



Sun Do News

Fall 2023

Volume 39, Issue 3

Dear Sundian,

Postpone your judgement
Until the mud settles
down
Because
Black and White
Good and Bad
Sin and Forgiveness
Come randomly
With no connotations

----Master Hyunmoon Kim

My 2023 Fall Retreat Experience

By Patrick Studley

Yellow belt breathing. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds. My first encounter with yellow belt postures and breathing was in 2015. Something in me, completely subconscious, rebelled at holding the breath after an exhalation. I was only aware of a slight, vague agitation. After a while, it seemed that the

agitation had the characteristics of fear, some deep part of my brain not knowing when the next inhalation was coming. We know this about the brain--different parts of the brain know different things, like watching a horror movie when some part of my brain doesn't know that it isn't real.

In 2022 I restarted white belt (and not the first time I have restarted my Sun Do practice), and by the time of the summer retreat this year, I was ready to re-encounter yellow belt. I signed up for the mountain retreat, looking forward to a grand emersion. The first four days included early morning (though 3:30 am doesn't really qualify as morning) meditation, bear walking, tiger walking, man walking, double practice, breakfast, and 500 big bows. It's a bit of a blur, so I don't exactly remember the time and sequence of events.

The first 100 bows on the first day had me in a bit of a struggle, but my body found a breathing pattern that supported the physical effort. I won't say what the pattern was because it might be different for different people. But I will say that the prostrated posture on the floor in a kind of yoga child's pose, but with my hands not so far from my head, occurred with a deep exhalation, like I never needed to get anywhere else, and there was no hurry to inhale. Fear of when the next breath would come was gone. The posture seemed to support the exhalation as well as the feeling of abandoning my need to control. No wonder this posture represents

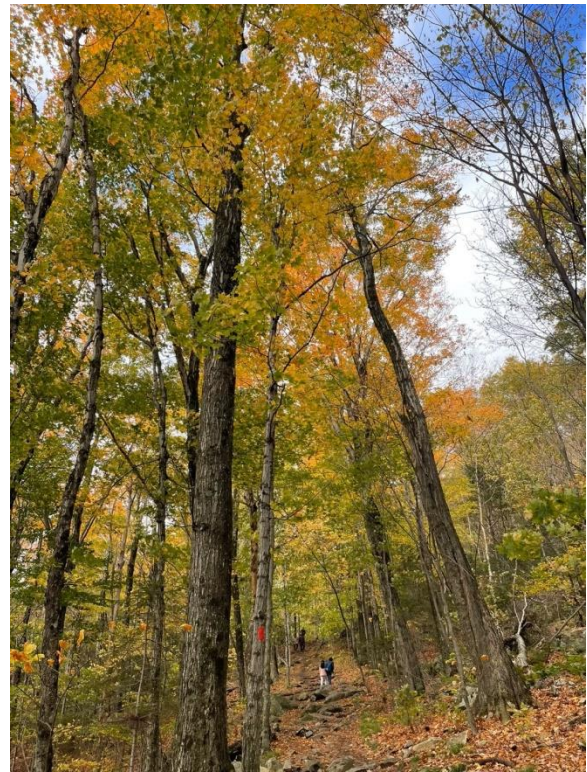
complete surrender in many cultures. For me it was surrender of my thinking apparatus to I know not what. And I didn't need to know.

During practices, I worked at relearning the yellow belt postures and gradually brought in yellow belt breathing. It's not the same as in the big bows, but I find much less agitation during the hold after the exhalation. Needless to say, there are postures where I am unable to breathe that way. But this is what makes this journey so interesting to me.

The retreat was also filled with meals, dish washing, clinics, and workshops. In the dining area, an idea came to me of a long table that many people could sit at together. I initially imagined a table 24 feet long and about 3 or 4 feet wide. My brother, who was an experienced woodworker, had made a 12' by 4' trestle table for my parents that could accommodate quite a few people. I texted my nephew in Sunnyvale, California, to ask if he could send me a couple of pictures to show Master Kim, which he did. Showing them to Master Kim, I mentioned that I had quite a lot of $\frac{3}{4}$ " oak lumber that was left over after a 2015 logging and milling operation that cleared the land for our house in Dutchess County, New York, and produced the oak flooring for the house. I now have more oak lumber than I can use in my life time, so I told Master Kim that I could donate the lumber. We looked at the space and decided that a 3' by 8' oak trestle table with two long benches would be a good way to start. He asked me if it could be built at the fall retreat.

So my plan was to bring up a lot of boards in my pick-up truck and drop them off, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that a lot would need to happen before the fall retreat if it was going to be finished there. Gluing $\frac{3}{4}$ " boards together to make a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " thick table top and the 3" thick trestle legs actually took me a good part of September, and unfortunately, the benches have had to be postponed.

Vermont was beautiful at the beginning of October, though the weather was rainy at times. The retreat was small and intimate. At one clinic, I was able to review every yellow belt posture with Master Kim. Don Zickefoose and I put the table together with the help of Master Kim's daughter Mina. It got sanded and stained, and Master Kim and I managed to get it into the dining hall in the early afternoon of the last day of the retreat.



An autumn walk at the retreat center

The table is much heavier than I expected it to be. Thank goodness Master Kim wanted it 8' long instead of 12' long. I hope to deliver benches in January for the winter retreat. It gives me great satisfaction to feel that people may be taking meals together on a table that was made from trees that were growing where my house stands or not far away. I think one could see trees, especially tall straight trees, as being a bridge between Heaven and Earth, and I hope that relates to Keon Kon Dan Boub.

Patrick Studley practices in Upstate New York.

International Sun Do Association

Grand Master

Hyunmoon Kim

Masters

Tora Strawderman
Philippe Lewkowicz
Wendy Larman (honorary)

Associate Masters

Hyunhee Kim
Kim Hedegaard
Betsy Forrest
Betsy Barstow
Brian Quirk
Roy Bushman
Virginia Platt
Rich Kramer
Christine Ucich
Jerry Geier
Hank Babcock
Lucie Lambert

Teachers

Stan Baker	Diane Matta
Kwong Lip Pang	Don Zickefoose
Joel Dunning	Teresa Lenzen
Nicolas Tacchi	Florin Serbanescu
Greg Vorst	

Senior Instructors

David Delbrook	Al Passacantando
Ginger Hobbs	Stephen Holmes

Instructors

Teresa Dunning	Barbara McCandless
Lucy Young	Heidemarie Holmes

A Journey toward Psychological and Spiritual Transformation

By Michael Nolan

As you will come to read, I have found the practice of surrender to be one of the most valuable elements of my personal transformation process. Before I tell you all the ways in which SunDo has provided me with an avenue for deepening my practice of surrender, I would like to give you some context for my journey.

In my early teens I began experimenting with different substances. I grew up in an environment that changed frequently. I moved every four years, and the fastest way for me to make friends was through attending parties. This experimentation in substance use to further my social pursuits eventually became an isolating addiction that destroyed relationships with the people I loved most. As a result, I began a years-long journey of entering and leaving treatment programs, relapsing, and looking for solutions to my problems in all the wrong places.

On August 8, 2007, a combination of the smallest amount of inner willingness, severe-enough consequences, and a committed group of loved ones helped me land in a treatment program that saved my life. I have been clean and sober since August 8, 2007, but that was only the beginning of my journey of transformation. Part of my healing journey required me to attend therapy, counseling, 12-step meetings, written assignments, service commitments, and practicing specific spiritual principles that I was told would grant me a reprieve from the incessant voice in my head that was trying to convince me that everyone was wrong, and that I knew what was best for me. One of the most important spiritual principles I needed to practice daily was surrender.

In 2017 I began working with Greg Vorst. At the time, I had been working on a program of recovery for more than 10 years and lived most of the time in a reliably consistent state of gratitude and acceptance of life's challenges. However, I was also struggling with intense anxiety that I assumed would never go away. It was only a few days into meeting Greg that he introduced to me SunDo. Greg had been a dedicated SunDoan for many years before my introduction to the practice. At the time, he said, "Mike, I want to show you this practice that I do. It's called SunDo and you are going to LOVE it!" I thought he seemed oddly enthusiastic, but I was willing to hear him out. Over the course of our next couple years of working together, I had an awareness of the practice and its positive impact on Greg's life, but I was too busy to dedicate two hours of every day to something like that.

Eventually Greg and I decided to go into business together. As soon as we began discussions around the nature of our work together, Greg made the demand that if we were to join together in business, I would need to practice SunDo consistently. I thought he was being unreasonable, but I also knew his talents as a therapist would propel our business into amazing success. So I surrendered to the idea that if I wanted to create a thriving community built around recovery and spiritual principles, I would need to walk the walk. So I began my regular SunDo practice in January 2019.



Rick Barstow, Michael Nolan, Greg Vorst, and Don Zickefoose at the fall retreat

Surrender often suggests weakness or giving up, but in the context of spiritual and psychological practices like SunDo, it represents a different kind of power—a power that unlocks deeper facets of human consciousness and capacity. For someone who has navigated the complex pathways of addiction recovery and now delves into the depths of SunDo, the concept of surrender isn't just a theoretical construct but a lived experience that resonates in every aspect of my being.

Initially, the physical demands of SunDo were gentle and relaxing. Over the next few years they became formidable, requiring me to coordinate intricate postures with specific breathing techniques focused on my lower abdomen. In my experience, as the practice became more demanding, I became fraught with resistance and frustration.

However, I noticed that in my practice when I would surrender to the process, allowing the muscles to stretch without tension and the breath to flow without restriction, an interesting transformation occurred. Over time I saw physical strength and flexibility improve, as well as a newfound sense of bodily freedom, a corporeal liberation that served as a metaphor for other types of freedom.

A natural byproduct of this physical surrender was a psychological transformation that I was not anticipating. When I abandoned the immediate need for results or mastery, I was able to cultivate patience, not just with my practice, but with myself. This led to a deeper experience of self-worth. I began to appreciate my journey, no matter its pace or the obstacles encountered. I found this particularly enlightening as someone who has been on the strenuous path of addiction recovery, where the fruits of my labor were not always immediately visible.

Surrendering physically and psychologically led to spiritual gains. As I dropped into the practice, my mind cleared, allowing for heightened awareness and the ability to live in the present

moment. This clarity created a greater experience of compassion, not just for myself but for others, opening up new realms of interpersonal connections and understanding.

For someone committed to addiction recovery, this has been of paramount importance. Surrendering to a higher power or aligning with spiritual principles isn't about losing control, but gaining a different kind of command—one that fosters a life of service and self-examination.

Interestingly, the act of surrender became a cyclical process. Physical surrender leads to psychological relief, which in turn fosters spiritual growth, encouraging further physical surrender. Each act of surrender replenishes the next, creating a self-sustaining cycle of continual improvement.

Surrender is not the end but a beginning—a portal to deeper psychological fortitude, spiritual wisdom, and an enriched sense of humanity. Whether navigating the complexities of addiction recovery or mastering the intricate poses of SunDo in conjunction with the lower abdominal breathing, the journey always begins the same way: by letting go. And in that letting go, we find not loss, but gain; not emptiness, but fullness; and not an ending, but a myriad of new beginnings.

For anyone committed to personal growth, psychological development, or a deeper spiritual path, surrender is not just a strategy but a practice in itself—a way of life, holding the transformative power to turn obstacles into stepping stones on the journey to the true self.

Michael Nolan practices at Los Gatos SunDo Center in California.

More Fall Retreat Photos

Courtesy of Master Kim



Retreat participants help Patrick build the new table



Painting the basement in the dining hall



Retreat center from the hill top

Korea Trip 2024

Sundo Pilgrimage Trip to Korea

Airport: Incheon International Airport (ICN)
May 10 (arrive) thru May 21 (depart), 2024
Fees: \$1850.00 (USD), includes
domestic transportation, lodging, and meals
Guided by Master Hyunmoon Kim

This trip includes Cheju Island, a land of myth and Taoist Master Chungsan's spiritual homestead; Kyungjoo, a Kingdom of Shila Dynasty for 1000 years; Jiree Mountain, where Sundo hermits once resided; Seoul; and daily Sundo practice.

Retreat Schedule

Romania Retreat

Bron, Romania
November 16-19
Led by Master Hyunmoon Kim
Coordinator: Florin Serbanescu
More Info: www.sundo.ro

New Year's Retreat

Vermont Sundo Retreat Center
January 2-7, 2024
Led by Master Hyunmoon Kim

California Retreat

April 18-21, 2024
Green Mountain Retreat Center
Santa Cruz, California
Led by Master Hyunmoon Kim
More info & Registration:
Embodied Recovery Center
1-888-372-3610 (Greg)

Spring Retreat

May 24-27, 2024
Barnet, Vermont

Summer Retreat

July 26 - August 4, 2024
Barnet, Vermont



The dining hall at night

Promotions

Won Ki Dan Boup II

Michael Nolan



Fall at the retreat center



The Sun Do News welcomes stories, articles poems, photos, and announcements. Please send your contribution to Betsy Forrest as an email attachment, if possible, at bforrest777@gmail.com.

Website:

www.sundo.org

Visit the Sun Do website for information on Sun Do history, retreat dates and registration, and much more.

You may also e-mail questions to us through the website.

Find us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Sundo.Healing/>

Editor and producer:

Betsy Forrest



The labyrinth



Greg Vorst



Have a great holiday, everyone!