

INKA CEREMONY FOR Jason Quinn

March 28, 2015, at the Providence Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Zen Master Bon Hae: So what do I understand? If you say “you already understand,” you’re dead.

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

ZMBH: You’re dead!

Quinn PSN: The dog runs after the bone.

ZMBH: [*Holds hands like paws.*] Arf! Arf!

Quinn PSN: You’re barking up the wrong tree!

Question: So, Zen is about here and now. But we have tradition, we have lineages, so what does Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, have to do with right now?

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Quinn PSN: What color is the floor?

Q: The floor is brown.

Quinn PSN: Hui Neng just appeared.

Question: At the beginning of the ceremony it’s not already decided, but first we have questions before we know if there’s a teacher or not. So there are 30 questions. So my question to you is, how many more questions until you become a teacher?

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Quinn PSN: Keep counting!

Q: That’s not really enough.

Quinn PSN: The dog runs after the bone.

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Everything in this universe is appearing and disappearing. This is the realm of opposites.

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

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says that when both appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss. This is the realm of before thinking.

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

Take another step and enter into moment world, where appearing is appearing, disappearing is disappearing.

But all these statements are false.

Why?

KATZ!

Outside it is snowing, inside the candles are burning bright.

First I would like to thank everyone for coming and supporting the school. Without sangha, this school would not exist. I would also like to thank Zen Master Dae Kwang for all of his teaching over the years and still to this day. Thank you to Zen Master Bon Soeng for believing in me and knowing when to pick the fruit. And of course, thank you to my family for your endless support and strong encouragement.

In the main entryway here at the Providence Zen Center, there is a calligraphy on the wall just to the right as you enter. The English translation states, “Three days looking into the self, a thousand-year treasure. Whole life chasing power and things is gone in an instant.” When I first read this several years ago, I was reminded of a period in my life just before I started practicing where everything was falling apart. My job was disappearing, my relationship was disappearing and money was disappearing. As I looked around, I saw many people who were spending so much time and energy chas-

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Photo: Paul Brymer

ing something outside of themselves. When this thing changed or disappeared, they were deeply dissatisfied. We can see this happening in our own lives. We either don't get what we want, then end up dissatisfied, or we get what we want, but we can't keep it. There is not one thing in this world we can keep. Or, we get what we want but it is not enough or maybe we wish it could be just a little bit different.

The Buddha said the reason we are dissatisfied is because we don't understand our original nature and we don't see the nature of cause and effect. We create this "I," which means there is a "you." Then we fall into the realm of opposites, the realm of good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike, white and black. We get pulled around and around by name and form. Out of this appears greed, anger, fear, jealousy, discrimination. This clouds our view, which then creates many problems in the world.

The good news is that there is another way. As the calligraphy states, "Three days of looking into self, a thousand-year treasure." Three days of looking into the self means right now in this moment, what is this? What am I doing right now? What is this "I"? If we look at that with sincerity, honesty and openness, it is possible to return to the mind before thinking. Before thinking is our original nature. In our school we call it "don't know."

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

Did you hear that?



Photo: Paul Brymer

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike, white and black.

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have greed, anger, fear, jealousy or discrimination.

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have "I" or "you." It doesn't even have Buddhism or Zen. It's before thinking. It's even before *[hits the table with the Zen stick]*.

Now listen. *[Long pause.]*

Look. *[Long pause.]*

Everything is already clear. It's pretty simple. From here it is very easy to see how everything in this universe is connected. It's not just some spiritual idea. If you look at a bicycle closely, you see that there are many parts. Each part is connected and functioning according to its nature. Just as the sun, moon, stars, trees, rivers, ocean and animals, everything in this universe is connected and functioning according to its nature. It's just that sometimes human beings do not see this connection. Because of this attachment to "I," we separate ourselves from everything else. Then we do not know how to respond to this universe, which causes problems for ourselves and everything around us. So it is very important that we practice. We actually have to do it. We cannot think our way out of suffering. Just talking about our original nature it is not enough. We have to do it. It is not that difficult. Just recently someone said to me, "That is very difficult, I can't do that!" So it's important to let go of "difficult." Let go of "I can't." Even let go of "I can."

In 2006 I did a 90-day solo retreat. Before the retreat I had asked Zen Master Dae Kwang to create a schedule for me. When I looked at the retreat schedule he gave me, right away I noticed that it included five sets of 200 bows a day. That's 1,000 bows a day! I was surprised and a little nervous to see this. I had never done more than 500 bows a day, and three months of 1000 bows a day is quite a lot. On day number three of the retreat, I was bowing, bowing and bowing. My legs were sore, knees were sore, back was sore. Then a little checking ap-

peared. “Ahhhhh, day number three. There are 87 more days to go. Let’s see, 87 days times 1,000 bows, that’s eighty seven THOUSAND more bows to do! I can’t do that! Not possible!” Then the opposite mind appeared. “I can do it. I have sat so many long retreats and lived in Zen centers for a long time. I can do it! No, I can’t do it. I can do it! No, I can’t do it! I can! I can’t!” Then at some point, “I can” and “I can’t” disappeared. What appeared was “don’t know if this is possible or not but . . . this bow.” Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up.

So, “don’t know” plus action is human being’s function. When we return to this moment, we also return to the realm of name and form. Here we can use name and form in a clear and helpful way, rather than name and form pulling us around and around. That even means using this “I.” Attachment to “I” results in “I like” and “I don’t like.” Using this “I” results in “How may I help?” Every moment. Every breath. How may I help? The name for that is Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. And that is a thousand-year treasure for the whole universe.

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

I is universe, universe is I. If you get stuck here, then you lose your life.

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

Kyol Che Is Three Great Things *(Continued from page 11)*

moment to moment. So Kyol Che is a big dry cleaning machine.

Second, Kyol Che is a dharma gasoline station. Our life has energy. This is our karma energy. We run on our karma gasoline. But karma means I, my, me. When you put down I, my, me, then you and the universe become one. Then dharma energy, universal energy, comes into you. So when we do Kyol Che together, we put down my opinion, my situation, my condition. Then the correct opinion, correct situation, correct condition appears. We and the universe are one, and then dharma gasoline comes in. So you get dharma energy. Dharma energy means being in harmony with the universe; you can follow the correct way moment to moment. So we come to Kyol Che with lots of karma gasoline. We take out this karma gasoline, then dharma gasoline comes in. So Kyol Che is also a dharma gasoline station.

No I, no universe. Attach to this point, then you will fall into emptiness and become a rock.

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

I is I. Universe is universe. This is a good idea, but the Buddhas and bodhisattvas don’t believe it and turn away. The cries of this universe become louder and louder.

So, can any of these statements help right now in this moment?

KATZ!

May I help you? ♦

Jason Quinn JDPSN grew up in California and began practicing with the Kwan Um School in 1997, with the Dharma Sound Zen Center in Seattle. In 1999 he moved to the Providence Zen Center (PZC) where he held various staff positions. He trained as a monk for nine years, during which time he sat many long summer and winter retreats, and participated in retreats around the world, including in Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Mexico. In 2008 Jason relocated to Berkeley, California, where he became abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center and returned to lay life. He spent a brief time back at PZC (2012–2013) to serve as abbot, and then he returned to California. He now lives in Santa Clara with his wife and son and leads the Empty Gate Zen Center’s Santa Clara group with Bodhisattva Teacher Juan Velasco. He is currently the vice abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley.