

Buddhism and Up (Karma): A Buddhist Priest's Wisdom to Help Suffering: A Conversation with Ji- Gong Bob-Sa

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Introduction

When I met Buddhist priest Ji-Gong (Ji-Gong Bob-Sa* [Priest], Ji-Gong hereafter), it was a cold winter day in Seoul, South Korea. One of my Buddhist friends introduced him to me when I asked him if he knew any Buddhist monk he admired. I was, at the time, interviewing Koreans nominated by others as wise and moral individuals motivated to live a virtuous life. Ji-Gong graciously accepted my invitation to interview him, which I appreciated greatly because I knew how difficult it was to interview people like him. On top of that, Ji-Gong spent the bulk of the day with me, from 3 PM to 12 AM. He even graciously accepted my follow up questions for this article. It was really a great pleasure to meet someone who would happily devote their time to others. He has been sought by many who have heard that he has been helping individuals suffering from physical and emotional wounds. No wonder that he became the person to go to for help. Just judging from what I heard and what I observed, I can say that he is altruistically helping others who come to seek his help. Many times in our interview, he emphasized that he is following Buddha's compassion.

Before I met Ji-Gong, I received one of his books from my Buddhist friend, entitled, *Buddha Speaks of Disabilities* (Choi, 2016). While I was reading the book, it became apparent that Ji-Gong is

* A Buddhist Priest, and the founder of Hwa-Gwang Seon-Won (Zen Center). He is also a Buddhist scholar and has published many books such as *Buddha Speaks of Disabilities*, *Rediscovering the Diamond Sutra*, *Rediscovering the Heart Sutra*, and *Rediscovering Jung-Do-Ga* (증도가:證道歌). He teaches Buddhism and the wisdom of Great Buddhist teachers.

someone who reads people's previous lives (humans who do not reach nirvana will repeat samsara/reincarnation according to Buddhism, as well as other Indian religious traditions), which made me even more excited to interview him.

Buddha Speaks of Disabilities is not the typical book where you might expect to hear about challenges people with disabilities have suffered. The book shows how Zen can be practiced in real life, and in Ji-Gong's words—borrowing Buddha's wisdom—thus the book is full of wisdom (J. Choi, Personal Communication, March 24, 2017). While reading the book, I observed that people born with disabilities or people who had been involved in an accident and became unexpectedly disabled suffer resentment toward their fate. The same holds true for their parents and other family members who take care of them. Often times disabled people ask, 'Why me?,' and, 'What is my *Up* (업: Karma, hereafter *Up*) that made me suffer like this?' They recycle this story in their head and have hard time moving on with their lives. This phenomenon might be accentuated among people with disabilities. However, trying to understand one's *Up*, carrying their *Up* on their shoulder, and holding resentment about their fate is very common, based on what I have seen and what I have experienced among Koreans. This can be a huge threat to Koreans' mental health. In our conversation, Ji-Gong stated (although the book focused on people with disabilities) that people with disabilities are just a few individuals who suffer from various challenges in life and want to be relieved from their psychological 'pain.' He also use a dialogue similar to Socratic dialogue, or a kind of cognitive therapy, that helps people to see different sides of their sufferings—a practice often used by Buddhist teachers.

This piece is largely composed of my conversation with Ji-Gong and two of his students, as well as quotes from Ji-Gong's writings. Throughout, I explore mental health issues concerning not only people with disabilities, but people more generally based on Ji-Gong's experiences in helping his patients. I also explore Ji-Gong's healing method focused on *Up* and Buddhism (*Seon* in Korean and *Zen* in Japanese). I divide the piece into two basic sections: *Up* (Karma) and Korean Culture, and Buddhism and Healing. Although the issues discussed throughout the conversation might appear to narrowly relate to Koreans and Korean culture, I believe they in fact provide potential insights for psychologists, psychiatrists, and other

mental health professionals (secular and non-secular) who help people with mental health issues.

Up (Karma) and Korean Culture

Hyeyoung: As I read the book *Buddha Speaks of Disability*, it seemed that there was a common difficulty among people with disabilities (either born with or through a sudden accident) and their parents and family. These people not only suffer from physical difficulties, but also suffer from trying to understand their *Up* (Karma). What did you think?

Ji-Gong: The human mind that analyzes cause and effect in any incident or phenomenon is rooted in a very rational and scientific way of thinking. If a phenomenon is hard to understand, it is assumed to be too mysterious to discover the cause. The causes of this kind of phenomenon could be beyond what we recognize in this time and space. However, understanding their own *Up* helps people to be less resentful and angry and to accept their life as it is, which helps them to start a new life. Furthermore, if [I help them] to obliterate their *Up* they can make progress in more easily overcoming and rehabilitating their disabilities. I have experienced this with many individuals: It is much more painful for them to be unable to explain why they have disabilities when they are trying so hard, than having the physical pain itself.

Up was a universal concept that was known to India before Buddhism. Thus, *Up* is not necessarily a Buddhist ideal but, rather, a human idea. In Buddhism, the essence of *Up* is empty (☯: emptiness); thus, anyone can be taught and guided to overcome their *Up*. Individuals can alter their recognition from *Up* that is a challenging phenomenon in this world to a different dimension—somewhere without *Up*. [...] Thus, my job was helping individuals who are suffering from *Up*, with whatever challenges they have; to provide them wisdom to overcome their *Up*. One of the things I do is tell them what their *Up* is, when absolutely necessary.

Hyeyoung: What relations do you think there are between the attachment to *Up* and Korean culture?

Ji-Gong: If you deny *Up*, you deny cause and effect, thus law and order can be confused and can destroy justice. *Up* is a universal ideology among Easterners, and *Up* is a hidden truth and wisdom in the current state. *Up* is the experience and memory embedded underneath, in your unconscious. Korean culture is, in many ways, based off of Buddhism; thus, *Up* can be also part of it. Consequently, people repress their desire for bad behaviours while building up good behaviours that promote benefit to others (공덕: Gong-Deok), which builds good *Up* (Karma). I had grown up hearing, ‘Humans need to build Gong-Deok’ (Good behaviours that benefit others). *Up* ideology has not only has contributed to protecting individual consciousness, but has also been essential to maintaining societal goodness, naturally, before we established law; that is because promoting goodness is more convincing with much scientific cause-and-effect than just promoting goodness as moral virtue.

Hyeyoung: What have you done to help people who are suffering from ‘*Up* dilemma’?

Ji-Gong: What I do is not a common practice that anyone can learn and it is not limited one or two methods, because each individual has different *Up*, a different current state, and various states of consciousness. I am only able to do that with [my] clear discernment and with the help of Buddha’s power and wisdom. I have helped so many people who are suffering from, not only physical challenges, but also mental suffering. Each case has been unique and I remember each one of them. A lot of cases are described in my book. Also, many of my clients became my students.

Hyeyoung: I felt astonished when I read in your book that you treat your clients by telling them their previous lives. How

did they responded to your treatment? Did they understand it well?

Ji-Gong: If one obtains wisdom, anybody can see their previous lives and understand their *Up*. [...] I only discuss their *Up* when it is absolutely helpful toward their understanding their own *Up*. When I tell my clients their *Up* in detail, they are able to understand that their suffering in this present life is directly connected to their *Up*. They experience this as miraculous. But, I do not stop there. If [I] removed their *Up*, their long mental suffering disappears. That is evidence. The reason I do this is to provide evidence that Buddha's teaching is the truth. If I just teach people [that Buddha's teaching is the truth], it may remain in their superficial level [of understanding (i.e. a notion)], but would not create any changes in their deep heart.

Hyeyoung: I am curious how you can remove people's *Up*.

Ji-Gong: If you look at the source of suffering, from the pain of the body and the mind, *Up* that is engraved in the soul is very active. Psychologically speaking, it is an unconscious trace. Eliminating *Up* destroys the power of this trace and erases the trace itself. Buddhism has so many teachings for this purpose that I use it freely to match my students and clients. One typical method is the mantra (진언: Jin-Un). Once you have extinguished your *Up*, you are able to see your achievement and progress as much as you strive for it.

How Ji-Gong removes *Up* is shown in the following example. *Ji-Gong* suggested I ask one of his students/clients—who is also my friend (pseudonym: H)—and his wife (pseudonym S), who had actually introduced me to *Ji-Gong*, about how they knew him, their story, the method of healing, and its effect.

Example (Interview with *Ji-Gong*'s clients): Our daughter Y (pseudonym) has scoliosis and she constantly had to see a doctor, 360 out of 365 days a year. The symptoms worsened when she entered high school. She constantly complained

that she had backache, finger ache, headache, neck-ache, etc., because she had studied so hard for her college entrance exam, because she wanted to go to a medical college, which is hard to get into; so we encouraged her to sleep more, but the symptoms wouldn't go away, no matter how much she rested. At that time, we didn't believe any of what she was saying. We blamed her and told her that she was going crazy due to lack of sleep. We never believed in any 'spirit' or 'ghost' story. Her school performance was also fluctuating widely. She would get 100% score one day and she would get a failing grade the next.

One day, we got the phone number of *Ji-Gong* Bob-Sa-Nim from one of our acquaintances. When we called him, he already knew what was going on. He talked about one of Y's previous lives, which we didn't believe at that time. He said in one of Y's previous lives, she was living with her grandmother. They were so poor and often did not have food. So, she often had to steal food and was beaten by people who found her guilty. Thus, she carried her *Up* even now, and she was in pain for this [for] years. In order to remove Y's *Up*, *Ji-Gong* Bob-Sa-Nim performed a ritual and prayer. For me (S) it was a mind-out-of-body experience. There were *Ji-Gong*, Bosal-Nim (*Ji-Gong*'s wife), and just me (S). We were praying while *Ji-Gong* was performing the ritual. He was calling out the ghost (Y's grandmother in her previous life) and scolded her not to stay around Y's present life. He told her that leaving Y's side was protecting her and saving her. We did the praying and ritual twice, and Y said she was no longer in pain. There are still imprinted pains here and there, for which we are continuously praying for her. She is now at the University of Minnesota, studying neuroscience. She is there by herself and taking care of herself, which is miraculous because I (S) had to carry her school-bag in and out of school every day because she could not carry anything. Now, she told us she has carried 22kg of stuff. We have so many people in our temple who are survivors from illness or life sufferings. They all got immense and miraculous help from *Ji-Gong* Bob-Sa-Nim. (Kim & Choi, Personal communication, March 28, 2017)

Hyeyoung: How does this kind of healing relate to traditional mental health therapy (both East and West)?

Ji-Gong: Hypnotherapy might be the closest to what I do: Accessing the clients' unconscious to extract the cause of suffering and treat it. So, I do teach hypnotherapy and some of my students administer hypnotherapy to their clients. However, I do not need to hypnotize my clients to reach their unconscious level to treat them, which might be unbelievable. I do not even need to have them in front of me to treat them. The reason [most] psychotherapy has limitations is a lot of truly important mental health issues might be related to the spiritual dimension beyond the psychic dimension. I am able to access their spiritual level, where their *Up* resides, and treat them invisibly. Thus, my treatment is not visible, and my clients do not need to be in front of me. This aligns with Buddhist practices that access the spiritual level, where the root of *Up* exists, to treat their illness and suffering alone. Further, it changes their immortal being. Zen in Buddhism directly deals with the spiritual level and not the body and mind, thus it is the most difficult practice.

Hyeyoung: Do your students have any license for administering hypnotherapy?

Ji-Gong: In fact, even if you try to escape from a great deal of suffering, the suffering you have suffered is not easy to be erased but is still carved in the unconscious; it's a kind of trauma, so it creates another problem later. So, in order to extinguish the karma and to remove the remnants of mind, I have been teaching hypnosis, through lectures, to my disciples, and my disciples are giving people hypnosis treatment. [...] And the use of hypnosis is so diverse, but it is now being used too narrowly, which is unfortunate. In Korea, hypnosis is not recognized as a medical practice, so there is no national or authorized body [for licensing this]; thus, individual practices are more common. I take advantage

of whatever helps people. How can you handle a variety of people with just one or two techniques? Even if people are experiencing the same symptoms, the causes are all different.

Hyeyoung: Traditionally, many people consulted shamans to cure and help their mental suffering. Many primitive religions in other countries seem to have similar practices. Shamanism is still prevalent in Korean culture. What do you think of that?

Ji-Gong: Shamans mainly use fate counselling and the occult aspects of life. I am also mastering all of these things and use them when necessary. In this world, the visible part and the invisible part merge together, so we are limited if we only comprehend the visible. Everything has both sides, so the invisible part of the illness should be used for the invisible force, and the visible part should be used for the visible force. And we have to use these two things in unison. Just as Western medicine and oriental medicine treat illnesses together.

Since religion has such a high degree of form and systematic organization now, it has lost the various practical powers of shamanism; it became helpless for healing modern people. Now I think that religion should incorporate various treatments, not only from shamanism but also from modern medicine. The Buddha was called Eui-Wang (의왕: King of medicine), and at that time, he healed so many people's bodies and souls. Buddha had the power and wisdom to see and understand the deep source of *Up* of a soul; to heal people, and I am following the Buddha of that time.

Buddhism and Healing

In this section, I discuss *Ji-Gong's* thoughts on a healthy mind in contemporary society and examples of his self-healing remedy. *Ji-Gong* suggested a few pointers for a healthy mind in his book, *Buddha Speaks of Disabilities*, based on Buddhist teachings. He focused on discussing ways for strengthening mental health for people with disabilities, but we can apply his pointers to anybody. He wrote that if something happened to someone (just being injured), do not remain

in sadness by judging the good and bad of the incident. One should instead embrace the new condition one is in and liberate oneself from its challenges (i.e., being physically disabled). I started by discussing how contemporary Korean culture influences mental health, and how Buddhism can help individuals overcome their challenges. His healing remedy is largely based on Zen practice, which is applied to real life situations in his book.

Hyeyoung: How does Korean culture have any effect (good or bad) on Koreans' mental health?

Ji-Gong: We call it Korean culture but the essence is very complicated. Contemporary Korean culture has been influenced by Western culture and has changed tremendously; it became a culture without nationality. Traditional Korean culture placed more weight on mind than the material world, and more weight on spirituality than on mind; thus, it is hard to understand even a traditional proverb without understanding the invisible non-material world. Even under a strict social system, where one cannot move up the social ladder, people would not be disappointed or resentful, but rather value cultivating their inner strength and mental health, based on Buddhism and traditional culture. On the other hand, a side effect was that their material pursuits never progressed. I believe that their unconscious desire to be a person with high morality and high wisdom might have been higher than their desire to be rich. Contemporary Korean culture is a threat to mental health of Koreans in that it encourages too much comparison and too much awareness of what others have. This is especially true in light of everyone's great suffering because of physical and material comparisons; A person whose appearance or property is deficient compared to others suffers more.

Hyeyoung: How can Buddhism affect such things?

Ji-Gong: In Buddhism, there is no competition or comparison with others. It is the best preservation of traditional Korean

culture because it emphasizes mental maturity and control of desire and obsession with material possessions, not your genetic make-up. And, in Buddhism even the most miserable person should be respected, and regarded as having a great potential; thus it will contribute absolutely to achieving equality. In my book, there are many Buddhist guidelines for people to treat those people with disabilities who are seen as the biggest social underdogs well.

Hyeyoung: What is a healthy mind? All people, including people with disabilities and average people have mental suffering and pain; what is the biggest threat to mental health?

Ji-Gong: The biggest threat to mental health is a dishevelled mind. When our mind is disoriented, it is easily pulled back and forth by various free formed forces from outside; that causes fear, conflict, and anger inside, which make us suffer in an outward way, and we have a harder time achieving our goals. That is why it is important to work hard to maintain a clear mind and consciousness. Grasping the nature of incidents happening around one's presence and holding on to the center of consciousness is important for maintaining one's identity. On the other hand, one must broaden the mind; not worry too much about good and bad, not stick to self - thought.

Ji-Gong also discussed ways of accepting nature and destroying and reconstructing *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik* (색수상행식)(Choi, 2016). *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik* includes the physical and mental world described in Buddhist teaching.

Saek (Rupa) is the physical world, including earth, water, fire, wind, and our body (Karunamuni, 2015). The mind world includes: *Su* (Vedana) or sensations *Sang* (Samjina) or perceptions; *Hang* (Sankhara) or mental activity, and *Sik* (Vijnana) or consciousness (Karunamuni, 2015). *Ji-Gong* encourages us to embrace and be friends with new challenges and to work hard and not be scared or fearful, and to construct a new *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik* (Choi, 2016). One should diligently practice the above to achieve this. The following are

some pointers for people who want to overcome their challenges, which, in my opinion, are actually Zen practices to reach liberation. Below I provide a very short summary of each point Ji-Gong discusses in his book *Buddha Speaks of Disabilities* (Choi, 2016).

1. Trust in you: Just trust in yourself in order to construct a new *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik*. If one truly trusts and lets the future present itself, fear disappears.
2. Encourage yourself: Let yourself out of your body and mind; gently embrace and encourage yourself. This exercise will help you to be brave and maintain a good and healthy self. Do this diligently.
3. Be familiar (get along) with your disabilities/challenges: If you keep fighting against your challenges you lose energy and power, become resentful, and eventually are defeated by your challenges. A sense of self-efficacy will appear when you truly love yourself and embrace your challenges. Everything will become your friend, so you will never lose.
4. Sublimate your desire: Wanting to best anybody might make you a little better than some people, but you will not obtain greater benefit. When you expand your ambition and sublimate your desire to benefit others, you not only overcome your challenges, but also become a better person, with wisdom and strength.
5. Be satisfied with what you have: This does not mean living an average life. It means not wasting energy trying to grab what you do not have. In nature, the physical environment is neither good nor bad: it is just what it is. Accept new challenges as a new starting point.
6. Share your heart: Ji-Gong gives an example of a physically challenged man and wife who help other people in whatever way they can. If they focus on their challenges they will lose their mind to unhappiness. They put their mind and body in a prison-like small cell, they become even more miserable. If they share their heart with others, they appreciate *In-Yeon* (Buddhist term: human connection), and

come to open their heart, which is always a great start to construct new *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik*.

7. Pledge to yourself: Pledge to yourself not to contaminate your new *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik*. This requires repressing your evil mind, boosting your goodness, and cultivating your unchanging mind. Anything that breaks a peaceful mind is an evil mind. It is very easy to be polluted when you have challenges: You blame the environment or karma that presents you with challenges, which might ultimately make you disrespect yourself. Diligent practice boost your goodness.
8. Unite your mind: Enduring resentment and anger does not mean being a pushover. It is a great Zen practice to make the source of anger emptiness. It is a great way to not to be shaken by the environment and to maintain your pure heart.
9. Expand your mind: Expanding your mind involves overcoming your challenges and escaping the environment you are in using your new *Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik*. Overcoming your mind disables the challenges. Keep moving forward rather than continuing to feel sorry for yourself.
10. Have tranquil mind: Contain a peaceful mind and put your challenges to rest. Erase your old despair about your challenges. You are in Zen, beyond your given surroundings. Then you are truly free from body and mind and understand that the given surroundings are under an invisible law and order; thus you enter the emancipation gate and, once there, you can take control of your challenges and understand that your challenges are actually your teachers.
11. Light your heart. Ji-Gong discussed many Buddhist Masters who entered nirvana after overcoming their physical challenges. They had lived their lives with great compassion toward others. Great compassion is eternal and never vanishes (Choi, 2016).

Here are a couple examples of Ji-Gong's dialogues with his clients and students from his book that give additional insight into the method he is using to guide others.

Example 1: One day an old lady came to see Ji-Gong and made a complaint. She was tired of helping others. Before she was only thinking of herself but since she attended the temple and listened to his teaching, she started working hard to help others by doing everything and anything, but now she felt exhausted and her husband and kids complained that she doesn't take care of them enough. So, Ji-Gong replied, 'Then, volunteer without volunteering.' Ji-Gong continued, 'It is pure when there is no justification; it is not service if it is for someone, for something.' The lady replied, 'Aha, yes, Buddha said *Ongmusuju Yisangkisim* (응무소주이 생기심): Abandon the discernment of 'no, good, mine, subjective, objective, bad, good', but I missed *Ongmusuju* (do not stay in any object). Ji-Gong said, 'You missed *Yisangkisim*. [...] When you help others you also need to see yourself inside of their heart. If they accept your help naturally as if they breathe air, then your family wouldn't complain so much.' He kept going, and wrote the following in his book: "A human mind that humans have a hard time experiencing is not an artificial mind or a compassionate mind, it is a natural mind. Helping others can be artificial if you desire it. [...] When our mind is free for giving love, then helping others becomes so easy and everlasting (Choi, 2016).

Example 2: A mother of a child with a severe disability came and said to Ji-Gong, 'I can't live any longer. I have no confidence. What should I do?' Ji-Gong replied, 'There is nothing I can do to help you to build confidence. What should I do?' She was desperate: 'You should do something.' Ji-Gong replied, 'If so, then you should listen carefully. Can you breathe with confidence? Life is full of unpredictables and your mind is also unpredictable, so desiring to live with confidence is a delusion and comes from arrogance. Even when I work I might show confidence not because I am fully confident but because I believe if I proceed with confidence

there could be more success than failure. [...] If every time something happens you seek confidence, you wouldn't do things that are not in your comfort zone. So, you limit yourself and that is worthless. I have been careful with no confidence. Often times I don't even think about if I have confidence or not. I just do whenever things I face to do. ... that's why I told you that I have no confidence to help you.'

She smiled with realization; 'I will forever have confidence till I die now. I was full of confidence before I had my child. Now I think back it seemed to be "silly confidence" [...] but it must be difficult not to have confidence.' Ji-Gong replied. 'Yes, you are right. First of all, you should not fixate on having or not-having confidence. Because everybody has some degree of fear, they work hard to feel confidence. If you don't fear, you won't need to seek confidence. What are you afraid of?' She replied, [...] 'I fear my child dies like this. I fear that, when I die, how my child will live by himself? [...] Ji-Gong replied, 'You can't be with your child forever, unless you die at the same day and time. Even if your body is gone Karma, Spirit, and Gene are eternal; thus, we live forever and there is no death. [...] Leave a beautiful stone to your child, he will forever carry it and you can die peacefully, without fear. [...] If you live with strength and a cheerful heart, he will forever carry that even when you die.' This mother later volunteered for others, getting back her life with confidence and audacity (Choi, 2016).

Lesson Learned: Concluding Remarks

Ji-Gong is neither a trained counsellor nor psychiatrist. He has been sought by others who have heard of his wisdom and ability to heal people's sufferings. His healing methods are very unique, and thus might easily be misunderstood by others. Reading others' previous lives and calling out ghosts are similar practices to Korean traditional Shamanism, or other primitive religious practices in other countries. Thus, people living in the modern era have a hard time understanding things like this that are beyond our consciousness. Furthermore, as Ji-Gong stated, what he does "is not a common practice that anyone can learn. Although there is quite a lot of evidence showing this type

of supernatural power, I am not sure how practical it is as a tool for modern counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Nonetheless, I still think that we can learn from this, regardless of whether one believes of this kind of power that can neither be seen nor touched. The following are a few interesting things left for me (us) to think about:

1. The *Up* dilemma is a major theme discussed in this piece. In *Ji-Gong's* lecture, he said, "Regretting builds *Up* (Karma). When something disappears, one thinks that it will come back. If continuously attached to what one has lost, s/he will be exhausted and resentful" (Choi, Lecture, February 22, 2017). If one cannot accept what they have now, one will deny nature and suffer from the evil karma they have created. This is the source of suffering for many of *Ji-Gong's* clients, or for anybody, including me. Some people who suffer from tremendous physical challenges, traumatic experiences, and sudden changes of their lives blame and resent the cause of their suffering. In some cases, they could be helped by changing their views (*Saek-Su-Sang-Hang-Sik*) about the phenomenon with the eleven steps described above in the Buddhism and Healing section. However, some causes or reasons they seek might not always be visible; some causes might be beyond what they can find, and beyond human reality.

People often want to know their *Up* (karma) to understand the deeper part of their suffering, which *Ji-Gong* experienced. On these occasions *Ji-Gong's* miraculous capability plays a huge role in soothing his clients' souls. Aforementioned, this is not a new therapy; it has a history as ancient as humankind. Even in the modern era, there are cultures or peoples who might need this kind of therapy, and it should not be ignored. Transpersonal psychology is a field that tries to understand this kind of extraordinary phenomenon.

2. Religion has the power to provide spiritual strength that helps people to overcome life pains. Religion has a history as long as human existence, and plays a great role both in human suffering and in human happiness. As much as other religions have helped people, Buddhist practice have also soothed people with emotional troubles. *Ji-Gong* found that Buddhism conveys the truth he believes in the best and he has been teaching Buddhist dialogues with students, and through rituals and lectures. *Ji-Gong* also believes that Buddhism will help his students to be wise and spiritually liberated. Goździak (2002)

has also found that spiritual and religious beliefs often provide meaning to people who have experienced life pains. Spirituality and faith often help people learn how to endure and overcome suffering (Goździak, 2002). This could apply to other religions as well. Larson, Milano, and Lu (1998), too, found clinical evidence showing a positive relationship between religious beliefs and behaviour and physical and mental health. They affirm that treatments of meditation, prayer, and worship can actually reduce psychological and physiological stress. The power of religion in supporting mental health should not be ignored. There have been so many great minds, such as those of Jesus Christ and Buddha, whose miraculous compassion healed people. As Buddha said, 'Each of us has Buddha in us,' and Ji-Gong's eleven pointers may help individuals find a peaceful world.

Our conversation did not dwell much on people with emotional disorders, but some of the life challenges of the people we did discuss might cause similar types of emotional suffering. He did speak a little bit about *Hwa-Byung* (pent-up resentment disorder—a cultural illness), which could develop into depression and panic disorder. For example, in Y's case, she was physically ill, but she also probably had suffered from anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (seeing ghosts in real life, having nightmares each night, and trauma from her previous life). It was a unique case, but there are a lot of unbelievable incidents that happen in our daily life. I am hopeful that mental health practitioners can take something out of this article to help clients with emotional disorders.

This has been an interesting project that has helped me to reflect upon my own suffering. Humans are not perfect. We fear, judge, regret, hate, desire, and get upset. And most of the things we suffer from are actually from what we created through new challenges that we face. Historically, people relied on religion, nowadays mental health professionals have become the people from whom to receive help. In closing, I do not mean to argue that Ji-Gong's healing method is the best; rather, I merely mean to report his interesting cases, in the hope of providing some insights from his unique philosophy on healing and on Buddhism engaged with altruistic intentions.

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