

Inka Speech

BY KNUD ROSENMYER JDPSN

Inka Speech by Knud Rosenmayer JDPSN, March 20 2016, Wu Bong Sa

[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 practised the longest, Jo PSN 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 maybe 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, I was traveling with my father and my family in the Himalayas. We were hiking towards 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 3800 meters above sea level. Unfortunately in Deboche my father got high

altitude sickness and that came as a surprise to us and to him because he had been here before and never experienced any problems with high altitude. But it's not only with 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 for 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 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 river bank 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, 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 towards my father but then something else was seen. There was some kind of running away there – some kind of escape from the situation. A strong wanting 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 – but completely – 100 percent. And interestingly... it was okay... 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 alright and we made it up to the next village and then downhill again.

It's okay 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 talk ourselves into it that we use them for others? Do you know that feeling? Can there be complete practice which is “not for me”? Can we pause and really listen before we go into this “automatic mode” that's trained and that's remembered over the years.

And how do we deal with it, when it gets really difficult. When strong feelings appear? Usually this question only comes up 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 which 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 – 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. We rather 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 so 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 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... *[Clicking of cameras.]* ...of the photo 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?

This article copyright © 2016

Kwan Um School of Zen