



# MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 4, Issue 1

Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

February, 2002

## The Purposes of Buddhism

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

“The purposes of Buddhism” means understanding Buddhism's direction. What we call Buddhism is the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Buddhism is not a revelatory religion; it is based entirely on what the Buddha taught as a result of his great enlightenment. So Buddhism is based not on some idea of divinity but on the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha, the central event in Buddhist history. The Buddha himself is not special. He attained his true self, which means he completely understood himself and this world. So we say Buddha is mind, mind is Buddha.

If you completely understand yourself, completely attain your true self, you too become a Buddha. The experience of the Buddha says that it is possible for each one of us to have the same enlightenment experience and to become Buddhas ourselves. This means it is possible for each one of us to completely understand ourselves, attain correct way and correct life.

What is attaining correct way and correct life? When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he was not sure if it was possible to transmit the truth he had received, in the hour of his enlightenment, to others. He thought that mankind, addicted to its delusions and attachment, would find it hard to understand his dharma. According to Buddhist legend, Brahma, the highest god in the pantheon, read the Buddha's mind. Brahma, fearful that the Buddha's teaching would be lost to this world, appeared before the Buddha and pleaded with him, "May the Blessed One teach the dharma; may the Well-gone One teach the dharma. There are living beings who have only a little dust in their eyes and who have fallen away through not hearing the dharma. It is they who will be recognizers of the dharma." Then, out of compassion for all beings, the Buddha looked at the world with his Buddha-eye and saw that indeed there were some beings who had keen faculties and only a little impurity. Realizing that there was a suitable audience for his teaching, he decided to proclaim the dharma.

The decision by the Buddha to share his dharma with others was a critical choice in Buddhist history. If he had decided not to act in this world, his withdrawal would have been insignificant for human history. The stated motive for his choice is compassion for all mankind. At the same time, he must have realized that the truth received by him had a dynamic quality and needed to be converted into a message; otherwise, it would go to waste. So the direction or purpose of Buddhism is the same as the Buddha's example: if you completely understand yourself and attain your true self, you must teach others.

## The Lotus Sutra

*All phenomena, from their very origin,  
Always have the aspect of stillness and extinction.  
When the disciple of the Buddha walks this path,  
He will become a buddha in future lives.*

***Comments by Zen Master Seung Sahn, adapted from  
The Compass of Zen:***

The Lotus Sutra teaches us about truth. It shows how to attain One Mind. It also shows how we can attain infinite time and infinite space.

The Lotus Sutra teaches us about attaining a mind of complete stillness. We sometimes call this One Mind. These are just names for our original mind. It is not something to “get” to, but something we already are. When a single thought appears, however, we lose this original mind of stillness and extinction. While you hear my words, and you follow some thought that flits across your mind, you and I become vastly separate. But by just cutting off all thinking and returning to simply listening, you return to being completely in this act. When you cut your attachment to thinking, then my speaking and your listening are completely the same. The speaking and listening are not two things. That is already the true Buddha, the true Jesus, the true God. This experience has no Korean or American or German or Chinese. There is no male or female. (Hits the table.) I sometimes call it primary point.

The Lotus Sutra shows us how this point (hits the table) is our nature and the nature of all phenomena. It also teaches that one who can completely perceive this point “will become a buddha in future lives.” This is a very interesting line. It does not mean that you get enlightenment in some “other” life; our next life is actually not the next life. This is only a distinction that comes from using words to describe something which has no words. There is actually nowhere else for us to become a buddha but right now, in this place. It does not “happen” anywhere else or at any other time. A disciple of the Buddha simply practices. By just practicing, right now, then “next life” means this moment. (Hits the table hard.) You only have this moment-- “next life” does not exist. Your “do-it” mind in this moment is already Buddha. This truth is invaluable. Attaining Buddha-mind is not difficult. It does not occur at some point in the future. It simply means that right now there is no inside or outside, no subject or object. In this moment, subject and object-- BOOM!-- become one. Only do it, and you are already Buddha. But be careful!

## **Heart Kyol Che Intensive Week of Practice**

*Monday through Friday, February 18-22, 2002  
7:00-9:00 PM*

On Jan. 7, we held a small celebration at GLZC marking the beginning of Heart Kyol Che. Kyol Che, literally translated, means "tight dharma", and it is an extended period of intense practice. Participants in Heart Kyol Che have made commitments to increase their practice during this period. Midway through the Heart Kyol Che period, during the week of Feb. 18, we will extend practice times by one hour and practice each night of the week. Practice will be held from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Please join us on any or all of these nights, and stay as long as you able.

### **Kido Retreat Scheduled**

*Saturday, February 23, 2002  
9:00 AM-4:00 PM*

As part of our intensive week of practice, a Kido chanting retreat will be held on Saturday, February 23, 2002, from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. Kido, literally translated, means "energy path." Participants in this Kido will play percussion instruments while continuously chanting "Kwan Seum Bosal." Zen Master Seung Sahn has said that completing a one-day Kido may provide as much benefit as a one-week YMJJ retreat. The Kido will be held at the First Unitarian Church, 1342 N. Astor, Milwaukee. Participants should bring a percussion "instrument" (anything you can bang or hit, such as blocks of wood, may serve this purpose) and a bag lunch. While this retreat is free of charge, donations are appreciated. Please let Peter know if you plan on attending or sign up at GLZC.

### **One Day Retreat at GLZC**

*Sunday, February 24, 2002  
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM*

To mark the midway point in our Heart Kyol Che practice and the end to our intensive week of practice, a one-day retreat will be held at GLZC on Sunday, February 24, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The retreat will feature a Dharma Talk, special and regular chanting, extended sitting and walking meditation periods, work practice, consulting interviews with senior dharma teacher Ron Kidd, and a vegetarian lunch. This retreat is offered free of charge and provides an excellent opportunity for new and experienced students to learn some additional practice forms used in the Kwan Um School of Zen. Lunch will be presented in the formal style, and instruction will be provided as needed. In order that we may plan food for this event, anyone interested in attending should sign up at GLZC, call Peter or Laura, or E-mail us at [glzc@execpc.com](mailto:glzc@execpc.com).

## **Food Drive for AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin**

During Heart Kyol Che, GLZC is collecting non-perishable food items for the food pantry at the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. You may drop off your items for donation at GLZC during practice hours until April 8, 2002. All donations will be greatly appreciated.

### **Chicago Area YMJJ Retreat to Be Held**

*Bill Brown, JDPSN  
March 16-17, 2002*

A YMJJ retreat will be held in McHenry, Illinois on March 16 & 17. Bill Brown, JDPSN, guiding teacher of the Isthmus Zen Community in Madison, WI, will lead the retreat. This retreat is sponsored by the Ten Directions Zen Community of Chicago. For more information contact Harold Rail of TDZC at [hprail@yahoo.com](mailto:hprail@yahoo.com).

### **Dharma Talk Schedule Change**

Effective immediately Dharma talks will be given on the fourth Wednesday of each month instead of the last Wednesday.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Zen Master Seung Sahn*

#### ***Why wear robes for formal practice?***

**ZMSS:** Originally these robes were monks' clothes. In India, during the Buddha's time, the monks wore yellow robes. They chose the yellow, the color of ground, because it got less dirty when the dust was blowing. If the color were white, the robes would get dirty in no time.

When Buddhism came to China, things changed a little bit. The robes that we wear are Taoist style clothes, not Indian style. Only the monk's big kasa is Indian style. So when Taoism and Buddhism came together, a new style of clothes appeared.

The kasa, both small and large, is a symbol. They have squares and lines - seven lines, twelve lines, eighteen lines. There are five points - east, west, north, south, and a middle. This means the whole world. A monk leads a homeless life, but wearing his kasa he symbolically carries the whole world with him; that means he is not separate from the world and still takes care of all beings. So the robes and kasa are different; robes are Taoist style clothes; the kasa is a symbol of renunciation, of leaving behind ego and small I.

***Editor's Note: If you have a question you would like answered, please forward it to our E-mail address or send it to GLZC.***

## What Is Your Direction? *Susi Childress, DT*

Zen Master Seung Sahn teaches that in our practice we must have great faith, great doubt, and great effort. But he also teaches that our direction must be clear. Without clear direction, our efforts may be counter-productive. Delusion may cloud our judgement, and even though we think our direction is clear, our efforts aren't helping us or others. This is why Sangha is so important... important enough that together with the Buddha and the Dharma, it is considered to be one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism. Aside from providing support and encouragement for your practice, the sangha can help you to perceive your correct direction. We are taught to "only go straight, don't know, which is clear like space, try, try, try for ten thousand years non-stop, get enlightenment, and save all beings from suffering." This is our true direction. So if we aren't already enlightened and going about the business of saving all beings from suffering, how do we attain our true direction? Perhaps some of the following suggestions may help.

1. Practice, practice, practice! Do some practice *every* day... sitting or walking meditation, repeating a mantra, chanting, bowing, or some combination of these. Even ten minutes a day of sitting meditation with 100% effort is wonderful. Just *do* it!
2. Go to practice even when you don't want to. Go consistently, and go to retreats, kidos, Dharma talks, and ceremonies. Is your practice just for you or for everyone? Your presence at practice provides energy, reassurance, and encouragement to your fellow sangha members.
3. Support the school; through membership, through donations, or by taking the precepts. If we only had our own individual practice, soon no one would be practicing as a group anymore, and our personal practice would suffer. We need each other and our Zen community in order to keep a strong practice.
4. Do a job. Help clean the Zen center, learn to lead chanting practice, help with retreats, talk with people new to practice, check on and purchase supplies for the Zen center, water plants, donate to and help with the rummage sale, or help lead practice. Try to do something. The more involved you become, the more your practice will grow.

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### **Purposes of Buddhism** *(continued from page 1)*

So every day we recite the four great vows. The first vow is, "Sentient beings are numberless; I vow to save them all." This vow is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha's own compassion for all beings. This means that our practice and our enlightenment is not just for ourselves but for all beings. Once again, the purpose of Buddhism is to attain truth, attain prajna (wisdom); that means attain correct way, correct life. Then you can save all beings. This is human beings' correct job. Attain your true self means attain universal substance; attain universal substance means attain whole-world situation; attain whole-world situation means attain your correct job. How? It means, moment to moment, keep your correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. That means, moment to moment, how do you help others? Not only human beings, but this whole world. When enlightenment and correct life come together, that means your life becomes truth, the suffering world becomes paradise. Then you can change this suffering world into paradise for others. This is human beings' correct job; this is the purpose of Buddhism.

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### **Lotus Sutra** *(continued from page 1)*

The most important point is, how do you take away your thinking? How do you keep your mind? How do you keep your mind empty? If you keep empty mind, that is the Absolute, or primary point. When you keep primary point for a long time, you can take away your primary cause. All your happiness and suffering come from primary cause. Then as you take away primary cause, your condition changes and you get a different result. You will change your suffering so that compassion and happiness can appear. This is the teaching of dependent origination.

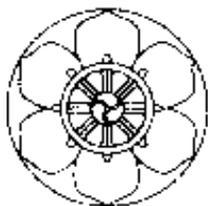
Thinking makes your primary cause. So taking away your opposites-mind takes away opposites energy, and primary cause disappears, like water when left out for a long time in the sun. It evaporates by itself. When you practice hard, it is very easy to do this! But your thinking makes karma, and karma blocks the sun, so this primary cause water cannot evaporate as quickly. Only do this practice, and keep a Great Question, and soon everything will become clear to you. It is very easy! But the most important thing is, you must try. When you are doing something, only do it. Only *do* it. This is the bone of the Lotus Sutra.

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## **GLZC Board of Directors Elections Held**

The annual election for the Board of Directors was held January 21, 2002. Andy Yencha was re-elected as secretary, and Susi Childress was re-elected as member-at-large. The election for the position of treasurer was postponed to a later date.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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The Great Lake Zen Center is affiliated with the Kwan Um School of Zen.

Founder: Zen Master Seung Sahn  
Guiding Teacher: Zen Master Dae Kwang  
Co-Director: Laura Otto-Salaj, DT  
Co-Director: Peter Neuwald, DT  
Treasurer: Jeff Ligman, DT  
Secretary/Publicity: Andy Yench, DTT  
Editor/ Member At-Large: Susi Childress, DT

### **Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center**

Monday and Wednesday at 7:30pm;  
Saturday at 8:00am

Other special events as described elsewhere in the newsletter. Unless otherwise noted, all events are held at the Great Lake Zen Center.

*Beginners Always Welcome!*

Unless noted otherwise, *Introductions to Zen* are offered on the first Monday of each month. Dharma Talks are offered on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.

