

## TRANSMISSION CEREMONY FOR Zen Master Joeng Hye

(Andrzej Piotrowski)

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### DHARMA COMBAT

**Question:** Year by year we have more and more teachers in our school.

All of them give the same answers in the style of the Kwan Um School. But these answers are a little bit boring. Please, can you give some new answer to this simple Question: What is Buddha? *[Laughter.]*

**Zen Master Joeng Hye:** *[Raises the Zen stick.]* What's the color of this stick?

**Q:** It is brown.

**ZMJH:** So you already know.

**Q:** Yes, but don't you have anything new?

**ZMJH:** *[Hits him with the stick, followed by loud laughter from the audience.]*

**Q:** Oh, thank you. It was a good new answer.

**Question:** I'm wondering why this transmission is for you and not for me?

*[Laughter from the audience.]* I mean, what do you have what I don't?

**ZMJH:** *[Giving him the Zen stick.]* This is my transmission for you. What can you do with it? *[Laughter from the audience.]*

**Q:** *[Looking at the stick with embarrassment.]* Nothing . . . I don't know.

**ZMJH:** So give my stick back. *[Grabs the stick.]* One step more is necessary!

**Question:** I have an important question, I think not only for Christians: Where is God?

**ZMJH:** *[Holds the student's hands.]* I love you! What can I do for you? Hallelujah!

**Q:** Hallelujah!

**Question:** I've been learning from you for many years. Please tell me when you will finally teach me something? *[Laughter from the audience.]*

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

**Q:** Sleeping.

**ZMJH:** So, wake up! *[Hits him with the stick.]*

### DHARMA SPEECH

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

Before you make a single step, you have already arrived.

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

Before you open your mouth, your speech is already over.

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



Photo: Yael Barlevy

Without cultivation, you are already complete.

What does this teaching point to?

KATZ!

One person is talking; many people are listening.

Thank you all for coming. Great thank you to the whole

sangha for this wonderful moment. The list of thanks is very long, but first of all I would like to say thank you to the Zen masters who arrived for this ceremony. Especially to Zen Master Dae Kwang, who offered me his trust; as well as to Zen Master Dae Bong, who decided to honor us here with his important presence, which is very meaningful to me, our European Zen masters and all my friends and teachers.

It is said that suffering is the mother of Buddha and also that the lotus flower grows out from the mud. It's an old buddhist allegory, which points to the fact that in the midst of suffering, ignorance, confusion and desire, there is the deeply hidden seed of wisdom and liberation. This is good news for all of us. And for me this message was a great blessing as well, when I brought the mud of my life into this Zen center thirty years ago. Up to that moment I had been living a life that actually led to self-destruction. I knew that the only thing that could save it would be a true and deep spiritual transformation. I used to read a lot of Buddhist literature at that time, and that is where I found this sentence: "Deep in the mud there is a lotus seed that blossoms." I met somebody who said: "You have Buddhist karma. You should try Buddhist meditation." This person brought me to this Zen center and is here at this assembly. I would like to say thank you to this person.

I heard about this great dharma of Zen Master Seung Sahn, who started visiting Poland, and I wanted to give it a try. But the first teacher I met was not Zen Master Seung Sahn, whom I met couple of months later. Zen Master Wu Bong, whose memorial ceremony we celebrated today, was my first teacher. I took part in a YMJJ that he was leading. I went to his room and I told him my story. At that time he was a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, but sometimes we used to call him simply Jacob; such was style of those days. I said, "I feel as if I were dead. I am looking for a new life. Please teach me."

He looked at me, listened and then he said, "In such a case I have a good question for you. Please insert it deeply into your heart. How does the man of great death return to life?" I thought, "Wow, this question really hits the mark." Of course I didn't know the answer, but he said, "Don't worry, you don't have to answer now. But insert this question into your don't-know and please build your practice upon it."

Then I said, "Poep Sa Nim, could you please recommend a certain technique of practice?" He explained to me the breathing, danjeon (tantien) and some methods

we all know. But he also said, "In fact, in Zen meditation the technical aspect is not the most important. It's the great question and don't know that matters most." Such was my first Zen meditation lesson.

I wanted to share with you a story, which really hits the point of what Zen meditation is all about.

A long time ago in China there was a monastery inhabited by many monks and guided by a great Zen master. In that community there was one man who was very determined and had a great will of practice, but his mind was unstable and constantly checking. Every day he would approach the Zen master and ask, "Teacher, this practice you gave me doesn't work, could you please change it for me?" The Zen master said, "Please, go ahead and try *Om Mani Padme Hum*." But next day the monk complained: "You know, this mantra is too long and I keep forgetting it." "What about trying om?" proposed the teacher. The student was back the next day complaining, "It's too long as well." [*Laughter from the audience.*] "How about a great question, such as *Who am I?*" But the monk returned the next day again. He was never satisfied: "Please teach me what is correct meditation. I want to find it." As you can figure out, the teacher was fed up with all of this. When he saw that man at the door, he would shiver. One time it happened that the Zen master's friend, a general, was returning from military training and wanted to pay him a visit. The Zen master was very happy: "Wonderful, we haven't seen each other for a long time, please let's sit down and share a cup of tea. It's beautiful weather; let's sit in the garden." They sat down, the tea was served but all of a sudden the monk appeared again. The Zen master said, "No, no, not now! Look, there is a guest here." "Only one word" the monk persisted. "This meditation you gave me yesterday simply doesn't work." The Zen master shouted, "No, just go away!" But the general made a remark at that point: "I see that you have a problem with this student. He wants to understand correct meditation. You know, I can teach him." The Zen master said, "Wonderful, I would be so obliged."

So the general addressed the monk directly: "Monk, I have heard that you want to learn correct meditation." "Yes, it's the only wish I have in my life. I want to understand what is true meditation." The monk was full of hope. "OK, but you have to accept my conditions." "No problem, I agree to everything." The general said, "Come on, follow me to the temple's courtyard." The general was accompanied by his soldiers, so all of them followed him



Photo: Yael Barlevy

to the courtyard. He asked the attendant to bring the water pot from the kitchen. The general ordered them to fill the pot with water up to the rim and said, “Monk, now you have to carry this pot around the courtyard, and you cannot spill even a single drop of water. My soldiers will follow you with their bows drawn and ready to shoot. If you spill a single drop of water, immediately you will die on the spot.”

He couldn't retreat. Sometimes it's better to lose your life than lose your face. *[Laughter from the audience.]* So he gently picked the pot up and step by step started to walk with sharp mindfulness, feeling the breath of the soldiers on his back. When he was walking, all his thinking disappeared. Subject and object became one and everything became bright. He experienced something that Zen Master Seung Sahn used to teach: “Keep your mind as wide and clear as space, but your attention as sharp as the tip of the needle.” Step by step, he finally made it. He stood in front of the general, put the pot down, bowed deeply and never mentioned a single word about meditation again. *[Laughter from the audience.]*

In the great work of life and death time doesn't wait for anyone, and you never know when the arrow you are destined to die from pierces through your heart. It's a great challenge for a human being, but there is no better teacher than this. It's the best meditation teacher. Wake up and watch your step!

This is when our mind touches this seed of the lotus flower deeply hidden in the mud. It blossoms and opens up naturally and our life achieves harmony with inner truth, which we originally are.

Once, Zen Master Un Mun brought forth the dialogue of two Zen masters. Hsueh-feng said that it's like somebody lying next to the basket of rice and dying of starvation, and lying next to the riverbank, dying of thirst. But Hsuan-sha denied it, saying that it's like somebody immersed to his neck in the basket of rice and dying of starvation. It's like somebody immersed up to his neck in the river and dying of thirst.

Then Un Mun himself commented, “His whole body is already rice. His whole body is already water.”

We often talk about this one clear and bright thing not dependent on life and death. But it also means this bright thing is not separated from life and death. It means it is birth, it is life and it is death. It's our seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, action and stillness. It's exactly this moment. So let's wake up and let's attain this moment. Let's share this rice and water with all sentient beings. In such a way today's transmission is not only for me, but for everyone.

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

Before you take one step, you have already arrived. But this step is necessary.

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

Before you open your mouth, your speech is already over. But correct speech is necessary.

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

Without cultivation you are already complete. But without cultivation it is only a beautiful idea.

That's why try, try, try for 10,000 years nonstop, attain your true self and help all beings. Thank you very much again, and I wish you all great fun this evening. ♦