

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Chuan Wen Sunim

November 1, 2015 at Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple in Kuala Lumpur

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: I forgot where my home is. Can you please tell me?

Chuan Wen Sunim: You already understand.

Q: I don't understand.

CWSN: [*Pointing at his cushion.*] You are sitting here. Here is your home.

Q: Thank you, Sunim!

Question: You have a very interesting place here. You have a very beautiful Chinese temple but outside it's just all Malay markets. So if some Malay people come into your temple and never want to know your teaching about Buddhism and never want to sit for meditation or teaching of Zen, how can you help them?

CWSN: You already understand.

Q: No, I don't.

CWSN: "Selamat Datang!" [*"Welcome" in the Malay language.*]

Q: Thank you!

Question: The cat is eating grass.

CWSN: What do you want to ask?

Q: What does Buddha eat?

CWSN: You already understand. What do you offer to Buddha every day?

Q: Put it all down

CWSN: Put it all down . . . then put down the microphone.

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Zen is Sutra. Sutra is Zen.

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

No Zen. No Sutra.

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



Photo: Chin Chun Yin

Zen is Zen. Sutra is Sutra.

KATZ!

Many beautiful smiling faces.

After graduating from Fo Guang Shan in 1989, I was sent by my teacher to take care of Hoeh Beng Zen Temple. It had never occurred to me that I would one day reside in a Zen temple. While doing Buddhist studies, I read in books regarding Zen that there are endless opportunities to gain enlightenment—some got enlightened upon seeing bamboo being hit by pebbles, others from falling pillows, from listening to songs from a brothel, from a leg broken by being slammed in a door, or from hitting and shouting. This got me curious and interested in wanting to gain enlightenment, and to realize what enlightenment is. Thus, after moving into the Zen temple, I become more keen to learn about Zen so as to live up to the standard of the temple's founding abbot.

In 1997, after the completion of the reconstruction of the Hoeh Beng Zen Temple, one day a Caucasian monk visited the temple to give a talk on Zen. This monk was none other than Zen Master Dae Bong. (At the time he was a guiding teacher called Do Mun Sunim.) Accompanying him was Myong An Sunim, who at the time was still a lay practitioner.

I was so pleased to meet Zen Master Dae Bong and I immediately went up to him and asked him a question that had been with me for a long time. I asked, "What is enlightenment?"

Zen Master Dae Bong pointed to his gray robe and asked me back, "What color is this?"

"Gray," I answered.

He replied, "That's right. This is enlightenment!"

I could not accept that answer at that time, for if enlightenment is so simple, then everyone in this world would already be enlightened. Where then is the need for dharma practice? I was too attached to my previous dharma studies. I held firmly that the Buddha gained enlightenment due to his realization regarding causality and emptiness. Furthermore, I was not familiar at all with Zen practice, which points straight to the mind.

I was not satisfied with the answer given by Zen Master Dae Bong, and I was totally at a loss regarding the concept of "don't know mind." More amusingly, I did not realize that this Caucasian monk, Zen Master Dae Bong, would be my guiding teacher at the Winter Kyol Che that I had registered for two months previously.

What would happen when a nun who had only studied sutras met with a monk who practiced Zen? Are you all curious to know?

During each interview, the Zen master would always remind me, "Put it all down . . . That is just explanation . . . Now you are a Zen student . . ." But my heart would say, "I hope you become a Chinese monk in your next life, then you would be able to better study and learn from sutras. Only then would you be able to teach sutra-studying nuns like me." There was truly no communication between two alien species, so much so that I began to dread attending interviews and listening to his reminders.

Then in one interview, the Zen master asked me about the kong-an with the wind and flag. In the interview I managed to provide only half of the correct answer. As a result I had to leave the interview room. Suddenly, as I was closing the door on my way out, the answer appeared. Immediately I returned to the interview room and gave the Zen master the answer, and he told me it was correct.

This process enabled me to experience the real meaning of "cut off thinking," "return to don't know mind," "outside and inside become one," "just reflect" and "just do it." Ever since then, I began to accept and appreciate my teacher's constant reminders.

Actually, it does not matter whether one follows sutra teaching or Zen, for they are both conduits to enable us to proceed toward enlightenment and then help all living beings.

The greatest enemy of a human being is attachment to one's self, while the attachment to success and the fear of failure is in turn the greatest enemy of self. People often judge winners or losers based solely on which outcomes were successful or otherwise.

Young children already know how to please their parents, and sometimes compete with each other to get their parents' attention and affection. Later, in school, they compete for status, and they compare their grades, mobile phones, clothes, wristwatches and other accessories with those of others, either to save face or due to pressure from their parents. As their ambitious minds grow stronger, they often won't admit their faults. When faced with any dispute, they blame others. All the while their obsession with winning and losing, success and failure, will only increase as they enter society, even when they settle down and have families, and as they progress to middle and old age. As their ambitious mind grows stronger, even when they are at fault, they often can't admit it. When faced with any dispute, they insist that the fault is always with others and steadfastly maintain their own innocence.

Thus, if children begin to foster this kind of mindset when very young, then inevitably their suffering shall multiply throughout their life.

After the seven-day Zen retreat in 2010, as we were driving Zen Master Dae Bong to the airport, we stopped in a café to have some refreshments. During the conversation, I informed a nun that Zen Master Dae Bong had agreed to return to Kuala Lumpur to lead another Zen retreat the following year. She was surprised, as about half an hour ago she heard from me that the Zen master would not be able to lead the retreat the following year. She informed me that she was curious and would like to know the reasons behind this change of mind.

But I did not answer her question. Feeling rather victorious, I told her to ask the Zen master directly, which she did. The Zen master pointed to me and said, "She knows how to control the mind of the Zen master, but she does not know how to control her own mind." This reply was like a Zen sword that sharply pierced through me. It instantly made me feel deeply ashamed, and I was too shy to face anyone at that time. What a failure! Despite all my efforts, I was still enjoying this victorious feeling, and it had never occurred to me that I would actually fail so miserably at letting go of

attachments. I wished there were a burrow where I could hide myself.

The end result of all of this, no matter who won, is that Zen Master Dae Bong would continue to return to Kuala Lumpur to teach Zen and to maintain the teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn in Malaysia till today.

I'd like to tell you another story about winning and losing.

A warrior caught a fish and brought it, still alive, to Zen Master Yi Shiu.

The warrior said, "We have a bet, Zen Master. Do you think that the fish is alive or dead?"

Zen Master Yi Shiu knew that if he were to say that the fish is dead, the warrior would release the fish; otherwise he would have the fish killed.

Therefore, Zen Master Yi Shiu replied, "The fish is dead."

22] The warrior immediately released the fish and laughing-ly said, "Zen Master, you lose. See, the fish is clearly alive."

Zen Master Yi Shiu grinned and said, "Yes indeed I lost."

While it is true that the Zen master had lost the bet, he won back the fish's life.

This story shows the compassion of Zen Master Yi Shiu.

Attachment to winning and losing poses serious hindrances to dharma practitioners. Indeed, we must be able to frankly face up to the mindset that attaches to winning or losing. In so doing, only then are we not fooling ourselves. Put down winning or losing, return to don't know mind, then see clearly, hear clearly, smell clearly, taste clearly, touch clearly and act clearly.

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

Lose is win. Win is lose.

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

No lose, no win

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

Lose is lose. Win is win.



Photo: Chin Chun Yin

Now, did Chuan Wen, who is standing here and holding a stick, win or lose?

KATZ!

Just do it!

My utmost gratitude to all Zen masters, guiding teachers, sunims, representatives of Buddhist organisations and all of you here for having us and for so graciously taking time off to attend this inka ceremony. Later when you hear the hitting of the moktak, please proceed to the dining hall for *nasi lemak* (coconut milk rice).

Chuan Wen Sunim was born to a Chinese family in Malaysia in 1964. After training and working as a teacher, she was ordained as a Buddhist nun in 1988 by Reverend Kong Euee of Beow Hiang Lin temple. She trained at temples in Malaysia and Taiwan, returning to Malaysia when her teacher gave her the job at the young age of 24 of rebuilding an old Buddhist temple in the heart of the capital, Kuala Lumpur. She is currently the abbot of Hoeh Beng Buddhist Temple. Venerable Chuan Wen first heard of Zen Master Seung Sahn and his teaching in 1995 and invited Dae Soen Sa Nim and his disciples to teach at Hoeh Beng Temple. Since that time Dae Bong Sunim has regularly visited to lead seven-day retreats. She did her first Zen retreat during the winter of 1997 at Hwa Gye Sa Temple and has participated in most summer Kyol Ches at Mu Sang Sa Temple since 2010. Chuan Wen Sunim was the vice president of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, and the chairperson of the Dharma Propagation Committee and is currently the religious advisor of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, an organization of all Buddhists in Malaysia under 40 years old. In 2003, Chuan Wen Sunim inaugurated the Dharma Practitioner Camp, a yearly program to introduce people to Buddhist practice through games and group activities giving the experience of don't know mind. ♦