

## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Hye Tong Sunim

September 2, 2012, at Mu Sang Sa Temple,  
South Korea

1.

[In Korean]

**Question:** Hello. Congratulations.

**Hye Tong Sunim:** Thank you.

**Q:** I have a good family and my job is also quite good. But to be honest, I'm not sure what to do for my life in the future. Can you give me any advice?

**HTSN:** What are you doing now?

**Q:** I'm a scientist in a research center and . . .

**HTSN:** No, what are you doing right now?

**Q:** [Surprised, then slowly] Sitting and talking with you . . .

**HTSN:** Live in that way!

**Q:** Ohhh . . . Thank you very much!

2.

**Question:** Good afternoon, Sunim.

**Hye Tong Sunim:** Good afternoon.

**Q:** Congratulations.

**HTSN:** Thank you.

**Q:** One man and one woman are walking in the field, they stop and they see a hole in the ground. And they see something that is coming up from the hole. Then, he says, "Oh, it's the head of a snake." And she says, "No, it's a seed." Who is right? He or she? They both are not right. What is coming out from the hole?

**HTSN:** You already understand.

**Q:** [Silence]

**HTSN:** [Stares at imaginary hole]

**Q:** [Closed eyes and silence]

**HTSN:** Not enough?

**Q:** [Keeps closed eyes and silence]

[Laughter]

**HTSN:** Go back to your hole!

[Laughter and applause]

3.

**Zen Master Dae Jin:** Good afternoon.

**Hye Tong Sunim:** Good afternoon.

**ZMDJ:** I have a question for you.



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**HTSN:** Sure.

**ZMDJ:** So, I have some bad news.

**HTSN:** What is that?

**ZMDJ:** Last night, around midnight, all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, all the patriarchs, they all suddenly fell down, got sick and died. What can you do?

**HTSN:** You already understand.

**ZMDJ:** Please tell me.

**HTSN:** I am so happy to see one that still survived sitting in front of me.

[Laughter]

**ZMDJ:** Thank you for your teaching!

[Applause]

## DHARMA SPEECH

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

East is west, west is east.

[13



Photo: Germán Linares

14]

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

Originally, no east, no west.

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

East is just east. West is just west.

So three statements. Which of them matches your dharma?

KATZ!

In the morning, the sun rises in the east. In the evening, the sun sets in the west.

Good afternoon. It's nice to see all of you here in the beautiful Mu Sang Sa dharma room. It's a great honor for me to give an inka speech.

I just would like to share two short stories. Here is one.

During the Shilla kingdom in ancient Korea, there was a monk whose name was Hye Tong, which is the same name as mine. Actually I found this in some encyclopedia, because I was wondering if there was anybody in Buddhist history who had the same dharma name as mine. I was a little bored at that time. So I tried to find it and there was one in the Shilla kingdom, Hye Tong. So that's actually how I came to know this story, because it touched me a lot, even though we're not exactly the same: while our names are pronounced the same, they are written with different Chinese characters.

One day, when Hye Tong was a layman before becoming a monk, he went to the lake shore on the edge of his

village and there he saw an otter. This animal is small—less than a meter long—with a round, small face. It can also swim well in the stream. So he saw it on the shore, and as soon as he saw it, suddenly he felt hungry. So he did what you are thinking of now: he just caught it, killed it, and now he had a barbecue party for himself. Then he just left.

A few days later, for some reason, he came back to the shore, and he remembered what he had done, and he was curious if it was still there. So he went to that spot, and there were the ashes from the bonfire he had made. But he found one other interesting thing: the bones that he had thrown away after he ate all the flesh had just disappeared. So he was wondering where they could go. He looked around in the sand and eventually found the outlines of where the bones had been. In addition, there was a small trail of blood. So he just followed this blood trail and it led him into the forest nearby. It ended in front of what looked like some animal's hole. And he heard some little animal sounds coming from the hole. He leaned toward the hole and looked into it. There were six baby otters crying, and they were so young they had not even opened their eyes. And looking further, he was startled at the sight of something else. Guess what there was? There were the bones he was looking for, an otter skeleton, and it was hugging the baby otters. So even after she died, this mother otter couldn't forget her babies.

And then, a few days later, Hye Tong left home and became a monk. So what this story says to us is, even animals have it. Have what? The one thing beyond



Photo: Germán Linares

life and death. The one thing which is beyond life and death.

And here's the second story. And this is my experience.

So in the early days of Mu Sang Sa, as Zen Master Dae Bong mentioned, I had lived here for a while. At that time, we only had this one building. We had no kitchen. Sometimes, rarely, Zen Master Seung Sahn would visit here. Back then, when he would visit we'd all get together, having tea, and he told us to ask him any kind of question. And I had actually one question, which I had always wanted to ask him.

When I was a haeng-ja, I had read a book about Zen Master Ko Bong, who was Zen Master Seung Sahn's teacher. In that book, when Ko Bong was giving dharma transmission to Seung Sahn, he told him, "You and I, let's meet again, five hundred years later." So I was wondering what it could really mean. Actually, I didn't like that speech because even though I admired both of them, it sounded a little like some kind of prediction or even some fortune-telling. [Buddha said monks and nuns should not do fortune-telling. —Ed.] So I didn't really like that speech and I wanted to ask Zen Master Seung Sahn what it meant. So here was a good chance. In that tea room, I think there were about 11 or 12 students, including some Zen masters and teachers who were Zen Master Seung Sahn's students. I asked him, "Sunim, I read this in a book about Ko Bong Sunim, that when he was giving you dharma transmission, he told you, 'You and I, let's meet again five hundred years later.' So, what does it mean?" And Zen Master Seung Sahn just stared into my eyes for a second, and immediately answered, "That means, he and I will meet five hundred years later." And I was completely stuck. Actually, I had prepared one or two more questions, so that if he answered one way, I'd hit that way, and so on. But when I heard this, I couldn't do anything. And then he just kept staring into my eyes, and he pointed

his finger at me and almost shouted, "Never, ever, have doubt at all!"

So when your direction is clear, it is already beyond all the opposites. Life and death, possible or impossible, good or bad, right or wrong—it's already beyond all the opposites. And what kind of direction you have is also important. What do you think about the mother otter, the skeleton that walked to its babies, bleeding, even after it had been killed—can it be true? Is it possible? Or is it impossible? Zen Master Ko Bong and Zen Master Seung Sahn will meet again five hundred years later. And they seemed to know already, before they had died. Would it come true? Is it possible? Or

is it impossible?

Sentient beings are already numberless, they cannot be counted. Is it possible to save them all from the suffering? When your direction is clear, actually it doesn't matter that your wish or hope is going to come true or not. It's not about success or failure. It's not about truth or untruth. It's not about coming true or not coming true. It just keeps going on straight, for infinite time. Which means, actually, you're the direction, the direction itself is you. We just try, try for ten thousand years, for life after life, as Seung Sahn Sunim used to say. So I'm sure that many of us had it, when we just began our practice. Many of us had it when we were just a beginner. Do you still have it?

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

When the direction is clear, you will see the sun rises in the east in the morning, and sets in the west in the evening.

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

When the direction is clear, in this dharma room, see in the east, the colorful, strong Hwa Um Seong Jung painting; in the west, the white wall. And, between them, compassionate eastern and western bodhisattvas' faces.

Thank you very much for listening. ◆

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Hye Tong Sunim is from Korea. He started practicing Zen Buddhism at Hwa Gye Sa Temple in 1995, and was ordained as a monk in the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism in 1996 right after graduating from Dong Guk University in Seoul. He has worked and practiced at Hwa Gye Sa, Mu Sang Sa, several Korean Zen monasteries, and Providence Zen Center. He now works and practices in Hwa Gye Sa International Zen Center. In addition, he collaborated on the translation of *The Teachings of Zen Master Man Gong*.