

# Inka Means Strong Center and Wisdom

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

In the old Chinese tradition there are two kinds of transmission: secret transmission and public transmission. The sixth patriarch had secret transmission, because at that time seven hundred monks were living in the Zen Master's home temple. The head monk had been practicing for many years with the fifth patriarch and everyone thought he would get transmission. But this sixth patriarch was not a monk, he was a layman. If he got transmission, maybe many monks would kill him. So he got a secret transmission at night and went away. For eighteen years he only hid. Then he cut his hair and became a monk. That was secret transmission.

Ma Jo Zen Master got transmission from Pai Chang in a big public ceremony. That's a famous story. Before transmission is what we call "inka," which means your practicing is okay. It's possible for you to teach other people. Inka means many Zen Masters are possible. Transmission means only one Zen Master.

Inka and transmission are different. Our "Ji Do Poep Sa Nim" title is like the Japanese title "sensei." In Korea, we call it "Chong Yong Sun" — your practice is okay, teaching other people is possible. This title has almost disappeared in Korea, although it still exists in China. In Korea we now have the title "Ip Sung Sunim." — "head monk."

Now we have the Ji Do Poep Sa Nim ceremony, which is very important. Why? In this ceremony we come together and believe him or her. How strong is his or her center? If the Zen Master gives inka or transmission only privately to this person, sometimes the other students don't understand. So our Ji Do Poep Sa Nim ceremony means that everyone can come to Providence Zen Center and ask any kind of question, and he or she must answer. Good answer, bad answer, doesn't matter. How much the candidate believes in himself or herself one hundred percent is the most important point.

Even my teacher, Zen Master Ko Bong, had young Zen Masters coming to him, challenging him. There is a famous story of the time a young Zen Master asked him: what did the monk whisper in Zen Master Duk Sahn's ear? This is from a famous kong-an. Duk Sahn Zen Master hadn't heard the drum (announcing meals) but he carried his bowl into the dharma room. That was a big mistake, so this is a mistake kong-an. So what did the monk say to him?

My teacher was stuck. He was thinking a little bit, like everyone does (even Zen Masters), and he was stuck. This young Zen Master wanted to become a great Zen Master, so he came and hit my teacher. When my teacher could not

answer, the young Zen Master said, "Aigo! Aigo!" This means, "You are already dead!" Then he went away.

After one week the young Zen Master understood. So he came back and said, "Thank you for your teaching." This kind of thing happens. So whether the answer is good or bad doesn't matter. The Ji Do Poep Sa Nim test means how much does he or she believe in himself or herself one hundred percent? This is very important. Zen means believe in your true self one hundred percent.

When asked "what is Buddha?," Ma Jo Zen Master used to say, "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind." That's not correct. These are bad words. Then next he said, "No mind, no Buddha." These are bad words, too. If somebody gave that answer today, they would get hit! But that's okay.

So in this ceremony we check two things: center and wisdom. Checking the center means, does the answer appear quickly or not? If there's no hesitation, that's a strong center. If the answer is sometimes a little slow in coming, that means the center is not clear. Next, we check whether the answer is correct or not. Correct answer means wisdom.

In the future some other people may become Ji Do Poep Sa Nims. Wisdom and a strong center are necessary. A strong center means your mind is not moving, your mind is clear like space. You can reflect action. Whether or not your answer is correct, you can reflect action. That is center.

In the future, everyone must practice strongly and many Ji Do Poep Sa Nims will appear, to help our School and help all beings. Thank you.

---

*This article copyright © 2008 Kwan Um School of Zen*