



## Conversation 16: Purification

**Sunim:** We all have bad thoughts, bad emotions and we do bad things which, eventually, when we remember them, make us feel unhappy. But it is difficult to overcome these habits by ourselves and so we make a first step to improve ourselves by using a symbol: water. It is a tiny little step towards becoming better people, towards having good thoughts and actions. Later on we can learn how to improve ourselves.

**Sara:** (*standing on the bridge looking over*) Are there any fish in the water?





**Luca:** Yes! Yes! I can see them. Can we feed the fish?

**Sunim:** Ha! Ha! Ha! We will ask permission from the Sunims. Clap your hands.

**Luca:** (*clapping his hands*) Wow! Look! The fish are coming! There are some huge ones! Do you eat them in the temple? Do the Sunims go fishing?

**Sunim:** No, Luca, we are vegetarians, we don't eat any meat or fish.

**Sara:** That must be hard.



## Conversation 17: Vegetarians?

**Sunim:** Oh, no, Sara. It fits in with the philosophy. We believe that everyone and everything in the universe is interrelated, everything depends on everything else. Because of this I must live as harmlessly, as inoffensively as possible.

**Luca:** What on earth does that mean?

**Sunim:** It means that I have respect for all things and I try to keep my life simple without using too much of the planet's resources. So by not eating meat, my life is simpler as plants require less land to grow on than animals for meat require and I waste as little as possible.

**Sara:** Oh, you mean recycling?

**Sunim:** That as well. But more than that, I consider my thoughts and words and actions carefully so I have no regrets.

**Luca:** All sounds very grand. Can we now go and visit the temple.



**Sara:** Oh, yes, do let's start our visit. I am longing to see everything.

**Sunim:** OK. So let us continue our journey from the ordinary world to the spiritual world.





## Conversation 18: Entering the Main Temple Compound

**Sunim:** So here we are finally.

**Luca:** It's a big area. There are a lot of buildings but there is a feeling of peace and harmony here.

**Sunim:** That's true, there is a feeling of harmony partly because of the symmetry. There is a very big temple near Daegu, called Haein-sa. During the Korean War a bomber pilot was sent to destroy the temple because, it was believed, there were rebels hiding there. As he flew over the temple, he could see the beauty of the way the buildings were arranged and so he was unable to destroy it.

**Luca:** What happened to the pilot?

**Sunim:** He became a national hero because everyone loves the temple. As you can see, the buildings are arranged in a special way that is almost like a mandala which is a geometric figure or pattern representing the universe.



**Luca:** Oh, really? That is amazing. How do they do that?

**Sunim:** Well, there are people who know how to relate the buildings to the place. It is a special study called geomancy; in Chinese and Korean it means “wind and water” Most temples follow a particular traditional pattern of layout.

**Sara:** What are those tall tower-like things in the main yard?

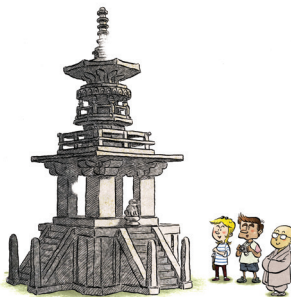




## Conversation 19: Pagodas

**Sunim:** Those are pagodas.

**Sara:** Oh, yes. One of the guardians was carrying one. I like the look of them. What are they for?



**Sunim:** Most of them contain some sort of remains of the Buddha. Originally they were built as a symbol of the Buddha after he passed away. Look at the proportions! They always have an uneven number of roofs.

**Luca:** I can see something carved on the side. What is it?



**Sunim:** There are often different figures carved on them. We will talk about them later. Actually pagodas were once all over Korea as they were considered a way of protecting and guarding the land. Look carefully, don't you find the balance of height and width



beautiful?

**Luca:** I suppose so. But actually pagodas are not very interesting.

**Sunim:** If you live in a temple, you learn to love them, I can't really explain why! Anyway, now we are going to start visiting all the buildings.

**Luca:** Okay. That sounds more interesting than the pagodas.





## Conversation 20: The Main Hall (Part 1)

**Sara:** Where do we go first?

**Sunim:** As a Buddhist, whenever we go to a temple, we go to the Main Hall first. Can you guess which of these buildings is the Main Hall?

**Luca:** I should think it is the one straight ahead of us, isn't it?

**Sunim:** Right you are. Let's go and have a look, shall we? Buddhists usually put their palms together as soon as they enter the door. Then we go in and make three bows. (*Sees Luca entering by the middle door.*) No, no, not that door, Luca. You must go around to the side. Only the Head Sunim goes through that door.

**Luca:** Oh dear, please excuse me. Why do you have such a particular custom?

**Sunim:** It is a mark of respect for the memory of our teacher the Buddha that we approach from the side. During the time of the Buddha, out of respect for the teacher, people would greet him and then go to sit on



one side, never directly in front of him. In Korea, we continued this custom so that in the royal palaces also, we never use the central staircase or door.





## REVIEW 4

### A. Questions

1. What happens when you clap your hands near a temple?

2. What is a pagoda?

3. Where do you go first when you visit a temple?

What do you do when you get there?

4. Why is Sunim a Vegetarian?

5. Why shouldn't you enter the Main Hall through the middle door?

6. Which door should you use?

### B. Try these Expressions for Yourself!

1. I can't explain why.

i) I love the color red, I can't explain why.

ii) I can't explain why I think you must be a kind person.



iii) “Do you know why the sun is yellow?” “No, I can’t explain why, either.”

## 2. To have respect for

i) I have great respect for you because you are always helping people.

ii) “Do you have respect for a teacher at school?” “Yes, one is really great!”

iii) If you have respect for all things then you live in harmony with the world.

## 3. To depend on someone or something

i) A small child completely depends on his parents.

ii) Sick people depend on their doctors to cure them.

iii) I’m depending on the car to get me there on time!

## 4. To overcome something

i) It is hard to overcome a fear of heights.

ii) When I see a sad movie, I am overcome with tears.

iii) He was overcome with gratitude at their kindness.

## 5. Right you are.

i) “Now drive carefully.” “Right you are!”

iii) “Don’t bang into the wall with that piece of furniture.” “Right you are!”

iii) “I think I should go left here.” “Right you are!”