

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Dyan Eagles

On December 13, 2020, Dyan Eagles received inka in a virtual online ceremony.

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: So last year we sat the first week of Kyol Che together, which was wonderful. But this year there's a pandemic and so we're not sure about Kyol Che. So where should we sit Kyol Che this year?

Dyan Eagles JDPSN: You already understand.

Question: So please teach me.

Eagles PSN: At your house!

Q: *[Laughing]* OK! Welcome! I'll see you then. Thank you very much.



Zen Master Bon Hae: I'm gonna start crying. Forty-four years ago when I started practicing, you were already a dharma teacher. And I remember you and Mark *[Zen Master Bon Haeng]* running around spritzing each other with plant spray in your dharma robes the first time I walked into Cambridge Zen Center. And you were so important to me in my own practice when I was in Cambridge and I'm so grateful to you. My question to you is, what took you so long?

Eagles PSN: *[Laughing.]* You already understand.



Photo: Barbara Gaskin

ZMBH: But I'm asking you.

Eagles PSN: Better late than never, Judy!

ZMBH: *[Laughing.]* All right!



Question: So Dyan, we had the distinct pleasure of sitting all of Kyol Che together last winter.

Eagles PSN: Yes.

Q: And you sat across from me. I was in the moktok seat, and if you remember, almost every night, we would do yoga together and inevitably Sunim would have us go like this. *[Mimics jumping up and down.]* And you and I would look at each other and do our best just not to start laughing—we'd have these big smiles on our face. I think you had to leave for the last week. Is that correct?

Eagles PSN: Yeah. Yeah I had to leave.

Q: Yeah. And you're gone, and so I'm doing this. *[Mimics jumping up and down again.]* But you weren't there and I missed you. I had no one to smile at. So my question is, at first I had someone to smile at and go like this with. *[Mimics jumping up and down.]* And then you were gone and I had no one to smile at. What does that mean?

Eagles PSN: Theran stand up for a minute.

Q: OK.

[Both Dyan and Theran stand up.]

Eagles PSN: Are you ready?

[They both start jumping up and down together and laughing.]

Eagles PSN: All right!

Q: Only that?

Eagles PSN: Not enough?

Q: Fifty percent.

Eagles PSN: Go drink tea.

Q: Thank you, Dyan.

DHARMA SPEECH

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

An eminent teacher once said, "Better late than never."

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

She also said, "Better never late!"

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

Late, never late: which one do you like?

KATZ!

Today is December 13, 2020 and we are gathered on Zoom for this inka ceremony.

Welcome everyone. I'm so happy that you could be here today on Zoom with me. First, I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who has taught me and practiced with me for all these years, and it certainly has been many. I'm especially grateful to Zen Master Seung Sahn for his teaching and for showing me my direction in life. I so wish that Dae Soen Sa Nim could be here today. I think he would be very happy. He always wanted me to be a teacher. I met him when I was only twenty-two years old, and of all the people in my life, he's had the most profound influence.

I would also like to express special gratitude to Zen Master Soeng Hyang (Bobby), who's been like an older sister to me since the very beginning; Zen Master Bon Yeon (Jane), my guiding teacher; Zen Master Hae Kwang (Stanley); Zen Master Bon Shim (Ola); and Zen Master Wu Kwang (Richard). I'm blessed to have you as good friends and teachers. And thank you to all the sangha, and especially my good practicing friends at the Cambridge Zen Center.

I'm very honored to accept this new job of Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. I'm looking forward to learning to be a teacher and to fulfilling my obligation to my own teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn. Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching boiled down to two things: find your true self, and then use your life to help all beings. He was a master at both, and an inspiration to me. He always said, "This life has no meaning, no reason, and no choice. So you! You must give it great meaning, great reason, and great choice." But how do we do that? For me, that's always been a big question. How do I use my life?

When I first lived at the Zen center, I drove a truck delivering Pepsi-Cola. I was Pepsi's first woman truck driver. My only claim to fame in this lifetime. I was an ardent feminist, and I loved my job. I loved having my own route, and I loved being in the union. I was very proud of myself. And I loved being living proof that a woman could do all these things that previously had been the sole domain of men. At that time, a woman might work in an office all week and only make \$125. Every week at Pepsi, I just punched the clock, and without selling a single case of soda, just showing up at work, I made \$400 a week. I loved that. In the wintertime when the business was slow, I would pull my truck over by the side of the road and I would read the Third Patriarch's famous poem, the *Hsin Hsin Ming* ("Faith in Mind"). I'm sure you know it. It goes "The great way is not difficult; only don't make likes and dislikes." I had a little booklet that I kept in my truck.

I was a young Zen student with a big truck and a big question. Then, one day, a group of us had to go somewhere. I think it was to New Haven Zen Center to make the *Perceive World Sound* chanting tape. I was sitting in the back seat with two other people, and Bobby was sitting up in the front, in the passenger's side. I was going on and on about how great my job was and all the money I was making, and just on and on. And suddenly Bobby turns around and she says to me, "Well, I don't see what's so great about selling poison to

people." I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe that she said that. I was so mad at her. I was really mad. She burst my bubble.

But her remark penetrated my consciousness. I had never thought about my job that way before. I had only thought about my job in terms of how it benefitted me, what was so great about it for me. So, as the days went on, I started to feel like maybe I should do something else with my life. I still kept working at Pepsi, but it wasn't really the same anymore. Finally, one day they offered me a job in management, and I would have to travel around the country for my training. And I was just about to marry a local boy who worked in his family's business. So it seemed like a really good time to leave the company, and so I did.

Now I wasn't sure what to do next, so I decided to do a hundred-day retreat. Bobby was about to go off and do her first hundred-day retreat, and I wanted to do that too. I always tried to be like Bobby. She was my role model, and actually she still is. So, I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn if I could go, but he said no. It was too soon. But I begged him and finally he said OK, and he made a schedule for me and told me what to eat and not to be afraid if the demons came at night. And so off I went on my hundred-day retreat up in Maine.

But he was right. It was too soon. I was back in twenty-one days. I missed my boyfriend too much. My demon was a very cute one. His name was Mark Houghton, who is now Zen Master Bon Haeng. But while I was on the retreat, the idea for DharmaCrafts appeared. I thought to myself, "Yes! Finally! A good way to use my life! I will make a company, and it will support people's practice by making meditation cushions. It will serve as a vehicle for the propagation of the dharma by selling books and teaching materials. And finally, it would provide a venue for Buddhist artists to sell their work. What a great idea!" You could see it was too early. It was a "many-thinking" retreat.

So when I got home, I went to Chinatown in Boston with ten dollars. I bought some fabric, and I started DharmaCrafts in my bedroom at the Cambridge Zen Center. Now with DharmaCrafts, my Zen aspirations and my everyday life came closer together. But DharmaCrafts was still only my outside job. My body's job. It was mostly an idea—a good idea, but an idea, nonetheless. I still needed to find my inside job. What am I? What does it mean to be a human being? What is my true human being's job? How do I change no meaning to great meaning?

We are all so lucky to have our practice. We have an actual way to look inside and find our human nature and our true job. Zen Master Seung Sahn always said, "To practice correctly, we need two things: correct direction and try mind." Correct direction means wanting to understand our true self and help this world. Try mind means moment to moment, do it! Try! Other people can point us in the right direction, but only we ourselves can try. So it's important for everyone, all of us, to try. Then we can find our true way in this world

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these seem naïve—did the curve ever flatten? Are the phases of reopening well defined or chaotic?—but at the time that is how we thought. As Ezra Pound said, poetry is news that stays news—and Lazer, reporting in the moment, has the sense to put a question mark after *we're back*.

The last section is anchored in George Floyd's death, and in some of its poems the horror of human injustice forces the poetic lines out of the space the page allows. For example, here is a single line invoking the demonstrations after Floyd's death:

*Yes, shattered glass, burning building, these are the
voices of the unheard, mixed in with others intent
on something else*

Yes, that is a single line. If you were reading it out loud, it would be read with one breath. Finally, the political/medical/human moment is distilled:

*so that the words
equality justice democracy
mark something other
than our shame*

*pain goes straight
to our emptiness
repeated videos enshrine
the victims what to do*

*with two viruses
death of a nation
blurred as i age
into what's next*

We can recognize “pain goes straight / to our emptiness” as a sort of double-meaning pun—Buddhist emptiness? Emotional emptiness?—but what's important is the challenge that Lazer is giving us: In the multiple crises facing us, what do we do? What comes next?

The curious reader may wonder why these poems are called *Sutras*. Just as this book is connected to William Carlos Williams's response to a similar pandemic moment, so it is connected to a similar political moment, the antiwar protests of the 1960s, which produced Allen Ginsberg's *Wichita Vortex Sutra*, and to the ecstatic early encounter by beatniks with Buddhism, for example, Ginsberg's *Sunflower Sutra*. More traditionally, as a long-time student of the Soto teacher and poet Norman Fischer, Lazer is deeply connected to Dogen's *Mountains and Waters Sutra*—on which Fischer recently published a book, *Mountains and Rivers Sutra* (Sumeru Press, 2020). Finally, the dominant format of short stanzas is reminiscent of such pithy teachings as some of the Theravada sutras, and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. So why not call these poems *sutras*? They are, in the ways that matter, wisdom poems. ♦

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and find our true human being's job.

We all come into this world with empty hands, and we leave with empty hands. Nobody said to us, “Hey! How would you like to spend a little time on planet earth?” And when it's time to go, nobody asks our permission. When our time is up, we're gone. There's no reason, and we have no choice in the matter. But while we are alive, what should we do? How do we live our life? How do we put our empty hands to work?

Every day, all of us have to do many things. But most important is why do we do something? What is our motivation? Zen Master Seung Sahn always asked, “Why do you eat every day?” That is a very important question. Is it for love? Is it for money? Is it only for me? Or is it for all beings?

Our human life is a precious opportunity to transform no reason into great reason, and no choice into great choice. But how do we do that? That is a million-dollar question that all of us have to answer every day. Each one of us for ourselves, moment to moment to moment. It is called the great work of life and death.

Today, I'm getting a Zen stick and a new job: Ji Do Poep Sa. My hands have new work to do. “Ji Do” means “point the way.” “Poep Sa” means “teacher,” which means helping other people. To me, this means that my inside job and my outside job have finally come together. It has taken a long time, and I am very happy.

[Raises the Zen stick over her head.]

This life has no meaning, no reason, and no choice.

[Hits the floor with the Zen stick and raises it again.]

But through our practice, we can change no meaning to great meaning, which is great love. We can change no choice to great choice, which is our great vow, the great bodhisattva way.

[Hits the floor with the Zen stick and raises it again.]

No meaning, no reason, no choice, or great meaning, great reason, great choice? Which one do you choose?

KATZ!

The candles are burning brightly; the Zoom screen shows me smiling faces. Thank you for coming. ♦

Dyan Eagles began studying with Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1974. She received inka in December 2020. Dyan is one of the founding members of the Cambridge Zen Center, where she served as housemaster and head dharma teacher. Prior to retiring in 2019, Dyan was the founder and CEO of DharmaCrafts, Inc.