is correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. Buddhism also calls that great love, great compassion, the great bodhisattva way. That's our practicing. That's correct life. That's Zen. So, substance, truth, and function all become very clear.

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

Sixth point: the dharma talk. The main point of a dharma talk is to expose people to what practice is, what dharma is, to show dharma, and in the process, perhaps encourage them to practice. First thing to consider when giving a dharma talk is whom you're talking to. Then you can adjust your talk to the audience. Next, what is most important to you in your practice now, or, what is very important to you in your practice now. Sometimes picking out what's really alive for you in your practice now and using that in some fashion as a topic can also help.

Dae Soen Sa Nim has given a few suggestions about how to structure a talk. First, our general form in a public talk is to have one of the students give a talk for twenty minutes, some kind of introductory talk, and then for the teacher to answer questions. But, maybe different kinds of situations appear, classroom situations, places where you're invited, etc. So that form may be set up in different ways. But here are a couple of good suggestions for how to structure a talk.

One way to do it is to first tell some old story, some kind of Buddhist story that you find interesting or appropriate for the situation. Next, you can tell some kind of modern story or modern experience, some story about your experience practicing, or some story about one of our other students who practice, or Dae Soen Sa Nim. Then, third, use teaching words to connect these stories and make the point that you are getting to. So everybody likes stories, so an old story, a kind of modern story, and teaching words that connect them together to really bring out your point. Another way to structure a talk is to always mention something about the big question, what am I? Also, to talk about don't know mind. And third, to talk about our direction, Buddhism's direction to save all beings from suffering.

Seventh, kong-an practicing. Very distinctive to Zen practice is kong-an practicing. Kong-an practicing has two main functions. First, to help us to always return to our correct practicing direction. Some people practice to feel better. Some people practice to take away problems. There are many kinds of reasons, and all those reasons can be very good, but very important is our practicing's original direction, which is don't know, only go straight don't know. So when you can't answer a kong-an, already your mind returns to don't know. So this helps us keep our practicing direction. Some people just want quiet for meditation. That's okay, but that cannot really help your life. So kong-an practicing helps you keep this correct practicing direction of don't know.

Second point is, kong-an practicing helps us to find correct function. As we go through kong-an practice, we begin to see very clearly substance, truth, and function, and can find the correct function in our life. There are basically two kinds of kong-ans. One kind checks our meditation mind, how much our mind is unmoving. It's like sword fighting; the teacher attacks, you go back, then the teacher, then you, then the teacher, then you. Then you can see how long you can keep this not moving mind. The second type of kong-an checks our wisdom, that means our functioning. This kind of kong-an can be checked by mail. This meditation kind of kong-an is best checked when we're in the presence of the teacher, but wisdom kong-ans, like Dropping Ashes on the Buddha, Nam Cheon's Cat, Duk Sahn's Bowls, the Mouse kong-an, those kinds of kong-ans can be checked through the mail because they don't require the same kind of ability to answer without any thinking. Of course, when the answer really appears, it doesn't appear from thinking, but it's not the same as kind of sword fighting. So, one kind of kong-an is checking our center. Another kind of kong-an is checking our cognition. Also, very important is that our kong-an practicing connects with everyday life. So the three main aims of kong-an practicing are to help us keep our correct



practicing direction, don't know, to find correct function, and finally, to attain no hindrance.

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

I think I'm up to number nine, so I'll talk about form. Already I've talked about our formal styles of practice, bowing, sitting, chanting, and walking. Now I'll talk about some other aspects of form. Sometimes people come to our practice and they don't like it because they feel there is too much form and structure. But, if we're able to explain it well, for many people, they will get over that hindrance and be able to act together and really get something out of practice.

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

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

Also, learn to use your eyes, ears, hands, etc. If you go to another Zen center and you watch what they do, soon you're able to follow them. Then often they're very surprised because most of the time we have to tell people over and over what a particular form is. Most people are not able to really use their eyes, ears, hands, etc, clearly.

One example is, when I lived at Cambridge Zen Center, our Zen Center was right in between Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, two of the strongest universities in our country. But when students from these universities would come to our Center, and everyone would be sitting on their cushions waiting for chanting, then it would be time to chant, and maybe twenty of our students would stand up, pick up the black cushion, put it to the right in a certain position, but the guests would stand there holding their cushions, not knowing what to do, even though half the room, or three-quarters of the room, had done the same action with it. That always struck me, that some people depend on verbal instructions, which are often difficult to follow anyway, and can't use their eyes. So if we as Zen students learn to use our eyes, ears, hands, correctly, then much more quickly we're able to connect with others and other situations.

Second series of points on form: this is kind of a brief outline review of our basic forms of sitting, chanting, and bowing. So, important in teaching sitting is understanding how to teach body, breathing, and mind. In teaching chanting, it's always very beneficial, if you have the time, to talk about lost mind, one mind, and clear mind. These things really help people understand what sitting meditation is, how to do it, and also what chanting meditation is and how to do it. Bowing means become one. Our body and mind all become one and then become clear. Also, bowing helps our energy come down. When you become very emotional, or too intellectual, or too filled with desire, or have lazy mind, then bowing helps this energy come down and balance our emotion and intellect. Also, bowing takes away lazy mind and takes away karma. As we said before, meditation means when you're doing something, just do it. This is a point that can be brought out in Zen that really strikes many people.

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

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

Another thing about practicing that's good for senior dharma teachers to be aware of, and teachers, is that often, after about three years, and sometimes between seven and ten years, people who are practicing have some problem in

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

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

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

Next point, I forget what number we’re up to. There are some books put out by our school of Dae Soen Sa Nim’s teaching that will be very helpful for teachers in providing stories, and also in giving us a very clear way of presenting our teaching. Dae Soen Sa Nim’s teaching speech is really excellent and I’ve found that it’s useful across cultural boundaries and in different countries and everywhere. He has excellent ways of talking about practicing and human life that people can really understand, that we as teachers can understand and know how to present. A book like *Only Don’t Know* has many practical ways in which Dae Soen Sa Nim applies Buddhist teaching to western people’s lives, so reading that over and over will give you a lot of good material to use when students ask questions. We don’t need to always just repeat what Dae Soen Sa Nim says, but if we understand things like the four kinds of bodhisattva action and other things like that, then it’s really possible to present those things in a very timely way when people present their problems to us. So the book *Only Don’t Know* has many kinds of good ways to practically apply Buddhist teaching to people’s lives and problems that we have in our lives.

The book *Compass of Zen* probably has the most complete presentation of Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching. He originally made the thin version of the *Compass of Zen* to teach to westerners what he called the bone of Buddhism so that they didn't only receive Zen style teaching from him, but would also understand the most important parts of Hinayana Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism and so be familiar with all of the major topics of Buddhist teaching. Of course he presents it from a Zen perspective, but by studying this thin version of *Compass of Zen*, we're aware of the major topics of Buddhism and are then better able to deal with questions and also understand other Buddhist practitioners when we meet them.

The thick version of *Compass of Zen* is a compilation of the many talks and lectures Dae Soen Sa Nim gave on the various topics of Buddhism that he had outlined in the original thin version of *Compass of Zen*. Included in there, of course, are many wonderful stories that bring out the points that he's trying to make, so that's a great book in combination with our practice to help us get a much wider view of Buddhism and to really understand from our Zen perspective all these various points. Every point in Buddhism is useful. Buddha said, "I'm a doctor who gives medicine according to the sickness that appears," so all the various kinds of his teaching appear and they're all useful in various situations.

Also, I find there are certain chapters in *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* that it's really beneficial for a teacher to be familiar with. First, the first chapter "Zen is Understanding Yourself" has a very basic talking about Zen practice and also gives this great example of the substance of the universe in terms of cookie dough. Every student should be familiar with the second chapter, "The Zen Circle." That really helps people understand our practicing direction. Many people have an intellectual approach to Buddhism or become attached to emptiness or are looking for spiritual powers, so this teaching really gives people a full view and will help them regulate themselves, as they practice, not to get attached to intellectual view, to emptiness, to special energy or special freedom, and also not to get too attached to just like this, to be able to use any of those things as a student presents them to help them in their practice.

"Advice to a Beginner," chapter number four, has Dae Soen Sa Nim's basic general teaching to new students. It's a little wordy, probably, for people nowadays, but it's good to be familiar with, the way Dae Soen Sa Nim presents his basic teaching. Many of these things in here are very good, chapter ten, "Not Difficult, Not Easy," is very important because some people say Zen practice is difficult, sometimes we say it's easy, but most important is don't make difficult, don't make easy, moment to moment just do it. That kind of speech is true, and so that helps people.

Chapter twenty, "What is Freedom?" is very good, especially in America or Europe, because many people are attached to freedom so understanding how to talk about freedom will help people. Whether they like what you say or not doesn't matter, this kind of teaching is true and is like planting a seed so that someday people will realize that this was true and they'll be very interested in looking up Zen again. Also the next chapter, twenty one, "Great Treasure," also has a very good point. Very important is chapter twenty-five, "Why We

Chant.” Often, people think of Zen as just sitting, so “Why We Chant” gives a much wider picture of what is the purpose of meditation and together action and why we have chanting practice.

Of course, if you’re good at remembering stories or you like them, most people like stories, it’s good to remember the stories of our lineage, of Won Hyo, which is chapter twenty-seven, of Kyong Ho Sunim, Man Gong Sunim, our Korean Ko Bong Sunim. There are many good stories in here that are really helpful. Two of the most helpful stories are chapter number thirty seven, “Buddha is Grass Shoes,” and chapter eighty two, “The Story of Sul.” Those are really wonderful stories and can always be used in beginning talks, in talks at new places, because they have some very deep and wonderful and clear points that people often have misconceptions about.

If you get questions about drugs, about people taking LSD, things like that, and how it relates to Zen, or people concerned about miracles, then if you’re familiar with chapters number forty five and forty six, then you’ve got some good material in which to answer people’s questions. Dae Soen Sa Nim used to always call these kinds of drugs special medicine or mirage medicine. He said that most people were attached to this world of name and form; they think it’s real. Then they take this mirage medicine and they see, “Oh, this is also only a dream.” But if you take this (what he called special medicine) a few times, then you get special medicine sickness. So, also, if you take many drugs, even if you stop, it makes your consciousness weak. Then later, when you really want to do something, if you’ve taken drugs a long time it’s very difficult to do it. So especially for young people, this kind of speech can be encouraging to some, “Don’t make your consciousness weak, then even if in the future you want to do something different, if you’ve made your consciousness weak, then it’s very difficult to do it. One day you can do it, next day you can’t. Next day you can, next day you can’t. So applying continuous effort is very difficult, so cutting drugs is very important and will really help someone’s life. Don’t make your consciousness weak.”

Chapters number fifty-one and fifty-three really put out in our teaching some clear delineation between samadhi or nirvana and anuttara samyak sambodhi, or satori, or what we call enlightenment. Now many people get mistaken on this point, looking for emptiness or bliss, the pleasure of a samadhi mind, one mind, and miss the point of attaining clear mind. Dae Soen Sa Nim says simply that samadhi is kind of “on the way.” Of course in the Platform Sutra by the Sixth Patriarch, he identifies samadhi and prajna in a certain way, saying that one is like the lamp and the other like the light. Of course, if your practice develops in the correct way so that samadhi and prajna develop together, then it is like that, but many people become attached to a false idea of samadhi and nirvana and basically find that in wanting peace and quiet, they miss the point of Zen practice which is to attain clear mind, which is our spontaneous compassionate mind that can respond in all situations and does so for the benefit of all people.

Another really good chapter is fifty-five, “Plastic Flowers, Plastic Mind.” Personally, I like all the stories in here, so any of the old stories are usually wonderful to read and people enjoy stories and they can help

them. Dae Soen Sa Nim used to encourage his students, particularly those who wanted to teach, to simply read his books or parts of his books over and over. Because they're not written as books, they were originally all kind of live presentations of talks of his interactions with his students, and they all come from some very live place. So just by reading certain ones over and over, then they combine with our practice and slowly become ours, and then you're able to use this kind of teaching at various times to really help people.

Next point, which may be number ten or number eleven, is helping new students. Dharma teachers' job is to develop their practice for their own benefit and also to help others. So when new students come, how do we help new students? One way is teaching our style, teaching our form, and conveying the spirit of our practice by your own energy and interest. I've already gone over in this many ways in which we teach our form. Conveying the spirit simply means yourself practicing, and at times, of course, you may be having difficulties and doubts and other times you may be quite inspired by our practice. You don't need to talk that out to students, but trying to help new students is also a great reflection for us and a great teaching to us as teachers.

Another way to help students is by setting an example. You don't even have to think of that consciously, in fact it's probably better that you don't, but if you're simply trying in your practice and your bodhisattva action is developing naturally, you'll already be setting a good example. The third point is to find ways to support new students, to support the directors of the Zen centers, and to support each other.

Be familiar with the temple rules. These were originally set down by Pai Chang and are a kind of modification of Pai Chang Zen Master's temple rules, which were written around the 800's in China and are the basic rules that all Zen temples in China, Japan, and Korea follow. They've been modified in various ways through the centuries but they're the basic rules, and great Zen masters like Ta Hui in China in the 1200's said nothing can top them for community living. Knowing them and reviewing them will help you in your own personal life, and then you can use them in various situations to help people in terms of advice and so forth.

Primary Point. This goes back to our teaching of substance, truth, and function. So, first point is primary point. If somebody becomes a Ji Do Poep Sa, they should of course know perfectly clearly how Dae Soen Sa Nim teaches primary point. He always says in interviews, always teach primary point for at least the first four or five interviews, even if the student gets it well. If someone's primary point is not clear and strong, then even if they can answer kong-ans in the beginning, later when things are more complicated or difficult, they will not be clear. So teaching this hit **hit!**, this primary point teaching is very important. But for many new students it's difficult to get until they really begin practicing then have some experience. This hit **hit!** we say means body, speech, and mind all become one, inside and outside become one, so hit means to cut off all thinking. Then very important is how do we use this in our everyday life. So you must find ways to communicate that through your own practice.

Another whole topic is soen yu, which I think I presented in another tape. So one aspect is teaching the basic breathing exercises, all founded on this dan jun ho. Another aspect is some of the teaching topics that Dae Soen Sa Nim mentions when teaching soen yu that help people develop faith in using this breathing technique and this practicing style. One point, which I won't go through thoroughly here, but is on the other tape of the soen yu teaching, is dae gi, kong gi, and won gi, great energy, space energy, and original energy, and how, through our breathing they all become one. Then, as this universe changes, we are also changing together with this universe. This kind of teaching gives people great faith in practicing, even when they're not experiencing results. Also, talking about how this slow breathing practice helps your body and helps your mind, also intellect, emotion, and action become one and have harmony. Those kinds of teaching words are very useful in talking about soen yu. #

One other one that I didn't talk about today when I taught soen yu is something a little whimsical that you can say sometimes that people get a kick out of and sometimes appreciate. He'll say **Dae Soen Sa Nim** that if someone practices soen yu everyday for a few months, then after some time, especially young people, but sometimes anyone, will be able to breathe one time every minute. So, maybe twenty seconds breathing in, forty seconds breathing out. And they can maintain that for quite a long time without any strain. So Dae Soen Sa Nim says, if you practice that way every day for one hour, every minute just breathe in one time, breathe out one time, for one hour a day, then living to a hundred and twenty years is no problem. If you practice this kind of breathing every day for two hours, slow slow breathe in, slow slow slow breathe out, every minute just one time breathe in breathe out, for two hours, then living to two hundred and forty years is no problem. If you go to the mountains, only stay in some place in the mountains, and every day, ten hours a day, slow breathe in, slow slow breathe out, every minute just one breath for ten hours every day, then living to seven hundred or eight hundred years is no problem. So people find that very funny, but sometimes it encourages them to try, regardless of their experience of result.

Next point, it's useful as a teacher to have some understanding of the history of our lineage, and a good book that brings out some of that is *One Thousand Peaks*. One doesn't have to be an expert of the history of Korean Buddhism, but to have the sense that Korean Zen comes originally from T'ang dynasty China through the sixth patriarch and the eighth patriarch Ma Jo, before the Chinese Zen actually split into five schools. That's useful to know, and to know that the Korean Zen style is very wide for that reason and not so attached to technique. Most important is this direction of attaining our true nature, perceiving our true self, and saving all beings from suffering. Then it kind of lays the foundation for how we actually have a very wide approach to technique and are very deeply rooted in the great tradition of T'ang dynasty Chinese Zen. Also, some of the stories of some of the lineage holders are very inspiring and brings up points that are very useful to everyone. So if one likes to do reading sometimes, then it can't hurt to read that stuff and then as you practice it just becomes part of you and then you can bring it out when it's useful or bring out some of the points that these other masters experienced

that will be useful in helping people when they're stuck or need encouragement.

The final point that I can think of today is some understanding of our School's organization. Basically, our teaching style is unified, and our practice style, and as a teacher we want you to have a very good understanding of what those are. Also, it's useful to have some understanding of Zen center organization. Throughout our Zen centers, as I said, the teaching and practice style is basically the same and the organizational style is roughly the same. Dae Soen Sa Nim kind of adapted Korean monastic administrative style to our western Zen centers, and most Zen centers find that that can function quite clearly. One thing that's nice about our school is that the exact practice schedule and some of the organizational structure can be adapted by a local Zen center to their city's or location's situation. But personally I think it's very important to try to maintain a clear following of our practice style and our teaching style. As you really digest our teaching style, you will be able to make use of the things in modern society to help people get faith in practicing and really find what correct practicing is.

One further point I just thought of is Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching about meditation and wisdom, particularly for people who already have a meditation practice but who may not be very clear about it or following something that does not seem from our point of view very clear, it can be helpful sometimes to talk about meditation and wisdom. Meditation means a not moving mind. When you're doing something, just do it. If one practices that way, one is able to get a strong center. But sometimes people have some deep experience in practicing, then they take this experience, turn it into some kind of understanding, then it's very difficult to teach them and they don't really get wisdom, they're just holding their understanding.

So wisdom, we say, comes from correct kong-an practicing and together action, especially important is correct kong-an practicing. So this having a big question, not holding on to my understanding, but having a big question, returning constantly to don't know mind and having the direction of saving all beings, then wisdom will appear. Some very important points that in our teaching are very clear, but that in some teachings aren't clear, are substance, truth, function, and also, meditation and wisdom. Wisdom is not something you carry around in your head, it's the ability to respond in a situation automatically that saves all beings from suffering.

I'm not sure if this is written up in any of our books, it might be, but there's a print out we used to give to new students of two talks that Dae Soen Sa Nim gave a long time ago. One was called "Become One," and the other was called "Primary Point." They're not very long, but they're very good to be familiar with because in them, he gives a very simple and clear explanation of meditation, and also of primary point, with some good concrete everyday life examples that are very helpful to be familiar with and will help your practice and help you in your teaching. All of Dae Soen Sa Nim's teaching words point to the same point, just like all of the various languages in the world's words for water are pointing to this thing that is not the word "water", but when you're thirsty, you drink it. So it's valuable through your own practice to digest the



meaning of all these teaching phrases and to realize when you're teaching people, too, that if they start practicing, then they'll really come to have some intuitive understanding of what the Zen Master is talking about.

So in teaching others, one of the main things is to give them don't know mind, then whether they follow that into practicing or not, is up to them. So I hope that covering some of these topics is useful and they're the main areas in our teaching that I think it's very important for a dharma teacher or a senior dharma teacher or one of the other teaching positions to be familiar with, and to, through their practice digest, and then you have a lot of material that will help you in your life and practice and help you teach others. Thank you very much.

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