
MOON ON THE WATER

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Ko Bong's Try Mind

By Zen Master Seung Sahn

Zen Master Ko Bong (1890-1962) was one of the greatest teachers of his time. He was renowned for refusing to teach monks, considering them too lazy and arrogant to be Zen students. He was also very well known for his unconventional behavior.

Ko Bong Sunim didn't like chanting. He only did sitting meditation, no matter what. That was his practice. One time, as a young monk, he was staying in a small mountain temple. The abbot was away for a few days, so Ko Bong Sunim was the only one around. One morning an old woman climbed the steep road to the temple carrying fruit and a bag of rice on her back. When she reached the main Buddha Hall, she found Ko Bong Sunim seated alone in meditation.

"Oh, Sunim, I am sorry to bother you," she said. "I have just climbed this mountain to offer these things to the Buddha. My family is having a lot of problems, and I want someone to chant to the Buddha for them. Can you please help me?"

Ko Bong Sunim looked up. Her face was very sad and very

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Is the Dharma Free?

Pete Neuwald, Abbot

So what gives? Two rummage sale weekends, a book sale, and now a fund-raising letter. Alright already – enough of this money stuff! The dharma is free after all, right? This is something that many of us have heard often, including me. I have to admit that this is something that I also have said. We sometimes look at money as something that is dirty or evil. Really though, money is not good or bad. Zen cliché? Maybe. The fact is we live in the world of form. That's a nice way of saying that we need to pay the rent, utilities, and other expenses.

Sometimes, usually after coming for a while, people will ask me how our Sangha is supported. Sometimes, when people first come, they ask if there is a fee for practice. Very good questions – why are we shy about talking about money? Actually, why are we shy about talking about what it costs to run a Zen center? That's what we are really talking about. There is an idea that talking about money or funding or how we pay the expenses is somehow tainted, or "too worldly." But that is just an idea.

When the winds changed in China and Zen fell out of favor, the Zen monasteries changed to become self-sufficient. That is essentially the situation we are in. Our Center depends on the support of our Sangha members and friends. Our expenses include rent, utilities, retreat costs and the day-to-day expenses needed to provide our practice schedule and events. We don't depend on the State (no kidding!) or a Zen Sugar Daddy – we depend on all of you. If you find that what we provide is of worth to you, I ask that you please consider providing a donation, or better yet, pledging a monthly amount.

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sincere. "Of course," he said. "I'd be happy to chant for you. No problem." Then he took the bag of rice off her back and they went to the kitchen to prepare the food offering. As they started to wash the fruit he said to her, "I don't know how to cook rice. You cook the rice, and I'll go start chanting."

"Yes, Sunim. Thank you very much."

Ko Bong Sunim returned to his room to put on his formal robes. But, because he never chanted, he didn't know any Buddhist chants. So, he dug out an old Taoist sutra from among his things and brought it back to the Buddha Hall. Then he picked up the moktak and started hitting it while reading out of the Taoist book. Usually it's appropriate to do certain chants for different occasions, like the *Thousand Eyes and Hands Sutra*, but Ko Bong Sunim didn't know about this. He only banged the moktak and chanted the Taoist sutra out loud, right from the book. After an hour or so of this, he finished.

The old woman was very, very happy. "Oh, thank you, Sunim. You are very kind. I feel much better now!" She left the temple. As she was walking down the mountain road, she passed the abbot, who was returning to the temple. "Hello, Mrs. Lee, are you coming from the temple?"

"Yes," she said. "There are many problems in my family right now, so I went up to pray to the Buddha. Ko Bong Sunim helped me."

"Oh, that's too bad," the abbot said.

"Oh, why?"

"Because Ko Bong Sunim doesn't know how to do any chanting. Maybe someone else could..."

"No, no," she said. "He did *very* well. He helped me very much!"

The abbot looked at her. "How do you know how well he did? These are very special chants! Ko Bong Sunim doesn't know how to do them — he doesn't know chanting."

"Yes, I understand." This woman used to be a nun, so she was quite familiar with all the various chants. She knew that Ko Bong Sunim was only chanting a Taoist sutra. "What is correct chanting? He did it very well. He only chanted one hundred percent. Words are not important. The only important thing is how you keep your mind. He had only try mind — only do it."

"Oh, yes, of course," the abbot said. "I suppose mind is very

important." They said good-bye and went their separate ways. When the abbot reached the temple, he found Ko Bong Sunim, seated in meditation. "Did you just chant for Mrs. Lee?"

"Yes."

"But you don't know anything about chanting."

"That's right," Ko Bong Sunim said. "I don't know anything about chanting. So I just chanted."

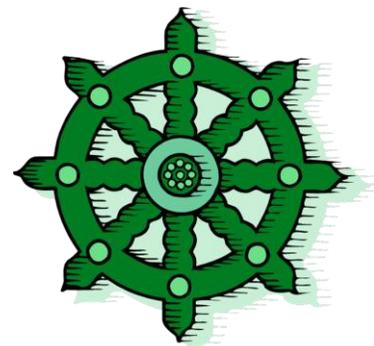
"Then what kind of chants did you do?" the abbot asked.

"I used an old Taoist book."

The abbot walked away, scratching his head.

This is a very interesting try-mind story. It means, from moment to moment only "do it." Only keep a try mind, only one mind: do it mind. When chanting, sitting or bowing, only do it. Practicing will not help if you are attached to your thinking, if your mind is moving. Taoist chanting, Confucian chanting, Christian chanting, Buddhist chanting: it doesn't matter. Even chanting, "Coca Cola, Coca Cola, Coca Cola. . ." can be just as good if you keep a clear mind. But, if you don't keep a clear mind, even Buddha cannot help you. The most important thing is, only *do* it. When you only do something one hundred percent, then there is no subject, no object. There's no inside or outside. Inside and outside are already one. That means you and the whole universe are one and never separate.

The Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God." When you are still, then you don't make anything, and you are always connected to God. Being still means keeping a still mind, even if your body is moving or you are doing some activity. Then there's no subject, no object, a mind of complete stillness. That's the Buddha's complete stillness mind. When sitting, be still. When chanting, be still. When bowing, eating, talking, walking, reading or driving, only be still. This is keeping a not moving mind, which is only do it mind. We call that try mind.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 2011

- Introduction to Zen
Monday, June 6, 7:30 - 9:00 PM
- GLZC GREAT BIG BOOK SALE
Sunday, June 12, 12:00 -3:00 PM
- Dharma Talk
Wednesday, June 22, 7:30 - 9:00 PM

July 2011

- No Introduction to Zen
Monday, July 4
Enjoy the Holiday
- YMJJ Retreat
Friday, July 22, 12:00 PM –
Sunday, July 24, 12:00 PM
- Dharma Talk
Wednesday, July 27, 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Great Lake Zen Center's Great Big Book Sale

Sunday June 12
Noon -3:00

Books, Vinyls, DVDs, Art
Low prices
@ GLZC
828 Locust St

Spread the word about our first-ever Great Big
Book Sale/Open House
During Locust Street Festival
Support our Sangha

The Power of the Sangha

Ken Alexander

The Power of the Sangha is Vast and Inexpressible.
It is not limited by time or space
Or temporary impediments.

It moves freely through walls,
Through streams,
Through meadows,
Through personal catastrophes,
Through what we like and what we dislike.

Boundaries is a word that does not appear
In this dictionary.
Neither does *Separation*.

Those are words of ones who are interested in
Trivial Pursuits.
They should not waste their time here
Because time is precious and cannot,
Nor should not, be spent in frivolous entertainment
That merely exacerbates the problem of
OUR inability to express our joy and appreciation
For One-As-Another.
And, of course, vice versa and appreciating
Both the Vice and the Virtue simultaneously
Without needing to reconcile either one.

So as the Sangha—the inexplicable
Interpenetration of appearances
Of both self and other==
Continues to continually manifest
We may allow ourselves permission to
Participate wholeheartedly and
Without Regret!
In the process of illuminating each moment of our lives
With our own Shining Brilliance!

As we take a shit, brush our teeth;
Mow the lawn;
Cuddle and kanoodle a loved one;
Piss and moan about all of those endless, ceaseless
Irritation that serve as our own personal wake-up.

Thus have I heard.



Note: The following article was written in my cousin's on-line journal in 2007. It is reprinted here with his permission. At the time this was written, Andy was a young man, in his mid-twenties, who was teaching English at Union Christian College in Kerala, India. Andy is now in seminary, studying to become a Presbyterian minister.
Susi Childress, BT

A Lesson in Karma

Andy Smith

Every night for the last few weeks, my room has been plagued by little black beetle sort of things. I wish I could say definitely what they are, but that's the best I can do. No one seems to know what they're called, even though I see them everywhere. They don't bite, they don't sting, they don't make noise. They're completely harmless, as far as I can tell. But after 7pm, they're EVERYWHERE. On my walls, on my floor, in my bathroom, on my desk, amongst my books, on the little Buddha statue I got in Sri Lanka, on my bed and pillow, on (and in) my guitar. And when I sit totally still to meditate and when I lie down to go to sleep, they're all over me.

I try to refrain from destroying any kind of life as much as possible. But when it's after midnight and I'm exhausted, hot and sweaty, and have been lying in bed awake since 10 and one of these little bugs lands on my face, I just get so... MAD. Every bug that lands on me while I'm trying to sleep gets crushed between my thumb and forefinger and flicked to the floor.

Now my floor is covered with little black chitinous corpses. Not only do I feel guilty for destroying living beings when I see the little beetle charnel ground, but the pile of corpses has now attracted a colony of carnivorous red ants. As a result, there are tiny little flesh devouring red ants EVERYWHERE in my room. And they see the human form for what it really is-- a big heap of decaying meat.

So now, not only is my room still being invaded by beetles every night, I'm also covered with painful red ant bites; most of which have been delivered in the most inconvenient (and painful!) places imaginable at the most inconvenient times (usually while I'm in the middle of an afternoon nap).
Awesome.

Why do we chant?

Frank Pauc

We often chant for other people, and sometimes they chant for us. There are a number of chanting request papers sitting on the altar in the Zen Center, and at times members of the sangha have sent emails asking for people to chant for them. So, why do we do this? What good does

it do for us to chant?

The chanting requests that we have in the Zen Center bear a strong resemblance to the prayer requests that I see at the church I attend. I think that the motivations and intentions for chants and prayers are very similar. I think that we at the Zen Center ask people to chant rather than pray because praying implies that there is somebody or something there to hear the prayers and answer them. Some of us believe that there is a God who listens, but certainly others do not think that this is the case. By asking people to chant, we avoid theological issues, but we still get the same results.

What are the results? Chants, like prayers, may not have the effect that we expect or desire. Prayers are not a way to manipulate a fickle deity, and chants are not some kind of New Age magic. I believe wholeheartedly that chants and prayers make a difference, but it is often a subtle one.

From what I have seen, Zen puts a huge emphasis on "together action". Together action reinforces the idea that we are all related in the sangha, and that we are interconnected with everything in the universe. I think that any spiritual tradition worth its salt has this kind of idea and activity. In Catholicism we have the concept of the Communion of Saints and we have the sharing of the Eucharist. Whenever I hang out the Sikh temple, I am always invited to share food with the people there. Friday prayers at the Islamic Center are very dramatic examples of together action. If anything, Zen has a stronger sense of this togetherness than other traditions, and this shows in the chanting.

Chanting for another person does not necessarily alleviate the problem that the other person has. As I mentioned before, chanting is not a type of magic. Will chants cure somebody's cancer? Will chants keep my son safe when he goes to Iraq? Will chants heal a broken relationship? Maybe not. However, when we chant for another person, especially if we make them aware of the fact, then we can ease the fear and loneliness of that individual. Together action is the same as saying: "We love you. We care about you. You are not alone." That is part of the power of chanting. When a person is in crisis, he or she often feels isolated or abandoned. When we chant, we show that person that they are not alone, that in truth they have never been alone.

Another result of chanting is the effect on the person chanting. If I am able to focus on the suffering of another person when I chant, then that is time and energy used to become more compassionate. Every minute that I chant for somebody else is a minute that I do not spend feeling sorry for myself. Even if chants do not change the situation of the receiver in a physical sense, the chants change the sender who is trying to radiate good energy and love. Just the intention and the effort involved make the person chanting more understanding and caring. This, by itself, is worthwhile.

Chanting has a value and a purpose

Kwan seum bosal.

Letter to Our Readers

Dear Friends,

Happy summer from the Great Lake Zen Center!

We hope you are well and planning a visit to the Zen Center soon for some together practice. But no matter how often your schedule allows you to drop by in person, your continued connection with us via *Moon on the Water* supports our Sangha . . . and this helps all Sentient Beings. Thank you very much for sharing your Dharma Energy!

It was a busy fall and winter for the Dharma Teachers at GLZC and we missed making a fundraising appeal in 2010. So it's no surprise that the Zen Center's cash reserves are running low. Our recent rummage sale raised \$500 but this amount still leaves us short for the rest of the year. The comforting news is we have survived these cash-crunch situations before thanks to the generosity of people like you.

Please support the Great Lake Zen Center by making a mid-year financial contribution.

Your donation will go directly toward paying the rent and utilities for the rest of 2011. And your financial gift is tax deductible because GLZC is considered a 501c3 by our association with the Kwan Um School of Zen.

You can make your donation in person the next time you stop by for some practice, or you can drop it off (and pick up some good reading material) by attending our first ever GREAT LAKE ZEN CENTER – GREAT BIG BOOK SALE on June 12 from Noon to 3:00pm. But if you can't get to the Zen Center anytime soon, please mail your contribution to:

**Great Lake Zen Center
828 East Locust Street
Milwaukee WI 53212**

As always, thanks for helping GLZC.

Yours in the Dharma,

The Board of Great Lake Zen Center

Three-Day Yong Maeng Jong Jin Retreat July 22-24

Looking for a quiet, centering summer break? Come and sit with us for one, two or three days. Enjoy the benefits of a longer practice session by taking advantage of this special opportunity for sustained periods of mindfulness. The retreat will include sitting, walking, chanting, bowing meditation, along with kong-an interviews, a dharma talk, formal meals and short work periods.

Our summer **YMJJ Retreat** will be held at GLZC, 828 Locust St., and will run from **noon Friday, July 22 through noon Sunday, July 24**. There will be a short **Precepts Ceremony** following the retreat from **2:00 – 3:00 pm**, during which one of our sangha members will take five precepts and four will be installed as Dharma Teachers. **Zen Master Dae Kwang**, the guiding teacher of our center, will be leading the retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat cost varies for DT/DIT, members of Kwan Um School, and non-members. See the registration form on our website for complete details. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleeping space should notify us by email and bring a sleeping bag, pillow, washcloth, and towel. For more information, email us at info@glzc.org

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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.



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