

# See True Nature, Strong Center, Clear Direction

Zen Master Dae Bong

*From a congratulatory talk at the inka ceremony for Hye Tong Sunim on September 2, 2012.*

**T**hank you everyone, I hope that's interesting. This is the first time with our Korean family that we have this kind of inka ceremony, so I think people are a little shy. I hope that next time we won't be so shy.

But Hye Tong Sunim has energy. Some other people, not so much energy. But if you practice hard, you'll get energy. Then, a question will appear. Only strong practice is not enough. But, even if we have a good mind, a correct mind, if we're not strong then we can't do much in this world. So I hope everybody practices strongly so that a question appears, then someday, inka, or Zen master. Why not? Otherwise, as somebody said, if you don't control your own life, somebody will control it for you. So it depends on what you want.

In our school, Zen Master Seung Sahn made it clear that inka and transmission are different. Inka means you see your nature, and your kong-an practice isn't too bad. Maybe not complete, but very good. So we realize our true nature. Everybody has that experience a little bit, but with much practice, then your ability with kong-ans grows up. So that means your wisdom grows up. Then, specifically

in our school, you must pass twelve gates. But you must be able to handle many other kong-ans very well, from the 1,700 traditional kong-ans. That's the first point.

Second, you must have a strong center. Even if you understand something, even if you have some kind of wisdom, if your center is not strong, then you are easy to knock over. Then you cannot accomplish much in this life.

Third, you must have a clear life direction. If you are always jumping around and changing your mind, then your direction is not straight, not clear.

So, first we check those three things. Then some Zen master—your guiding teacher—sees your progress: “Ah, this person is getting very good.” Then we make a committee—it's not just one person's decision. In our school, this committee must include three Zen masters and two Ji Do Poep Sas, all who have been teaching more than five years. And each of them must accept this person's attainment. So this candidate must go to each of the people on this committee—Zen masters and Ji Do Poep Sas—and be tested. If his or her kong-an practice is good, then this ceremony is possible.

But this ceremony is also a final check for becoming a Ji Do Poep Sa. If everybody comes here and many of them hit this candidate, and the candidate makes more than three big mistakes, then receiving inka is not possible—we don't even get to this part of the ceremony. In that case, more practicing is necessary. So, we have this public test. In the old days, even if they had a private transmission, they always tested in public.

Then, if the candidate passes the test, they become a Ji Do Poep Sa. *Ji Do* means “show the way”—show the way of dharma. *Poep Sa* means “dharma teacher.” Then this person gets more training—always in



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teaching situations—with one of the Zen masters in our school. They start giving interviews to students, always accompanied by a Zen master. In this way the new Ji Do Poep Sa gains more and more experience, until eventually they can teach on their own.

Then, practice, practice, teaching, teaching, for three years. Then it's necessary to go visit Zen masters from our side out school, and these other Zen masters check the person's understanding. Then, the candidate returns and reports—to three Zen masters in our school—on how the conversation went. "I said this, this Zen master said that. Then I said this, then that." The three Zen masters check that. If the Ji Do Poep Sa visits three different Zen masters in other schools, and then three Zen masters in our school approve of the interaction was clear, then transmission is possible.

That's after three years. The fourth year you spend traveling, testing yourself. Then, two more years teaching. Then, after six years, everybody says, "Oh, this Ji Do Poep Sa is a very good teacher." At that point, since three Zen masters have already given their approval, then the Ji Do Poep Sa gets transmission and becomes a Zen master. At that time, there is another ceremony like this, but with only five or maybe seven questions. This time, for the inka ceremony, there are 30 questions, and 30 people can check this new teacher. But on receiving transmission, there are only five or so, because they've already had much dharma combat over six years. After that ceremony, the person becomes a Zen master, a Soen Sa Nim, in our school.

Traditionally, when one person became a Zen master, they were then in complete charge of their own school. But in our school, all the teachers—Ji Do Poep Sas and Zen masters together in the Americas, Europe, and Asia—they all agree to follow the school's teaching and practice style. In this way we keep our practice direction clear, and we keep our form and teaching clear, and we help all students. This style is broad, and sometimes can change according to the situation. But the teachers' group makes those decisions, not one individual.

So it's an interesting style of organization. I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn once, "Why make a teachers' group?" Then he said, "One man on top cannot see his karma." So only one person at the top—maybe Buddha, no problem—but sometimes, even some person who has got enlightenment, sometimes they make some mistake, and there's a big problem. But with the

teachers' group, it's easy. Other teachers can show you your mistake. Then simply, "Oh, OK." So, our school has many checks and balances.

Hye Tong Sunim started at Hwa Gye Sa Temple. At that time, he was in the Korean sangha, but practicing with Western people sometimes, and he knew Seung Sahn Sunim. Sometimes he would have interviews with Seung Sahn Sunim. Then, finally, he went through Korean monastic training, and visited many Korean *soen bangs* (Zen halls). Then he returned to the Kwan Um School style and lived here at Mu Sang Sa Temple for four years. Then he also went to Providence Zen Center and lived in a Western situation, becoming head monk over there. That's difficult, because they are such different cultures. All foreign sunims here can tell you—if you live in a different culture, then many things hit you. Then, automatically, you get don't-know mind. If you hold your opinion, nobody cares—it's just not possible. So, your mind grows, grows, grows. So, Hye Tong Sunim practiced in America, had responsibility there, and also visited our centers in Europe. So his experience is very unusual. All very good. Even the dharma combat today, both English and Korean—both are OK. Not even any translation!

This is a good opportunity for us. In the future, I hope you go sometime, visit Hye Tong Sunim, and see his dharma also growing. Then, we can help Buddhism in Korea, international Buddhism, and the whole world. ♦



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