

Knud Rosenmayr

March 20, 2016 at Wu Bong Sa Temple, Poland

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: Knud, your wife, Mingma is coming from Nepal. I've heard something like this: Your wife is so strong, yes? *[Laughter from the audience.]* Very strong—stronger than you. Is that true—is she stronger than you?

Rosenmayr PSN: You already understand.

Q: No, no. I don't.

Rosenmayr PSN: I love my wife.

Q: Yay!

Question: We've practiced many years together since the '90s. You came here with very big "I, my, me." Now you are becoming a teacher. You have no "I, my, me." So who will receive this inka? *[Laughter from the audience.]*

Rosenmayr PSN: You already understand.

Q: I don't.

Rosenmayr PSN: How do you call me?

Q: Knud?

Rosenmayr PSN: Ah. Already appeared.

Question: Now you're becoming a teacher. We know a lot of teachers, and everyone has his own style—like pointing a finger or hitting the floor. So what's your style?

Rosenmayr PSN: You already understand.

Q: No, I don't. Show me.

Rosenmayr PSN: I'm sitting here talking to you.

Q: That's all?

Rosenmayr PSN: That's my style.

Q: Thank you very much. I like this.

DHARMA SPEECH

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

Holding is putting down. Putting down is holding.

Who is it that is trying to put it all down?

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

In this moment—no holding, no putting down.

Careful here.

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

Holding is just holding. Putting down is just putting down.

This is without skin.

What is there to hold and what is there to put down?

KATZ!

Holding this stick and putting it down on the table!

[Holds up the Zen stick and puts it down on the table.]

Actually this talk is already complete. However, let me say some more words. I also would like to say thank you to the teachers—many of them are here today, and it's really wonderful to have the opportunity to practice with so many different teachers in our school. All of them helped me so much in my practice, especially Zen Master Dae Kwang, with whom I had my first interview; Zen Master Ji Kwang, with whom I have practiced the longest; Jo Potter JDPSN, with her unconditionally open heart; and also my wife, Mingma. Thank you all for your continuous teaching. I'm very grateful for that. We say our true teacher is always in front of you. However, it's so important to have somebody "mirroring you"—this may be a Zen teacher, a dharma friend, your partner, a family member or just somebody on the street—it doesn't matter.

Here is a short mirroring story from my family. It was about three years ago, and I was traveling with my father and my family in the Himalayas. We were hiking toward Everest Base camp in Nepal—actually my wife was born in that region so there were many family visits included and lots of tea was drunk. We made it up to Tengboche and a little village called Deboche, which is around 3,800 meters (12,467 feet) above sea level. Unfortunately in Deboche my father got altitude sickness, which came as a surprise to us and to him because he had visited there before and had never experienced any problems with high altitude. But it's not only the high altitude: there is no guarantee that you won't run into problems even if you think you've mastered them before. So my father didn't sleep all night, and we stayed there another day hoping that it would get better. But it didn't, so then we decided to split the group. The others—my brother and his wife, my niece and her husband and other friends—went on, and my wife and I went down with my father. We were walking down this narrow path—actually it was a shortcut someone recommended—and I could see him stumbling from



Photo: Grzegorz Piaskowski

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time to time. We had to cross a river to get to the other side where the trail was leading uphill again to the next village. At the riverbank we rested a little bit. My father was lying down on the grass facing the sky with his hand on his heart. He really didn't look well. I could see his chest moving fast trying to make up for the lack of oxygen in the thin air. So my wife and I, our minds went into big checking mode: Oh, shit! What are we going to do? There was no place for a helicopter to land, and no horse could come this way because the trails were too narrow. So this strong fear appeared, and I noticed my mind going directly into mantra practice. The mantra was directed toward my father, but there was also something else, some kind of running away there, some kind of escape from the situation. Then appeared a strong desire to get rid of this agonizing feeling inside, this pain of worrying and that fear.

So the mantra dropped and there was just being with that fear, completely, 100 percent. And interestingly . . . it was OK just the way it was. It was no problem! We did the things that we could do, gave him a little bit of pain medication and went on slowly. Luckily everything turned out all right and we made it up to the next village and then downhill again.

It's OK to use mantras or other practices, but sometimes it seems that we use them mainly for us. Have we found a way to use them for our own purposes and then just convince ourselves that we use them for others?

Do you know that feeling? Can there be complete practice that is "not for me"? Can we pause and really listen before we go into this "automatic mode" that's trained and remembered over the years?

And how do we deal with it, when it gets really difficult? When strong feelings appear? Usually this question comes up only when we think or have feelings that we don't like. Nobody has any problems with feelings that they like. Nobody wants pleasure to go away. We actually have a kong-an in our book that deals with this point. It's called Dong Sahn's "No Cold or Hot." Many of you know this kong-an already, but let's look at it together for a moment anew.

A monk asked Zen Master Dong Sahn, "When cold or hot come, how can we avoid them?" "Why don't you go to the place where there is no cold or hot?" Dong Sahn replied. The monk said "What is the place where there is no cold or hot?" Then Dong Sahn said, "When cold, cold kills you; when hot, heat kills you." That's the case. Here Dong Sahn is not only talking about hot and cold. We might give a very good answer to that kong-an, but can we die to our feelings completely or is there a running away?

There is an interesting story—it's an Italian Youtube video: a man is hanging on the edge of a cliff in the mountains, and under him is the abyss. So he knows if he lets go, he's going to die. In despair he cries out "God! God! Are you there?" Nothing happens. Then again: "God! God! Are you here? Please help me!" Then suddenly a voice appears "Yes?" "God! Oh, wonderful, you are here! Please help me! I will do anything you say." Then the voice says "LET GO!" [*Laughter from the audience.*] And the man says, "Anybody else here?" [*Loud laughter and applause from the audience.*]

In a way we are all hanging on this cliff. We don't want to let go and let us fall into what's here now. Instead we try and have a better job, have a better relationship or become a stronger Zen student or get a stronger center or become a worse Zen student and so on and on. Can we knock down the flagpole in front of the gate and just be with this? [*Hits the table with his hand.*] Then helping each other just comes by itself, without effort. It doesn't need much. On the contrary. How many times have we heard this—but have we really listened? And for most people this is not enough; they want more. Maybe some wonderful enlightenment experience or some great insight, and then there

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quickly. The crowd was moving and I could see they were trying hard but inside my chest was this rush, “Come on guys! The sunims are waiting!” Then, Zen Master Soeng Hyang came up the stairs with a group of people behind her. Beckoning them, I yelled, “Come on guys!” And Zen Master Soeng Hyang looked at me and said, “Kathy, Jean is back there, really far away. Her foot is injured and she’s not going to be able to walk so fast. Don’t leave anybody behind, OK?” When I heard that, I totally stopped. I saw all the people coming up and all the rush inside me suddenly disappeared. Inside my heart was this echo: “Don’t leave anybody behind.”

“Don’t leave anybody behind” is a teaching for that part in each of us that leaves ourselves behind, the part that doesn’t believe in ourselves. When we don’t believe in ourselves, we leave someone else behind. This is a very ordinary thing that happens all the time. Leaving someone else behind. So, believing in ourselves, we can save all beings from suffering.

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

Great is ordinary, ordinary is great.

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

No great. No ordinary.

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

Great is great. Ordinary is ordinary.

Which one do you like?

KATZ!

It’s wonderful to see so many great dharma friends all together here. Thank you very much. ♦

Kathy Park (Il Hwa) began practicing Zen in 1999 while living in London and has lived and practiced at Cambridge Zen Center and Providence Zen Center in the United States, Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong and at Mu Sang Sa Temple in Korea, where she has participated in several 90-day Kyol Che retreats. She served as director of the Cambridge Zen Center and helped establish the Harvard Women’s Center’s meditation group and the Harvard Zen Buddhist Group. She also served as interim director for the Kwan Um School at PZC and is currently an administrative director at Mu Sang Sa and the coordinator of the International Initiative Project for the global Kwan Um School of Zen. Kathy lives in Korea with her husband, Andrzej Stec JDPSN. Together they lead the newly established Kwan Um Seoul Zen Group and Daejeon Zen Group. Kathy has a BFA in sculpture from Parsons School of Design in New York. She is an art and design consultant, focusing on supporting Korean artisans and craftsmen for sustainability and development of their traditional craftsmanship.

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will be happiness, and no more sorrow for their whole life.

Have we found the place where there is no cold or hot?

Please listen!

The sound *[cameras clicking]* of the cameras. *[Pause.]*

The light on the brown floor. *[Pause.]*

The smell of the air. *[Pause.]*

The feeling of the clothes on the skin. *[Pause.]*

[Swallows.] The swallowing. *[Pause.]*

What are we doing? What is this?

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

Sorrow is happiness. Happiness is sorrow.

Two sides—one coin.

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

At this point there is no sorrow, no happiness.

This is not even a point.

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

Sorrow is just sorrow. Happiness is just happiness.

This is great peace.

But all of this is not enough. Then what?

KATZ!

Very happy to see you all. How may I help you? ♦

Knud Rosenmayr JDPSN started practicing in 1995 after meeting Zen Master Seung Sahn in Korea. After finishing his studies at the university in Vienna he started to work at a language school and got married in Nepal in 2008. Since 1999 he has been the group director of the Viennese Kwan Um Zen group, and he became the abbot of the Vienna Zen Center in 2013.