

Inka Speech

BY ROLAND WÖRLE-CHON JDPSN

On February 6, 2000, Roland Wöhrle-Chon received inka from Zen Master Wu Bong at the Berlin Zen Center.

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

In the 30th case of the Mu Mun Kwan, the famous Zen Master Matsu is asked: "What is Buddha?" He answers: "Mind is Buddha."

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

In the 33rd case of the Mu Mun Kwan, he answers to the same question with: "No mind, no Buddha."

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick and points to the altar.]

The Buddha is golden. Is this mind or no mind? If you have mind, how do you keep it? If you have no mind, then what?

KAAAATZ!

There are many ears and eyes in this dharma room.

We all have different emotions, moods, longings, desires and fear. We think a lot about a future, which we hope will be different, better, nicer. But this is only a dream. We also think about events of the past: where we failed, the wrong we did, the things we miss. But this, too, is only a dream. We thus miss the only reality we have -- now! It seems that life is often an awkward and difficult affair. I had this same take on life when I started to read Buddhist books at the beginning of the eighties.

One book really affected me then and still does today: the Avatamsaka Sutra. The heart of it is in this gatha: If you want to understand the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, then you should view the nature of the whole universe as being created by mind alone. This is great! Imagine, if I just change my mind, then it's possible to become free, or even live in paradise. What a deal! We all understand what this sutra is talking about on some level. If we are happy and active, then the whole world around us becomes joyous. But, when we are sad or depressed, then even the clouds look sad and the rain turns into the teardrops of the world. Everything becomes a problem, and we are passive spectators in a world not of our making.

But everyone makes their own world. Master Matsu said, "Mind is Buddha," and he also said, "No mind, no Buddha." Both have the same point. If you want to understand this point, you must throw your mind into the garbage. The mountains, rivers, trees, the sky above us--all these have no problems. They are always complete. It's our minds that make the problems.

In the eighties, when I started looking for a meditation group, I was far from understanding this.

I already understood that mere conceptual understanding was not enough, I'd have to try to do something myself. But this wasn't easy. I have a very active and vigorous nature. My wife sometimes calls me a nervous and restless fellow. Consequently, I didn't think that I would ever be able to sit calmly for long periods of time on a cushion and do nothing. I felt far away from the venerable ideal put forth by meditation teachers. The peace and mindfulness the swami and monk embodied seemed far from me. But I tried.

Shortly before giving up, I first met a teacher of the Kwan Um School of Zen. It turned out to be a very interesting encounter. This teacher was very energetic, like myself. He liked to organize and make plans, and he telephoned a lot. He always walked fast. He was always in a hurry, taking long strides. This was the first thing I noticed. I joined the Zen practice there in Poland. Some of you know our Zen Center in Warsaw. I found the Zen practice there very interesting--it wasn't so holy; actually, more the opposite. Everyone did a lot of bowing and chanting; it seemed like a LOT to me! It was quite different from the meditation techniques I had tried up until then. I had good use for the energy which this practice generated.

A little later I met Zen Master Seung Sahn when he came to visit our small Zen group in Berlin. I was chauffeur, translator, organizer, dharma teacher and German secretary for Zen Master Seung Sahn. I didn't know him at that time, so I was a little cautious. Sometimes my vigorous style makes people nervous, and I didn't want to give a bad impression to the Zen Master. It was about the time that the Berlin Wall fell.

Around the Brandenburg Gate there were all kinds of people selling Russian watches, or some stones from the Berlin wall for 10 DM. I drove Zen Master Seung Sahn to see the Brandenburg Gate, which is regarded as the symbol of German unity. He was quite interested: "What is that? How much is this? And that?" Meanwhile I kept looking at my watch, "My goodness, Dae Soen Sa Nim, we have to go to the television station for an interview and then visit the Korean sangha and then back to the Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Sir, we have to go now!" He said, "OK!" He was always cool. "OK, lets go!" Actually it was already too late. Well, it's no problem for me to drive a car very fast, but with a Zen Master inside it might be risky, screaming around corners. Sometimes I would peek at him: Zen Master Seung Sahn was only doing mantras, holding his mala. I thought: "Oh, now he is afraid for his life." But when we arrived in time he said, "Good driving! When driving, 100% just drive, this is clear mind!" I liked this kind of speech.

Today I am standing here in front of you and giving this dharma talk. I received this stick and wear this long red kasa. And some of you may ask yourself: "What did he attain?" Nothing special! This wall is white and that one, too. But there was one experience which has been of great importance to me. It happened at Shin Won Sah, our temple in Korea. I attended a ninety-day Zen retreat there in 1993. Regularly I would have two super days and one bad day. Again and again. During the good days everything was wonderful. It

was sooooo calm and silent there--outside the snow was gently falling. The birds were singing--indescribable! One of my duties was to hit the big temple bell each morning and evening. Every morning and evening the bell sounded through the valley. Two days went by smoothly, then on the third-- everything was shit. "What the hell am I doing here? Am I crazy? I want to go home to my sweet wife!" The day passed like this and it got even worse. It continued like this until I stopped recognizing it. Suddenly it didn't affect me anymore. Interesting! The days passed, my mind flipped out, but there was no hindrance. It didn't really affect me anymore.

This experience continues until today. Before when I quarreled with my wife it was for three days minimum, followed by three weeks of cold war. Nowadays its only three hours! Not so much. *[laughter]* But it cannot spoil the whole day or our life. This is the meaning of "throw away your mind"--not holding. Let go, again and again.

Stick, red kasa, robes, scriptures, sutras, masters, Buddha, religions: all these are actually only placebos. But as long as we have mind, we need them. And even if we keep no mind, become completely free, we still need them. If even one being is still entangled in their difficulties and suffering, then we must put on our robe and practice Zen together with them. Because that's what we are all about: become a fellow-being, help each other.

Something like this must have happened to Bodhidharma. Some of you may know the story already. He sat in Sorim, in China, for nine years. It is said that he breathed only three times an hour and neither drank nor ate for nine years. One day a monk appeared. His name was Hui Ko. He was standing in front of the cave and said, "Master, please teach me!" But Bodhidharma didn't move. It was cold and snowing. Hui Ko repeated his request, "Master, please teach me!" Bodhidharma still didn't move. Finally the monk cut off his arm to demonstrate his sincerity and screamed in pain, "Master, I cannot stand it! Please give rest to my mind." To this Bodhidharma replied, "Where is your mind?" The monk: "I cannot find my mind." Bodhidharma said, "Then I have already given your mind rest." Do you have mind? Where is your mind? This is an important question.

Today I am standing here and giving this dharma speech and receiving inka. But I get nothing. Actually I give something: I pay back an immense debt to my teachers.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
Let nothing remain in your mind.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
Don't let your mind remain with things.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
Only do it! How?

KAAAATZ!

Thank you for coming and listening.