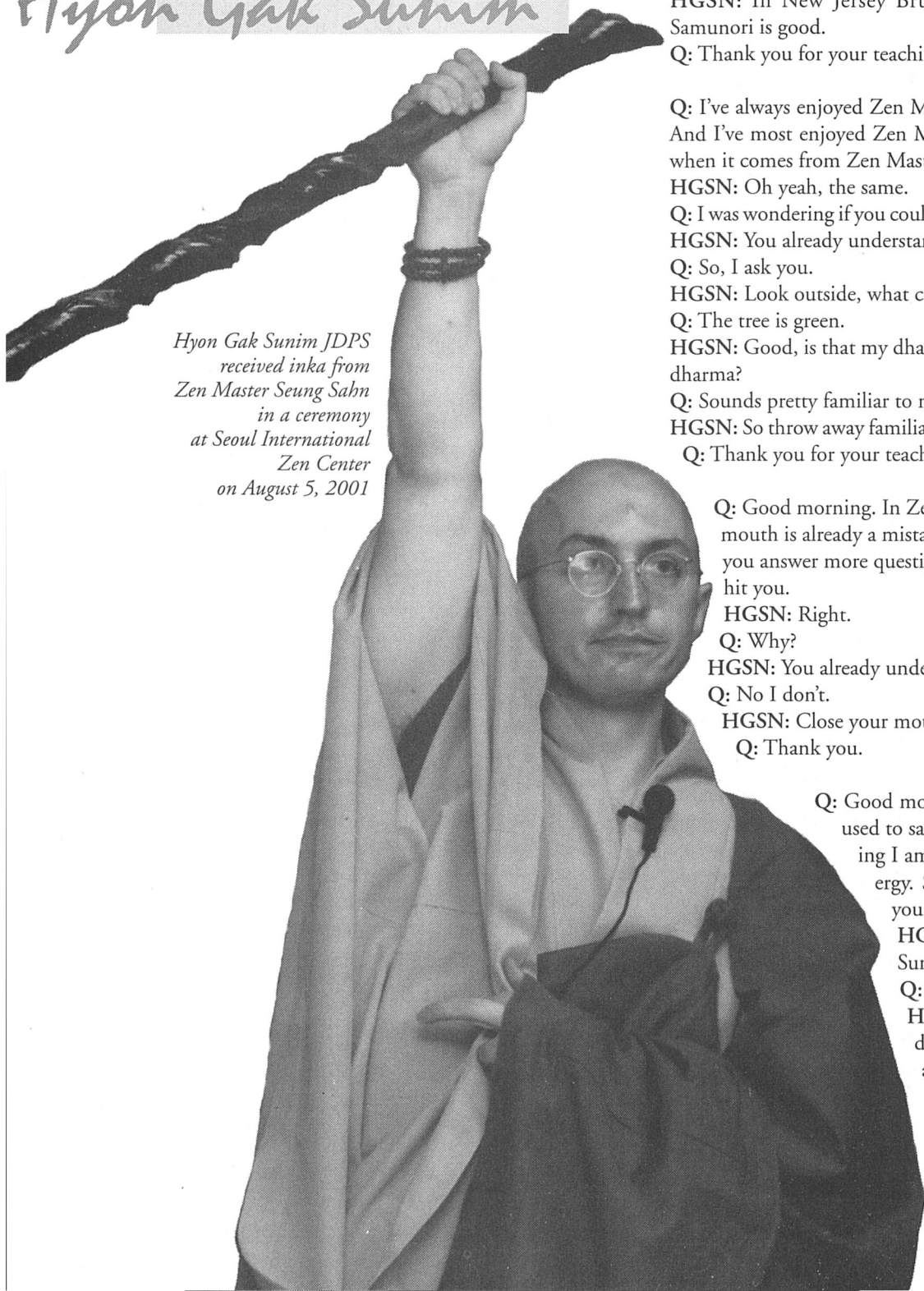


Inka
Ceremony
for
Hyon Gak Sunim

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



*Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS
received inka from
Zen Master Seung Sahn
in a ceremony
at Seoul International
Zen Center
on August 5, 2001*

Q: You know you're a real all-American guy from New Jersey. So what's the secret of your success in Korea?

Hyon Gak Sunim: You already understand.

Q: Really I don't.

HGSN: In New Jersey Bruce Springsteen, in Korea Samunori is good.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Q: I've always enjoyed Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma. And I've most enjoyed Zen Master Seung Sahn's dharma when it comes from Zen Master Seung Sahn.

HGSN: Oh yeah, the same.

Q: I was wondering if you could reveal for us, your dharma.

HGSN: You already understand.

Q: So, I ask you.

HGSN: Look outside, what color is the tree?

Q: The tree is green.

HGSN: Good, is that my dharma, or Seung Sahn Sunim's dharma?

Q: Sounds pretty familiar to me.

HGSN: So throw away familiarity, dog runs after the bone.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Q: Good morning. In Zen we learn that opening the mouth is already a mistake. So it seems to me that if you answer more questions your new stick ought to hit you.

HGSN: Right.

Q: Why?

HGSN: You already understand.

Q: No I don't.

HGSN: Close your mouth, then you'll understand.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Good morning. Oh Jin Sunim JDPS used to say that whenever I am teaching I am connected to universal energy. So what kind of energy are you connected to now?

HGSN: You already understand Sunim.

Q: No.

HGSN: Right now the air conditioning is cool on my face and the light off your face is shining.

Q: Thank you very much.

Is this one or not?

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

Not one, not two. Hitting the table is just hitting the table. So opening your mouth to explain or describe it is already an enormous mistake.

If this point is not-one-not-two, if we can't describe it with any kind of speech or words, then how do we show this point to others? How do we save all people with this point if we can't call it anything?

KATZ!

Today is August Fifth, 2001, many Zen students are gathered for Inka ceremony.

So that's actually the end of my dharma speech. But maybe someone here doesn't understand this kind of speech, so I'll say a few more words.

Today I'd like to introduce all of you to my new teacher. I have a new teacher, nowadays. I didn't tell the community yet but maybe some people already understand. *[Points to his left shoulder]* This is my new eminent teacher. A few weeks ago, in the middle of summer kyol che, a few of us were sitting in the Dharma Room in Hyon Jeong Sah Temple, practicing very, very strongly, and really, really with a lot of determination looking into this great question. And one evening, in the middle of the rainy season, I had to go out of the Dharma Room momentarily for an errand. I came barreling out of the Zen room in the pitch dark of a moonless, wet night, and while slipping into these slippery rubber shoes that we wear, kind of popping into them as I turned to negotiate the stairs by feel, I fell on the wet stairs. It was not a big height, but there was an obstruction in the way that I didn't see in the dark, a small gate that was installed to keep temple visitors away from the Dharma Room. And I fell into the gate and my left arm got tangled in the gate and so I couldn't land properly. I landed on my left shoulder directly and with full force. A few hours later we would learn that my arm had been totally dislocated, and an important bone supporting the socket had not only broken off, but was fragmented in pieces inside. Later I would need several hours of surgery for it, a pin and some wires and a week in the hospital. It was very serious. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I had never broken a bone in my body.

I yelled out and the monks came out and the bosalnims came up from the kitchen and the worker guys came up from the little room where they were watching TV and I lay on the ground there, kind of pounding the ground and gritting my teeth intensely for a few minutes. I was kind of helped up and brushed off and was brought into the room.

Very suddenly after really incredible sitting practice, weeks and weeks of working up to this kind of intensity of effort, after some "pure" and "clear" engagement with the world protected by the rules and arrangement of the meditation room, the world was teaching back to me something very interesting. And the lessons haven't stopped yet actually. The world was showing me many things about impermanence, and about aspects of my relationship to the world, I believe. So there was obviously that dimension to it.

And yet something else very interesting appeared. I probably can't tell this part of the story as well, but perhaps some of the people who saw it there, maybe Kwan Haeng Sunim or Won Do Sunim could. What's very interesting about this excruciatingly painful experience was that after the shock — the first five minutes or so of the newness and the pain and the intense, intense agony of it — I became very, very, very calm. Something clicked inside and the whole thing became a kind of bliss experience. While the bosalnims and worker guys and temple guests hovered around, wringing their hands and some of them even crying and turning away as they saw my arm sticking up above my shoulder, I was suddenly very, very calm. Unmoving. This physical pain was intense, no doubt about it — it's like having half your body ripped off. It's incredible, my arm was sticking out like this. It was out literally separate from the body. But what was really interesting about it was after that first period, after I settled in and returned to what practicing had been, what I had been connecting to on the cushion up to that event, it was a very, very, very calm and perfect experience. And I remember looking at all these wonderful people hovering around, suffering and making such a fuss over my condition, and I said, "Why is everyone getting so worked up?" It occurred that they seemed to be in worse pain than me. I watched that whole situation with great interest and curiosity.

This intense, blinding pain was just-pain: not "pain", some disagreeable, intrusive, separate, other thing, but it was just pain. Everything was very simple, very clear. There was absolutely no "inside" or "outside" to it. It was beautiful, indescribable experience. There was pain, but that's all: something was not moving behind that, not moving at all. Something was not touched by that, something was not moved or touched by that in the least. Although there were moments of gripping again, suddenly it was again possible to make jokes to people or talk about stuff or even do imitations of several of the people who work there. I would close my eyes, do mantra, and fall back into actually relishing the relief, if you could experience it, of this not-moving experience. It was sweet and liberating. Kwan Haeng Sunim asked me several times, "Why are you laughing?" or "How could you laugh?" A local farmer was called, a man who readjusts the dislocated hips of cows that have stepped into a rivet or soft spot of earth and dislocated some joint.

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HYON GAK SUNIM RECEIVES INKA

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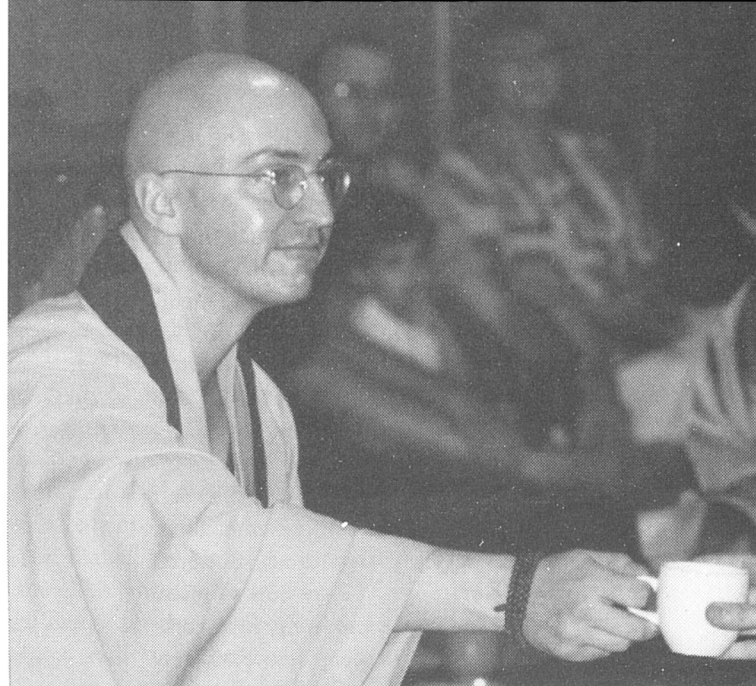
He also fixes farmers with the same problem. His specialty on that mountain is the man who fixes those things, so they called him. When he came in the room, he took one look and said it was too serious for even him to touch. And I was just laughing the whole time, joking with people. As he turned away, he said to the bosalnim who was literally cradling my body, "How can this guy be laughing?" Stuff like that. But I guess you really had to be there.

In that experience appeared another face of my one, true teacher. That is our true teacher. And that's what our great Zen Master Seung Sahn is always pointing us towards—to *that* experience. All these sticks and books and certificates and robes and kong-an interviews and speech and form and everything are tools he's used to unlock our stubborn minds to that, to that experience that we can all have of our fundamentally unmoving and immovable true nature. You see it on the cushion, when conditions are contrived and controlled to enable that kind of insight. But do you ever see your one true teacher's luminous face in the bustling crowd of day-to-day life? Can you do *that*?

Zen Master Seung Sahn has struggled for fifty-five years to open so many people's minds to the fundamental nearness of *that* experience, which is nearer than your nose. And it takes form, it takes books, it takes kong-ans, it takes beatings and people agreeing and not agreeing and still we don't see that. We think the teaching is him. But instead it's moment-to-moment not-moving mind—*that's* our true teacher, *that's* what we bow to, and *that* is where our teacher has always pointed us, relentlessly. He uses some expedients to show us one way and then the very next week, totally goes against what he showed us last week to show us from another way. He has relentlessly employed the shock of our own attachment to his teaching's myriad forms to point us right back to *that*, right back to that fundamental thing.

There is an interesting story that will explain a little bit how I appreciate the way in which Zen Master Seung Sahn has accomplished this. A few years ago I translated from Korean to English a book of Zen Master Ko Bong's life and teachings. Some Korean friends helped, and so we translated this book together every day, morning to night, every day except Sunday, over the course of about one month. At the time, I was also deep into putting together *The Compass of Zen* at Hwa Gye Sah Temple, so there were sometimes opportunities to go into Zen Master Seung Sahn's room to go over questions for that project.

One morning in particular, after finishing what had to be asked about *The Compass*, I took this Ko Bong Sunim



manuscript out to show him. And it was very small in manuscript pages. It was all written in notebook pages and he looked at it and—as can be expected, since he likes very, very big things, usually vast things actually—he said, "Too small, that's too small, cannot publish. More into necessary."

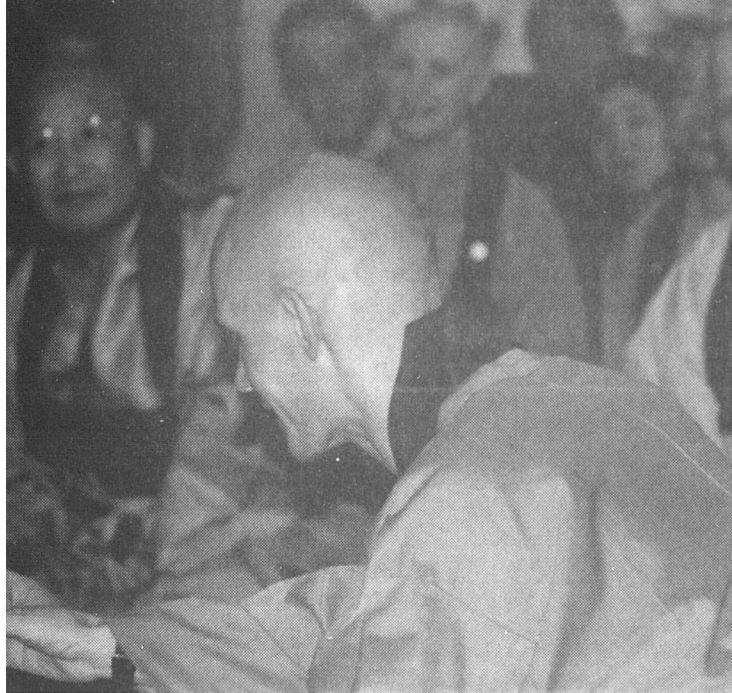
"Well, sir, that's it," I said. "That's all there was. We don't have anything else to translate."

Then pointing back over his shoulder, in the direction of the area behind his room, he said, "We behind have this old bhikkuni sunim. She understands my teacher's stories, long time together with him, so many stories, more than me, more than I remember. You talk to her, she give you many stories, then into this book, can publish."

So here's the point. I decided to ask her help and Mu Shim Sunim was helping to translate at the time. We got her into Mu Shim Sunim's room. You know how she is, very regal, with this perfectly starched and ironed bowing robe with a silk cravat that comes out in this elegant way, with a single curl you know pinned in the middle of it with a single pearl pin, and that stunning face with this extraordinary beauty and elegance and style—a very, very dignified, beautiful woman.

I said, "Sunim, we have translated your teacher, Ko Bong Sunim's book, and we want to bring it to all over the world. But it's a little small. Kun Sunim said you have many stories about Ko Bong Sunim. So maybe you tell me some of these stories, we can put it in the book, then this book can go all over the world and his teaching can help many, many people. But we need to hear your stories about Ko Bong Sunim, or tell us some of the things he said. Only you know these things, Sunim. Please help us."

She sat there, not saying anything, like we weren't even there.



Then I thought well, maybe we aren't getting across to her, and of course she's hard of hearing, so I put it again, and really loaded it. Mu Shim Sunim translated it to her. "We want to put this book all over the world. Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching went all over the world, but Zen Master Ko Bong's teaching really, we don't know much about it. Many people can be inspired to practice by it. He's dead and we can really save the world with it..." This kind of thing.

After a few moments, finally, she replied, very firmly, "I forgot everything, I forgot everything, I don't know anything. I don't remember any of that stuff, no, no." And then I thought, well OK. We're only going to get this woman in a room one time, I'll try one more time. So we tried one more time, we asked. Maybe Mu Shim Sunim on his own kind of pushed her a little bit, I pushed her. But she just sat there in her elegant silence, for several more moments.

And then she blew up.

Like an elegant little volcano, she just exploded. She said "My teacher never said *anything!*" Then referring to our Zen Master Seung Sahn by the dharma name given when he first became a monk, she said, "Haeng Won Sunim is always making something! Haeng Won Sunim is always making temples, making pagodas, making books, making students, making Zen centers, making this, going to this country, going to that country. Always making something!! But my teacher Ko Bong Sunim never made *anything*. He never...even...opened...his...mouth." She said that, and would not be stopped. "He never said anything. But Haeng Won Sunim always making this, making that, making something, making something, making something. My teacher never made anything." So she sat there, and began to smile, finally, as she recalled the memory of her teacher's severe presence. We could have put a gun to her head and she wasn't going to move.

The story is really interesting. On the surface there is some apparent disconnect between the teacher and the student. A great teacher taught a certain way and his student didn't seem to follow much of that style or form, if you look at it on the surface. But the truth of that story is deeper than appearances. When I heard that story, my love and respect for Zen Master Seung Sahn went even higher. Because what I saw was, this old nun was just as legitimate a student of Ko Bong Sunim as our Zen Master Seung Sahn. She had a certain memory, a certain idea, a certain expectation from her teacher, of what the teacher's teaching and style should be. She knew this elegant, aristocratic, quiet, severe, deep presence. And the student—the only student that he really gave transmission to—is very active and very lively.

Our teacher's courage is supreme and his attainment complete, because he was so unlike his teacher and yet completely the same mind as his teacher. The same mind, but different action. Different action but the same mind. That's a very instructive point for us. It teaches about this courage and about the completeness of what he digested from his teacher. And the courage, the truly believing in himself, to let that teaching manifest itself fearlessly according to what his karma was, which was active and teaching, and liberating, and in that way only was he different from his teacher.

If you look at our whole line, all of our teachers, there is some respect for this quality. Ko Bong Sunim was totally unlike his teacher. His teacher Man Gong Sunim was a real straight arrow and organizational and into monk's society. That is why Su Dok Sa was able to protect Korean Buddhism and preserve the monk tradition because of Man Gong's power to protect the bhikku tradition through organization and institution. But Ko Bong Sunim had nothing to do with monks. He didn't like them. And Man Gong Sunim was nothing like his teacher, the no-hindrance Kyong Ho Sunim—completely different style, completely different method, completely different everything. But the mind is the same, all the way back to the Buddha. None of them copied the teacher. None of them felt compelled to duplicate what had come before, or felt that by not being exactly or completely or even remotely like that teacher they were failing his dharma. That's a really important point.

The Buddha said, "Don't follow the teacher, attain the teaching. Don't attach to the teacher, but become the teaching." So Zen Master Seung Sahn has always been pointing us to that point, always pointing us to this point of don't know, which is our true nature, in any country, in any language, attaining that. And he has given us forms and teachings and styles and ideas and encouragement in many different ways and shapes and forms. But those things themselves are not *it*, that *teacher* itself is not *it*, it's merely *pointing* us to "it." It's pointing us to it, but if we attach to the pointer we never find it. Maybe until it hits us at some point in our life.

As I was going through this Ji Do Poep Sa preparation thing, there are lots of interviews with different teachers and different styles that you have to experience in a very short time. It kind of puts in very short form something that we sometime experience over a very long time, different teachers, different styles, different forms. We found that even Zen Master Seung Sahn's kong-ans, sometimes the way he's taught them one way, he will years later teach in another way. We know about that, this is no secret. This is something that we have all experienced and we struggle with.

When I first started entering this training thing, I struggled with that. Because in some areas my mind was still too active. But what's real interesting about him is that he has used any kind of tool to take that mind away. And so hopefully we will return, not to the forms or things that we agree with or don't agree with, the things we like or don't like, but that original thing that he has used all those things freely to show to us and he'll depart caring nothing about maybe in the future, just as his teacher did. So let's have that mind together. Let's really keep that spirit of doubt, that real spirit of really looking in and not needing these certainties, these formal certainties to give us some sense that we are actually studying, actually doing and experience that. So that's my encouragement talk to all of you

today. More than attaching to the forms in which it is all delivered and made clear to us, let us instead remember that that teaching is supposed to point us to something. If it doesn't point to this fundamental thing, let's throw it out and not bother with it. The stuff that points us back to our fundamental job that Zen Master Seung Sahn has given us, let's do that and keep that doubt and together help all beings. And don't worry about the form.

So today I talked teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher, good teacher, bad teacher, this kind of teacher, and no teacher, But I have a question for you that I want to end with. How do you find your true teacher? We have good teachers and bad teachers, teachers we believe in and don't believe in, Korean teachers, Polish teachers, American teachers, Jewish teachers, Irish Catholic teachers, lots of kinds of teachers. But actually how do you find your true teacher right now?

How do we find our true teacher and save all beings from suffering?

KATZ!

Today is the second day of Hae Jae, many bodhisattvas gather together to say, "Thank you, Zen Master Seung Sahn, for your teaching."

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