

INKA CEREMONY FOR

José Ramírez

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DHARMA COMBAT

Question: Hi, José. A lot of the Zen teaching is bullshit. So, how do you actually figure out what to teach?

Ramírez JDPSN: What do you need?

Q: Don't know.

RJDPSN: That's enough.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Q: Congratulations, my friend. Getting inka is a very good situation, but Zen Master Seung Sahn says a good situation is a bad situation. Show me the bad situation.

RJDPSN: How can I help you?

[laughter]

Q: That's not bad. Thank you.

Q: First Venezuelan born about to receive inka from the Kwan Um School of Zen. So that actually comes at a great time. It comes at a great time because, in Venezuela, many people are suffering. Political reasons, economic reasons, crime. Many problems. Now that you are going to become a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, how can you help all of Venezuela?

RJDPSN: *[Chanting]* Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal...

Q: Thank you so much. Gracias. ☸



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get rid of them, you'll see them for what they are, you'll see their insubstantiality, and they'll naturally lose their grip so you're less likely to be pulled around by them.

Finally, getting back to the question about how practice is related to saving all beings, when you are open to whatever appears in meditation, you are living fully in the moment as it is, and accepting yourself as you are. If you can do this with yourself, you can do it with others. Then really, practice is directly related to being helpful, because the only place you can "help this world" is right in front you, just now.

In Zen, the metaphor of a dung heap is sometimes used to describe our mental baggage—we saw it used during dharma combat today. Everybody has one, and if you can see through your heap of dung, you can show other people how to see through theirs. Using this approach, we can genuinely connect with people, be of help, and share this simple, clear way of being that we practice.

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

Do you see this?

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

Do you hear this?

This stick, this sound, *[hit]* and your mind, are they the same or different?

KATZ!

Today is Buddha's birthday. Soon we will be playing volleyball. ☸

DHARMA SPEECH

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

If you think I have an accent, you're attached to name and form.

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

If you think I don't have an accent, you're attached to emptiness.

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

What is the original accent?

KATZ!

Waaaaa! Waaaaaaa! Waaaaaaa!

A loose translation of a stanza in the third patriarch's poem, "Trust in Mind," reads:

*We have the tendency to think that things
are right or wrong,
And we stick to the "idea" of right or wrong.
If we do not know the true meaning of this,
Only sitting, meditating quietly, is of no use.*

Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, "If you are thinking, your mind, my mind, all the people's minds, are different. If you are thinking, then your checking mind appears." Yes, when we are thinking, we make, "I like this, I don't like that." You hear my accent and think, "I don't like people with accents. How come they cannot speak like us?" Or, you hear my accent and say, "Oh, I love that Spanish accent, it makes me think of Ricardo Montalban!" or for the younger people in the audience, Antonio Banderas. Isn't that the human condition of picking and choosing?

Our Zen group practices in the sanctuary of a church, and every Wednesday night when we get there, there are lots of chairs to move. We have to set up the altar; we have to unpack boxes. And after all these years of practice, my mind still goes, "Why do we have to move all these chairs? If we only had our own place, then things would be better." But the truth is, that the moment we stop making, "I don't like moving all these chairs," we just move the chairs and are done with it. All the meditation in the world is not going to help us if we don't stop picking and choosing, and start functioning according to the situation.

I was involved in some diversity activities in the company I work for, and at a meeting one time someone said: "Because I speak with an accent, it doesn't mean I think with an accent." My reaction to that was, "Wow, that's great! I wish I had said that!" But it also pointed me to the fact that the original accent has no this or that, that the original accent is not dependent on words or speech. A smile is a smile in any language. A baby's cry does not depend on words. The great mime Marcel Marceau once said, "Isn't it amazing that the most moving moments in our lives find us without words?"

The last two verses in the stanza read:

*If we do not know the true meaning of this,
Only sitting, meditating quietly, is of no use.*

That reminds me of the story of Zen Master Ma Tsu. Zen Master Ma Tsu was constantly sitting in meditation in his hut. One day, his teacher, Zen Master Nan Yue, came by and said, "What are you trying to accomplish with your sitting?" "Oh, I am trying to become a Buddha!" Ma Tsu said. At that moment, Nan Yue picked up a brick and started polishing it. Shhhhhrrrrp, shhhhhrrrrp, shhhhhrrrrp ... So all this grinding noise got Ma Tsu out of his meditation. He got up and said, "What are you doing?" And Nan Yue said, "Oh, I am making a mirror." Ma Tsu said, "A mirror? There is no way you can make a mirror out of polishing a brick." Zen Master Nan Yue said, "There is no way you can become a Buddha by doing zazen." At the end of the exchange, Zen Master Nan Yue said: "If you are attached to sitting you will not attain the true meaning."

I want to thank the three women in my life that have always been a mirror for the things I cannot see in myself, or that I don't want to see in myself. The three women that at this moment are probably asking, "You're giving inka to who?!" My wife Brenda, who for the past fifteen years has unconditionally supported this practice, and that is a practice in itself. I love you. My daughter, Oriana, for whom, like Ikkyu's daughter, "a Zen Master is no match for her!" She is always teaching me about correct function. Whenever I travel, she makes sure I call Bill, or I let the sangha know that I will not be at meditation. And my aunt Yaya, the woman who raised me, that even though she's a little sad because she feels I have abandoned my religion, (I was raised Catholic,) she came several times to the Providence Zen Center, and saw me become a senior dharma teacher from the back of this room.

I also want to thank Zen Master Seung Sahn for his legacy, all of you sitting in front of me. My teacher Zen Master Dae Kwang, and all the teachers of the Kwan Um School of Zen who keep "pulling the rug from underneath my feet." And the Delaware Valley Zen Center Sangha, represented here today by Bill and Denise, for their strong effort and for their strong practice.

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

Buddha held up a flower. What was his accent?

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

JoJu said, "Mu." What was his accent?

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

Buddha used no words. JoJu used one word. What will you use?

KATZ!

The baby cries, and the father changes her diaper. 