

# Inka for Thomas Pastor

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

*Thomas Pastor JDPSN received inka in a ceremony at Providence Zen Center on April 6, 2002.*

*Pastor Poep Sa Nim is founder (1994) and abbot of Great Bright Zen Center. He began formal study in the Kwan Um School of Zen in the late 1980s with Zen Master Ji Bong. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at Great Bright Zen Center, Pastor PSN also teaches an Introduction to Zen Buddhism course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He initiated a Zen meditation program at Federal Prison Nellis five years ago which now claims one of the highest attendance rates of any volunteer program at that facility. A former professional musician who now serves as secretary/treasurer of the Las Vegas Musicians Union, Pastor PSN has performed with over 100 recording and show business luminaries. He is married and the father of two children.*

**Question:** So you're from Great Brightness Zen Center. Zen Master Chinul was talking about brightness. He said the whole point of practice is to trace the brightness back. So when you trace the brightness back where does it go?

**Pastor PSN:** The light above you is shining brightly.

**Q:** Thank you.

**Q:** So you live in Las Vegas and tickets to Cirque de Soleil are a hundred dollars a piece. Can you get me a free ticket to Cirque de Soleil?

**PPSN:** Get out your wallet.

**Q:** I was noticing during the ceremony that Olivia kind of wanders off and then returns to her mother, and also Justine is sitting with her father, and Kimball is sitting with his mother. So, how do children know to return to their parents?

**PPSN:** Where do your parents live?

**Q:** I don't know!

**PPSN:** Well, when you find out, come ask me again.

**Q:** Okay.

**Q:** Hi, I have a friend from Las Vegas. When I first met him I didn't know that people actually lived in Las Vegas, and so I said, "How can you live in Las Vegas?" And he said, "Oh no, it's okay, there are plenty of normal people there." And I don't know you at all, so how can you show me that you're normal, one of the normal ones?

**PPSN:** The floor is yellow, the cushion is blue.

**Q:** Thank you.

**Q:** Thom, earlier, I overheard a conversation in the hallway in which you were asked if maybe you would play the saxophone tonight, and you hesitated and it didn't seem like you would. Tonight will be a celebration and if tonight you don't play the saxophone, how will you celebrate?

**PPSN:** Be Bop Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

**Q:** Thank you for playing.

## D H A R M A T A L K

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

Cloud is mountain, mountain is cloud.

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

Originally no cloud, no mountain.

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

Cloud is cloud, mountain is mountain.

Which one of these statements is true?

If you find it, this stick will hit you thirty times. If you don't find it, this stick will also hit you thirty times.

What can you do?

KATZ!

Cloud is white, mountain is blue.

The third patriarch once wrote:

*To deny the reality of things is to miss their reality;  
To assert the emptiness of things is to miss their reality.  
The more you talk about it, the further astray you wander  
from the truth.  
Stop talking and thinking and there is nothing you will  
not be able to know.*

Like many of us, my early years were characterized by strong attachments—not to just a few things, but to many things. Little did I realize that this was a harbinger of suffering—always wanting something, wanting something, wanting something. It never occurred to me that this very wanting was the source and foundation of unhappiness. Desire mind kills the resources necessary to find that which we are truly after, namely to find our center.

For twenty years I made a living as a professional musician, and even though I traveled and performed with top recording artists such as Frank Sinatra, Tom Jones, Sammy Davis, Jr. and the like, it was never enough. There was always something missing, something unsatisfactory about this life.

A few of my friends had recording contracts of their own, and for a while that became a driving force. More, more, more, was the insatiable cry.

Ironically, I had a nice home and family. I still have the same nice home and family. As a matter of fact, my daughter Jane made the trip from her home in Los Angeles to be here with us today. At that time, however, this emptiness kept gnawing at me. Although I was present for all of the important family functions and holidays those events usually found me lost somewhere in my thinking.

Lost in a search for something that although elusive, seemingly, or so I thought, had form and definition. If only I could find it.

Music can be a great vehicle for expressing *wu shin* or no mind. On a few occasions when a particular concert performance jelled, floating above mere technique, some interesting results would appear. It was like capturing lightning in a jar, but never quite knowing when it would happen again.

I read a little about meditation at that time and began a cursory, dilettante's search for meaning through books, hoping it would in some way contribute to my musical experience. Life seesawed along this path for quite a while until a telephone call one morning from my nephew revealed sadly that my brother Bob had died in his sleep the previous night. No warning, his heart just stopped beating.

In retrospect, his death became a strong teaching tool. As Zen Master Seung Sahn says, "This life guarantees you nothing."

I was not familiar with that term then, but certainly the truth of that teaching became immediately apparent. My brother was already dead, and here I was still hanging around the eastern philosophy section of Barnes & Noble bookstore. It hit me that I could someday be an old man still pursuing that same course, and for what?

Once again the third patriarch:

*To return to the root is to find the meaning,  
But to pursue appearances is to miss the source.*

After a conversation with a long-time friend who many of you know as co-founder of the New Haven Zen Center, David Mott, I was introduced to the Kwan Um School of Zen. Through the wisdom and guidance of Zen Master Seung Sahn, guiding teacher Zen Master Ji Bong, and more Yong Maeng Jong Jins than I can remember, the clinging and attachment alluded to earlier in this talk, began to slowly fade away.

When we quiet the mind and look carefully at our experience, we see that this world is a world of constant change and insecurity. Anything that arises in our life, no matter how hard we try to stabilize it, will pass away. Whatever appears is transitory and thus can never last. Consciousness and object reveal themselves to be continually dissolving like snowflakes on a hot oven. Whatever appears is not dependable and there is no refuge, no anchor, no safe haven.

Again the third patriarch:

*If there is even a trace of this or that, right or wrong,  
The mind essence will be lost in confusion.  
Just let things be in their own way  
And there will be neither coming nor going.  
To seek mind with discriminating mind is the greatest of  
all mistakes.*

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once a year, maybe once every two years, and some of our Ji Do Poep Sa Nims were coming, but also teachers from different traditions. At one time a very interesting monk came to visit us; his name was Muhen Roshi. He was an old Japanese monk and he was very kind, gentle and soft-spoken—it was really nice to be around him. He somewhat reminded me of Maha Ghosananda. And he had also very a interesting ability; he could heal people by touching their bodies.

At one of the meetings with him in Krakow Zen Center, we had some time to ask him questions. One person was going through some problems in her life at that time and she asked Muhen Roshi: “Roshi, if you have a serious problem, or if you want to help somebody, what kind of practice is good for that purpose; what can you do?” And the Roshi just smiled, and said, “Oh, that’s very simple, just do Kanzeon.” (Kanzeon is the Japanese name for Kwan Seum Bosal.) “Do a lot of chanting of Kanzeon, and then you will get it.” And then he smiled again, and he said, “You may get not what you wanted, but you will get it!”

So, it’s the same teaching. If you don’t make anything, then you can get everything, because this moment [*bit*] already contains everything and it’s already complete. If we want something, then we are just adding something to it. If we put it all down, then everything is ours. It is very, very simple, but often very difficult to do. So, it all comes from our mind. Keep it clear—no problem. Get attached to whatever arises in it—don’t be surprised!

So, one of the sutras says, when mind appears, then everything appears.

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

When mind disappears, then everything disappears.

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

But, when mind neither appears nor disappears, then what?

KATZ!

Standing here in front of you on this Buddha’s Birthday, finishing my talk. Thank you very much.

To attain this mind is to attain emptiness, or as we often refer to it in our school, 180° on the Zen teaching circle. This is not good, not bad and some practices actually stop there. Vilamikirti only taught that style. Samadhi can be quite intoxicating. But our school teaches that if we only do this practice for myself, to relieve some situation, personal dilemma, or pursue a special mind state, the teaching is incomplete.

We’ve all heard the story of Sul. This is the story of a little girl who, as a student of the famous Zen Master Ma Jo, grew up only keeping Kwan Seum Bosal as her practice day in and day out, and eventually became a great Zen Master herself. Outside, her actions were ordinary actions; inside, her mind was the mind of a bodhisattva. She married and raised a large, happy family. Many people came to her for her wisdom and teaching. One day when she was an old woman, her granddaughter died. She cried bitterly both at the funeral and at home. Someone finally asked, “You have attained the great enlightenment, so you then understand that there is neither life nor death. Why are you crying and why is your granddaughter a hindrance to your clear mind?”

Sul immediately stopped crying and said, “These tears are greater than all the sutras, all the words of the patriarchs, and all possible ceremonies. When my granddaughter hears my crying she will enter Nirvana.”

Obviously Sul’s tears were not for Sul. Just like Kwan Seum Bosal, her teaching clearly demonstrated, “One who hears the cries of the world.”

Ultimately we must abandon our I, my, me. After all, it was never about you in the first place. Whatever we do, the question should arise, “Is this for me, or for all beings?”

The Buddha once said, “This world is an ocean of suffering.” So our job, each one of us, is to be mindful, appreciate this moment, indeed this life, attain a mind which is clear like space, and help save all beings from suffering.

As for my late brother: only *Ji Jang Bosal*.

As for all of you: How may I help you?

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

Appearing is disappearing, disappearing is appearing.

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

No appearing, no disappearing.

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

Appearing is appearing, disappearing is disappearing.

KATZ!

Smiling faces appearing, [*turning around and facing the altar*] smiling faces disappearing. [*Turning back to the sangha.*] Thank you for listening.

