



Paul Park, JDPSN

DHARMA COMBAT

Park PSN: Ji Bong Soen Sa, how are you today?

Ji Bong Zen Master: I am fine. I have only one question for you.

PPSN: That's all I need! *[laughs; audience laughs]*

JBZM: My question: What took you so long? *[laughs]*

PPSN: You already understand!

JBZM: No, I don't.

PPSN: Thank you very much for your teaching!

[laughter and applause from audience]

Q: Good morning, Paul.

PPSN: Good morning.

Q: I live at Hwa Gye Sah. At the end of last Kyol Che there were some Chinese nuns. They wanted to go to Gang Wal Do (which is on an island) where Zen Master Seung Sahn did a kido. But a Korean nun took them to Kang Wal Do and they ended up at So Rak Sahn (which is a mountain). So how can you help these nuns get to Gang Wal Do?

PPSN: You already understand!

Q: Please teach me.

PPSN: *[rows a boat]*

Q: *[laughs]* Thank you very much.

PPSN: How are you, Poep Sa Nim?

Jeff Kitzes, JDPSN: I am very well. And you?

PPSN: Real good. Thank you.

KPSN: So, I have a question. You live in Los Angeles. I live in the San Francisco Bay area. Both places are in California but, both are very different. I don't understand this. Could you please explain it to me?

PPSN: You already understand!

KPSN: So, please teach me.

PPSN: It takes me six hours to drive up to San Francisco from Los Angeles.

KPSN: Oh, very fast driver!

[audience laughs]

DHARMA SPEECH

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Sky is earth. Earth is sky.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No sky. No earth.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Sky is sky. Earth is earth.

Which one of these three is correct? If you say you know the correct one, the stick will hit you thirty times. If you say you don't know the correct one, the stick will also hit you thirty times. Why is that?

KATZ!

Sky is blue. Earth is brown.

Seems I've been practicing Zen for only a few years, but already eighteen years have passed. When I was twelve years old, I remember that my mother and I went to the Korean temple, Dharma Sah, which had just opened in Los Angeles. There, for the first time, we met Seung Sahn Dae Soen Sa Nim. He gave a dharma speech that day. He said, "First you must find your true self. Then attain the truth and the wisdom, and lead a correct life by helping others." I didn't understand what the heck he was talking about. Afterwards, we sat for thirty minutes. You know, for a twelve year old boy, sitting for thirty minutes...it's an awful long time. It felt like an eternity. My body felt like it was on fire. I was just literally burning up. I said to myself, "I don't want to do this! I don't know why I'm doing this." So, I didn't sit meditation for several years after that. I still followed my mom to the temple, but I didn't sit. I just went and played. I remember I played a lot in the temple.

A few years passed; I got discharged from the Army. So, I decided to try sitting again. Again, every time I sat, my body felt like it was on fire. I just couldn't handle it. But, I kept on trying. I guess it was my karma to keep on trying, even though I was having such a hard time with sitting.

After a few years, I had gotten into my own business. It was a small fast food place. One day my mother, my very wise mother, suggested I do some bowing. She said, "It might help you with your business. It may help you with your sitting." I had been watching my mother do 108 bows every morning for several years. She never had any problem sitting, so I reluctantly tried bowing.

I started doing 108 bows in the morning. I had that same question, again. "Why am I doing this? I don't want to do this." But I kept on trying. I kept on trying. I continued

doing bows each morning. Then, one day I heard that Zen Master Seung Sahn does a thousand bows a day. I thought to myself, "Hmmm, if that old man can do a thousand bows per day, maybe I can do at least five hundred bows a day." The next day I woke up at 4:30 in the morning. I had probably never been up that early before in my life. I did my first set of five hundred bows. The one thing I remember is I kept saying to myself, "I don't want to do this. I don't know why I'm doing this. Why in the world am I doing this?" But, I kept on bowing anyway.

I continued bowing daily and I started to feel my center getting stronger. I was able to sit for a little longer period of time. Then, one day while I was sitting, I remembered Zen Master Seung Sahn's speech. He said, "First you must find your true self. Then attain the truth and the wisdom, and lead a correct life by helping others."

I couldn't understand what he meant by "true self." So, I started to sit with "What am I? What is my true self?" I felt my center getting stronger and stronger and I got stuck just like this, just like now. *[laughs]* I was totally stuck, just like now. *[audience laughs]* Boy, was I stuck! So, I sat with "What am I? What is my true self?"

Then, one day I was driving home from work. I finally realized this "don't know" mind I'd been carrying around with myself. I looked up at the sky and realized the sky is really blue. And dogs really bark "woof, woof." And trees are really green. And, then, sugar tasted really sweet. I realized that my true self and nature are not separate, but one.

But going one more step was necessary for me.

My mother, my very wise mother, had me bring her all the leftover bread from work so she could feed the birds and it wouldn't go to waste. I didn't think much of it back then. Now I realize she was teaching me that this was correct function. Our correct job is to help all beings—all sentient beings. That's doesn't mean just human beings, but every living thing in this world, including the birds. I still take bread to my mother's house, but I keep a portion of it because there are hungry birds around my house as well.

So, the first most important thing is doing hard practice and getting your center strong. Then, have that big question of "What am I?", attain your true self and the wisdom to lead a correct life.

For the last eighteen years, I have been practicing Zen. And I still don't know. But now, I know this "don't know."

KATZ!

Chili pepper is hot. Lemon is sour.

How may I help you?