

Is It Universal Sound.... Or a Whole Lot of Slot Machines?

*Laura Otto-Salaj, DT
Co-director, GLZC*

I attended a concert last night and was really excited about going. The performance was held in a theater located in a local casino.

Now, until last night, I'd never been in a casino. Even after living in close proximity to Atlantic City for years, I never went. So, going to this concert, Scott and I wandered around in the main gaming room for a bit.

Coming through the door, the noise hits me. As I walk onto the casino floor, the sounds of all the slot machines and talking meld into one mechanized, universal sound. Hundreds of shiny silver slot machines lined up neatly in rows. Many have people sitting in front of them in surface meditation: upon closer look, their eyes are dead, no smiles present, slack-jawed staring. Lights flash. Eyes glaze.

Hands repetitiously hitting buttons, not seeing the coins entering the machine, focused only on the display. Bar, orange, cherry. Plink. Hit. Cherry, cherry, bell. Hit. Occasionally, the lights show the person has won: many just hit the buttons to put that money back into the machine and play again. The machine has said YOU WIN!, but the people have no change in direction. All along, the high ringing of the ever-present sound of suffering, in the form of ringing and buzzing.

Impossible to separate out the sounds of each individual machine or person – one giant, whirring, trancelike being. Cigarette smoke makes the air a haze, obscuring faces. Few conversations go on between players – intimate relationship between person and machine is the norm here.

No indication of what time it is – it's 7:30 pm, but it could be dawn, lunchtime, the middle of the night... the atmosphere is timeless, vague -- perpetual dusk. I see coins in large buckets on laps, on stools, as people mechanically reach in for more to deposit in the mouths of hungry machines. The movements of the woman in front of me blur in concert with the display of the slot machine. All around are attempts to reach Nirvana through the exchange of money for more money.

Ah, a flash of awareness: I've done this – just not through gambling. My surface meditation is shopping, conspicuous consumption of other things besides the air in the gambling hall. Other karma with food, sex, fame, sleep – we all have our desires. We are not different, these people and I. Tears well in my eyes.

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Stealing the Dharma

Zen Master Seung Sahn

From "Zen Master Goes to Europe" (unpublished) by
*Zen Master Seung Sahn and Mu Sang Sunim
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"Ed is an interesting man. He is now teaching Zen in a university. This man understands everything--thinking, he understands everything. He understands all kong-an answers. But this understanding is his problem. Every day we practice at Tahl Mah Sah. When there's a Dharma talk he asks, 'Dae Soen Sa Nim, what is Dharma?' I answer, 'I hit you.' Bong! He cannot answer. He is always asking, 'What is Buddha?' 'What is mind?' always testing the Zen Master, 'How is my understanding different from the Zen Master's understanding?' He's always checking--checking himself, checking other people, checking outside, checking inside, checking reading, checking, checking, checking. He understands everything, all eminent teachers' styles, all Zen words, so he became a monk twice. First, he became a Japanese-style monk, next, a Vietnamese-style monk. Then he came to me and said, 'I want to be your disciple.' I said that wasn't necessary. Then I thought, 'This man already understands everything, but he needs to learn together action,' so I told him if he learned our chanting and bowing and formal practice style he could become a Dharma Teacher. He wanted this, so I made him a Dharma Teacher.

"Afterwards, Linda would send him letters. 'You are a Dharma Teacher so you must pay \$10 a month dues to the Providence Zen Center.' Ed would reply, 'I don't have to pay Dharma Teacher dues to Providence. Dae Soen Sa Nim made me a Dharma Teacher, not the Providence Zen Center.' He understands too much. How are Dae Soen Sa Nim and the Providence Zen Center different? So he wouldn't pay. We told him this was important, 'If you come to Tahl Mah Sah you must pay money,' so he stopped coming.

"Before, whenever I was at Tahl Mah Sah he would come. If I wasn't there, he wouldn't come. He would only listen and steal the Dharma. A thief, a Dharma thief. He would steal a little here, steal a little there, always dealing in stolen goods, not his own things. You must have your own things--why steal other people's Dharma? But he likes many Dharmas: Japanese Dharma, Vietnamese Dharma, Chinese Dharma, Korean Dharma, even American Dharma. Then he sells them all. It's like a department store. 'Do you like this Dharma? I'll sell it to you.' This is a very bad style. But all students like him. He understands everything, but he has no direction. "So I told him, 'If you open your mouth I will hit you.'

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YMJJ Retreat and Precepts Ceremony Scheduled

**October 17-19 with Zen Master Dae Kwang
6:00 AM-9:30 PM**

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled with GLZC Guiding Teacher Zen Master Dae Kwang for October 17-19, 2003. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is \$60 for both days, or \$35 for one day. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space is available at no extra charge at GLZC. Those planning on staying at GLZC should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and washcloth/towel.

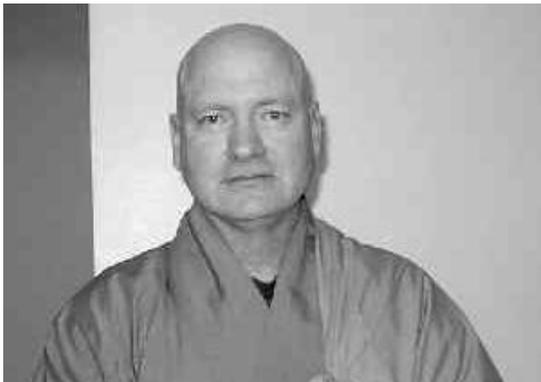
The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday. Please plan on joining us for some very strong practice. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by contacting Peter or Laura.**

On Sunday, following the YMJJ, there will be a precepts ceremony. There is no charge, and everyone is welcome. Please plan on attending. *Anyone interested in taking precepts should contact Peter or Laura as soon as possible.*

Public Talk and YMJJ Retreat with Zen Master Dae Kwang Isthmus Zen Community Madison, Wisconsin September 19-21, 2003

GLZC's guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang, will be giving a free public talk at the Madison Senior Center, 330 West Mifflin Street, in Madison on Friday, September 19, 2003. The talk will begin at 7:30 and end at 9:00 PM. The talk is sponsored by the Isthmus Zen Community.

Zen Master Dae Kwang will also be leading a YMJJ retreat for the Isthmus Zen Community September 20-21. If you are interested in attending the YMJJ, you may register by calling Dave at 608-257-7970.



Zen Master Dae Kwang

Soap Enlightenment Dae Kwang Zen Master

The first thing the Buddha said after his great enlightenment was that everything had Buddha nature. The problem is that we don't know that. Because we are ignorant of our original nature, we produce suffering. Not good, not bad, but...suffering.

Several months ago there was a story in the news about a very rich widower who had one son. Even though the son's education was the best that money could buy, he had some very strange opinions, which, try as he might, the father could not assuage. The son was very taken with the idea that humans should never cut their hair or bathe. Now, if you hold ideas like this for two or three days, they won't create much of a problem. But as the son grew older, and the years passed, there was a big problem, as well as a big smell! Finally, the father gave up and let the son do as he pleased.

Several years later when the father died, the son was shocked, for he had only been left two things: a small empty house and a very large bar of soap. The rest went to charity. The son didn't know what to do. Day after day he just sat in the house and looked at the bar of soap. Three... four... days passed, and he started to get hungry, something he had never experienced before. Circumstances had definitely changed for the worse; he would have to do something. Finally his soap meditation brought a realization: he would have to cut his hair, take a bath, and get a job. He grabbed the huge bar of soap and ran to the shower. He scrubbed and scrubbed... and then he scrubbed some more. Finally, just as the bar was beginning to wear down and he was starting to get clean, he noticed a bright, shiny object emerging from the center of the bar. Frantically he scrubbed, finally revealing a large diamond--his true inheritance.

Most human beings are just like this young man, except it's their minds that need cleaning to reveal the jewel hidden inside. One time Un Mun Zen Master addressed the assembled monks saying, "Between heaven and earth, throughout the universe, there is a jewel. It is hidden in the mountain of form. Pick up the lamp and head straight for the Buddha Hall; take the triple temple gate and bring it on the lamp." If you truly attain the jewel of this kong-an, you have already received your true inheritance.

GLZC T-shirts for Sale

We have a few T-shirts with the Great Lake Zen Center logo and name on them for sale. There are several short-sleeve shirts. They cost \$20 each and are available at the Zen center. Checks should be made out to Susi Childress. If you would like a shirt and aren't able to come to GLZC to pick it up, e-mail Susi at susichldr@aol.com to make arrangements.

Universal Sound *(continued from page 1)*

My mind flashes to the Dharma Room, and the silent meditation retreat we just held at the Zen Center. People sitting in silence, eyes open and seeing, the universal sound of silence punctuated by cars outside, an occasional cough, rustling of people getting up, sitting down, the slap of the chugpi. The Dharma Room brightens up with the sunrise, and shadows play on the walls in the evening. Sitting together, eyes focused, in silence, we become intimate with one another. We connect. I wish the people in the gaming room would know of this, rather than the isolation of the gaming hall. I'd like to know these people.

My fingers go automatically to my mantra beads. I'm grateful I brought them. You never know what will happen. Don't know.

Hearing the sound of suffering, what can I do?

My fingers flick over the soft wood of the beads. Kwan seum bosal, kwan seum bosal.... Staying for a while, watching, then eventually walking through the casino into the concert hall.

Dharma Crafts Order

Are you in need of a new cushion or mat upon which to seat yourself and attain enlightenment? The GLZC directors will be placing an order to Dharma Crafts for mats and cushions in the near future. If you would like to have us place an order for you, please contact Peter or Laura. Catalogs are available at GLZC or on line at www.dharmacrafts.com. We are also seeking donations from anyone who would like to purchase a mat or cushion for the Zen Center.

Sangha Picnic Scheduled

GLZC will hold a Sangha and family pot-luck picnic on Sunday, August 17, 2003, beginning at noon. Laura Otto-Salaj has generously offered to have the picnic at her house in West Bend. Details, sign-up sheets, and maps to Laura's house will be available at GLZC. Hope to see everyone there!

YMJJ Held at GLZC

On the weekend of July 11, 2003, a YMJJ retreat was held at the Great Lake Zen Center. The retreat began with a public talk on Friday evening by Zen Master Dae Kwang and ended with the traditional circle talk on Sunday afternoon. We would like to thank Zen Master Dae Kwang for his clear teaching. We'd also like to thank those who attended the retreat for their strong practice and continuous effort despite some physical suffering. Such wonderful Bodhisattvas!

Stealing the Dharma *(continued from page 1)*

For one week he kept silence. Then he started talking and talking again. He's very clever, you know.

"Once I went to Detroit with Linc to give a Dharma talk. There's a professor there, Michael, who has a Ph.D. from Harvard who invited us. At that time he said he wanted to make a Zen Center and wanted one good Dharma Teacher to help him. I told him I didn't know if we had anyone who could go, but I would ask. When I returned to Los Angeles I happened to mention that there was a professor in Detroit, my student, who wanted a Dharma Teacher to make a Zen Center there. That was all I said. But Ed sent him a letter saying, 'I am Dae Soen Sa Nim's Dharma Teacher. You want a Dharma Teacher to make a Zen Center, so I want to go. Can you help me?' He sent a lot of letters. Michael didn't understand since I had not sent him a letter, only Ed. So Michael wrote me, 'Ed wants to come to Detroit. Is he a Dharma Teacher? Have you talked to him about this? What is your opinion?' I wrote back, saying I had never talked to him about it, and he had never mentioned it to me, and that Ed was not clear about his situation. So Michael cut him.

"Afterwards I talked to Ed, 'You don't understand. What is Zen? What is your correct situation? If you want to go to Detroit, first you must talk to me. Then I will talk to Michael, and if Michael says it's O.K., you can write him. This is the correct way. Your writing straight to Michael, 'I want to go to Detroit,' is not correct. Nobody likes this style. You are always teaching other people in this style, so you don't understand Zen. How do you teach other people? First, you must correctly understand your true self. So what is your true self?'

"He replied, 'Nothing.'

"I said, 'What is nothing?'

"He said, 'Nothing is nothing.' So I told him, 'Your practice is the same as, when you are hungry, looking at pictures of bananas, pictures of rice cakes, pictures of cookies. If someone wants food, you give him a picture of some food. If you see picture food, is this enough? Do you get enough stomach? Your style is only like this. Your understanding is like picture food. Picture food cannot help your stomach. Your understanding Dharma cannot help other people. So you must cut all your understanding. One thousand pictures, ten thousand pictures cannot help your stomach. One banana, one real banana is better than ten thousand pictures of bananas.'

"So he said, 'Thank you very much. I understand my mistake. But I can't change.'

"I answered, 'Just this point. You say, 'Can't.' I say to you, 'You can!' You must try, try, try. You are attached to your understanding. You always think, 'I understand everything.' Thinking, thinking, thinking. Checking, checking, checking. A new book appears, you go right out and buy it, stay up all night reading it. It all goes into your head and you start using it. This is like a tape recorder. It cannot help your karma. So you must cut all books.'

"Dae Soen Sa Nim,' he said, 'I cannot cut books. I am a teacher.'

"I said, 'Only sit, only cut, only teach other people cut-books teaching. You only teach read-book teaching, so all your students have a problem, they think like this. They only want picture food, picture rice cakes. Yah, the color is good, the form is good, everything is good, but they cannot help your stomach. Cut off all thinking, only go straight, O.K.'

"So he has a problem. Don't attach to picture food, O.K.? Then you will have no problem. Only real food is necessary."