Dharma for Children ✤ Transmission of Zen ✤ Compost is Key! ✤ Dharma Parents

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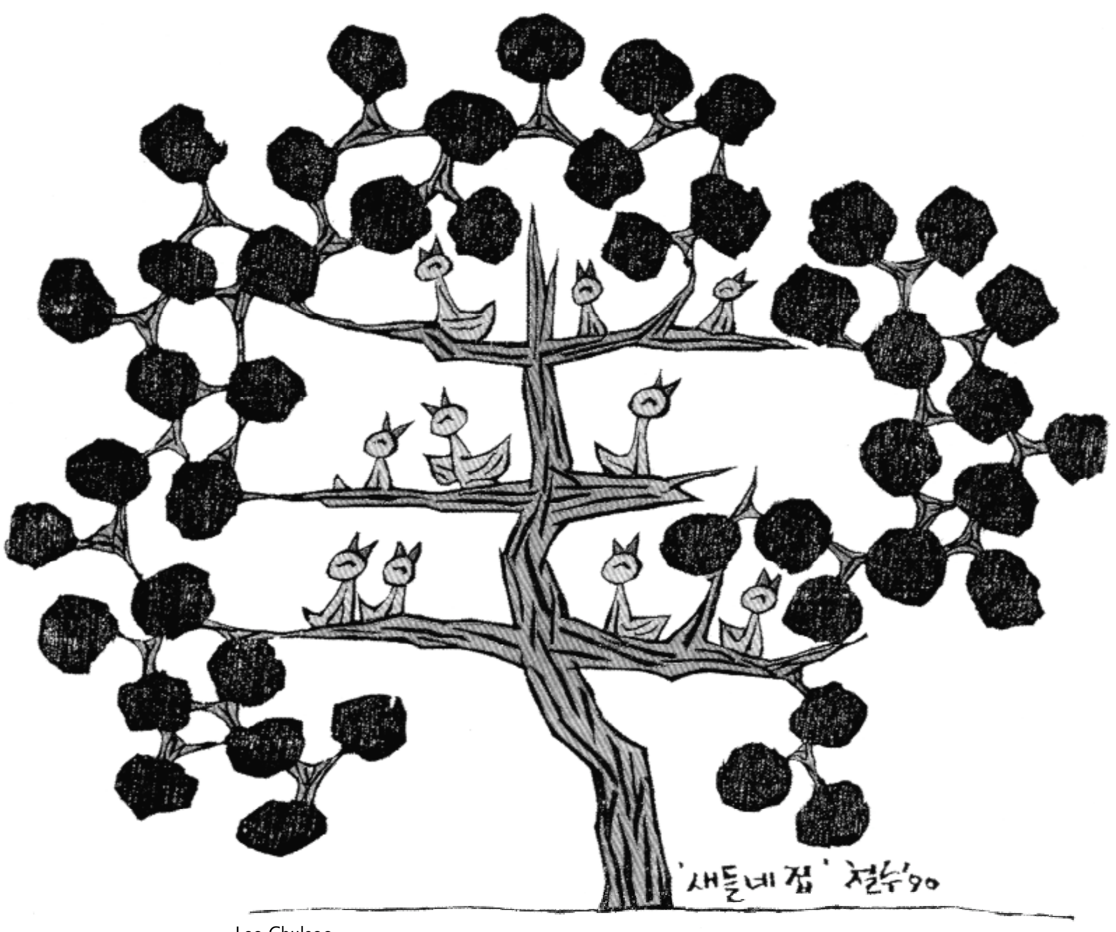

Lee Chulsoo

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May the merit from this issue be transferred to all beings throughout the universe!

Dear Readers,

You are buddhas and bodhisattvas. Your everyday stories of awakenings and struggles will help each of us find wisdom and compassion and build an enlightened society. Please submit articles, artwork, and letters to *Spring Wind*.

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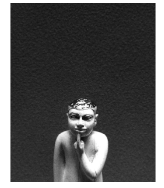

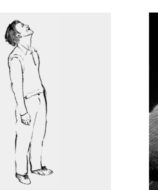

On the Cover

Photograph by Anjali Jacques Oule.

Letters

Dear *Spring Wind* folks,

Glad to have you back.... I'm not sure why I let the subscription lapse. I like your publication better than the big slick ones, I guess, because I can't see myself as any kind of "real" or "good" Buddhist. I am actually just a recovering Catholic trying to make sense of things or, perhaps, let go of their ideas and do the right thing from moment to moment. At the age of 56, I have had a fair share of learning opportunities!

Your magazine never makes me feel inadequate about my journey, rather it allows me to be gentle with myself and keep my sense of humor about the whole thing. I thank you and welcome you back into my life.

Wishing you and all beings peace and happiness,

Susanne Wichert
Bothell, WA

Carrie McGeachie

Monastic Community & Transmission of Zen

INDIA—CHINA—KOREA

Venerable Samu Sunim

Buddha and his disciples were mendicant and homeless monks called bhikkhus who had renounced the world. They led wandering lives in order to spread Dharma and collect alms. They stopped traveling only during the rainy season which prevented them from "going forth" not only because of the hazardous conditions created by heavy monsoon rains, but also for the reason of non-injury to all beings. This provided them with an opportunity to settle in one place for spiritual practice together. This was the beginning of Buddhist communal life.

However, as lands and *viharas* (monasteries) were acquired through donations, they began monastic life and residential training in earnest. Before they had meditated under trees and on rocks. Now they sat in meditation in rooms in the monasteries. Thus the lifestyle of bhikkhus changed. They moved from completely homeless lives to communal living in the monasteries. But they never completely abandoned homeless wandering. They still traveled to nearby villages and towns early in the morning to collect alms. Also during the off-season and off-training periods they traveled far and wide on pilgrimages or for spiritual training. Renunciation of the world and homeless wandering were the underlying reasons for monastic life for bhikkhus.

Not only has this lifestyle been maintained by the Buddhist sangha throughout its history, but also, in Theravada Buddhist countries where the Buddhist sangha has remained most influential, it has become the custom for laymen to join the monastic order once in their lifetime.

"Monastic Community & Transmission of Zen: India—China—Korea" was originally published in *Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum*, Summer 1984.

Most enter monastery before they reach adulthood and train as novice monks for a period of three months to a year. Beginning their spiritual training early in life in the monasteries that dot the land, they gain a spiritual outlook on life, which lasts throughout their lives. Once one has a spiritual experience one is not the same again. One cannot kill or harm. This explains why the Buddhist countries have remained largely free from violence and war until recent times.

Gentle in character and peaceful in attitude, Buddhism has never been an aggressive missionary religion. Rather, it has been a monastic religion that has been maintained by the bhikkhu sangha who observed Vinaya rules, practiced meditation and performed devotional acts. The monastic community was supported by lay people who engaged in agriculture and village life. But the experience of spiritual training and community life was open to all who came. No lifetime religious vows were required to join the monastic sangha. Most came as young adults for short, temporary spiritual retreats. Thus the monastic Buddhism in Southeast Asia functioned as a community-oriented religion serving local people and enriching their lives. For without becoming a monk once in his lifetime, a man's life was thought to be incomplete. Our society would be a different one, certainly less violent and more peaceful if we followed the same custom today.

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Zen Buddhism was brought to China by wandering meditation monks from India and Central Asia. They traveled homelessly in China and carried their meditation practice with them. In their journeying they gathered students who wandered with them. They stayed in the temples belonging to the Vinaya school, which they found most congenial to their temperament for the reason of discipline. After all, was not the Vinaya the rules and regulations of the monastic life for meditation monks in India? Aside from the practical character which Zen and Vinaya share, there was a close link between the Vinaya school of Hinayana Buddhism and the Zen school of Mahayana Buddhism. Zen monks were bhikkhus in the orthodox sense, celibate and vegetarian. Despite the eccentric and crazy behavior of some Zen monks, the Vinaya rules have always been an important element in the lives of Chinese and Korean Son monks. By the time of the Fourth Patriarch Daoxin (580–651) the number of Zen monks had increased so as to require their own monastery for training. The Fifth Patriarch Hongren (602–675) commanded a flourishing community of five to six hundred monks training under his instruction.

With the establishment of Zen monastic communities in China, Zen Buddhism became distinctly Chinese. Manual work, which was shunned in Indian Buddhism, not only became important in Zen monastic life, but was emphasized as a vital part of Zen training. As an inevitable outcome of daily work and cold climate, the important Indian Buddhist precept not to eat after midday was abandoned. The evening meal taken by Chinese monks was termed "medicinal," a reminder of the precept not to indulge in food but to take it to sustain the body for spiritual practice. Monks' clothes and underrobes were developed for the cold northern climate. In addition to the Vinaya, "pure rules" were introduced to regulate the monastic life of meditation monks. In all this, the practical character of Chinese Zen prevailed. Finally, a lineage of patriarchs and masters was developed and it became important to identify one's teachers and one's line of teaching, a famous family-oriented Chinese custom.

The recorded sayings of Sixth Patriarch Huineng (638–713), during whose time Zen Buddhism flowered in China, is called the *Platform Sutra*. Since the canonical term sutra is usually reserved for the sayings of Shakyamuni Buddha, this is an indication that Huineng ranks with Shakyamuni Buddha. As a matter of fact, the

Chinul (1158–1210)

patriarchs of Chinese Zen Buddhism were treated with as much reverence as Buddha, if not more. One of the favorite descriptions in the literature of Zen is "Buddhas and Patriarchs" who are regarded as equals in the succession of the transmission of "the lamp." It goes without saying that the word "patriarch" reflects the strong Chinese tradition of the male-dominated Confucian familial system. At any rate, Zen Buddhism in China became the most sinicized of all Buddhist schools, if not itself originating in China, as some scholars have even argued in recent times.

Zen Buddhism drew its strength from people. Zen meditation is a direct, intuitive method of experiencing enlightenment and awakening to one's true nature, and Zen training is revolutionary in its radical approach to enlightenment. This is because of the great compassion and fervent desire of the teachers to have the experience of awakening available to all who are willing to undergo the training. Zen Buddhism in China remained close to people and its monks and nuns came from the most ordinary, common people. The direct and radical approach of Zen combined well with ordinary people's straightforward minds. It seemed that Zen flowed naturally through the simple and unknowing minds of common folk with their earthy attitude and humor. The vitality and spontaneity generated by Zen people in turn inspired artists and scholars and thus Zen influenced the art and culture of the literati class of Chinese society.

Five generations after Huineng and after Linji (J. Rinzai d. 867), Zen Buddhism in China was organized into five schools. The five schools developed their own distinctive teaching styles under the inspiration of their founding masters. Books on Zen appeared and were circulated. Zen monks wrote short commentaries in verse forms or pithy sayings in order to reveal their understanding of the "public cases" (koans). These fascinated the keen minds of literary circles and stimulated the interest of members of the gentry class. Thus, Zen became established as a spiritual culture. In the process, Zen lost its original vitality and the spontaneous vivacity of ordinary people. By the time of the Ming dynasty period (1368–1662) Zen Buddhism in China had lost its distinctive character as a spiritual force of enlightenment. With the deterioration of Buddhism the different schools merged into each other. So the practice of Chinese Buddhism became a combination of Zen, Vinaya, Pure Land, Tantra and doctrinal Buddhism.

As the strength of traditional Buddhism weakened, the high doctrines and pure spiritual training were gradually replaced by folk Buddhist beliefs and practices that attracted the multitude. Once again Chinese Buddhism belonged to people. But lacking deep spiritual experience themselves, the Chinese Buddhist clergy were unable to provide their flock with strong spiritual guidance and training. The practice of Chinese Buddhism as we see it today in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and in the overseas Chinese Buddhist temples is folk Buddhism in which the priests perform services for people, invoking the names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and praying to them for blessings, peace and happiness. Some engage in superstitious practices such as fortune telling, magic or even sorcery. Their main spiritual discipline is devotional worship of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Their missionary mark or merit-gathering practice is to build temples and print Buddhist books in order to propagate the Buddhadharma. However, in general, the Chinese Buddhist monks today do little Zen training. It is the case where there are people eager to follow the Way of Buddha, but with few qualified teachers to guide them strongly in spiritual training. Let it be said, however, that Chinese monks are celibate, do not drink or smoke and are strictly vegetarian and adhere to the Vinaya rules. They are monks of traditional style in this degenerate age of ours!

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Zen meditation is a direct, intuitive method of experiencing enlightenment and awakening to one's true nature, and Zen training is revolutionary in its radical approach to enlightenment.

Zen Buddhism was first introduced into Korea by a wandering Korean monk named Pomnang (fl. 632–646) who went to Tang China and studied Zen under Daoxin, the Fourth Patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism. Pomnang had a disciple named Sinhaeng who served him for three years. After Pomnang died Sinhaeng went to Tang China. At the time there was a long spell of drought and crop failure in northern China. Starving peasants roamed the countryside in search of food. They banded together and robbed the warehouses of the state granary office and the wealthy. Sinhaeng, mistaken for a bandit, was arrested and put in jail for 240 days during which time he sat in meditation. After being released he sought out a master under whom he trained for three years. Upon his return to Korea he went to Chiri Mountain and built a temple where he trained a few students and died in 779. This information, all that is known about early Zen Buddhism in Korea, comes from the inscription on the stone monument of Zen Master Sinhaeng, which to our great fortune still stands today on the temple site.

Korean Zen Buddhism began in earnest with the establishment of the Nine Mountain Son (Zen) Centers whose founders had all gone to China to study under the Dharma descendants of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch, in particular Xitang Zhizang (735–814) and Baizhang (720–814). Xitang and Baizhang were two of the four great disciples of the famous Mazu (J. Baso 709–788), the other two disciples being Nanquan (J. Nansen 748–835) and Damei (752–839). In the *Chodang Chip* (Collection of the House of the Patriarchs) and *Transmission of the Lamp*, the two oldest books of the history of Zen in China, there are several references made to Korean monks training under Chinese masters. The remarks made by Chinese masters in regards to their Korean disciples range from mild regret, "Our Zen tradition is now all going to the Eastern Kingdom (Korea)!" to the lamentation, "In the future our descendants will have to go to Korea to study Zen."

A considerable number of Korean monks went to China and distinguished themselves in training under their Chinese Zen masters. So eager were they to transmit authentic Zen tradition to their country that, according to one record, two Koreans took the head of Huineng shortly after he died and brought it to Korea. The head of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng was apparently duly enshrined in a Korean monastery. There stands today in the compound of Ssanggye-sa monastery of Chiri Mountain in South Korea a stupa called the "Head Pagoda of the Sixth Patriarch." Every spring the monks there hold a great memorial service in honor of the Sixth Patriarch. The "Head Pagoda of the Sixth Patriarch" of Ssanggye-sa monastery and the remains of the Nine Mountain Son Centers have long been the focus of pilgrimage for all Korean Son students and an inspiration to their Son training. In 1981 a Chinese Buddhist delegation from Taiwan visited Ssanggye-sa. After some inquiry and research, they concurred with the temple record and paid their respects to the pagoda. Their visit to the Pagoda of the Sixth Patriarch meant so much to them that they had a stone monument erected as a record.

Chongsang (J. chinso) is a term applied to sculptured or painted images of the Patriarchs of Zen, works which were venerated after Huineng's time. Eventually they developed into portraits of Zen masters, a favorite theme of Zen painting. The portrait of Bodhidharma as the First Patriarch is a particularly famous work of this genre.

The whereabouts of the head of the Sixth Patriarch must have had a symbolic significance with the result that Korean monks vied with Chinese to obtain it since, according to the record, the Chinese were guarding Huineng's body after his death. The incident concerning the head of the Sixth Patriarch must have had something to do with the establishment of the so-called "Southern School" of Zen Buddhism after Huineng. There are several evidences of the transmission of Zen of the Southern School at this time to Korean monks in China who then took it to Korea. Of major significance in the history of Zen Buddhism, this has not been dealt with up to now, along with a study of the Korean Zen school in China, *Chingchung-tsung,* founded by the Korean monk Musang (684–762) who had trained Mazu in his early years.

What is certain so far from the Chinese records is that out of the four great disciples who inherited the Dharma from Mazu, the second generation from Huineng in Dharma succession, the Dharma transmission of Xitang and Damei went to Korea with their Korean disciples. That is to say that half of the strength of the Southern School of Chinese Zen came to Korea. Back in Korea, the Korean masters of the Southern School established themselves in the mountains. But aside from the fact that they led monastic communities, trained and produced strong disciples, they left little trace behind. The little information we have comes from the inscriptions on stone monuments that were erected by their disciples after their deaths, and which amazingly still stand today after centuries of foreign invasion and destruction throughout Korean history. This is, of course, in marked contrast with their Chinese counterparts who enjoyed social recognition and about whom much was written. Nor do we know much about the disciples of the Korean masters or their Dharma succession, while in China both direct and collateral lineages of Dharma transmission were available. The Chinese descendants kept and compiled their genealogical records, and retold and wrote down stories and anecdotes of their masters.

The strong indications are that Korean Son monks led a spontaneous and unworldly lifestyle in the rugged mountains and produced their "original mind without abiding anywhere" true to the spirit of Huineng who planted Zen on the Chinese soil and abandoned the lineage of Dharma succession. With the passage of time Son Buddhism in Korea underwent change. The Nine Mountain Son Centers suffered due to lack of leadership and support, and declined. Son monks wandered, seeking training and inspiration, but without finding strong teachers. One of these monks was Chinul (1158–1210), who was a remote descendant of one of the masters of the Nine Mountain Son Centers. One day during the rest period of his Son training he was reading the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and attained spontaneous enlightenment upon reading the passage, "(our) self-nature of Suchness is always free and untainted..." Thereupon he called his old Dharma friends and organized a "Society for the Practice of Meditation and Wisdom" at Son Meditation Center of the present day Songgwang-sa monastery. Many able and eminent monks were produced at the center under his strong guidance. Chinul upheld the teachings of the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Platform Sutra*. He wrote essays such as "Key to the Cultivation of Mind" and "Straight Talk on the True Mind" in order to clear away the misunderstandings that surrounded the Son practice of his time, and to encourage Son students to right practice. Chinul revived Korean Son Buddhism and produced a brilliant Dharma heir, Hyesim (1178–1234), who further developed Korean Son practice and

Kyongho (1849–1912)

thought. The Son practice of Chinul and his disciples attracted national attention. In 1205 the name of the mountain where their training center was located was by royal decree changed to Mt. Chogye after the name of the place in Guangdong Province, southern China, where Huineng first proclaimed his Zen teaching.

Even after the establishment of the Nine Mountain Son Centers, Chinese Zen traditions of different schools were introduced into Korea at different times by Korean monks returning from China after study. After Chinul and Hyesim, Son Buddhism in Korea once again flourished. The practice and culture of Son attracted both civilian and military members of the *yangban* class, the ruling class of the society, for various reasons. Out of this contact with the gentry class, Son-inspired culture emerged. Son talks and debates were held regularly and attracted crowds. Laymen sponsored the construction of Son gardens. Literary figures enjoyed drinking tea brewed by Son monks in the monasteries and composed Son-inspired poetry. However, once again the country was in turmoil. The military generals assumed power and suppressed the civilian bureaucrats and officials, many of whom fled to the mountain monasteries. The military rule came to an end when the Mongols invaded and dominated the country.

During the Mongol domination (1271–1368) the borders of China and Korea were open and there was heavy traffic both ways. Many Korean monks traveled to China along this open highway. The Korean monks in China were exposed for the first time to the accomplished Chinese Zen culture of the "Five Mountains and Ten Great Monasteries" of the Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279) which began to show signs of decline under Mongol rule. The Mongol conquest of the Eurasian continent provided an opportunity for international trade and cultural exchange between East and West unequalled before modern times. Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, Korean and Japanese monks traveled to different countries to learn and train, and to disseminate Buddhadharma. In China, Zen came in contact with the Tantric Buddhism brought by Mongolian and Tibetan lamas. It was during this period that the last Zen monk from India visited Korea, and Lamaism was introduced into Korea by Mongolian priests.

Three monks returning from Mongol China, Pou (1301–1382), Hyegun (1320–1376) and Kyonghan (1299–1375), who all received Dharma transmission from their Chinese masters of the Yangqi branch of the Linji line of the Southern School, introduced Imje (Linji) Son to Korea. Linji Chan was one of the five divisions or "houses" of the Southern School of Chinese Zen Buddhism. Linji Chan is called "Koan Zen" (K. Kanhwa Son) for its use of koans as opposed to the "Silent Illumination Zen" (J. *shikan taza* "Just Sitting") of Caodong Chan (J. Soto Zen). Another name that is usually reserved for Linji Chan is "Patriarchal Zen," a favorite term used by Zen masters and students of the Linji line in order to distinguish their intuitive grasp of the essence of Zen from the doctrinal understanding of Zen, particularly Tathagata Zen. It was called "Patriarchal" because this Zen tradition was based on "transmission outside the scriptures" and was transmitted only from the enlightened minds of the Patriarchs to their Dharma heirs, hence the great importance attached to *inka* (certification) and Dharma transmission and lineage.

To be sure, there were koans (generally called *hwadu* in Korean Buddhism) studied in Korean Son Buddhism before the official introduction of koan Zen by the three Korean monks who returned from Mongol China. For instance, Chinul read the *Recorded Sayings of Dahui Zonggao* (1089–1163), was inspired by it and recommended it widely. Since then, the *Letters of Dahui* which form part of his *Recorded Sayings* and consist of his instructions on koan studies to his lay students, came to serve as one of the four textbooks for the regular curriculum of senior students in the Korean monasteries. More importantly, however,

Chinul's chief disciple Hyesim collected commentaries of 1,125 public cases (koans) and compiled them in thirty fascicles in 1226. This *Sonmun Yomsong Chip* (Collection of Commentaries of the Son School) was the largest collection of koan studies ever compiled. (The forty-eight cases of the *Gateless Gate* were compiled in 1228.) Soon commentaries of *Sonmun Yomsong Chip* appeared. One of them, *Sonmun Yomsong Sorhwa* by Kagun, became required reading among Korean Son students until the beginning of the Choson dynasty. Pou, Hyegun and Kyonghan, the three Korean monks who transmitted the koan Zen of the Linji line from China to Korea, were well acquainted with different koans and already much advanced in their Son studies.

The three monks had already had enlightenment experiences. The Chinese masters they visited merely confirmed this. However, this proved to be significant for the future of Korean Son, for by having their experiences confirmed by Chinese masters they inherited the Dharma from Chinese Linji Chan masters and became the first patriarchs of Imje (Linji) Son Buddhism in Korea upon their return. Before they left for China they were remote Dharma descendants of the Nine Mountain Son Centers. Due to their strong influence and also the activities of their disciples, the koan Zen of the Linji School soon became the dominant force in Korean Son Buddhism. The records of the three founders of the Korean Imje School were printed and their spiritual genealogies compiled. With new strength and emphasis on Dharma transmission from master to students, the hwadu Son practice of the Imje School was to dominate Korean Son Buddhism through the five hundred years of the Choson dynasty (1392–1910).

With the advent of the Choson dynasty, Buddhism lost its royal patronage. First the ruling Confucian class became critical of Buddhist corruption for good reason. Then the Confucian dislike of Buddhism turned into outright hostility. At the hands of the hostile Confucian gentry class who yielded so much power over the common people, Buddhism suffered many setbacks in the long years of the Confucian regime. Buddhist temples were forced to give up much of their landed properties and the number of temples was greatly reduced. The different Buddhist schools had to undergo reorganization under state orders. Finally, in 1424, the government reduced all Buddhist schools to two, Son and Doctrinal. The two Son schools of Korea, Imje and Chogye (the Korean Son school that evolved out of the Nine Mountain Son Centers under Chinul's innovation), merged at this time. To this new Son school were added the Ch'ont'ae (Ch. Tiantai) and Vinaya and Mantra schools. Further restrictions on the practice of the religion were introduced. Women were not allowed to go to Buddhist temples for worship or spiritual practice. Commoners were prohibited from becoming monks. Buddhist monks were required to have a special permit to enter the capital city of the country. Later the monks were altogether prohibited from entering the capital city.

Although the rules and decrees restricting the Buddhist religion were occasionally relaxed by ruling monarchs who favored Buddhism, Buddhism declined at the hands of the unsympathetic and often hostile Confucian literati class as much as under the state's suppression. The Japanese invasion (1592–1598) dealt a final blow to Korean Buddhism, which was already weakened by Confucian suppression. Many important temples were completely destroyed during the invasion and many cultural and art treasures were pillaged by the invading Japanese army and taken out of the country. The state of Buddhism after the war forced the two existing schools of Buddhism, Son and Doctrinal, to blend into each other for survival. Monks of different traditions lived together in the same monasteries, and before long naturally influenced each other. Son being the stronger, influenced the monks of the *kyo* (doctrinal) school, and Son monks in turn incorporated the practices of other Buddhist traditions into their training. So the Son interpretation of

The influence of Huineng Zen has been kept alive in the Korean mountain monasteries by Korean Son masters of the "unorthodox and scattered" tradition and continues today.

the doctrinal teachings and Pure Land practice appeared and prevailed. This syncretism of Choson dynasty Buddhism was already revealed in the famous *Son'ga Kugam* (Handbook for Son Students) by Hyujong (1520–1604), who had raised a monk army in order to protect the nation and people from the invading Japanese. The strongly Son-influenced syncretism of Korean Buddhism was to prevail for the rest of the dynasty and still prevails today in Korean Buddhism under the name of the Chogye order.

The country was wasted after five years of war with the Japanese. The monks were mobilized in a corvee to man mountain fortresses to defend the capital against possible invasion. The monks in the countryside were ordered to send special local products to the court as tribute. The local governments wanted their share, so they exploited local Buddhist temples as much as they could. The unemployed local Confucian scholars too wanted their share and exploited Buddhist monks or harassed them. The Buddhist monks were gradually reduced to the status of de facto serfs serving the demands of the ruling class. Thus the situation forced the serious Son teachers and students to abandon their temples and go into hiding deep in the mountains. Most of them became recluses. They ate fruits and nuts from the trees since they did not grow food. Since the days of the Nine Mountain Son Centers, Korean mountains had provided a natural shelter for Buddhist hermits and recluses. Away from worldly concerns they led simple and free lives. This eremitic lifestyle of some Korean Son monks is responsible for the Taoist character of Korean Son Buddhism. Practicing "no mind" every day they came to spontaneous freedom and enlightenment without even becoming aware of it. They flowed with all beings, trees, rocks, birds, clouds and animals, and left no trace when they died.

They were called "unorthodox and scattered" masters of the Son Buddhist tradition. Free and genuine, they inherited the essence of the Huineng Zen of the Nine Mountain Son Centers, as distinguished from the Imje school, the later development of the Southern School of Zen Buddhism. The influence of Huineng Zen has been kept alive in the Korean mountain monasteries by Korean Son masters of the "unorthodox and scattered" tradition and continues today. This has proved to be both the strength and weakness of Korean Son Buddhism throughout its history.

Aside from the monastic institution that has existed since the introduction of Zen into the country, Korean Son Buddhism has never developed training programs like those of Japanese Zen Buddhism. The Korean approach to Son was always spontaneous, direct and self-reliant. Many Korean monks attained enlightenment without teachers. Many sought teachers afterwards and had their enlightenment experience confirmed. Although they both originated from the Chinese tradition of Linji Chan, the Korean Imje school was markedly different from Japanese Rinzai Zen. For instance, Korean monks in the Imje tradition always believed that the solution of one strong koan (K. *kongan* or *hwadu*) was tantamount to the solution of all koans (1,700 of them) and one strong *kensho* experience was the very attainment of Buddhahood (realization of one's unborn

Solbong (1890–1969)

nature). So the Korean Son monks approached Son with "non-attachment" from the very beginning, while in Japanese Rinzai Zen, "non-attachment" was the last of the five or three progressive stages of their Zen studies. In other words, Japanese Zen training was a highly organized system whereas Korean Son used no such system to train its students.

Also, the two most important Son texts for senior and advanced Korean Son students were *Transmission of the Lamp* and *Sonmun Yomsong Chip*, whereas for Japanese Zen students they were the *Gateless Gate* and the *Blue Cliff Record*. *Transmission of the Lamp*, which was compiled by Daoyuan in 1004 is an essential book for understanding the history and thought of Chinese Zen and it is said that the 1,700 koans were originated from this book. The final edition of *Sonmun Yomsong Chip* contained 1,472 "public cases" (koans) and Zen commentaries by different masters. However, *Transmission of the Lamp* and *Sonmun Yomsong Chip* were read and studied by Korean monks in order to acquire an inner and intimate knowledge of Son or to deepen their understanding after their enlightenment. They were never used as instructional manuals for Son students as were the *Blue Cliff Record (J. Hekigan-roku)* and *Gateless Gate (J. Mumon-kan)* for Japanese Zen students. Again, because of the voluminous nature of the two classics (both 30 fascicles each), they were never used by Korean Son masters in their formal Dharma talks or lectures for Son students (K. *sangdang pommun*, J. *teisho*) as was the case for the *Blue Cliff Record* and *Gateless Gate* in Japanese Rinzai Zen. These latter works, which enjoyed such popularity among Japanese Zen students, were almost unknown to Korean Son students until very recently.

In fact, many Korean masters were ignorant. Many of them never read either *Transmission of the Lamp* or *Sonmun Yomsong Chip*. And they scoffed at any kind of reading or writing as "excrescence" and therefore harmful for Son practice. Nonetheless, many of them had a surprising amount of knowledge of Son acquired from their direct experience and oral tradition. When they delivered a Dharma talk it was usually "Dharmastaff talk" (K. *chujangja pommun*) or "Eyebrow talk" (K. *nunsop pommun*). They were so called because when the master ascended the rostrum he would raise his Dharmastaff and, after a silence, shout, "Do you know?" If there was no response from the students the master would give out a great shout (K. Hal, J. Katz) and descend the rostrum. Or he would raise his eyebrows and look sharply at the students. Then he would ask, "Do you understand my eyebrow talk before you hear my voice?" or "The Way strikes the moment our eyes meet. Did you get it?" If there was no response he would yell or say something to upset the students before he came down.

The famous Dharmastaff talk of Korean Son masters dates back to the time of the *Gateless Gate* (compiled in 1228) where the Dharmastaff talk of the Korean monk P'ach'o Hyejong (fl. 9th century?) is listed as case 44. His Dharmastaff talk must have been famous to the Chinese Zen students of his time, for this was the only koan by a non-Chinese listed in the Zen classic whose 48 cases were culled from all the koans essential for Zen studies.

My own teacher Solbong Sunim's (1890–1969) favorite Dharmastaff talk ran as follows:

(Holding his Dharmastaff high in front of the students.)

Do you know? If I hold this staff up it is teacher to men and to gods.

If I put this stick down it is teacher to all the Buddhas and all the Patriarchs.

And if I neither hold it up nor put it down it is teacher to the man of freedom, the man of the Way.

But there is another one who is neither man, nor god, nor Buddha, nor Patriarch, nor the man of freedom. Who is this One?

Regardless of whether it was the Imje or Chogye line, the style of Korean Son was spontaneous, flowing from the rustic and original nature of the Korean mind and so remaining true to the free and vital way of the Huineng Chan tradition.

Korean Son Buddhism's spontaneity and lack of system or set teaching devices made it difficult to keep an unbroken line of Son transmission from master to disciple. Also, the standards of Korean Son were high and only men of great capacities could meet them. Thus, the Korean Son tradition appeared and disappeared several times throughout the country's history. Towards the end of the Choson dynasty the tradition of Son had almost disappeared from Korea. As noted in the above, state suppression of Buddhism and the Taoist character of Korean Son masters contributed to this. It should also be noted here that during the latter half of the Choson dynasty the doctrinal school of Korean Buddhism became active once again. The revival of the school was initiated by the activity of lecture masters. They lectured on rotation at different lecture halls of the country's monasteries, thereby stimulating the interest of the students. The lecture masters wrote introductory essays and commentaries to the Buddhist texts the students were using, which were avidly copied and carefully examined by the students. But all doctrinal studies culminated in the study of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the understanding of its profound philosophy. And it was the philosophy of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* that was to influence the thought of Korean Son Buddhism of the Chogye order in modern times.

It was not until 1881 when Kyongho Sunim (1849–1912) attained enlightenment that Korean Son was once again revived. The appearance of Kyongho Sunim at this time was for Korean Son Buddhism like rainfall after a long spell of drought. His Son training and enlightenment were typical of the Son tradition of Korea. Kyongho lost his father when he was eight. His mother, who had little means to support him, took him to the temple. He did manual work until he was thirteen, then he began to study classical Chinese with a Confucian scholar who was spending the summer at the temple. However, his tonsure master disrobed and returned to the laity. So Kyongho had to be sent away to Manhwa Sunim to be looked after. Manhwa Sunim was a learned monk well versed in both the Son and doctrinal traditions of Buddhism. Soon Kyongho's capacity for learning was recognized and he pursued the study of Buddhist scriptures under the guidance of Manhwa Sunim. He studied deeply and widely and distinguished himself. He was also noted for the intensity of his character and his big-heartedness. At the age of twenty-two he was made lecture master of the Lecture Hall of Tonghak Monastery. His devotion and vitality attracted students from the temples and monasteries across the country and he became very popular.

In the summer of 1879 when Kyongho was thirty years old, he thought about his tonsure master who had returned to the secular world. He wanted to visit and repay his master's kindness, so he set out, taking advantage of the off-training period of the summer months. On his journey he met with a rainstorm. He took temporary shelter under the eaves of houses in a nearby village. However, the rain continued until well after dark, so he sought to stay overnight with a village family. But he met with either summary refusal or no response at all from within the houses. Finally he got angry and loudly reproached the people for their inhospitable treatment of a stranger. Only then did he learn from the villagers that an epidemic was stalking through the village. He was told that half of the village's inhabitants were already dead. Some died seated, some standing and others lying down. When he heard this, a chill ran through his entire body. He realized that one's life-span indeed depends upon the short duration of a single breath. He also realized how useless and futile his study and knowledge of books was in the face of this impending death. Then and there he decided to abandon all his

studies and knowledge, and devote the rest of his life to gain release from the suffering of birth-and-death.

On that night, while waiting for rain to stop in a country village where death was taking away people's lives at every moment, Kyongho vowed that he would rather spend the rest of his life as an idiot than pick up another book until he solved the problem of life amid death. All night he searched for the way out of life-and-death from the works of Buddhas and Patriarchs. Dawn came and he started back to his monastery. On his way, his mind ran through all the koans he knew but it was difficult to raise a great doubt because of his book knowledge of them. Finally his knowledge came to an end with the koan "Before the donkey business is finished, the horse business has arrived." His doubt of the koan became complete. He felt as though he were directly facing the "silver mountain and iron wall." There were no cracks, "What is it?" the inquiry came back, stronger each moment. Upon his return to the monastery he told his students that he was no longer their teacher. He advised them to disperse and to forget about him altogether. With these words he locked himself inside his room and sat in deep meditation day and night.

When he felt sleepy he pricked his body with an awl. He also sharpened a knife and held it up right underneath his chin in order to alert himself completely to his practice. Thus he practiced for three months.

In the monastery there was a novice monk whose father was a lay practitioner of Son. The novice monk went to the village to visit his father. In the middle of conversation the layman said, "Monks will become oxen in the end."

"Is that because monks consume alms from devotees without awakening to their own mind-ground, and therefore get stuck with their indebtedness to the donors?" asked the novice monk.

The layman laughed aloud upon hearing that and lamented, "When can you awaken yourself with such shallow awareness?"

"I do not have the wisdom of Son. How, then, should I answer?"

"Can you not say, 'Even if I become an ox there is no place to put the reins on'?"

The novice monk said no more and returned to the monastery. He greeted the monks, who asked, "How is your father?"

Thereupon the novice monk related the conversation, and added with a shrug, "I still don't understand what he meant."

The monks then said to the novice, "Well, you should go ask Kyongho. He is now so absorbed in his Son study that he has all but forgotten about eating and sleeping. Go ask him if he knows."

The novice monk stood outside Kyongho's room and asked the meaning of "There is no place to put the reins on even if one becomes an ox." These words struck Kyongho's mind like stone striking a flint. The thick clouds that had oppressed him all along dispersed in a single moment and the unborn nature of all beings shone like a bright sun in every direction. He felt the sky and ground disappear, all obstacles dropped away, and he enjoyed vast freedom.

This happened on the full moon day of the eleventh month in the winter of 1879. Kyongho Sunim saw the moon, the snow, the mountain and flowing water again.

He composed the following song of enlightenment upon the occasion:

*Upon hearing "There is no hole,"**
I suddenly realize the whole universe is my home.
In June, on the road under Yonam Mountain
Countryfolk sing a carefree song of peace.

(* i.e. hole for a ring through the ox's nose)

After Kyongho's enlightenment he wandered freely. His powerful presence attracted many capable students from all directions. With their help he set up Son centers around the country and trained students. He produced most of the illustrious Son

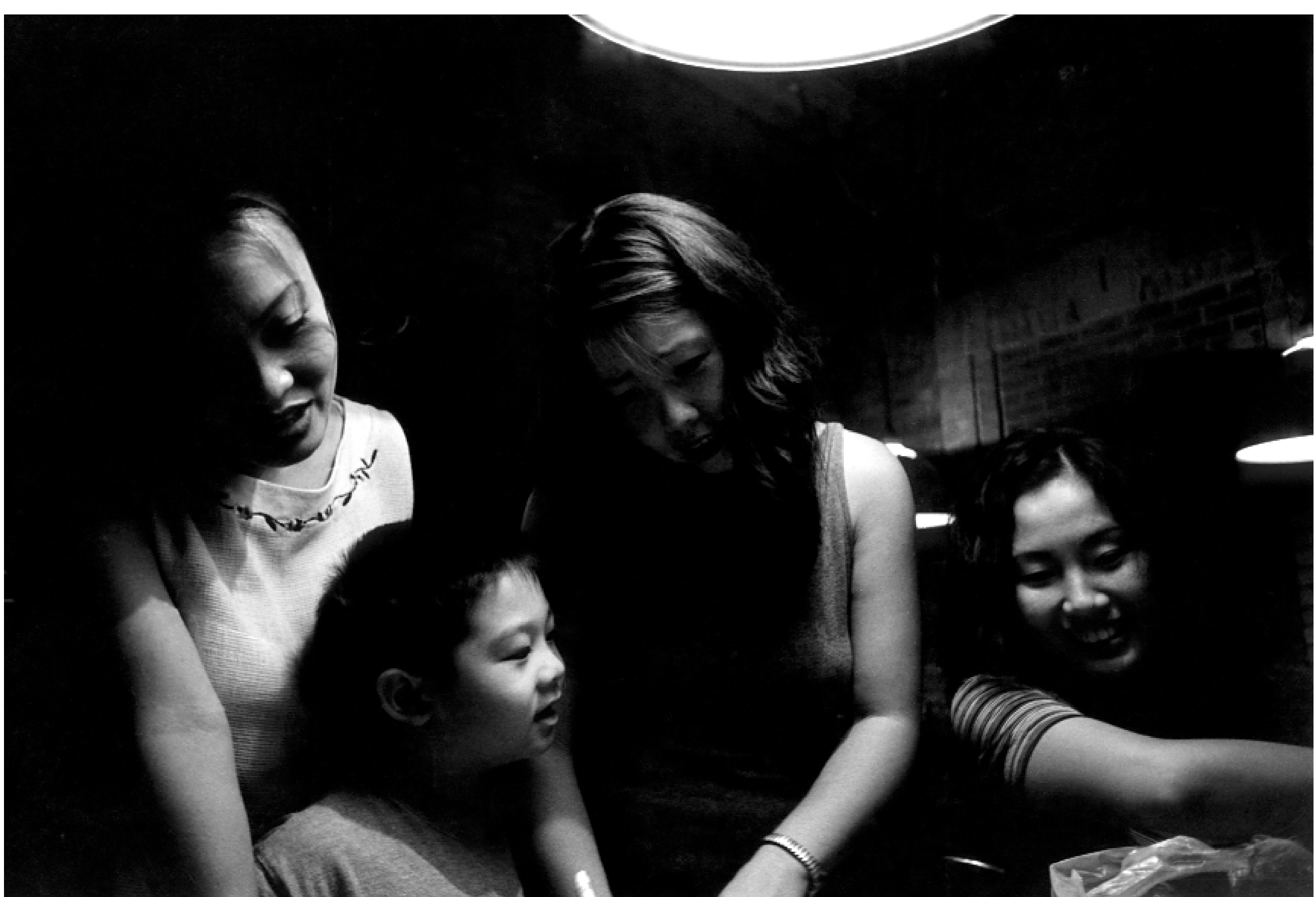
masters of modern Korea. His Dharma disciples included Man'gong (1872–1946), Hyewol (1861–1937), Suwol (1855–1928), Yongsong (1864–1940) and Han'am (1876–1951), who all became leading Son teachers and who played important roles in revitalizing Korean Son during the Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945).

In 1910 the Japanese attempted to annex Korean Son Buddhism to Japanese Buddhism, but Korean monks successfully resisted such an attempt. The Dharma disciples of Kyongho Sunim not only kept the Korean Son tradition intact from Japanese influence under Japanese rule, but Korean Son flowered during this period. Man'gong Sunim, who was the Dharma heir of Kyongho Sunim, excelled his teacher in several respects and many great Son students were trained under his strong hand. After Korea was liberated from Japanese rule, the country was divided into North and South against the wish of the people. This was soon followed by civil war. During the war many temples were destroyed and the monastic communities disrupted and scattered. The famous Buddhist temples of the Diamond Mountain, the most important center of Korean Buddhism, became the targets of intensive fighting at the end of the Korean war, and most of the temples of the mountain were destroyed.The Diamond Mountain itself finally fell under the North Korean communist regime. However, in spite of all this disruption and destruction, it was largely due to the Dharma disciples of Man'gong Sunim that Korean Son Buddhism has been able to maintain its vitality and strength in South Korea.

The strength of Korean Son Buddhism today lies with a few Son masters, most of whom are the third generation descendants from Kyongho Sunim. For some time now Korean Buddhism has been beset with internal troubles such as corruption and power struggles. The Westernization and industrialization of the country have steadily undermined the strength of Korean Buddhism in the years following the army revolution of 1960. Over the last decade the population has become urbanized, concentrating in a few large industrial cities, leaving the countryside and the isolated mountain temples far behind. The people attend Christian churches of all denominations in growing numbers as the isolated Buddhist temples in the mountains are not able to serve their needs. The increasingly hostile attitude of Korean Christians towards Buddhists and their rising power in Korean society, combined with these other factors, are posing a real threat to Korean Buddhism today.

The Korean Buddhist Chogye order is essentially a monastic institution. Its monks and nuns are celibate and still adhere to the traditional disciplines of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. Yet their Son tradition is rich with rustic and spontaneous characters. Though the tradition has long been lost both in China and Japan, in the remote mountain temples and monasteries of Korea, where the hospitality offered to traveling monks is unfailing, one can still encounter the ancient Son tradition that flourished originally in the Tang dynasty in China, kept alive by monks and nuns who have renounced the world.

Ven. Samu Sunim. Photo by Toan Sunim.



Sandam Tammy Nakashima

Home-Grown Dharma

Rev. Haju Sunim

One of the central rituals at the celebration of Buddha's Birthday in May is bathing the Baby Buddha. At an altar festive with lilac, iris, bleeding heart and other spring flowers and with beautiful, handmade lotus lanterns hanging overhead, we ladle fragrant tea over a small gold statue of the Baby Buddha. We honor our children as future buddhas and bodhisattvas and acknowledge our own innate Buddha-nature.

"How to best nurture these future buddhas and bodhisattvas?" How best to nurture was a professional question when I taught fourth to seventh graders in public school and it became immediately and deeply personal when my two daughters were born.

Grandmothers' Dharma

Kongduksim Posalnim, a wonderful character of a Korean grandmother living with her family in Toronto, Canada, in the early eighties often brought her three-year-old grandson, Michael, by bus to our Gwynne Avenue Toronto temple on Sunday mornings for the Korean service. Several other grandmothers arrived early, took over the temple kitchen, and began steaming rice and preparing instant kimchi, mung bean sprouts, soybean sprouts, Korean pancakes, fried seaweed, rice cakes, and more. Michael was among them, held by one, laughed at by another, fed a little morsel by another—very much a part of the

cooking scene. When the service began—chanting, prostrations, meditation, and a talk by Sunim—he was in the sonbang as well, being held, being gently disciplined, being taught to bring his small hands together in *hapchang* and to bow, watching and listening and soaking up grandmothers' Buddhist devotion.

Sometimes a young couple brought their daughter and son, and on special Buddhist days the other grandmothers brought some of their children and grandchildren, some dressed in colorful, traditional Korean clothing. It was a small group, grateful and happy to be together and to support their temple.

I learned that this is how it was in Korea—generally no formal training for the children—just the grandmothers turning up at the temple with their grandchildren. Sometimes the monks would teach the children a little meditation, insist on their being still and quiet and focused for a short period, and then release them with a whoop for a play in the temple yard.

Children, My Practice

Two years earlier, before we got our Gwynne Avenue temple, my husband, infant daughter, and I were living in an attic apartment on Markham Street across from the temple. When Sunim offered interviews, my husband, Sanbul, crossed the street for his and then came back and cared for Karima while I went for mine. These were times to receive guidance and to be tested on the strength of our meditation practice. I remember Sunim's advice: "Karima is your practice."

I turned that over in my mind a lot—"Karima is my practice," and when Komani was born, "Karima and Komani are my practice." Sunim always urged us to make practice central and continuous. Like motherhood!

We moved to Ann Arbor in 1982 and purchased an old Victorian house for our Ann Arbor temple. Two or three families with children came for Buddhist training. We all lived together in the temple sharing meals, re-roofing and opening up the attic of our rundown building, growing vegetables, and starting a carpentry business and doing outside jobs to pay the bills. We appreciated Sunim's strong guidance when he traveled from Toronto for Summer Training, Precept-taking Ceremonies, Liberation of Life Services, Sangha Days and other special times on our Buddhist calendar. Through a kind of osmosis our children "sponged up" all of it.

They usually didn't join in the formal morning and evening meditation practice except for Ziranda, a six-year-old boy who came for several months with his family from Mexico. Amazing all of us, he came to Wednesday evening meditation practice, which was then from 6–10 pm, for the whole time. And he memorized the whole long Great Compassion Dharani in a few weeks—this chant often takes adults years to learn! My daughter, Komani, staying in our rooms below the *sonbang,* says she could always feel what was going on upstairs, especially walking meditation, and learned much of the Great Compassion Dharani and Yebul through the floor over her sixteen years in the temple.

After those families moved on, there were other children living outside of the temple who came with their parents. Of course my girls loved more kids to play with.

Children's Service

My mother in Vancouver, British Colombia wanted to see her granddaughters and sent money so we could travel there every year. On one of these occasions Sunim suggested I visit Buddhist groups in the area and make a report for our journal, *Spring Wind,* on Buddhist activities in that area. I was happy to find a group where several mothers in a Tibetan Buddhist sangha had created a program for their children. When I returned to Ann Arbor I thought we might do that as well.

Sometimes the monks would teach the children a little meditation, insist on their being still and quiet and focused for a short period, and then release them with a whoop for a play in the temple yard.

So, on some Sunday mornings we began having a time for children, a small service with the Three Refuges and a little chanting and meditation followed by a craft activity—making Buddhas, trying calligraphy all spread out on the yoga room floor with brushes, paper and homemade black ink, carving pumpkins at Halloween—and work practice, usually litter pick-up around the neighborhood. Lunch followed with meal verses and a period of silence at the beginning. The kids all stood on a chair at the kitchen sink and washed up their own cups, plates, and cutlery.

Peace Camp

In 1986, we started the Peace Camp. It was a multi-aged morning camp with a few kids staying over who lived too far for their parents to bring them back and forth every day.

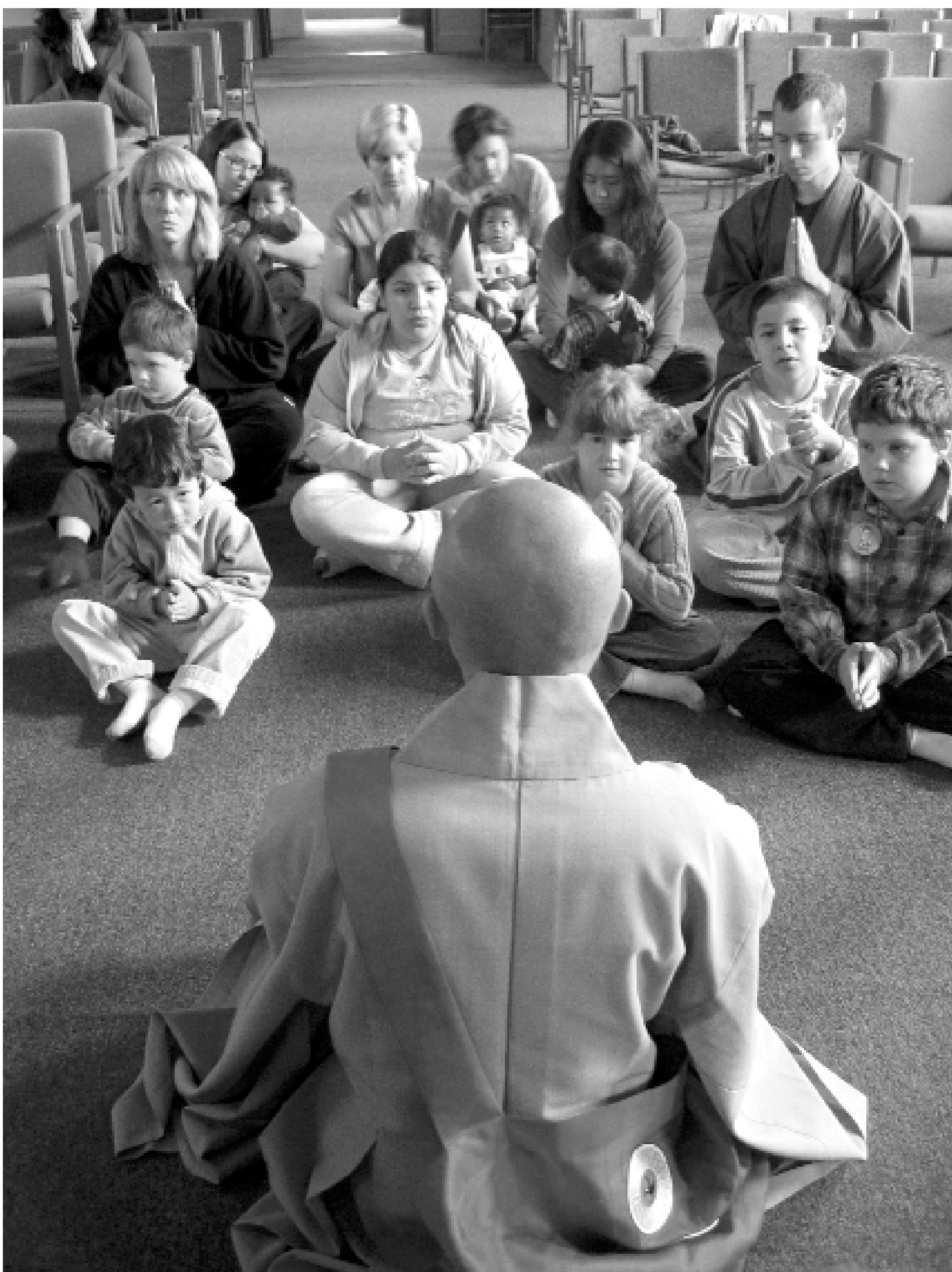
In one of our first years, when days were deeply muggy, we put up a little plastic wading pool for the kids. They loved splashing in and out of it. One morning there was a summer downpour and instead of taking refuge indoors, we danced around in the rain and got soaking wet, even throwing buckets of water from the pool on each other. Exhilarating! I remember Sunim was in the thick of it and also Sue Hansen, seven months pregnant. We were soaking wet and laughing, body-mind completely refreshed!

Giant sunflowers bloomed and tomatoes, peppers, and green beans ripened in our backyard garden. We sang wonderful songs composed by our very own genius of a Buddhist songwriter and alternative educator, Paramita Nat Needle, and put on some great Dharma dramas. We made camp books, altars in a box, and clay Buddhas. We got ourselves all covered in paint from one project, and once it took us hours to pick burrs from one camper's long, blond hair. A big yellow and white striped canopy housed our "craft department," and a line of red-and-white checkered tables that we had found at an auction stretched twenty-five feet along the gravel driveway for lunch and snacks.

For a few days during the summer of 1989, my daughters and I enjoyed camping with a friend and her three children at Friend's Lake near Chelsea, Michigan. The idea got hatched to move Peace Camp there. A few years later we made the leap—living in tents, cooking on a camp stove under a picnic shelter, swimming and boating and hiking, for five and then six days. It became a family camp for children of all ages.

Parents and others stepped forward to help, so both the camp and the Sunday get-togethers were slowly flowering. We searched for activities and stories, usually Jataka Tales, for lesson ideas in keeping with the Buddha's teaching and appropriate for the ages of our children.

Ilsang Laurie Jackson began recording the lessons over the years and produced a curriculum guide in 2002. She first turned up at the temple from Toledo, Ohio, interested in Buddhist practice for herself and then brought her children, Anna and Sam. Over time she began leading services and



Kongsim Rob Brown

coordinating Peace Camp. In the forward to the extensive curriculum she compiled, Ilsang writes:

This guide is a compilation of the work we have done with families and children at the Ann Arbor Zen Buddhist Temple over many years. Although most of this Resource Guide consists of discussion of the Buddhist teachings, more important than the intellectual content of the lessons is the quality of the experience that the children have during the services. One of our primary goals has been to ensure they have fun and experience the joyfulness of the Buddhist path, and we have worked to make the services kid-friendly. For us, this has meant giving up trying to control and impose our own order, letting go of our ideas of how the services ought to be, and trying to accept whatever happens with grace and humor!

In our work with the teachings, we have tried to focus on how they relate to everyday life in very real and practical ways. We have also attempted to give the children a basic understanding of temple rituals, our Korean Zen lineage, and Buddhist holidays and history, so they will feel connected to our tradition and comfortable at the temple. Other goals have been to make the children of our temple feel like valued members of our community, and to help them form sangha relationships.

Parents' Wishlist

With Buddhism just beginning in the West, we don't yet have grandmothers steeped in Buddhist rituals and teachings bringing their grandchildren to the temple. Just getting rooted in this soil, temples and centers have been more devoted to meditation, retreats, and Dharma study for adults. That is changing as several sanghas around the country begin opening to children's involvement. In particular, the ordained and lay members of Dharma Rain Zen Center* in Portland, Oregon under the guidance of Ven. Gyokuko Carlsen have developed a strong Dharma School program and yearly camp, Mandala on the Mountain, in co-operation with Great Vow Monastery in Clatskanie, Oregon.

*www.dharma-rain.org

Right now, June 2005, here in Ann Arbor, a committee of parents and temple members is preparing for our eighteenth annual Peace Camp, where approximately forty children and accompanying adults will live in Buddhist community for six days.

Some of our parents recently finished another year of the Zen Parents Group, meeting weekly in each others' homes for sitting and walking meditation and Dharma discussion while their children are cared for in the next room, upstairs, in the nearby park or in the downstairs playroom.

We just sent an email bulletin out to our members and friends about our annual Liberation of Life Service. Children are always a part of this special event held in a wildlife sanctuary or nearby park in the spirit of the first precept, "not to harm, but to cherish all life."

We have in mind to pull together the curriculum emphasis for our next Dharma School year, September 2005 to June 2006. Each month children will have one formal service in three age groups and another get-together to do a service project (this past year our children raised money for Heifer International, enough to send several animals to families in third world countries) or have a special field trip. They will honor special times in the Buddhist calendar. Maybe, our children can be more involved in our Great Green Recycling Yard Sale during Labor Day weekend.

We have a wishlist:

• We would like to have four or five female and male monks to organize all this, but yet we don't. So dedicated parents have stepped forward.

• We would like to have a curriculum all set for our three age groups, but we don't. So we will meet monthly and work that out with our current curriculum.

Evan Carter

• We would like to have appropriate spaces for our children's services, but we don't yet. We have purchased the building next door. This needs to be renovated and in the meantime is usable.

• We would like to meet more often, but after discussion, we realize that this is unrealistic. We are doing as much as we can...probably a little more!

• We would like to have a "coming of age" program for our early teens. We will get to that.

• Since Paramita and his family have moved to Worcestor, MA, we would like to have someone who can help put more music into our children's programs. Hopefully that person will soon appear.

• We would like.... We would like.... We watch and see what we can do. Easy does it. One step at a time. Our lives and schedules and our children's lives and schedules are very full these days.

Indeed, as Margaret Mead said, it is amazing what a small group of dedicated people can do. We are grateful to all the pioneers along the Way and, most of all, to our children who keep inspiring us to do all this!

Haju Sunim is the resident priest at Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor and a disciple of Ven. Samu Sunim since 1978.

Koseya Blair Thomas

Pondering Kids' Service

The Dharma of No Dharma

Lenny Bass

It is Sunday morning, 6:30 am, mid-January, and from the haunting recesses of semi-slumber I am hearing the voices of angels singing a solemn dirge in six-part harmony. I slip into full wakefulness to realize that the angels are nothing more than our wind chimes being blown to kingdom come by gale force winds. A "supersized" helping of winter has arrived overnight, and from the pale moon-lit dawn I can see a landscape transformed into a sea of white silk. Ankle-deep snow has fallen and I know I must get up now to have any chance of getting to services at the Zen temple on time.

It is the second Sunday of the month. Were it not for this fact, I would be awfully tempted to conduct my own private meditation service in the warmth and comfort of my very own makeshift sonbang at home. But this year, duty calls. At the Zen temple, the second Sunday of the month is kids' service. And, not only is my own five-year-old son involved in kids' service, but for reasons that I am still attempting to sort out, I have signed on to be one of the teachers. It simply would not speak well for the Dharma teacher and his prodigal son to defer to mere expedience by hitting the snooze alarm. We should, at the very least, have to call in our absence from a ditch somewhere en route.

I tip-toe into my son's bedroom like a dental surgeon ready to extract a tooth. Don't get me wrong; Zeke—my son—likes kids' service. It's just that he likes warmth even more. The heat from our wood stove is just now kicking in, and I'm hoping to use this as one of my selling points as I creep into his room. But, when I get there, I find that it is even worse than I imagined. Somewhere in the time it took me to fire the wood stove into high gear, the little mouse has snuck out. I know exactly where to find him: in the forge-fire radiance of his mama's slumbering embrace.

I peer through our bedroom door to find him there snoring soundly with a silly little grin plastered across his face. He's tucked neatly under his mama's arms, content as a lark. I begin by sticking my frosty hands underneath the covers and rubbing his flame-broiled feet. The grin instantly dissolves.

"Pssst, Zeke," I start in. "Hey sweet bear."

Nothing. He buries his head deeper into his mama's chest.

"Hey Zekie, we gotta get up now if we're going to get to service on time."

He sits up, rubs his eyes, and groans. It takes him five full seconds to survey the situation. He

Kongni Ben Ridgway

then broadcasts his final decision by lying back down, pressing deeper into his mother's embrace.

"Da," he says finally, "how about this time you just go by yourself?"

I am silent for a time while the deck of possible replies shuffles through my head. I could play the "guilt" card, the one about how all the other kids are going to have such fun while he misses out. Or, I could play the "good medicine" card, suggesting to him that going to kids' service is sort of like eating his spinach; how else will he grow up to be big and strong? Or, I could play the "bad cop" card and tell him he is coming with me on account of his indentured servitude to me until the age of eighteen. But, after mulling it over, I come to the only answer that I feel is worthy of a path that I have grown to respect with such fullness of heart.

"Are you sure?" I ask him.

He sighs as if to suggest that the discussion ended eons ago.

"Okay," I say finally, "see you when I get home."

As I am slogging through the unplowed thoroughfares, weaving my way towards kids' service (absent my own kid), I cannot help but think back to my own religious school education. This education, made compulsory by my conservative Jewish parents, began early with mandatory Sunday school classes. This morphed into three two-hour Hebrew school sessions a week, held after regular school hours and on weekends, spanning five long years. It ended with the rite of passage otherwise known as my Bar Mitzvah. As I am driving along, I am racking my brain to come up with a single, solitary stitch of relevancy this compulsory religious education left upon my soul.

I say this not out of disrespect to the Jewish faith, nor as a critique of my parents' choices. In

fact, since becoming a "religious school teacher" I have been exploring the concept of compulsory religious education in full, even as it now applies to my own child in the context of once-a-month service at the Zen temple. When I look back upon the landscape of my own religious school education, the picture that comes to mind is little more than that of a wholesale religious uprising. Why, for example, did we routinely lock our poor Hebrew school teacher—a kindly old fellow called Mr. Agmone whom we tagged as "Soggy Auggie"—in the classroom closet? Why did we defiantly toss our *keepas* (skull covers) out the second story window to don the tall yew branches below? Why did my sisters and I hold our noses every time our parents happened to drive by the synagogue? Why did we participate in ten thousand other acts of subterfuge too numerous to elaborate upon? Were we all just a bunch of "bratty" kids? Was it just "bad" educational programming on the part of the purveyors?

As I'm reflecting on it now, my sense is that there was more to it than this. In fact, having thought about it a while, I have come up with my own theory on it. I think that as children we were responding in a wholly rational way to a very deep—and, for me now, very troubling—phenomenon we simply were too young to express with our words. In hindsight, I believe that we were reacting as autonomous spiritual beings who somewhere deep inside understood (at that time, at least) that real spiritual undertaking is nobody's business but our own. The fact that others were attempting to define it for us, to make us into good little marching soldiers of whatever religious causes they deemed important for us, transformed us into the snot-nosed brats we were. Not in a conscious way, of course. But in the way of "acting out" that which we had no ability to codify in words. All we were really guilty of was refusing to hand over that autonomy—the autonomy of having the right to choose our own spiritual path through life in our own way and in our own time—or even to choose no path at all. The theory has caused me consternation in my decision to involve my own son in kids' service at the Zen temple. Why would I reinvent such a cycle a generation later?

I arrive to the service just in time to set things up before seventeen sprightly youth ages four to six come traipsing through the back door. Barbara, my co-teacher, and I are ready for them, having met earlier in the week to hammer out our itinerary. I hand each child a small purple daisy as they come through the door and instruct them to take off their shoes and coat and take the flower to the altar and make a bow to the Buddha. From there, they find Barbara who has a coloring project to hold their attention until the service formally begins. Ten minutes later, we reign in the troops by tapping on a small wooden drum and reciting the chant, "I have arrived, I am home, in the here, in the now." We pass out two drumsticks to each child as they come to the circle and they accompany the drumming, adding their own voices to the chant. We increase speed until we can barely get the words out and the kids are wildly banging their drumsticks together. All comes to silence and we begin the formal service which includes yoga, lighting the incense and candles, chanting, three prostrations to the Buddha, and a short bell meditation where the kids listen silently with eyes closed to the ringing of a meditation bell and then raise their hands when they can no longer hear it.

For the most part, the kids are a well-behaved bunch. But already I am noticing the first signs of the coming "uprising." We light the candles and incense and insist upon their chanting "ma-um" where "ma" means mind and "um" means heart, and so they are learning to bring heart and mind together as they chant "ma-um, ma-um, ma-um." Instead, they sing "mommy, mommy, mommy… mommy, mommy, mommy," laughing hysterically all the while. Part of me (the part of me that now feels how "Soggy Auggie" must have felt!) wants to react to this by stopping them midstream and telling them how they ought to have

Anjali Jacques Oule

more respect for this practice, how they need to learn to bring their little hearts and minds together now before they become an adult like me and do unspeakable damage to life, limb and anything just in this world. But another part of me—the part of me that is "just watching" and not judging—simply wants to commend them for their ingenious first uprising as fully autonomous spiritual beings, beings who needn't be shepherded about by others claiming to know their true inner yearnings. And besides, I think to myself, who am I to be prevailing upon them to do what I only remember to do maybe every other Friday at noon?

I am not simply belittling myself here. I think I am speaking the truth when I say that this path—the path of Zen—is not for the faint of heart. This path offers no quick redemption, no instant enlightenment, no comfy sofas on which to relax while we systematically take apart every known aspect of ourselves, and even some aspects that we didn't know existed. This path is messy, long and arduous. And if this is so, then how do I justify bringing my own child into the midst of this overgrown jungle of change? Why not leave him out of it, let him enjoy his days of childhood innocence rather than force-feed him from my own tube of concocted sludge-water? What gives me the right to sit up high in front of these kids, I wonder?

The formal service aspect of our gathering has ended, and Barbara and I then launch into the "meat" of the curriculum. This year we have been focusing on what are called the Six Harmonies. These essentially are six observations the Buddha made for how we can live harmoniously with one another. They include sharing space, sharing the essentials of daily life, not harming but cherishing all life, speaking from the heart, sharing wisdom, and respecting the viewpoints of others. It's all good stuff, and so far I think Barbara and I have done well to bring it all down to the level of a four- to six-year-old. We talk about keeping our rooms clean, sharing our toys, not "shmooshing" ants in the house, but capturing them and setting them free outdoors. We ask lots of questions too, and their answers are often witty, funny and full of small insights into their view of the world. This time, we're trying to understand together what it means to speak from the heart. One of the more flamboyant little girls who always raises her hand before the questions are done being asked chimes in. "Uh, well," she says, thinking on her feet, "it's like when your little brother, uh, you know, like does something that like totally annoys you and then you like just want to scream or something…but then, you know, you just explain it to him." She shrugs her shoulders as if to say, "Well, duh, it's not like rocket science."

And if I were truly speaking from my own heart, I might say back to her, "Listen, none of this stuff we're telling you really matters. Most of us so-called adults are so lost in our own mass confusion, we barely know up from down. The best you can really do is to try your very hardest to listen inside, to your own heart. Forget what the rest of us tell you. You already know right from wrong, and it's really not about pleasing any of us adults. The path of Zen is out there for you to discover, not for others to discover for you. You might like this path, and you might not. You might like a different path, or you might not like any path at all. But, most of all, whatever you choose, make sure it speaks to your own heart first."

I have heard that in the realm of spirit, when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. I believe this statement suggests that the initial responsibility of what we call the "Dharma" is first, and foremost, the student's and not the other way around. Perhaps my lack of ease with religious education for children in general is that it twists this conventional wisdom by suggesting that when the teachers and the parents are ready, the student, through an act of compliance set up by an unfair power dynamic, will appear. Once a month, 9:30 am to 11 am on Sunday at the Zen temple. Three times a week, two hours a crack, in the synagogue classroom. At CCD classes through

the Catholic church. The basic premise is always the same. And even if it is the so-called state-of-the-art program, ultimately, I feel it can only result in one logical outcome: rebellion. Rebellion because the way we have set it up for them, our kids have no choice but to rebel if they are ever going to make this path, or any path, truly their own. Rebellion because what we are hoping to achieve in them, we need to achieve in ourselves first. And they…our kids…know it.

But then, how do we share the Dharma with our children, I wonder. Because I do want to do this; it's what caused me to sign on to be a kids' service teacher in the first place. As I am driving home from kids' service on the now plowed thoroughfares, I am thinking hard about this. It occurs to me the path of Zen is truly a path of personal transformation. As adults, the best we can do for our children is to set about this work—the work of our own transformation—with great diligence, and bring home to our children the small fruits of our labors as they unfold. That's the very best Sunday school of all, better than the best I can provide—even as a soul who has been after this for many years. Perhaps then, in time, our children will come to appreciate the subtle differences in our demeanor and express a natural curiosity about it towards us. If this should occur, a small window of opportunity will be opened and the real work of the Dharma can finally begin. The day my own son expresses such curiosity towards me is the day I hope to lead him through the temple gate for his first real experience of temple life. Then his experience will be sparked from within, and not just from a prescription for him.

I arrive safely home to find Zeke out in our yard jumping off a mound of snow that our good neighbor has assembled when plowing off our driveway. The kids' service went well, but I have no regrets that my own son is taking his lesson from the offerings of the north wind. I see his spirit soaring high as he takes flight into the soft snow below him. I know one day the world will be encroaching upon him; indeed it already has started with his attendance in compulsory state-mandated education. From the ten directions will be coming ten-thousand competing temptations, all calling themselves the "good" and the "just," all vying for his small cache of light. In the mass confusion that will ensue, I hope not to simply become another competing dart to his heart. If I can focus my attention on transforming myself first rather than teaching him the Dharma, perhaps he will stumble upon this path one day. I'll welcome that day if it should come, but won't take it personally if it does not. In the matters of the soul, let me respect his right to choose by never attempting to superimpose the necessities of my own journey upon his. I think this is the Dharma, spoken as a whisper when I am quiet enough to hear it.

So, is there no place for children at the Zen temple? Is this the message I'm hoping to convey? No, I don't think that at all. I believe that all children benefit greatly while in the presence of those who are taking their practice to heart. But, to my way of thinking "in the presence of" implies something quite different than "intentionally being taught to." The former implies something much more subtle, much more mysterious in its workings. But, my gut tells me that this is the way of the Dharma—the Dharma of no Dharma, in a sense. Despite the best of human intention, it truly has a way all its own.

Lenny Bass is a long time temple member and co-coordinator of the annual Great Green Recycling Yard Sale of Zen Buddhist Temple–Ann Arbor. After years of holding out, he plans to take his precepts this summer.

My darling asleep
for Elena

Suzanne Camino

Baby girl lying beside me
in the pink-grey of early evening,
your soft brown hair in the bend of my arm,
and your little bird mouth tugging at my breast, even in your sleep.
We rest together in this familiar room,
and your breathing keeps its own time,
strangely separate from mine.
The passing day is marked by the changing colors
that move across the old dresser mirror where
your great-great grandmother winks at us
from behind the worn glass.
Earlier today, I nursed you secretly,
in the dressing room of a fancy clothing store.
There were twenty-seven of you and me
nested in the three-way mirror.
Across the hall, I could hear
someone else's daughter
rustling in and out of prom dresses
as her mother stood outside the door.
"These kids and their ideas,"
the mother told the clerk,
"sometimes I feel like I'm from a foreign country."
Beautiful girl, maybe if I just keep nursing you,
I can keep the clocks and calendars at bay
and this time will last, this moment
that we are inhabitants of the same country,
living together in a land of mother's milk and hush-a-byes,
sheltered from the clashes on the horizon,
from partition, secession,
and wars of independence,
from driving permits and curfews
and the junior-senior prom.

Elena Hope, age 3, in the Bathroom

Sansa Evan Chambers

Sitting on the toilet, swinging her legs, she asks:

Daddy! What time is it?
About 7:30.

DADDY! What time is it?
(coming out of a fog) Almost bedtime…

Dah-deeeeeee…What TIME is it?
(realizing it's a test, trying again) Time to pee!

Dayuh-deeEEE!—WHAT TIME IS IT?
(finally called to attention in the moment) Now!

(Long silence…legs still)

D a d d y . . . ?

Where is now?

Sansa Evan Chambers took the precepts in 1999 and Suzanne Camino is a member of St. Leo's Catholic Church in Detroit. Their daughter Elena, who was born in 1998, describes herself as "Budatholic." The family lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Doing a Headstand

Elena Chambers, age 6

Doing a headstand
I let my dress fall.
It sways gently against my legs—
Underwear for everyone!

Elena Chambers

DHARMA PARENTS

Katy Fischer

Parents discuss their Buddhist practice and the joyful art of parenting.

My younger son Basil, when he wants my attention, wants it fully. He is not a child to tolerate many absentminded nods, smiles and affirmations. When he has something to say to me and I am preoccupied, he will take my face in his two small hands and turn it towards himself so he can speak to me fully. The touch of his hands against my cheeks—their softness and smallness—and the very Basilness of the gesture, is like a bell to me. I am immediately back with him, for maybe a moment or maybe several. He is my escort to the present moment.

When Basil was smaller I would nurse him to sleep. As an infant I would nurse him rocking in a chair and would sit in the stillness we had created together—just nursing and breathing. When he was asleep, I would lay him in the bed he shared with us and retreat to the grownup world downstairs.

My husband Ed and I have always felt that sleeping through the night would eventually occur without recourse to sleep training methods or letting our children cry it out. Indeed, this has proven to be true with the operative term being "eventually." As a result, we had a pretty interrupted nightlife for a while. Basil would wake up at least once every evening and I would ascend the stairs, leaving the grownup world below. I would lie down with Basil and nurse him back to sleep. The catch was that I couldn't just nurse my son with my body. I had to do so with my mind as well. Basil was keenly aware of my mental presence or lack thereof, and was unable to settle down into sleep until I had managed to let go of

whatever fantasy, obsession, or plan my mind was busying itself with, and just be with him—right here, right now—nursing and breathing.

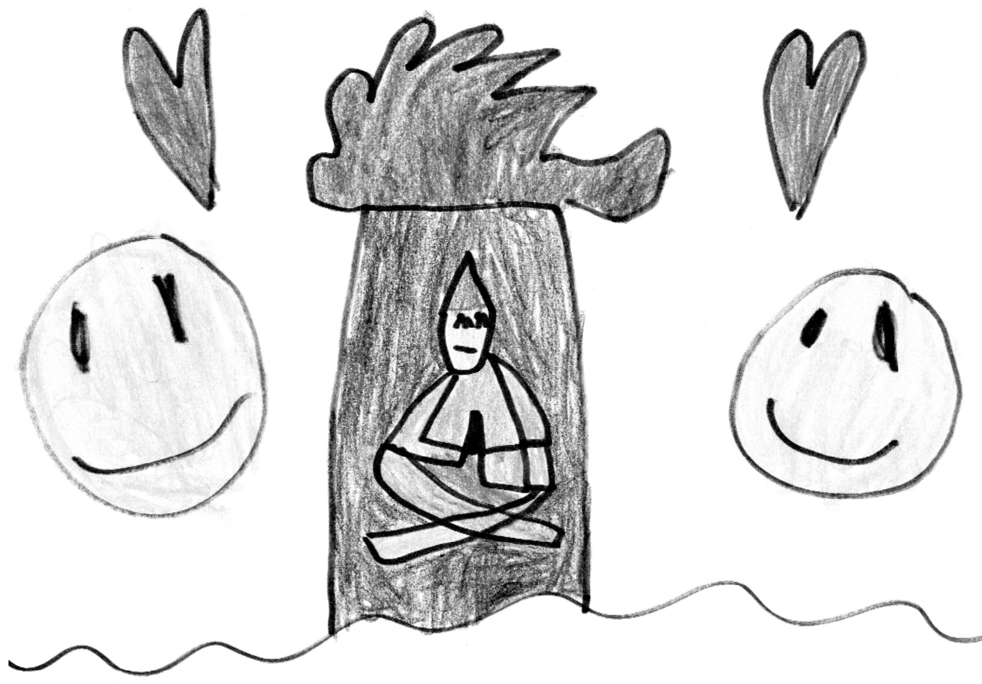
On a typical evening at home this process did not seem unduly disruptive. When we were having a party, on the other hand, or even watching a movie, I would feel distinctly aggrieved to have to leave the grownup realm and go nurse Basil again. On these occasions I would lie in the room with growing irritation that I was not downstairs visiting with my friends. And, inevitably, Basil would squirm and fuss and not be able to settle down. We would lie in the dark together, a discontented pair. Eventually I'd see that I needed to commit to this process for it to work and I would endeavor to bring myself back to the nursing and breathing. Usually, it took a few tries before I could be successful. During this process, my son would mirror my state of mind. As I brought my presence to him he would begin to drift off to sleep, and as I began to become irritated again that this was taking too damn long, Basil would start to wriggle and I would feel like screaming with frustration. Finally, with no other option, I would relax and let go and allow myself to sink down into the nursing and breathing. Basil would know that I was fully with him and he would be able to let himself go into sleep.

Basil is four now and the nights of nursing him to sleep are long past. I sometimes miss the wonderful connection we had at those times, but usually I am just grateful to have uninterrupted grownup time each evening. Not long ago Basil, who is generally easygoing, had one of those tantrums that become family legend. At first I tried to do things to his liking. If you've ever experienced a child in full-blown tantrum you know that I failed miserably. If I tried to sing the song he wanted, I wouldn't be singing it the right way or after the right ritual. Tantrums often involve a complex series of rules, designed by the child, which are ever changing. I always begin by thinking the purpose of these rules is to bring the tantrum to an end, but indeed their purpose is only to perpetuate the tantrum. Slowly it got through my sluggish mental processes that I was on the wrong track. I changed course to the firmness approach. "Basil, you need to calm down right now and stop screaming." This method sometimes works, but usually not before it has escalated to a raised voice, and there are almost always emotional casualties.

On this particular evening I saw where I was headed before any damage was done and again set a different course. I took Basil on my lap in the chair we used to rock in together when he was nursing. I began to rock him and to tell him I love him. And though I do love Basil deeply and tenderly, he recognized that my saying so was not an expression of my love, but a ploy to get him to stop raving. Once again, I was trying to settle him down with my body and my words, while my mind was impatient for all this unpleasantness to end. But as I rocked my hysterical child and fed him sweet nothings, I remembered our nights together nursing and breathing. So I began to tell Basil about those evenings long ago. I described how we would rock together until he slept, and I told him how he would never let me go until I had stopped thinking about other things and focused on just the moment at hand. He stopped crying and began to listen with those gasping breaths that follow a frantic bout of crying.

In that moment it occurred to me with new force what a gift I was being given. So I talked to Basil about my meditation practice and how I am always trying to be right here, right now. I told him how he has been helping me to do this thing that I most want to do, and that this help was a special present that only he gave me. Through this telling, I once again was brought back to the present by my youngest son. And because I now was truly with him, he was able to let go of his tantrum and we sat rocking in the chair together in the evening, in the silence, in the present.

Kongsi Leslie Rutkowski (Ann Arbor, Michigan)



Evan Carter

When Alex, our daughter, was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, a tremendously demanding, high maintenance, scary condition, she had just turned five. David and I had been bringing Alex to Dharma School for over a year by then. The revelation of this disease was a shock to our family. When we came home from the hospital, it was like coming home with a newborn, without the joy.

David sat down with Alex and said, "This is a big deal, we know. How do you feel about it?" She looked him in the eye, then quietly replied, "It's a lot." After a few moments, Alex said, "Daddy, can you get my meditation pillow? I want to meditate for five minutes." David retrieved her pillow. "I'm going to close my eyes, so you can time me. Please don't interrupt me," she said as she sat down. She closed her eyes and rested her small hands upon her knees. She sat very still. When David let her know when five minutes had passed, she got up and didn't speak much about her diabetes again for a while. We had no idea what an impression Dharma School and the practice of meditation had upon our centered, mindful little daughter. It clearly is an integral part of all our lives.

Louanne Moldovan (Portland, Oregon)

"That's what I'm doing." I told my third grade class of students when several of them finally asked me, "What are you doing?" "Just watching the tree grow."

I had tried all the traditional methods of getting a class of twenty boisterous and unruly eight-year-olds to sit quietly on the carpet in a semi-circle around me and focus on their teacher's lesson. We were scheduled to learn some new math. A few of the serious students stopped talking and wiggling around. The mischievous, chatty ones were poking each other, undoing and doing up their Velcro shoe fasteners, and playing with pencils.

So I sat. I folded my hands palm to palm and proceeded to look out the window on the other side of the room, while sitting perfectly still. After ten seconds, "What's she doing?"one boy whispered. Another ten seconds, "Shhhh.....she wants us to be quiet. Look at her. She's not moving." "Oh, I can do that," another one said. He moved easily into a half lotus position. Several others followed him until they were all competing with each other to see who could be most perfectly still for the longest time. I hadn't raised my voice. I hadn't used anyone's individual name to get their attention. I hadn't said a word. I had simply sat still and looked out the window at the tree. As I watched the tree sparkle in the youthfulness of early spring, I witnessed the subtle growth and change in the children. They were settling down and quietly paying attention.

Lynda Archer (Toronto, Ontario)

I long to be a hermit meditating alone in the cave. I want to have a steady relationship with my meditation cushion. There are times I beat myself up for not meditating regularly. There are dishes to be done, laundry to be folded, a daughter who needs to learn to ride her two-wheeler. The list goes on!

I talk myself into breathing as I do the dishes.

I try to be grateful that I am able to fold laundry.

I realize how hard I'm breathing as I push my daughter on her two-wheeler.

I homeschool my ten-year-old son. What opportunity for growth! I realize he's not the only one being homeschooled at our address.

I breathe.

I remind myself that I am engaged in such important practice every day.

Valerie Mann Hatopp (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

My husband Koseya and I gave our twin boys very biblical names. We didn't mean to do it. When traveling in North Carolina, me five months pregnant, we often played the name game while driving. We passed many bridges and rivers, both with sign-post names, and tried them out on each other as possible names for the boys. Many were appealing and seemed appropriate in our Southern bliss. We both suffer from an intense nostalgia for things past and a love for all that is rural. "Are we near Cold Mountain yet?" I asked Koseya. Clearly our yearning for the simple and rustic, the actual soil of yesteryear, is often driven more by fantasy than reality.

So Koseya says, "How about 'Abraham'?" I pause in consideration. He fears, "Do you think it's too biblical?" I laugh. "Oh, *that* Abraham. I suppose so. I was thinking of Abraham Lincoln." I liked the idea of a son with the same name as Honest Abe. It's a solid name—old and epic in the formal, but simple and clear in the diminutive.

Silas' name was surfaced from somewhere in my memory. I liked the sound of it and the name seemed different enough to satisfy me. I looked up what it meant, and "woodsman" thrilled me. Visions of flannel and tall trees flitted through my mind. Maybe he will become a conifer specialist, or a southern preacher, so different from

See With Beginner's Mind

KOSEYA

Koseya Blair Thomas

his parents. Both of these notions pleased me. My father did a bit more extensive research on the name Silas, being that his grandson's middle name is Doyel and the smile on this boy's face is almost a replica of his own. It turns out that Silas traveled with Paul while he was teaching, went to jail with him, and may even have been the author of the second Book of Peter. So Koseya and I managed to get both the Old and New Testaments represented in our new family.

Our close friends were understandably confused. "But wait," they said with their heads a bit cocked, "Isn't Koseya a Buddhist?" It is strange when something about yourself is revealed to you from the outside or from some unconscious action. No matter how you grow and flower, your roots hold you fast. This is no longer an unfortunate thing in my mind. Koseya and I were both raised Christian, and Europeans can spot us as Americans even from a distance. His father was a forester and his mother a history professor. Both of my parents' families migrated to California during the Dust Bowl, one from the Ozarks, the other from flat-land Missouri. They are country at their core. Koseya likes to make things from wood; I like to work with dirt. Our boys are Abraham and Silas. It all makes sense.

Now we live in a city and we take our young, beautiful boys to a Buddhist temple started by a Korean monk who was once an orphan but came to the States and built a place that affects people profoundly. I am not officially a Buddhist, but my children are calmed before sleep every night with the "Ma-Um" chant, slowly diminishing until it is just a whisper. They watch Koseya and me do *hapchang* before breakfast and dinner and they hear us say the prayer of gratitude for our food. They see that hapchang is similar to clapping (something I never noticed before), so they clap and are smiling when I look up. We bring them to the temple now and then—even though they can't sit still for one minute, and we have to leave even the children's service because they are so spirited. We do this in hopes that the vibe will rub off on them. I say that a bit flippantly, in part because I'm from California, and in part because it is too big of a thing to articulate.

I don't know exactly what it means to raise my children Buddhist. I've never seen it done before. It feels strange to me. It also feels right.

Sheri Doyel (Chicago, Illinois)

Katy Fischer

Make Your Own Buddhist Picture Book

Sanch'ul David O'Donnell and Bobyo Jessica Thebus

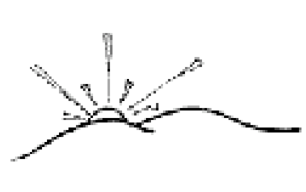
Photocopy this accordion-style picture book on your favorite paper. Feel free to enlarge each page and make a two-sided copy, joining the pages together with tape or staples. Or make your own Buddhist picture book. Share with the nearest Baby Buddha!

Fold along vertical dotted lines.

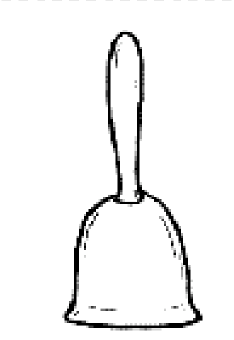
Ring
Bong
Steam

by Sanch'ul David O'Donnell
and Bobyo Jessica Thebus

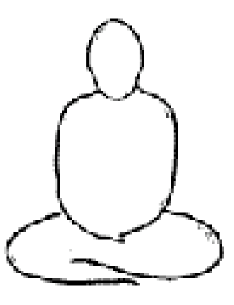
The Sun says
Wake Up!



The Candle says
Flicker
Flicker
Flicker



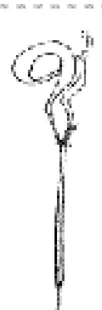
The Person who
sits says
MMmmmm
AHhhhhh

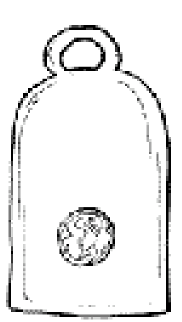
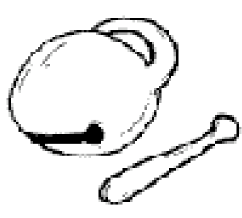


The Temple Bell says
Bonggg
Bonggg
Bonggg

Cut along horizontal dotted lines.

Fold along vertical dotted lines.

	The Incense says Smoke Smoke Drift		The Meditation Bell says Riiiing Riiiing Riiiing

	The Mokt'ak says Tok Tok Tok-Tok- Tok-tok-tok-tok-tok		The Tea Cup says Steam Steam

Cut along horizontal dotted lines.

Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom

Zen Buddhist Temple, Chicago

Life and death are not separate from each other. Our Buddhist calendar teaches this truth. In springtime, we commemorate the Buddha's great passing, Parinirvana, and we celebrate the Buddha's Birthday.

We celebrated the 2549th Buddha's Birthday at the Chicago temple on May 14th and 15th according to the Korean Buddhist tradition (8th day of the fourth lunar month). The overcast sky turned blue when the "Peace and Happiness Parade" kicked off the festivities. About eighty young and old members of the sangha joined the parade, carrying lotus flowers, banners, flags, and candies. We walked while chanting cheerfully to the rhythm of the mokt'ak and drums. It was a wonderful opportunity to share the presence of a Buddhist community with the neighborhood.

People dedicated lotus lanterns to express their good wishes and gratitude. Some of us spent many hours making the lanterns. Sanha, resident priest, described the lantern making in her letter to the sangha. "One lotus lantern takes about 100 petals, each one twisted and glued onto the frame, one by one with hands in concentration. The petals in different colors come together to form one lotus flower, blooming in love and happiness, in compassion and wisdom. Each lantern is then hung in the Buddha hall. They are strung together by wires. The rows of lotus flowers reveal the teaching of Oneness—there is no me; there is no you. What is, is indivisible, like the petals on the lotus."

At the Blessing of Children during the celebration, Sunim asked parents two questions. One was how their children are good, and the other how they can improve. "They should eat more vegetables," said some parents. Vegetables! They are precious members of the temple community. We grow greens and herbs in the back garden. Watching them daily, we get to know them intimately—their forms, smells, behaviors, likes and dislikes. Each interaction with them—planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, cooking, eating, and composting—becomes a spiritual affair. We pay attention and discover their Buddha nature. We cultivate the mind with constant care and devotion to them. We become one, smile at each other, and grow together.

When we are at one with all situations, we flow like a river ceaselessly. "Oneness" is what we try to practice and cultivate in everyday temple life, sitting, working, cooking, and eating together. Right now there are five residents—Sunim, Sanha, Kongsim, Nalanda, and Konghwa. Joe Reilly stayed over the spring and just moved to Michigan. He, a wonderful singer and songwriter, wrote two Buddhist songs during his stay—*Buddha in Me* and *Monkey Mind*. Daekwang came to visit from Korea for one month. He washed all the dishes, vowing to be helpful.

Spring has turned into summer. When it is sunny, we hang the laundry on the clothesline. When mint is plenty, we make fresh mint-green tea. When a big bunch of cilantro turns up, we make cilantro kimchi. When it is hot, we open the windows in the early morning and close them before noon. And, of course, cold showers!

There is one squirrel, who has been showing up at the door to the side garden over the past few months. We often feed her with nuts. As she gets to know us, she follows us into the sangha hall, the kitchen, the upstairs Buddha hall, and the office. It is interesting to watch the squirrel acquiring this habit. As Sunim puts it, we wake up with the power of constant practice. When we face worries, anxiety, irritation, and laziness, we go into the Buddha hall, do prostrations, and sit with the Buddha.

Katy Fischer

Achala Jeff Legro

I first encountered compost and a compost bin at the Zen Buddhist Temple–Ann Arbor. At one side of the sprawling vegetable garden, hidden somewhat behind a corner of the fence, were multiple bins for composting the collected raw materials—always a fresh pile and an almost finished pile. Since moving to Chicago fifteen years ago, I've had to adjust to postage stamp yards with gardens of precious few square feet. Still, I wanted to garden in part as antidote to some of the stresses of living in an urban environment. If I can grow a few things, I can retain a connection to the earth, to the annual cycle of life.

Composting is an essential ingredient to organic gardening, contributing to the life of the soil as well as directly feeding the plants we want to grow. Instead of sending grass clippings and fallen leaves to landfills, we can foster a rich and diverse macro- and microbial world in our soil. Chemical fertilizers don't respect the life of the soil, harm the soil's residents, and find their way into water sources. Compost, as premier organic fertilizer, not only stimulates that life, but improves soil texture and protects our lawn and garden from disease and insect problems.

Making compost is quite simple. There are many tricks, mainly aimed at speeding up the decomposition process. Everything rots (you know, impermanence surrounds us). Compost happens. Here's how to make your own "black gold."

Compost Recipe

1. **Build the pile.** Alternate two to four layers of fresh green (grass, garden debris, kitchen scraps) and brown (dry autumn leaves, straw, black-and-white shredded newspaper) and a couple scoops of unfinished compost or garden soil (helps provide

those microbial workers). Don't worry about the proportions too much 'cause compost happens.

2. **Water well.** Wet the materials as you build the pile, keeping them damp like a wrung out sponge (the little guys need water). Water the pile every week it doesn't rain and cover the pile during rainy seasons.

3. **Turn the pile.** Fluff the pile every week or so to circulate air (the little guys need air) and move undecomposed material to the center of the pile. Your compost is ready when it looks dark and crumbly, and smells sweet and earthy.

Other Compostibles

Wood ash in moderation, feathers, eggshells, human and pet hair, floor sweepings, pine needles, sawdust (but never from chemically treated wood), spent brewery hops, coffee grounds and vegetable scraps, bags and bags of leaves that can be found every fall, manure.

Non-Compostibles

1. Meat, dairy, and oils—they will rot, smell, and attract vermin.
2. Plastics—they don't break down.
3. Colored paper—likely to contain toxic inks or non-biodegradable coatings.
4. Charcoal ash—won't break down and can leach starter fluid residuals.
5. Diseased plants and weed seed-heads—can spread to garden.
6. Pet waste—can spread pathogens to humans. Human waste should not be composted either.

Three Signs of a Perfect Pile

1. *Steam.* Heat in a new pile is a sign of the little guys, the microbial community, hard at work.

2. *A sweet, earthy smell.* If compost stinks it needs to be fixed. The pile may have too much nitrogen or moisture, or it may not have enough oxygen. Turn or fluff the pile and add dry matter to bring it into balance.

3. *Volume.* Unfortunately for the urban composter, size does matter. To heat up and work effectively, a pile should be at least one cubic meter. But don't worry. Like that little bitty pile of fallen leaves under your front stoop, compost happens.

Compost Bins

I built my compost bin from a discarded pallet and scraps of wood I had in the garage. Vermin can be a problem in the city even if you do not compost meat, dairy, oils and even bread. Too many kitchen scraps can be inviting even if you carefully cover these with a scoop of dirt or other material. Three options can remedy the situation keeping you and your four-legged neighbors on friendly terms. Stop feeding the bin until you "manage" the population. Line the sides, bottom and under the lid with wire or wire mesh. Build or buy a compost tumbler. This keeps those most delectable kitchen scraps out of the vermin's reach. Google "compost bins" and you will find a wide assortment available to buy. Simple bins can be easy to build and affordable to buy, but after seeing the prices of tumblers I decided to build my own out of a perforated trash can and electrical pipe bent to frame the trash can like a babe rocker or swingset frame.

Many of the bins for sale out there may not hold a cubic meter of material, but with a good mix of materials, moisture and adequate oxygen from fluffing, you will harvest a yearly supply of "black gold" for your lawn or garden while reducing the landfill you create.

homemade

Spring Wind invites readers to share the joy of creativity and a non-consumer lifestyle in this special section.

Achala Jeff Legro

Loving Vermin Compost Tumbler

For this rat-proof composter you will need:

- 1 large plastic (or metal) garbage can
- 10' lengths of thinwall conduit (electrical pipe) and couplings
- 3' length of water or gas pipe
- 4 small scraps of plywood
- 4 small scraps of sheet metal (2 to 4 SF)
- sheet metal & drywall screws (galvanized is better)
- electrical pipe bender
- screw gun/drill and bits
- 2 bungee cords

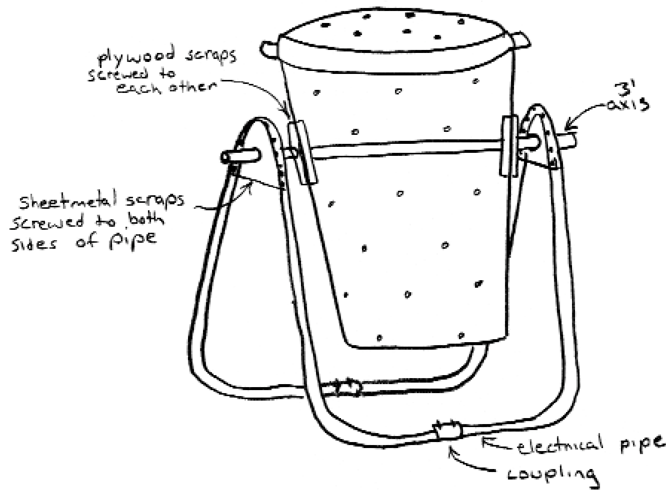
1. Drill numerous holes all over garbage can for ventilation and drainage.

2. About half way down on either side of the can, fasten your scraps of plywood inside to outside. These stiffen the can for the tumbler's axis. Drill a hole large enough for the 3' length of pipe to pass through.

3. Bending the electrical pipe with the pipe bender may be the biggest challenge for non-electricians, but the pipe is cheap and bending is fun. Starting at 8" from the end, make a 90° bend. 35" after this bend, make a 120° bend perpendicular to the first bend. Finally, 35" after the second bend, make another 90° bend in same direction as first bend. Bend the second length of conduit just like this and couple the ends together to create the legs and cradle of this composter. The coupled ends (use electrical couplings) will sit on the ground with the 120° bends up in the air.

4. Screw scraps of sheet metal to either side of this bend and drill another large hole through each of the attached sheet metal to accept the 3' axis.

5. Assemble can, axis and cradle and you are ready to compost peacefully with your neighborhood vermin, much to their chagrin. Use bungees to secure lid when it's upside down.



A NEW LIFE

Kongyi Elena Centeno

"Welcome to your new life!" my husband Tom said when he opened the door. I was coming home from the 2003 summer *Yongmaeng Chongjin* in Toronto. When he said that, I realized that he was right—Buddhism had changed my life entirely.

About three years earlier I had arrived at the psychologist suffering from what I called "chronic unhappiness." I had a lot of complaints. In my marriage I felt that Tom was not nice enough to me. I carried around a lot of remorse and resentments from my childhood, and I hung on to a lot of memories from bad situations with my parents. At work I was under a lot of stress; I felt like I was right and everybody else was wrong. I wanted to control the lives of my brother and sister. I felt I was not being considered or treated well by my relatives, colleagues and friends. In fact, I had lost faith in humankind. I felt miserable. On top of that, I felt stupid to be so unhappy because I considered myself a lucky person. Professionally I had been successful and had no economic or health problems. I could see that my complaints were trivial compared to the suffering of others in the world. But still my chronic unhappiness would not budge.

Some visits to the psychologist helped me to see the origin of some of my problems. It turns out she had practiced Zen in the past and her brother had been a Zen Buddhist monk. She told me that she had successfully applied some of what she had learned in Zen to her therapy. This included things like concentration in breathing, the way to look inside for the true self, to move out of the center and reduce the size of the ego, and to concentrate on just what is here and now. When I told her I was interested in meditation, she encouraged me to practice.

Being raised in Mexico, a majority Catholic society, though in a free-thinking, non-religious family, I did not know much about Buddhism. I became interested in Buddhism in 1996 after a

Anjali Jacques Oule

trip to Tibet. Perhaps what captured my attention the most were the eyes of the Buddhist monks. Their eyes were so clear and deep. It was like seeing into a peaceful clear lake, with no bad emotions or negative intentions. I felt peace and confidence by just looking at them. When my husband and I got home we bought lots of books about Buddhism and we started reading them. I was astounded by the ethics and values of Buddhism, the search for happiness, and liberation from suffering for all beings.

My brother Hector had started his own search for Buddhism. He tried meditation with the group at the Mexico City Buddhist Center (Centro Budista de la Ciudad de México) and with the Mexican Theravada Buddhist Center (Centro Mexicano del Budismo Theravada). At his recommendation I went to the Theravada group, but I did not continue. Then, in 2001, Hector learned of Samu Sunim's visits and went to his talks and retreat that year. He did not stop talking about it until I finally followed his advice and took Toan Sunim's meditation workshop with the Mexico City sangha. Hector and I felt lucky, because Buddhism is not widely known in Mexico, and we had struggled to find it.

In 2003, a year into my practice, I remembered that I had been interested in Buddhism when I was about fourteen years old. I had completely forgotten that I had read the *Life of Buddha* and *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse. I felt enchanted by the readings and had started practicing meditation on my own. I used to stare at a candle for thirty to forty minutes every night, or to stare at the circle of my pupil in the mirror, asking, "What am I?" Nobody had taught me, I just came up with that, and I was in the Dharma without knowing it. It was an interesting experience, but it lasted for only a short time. Parties and other teenager activities pulled me away from the readings, the candle and the mirror, and I forgot about them. But still, my days were filled with

I began to realize that a lot of the problems of my chronic unhappiness were created by my big ego that never had enough.

dreams about visiting the Himalayas. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I'd had access to a Buddhist temple when I was young.

After Toan Sunim's workshop in 2002, I knew that this was "it." My search had ended! I became a regular member of the Mexico City sangha. I arrived at the sangha after two years of visits to the psychologist. Although the therapy had helped me in some aspects of my life, I was still struggling with negative emotions and thoughts and a load of remorse. But from the beginning I felt at home at the small and noisy place on Mérida Street. The members and Dharma students were very friendly and warm and I felt sheltered and comforted. A few months later, in December of that year, everybody got excited about Samu Sunim's annual visit. While attending one of his talks a year before, I had felt truly inspired. So, in that winter, I was ready for my first five-day "fearless" meditation retreat, Yongmaeng Chongjin.

On the first day of Yongmaeng Chongjin I said to myself, "I am going to sit down and practice so hard that I am going to reach enlightenment in no time." But, after the first afternoon, I had a terrible headache, and the fear of the first cold water rubdown the next morning kept me tossing and turning all night. Tired and a little less fearful (the rubdown wasn't that bad!), but still with a horrible headache, I spent my second day barely able to sit in the meditation hall. I thought of leaving that night. I felt like I was not ready for the Dharma yet.

The next morning I was nodding off during Sunim's Dharma talk. The smack of the *chukpi* on my neighbor's shoulder woke me up and made me listen to Sunim's words. His words moved something inside me, so deep that I broke down in tears and ran to hide in the restroom. I do not know how long I cried or why I was crying so hard. When I came out of the restroom, the headache was gone, I felt like my heart had opened wide, and I no longer wanted to leave the retreat. I just wanted to run and hug Sunim! But the silent breakfast made me sit quietly and eat, with all my attention on the plate.

The retreat taught me about the power of silence, the experience of being attentive, and the rest of a quiet mind. In the silence I was in touch with myself for the first time. I learned that by being quiet I could concentrate and be more deeply in touch with everything around me. I also learned that a quiet mind removes many of the mind's selfish demands, making the shallow things less important and life more happy.

On the last day of the retreat, Sunim led a "fire" practice, in which all the participants can behave like the residents of a madhouse, free to scream and do whatever they want without hurting themselves or others. The environment of freedom made me realize that I was tired of all the crap I was carrying in my mind; it was time to dump it! I began to realize that a lot of the problems of my chronic unhappiness were created by my big ego that never had enough.

Though invigorated by the retreat, my spiritual batteries slowly lost their charge. I practiced irregularly until it was time for the summer Yongmaeng Chongjin of 2003 in Toronto. I arrived at the temple a week before the retreat. I just knew that I wanted to practice. The hard work at the temple was invigorating and I was enjoying it a lot. Then, a couple of days before the start of the retreat, Sunim stopped me at the

stairs and shocked me with the question: "Kongyi, would you like to enroll in the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary and become a Dharma student?" I said yes! I just wanted to run and hug Sunim (again!), but the chanting of people working upstairs reminded me that we had a lot of work to do before everyone arrived.

During this retreat, I began to notice how great it was to have people sitting around me, all practicing so hard, trying to give the most they could. I felt respect for their effort, happy to be there with them, and inspired to keep my practice strong. During the afternoon sitting of the third day, something moved inside me that freed me from all the remorse and resentments that had built up since childhood. When I went for an interview, I just wanted to scream and hug Sunim! But seeing the line of people waiting for their interviews, I realized I should move fast so others would have the guidance they needed in their practice.

At the end of the retreat I felt like I was liberated from my past. It wasn't that I completely forgot all my past and memories, I just was not attached to them anymore. My negative attitude and the remorse were all removed, my heart was open and clean. I went to visit my family. For the first time in many years, I was really with them, accepting the way they were, happy to enjoy their company, and thankful to them for all they had given me. There were no harsh feelings in the way. I realized that in the course of my life I had built layers, like an onion, around me. Those layers were heavy, negative, solid, and isolated me from my true self and from life. The Dharma is peeling them away and is helping me to become a better person.

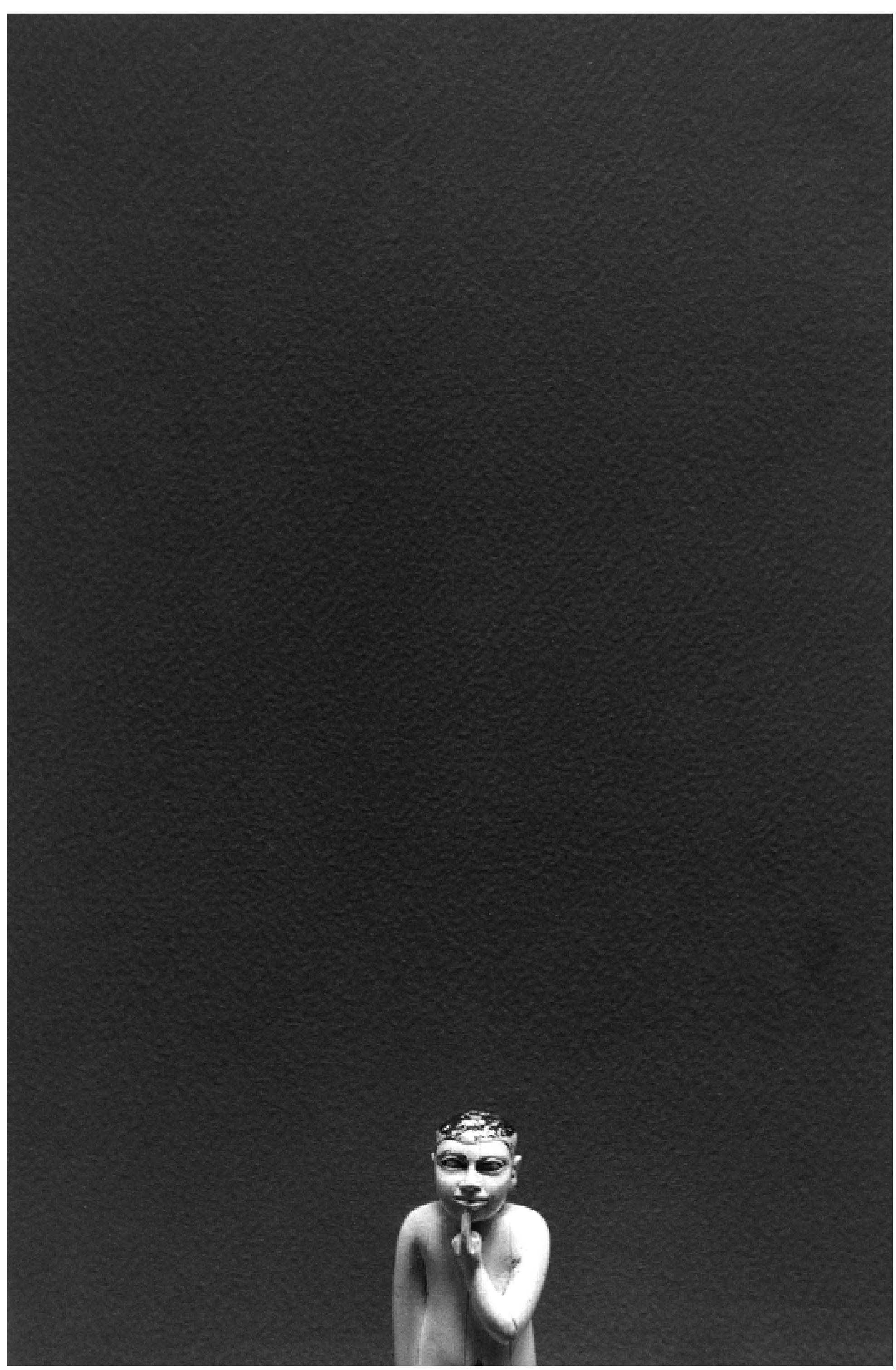
My husband Tom immediately noticed all that when I arrived home that summer day in 2003, to my new life! Just with a glance at my face he realized that something deep and important had happened to me. I asked Tom later what he had seen in me that day. He said I looked lighter, as though life was not a burden to me anymore.

Months went by, and in the winter of 2003 Samu Sunim arrived for another of his visits to Mexico. As usual, there were a series of talks scheduled at different locations in the city, as well as a workshop and Yongmaeng Chongjin. It was a cold winter for Mexico, and Toan Sunim had a terrible flu. He asked me if I could be his substitute as a translator at Sunim's talks, saying, "It is very good practice. You have to keep all your attention, and can't lose your concentration." Inside I was freaking out, but I could see it was true.

I always have a terrible time remembering people's names, and names in Asian languages are even harder for me. Every time Sunim made reference to a Korean master, I avoided repeating the name in the translation. From the way he looked at me, I think he was aware of that. What was great about this experience was that I began to become aware of Sunim. I opened myself, and at the same time I got closer to my teacher. Thus, I started noticing if he was cold or if he was satisfied with the way the talks went, among other things. This was very important to me because I realized that I was too closed into myself. My experience with Sunim peeled off one more layer of the onion and allowed me to be more open to the needs of the rest of the world.

During the last day of Yongmaeng Chongjin, Toan Sunim was not at the meditation hall when Sunim needed a translator for the Ma-Um chanting. He waved a hand at me, and I quickly sat next to him. While Sunim chanted, I saw how the chant came from the deepest part of his heart. He was giving all his strength, his hope, his faith, his love, in every single Ma-Um. It was as if he wanted to embrace all—healing and awakening all in every single Ma-Um. At the end of the chant, I was aware of how exhausted he was, but Sunim did not care, he was just sitting there, humble and with true, genuine love. It made me see my own arrogance and my face flushed. I just wanted to stand up and hug Sunim! But the healing and peaceful mood in the room froze me and I just sat there still.

Six months later I was flying to Toronto, to my



Anjali Jacques Oule

fourth Yongmaeng Chongjin. It was the summer of 2004. After my first semester as a Dharma Student, I was arriving for the retreat very tired. A lot of changes were looming in my life—a move to California for a year and lots of work and family pressures. However, I tried to keep my practice and a good, positive attitude toward the changes. During the retreat I was tired all the time and had a lot of resistance. I was complaining to myself about everything and was barely able to concentrate for more than a few minutes at a sitting. But I did not give up. All I could do was to put aside that attitude without forcing myself, but my low energy stayed the five days of the retreat. This retreat taught me to be more tolerant with myself and to accept things as they are.

After the Yongmaeng Chongjin there was an ordination ceremony and the Dharma transmission ceremony for Toan Sunim. During the Dharma transmission, Toan Sunim was sitting in front facing Sunim. As Sunim read a poem to him, Toan Sunim's body trembled and tears ran down his face. At that moment I understood what devotional heart meant. Toan Sunim's devotional heart was so intense throughout the ceremony that I broke down in tears, but this time I did not run and hide in the restroom. I just sat there crying. And this time I knew why: there is so much happiness in spiritual realization and it is unknown to us when we are trapped in the world of delusions. I felt my heart wide open to the self and spiritual awareness. I just wanted to run and hug Toan Sunim, and I did, but after the ceremony. During the wonderful meal that followed I was not tired anymore. All the energy that I had missed during Yongmaeng Chongjin was right back with me. At that moment I was also aware of what a great responsibility and commitment it is to become a Dharma teacher or a monk.

Today I practice: life is continuous change. Some days are only struggle, some days are just like running water in a clear stream, but as Toan Sunim says, quoting a Korean Zen master, "Do not judge if your practice is good or bad, if your karma is heavy or not. Just practice, every day for one thousand years!" My daily Zen practice is to try to follow what is, for me, Samu Sunim's greatest teaching: just do it! In my everyday life I try to keep a clear and peaceful mind. I try to be more aware of others and their needs. I try to have more tolerance for all. I am aware of a light on that should be turned off to save energy. I try to use the minimum amount of water when I shower. The practice of chanting the Dharani throughout the day brings instant clarity. How different things around me are now from the way they were before fall 2002! Well, things are not different—my mind sees them differently.

Though my life is a lot better than before, I still have a long path to walk. I still have a hard time forgiving humans for damage done to the environment and for harm to other living beings. I cannot overcome all the violence and injustice in the world. But I have hope that one day all beings will be free from suffering.

The Dharma is such a wonderful path, the way that the Buddha Shakyamuni revealed, and that so many teachers, buddhas and bodhisattvas have carried down from their generation to ours. I have no words to thank all of them. I have no words to thank Samu Sunim for bringing Buddhism to Mexico and to the Mexican sangha. They all give me, and all of us, a chance to change our lives, a chance to change the way we see the world, a chance to find a new life.

Kongyi Elena Centeno is a researcher at the Institute of Geology of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and a first-year Dharma student in Maitreya Buddhist Seminary.

The Typewriter

Mike Armitage

I'll just come out with it: I'm a big geek, a computer nerd. My lightweight laptop is my connection to the world; it is my soul. It connects me with my friends in Kinshasa and Taipei simultaneously, allows me to shop for shirts, play music, or make music. With a wireless network at home, this world can even follow me into the bathroom.

I'm also a writer—a word nerd. I really only need a computer to type words. Everything else a computer offers is just a distraction. I didn't know this until my laptop crashed and every last song vanished, every last sentence. I was lost. A writer without a computer is like a plumber without a wrench. Not only had my virtual world disappeared, my soul went silent.

Soon after the crash, I needed to type a letter to a friend. By chance, I found myself at the Zen Buddhist Temple rummage sale during a weekend shopping spree. As I fingered through the cast-away jeans, plates, and paperweights, I came upon a black wooden box sitting on a table. It was mysteriously heavy and banged loudly when I laid it on its side. I popped the steel clasp and lifted the top. Inside was an army-green typewriter with forest green keys, exuding the scent of oil and dust. Its embossed nameplate said, "Smith Corona," a name that marries a lowly commoner with high royalty. My hands caressed its cool, curved edges. I struck the "H" key and the typewriter suddenly jumped to life: a hammer-like arm swung up and whacked the black ribbon with a sharp snap. It didn't need to be plugged into a wall or recharged. It just worked, like magic. I felt a shiver of excitement. A kind lady wearing an apron said it worked perfectly. The sticker said five dollars.

At home, I plunked the typewriter on my desk, next to my dead laptop, and opened the cover. Taking a sheet of paper from my bubble jet printer, I loaded it into the Smith Corona, and cranked the cylinder knob. I suddenly felt like a painter confronting a newly stretched piece of canvas. What should I type?

Realizing I could type just about anything I wanted, I started simply: "Today is a bright spring afternoon; the buds are starting to poke out from the bare maples outside my window…." It wasn't what I wrote that excited me, but how I wrote it. What the typewriter was teaching me was how to write like a writer. It was teaching me to be mindful of every word.

I soon learned a non-electric typewriter has no backspace key for erasing errors. Although an inconvenience, this inability to correct also had benefits: it erased my need for perfection. On a computer, I can delete, insert, cut, copy, and paste to my heart's content. On a typewriter, I'm forced to overcome my fears and go forward, warts and all. Every thought became important. I also had to learn to slow down my typing and pay attention to every keystroke. Type too fast and the hammers jam together. Writers are notorious for letting their minds wander, but this mechanically imposed concentration made me focus. I became increasingly mindful of what it was I wanted to say.

Unlike computers, on a typewriter I am not processing words, I am an artisan creating them. For every letter pressed, the hammer surges forth

and hits the surface of the paper like the two fists of a boxer: THUNK, THUNK, WHACK, THUNK, BING! As I type, the desk shakes, the percussion reverberating throughout my house. The silent, solitary pursuit of writing is now filled with music. THUNK THUNK THUNK, WHACK. Every letter sets off a chain reaction of minute and precise movements: gear wheels click, a thin wire tugs the carriage, the ribbon uncoils one space, the hammers strike, and a bell rings. By nudging the carriage return, I start a new line of words, stitching together a paragraph like a scarf.

When I remove the sheet of paper, I can feel the letters punched through on the back like a license plate. These letters are permanent, solid, real, not saved deep inside a hidden hard drive. I lay that completed sheet on the table and start on the next, as if working on an assembly line.

As weeks passed, I learned that my typewriter has its own personality and I had to accept its faults. After every typing session, it jerks to the left so I have to move it back into place every few pages. When I type a capital "A" the carriage jumps two extra spaces; if I want to type the number "1" I must type a lower case "L." If I want to type an exclamation mark, I must mark an apostrophe, reverse one space, and type a "." below. It's like getting to know your spouse intimately—like building a relationship.

I'll just come out with it: I have not become a Luddite. I eventually bought the latest laptop. I travel far around the world again from my desk. But my typewriter still sits nearby. It is my black box, ready to faithfully record everything, at any time, when everything else crashes.

Mike Armitage is a writer, blogger, and journalist in Toronto. He is now busy unpacking his old record collection instead of listening to MP3s.

Katy Fischer

Helping Others and Letting Go of Self: Post-Tsunami Reflections

Ilho Dennison Berwick

Giving to others and understanding that there is no giver or receiver lies at the heart of our practice as Buddhists. From the moment we make any kind of commitment to our practice, we begin a life course in generosity, not just in goods and money but, more importantly, in letting go of the notion of self.

How to live the Dana Paramita is something each of us discovers through practice. In my own case, the perils and mistakes of rushing to help others without spiritual and emotional maturity are legion. During my 1994 pilgrimage to Korea with Sunim and others, we were traveling on a bus when a car suddenly overtook us and smashed head-on into an oncoming car. When the bus stopped, Sunim told us to stay in our seats, but I, furious at Sunim's apparent indifference to the tragedy outside, instead rushed forward and pushed my way out of the bus in eagerness to help the people trapped in the cars. But I am no doctor, fireman, paramedic, or nurse. I could do nothing for the injured people and could just stand gawking at the blood. Later, I came to understand that my rush forward was motivated more by my need to do something than by a calm evaluation of the injured people's needs, my skills, and how best to help.

When the tsunami struck the countries around the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004, I had lived for more than two years on a sailboat in the Andaman Sea. I had made many friends along the coast and on the islands between Phuket, Thailand, and Langkawi, Malaysia. So, after the tsunami, I hurried south by train from my temporary home in Bangkok to help in the recovery effort on the island of Langkawi. One

We had no doubts in our minds that we were doing something special.

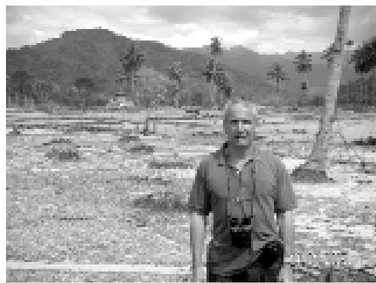
close friend on the island had run for her life and finally climbed a tree to save herself as the waves engulfed her house and car. The nearby fishing village was badly damaged, and two marinas and several boats were destroyed, including my friend's.

Every evening the two of us watched the reports from Banda Aceh, 240 miles away across the Malacca Strait, and heard the worsening reports of death and devastation. It became obvious to us that the food and medical aid being supplied by helicopters was not nearly enough for the thousands of people isolated on the west coast of Sumatra. Sailboats may be small, we told ourselves, but at least we could do something to help. Many others had similar thoughts. The next day the phone rang: a group of expatriate sailors in Langkawi who called themselves Waves of Mercy wanted to load a 125-foot schooner with food, water, and medical supplies for a rescue mission to Aceh. Would my friend—a nurse and a sailor—and I go with them? Without hesitation, we signed on as crew on the Sean Paquito II, along with five others. The second ship in our mini-flotilla, the 135-foot Indonesian pinisi Silolona, had a paid crew of fifteen men. After a day of delays, we cast off on a Friday for the crossing of the Malacca Strait with our load of four tons of rice and water, a field kitchen, and twelve members of an organization called Global Sikhs. The Silolona was similarly loaded.

We closed within two miles of the Sumatra coast the next morning and searched the coast with binoculars for the evidence of tsunami damage. At first, recognizing the devastation was difficult. A brown band running along the coastline for miles looked like low tide, and only when we saw the few buildings still standing in the villages did the extent of the damage become obvious. The east coast of Aceh had officially been closed to relief work because the Indonesian military claimed that the area was a stronghold of the GAM rebels—separatist insurgents who had been fighting the government in Jakarta for thirty years.

The magnitude of the miles and miles of devastation in Banda Aceh was revealed as we rounded the most northerly headland of Sumatra and turned toward what was left of this historic capital. A few fires burned. Two bloated and naked bodies floated by as we came alongside the Silolona. The emptiness of the shoreline was terrible. The sights and the smells of the devastation stunned us. Yet, at the same time we were all bubbling with excitement and proud to have arrived to help people in such obvious need. We had no doubts in our minds that we were doing something special.

We arrived in Aceh on day fourteen following the tsunami, and it became immediately apparent that the search-and-rescue phase was over. Those who were not going to survive had already died. The need for food and supplies was still enormous but less urgent. We had to adjust our thinking, which can be a hard thing to do when one is gripped by a situation. Originally, we had intended to help people isolated on Sumatra's outlying islands, but this plan had to be scuppered because all the people had been evacuated. The Global Sikhs also needed to rethink their plans. The challenge now was to get to villages on the west coast that had been isolated by the destruction of the coastal road. First, we needed immigration, customs, and harbormaster clearance. Because offices in Banda Aceh had been destroyed, we sailed to the harbor of Sabang on an island north of Sumatra.



Ilho Dennison Berwick

Once in Sabang, we had to wait for a resupply ship to come from Langkawi because in our haste to get to Aceh to "save people," we had sailed without our full complement of medical supplies that might be needed farther down the coast.

While we waited, an advance party of Sikhs planned to take rice and other foodstuffs down the coast in an appraisal of the situation. When they approached a captain to hire his medium-sized boat, he demanded $600 per day plus fuel, approximately three times the pre-tsunami price. The Sikhs had no choice but to pay his price if they wanted the vessel (although once down the coast, he refused to take his boat inshore). Later, after two three-day trips and seeing the destruction and needs of the people, the captain doubled his price to $1200 per day. The Sikhs refused the offer, and the captain eventually relented.

Three of the crew from the Sean Paquito II (a doctor and two nurses) and the Sikh doctors and nurses from the Silolona went ashore to visit 3000 people in refugee camps. The local authorities provided accommodations and transportation for the medical teams, and in two days they were able to treat hundreds of people. The doctor from our ship reported that the people were undernourished and urgently in need of services if epidemics of diarrhea, malaria, and pneumonia were to be avoided. Doctors from the hospital in Sabang had gone to replace the doctors in Banda Aceh who had died.

After more delays, we at last sailed down the west coast of Sumatra. There was little wind, but a high swell that kept the boat rolling all night was a warning of the difficulties of supplying villages by ship. The west coast of Sumatra is world famous for its surf, caused by ocean swells crashing ashore. The swell makes anchoring very uncomfortable, and the surf renders landing on beaches extremely hazardous, effectively closing the west coast during the April-to-September south-west monsoon season to all but the largest ships and military landing craft. Even in January, there were few places to safely anchor and transport supplies ashore by dinghy. We headed into a headland-protected bay approximately forty miles down the coast from Banda Aceh.

Silence filled the bay as we approached. Before the tsunami, the bay would have seemed a tropical paradise—warm clear water, coral reefs, and a village amid swaying coconut trees and backed by forest-covered volcanic mountains rising to the sky. Instead, we saw a land destroyed: shattered houses, trees, and people. More than two thirds of the people had died. Two hundred twenty people had taken shelter in a makeshift encampment a mile inland, and the village headman was looking after twenty-two orphans.

US military helicopters had made two drops of food in two weeks and evacuated the worst of the injured. One of the signatures of this tsunami disaster was the relative lack of injured people. The waves killed outright, or the people survived. Such was the devastation that almost everyone who was in the villages was killed. Those who did survive were elsewhere when the tsunami arrived: the men fishing at sea and the women and children tending gardens in the hills. After the initial 9.0 earthquake, the tsunami hit the west coast as a fifty-foot wall of water moving at a speed of perhaps seventy miles per hour. The force of the water was such that it tore many trees off at ground level and left the roots in the earth.

Despite everything, the headman of the village of Paro received us with great dignity and asked for our captain's address. "We need your help now," he said, "but one day we will stand again, and then I will write to thank you." He said that the people in his village were not too badly off and that the people in the next village had greater need.

The medical team went ashore immediately, and we began to ferry the 3000 kilos of rice, canned foods, and bottled water the more than half mile to shore. Meanwhile, the captain, one of the Sikhs, and I traveled five miles in a second dinghy to visit the next bay south of Paro.

Nothing prepared us for what we saw, even

The wisdom path may mean letting go of being needed, of being useful, of giving.

though we had seen the devastation in Banda Aceh. We landed at the southern end of the bay, where a small inlet broke the dangerous surf. The bay, a mile wide and about one and a half miles deep, backed up to forested mountains. More than 2000 people in two villages had lived here. All that remained on the plateau were a few palm trees and a mosque with a green dome. Everything else was gone. There was no debris, no rubble of walls or roofs, no motorbikes or cars, no furniture, no bodies, and no stench of death. Incredibly, the waves that had killed so many had taken all the evidence out to sea.

We walked in silence along a stretch of more than a mile. All that remained were the foundations of houses, paddy fields swamped with salt water, a broken road, and the concrete mosque with the green dome. At the foot of the hills, we found more than seven hundred people camped in what remained of a third village. The four village teachers were all dead; their classrooms had now become homes for survivors, including eighty children under ten years of age. Despite everything that had happened, we were quickly surrounded by laughing children and greeted by men and women shaking our hands.

Almost all of the people of Aceh are Muslims, and many arduously practice their faith. When asked what they needed most, people always asked for the Koran and prayer mats. Even though we said we were listening to the people, such requests immediately raised eyebrows among some of the volunteers. We initially treated such requests with a much lower priority than what our "practical" mentality thought was important. Listening and trusting people to know what is best for them can be a challenging task when we sincerely want to help. Letting go of control and seeing outside of our own personal or cultural markers are especially difficult as long as we think of ourselves as helpers and the others as victims.

We were warned several times that we were in danger of attack from GAM rebels, even though there had been no reports from aid agencies of attacks on people helping in the relief efforts. Although the civil war was real, we came to regard the threat of a GAM attack as a bogeyman the Indonesian military had created to control our movements and to ensure that our food supplies did not get into rebel hands.

The Waves of Mercy effort bought tons and tons of supplies and paid for passenger ferries to transport food and the reconstruction aid from Langkawi—tools, seeds, kettles, pencils, soccer balls, prayer mats, nails and hammers, corrugated tin sheeting, mosquito netting, fishing nets, and fishing boats—to help these people become self-sufficient again.

Buddhist teachers have sometimes ranked giving into categories as an instructional tool. The lowest rank of giving is giving out of fear in the hope that the person will go away. The next higher category, common giving, is giving away something we do not want. Princely giving is giving things of the same standard as we ourselves enjoy. The highest rank is kingly giving, giving what we value highly for ourselves. This rank includes giving of a better quality than that we would possess for ourselves.

The instructional value of this ranking of giving may best be understood by talking about material things, but I think it also applies to our donations of time, energy, and money. When we

give, do we give our full attention and our most valuable time, or do we give only to kill time because we have nothing better to do?

Likewise, what kind of giving is giving fishermen inappropriate nets or boats of the wrong design for their sea conditions (which happened after the tsunami)? Why should we expect fishermen to be grateful for fiberglass boats that they cannot easily or cheaply repair?

What sort of giving is insisting on giving what is no longer needed? The medical team from Sean Paquito II was the fourth medical team to visit these villages after the tsunami (although they stayed the longest and provided some follow-up care). Our medical team treated the usual afflictions of third world villagers—diarrhea, malaria, and scabies—that the tsunami had exacerbated. Yet, while we were there, a doctor arrived who was hyped about having come from London to help, even though his specialty was emergency medicine and the emergency medical care work had mostly been finished.

There comes a time in helping, even in dire situations, when enthusiastic volunteers need to step back, let go, and reassess. This lesson can be a cruel one if we have become fixed on our powers to help other people. Complex situations demand time to evaluate the more difficult questions and the more delicate tasks that require greater coordination, planning, and knowledge of local social structures. For example, there was talk of providing a sawmill to enable the villagers to turn trees on the hills behind their villages into planks to build houses. But who owned the land and the rights to the timber? How will the fuel for a sawmill be supplied month after month, along with spare parts, when there is no road and sea access is next to impossible? When will the power supply be restored if the motor is electric? Letting go and stepping back after being intensely involved is not easy, because we all want to help. There is a big difference between giving to people and supporting people helping themselves. Supporting people sometimes means standing aside.

The Second Noble Truth states that suffering arises because of attachment to things, mental conditions, becoming, and unbecoming. Grabbing or pushing away any mental state is the cause of suffering. It includes our attachment to others' need for us. The wisdom path may mean letting go of being needed, of being useful, of giving. Being fully compassionate and holding other people's tragedy lightly in the palm of our hand, neither grabbing nor pushing away, can be hard to recognize and to practice.

After two weeks in Aceh, three new crew members arrived on a sailing vessel from Langkawi to replace the doctor, one of the nurses, and me on the Sean Paquito II. After a month immersed in helping in the tsunami aftermath, I knew I had come to the end of my giving. I needed solitude again, several days of sleep, and perhaps the simple fragrance of flowers. Sean Paquito II provided aid to approximately 1200 men, women, and children—less than one percent of the people on the west coast of Sumatra. In the scale of this disaster, the aid we provided was a drop in the bucket, but for the 1200 people whose food supply was secured, it was real. Our giving may always be imperfect, but that is the reason for giving more, the surest means of perfecting what is truly important.

Ilho Dennison Berwick was a Maitreya Buddhist Seminary student for two years and founded Still Life Retreat, north of Toronto, in 1996. He is in Bangkok and may be reached at dennisonberwick@hotmail.com.

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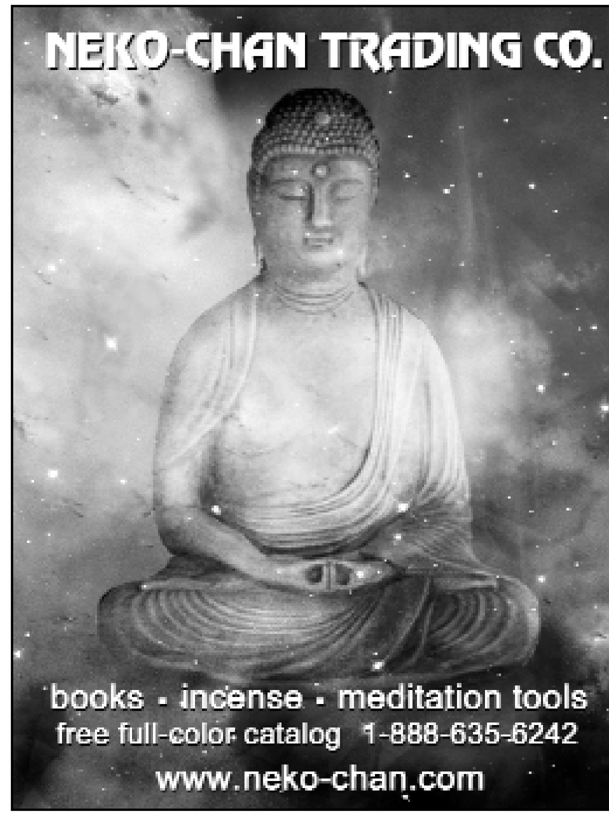

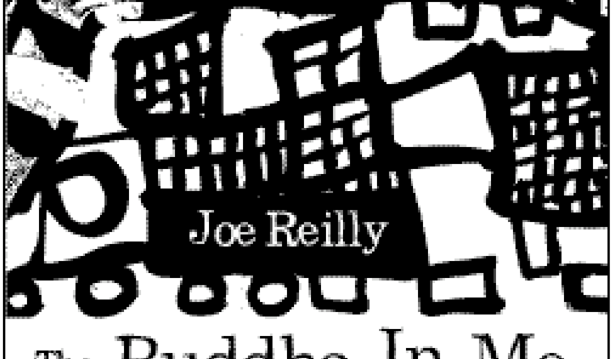

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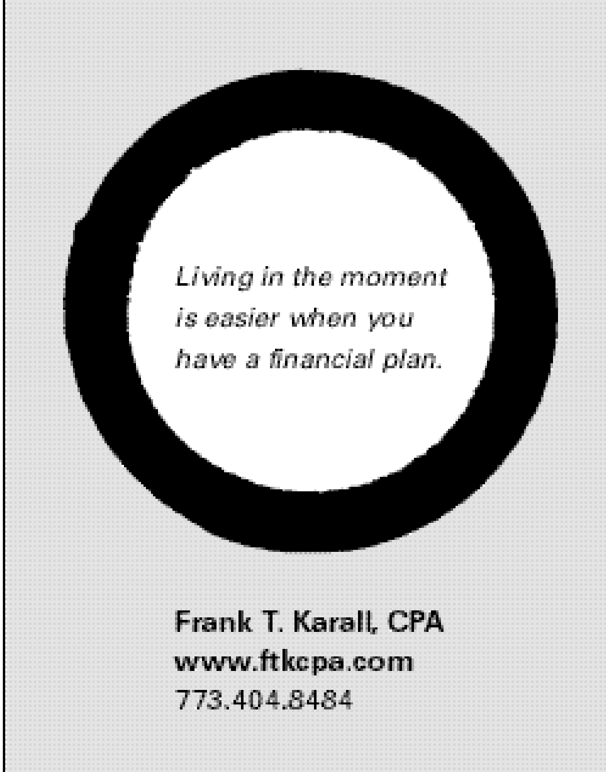

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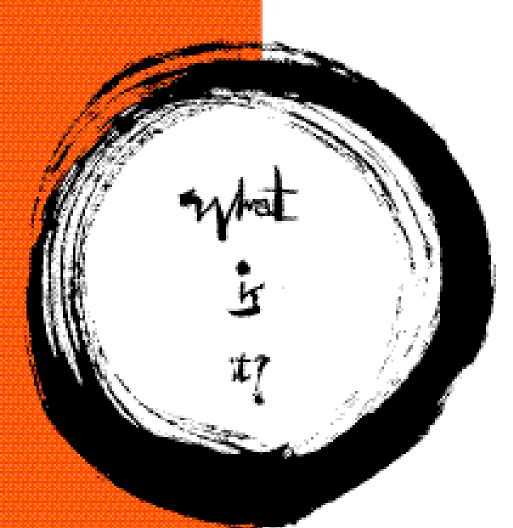

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