

Inka Ceremony for Chong Hae Sunim

On April 7, 2001 Chong Hae Sunim received inka in a ceremony at Providence Zen Center with Zen Master Soeng Hyang presiding.



D H A R M A C O M B A T

Question: During Zen Master Dae Bong's opening talk, he said that inka was an obligation. And you don't even understand yet. So, what will you do when you really don't understand?

Chong Hae Sunim: You already understand.

Q: So, I ask you.

CHSN: How can I help you?

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: Zen Master Dae Bong said in his opening talk that when a teacher gives inka to a student that it's like two halves of a seal. The teacher has one half and you the other half. I'm looking at you, I don't see half of a seal, I see Chong Hae Sunim. Could you tell me, where is your half of a seal?

CHSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

CHSN: [*shakes student's hand*] Pleased to meet you.

Q: But that's just a handshake.

CHSN: You want more?

Q: Yeah.

CHSN: Dog runs after the bone.

Q: I used to practice with you in Seattle, but now you live in Providence and I still live in Seattle. So, how will you teach me when you get inka?

CHSN: You already understand.

Q: I don't understand.

CHSN: So, where are you right now?

Q: I'm sitting here talking to you.

CHSN: You don't even need my teaching now.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Q: You used to be a musician. I think you sang the blues, is that correct? Tell me, now that you're a monk, have you changed your tune?

CHSN: You already understand.

Q: I ask you.

CHSN: [*sings*] Well, the sky is blue and your hair is red. But if you ask me one more question I'll say you're already dead. If you don't like this song I'm singing just hold your own, 'cause if you ask me any more I'll say the dog runs after the bone.

Q: Thank you for your very long song.

Q: This is a beautiful time of year, springtime. The geese are all going north. They fly a lot over the house where we live in Lexington. My daughter always reminds me to park the car in the garage. Why?

CHSN: You already understand.

Q: Oh, please teach me.

CHSN: [*Imitates a goose flying and makes a pooping sound as he passes over the questioner.*]

D H A R M A T A L K

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

East is west and west is east.

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

There is no east and there is no west.

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

East is east and west is west.

East or west, which one is the better direction?

KATZ!

Rhode Island is east and California is west.

In the temple rules it says: Where are you going? Watch your step. This is a wonderful question and very good advice! This world and its occupants are spinning around at blinding speed. We are coming and going very quickly in all kinds of vehicles, as many of you have done in the past few days. We can send messages around the world in the blink of an eye. But where are we going and why?

Bodhidharma left India and went east into China. After his famous encounter with Emperor Wu of Liang, he turned and walked away toward the north and only kept a don't know mind in a cave for nine years. Why did he do that?

When the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng heard a line from the Diamond Sutra, his mind exploded and he decided to go north to visit the Fifth Patriarch. After his secret transmission in the third watch of the night, he snuck away and went south to live with hunters for eighteen years. Why did he do that?

Zen Master Dok Sahn traveled south to hit the southern monks because he thought that they weren't practicing correctly. Along the way, he was humbled by an old woman at a teahouse, and later he met Zen Master Yong Dam, who helped him to see the light by putting him completely in the dark. Which way could he go?

Why are all these Zen Masters wandering around so much?

When I was a teenager I was living in a small town in northern California and I wanted to get out very badly. I loved blues music very much, and I wanted to see the world and experience something beyond the small town where I lived, so at 17 I decided that I would go on a pilgrimage down south to the Mississippi delta. I actually intended to meet an old blues master, who would of course be sitting under a tree, playing guitar, and he would take me under his wing and show me the ropes! In this way I would really connect with the authentic blues. Well, I got as far as Los

Angeles and my Volkswagen broke down. I guess I was learning about the blues, all right, but not the way I had expected. Luckily I had a brother there to help me, and I continued on my way winding east on I-10 and then south through Texas and on down to New Orleans.

Eventually, after many misadventures, I arrived in the heart of the delta, Vicksburg, Mississippi, which was an incredibly beautiful town. When I got there I was just a little disappointed. There was the big river flowing by and the landscape was lush and green, but I couldn't for the life of me find out where the old blues masters sat under the trees. Here I was, "White Boy Slim," complete with an old guitar and a scratchy voice, looking for my mentor and everyone looked at me like I was completely crazy. After a few weeks bumming around Vicksburg I got more and more disappointed and quite confused about what the heck I was doing.

My fantasy was shattered. I remember driving north on the famous Highway 61 toward Greenville. It was about 105 degrees, and pouring rain harder than I had ever seen it before. I pulled over to the side of the highway in a daze. I knew exactly where I was, and yet was completely and utterly lost. What am I? Where am I going? What am I supposed to be? What am I supposed to do? I would love to tell you that I had a great revelation at that moment, but in fact I stayed quite lost for many years after that. But I'm a stubborn guy, and I kept playing music and traveling, wandering around and around, always searching for something authentic that I could latch onto. Some way to be or someone to teach me, to give me validation. I wandered around like that for what seemed like years, until slowly I realized that searching for authenticity and a clear direction outside of myself was a big mistake and ultimately fruitless, and if I was ever going to be an authentic person I would have to look inside and see what was there.

So, you could say I came to Zen practice in an effort to be an authentic person, to find the truth about what I was. Zen asks two interesting questions: What are you doing right now? And why? What are you doing right now?—can often be pretty clear. Why do we do what we do? It is very important to attain that. Our practicing direction, the reason we practice, is of utmost importance. So having a clear compass is necessary to keep us on track! When you look at a compass it can tell you which direction is north, but it doesn't tell you if there will be obstacles or difficulties along the way—it just points north. But if your compass is functioning clearly, then even if you get lost or encounter obstacles and difficulties that throw you off course, you can always return to your original direction and continue. In the temple rules it also says that first we must make a firm decision to attain enlightenment and help others.

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Without this bodhisattva direction, it is very easy to get lost. When our reason for practicing becomes clear and we do it sincerely and courageously, it is possible to let go of the selfish ideas that make us think that we are separate individuals with something to keep and protect. When we let go, let go, let go, it is possible to wake up and see our situation clearly, just as it is. It is possible to participate in relationships clearly without being controlled by judgments and likes and dislikes, and ultimately it is possible to function moment to moment as authentic human beings guided by the light of compassionate wisdom that we all have inside of us. The name for that is "saving all beings from suffering."

Human beings are always wandering around and around.

Buddha wandered around.

Zen Masters wander around.

You and I also wander around.

Where are you going?

Watch your step!

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

North is south and south is north.

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

There is no north or south.

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

North is north and south is south.

North—South—East—West.

What is our correct human direction?

KATZ!

Do you need any help?

Thank you.

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