

Go Straight

**A collection of Dharma Talks
by Teachers of the
Kwan Um School of Zen**

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A Bad Situation is a Good Situation

BY MU SANG SUNIM

Traveling with Zen Master Seung Sahn in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union last spring, I was repeatedly struck by his teaching: "A good situation is a bad situation; a bad situation is a good situation." The whole region is in upheaval. For ordinary people, getting even the simplest things can be an arduous task. And yet over and over I found people who, far from concentrating on their possessions, had a strong desire to practice and find the true way. In many ways I was reminded of America in the sixties: young people struggling to find the truth in a world that made no sense.

Scenes from a journey: One woman and five men take novice monk/nun precepts at the Warsaw Zen Center in Poland. They are all in their early twenties. Not wasting any time, with complete faith in his students' potential, Zen Master Seung Sahn tells them, "Each Bodhisattva has a special job. So you must each pick out some kind of practicing, only go straight, then completely understand your mind, become Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, then become Zen Masters."

Again at the Warsaw Zen Center, a group of young students come up and ask me to teach them Soen Yu, Zen Master Seung Sahn's breathing-energy exercises. I haven't taught Soen Yu for years - I haven't practiced it for years (I've been in a funk). But what can I do? They asked, so I teach. Slowly I remember the exercises, They feel just right. The students love them. By the end of the class we're all very happy. People are asking me all kinds of questions — their sincerity, openness, and lack of checking amaze me, give me energy. "Now you are again Soen Yu Master," says Zen Master Seung Sahn, half serious, half joking as usual. I've been practicing Soen Yu regularly ever since.

Zen Master Seung Sahn is giving a Dharma talk in a Tibetan center in Leningrad. The center is just a musty room in an abandoned building maintained by squatters, with a few Tibetan-style pictures on the wall. The room is full, about 50 people. The students are all young, with long hair and beatific smiles, just like our flower children in the sixties. Zen Master Seung Sahn says, "In this world, very few people understand their minds. Most people nowadays are totally controlled by the animal mind inside them. They only have desire. So this world is getting worse and worse — Christians say, 'End of this world.' But I say it is the beginning of a new world. Any fruit first has a very good form, very good color, but not such a good taste. Then later, when it becomes ripe, the form and color are not so good, but the taste is very good. Then finally, the fruit becomes rotten — then inside, the seeds are completely ripe. A new tree can be born. So you must all find your don't-know seeds, then no matter what occurs, for you it will be no problem." The students gaze at Zen Master Seung Sahn intently, still smiling.

At another Dharma talk, this time in Moscow, we encounter a different kind of energy, and it requires stronger teaching. Two older men, obviously believers in Communism, dominate the question period. One wants to know what Zen has to do with social responsibility. Zen Master Seung Sahn asks him, "What are you? If you understand your true self, there are no opposites. Then you and the universe become one. Then helping other people is very easy, automatic." The man starts to argue. Zen Master Seung Sahn waves his hand - "Sit down please!"

Another starts to argue in the same vein. Zen Master Seung Sahn asks in the middle of the old man's harangue, "You have a son? If you're holding your opinion, then you and your son cannot communicate, cannot become one. But if you put down your opinion, your condition, your situation, then your son and you will have a very good relationship." A chord has been struck - for the rest of the talk the man sits, head down, holding his face in his hands.

In Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, we have a Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Everyone is anxious about the dangers facing the country, about provocations by the Red Army. About 80 people come for the retreat from all over the Soviet Union. Do Am Sunim, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim and head of the Polish Sangha, has been coming here to teach for several months now, stirring up interest in Zen practice. In January he stood outside the Parliament building with his students, joining a large group of Lithuanians defying the Russian soldiers. A student with whom he had been talking one evening was killed by attacking Soviet soldiers the next day. The Lithuanian students admire Do Am Sunim very much for standing with them, and they are ready to meet the Zen Master.

Zen Master Seung Sahn tells them, "I understand your mind. Long ago when I was young, Korea was controlled by Japan. At that time we only wanted to drive out the Japanese. Win or lose didn't matter - we only wanted to fight. We just did it. But if you understand your mind, then fighting is not necessary. You can keep your correct situation, condition, and opinion. "You come here to practice. That is wonderful. In this world how many people want to understand their minds? Not so many. So I say to you, you are special."

Afterwards we have a Precepts Ceremony: thirty-three people take the five precepts, among them several youths, one of whom looks like he cannot be older than thirteen; five people become Dharma Teachers. I think about our Zen centers in America, where nowadays so few young people are involved, and wonder why it is that here people find it so easy to believe in Zen Master Seung Sahn.

The economies in this area are in disarray. In the Soviet Union we find there is a two-tiered economic system: one tier for those with dollars, another one for those with roubles. In many places, if you want to stay in a good hotel or go to a restaurant with good service, you must pay in dollars — pay a lot. And Soviet citizens are often not allowed in unless accompanied by Westerners. On the other hand, where goods and services are offered for roubles, the prices, by Western standards, are very low. A deluxe buffet breakfast in our hotel in Leningrad cost the equivalent of 30¢. But this is no solace for Soviet citizens, who make an average of \$10 a month! The result is that ordinary Soviets feel

shut out of their system. They are looking for a change - and their openness to Zen is one aspect of their search.

In the newly-capitalistic Eastern European countries there are many new millionaires - former Communists who stole from the state, and now, ironically, are set for life. Now they are becoming the prime capitalists. But there are many opportunities for ordinary people too. In Poland, sixteen and seventeen year old boys get together and pool their money. One of them gets a truck, takes it to Western Europe, buys a load of bananas, and brings it back. They divide the load, each taking some of the bananas and selling them on the street. Then they pool their profits and do it again. Everywhere you see people selling even tiny quantities of goods in little stalls on the street. So nowadays, unlike before, you can find all kinds of Western goods in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia. Most people don't yet have the money to buy them. But the people are free, and happy to be so. And everywhere they are trying.

Riding through Leningrad in a large bus we have rented for the day, Zen Master Seung Sahn is talking to our Russian students. He finds out that now people can own their own homes. Houses are very cheap by American standards. "You buy an old building, fix it up, make a Zen center. We will help you," Zen Master Seung Sahn says, ever alert to possibilities for encouraging his students.

People talk a lot about new business possibilities. The government is also beginning to give land to the farmers. "Soon everything will change," says Zen Master Seung Sahn. "There will be lots of cars, the roads will be widened, everything will open up, politically and economically." The Russian students look dubious. "You must understand," says Dorota, a senior Zen student from Poland who is traveling with us, "ten years ago when the Solidarity leaders were in jail, Zen Master Seung Sahn told us that Solidarity would win. We all thought he was crazy. But it's happened, now Poland's politics have changed completely. Soon it will happen here too."

We ride on, admiring the broad streets, the stately rows of old buildings on the River Neva - some of us seeing ghosts from the past, some of us looking deeply into a future that is ours alone to make together.

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Zen is Very Simple

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Zen is very simple... What are you?

In this whole world everyone searches for happiness outside, but nobody understands their true self inside.

Everybody says, "I" — "I want this, I am like that..." But nobody understands this "I." Before you were born, where did your I come from? When you die, where will your I go? If you sincerely ask, "what am I?" sooner or later you will run into a wall where all thinking is cut off. We call this "don't know."

Zen is keeping this "Don't Know" mind always and everywhere.

When walking, standing, sitting,
lying down, speaking, being
silent, moving, being still.
At all times, in all places, without
interruption — what is this?
One mind is infinite kalpas.

Meditation in Zen means keeping don't-know mind when bowing, chanting and sitting Zen. This is formal Zen practice. And when doing something, just do it. When driving, just drive; when eating, just eat; when working, just work.

Finally, your don't-know mind will become clear. Then you can see the sky, only blue. You can see the tree, only green. Your mind is like a clear mirror. Red comes, the mirror is red; white comes the mirror is white. A hungry person comes, you can give him food; a thirsty person comes, you can give her something to drink. There is no desire for myself, only for all beings. That mind is already enlightenment, what we call Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. It's very simple, not difficult!

So Buddha said that all beings have Buddha-nature (enlightenment nature). But Zen Master Joju said that a dog has no Buddha-nature. Which one is right? Which one is wrong? If you find that, you find the true way.

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Why We Chant

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

One Sunday evening, after a Dharma talk at the International Zen Center of New York, a student asked Seung Sahn Soen-sa, "Why do you chant? Isn't sitting Zen enough?"

Soen-sa said, "This is a very important matter. We bow together, chant together, eat together, sit together, and do many other things together here at the Zen Center. Why do we practice together?"

Everybody has different karma. So all people have different situations, different conditions, and different opinions. One person is a monk, another is a student, another works in a factory; one person always keeps a clear mind, another is often troubled or dissatisfied; one person likes the women's movement, another doesn't. But everybody thinks, "My opinion is correct!" Even Zen Masters are like this. Ten Zen Masters will have ten different ways of teaching, and each Zen Master will think that his way is the best. Americans have an American opinion; Orientals have an Oriental opinion. Different opinions result in different actions, which make different karma. So when you hold on to your own opinions, it is very difficult to control your karma, and your life will remain difficult. Your wrong opinions continue, so your bad karma continues. But at our Zen Centers, we live together and practice together, and all of us abide by the Temple Rules. People come to us with many strong likes and dislikes, and gradually cut them all off. Everybody bows together 108 times at five-thirty in the morning, everybody sits together, everybody eats together, everybody works together. Sometimes you don't feel like bowing; but this is a temple rule so you bow. Sometimes you don't want to chant, to sleep; but you chant. Sometimes you are tired and want to rest but you know that if you don't come to sitting, people will wonder why; so you sit.

When we eat, we eat in ritual style, with four bowls; and after we finish eating, we wash out the bowls with tea, using our index finger to clean them. The first few times we ate this way, nobody liked it. One person from the Cambridge Zen Center came to me very upset. "I can't stand this way of eating! The tea gets full of garbage! I can't drink it!" I said to him, "Do you know the Heart Sutra?" "Yes." "Doesn't it say that things are neither tainted nor pure?" "Yes." "Then why can't you drink the tea?" "Because it's filthy." (Laughter from the audience.) "Why is it filthy? These crumbs are from the food that you already ate. If you think the tea is dirty, it is dirty. If you think it is clean, it is clean." He said, "You're right. I will drink the tea." (Laughter.)

So we live together and act together. Acting together means cutting off my opinions, cutting off my condition, cutting off my situation. Then we become empty mind. We return to white paper. Then our true opinion, our true

condition, our true situation will appear. When we bow together and chant together and eat together, our minds become one mind. It is like on the sea. When the wind comes, there are many waves. When the wind dies down, the waves become smaller. When the wind stops, the water becomes a mirror, in which everything is reflected-mountains, trees, clouds. Our mind is the same. When we have many desires and many opinions, there are many big waves. But after we sit Zen and act together for some time, our opinions and desires disappear. The waves become smaller and smaller. Then our mind is like a clear mirror, and everything we see or hear or smell or taste or touch or think is the truth. Then it is very easy to understand other people's minds. Their minds are reflected in my mind.

So chanting is very important. At first you won't understand. But after you chant regularly, you will understand. "Ah, chanting — very good feeling!" It is the same with bowing 108 times. At first people don't like this. Why do we bow? We are not bowing to Buddha, we are bowing to ourselves. Small I is bowing to Big I. Then Small I disappears and becomes Big I. This is true bowing. So come practice with us. You will soon understand."

From *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*

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Finding Your Primary Point

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Zen Master Seung Sahn gave the following Dharma Talk at the Providence Zen Center the evening before the April Yong Maeng Jong Jin 1977.

I often talk about primary point. What is primary point? When you have a scale and there is nothing being weighed, the indicator points to zero. You put something on it, and the pointer swings to "one pound." You take it off, the pointer goes back to zero. This is primary point. After you find your primary point, then good feelings come, bad feelings come, so your pointer swings in one direction or the other. But this doesn't matter. Don't check it. When the feeling is over with, the pointer swings back to zero.

But if you haven't found your primary point, then it is like taking a heavy object off of the scale and having the pointer stay at "ten pounds." Or the pointer moves back only part-way, it doesn't go completely back to zero. Then you have a problem. Your scale does not weigh correctly. Maybe if you put a heavy object on it, it will break completely.

So first you must find your primary point. Then you must keep it very strongly.

A taxi has weak shock absorbers, so it hits a small bump and bounces up and down. A train has strong shock absorbers, so it is very steady. If you keep your primary point, your mind-spring will become stronger and stronger. You will meet big problems and your mind will move less and less. A big problem comes, your mind moves, but soon returns to primary point. Finally your mind will be very strong; it will be able to carry any load. Then saving all people is possible.

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Already This World Gives You Your Job

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Cambridge Zen Center, 6th April 1989.

Zen Master Seung Sahn: Compassion mind means only help other people. Not thinking about me – only helping other people. Choice means great vow; great vow means “Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all.” That’s choice: “Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all”. That’s the human being’s original job...

So, questions?

Question: Human beings’ job is to save all beings. How did we get this job?

ZMSS: So, what are you doing right now?

Q: Picking my fingernails.

ZMSS: Hah, picking my fingernails. Yes. Sitting on a cushion, talking with you, yes? That’s your job. Just do it! (*Laughter*) Very simple. Don’t make anything. Moment to moment just do it! When you drive, just drive. Don’t think of girlfriend, okay. If you have a girlfriend, then you have a problem. Policeman appears, gives you ticket, then you lose money.

So when you do something, just do it! Moment to moment to moment to moment, just do it, do it, do it. Do it means there is no subject, no object, no inside, no outside; outside, inside, BOOM! become one. Do-it mind means, if somebody is hungry, give them food, somebody is thirsty, give them drink, okay? Only help other people. There is no I-my-me. In do-it mind there is no I-my-me. Already this world gives you your job. When you are working in the office, just work in the office. Do you have a wife?

Q: My wife? Oh, yes.

ZMSS: Then if you have a wife, then one hundred per cent love your wife. “Oh, I love you!” Then your wife will be very happy: “Oh, my husband loves me!” (*Laughter*) Don’t make anything, okay? If you keep your opinion, your wife won’t like you. “I don’t like your idea!” Fighting, always fighting! So put it down, any opinion, any condition, any situation – only love your wife. Then your wife very happy, also happy you! You have children?

Q: Yes.

ZMSS: Good, then, if you are with your children, one hundred percent love your children. One hundred per cent father's mind. Very important. You have parents?

Q: Yes.

ZMSS: Every week, what do your parents like? Maybe drink or chocolate or cookies, then buy something, then visit your parents: "I love you! My mother, my father." They will be very happy – "Yaaah!" (Laughter) This your job, okay? You must understand that, it's very simple. Only if I-my-me appears, you cannot do that.

One hundred per cent father's mind, one hundred per cent husband's mind, one hundred per cent son's mind – you must do it! That's your job. Okay? Try it.

Okay, more questions. Over there.

Question: Here's a historical query. The other day you mentioned that you realized your Zen mastery at 22. How did that come to you, was it from meditation, or something, a realisation of the "I" at that point? Can you tell me that?

ZMSS: Someone asked this great Zen Master, "Before got enlightenment, what happened? After got enlightenment, what happened?" Then he said, "Before got enlightenment, when I see sky, sky is blue. After got enlightenment, sky also blue." (Laughter) That's all. "Before I got enlightenment, mountain is blue. After got enlightenment, also mountain is blue." That's all. Nothing at all. Only believe in my true self, one hundred per cent.

So ask, "What am I?" Don't know. Don't know. Do you understand "you"? Don't know, yes? You must believe in your true self one hundred per cent, you must attain don't know. That's all. If you attain don't-know, it means attain everything, because don't-know is everything, everything is don't-know. But don't-know is don't know – nothing at all.

So, more questions?

Question: Dogs don't think. Are they enlightened?

ZMSS: Of course. Dog has dog enlightenment. (Laughter) What is dog enlightenment? You understand that? Don't understand? You ask me, what is dog's enlightenment. You ask me...

Q: What is dog enlightenment?

ZMSS: Woof, woof! (Laughter) Okay? Do it, do it! Okay? Dogs only do it, woof woof, that's all. So your human job, what is your human job? You don't understand.

Q: Think.

ZMSS: Thinking? What kind of thinking?

Q: Think. That's what humans are supposed to do.

ZMSS: But what kind of thinking? So that's the problem. Just think. Not holding thinking. Just think. What kind of color is that wall? What color?

Q: Yellow.

ZMSS: Yellow – correct. That's "just think". What kind of color is the sky?

Q: Blue.

ZMSS: Correct! Very good. You understand. You got enlightenment already.

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How Can I Help You?

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

The sky is blue. The tree is green. The dog barks "woof, woof". Sugar is sweet. When you see, when you hear, when you smell, when you taste, when you touch, when you think, everything, just like that, is complete. There is no subject and no object at that point. Everything becomes one. Correct situation, correct relation and correct function becomes clear at that moment. When someone is hungry, you give them food. When someone is thirsty, you give them drink. When your mind is clear, it is possible to function to help others. This is Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. When we see a person who is suffering, or hear that someone is suffering, our compassion immediately responds and wants to help.

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Death

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Cambridge Zen Center on the 10th December 1995.

Question: Can you talk about death and dying? What is death?

DSSN: What is death? I have no experience! (*Much laughter.*) Last night I lay down and slept. No dreams. No consciousness. No thinking. Where is my consciousness?

Some religions say, if you believe in God you go to heaven. In Japanese Zen, when you die, if you believe in Buddha, you go to nirvana. Any religion says, if you die, you go some place.

That is because we have consciousness. Consciousness does not die. This my body: that's my head, that's my hand, that is my body. My body has life and death. But my true self has no life, no death.

Buddha sat under the bodhi tree for six years. Then one morning he saw a star. Boom! Got enlightenment. Attain my true self.

So, who are you? Everybody says "I am I". What is "I"?

Don't understand.

Too much understanding! Human beings have too much understanding. Too much understanding, too much have problems. Little bit understanding, little problem. If you don't know, no problem! (*Laughter.*) That's the point: if you don't know, no problem. So Don't-Know mind is very important.

Much understanding means somebody's idea; it's somebody's idea that makes problems for me. Many desires, cannot get the desires, then get angry, then ignorance appears, make ignorant actions – stupid actions. So then you have problems.

So Buddha is teaching us, you must attain your true self. If I ask you, "Who are you?", what do you say? You know what I mean? Human beings have much understanding, but don't understand anything!

When a dog is barking, Korean people say the dog is barking "meong-meong" American people say the dog is barking "woof-woof". Polish people say dog is barking "how-how". So different sounds, okay? Koreans say "meong-meong",

American say “woof-woof”, Polish say “how-how”. So which kind of dog barking is correct?

Student: Ours is. American. Ours is. (*Much laughter.*)

DSSN: You are attached to American! I hit you thirty times! (*laughter*)

So “meong-meong” is Korean people barking, “woof-woof” is American people barking, also “how-how” is Polish people barking – not dog barking, people barking. You must become 100% dog, then dog barking appears. That is our practicing. Only understanding cannot help. Nowadays, too much understanding, so you have problems. ...

You must attain your true self and find your correct job. Everybody’s got a job. Teacher’s job or engineer’s job, storehouse-working job over there, any kind. Everybody has a job. Mother’s job, father’s job, children’s job, any kind of person has a job.

But what is your true original job? What is a human being’s original job? That is the perfect job.

So Zen means to find human beings’ original job. This body, my head, my hand, my body, someday will disappear. Then your consciousness, that controls your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, whatever thing controls, where does it go? Don’t understand!

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Great Doubt

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Shin Won Sah, February 9th 1990.

Question: What is great doubt? ...

DSSN: Everybody thinks about “great doubt”. You know, that’s don’t-know mind.

A long time ago in New Haven Zen Center, there was this young university teacher, who was teaching music in Yale University. In the morning during YMJJ time, he said, “Soen Sa Nim, I have a problem.”

“What kind of problem?”

“You are teaching me don’t-know. That is very, very wonderful, so I want to keep don’t-know mind all the time. But when I am teaching music, I have a problem appear. I want to keep don’t-know mind, then I cannot teach music correctly. I want to teach music correctly and keep don’t-know mind, but that’s not possible. If don’t-know mind becomes clear, I cannot teach music correctly; if I’m teaching music correctly, don’t-know mind is already gone. Not there! Only music! So I have a problem. I want to teach music correctly and keep don’t-know mind.”

So I asked him: “What is don’t-know mind?”

Then he hit the floor.

“Only that?”

“No. Wall is white, floor is yellow.”

“Correct. When you are teaching music, just teach music. That means don’t know. 100% only teaching music.”

So you think about great doubt. What is great doubt? Great doubt’s name is “Don’t Know”. 100% don’t know means great doubt. So great doubt becomes clear means: when you are doing something, just do it. That’s all! If you say, “I am doing something and I want to keep don’t-know mind”, then you have a problem. That is wanting something, already: “I want something: keeping clear”; “100% keep don’t-know mind”; that’s already odd. “I want to keep don’t-know and try mind, do-it mind.”

Do-it mind and don’t know mind: which one is correct? (Laughter) So don’t-know mind is do-it mind, do-it mind is don’t-know mind. Not special. So moment to moment become clear, means: already that is the great doubt, that is the don’t-know mind. ...

Q: ...so never think that great doubt is not necessary?

DSSN: Don’t make great doubt. Then already great doubt helps you.

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Broken Consciousness

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a talk given by Zen Master Seung Sahn at Hwa Gye Sah Temple, Seoul, Korea on June 9, 1997.

Question: Twenty years ago I was a soldier in Vietnam. At that time I had some bad experiences. These experiences still effect my consciousness today — my consciousness is a little bit "broken." How can I fix my consciousness?

ZMSS: During the Vietnam war many young people went over there to fight. War is a very bad situation, but this war was even worse. The soldiers could not even tell who the enemy was. Even the soldiers on the same side were sometimes fighting each other. Also, the people at home didn't completely support the soldiers. So there were many bad experiences and many came back with their consciousness damaged. How do you fix this consciousness? Broken consciousness comes from karma. Not just war: bad family situation, natural disasters — many kinds of bad experiences can have a lasting effect on our consciousness. Most important is, how do you take away your karma?

The only way to fix your consciousness is through strong practicing. Two kinds of practicing are important: bowing and mantra. First, every day and do bowing practice. Slow, slow bowing. Next is mantra. Choose one mantra — Kwan Seum Bosal or any mantra — then do it. Only try, try, try mantra. This problem means you have a lot of thinking many opinions. These appear from "me." Doing bowing and mantra practice doesn't have "I, my or me." Inside and outside become one — boom! If you try that, then your karma will slowly disappear. Only do it, then finally your consciousness will be clean, then your problem will disappear. Only practicing will help you. Reading books and understanding will not help you. OK? Only do it!

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Fixing a Pot

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

At a Dharma Speech at the end of the November Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the International Zen Center of New York, Zen Master Seung Sahn told the following story:

In the countryside of Korea, people used to come together for big markets that lasted several days. Once a young man went to sell his vegetables and buy some rice. While he was there he saw an old monk just standing completely still in the sun for five minutes. The monk was wearing wintertime clothes, and they were old and torn. It was summer, and the sun was very hot — Korean people don't like this sun — but this old monk just stood still for five minutes.

The young man thought as he watched him, "This old monk, is he crazy? Does he have no consciousness, only standing still like this?" So afterwards, when the monk started walking around, the young man went up to him and said, "Excuse me, I would like to know why you stand still in the sun for five minutes."

The old man looked at him and said, "Lunch time."

"Lunch time? Who is having lunch?"

The old monk showed him the inside of his robe — there were little animals, parasites, like lice. "If I move, they cannot eat, so I only stand still while they take lunch."

The young man thought this monk must have a wonderful mind, to be so kind to little animals, so he asked him if he could become his student.

The monk looked at his face and said, "Not possible."

"Why not possible?" asked the young man.

"Why do you want to become a monk?"

"Well, I don't like married life. I want to find the correct way. You say you give lunch to these small animals, so I have this very strong feeling that maybe this is the correct way. So I like you, so I want to be your student."

"Maybe," said the monk, "Maybe. Where do live?"

"My parents are dead, so I stay at my brother's house. I have no place of my own; I want to come with you."

"O.K.," said the old monk, "come."

Then they went walking up deep into the mountains for a long time, until they reached a small grass house.

In Korea, kitchens are outside of the house. In the kitchen there is a big pot, on a stand, with fire under it. The pot is made of steel, very heavy. It has two parts: one side for water and one side for rice.

So in this house the pot and the stand were broken. Fixing the pot means pouring a little water into the bottom of the pot and making sure it settles exactly in the middle of the bottom of the pot.

The monk said to the young man, "You must fix this pot and stand."

When he had finished, the young man said, "Master, I have fixed the pot."

So the old monk went to check and said, "No good! Again!" and he dumped the water out.

The young man thought, "This Master has very keen eyes, so maybe he sees some mistake." So, he tried again, this time being very careful and checking the level of the water in the pot. When he had finished he said, "Master, I have correctly fixed the pot."

"O.K., I will check." So the Master went to check the pot and again he said, "No good! Again!" and dumped the water out.

The young man was very confused. "Where is my mistake? I don't understand. Maybe it is outside the pot, maybe the stand is not correct." So this time, he prepared the pot and checked all around the outside, the counter area, making sure everything was clean and neat. When he finished up said, "Master, I have fixed the pot — it's very wonderful, very beautiful!"

"No good!" said the Master, and dumped the water out.

The young man did not understand. "Maybe the pot is good, but the kitchen is no good," he thought. So next time he fixed the whole kitchen — the ceiling, the floor, everything. When he finished, he called to the Master, "Master! I have fixed the whole kitchen!"

"Oh, that's wonderful! I will check," said the Master. He went to the pot — "No good!" and turned it over again.

This happened four times, five times, six times, seven times, eight times. Each time the young man thought, "What could it be this time?" and each time the Master answered, "No good!" and dumped the water. Now this man is getting

angry. Finally the ninth time, the young man thought, "I do not like this Master, this is the last time!"

So he just set the pot on the stand and said, "Master, I am finished."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" said the Master.

This Master was testing his mind. Zen is not dependent on anything. You must be dependent on yourself, whatever your own style is. But what is your own style? If you keep your opinions, your condition, your situation, your correct style cannot appear. So this Master tested his mind. Before, each time when the student fixed the pot, "maybe this will pass, maybe this will pass;" much thinking. The last time, no thinking.

Also this Master tested his perseverance mind. "This young man likes me, but how much does he want to understand his true self?" Usually people try maybe four, maybe five times, then they say, "I don't like you!" Then they go away. Try, try, try is very necessary, then some time the Zen Master will say, "Oh, wonderful!"

Only this mind, try, try, try, is very important. Try, try, try means persevere. So you must only go straight, try, try, try — then you will get your true way.

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Keep the Great Vow

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

During his visit to Europe last spring (year?), Zen Master Seung Sahn gave a kong-an talk after the morning sitting each day. What follows is part of a talk he gave in London.

Enlightenment is a name. This name is only a teaching word. Originally there is no Enlightenment. Already everybody has everyday Enlightenment. Drinking coffee — coffee Enlightenment; walking — walking Enlightenment; watching television — watching-television Enlightenment; driving your car — driving Enlightenment. Moment to moment, only Enlightenment, Enlightenment, Enlightenment. Enlightenment means clear mind. Clear mind means there is no subject, no object, no inside, no outside. Outside and inside

already become one. If you have becoming one, what do you want? That's all! That's enough!

So moment to moment keep clear mind, moment to moment get Enlightenment. It's not special. If you make special, if you make Enlightenment and un-Enlightenment, you cannot get Enlightenment. This mind already separates Enlightenment and un-Enlightenment, so it makes Enlightenment special. So no Enlightenment. The Heart Sutra says, "No attainment with nothing to attain." You must attain no Enlightenment. There is nothing. Nothing is also not correct. When you drink, only drink. When you are tired, only sleep. If someone is hungry, give them food. That's all. It is very simple.

Everybody has too much understanding, so they are not simple. Not being simple, they want Enlightenment, they make something. If you want Enlightenment, maybe you spend your whole life practicing, but you cannot get it. Even if you spend an infinite time sitting Zen, you cannot get Enlightenment. So we say, put it all down. But many people want something. This wanting something comes from our karma. Everybody has karma. When karma appears, you lose clear mind. When karma appears, you lose yourself. So this mind is not clear.

Long ago there were great monks and scholars who had great understanding. They understood all philosophies — Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism. They understood, but they completely digested this understanding. If you digest all your understanding, then your mind is very simple. But if you understand many things, read a lot of books, talk a lot, experience a lot, but you cannot digest this, then you cannot get your own things. You have many things that belong to others. So this mind is very complicated. It cannot decide. This means your intellect controls you. If you put other ideas into your mind, you must digest them. Then they become yours. This is very important. So scholars long ago took everything in and then digested it. But their mind was nothing. It's like a computer. A computer can do many different operations, but when it's resting, it's nothing! Push a button — click, click, the answer appears. Very simple. So put everything into your mind, then digest it, then when you use it, pick out the right thing. Then the answer appears.

So the ancient scholars and great Zen Masters' speech, understanding, and actions always became one. But people today cannot digest, so their understanding goes this way, their actions go that way.

One day Mang Gong Sunim, my grand-teacher, visited Kyeong Ho Sunim, his teacher. It was Kyeong Ho Sunim's birthday, so Mang Gong Sunim brought some meat, drink, and some rice cakes with him. Kyeong Ho Sunim was very happy to see Mang Gong Sunim.

"You are so busy, how can you find time to come?"

Mang Gong Su Nim said, "No, no, Master, I am not busy. It's your birthday, so I'm visiting you. You already have everything, so I'm just bringing you this food." So he took out the meat, the alcohol, and the rice cakes.

Kyeong Ho Sunim said, "Oh, wonderful! Where did you get all this?"

Mang Gong Sunim said, "Nowadays I have no hindrance. If someone gives me wine, I drink. If they don't, I don't drink. If someone gives me meat, I eat. Meat and rice are the same. If they don't, I don't eat. If rice cakes come, I eat rice cakes." This style talking.

The Kyeong Ho Sunim said, "Oh Mang Gong Su Nim, you are wonderful. But my mind is not this style."

"Oh? What is your style, Master?"

"I cannot get freedom. I want something. Maybe I want garlic. In the temple there is no garlic, so I go to the city, I buy some garlic, I put it in the ground, it grows up, a lot of garlic appears, then I eat it."

When Mang Gong Sunim heard this, his mind went, "Bong!" "Zen Master," he said, "I am sorry. Before I didn't understand. Now I understand."

Mang Gong Sunim's mind was only original Enlightenment. Kyeong Ho Su Nim's speech was final Enlightenment. In original Enlightenment, everything is no hindrance. Seeing just like this is truth; hearing just like this is truth; everything just like this is truth. So there is no hindrance. Everything is O.K. Practicing is O.K., not practicing is O.K..

This is already past primary point. Attaining primary point is first Enlightenment; only like this is original Enlightenment. Final Enlightenment means, not only for me. I want something, for all people. This means, you must keep the Great vow. Then you must go straight. Don't check yourself. If you say, "Something comes, I eat; nothing comes, I don't eat," there is no vow there, there is no Bodhisattva, no great love, no compassion. Coming is O.K., going is O.K., suffering is O.K., not suffering is O.K. This style mind is no good. You must go straight, do hard training for other people. This is correct teaching. So soon Mang Gong Su Nim understood: "Ah, I am sorry."

So I hope you only go straight don't know, do hard training for other people, attain Enlightenment, Great Love, Great Compassion, and the Great Bodhisattva Way, and save all people from suffering. Thank you.

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I Want to Be Like You

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Cambridge Zen Center on the 10th December 1995.

Question: If I want to be like you, is it possible without a master? (*Much laughter, continuing.*)

DSSN: Already you have it. Already you have it. Everybody liked your speech, so everybody laughs, “Ha ha ha!” That is wonderful.

Don't make “master”, don't make “I”, okay? Don't make “I”. Don't make “master”. Moment to moment, just do it. When you are eating, just eat. When you are driving, just drive. If you are thinking, thinking, thinking about girlfriend, thinking about family, then you will make a big accident – *psheu!* Put it down. Driving time, just drive. Talking time just talking. Sitting time just sitting. Walking time just walking. Moment to moment, when you are doing something, just DO IT!

Then you and me are never separate. Okay? No problem? Ha, ha ha! Good! Try that. Very simple. Don't make complicated, okay? Human beings have too much understanding, so only hold understanding, so make it complicated.

Only keep don't-know mind, that's very simple. “What am I?” Only don't know. Only don't know driving and walking and eating – everything. Then very simple mind appears. Simple mind is clear like space. Clear like space means you can do anything. That is our original mind, original nature.

Everybody makes something; holding something in your mind, then you have problems. So we say, “Put it all down! Put it all down! What am I? Only go straight, don't know!” Keep don't-know mind. And keep don't-know mind as you eat, drive, walking, everything. Possible. Okay? Try that.

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Mind Light and Karma Wind

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a Dharma Talk at Cambridge Zen Center, July 7 1989.

Zen means correct meditation: not-moving mind, everything becomes clear. Not-moving mind, then your mind light appears. Mind light appears, then correct shining, then correct seeing, correct hearing, is possible. But if you are moving your mind, then you cannot see correctly, cannot hear correctly. If somebody is shaking your body, you cannot see correctly.

Sun rising in the east mountains, then brightness! So you can see the mountain is blue, the sky is blue, the world is white, the floor is black – everything. If you have no light, only dark, you cannot separate red or white. If you have light, you are clear; any kind of colour, any kind of form, any kind of thing you can see correctly, you can hear correctly, you can use correctly. Correct function, correct situation is possible.

Same as that, your mind light is very important. If your mind light is shining then you can see this world correctly and also correctly see your way, and the truth and correct life.

So how is your mind light bright? Not moving! If you are moving, there's a wind coming this way – we say that is the karma wind – and takes away your mind light. If you are not moving, the karma wind does not appear. Mind moving, the karma wind appears and takes away your mind light. So if mind is not moving, karma does not appear; if karma does not appear, you have no karma wind, so then it cannot take away your mind light. So your mind light is very important, that's why I talk about it.

So I hope you only go straight, only use don't-know, then your mind light is bright, then everything is clear. So with don't-know energy, your mind light is bright, you see correctly, hear correctly, smell correctly, touch correctly, thinking correct, find your correct way and truth and correct life, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Thank you.

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Moment-Mind

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a question-and-answer session at Cambridge Zen Center, 6th April 1989.

This world is very complicated, but if you don't make anything, this world is never complicated. If you make something complicated, this world is very complicated. So don't make "complicated". How can you not make complicated? Don't make anything. Only moment to moment to moment, just do it. Just do it.

This moment-mind is very important. If the moment is clear, past is clear, future is clear. But everybody loses the moment and thinks about the future: maybe tomorrow I this and that... already loses this moment. Also checking the past: yesterday I this and that, checking this past, already loses this moment. But moment-to-moment clear means already in this moment you have infinite time, infinite space. So moment clear means future clear. Moment clear means past clear. So past, present, future, all become clear in that moment. Moment-mind is very important.

So everybody just attain moment to moment to moment. Very important. How do you attain your moment? That means practicing. If you don't have strong practicing, you lose the moment, because your back-seat driver always controls you. "This way, this way, this way, that way, that way, that way." Then already you lose the moment.

But you must drive your rental car. Moment to moment: red light, stop; green light, go. Okay? If you are only thinking, thinking, thinking, then you lose the moment. Then that means the back-seat-driver controls you. If your center-moment is clear, then if your back-seat-driver talks about it: "That way," you say: "Shut up, that's my car!" No problem! (Laughter).

So practicing is very important. Every day, any kind of practicing. Just do it!

Student: Practicing zazen?

ZMSS: Yes. If you don't like it, "Coca Cola" is no problem. Every day "Coca Cola, Coca Cola, Coca Cola." Then "Coca Cola" is working for you. Doesn't matter. "Coca Cola" is better than dry shit on a stick. Somebody asked Un Mun Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" He said: "Dry shit on stick." Coca Cola is better than dry shit on stick. Why not?

Only keeping one mind, one point, only just do it. Bowing or chanting or Kwan Seum Bosal; every day practicing, practicing, practicing. Then your

center becomes stronger, stronger, stronger. Finally you control your feelings, your condition, your situation. Then see clear, hear clear, everything is clear. Sky is blue, tree is green, wall is white, dog is barking, sugar is sweet – all just like this is truth. That has becomes yours. Then everything is no problem.

But everybody is holding something, attached to something. That's why they have a problem. Don't make "my mind". If you have mind, throw it in the garbage. If you have a mind, problem; no mind, no problem. Okay? Only just do it, moment to moment.

So I hope, when everybody returns home, only don't know. What am I? "Don't know." If you don't like "Don't Know", "Kwan Seum Bosal" is no problem. If you don't like "Kwan Seum Bosal", "Coca Cola" is no problem. What am I? – "Coca Cola." Okay? Then Coca Cola and you are never separate. Only try, try, try, then your center becomes stronger, stronger, stronger. Because if your center is strong, everything becomes yours. Not only Coca Cola, Seven-Up becomes yours, wine also becomes yours, cognac also becomes yours, everything becomes yours. The whole world becomes yours. Then no problem. You are the true master here – universal master. The name for that is Don't-Know Master.

So I hope you only go straight, don't know, try, try, try, soon get enlightenment and save all beings from suffering. Thank you.

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One by One, Each Thing Has It

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a Dharma talk at Cambridge Zen Center, 19th December 1985.

If your center becomes strong, then you can see correctly, hear correctly, smell correctly, thinking is correct, action is correct. If your center is moving, then not correct. So I hope everybody will freely breathe in, breathe out: “clear mind, clear mind, clear mind”. All perceive your mind here (*indicating belly*). Breathe in, breathe out, “clear mind, clear mind,” or “Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal.” When you breathe in, your stomach becomes big; when you breathe out, your stomach becomes small.

With practice, your center becomes stronger, stronger, stronger. Then you can control your breathing, your condition, your situation. Then you can believe in your true self one hundred percent. Then see clear, hear clear, smell clear, thinking clear, action clear. Sky is blue, wall is white, tree is green, dog is barking “woof woof”, all just like this is truth. That becomes yours. The whole world becomes yours.

Wall is white. How much do you believe the wall is white? Sky is blue. How much do you believe the sky is blue? Only understanding “the sky is blue” cannot help you. How much do you believe that? Ten per cent? Twenty percent? Ninety-nine percent? Even with ninety-nine percent you have a problem. One hundred per cent believe.

You can believe in your true self one hundred percent. Then you can believe the sky is blue one hundred percent. Possible!

That means your mind is complete. The sun, the moon, the stars – everything is complete. One by one, each thing is complete. Your mind has substance, then the sun, the moon, the stars, everything has substance, the same as your substance. So one by one, each thing has it: substance. “One by one, each thing is complete; one by one, each thing has it.” Next, substance, name and form become one. So substance already appears in all things. Sky is blue, tree is green wall is white, that all becomes yours.

Then you can *do* everything, at that point. So I hope everybody try, only just “don’t know”, try, try, try, then your center gets stronger, stronger, stronger. Then you can believe in your true self one hundred percent. Then everything is clear. So I hope only go straight, try, try, try, soon get enlightenment, and save all beings from suffering.

Thank you.

Poison Arrow

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a Dharma Talk in South Africa, 1989

Many people in this world want explanation, explanation, explanation, explanation. Go to a university library: many, many books – that’s all thinking! I went to Harvard University to give a Dharma Speech. Harvard University makes many books. Many people read these books and make this world complicated. Why make this world complicated? All over America is this Harvard University head – Harvard University consciousness. So burning all the books is necessary – then no problem! Ha ha ha! *(everyone laughs)*

Too much understanding! Too much understanding, then you have a problem, okay?

Many Indian people shoot poison arrows. Pssheu! If somebody comes in here with a poison arrow, taking it out is necessary. If he says “Don’t take it out! This arrow comes from where? Who shoots it? Why did he shoot?” – many things, thinking, thinking, thinking – then this man will die.

This checking is not necessary. First take out this arrow, then no poison around. Many people do not take out the arrow – “This arrow comes from where? Why shoot? Who shoots? When shoot?” – checking, checking, checking. Then this man already dies.

That’s human beings: “Why is there this suffering? Suffering comes from where? Why is this world complicated?” Only checking, checking, checking. Not “What am I? Don’t know!”, then already checking mind disappears. Only don’t know mind already takes out this arrow. First take out the arrow, then checking is no problem. Okay? If I am checking the arrow, only checking, checking, then I die – everybody dies.

In the whole world there are five billion people, always checking, checking, checking, and dying. Never “What am I?” Only a few people do that: so you are special. “What am I? What am I?” Don’t check, only “What am I?”, then the poison is already gone, the arrow is already out, then no problem. Only keep don’t-know mind, then no problem. But lose the don’t-know mind and already you have the poison inside. So don’t check, only don’t know, moment to moment just do it, do it, do it. Then everything is no problem.

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For What and For Whom?

BY ZEN MASTER SOENG HYANG

A Dharma Speech given during the 30th anniversary of the School, April 6, 2002 at Providence Zen Center.

(Raises Zen stick over head.)

This stick...

(Hits table with stick.)

... this sound... and your mind:

Are they the same or different?

That was one of the first kong-ans that I remember being asked by Zen Master Seung Sahn. One of the really unique things I found about going to Doyle Avenue was the eagerness and the openness, the enthusiasm to teach that I received from him, like a magnet, pulling... come, come, come. And I had my doubts because this tradition wasn't Japanese and everything I had read and really been attracted to had been Japanese style, very simple altar, grays and little hues of black and gold but this (*pointing to the altar behind her*) is what we got.

One of the most important teachings is that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. So, from the very beginning Zen Master Seung Sahn always taught those very simple things: form is emptiness, emptiness is form; then no form, no emptiness; then form is form, emptiness is emptiness. And you can hear those words and you can try to understand those words, but again it boils down to practicing and perceiving these things.

This very simple kong-an—this stick, this sound and your mind, are they the same or different—some people don't understand that kong-an at all. Maybe at the end of this talk I might even answer this kong-an, but half the people in the room won't know I answered it, because they don't understand, and that's the practice. Some people will know I answered it and think, "I understand this kong-an." That's it, so simple, so wonderful. Yet, of those of us that understand the kong-an, most of us haven't really attained it. We always talk about, "understanding cannot help you." These are all things that I learned from Zen Master Seung Sahn. Within five weeks of learning a little English, he had learned how to say those things with so much enthusiasm.

Michael Konstan noted that if you feed a college student, they'll stay around. I wasn't a college student, I was a nurse, but I was staying around too. The food

was really good. Zen Master Seung Sahn used to make us homemade noodles. He'd roll out this flour mixture and take a knife and slice these big, flat noodles and he'd throw them in miso soup and he'd put in tons of butter and kimchee and peanut butter and tofu and potatoes. It would look gross... it would taste good, though. But I remember watching him cook one time and he was cutting up the onions and the skins were falling on the floor and he'd just kick the skins underneath the stove. I'd read all these books about Japanese style and Japanese cooking and I thought, "Oh God, he's kicking the skins under the stove, how do you justify that? It's not correct Zen, you know?" And the soup came out delicious. I started to get that point: for what and for whom. What do you do when you make a bowl of soup? Did it nourish you? What are you going to do with that nourishment? Get the housemaster to clean out the onions later. I was the housemaster.

It was mentioned that students come and go. When I was first asked to give this talk I thought, oh no, don't tell me I'm the one, I'm the oldest, I'm the thirty-year person. I thought, gee, where are all those people, I miss them. Some people left and if only we had done it this way, if only we had done it that way, if Zen Master Seung Sahn had only done it this way or that way more people would have stayed, more people would be here today. And that's what we call checking. That's checking mind. The most important thing is be here, be here. Just (*snaps fingers*) be here and be awake and be alive right now.

There are so many stories about my teacher. One time I was driving home with him from Cambridge. It was about 10:00 o'clock at night and we were both tired. It was summertime, so there were a lot of bugs in the headlights. One bug landed on our windshield. I was driving and going about 65 mph. The bug slapped against the windshield, and its wings kept moving. It hit at 65 miles per hour and it's just this little bug so my logical mind thought... it's dead. But it kept moving as if it were alive. Zen Master Seung Sahn kept looking at it and looking at it from the passenger seat and he suddenly said, "Stop!" I pulled over. He got out and crawled up on the hood and examined the bug. Cars were whipping by. Logically, yes, it was dead, but it looked alive. That little chance that maybe it was suffering, maybe there was a still a chance to put it over on the grass was in his consciousness. That's better than any dharma talk I have ever heard. Just that, live that life of "how may I help you." Is there anything I can still do, even though it looks like it's impossible? Maybe there's something, maybe there's something.

Right now he's very ill. I'm a hospice nurse. I'm hearing this story about him being in the hospital and he's on a respirator and he's on dialysis and he's on a lot of different machines keeping his vital organs running, and part of me goes, let go of that, what's the point, if your heart stops why get it going again. That's just me. I don't have his body. I'm not there, I'm not with him, people want him to live and he wants to live for people. He loves medicine. Anybody who knows him... the pills, the bottles... he's always had lots of medicine in his room and around him and many, many doctors. So, of course that's what he's doing. He's using his doctors, he's using his medicine, he's using all those modern machines and doing it his way. And just like that bug on the windshield, maybe it's still there, maybe there's still life, maybe there's two, three more years, maybe he'll see the reunification of Korea, maybe he'll see

the Korean sangha in New York move to Manhattan. We don't know. So, there's that don't quit, don't quit, don't quit mind. Again, it's not right or wrong, whether you just let go and phase out and die sitting up still in a mountain temple or you're in the hospital, that's not the point. Again, it's for what, for whom do you live, and what am I?

I'm just going to tell a couple of my favorite stories that are in *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. This is a very, very beautiful book. Twice I've done long retreats by myself and taken that book. It has 100 titles in it, so every day I would read a chapter out of that book. One of them is about expensive dharma. It's called "My Dharma is Too Expensive." It's just a great little story, it reminds me of our journey here.

A student meets a teacher and says, "Please teach me. Give me your dharma." And the teacher says, "Oh, my dharma is much too expensive for you. What do you have?" And the student pulls out maybe 75 cents, whatever he has, and says, "This is all I have. This is all of my money. I give it all to you." And the teacher says, "If you had ten billion dollars it wouldn't be enough."

So, the student goes back and sits and wonders, why is that? What's this about expensive? Ah hah! So he comes back and says, "I give you my life. I'll work for free for the temple for the rest of my life. I'll do anything for you." And the teacher says, "Ten million lives like yours is nothing, that's not enough. My dharma's much more expensive than that." And then the student goes back and sits and thinks about it and ponders... ah, now I get it. "I give you my mind," he says to the teacher. The teacher responds, "Your mind is a pile of garbage, I don't want that. My dharma is much more expensive than that." Again the student goes back and sits... what is this? Really sits for a while, and then gets (*claps hands*) KATZ! Gets empty, don't know, that mind. Just that. Really clear, really good. The teacher says, "Oh, my dharma's much more expensive than that. Are you kidding?"

So then the student's really perplexed, really upset. What's better than emptiness? What's better than that one still moment together where there's no idea, no nothing? And then after six months or six years the student gets that second enlightenment that we talk about and he runs up to the teacher and says, "Now I have it." And the teacher says, "What?" And the student says, "The sky is blue, the grass is green." And the teacher says, "Oh my God! That's awful. What kind of a student are you? Anybody can do that." And the master starts to walk away. And the student gets really upset, really angry and says, "You know, you can take your dharma and shove it up your ass!" The teacher keeps walking away, and then he turns around and says, "You!" The student turns around and the teacher says, "Don't lose my dharma." So that was the one genuine thing, just, "Shove it up your ass!" But the student was owning it. It came from his gut, just trusting and believing in himself.

When I think back about Zen Master Seung Sahn, it's that total encouragement to believe in myself and for each of us to be encouraged to believe in ourselves. What are you? What am I? What is this? And that's all he taught. Sometimes I've heard people through the years say, "What are we going to do when Zen Master Seung Sahn dies? What's going to happen?" That

doesn't die... that we should be able to just work on believing in ourselves, knowing who we are, what to do. He used to say to me, "You're going to be a nun." I said, "Well, I really like being a nurse." "Oh, there's tons of nurses. Nurses are a dime a dozen. How many women really attain the dharma and become a great teacher?" I was checking, checking, checking. And I just kept being a nurse. He told me not to do that, but, that's even better— that's believing in yourself. That comes from this (*points to her center*). What are you? What is this?

I read once that the sign of a good teacher is when their students are clearer than they are. You believe in yourself and you stop listening to the teacher and you say, "what am I?", and do it. You don't stop listening to the teaching, that's different. So, paying attention, moment to moment, what am I? That's it. I'm very glad to see everybody here and very glad to stop checking and to be able to appreciate that each of us is coming and going and trying.

The other story I wanted to tell from Dropping Ashes on the Buddha is about the boat monk. These two students were disciples of a Zen Master who was very old and dying, and he gave them transmission. One of them was described as being tall and strong and broad with great teaching, great technique, great dharma. He took over the temple when his master died. He taught hundreds of monks; he was just brilliant, a wonderful guy. And the other monk was smaller in stature and quieter and liked more solitude and a lot of people didn't notice him at all. Once in a while he would say something that people would remember, but he was very quiet.

So he decided to leave and just row a ferryboat back and forth across the river in another province. He let his hair grow and stopped being a monk, stopped wearing monk's clothes. Never married; he was still a monk but he just didn't have any outside stature. Before he left the temple he had told his dharma brother, "I am very different from you, but at some point send me a disciple, send me someone and then I'll fulfill my obligation to my teacher."

The years went by and finally the monk that had stayed and become the great Zen Master found a student for this monk who just ferried people back and forth across the river. This student was very attached to words, but a very clear and wonderful person. So he went and met the boat monk and they rowed slowly across the river. They had a little dharma exchange. It was all words. It was OK, but lots of times dharma combat is just a bunch of words; it wasn't quite ringing.

Finally the monk took his oar and just slapped the student right into the water. And he said, "You know, even the greatest speech in the world is like a tether that you tie a donkey to, and it just goes around and around and it doesn't really hit the mark." The student was trying to crawl back into the boat, and the monk slapped him again into the water. And with that second slap, the student's mind opened and he got it. He got untethered from the words. Then they just sat in the boat together and spent some time and just connected. Then the monk deposited the student on the other side of the river, rowed back to the middle, flipped the boat over and never appeared again. What's the teacher, what's the disappearance? It's not appearing or

disappearing, it's just—can you listen, can you wake up and go beyond the words and *(claps hands)* feel the slap and then do your job.

I want to thank very much Zen Master Seung Sahn. I know he would like to be here right now, and he is here. I want to thank him for all that work and not giving up and just as he isn't giving up today, just taking it out to that last thread. And I hope that each of us finds our way, whether it's riding in the front of a truck, or whatever we need to do, but to do it wholeheartedly and do it not for ourselves but for all people. Thank you very much.

(Raises Zen stick over head.)

This stick...

(Hits table with stick.)

...this sound... and your mind. Are they the same or different?

(Raises Zen stick over head and hits table with stick.)

Thank you.

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Become an Expert... Or Become a Buddha

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Question: Sometimes I feel complete, and everything is clear, but then at other times I lose that, and no longer understand. What can you say about this?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Being complete is not dependant on your feeling. Everyone is complete, you are all Buddha. Does that help your life? You have everything! I don't have anything that you don't have. Buddha doesn't have anything you don't have. Does hearing that help your life? No? So any understanding, even the most wonderful understanding, cannot help you. You are already complete, but until you realize that for yourself, until you become intimate with that, until you digest that understanding so that it becomes yours, it has no power to help you.

Maybe sometimes it will make a nice feeling: "I am already complete. I am Buddha. Ahhh . . ." But feelings change, so you will not remember that you are complete. Understanding that and attaining that are very different. So practicing is necessary.

Q: How can one be Buddha and not be Buddha?

ZMWB: I ask you, what is Buddha?

Q: I have no idea.

ZMWB: That's correct. That's Buddha.

Q: But what about people who don't know that they don't know?

ZMWB: Those people are the experts. So you have a choice in this life; you can become an expert, or you can not know, and become Buddha. Again this brings us to practicing. No matter what anybody says and no matter how well anything can be explained; it is finally all up to you. The wonderful thing about Buddha's teaching is that Buddha taught us not to accept something just because a wise person or an expert said it. Don't accept something because a holy book says that it's true, or because of tradition. You must find the truth for yourself. Everyone has that capacity. You came to a dharma talk, but no matter how well things are explained and how appealing it may be to you, that alone has no power to change your life. There is a vast gulf between understanding what is being said and actually being able to do it. That's why having a big question is very important. In Buddhism we talk about bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is propensity toward bodhi or enlightenment. Everybody has that. That question is your bodhicitta. That is the power that brought you here.

Bodhicitta is called the seed of enlightenment by some Buddhist scholars, so your seed has already sprouted. Next, you must cultivate it; that cultivation we call practicing. If you take care of this question, then it can grow up, grow up, grow up. Then one day, this flower can bloom. Then you can say, (*slapping his knee*) "Ah ha." This "Ah ha" is not the Buddha's, is not Zen Master Seung Sahn's, is not Zen Master Wu Bong's, it is all yours. So everybody must find that, because this world needs you.

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Leave Your Mind Alone

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Excerpted from a dharma talk given in September, 1991

Question: I have a friend who has amnesia. Could you explain this in Buddhist terms?

WBZM: In Buddhist psychology, we speak of eight kinds of consciousness. The first five are sensory-sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. The sixth is mind consciousness, which controls our body, and the seventh is "discriminating consciousness," which enables us to distinguish white from black or good from bad. The eighth consciousness is that which controls memory.

Sometimes these last three consciousness are split apart and don't function together. The result might be amnesia, or perhaps a split personality. In extreme cases one personality doesn't know what the other personality is doing. If you are practicing, however, you return to "before thinking." Before thinking there is no first, second, third consciousness, etc. It is before any consciousness. If you keep this "before consciousness," then amnesia and even a more serious kind of dysfunction can heal. The sixth, seventh and eighth consciousness can work together.

Practicing means you don't use your consciousness; you let it rest. When your arm is damaged, you put it in a sling and let it heal. Otherwise you will damage it more and more. It's the same way with your mind; if you leave it alone, it will heal. Leaving it alone means returning to before thinking. This is the purpose of Zen meditation.

Q: I have trouble deciding things. Is there some way practicing can help?

WBZM: I have a secret technique which I've been teaching for several years now. Take a coin (laughter) and throw it up in the air. By the time you catch it, you usually know what way you want it to come up. You don't even have to look. Just do it!

From the vantage point of distance, most decisions are not so important. Either way will be OK. Why you do what you do is most important—is it for me or for others? If your direction is clear, then your choice is also clear. But sometimes you cannot decide what is helpful, so flip a coin. It's OK.

Q: My desires seem to come in two varieties: low class, like "I want that cheesecake" or "I want that woman in a bikini," and high class, like "I really want to see peace in this world" or "I want to see my family flourish." Is this the difference you're talking about?

WBZM: Not exactly. We talk about desire versus aspiration. Every morning at our Zen centers we recite "Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all." That vow's direction is for others. That is aspiration.

Desire means "for me." You said, for example, "my family will flourish." Why only "my family?" That is desire mind. But, "May all families flourish." Not only human families. Tree family, cat family, dog family... Then there is no I, my, me. Or someone says "I want enlightenment" That, again, is desire mind.

But suppose someone says "I don't understand my true self, what is this 'I'?" That question takes away desire mind. If you cultivate desire, desire will grow. If you cultivate Great Question, thinking calms down and desires disappear.

Thinking itself is not a problem, but if you let your desires and thinking control your actions, then you do have a problem. Let's say a feeling or an idea appears, and you know it's not correct to act on it. If you're practicing, you've learned to let what appears in your consciousness pass. If you're not practicing, it's harder to control your actions. Even though you know something's not correct, you still do it. Or something should be done, but you don't do it. Later you say, "Why did I do that?" But the next time is not any different. When I was a university student, I remember vowing after each exam that the next time my preparation would begin well ahead of time. I was never able to keep that vow, which means that my laziness thinking was quite strong. I wasn't practicing hard enough, so this lazy mind controlled me.

Q: You said "don't check yourself, don't check others." What does this mean?

WBZM: When you are practicing, uncomfortable thoughts and feelings often arise. We are accustomed to running away from these things. One way we try to escape when we're alone on the cushion is to check ourselves: "Oh, I am no good. I should not be thinking. I am a lousy Zen student." Thinking about thinking is like putting a head on top of your head. Another way of escaping is to look at and judge others. It is much more amusing than dealing with our own predicament.

Q: I saw a book named "If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him." What does this mean?

WBZM: Zen means becoming independent. That is the Buddha's teaching. Many people, however, become attached to teachers, attached to ideas, attached to words. It can be a kind of sickness. I heard a story about two friends walking down the street. One friend fell down, and the other one started to laugh. So the one who fell down said, "Look, that's not very nice. In the Bible it says that even if your enemy falls into adversity, you must not laugh, or rejoice". His friend responded, "Yes, of course I read that in the Bible, but it doesn't say anything about laughing when your friend falls down." That's a joke of course, but sadly we do attach to words, usually missing what they point at.

To be independent means that you find for yourself what the truth is. Don't just take someone's word for it, no matter how famous a person it is. If you attach to someone, you attach to someone's ideas, judgments, opinions. So if you meet the Buddha on the road you must kill him. Those are good words! However, even more importantly, when you meet your own I, my, me, kill them. Think of your life as a kind of a laboratory. You hear of a good formula. Don't accept it automatically. Test it in your life. If it really works, then use it, and teach it to others. If it doesn't, throw it out, Kill the Buddha, because you are the most important authority. That means that you must become Buddha. That means that your practicing is most important.

Q: Do you mean practicing, as you people do here in this room?

WBZM: Earlier this morning I asked you "What are you?" You were stuck, and unable to answer. That is our practice. Formal practice, which is what we do twice a day in this room, is only a technique, albeit a very important one. We can easily talk about keeping a don't know mind, but it is not always easy to actually do it. Even ten or fifteen minutes a day of formal practice can help us carry that practice into the rest of our life.

In your daily life, when you are doing something, do it one hundred percent. Then you are completely awake. If you are dreaming, wake up. Good dream or bad dream, dream of the past, the present, or the future, it does not matter. Become awake! Become an awakened one. Become Buddha.

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Practicing is Essential

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Recently I glanced through a book written by a spiritual teacher. The main point seemed to be that all religious teachings and practices are totally irrelevant because everyone already has "It."

This is almost like Zen teaching, except for the fact that this understanding alone will not help anyone's life. It is very important to realize this understanding in your life. For that, practicing is essential. Our practicing is itself not special; practicing means to keep a clear mind and help others.

While there are many approaches to practicing, practicing with a sangha - together action - is the most powerful. It forces us to confront our limitations, which in turn helps us to overcome our limitations. In the Heart Sutra it says, "The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita and the mind is no hindrance; without any hindrance no fears exist."

This "no fear" is our human heritage. If you like this, then throw away all thinking; throw away all liking and disliking; throw away even the most profound understanding.

Then, what is this moment's correct job?

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Understanding It, Doing It

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Recently, a friend of mine, while giving a Dharma talk, reminded me of an interesting figure in the history of Zen. This particular Zen Master was famous not only for his clear and simple teaching, but perhaps even more for his unusual lifestyle. Known as "the bird's nest monk," he lived in a tree, depending on his followers for help with basic necessities of life. At one time, a great Buddhist scholar from the neighboring province came to visit him. The

scholar was an eighty year old monk who was very learned in all the major scriptures and commentaries, and was curious to meet someone who, although not very learned, was even more famous than himself. The scholar asked the Zen Master for his teaching. The "bird's nest monk" replied: "Don't do any evil; do good." The scholar scornfully pointed out that this kind of simplistic teaching is something that even a four year old child understands. To this the Zen Master replied that while it is true that a four year old child understands it, even an eighty year old man cannot do it.

The teaching of Zen is very simple, and very clear. One way to present it is by "don't do evil; do good." Unfortunately, just understanding this principle, or even believing and aspiring to it, by itself cannot help us to accomplish it in our everyday endeavors. Practice is essential. The war in the Persian Gulf is a good example of this. In television interviews before the conflict started, both our President and the President of Iraq stated their abhorrence to war and support for peace. The same was true of the people interviewed in the streets, who expressed the hope that conflict would be avoided. But the Americans and the Iraqis saw the dispute very differently. As long as we hold on to our opinions, and our ideas, we will continue to face the dichotomy between our beliefs and our actions. It is only by letting go of "I," "my," "me" that a "correct idea", "correct opinion," can appear. This means "Bodhisattva idea," which means an idea for all beings, not just for my family, my country, not even just for people; for animals, for trees, for water, for air, for this whole world. This also means that without the "I," "my," "me" there is no separation, no wall between our understanding and our action. The taking away of "I," "my," "me" brings us again to the subject of practice. Like any endeavor where we seek some kind of perfection, practice is essential. It is not enough to understand that the selfless state just described is our natural state, our natural heritage. It is not enough to understand that everyone is essentially an enlightened being, a "Buddha." A final very important step is necessary. We must make that understanding completely ours, which means that we must attain "that." It is for this reason that Zen Centers, retreats, and teachers are all important. It is for that reason that a regular daily formal practice schedule, as an adjunct to our everyday practice, is important. It is only for the encouragement of the practice that Dharma talks and articles like this one are important.

Finally, does it all make any sense? Then do it.

Make a daily schedule. Make the effort to practice regularly together with other Sangha members. Regularly join an intensive retreat. Make the effort to regularly attend a Dharma talk. All of these activities help your practice, and your participation and your energy help other practitioners.

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This is the Only Moment We Have

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

Excerpted from a talk at the start of a one-day retreat on Sunday, 17 June, 1990.

One thing that is not always clear to us as we go through our daily routine is that if we look at our life, if we think about it and try to analyze it, we find that there are not so many "important" events — events that have great significance, great meaning. Mostly our life, moment by moment, is composed of very mundane tasks, very small things.

So what happens, and it's sort of a human fallibility, is that we don't pay attention to the small things. But the small things are also very important. I like to tell the story of how an avalanche comes to take place. If we start to trace the cause of an avalanche, we find that often it's a very minute action. Maybe somebody speaks too loudly and that loosens a small rock and that rock loosens a bigger rock, and so on and so on. Just one small thing that is very insignificant, through a chain of events, comes to be very meaningful and has a big impact.

In a way, it is the same with our practice. We don't often realize the power of practice. One day, one retreat, just coming here on this Sunday morning and doing what we're doing. What kind of significance will it have? We don't understand right now.

What Zen teaches us is not to make those distinctions about whether something is important or not important. But as we go moment by moment, we are asked to pay attention — to give ourselves fully to this moment, one hundred percent. It doesn't matter whether it is an important moment or not an important moment; it is the only moment we have.

So what I emphasize is that in fact the only thing, the only true thing, that we ever have is this moment. The past we cannot touch. The future we cannot grasp. And if we try to catch the present, it's already gone.

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"I Don't Like Kong-ans"

BY ZEN MASTER WU BONG

The following exchange took place in an interview during a retreat in Norway:

Student: I don't like kong-ans. That is why I come so rarely to interviews. Can you say something about that?

Wu Bong Zen Master: Sure. You don't like kong-ans, then you must drop dead.

Student: Hmmm? I don't understand.

WBZM: A kong-an is not special. Any of your everyday life situations is already a kong-an. If you don't like kong-ans, you don't like life. So, you must die. Do you want that?

Student: *(laughing)* No. I would like to live a little while still.

WBZM: Good. Then put down your like and dislike. When a kong-an appears, only respond. If the correct response does not appear, return to "don't know." In your everyday life it is the same. If any situation is not clear for you, return to "don't know."

Student: I understand. Thank you very much.

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Transmission Speech

BY ZEN MASTER BON YO

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

Coming empty handed

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

Going empty handed

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

This is human.

What that does mean?

KAAATZ!

A newborn baby cries:
WAAAAaaaa!! WAAAAaaaa!!

In the past century a young man from United States visited a very famous Rabbi in Poland. When he entered the quarters of the Rabbi he was surprised to see how simple the room was. There was only a shelf with books, and a bench and a table. He looked and said: "Rabbi where is your furniture?"

Rabbi asked: "Where is yours?"

Young man said: "Mine?.. But I'm just a visitor here!"

"So am I," answered the Rabbi.

From the moment we are being born we collect. The first thing that is given to us is our body from our mother and father. Then day after day, year after year, we collect more: things, ideas, possessions, religions, titles. And most of us, most of human beings, identify themselves with those things. "I am a woman..." or "I'm a man...", "I'm tall", "I'm an artist... a doctor", "I'm rich", "I'm poor". "I" and "I", and "this" and "that".

Can the true "I" be rich or poor, or tall or short, thin or fat? Can the true "I" be a man, or a woman, or Asian or Western, or have any such identification?

This world and this universe gave us already everything. Everything already is ours. Buddha said: "Everything has a Buddha nature". So the Buddha nature is ours already.

This world nowadays is quite sad and I really appreciate the Zen Master's Dae Kwang tear transmission. It is sad and true.

Who creates this world the way it is now, and who can undo it? (*Pointing at the audience.*) You... and you, and you, and you... It is all in our hands.

And for that I have a story; a story which these past years was my guide. It is a story about a preacher who was traveling from town to town. He was teaching, staying in each town for a few days. In one of the villages he stopped on the main street and started to preach and many, many people came to listen to his teaching. He gave the most passionate teaching. And with great hope he came the next day to exactly the same place and again gave the best talk that he could.

The second day there were already fewer people listening to him, and the third day, even fewer people. The following day this trend continued and an even smaller group came. By the end of the week he was standing there all alone, there was nobody listening to his teaching, but he kept on talking. Then a passerby saw this man standing there teaching and talking to himself so he asked: "Why are you standing here talking? Nobody is listening to you. Why do you do that?"

The teacher answered "When I started the first time, I hoped to change this world. Now I keep on talking to not let the world change me."

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

No coming

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

No going

(Striking the table with her Zen stick.)

That is Buddha nature.

What does that mean?

KAAATZ!

The Sun rises in the East and sets in the West. Thank you very much.

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What There Is Is Really Enough

BY ZEN MASTER BON SHIN

Part of a Dharma talk on 20th August 2008 during the Summer Kyol Che at Warsaw Zen Center

Once there was a sick man, who went for help to many doctors, but they only spread their arms helplessly – they were not able to help him. At last he found a person that we usually call a wise old man. This man was a herbalist. He said: “I can help you. Not far away from here in the forest, in the mountains, grows a medicinal plant. If you only look for it according to my instructions – patiently and carefully – you will surely find it and you will be healthy again”.

So this man, feeling very happy, set off to look for a plant. At the beginning he was alert, patiently and carefully looked around. But as time passed he became less careful – he noticed a lot of interesting bushes and a lot of beautiful rocks and stones and slowly, slowly he forgot about the instructions of the herbalist and finally forgot why he had come to the forest.

This situation is very similar to people practicing meditation. The Big Question weakens after some time. The beginner’s mind changes into the expert mind and our practice reaches a dead point.

When I was finishing a driving course I thanked my instructor and told him that I hoped I would not bring shame on him by causing an accident soon. He answered: “Don't worry! Statistically, accidents caused by beginners happen very rarely. Most of the accidents are caused by people who have been drivers for several years, because they lose their attention and vigilance and think they know what’s what. But you should be careful anyway.”

In one of the kongans, one Master comes to another Master and asks: “In the Mu kongan there are ten sicknesses. How can you stay healthy?” The second Master’s answer is: “I only walk on the sword’s blade”. This kind of vigilance! If you walk on the sword’s blade you must be very careful. If you are not careful you may hurt yourself. So the thing is – the more you practice the more careful you must be.

There is one more teaching, which has not been developed much in this school. Perhaps I will be able to elaborate on it. Dae Soen Sa Nim used to say very often: “Let go of everything”. Great Dogen Zenji taught similarly: “Let go of your body and mind”, which does not mean leaving anything. It does not mean rejecting your mind and body. It means: “Experience your mind and body. Experience, at this very moment, everything that happens to your body and mind...”

Then Dogen continues: “Settle your life in Buddha’s home.” So Buddha’s home is not some Nirvana, which we will maybe experience after hard practice. Buddha’s home is this moment. When somebody says: “Only this moment, only this” – you can approach it in two ways. One way is: “Only this? Is that what practice is all about?” Or you can approach it quite differently.

There is a kongan about it. A man runs away from a tiger. The tiger chases him and suddenly the man falls into an abyss. At the last moment he catches a creeper hanging over the edge. He looks up and sees the tiger, disappointed that it has failed to catch the man and waiting for a good moment to do it. The man looks down and there he sees another tiger with its jaws open wide.

This is the moment of facing life and death. In this moment there is no escape. There is only “don’t know”. And suddenly this man notices a beautiful, ripe, red strawberry. He reaches for it with this “Don’t Know mind” and – Nirvana!

So you can react to this moment with “Only that?” or you can experience it totally, completely. It is possible only when you experience what there really is, not your ideas. This is very helpful, very useful in life. If you really experience life that way, you do not waste your entire energy in creating anything, creating yourself and so on, then you can perceive the situation exactly as it is and react to it.

Now the only thing you must leave behind is schemes like: “After several weeks of Kyol-Che I should think less” (*laughter*) or “After so many years of practice I should have a better life”. Stereotypes like these should be thrown out without hesitation. If you do not follow them then it is possible to experience everything completely. There is no energy loss for a fight – for a fight, because you do not accept this experience, you do not want it. You want a different experience, because “it should be different”.

Dogen said that it is not until the moment of death that you experience complete surrender, only then you understand that there is no escape. There is no need to fight. This is a very important experience – no way out. The experience of Kyol-Che – no way out. In life it is exactly the same. But there is a strawberry. (*laughter*) There always is a strawberry! If you open yourself to such experiences you can feel Nirvana... In a certain moment there is such an experience: what there is is really enough.

– Translated from Polish by Joanna Sadowska

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The Mountain is Green and the River is Flowing

BY MUKYONG JDPSN (ZEN MASTER JI KWANG)

An old man is sitting opposite me. He smells rather. The passengers next to me change their seats. I deliberately remain seated. The man drinks from a bottle of high proof liquor and offers me a sip. I decline politely. It is obvious: the man is lonely and is looking for contact. He begins to talk: I learn that he has no home, but once he had a profession and loved a woman. And in the city, somewhere, there are his kids, whom he has not seen in a very long time. Because then everything turned out differently... I listen to him, ask a question sometimes, expressing appreciation during the magic tricks that he clumsily tries to demonstrate using his hands and fingers. It used to be his hobby, he tells me. It is important that one has a hobby, he calls out to everyone who enters the S-Bahn. He wants to go to Schönefeld now, but it really doesn't matter. He then rides on together with me until my stop. Before I step off, we kindly say goodbye to each other. I realize that I admire him because of his unconcern. He is a man like all of us, with a history, with longings and plans, with laughter and sadness.

What is this: being human? We all say: "I". But do we understand this I? In nature, everything and anything has its job. The tiger, the snake, the flower... everyone understands his job. Only the human seems not to know why he came into this world. And so we search forever, for ourselves, for our destiny or fulfilment; for generally accepted rules and norms; for the reasons, possibilities and origins; and time and again for the meaning of living and of dying; for explanations, meaning and love - everyone in his own way. Some want to change the world. Others strive for amusements and consumption. Some of us settle for nice words or scientific theories. Some fall in love with the search and stay searchers. Others forget what provoked their search and what they wanted to search for. And still others don't want anything. If there were not the big attachments – sleep, food, money, fame and sex – that entangle us with life and that concern us all, with which asking and searching begin again... A wise man once said, "The mountain is the mountain and the river is the river." Undoubtedly true. It is a clear reflection of truth. But how does it occur? How does it function, and what does the experience of this truth mean in action?

Is it sufficient to say, "A watermelon is a watermelon"? If one wants to know what a watermelon is, then one has to take a knife, cut the melon up and eat a piece: "Ahhh lovely – so that is a watermelon".

Bite – listen – just doing what needs to be done! For this we need to arrive: at the You and ourselves in this precise moment. This can only succeed when nothing stands in between, no "good", no "bad", no preferences or aversions. Then the mountain is the mountain and the river the river. In the moment, come back to oneself and recognize: everything is always complete. What could be missing? If this moment is clear, and the next one

too, and then the next one again ... then our life becomes clear: the situation, our relationship to the situation and our function. Living and acting come into accord with reality. Inside and outside become one. Then the mountain is not only the mountain, and the river not only the river, but a clear reflection of truth in us becomes the experience of truth in us: the mountain is green and the river flows. And so, when we meet a person in need then we try to help. In Zen we call this Great Compassion or the Great Bodhisattva Way.

“With chest exposed he comes barefoot to the market. Covered in dirt and smeared with ash he broadly laughs all over his face. Without refuge in mystic powers, he brings sere trees quickly to bloom.” To be in the market with open hands, to do what needs to be done, means to help where help is needed. The Bodhisattva has jumped from the big No into the big Yes. He is not dwelling in the original unity of nothingness, which overcomes the multiplicity and contrariness, that makes up the nature of the Bodhisattva, but the essence of the experience of this connecting and uniting that lives between the separated and is possible, becomes alive in him. The world’s focal point is this One, which is nothing else than the other person, and therefore the entire world with all beings. “The mountain is green and the river flows” becomes the expression of great love, great compassion and the great Bodhisattva Way. It means being – being together – being for one another.

We find the reality of great compassion not only in the biographies of Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi or Mother Theresa and many others whose names cannot be mentioned here, but potentially in each and every one of us. We can create conditions that enable us to face the You fearlessly, open and emphatic: with open hands.

To set our potential free, we dedicate our Zen practice to the search, to the suffering and to the hope of all beings, and the always possible and everywhere immanent experience of the truth that everything, just as it is, is enough. Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all. Delusions are endless, we vow to erase them all. The teachings are infinite, we vow to learn them all. The Buddha-Way is inconceivable, we vow to attain it. It is about retranslating the experience of truth that flashes up behind searching, letting go and coming back into life, where it has always been a daily reality: the mountain is green and the river flows.

One day, there was great disquiet in the monastery. The monks of the east wing were arguing with the monks of the west wing about a cat. “This is our cat!” “No, it is ours, after all we feed it every day!” It went back and forth like this, until Master Nan-chüan came between them. He took the cat and held it up. In his other hand he had a knife. He called out: “You monks! Give me one word and save this cat!” The monks could not answer and so he killed it. (*14th case of the Wu-Men-Kuan*)

How can you save the cat?

The Zen experience must combine with wisdom to manifest itself on the level of action. Then we can save the cat that Master Nan-chüan is holding up until the present day: “Give me one word!”

The Wave of Together Action

BY ANDRZEJ PIOTROWSKI JDPSN

From a Dharma talk given during the Summer Kyol Che at Warsaw Zen Center on 23 July 2008.

Student: What is the difference between our practice together and our individual practice later on at home?

PSN: This time of practicing together is something special. You can say this time is like potatoes banging against one another in water. Everyone who practises in this school knows this teaching of potatoes. We are all like potatoes in a pot. When we practise it is like a stick stirring the potatoes and then the potatoes start to work on one another and the cleaning goes faster. So when we are here we learn from one another. Individual practice is not enough. We are too young for individual practice – of course I am only joking a bit, because individual practice is important too. But when we only practise individually, it is difficult to see our limitations and our karma, the karma of our mind. The sangha is like a mirror, in which you can easily see your limitations, the limits of your actions and your opinions.

To awaken our original mind we have to go beyond our likes and dislikes, because our mind is always looking around and sniffing out what it likes and dislikes, but the things we like are not necessarily good for us and the things we dislike are not necessarily bad for us. When you are here you have no choice – then your mind of likes and dislikes appears. It is easy to see – many people have problems with it. *(Laughter)* I'm sure you have found many things that you don't like here. Do you like to get up at half past four?

Student: I like getting up early because sleeping here is very uncomfortable!
(Much laughter)

PSN: You don't like sleeping conditions here – so you have one dislike. "I like getting up early because I don't like sleeping conditions". That's a like and a dislike. So you have both of these, but you also have a third thing – you have no choice. Whether you like it or not, you don't have a choice.

Together action is like a wave that carries you away and you cannot resist it. Your small self, your ego is too weak to resist that wave. This wave of together action is the wave of your true mind, of your true self. The name of it is – Just do it! *(Hits the floor)* You have no choice, that's why this wave of together practice is so important. If you submerge yourself in this wave from time to time, your individual practice will become stronger and you will see more clearly, in your everyday life the "Just do it" mind. This is the intuitive mind of prajna, our primary wisdom. Instead of losing yourself in likes and dislikes, just see the situation, let it be mirrored in your mind, see your relationship to this situation and then you can act correctly.

That comes from beyond thinking, beyond the realm controlled by likes and dislikes. Dae Soen Sa Nim called this: “following the big situation”. He said that in life we have two kinds of situation: big situation and small situation. The small situation is your life controlled by likes and dislikes. Following the big situation is following the Bodhisattva Way, following your true mind, the way of freedom and enlightenment.

So here the sangha is your big teacher. Not necessarily the teacher at a kong-an interview, though he might help a bit, but you see him only every couple of days, so your real teacher is sangha and together action — this wave you cannot resist, because ultimately our true self is all other beings and our small self cannot withstand this pressure. Every single one of us is himself, but at the same time we are all one. Zen Master Huang Po compared us to mercury. If you break one droplet (*hits floor*), it makes a lot of droplets and each one of them is separate and individual. Every one of them seems to have its individual being, yet they are all elements of one big droplet of mercury. If you don’t believe it then try to get them together — they will connect — become one.

So we are all one and every one individually is complete and this is the mystery of our practice.

Student: But when we go home and become the little droplet of mercury alone, without the wave, what then?

PSN: Well, you have to come back. Yes, you have to come more times.

Student: It means that I become addicted to it.

PSN: Yes, there is an addiction which is pathology and there is an addiction that is a real relationship. We are all interconnected and we are all related to one another. In Buddhism this metaphor was once depicted as Indra’s Net. The god Indra wanted to give a beautiful present to Buddha. So he wove a net which was infinite in time and space and encompassed all possible worlds, and at each intersection of this net he placed a little jewel. The effect was astounding. All jewels were mirrored in every one of them and each of these jewels was reflected in the rest. This is real dependence and real relationships and we are these jewels.

From the point of view of I-me-myself, freedom means “I can do what I want”. This is the freedom of self. But real freedom, as understood in the Buddha dharma, is the freedom from self — from the self which wants freedom for itself, because the self is the prison... Once someone asked Dae Soen Sa Nim how to develop wisdom. Dae Soen Sa Nim answered: “Only together action”.

“ — but Soen Sa Nim, there are a lot of hermits in the mountains who have been practising for many years, and they have very clear minds.”

“Yes, clear minds, but no wisdom”. (*Laughter.*)

Everything Becomes Buddha

BY MUCHAK JDPSN

From a Dharma talk given during the Summer Kyol Che at Warsaw Zen Center on 3 September 2008.

As you just heard, my name is Muchak. When I got five precepts, I received this name Muchak, which means mu, “no”, chak, “attachment”. I was very proud of my name. At that time I checked very much: I checked me and I checked others. One teacher called me “Checking Woman.” At that time I checked myself.

I’m not so much attached to money, and not so much attached to sleep, and sex, or fame. I checked myself, and thought, “I’ve not so much attachment.” I thought I could give up everything, like this (*snaps fingers*). And so I thought, this name is really good for me.

And then once I went to Korea and met a very strong Buddhist woman. She asked me, “What is your Buddhist name?” I said “Muchak” and she immediately knew the meaning. Then she told me, “Your master must have reasons to give you this name.” I never thought of it from this viewpoint. So my ego got hurt.

After a while I noticed my mistake. There was so much “I”. “I can do this, I know this, I can...” Everything I, I, I, so big. Even if we give away our life and the whole world, if we keep hold of our “I” – nothing happens.

Buddha told once, when we look closely, all the origins or roots of our suffering come from this “I”. We have something to protect, to be nourished, and to be praised. From that come the so-called five poisons: pride, jealousy, desire, hatred, ignorance.

But what is this “I”? Who am I? To find out what this is we come here together. Once in a summer retreat in America, in Providence, I sat and I got really lost in huge mountains of memories. You know already what it is like: you have lots of memories, and I saw lots of people whom I saw before, whom I loved, whom I hated, with whom I fought. Places I had been to, and wonderful experiences and bad experiences, all this stuff.

But somehow I could manage to come back this moment where I was sitting. So I looked at the floor and suddenly a question appeared to me: “This person, this person in my memories, is it still me? Is it still me who loved this person and hated that person, who did this and that?” And I must say “No”. I was no more this person. I could not say, “This is I, this is me.”

In this way I could see that this very person who asked this question, whether this person is me or not, soon this person will not be me, too. So I somehow got into a panic. Then “What am I? Where is this I?” – I was kind of desperate to look and find, to search... There was no answer.

Now on this day there was an interview. The teacher rang the bell and I went into the interview room. As soon as I bowed and took a seat, Dae Kwang Soen Sa Nim (at that time Do An Ji Do Poep Sa Nim) asked me “WHO ARE YOU!”

And all of a sudden I had to cry, I had to cry hard tears. There was no way to find out. After some time Dae Kwang Sunim told me “shhhh” and then said, “Listen!” And outside at this very moment a bird was singing. I was so happy! I was so sad and at that moment Dae Kwang told me, “Listen!” and then he said, “That’s all.”

The rest of that retreat I spent with hearing. Every sound, each sound I was hearing, was wonderful. The wind, birds, doors banging constantly. There was only this sound, this wonderful sound. ... It’s not only hearing. When we are really stuck, when we don’t know, when we have this “Don’t Know” completely, then everything, whatever you hear, whatever you see, whatever you touch, everything becomes Buddha. Everything is like what it is. There is nothing to add, nothing to take away. Everything is okay.

So we sit. Many of you sat already the whole retreat, and some of us just for several weeks. We sit, looking, perceiving how the thoughts are coming, going, coming, going. This is actually all that we are doing. Our work during sitting time is to sit and watch as thoughts are coming and going. And don’t touch this; then the thought itself is Buddha.

There is no good thinking and bad thinking. There are thoughts. We don’t welcome them, but we don’t reject them. And so we sit, straight but relaxed. We just naturally – without manipulation, just relaxed – we watch. But the thinking, the sounds that we perceive are not that important, too. Our minds just reflect these things, but it comes and goes.

But one thing: we stay awake, aware of what is coming, what arises. And we let go, by itself. This awakening from moment to moment is very important. In this way we can be master of our house. We don’t get controlled by others, or by our mind...

So we don’t need to keep saying, “How may I help you” – all this is bullshit. This is only speech. If we, from moment to moment, awake, and be aware of what is coming, that is already big help. So I hope we keep clear mind from moment to moment, save first ourselves from suffering, and at the same time others. Thank you.

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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 knoooooowww." So, breathing in: clear mind, clear mind, clear mind. Breathing out: don't knoooooowww. 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 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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The Human Route

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

When you are born, where do you come from?

When you die, where do you go?

Life is like a floating cloud which appears.

Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.

The floating cloud itself originally does not exist.

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

But there is one thing which always remains clear.

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

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?