



Preface

A Message of Congratulations

The defining characteristic of Korean Buddhism is its long tradition of Ganhwa Seon,¹ or “word-contemplation meditation,” a tradition that is rarely found in any other country in the world.

At present, every year about 2,000 monks practice this style of rigorous meditation, especially during the three-month long Summer and Winter retreats, at some one hundred Seon Halls around Korea. In the past, however, there were many difficult times in the tradition of Ganhwa Seon in our history, and it was the great Seon Master Gyeongheo (1846-1912) who overcame these crises and restored the foundation of Korean

¹ Seon is the Korean pronunciation of the character (禪), which in China is pronounced Chan, and in Japan, Zen. While these schools share a similar root, they have developed differently within each culture, and thus, we use the term Seon to represent the unique practice of the tradition in Korea.

in the tradition of the mind-to-mind meditation practice of the Linji Order. The Master established a number of meditation centers at monasteries and temples, such as Cheonjang Monastery and Sudeok Temple in South Chungcheong Province, Beomeo Monastery in Busan, Haein Monastery in South Gyeongsang Province, and Songgwang and Hwaeom Monasteries in Cheolla Province. He also promoted the tradition of Seon by cultivating countless disciples, among them, the Master's chief Dharma disciples, Mangong Wolmyeon, Hyewol, Suwol, and Hanam.

But, in fact, the Master was the teacher of countless Seon masters who contributed to the revival of Korean Buddhism in its modern history and who established the foundation of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the major Buddhist Order in Korea.

This collection of writings of the great Master was published based on the materials collected by Ven. Master Mangong in 1942, thirty years after Master's death. It includes dharma speeches, prefaces, the records of letters, epistles, brief life records of Masters, eulogiums, Seon poems, songs, and brief biographies of the great Master by his disciples, Hanam and Manhae Han Yong-un.

It is truly regrettable that we've had to wait so long to have the

Master's collected writings translated into English. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the translator and editors, and I also sincerely wish that the great writings of the Master be read far and wide, encouraging a true understanding of Korean Buddhism, which is, as I noted above, indeed a very unique form within the larger religious tradition of Buddhism.

March 2551 (2007)
Ven. Jikwan
The Chief Executive of Administration
The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism



Forward

When I was working at Bulgyo-sa Buddhist Publications Ltd. seven years ago, my respectful Dharma friend Mangong showed me a bunch of papers and said, "This is the collection of writings written by Preceptor Gyeongheo that has been kept by numerous individuals. I fear that there might be some erroneous and missing words. I want them corrected and I also want you to write a foreword and have this collection published."

I could not refuse his proposal. I read it several times and immediately realized that this manuscript was not a mere collection of prose and poetry but a primary collection of very profound Dharma talks. These talks sometimes took place in a tavern or at a market place, yet they are never vulgar. Gyeongheo wrote some of these essays while in the remote mountains during a frigid winter storm, yet none of them are isolated from our mundane world.

His writings are powerful and without any hindrance, yet not forced. Every sentence and phrase is full of Seon, steeped in the Dharma, and resonant of truth. As varied as his topics may be, all his writings and poetry are truly singular and unique. The purpose of the younger generation publishing them is to transmit not the words, but the teachings of truth.

I really wanted his writings to be known to the world without delay, but fellow practitioners and elders were afraid that more of his writings would emerge, especially those from the late years of his seclusion. Thus, the general opinion was to first locate all of these in order to make the collection more complete for publication.

This compilation effort was achieved through the help of the young scholars Kim Yeong-un, Yun Deung-am, and others, who collected the writings through inquiries among the residents of Gapsan and Ganggye, in the northern part of the peninsula, and Manchuria where the Preceptor had spent the last years of his seclusion. Finally, it seemed that we had a complete collection of his works, but as we could not further investigate the exact dates of the writings, we decided to edit the compilation as it was.

I understand that Master Gyeongheo did not major in the letters, but even if there are some flaws in his style and refinement within his long passages, they are but tiny blemishes when seen in contrast to the entirety of his work. They are but a wisp of cloud in a clear blue sky.

The mystical cadence within the essence of Seon resounds distinctly in his calligraphic writings and this should be a good example to the younger generation. I really wanted to meet him when he was alive so that I could have a drink with him, and then strike down all the Buddhas of the three ages, the past, present, and future, with great admonition. Yet fortune did not allow me to perform such a feat and he suddenly left us.

It has been decades since he entered Nirvana. His writings remind me of the grief of the transient world.

September 2, 1942
Han Yong-un²

² Bhikku Manhae, the pen name of Han Yong-un, a poet as well as a monk, was one of the chief signatories of Korea's Declaration of Independence, on March 1, 1919. His best-known writings are his poem "The Silence of Love" and "The Reformation of Korean Buddhism."



Objective of the Publication of *The Collected Writings of Gyeongheo*

It is widely acknowledged that Seon Master Gyeongheo was responsible for the revival and enhancement of the Seon Buddhist tradition in modern Korea. In addition, there is no one who denies his deep understanding of the doctrine of Seon Buddhism or his great writing. His piquant style sometimes becomes a Dharma talk, sometimes poetry, and sometimes a treatise, and they are all great in number.

Yet, few people cared to record or collect them, and only a few of them are known. It is feared that they will all be lost as time passes by. Of course, there is in fact already an overabundance of Dharma talks and masterful dialogues on truth, and we might not really need yet another cart load of Master Gyeongheo's writings. Yet I think there is no Korean

Sunim³ who is not indebted to the great Seon Master. Therefore, instead of erecting a monument marking his remains or a stele detailing his virtuous deeds, we agreed to collect the writings of the Master and publish them posthumously to distribute among his fellow monks. We undertake this effort entirely through our own hands, eschewing the common practice of relying on the financial aid of devotees

We sincerely wish everyone examines our proposition and endorses the project. We also implore all practitioners who are now in the summer retreat to join our project and contribute according to their means, regardless of the amount of the contribution.

P.S.: The set amount for contributions is as follows: Five won or more for each Seon Hall, five *jeon* or more for each individual. All contributions should be sent to the Central Seon Monastery, 40 Anguk-dong, Seoul, by the end of July of this year.

Enclosed is the form of the list of contributors. Please write down the names and other information of the contributors in detail.

³ Sunim (스님) is the standard title for ordained Buddhist monks and nuns.

June 1942

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The Collected Writings of Gyeongheo

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Contents

Preface	5
Forward.....	8
Objective of the Publication of <i>The Collected Writings of Gyeongheo</i>	11
I. The Odes	17
O-eon Jeol-gu.....	19
O-eon Yul.....	30
Chil-eon Jeol-gu.....	40
Chil-eon Yul.....	58
Saryuk-eon	149
II. Songs	155
The Song of Enlightenment.....	157
The Ode of Searching for the Cow (I).....	164
The Ode of Searching for the Cow (II).....	173
The Song of Meditation	177
A Dirge	183
The Song of Dharma Speech	190

III. Returning to Oneself.....	201
IV. A Brief Biography of Master Gyeongheo.....	217
V. The Memoir of Master Gyeongheo	243
Afterword	250
English Translator's Afterword	252

I. The Odes



O-eon Jeol-gu⁴

Rambling in the Eunseon Ravine

No sounds of the mountain or people,
A flock of birds flies in the company of a cloud.
Water flows and flowers are bloom,
One forgets the time to return.

Baekryeon Hermitage at Tongdo Monastery

The mood is so hearty there is no way to pacify
But to ramble in the heavenly realm.

⁴ O-eon Jeol-gu (五言絶句) is a metrical form of poetry written with Chinese characters, consisting of four lines of five characters in each line. "O" and "eon" literally mean five and word, and "Jeol" and "gu" means complete and phrase. A line composed of seven words is called Chil-eon (seven word) Jeol-gu.

Do I hear the singing of the cuckoo?
That must be the soul of the imperishable mountain.

Notes on a Passing Thought

1

The slanting sunset in the empty hall of the temple:
A monk dozes with his knees in his arm.
Awakened by the wailing blast of autumn,
One finds frostbitten maple leaves falling in the yard.

2

How could noise and stillness be the same?
I would rather go to bed with the pillow
Of the moon beam than fuss around
In the long winter night on the desolate mountain.

3

Not doing is also a kind of doing,
So I locked the door and took a nap.
The flying bird must have known my loneliness
Dropping in with its shadow in my window.

4

If it is quiet and cozy, any mountain suits me
As my bed, with the cloud my pillow.
And if I come to like it,
I would live like a jolly man at a crossroads.

5

If it is hard to divine,
Then why not just go to bed?
There is nothing more to add
To the words of the ancient sages.

6

He is dozing with a drooping head.
He has nothing to do other than dozing,
Nothing to do other than dozing.
So he dozes with a drooping head all the time.

7

The colors of mountain and water:
They are our "original face."
If you want to know more about them,
See if eight dollars equals a half pound.

8

What is it that you are so engrossed in
Sitting under the pine tree on the white rock?
As I lean against my walking stick,
I see the indifferent birds flying in the direction I am heading.

9

All I do is eat rice and sleep,
Or sing about the dreamy life of a phantom.
Why is the hermitage in the mountain so desolate?
I see piling maple leaves in the yard.

10

So lonesome is the whiff of autumn.
Why am I wide awake in the deep of night?
What is it that makes the insects cry so mournfully
And wet my pillow?

11

The old path never changes
Yet your silence is already mistaken.
Then all of a sudden,
An argument arose in the household of Bodhidharma.

12

Writing found its end through one thread
Where the blank paper is.
When he failed, he had to meet the dawn of the day
In the window of the meditation hall.

13

All men of talent!
If you see the green mountains of truth
Where this gatha is pointing without a speck of doubt,
You would find the Kindler of Lights, the Buddha, everywhere.

14

I got lost in my rambling
And took a rest on the stony mountain
And saw leaves flowing down the creek
And the full moon on the lonely peak.

15

Alas! You, the hermit of Fragrant Mountain,
Have missed the lion's roar of the Buddha.
If only you would have awakened to find your true self-nature,
There would have been no problem in becoming a Buddha.

16

On a balmy spring day in the time of peace,
So lively are the myriad flowers.
There was rainfall on Mt. Gyeryong last night,
And there is not a particle of dust to be found in the world.

17

Wiping my sweat as I leaned upon my walking stick,
I set out to find the finest mountain
And forget the world for ten years,
Until at last, I met a hermit today.

18

The day was getting dark and I saw the snow blossoms
On snow capped Mt. Yeonam,
A young student informed me that
The drum had been already been struck for the evening meal.

19

After having learned of the import of birth and death,
I let all worldly things fly off in the wind.
Resting beside a cloud today,
I saw dancing cranes returning home to the mountain's four peaks.⁵

20

How fast this fleeting life is.
It flits away like haze in the heat.
Yet what is it that still lingers in my heart,
As I watch a phoenix return from beyond the heavenly realm?

⁵ This may refer to the Four Noble Truths: truth of suffering, truth of its cause, truth of its cessation, and the truth of the path of the cessation.

21

The white cloud!

Why do you fly away to the mountains day after day?

If you do not like the dirty world,

Come with me.

22

Who doesn't know that there is nothing that lacks its mate?

When autumn comes, the wild geese fly to the south.

And when spring comes,

Without fail, they fly to the North.

23

They fight over right and wrong

And go crazy about fame and fortune.

There is no exception

Whether they are heroes or celebrities.

24

The temper of the people became so violent
That its venom reached the end of heaven.
The crane flies beyond the heavenly realm in the company of the clouds.
Now, with whom should I go?

25

I see the flower of the pine tree,
Why should one try to find it in the root and branch?
A man takes a nap in spring in a thatched cottage,
And all the birds are singing outside.

26

The fallen leaves roll over on the ground in the wind
And then fly away again.
There is no way to comfort the desolate mind of a wayfarer
Who forgot to return.

27

The flower in the empty sky bore fruit,
But where is the empty sky?
It must be the message of spring,
And I smell the flower's fragrance in my room.

28

Hal! The sound stopped in the flow of water.
And when I pointed to the mountain,
 it disappeared without even leaving a shadow.
When I found the way out by means of the sound and the shadow,
I saw the sun flying in the night sky.

29

I hear the hurrying sound of the creak in my eye,
And see the flash of lightning in my ear.
The stone-man checks himself about
The myriad things of the past.



O-eon Yul⁶

The Boje Pavilion of Beomeo Monastery

A man of great insight
Abides on Mt. Geumjeong.
He hides the end of heaven in his sleeves
And strikes the head of the earth with his short stick.
The lonely cloud arises from a mountain far away
And the swan alights by the water.
Is there anyone who is not in a dream?
I must be the only one who is awake, free from cares.

⁶ *O-eon-yul* (五言律) "Yul," which literally means rhythm, is a metrical form of poetry written with Chinese characters, consisting of eight lines or phrases, and the third and fourth lines match as a unit, as do the fifth and sixth lines. The line or phrase consisting of five words is called O-eon Yul, and the line consisting of seven words and eight lines is called Chil-eon Yul.

Passing by Undal Mountain

I stride around the east and the west regions
With a bamboo stick on my shoulder.
The pale moonlight passes over my face
When the wind flutters my long sleeve.
The crops in the field ripen in the warm sunshine
When the frost dyes the maple leaves in beautiful tints.
The king of the beasts has withdrawn
But how can it be compared to other animals?

Seeing You Off

I could hardly contain the tears
When I was seeing you off.
We are all uninvited guests on earth for a little while
Without even knowing where we'll be buried.
I see a piece of cloud arising on the mountains far away,
And the setting sun by the water's long shore.
If you really think about it,
Life is but full of grief.

Asked the Young Student to Try His Hand at Writing and then Tried It Myself

The theme was water

And there is deep wisdom where water is appreciated.

Every shadow is likened to the face of heaven,

And every sound is the mind bound for the sea.

So changeable are worldly things

And time flows without any notice.

Thunder and storms are the same as ever

And they construct a cave of dragon fish in the water.

Notes on a Passing Thought

1

Birds fly in the sky far away but where does it end?

One can never reach

The ultimate reality through appearances.

All the forests would end even before you got half way

And there would be no place to rest, not realizing the mistaken quest,

One is irresolute, not knowing what to do.

2

A patient asked me, "Why is it that
My sickness is incurable?"
People say that there is a miraculous medicinal herb
On Mount Bangjang.
Yet human life is like a drop of dew on the tip of grass
And it is not easy to expect a peaceful life.
The patient murmurs,
"It is not easy to expect a peaceful life."

3

The universe is so vast.
Is it not ridiculous to live like this?
I have already wasted half my life.
How much remains?
We are always vexed by worries and anxieties.
How many hours of peace and ease remain?
As if in a state of drunkenness,
One is still undetermined, without purpose.

4

Life is untrustworthy.
Who is so and so, and so and so?
Among the ones I have associated with,
Very few are alive,
And there is no distinction of young and old
In the final journey to the other world.
It is the best to awaken
Without delay, without hesitation.

5

The herb in the boiling pot is
For the patient.
Young kids, not knowing what that is for,
Are eager to have them, though they are without ailment.
To think of it,
Who can claim that he is not ill?
Alas!
Our lives of one hundred years all end in the same grave.

6

Meeting a woodcutter in the mountain
And having a conversation is no pure coincidence.
These days, I spend the afternoon with scholars in the village
And return home at sundown.
The spirit of the willow has already departed
And the dream of the butterfly is not deep enough to last long.
There is no one around,
And I only hear a magpie's cry in the distant sky.

7

I have lived all my life without a fixed rule,
Just letting the causal conditions have it.
The sage sojourner Yeonam
Has spent a warm summer at Buseok temple.
I hear the singing of a fishermen afar,
And the full moon is up in the sky as if to please me.
I go up and sit high in the pavilion
And see small busy flies circling around.

8

I have spent ten years studying the truth of emptiness,
And that naturally let me forget about worldly conditions.
All kinds of beautiful flowers are in full bloom,
And the brilliant moon is coming up in the blue sky.
All the waters of the river flow into the sea,
And all phenomena are one, in complete harmony.
Such pleasures I now enjoy are the result of
The far reaching reflections of the mirror of the mind.

9

I hear the music of the insects,
And the moonlight of the autumn is beside my pillow.
The fallen leaves fill the front yard,
And the pleasant breeze blows by the river.
Thinking only brings endless feelings of desolation,
Which in turn brings more loneliness.
So ephemeral is our life,
And we come to its end with a puff of breath.

10

It is strange. Where am I now?
Summer left while I was sitting.
The bright moon is in the blue sky above the flat wooden couch
And the pleasant sea wind is in my sleeve.
At first, the temple was established by the hand of Buddha,
Then renovations were made by the tireless efforts of the monks.
It is all due to the efforts of sages
That we are able to stay together here today.

11

A student came to me and said,
"I want to climb the mountain today."
We can find medicinal herbs,
Or steal the magpie's nest.
Pleasant breezes in the pines are like a string orchestra
Of singing birds.
If such is the prospect of the woods,
It is surely worth appreciating.

12

Judging from the spring sunshine, it is March,
And I hear the singing songs of joyful birds.
The flower blossoms are like beautiful silks
And the green weeping willows are everywhere.
The prospects are truly enjoyable,
Yet my sad thoughts are not,
And who could possibly imagine that what I am reciting is
The doleful ode of southern folk.

13

The construction of Dharma Halls by a lay person -
Great is the faith of the devotee.
A strange bird flew into the empty yard of the temple
And then sang under the pleasant shadow of the valley.
The whole world is in a dream,
And only those who have set their minds
On sublime teachings can awaken.
I was so overcome by the thought
That I could not stop reciting a song.

14

A friend called upon me
And we sat together in the guest room.
The view of the fine scenery is just too beautiful,
Together with the singing of the bush warblers about the shady nook.
The causal conditions of the mundane world are hard to part,
Yet the guest hurries to leave.
Our grasped hands know not how to separate,
And I once again celebrate in song.



Chil-eon Jeol-gu

The Gugwang Pavilion at Haein Monastery

The Grand Pavilion of the Sutras faces the hermit peak in tranquility,
And all the past is but a dream.

Here is a man who swallows the universe and then emits it,
And a man who weighs thousands of mountains
at the top of the pavilion.

The Hongnyudong Gorge in Mt. Gaya

Who says they are water and mountains?
Mountains and water flow in the clouds and through rocks.
Infinitude is the essence of great illumination.
Just open your mind and then you would see
that mountains are mountains and water is water.

To Namjeon-dang Han-gyu

1

I sat by the window of the meditation hall for a long time
wordless,
And forgot all the causal conditions of the world.
Even though I have forgotten them all, some residue still remains,
And as I am old, I can foretell
whether it will be raining, cold, or warm.

2

I sat by the window of the meditation hall for a long time
wordless,
And homesickness has somewhat waned,
And then I just remembered that I have forgotten
your letters, your voice.
This is the verse of my inquiry.

A Sudden Thought about Something

A bed bug is ravishing my blood
And I cannot forbid ants and flies, either.

I am so busy shaking these four trespassers off
That I even forgot the pine tree standing cold in the yard.

Baegun Hermitage at Tongdo Monastery

Baegun Hermitage is in the white clouds,
Half hung in empty space, half in the crag.
How beautiful the mist among the arrowroots is,
Like riding a swing pushed
by the wind in the white cloud.

Exercise on the Rhyme of Master Hwanseong at Tongdo Monastery

I do not care where they keep the gold and relics.
So priceless is the excellence of the Dao
that even the mountains and sea seem insignificant.
Who can fathom this timeless, expansive heart?
The clear sounds of a little bell and a flute resound
to the end of the cosmos.

Climb to Wonhyo Temple after the Summer Retreat at Beomeo Monastery

Who said that the Patriarch⁷ has entered Nirvana?

He is sitting here right now.

The luminosity of the eyes on the Dharma staff is pitch-black,

Yet it illuminates the whole universe.

A Verse Composed on the Way from Beomeo Monastery to Haein Monastery

It is dangerous to be eminent with little knowledge

in these troubled times,

So where should I hide this body of mine?

Of course, there are fishing villages and taverns,

Yet I fear that in seeking to hide I'd be even more revealed.

Passing by Yunpil Hermitage in Mt. Bulmyeong

Wine is brilliant and so is a woman's charm,

⁷ The Patriarch here refers to the great Korean priest Wonhyo (617-686) of the Silla Dynasty, often regarded as the most eminent of all Korean monks.

And there is no way to chase them off.
The walking-staff and grass shoes turned into lions
and took a leisurely leap.
Who could capably overtake them?

Composed after the Summer Retreat at Yunpil Hermitage

I did not frolic around but did not study either,
And it is already autumn at Mt. Bulmyeong.
I might stop at a few pavilions tomorrow
In the eastern region, leaning on my bamboo stick.

Composed on the Way to Bullyeong with Yeongmyeong-dang

1

What is true and what is untrue?
It all comes from delusion.
In the mist of a bright autumn day,
with the falling leaves,

The green mountains are the same as ever before.

2

Let delusion and truth stay as they are.

Old gentleman Jang is drunk, but Mr. Lee is not.

Selling dog meat as mutton is an old practice.

If one truly realizes this fact, one would realize the truth.

3

To be truthful, a scholar has to have a good pen fellow,

But in the earthly life, purity comes first.

One should realize the truth even before the advent

of the first Buddha, Bhismagarjitasvararaja,

So that one would not mistake fiction for truth.

Yeongwon Temple on Jiri Mountain

If it is not a thing, it is already a thing that is not a thing.

Then what is the use of recounting names and things?

A headless monkey is climbing the tree upside down

In the jumbling vines of the familiar arrowroot.

To Noble Man Heoju

I tried to take up my writing brush but my mind became confused,

And there is no one to reveal this feeling.

The sacred ibis is white and the raven is black,

but they are only the products of the mind and words.

I see mountains and water,

but no sentient beings and Buddhas are to be seen.

The Yukgam Arbor at Songgwang Monastery

There is no end to the exuberant joy

Of the annual feast at the spiritual sacred grounds.

When the horns of a rabbit are blast open with a shout,

Countless dragons and fish fly to the blue sky

amidst an ear splitting thunder.

Boseok Temple in Geumsan County

A lonely stone monument stands by the temple
in the sobbing autumnal wind.
How many tides of time have passed by
in the shade of green mountains?
There is no one to enquire about the military merits
of High Priest Yeong-gyu.⁸
All I see are the cows and sheep returning home
to the village yonder.

Magok Monastery

1

If we close our eyes and ears
The whole universe would drop out of space.
Never trust the secret chamber.
The completely sequestered place is where the intersection is.

⁸ High Priest Yeong-gyu, who with Jo Jungbong led the volunteer army of seven hundred soldiers, died here in Geumsan County, South Chungcheong Province, during the battle against Japanese invasion in 1592.

2

You are deaf and I am a dumb,
But this phrase penetrates through the heart of the universe.
One should never get the idea that the diamond bludgeon is asleep.
There will be no rainfall in the pond when a earthworm cries.

Cheonjang Temple

Which is true, the mundane world or the green mountain?
The flowers are blooming all over around the castle in spring.
If anyone inquires into what this monk is doing,
Tell them that he is singing a song in the mind of a barren woman
forevermore.

Reply to the Question of the Dharma Disciple
Mangong: "How should we teach sentient beings
after you are gone?"

In the grand tradition of the clan of the Seon Master Suseon,
There is no distinction between clouds, the moon, rivers,
and mountains.
Now I am transmitting the letterless Dharma seal in secrecy,

And you shall promote its spirit and expedience
to its full capacity correctly.

Yeongwol Pavilion at Seokwang Temple

The flowers flicker like a fog in the sunrise of spring,
And strange songs of singing birds comfort my napping.
How could we verify the countless virtues
and the accomplishments of complete enlightenment?
The peak of the mountain in the daybreak
stands high up in the dark blue sky.

Passing by the Yisu Gorge of Mt. Superior

The blue rapids of the Yisu gorge
Run down in a great torrent.
Gentleman Go-un⁹ once composed a verse at Mt. Gaya:
"I made a complete cessation with the world
for fear of hearing a quarrel over right and wrong."

⁹ Choi Chi-won (857-? CE) was an eminent scholar who lived during the Silla Dynasty. Go-un was his pen name.

Watching the Angling

Why do you keep swimming around the moss of stones
in the clear water of the creek

Instead of living in the deep of the pond?

Water birds and anglers are spying on you,

And if you get hurt, who is to be blamed?

Planting and Tending Trees and Flowers

1

Flowers and vines are in full bloom on the wall,

Do not tell me you can cultivate the thorn thickets like this too.

When Yeoneun was playing with the old folks from next-door,

The songs of the bush warblers are heard in the wind.

2

If the branches are thick and exuberant

by the good care of the divine root,

The tree would withstand gales and torrents without a stir.

And if they sway high up in the blue clouds next year,
Wouldn't the hermit pass by playing the flute?

3

The clear creek is dressed up with green mountains,
And green shadows emit a ravishing fragrance every nightfall.
Yet one must realize that they are not the works of man,
And what I fear is that someone might defile them with some putrid fume.

Exercise on the Rhyme of the Medicine Herb Gatherer Jo

All I want is to live on the mountain leaving all worldly fame behind,
And to pick medicinal herbs, making me forget the passage of time.
The sound of the wind pervades the mist of the pines,
And all phenomena are quiet in the song of the divine mushroom.

Notes on a Passing Thought

1

The water running down from the thousands of mountain peaks
parts halfway,

And the cloud descends downward to the gorge of the hermit.

If the water vapor and the mist did not part in half,

The communication could have been disrupted.

2

I turned around with a sigh and asked the old man in the field

By the Yongjeong River where the crossroad was.

The old man didn't say a word and the mountain was already in the dusk,

And there was no way to tell which was more desolate,

the song of the rough sea or the lonesome old man in the field.

3

The everlasting light of the Great Extinction¹⁰ melts

In the lonely mountains of autumn.

¹⁰ The passing of Shakyamuni Buddha.

I called on the eminent Seon Master but I missed him,
But Ungjin is just the old name of Gongju.¹¹

4

Trivial are the names of the Buddha and Patriarch.
The ghost has already taken the house of the fortune teller
and is now sleeping.
The clouds above the pines are peaceful
and the arrowroots are reserved,
Mt. Taehwa¹² tells the stories of ancient and modern times.

5

The centipede in the fire does not ask questions,
And the cuckoo is asleep in the bright mist of the river in the autumn.
There is no one who knows these truths,
And maybe I should speak of the beautiful lands of the country
of Gue in the dream.

¹¹ Gongju City, South Chungcheong Province, Korea.

¹² The mountain where the famous Magok Temple, constructed in 640 CE, is located.

6

I enjoyed the balmy spring of March riding on the stone-man
And painted the picture of a tiger, but it was not right
so I had to paint it again.

The forest and the ditch are in the sky
and the stars and the moon hung below them.

The dead chicken has caught a mouse
and is sacrificing it for the dead man.

7

The cicada has cast off its skin in the wind of dust,
And now who is upholding the mysterious shellfish?
When I come to meet the end of this mundane life of a passing dream,
I shall see Buddha and the beautiful landscape in a particle of dust.

8

I do not care about Buddha and sentient beings.
I just want to while away my crazy drunken life.
I sometimes look far away when I have nothing to do,
And I see the green mountains beyond the cloud in the distance.

9

Although the myriad things in the world are sometimes
cold and warm,
And sometimes round and square,
In the realm of emptiness, there is no place
Where the divine spirit of sentient beings cannot pass through.

Sitting at Ducheop Temple in Huicheon

1

What is wrong with a monk abiding
in the noted mountains
Where every valley is enveloped in the mist?
A lonesome old man is watching the sunset resting
against the pavilion
Waiting for the arrival of the heavenly crane.

2

It is a pleasant, joyful night at the pavilion

Reclining on the high pillow after a meal of boiled millet.
The voice of the Great Way is silence,
And a quick-witted young novice is preparing tea.

Parting with a Friend

Climbing up to the pavilion on the mountain in spring,
I see the peach flowers blooming and water flowing.
Once we part, when shall we meet again?
Every scene before my eyes makes me sad in my heart.

A Fragmented Verse

A swan is flying over the wave,
And random cottages on the green mountain
are caught after the mist is gone.
Fish are jumping up to the shore in the pouring rain
in the outskirts,
And the ghosts are running around in the lonely brush
of the deserted city.
The high waves in the blue sea after the passage of a dragon,

And the vacant green mountains before the arrival of a crane;
One plays with the universe, jumps around the sun and moon,
And catches tigers alive raising the clouds and the wind.

The Flowers of Peach and Plum Trees in the Front Yard

The countless peach and plum blossoms are busy
Diffusing the colorful minds of past Buddhas.



Chil-eon Yul

Visiting Muheul Temple

Visiting the temple in the heat of the summer, cleansed of
all defilements and worries,

Made me think of the great sea and the long shore
of thousands of miles.

I climbed to the pavilion of Musul Temple, enveloped in misty clouds.

Looking out on the fields from Jeongpyeong village,

It is hard to distinguish the day from the night
through the thatched hut's dim window,

And I wonder how many years that stupa has been standing there
covered with spider webs.

Full of disgrace is the mundane world,

And it makes me cry to think of the sad aspects of life.

Climbing Nine-fold Mountain with Friends

Sitting among the pine trees is better than sitting
in the meditation hall,
And no distance can prevent one from getting some liquor.
The shadows of stones and vacant mountains
are just as they were in ancient times;
The day grows late with the sounds of the creek.
The waves of the sea may bite off the island,
but its bone will stay.
Ghosts may assault the people,
but they cannot harm their spirit.
I am trying to sing the truth of ultimate reality, but there is no way to
express the beauties of the autumnal tints and chrysanthemums.

Climbing to the Monastery at Cheong-am Temple

Climbing a hill is not at all like walking on level ground,
And it is feared that youth does not stay for long.
I have given up the skill of catching pearls in the sea,
And lost time collecting medicinal herbs
in the famous mountains.

The snow in the deep valley is blown over the cloud-draped rocks,
And the wind is singing against the wisteria
 with the moon hung on its vines.
So picturesque is the Dharma Hall, but the monk is mute
And there are only the sounds of a bell
 and the soaring cloud of incense.

Visiting the Seon Hall

It was a hard climb to get to the fairyland
Where a man attained enlightenment in quietude.
The monastery was very small but it was friendly
 with its entire surroundings,
Even with the visiting stars hung on the empty railings.
The canopy, the blue dragons, and the heavenly guardians are
 all discolored,
And the towering rock is as blue as a ghost.
Yet it looks more like the spirit of the dead monk,
And the fleeting clouds and passing birds are flitting
 in the dark of the forest.

Some Jade for Master Suik at Gwaneum Temple

So desolate is the will of the forlorn wayfarer,
Yet high priests inquired of each other and met at the lecture hall.
The infinitude of mind is like the moon,
Yet their hair has grown gray while they were apart.
So grand is their aspiration,
But in retrospect, what they have seen are the busy dreams of ants.
Since the beautiful tune of a harp is disrupted,
Even the breaking sound of a willow branch is quite welcome.

A Reply to Gentleman Yeongho

Our leisurely life of some one hundred years is
Like a wayfarer resting for a while on his travels.
The world is forgotten in the thick smoke of incense
And suddenly I see a hermit in the flying blue bird.
It is the season of the colorful autumnal tints
And the water and floating clouds in the sky are
 reflected in the evening sunset.
We part again

And graying hair makes us both so pitiful.

A Reply to Geummyeong Dang at Songgwang Monastery

I beg your pardon for my belated calling,
Yet I see the bright moon of Jogye Mountain in the window.
The story of the water demon that was supposed to have found
the pearl in the water is not true,
Yet what is the ghost that has disappeared into a dream?
This place is noted for its fine scenery,
But what I want to see are the frozen branches of the pine trees.
There were many great masters residing in this great temple
Instructing the doctrines of the Mahayana from antiquity.

A Line Composed on the Way to Hwaeom Monastery with Great Preceptor Wolhwa from Songgwang Monastery

1

It is truly a splendid view to take in
And I forgot all worldly things in the joy of serenity.
What a sight, the overhanging cliffs and the strange spirit

of the mountain

That makes my mind so cozy in the forest!

Little puppies are following the maidens picking wild greens,

While the pigeons by the river sing for a tilling farmer in the field;

Songs of the woodcutters are heard in the setting sun

While the great peaks of the mountains hide in the clouds.

2

How many steep peaks and deep rivers

have I climbed and crossed?

How fast I wanted to get there, yet it is still so far away.

The chilly smoke hanging on the branches of the trees

means it is not yet spring.

A bird flies among the clouds at sunset.

A drunken rambling monk has grown old,

Yet what can they do to a monk who has renounced

the entire world?

A friend is suggesting another drink before

I haven't yet finished my cup.

Shall I leave this idyll life to the will of heaven?

3

I washed the string of the hat in the clean water,
and my feet in the muddy water.

Life is an empty dream and floating duckweed anyway.

Clear water, beautiful mountains, and small and large landscapes;

They are all friendly as usual in the reflection
of the leisurely clouds in the sunset.

A lonely bird looks hoary in the wake of the fog in the field,

And the bamboo tree in every home is green as ever.

I wish I could get drunk in the everlasting thought,

But where should I find the tavern beyond this forest?

Gongrim Temple

I arrived at the countless peaks of Mt. Gongrim,

And this is really a wonderland!

Every beautiful peak is enveloped

in the clear spirit of the mountain,

Yet so quiet is the day in the tincture

of the ancient Dharma Hall.

Am I already so old, hanging on the great walking-stick?

I had great schemes, but they were not all successful.
Doleful is the flowing water,
And a lonely man sitting on the mossy rock.

The Hwail Ferry Point at Okchyeon

How many occasions were there for drinking and studying?
In all of them, we were at home without a care.
Mountains compete with each other with their heights,
And rivers flow deep and wide to attract great fish.
The blue smoke is painting the setting sun
 of the fishing village,
And the pleasant wind passing through the boughs
 must be the sign of autumn.
The bright moon reflects its shadow
 on the forest and the fountain,
I must be getting on in years to think how sad it is to sport around.

Jeonghye¹³ Temple

The top of Mt. Deokseung is capped with samadhi and wisdom,
Yet the eternal autumn is the mundane world.
Even the pine-nut tree in the front yard is at ease
With the empty mind acquired from the ambience of the monastery.
Wealth, fame and prosperity are all but floating bubbles,
The imperial monarch and the splendors of its seat
are but floating clouds in the sky.
All I wish to enjoy is the butterfly of Zhuangzi¹⁴
And True Suchness with my dragging tail.

At the Village School of Dohari, Gang-ge in Early November

1

When I reflected upon the last half of my life in study,
I could see the bright and shady side
as if I were looking through a mirror.

¹³ "Jeong" (定) means samadhi, the state of fully unified concentration and oneness with truth, that culminates the noble eightfold path to spiritual release and realization. "Hye" (慧) means incomparable supreme wisdom.

¹⁴ In Zhuangzi's poem, the narrator sees himself in his dream turning into a butterfly and then the butterfly turns into himself. In the ultimate sense of emptiness, would there be any difference?

No flower blossom in March means it is not spring as of yet,
It is summer, but the snow on the cliff is still cold.
My infirmity means that I am getting old,
And no letter makes me anxious about your health.
What is good about being brave is having no hindrance,
And there is no difficulty visiting each other with joy.

2

What a view of the distance from the arbor!
There is no way to express its beauty.
The crimson roses wet with rain are like burning fires,
And the swaying willow branch is like the slim waist of a maiden.
Here is a verse of a drunken man
Who is excited for nothing.
Yet I wonder how I can express all this joy in a letter,
And I worry about how I can restrain the mind of a libertine.

Passing over the Mountain Pass of Adeukpo in Ganggye on the Way to Gapsan

I wonder why people value gold so highly
and try to hoard it so,
Not knowing that the most precious thing is the life of leisure
and purity beyond the material world.
Looking intently into the deep valley of a thousand feet,
surrounded by pine trees,
I see the misty clouds spreading up thousands of feet high.
The strange flowers are in full bloom,
And strange birds exchange the songs of ancient times.
How could the people with hair stained gray by the mundane world
Collect their minds and bodies in such quietude?

On the Way to Jangjin

Nine out of ten houses are vacant with not a living soul,
The birds are noisy along the ridgeline and fish swim in the water.
A man in his bare feet works the field
In tattered garments and a dirty hat.
There is scattered firewood and cattle dung by the manger,

Walls made of plaits of wood and a roof covered with reeds;
How could we begin to describe the miserable states of people
Far from peace and prosperity?

Passing by the Jangjin River to See Triplets

It is June, but the wind on the Jangjin bridge is cool
As if it were already autumn.
It is very rare to see triplets,
So, leaning on my walking stick, I went a long way to meet them.
So desolate are the colors of grass in the field,
And no soul is to be seen anywhere,
 yet I hear well-wishing remarks all day.
Looking around, I tried to mumble something and found a phrase,
Yet who has any idea what I had in mind?

A Letter of Sentiment

1

It is not right to tarry on the periphery of the castle
Absorbed in thousands of reveries about one's hometown.
It is hard to practice with a sickly body,
And it is not an easy thing to gain skill in writing.
The peaks of the mountains show off their green
 in the clear sky,
And the leaves are felled by the gusts of the deep valley.
One suddenly decides to return home
And is met by the sweet fragrance of chrysanthemums in the yard.

2

The best place to hide oneself is in the tavern
 or among the merchants in the market place.
The nimble leopard is coming down from the mountain
 even before sunset,
And the wild geese are flying from the north
 in the chilly wind of late autumn.
The true treasure is to abandon gold and jade,

And I forgot even the non-material leisure hours,
among the clouds and fog.
Attaining the clear mind of enlightenment is purely
The result of breaking the illustrious gates
Of the ancient patriarchs.

A Reply to Yang Yusang of Changpyeong

Under the slim lamp light, we talked about
the forlorn karma of our past.
The fleeting cloud floats over the hill with the wayfarer,
And the humming wind of the barren tree
plays with young students.
The snow in the frozen mountain reaches as high as the waist,
And the stinking smell of the troubled world
rages like a bloodshot eyeball.
Be careful in your thousands of miles of travel.
I am very sorry that I cannot go with you
because of the bad road.

A Reply to Lee Yeoseong of Jongnam Township in Ganggye County

Though I'm in this angst-ridden world, I'm quite fortunate
to preserve this old body of mine, wandering about as I do.
Swallows fly to every village balmy and bright,
But it is too early for the bush warblers to fly
to the primeval cool mountains.
The dream of the wayfarer sinks deeper
like the green grass by the river,
And an old friend is waiting in the village where they brew wine.
I came to visit you where the white clouds are gathering thick
With the thoughts of sunny and seamy days of the past.

Composing a Poem at Night with Teacher Lee

Unreliable is the turbulent world.
So, how about getting drunk and forgetting it all?
We were deep in the thought of our spring dreams
in the countryside of Jeongju,
And met late in a study on Mt. Jongnam.
There is only a flickering lamplight in the quiet
surrounded by the mountains,

And gray hair grows with the steady flow of time.
Why couldn't you have broken right into the heavenly gate
And have left your line in the rhyme of Hedongfu?¹⁵

A Letter of Sentiment

The wild duck and duckweed are both temporary itinerants
in this world,
And how could we express all that we have in our minds.
Losing words is good fortune,
And it is the best to learn the poems of the hermit
when the crane returns.
Bitter is the spirit of the shivering mountain, as is the wind,
And snow flowers are as soft as cotton as the moon hangs
on every branch of the trees.
It is not difficult to cast this body into the East Sea,
as Lu Zhonglian¹⁶ did,
But I must hurry home where my parents are waiting.

¹⁵ The Hedongfu (河東賦) is a celebrated Chinese poem.

¹⁶ Lu Zhonglian (魯仲連) is noted in the *Shiji* (史記) by the eminent Chinese historian Sima Qian (司馬遷) as being held in great respect during the Warring States period for his noble rejection of enumeration for his service saving the Duke of Zhou (周公旦), upon which Lu disappeared forever.

New Year's Eve

How can we express all the sentiments in our heart.
My study in the deep mountain covered with snow is so lonesome.
I spent last spring in Ganggye township,
And I spend New Year's Eve in Gapsan village.
I have been to my hometown in a dream,
And I wish I could forget the lonesomeness
of the forlorn wayfarer for a while.
I see a solitary lantern by the window
and the dead quietude is the night,
As I lean against the door, hearing the crying of a cock from afar.

New Year's Day

There is no echo of my sincere cry to the heavens,
Yet the colorful clouds are able to erect a starry abode
wherever they wish.
So pitiful is my lot on this New Year's Day away from home,
Yet fortunately this remote place is where the people know their manners.
I am enjoying good fortune on this New Year's Day,
And all my ailments are cured by the herbal wine imbibed
in the rites to cast off evil-spirits.

The herdboy seems to know nothing about the fate of the country,¹⁷
And enjoys beating his drums, playing a flute, and singing
at the top of his lungs.

Notes on a Passing Thought

1

A dry brush fire is hard to extinguish,
And time is passing in this poor plain shirt.
Floral leaf-like whiskers are like the bases of heavenly pillars,
And the spirits of the mountain and the ghosts of the trees
have attained the Buddha mind.
The truths of the ten directions¹⁸ spread like the clouds,
And I endured the rainy season wearing a single garment.
Unless one can break a tiny particle of dust,
there is no way to understand the meaning of the Sutras
And fathom the essence of all things in the universe.

¹⁷ Korea lost its sovereignty beginning with its annexation by Japan in 1910 until liberation on August 15, 1945, with the defeat of Japan at the end of World War II.

¹⁸ The four cardinal directions, their four intermediate directions, the zenith, and the nadir.

2

If anyone prays for fortune by making offerings of tea
and burning incense,
One will never be able to escape Mara's¹⁹ dungeon.
I have lived like a bubble for eons,
And then attained sudden enlightenment, just like the sudden emergence
of a lotus flower from a burning fire.
Who could possibly recognize that the old man who was herding the
Cows on Mt. Odae was Manjusri Bodhisattva?
No beating of the drum will avail a meeting with the sage Yeoam.
One should renounce virtually every tiny thing,
And hearing the songs of the spring bird, all worries suddenly disappear.

3

All I wanted to do in my whole life was to appreciate
mountains without disturbance,
And now I spend autumn in this monastery,

¹⁹ Mara is the "god of death," who tried desperately to obstruct the Buddha's spiritual quest. The legend of the Buddha's enlightenment includes a final battle between the Buddha and Mara, who wielded both comely virgins and terrifying armies as a means to shake the Buddha from his spot under the Bodhi tree.

Appreciating the flying birds all day long.
Worldly things are but dreams,
 and I watch a patch of cloud leisurely floating in the sky.
The northern sky is far away somewhere
 in Hwa-ak mountain,
And I gaze at the bright setting sun in the West Sea.
The landscape is the same as ever before,
And I am here to recite a few lines of an old story without an end.

4

I hid myself among the rocks to escape the rain,
And it was cool, as if it were already autumn
 though it is still summer.
The young students are passing by, laughing at this
Pitiful sight of an old monk in the field.
The landscape of Mt. Gaya is soaked in the clouds,
And I hear the running water of Nabak River by the road.
As the day is already late and I am all wet,
I must return to the monastery for the night
 and play again tomorrow.

5

What are all the glories and defeats of the past?

Let us then practice the supreme truth hidden

in Mt. Gaya.²⁰

Blessed are the boundless minds of the singing songs of birds

and the smiles of flowers,

Where supreme enlightenment overflows in the clear moon

and the wind.

Blessed, too, is the liberation of sentient beings from delusion

By the supreme truth and the wisdoms of sages.

In these tattered garments

I shall spend the rest of my life on the mountain peak

in the clouds.

6

The singing of insects and birds blends in great harmony,

Yet time passes like flowing water.

I have no talent for painting,

But what happened to your picture of a cat?

²⁰ The Sutra Pavilion at Haein Monastery, located on Mt. Gaya in Hapcheon, South Gyeongsang Province, houses the 80,000 wooden blocks of the Great Sutra Pitaka, the *Palman daejang gyoung*.

Everything is quiet in the destruction of empty space,
And I see countless Buddhas in the great mountains
and waters.

It was a great fortune to meet a good friend
And listen to the Dharma lecture that prevented me
from falling into the hands of the devil.

7

I found a snug place to live in,
Yet it was already formed even eons ago.
Trustworthy are the minds of the wood-maiden and the stone-boy,
And so are the lights of the myriad stars.
A balmy light comes from the yonder world of crying
sand and dust,
And then returns laughing to the infinite time
of empty space.
Discrimination arises from confusing the saint
and the ordinary man.
How joyful it is to meet and share time with the fellow practitioner!

A Piece of Thought

You are gone and I am scratching my head to forget
the sad feelings in my heart,
And still regret not having stopped you.
How hard it was for you to beg for food in the snow,
And your bringing me wine, not minding the icy road.
We are not always successful,
And it is even harder for one to attain the sublime meaning of the Dao,
After having experienced the ups and downs of the world.
I realized that the mountain is green and the water is flowing.

Notes on a Passing Thought

1

I removed the iron slag using the bellows
and pounding away for a while,
And so ○○○○ [words missing].
An inverted view will never allow you to know
what the Dharma seal is,
And now I am used to letting things go by like flowing water.
Who said that one could not sit on the burning fire?

Though one injures the body, it does not mean that there is no will to live.
I let my hand go from the great cliff and returned home,
and that's all there is to it.
Practitioners! You need not hesitate. I guarantee.

2

I am still meddling with the problems of the Buddha
and Mara,
And they say that there is a crotchet hook in the hands
of divine wisdom.
The dead dry skull that walked on the flower is
laughing in the bliss of spring,
And a hoary child shall live for eons.
I had an idle dream last night and it will be the same
tomorrow night.
One should realize what true mind is,
not seeking for anything from the outside.
Alas! Everything is in the fog,
And it makes me sad again when I think of our parting.

Exercise on a Rhyme Hanging on the Wall of Inpung Pavilion

1

I was sitting at the pavilion with the slanting light of the sunset
on the riverside castle,

Watching the willows by the river in the thin smoke
as the water flowed on.

What is the world of a brave man half drunk?

It is the world of a lute in his arms,
the flowers and the moon.

A dark cloud is hanging at the end of the eave,

And the water bird jumps onto the railing
with a fish in its bill.

The sickly body in the transitory world of turbulence

Makes me even more plaintive, listening to the common tune of the flute.

2

There is a huge pavilion that stands in the big border town.

How many events and years have passed there?

I take a walk with the twinkling stars of the night,

And the cuckoo sends the message of autumn.

The ever bending noisy water flows into the sea,
And the mountain range is stretched far and wide
 with its countless peaks.
Reclining on the rail, I sent a long blow of my whistle,
Blotting out the vanity and heaviness of my mind.

Forget the Sad Thoughts of Pak Yisun

As the pine trees stand cold in the dense fog,
Look closely at the bright lights on the earth.
I have no interest in the fame and prosperity that is as fleeting as clouds,
And there is no difficulty in living the life of a hermit
 by catching fish and cutting wood.
My whiskers have turned grayer by homesickness,
And my heart has turned red-hot worrying about the fate of the country.
If one wishes to be a hermit, one should follow the crane,
Forgetting even kings and parents.

A Reply to Gentleman Lee of Pocheondong

His deportment, heavy as a mountain, is that of
a true gentleman,
And his quietude is never distracted by family affairs,
no matter how busy they seem to be.
As the village is destitute, it is not easy to stay drunk,
And although the world is troubled,
reciting poetry is the same as ever.
The idle wind from the river is blowing hard,
And there is no time to put on smiles in this rough world.
Seoul is a thousand miles away,
How sad it is to think that I might never return
once I leave here.

Together with Kim Dam-yeo, Kim Sosan,
and Oh Hacheon

I am very old and it is not so easy to be generous
in such dubious times,
Yet I happened to find a joyful occasion

and I was very happy all day long.
I see great mountains beyond the window,
And I hung my coat and head gear on the rack
of the snow covered castle.
I am truly envious of your noble son and attractive wife,
And I feel shameful to be so shabby in these tattered garments.
It is getting late and so is the drinking party,
Yet it is nice to appreciate the art of calligraphy
on the hanging scroll again, in this great mood of intoxication.

A Reply to Choi Munhwa

There is no fun visiting a lonely place when one is depressed.
How long have I been wandering on the path of thin ice?
How many would survive the life of a tramp?
Deplorable is the incompetence of a drunken old man.
A lively voice is heard from the desolate old castle,
And a great stone lantern stands like a grand precipice.
If there is anyone who is good at both words and deeds,
Great would be his fame in the ages to follow.

On the Way to Hwangrin Village

Why is this road to the village so desolate?

The life of the destitute is the same as ever before.

The disheveled hair of the weaver is like the frost
hanging at the end of the eaves,

The hands of the housewife are all cracked,
and the sickle and firewood are all scattered about.

No parents are free from the cares of their sons'
military service,

And no tilled land is free from the greedy hands
of government officials.

I am trying to forget about the rare wine
a thousand days old,

Yet I still could not resist the thought of its stealthy temptation.

Parting with Choi Munhwa at Jinpeong Village

The best thing in life is the appreciation of one's mind,

But what is the use of recalling the hard times of the bygone days?

Even though the fleeting clouds are so mutable,

Isn't the peak of the mountain as green as ever?
No luxuriant bush can complete with the verdure of the pine trees,
And no noisy songs of the birds in the spring can complete
 with the crying of the cranes.
Night is very quiet on both sides of the river bank,
And I want to maintain the pride of a hermit
 with a rough line from a song of parting.

Passing by the New Market in Yeongbyeon

It makes me feel like I am a hero to recite a line
 as I take a drink,
And decide to end my journey in the market.
The big river flows for miles and miles,
And the sharp points of the great mountain peaks are forming
 from the bottomless gorge.
Who would not worship the virtue that extends to the heavenly realm,
And the grand writings as extensive as the sea
 do not have to wait to be recognized.
Yet all I wish is to live the rest of my life befriending
The clouds and cranes, leaving all the cares and glories behind.

The Sentiment of a Snowy Night at the Foot of Mt. Osu

All the roads are closed again by the heavy snows in Mt. Osu,
And I wonder when I can meet relatives and share some
old stories.

The moon hanging high in the sky sets over the low hills,
And the north wind blows in the daybreak on the tops of the trees
with the message of winter.

I have acquired a wide range of knowledge,
but where is the gold?

And there is no end to my practical wisdom,
but my hair is already gray.

The lamplight of the pine-stump oil is getting low
and so is the stock of wine,

So I opened the door with a heavy sigh of restlessness.

Reciting a Line with Kim Ilryeon at Sindeok Study

We enjoyed a drink in the Sindeok study reciting verse,
And I thanked him for the favor he offered me
when I had difficulties.

There is no reason for the flowers to leave their
spring dreams behind,
And if we try to trace things back, there is neither
beginning nor ending.
They make a small hole and build a stone house
on the horn of a snail,
And the bright, round moon is in the cloud of smoke.
The receding moon is hidden far away,
So what could be the reason for your parting with
the noisy world?

At the Study of Kim Sosan Seohwang

After wandering all over the place,
I arrive at a place as lofty as the shrine of the royal family
in the autumn breeze.
Pick the weeds and they will grow again,
The strange dear flowers fallen on the ground
still retain their beauty.
The clouds in the sky are casting their shadows
on the lonely castle,

And the sound of the creek resounds on the mountain side
all day long.
Sober at night when the moon is bright,
I was thinking, "How can a line of verse be like thee?"

A Reply to some Friends in Gonggui Village

1

I made a courtesy call again to the academy,
And it is no wonder the excellence of their writing is known
to people far and wide.
It is the same for both the country and home
that they are in a difficult situation,
And so are the difficulties of yours and mine.
A pile of ancient snow is in the chilly stone cave of the cold mountain,
And the deep groove of the eave is in the clouds all day long.
I am not well and the world is too confused to know its future,
And it is surely regrettable that we cannot share in our friendship
that we have made in this world.

2

It is a great joy to discuss with a close friend
The many random stories, good and bad, of our lives now half-gone.
For a few nights, I was in dreams beyond this mundane world,
And enjoyed reciting verse with a loud voice in the smoke
 of a lonely village.
So miserable are the ups and downs of life,
 and I long for the crane that is far away.
Yet there is no way to tell the fate of our future,
 and it reminds me of the old sage Sai.²¹
The idleness of the noble man is what the sages warned of,
And those who do not seek for anything, never lack anything.

3

There is no use for a big window when meditating,
Though it is a great joy to hear the pleasant sound
 of the river in spring.

²¹ There is a famous Chinese anecdote ascribed to the old sage Saiweng (塞翁) who resists making conclusions about the fate of first finding and then losing a horse. His pithy remark in conclusion of this topsy-turvy affair was, "Inscrutable are the ways of Heaven."

I toast the green mountains,
And only my gray hair is fluttering on the way back
from my long journey.
I thought I forgot the affairs of the country
in my infirmity and drunkenness,
Yet, come to think of it, even the place that the hermit is looking for
is also within the domain.
My thoughts of forgetting the big cities and having a meal
with a lunch box and some wild greens seems not to have changed.

4

It seems wayward to take the wine I paid for as a topic for a poem,
Yet how could we otherwise forget the distress
of the mundane world?
The east wind melts the snow of the great mountains
And the water flows into the sea causing the big waves to rise.
But I am of the mind to part with this good friend of mine--the wine--
And so when could I have another joyful occasion like this again?
The house in the forest is desolate, though it is good
to stay away from the noisy world,
And in the ever changing world of impermanence,
my gray hair is growing thin.

5

I am neither for the old culture nor the new one,
And if you once get drunk and forget them,
 no distinctions will exist between right and wrong.
The wine revives the strength of my thirsty intestines,
And I feel like flying with the wings under my armpits.
My ailing heart got sick and I am already an old man now,
Yet the divine seed met rain and it is now full of vigor.
I wonder who could ever guess that I am hiding a secret treasure,
And then I sometimes throw on my Dharma robe.²²

6

When the river and the pavilion are frozen
 and covered with snow,
A guest visited the village in February again.
It was a balmy spring, good for reciting a poem,
And if only I could borrow the ruddy cheeks of a young man,
 I won't refuse a drink even though I am quite old.

²² In his final stage of life, Master Gyeongheo nearly abandoned his life as a monk and took to wearing the robe of a scholar.

Friendship is of more value than a great sum of gold,
Yet my traveling outfit on a long journey is only
a pair of wooden shoes.²³

As if the heaven had caught our joyless encounter,
The cloud and the moon linger around one another.

7

A few days have already passed but it seems like an instant,
And I even forgot where I was in listening to your lines of verse.
I have not forgotten the vow I made with a seagull,
Yet I gave up my schedule for picking medicinal herbs
on the illustrious mountain.

The thunder has stopped in the deep gorge,
and the white cloud is hung on the rock,
The wind is blowing against the stems of wisteria
while the moon is hung on its vine.

Even if I had the good fortune to enjoy fame and prosperity,
I would not exchange them for my foolishness, homeliness,
and stupidity.

²³ High-heeled shoes cut out of wood were very convenient for walking through the rain.

8

Your integrity is as high as the mountain,
And your magnitude of mind is like a great bell.
Are the sufferings on earth the will of heaven?
Why is the path of human beings so rough?
The sound of the creek flowing in front of the gate
is like the ringing sound of jade,
And the mountains over the railing are like a standing sword.
My sincere mind thinking of you grows everyday,
Yet I feel shame for my indolence.

9

Have you forgotten your timeless fame?
The green pine trees are playing the stringless harp evermore.
As the theme of the verse is set, so let us recite in a full tone.
And though it is not home made, let us drink a brimful.
The young woodcutters are frolicking in the snow,
And the young water carriers are taking to the mountain trail
in the shadow of the setting sun.
The old traditions are well kept in this remote village,
And it is my wish to stay here.

Sitting at Ducheop Temple in Huicheon

When I sang a song on the non-arisen²⁴ at the top of my lungs,
The whole universe turned to brilliant golden waves.
Who said that the Great Way does not forsake humanity?
And no matter what people say, the fleeting world is
 but a daydream.
The bright mountains illuminate themselves evermore,
And the shadow of the forest in the distant village
 is lingering over the hill.
All creations are themselves true just as they are,
Then what is the use of discriminating between the male and the female,
Buddha and Mara?

Together with Pak Hyeong-gwan of Byeok-dong
School and a Bunch of Friends on the Day of Dongji²⁵
I happened to visit a village school,

²⁴ *Mu saeng* (무생 無生) – this is among the most important of Buddhist philosophical concepts. According to Buddhist theory, all things are impermanent because they arise from particular causes and conditions. The category of that which does not arise from causes and conditions, the non-arisen, represents the absolute truth, namely, nirvana and emptiness, and the height of Buddhist thought.

²⁵ One of the 24 solar terms on the lunar calendar. The winter solstice and shortest day of the year, *dongji* literally means “the arrival of winter.” In some East Asian countries it is celebrated with great feasts eating red bean gruel.

And was very happy to hear the students reciting from a book
with their beautiful voices.

I had a coarse but delicious meal with edible mountain herbs

By the window in the breeze of the pine trees.

You renounced the world but not your great will,

And the wayfarer walking along the alley with a spade on his shoulder
must have a great many thoughts.

You, the lover of fellow countrymen and courteous to friends,

Let us have another drink on our parting.

Spending Some Time at the Bongcheon Observation Tower.

I just wanted to stop by the temple,

And then saw a group of deer in the deep mountain.

I first learned about the devotion and rites of Confucianism,

Then at a later age, learned the Buddha's teaching that reaches
beyond the mundane world.

Many odd bird songs are heard in the deep valley,

And the leisurely clouds are floating by the river
in the balmy spring.

The old priest is hoping that the meal is ready.

What a good practice the charity of offering is!

A Reply to Noble Lee

So quiet and leisurely are the worldly affairs, like the falling snow,
And the useless body of mine is in the agony of ailments.
When I was watching the waterfall in the floating cloud
 with a drink in hand,
All the countless words and letters turned to gold and jade.
The willow branches of the village by the river are swaying
 on this balmy spring day,
And the fantastic birds are singing in the forest.
We are truly of the same mind as our intimate friends,
Yet how could I express the sad feelings
 of this wandering vagabond?

Meeting Oh Hacheon of Hacheong Village

1

Noble scholar Hacheon took the peak of the mountain
 as a pillow,

As the water flowed on without concern
by the destitute village in the month of May.²⁶
Immersed in the world of profit and loss, who can understand the
wisdom of the Sage Saiweng?
The seagulls were the friends of this wanderer for a decade.
During the noonday leisure hours the cloud is floating in the sky,
And it is pleasant like autumn, with the shade of the trees
in the window.
I forgot the cares of a vagabond for a moment
By reciting some lines with the tune of a harp and a drink.

2

Even one hundred generations of rough troubles in life
Could not disturb the quietude of seclusion
where one studies the merits of the sages.
The mind becomes like the moon when one corrects
one's mistakes,
And virtue would flourish when one lives in harmony.
Frogs are busy singing their songs in the woods,
And the wings of the tiger moth that loves the light turns red

²⁶ May is the hardest time of the year for poor farmers, when practically all their provisions are exhausted until the harvest time of barley in June.

in the deep of the night.

I got old by chasing after fame and prestige,

And I am grateful for the kind consideration

of the host who understands my heart.

3

Everything became bright when I sat with a friend

with our hearts wide open.

Our postures looked intimate in the study

by the clear water.

Birds cry out when flowers are about to fall,

And the water tries to jump, even before the rocks fall

down from the cliff above.

One thinks one has attained the charm of wine and verse,

But the gray hair does not comply with one's taste.

The sage tilling in the field seems refined,

But how could he appreciate the life of dissipation and debauchery?

4

The weeping willows are swaying gracefully

with the beautiful singing of the bush warbler,

And although it is only a small cottage,

it is far more refreshing than the great pavilion.
All life's busy affairs are but empty dreams,
And everything comes to naught in a glass of wine.
The crying of the cuckoo on the hedge reminds us of
the deep green mountains,
And the falling flower in the yard in the heat of the day
still retains its fine fragrance.
Wonderful is the fine landscape, but far better is the good friend,
So I would rather stay a little longer at the study by the clear water.

5

It is already the May Dano Festival²⁷ when ladies compete
to test their skill on the swing,
And the bush warblers fly from the deep mountains
to enjoy the celebration with the folks.
The calf that was lying down awakes from its dreaming
of the fields of green grass,
And the birds cry for the falling flowers of spring.
When I stopped before the wine cask on my leisurely walk
in the lean year,

²⁷ Held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Dano is a day when ancestors are honored through rites and farmers pray for the success of the newly planted rice crop.

The magnanimity of the transient world comes alive
with friendliness that transcends the material.
The beautiful tune of the harp plays
with the rhythm of the song,
And I must tarry, even though I am a busy man
in the forlorn world.

6

So beautiful is the residence hall of Elder Ha,
And it is nice to enjoy verse, wine, and song
under the blue sky of May.
The bush warblers are singing and swallows are flying in,
And the clear water is flowing in the shade of the green willow.
The mind is as bright and clear as the water,
And the warmth of the green mountains dims the eyes.
Alas! Ladies are busy making up their faces,
Ignorant that the sacrificial rites for the ancestors
of the royal family are coming to a final end.²⁸

²⁸ This must mean the precursor of the end of the royal family and the beginning of the Japanese colonization of Korea, formalized in 1910.

Exchanging Sad Thoughts of the Past with Hacheon at Sangwon Monastery

1

"Your whiskers are gray but your eyes are still blue,"

I said to him,

And we spent all day with the door locked.

It is the temple where the Papyrus Sutra is preserved,

And he is the hermit-angler who is friends with the wild geese.

It is such good fortune to meet you here,

But is there anyone awakened in the mundane world?

The willow by the river is getting greener

and the birds in the mountains are singing merrily,

As we take a walk hand in hand by the arbor.

2

Whenever I dreamt, I was surprised to find myself

as a high government official,

And then I recalled that I was actually tilling a field

in the remote countryside.

I learned through my body and mind how precious

the green mountains are,

But there is no way to stop the graying hair.

I really hate eating rice with corn,
But I feel sad when I worry for our country.
I become more emotional as I get old,
And we sit facing each other raising the flame
of the lamp without any thought.

3

The best way to the great Dao is to retire in quietude,
And the best way to cultivate delicious fruit is
to take good care of its root.
Thousands of birds singing on the tree are like poets,
And the many kinds of grass lying in the wind are
like sages practicing the Dao.
What could your dream be when you lie down
with a high pillow under your head in a locked room?
I found my soul when I recited a verse with a book in my hand,
And I forgot all the noisy sounds of the world for a while
When I learned the truth at Sangwon Hermitage.

A Reply to Im Ringyu

The reward for filial piety is a blessing that has

the tendency of its own natural augmentation,
And if one is attentive to what the filial teachings say,
even God would be envious.
Some day you will be flying like a phoenix,
But, alas, I am already half dead.
Melting icy water is as blue and clear as the color of indigo,
And the snows from last winter that remain on the branches mean that
it is not yet spring.
The muddy road is slippery and it is already dusk
in the riverside village.
I am sending my old friend off with another toast.

A Reply to Kim Nak-ui and His Brother²⁹

The bush warblers have already gone home,
and the swallows are busy building their nests,
Our fruitfly-like lives are lingering around
the dream of a butterfly.
The newly planted rice beyond the copse of willows
looks green at the foot of the mountain,

²⁹ Master Gyeongheo was a good friend of their father, but when he met them, their father was already deceased.

And I see a lonesome small cottage in the evening sunset.
The deceased has returned to his home of countless eons,
And here is another sage visiting from afar.
All I see are the white clouds in the sky,
 and there is no more wine to be drunk.
So mournful is the song of the wayfarer
 in Deungong village.

A Reply to Kim Yugeun of Hongyu Village³⁰

I hear desolate sounds of raindrops and the songs of insects
 in the riverside pavilion,
I worry about the thousands of miles in my journey home.
Everything is but a floating cloud, then what is the truth?
One hundred years are like flowing water,
 and life is but a floating cloud.
I could not decline the kindness of the host
 and I am still tarrying here.
How many times have we met and then separated?

³⁰ He originally lived in Galsan, Hongju, South Chungcheong Province, for ten years before he moved to Seoul.

It was the ancient sages who said that nothing is more precious
than one's native place, where our parents are,
And I should not tarry any longer.³¹

A Reply to Kim Damyeo

Three intimate friends are better than hundreds
of mere companions,
So it may be pardonable for us to have some drinks
and song.
Although I was poor, I was happy because I had hope
and was as merry as Yen Yuan,³²
And I was serious as Qi You,³³ but now that I am old,
there is nothing I can do about it.
Alas! I am too faraway from where my parents are,

³¹ Master Gyeongheo had an elder brother who was also a monk and the two brothers stayed with their mother at Cheonjang Monastery on the southwest coast, an area the Master mentions a number of times in his poems. For a monk to stay with his own parent at a temple was unthinkable, and such was the magnificence of the Master in almost every way.

³² Yen Yuan (顏淵) (521-481 BCE) was a beloved disciple of Confucius. His given name was Hui (回) and he died in his thirties, over which his master cursed his fate.

³³ Traditional folklore in the Chinese classics remarks on a man name Qi You (杞憂) who was vexed with groundless worries, such as the destruction of the heaven.

And I have to spend Cheongmyeong³⁴ in the border area.
The flowers are in full bloom in the eastern wind,
And I wish I could fill this glass with an entire river of wine.

A Reply to Gang Bongheon of Domun Village

I kept studying but the arguments are conflicting with one another,
And even the teachings of great sages are confusing.
Even if one is fortunate to meet a sage,
 one's mind is not quite willing.
And even if one is willing to study the sublime truth,
 it doesn't seem to be easy.
Close to the shade of the fleeting clouds beyond is the lonely shore,
And the crying of the cuckoo seems to quicken my graying hair.
Cutting off everything, even emptiness and non-emptiness,
I am envious of the angler down by the river with his broad hat on.

³⁴ The warm and clear day of the seventh of March by the lunar calendar. It is supposed to be the best time of year. *Cheong* (淸) literally means clear, and *myeong* (明) means bright.

A Reply to Yu Jingu³⁵ in Seoul
from Uiwon Where I am Staying

A friend I made from thousands of miles away
spent the end of the year alone.
Every mountain, small and great, is enjoying the autumnal season,
yet I stayed in a small arbor.
My knapsack is empty, and there is neither a place to stay
nor anything to eat,
And even tramps have their class, so we sleep apart.
There are countless forests and springs of great beauty,
And you are free to think whatever you please.
What is so great about the way of the normal life?
I would rather enjoy my life here as I please.

A Reply to Song Euijing from Uiwon
Where I am Staying

Woodcutters, anglers, and old people are coming
through the bush-wood gate in a line,
And travelers going to the Ui castle bustle around.

³⁵ The master borrowed a book from him.

Given the discussions for a half a day that we've shared
about truth and the sad stories of what I have gone through,
It seems that we are of the same mind.
What quietude here in the mid-day in this empty house,
And I do not see any flowers in the icy secluded place as of yet.
You do not seem happy about our parting,
Yet I hope that you would manage your karma
and your vows well.

A Reply to Han Haksun

The willows look beautiful on the bank, and the clouds are
emerging from the river,
The traveler returning to Changpyeong stops
at the bookstore.
It is a clear day, but the high mountain peak is
in the rainy clouds,
And it is cool in the late spring forest,
as if it were already autumn.
It is a great joy to hear a line of poetry,
And although it is not quite enough,

drinks are good to forgo worries.
Just sitting in the stone cave in the mountain without studying
Would not help one enter the heavenly gate.

A Reply to Jang Sayun

He is a celebrated writer and upright in his manners,
And lives in the deep misty clouds
 where hermits are likely to dwell.
Tramps could have a hard time living in the mundane world,
But what is the reason for a celebrated man to live
 in such a lonely place?
The riverside is full of willow blossoms,
And the pleasant breezes of the pines blow into the study.
We have not met for long, but it seems that
 we have known each other for some time.
I could hardly resist the sad thoughts of home.

A Reply to Kim Suho

I am living beyond the material world seeking
the cranes and clouds,
And have left the noisy mundane world far behind.
Do you know where the fascinating and sublime place is,
The place where sages live?
The birds are singing in the quietude of the deep mountain
And the water in the creek is in a great commotion,
but the white heron is at ease.
I wish I could sing, and clear the thoughts in my heart,
but it only gives me more pain to express them all,
So I lean against the window, forgetting the deepening night.

A Reply to Pak Yeongsang

When I arrived at Sinpyeong, it was already evening,
And the teacher's place at the high elevation was
in the white clouds.
He was well read in the classics of the sages,
And he was also a well-known man of letters.

The ridges in the field by the river were neat and tidy,
And the slanting stone embankment was almost
at the eaves of the house.
It is hard to meet a personage of such a mind,
and I wish we could have met before.
So how could I express my heavy heart as I
leave him behind for the border town far away?

Spending Some Time at Onam Temple

The rise and fall of the world is like a dispersing wind,
And the way to Onam Temple is open to all directions.
I spent March willy-nilly in a drunken state,
And heaven seems like something I have seen in a picture.
Infinitely bright are the dusky clouds flitting through the sky,
And the timeless falling flowers of rain look crimson
in the pavilion.
How could we induce all the sentient beings in the sea of delusion
to the realm of truth to realize that form is empty?

A Reply to Kim Eungsam at the Village School in Songpyeong Village

As if the remote and infinite mind of sad thoughts
 had burst open,
The beauty of Songpyeong village looks beautiful, like pictures.
The heat waves glow in the woods in the balmy weather,
And all kinds of birds fly into the desolate mountains
 when spring comes.
This coarse attire is my trademark style,
And your skill on the harp in the locked room is just amazing.
The heartwarming mutual consolation of friends
Releases worries of worldly affairs for a spell.

A Reply to Both Kim Yeong-hang and Kim Damyeo

All the sad thoughts of this wandering wayfarer
Have vanished in an instant at this old castle
 in the borderlands.
I have newly gained the heart of an old friend,
And even though the fragrance of the flower is gone,
 the shady nook is still green.

What kind of phrase could capture the landscape
that attracts the eyes?

Let's have another drink to the leisurely mind
that comes with our gray hairs.

Do I hear an elegant song from afar?

I forgot coming and going in the heavenly realm
of non-doing.

Climb to Jabuk Temple with Friends

1

How friendly are the scenes of the woodcutters
and the traces of the hermit

At the entrance of the temple where flowers are falling
like rain.

(It seems that a tiger might rush out at any moment),

Yet I hung my walking-stick on the pine-tree-rock

And my garment on the wall of lotus flowers,
and then saw the birds flying in the sky.

The mind of moon is reflected coolly in the realm of purity,

And what is this gray hair that intrudes at the junction

of the path?

Both of us are wandering in the sea of suffering,
Then when shall we attain the truth of Vulture Peak?³⁶

2

The reason for climbing mountains, even at an old age,
Is to enjoy some time with the hermit at Ongnan pavilion.

I thought you were a crane composing a verse
in the borderlands,

And the reason why I am visiting the temple
in Fragrant Mountain is that I am a monk.

Is there any sentient being that has awakened
in the mundane world?

The moon has put the Dharma seal on the thousand rivers,
and surely deserves to transmit the lamp of the Buddha.

It is now the scorching time of summer,
And I wish the grace of the clouds could spread everywhere.

³⁶ This is the site where the Buddha was said to have given many of his Dharma discourses.

A Reply to Lee Taeryong from Uiwon
Where I am Staying

1

How many years have I lived in this border area
with a walking-stick and a pair of grass shoes?
It is a shame for a man to live without leaving a name.
How many times have I dreamt the dream of a sea-gull
on the sandy blue waves?
How many times have I heard the singing of the cuckoo?
The fields of mulberry and the hemp of saints are peaceful
in the misty rain,
And the wise man on the wooden couch is welcoming the guest.
The worldly affairs have come to rest
and so are the personal affairs,
And the seasoned green is on the table
and the wine is full in the cup.

2

I examined the prose and poetry of both the ancient
and the modern ages of the East and West,
And found them all to be the pure works of great scholars.

The lonely cranes never decay unmindful of time,
And the dust of the crazy world can never contaminate
the noble world of beauty.
The green vines of arrowroot are reflecting the mind of the moon,
And the breeze of the weeping willow is passing tenderly over my face.
I sat upright all day without minding worldly affairs,
And I hear the occasional songs of the fisherman in the sunset.

Replies to Friends

You are looking for Hyeran and so am I,
And such is the friendship we have in this world.
So fine is the piece of jade to carve a vessel,
And the bush warblers in the valley are calling each other,
flying from branch to branch.
The melodies of song and flute by the river in the sunset
are like part of a painting,
And I am enjoying the verses in the pavilion
in the clouds of smoke.
No cares could avail the fate of time,
And let us enjoy, instead, the beauty of the landscape.

A Reply to Kim Yongseon

Even the crazy world could not tarnish the green moss,
And I am enjoying the whole day, drunken with the landscape
in the fog.
I folded my wings knowing that I am not cut out for anything,
But what is the reason for you locking yourself in?
Wine is brewing in the deep mountain and the bush warblers are
singing beautiful songs,
As rain falls on the lane lined with willows.
The rise and fall of our life is but a vain dream,
How could we stay awake together, untarnished and pure?

Climbing to the Northern Gate with Friends

I was engrossed with myriad worries,
And it was very fortunate to meet good friends
who helped me forget my anxieties for a while.
So quiet is the shade of the cloud in the sky over the lonely castle,
And the pleasant sounds of the river in May are heard
even within the cave in the rock.
Where the nobles are playing, there must be elegance and wine,

And the fatigued wayfarer climbs up to the pavilion
to join the party, not minding his shabby attire.
So beautiful is the scene of the sunset with the dense branches
of the willow,
That I lost myself enjoying the scenery.

At the Scene of the Exposition

Let the changeful world go its way,
What I want is to forget the wrangles of the world with you.
The old tree sways in the wind in the hazy sunset,
And the thunder is heard in the green mountain in the rain.
The elder brother is returning home with the cow and
an ax on the shoulder,
And the younger brother is also returning home
with the fishing rod and net.
So diverse are the ways of the recluse,
And it is shameful that I have not cast off this dirt as yet.

At the Thatched Hut with Hae-am

1

At the cool thatched hut in the thin smoke,

He was standing with fish at his waist and a deer
on the shoulder.

Learning letters and sword with a grand aspiration
is but a dream.

And neither sobriety nor drunkenness could stop hair from graying.

The sunset is leaning against the branches of the tree
in the great ranges of green mountains,

And the sandy river, full of green grass, is flowing its winding course.

Under the infinite sky,

A wanderer has a mind of abiding with a hermit
in the woods for a while.

2

You are good at verse and painting, in addition to your nobility,
And I am sure you will be an outstanding personage
of the northwest.

The water flowing in front of the gate is
as clean as a mirror,

And I regard success in the fleeting world
as light as a piece of silk.
The wild greens on the table are better than meat,
And as I have cool spring water, there is no need to boil tea.
Other than taming the monkey and the crane,
All the talk is about the farming in the next village.

3

How could I accurately express the entire beauty of the landscape
Of the valley, the peaks, the marsh wind, and the rapids.
The poets visit the dales when flowers bloom,
And when the picnicking people leave the mountain peak,
birds start their banquet.
I wash my feet in the pond where the weeping willows
are hanging down,
And then walk on the rocks adorned with arrowroots.
I hear the ringing wind of the crushing jade,
And when I'm free, this is my favorite hobby.

Napping

Whoever thought of unpacking the traveling outfit
at such an arbor?

Sometimes, it was a grand pavilion or canopy
where I spent my time.

Every landscape I see and hear in the borderlands
has changed.

And only mosquitoes and bed bugs thrive
in the devastated village.

It is not the faults of the master and student to be poor,
And if there is any offence, it is the ardent desire to learn
the drunkenness of the sage Ruan Ji.³⁷

I turned into a butterfly in my nap forevermore,
And frolicked in my dream in the fragrance of the
flowers and willows.

³⁷ Ruan Ji (阮籍) (210-263 CE) was an eccentric Chinese poet famous for his fellowship with the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. He wrote poems about seeking refuge from the world through poetry and wine.

Exercise on a Rhyme of Kim Siseup³⁸

Gentleman Siseup, an odd duck and a man of note
in the world, opened a private school,
And birds are frequenting to warn the teacher of his future.
The moon of Mt. Myohyang is illuminating every home,
And a disruption of clouds at the Yalu River joins
at the observation tower.
Your life-long treasures were verses and firm principle,
And a wanderer of the world is in deep thought
with a cup in his hand.
The great project of the sage is recorded in the book,
And one should study hard even when one is young.

Spending a Night with Hae-am

He has good taste for potted plants in the study,

³⁸ A great 15th century scholar of the Joseon Dynasty who resigned his high government post in protest against the usurpation of the throne by King Sejo, who put his nephew Danjong, the legitimate claimant to the crown, to death. He spent the rest of his life wandering around the country wearing Buddhist robes and composing poetry.

And even the sound of the running water is courteous,
so to match the master attired in half sleeve.
From the experiences of this old man, I gather that
the mind of a human is as precarious as the ladder,
And although we know what the teachings of the sages are,
time flies like a running horse.
There is no way to express the landscapes of nature,
And no heaven and earth could stop the fleeting time.
I am very much indebted to the master,
And how could I express my thoughts to forget
the impermanence of the world?

Visiting the Summer House of Unpa³⁹

It must be the grace of heaven that allows us to meet,
You adorned with aromatic hair and beautiful hairpieces.
Amid the constant rain from the clouds over the Yang tower,
The seagulls of Nak harbor fly up high as dragons.
The brown leaves and desolate woods mean it is already

³⁹ Unpa is the name of a *gisaeng*, women learned in music and verse who performed in the service of men.

late summer,
And a thin smoke floats by the old castle like flowing water.
I emptied the wine glass to toast our reluctant parting,
And it will be my lasting memory in this fleeting world.

A Drink on Jungbok⁴⁰ at the Study of Gentleman Siseup

We are having a drink by the railing on a clear summer day,
How could the town officials know about this meeting
of the hermits?
Our casual meeting is like clear water,
Which could be compared to the mind drunken
with a fragrant orchid.
Casting our writing in the wine pot is fitting in this study,
And what delicacies are the rare wild greens
and the young steamed chicken on the table.
Perhaps tilling the field and studying could be done
well together,

⁴⁰ One of the three summer seasonal terms, along with *chobok* and *malbok*, this day is considered the mid-point and marks the middle of the hottest stretch of summer.

And I wish I could stay here with you peacefully.

At Geumcheon Pavilion

The demolished wall and decayed rafters of the pavilion
Constructed by an ancient man show the fleeting nature
of things.

If everything is like wind, what is true reality?

One hundred years is like floating water,
and life is but a transient cloud in the sky.

Birds are singing with their beautiful voices in the mountain,
And heedless clouds are floating through the branches.

My friend Hae-am owns an odd painting,

And, reclining on a wooden pillow,

I appreciate forgetting the heaviness of my mind.

A Drink at Ilhae⁴¹ Hall

The lofty way of life never yields, even to the peaks
of the mountain,
Yet falling flowers yield themselves to the floating water.
Who can ever tell the noble personality hidden in the dust,
And the pine tree is ever green even in the snow.
Newly purchased wine in the pot gives off the aroma of flowers,
The bookshelf offers pearls of wisdom that ripen and fall like raindrops.
The master of the house knows how to treat his guests,
And he is too generous, even to a tramp like me.

Visiting Mr. Pak's House

It is my wish to forget about the ups and downs of the world
and spend the time drinking,
Yet the chrysanthemum is in full bloom under
the rock and the maple tree at the old castle.
By chance, a friend visited me from far away,

⁴¹ This is the pen name of Kim Bak-eon, the master of the house.

And it is lonesome to look out at the field in the autumn.
The window by the tree is closed tight,
And the man with his animals crosses the bridge
 returning home in the sunset.
It is confusing to think about the causal conditions
 of the mundane world,
And I wonder if there is any place in the green mountain
 where I can doze off.

Sitting Up at Night

I lived ten years in Gangju wearing a piece of tattered garments,
Begging at the doors of the lonely village covered with snow.
My present circumstance is like a lame donkey
 that cannot run away,
And my mind is like a stupid bird that cannot fly.
Every drinking place is friendly to me,
 regardless of its class,
And what if the window and lamp are small or large?
I wonder what it is that Confucius learned.

Fu Xi's⁴² Daoist *Yi Jing* also ends in trimeter.

A View from Inpung Pavilion

The autumnal view from the pavilion by the river is

as beautiful as silk,

And this is the favorite place of high government officials.

The weeping willow sways by the sailing boat,

And the melody of the bamboo flute is

just as that of the green mountain.

When I think of the spirit of the devastated old town,

It was the indignation of one person that incited the incident.

Precious stones and sumptuous meals are not real treasures,

Praise good politics and singing as the best.

The South Gate Pavilion

I would like to enjoy the songs of the bush warbler

⁴² Fu Xi (伏羲) is noted as the first of the mystical three sovereigns of China and is credited with creating the *Yi Jing* (易經).

From the green forest in the brilliant sun
at the south gate summer pavilion.
A small stone monument lies desolately in the wild grass,
And the vines are intertwined on the branches of the trees.
This old fortress has been here for a thousand years,
And it makes me think more about our fleeting life.
The color of the river is like that of the beautiful silk
and the mountain is in the dusk,
And it seems there is no end to our thoughts
as we grab some glasses of wine.

Climb to the South Gate Pavilion

1

The cloud of fog by the river is extended like a picture,
And it is pleasant to recline against the railing
with nothing to do.
I see a few cottages in the deep forest,
And how pleasant it is to look at the peaks of the mountain
after the rain.
How emotional it is to think of the old pavilion

that has suffered countless hardships,
And it impels the wayfarer to empty more glasses of wine.
The sleeping grave seems to understand the sad thoughts
of the wayfarer,
And from somewhere I hear a song of falling plums.

2

If your voice is stifled when reciting a verse,
it must be because there is no fun in it,
But if you can change your mind,
you can be like an innocent child.
My eyes are dim and the village in the distance is
obstructed by trees,
And I saw a short walking stick and half of the demolished wall
of the castle that was turned into a patch of dirt.
The swallows are flying away along the mountain
on the clear day,
And the evening smoke in the field hangs on the trees.
Meeting my old acquaintance Hyangpa again
Reminds me of good karma.

The Soldier's Wife

The moon is rising over the green bamboo forest
in the hills behind the village,
But the soldier's wife does not even know his whereabouts
and stays awake all night.
Their meeting was fortunate, but now she is full of worries,
And her love for her husband prevails even thousands of deaths.
The candle in the bedroom is still burning,
but the pillow next to hers is vacant.
So what is the use of makeup and the bright mirror?
Happy are the doves and swallows
That return to their young with joyful songs.

Yahak Village

When I returned to Seongdong village after spending some time
with friends,
The sun was hung up at mid-day in front of the
night school village.
The vegetables in the kitchen garden are fresh with the rainfall

from the previous night,
And the crops in the field are swaying in the wind.
The autumnal rain is sleeping in the grass with no work to do,
And when the showers stopped falling,
the swallows were flying in the blue sky.
The courteous old folks of the village are
Treating the guest with all kinds of fruit.

At the North Pavilion

Let heaven take on the worries of our lives,
Though the hair of the libertine has grown gray.
The grand statues are the thousands of mountain ranges,
And the river floating down for miles never returns.
The tree branches sway by the bridge that arose
from the corner of the stupa,
And the light smoke rises over the overlapping roof tiles.
Relatives from afar and friendly neighbors are coming,
And I can sense this is certainly a place of refined tastes.

At the Pavilion of Sosan Garden

I am full of confidence lingering on the bench,
And thought it is too early for the bush warbler,
 it is nice to hear the songs of swallows.
The long branches of the spindle tree are forming
 a green covering,
And the strange flowers are also forming a pile of gold.
The cares of life are the tramp's good friends,
And an arbor is a good place for the man who loves to live
 a secluded life.
I am grateful for the hospitality of drinking partners
Like Dong-eun and the travelers who have visited this wandering
wayfarer.

Climb to Mangmi Arbor

The setting sun is casting its light around the arbor,
And the grass around the railing by the sandy spot
 of the river looks green.
The Seong-ui tower is girdled around like a belt,

And the colorful clouds are gathering from somewhere
in the direction of Bongnae and Yeongju.
All sorts of crops are ripening in the bright fields of autumn,
And the sound of cloth being beaten smooth is heard from every home.
Few know the true joys and cares of the world,
And, alas, so few are the wise men in the world.

The Game of Baduk⁴³

It is more enjoyable than reading books,
And the enjoyment is not only for the four old sages
of Mt. Shang.⁴⁴
The leisurely movement of the foot soldiers
capturing the enemy territory is like cranes,
And all the captured fish disappear when the siege is crushed.
Placing the stones one at a time with the tip of the finger
is just like the landing of the wild goose,

⁴³ This game that uses white and black stones is more commonly known in the west by its Japanese name, *Go*.

⁴⁴ This is a famous bit of folklore from the Chinese classic. Four old sages were playing baduk (Ch: weiqi) unmindful of the passage of time and the decay of the handle of an ax, a kind of Chinese version of "Rip Van Winkle."

And the sound of placing the stones is just like the raindrops
in the night.

Ingenious are its strategies and schemes,

And there is no game that surpasses it for passing the summer.

Climb to Inpung Pavilion

The writing skill is still alive even in my old age,

And I wish I could construct a great rainbow and hook
it onto infinite space.

The crane that witnessed the world's many transformations
has come back,

And I found the fish that was once tumbling in the West Sea.

Every grain of rice in the field is ripening,

Yet the mild wind prevents the spell of rainy weather
from clearing.

Leaning against the railing of the great precipice,

I think of how we can find a peaceful place
where people can live.

The Swallows

The drum of the temple sounds in the pure shade of the trees,
And the swallows are flying in the beautiful sky.
Folks love the skill of the swallow building their nests with the dirt
they carry in their mouths,
And their adept flying skill knows no hindrance.
The drizzle falling on the eaves enlivens the lush forest of summer,
And the pleasant breeze on the hill of the village
smacks of autumn.
The people who forsake righteousness and gratitude
should feel shameful,
Because even the birds remember their duty
of visiting the homes of their old masters.

The Insects' Song

The sound of insects singing is everywhere,
In the fields, on the desk, in the window,
and throughout all creation is their song.
Could the maple bush and the mild breeze be the reason

For the mournful songs of the insects in the house
 where the moon is shining?
It must be the lamentation of the widow, longing
 for her lover,
Or the longing of the wayfarer in his dream
 for his hometown.
How can there not be sorrowful lamentation in this fleeting world?
Sorrowful lamentations are indeed the most unforgettable.

Climbing to Geoyeon Arbor in the Rain

I climbed slowly to the small Geoyeon arbor,
And the clear spring water issuing from the chasm
 of the rock was very refreshing.
The cock's cry is heard in the ruins of the castle
 covered with wild grass,
And the pine forest is more green after the day-long rain.
Someone wanted to visit the East Sea at this time,
Though it is not easy to sober up once you get drunk in the mountain.
The poetry and stories of the wayfarer were so serious
That I forgot the gray whiskers of the mundane world.

Climbing to East Pavilion on Cheongmyeong⁴⁵

I got drunk in the west and then recited verse
in the east when sober,
The diverse moods seem in good harmony.
The pleasant green field lies beyond the long stretch of the river,
And the vivid aspect of the village is drenched
in the drizzling rain.
Gray are the whiskers of the wayfarer in the pavilion
who is from afar,
And crimson is the wineglass with which to bow
to the graves of thousands of households.
Assembling to disperse are the daily affairs of the fleeting world,
And it is best to live with the clouds and the winds.

In the North Pavilion

The scorching summer heat of August is glowing,

⁴⁵ See footnote 34.

Yet it is cool and pleasant in the lofty North Pavilion.
The shadow of the mountain in the sunset is green
and so is the castle,
And the risen water of the river is muddy after the rain.
My strength is not as it used to be, able to catch the tiger,
And what is so precious about one's writing skill,
which is but a device to find the lost sheep at the crossroad?
You are the tramp of the world who is waving the gray hair
before the wine cask,
And there is no merit in the hard labor of the dogs and the horses,
about which I am ungrateful to the Royal Order.

At Yuksam Arbor (I)

I climbed Yuksam arbor again this morning,
And saw that rain has stopped and the water under the bridge
has risen.
The shadow of the cloud passing by the railing resembles
an image of the world,
And the wind in the pines is like the chilling sound of tides.
So hard was the life in the sea of suffering,

And when I got up to the hermit mountain,

I found it to be not as far as I thought.

As if the heavenly god understood the joys of the frolicking people,

He sends rain to create the cloud of fog.

The Touch-me-not

The beautiful flower must have found good company in the moss,

Rare is the phoenix, and the Daoist hermit as well.

The misty rain is falling on the inner bed chamber,

And the quietude screened by the flower shade

is even more beautiful.

Your kindly mind and graceful figure is a piece of poetry,

So many times have the maidens dyed

their delicate fingers crimson and got frightened at the loom.

I love the lotus flower, the chrysanthemum, and the lily,

But how could anyone imagine your incomparable beauty?

At Yuksam Arbor (II)

After a short rainy spell, I visited the arbor again.
The place was lonesome, though it was very pleasant,
and a poetic sentiment flits across my mind.
The ancient border of the country and the floating sound
of the river are the same as ever,
And so is the breeze through the pines in the deep forest.
So mournful are the songs of the insects in the infinite sky
of autumn,
And the wayfarer roving in the northwest is penniless.
The sunset is hidden in the dusk and the wine casket
is also empty,
Such is the sentiment of this mind in this world of worries.

At Myeon-ga Arbor

All of my life, I roved around the country among the rivers and lakes,
But I have not seen a landscape so beautiful before.
The mountain in the rain at dusk looks greener
at the eaves,

And so gorgeous are the flowers and the tiny grass on the railing.
Concerns for the fate of the country arise after a few drinks,
Yet there is no way to appease the homesickness
 of a rover thousands of miles away from home.
I thought it was spring when I met the noble scholars
 at the border town,
And all of a sudden I realized it is already autumn.

Spending Time at the Yongpo Festival

The Dongno River flows gently in the sunset,
And I hear the rainfall at the village school
 and the crowing of the cock.
The field is obstructed by the thick foliage of the trees,
 and I can smell the fragrance of ripening rice,
As the shadows of the swallows carrying dirt in their mouths
 to build their nests are flying low.
The town seems too stuffy for the man sick at heart
 from heavy drink,
So he joined the Byeong-na festival, hand in hand with friends.
We laughed away all our worries, leaning against the railing,

And the feast could be compared to the idyllic life
in the Tiger Gorge.⁴⁶

To Kim Bak-eon

He was born in the bliss of a former life,
Yet he is poor and time has not been favorable to him.
He is a celebrated scholar with an intrepid taste for elegance
In addition to being a gentleman of fine manners.
How the dragon living in the great sea can be attached
to the fins of the past,
And the roots of the divine medicinal herb in the mountain
go deep into the ground.
I have wandered around here for eight years,
And I sincerely wish your household to be happy and peaceful.

⁴⁶ There is a famous Chinese folktale about a bucolic life within the Tiger Gorge.

To Kim Sujang

I have stayed in this mountain for four months,
and it is already autumn,
And I have been teaching students without a subject,
yet, all I have gotten in return are these long whiskers.
So grateful was I for the letter from a friend asking how I was faring,
That I feel as light as a feather.
The bright moon reflects the place through the woods
where the wayfarer sits,
And the white cloud is reflected on the letters
of the folding screen through the water.
The leaves are falling in a pile
and the chrysanthemum is already withered.
How many times have I longed for such old sentiments
gazing upon the rural landscape?

To Song Namha Whom I Met by Accident

1

The weather in the city is in a cloud of sandy dust,

And a man at the outskirts of the spacious ruins of the castle
is already old with gray hair.

I am a wayfarer, fleeting clouds and flowing water,
And you are the house on the green mountain
in fair weather.

Your comely features are that of the crane,
And your admirable writing is the flower on silk.
Come to think of it, life is originally but a dream,
Shall we then recite a verse and sing as we enjoy a big drink?

2

The spring landscape of the dark blue river
And the green mountains afar are like a bit of
a painting of the grass hut of the hermit.
How can I decline your cup of wine?
And as a lover of literary art, you must be free from cares.
The wayfarer like a cloud thousands of miles away from home,
Is wandering around the castle in the borderlands.
Sad thoughts are as bright as the moon,
and verses as beautiful as jade.
It must be the heavenly beings who enjoy themselves here
on earth.

Parting with Manudang, the High Priest of Cheong-am Temple

The cricket is singing in the raining night
at Byeoksan pavilion,
And I am thinking of my hometown.
Everything is but a fleeting cloud and so is truth,
And life is but a duckweed and ever floating water.
I did not want to be obligatory so I am late again today;
How many years have we been meeting
without any aim and then parting?
It is sad to think about the growing gray hair,
but it is moreso when we think about parting,
And what would I do when you depart?



Saryuk-eon⁴⁷

1

Today is Cheongmyeong⁴⁸
And I think I should go out and play.
But where?
What perspective shall I see
Through the ridge of the pine tree forest?
The endless landscape is before us,
 bright and serene,
Where rain has stopped
And no cloud is in the sky.
When a spontaneous idea pops up,

⁴⁷ Poetry written with Chinese characters that is composed of four or six characters per line.

⁴⁸ See footnote 34.

The leisurely mind grows. Endless are the three spheres of the cosmos,
So, where shall I turn my head?
The sun is setting over the green mountain,
And the blue sea is stretched out far and wide.

2

Who is right and who is in the wrong?
They are all mumbled talk in one's sleep.
At the graveyard,
Can anyone distinguish who is who?

3

The third and fourth sons of Mr. Jang and Mr. Lee died,
And I shall be like them.
All is a dream when the wind stops and the fire dies,
Yet, they fight over greed and anger, mine and yours.

4

You take up one and you gain two,
And that is what it should be.
Even if you turn the establishment upside down,
Subjugation will be the same.

Create the elixir of life
Out of the dust of wind.
Even if you can do such a thing
And attain an ease of life and fame,
That is but a trick
To hide the sky with the palm of the hand.
If you step upon the frost, it will become ice,
And you should try your best to concentrate your mind on one point.
Even if the dirty water overflows,
It could never dampen the sky.
These two subjects are
To show the nature of things.
Though that seems to be true,
It is the crying of a dead cock.
When simplicity loses its essence,
Nothing will avail from the start.
Look at the young bird that lost its ear to a knife,
People might take a duck for a marvelous bird.
I tell you, mastermind,
No one can deceive the wise man.

5

The mountains and the water are green as can be,
And there is a pleasant wind and white clouds floating in the sky.
I have abandoned the world, saying funny things upon the rock,
What more could I expect?

6

In truth, the immaculate Buddha without any worldly cares
Cries on the tree in the bright moonlight.
And it is only you who speaks of east and west
At night when it is quiet and there is no one around.

7

Hey you, phrase!⁴⁹ You have no future.
Truth has no confines, like empty space.
He might not wish to believe it,
But how could the deaf hear?
There is nothing that is not right
At Cheonjang monastery.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ "Phrase" here must mean words, letters, and conceptual reasoning in general.

⁵⁰ This monastery is where Seon Master Gyeongheo and his elder brother, also a monk, once lived with their mother.

Of all that pervades heaven and earth
There is no discrimination and nothing that is not right,
And the Four Noble Truths and Six Paramitas
Abide in the radiance of wisdom.
As there is no foundation for truth,
The mountains, water, and earth themselves are truth
as they are,
And there is no use for wisdom.
There is no use for wisdom
Where there are no arguments of right and wrong,
Between the mountains and the waters.
The blow of a cudgel and a shout!⁵¹
You are the unforgivable enemies
who strike at the heavens.
I see a sage
On Vulture Peak today.

⁵¹ These are the famous pedagogical tactics that Seon masters use to provoke their disciples to renounce rational methods so as to achieve ultimate enlightenment.

II. Songs



The Song of Enlightenment

There is no one around,
And to whom shall I transmit this robe and bowl?
To whom shall I transmit this robe and bowl?
There is no one around.

Flowers are in full bloom and birds are singing
In the mountains in spring,
And brilliant and pleasant are the autumnal moon and wind.
How many times I sang the song of non-birth
In such beautiful weather.
Yet there is no one to appreciate it.
Is it a sign of the times of this world or is it our fate? I wonder.

The brilliant hues of the mountain are
The eyes of Manjusri Bodhisattva, the guardian of wisdom,

And the ringing sounds of water are
The ears of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara,
The savior with a thousand eyes and hands.
The ox herder is Samantabhadra, the guardian of the law,
And the third and the fourth sons of Mr. Jang
And Mr. Lee are originally Vairochana Buddha,
The Buddha of cosmic energy.

They speak of Buddha and Patriarchs,
And talk about the doctrinal teachings and Seon.
But is it really necessary to distinguish one from the other?
The stone-man is playing the flute
And the wooden horse is dozing.

Without knowing their true original nature, the common people say
"I am not cut out to be the sage."
Alas, such people can never be more than the dregs of Hell.

When I look back on my previous lives,
I can clearly see that I was wandering with great pain
For so long amidst the Four Modes of Birth:
Andaja, born from the egg or egg-born;

Jarayuja, born from the womb or womb-born;
Samsvedaja, born out of moisture or moisture-born;
Aupapaduka, spontaneously-born or born by transformation.

I was also wandering in the Six Realm of Existence:
The human realm, the animal realm, the hell realm,
The realm of the hungry ghosts,
The realm of the Asuras, those jealous demi-gods or titans,
And the realm of the devas, or gods.
If they were also as such, how could I tell the people to bear their
suffering?

Fortunately, because of the previous good karma,
I was born a human, became a monk,
And, moreover, attained enlightenment.
Therefore, there is nothing amiss in the four difficult attainments:
The difficulty of encountering the Buddha's teaching,
The difficulty of discourse, the difficulty of listening to the discourse,
And the difficulty of believing and retaining the Dharma.

Someone said in passing,
"Even if you become a cow, you would have no nostrils,"

And upon hearing that joke,
I attained sudden enlightenment
And realized the emptiness of name and form,
And in that quietude of emptiness was the illuminating light.
And ever since, I have attained thousands
Of enlightenments from every sound heard,
And before me was the land of Dharmakaya,
The Dharma-body, and behind me was the land of diamond.

The Four Great Elements and Five Aggregates are
None other than the immaculate Dharma-body,
And the Land of Bliss is none other than a combination
Of the Hell of Boiling Metal and the Hell of Ice and Cold,
And the Great Sea of the Flower Treasury is
None other than the Hill and Forest of Swords
In the Hell in the Land of Dharma nature,
And the pile of decayed manure and night soil is
None other than the Land of Thousands of Cosmos,
And the orifice of ants, and the eyebrows of mosquitoes are
None other than the Three Bodies of Buddha and the Four Wisdoms,
And the great space and the whole universe are
None other than eternal reality as they are.

Isn't this all quite strange and odd?

Chilly are the winds in the pine forest
And all around are the green mountains,
The bright autumnal moon seems like the water of the sky.
The great employments are the works of yellow flowers,
The green bamboo, the songs of bush warblers,
And the chirping of swallows.
No high post of the mundane world could make them do their job.
They are the waves on the ground
And the seals of jade on the zenith.

It is odd. The countless Buddhas
And Patriarchs appear in the eyeballs of the skull,
And the plants and roof tiles are
None other than the Sutras of Avatamsaka,
The Flower Adornment, and Saddharmapundarika, the Lotus.

As I always said, coming and going,
Sitting and lying down are true reality,
And there are neither Buddha nor sentient beings.
What I am saying is true

And there is no difference between hell and heaven.
They are all the workings of our mind,
And the millions of Dharma speeches
And their infinite meanings are but lotus flowers in a dream.

Where do we find two extremes, nihilism and eternalism,
And the three realms of past, present, and future?
There is no inside or outside, nothing
But the great illuminating light in the ten directions of the world.
In other words, I am the lord of Dharma,
Free of all doctrines and without any hindrance.

How could I be hindered by right and wrong?
Fools will think that I am talking nonsense
And will not believe or follow my words.
But anyone who believes my words without any doubt
Will attain the peace of mind and wisdom of the way of heaven.

I would like to give a bit of advice to the people of the world,
That once we lose our body,
It is almost impossible to be reborn a human,
And there is no way to guarantee the life of a fleeting cloud.

It is like a blind donkey trusting only its feet
Without knowing the dangers that wait ahead.

There is nothing that is trustworthy in this world.
So why not come to me and learn the law of non-birth
And be a great person both in heaven and on earth?
The reason I am asking you again, out of compassion,
Is that I myself was once a wanderer like you.

Alas!

To whom shall I transmit this robe and bowl?

There is no one around.

There is no one around.

To whom shall I transmit this robe and bowl?

A gatha:

Upon hearing the words that there are no nostrils,
I awakened to realize that the whole universe is my own home.
On the path at the foot of Mt. Yeon-am in June,
An idler in the field is singing the song of idyllic peace.



The Ode of Searching for the Cow⁵² (I)

Seeking the Cow

What is the use of seeking for something that is originally
not there?

But the thing that you are seeking for is the preceptor
of Vairochana Buddha,

And it reveals the secrets to all the green mountains, the rivers,
And every song of the bush warbler and swallow. Tut!

⁵² The cow symbolizes the mind of enlightenment and this tale of the cow is a prominent teaching story in the history of Chan/Seon/Zen. The pictorial representation of this tale is found on the walls of many temples in Korea.

Finding the Traces of the Cow

All kinds of beautiful flowers are but a part

of the balmy spring,

And the most beautiful scene is the ripening yellow citrons

and oranges.

What a joy it is! Let's sing together.

As you have found the trace, forget the cow,

and you would be nearer to the Dao.

What a joy it is! Let's sing together.

There is an incense burner in the ancient shrine

and the clear river of autumn is flowing.

What a joy it is! Let's sing together.

Finding the Cow

Exclaiming a shout and saying,

"Even if sublime illumination may pervade

over the heaven and earth,

That is but a humble servant below the stone steps

and a device to deceive the phantoms,

And it is best to stop the ghost game.

Tell me again! What is it that you have seen?"

Shout!

Securing the Cow

You saw the cow and secured it,

But, alas, you have already fallen into the lesser vehicle.

The one who sees the cow but loses it, secures it,

And the one who sees the cow and secures it, falls into delusion
and loses it,

And the one who attains enlightenment will retain it forevermore,

And the one who is deluded and loses it,

Will never be able to attain it.

Is this not the right way to secure the cow? Is it not?

Striking the floor with the Dharma staff once, he says,

"There is no way to reap an armful of willow branches,

It is best to let them sway in the wind by the jade railing."

Feeding the Cow

Both good and evil arise from the mind,
And there is nothing to cultivate or cut off.
It is like passing by the village contaminated by poison.
One should not drink even a drop of water.

As there is not another mind in the mind,
There is no greed and lustful mind to cut off.
Look at the eyes of the dead man who struggled all his life.
They are all there, but they cannot see the way.
Tell me again, what is truth?
Nine times nine is eighty-one, but that is irrelevant.

Master Yongcheon practiced for forty years,
But his mind was always restless.
On the other hand,
Master Hyangrim attained enlightenment
By strenuous practice for forty years without distraction.
Oh, it is easy to obtain but hard to keep.

Moreover, one should not be satisfied with a small gain.

Instead, one should visit great masters to practice
Without intermission.

Riding Home on the Cow

I have been wandering through the six modes of existence
And the four kinds of birth for eons,
Experiencing everything, good and bad,
Yet there was not time enough to take even one step in my hometown.
Ha! Ha!

There is some flute music called the Gal-un.
So I tried it, and it is the spirit of Dongting Lake⁵³
And the melody of the green mountains.
Yet I dare say that you failed to go home.
Do you understand what I mean?
These are the words of the Seon Master Gyesim.

⁵³ This famous lake in China appears in the poems of many celebrated poets of ancient China.

Losing the Cow, Now All by Oneself

Let's have some sleep.

What is the use of bustling around?

I am all alone, but spring is here and the grass is green.

Today is like steaming a tumor with burning sagebrush.

Haven't you heard what he said?

You must give heaven a blow with a bludgeon.

Do you know why?

The reason is that it does not rain when we expect it,

And when we want clear skies, it rains.

That is why!

But why does it play such a trick?

I haven't been out for sometime,

And why is that?

I haven't looked back into my mind,

And why is that?

In this fleeting world,

I have no interest in the arguments about this and that.

And why is that?

I would not spare my eyebrows to help you understand.

There is no place to hide oneself

Whether you drop your head or raise your face.

The cloud is in the sky and the water is in the bottle.

Losing Both the Cow and the Person

"Siri soro moddaya jidaya sabaha,"⁵⁴

Which means, "picking the willow flower,

Picking the willow flower."

I have practiced for so long, but when it comes to this,

I am still in the dark and get confused, gaining no merit.

Do you understand what I mean?

In the frontier, absolute is the general's order,

And in the state, absolute is the king's decree.

Hal!

⁵⁴ This comes from the *Dharani of the Bodhisattva With a Thousand Hands and Eyes Who Regards the World's Sounds with Great Compassion*, a chant that is used in Mahayana practice.

Returning to the Root

Even though the crane's feet are long,
If anyone tries to cut them short, a problem arises,
And even though a duck's feet are short,
If anyone tries to extend them, a problem arises.

A bowl needs no handle, and a bamboo ladle is meant to leak.
In the Myeonju area, Buja (medicinal herb) bulbs abound,
And in the Byeongju area, iron ore abounds.
Everything loves its native place.
Provisions are plenty and so is the firewood,
And all the neighbors are plentiful and happy.
The lips blowing the fire under the Honam castle are pointed,
And the tongue that reads the book rolls in the mouth,
Such are the ways of the house of great fools and sages.
I have another line, but I will save it for tomorrow.

Teaching in the Market Place

The dream of the wooden-woman and the song of the stone-man;
These are the shadows of the Six Dusts,
Sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea.
Non-existence is the formless Buddha,
Then what is so precious about the highest head
of Vairochana Buddha?

After playing on the bank of green grass,
I am sleeping in the field of reeds.
Preaching in the market place with a sack on the back
And visiting the village ringing the hand bell
Should be the job of the monk who has mastered his practice.

Is it the same as when he was seeking
The cow wandering in the forest?
Anyone whose blood flows under the skin should think about it.



The Ode of Searching for the Cow (II)

Searching for the Cow

A poor fellow is searching for a cow while

Riding on a cow.

This is a futile task,

And I see the path of fragrant grass in the sunset.

Finding the Traces of the Cow

Monkeys and birds are longing for spring,

But they are in a sad mood

because they cannot find the old road.

Yet the secret is right there,

And the traces are clear in the batch of clouds.

Revealing the Whole Body

In the infinitude of antiquity, he once owned farms,
And one day a portion of the fields was cut through.
I once heard that the aroma of milk remained
In the cave of snow for ten thousand years.

Cultivation and Replenishment

I let the cow graze in the field for a long while.
Now it is hard to pull the reins.
Fortunately, my effort was not in vain,
And now I am able to reap in all the lands.

Returning Home at Will

There never was east nor west, inside or outside,

And I returned home at my will.

As for the flute with no holes,

It is too soon to play it well.

Losing the Cow, Now All by Oneself

I have finished the work of the bubble and lamp before the wind,

Then what truth do I have to seek again?

But I am putting up a notice at the main street of the metropolis

That I have not stopped hearing words.

Losing Both the Cow and the Person

I have not achieved peace and enlightenment yet,

But I have attained a small playing ball covered with fuzz.

The truth is nothing special.

The mountain is high and water flows by itself.

Preaching Among the Outlandish Beings

They put a horn and then fur on their heads,
And Master Deungtap says, "How woeful it is!"
This body, beyond the realm of the Buddha and Patriarchs,
Is busy tramping around the market place forevermore.



The Song of Meditation

All of a sudden, it came to my mind that everything is but a dream.
All the heroes and great people of the timeless ages are in their graves.
What is the use of prosperity and honor in the face of death?
Alas! My life is but a tiny dewdrop at the end of a blade of grass,
A feeble candlelight before the wind.

Buddha, the teacher of the three realms,⁵⁵ said in earnest,
"Without practice, there is no way to attain enlightenment
And Buddhahood, and to live an everlasting life in the Buddha-land
Beyond the wheel of birth and death."

The sublime teachings of Buddha have been transmitted down for ages

⁵⁵ In Buddhist cosmology, *samsara*, the world of life and death, is divided into three realms: desire, dominated by base desires for things like food and sex, which includes human beings; form, populated by beings who have transcended such desires; and the formless, where only spirit dwells.

But if one does not practice in this life,
It is almost impossible to be reborn a human and to practice.
Why then do you not practice now?

There are many ways to practice,
Let me just introduce them briefly.
What is this one thing that sits, stands, sees, listens,
Puts on clothes, takes meal, talks with the people,
And perceives clearly, whenever and wherever it is?

It is my mind without doubt,
My original face, and Buddha beyond delusion,
That sees, listens, stands, sleeps, works,
And travels thousands and thousands of miles
In a second with supernatural power and skill.

You must raise a doubt beyond doubt with the concentration of mind
Like a cat catching a mouse, and a thirsty man craving water.
You must concentrate your mind deeply, without cessation,
Going so far as to forget eating and sleeping, until you attain
enlightenment.
If you attain enlightenment forthwith,

That is your original face of Buddha, sublime and mysterious,
That is Amitabha and Shakyamuni Buddha,
Not young, not old, neither huge nor small,
The utmost bliss and illumination of the world
And the eternal bliss of Nirvana,
Where there is no wheel of birth and death,
Where there is neither heaven nor hell,
Which never had any beginning.

You should visit a great master, receive recognition,
Cut off all doubts, and leave all attachments behind,
And then live like an empty vessel according to one's causal conditions,
Liberate sentient beings you come to meet
So that you can repay the favor you owe the Buddha.

If you keep the precepts,
You will be born in the pure land of bliss.
You should also make a great vow to learn the teachings of Buddha,
You should look after ailing neighbors with great compassion,
And with a steady mind like a great mountain, you should regard
The empty bag of your body as if it was foam on a river.
How can you study if you spend all your time

Talking nonsense without realizing your hair growing ever grayer.
It is too late to lament when in pain on your deathbed.
It is too late to repent when this body of four elements,
The components of earth, water, fire,
And wind, begin to decay.
Have you ever imagined your life in such a miserable state?

There is no way to be born a human
If you simply wander along the path in the endless wheel of life.
The sages who kept their vows of ardent practice
Are now able to take leave of this mundane world
Whether standing or sitting,
And they are able either to live, abide, or die at their own will.
They are also able to exercise infinite manners of supernatural powers.
Shall we not then practice with all our heart with a single pointed mind?

Death never waits for us,
And every step could be our death step,
Like the steps of the cow that is being led to the slaughter house.
The ancients never wasted time in practice.
But how sluggish we are!
The ancients even punctured their thighs

With sharp points to stave off sleep.
But how sluggish we are!

The ancients stretched their legs and cried
When their practice was forced to halt at the end of the day.
But how sluggish we are!

We are leading drunken lives of retribution and ignorance.
Alas, what a pitiful life it is!
We are deaf to admonitions of good will,
And heedless to reprimand.
How could anyone straighten such careless and deluded minds,
Leading them along the right path?

It is foolish to be grasping and angry,
Foolish to fall into delusion and discriminate between things.
There is no one to blame but oneself.
The poor butterfly is flying headlong into the fire, not knowing
That it is its own death.

The mere observation of precepts and good conduct has no merit
If one does not cultivate the mind.

What a pity it is!

Read this admonition over and over again, day and night
And study hard without negligence and with little sleep.

Lay this song open on the desk with great devotion,
And reprove oneself every now and then.

All the waters of all the seas would be exhausted

If I were to write all that I wanted to say.

Although I am concluding my song,

Everyone should bear in mind what I have warned.

I still have more to say,

But I will tell you when a stone totem pole bears a child.



A Dirge

Listen to a song by an ascetic called Gyeongheo
Who has nothing else to do.
Listen carefully, people of the world.
There really is a cause and effect of good and evil.
Those who did evil in the previous lives
Are born as animals or creeping creatures in this life.
So pitiful are the hungry ghosts in the nether world.
Those who did good in the previous lives
Are now born, as sure as one's eyes, as the monarchs, the lords,
People of fortune and heroes.
So, we can foresee what we will be like,
Based on the good or evil deeds of the present life.
Even if your parents and brothers and sisters are alive,
And all your relatives are
As numerous as the stalks in the hemp field,

And the stacks of gold, silver, and jewels are
As high as the great mountain,
And though they may become emperors, the wheel-turning monarchs,⁵⁶
And enjoy infinite happiness,
So fleeting is our life that the one
Who was healthy in the morning
Might be in the nether world in the evening.
Our life of today may be like so,
But what will it be like tomorrow?
How pitiful is the cow that is being led to the slaughterhouse,
Whose every step is the death step.
Our life is but meager duckweed,
How long can it possibly be sustained?
It is like a flickering fire in a dream.
When breathing stops, that is the end of our life.
How can we know about the next life?
Even if we live a natural life span,
How many days and hours of peaceful living would there be
If we subtract the days of sickness,
Our hours asleep, the days and hours of misfortune,

⁵⁶ A *chakravartin*, the ideal political leader in ancient Buddhist thought, the leader who governs the land through “turning the wheel of dharma.”

Our maladies, anxieties, and endless illusions?
So vain is our life, yet we struggle in the eternal swamp
Of grasping, anger, and ideas of personality and ego,
Pride, jealousy, good and evil, deception, falsehood, insanity,
And infinite delusions, the list goes on and on.
We are ignorant to the fact that we will all fall into the three evil paths,⁵⁷
And live within the painful wheel of life for eons of eons.
How pitiful would that be?
Even if one is fortunate to enjoy the life
Of a human or heavenly being,
Impermanent are all defiled and conditioned things,
And thus there is no way to escape
The wheel of life of the six modes of existence.
Listen to what the Patriarch says:
"Even if you are in the hall of the King of the Devas,
If you waste time enjoying the bliss of the heavenly realm,
You would surely eventually fall into the steaming hell of fire.
I warn you.
Now, what should you do?"

⁵⁷ In Buddhist cosmology, there are six paths of birth, the first three being the "three evil paths", those of the hell denizens, hungry ghosts and animals. The other three are as humans, wrathful spirits, and heavenly beings.

Three spheres, the worlds of desire, form,
And formlessness, are but dreams.
There are no such things as birth and death
In the land of bliss and quietude,
In the land of purity, awakening, true suchness,
Buddha nature, and eternal joy of freedom without hindrance.
There are white clouds and flowing water everywhere.
Once you awaken, there will be no more worries.
You will see, hear, sit, lie down, eat,
Put clothes on, speak and sleep.
You may play as many tricks as the sands of the Ganges River,
And they are all true, as clear as a mirror,
And mysterious as magic.
There may be many possible paths to the Dao,
But the shortest way is the reflection of one's own mind.
You can never find good minds or evil minds,
Or boundless minds outside of the Four Great Elements,
Earth, water, fire, and wind.
You might find nothing there,
Yet such sublime wisdom is undoubtedly clear and unreserved.
How absurd it is!
A stone-man is playing the flute,

And the wooden-horse is playing the harp.
Everything is like a dream and forlorn,
And it is the best to forget the worldly affairs.
Watch the white cloud, the green mountains,
The mysterious rocks and the flowing waters of
The infinite landscapes of the autumn moon
And the balmy wind of spring.
Aren't they beautiful?
Fill the stomach with herbs and fruit,
And sleep just with the bit of clothes that you have on.
The natural arbor on the rock in the pine woods
And the melody of a harp are in great harmony
With the bright moon and the pleasant breeze.
The crying of a cuckoo left me
With no thought all day and night,
The guest of the earth with no thought,
And even the full moon is empty-minded as I am,
As is the pleasant breeze.
Faring with an empty mind,
And isn't he the true sage of non-doing
And the hero of the ascetics?
Where else do we seek the Buddha and Patriarchs?

Who can tell the ups and downs of life?
Who can foresee even an inch ahead in the fearful future of our life?
Absurd are the bubbles in foam and the candlelight before the wind.
True-suchness and Nirvana are but passing dreams.
Alas! Why then do the people of the world
Not enjoy such supreme happiness?
Instead, regardless of their social standing,
They are indulged in the deadly wine and carnal pleasure.
Instead, every one of them is avoiding supreme bliss
In the door of enlightenment.
Is it because there are no longer any virtuous minds?
Or is it because this is the last era
Of the decline of the illustrious doctrine?
There are no wise men to be found anywhere.
One must realize, immediately,
How fleeting and futile the affairs of the world are,
And then seek for the great master so as to find one's True self-nature,
And deliver all sentient beings from the Six Evil Paths.
Most of all, let us realize that there is neither you nor I,
Let us sing the song of the peaceful world
In the company of the white cow in the field,
With the music of the flute that has no holes

At the peach garden by the riverside of green grass.

Ril-ri-ri-ya, ril-ri-ri-ya, ri-ra-ri-!⁵⁸

⁵⁸ This is a commonly hummed tune that mimics the sound of a blue-bird.



The Song of Dharma Speech

Oh, people of the world,
Listen to my song.
Do not be careless, listen carefully.
Infinite is time and so is the universe,
Human beings are less than a tiny particle
In the great universe.

Forlorn is this bag of bones, the body.
Heat is the element of fire,
Movement is the element of wind,
Tears, snot, blood, urine, and pus-
They are all of the element of water.
The finger and toe nails, hair, meat, bones,
Teeth and all the hard stuff-
They are of the element of earth.

Let us look closely into our entrails.
All we find is that they are full of shit and piss.
We can also find them full of earthworms, tapeworms,
and countless microbes.
If we look on the outside of our body,
We find mosquitoes, fleas, lice, bed bugs,
And countless other offensive creatures attacking us.

Even if we live to be one hundred,
It is only thirty-six thousand five hundred days,
Which is but a fleeting moment.
If it is rare to live to seventy,
How many people can endure their lives for much longer?

A medium life span is from forty to fifty,
A short life span is from twenty to thirty,
And there are some who die in their infancy.
What a life! But we can do nothing about it.

Then once we die, we all must be guests of Hades.
Even if we live to seventy,
Think about the days we were asleep,

Days we were on the sickbed,
And the days of worries.
How many peaceful days were there to really enjoy?

The one who was robust in the morning,
Might get sick in the evening with great pain,
They might call in the physicians, but what could they do?
They might call in the witches, but what could they do?
They might call in the fortune tellers, but what could they do?
They might pray to the mountain and the river,
But what will their devotion and the guardian spirits
Of the mountains and rivers be able to do?

They might have wealth as high as the mountain,
They might have as many children and relatives
As the stalks in the hemp field,
They might have many consolations of teachers,
Students, and friends,
But nothing could save the life of a dying man.

They will cut out all your entrails,
They will cut off all your four limbs and joints.

All we have are the sighs and tears.
No parents, brothers or sisters could die for the dying man.
No gold and silver or wealth could save the dying man.

What meanings lie in all the ages of crowned heads,
What meanings lie in all the ages of brave men and women,
Prosperity and fame?
No accomplished writer or orator of the ages
Could do anything about death.
There are no words from the five hundred young boys and girls
Who have gone to the nether world.

Miserable is life, and no elixir could be of any use.
Who could defy death?
The moonlight shines dimly in Hades,
And desolate is the wind in the pines.
The only one offering condolences is the raven.
Who can awake from a life that's an empty dream?
So miserable and pitiful is this life.

The great teachings of the Buddha on the laws
Of the birthlessness and deathlessness of life are

As bright and clear as the sun and the moon.

The number of enlightened sages and eminent personages
Who attained Buddhahood in the infinite past is
As vast as the sands of the Ganges River.
Once you attain enlightenment,
There would be no more birth and death,
And there is no falsity in the words of Buddha.

I went into the mountain when young and studied hard until now,
Attained enlightenment by cutting off all doubts,
And it was like encountering a light in the dark,
It was like a hungry man encountering food,
It was like a thirsty man encountering water,
It was like an ailing man with a serious illness
Encountering an eminent physician.
How joyous and happy it was!

Listen to me with care, my friends,
And let us spread this Dharma song far and wide,
So that every being may attain Buddhahood
Beyond the wheel of birth and death.

This dead body of ours is but a delusive empty bag,
Yet within it is the living Buddha
That perceives, hears, sits, stands, eats, excretes, speaks,
And sometimes even laughs and gets angry,
And becoming a Buddha is none other than
Realizing the truth of this mind.

Let's then examine the ways to find the Buddha.
One should doubt and question, wherever and whenever one is,
Whether one is lying down or standing,
Whether one is eating, whether one is sleeping or not,
Whether one is moving, whether one is urinating or excreting,
Whether one is laughing or getting angry.

One should doubt and question about what this is,
How it appears, whether it is small or large,
Whether it is long or short, whether it is bright or dark,
Whether it is yellow or green, whether it exists or not,
Through this ceaseless great doubt, then mind will become clear
And all of a sudden one will realize that
The original face of our own Buddha is within us.

This is it, and it is surely beyond birth and death.
It is far more precious than gold and silver,
Far more precious than prosperity, honor, and fame.

Heaven and earth are in one's hands,
Eons of time are but a fleeting moment,
Fire could not burn nor could water dampen
Mind's boundless supernatural power and marvelous function.
Infinite is its expansion, and infinitesimal are its particles.
It never gets old or dies,
And there is nothing that is comparable to it.

Even if one takes only wild greens and water,
And lies down in hunger,
There is nothing to worry about.
Even if one is praised as a holy spirit,
There is nothing to be happy about.
Even if one is denounced as ill-natured,
There is not a single thing to worry about.
Full of the illumination of Buddha are heaven and the earth,
Full of the illumination of Buddha are life and death,
Full of the illumination of Buddha are rich and the poor,

Full of the illumination of Buddha are right and wrong,
This is what is called Buddha and our mind.

Even if one casts off this empty bag of a body,
Mind is free of coming and going,
It is free of birth and death,
And it offers no pretense to be lying.
It just appears as usual, non-thinking and non-doing,
And it only focuses on the pitiful people of the world
Who endure perpetual pain and suffering.

The enlightened one is the one
Who has entered the realm beyond birth and death,
Whose mind is like that of the heavenly being,
Who is always in the realm of infinite pleasure
And immersed in a serenity free of any obstruction.

All the words of the Buddha and Patriarchs are true,
Free from any deception.
Time flies like an arrow,
And we might pass away in any moment.
Then again, I ask, how could we tarry any longer without studying,

Without caring about the grave matters of birth and death?

I must end this song because the night grows late.

Already I hear the morning chanting.

When I was thinking in silence at a place

Where there is no front door,

It came to my mind that every word of the Buddha is true,

And so is every saying of the Buddha,

And incomparable is every writing of the Buddha's teaching.

But could nonbelievers possibly understand all these truths?

Listen carefully, I pray.

Buddha told his followers to be filial to parents,

To pay respect to monks and nuns,

To be harmonious with the people,

To be charitable to beggars and the poor,

To be devotional to the Buddha.

Buddha said, if one is poor, a sincere bow with a flower, a penny,

Or a bowl of rice will be more than sufficient

To receive boundless blessings.

Just observe the above five devotional duties,

And one will receive boundless blessings.

One should not kill even insects or bugs like ants and lice,
Should not slander and use unkindly words,
Should not take anything that does not belong to oneself,
Should not get angry,
Should instead be kind and amiable to others,
And should be humble in both mind and action,
Then one will surely receive boundless blessings.
All this is what the Buddha said,
And one should take this all to be the true words of the Buddha.

junjoe-gongdeok-chwi jeokjeong-simsangsong

ilche-jedaenan muneung-chimsi-in

cheonsang-geupin-gan subok-yeobul-deung

ucha-yeoeui-ju jeonghoek-mudeung-deung

namu-chilguji bulmo-daejunje-bosal

The Mantra for the Supreme Teaching: OM-NAM

The Mantra for self-protection: OM-CHI-RIM


The Six-character Mantra of Kwanse-eum Bodhisattva: OM

MANI BANME-HUM

The Mantra of Junje Bodhisattva:

NAMU-SAMANDA-SAM-MYAK-SAM-MOTDA-GUCHI-
NAMDA-NYA-TA-OM-JARYE-JURYE-JUNJE-SABAHA-
BURIM

icha-pung-song-jineon-deok ilche-aekran-gaesomyeol-
subu-gyeom-deuk-jehoswae sokseong-jeong-gak domi-ryun.⁵⁹

 ⁵⁹ This ending section is also from the *Dharani of the Bodhisattva With a Thousand Hands and Eyes Who Regards the World's Sounds with Great Compassion*.

III. Returning to Oneself



Composed on New Year's Eve, 1899.

Which of the roots of feeling is the right one to perceive?

The six roots of feelings are eyes, ears, nose,

Tongue, body, and mental faculty.

1

I go to bed every night clutching Buddha in my arm,

And get up every morning together with Buddha.

He is always with me whether I am sitting or standing.

We always stick together, like a body and its shadow.

Do you want to know where the Buddha has gone?

This is all that I can say.

-From the *Song of Maitreya*-

2

I will live willy-nilly according to causes and conditions,
Without seeking fame, wealth, or prosperity.
When breathing stops, that is the end of life.
The only thing that survives time is a vain name.
When garments get tattered, mend them,
And when there are no provisions, sometimes beg for food.
Life is short, so how could I neglect my study
By wasting time with a deluded mind?

-From the *Self-Discipline of Preceptor Dongshan-*

3

I came to Cold Mountain to sit and practice,
And thirty years have already passed by.
I returned yesterday to see some friends,
And found that half of them are no longer alive.
Life is like a candle that burns itself to extinction,
And a river that travels a long way.
I saw my lonely shadow at my side today,
And there was no way to stop my falling tears.

-From the *Poems of Hanshan*-⁶⁰

⁶⁰ A 7th-8th c. Chinese poet famous for describing his hermetic life on "Cold Mountain" (寒山).

4

What a life these people of the fleeting world lead!
It is so forlorn that at times it seems there is no end to it.
Morning after morning, no rest to be found.
Days go by and I suddenly found myself to be an old man.
All this labor, all these cares are for the attainment
Of the daily necessities of food, clothing, and shelter.
They have slaved themselves for eons
Only to fall into the endless Three Evil Ways.

-From the *Poems of Hanshan*-

5

If we look into our lifespan,
It seems that we are surrounded with countless enemies,
And life is diminishing everyday, never extending,
Just like the incessant falling of a waterfall.
It is also like the morning dew that stays for a while
and then disappears.
It is also like the footsteps of the criminal
Whose every step carries him nearer
To the door of his death.

-From the *Nirvana Sutra*-

6

Our life is like Candala,
Who takes the cow to the slaughter house.
It is also like the steps that take its master nearer to his death.
This is what our fleeting life is.

-From the *Maya Sutra*-⁶¹

7

Flowing water never stays still,
And a blazing fire never lasts long.
The sun rises, only to set in the evening,
And the full moon eventually subsides to its crescent form.
So are the fleeting lives of the highborn
And the dignitaries of wealth, fame and prosperity.

-From the *Sutra of the Retribution of Virtue and Evil*-

8

The blind turtle might sometimes find the hole
In a wood block floating in the great sea,
But once we lose our life,

⁶¹ Maya Sutra (摩耶經) – A sutra about the Buddha's mother, Maya.

It is almost impossible to be reborn a human again.

It is easier to retract a tiny needle

Dropped in the great sea

Than to be reborn again as a human

Once we lose our life.

-From the *Sutra of the Womb of the Bodhisattva*-

9

At the foot of Mt. Sumeru, a man was waiting

With a needle, for the thin thread

Dropping down from the summit.

The wind was blowing hard

Sending the thread flailing in all directions

Preventing the man from getting it

Through the eye of the needle.

Yet this above enterprise is easier

Than to be reborn as a human once again.

-From the *Sutra of Jeui*-⁶²

⁶² Also known as the *Sutra of Trapusa and Ballika* (提謂波利經).

10

If we are to talk about the true way of learning,
It is like a grave sinner trying to escape jail
By destroying the knife sheath and handcuffs
While the drunken jailer is dozing,
And even if he encounters a dragon
Or a fierce tiger during the escape,
He will dash forth without fear.
How could this be possible?
The simple answer lies in cutting off even a single word.
Anybody who has such earnest desire in their practice,
Will succeed without fail.

-From the *Essence of Seon*-

11

What is birth and death?
It is none other than the rise and fall of thoughts,
And if anyone is in that situation,
One should maintain the *hwadu* with all one's heart.
If the *hwadu* is working well,
The rise and fall of thoughts will disappear,

And when the rise and fall of thoughts disappears,
It is called serenity.

If there is no *hwadu* in that serenity,
It is called neither good nor bad,
A lifeless, neutral blankness,
And if the *hwadu* is alive in that serenity,
It is called the tranquil spiritual source of knowing,
Devoid of any disturbance and confusion.
And with such ardent study,
One will surely achieve the ultimate goal before sunset.

-A Dharma talk given to Seon practitioner Elder Boje-

12

There is a cave in our house,
But there is nothing in it.
It is neat, clean, and magnificent.
It is also bright as daylight.
It nurtures the frail body of mine with rice and wild greens,
And covers the false body of mine with tattered garments.
Yet I have no interest in the sages,
No matter how numerous they are,

Because I am already in possession of the Dharma-body.

-From the *Poems of Hanshan-*

13

Make no more mistakes with your mind.

Blood is issuing from the hundreds of pores.

Whose doing is this?

Abide silently where True-suchness is,

And let the magpies build their nests as they wish.

This true and incomparable enlightenment is

What the Buddha had achieved.

He then delivered the sentient beings

Under the Bodhi tree and entered Nirvana,

Beyond birth and death.

The great man is the one who has crossed

The shore of birth and death.

Great compassion arises from the wisdom of formlessness.

When defilements are cut off, there remains a True-suchness,

That is the priceless treasure of bright jade.

-From the *Song of Preceptor Yibo-*

14

What is called mind is the true Buddha,
Which is the brightest in the ten directions of the world.
It is the master of a magician,
And nothing is more truthful than mind.

It is so active, yet so self-existent that there is nothing to do
But to enjoy the freedom,
Which is the objective of the ascetics.
It is not disturbed a bit even by the true Dao
That is right in front of it.

What is the difference between the things in the universe?
What is the difference between the minds of the people anyway,
Who try so hard to understand the meanings of the Sutras?
There is no discrimination in the lord of the mind.
Hence the wise man only perceives the truth of reality by
Leaving the learning behind.

-From the *Song of the Laughing Buddha*⁶³

⁶³ Budai (布袋), a 10th century Chinese monk known as the “Laughing Buddha” is famous in the west for his prevalent statue, portrayed as having a large belly and a hearty smile.

15

All good people of the world!
What is your wish?
That is what I want to know.
Awaken and see your self-nature,
Which is Buddha himself!
Everything is ultimate truth itself,
And people who try to attain the truth by cultivation,
They will never succeed.
It is like abandoning the head to follow the tail.
What a laughing stock they will be!

-From the *Poems of Hanshan-*

16

The non-origination of all phenomena
Resides with the Three Poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance,
And the Buddha-nature resides with the Six Feelings
Of joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, love, and hatred.
If one can cultivate the mind
And know how to find the priceless treasure,
There is no need to look for it outside.

-From the *Song of Master Niutou-*

17

The East Sea is deep,
Yet it is so clear that we can see its bottom.
The fountain of truth has flowed into the origin of the spirit,
And it leaves no trace even if you cut it in half.

I met an evil-minded man of ignorance
Who tried to climb Mt. Sumeru
With the wick of the lamp;
Who tried to burn the great sea
With the unlit branch of a tree;
Who tried to crush the rock of the great earth with his foot;
Who tried to cook rice with sand;
Who tried to make a mirror by grinding a roof tile.
How could you enjoy your rice by cooking sand?

Practice with all your might.
The dignified master of great stature is buried
With a lonely gravestone, without even knowing what truth is.
What a pity it is!

-Anonymous-

18

When you read, you must understand the word's true meaning,
And then put your knowledge into practice.
You must practice with right knowledge
To enter the realm of Nirvana.
If you do not understand the true meaning of what you study,
It is like a blind person reading a book.
If you are blinded by the words,
It is like a blind ox tilling the field.
If the field is covered with wild grass,
How could rice grow?

-From *Poem by Pang Jushi-*

To the Buddhist Community⁶⁴

Generally speaking,
Meditation practice is nothing special.

⁶⁴ Outside of the last entry, these final pieces are mostly quotations. The editorial staff thought them to be worthwhile to be published with the original manuscript, especially this final letter, "To the Buddhist Community."

It is only to reflect upon oneself in order to find the true self,
Not disturbed by the outside world,
Not disturbed by the problems of birth and death.
It is beyond all these, bright and clear,
Yet it is not evading anything,
And it is neither defilement nor Nirvana.

I wore clothes all day,
Yet haven't put on a single piece of thread;
Ate all day, but haven't eaten a single grain of rice.
It applies also to misfortune and prosperity, birth and death.
One lets everything run its own natural course,
And such a person is called the accomplished one.

Such an accomplished one can sometimes crush Buddha
And sentient beings, heaven and the earth, into tiny particles,
Sometimes they let things abide as they are,
And then sometimes exchange their places at will,
And there is a mind called nondiscrimination and self-enlightenment.
There is no birth and death to avoid, no Nirvana to attain,
And no obstacles to hinder one's complete freedom.
Everything is true and bright, the original face as it is.

This mind is peaceful, pleasant, bright, and in sublime accommodation.
It meets birth and death like entering any open door,
Like it is handling the heaven and Buddha at its will.
No illusions of life and the sufferings of the world
Could disturb our original face,
Something that is not the product of speculation.
If you draw a picture of a cat with such ideas,
You may enter into such a wonderful world. Ha, Ha!

IV. A Brief Biography of Master Gyeongheo⁶⁵

⁶⁵ This is a transcription from the original hand copy of *The Collected Writings of Master Gyeongheo*, ed. by Old Master Hanam.



The Diamond Sutra says, "In the future age after some five hundred years, if any sentient beings attain pure mind and body after hearing this Sutra, they will surely attain enlightenment, and remember, this person has attained the supreme and incomparable merit."

Preceptor Daehe also said, "If some devout people had not attained enlightenment at the stake of their own lives during turbulent times, how could the teachings of Buddha have preserved until today?"

What Buddha was saying in the Diamond Sutra is that there would be some courageous people of great devotion even in the era of the decline of the illustrious doctrine to preserve the teachings of the Buddha.

But at the same time, it also means that there were few courageous people to preserve the illustrious doctrine. Then, who would attain

enlightenment by realizing the true self-nature and transmit the wisdom of illustrious doctrine to the future generations following the five-hundred years of the decline of the illustrious doctrine? My master Gyeongheo was such a great man.

The preceptor's posthumous name is Seong-u. His original name was Dong-uk, and Gyeongheo was his pen name. His family name was Song of Yeosan. The name of his father was Duok, and his mother's family name was Pak of Miryang. He was born on April 24, 1858, in Ja-dong, Jeonju City.⁶⁶ People thought it to be strange that he did not cry when he was born and waited until three days later when he was first bathed to do so.

His father died when he was a child, and he then moved to Seoul with his mother. He then went to Cheonggye Temple in Gwangju County near Seoul and shaved his hair, received precepts from Master Gyeheo, and became a monk. He had an elder brother who was also a monk residing at Magok Temple in Gongju, South Chungcheong Province. Two brother

⁶⁶ In *The Collected Writings of Master Gyeongheo* published by the Seon Academy in 1942, and in the *Dharma Speeches by Master Gyeongheo* ed. by the Research Institute of the People, published in 1981, the date of his birth is recorded as August 24, 1849. But in *Bulgyo* 95 (May 1932), and the hand copy edition of *The Collected Writings of Master Gyeongheo* by the old Master Hanam, his date of birth is recorded as April 24, 1857.

monks from one family? Such a blessing was the result of the virtue and merit of his mother's great devotion to the Three Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

He was young but his aspiration was on par with that of the elders. It was a hard task for him, but he never complained about the daily chores in the temple and he obeyed his master's orders of cutting wood, carrying water, and cooking rice, etc.

He did not have a chance to learn characters until fourteen years old, when a scholar happened to stay at the temple for a summer. To kill the lonesome hours, the scholar taught the young boy the Chinese characters from the textbook called *One Thousand Words* (千字文), and found that the boy had a wonderful talent for memorizing. The teacher then proceeded to teach him the text called *The Chronicles* (通史), and saw him memorizing five to six pages a day, thinking him to be a genius. He surmised, "If he should meet a good teacher, in the future he would be a great man to liberate all sentient beings."

Sometime later when his old master Gyeheo returned to lay life, the master sent him with a letter of recommendation to the eminent Preceptor Manhwa at Donghak Temple in Mt. Gyeryong. The Preceptor was very

pleased to find him to be a boy of unusual talent, and taught him writing as well as Buddhist doctrine. The boy's way of learning was to read something once, memorize everything that he had learned, and then sleep the rest of the day. Yet, when he was questioned the next day about the text he had learned the previous day, his answer was always perfect, like breaking wood in two with the perfect strike of an ax, or illuminating the darkness with a candlelight in his hand.

To test his skill, as well as to reprimand his habit of slumber, the master gave him an assignment to memorize five to six pages, and sometimes more than ten pages, of the explications of the *Complete Enlightenment Sutra*, one of the most important Mahayana Sutras to memorize. The community at the temple was amazed to find him memorizing them, even as he still dozed all day long. It was something no one have ever seen or heard of before.

From then on, his name and talent have spread far and wide, and he continued his study, attending all the academies in the country. In addition to the Buddhist sutras and doctrines, he also studied Confucian and Daoist classics, and his scholarship progressed rapidly. There was practically nothing among the Chinese classics that he did not master.

His character is frank, unconventional, free and easy, and broadminded. During the hot summer season, when most of the fellow practitioners were sitting upright sweating in full costume, he just took his clothes off without minding others, about which an instructor said to his students, "He is a great Dharma vessel for the Mahayana, beyond your imagination and ability."

At the age of twenty-three, he started teaching at Donghak Temple, at the request of the community, and a great number of students from all over the country attended his renowned class.

One day, he decided to pay a visit to his old master Gyeheo, but on the way, he encountered a great storm and ran to a house to escape rain. He was standing under the eaves of the house when he was chased out into the rain by the owner. No house in the village welcomed him, instead chastising, "What sort of man are you, wandering into the graveyard where the great epidemic is raging everywhere?" Upon hearing this story, he was greatly frightened, as if he were already in his grave, and he realized again the fleeting nature of our dream-like life.

He then made a great resolution, thinking, "I might rather be a fool in this life than to be a slave of words and letters, and I will find the way of

the Buddha to escape the Three Spheres of the World." He then thought about the *hwadu* he had been studying, and found that he was still trying to understand the meaning of the words in a conventional way. But as he kept thinking about the *hwadu* of Seon Master Yeong-un, he could not fathom what they really meant, "The problem of a horse came up even before having solved the problem of a donkey."

He returned to the mountain where he was teaching, and told his students, "It is not my wish, but I need to let you all go wherever your feet take you," upon which he closed the academy. After sending them off, he began strenuous meditation for three months, puncturing his thigh with a sharp point, or placing a sharp knife under his chin to prevent slumber.

There was a young novice attending him whose name was Lee. His father was a good Seon practitioner himself for some time, and people called him Hermit Lee. One day, the monk called on him and had a good talk, and when the father of his student said, "Even the monk could eventually become a cow," the hermit's response was, "If a monk cannot see his bright mind and only take offerings of devotees, he will surely become a cow in the next life, so as to serve the devotees and repay the favor he had received from them." Then the monk was chastised by the

hermit, "How could a monk miss the mark so widely?" The monk's reply was, "I am not sure of the essence of meditation. Would you kindly tell me the right answer?" Then the hermit said to the monk, "Why didn't you say that even if one becomes a cow, that cow has no hole to make a nostril?"

The monk returned to the temple and told his attendant, "Your father taught me such and such but I did not have any idea what that meant." Then the attendant said to his teacher, "A great preceptor is at present practicing meditation most ardently without even eating or sleeping. Why don't you ask him? He might know the true meaning of your question."

The monk took his student's advice and went to see the preceptor, bowed to him, and told him the whole story that took place between him and the father of his student. When the story reached the point of the cow that has no nostril, the preceptor awakened to the dharma eye and perceived the true face of self-nature even before the advent of all the past Buddhas, seeing the vision of the sinking of the great earth and the disappearance of every form including himself. This is the realm that the ancient sages attained and where they took their eternal rest. It was like billions of billions of Dharma talks and the countless sublime teachings were dissolving like melting ice, or roof tiles were breaking with a great

cacophony. The date was around November 15, 1879. The Master wrote:

There is no truth outside the mind, the eyes are full of snow and moonlight, and the water is flowing under the high hills and the pine trees. There is nothing to be done on the long bright night. What they call the truth is not what you should seek. The truth must be a single Dao.

I lay down in the spiritual master's room and didn't mind the people coming in and going out, and I did not even get up when the spiritual master came in, and he said, "Why don't you get up? What is the reason?" When I replied, "The one who has nothing to do is just like this," he left the room.

In the next spring of 1880, I stopped at Cheongjan Monastery in Yeonam Mountain, where my elder brother was residing with my mother. In verse and song, I expressed what I have attained, which is as high as the great cliff and as wide as the limitless words and names. And no tradition of the ancient Patriarchs is comparable to mine. The following is my verse:

Upon hearing the story of the cow that has no nostril,

I realized that the whole universe is my house.
On the path at the foot of Mt. Yeonam in June,
A man who has nothing to do is singing the song of the peaceful
world.
I have a song,
But there is no one around.
To whom should I transmit the robe and bowl?
I look around and there is no one to be seen.

The meaning of these four line stanzas is that he is no longer in contact with his master and friends, and there is no one to acknowledge one another's enlightenment.

Once he said to the assembly, "To prevent confusion, there was a model and evidence used to transmit the law of mind in the house of the Patriarchs. In ancient times, Huangbo succeeded the law of Baizhang by hearing the story of the master about the "Shout!" of Mazu, and Xinghua succeeded Linji after the master's death by hearing the story of a blow his master has received from the great enlightened master.

In our country, Byeokgye went to China and received the law from Zhongtong and then transmitted the law to Gugok. Jinmuk as a

manifestation of a saint succeeded the law of great Seon Master Seosan after his death. Thus, there was a strict rule of transmission of the law from the master to disciple by the acknowledgement of mind by mind transfer.

Alas! It has been a long time since the appearance of the sages, and the Great Way has declined. But fortunately, eminent masters sometimes appeared and taught a few sages by means of deadly but life-preserving weapons, in order to preserve the legitimacy of the Order. It is like an illuminating light in the dark and the resurrection of the dead.

Although my enlightenment is not complete and has not been acknowledged by a master, what I have been trying all my life is to firmly establish what the duty of an ascetic is. I am already old and in the future my disciples should transmit the law to Elder Yongam, to establish a clear lineage of the law that I received from my master Manhwa.

In obedience of the master's will, we found the origination of transmission that the preceptor succeeded the law of Yongam and Hye-eon, and it is transmitted from Hye-eon to Geumho and Byeolcheom, from Byeolcheom to Yulbong and Cheonggo, and from Cheonggo to Cheongbong and Geo-ae, and from Geo-ae to Ho-am and Chejeong, and

from Cheongheo to Pyeongyang, and from Pyeongyang to Pungdam, from Pungdam to Wondam, and from Wondam to Hwanseong. Thus, Preceptor Gyeongheo is the 12th legitimate disciple of Cheongheo and the 7th legitimate disciple of Hwanseong.

The preceptor resided in the southwest region for some 20 years. The temples he resided in were Gesim and Buseok in Seosan, and Cheonjang in Hongju. They were all ideal places for rigorous practice. He moved to Haein Monastery in Mt. Gaya in the Yeongnam area in the autumn of 1873.

He supervised the printing of the *Complete Collection of Buddhist Sutras* that was being undertaken by the decree of the King, and constructed Suseon Temple so that the practitioners could stay and practice, wherefore the community accepted him as their Head Patriarch. When he was preaching on the Dharma seat, he preached the right way of practice, and made use of countless artful devices to awaken the practitioners. This skill turned out to be a priceless diamond sword and the lion's roar by which every one of the practitioners attained enlightenment by cutting off completely their discriminating mind and attachments.

He sat at the Dharma seat, hit the Dharma staff once, then said, "All the Buddhas, Patriarchs of the three ages, and all the great masters and the old preceptors of the world came." He drew a line on the seat and said, "All the Buddhas, Patriarchs of the three ages, and all the great masters and the old preceptors departed. Can you understand?" He then stepped down from the Dharma seat.

A priest asked him, "An ancient sage said that if one can move one's head and rise in the old path of the world, he might not fall into fallacy. Now, what is the old path?" The preceptor's answer was, "There are two old paths. One is an easy path and the other is a rough one. Which one is the rough one? Carts are passing back and forth on the thousands of paths at the foot of Mt. Gaya. Now, which one is the easy path? A monkey is hanging on the tree upside down on the cliff a thousand feet high, where a man cannot reach."

On the closing day of the summer retreat, the master went up to the Dharma seat and gave an address to the community, citing the words of Dongshan, "It is the end of summer, and fellow practitioners should head either to the East or to the West where there is not a plant of grass growing for millions of miles." But, on the contrary, I would say, "Fellow practitioners, head either to the East or to the West treading the wild grass

on the road. Now, tell me what is the difference between Dongshan's words and mine?" When there was no reply from the community, the master got up from the Dharma seat and returned to his room, leaving the following words, "Since there is no reply from the community, I will give you an answer." This was his typical way of teaching, short and enigmatic, but final and clear-cut.⁶⁷

The Master stayed at various temples, such as Tongdo Monastery in Mt. Yeongchui, Beomeo Monastery in Mt. Geumjeong, and Hwaeom and Songgwang Monasteries in the Honam area. He also set up many Seon Halls to instruct devoted and ardent practitioners from all over the country. There was no other period where the Buddha's illustrious teaching that awakened the eyes of the people was as flourishing.

When he was residing at the Diamond Monastery of Beomeo Monastery in the autumn of 1902, he was invited as a testifying teacher at the dedication ceremony for the repainting of the Arhat at Maha Temple in the eastern part of the county. When he arrived at the temple, it was already too dark to find the path. Seeing as it was too dark to walk at night, an old Sunim told the sleeping abbot of the temple to go out and

⁶⁷ What was the Master's silent answer? Guess yourself. You might attain enlightenment if you get the right answer.

meet the master. Awakened from his dream, the abbot went out to meet the master with a torch in his hand, and when the abbot saw him coming, he thought the master was the Arhat himself. He told the people in the temple this, and the people who were slandering the priest all came to him to repent of their misconduct.

The following is the verse the master composed on the way to Haein Monastery from Beomeo Monastery in the autumn of the 1903:

I have become well-known without knowing anything,
And where should I hide myself in this unstable world?
The fishing villages and taverns are everywhere,
But the most ineffective way of hiding is hiding yourself.

Poetry is used to express one's ideas, and the ideas are used to hide one's identity. But no pursuers of fame and wealth would understand it. The next year, in the spring of 1904, he stopped at Mt. Odae, went on to Mt. Diamond, and then arrived at Seokwang Temple in Anbyeon County. When he arrived, there was a dedication ceremony for the repainting of 500 arhats, with illustrious teachers from all directions in attendance. When the master gave his Dharma speech with his typical libratory, artful technique and eloquence, all the community paid respect to him in

amazement, joining their palms in respect. After the ceremony, the master hid himself, and no one knew where he went.

After ten years, a letter was delivered to Jeonghae Monastery in Yesan County, South Chungcheong Province. The sender was Preceptor Suwol, and the message of the letter was that the master had let his hair grow, wore the robe of a scholar, and was sometimes teaching at the village school, sometimes drinking at the tavern.

The letter also informed that the master had died in his study at Dohadong, Ungibang, in Gapsan in the spring of 1912. Upon receiving the news, two disciples of the master, Hyewol and Mangong, went there to cremate the master at Mt. Nandeok. After the cremation, the two disciples returned on July 15, 1913, with the deathbed gatha, a year after master's decease.

According to the elders in the village, one day the master was sitting by the fence, watching the boys picking wild grass in the yard. All of a sudden, he fell down on the ground saying, "I am so tired." Finding him unable to get up, the people carried him to the house, but he refused to eat or speak. It was fortunate that he did not feel pain. He just lied down with his legs outstretched. Then, the next morning at sunrise, he sat up, took

up a writing brush and wrote his deathbed gatha:

The lonely mind of the full moon is shining bright,
Engulfing the entire universe.
I have forgotten both the light and phenomena of the world,
Then what is this thing?

After finishing the gatha, he drew a circle at the bottom of the verse, put down the writing brush and, turning to right side, passed away. It was April 5, 1912. The villagers gathered his body with the proper rites and buried it in the mountain.

Alas! How sad it is. It is a once in millions of eons chance to encounter a great master. We just had a glimpse of the master, that was all, and we did not have much time practicing with him. Moreover, it is most regrettable that we didn't even know his dying hour, and could not attend his funeral. He left us sorrow after his death, as the ancient sages had done.

The master was born in 1867 and entered Nirvana in 1912. As he took his oath of the order at nine, his lay age was fifty-six and his Dharma age was forty-eight. He left four Dharma disciples. Chimun

Hyeonju practiced at Pyochung Temple in the Yeongnam area, and entered Nirvana at Beomeo Monastery, leaving a deathbed verse. Hyewol Hyemyeong and Mangon Wolmyeon attended the master since their early age, and had the great favor of receiving the essence of the master's teaching. They both earned great respect by teaching countless practitioners who devoted themselves to living in accordance with their instructions. I was not bright but I had the great fortune to listen to his great teachings. But the reason I respect and thank the master is that he did not give a simple and clear statement in expression of the truth. Thus, we are four of us, the most favored by the master.

It is the common practice that the records of the deceased do not record that which is not true. If we are to describe his constitution, he was very tall with the dignity of a lion. His character was quick and resolute, and his voice was like a ringing bell with great eloquence. His deportment was as decisive and formidable as a great mountain, never swayed by any wind from any direction. He was never picky about food, and he was never hindered by music and feminine beauty, which invited great suspicion and slander. His broad mind was that of the gate of non-dualism, and his inbred nature of detachment and independence was that of Elder Li Tongzhuang (李通玄), the sage of Tang China. When he was under oppression, full of emotion, and in misfortune, he would lay

himself low and enjoy himself in the realm of Dao. No man of no great ambition can understand the great ambition of a man. No man of no great enlightenment can be free of small etiquette. The following verse shows the typical picture of the master's way of life:

I am independent from drinking and women,
And I have no way to cut off grasping, anger, and defilement.
I do not care about Buddha and sentient beings,
And I will spend my life as if I were drunk and deranged.

His life was peaceful, but he ate only enough to sustain his life, locked himself in the room without many words, avoided meeting people, and if anyone asked him to go to the big cities and preach, he would say, "If I have a wish, that is not to go to Seoul."

When he was residing at Cheonjang Monastery, he had only one set of tattered clothes all year around and never changed his clothes, whether it was cold or scorching hot. Mosquitoes never left him alone, and his tattered clothes were full of lice. His body was sore all over, bitten by bugs, but he was like a huge mountain, never even wincing. One day a snake crawled into the room and was resting on his back and shoulder, but he never even stirred, and soon the snake moved away. If he were not

immersed into the Dao, how could anyone even imagine such a thing?

Years of immovable sitting were like a passing moment. One morning, he composed a few lines:

The green mountains and the mundane world, which is upright?
It is spring and the castle is full of flowers.
If anyone asks me what my job is,
I would answer that it is the song of eons within the mind of a maiden.

At last, he broke his Dharma staff and threw it out of the house, and then came down the mountain to preach around the country. But his way of preaching was unconventional and eccentric. Sometimes he associated with lay people wandering in the town. Sometimes he lied leisurely at the arbor among the pine trees reciting verse. It was a great puzzle to the people who did not understand his peculiar way.

Once, he was preaching tenderly the mysteries of the sublime world. It was about the realms of extreme goodness and evil beyond the realms of cultivation. His writing styles and skill were also very exceptional.

Alas! If every ascetic were as courageous as the master, and transmitted the illustrious light from light, with ardent practice and great resolution, there would be no obstacles that could prevent the revival of the flourishing of the teachings of the nine branches of the meditation monasteries, and the lineal tradition of sixteen national teachers! It is not only for the revival and flourishing of the illustrious teaching and the lineal tradition of Patriarchs. All the original seeds of enlightenment of all sentient beings in the mundane world would be delivered from the dark, forevermore. Isn't it the right way to repay the favors of the Buddha, with devout faith? Wherewith I sincerely pray with offerings of incense.

It is right for posterity to learn the teachings of the master, but they should not follow the master's way of life. The problem is that they know what to do but they hardly understand them properly. When we say we take refuge in Dharma, it means that we take refuge in the sublime teaching, and when we say we do not rely on man, it means that we do not rely on precepts nor on non-precepts, and when we say we take refuge, it means we rely on masters and follow them as models, and when we do not take refuge, it means that we will not be bound by gain or loss, right or wrong. Practitioners should ultimately renounce even the truth, let alone the relative value of gain or loss, and right or wrong. A passage from the *Complete Enlightenment Sutra* states:

If the sentient beings during the era of the decline of the illustrious doctrine wish to practice with a firm resolve, they should seek a teacher of supreme wisdom, and should not abide in any form, and their minds should be pure all the time, even though they are in the midst of defilement. They should observe precepts even though they seem to be in the wrong, and should prevent sentient beings from falling into evil practice. If one could meet such a master, one would surely achieve incomparable supreme enlightenment.

Whether the great master was upright in the Four Departments or not, i.e., moving, abiding, sitting, and lying down, or conducted misdeeds on various occasions, one should not be proud of himself and harbor evil thought. The *Diamond Sutra* says,

Those who see me by form,
Who see me in sound,
Perverted are their footsteps upon the Way;
For they cannot perceive the Tathagata.

The national teacher Bojo also says:

Every practitioner should, at first, establish the right causal conditions. For instance, the Five Precepts, the Ten Virtues, the Twelve Dependent Originations, and Six Paramitas are not, in fact, true causal conditions. Instead, one should firmly believe that one's own mind is the Buddha, and if one can cut completely off deluded thoughts, incalculable eons will become empty. That is the right causal condition.

Thus, if precept, truth, conditions, and enlightenment are not right causal conditions, there is no use of mentioning transgressions of conduct.

An ancient sage said, "Take good regard to the right view, not deportment." And he goes on to say, "My discourse is not about concentration and enlightenment, or keeping the precepts, cultivation and verification, but the consummation of the wisdom of Buddha." Does it not mean that the right view comes first, before deportment? Thus, one should keep in mind that we should learn the master's teachings, but not his deportment. The quotations are criticism of those who only pay attention to deportment without having any insight of distinguishing the truth. They are also criticisms of the attachment to phenomenal distinctions without the earnest effort to find the true nature of mind. If one has the insight to distinguish the truth and realize the true nature of

mind, one's deportment will always be upright without blemish, without delusion of the phenomenal world, and without the discriminations of love and hate, this or that.

When elder Dharma brother Mangong was residing at Yujeon Temple as a revered Sunim in 1930, he asked me to write the life record of the master. As I am not well versed at writing, I am just writing the true record of the master's life, mainly on two accounts, for posterity.

One is to write how he became a monk and commended his unimaginable merits in the era of the decline of the illustrious teaching of Buddha. The other is to chastise ourselves about how we are wasting time and injuring the teachings of Buddha, deluded by attachment to outward forms. Attached to this and to be published are some of the verses and articles of that the master wrote for all his fellow practitioners.

March 15, 1931

Cordially,
Hanam Jungwon

V. The Memoir of Master Gyeongheo



The Master's lay family name was Song of Yeosan and his Dharma name was Seong-u. His original name was Dong-uk, and his pen name was Gyeongheo. He was born in Jadong, Jeonju City, on August 24, 1849. His father's name was Duok, and his mother's family name was Pak of Miryang. People thought it strange that he did not cry for three days after he was born.

His father died when he was a child whereupon he moved to Seoul at the age of nine. He then went to Mt. Cheonggye in Gwangju County, shaved his head, and received the precepts from Master Gyeheo. He wanted to set out around the country on the “wandering practice,” with one set of monk’s robes and one bowl. However, he was busy helping his master with common chores, such as cutting wood and carrying water, and he did not even have time to study.

When he was fourteen, a scholar stayed at the temple for a summer and he studied from time to time between his duties. He was quick to learn and progressed rapidly. Before long, his master had to return to lay life. The master was very regretful that he could not help the boy's study and sent him to Preceptor Manhwa at Donghak Temple in Mt. Gyeryong with a letter of recommendation.

Under Preceptor Manhwa, Gyeongheo mastered all the Buddhist sutras. Though he did not seem to be studying hard, his achievements were ten and even one hundred times greater than other students. There was nothing that he did not know, whether in the realm of either Buddhist or non-Buddhist writings and classics, and his fame was known all over the country. At the age of twenty-four, when he started teaching in response to a request from the Buddhist community, hundreds of students from all over the country came to hear his Dharma lectures.

When he was thirty-one, he missed his old master Gyeheo and set out to visit him. On the way, he encountered a storm, and when he was standing under the eaves of a house to escape the rain, he was chased back out by the house's owner. He was not welcomed by any of the houses in the village, and he soon found out why. An epidemic was raging in the village, and once anyone caught the illness, there was no

way to escape death, hence, their unwillingness to welcome the wandering traveler.

Hearing this story, he was frightened and felt as if he were at the edge of the precipice of death. He also realized that one's life could not be saved through letters alone. With great resolution, he returned to the mountain, and after sending all his students back to their homes, he locked the door and started his rigorous meditation with Seon Master Yeong-un's *hwadu*, "The problem of a horse came up even before having solved the problem of a donkey." He even went so far as to puncture his thigh with a sharp point and hit his head to chase off slumber. A moment seemed like eternity, and walls of silver and mountains of iron surrounded him, leaving him no escape.

This training continued for three months, and the fruit seemed to have ripened. One day a monk asked, "What does it mean that even if you become a cow, there will be no hole to make a nostril?" At that instant, the master felt that the bottom of the earth was dropping out. He forgot every phenomenal form, including himself, and felt as if billions of billions of Dharma lectures and the countless sublime teachings were dissolving like melting ice. The date was around November 15, 1879. From this time on, he was above the ways of the world, self-composed,

and was as free as the wind.

He once gave a lecture focused on “the transmission of the lamp”⁶⁸ when he was residing at Cheonjang Monastery at the age of thirty-two. The master received his transmission from Yongam, and he was the 12th lineal disciple of Cheongheo and 7th lineal disciple of Hwanseong.

After his great enlightenment, Gyeongheo resided at various places, such as Cheonjang Monastery in Hongju, and Gaesim and Buseok Temples in Seosan, sometimes spending quiet hours in meditation, and sometimes preaching, which aroused in his students a great interest in meditation.

When he was fifty-one, he went to Haein Monastery where, by decree of the King, the printing of the *Complete Collection of Buddhist Sutras* was underway, as well as the construction of Suseon Temple, a project to which he was appointed as head.

At the age of fifty-four, he was the testifying teacher of the dedication of a color painting of an Arhat at Diamond Monastery at Maha Temple.

⁶⁸ This is the Seon tradition in which a master passes on his authority to his disciples.

At the age of fifty-six, after visiting Odae and Diamond Mountains, he served as a witness at Seokwang Temple during the dedication of the color painting of 500 Arhats.

From that time on, he hid himself from the world in the Gapsan and Ganggye areas, calling himself Nanju and growing hair. He wore a scholar's hat, transforming himself into a Brahman, and preached wherever his feet took him in his wanderings as an ascetic preacher. On April 25, 1912, at the age of sixty-four, he died at Doha village, Ungibang, Gapsan. His Dharma age was fifty-six.

The above memoirs are based on records published after the master's death and on my own random notes. This is the reason why I called this article a memoir, and I sincerely wish the readers will accept my poor apology.

Han Yong-un



Afterword

The old master Gyeongheo was the most illustrious monk during the last era of the Joseon Dynasty. He restored a Korean Buddhism that was in decline by producing countless great masters to help preserve the long tradition of meditation practice in the country.

Even though he was born during a time of Buddhism's decline in Korea, the old master was so great that he could be considered the equal to the great masters of the Five Schools at the time of the Tang and Song Dynasty in China.

In the spring of 1990, layman Beopan Kim Min-yeong brought me a hand copy of *The Collected Writings of Gyeongheo* written by the old master Hanam. It was not that different from the edition used as a text at the Seon Academy. The only difference was it also included a brief

biography of the preceptor Gyeongheo written by the old master Hanam on the front page of the book.

I was so glad to see this treasured artifact of our Buddhist Order that I immediately undertook the translation of the text into Korean, in spite of the lack of my ability and scholarship. When I took an oath at Haein Monastery to become a monk in the 1950s, there were numerous temples and Seon Halls where the old preceptors taught practitioners. It was a time of Seon Buddhism's revival in Korea, and each of these new training centers was like another Vulture Peak. But the old masters have deceased one by one, and there are few left to preserve the illustrious traditions of the Buddha.

In such circumstances, I am sure that the writings of the old master Gyeongheo will promote the practice of Seon Buddhism in Korea again. I want to thank layman Byeokcheon Kim In-bong for his careful proofreading. I also want to thank all the contributors for their assistance, both spiritual and material.

Early Autumn, 1990
Bhikku of Yeongchui, Myeongjeong



English Translator's Afterword

Considering the great role and teachings of Master Gyeongheo in the history of modern Korean Buddhism, it is remarkable that no translations of the Master's writings have appeared in a Western language until now. To be frank, this was not an easy job, especially the translation of the Seon poems. It required erudition, not only in Buddhism but also in the Chinese classics, and in addition to that, a great imagination. I sincerely want to thank Professor Shin Seong-chul, Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at Chungnam National University, who read the entire manuscript of my English translation.

I also want to express my gratitude to Professor Yu Ye-geun, Department of Korean Literature, Chungnam National University, who helped me with the interpretation of poems and the Chinese folklore, and Seonrim Sunim at Manbul Monastery in Daejeon, who helped me with

the Chinese Buddhist terms.

I need to express my greatest gratitude to Mr. Matty Wegehaupt, Fulbright Researcher, for the excellent job he did editing my translation and for the great number of valuable footnotes he contributed, supplementing those I had already provided. His notes regarding Buddhist terms, Chinese Chan masters, and other information about Chinese literature and folklore will be of great service to the reader.

I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to the Bureau of Propagation of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism for asking me, to undertake the important job of translating the *Collection of the Writings of Great Master Gyeongheo* into English. I also want to extend my thanks to Mr. Cho Hyun Woo and Mr. Nam Won Keun at the Bureau of Propagation, who helped me in many ways during the translation process.

I also owe my greatest gratitude to Pop Chin Sunim for his correction of technical Buddhist terms. It definitely improved the authority of the English translation.

Lastly, I want the readers to be prepared for some of the singular and puzzling poems of the great master and, sometimes, for my even more

outlandish English translations. Any criticism, comments, or advice will be greatly appreciated.

November 15, 2006
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