



Conversation 31: Kasyapa, Ananda and Ceremonies

Sunim: After they have learned to draw the lines really well, they...

Luca: (*interrupting*) But at the top of the painting behind the Buddha, there is an old monk and a young monk. Who are they?

Sunim: They are two of the Buddha's main disciples. The old monk is Kasyapa who is considered the origin of our school of Buddhism usually called Zen in English and Seon in Korean. I will tell you the story later. The

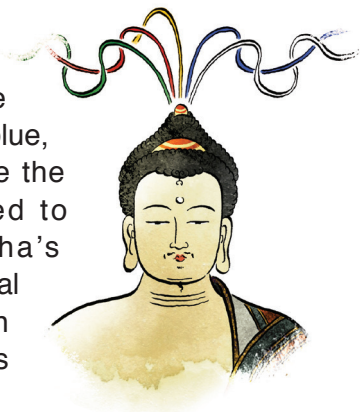
young monk is Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and faithful assistant. Kasyapa represents experience and wisdom, Ananda represents intellect.



Luca: The Buddha has some strings coming out of his head in the picture. What are they?



Sunim: Have you seen traditional Korean clothes? Sometimes the top has multi-colored sleeves. There are five colors: red, yellow, blue, green, and white. They are the colors that are supposed to emanate from the Buddha's head. Each one has a special meaning and we will return to this later when we discuss the Buddhist flag.



Sara: On the other side of the hall, there is a large table with lots of little pieces of paper stuck on the wall.

Sunim: Oh, yes, that is the place where we do Jaesa, ceremonies for the dead. When someone dies, we have a ceremony for seven weeks and a final big ceremony on the 49th day when the family say goodbye to their loved one by burning some belongings of the deceased.



Conversation 32: Ceremonies for the Dead

Luca: Why do you have so many ceremonies for dead people?

Sunim: Well, when someone dies we believe that they will be re-born in 49 days and so we help them on their way. Also, the process aids the family in the grieving process in stages.

Sara: Then you forget them after that?

Sunim: Oh, no. Every year we remember all those that have died in a special big ceremony.

Sara: (*pointing*) Look, Luca, there are some funny looking little men!

Sunim: Yes, those are a symbol of the ghosts that we invited because no one else wanted to help them. In fact we offer a lot of special food to the departed and wish them well. That is why the table is so big. But you must remember that it is all a symbol of our good wishes to those we love who have died. As we do those things, we remember them and it helps to



console us.

Luca: Oh, so you believe in ghosts!

Sunim: Luca, let's face it, there are many things we do not understand in this world. So maybe there are ghosts? Who knows?





Conversation 33: Other Buildings

Sunim: Over there is the building for Gwan seum Bosal. Should we go and take a look?

Sara: Who is Gwan...?

Sunim: Gwan seum Bosal? Take a look and you tell me.

Luca: Let's see. Looks like a woman and she's holding a bottle and a branch and there is a picture of a sea behind her. She looks very beautiful and kind and gentle. Why does she have a moustache?

Sunim: Actually Gwan seum Bosal is neither a woman nor a man but I must agree that the statue looks female, and compassion is usually considered





a feminine quality. The bottle contains the water of life, the nectar of wisdom and a willow spray to sprinkle the water with. Gwan seum Bosal is known as the One-who-Looks-upon-the-World-with-Compassion.

Luca: But why the moustache?

Sunim: The golden age of Korean Buddhism corresponds to that of China during the Tang Dynasty (CE 618-907). During that time, they created Buddha's with moustaches and as Korean art was influenced by Chinese art at that time, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have remained in that stylized form. Also, as you know, men are better than women!





Conversation 34: Gwan seum Bosal

Luca: Ha! Ha! Ha! That doesn't sound like your opinion. But it is true, in the past, in many societies women had few rights. So I guess that is why the female looking Gwan seum has a moustache!



Sunim: That's right.

Sara: What does it mean, One-who-Looks-upon-the-World-with-Compassion?



Sunim: Well, this Bodhisattva is ready to reply to the cries of people suffering. Sometimes the statue is depicted with 1,000 hands and on each hand is an eye in order to see where help is needed.

Sara: Will she help me? How can she? Is she a person?



Sunim: Some people believe she can help us, but actually she is within us, we are Gwan seum Bosal and we have to try to grow our compassion. We have to learn to be less selfish, less greedy. Compassion means to suffer with, to share the pain of another person.

Luca: Why is there some sort of water behind her?

Sunim: That is the sea around the Potalaka Mountain where the Bodhisattva lives. I think it probably has some symbolic meaning like the sea of beings. But, I am not sure.

Sara: There must be some very beautiful statues of the Bodhisattva.

Sunim: Yes, there are.



Conversation 35: Gwan seum Bosal Again

Sunim: Have you heard of the Dalai Lama? He is considered to be the incarnation of Gwan seum Bosal. His home is called the Potala after Potalaka.

Sara: *(walking up to the statue)* It's really beautiful. The face looks like a loving mother.

Sunim: Look carefully. Can you see anything special?

Luca: That is quite difficult. Apart from looking serene and peaceful, I don't really notice anything.

Sunim: Look again.

Sara: Hmmmmm. There is a kind of funny little person on Gwan seum's head.

Sunim: That's right! It is a small Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. Gwan seum Bosal helps the Buddha in the Pure Land and so carries him on her head. Another name is...

Sara: One-who-Looks-upon-the-World-with-



Compassion.

Sunim: Absolutely. But there is also the Sanskrit name of Avalokitesvara.





REVIEW 7

A. Questions

1. How many ceremonies for the dead are there?
Why?
2. How many hands does Gwan seum Bosal have?
Why?
3. What is on each hand? Why?
4. What is the statue on Gwan seum Bosal's head?
5. Why do we offer a lot of special food to people who
have died?
6. Do you believe in ghosts?

B. Try these Expressions for Yourself!

1. Have you seen...
 - i) Have you seen this Buddha in other temples you have visited?
 - ii) Have you seen how hard it is to fly to the moon?



iii) Have you seen Jenny lately?

2. Apart from...

i) Apart from Sundays, Mickey skis every day.

ii) John thinks he is apart from the others.

iii) Apart from peanuts, I can eat everything.

3. Oh so...

i) Oh so, you know Jamey?

ii) Oh, that is oh so good!

iii) "Are you coming to the party?" "Oh so, you are going too?"

4. Who knows!

i) Who knows how long it takes to become enlightened!

ii) I don't know where I will be this time next year. Who knows!

iii) So maybe there are flying saucers. Who knows!

5. That is why...

i) Everything is interrelated, that is why we don't eat meat.

ii) Is that why you are so skinny?

iii) I like ice cream that is why I eat a lot of it.