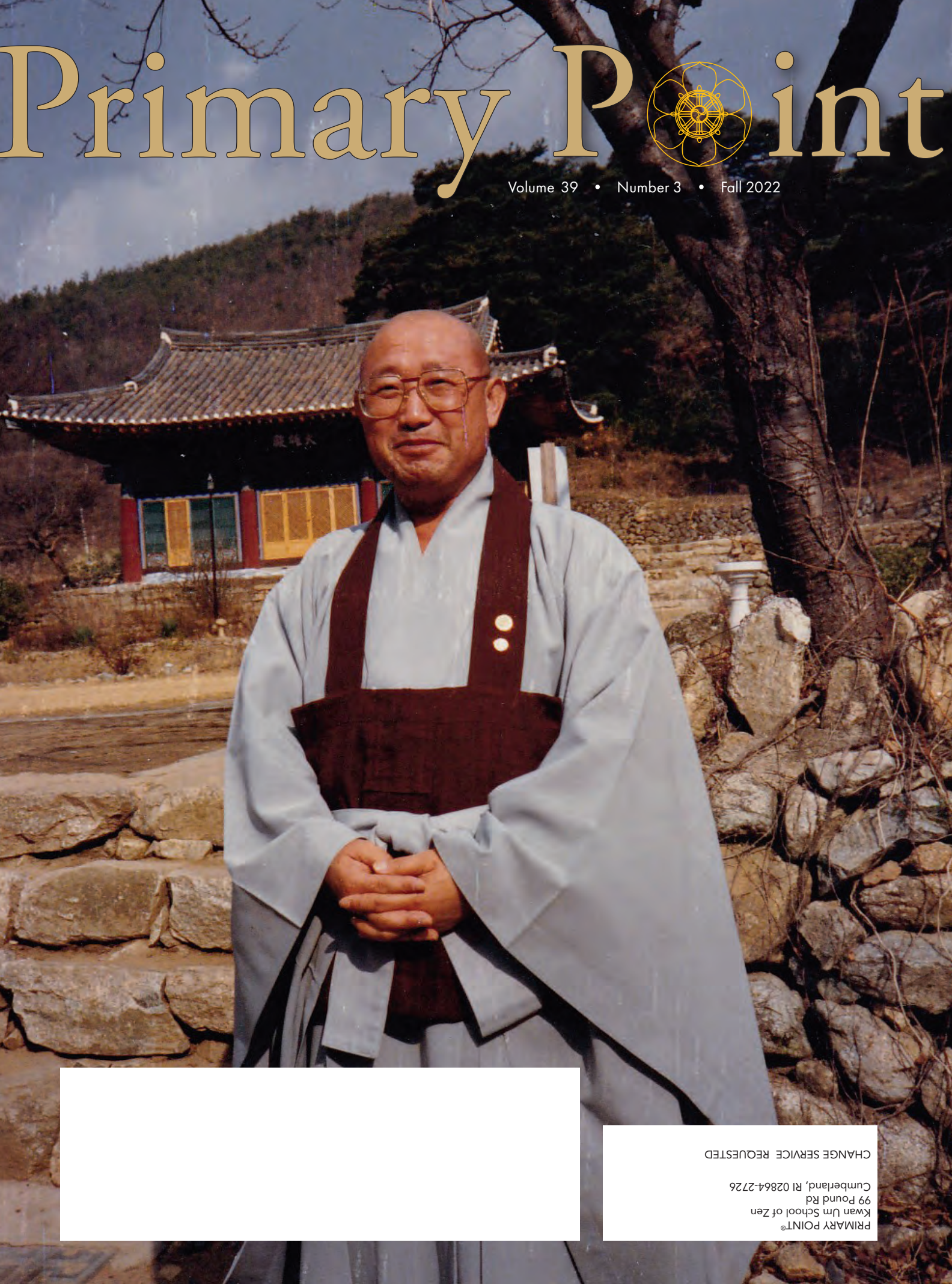


Primary Point



Volume 39 • Number 3 • Fall 2022



PRIMARY POINT®
Kwan Um School of Zen
99 Pound Rd
Cumberland, RI 02864-2726
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Seung Sahn International Zen Center

MUSANGSA

승산국제선원무상사

MUSANGSA 2023-2024

Kyolche

Summer

JUN 3, 2023 - AUGUST 30, 2023

Winter

NOV 27, 2023 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024

*Kyol Che guidelines may be subject to change according to COVID-19 regulation.
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*Join us at Borisa for a retreat in the Catalan Pyrenees mountains. Minimum participation one week.
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Published by the Kwan Um School of Zen, a nonprofit religious corporation. The founder, Zen Master Seung Sahn, 78th Patriarch in the Korean Chogye order, was the first Korean Zen Master to live and teach in the West. In 1972, after teaching in Korea and Japan for many years, he founded the Kwan Um sangha, which today has affiliated groups around the world. He gave transmission to Zen Masters, and inka (teaching authority) to senior students called Ji Do Poep Sas (dharma masters).

The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 1,400 copies.

The views expressed in *Primary Point* are not necessarily those of this journal or the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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Cover: Photo of Zen Master Seung Sahn in Korea, from Kwan Um School of Zen archives.

Editors' notes:

The Asian editorial team welcomes Myong An Sunim JDPS and Beop Hwa Sunim as co-editors for this issue, joining Bop Yo Sunim.

Beop Hwa Sunim first started to practice at the Chogye International Zen Center of New York in 2006. She has been living and practicing at Musangsa Temple since 2014 and started her novice monastic training in 2020.

We would like to thank Zen Master Dae Bong for his great support on the Musangsa interview (including the editing process) and Zen Master Tan Wol for reaching out to old Korean students of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Without their help, this issue wouldn't have come out with such rich and profound teachings.

Also we would like to thank Jayme and John Pekins in Florida for English editing support, Hyu Jeong Sunim at Chilbulam, South Korea, and Go Bora from the Musangsa editing team for aiding in translation of the articles.

We are grateful for all the help from the ten directions coming together to make this dharma offering.



Primary Point would like to offer thanks to Bop Yo Sunim, who has taken on the responsibilities of Asian regional editor for the past two issues. We are grateful for her deeply collaborative approach and the teaching that has come forward under her guidance. She is leaving to do training in Korean temples. May she continue to tend well to the dharma.

“Bringing the Tree Back to Asia”

A Story of Musangsa Temple

Editors' Note: *Musangsa, the home temple of the Kwan Um School of Zen, is hosting the thirteenth Whole World Is a Single Flower conference next year. For many of us, it will be an opportunity to come home and dive deeper into the dharma energy of Korea, where Zen Master Seung Sahn's great wisdom was cultivated.*

For this occasion, we interviewed Zen Master Dae Bong, who has spent more than two decades of his life teaching at and supporting the growth and development of Musangsa. We hope this interview helps readers be touched by Zen Master Seung Sahn's great vow.

The interview was conducted by Myong An Sunim JDPS and Bop Yo Sunim for Primary Point.

Primary Point: Could you please share with us what was the vow and vision of Zen Master Seung Sahn to build Musangsa?

Zen Master Dae Bong: Sometimes we would ask Dae Soen Sa Nim why he came to the West, and he would give different kinds of answers. One time he said, “Korean Buddhism is like an old tree. Difficult to grow new branches. So I cut a piece, take it to the West, plant it in this new soil, then another tree blooms, and then I take some of that and bring it back to Asia.” He said he realized even when he was a young monk that he could not teach the way he wanted to in Korea. Korean Buddhism is 1,700 years old, and its traditions and ideas are very strongly held. But modern society is changing very fast. If Korean Buddhism cannot also change, how will it be able to connect to modern Korean society?

So one idea he had was as I just said: take a piece of it, take it to the West where there's no Buddhist tradition, and let it grow in a modern society. Nurture it and then bring some of that back to Asia.

The last major project Zen Master Seung Sahn worked on during his life was creating Musangsa. He wanted our international school to be connected to the roots of our Zen practice, teaching in Korea and in Asia. He thought that was very important. If you have a tree, and if it doesn't have roots, it won't grow well and may die. So he wanted that connection to be strong. So he was cross-fertilizing Korean and Asian Buddhism, while at the same time developing and helping with many other Asian masters, helping Buddhist practice to grow in the West. Many purposes at once. Knocking many balls into the holes. This was his great vow.

I heard from Oh Jin Poep Sa Nim [Andrzej Stec], who was living at Musangsa in the early 2000s, that he one time asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, “Why are you making Musangsa?” Dae Soen Sa Nim said to him, “So our foreign teachers and students can come here, sit on this Korean mountain, experience the dharma energy of Korea and Gyeryongsan Mountain, and realize they are not finished.” Of course, all our teachers and students understand our job is life after life after life. We vow, “Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all.” When all sentient beings are saved, we finish. Being able to practice here, get energy and go home, we can spread Buddhism with a stronger and wider mind.

Another time when asked, “Why did you come to the West?” he said, “In this world there are two kinds of hungry people: body hungry and mind hungry. Body hungry people cannot get enough food, so they suffer and die. They don't hurt many people. Also we can take away their hunger easily by giving them food. Mind hungry people have enough, but want more, want more, want more.

Mind hungry people make a lot of suffering for many, many beings. Rich countries have many mind hungry people. They make lots of suffering for others—for people, plants, animals, birds, fish, air, water, everything. So I will go to the West, teach dharma, and practice. I'll teach them how to get enough mind and take away their mind hunger. Then helping each other and world peace is possible."

One time Zen Master Seung Sahn told me, "A good pool player hits a ball and it goes in the hole. A great pool player hits a ball, which hits another, and another, and another, and they all go in the holes." Zen Master Seung Sahn had a purpose that hit all of our weaknesses and blind spots and helped everyone realize where we can be if we learn the buddhadharma and practice. We can open our hearts and minds and become wide beings. Then we can have lives and societies that are beneficial to everybody.

PP: How did this project appear?

ZMDB: When Zen Master Seung first came to the West, he stayed in America for several years, concentrating on his new American students. This must be where he felt the energy needed to be. After starting Providence Zen Center in 1972, he found students who established Zen centers in Cambridge, New York, and New Haven. New York, Harvard, and Yale were all well known in Korea, and thus significant places for Zen centers to be established. They each are also strong energy points in America, so that made much sense from that view, as well. There was also a strong Korean Buddhist presence in Los Angeles, and he was able to establish a Zen center there and, subsequently, in Berkeley. Until the fall of 1975, he spent approximately three months on the East Coast and three on the West Coast, initially. On the East Coast, his base was Providence Zen Center. On weekends, he'd alternate between Cambridge, New Haven, and New York to lead weekend Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreats. At one point, he spent more extended time in Cambridge to take English lessons at Harvard. On the West Coast, his base was in Los Angeles. Eventually, his travels extended to Chicago and Kansas, where Zen centers were established, and he had many more destinations during those months.

In the fall of 1975, he first returned to Korea with Mu Bul Sunim, Mu Gak Sunim, and Larry Rosenberg. They toured many temples, with a base at Hwagyesa Temple in Seoul, and then later that same season, the three American students began Kyol Che at Jonghyesa Temple, the Zen temple in the Sudoksa complex. Zen Master Seung Sahn returned to America at that point, continuing his travels here as before.

The next time he went to Korea was in 1978 with a much larger group of students from America and Europe to do a more extended tour of the temples there. This allowed his Western students to get a stronger flavor of our lineage's Korean roots by being in the culture, seeing the major temples and strong practice venues among Zen



Photo: Musangsa Archives

Master Seung Sahn's lay students, contemporary Zen masters, and practicing monastics. In the group were many of his senior students as well as other serious practitioners. This was their first taste of our tradition's primary point, an essential part of our founder's teaching.

In 1978, he was invited to Poland and Europe for the first time, and after that each year he began to stay one month in Europe, one month in Korea, and ten months in the United States. As his teaching in Europe developed and many Zen students and Zen centers began to appear, he spent more time in Europe and less time in the States, especially as some of his American students had become teachers.

I remember around 1983 or '84, he told the American Zen centers that he would let the Ji Do Poep Sas do the teaching, lead retreats, and give interviews in the United States. He would give more time to teaching in Europe. He had the great vision to train his local students in each country to make and run practicing places and to become the leaders and teachers, Ji Do Poep Sas, and, later, Zen masters. He also continued to bring students to Korea, including a few big trips, in 1978, 1980, and 1982.

In 1984 he brought a group of Western sunims to Hwagyesa Temple and officially started the Seoul International Zen Center. They then held our first international three-month Zen retreat [Kyol Che] at Sudoksa Temple in 1984–85. For the next three years, we continued having the international winter retreat at Sudoksa. Also, the Seoul International Zen Center at Hwagyesa was open to anyone who wanted to practice in our Kwan Um School style. The Zen center was part of the Korean temple, had some of its own Kwan Um–style daily practice, and also interacted with the temple and the Korean monks and lay followers in numerous ways.

After there were some changes at Sudoksa, we weren't able to have our three-month winter retreat there anymore. At this time, Zen Master Seung Sahn actually asked the

administrators of Sudoksa to build an international Zen center where he could send many people, but they decided not to.

So when they weren't able to offer the winter Kyol Che there, Zen Master Seung Sahn spoke with his good dharma friend Byeok Am Kun Sunim at Shinwonsa Temple, and asked him if it would be possible to hold the international winter retreat there. Byeok Am Sunim agreed. We continued to have international winter retreats there for the next twelve years. I sat the first three retreats there and three others later, after I became a teacher. They were great! Everyone loved Shinwonsa and Byeok Am Kun Sunim. The retreats were very strong, quiet and focused.

For the first retreat we had no teacher. Zen Master Seung Sahn came down in the beginning and in the end, and I believe Do An Sunim [now Zen Master Dae Kwang] was the head monk. We didn't have kong-an interviews. But Byeok Am Sunim would come and teach us about correct temple behavior. We had monks, nuns, laywomen, and laymen all sharing one building. And that went on for twelve years.

Meanwhile, in 1988, he brought Mu Deung Sunim, who later became Zen Master Su Bong, to Asia full-time. Later, we began to also have the three-month summer retreat at Hwagyesa. At Hwagyesa we were in the middle of a busy temple, so it wasn't quite as isolated and focused as the winter retreat.

In 1992, I became a Ji Do Peop Sa and in 1993, Zen Master Seung Sahn told me to come to Korea and help him and Zen Master Su Bong there. Su Bong Sunim was traveling often to Hong Kong, to Australia, to South Africa, and helping Dae Soen Sa Nim in Korea. Zen Master Seung Sahn sent me to Shinwonsa to lead the winter Kyol Che.

We started having two winter retreats, one at Shinwonsa with no coming, no going, everyone stayed three months. And we had another one at Hwagyesa like our retreats usually are, where people can join for one week, two weeks, three weeks, and so on. We also held the summer retreat at Hwagyesa. This arrangement continued for quite a while.

Sometime in the 1990s, Dae Seon Sa Nim realized that while he's alive, he has the influence to allow us to be in a Korean temple and maintain our style of having the four Buddhist families (traditionally monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) live and practice together, even on retreats. But he thought the temple administrators would go back to the traditional ways if we were in a Korean temple after he passed away. So he decided that we needed to make our own international temple. This was the beginning of the efforts to get some land and build Musangsa.

I remember around 1996, when I was at Hwagyesa helping Dae Soen Sa Nim, after Su Bong Sunim passed away, he began saying "We must make our Zen center on the army land at Gyeryongsan Mountain!"

PP: How was it decided to pick the current location?

ZMDB: Zen Master Seung Sahn told Koreans that he had a dream in which the Gyeryongsan mountain spirit (traditionally pictured as an old man with a tiger) appeared and told him to build an international temple in Shindo-an. Shindo-an is the southeastern quarter of Gyeryongsan. Gyeryong Mountain is not the biggest mountain nor the most beautiful in Korea, but it is considered uniquely spiritual because of its unusual location and shape.

Zen Master Seung Sahn told us that a very old book in Korea predicted that in the future eight hundred great dharma teachers will appear from under Guk Sa Bong (National Teachers' Peak) on Gyeryongsan, and then the mountain's dharma light would spread all over the world.

Shindo-an has an interesting history. It is made up of two valleys: one below the main peak, named Cheon Wang Bong (Heavenly King's Peak), and the other below Guk Sa Bong. Originally, Shindo-an was chosen to be the capital of the Choson Dynasty in 1392 because of its powerful geomancy. But in 1394 it was decided that the capital would instead be a rice village on the Han River, which is now Seoul. Because of its powerful geomancy, it was declared that Shindo-an could only be rice farms, so as not to develop a town to rival Seoul.

Zen Master Seung Sahn really hoped and wanted to make available this possibility and opportunity to sit in a dharma land that had hosted dharma practice for 1,700 years.

I remember driving down with Dae Soen Sa Nim a number of times to this area. It's about 180 kilometers south of Seoul. We looked at pieces of land that were available to buy in Shindo-an, but he didn't feel any of them were suitable. One time, we saw a piece of land that was quite nice on the mountain. It has quite peaceful energy, and now we actually own it. But when we were looking at this land, Zen Master Seung Sahn pointed to an adjacent piece of land and said that is the energy point below Guk Sa Bong. We were able to buy it and have since acquired the other piece as well.

PP: What was the construction process like?

ZMDB: We bought that land in 1999. In May of that year, he sent me down here with two Korean laymen and a construction crew, and the construction was started. We all lived in a hotel for a few weeks until two container boxes for the laymen and me, and a temporary shelter for the construction crew, were built.

My container box had our "Buddha Hall" where I practiced. It was also where we received visitors, and it had a bedroom/office for me, and a shower. Our toilet was a typical construction-site plastic toilet. There was no kitchen. We ate every day in a tofu-and-rice restaurant in the village below our "temple."

We made a deal with the restaurant in the village, and two of us ate over there three times a day, except when occasionally Zen Master Seung Sahn would take me to

another place to eat. And we made another deal, so that they would come up and feed the construction workers, who lived in a little shack on the property, five times a day, because that's how it works on Korean construction sites. Three meals, plus mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks for the workers. Mid-morning was always *juk* (Korean porridge), mid-afternoon was noodles. I often joined the construction workers for the snack meals. We lived like that for eight months, through the summer, autumn, and winter. People started coming around and wanting to know what was going on.

PP: What were the first years of Musangsa like after finishing construction? How did you get things going?

ZMDB: The first building that was completed was the meditation hall building, which includes a meditation hall with an altar on the second floor, and bedrooms and a tea room on the first floor. We used the meditation room in the same way that our Zen centers around the world use their dharma room. We did all our formal practice there—bowing, chanting, sitting, dharma talks, and formal meals.



In March of 2000 we had a big official opening ceremony, and a lot of our foreign monks and nuns came down from Hwagyesa and moved in. We turned my container box into the kitchen. We started practicing every day and followed a daily schedule of waking up at 3 a.m., bowing, chanting, and sitting, meals, work, and evening practice.

In the summertime we held our first three-month *Kyol Che* at Musangsa. That's how we got going. A few years later, the dormitory building was completed with a floor for women and a floor for men. The first floor is the kitchen, pantry, dining room, and some bathrooms. The container box became our temple office.

The last project Zen Master Seung Sahn oversaw during his life was the building of the Musangsa Buddha hall.

I had a feeling that he was keeping his body going at least until that was done. And then when his body was truly finished, he went. For Musangsa, for me and perhaps for many of the people, we were ready to continue on our own at that point.

I often wondered why Dae Seon Sa Nim had us build a separate Buddha hall from our dharma room. Our other Zen centers do all the formal practice in one room, but at Musangsa, we have daily chanting and sometimes dharma talks in the Buddha hall, and bowing, sitting, and other dharma talks in the meditation hall. He wanted us to have a wider view and experience that also understood and connected with the wide range of Buddhism in Asia, where it has grown and developed for 2,500 years.

Zen Master Seung Sahn taught us to be independent, like Bodhidharma, who went to a cave and meditated until his students appeared. Bodhidharma didn't live in a Chinese temple. He didn't ask the emperor to support him or build him a temple. He went and did something himself. We didn't ask the Chogye Order or Hwagyesa to support us financially. We keep naturally appreciative relationships with them. I am grateful for the opportunity to live and practice in Korea, and that the roots of our Kwan Um teaching and practice come from and through Korean Buddhism and the 1,700 years of Korean sunims and laypeople who have kept it alive and share it with us. But we made Musangsa by ourselves, with the support from those who became our members and students, and anyone else who wants to help. Zen Master Seung Sahn impressed upon me that this was important, and I saw that is also how he lived. He had us make our Zen centers ourselves. For any project, he only asked his students to support it financially. He never went beyond his own students for support. His students might raise money from the general public in a style that fits their culture. For example, when we were building Musangsa, our Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong held a fundraising dinner that took many months to prepare. It was wonderful, and many Hong Kong Buddhists—who liked what Zen Master Su Bong was doing and who heard of Zen Master Seung Sahn and respected him—came to the dinner to support a good Buddhist cause. It was fantastic, fun, and it raised a lot of money. Sometime Primary Point should interview Zen Master Dae Kwan Sunim about it. Zen Master Seung Sahn attended and only gave a dharma talk. He didn't talk about money at all. This taught me a lot about independence and the correct dharma way of a sunim.

Musangsa has an independent legal structure under Korean law as a nonprofit religious organization. And of course, we're in a foreign country following their tradition and the developments made by Zen Master Seung Sahn. So making harmonious and smooth relations is essential. That is also our correct practice in any situation. Otherwise, why would they let us stay?

We have managed to be faithful to Zen Master Seung Sahn's intentions, vision, and teaching, while keeping harmonious relationships with the people, country, and surrounding culture—and we've done it independently.

In the years since Dae Seon Sa Nim left his body, somehow we have managed to survive and grow financially. Even some of our sunims have been shocked that we have been able to do it. I have to say sometimes I wonder too, "How do we do it?"

I feel, for sure, that Zen Master Seung Sahn is still helping us. What has been my approach? Go straight, don't know, for all beings. We practice sincerely, follow our school's teaching, which includes making harmony with everybody in the society we're in, appreciating our situation and each other, and having gratitude for this opportunity. And we try to manage things carefully and, hopefully, wisely. This helps us build up faith in ourselves and also faith in people around us.

PP: Could you please tell us what is unique about Musangsa?

ZMDB: Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to bring the style that he and his students created in the West to Korea and Asia. This includes the monastics and laypeople living and practicing together as well as our teaching and practice style, which connects well with modern life and society. We have been able to do so, and as time goes on, we've kept Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings and the Kwan Um School of Zen style, with some adaptations for

living in a traditional Buddhist culture, for twenty-two years in Korea.

Another thing that is unique about Musangsa is that we have many lay and monastic non-Koreans coming here to practice, live, and run the temple. It is truly an international Zen center.

Also, most temples in Korea have a large, flat area in front of the Buddha hall. This gives people a comfortable feeling. But because of our location, Musangsa doesn't have this feature. The land slopes quite sharply away in front of the Buddha hall. This is simply because we are on the side of the mountain. I have always felt the land here is a lot like Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy: strong, with a clear direction. If you don't practice strongly and sincerely here, you will sort of roll off the mountain, so to speak. If you let go of everything, practice sincerely, do your best to make harmony with the community, you can find your center inside and get fruitful results. I think Musangsa is developing in line with Zen Master Seung Sahn's vow.

PP: Why did Zen Master Seung Sahn insist on having four Buddhist communities (monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) practicing together?

ZMDB: I talked with him about that. He said this is the way Buddha's original community of students first practiced. He also said that there are two benefits to having the four Buddhist communities practicing together: first, individuals (and groups) are less likely to become arrogant, and second, everyone's wisdom grows more quickly.

Occasionally a Korean monk or nun wants to come practice here. We talk with them about our style and a few of the differences in our retreats. Teachers may come who are laymen, laywomen, nuns, monks, and they need to bow to any of them and respect them. Also, laypeople may participate for less than three months, one week minimums, so some people may come and go. If the Korean monastics are open to this style, then they can join and try. Some have done very well. One Korean nun sat summer Kyol Che here. While she was here, she totally followed our situation, very smooth, very harmonious. I have visited her since and actually she is quite traditional. I asked her, "What was the best part of the retreat?" She said many people think only sunims could sit Zen retreats. That summer, some high school kids came and sat in the retreat for a week. She saw that the high school girls not only sat for one week, but they signed up for a second week as well, and they could do it fine. Seeing that really touched her.

If you don't have those experiences, you don't know. That's why Zen Master Seung Sahn puts everybody together. It helps people not become arrogant and everyone learns to follow the temple situation. In Asia, many laypeople want to sit with monks and nuns if there is the opportunity. They want to practice with people who have given up the usual social life and devote themselves to



living in groups, in communities, to dharma, and to practicing.

In our school, laypeople can live in Zen centers and temples too. This is rarely true in Asia. Most of our school's centers have been started and run by laypeople. Practicing together is wonderful for both laypeople and monastics. Laypeople can get wisdom about things that sunims don't have experience with, and sunims can learn about things that laypeople don't know about. Zen Master Seung Sahn said the main difference is that sunims can do together action with others who want to practice all the time. And when laypeople have families and jobs, they cannot. That is the difference. The effort to attain our true nature, to uncover our true love, compassion, and wisdom, and help others is the same. Everyone's wisdom can grow more quickly. That is the main reason Zen Master Seung Sahn emphasized the four Buddhist families practicing and supporting each other together.



Photo: Musangsa Archives

PP: Did Zen Master Seung Sahn give you instructions on how to teach in Asian countries where Buddhism already existed?

ZMDB: One time I asked him, “How to teach people in Asia?” He said, “Same as we teach everybody!” Then I said, “I know what you mean. But Buddhism in the West is about a hundred years old, and Buddhism in Asia is almost 2,500 years old.”

Then he said, “Three things are very important. First, make clear what is Theravada Buddhism, what is Mahayana Buddhism, what is Zen Buddhism. Second, clarify what is meditation and what is wisdom. Third, make substance, truth, and function clear.”

I use the *Compass of Zen* to share some of the basic teachings of Theravada, Mahayana and Zen: the three insights of Theravada, six insights of Mahayana, the one insight of Zen; the three practices of Theravada, the six

paramitas of Mahayana, and what “cut off conceptual thinking” in Zen means. Zen Master Seung Sahn wrote the *Compass of Zen* so we would become familiar with teaching from these branches of Buddhism.

Next, we have a wonderful teaching about meditation. When you're doing something, just do it! The words are easy, but it is actually quite difficult to do. It is not our habit. This is wonderful teaching because it connects our practice and everyday life.

We teach that wisdom arises from don't-know. Wisdom is the ability to become one and act harmoniously, to keep the correct situation, correct function, and correct relationship.

And we make substance, truth, and function clear. This is a slightly different way to teach wisdom than has traditionally been taught. In the Tang dynasty, great masters talked about “essence and function.” I think Zen Master Seung Sahn separates substance (before-thinking nature), truth (see clearly, hear clearly, and so on), and function, because our experience moment-to-moment isn't clear.

When you look at the sky without thinking, you experience blue without the thought of “blue.” This is important—to be aware of the sensations of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. When we see and hear this way, without making *I*, it is purifying the senses. This is not an intellectual process.

For me, an important part of practice is realizing our hindrances, how we make something, what we make, and taking that away.

PP: Do you see how this teaching can spread and grow in the future?

ZMDB: Bodhidharma had four students, and a few generations later, his teaching and practice style spread all over China. Eventually, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng, appeared, and Zen really became Chinese. I am sure that will happen with Zen Master Seung Sahn and the Kwan Um School of Zen teaching in the West. We only have to practice sincerely and strongly, make our direction clear, and slowly American style, Polish style, Mexican style, German style, Russian style Buddhism will appear. This is natural. And in each country, it will include more than just our school, because there are many types of Buddhism now being practiced by the people in each culture. I love the organic, alive way Zen Master Seung Sahn experienced and lived in the world. He didn't make strict lines between things—between the Kwan Um School of Zen and Korean or Chinese Buddhism, between laypeople and sunims, between himself and others. He taught us to reflect back on ourselves, to have a big question and realize don't-know, put down our I-my-me and help others. He allowed us and this world to grow naturally, organically. He taught anyone who appeared and knew if our direction becomes clear, and we are practicing sincerely, something wonderful will grow. ♦

“Bring This Zen Practice Back”

Su Bong Zen Monastery Interview

This year, Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. *Primary Point* interviewed the guiding teachers to take a close look into their trajectory of spreading Zen teaching during the past three decades. The Zen center in Hong Kong was opened twenty years after Zen Master Seung Sahn went to the West. In the last part of his life, he intended to plant new dharma seeds in Asia, where Buddhism already existed. Through this interview, we wish to give a glimpse of this adventure. The interview was conducted by Bop Yo Sunim for *Primary Point*

Primary Point: How did you start your journey of thirty years in Hong Kong? From your first meeting with Zen Master Seung Sahn?

Zen Master Dae Kwan: He came when I was on a three-month retreat in Korea. I didn't know who he was. I really didn't know. My first meeting with Zen Master Seung Sahn was in the interview room, and he tested me with a kong-an from Dropping Ashes on the Buddha. I was giving him answers, and he really tried to help me to answer that kong-an correctly. I found him very cute. [Laughter.] That was my first impression of Dae Soen Sa Nim, and I found him to be very easy. A very easy teacher to connect with, not through words, but mind to mind.

PP: How did you become part of establishing a Zen center in Hong Kong?

ZMDK: One of my old Hong Kong friends came to visit me in Korea after the ninety-day retreat. She really connected with him. When he said he wanted to have a Zen center in Hong Kong, my friend pointed to me. “She is from Hong Kong!” Actually, I refused at the beginning because I wasn't living here and wanted to go back to Thailand to help my Thai teacher. But also I liked Zen

kong-an practice. I found it interesting. So I just wanted to help as a volunteer. I didn't know he was that serious. But I just followed the flow.

PP: Do you know why Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to establish a Zen center in Hong Kong?

ZMDK: Wherever he went, he wanted to open a Zen center. No matter where. But at the same time, I heard from Zen Master Su Bong that Zen Master Seung Sahn wanted to “bring this Zen practice back to China and show his gratitude for what he attained.” When I heard that, I didn't know why, there were tears running in my heart. “Wow, somebody has that gratitude mind!”

His dream was to see more people practicing in China because that's where Zen is originally from. But when he visited the Sixth Patriarch's temple, Nam Hwa Sa, he was sad to see people were doing a lot of rituals and chanting, but not so much Zen practice. Of course in China there are many great Zen teachers and practitioners, but the way they teach kong-ans is a little different from how our school does it. Zen Master Seung Sahn was bringing those kong-ans back to life! In China they didn't emphasize this living quality of the kong-ans. You know, his teaching is

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Photo: Courtesy of Su Bong Zen Monastery

powerful. Very handy. You can use his dharma right away. You don't need to know many terms. It's a direct experience. You drink water, then you understand. It's so direct, right? In China, one monk asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "What is Zen?" Then Dae Soen Sa Nim gave this monk a candy and said, "Open your mouth and try it!" The monk put it into his mouth, then he smiled and bowed. He got it! And I think that was what was missing in traditional Chinese Buddhism in those days.

PP: How were the early days of the Zen center in Hong Kong?

ZMDK: The Zen center was opened in 1992. When I first came back to Hong Kong, I didn't know anybody. So my friend who visited me in Korea, she organized all those things. Hong Kong people are interesting. They like to be involved with everything. They just want to go to a place out of curiosity. And that's how people first came to the Zen center. At that time, meditation was not popular at all. And if you told people that you practiced meditation, people would shout at you, "You'll become a demon practicing meditation!"

People thought we were in a cult, and they said many not-so-nice things about us. They pretended not to see us on the street and hardly opened their doors when we visited them. Not welcoming. Some senior monks kept asking me, "Why do you practice with a Korean teacher? We also have good Chinese Zen masters." Then I just put my palms together, bowed, and said, "I'm sorry, I have no good karma. This is my affinity with Thailand and Korea. So please excuse me."

One time a woman called up the Zen center and said, "You are not teaching correctly. Aren't you afraid of going to hell?" And I said, "I'm already in hell." Then this woman was stuck. "I don't know what to say to you."

"Somebody calls and yells at me. I'm already in hell." She couldn't respond and hung up.

Many people came and went at that early stage. And finally, many students left after Zen Master Su Bong passed away in 1994. At that time Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "It doesn't matter if people leave. No problem. You yourself practice is very important. Even one person, you practice." This really gave me a lot of encouragement. We kept practicing steadily, and eventually more people gradually gathered to continue the journey of our Zen center in Hong Kong.

PP: When did the situation around the Zen center start to change?

ZMDK: It took a long time actually.

Bon Sun Sunim JDPS: After the first ten years maybe. I came here in 2003, and around that time things slowly got better.

ZMDK: In the early days, my Chinese teacher, Ven. Cheung Way Fa Si, also helped a lot. He was popular and had a few thousand students. He liked Zen Master Seung Sahn, and also he trusted me because I had known him since



Photo: Courtesy of Su Bong Zen Monastery

I was very young. He visited Korea to join the Whole World Is a Single Flower conference and was impressed by it. When he returned to Hong Kong, he told everybody, "Zen Master Seung Sahn is an enlightened person." He gave us a lot of support and encouragement. He helped us to organize a talk that was attended by about five hundred people.

But it was still very difficult at that time. Even though many people attended the talk, how many people actually understood? Maybe one or two. Many people like to come and listen to the talk, but few people end up practicing.

At the beginning, people criticized meditation as a selfish practice. "You only sit and just think about yourself. You make no contribution to the world or to society." So then, for the first time in the history of Hong Kong, we organized a meditation event. In 1998, we did meditation to raise funds for flood victims in eastern China. We sat for three hours and raised 400,000 Hong Kong dollars to give to the Red Cross. Zen Master Seung Sahn and some of his monastic students came and gave talks and taught soen-yu. That was really the first time in Hong Kong that we directly helped others through meditation. And from that time onward, Zen meditation became more accepted in society.

PP: Did your students like to wear Korean robes for practice from the beginning?

ZMDK: Not back then. But now they are happy. They feel the robes are beautiful and elegant.

BSSN: The situation changed after they watched a Korean movie. [*Laughter.*]

DKZM: Actually, we have to give credit to a Korean soap opera. [*Laughter.*] It saved our life in Hong Kong. When we walked on the street people started to recognize our robes.

BSSN: Also some students from our Zen center went to other centers to work as volunteers. And they really behaved well. People asked them, "Oh, where are you from?" "I'm from Su Bong Zen Monastery." Then slowly we gained a good reputation.

ZMDK: We have to make the teachings alive through our behavior—how we conduct our lives and how we treat



Photo: Courtesy of Su Bong Zen Monastery

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each other. We have to practice how we relate to people. That's why our school's teaching says "don't check," meaning you don't check others. "Don't hold" means if something happened, even though people were good or bad, don't hold on to it. And "put it all down." These phrases are not just empty speech. They're about really putting these words into our everyday life.

For the past thirty years, we've brought these teachings into our everyday life, into the world of function. Kong-ans are not only stories in a book or in the interview room. Kong-ans are really our everyday life. And yeah, this is how we came through these thirty years.

PP: How have your students been using kong-an practice in their daily life?

BSSN: One of the senior students shared a story about something that happened in his office. He had answered the kong-an "Dok Sahn Carrying His Bowls." Then one day something similar happened at the office. His supervisor yelled at him, just how Dok Sahn yelled at Am Du in the kong-an, asking, "Do you not approve of me?" And the student gave an answer similar to that in the kong-an. Afterward, his relationship with his supervisor was transformed and improved.

ZMDK: Also, you know, we have some societal problems in Hong Kong recently. Many people take sides in this situation. But here we only talk about absolute; we don't touch opposites. When people are in a hostile situation, they remember "The floor is brown, the wall is white." They remember this answer in the midst of a conflict. Then all the worries and fears disappear. Just coming back to this moment. To this absolute world. I feel happy when I see students using the dharma or the kong-ans in their everyday life. This gives us a lot of energy and encouragement to move forward.

BSSN: What I have seen is Sifu [Zen Master Dae Kwan] really puts a lot of effort into giving interviews. In other Zen centers, maybe students can get an interview once a month or so, unless they actually live in the Zen center. When I first came to Hong Kong twenty years ago, some students were getting two or three interviews per week. Sifu was younger and had lots of energy. One time

she even called us up from the airport to set up an interview room. "OK, now I'm in the airport!"

With this effort, our students kept a close relationship with Sifu. And they received a lot of advice from her to settle their life problems. They really appreciate that. For years, whenever they faced some problem with family, with work, they would put everything into practice. They all came to Sifu because she gave so much time to everybody. This really makes a difference.

ZMDK: You care about your students. Care also means being grateful to them. I really am grateful to them because, without the students, we cannot have the temple. I'm helping them, but actually, they are also helping the temple. So it's not just one way. I give energy to them, but also they, like everyone here, come from a long way. I know everybody is tired. They have to take care of their family and carry their tired body to their job. When I look at them, I look with great gratitude and appreciation. And what I can return to them is the sharing of the dharma. People have a choice. Why do they come? They can go to other places. People don't have to be nice to us, but they are nice to us. When you practice and when you see everything as it is, then you will see everything with great gratitude. Not only people but also nature. With the sky, with a mountain, with a frog, with every stone, and with everything around me, I feel great gratitude.

So I respect them.

PP: After thirty years of this journey, what is the next step for the Zen center?

ZMDK: Right now, a new retreat center project is in progress, Hae Su Zen Center. Actually, we got this old temple on Lantau Island twelve years ago. We cannot use the temple as is, so we have to renovate it. We have to completely redesign the whole temple. So when it's finished, we can hold up to a hundred people for a retreat.

One of our good friends said to us, "If you have a bigger temple, you can receive more people. If one million people know your skill and can bring this practice back to society, our society will be very different." Then I said "OK, let's wait for the one million!"

BSSN: The project has already begun. We have just enough money to kick off the project for the construction part. But later we will need more funds to continue the whole project. We have begun, but of course the most important thing depends on the funds, and they have to come in on time. Otherwise, maybe a little delay? We don't know. Hopefully next year everything will be done and we can use this place for the thirty-year anniversary event. And later we can use the temple for the Whole World Is a Single Flower conference and for all of our sangha members who plan to come to Hong Kong and practice. ♦

Recollections from Zen Master Seung Sahn's Korean Students

“You’ll Be Fine. You Will Do Well.”

Bo Deok Gung

I didn't know much about Zen practice before I met Zen Master Seung Sahn. I just loved temples, so I followed my aunt to worship. While I was visiting and praying occasionally, I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn at Hwagyesa Temple.

Life was not easy for me. I was working hard only to make a living. But after getting to know about Zen practice, it became the most important part of my life. I didn't usually talk much. I really liked Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings, but I could hardly express how much they meant to me. Seeing my shyness every time we met, Zen Master Seung Sahn, addressing me by my dharma name, would say, “Bo Deok Gung, you'll be fine. You will do well.” Even though he would say only one or two words like that, his encouragement became a great support to me. I thought that I didn't know much about the practice, but whenever he said words of encouragement, I would think to myself, “I can just practice like this.” As a result, I gained a lot of courage. When I think back now, it seems to me that Zen Master Seung Sahn inspired the students to continue practicing by carefully taking into account their individual spirits and different personalities.

I am at the age of eighty-seven now and have been diagnosed with terminal cancer, so I don't have lots of days to live, but my mind is comfortable. I'm sure it's because I have studied Zen practice diligently and with all my heart for half of my life, following Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings. Because Zen Master Seung Sahn taught me to throw away this “I-my-me,” I find there is nothing to worry about or to cling to. I only wish to give away what I have in the world before I go. I'm sure that it is not just about learning Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings but also truly digesting them.

Kun Sunim (Great Teacher), I bow to you with my hands together and thank you!

Great Harmony between the Dharma and Life

Beop Seung Hwa

In 1992, I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn at Hwagyesa Temple.

I was a member of the Soen Woo Association (the temple's lay devotees group), which held an all-night meditation practice there every Saturday night, and continued to practice Zen meditation until Zen Master Seung Sahn's death in 2004. I often had the opportunity to talk about Zen with Zen Master Seung Sahn while under the guidance of his teaching and also to accompany him

when he went on teaching trips abroad. I have always wondered how he would handle things in daily life according to the teachings of Buddha.

Any time I joined Zen Master Seung Sahn on a trip abroad, I noticed that after a meal, he would gently push to one side the folded napkin on the table without using it. Then he would take a paper napkin, wipe his mouth, and then put it back in his pocket. In fact, whenever he would go to a restaurant, he would always use his own napkin. At that time, I was interested in not only his every word but also his every movement. And I wondered why he recycled his napkin for a month, because I had a habit of using a new paper napkin whenever I needed to remove lipstick on my face. That was how it was then, and now I think it was shameful that I behaved that way. After seeing Zen Master Seung Sahn, though, I began to save my used tissue carefully and not throw it away, and I found I was able to use one piece for over a month. The Master fully engaged with thrift and saving throughout his whole life, and I learned lessons through my experiences with him. Soon afterward I would share these lessons with my family, and my children learned to value the daily necessities of everyday life as well.

A long time ago, the Soen Woo association would treat the people who participated in retreats at Musangsa or Shinwonsa temples to a meal at a hotel restaurant. Since we regularly went for meals there, we were able to get a 20 percent discount. As usual, all the members would wipe the plate clean with a piece of bread after a meal. One of the restaurant staff witnessed this and told the manager. Along with the staff, he was impressed, and gave us an additional 10 percent discount.

Zen Master Seung Sahn always walked upright, looking straight ahead. Even his walk was admirable. He was never seen to be disorderly. All his actions and words were teaching itself.

I have seen many monks who are respected in Korea, but I have never seen anyone with the dharma power of Zen Master Seung Sahn. In everyday life, his actions and teachings were the same, and he showed us great harmony between the dharma and life.

Showing the Right Way of Life

Dae Seon Haeng

I had worked as the head of lay supporters at Hwagyesa for many years. It was in early 1980 when I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn there. I was close to him and received teaching until he entered parinirvana.

One winter day, it was very cold and there was heavy snow. I had been to Shinwonsa Temple with Zen Master

Seung Sahn and Mu Shim Sunim (later known as Zen Master Dae Jin). Mu Shim Sunim served as the attendant and was going to drive the car, but it would not start because of the severe cold weather. He turned the key several times, but it did not start. Mu Shim Sunim and I were embarrassed. After a while, Zen Master Seung Sahn, who was sitting in the back seat, got out of the car and came to the driver's seat. "Come out, Mu Shim Sunim." Mu Shim Sunim got out of the car and Zen Master Seung Sahn folded his outer garment and put it on his lap. He sat down right in the driver's seat. As soon as he put in the key—it seemed to go in deep and turn easily—the car started right away with a big *br- br-* sound.

This might have happened to anyone, but at that moment I was struck by a strange feeling, as if waking up. Zen Master Seung Sahn had an insight into the situation and an intuition about where the problem was. I had just witnessed Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma. I patted my knee and thought that this was a moment of only-just-do-it! mind.

I accompanied Zen Master Seung Sahn during many activities, such as Zen practice, Buddhist temple services, and overseas teaching trips. He was truly the same at all times. His merciful dharma talk was always simple and clear, only expressed differently depending on the situation of the people in the country he was visiting. He was not only a Zen Master just sitting in his room waiting for people to come but one who always reached out his hand first and showed the right way of life to his disciples, who needed attention and help.

I really miss Zen Master Seung Sahn now.

O Captain! My Captain!

Dae Do Hwa

In 1993, I was asked by the Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Center to pick up Zen Master Seung Sahn at the Singapore airport and take him to a hotel. This driving service was the first time I met Zen Master Seung Sahn.

On the way to the hotel with Zen Master Seung Sahn and Mu Sang Sunim, I asked, like a fool rushing in where angels fear to tread, "Master! Who is dragging this corpse around?"

"Hmm. You have been practicing?"

"No. I just read your book, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, three weeks ago."

"Did you enjoy it?"

"Yes, I was so impressed with it. In particular, the phrase 'only do it' touched me. I have been working hard while living in this foreign country, and it made me think that working hard and having 'only do it' mind are the same."

It was serendipity that I met Zen Master Seung Sahn in Singapore. Whenever he came to Singapore for an event hosted by the Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Center, I would make the hotel reservation, take him from the airport, and do the work related to the dharma meetings. I knew that



he had a chronic disease, and I thought it must be so tiring to travel by plane for such a long time. I tried to reserve a room as close to the elevator as possible, and I checked the room to be sure it was in good condition. I wondered how he could give a dharma talk as soon as he arrived, especially with a tired and uncomfortable body. But it did not matter. He would find a way to have a powerful voice and good posture without looking more tired than usual. Of course, he became tired after talking and answering the many questions, but he would spend his time wherever he and his teachings were needed. It was not a problem for him—neither a shabby place nor an uncomfortable body. No matter where he was, whether on the ground, under a roof, or up on the second floor of a hotel, each place became the dharma seat.

At the time my mother passed away, I was in great sorrow. As soon as the mourning period had ended, I went to Singapore and helped with the hotel reservations and transportation from the airport. Since I had helped Zen Master Seung Sahn closely and spent a lot of time with him, he gave me lots of advice and encouragement. I thought that he was really good only to me, but that was a deluded, self-centered idea. He was a living Buddha who listened to everyone's stories, gave clear answers to difficult questions, and offered his time and sincerity on their behalf. Even for someone who did not know Buddhism, his skillful actions and explanations for all the worry and anger in the world were simple and easy to understand. I soon realized, "Ah! The Master is not my own monk, but the great monk of us all."

As time went by, the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn continued to touch my heart, and the short and powerful phrase, "Just do it! Only don't know" became a part of my life.

I will always be grateful to Zen Master Seung Sahn. O Captain! My captain! ♦

A Zen Master Is Like a Tiger Mother

Q&A with Zen Master Dae Bong on Zen Master Seung Sahn

Editor's Note

The Asian editorial team sent a set of questions via email to those who had direct experience with Zen Master Seung Sahn. Here are wonderful answers from Zen Master Dae Bong.

Primary Point: How did Zen Master Seung Sahn live as a human being, a teacher, and a Zen master?

Zen Master Dae Bong: I think he gave his life 100 percent to dharma and to his students.

Today, exactly 38 years ago, I took sunim precepts from Zen Master Seung Sahn. After first meeting him, I trusted him. I believed he truly attained great enlightenment, and that he could teach me the Way. And I knew I would have to learn to believe in myself. Also I seemed to realize at the same time that he was a human being, and not perfect.

To me, at least, his speech and actions were one. He said, "Zen masters also make mistakes. How soon make correct—very important." Also he said, "Ten Zen masters will have ten different opinions and they all think they are correct." I felt he was always honest with me; his speech and actions matched.

I did not always have an easy time with him. He encouraged me into many difficult situations, but I knew each time that I was choosing to try it. And sometimes he yelled at me quite strongly, not holding back at all.

I felt that I didn't always have to listen to him, and also that he didn't always know what was best for me, but I would always learn from our relationship and our interactions. I trusted that he was completely sincere and caring with me. Ultimately, however, it was up to me to grow and become clear and find my way. He wasn't Santa Claus granting wishes.

PP: What is the most memorable teaching that you received from him?

ZMDB: I cannot say just one.

First teaching: The first time I attended a talk by Zen Master Seung Sahn, he was asked "What is crazy? What is not crazy?" His answer was "If you are very attached to something, you are very crazy. If you are a little attached to something, you are a little crazy. If you are not attached to anything, that is not crazy." I thought, "That is better than my ten years studying and working in psychology."

And Zen Master Seung Sahn continued, "So, in this world, everyone is crazy, because everyone is attached to I-my-me. But this 'I' doesn't exist; it is only made by our thinking. If you want to not attach to your thinking I, then you must practice Zen."

Then I thought, "This is my teacher."

Second teaching: First kong-an interview, primary point basic teaching: "Your before-thinking substance, my before-thinking substance, somebody's before-thinking substance, also this stick's substance, the substance of the sun, moon, and stars, is the same substance." When I heard that, I thought, "I've been waiting my whole life to hear that." I trusted he could teach me how to attain that and how to really help others.

Third teaching: At the end of my third kong-an interview I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "When will I see you again?" He immediately hit me strongly on the leg with his Zen stick, looked me in the eyes closely and said, "When you keep don't-know mind, you and I are always together."

He also gave me great advice in dealing with many specific issues in my personal life, with my parents and other intimate relations, and with some serious parts of my karma. He was, for me, a living example of great vow, great effort, and great wisdom. He was an example of what is possible. I felt he taught me true love and compassion by giving me love and compassion.

I think he helped many people in many different ways and to different degrees. It depended on what they wanted, needed, what was most important to them, and how they wanted to live. He pushed people, but he also adjusted when you made your own clear decisions.

He said a Zen master is like a tiger mother. A tiger mother pushes its cubs over a cliff, and those that climb back up, she takes care of. He certainly pushed me over a number of cliffs, with my willingness, and he certainly was right there whenever I climbed back up.

Meeting and practicing and studying with him was crucial for me. He once said to me, "If you hadn't met me, you would already be dead." I believe that was true. Attaining the Buddhadharmas is the only thing I ever really wanted to do in my life, even if I didn't consciously know it.

PP: What was your most unforgettable day or moment with him?

ZMDB: I can't say what was my most unforgettable day or moment with Dae Seon Sa Nim because there are many, many ones. ♦

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Opening a Day with “Complete Oneness”

In Memory of Zen Master Seung Sahn

Zen Master Tan Wol

After becoming a *sami* (novice) at Hwagyesa Temple, my job was to work in the temple office. It was a well-known temple, in the big city of Seoul, that used to attract hundreds of people to visit there almost every day. A day for me would be filled with endless tasks, such as answering phone calls, serving guests, and filling out paperwork at the office. I used to think quite often, “I didn’t become a monk for this.”

Still, I was able to clear my mind at 8:00 every morning. At that time, Zen Master Seung Sahn walked out of his residence and went around to every dharma hall, together with the two sunims who attended him, to make bows. Looking at him doing it, all my anguish and delusion disappeared, and I reminded myself of the path I wished to pursue. Starting with Myeong Bu Jeon (Ji Jang Bosal hall), which is the dharma hall closest to his residence, he stopped by the halls located next to each other one by one, and finished at Dae Jeok Gwang Jeon (Great Stillness Light Hall), where he would give a short dharma talk for his students from various countries. If he stayed at the temple, it was his daily morning routine.

He made three prostrations inside the main halls such as Dae Ung Jeon (Shakyamuni Buddha Hall) and Dae Jeok Gwang Jeon, but he bowed three times standing outside in front of the smaller halls such as Myeong Bu Jeon, San Sin Gak (Mountain Spirit Hall), O Baek Ha Han Jeon (Five Hundred Arhats Hall), and facing the stupa for his teacher, Zen Master Ko Bong.

Closing his eyes and placing his palms together, he prayed for a few seconds at the end of the three bows at each hall. His appearance just inspired me as much as his words from his dharma speech, which always struck my mind. Because he did it at the same time every morning, when the time drew near, my heart would flutter with a pleasant tension as if it was time to listen to his dharma speech. It was a great teaching and support to start my daily work in the office of the temple. It had become a precious moment every morning that reminded me of the beginner’s mind as a practitioner.

One day, on the way back to his residence after finishing the morning routine, he stopped in front of the office and motioned for me to come to him. I approached him and he said, “The energy flow of the temple is leak-

ing behind the San Sin Gak (Mountain Spirit Hall). We should block the hole.” I couldn’t quite understand what he meant but just answered, “Yes, Sunim.”

Just a few minutes after he returned to his residence, a woman who was very large, dressed all in black, and wore thick makeup came to the office. In her eyes and aura, which made me feel uncomfortable, I immediately noticed that she was no ordinary person. Standing outside the office, she asked me:

“Sunim, I saw many bodhisattvas in my dream last night, and they are enshrined on the mountain beyond the San Sin Gak. To get there, I must go through the fence put up behind the San Sin Gak. So, I ask for your permission to walk through it.”

What is this! It just woke me up. It’s the same spot he

had just mentioned to me! I pulled myself together and told the woman that I couldn’t let her do it, because it was not a regular passage and it could be dangerous to walk up through there. She started telling me the reasons why she must go there, but I resolutely said no as a matter of safety and was able to persuade her to give up after all. As soon as she left, I went straight to the spot and found that a part of the fence had been cut through. There were signs showing that some people had already gone to and from the mountain through it.

I thought it was very mysterious. How did he know? Of course, someone could have said to him that the fence had been cut through. Even so, how can it be explained that the woman with a strange

aura appeared and said such a thing to me? It was a mysterious thing to me, and I thought that Zen Master Seung Sahn was a mysterious man.

Rather, I started thinking that his energy, which opens each day with complete oneness by making the four great vows for all beings at every hall every morning, is the power of his original nature that allows him to perceive everything clearly.

Complete oneness, before-thinking mind, is so clear that it can connect with anything. Being beyond good or bad, he pierced through the truth and manifested it in wisdom for the bodhisattva path. As he had taught his disciples all his life, he himself lived that way. ♦



Photo: Kwan Um School of Zen Archives

Providence Zen Center
Cumberland, RI

Winter Kyol Che 2023

JANUARY 7, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2023

Kyol Che is a time to investigate your life closely. This experience can bring about a clearer, more compassionate direction, and more harmonious relationships within all aspects of life. Conducted in silence, the daily schedule includes sitting, chanting, walking, and bowing meditations, as well as work practice. Meals are eaten in silence in formal temple style. Retreat leaders give dharma talks and kong-an teaching interviews. Retreat ends with lunch on the last day.

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Winter Kyol Che 2023

TEACHERS LIST

January 7th - Colin Beavan JDPSN
January 14th - Jason Quinn JDPSN
January 21st - TBD
January 28th - Kwan Haeng Sunim JDPS

February 4th - Zen Master Bon Shim
February 11th - Colin Beavan JDPSN
February 18th - Matt Keeler JDPSN
February 25th - Dennis Duermeier JDPSN
(INTENSIVE WEEK)

March 4th - Rebecca Otte JDPSN
March 11th - Paul Majchrzyk JDPSN
March 18th - Zen Master Soeng Hyang
March 25th - Zen Master Soeng Hyang

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“You. Thinking Thinking Too Much. Put It All Down! OK?”

My First Meeting with Zen Master Seung Sahn

Ye Jin Sunim

In 2002 I graduated from Unmunsa Temple’s traditional Korean Buddhism college. That spring, after my bhikkhuni ordination, I went to my first Kyol Che at the Musangsa Temple International Zen Center. I wished to receive the teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn.

After graduation from Unmunsa, most of my monastic dharma friends prepared to go to one of the meditation temples in Korea.

Before going to a meditation temple, however, I had to decide from which Zen master to receive the *hwadu* (kong-an). After making that decision and receiving the *hwadu* from that person, I put it deeply in my heart and went to a meditation hall (*soen bang*) where I felt an affinity for the practice.

I was feeling concerned about which spiritual teacher I would go to meet when I learned about a man called Zen Master Seung Sahn. I had heard about him from a dharma friend who was practicing among Zen Master Seung Sahn’s disciples at Hwagyesa Temple, and it had made a strong impression on me. I also read Zen Master Seung Sahn’s books. What on earth is he teaching, I wondered, that young people from every corner of the globe are practicing Korean Zen? To be honest, I was curious.

So I came to Musangsa, where it was said that Zen Master Seung Sahn was teaching. I thought that it would be OK not to know English. Although it is an international Zen center, I thought I would have no problem communicating because it was in Korea.

But immediately after arriving a problem appeared. Korean was not being spoken, and I didn’t speak English at all. The English I learned and remembered was the English I had learned in middle school, like “I am a boy! I am a girl.” Beyond that, I had no English. All the people at that retreat at Musangsa International Zen Center spoke English as their mother language, and there was not one other person who could not speak English.

I felt like an impaired person at Musangsa, since I could not understand a single word anyone spoke in English.

Moreover, Zen Master Seung Sahn wasn’t there! He wasn’t able to come often because he was sick. I felt hopeless. I had already begun the Kyol Che and couldn’t leave. And I couldn’t communicate. Indeed, I thought, would I even be able to do this Kyol Che?

I built up my courage and made a decision. I thought back to the time when I had gone to an unfamiliar place

and become a sunim. OK, I said to myself, I’ll just think that I am doing *haeng-ja* (postulant) training again.

Before getting used to the traditional culture of a Korean Kyol Che, I first got used to the Kyol Che culture of the international Zen center.

During chanting one must match the melody like a piano note, bowing while facing each other. Even though it was unfamiliar and strange, it was interesting and fun. Seeing the earnest figures of foreign monks, nuns, and laypeople wearing the Korean monastic robes also made a strong impression, as well as the forty or fifty people all practicing with one heart and devotion. Even though I hadn’t personally met Zen Master Seung Sahn, from the appearance of these people, I felt that Zen Master Seung Sahn must be a great man.

During the Kyol Che there was an interview—in other words, a Zen dialogue—twice a week, a person-to-person question-and-answer period between one Zen master and one student:

“Do you have any questions?”

“No!”

“Good. Keep only don’t know. OK?”

“Yes!”

I usually had this sort of simple dialogue during my interview period. Through the foreign students who spoke English I got to know that Zen Master Seung Sahn emphasized “only don’t know.”

The interview time was a little burdensome for me. I didn’t have any questions, but the teacher would say, “Do you have any questions?” every single time, and I would think to myself, “Should I make up a question?”

It was just as if I were walking down the street without any thoughts, and a TV reporter approached and asked, “Sunim, what do you think about while walking?”

Still, I treated even that burden as a delusion and continued my practice day after day with “only don’t know!” and “just do it!” mind.

Unknowingly, I had been affected by Zen Master Seung Sahn’s “not knowing” and “just doing it” teachings.

Then one day someone said that Zen Master Seung Sahn was coming. I was curious and happy. Even now I remember it vividly. When he arrived, he immediately looked into the meditation hall on the second floor of Musangsa, waved his hand, and greeted us: “Hello, everybody!” Even though his face looked sick, his wide smile was the same as a ray of sunshine.

An old Korean phrase says, "Seeing the master even once, the karma of three generations is extinguished." Isn't it the greatest fortune of all to meet a great teacher? I thought I was really lucky to have come to Musangsa.

Finally, it was time for the dharma talk. To the left of Zen Master Seung Sahn sat the American monk Mu Shim Sunim (later known as Zen Master Dae Jin), who was fluent in Korean. On the right was the Korean monk Do Kwan Sunim, who spoke well in English. What a relief! Finally, I will be able to understand the dharma talk through interpretation.

Zen Master Seung Sahn started with the question, "Do you have any questions?" He looked at us as a grandfather looks at his grandchildren, and smiled widely. (I had heard those same English words a lot during the interviews, so I understood well!) Some foreign young man who spoke fluent, native English asked a really long question. (Even now, I still don't know what the question was.) I had thought that Zen Master Seung Sahn was fluent in English, but surprisingly, he didn't understand, either. Looking to his left, he said, "What did he say?" and Mu Shim Sunim explained it in Korean. Maybe the Zen master wanted to understand more fully, so he looked at the Korean Do Kwan Sunim and asked, "What?" and Sunim did a lengthy translation in reply.

After that came Zen Master Seung Sahn's answer. It was so quiet in the meditation hall that only people's breathing could be heard. I wondered, "What answer is he going to give?" The atmosphere felt like everyone was focused on what kind of an answer one should give. But without being able to understand English, I could only watch the scene as if it were a movie.

Again, Zen Master Seung Sahn smiled widely and said, "You. Thinking thinking too much. Put it all down! OK?"

Suddenly, the serious atmosphere became filled with laughter. Even now I vividly remember the English that Zen Master Seung Sahn spoke that night. He is still teaching me: "Too much thinking! Put it all down!"

When I was in Musangsa I was like a person in a foreign country who doesn't speak the language. I couldn't speak English, and I had never before heard "KATZ!" But with that short and simple shout by Zen Master Seung

Sahn, my ears were opened and my ignorance was broken.

It was my first intense experience with Zen Master Seung Sahn.

Already at that time the Zen Master was sick, and I didn't meet with him much more after that. Still, I could learn from him and feel his teaching presence through Zen Master Dae Bong, Zen Master Dae Kwang, Zen Master Dae Kwan, Oh Jin Sunim (who later left the monastic life and returned to his lay name, Andrzej Stec JDPSN), Hyon Gak Sunim, Myong An Sunim JDPSN; and dharma friends Kathy Park JDPSN, Jo Bul Sunim, Kwan Mi Sunim, Bo Haeng Sunim, Myong Haeng Sunim, Myong Hwa Sunim, Shim Hae Sunim, Chi Rin Sunim, and Ji Chen Sunim. Back then we all were young and passionate. We played at being like the Zen master. Whatever kind of work we did, we did it with a "just do it!" mind.

Even when we were working, we imitated Zen Master Seung Sahn: "Just do it, put it all down," we would say, as we encouraged each other and tried again. Sometimes when we became emotional and began to think a lot, we helped each other by shouting, "only don't know!" Whenever something bad would happen to one of us, we would keep repeating in our hearts the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn: "Bad situation is good situation, good situation is bad situation." We would remember the exclamations the Zen master would make about the way of practice: "Only go straight, don't know" and "just do it."

Now, I am passing on to my disciples the practice I created by imitating and following the Zen master's words and actions with other students. I miss Zen Master Seung Sahn, who gave us this dharma. Now I try to follow him by living like he did and going about my life like that. ♦

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Ye Jin Sunim took bhikkhuni precepts at Unmunsa Temple in 2002. Since then, she has sat retreats at Musangsa, Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong, Providence Zen Center, and various Korean Zen monasteries. From 2008 to the present, she has served as abbot at Chilbulam Hermitage, which is a World Heritage Site on Namsan Mountain, and at Jungheungsa Temple in Gyeongju, South Korea.



A Special Name

Won Il Sunim

Zen Master Seung Sahn gave me the five-precepts dharma name Manhae when I first moved to the Providence Zen Center. It was the summer of 1990. I remember clearly the first time I saw him. He stood across from me as we entered opposing doors to the dharma room. We both paused to look at each other. He was studying me carefully, a wonderful flash of a smile playing across his lips. It was the only gentle encounter I remember with him. Dae Kwang Sunim told me later that he'd given me a very special name. He apologized that the original calligraphy had to be destroyed because the first character, *Man*, was the symbol of Buddhism—a counterclockwise swastika. He felt this would not be tolerated in the West because of its similarity to the clockwise swastika used by Nazi Germany. To remedy the situation, Zen Master Seung Sahn changed the character to “complete.” The original “ocean of Buddhism” became “complete ocean.”

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After giving an answer about the name during the precepts ceremony—which was unusual because Dae Soen Sa Nim was there—I went to him and asked, “What does the name really mean?” He looked at me fiercely and said, “No meaning!”

Years later, after I'd become a dharma teacher, I had my first interview with him. While thanking him

for his teaching, I broke out in tears. He looked at me for a moment with his brilliant eyes and said, “You've been practicing so your heart has opened up. That's wonderful.” Then his expression grew fierce again. “But now you have to do hard practice and bring your energy down to your danjoen [center], OK?”

He was my teacher. There was no doubt about that. There was no softness between us.

After attending half a dozen Kyol Che retreats in as many years, I headed west to help build Mountain Spirit Center in the Mojave Desert. Because of the tough conditions and no running water, most of us trimmed our hair to buzz cuts. We'd get a shower every few weeks, when Mu Sang Sunim would visit from Los Angeles and rent a motel room. Sometimes we'd go there instead. On one of the visits, as I walked across the library at Dharma Zen Center with a friend, Zen Master Seung Sahn shouted from the couch, “Strong young men, you should become monks! Go to Korea and do the haeng-ja kyoyuk!” (That is an intensive training course that serves as both an indoctrination into the Chogye order and an effective way to weed out weaker candidates.)

I never had the idea to become a monk. It isn't something often entertained in the West. But I was at the end of a ten-year push into American dharma, and

I needed something more. Unknowingly, I'd been preparing for it through all the years as a resident of various Zen centers. At that time, the teaching I received was to get a simple job, like working at a gas station, so that I could devote my life to practice. The emphasis on the path alone, starting in my mid-twenties before I'd gone to college or developed a skill in the trades, is something that has carried throughout my life. I don't know if it was meant to be maintained indefinitely, unless one intends to ordain. Regardless, I'd given so much of my life to the dharma already, I didn't have much resistance. I looked at this great patriarch of Zen, my teacher, and said yes.

I flew to Korea. After completing the first torturous course—haeng-ja training and the *sami-gye* (novice precepts), I was ordained as a *sami* (novice monk) in the Chogye order. That same day I received a phone call from home. My father was in the hospital. They didn't think he would



Photo: Won Seong Sunim

survive. I flew home. He was a strong man. He survived, then gradually succumbed over the years to the many afflictions of diabetes. I was asked by the family to get a job and start sending money home. Zen Master Seung Sahn refused to let me do this. I had to give back my robes. He said, “Your life will be only suffering.”

Soon after I buried my father, Zen Master Seung Sahn passed away. That year, there was a fire at Mountain Spirit, the monastery I’d helped build. I’d gone through my own raging fires by then. There was poetry to it. I helped a small crew of monks clean the grounds and put things in order. Afterward, they thought it would be a good idea to do a winter Kyol Che. I sat with them in a brooding silence, not fully engaged. I hadn’t practiced for six years at that point—I hardly remembered the Kwan Um forms. The first thing I noticed was that I didn’t want to be alive anymore. I took that life, that ball of suffering and misery that I’d made, and gave it away, then and there. I remember that moment quite vividly. I said, “You can have it. I’m no good at it.”

From that point my life changed completely. Meditation became something deep and profound. I can’t describe all the things I experienced, even on that first retreat. I flew back to Korea. I was circling then, trying to figure out what was going on with my mind and my practice, searching for someone who understood what I was going through. On a visit to Hwagyesa Temple in Seoul, I went to Zen Master Seung Sahn’s room for a ceremony when I noticed the same calligraphy that Dae Soen Sa Nim had intended for me, the counterclockwise swastika and the character for “ocean.” I wish I had that calligraphy now! That was the first clue that there was something more. If the name had no meaning, why this handprint, from someone else named Manhae, on his wall?

Several years later, when I made the resolve to return to Korea and complete the training to become a bhikkhu in the Chogye order, I did the sami training at Baekdamsa Temple. Despite being the only exclusively Zen training temple in Korea, it’s largely unknown to the West. Dae Soen Sa Nim was the *joshil* there, the guiding Zen master. He held the title there ten years after his death. Who could replace him?

Baekdamsa, located far to the north, is nestled in a watershed of the enormous Soeraksan—Korea’s biggest mountain range. It’s a beautiful nature preserve, and my favorite monastery in the world. As I began four years of



Photo: Bon Myong Sunim

arduous training there, I came across a statue of the other Manhae, my namesake, in the courtyard. Manhae was the pen name of Han Yong-un. He’d resided there long ago, and had written his famous manifesto there, among other writings. He was a *writer*. It’s impossible for me to make sense out of this. When Zen Master Seung Sahn gave me that name, I had no idea that I would develop into a writer. I hadn’t written a single line of prose back then. Had he seen that in me the day we’d met, when he stared at me with such intensity?

I’ve since returned to the United States, to the Providence Zen Center—the same place where I’d first encountered Dae Soen Sa Nim. Thirty-two years have passed, fifty since he first appeared in the West. The world has changed so much. I wish he was still here. There’s so much I want to tell him, the one who’s shaped my life more than any other. And so many questions. How do we teach this new generation, the ones who can’t or won’t put the path in the center of their lives? We are trying to meet the moment, all of us. Though there are many new teachers and Zen masters all over the world, there’s no one to replace him. ♦

Won Il Sunim has been involved with American Zen since the late 1980s. A resident of the Providence Zen Center for several years, he was also with Dharma Zen Center in Los Angeles and Taegosa Temple in the Mojave Desert before moving to Korea to become a Zen monk. After completing training at Baekdamsa Temple and taking bhikkhu precepts, he moved back to the Providence Zen Center, where he is currently living and practicing.

TRANSMISSION CEREMONY FOR

Zen Master Tan Wol

On April 17, 2022, Hye Tong Sunim received transmission from Zen Master Dae Bong at Musangsa temple in South Korea and became Zen Master Tan Wol.

DHARMA COMBAT

Jason Quinn JDPSN: I have a question. Zen Master Dae Bong in his talk said that the Buddha's greatest teachers were old age, sickness, and death. And I was curious that out of those three, which one is your greatest teacher?

Zen Master Tan Wol: You already understand.

Quinn PSN: I definitely don't.

ZMTW: Thank you for being there and giving me a question, Jason PSN.

Quinn PSN: That's not so greatest. Isn't it?

ZMTW: Not enough?

Quinn PSN: No.

ZMTW: Dog follows bone.

Quinn PSN: Thank you for your great teaching.

Question: So, Sunim. The Sixth Patriarch was illiterate. You went to university and studied a lot. The Sixth Patriarch received transmission from the Fifth Patriarch. You are receiving transmission from Zen Master Dae Bong today. So, whose dharma is higher? Yours or the Sixth Patriarch's?

ZMTW: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

ZMTW: Zen Master Dae Bong's kasa is brown and the wall is white.

Q: So, the dharma is only the colors?

ZMTW: Not enough?

Q: Not enough.

ZMTW: Dog follows bone.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

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Photo: Courtesy of Musangsa

Question: Hello! Congratulations, Hye Tong Sunim. We are very happy here for you. Congratulations for receiving the dharma transmission from Dae Bong Sunim. And actually, I have no question. I'm here to steal your dharma. [Pointing at Zen Master Tan Wol.] Just give me all your dharma right now!

ZMTW: [Smiles silently.]

Q: [Keeps an upright posture.]

ZMTW: Not enough? [Laughter from audience.]

Q: [No answer.]

ZMTW: Bye bye! [Waving hands.] See you sometime! [Big laughter from audience.]

Q: Next time. Thank you!

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Before you were born, what was it that sees and hears?

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

Now, what is it that sees and hears?

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

After you die, what will it be that sees and hears?

After all, among the three, which one is your true self?

KATZ!

Floor is yellow, camera shutter sound “click, click.”

About 140 years ago in Korea, Zen Master Kyong Ho was traveling to Seoul when he heard the news that his teacher was ill. On the way, he encountered a rain-storm and tried to find a place to rest until it would stop. But the owners of every house he visited did not even allow him to enter their houses, telling him that

a severe epidemic was raging in that village. He finally entered a ruined house at the end of the village, where he found the bodies of the whole family lying inside the room. In an instant, he was overtaken with the fear of death. Zen Master Kyong Ho was already a famous Buddhist sutra lecturer at that time, but he realized that all the understanding of the sutras he had been proud of until now was of no use to the great matter of life and death. Returning to his sutra school, he announced that he would not teach sutras any longer, and he began to devote himself to practicing Zen with an unanswered question. And he finally got enlightenment and went on to revive the fading Korean Zen Buddhism.

About half a century later, Zen Master Seung Sahn went through different kinds of hardships and was determined to practice risking his life. During his childhood, he experienced numerous tragedies during the Japanese colonial period. But as soon as his country achieved the independence that all the people longed for, he witnessed a desperate situation in which the same people were divided into two groups and fought each other, only because of their different ideas, their ideologies. The situation eventually escalated to war, leading to the tragedy of the division of Korea into two countries, which has continued to this day. Zen Master Seung Sahn deeply felt the impermanence and ignorance of the world of samsara. Before he was twenty years old, he decided to leave society behind and went into the mountains to solve the problem of life and death.

Disasters and tragedies such as epidemics, pandemics, and wars have always existed. We face them today, and it seems certain that they will continue in the future. When such disasters and tragedies strike, most people get lost. However, some instead wake up in the midst of such difficulties and help the world. How should we deal with the hardships of the world of samsara—hardships that exist regardless of time and place? How can you digest them so that you can live a peaceful life for yourself and help others live a peaceful life?



Photo: Courtesy of Musangsa



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About two weeks ago, Zen Master Dae Bong notified the members of the action committee of Musangsa Temple about this transmission ceremony. At the end of the announcement, he said, “I will give transmission to one of the three cats living in the temple.” *[Laughter.]* Yes, exactly! Everyone burst into laughter at that time. However, a few days later, at a meeting with other guests, he spoke again about the ceremony, and he said the same thing: that he would give transmission to one of the three cats living in the temple. Everyone burst out laughing too. I laughed too, but thought to myself for a moment. “Maybe it’s not a joke. Didn’t he already tell people this twice?” This is my joke to you, everyone!

But after watching those cats for several years, I don’t think they’re bad candidates for transmission. Cats don’t think as much as people do, and they seem to live much simpler and more laid-back lives. They are also often seen meditating. They know how to get what they want. For example, if they want to be petted by people, they come in front of people and start rolling their whole body on the ground, twisting it. They just do it 100 percent! Without checking or hesitation, “just do it!” When I see them doing it, I can’t help just petting them.

However, almost no one here would want to live an animal life. Almost no one would like to be reborn as an animal in the next life either. Animals’ minds are simple and focused, but they think only for themselves and have little understanding of others. Human beings think and check a lot, and their mind is complicated. But humans’ mind becomes simple and wide only if they return to don’t-know, their true nature. Not only will they understand their situation, but they can also understand

the pain and suffering of other beings. This is called great compassion.

Sometimes we don’t even understand those we love. Sometimes you don’t understand why your children, wife, husband, or friends do something. Sometimes it’s hard to understand the motivations behind your student’s or your teacher’s actions.

But if you return to your true nature, don’t know, moment to moment, you can connect with everyone and everything. At that moment, thoughts such as “I understand” or “I do not understand” disappear.

Somebody said, “We may not understand someone perfectly, but we can love them completely.”

If you lose the moment, you will fall like an arrow into the ocean of suffering and you will lose your life.

If you attain the moment, you will attain the sufferings and attain the true life.

How to attain the moment?

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

Did you hear clearly?

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

Do you see this stick is brown?

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

Don’t lose that point, and use it for all beings.

Thank you all very much in all time zones and all places at this moment. ♦



Photo: Courtesy of Musangsa



Arno Schuler / DZSM

Teachings from Nature by Zen Master Dae Kwan

Editor's Note

This Zen photo book is a compilation of photos taken by Zen Master Dae Kwan herself and her teaching words accompanying those photos. Most of the photos were taken with her mobile phone during the 2019–2020 three-month winter retreat in Gak Su Temple on Lantau Island, Hong Kong. If you wish to obtain a copy, please contact Su Bong Zen Monastery at info@subong.org.hk. The book is being distributed free of charge. Donations for postage are welcomed.

Excerpt from the Introduction

Zen Master Dae Kwan

After meditating for some time in the kuti (wooden huts), I opened the door and continued my meditation on the balcony. The kuti and the balcony were built on a slope. When I was looking at the forest, most trees were below me. Looking at the trees in the forest, a gentle breeze was blowing. All of a sudden all the trees in the forest were welcoming me—it was like they were all my friends. As I was brought up in the busy city of Hong Kong, this was the first time in my life that I felt like I had arrived home. After I left, this joy remained with me for many weeks. This was the true beginning of my life—when I had a taste of how pure and selfless nature is. [...]

When I came across Zen teaching, everything became clearer to me. During my first three-month winter Kyol Che in Korea, I was very touched to hear Zen Master Seung Sahn teaching: “What is Buddha? Buddha means wake up! With awakened eyes, one can see everything

as it is. The sky is blue. The tree is green.” This teaching opened my heart and confirmed for me all that I had learned in Thailand. Our true nature and the universe’s nature are not separated. In fact, every day nature is teaching us very high-class dharma. Nature is always pure and clear. Nature never thinks for itself. Our true nature and the universe’s nature have the same substance. Everything in nature is pointing us to this substance.

From the Book's Designer

One day a few years back, Sifu (Zen Master Dae Kwan) was swiping her phone as if she was looking for something, before showing me a picture she had taken. “Wow” was my immediate response and I couldn’t help saying: “Please take more! I hope someday we can turn your work into a photo book.”

Later when I received the finalized manuscript from the editorial team, I spent a long time mulling over it—treating it like a photo essay book with clearly defined sections would somehow impose a straitjacket on the layout design. Sifu’s photos are so full of life yet with no specific style, each accompanied by poems or words of truth that arise at that moment. After much deliberation, the editorial team accepted my suggestion that all photos be arranged according to the time they were taken, without being categorized into separate themes. By doing so, it is hoped that the reader can follow Sifu’s personal timeline to catch a better glimpse of her insights about nature. For either Zen practitioners or the general reader, this entry point is easy to grasp, simply because the book is a vehicle of the living dharma!

The design work lasted for more than six months. During that time, there were countless heart-touching moments and takeaways, as though I was enjoying one live jazz concert after another—spontaneous, exuberant, and brimming with wisdom. This is perhaps the liveliness a Zen master radiates, so even the simplest tool can capture vividly all the dharma lessons from Mother Nature. Before this photo book was put into print, I asked Sifu: “Why is nature so important to us?” “Because nature helps us to see clearly our true nature which has no ‘I.’” And that is how the book came about. ◆



Francis Lau is a dharma teacher at Su Bong Zen Monastery.



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