

*A
Staff
for the
Mind*

Kokoro no Tsue

Shodo Harada

Calligraphy collection
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*The plum blossoms
are fragrant in the
snow*

Baika yuki ni washite
kambashi

梅花雪和香

When you mention the flowering plum tree, most Japanese think of its white blossoms. The plum flower, the bamboo, the chrysanthemum, and the orchid are all considered flowers of good fortune. They're symbols of purity and sagacity. The plum is one

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梅花雪和香

of the first flowers to bloom in the new year, appearing naturally during the severest cold of winter. No matter how brutal the weather, the plum thrives and blossoms. Persevering through the cold and blooming even when everything is covered with snow, it expresses honesty and endurance in the face of extreme hardships.

Closely associated with plum flowers is the Sung dynasty hermit named Rin. He lived from 963 to 1028 and was known as the hidden sage. Although he seldom appeared in public, the influence of his verses on the plum was so great that it's hard to think of one without the other.

In one poem describing winter, the water so clearly reflects the cold moon and the shadow of a plum branch that the plum's fragrance can be smelled. There is only the bright moonlight and the shadow of the plum branch, seen against the flowing water. Although the shadow of the plum doesn't move, the flower's light fragrance brings us a feeling of great abundance. The scene is famous from Rin's song of the plum.

In China in the Gen dynasty, the black plum was steamed and dried and then used as a preventative medicine and also to treat coughs and various other ailments. Even that long ago, it was recognized as a powerful elixir. In a sutra on medicine and healing, it was told that the plum was given to humans by the gods. Many poeticized on the plum and its blossom.

The *Manyoshu*, the earliest anthology of Japanese poetry, published in the middle of the eighth century, included many descriptions of plums.

In my garden the plum's petals are fluttering down. In this great huge sky the snow falls, and in that same way the petals fly. But is it snow or is it the flowers? It's hard to know. This beauty of not being able to tell the difference.

That child on my back, I wanted to show it the plum flowers, but was it plum or not? The snow was falling, the snow was dancing . . . or was it the flowers dancing? We could not tell them apart.

The snow fell this morning; in my house's garden the old plum tree has bloomed on two branches.

The *Manyoshu* included three times as many verses about plums as about cherry blossoms. From this we can see how much people of the time loved the plum tree.

While it's hard to prove historically, it's said that Daruma Daishi, when he transmitted the Dharma to Niso Eka Daishi, said to him,

One bud opens its five petals
It naturally grows into fruit

He was saying that the Buddha Dharma, the Zen he was transmitting to Niso Eka, would flower into five great petals. This prophecy was seen to have come true with the schools of Rinzai, Soto, Igyo, Hogen, and Ummon, which spread Zen throughout China and then Japan. Ikkyu Zenji said that Daruma was speaking of a plum flower; Hakuin agreed and made many paintings of plum blossoms. Tsugaru Michizane, who broke through deeply under Hakuin, was given a plum branch, and Hakuin made a painting of that too.

It's impossible for people who lived five hundred years apart to have done sanzen together, but in Zen there is a place beyond time and space where the Dharma's truth can be clarified. If we experience that, we know that no being is limited to a certain period or era; there is only awakening. That is the purity of the plum flower as well.



The moon by the window has its usual appearance

Jinjo ichiyo sozen no tsuki

尋常一樣窓前月
纔有梅花便不同

The moon by the window has its usual appearance
But put plum flowers there, and suddenly it's different

jin jo yo no tsuki
wazuka ni baika areba onaji
karazu

yonotsune ichiyo sozen no tsuki
wazuka ni baika areba
sunawachi onajikarazu

This poem, from Daito Kokushi's *Kaian Kokugo*, first appeared in the *Sodaisen Keishusen Keishi*. It describes looking out the window at the moon and always seeing the same moon; but if a single bough of plum flowers is placed in front of the window, the moon changes completely.

Bankei Zenji lived from 1622 to 1693 and was known for teaching the Zen of the Unborn Mind. Bankei described his deep awakening, which occurred one morning when he went outside to wash his face. As he was washing, he smelled the scent of the plum, and everything that had been caught in his mind until then vanished. It was as if a barrel's bottom had fallen out, and all of his challenges—physical, spiritual, mental, and psychological—fell away at once. He was completely healed. In this way, Bankei Zenji wrote of his own experience.

When he was eleven years old he had heard it said that the path of Great Learning was to clarify Bright Virtue. From that moment, he inquired deeply about what Bright Virtue was and where it could be found. The path of Great Learning had been taught by Confucius. The world of morals and ethics was about reflecting upon that with which we were originally born. Confucius had written that this was the most important thing to be done. But Bankei was troubled by that particular phrase concerning the Bright Virtue of the path of Great Learning.

He wondered constantly, "Where in me is there something like Bright Virtue?" He could see only the boy who took money from his mother's purse and lied about it, who caught fish he wasn't supposed to and fought with the kids

in the neighborhood. He could see himself only as a disobedient boy who was unreliable and always misbehaving. He was the leader of all the bullies and ruffians and was admonished and reprimanded by one and all. How could anyone like that have any such thing as a Bright Virtue to clarify in the first place?

For fourteen years he suffered with this insecurity and doubt, seeking out a path that would enable him to resolve it. He went to training with Master Unpo of Zuioji near Akoo, but this deep question about the path remained beyond his grasp. Traveling the whole of Japan, he sought different teachers and attempted assorted ascetic practices. Always training hard, he followed ancient paths, staying in the forests, sleeping by the side of the roads, in fields, wherever his training took him. He did zazen under the trees in the heat of the day and the cold of the night, sitting in the wind, rain, and sleet, unconcerned about hunger or pain or discomfort. He was willing to throw away his life for his quest. Still, he couldn't resolve his profound doubt or rid himself of his confusion.

Finally, he returned to his hometown and built a small hut, one tatami mat square, near his family's house. He put up four walls, but there was no door, only a window just large enough to allow a bowl of food to be passed through and another for his excrement. Then he vowed not to leave the hut until he had died completely.

With this vow he sat and deepened, ripening. Using such great effort in his sitting without the benefit of exercise or the ability to move about, he became very ill. His body weakened, and he began to cough up great amounts of phlegm mixed with blood. One day he coughed up a huge plug that struck the wall in front of him, looking just like a rabbit turd. It slid down the wall to the floor. This is how Master Bankei wrote about the refining of his practice. As he watched that lump of phlegm and blood roll down the wall, he realized

that, until then, he had been thinking there was something he had to clarify, something he had to understand. Suddenly, he knew that everything had always been aligned. He had almost killed himself making great efforts that weren't necessary. Finally, he saw this clearly.

In this way, at age twenty-six, Bankei Zenji was able to realize his deep clear mind. He was able to let go of all of his attachments and desires and doubts and become one with nature, entrusting everything. Within that clarified state of mind, he smelled the scent of the plum flower. He experienced an acute awareness not only of all vegetation but also of the rocks and other solid objects. He knew the sacred function of the huge universe, that there is something that can't be seen with the limited awareness of human beings' consciousness. He awakened to the eternal mind that unites everything. He knew from where this universe was born, why it exists, and where it flowed.

This is the Buddha. The universe as it is and all things in existence are the Buddha. "The shape of the willow tree is Kannon, and the wind in the pines is the teaching of the Buddha." Our desires, just as they are, are our Buddha Nature. Just as we are, we are enlightened; just as it is, our body is the Buddha. We must experience this. In olden days, people would do training and more training to realize that awareness in which there is no lingering self-consciousness. In this way we go beyond our self-conscious awareness to become one with the mind of the heavens and the earth.

The way of tea ceremony and the way of flower arranging, all of the various ancient paths, enable us to give life to our innate talents. We clarify and then clarify further, purifying and purifying, crushing the human self-conscious awareness, the small self, until the universe functions through us without any divisive ideas of cute, ugly, want, don't want.

We let go of our small mind and function in the ways of the heaven and

the earth. We become that actual life energy. That is Buddha Nature. Then, every movement and action is prayer, and the ways of the Buddha are given life in our everyday activities. All true music, art, and dance arise from this place. Every single footstep and hand motion comes from a place where small-minded human ideas can't reach. This becomes clear.

Our intellectual ideas and dualistic interpretations are not what have most meaning. What is most important is to burn brightly in one straight line. When we experience our life energy dancing in one straight line, burning in complete combustion, this is what is called continuous clear mind moments.

The moon by the window has its usual appearance
But put plum flowers there, and
at once it's different

These words, describing something we taste often and clearly, are for those of the path.

As Master Bankei further says, "Everyone! I say to you--your parents all gave you birth. But that ego and dualistic thinking were not given birth to by your parents. Only your Buddha Nature was given by your parents to you.

"What is that Buddha Nature? It never has any expectation or plan. It always comes forth as new consciousness, deep and immeasurable, offering unlimited possibilities for functioning. Without thinking and dualistic expectations, in each place and on each occasion, it comes forth from our eyes and nose and ears and mouth, and the whole world jumps into us and everything is aligned. Now I'll show you proof!

"Look here! You're all gathered and listening to my talk. That's what you came here to do. But behind you there is a sparrow chirping, a dog barking, and a crow cawing. We can hear all those different sounds. Chirp, chirp! Bow-wow! Caw, caw! You didn't come here with the intention of hearing

those sounds. Yet when the birds call, you hear their voices; when the dog barks, everyone here can hear it. That is because everyone is endowed with the exact same Buddha Nature. All of it arises from the Unborn mind."

We all like to collect things and want more and more of everything, but that's a big mistake. Choosing and preference are not our original mind. In original mind, everything is one and the same. Our original nature is deep and clear and bright--Buddha Nature exactly as it is. One who when seeing becomes the seeing, when hearing becomes the hearing, who becomes the very thing itself, is an eternal living Buddha.

There is nothing but this in the Buddha Dharma, and there is nothing *beyond* this. Any analysis we make about it is a mistake, only adding clutter after the fact.

The fragrance of the plum blossom is exactly the same whether smelled by an old person, a young person, a suspicious person, or a good person. We are all able to smell and see and hear directly, without adding in any distortions. When we live with no separation between ourselves and what we are experiencing, we know the truly bright and clear mind that is our original nature. But as long as we carry around an ego filter, it's impossible to live like this.

To clarify to this point is the Path of the Buddha. We have to throw away every speck of our ego and our small self and completely let go of everything we get caught on. Then, without giving any attention to it, with our original nature we see with our eyes and hear with our ears and taste with our mouth and feel with our body. When we let go of all of our notions and thoughts, we can receive this world with a fresh awareness and a true life energy. If it arises, we perceive it; if it doesn't arise, we have no awareness of it.

The moon is always shining brightly, but we have to see it ourselves, directly. When we know it deeply from our true

mind, it's not just scenery but a slice of our own original nature.

A flowering hedge

Kayakuran

花薬欄

This phrase is from the thirty-ninth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*. It is attributed to Master Ummon Bunne Zenji, the founder of the Ummon line.

Once a monk asked Master Ummon, "What is the pure body of the Buddha?" The pure body of the Buddha is the source of the universe. It is the absolute, that which includes all things and manifests all things. We might call it all-that-is.

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Scholars use descriptions like the Dharma body or the Transformational body or the Bliss body, but the actual Buddha body is nothing like that. Rinzai Zenji says, "The pure light in a single thought of yours--this is the Dharma body Buddha within your own house."* This one mind moment is the true base of the Buddha, the Buddha body.

The monk asked, "What is the pure body of the Buddha?" But he was adding a mental question to the actual experience. Rinzai teaches that in each person's body there is pure, unblemished light. This mind, free from any defilement, is the pure body of the Buddha. This is also the root source of mu and the meaning of surging throughout the universe.

This Dharma body surges through each and every one of us, spilling out to fill up the universe. It's a truth that goes beyond the physical body. It is the purity of our clearest state of mind. Vertically it pierces through the three realms of time, and horizontally it extends throughout the ten directions. This is the absolute, and of course it does not exist only in our physical bodies. As Rinzai also says, "On your lump of red flesh is a true man without rank who's always going in and out of the face of every one of you. Those who have not yet proved him, look, look!"

As our inner awareness extends to every corner of the universe, everything becomes our body. Through our ears, through our eyes, through our nose, through our mouth, through all of our feelings and senses, we become the whole universe, spreading horizontally in all ten directions and vertically piercing through the three periods of time. This is how Rinzai teaches.

Sometimes this is called God and sometimes it is called Buddha, but it's not a Buddha that can be understood intellectually. To settle for just that would be too speculative. It has to be that actual experience of not one speck.

The truth of this experience is called the

pure body. It is not pure in the sense of being compared to something that is impure. It is pure in the sense that there is nothing it can be compared to. Pure body is empty and has no form or substance. It can't be seen or heard or felt. If we don't understand this clearly, we'll be forever preoccupied with the question.

This monk's question has a trap built into in it. If it is answered with an explanation, then the answer has nothing to do with the pure body. The pure body can't be spoken about or perceived. That's its nature. Anything that can be discussed intellectually can't be called this pure body.

Yet, if the monk's question isn't answered, where's the Dharma? This monk was asking about the pure body of the Buddha, and if the question isn't answered, even though there's no way that the answer can be put into words, then there's no Zen at all. Then there's no reason to do zazen.

If you give a thorough answer, you tumble into duality. If you can't answer at all, that means you don't have any experience yourself. The monk knew well the two sides of his question. No matter which way he was answered, he was ready to cut away at the response.

Master Ummon didn't care how the monk saw him. He calmly replied, "A flowering hedge."

Was Ummon saying that the myriad things are the pure body of the Buddha? It was common to plant a flowering hedge around a toilet area or any other unsightly place so that it couldn't be seen by visitors. It was thought that if the guests didn't have to see something that made them uncomfortable, their minds would be more serene. Often such hedges consisted of gardenias, camellias, or other bushes with fragrant blossoms.

Ummon was asked about the source of the universe, the pure body of the Buddha, and he answered by pointing to a hedge. What kind of a riddle is

this? How can the hedge that hides the toilet be the pure body of the Buddha? Commenting on this case, Engo Zenji says that these are the words of buying and selling. This monk's question is mistaken, and so is Master Ummon's answer. The pure body of the Buddha, a fence around the toilet--it's just one mistake after the next! The purest thing is asked about, and least pure thing is given as the answer. The absolute is being asked about, and the differentiated is being given as the answer. The monk asks about the pure body of the Buddha, that which nothing can be compared to, and the answer is "a flowering hedge"! What does it matter whether the toilet hidden by the hedge is clean or dirty? Only in the mind is there a need to make differentiations, dividing the world into good and bad.

All words have to be gone beyond, whether beautiful or dirty. This is what the monk was asking, and Ummon answered with a dirty thing. He answered from the world of objects.

But looking closer, this is the only way he could answer. If he is presenting that which surges through the whole universe, vertically piercing through the three realms of time and horizontally extending in the ten directions, if this really is the root source of the koan of mu, then it needs to reach from the heights of heaven right down to that toilet. If it doesn't reach all the way down to the maggots in that toilet, it's not the root source of mu.

If we try to say that everything is clean and pure except for the toilet, that's not the true Dharma. There's no all-seeing Buddha there. If there's even one tiny speck of anything that is disliked, it's not the pure body of the Buddha. Everything in the universal inventory has to be accounted for, or it's not that pure body, that flowering hedge, or the magnanimous functioning that covers the heavens and the earth. We have to know this place where everything in all the world has its tongue cut off

completely.

But this monk is vicious and persistent. He continues, "How about if I understand it like that?"

He was asking, "What if I receive everything, ugly and beautiful, good and bad, as this pure body of the Buddha?" There is a immense danger in these words! If you only look casually at what he is saying, you're making a big mistake.

Why don't we all just do whatever we feel like? There are laws in this world. If we don't need them, then we don't need the Buddha Dharma either. If we have this kind of a mistaken enlightenment, the heavens and the earth are split asunder. If there's this kind of difference, then it's as big as the difference between the heavens and the earth. This monk and Ummon are as divided as the heavens and the earth. Only when we can go into the midst of society without anything extra in our mind will we be able to function without being caught on the differences around us. Then, when we have that state of mind for the first time, we can know things with their differences.

To the monk's second question, Ummon answered, "The golden-haired lion."

To this, Engo responds, "A mistake is answered with a mistake." Is Engo praising or criticizing? This is what you have to consider without averting your gaze. When Ummon answered, "The golden-haired lion" was he praising or slamming the monk?

A golden-haired lion is one whose whole body is reflected in each hair, each hair reflecting all the others so that the gold is reflected infinitely. In the *Lotus Sutra*, the phrase is used to describe our Buddha Nature. We are the golden lion. Every aspect of our body, from our hair to our feet, is that golden and perfectly pure Buddha Nature. It's to know this essence that we find the Buddha Dharma. But we can't leave it at that.

Ummon Daishi presents the samadhi

of Buddha Nature. But can we live in that samadhi of Buddha Nature or not? That's what's important. To this koan, Setcho Zenji added a verse:

Don't mistake "Kayakuran."
The mark is on the balance, not
the tray;
Saying "like that" betrays
ignorance;
Master hand, beware the golden
lion.

The problem isn't in the words but in this very shit bag. We must see with the eyes of the Buddha. If we aren't awakened, if we don't yet have eyes that see beyond the differences, then we'll jump to conclusions and go nowhere fast. Watch out! You are going to be ridden around by that golden-haired lion without even realizing it! The Buddha Dharma's infinite size can't be known by those who don't open the eye of the Mind, and it will all end up being self-conscious sacrifice only.

* All passages from the Records of Rinzai are from the forthcoming translation by Ruth Fuller Sasaki and the Institute for Zen Studies.



*The blossoms of the
mountain cherry shine
like flame*

San ō daienki

尋常一樣窓前月
纔有梅花便不同

This phrase comes from the *Zenrin Ruiju*.

In the mountains the cherry blossoms are blooming, one thousand at the foot, one thousand on the slopes, and one

thousand at the top. The mountains are on fire with cherry blossoms; it is springtime in its fullest blossoming.

Spring has come! Spring has come!
From where has it come?

To the mountains and to my hometown
and to all the fields!

This is a song that Japanese children sing. In Japan, everything--at school and in the workplaces--begins in the spring. I remember that my elementary school uniform sported buttons with cherry blossoms engraved on them. This flower was the symbol of the school. While the cherry blossom isn't the only flower that blooms in spring, in my mind it symbolizes every flower. Perhaps those buttons still flavor my view today.

Master Reiun lived during the Tang Dynasty. He saw a peach blossom and was enlightened.

For thirty years no guests came
by
The leaves fell and the branches
became bare
Seeing one peach bloom,
The time has come,
There is no doubt left
whatsoever

For thirty years Reiun killed himself and then killed himself again, obliterating every deluded thought and view that came and went. While tending to this internal housecleaning, day in, day out, he had welcomed the autumns and springs so many times he had lost count of them all. Now with the sight of the peach flower, at bloom in this very moment, thirty years were swept away. Reiun's huge mind, freed of judgments and opinions, could provide no quarter for doubts to arise.

The Buddha was born in Lumbini under the sala tree on the eighth of April. On the eighth of December under the bodhi tree he was enlightened upon seeing the morning star. His heart flower opened and bloomed. "How

wondrous! How wondrous! All beings, without exception, are endowed from the origin with this same clear bright mind to which I have just awakened."

All life, all existence, he directly awakened to. For forty-nine years, he shared this realization with everyone he met, through his life and his teaching. There was nothing but that. When the Buddha held out the flower before all those assembled at Vulture Peak, only Makakasho realized it completely. The true Dharma eye was opened. Then, on the fifteenth of February, under the shadow of the sala tree, the Buddha departed this brilliantly shining life, saying he had taught everyone he possibly could. With the dropping away of his body's shell he left a karmic connection to the truth for all others, through the wheel of the Dharma and the six realms of existence.

There are many ways in which we can compare our lives to the flowers' bloom. Everyone who is born wants to live a fortunate life. But we can easily mistake the path to happiness.

True happiness isn't about acquiring knowledge or gifts from others, but only about realizing our own great good fortune in the radiance of our very own life. All beings are born to realize this Buddha Nature directly.

As Daruma Daishi said, "One bud opens its petals, it naturally grows into fruit."

Awakening is the seed of our practice, blooming forth to produce fruit. Our zazen gives blossom to the flower of mind. This is the true source of joy. If the flower doesn't bloom, no seed can be produced.

*Spring mountains are
green,
Spring rivers are blue*

Shunzan wa aoku,
shunsui wa midori
春山青春水碧

These phrases are found in the records of Master Kido.

On a clear day in the rainy season, Bucho Zenji was called by a sweet wind that prevailed upon his heart to travel to Fukugawa in Edo to visit Basho. Basho was pleased to see his friend. He had just been thinking about wanting to take sanzen with Bucho Zenji. Upon hearing the footsteps quickly approaching, he ran outside at once. Seeing each others'

春山青春水碧

faces, both men smiled broadly. Basho then made a sincere request to do sanzen with Bucho Zenji, to express a recent deepening of his mind state.

They then began their exchange. This particular kind of tete-a-tete is known as a mondo. Originally, it was conceived as a bartering tool between a seller and a buyer. The same name is used when the exchange is between a master and a disciple. Here, two Zen monks are exchanging the quality and depth of their states of mind. The particulars of any given exchange are called koans or shogyos.

First Bucho Zenji spoke, "So . . . what is it you have realized?"

How about it, did you make some good money? It's showing all over your face! This was how Bucho Zenji started it off.

"The rain is over, there's a big clear blue sky."

Without pausing, Basho answered that after the rain the sky is clearer than ever. How bright and blue that great clear sky seems after the rain has passed! This bright blue could dye your eyes; it could color all your senses with its piercing hues!

Naturally, Bucho Zenji couldn't allow just that. "How is it prior to when that green moss grows? How is it before you even touch that greenness?" He cut deeply with the sharp blade of inquiry.

Zen teaches of that face, present long before your mother and father were born, that reveals your original true nature. "That awareness prior to the birth of any awareness, prior to God even deciding to create the heavens or the earth, how is that for you?" That place of dying completely to everything in this world, of having realized that boundless state of mind--how is it there? This is the same place as the source of mu before any notions or questions or thoughts can enter; this is the very foundation of our state of mind. It is that place where the heavens and the earth and I are one, where there's not yet any division into good and bad,

where I am in no way separated from anyone or anything else, where not one mind moment has been born. How about right there? What is the actual substance of our awareness? This whole world--what gives birth to it and its perception?

If we are careless, we might answer something like emptiness or void. We shouldn't fall into that pit. In Zen, this kind of nihilism is called the dark fox's cave and is severely cautioned against. Turning your back on the pain and suffering in the world, or placing yourself as the center of the world and paying no attention to anything else, is not the Buddha Dharma. If that were the Buddha Dharma, then it would rot. The Buddha Dharma does not sell as cheaply as that! The Buddha Dharma is the activity of liberating all sentient beings in the whole world--it has to be this, or it's not the Buddha Dharma.

The sharp point of Bucho Zenji's scalpel entered without erring. He cut toward that root source of mu. "What is it that is prior even to that great clear blue sky?"

Into the old pond
the frog jumps...
plop.

At that moment, Basho heard a frog jump into a nearby pond. With that sound, he broke through that placid surface and dove deep into the pond himself. That sound split his awareness open, and that which was prior to the huge clear blue sky was manifested without any thoughts about it.

Basho realized completely that truth which is prior to even the great blue sky. No matter what kind of experience you have, the meaning is not in the past. It has to be immediate and on the spot. It has to be born right here, right now, or it is not Zen.

There is no meaning in saying, "I had this experience." Our awareness is changing in every moment. No matter what wonderful experience we might

have had, if it becomes a stain on our perceptions it's not the true source. Basho's state of mind expressed the truth of that very moment.

Bucho Zenji said, "If you realize that place, that's good." He confirmed Basho's state of mind.

Into the old pond
the frog jumps
plop.

Basho's poem was born from here. However, this isn't about Basho. It's about the true state of mind in each of us; the actual awareness that's filled with wonder and awe. If it is not like that, we can't give birth to the activity that will liberate all beings. The energy that moves beyond the unending obstructions and gives birth to humans' best can arise only in accordance with this true state of mind.



三級浪高魚化龍

*At the three-tiered
Dragon Gate,
where the waves are
high,
fish become dragons*

Sankyu nami takoshite
uo ryu to kasu

三級浪高魚化龍

This line is from the Setcho's poem to the seventh case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Echo Asks about Buddha."

Hogen Buneki Zenji was the founder of the Hogen line of Zen Buddhism. Because he was the abbot of the Seiryō Temple in Nankin, he was also known as Seiryō Zenji. The essence of Hogen's Zen has been described as two arrows meeting midair. He was a teacher who would use your own words to save you. This is also called pecking the shell from the inside and the outside. Such is the way of Hogen's line.

Once the monk Echo asked Hogen, "What is the Buddha?"

This wasn't meant as a casual inquiry. In order to even ask it, Echo had worked tirelessly. He traveled far and wide, looking within, looking without, all the while striving to deepen. He wasn't looking for an explanation; nor was he looking for theological support about a Buddha. All that pragmatic luggage had been put aside. He was seeking to know the Buddha the same way Hogen had.

Echo had searched and searched until he could no longer find any words or even the search itself. He needed to know that ultimate truth of human existence, and anything short of liberation was unacceptable.

"What is the Buddha?"

He was asking the Dharma manifested before him about the Buddha. There was still a paper's width of separation there; one veil remained to be lifted.

"What is the Buddha?"

Hogen answered without hesitation, "You are Echo!"

The monk Echo asked, "What is the Buddha?" He had kept his attention focused on only that one question. When Master Hogen replied, "You are Echo!" he laid out exactly what was being asked for, and immediately Echo awakened, filling the heavens and the earth. There was no more separation; the last remaining speck was swept away.

Mumon Ekai has said that we have to let go of all of our previous knowledge,

conditioning, and flawed thinking. Then, in every minute and hour of the day, we continue until we're able to know that place where there is no difference between inside and outside. Echo truly possessed this state of mind.

When Niso Eka Daishi traveled to see Daruma Daishi, he was seeking the truth in exactly the way Echo had. Niso Eka had studied and trained exhaustively on this path, yet still he implored Daruma Daishi, "Your disciple's mind is not yet at peace. I beg of you, my teacher, please give it peace."

Daruma Daishi replied, "Bring your mind to me, and I will set it at rest."

Stopped dead in his tracks, Niso Eka couldn't answer. He understood every doctrine, concept, and explanation intellectually, but still that mind being summoned was troubled. When Daruma Daishi told him to put his mind right out there before him, all the ideas about how this mind should be vanished. Thus did the clear eye of Daruma Daishi function.

Niso Eka responded, "I have searched for the mind, and it is finally unattainable."

Daruma Daishi countered, "There. I have thoroughly put it to rest for you."

Niso Eka wasn't stupid or fuzzy about this matter. He'd seen directly, slicing through completely. It was all now resolved! This is exactly where the encounter between Master Hogen and Echo unfolds.

Master Hogen was working on the pecking of the egg from the outside. He was a master of the highest order. But how could Echo have come to complete awakening simply by hearing that singular response from Hogen?

In his many years of searching, he hadn't wasted time. All day, every day, every moment, whether standing, sitting, walking, or sleeping, he kept his query of "What is the Buddha?" alive.

In all that he did, he kept all of that concentration and focus centered on

this important question. His whole being was consumed by this query. The question was right before him, alive with his very breath. Because it touched everything around him, it never strayed or departed.

This is the degree to which he was imbued with its importance. You're told to never let go of your koan, but it has to be done to this extent--this is the most essential and necessary point. No matter how deeply we enter samadhi in the zendo, if it's realized only in the zendo, that's hothouse Zen. If we immediately let go of it on leaving the zendo, then no matter how long we train, it'll all come to naught. Your koan can't be left unexpressed this way.

If you don't devote yourself twenty-four hours a day to revealing it, the wellspring of this life energy can't be realized. The zendo is one small bit of our life's energy, a fragment. If you think you can see the whole of that energy from this one chunk, you're sadly mistaken.

After training hard for six years and setting everything else aside to actualize that life energy directly, the Buddha saw the morning star, shining. He knew himself as that very star, not separate, with a mind where no differences could remain between inside and out. The certainty of this was now his marrow.

Kyogen devoted himself to the samadhi of daily work, reaching the place beyond an inside or an outside, a place where the sound of a tile hitting the green bamboo shattered his old way of thinking completely. If we operate from a world populated by our own notions of good and bad, no matter how many times pieces of tile hit bamboo in our world, we won't break free from the shackles of doubt and uncertainty. The great amazement will not be born forth.

Upon hearing the morning bell, Hakuin Zenji was deeply awakened, but this was only after a week of strict sesshin. During this training period, he secreted himself in the graveyard, until the week became just one more day and

then just one instant. In the thick of this very life, in the midst of all we do, we ripen a little and then ripen some more, and the ripening transfigures and transforms our existence. We ripen to completeness. Only then can this full blooming maturation of our training and life be realized.

Within this fully concentrated awareness, the occurrence of a sound, sight, or maybe a smell, associated perhaps with a common daily chore, serves as a catalyst for profound change and awakening. One of Master Gasan's monks at Tenryuji was enlightened when making his begging rounds. On a bitterly cold winter day, as monks made their way through town, a young apprentice of a sake maker came along on a bicycle that had been precariously loaded with large sake bottles. The street was covered with ice, and when his bike encountered a patch of it he skidded. As he and the bike went down, the sake bottles were displaced, falling and then exploding all over the street--glass breaking with a thunderous report of . . . crash . . . boom . . . bang! Not a bottle survived. Upon hearing the sound of the massive report, the monk awakened. Running back to the monastery and finding Gasan Roshi he yelled, "Crash boom bang!"

Master Gasan praised him: "This is a very deep enlightenment, rare for these modern days."

It's only from within this deep, complete concentration that we can encounter that true life source and connection. Maintaining that concentration in your everyday life is what's most important. You can't let it flag for even a moment. As if you were inflating a balloon, you continue with one breath after another, muuuu muuuuumuuuuuu--not pausing until you become so full and taut that with the prick of a pin you'd explode. If it's not done this way, you'll be like a flat, limp balloon, which won't pop no matter what touches it. It's this full and present state of mind that collides with a stimulus from outside, becoming the very thing it encounters.

From this chance meeting, you can know the wonder of this mind state. Our greatest amazement is born from here.

Echo's enlightenment was proof of this. Once you realize this truth directly, you'll be without fear. But everything must be swept clear first. Then the bright clear mind is openly revealed.

Once the bottom breaks out of
the big barrel,
there is no more water collecting
there,
no more moon living there

In the Kamakura era, the nun Chioyo Daini expressed it so. Our mind is like a barrel, filled with all the things we carry about. We never rest in this chore. Then, at some touch, some encounter, some junction, the bottom falls out, and everything we've carried for so long is let go. We awaken. We don't awaken simply because we carry a big load, until the bottom conveniently falls out. Only when our mind becomes thoroughly ripened is it possible for a subtle touch to provide the opportunity for a breakthrough.

To pierce through our conceptual thinking and mental accumulations, commitment is required; a truthful honesty should direct even our commonest daily activity. Great effort must be expended to break through; anything less than our best won't cut it. Echo's effort was applied straight on.

Setcho wrote:

In the river country the spring
wind isn't blowing;
Deep within the flowers
partridges are calling.
At the three-tiered Dragon Gate,
where the waves are high, fish
become dragons
Yet fools still go on scooping out
the evening pond water.

The passage describes the land of Konan,

which sits south of the Yangtze River in an area known for its beautiful scenery. When winter passes, and spring arrives, the buds of the willow appear and the peach flowers open. Branches gently sway in the wind, but the breeze isn't strong enough to loose the petals from their mooring. Cherry flowers softly bloom everywhere, creating a luminous quilt woven with the pink of the peach blossoms and the apricot's pure white flower. Wherever you look, it's spring. The buds on the trees open fully. No room here for ideas or descriptions. Am I spring or is the spring me? Is the wind me or am I the wind? No explanation is possible--we recognize the spring scenery as ourselves. This very place is the land of the lotuses; this very body, the body of the Buddha.

It is this very state of mind.

Deep within the flowers partridges are calling.

The partridge, like the meadowlark, is famous for its beautiful song. With the peaches and apricots in full bloom, the partridge is singing. Is it a song to friends? Is it singing from a place of joy? Is it singing from sadness? No thinking is required here--from within the lushness of the flowers, the bird can be heard, but while we can see the flowers and hear the bird, we can't make out the bird's form at all. It's nowhere to be found--no explanations--no ideas--no thoughts. We've been looking everywhere for "Buddha Buddha" and "truth truth," but here there's no need to carry around anything like a truth or a Buddha. We've plunged into the midst of Buddha; we couldn't explain it if we tried. If you need an explanation for it, then you need to keep looking. For those who have realized this place of not knowing whether you are the flower or the flowers are you, there is no separation. This is what we have to experience directly ourselves.

But it's not this way from the start. Only after ascending the falls does the carp become the dragon.

At the three-tiered Dragon Gate,

where the waves are high, fish become dragons

In the land of Kan, the emperor Yu was able to control the flooding of the Yellow River by cutting a gorge through the mountain at the headwaters of the river. The Three Falls of the Dragon Gate were created by making steps, cutbacks, and waterfalls for the river's course. In March, when the peach flowers begin blooming fully, the carp gather at the bottom of these falls and, legend says, those that jump back up the falls become dragons. They become the emperor of absolute authority.

If we, with all of our delusions and flawed ways, can completely pass back up that waterfall, our tails get burned, our habits of thinking and presuming are incinerated, and we become a dragon that can fly through the sky--we lose everything and can luxuriously fly anywhere. Then there's nothing left to obstruct us or for our mind to get caught on. Losing the obstructions, we gain our freedom.

We have to clarify our being with the same effort and determination used by the carp to ascend the falls. We do this work by putting everything on the line, and for the first time this state of mind appears. The carp that don't make it up the waterfall plunge back to the deep pools of the waterfall's base and die, battered. If we do it, we have to follow through to the end.

Some people can't understand why this is essential. Those who have done it don't look different on the outside; it doesn't change their appearance. What changes is how we function and live our life.

Even if we don't realize enlightenment, the body still dies. People say that if we're all going to die anyway, what's the use of becoming awakened? Someone with no training might say this, but how do they move in society, working alongside other people? Now and in the future--how will they pierce through the confusion of the world with a state of mind that's moved about? What

a great truth this huge mind offers! Saying that we're going to die anyway, that awakening won't change whether we get hungry or not, won't change the economy or stop world crises, is to deny that truth. People who can't see the value of refining their state of mind will forever be at the mercy of their body and its needs. They'll be tossed by emotions and their every thought. After a life like that, with death the end indeed comes.

If we can see as Echo did, we too can deeply affect change among people by showing them how to see through the eyes of Echo. Everyone who awakens can enable and guide others to awaken as well. Just as the Buddha's enlightenment still influences the enlightenment of others today, each enlightened person continues to influence the awakening of all others. Even those living 5,000 years hence can be supported by our awakening. But while the Buddha's awakening has been kept alive for 2,500 years, if no one continues this work, there won't be anyone left to tell others about it.

No matter how many words and records are left behind, it won't matter, because that which reads and realizes those words and records is Buddha Nature. Those who have not realized this Buddha Nature, while understanding the written word, won't be able to touch its deep truth. Because of this, the awakening of each person is essential. We have to see this truth clearly.

Yet fools still go on scooping out the evening pond water.

Those who don't see where they'll end up, who can't see anything but what's in front of them, are satisfied with just feeling good in the moment. They can't perceive anything beyond their casual view of form and shape.

Echo moved well beyond that. He wasn't caught on the form and shape before his eyes. Setcho Zenji wrote his poem to say this. Ummon Daishi's staff turned into a dragon and swallowed down the heavens and earth--so where are the

heavens and earth? As Ummon Daishi said, this world has to be completely drunk down and extinguished. Our awakening isn't limited to objects like staffs or explanations about dragons. When we know the huge and magnanimous quality of our truest state of mind, even though we live every day like a fool or an idiot, our hugeness will actively give birth to an influence that touches everything.

*White clouds crown
the heavens
The streams draw
music from the harp*

Haku un wa kasa
to nashi, ryu sui wo
koto to nasu

白雲為蓋流泉
作琴

These lines are from the thirty-seventh case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Banzan's `Three Worlds, No Dharma'"

Banzan Hoshaku Zenji was a disciple of

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白雲為蓋流泉
作琴

Baso Doitsu, and he later transmitted the Dharma to Master Hokei. He left a phrase that splendidly expresses the Dharma: "In the three worlds, there is no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?"

One day while doing takuhatsu, Banzan stood in front of a butcher shop. A customer entered the shop and asked the butcher for some excellent meat. The butcher replied, "Do you think I have anything here but excellent meat?" He threw down his knife, furious that someone would imply otherwise. Hearing the butcher's words, Banzan broke through completely.

Upon seeing the morning star Buddha had said, "All beings are endowed with this same clear, bright mind to which I have just awakened." There is no one in this whole world who does not have the same wisdom as the Buddha. Later, to his assembled students, Banzan expressed this as, "In the three worlds, there is no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?"

The three worlds being referred to here are the worlds of desire, of form, and of formlessness. We all live in the same world, but there are many ways of seeing it. One person lives according to his desires; another has fewer desires but is caught on form and doctrine; another who is not attached to material things may instead be attached to art and philosophy. Even while being in a world that arises and passes with karmic affiliation, people get caught in these views.

In their own way, people live in these three worlds; what they have in common is their delusion.

Our mind isn't stuck on anything--not desires or things or states of mind. We operate from mind, within the external world. Nothing about us is eternal or fixed. We constantly change with the ebb and flow of the world, which is without any Dharma. Even if there were something that was determined to be THIS, our mind couldn't perceive it. Our body is composed of earth, air,

fire, and water, and we're an empty circle. Yet a mountain contains the same earth element; a river, the same water element; the sun, the same fire element; and the wind, the same air element. In accordance with these elements, everything is manifested; yet nothing is fixed or eternal.

Since nothing is eternal, where is there a Buddha? If you think there is such a thing to depend on, that's a mistake. "In the three worlds, there is no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?"

As the world changes, mind changes as well. So where is this absolute thing called mind?

Banzan Hoshaku Zenji was fixed in neither an objective nor a subjective view. He was beyond such dualism, and he asks us to grasp that!

To this, Setcho Zenji added a poem about how everything is in accordance with karmic affiliation:

White clouds crown the
heavens,
The streams draw music from
the harp.

There is not one thing that can be called "IT." The flowers we see in the garden constantly change, as do the moon and the stars. The mountains and the rivers rise and fall back. Nothing is fixed; the entire world is constantly in flux, and thus is empty and void. But if nothing is fixed, it follows that there can't be any "me." I am constantly in flux along with this world; thus, if the world is empty and void, I must be empty and void as well. To search for mind is without substance or merit.

But we have to be careful that we don't blindly fall into the trap of nihilism. Setcho Zenji is telling us to look up at the huge blue sky! The clouds are flowing along leisurely; they are like an umbrella over our heads! By our feet, the valley stream makes music as it flows.

As Sotoba wrote:

The mountain--Buddha's body.
The torrent--his preaching.
Last night, 84,000 poems.
How, how to make them
understand?

"In the three worlds, there's no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?" If we look up, there are clouds overhead like an umbrella. If we listen, we hear the gurgling of the stream. We have to receive the truth of this. If just once we truly embrace this simply and completely, we will know . . .

White clouds crown the
heavens,
The streams draw music from
the harp.

How many can actually hear this sound?
Setcho is poeticizing in this way.

Mumon Ekai Zenji says that if you pass through the barrier, "You will not only see Joshu face to face, but you will also go hand in hand with the successive patriarchs, entangling your eyebrows with theirs, seeing with the same eyes, hearing with the same ears. Isn't that a delightful prospect?"

If we realize mu we can see with Joshu through his very eyes. Not only that, but we can walk the path right alongside Daruma Daishi, Rinzai, Hakuin, and all of the patriarchs. We can see the world with their same eyes and hear the world with their same ears. Then our eyes and ears and path are exactly the same--not an approximation, but *exactly* the same.

Although it has no form, no shape, mu is not nothing at all. As Master Rinzai has said, "Mind is without form and pervades the ten directions."

In the eye it is called seeing,
In the ear it is called hearing.
When it is a dog it says bow-
wow
When it is a sparrow it chirps

This functioning is not something we

learned to do at school or read about in a book. It's part and parcel of our Buddha Nature that we have from birth, beyond any mental understanding. From this place of no preconceived notion whatsoever, we are freshly born with each sight and sound, new with every moment.

White clouds crown the
heavens,
The streams draw music from
the harp.

"In the three worlds, there is no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?" This is Banzan Hoshaku's deep state of mind. Banzan, the Buddha, each one of us--we all see the red flower and the green willow with exactly the same eyes. This wonderful thing, this mind, where can it be?

"In the three worlds, there is no Dharma. Where could you find the mind?" It can't be just a concept. We have to actualize it by dying completely, using all of our 360 bones and joints and 84,000 pores. From the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, with every fiber of our body and being, we must become this. Beyond any possibility of giving rise to a shred of an idea of a me or a self, we have to thoroughly become this place.

Don't hold to any notions that you've picked up since birth. Wash away all your learning and reasoning and become that newborn baby, free of any preconceptions; become that boundless mind. Then it'll be as if you are seeing everything for the very first time. With that state of mind you can receive the entire world. Unless we can be free of all of our ideas of a small self and all of our dualistic perceptions, we can't know what Banzan Hoshaku is saying, even in a dream.

When we know that pure mind with which we were born, then everything we see is brand new. Then everything we hear is brand new. That is the truth of our Buddha Nature.

The sound of raindrops

Uteki sei
雨滴聲

This line is from the forty-sixth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Kyosei's Sound of Raindrops."

Master Dofu Kyosei, who lived from 868 to 931, received Dharma transmission from Master Seppo. As a young monk, he trained with Gensha Shibi Zenji, working hard, but feeling that he had made no headway in resolving the Great Matter. Finally, so ashamed with his sense of failure, he asked Master Gensha, "Since my arrival here, I've worked very hard, but without any real progress. I don't know where to begin! Where does one enter Zen?"



Master Gensha said, "Can you hear the sound of that stream in the valley?"

The monk answered, "Yes, I hear it very well"

"Good. Then it's best if you enter from there."

From this exchange, Kyosei came to realize the means to his enlightenment. As a teacher, he often used this same approach with his monks.

Kyosei asked one monk, "There's a voice outside the gate. What is it?"

"That's the voice of a dove."

Kyosei retorted, "You! If you don't want to fall into hell for all eternity, you shouldn't malign the true mysterious Dharma eye of the Buddha. Don't defile the Buddha by calling his teaching the voice of a dove."

To another monk he asked, "What is the voice outside the gate?"

The monk answered, "That is the scream of a frog being gobbled down by a snake."

Kyosei responded, "I thought that a frog being eaten by a snake was to be pitied, but someone like you is even more pitiful. You are being drunk down by circumstances and can't even find yourself. How pathetic!"

The patriarchs of old were very kind in this way. Through the rain and the wind, the heat and the cold, they waited for the moment when each monk's practice could ripen and bear fruit. They sought the means that would lead to the opening of the monk's true mind.

Master Kyosei asked another monk, "What sound is that outside the gate?"

"The sound of raindrops."

Kyosei said, "Sentient beings are inverted. They lose themselves and follow after things." He was aggrieved by the monk's answer.

The monk replied, "What about you, Teacher?" He returned the question to his teacher, asking what he would call the sound.

Master Kyosei answered, "I almost don't lose myself."

He was saying that no matter what his circumstances were, he didn't lose his true self.

The monk followed up: "What is the meaning of 'I almost don't lose myself'?"

That which hears the raindrop and that which is being heard are not two separate things. Because I hear it, the raindrop sounds; the raindrop sounds so that I hear it. There aren't two of us. It's much harder to express that state of mind of not-two than it is to give up our attachments to things. It's nearly impossible in the midst of samadhi to speak of the experience itself. But to become the expression of it--that is Zen. It has to be verbalized, and Master Kyosei wanted to awaken this monk. This is why he asked the question.

Master Kyosei had deep compassion and kindness. His answer was not mistaken. As long as we're still aware of a "me," we need to defend ourselves against the world and, because of that, we get used by our surroundings. Those who are used by their surroundings have no true master.

There is no enlightenment in simply saying, "The sound of raindrops." It has to be the true master hearing them fall. This is the great kindness of Master Kyosei, manifested clearly and openly, just as it is.

Kyogen Zenji said that the raindrop doesn't call itself a raindrop. The sound of the raindrop is me; the raindrop and I are one and the same. The same is true for that which is seen and that which is seeing. The flower that I see and the I that sees the flower are one.

A sound has no substance; that which is nothing at all hears the sound. If we think there is an "I" there listening to some thing that is not-I, then we're being moved about by what we think. When we hold on to nothing, we become the sound of the raindrop. The raindrop becomes us, and we fill the

heavens and the earth with its sound. This state of mind has to be realized, or we can have no understanding of Zen. The monk asked, "If you do not call it a raindrop, then what do you call it?"

Master Kyosei said, "I almost don't lose myself." His answer is vague because there is no fixed "I" there. Becoming one and the same with the raindrop is Master Kyosei's truth. But the monk doesn't understand. That's why he asks, "What is the meaning of 'I almost don't lose myself'?" He's listening only with his ego and hearing only with that dualistic mind. Master Kyosei is becoming one with the raindrop, one with the heavens and the earth, and here there's no such thing as an ego. Master Kosei has become the raindrop and is falling.

Because this place can't be explained, he says, "I almost don't lose myself." But there's nothing to be lost or not lost in the state of mind that Master Kyosei is manifesting.

To the monk's follow-up, Master Kyosei answered, "Though it still should be easy to express oneself, to say the whole thing has to be difficult."

We sit zazen and cut thoughts. By doing this great cleaning, we go beyond life and death and know freedom from our desires. But it's much more difficult to be among deluded people in our daily lives in society and still remain apart from our desires.

Many have said how difficult it is to continue and sustain our practice. It's easy to experience a place beyond desire and unnecessary thoughts, but can we sustain that state of mind? Can we keep it going during our daily life? Master Kyosei is telling the monk that this is the greatest challenge. He's showing him how to keep his life on the line and dwell in the world of continuous clear mind moments.

"What sound is that outside the gate?"

"The sound of raindrops."

Even though we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, smell with our nose

and taste with the mouth, feel with our body, all these fields and sense stores are empty. In the very midst of using our senses and holding on to nothing is that place of continuous clear mind moments. That which is form is emptiness, and that which is emptiness is form.

This clear mind, the mind of the Buddha, is what is most important, and that is what Kyosei is showing the monk. All day, every day, we remain in that place of no gaps, always keeping our focus on our footsteps. This is the true state of mind of mu.

Setcho Zenji adds a poem here,

An empty hall, the sound of
raindrops . . .
Hard to respond, even for an
adept.
If you say he's ever let the streams
enter,
As before you still don't
understand.
Understanding or not
understanding--
On South Mountain, on North
Mountain, more and more
downpour.

Our body is truly "An empty hall, the sound of raindrops." Like a deserted house in the mountains, there is no self there. Into that empty hall the rain falls, but who is home to hear the sound?

If the one who is listening and the raindrop that is being listened to are two separate things, then there is a "me" after which I still grasp. Only when there's no speck of any "me" can we know "the sound of raindrops." This state of mind is our awareness, not of a me hearing the raindrop, but of the raindrop itself--drip drip drop-- falling within my body. If we try to understand or explain it, we fall into dualism. Our world is one of direct experience. It can't be divided, it can't be explained, and yet it has to manifest. This is why all that can be said is "drip drip drip, I am falling." This state of mind beyond

dualism is what has to be realized all day long.

Every day we are working on mu, whether we're standing, sitting, or lying down. Waking, sleeping, walking, sitting, standing, we keep it going muuuuumuuuuuum. Everything we see is muuuuuu, everything we hear is muuuuuuuu. Walking is muuu, feeling hot is muu, being cold is muuuuu--from morning until evening we continue. We continue muuuuu without trying to become something in particular. We hear, but there's no me doing the hearing; we see, but there's no me doing the seeing; we taste, but there's no me tasting. We have not invented some "me" and then gotten rid of it. We have become the rain, the flowers, the rivers, the mountains. With everything we see, hear, and touch, we create the heavens and the earth and become one with them, transforming into them.

When Hakuin Zenji heard the dawn bell he was awakened. That bell sounded in the empty hall. The Buddha is said to have awakened when seeing the morning star. The light of the morning star shone into the empty hall, and because the hall was empty, everything became the morning star. A monk heard the meal clappers and was enlightened. He heard the sound so directly there was no one listening! "DON!DON!DON!DON!!" Kyogen awoke when he heard the sound of the tile hitting the bamboo. Anyone who knows this empty hall will break through completely.

"What sound is that outside the gate?"

In this way it is realized, and the life energy of the heavens and the earth is touched. But it can't be done with compromised effort, or it becomes something else about somebody else.

We have to work creatively on making ourselves completely empty. For this we have zazen. Everyone when told to become empty says the same thing: What value is this to society? If we're empty inside, how can we possibly work in the world? If we have thrown

ourselves away completely, then who's going to liberate society?

For those who are lost in dualistic thinking, this won't make any sense. They will remain preoccupied with a limited idea of a good mind and only be able to work from there. When they experience difficult states of mind, they will not be able to function at all. There is no true liberation for society in that! It is precisely because people can't throw themselves away that there's so much suffering and confusion.

Throw yourself away, open yourself up, liberate yourself, then dive into the middle of society. If you don't do it like this, you won't be able to function there.

This is why Bankei Zenji described our mind as a rotten old barrel, held together with three metal hoops, like the three realms. Everything we have heard and studied and read and experienced and talked to other people about is stuffed into that old barrel, that collective unconscious. Doing zazen we throw all of that away, but still those unnecessary thoughts and delusions keep arising. To let go of them we do muuuu muuuuumuuuuuu. We do a thorough cleaning, and finally we let go even of that mu, losing it completely.

We must do it to that point and enter the true empty samadhi of mu, where no matter what's encountered, no matter what touches our ears or eyes, we'll awaken to our true mind. When we hear the raindrop, we will know directly this place of the great death and the rebirth that accompanies it. But if we don't kill ourselves and die completely, we'll always remain a stranger to this place,

We have to realize this sound of rain that fills the heavens and the earth, or we will never know true joy.

*The
mountain flowers
bloom
like brocade*

Kan sui tataete
ai no gotoshi
澗水湛如藍

Kan sui tataete ai no gotoshi
Sanka hiraite nishiki ni nitari

This couplet comes from the eighty-
second case of the *Blue Cliff Record*,
"Dairyō's 'Indestructible Dharma
Body.'"



*The
valley streams
are brimming
blue as indigo*

Sanka hiraite
nishiki ni nitari

山花開似錦

Dairyō Chiko Kosai Zenji was of Tokusan's lineage, but little more than this is known of his life. In this case, a monk asks him, "The physical body rots away: what is the hard and fast body of reality?"



Our physical body will without fail stop breathing and lose its pulse. Taken to the crematory grounds, we become ashes. If we're buried, we rot and become worm food. In this world everything is impermanent.

Will I go first or will someone else
go first
We don't know if it will be today
We don't know if it will be
tomorrow
Those who are being sent off
first,
Like drops of dew,
We never know which falls next

This morning a strong young
person
Tonight nothing left but a
skeleton
How pitiful, how foolish

Shinran Shonin includes this poem of impermanence in his *Hakkotsu*.

We will all leave this world, but we don't know when. We don't know who will go first. Who will die today? Who will die tomorrow? Those who die young are like the raindrops that land on an autumn leaf and then quickly fall onto the branch and roll down the trunk to the ground. Those who live longer are like the drops of dew that form on the colored leaf, not rolling to the earth until the wind blows. We'll all go just the same, but when?

No matter how strong and lively we feel this morning, by evening we may be a bag of bones. The vivid face with which we awoke this morning may be gone by nightfall. If we're attached emotionally to this body, it's pitiful. Everyone dies, and anyone who does not see this is foolish. This is how Shinran Shonin explained it in the *Tannishō*.

Without fail everyone will die. Those who meet must depart. Anything that's built will crumble. No thing is eternal. We feel this impermanence and long for the eternal. This longing is what led the Buddha to leave home. For six

years he trained in the mountains, and then he realized satori. He experienced that which is without birth or death, is not tainted nor pure, does not increase nor decrease; it lacks for nothing and contains not one thing extra. It was to this pure body that the Buddha awakened. He realized that eternal life energy. This is the Buddha Dharma.

There's no god out there that we can entreat to save us from our delusion. Each and every one of us has to discover this eternal life within our own rotting flesh. That is the truth of the Buddha Dharma.

The monk asked, "The physical body rots away: what is the hard and fast body of reality?"

This body will die and decay; in that sense ours is a melancholy existence. But that eternal life energy, that which isn't born and doesn't die, that to which the Buddha awakened--where is it?

Did this monk already know? Was he asking his question to test Dairyō? If he asked without knowing, then he was still confused about where he himself was headed. Nothing is more stupid than that.

But the majority of humans are this stupid. They don't know where they're going or what their existence is. If this monk knew and still asked, then in his asking, he was falling into the trap of dualism and relativity. He was splitting the world in two. He was still looking for something special within himself, and anything that he understood was only mental dross and not yet born from experience. That is not the true essence.

Dairyō said without hesitation, "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade, the valley streams are brimming blue as indigo."

The cherry trees are blooming and the flower petals fall. The mountains are a rich brocade, a gloriously, complete world. This is the world of the pure body of the Dharma.

A stream so full to its bank that the water does not move--this is the eternal world. The brocade of cherry blossoms--this is our wide open awareness. We want the blossoms to last forever, but in three days, where have they gone? With the rain of impermanence they fall. With one gust of wind, no trace of them remains. At the stream's edge the water seems to be still, but it's always flowing, always changing. Yet in the constantly flowing water we can find that world that does not flow at all. The cherry flowers all of a sudden fall away, but in an instant, we discover a world that does not change.

This body of ours will without fail die and rot and be gone, but within it, there's an eternal form. Can we say that we have discovered this?

In the brief time that flies by, we can discover the eternal, but we have to have this sharpness. In our own body we can find the pure body of the Dharma, the absolute that drinks down the whole universe. There's no eternal separate from the temporary. There's no absolute separate from the individual.

Dairyō had offered no such intellectualization or explanation. He simply spoke about the world exactly as it is. In that way, he highlighted the monk's weakness.

Put down the four elements, do not cling to anything;
In this Nirvanic nature, feel free to eat and drink.
All phenomena are impermanent; all are empty.
This is the complete enlightenment of the Tathagata.

This is how it is put by Yokka Daishi in the *Song of Enlightenment*. But Dairyō doesn't offer so much explanation:

The mountain flowers bloom like brocade
The valley streams are brimming blue as indigo

These words can't be understood through any explanation or mentation whatsoever. The physical body is the Dharma body.

Not a single word of interpretation can be inserted, but this monk probably didn't understand. Dairyō was way beyond understanding or not understanding. His mind was beyond any realizing, so of course the monk couldn't understand. This monk was looking for something apart from the physical body, something separate from it that he could hold on to! We all think we need that! But Master Dairyō smashed this idea of a precious soul; he crushed this concept.

If we have had the same experience as the Buddha and the patriarchs, then we have been liberated from any dependence on the Dharma and the Buddha. We know Dairyō's free and easy state of mind because it's ours. It's the responsibility of such a person to crush the delusions of a person of training, and this is what Master Dairyō did.



No water no moon
Seiha toro nashi
清波無透路

The water and the moon are becoming one. This is the meaning of this line from the third case of the *Kaian Kokugo*.

Ummon Daishi was asked by an official, "It is said that the Buddha Dharma is like the moon reflected in
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the water--it is there and it is not there. Is this true? Is it correct to see it like this?"

Ummon Daishi said without a pause, "No water no moon."

The official had asked this question using intellectual reasoning and a mental understanding. Ummon Daishi answered from the place of true, deep experience. Nowhere in that true experience is there room to insert ideas about it. If we don't get caught on the idea that the moon is in the water, then the water is the moon and the moon is the water. They're not two things, mutually exclusive. But if there arises the smallest awareness that "the moon is reflected in the water" or that "the water is reflecting the moon," then it's only an idea, not truth.

The Buddha--the moon--is manifested in everything equally; the water of the Dharma reflects everything equally. If there are a thousand bodies of water, there are a thousand moons. If there are ten thousand bodies of water, there are ten thousand moons.

For ten thousand miles not a single cloud,
For ten thousand miles the clear sky.

If the moon is shining in the sky, any tranquil water will reflect it. Whether the water is in a pond, a lake, or a great ocean, or even if it's only in a tub, a well, or a tea bowl, or a drop of dew on the grass or someone's piss, there's no need to analyze its value. There are physical differences among the different bodies of water, but when the water is still, the moon will always be reflected there. The moon will even be reflected in muddy water; no matter how murky the water, if there are no ripples, the moon will appear there.

The poet Basho became one with the moon and shone brightly. The moon became one with Basho and illuminated the whole world.

Myoe Shonin lived in Togano, a rural

area near Kyoto. He wrote, "Coming out from the clouds, I become one with it, the winter moon."

He had stayed late one night at the zendo doing zazen. Afterward, as he returned to his house, the clouds parted, the moon was revealed, and all of his surroundings suddenly appeared buried in a bright white snow. Was it the snow that was shining or was it the moon that illuminated the whole world? Or maybe it was his mind that provided this bright samadhi. Was it the chill brisk winter wind that made his ears so cold? Or was it his clear mind that could see that winter scenery with such sharp clarity? His mind and the snow joined into this chilly truth.

Another ancient said, "Is it me or the moon that is reflecting? The lake of Saruiki." This is the state of mind about which he was poeticizing.

From the origin we are all Buddhas, and from the origin we all have Buddha Nature. We must realize completely this base of being one. This is the essential point. We think that we should do this good thing or not do that bad thing, that we should recite sutras, that we should do zazen, that we should chant the Buddha's name, that we should follow the precepts, that we should give offerings. These are not bad things to do, but they are only the branches and leaves. If we get caught in the branches and leaves, we never touch their source. We can't do it this way. As long as we grasp after branches and leaves, we are lost in our desires and indulgences and thoughts. We have to let go of the leaves and branches and work at the root.

To reflect it, the moon

At birth we are not in any way different from the Buddha. We are all endowed with a splendid character. Just like the full moon, we are endowed with a marvelous Buddha Nature. But sometimes we encounter clouds. When we sweep away those clouds, the bright moon always shines.

Is it like this?

Is it like that?

Should I do it like this?

Should I do it like that?

This is the duality of mankind. When we don't hold on to any of our problems or confusions, we become simple and clear. We shine as brightly as the perfectly round moon. When our mind is transparent and clear, it becomes like the water that reflects the moon. Our Buddha Nature is our body and is manifested through everything we do and are conscious of. If there are no waves on the lake, the moon is reflected as round as round can be.

If we become empty minded, the moon of our Buddha nature is right there. As long as our minds are like a rocky stream making constant ripples, the moon can't shine. If we drop all of our calculating manipulations, our mind settles and becomes transparent. We don't need to try to produce a moon and some water. Even if we do nothing at all, we see the moon reflecting.

Being empty minded doesn't mean not to think about anything; it means not to be confused or deluded. We aren't trying to live in some peaceful, eventless world. Rather, no matter what circumstances we might encounter, when we are not moved around, our mind is naturally transparent. Because of our confusion, we can't realize kensho. The moon's reflection is not caused by our efforts to make it appear in a certain way. If we let the waves of unnecessary thinking subside, and do nothing at all, then the moon of our Buddha Nature easily reflects.

There are many poems written about the moon:

To look at the moon until I
become the moon,
the autumn moon

There is a white half-moon, and
the wind blows through the
pines. That which is me melts
into nature, and I become one

with the wind in the pines. That
which is hearing the rustling
pines and the wind rustling the
pines become one, and I become
that which is blowing.

That which sees the moon shine
becomes that moon and shines within
it.

This state of mind is our eternal form. When we taste this, we know Zen. We don't have to practice Zen or Buddhism to know this, but we can't know it through efforts and manipulations. If we don't experience this place just once, where we are joined to the heavens and earth, we can't know that state of mind of being completely and simply human. That immensity will not open. We will stay stuck in our small self, hurrying about and being pathetically small-minded. It's foolish thinking that this is who we are and that this is all our life offers.

At nighttime, doing yaza, we see the moonlight; the chill moon shines; the city's sounds become distant and still. Only the moonlight remains, where we sit silently and deeply. Our body disappears, our habits disappear, and we become that moon and that moon becomes us.

At one with the heavens and earth, eternity and I are one. Is the moon me or am I the moon? We don't even need to ask. The subjective and objective views become one shining.

I become one with the moon, and the moon fills my form. The moon fills me, and I enter the moon. As Ryokan has said in his poem, "The moon and I are one and the same, and I and the moon are the same." If we never know this state of mind, we can't truly know Zen.

I realize that I am the heavens and the earth, and everything is my eyes. I shine as the sun, I illuminate as the moon, I am the wind, I am the sound of the stream as it flows through the valley, I am everything in society. Abiding within this deep and clear state of mind, we know we've returned to our

true home.

This is the world of “no water no moon,” the Pure Land, the eternal; here we see God, the Buddha, and our true self. It’s in this state of mind that we find our true salvation. Going beyond time and space, we’re at one with the whole universe. We shine as the moon.

We have to taste this place where we are at one with others, with no separation. We have to feel it with our whole being, like the moon reflected in water, as if it had been imprinted on our mind, stamped into our being.

When we taste that flavor, we awaken to our deepest wisdom and Buddha Nature with great wonder. We are one root with the heavens and the earth, at one with all the myriad beings. We don’t need explanations or a mental understanding. The whole universe and I, the myriad things and I, are one. There’s nothing left to be apart from. The universe and I shine brightly.

If the universe is eternal, then I too am eternal. There is no birth and no death there--when I am at one with the universe, the self is infinite. We all can experience this.

No water, no moon

Please, experience this just once.



*Listening to the rain,
I passed the cold
night hours*

Ame kiite sara ni
tsuku

聽雨寒更盡

This line is part of a couplet:

Listening to the rain, I passed the
cold night hours
When I opened the doors, there
were many fallen leaves

A footnote in Toyo Eicho Zenji's *Zenrin Kushu* tells us that these lines are by the poet Buko Shonin. They also appear in the *Kaian Kokugo*, Hakuin Zenji's commentary on the writings of Daito Kokushi. They describe a night in which the rain can be heard falling nonstop on the roof. In the autumn, deep in the mountains, nobody comes to call; night is a time of deep solitude and loneliness. The rain falls, drop after drop, and as that sound repeats all night long, the loneliness is profound.

When daybreak comes, I'm surprised to find that what had sounded like falling rain had actually been the falling leaves! In the crisp cold winter night air, the leaves had been dancing and hitting the roof, and I had thought it was the rain. The leaves are piled everywhere, in every direction.

In one of his poems Ryokan wrote:

The wind brings just the leaves
needed for cooking
Gogo-an

Ryokan wrote many poems about living at Gogo-an in the deep mountains in sparse solitude. A person who is comfortable in solitude and living in nature might express his life this way, but when it's the poetry of Zen the meaning changes a bit.

A monk asked Master Taizui, "The conflagration at the end of the eon sweeps through and the universe is totally destroyed. I wonder, is this one destroyed or not?"

This is a question about the conflagration at the end of the eon, written of in the teachings on the ancient cosmology. This world is being reborn every moment, but will there be a time when it too is destroyed? According to the teachings, since the earth has been created, without fail it will also be destroyed. When this comes to pass, there will be great winds, huge storms, and floods. The result will be the destruction of the whole of the planet. If we were to ask the same question today, we might

say: If there were a third world war, with hydrogen and atomic bombs all exploding at once, how would it be? The whole world would be on fire; all humankind and all cultures would be burned.

From a scientific point of view, this would be the end of the earth. But what about that unmoved truth we realize in zazen? If the world is destroyed, will that clear, bright place we know from zazen have meaning? If we train and realize that Buddha Nature, that which is without birth and without death, will that remain or not? How about it?

The Dharma body is said to be eternal, but at the time of the great conflagration, what will happen to it? This is what the monk asked Master Taizui.

This is the kind of question where the monk is investigating the master's state of mind, but it reveals the monk's own delusions. "The conflagration at the end of the eon sweeps through and the universe is totally destroyed. I wonder, is this one destroyed or not?" Will the Buddha also be destroyed, or will only the Buddha be left looking on at the whole thing with cool countenance? How about it?

Master Taizui answered ever so matter-of-factly, "Of course it will be destroyed!"

At that moment the monk was tripped up. He had been so certain that Buddha Nature was without birth and death. He thought that nirvana was eternal. He thought that even if the world changed, the state of mind of enlightenment would be unaffected. He thought that this state of mind would be like the Ark of Noah, remaining full and taut, even as it was pitched about in the deluge. The monk thought that only those who were awakened would be separate.

The monk was astonished at Taizui's answer and further inquired, "Then the true inner master, the eternal Buddha Nature, and the true self will all perish right along with the world? They will all be consumed in the blaze together? That which isn't influenced by anything

at all, that which is the true master, that too will disintegrate along with the world?"

Again, Taizui spoke directly, "Along with the world, it will be destroyed."

This monk was looking at the body of form and the Dharma body from a dualistic point of view. He was thinking that along with the physical body there was another thing called the Dharma body. He thought that while the physical body would decay, the Dharma body would not. By seeking an absolute, he created two worlds. Taizui meant that this monk's double-faced view would be destroyed along with the world.

No matter how long we've trained . . .

No matter how deeply we've understood . . .

Listening to the rain, I passed the
cold night hours
When I opened the doors, there
were many fallen leaves

Master Taizui answered, "Along with the world, it will be destroyed." These words didn't arise from a dualistic source but from the true essence that is in accord with heaven and earth; they came from Taizui's actual experience. The monk didn't understand this. Without having seen this directly, he could only conceptualize it. The monk was like someone who mistakes falling leaves for rain. He had not yet realized this true freedom. There is nothing you can do to help such a person!

We do zazen and try to attain an imagined serenity. But there's nothing sillier than searching for a world that we think will be like this or for something to be gained that we think will be like that. In each and every thing that we do, if we throw our whole hearts into it, then our mind won't be moved about and our most effective work will result. Then, even if there's a horrible upheaval that would roil the heavens and the earth, it's only one frame that has been reflected in a mirror, and nothing more. This becomes very clear, and we

don't even need to try to understand it. Through the actual experience, we know the profound mind of not being moved around by anything whatsoever. But without the actual experience, explanations about it are without meaning.

It's because we think about things as being scary or cataclysmic that we entertain thoughts about whether we'd still be alive if this world were to be destroyed. Will we be destroyed along with it or not? It is in focusing on questions like this that our minds become muddled. Our mind hasn't one speck of anything to hold on to whatsoever. It's like a clear mirror. If there's nothing caught in our mind, no extraneous thoughts or desires, then all aspects of the universe, no matter what changes occur, will be reflected without changing the mirror at all. We can perceive all situations and circumstances and know clearly what to do in each and every instance. Our response is born forth from here; it can *only* be born forth from here.

Takuan Zenji wrote a letter to Yagyū Tajima no Kami that has been collected in the book entitled *The Unfettered Mind*. In this book, Takuan Zenji says that the unfettered mind is not one that is unfeeling like some rock or boulder. That is the mind of a dead person who still breathes, and anyone who thinks that this is Zen or awakened mind is making a big mistake.

In terms of swordsmanship, the unfettered mind describes the importance of not resting your attention on any one thing when moving with your sword: not on the opponent, or the opponent's sword, or his hands or feet, or your own feet or sword. You never know how or when the other's sword will move; his function and his response are unknowable. You can't rest your mind anywhere, yet you have to spread your ki in all of the ten directions and eight quarters at the same time. No matter how or when your opponent moves, your mind mustn't be moved around at all. To say it another way,

even though your mind isn't stopped and fixed, at the same time, no matter what comes along, it isn't moved around by it at all.

To extend our ki in all of the ten directions and eight quarters and respond to the other's movements is wisdom. To not be moved around by anything at all is to be unfettered.

This is what Takuan taught.

This unfettered mind is the same thing as having no preconceived notions. And with no preconceived notions, rain is rain and falling leaves are falling leaves. There is no possibility of misunderstanding or of feeling off-balance. This does not mean we shouldn't have feelings; the sound of the rain brings a quiet and settled feeling that can be deeply enjoyed. Is our mind moved around by the situation, or can we really just enjoy it? How will we taste it? It all depends on how our mind is.



Bright and clear!

Kaikatsu

萬物光輝生



Existing freely Itself!

Jizai

Bright and revealed, we exist freely in our own nature. In the *Analects* of Confucius it's taught that the order of the heavens is our nature, and to live in accordance with that is our path.

Birds have their own birdlike ways of being, fish their own fishlike ways, and people their own individual ways. We each have our own nature to open to and follow. To live in accordance with that nature is only to be free.

Ryokan was said to practice his kanji by tracing the characters in the air. A group of children asked him to write "the great wind of the heavens." Alongside that he wrote "the all-embracing great wind." Ryokan's abundance of mind give birth to that great wind.

We do zazen and become one with heaven and the earth, and for the first time we experience the heavens and stars and planets as our very own body. Then we understand directly. In doing zazen, we return to our true nature. It is our home.

The Buddha said, "In all the heavens and earth, there is only one." We can see directly from these words that he had become that mind of the universe for the first time.

Oh! Great all embracing Mind!
 It is impossible to measure the
 height of the heavens,
 yet the Mind is above the
 heavens.
 It is impossible to measure the
 thickness of the earth,
 yet the Mind is below the earth.
 The sun and the moon shine
 with a great radiance,
 yet the Mind is the source of that
 radiance.
 Within the Mind, the four seasons
 open in their sequence,
 Within the Mind the sun and the
 moon move.
 All of the ten thousand things
 exist within the great Mind.
 Oh! Great all embracing Mind!

This is how Eisai Zenji described this mind we all have from birth. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra* it is written that to realize the straightforward mind, the innocent mind, the untwisted mind,

is the pure land. To realize this true person is to fulfill our natural mind and be free.

*The sea is calm,
the rivers are clear*

Kaian Kasei

萬物光輝生

This line is from the eighteenth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "National Teacher Echu's Seamless Monument."

When there was a great political upheaval in the Chinese capital of Ch'ang, the emperor moved his government far away. At the time the National Teacher was Echu. This master, who died in the year of 775 at the age of 130, had received the Dharma lineage of the Sixth Patriarch. For forty years he lived in seclusion in the Hakugai mountains, maturing in the sacred womb, before being called to the emperor's court.

Following the emperor's move, Echu continued to teach the son, Prince Taiso, so that he would not mistake the path. After Taiso assumed the throne, it



was Echu Kokushi who kept Taiso's way of ruling one of liberation. At the end of Echu's life, when he offered his farewell to Taiso, the emperor became very sad and asked if there was anything the national teacher might need following his death.

Echu Kokushi said, "I want you to build me a seamless monument."

Emperor Taiso replied, "What shape should this monument be?"

National Teacher Echu was silent for a long time. Then he said, "Do you understand?"

A seamless monument, a monument of no form, is one where there is no division, no separation between self and other, between me and a world. It's meaningless to construct such barriers. How can we separate ourselves from a world while living in it, while being a part of it? Echu wanted a monument free from differentiation or dualism. A tower with no steps, no levels that would divide enlightenment and ignorance. This is what he was saying.

But the emperor replied, "I do not understand." This is all he could say. Most people would have assumed from the National Teacher's silence that he wanted a regular monument of form and substance. Others might say that his silence was the manifestation of the monument, but that's a nihilistic interpretation and not the view of Zen and the Buddha Dharma. The line of Daruma Daishi wouldn't have lasted until today with a point of view like that.

When Joshu said "mu," it was the mu that pierces the whole universe. The mu where self and the heavens and the earth are all one and the same. Only a mu like that can contain the absolute authority of being a living human. If it's not like that, it's not the Zen of the patriarchs and the Buddha.

Yet not having any dualism does not mean to be nihilistic. In mu the heavens and I are one and the same. Essence can't be divided in any way. It has to

be the mu of a self that is in no way apart from the heavens and the earth. It's exactly one and the same with our Great Nature. But neither can it be just silence and emptiness. It has to be the mu of becoming, in which your whole body and being fills every space in the heavens and earth.

When the Buddha was teaching at Vulture Peak he held out a flower to convey what couldn't be expressed with words. But if we interpret his action as a negation, then the Buddha Dharma comes down to being nothing more than nihilism. Buddhism shatters the concept of not having as well as that of having. We pierce through relying on anything. We pierce through not relying on anything too. Depending on nothing external at all, we realize the truth of the Buddha Dharma and leave nothing behind. This is where the mysterious wisdom of the East lies.

There is nothing here that can be explained to another person. So the Buddha held out the flower and Makakasho smiled. Daruma said, "I don't know" and traveled deep into the mountains.

The emperor didn't know what Echu was asking and said, "I do not understand."

Finally, the Master said, "There is a disciple to whom I have transmitted the Dharma. His name is Tengen, and he has realized the Dharma deeply. Please call him and ask him about this."

After Echu Kokushi died, the emperor called Tengen and asked him about the monument. Tengen offered a poem in response, which began, "South of Hsiang, north of Tan."

To this Setcho added, "A single hand does not make random sound."

You have to hear the sound of Hakuin's single hand.

"South of Hsiang, north of Tan" is not the universe of form, but the universe of Zen, which extends in all directions and through the three times. Always resonating, we can hear that one voice

of the heavens and the earth. If there are two worlds, divided into one who is listening and that which is being heard, then there is no way the one sound can be heard. That which is not matched perfectly can't be called the root source of the whole universe.

Next Tangen says, "In between there's gold sufficient to a nation."

Setcho adds, "A rough hewn staff."

That sound of the single hand isn't no sound at all. It is nothing so nihilistic. The universe and everything in it is golden. It extends throughout the three realms of time and the ten directions. That rough-hewn staff from the mountains will be useless if we can't open our clearly seeing eye and know the awareness that holds on to nothing at all. If we experience this once, we know it for our whole life.

Tangen continues: "Beneath the shadowless tree, the community ferryboat."

Anything with a shape will cast a shadow. In this world we have good and bad, deluded and enlightened, and they all cast their shadows. But in this seamless monument there can be no shadow, because all Buddha Nature is born forth from right here, right now. Without a shadow, it soaks into the heavens and soaks into the earth, a huge tree that makes a boat that everyone, everywhere, can get into together. Enlightened ones, ignorant ones, willows and flowers, dogs and cats can all fit into this great boat together.

Here Setcho says, "The sea is calm, the rivers are clear."

There are no waves, and people can enjoy calm traveling. But we must not be deceived by these words. Why is the ocean calm, and why are the rivers flowing so peacefully? There has never been a single day that is only quiet and simple with no waves at all.

Nothing's more difficult than living in this world. We say that all humans are equal and splendid, that everyone is free and should live freely. But show

me this place where there are peaceful seas and rivers! Life can't be looked at so indulgently. The quiet ocean and peaceful rivers have to be found within our own mind; we won't find them apart from us. No matter what inconveniences or challenges we face, we have to be able to receive them as calm seas and clear rivers. Only when we realize this state of mind can we go on the community ferry.

Tangen then says, "Within the crystal palace, there's no one who knows."

The seamless monument is from the origin not one single thing. There is nothing about it to be understood intellectually. Nor can we know it from trying to hold on to any emotion. It's a world of purity in which all emotions and thoughts are swept away. This is the seamless monument, right here in the very midst of our daily lives. Echu Kokushi and all of the awakened patriarchs are not sitting safely and comfortably in some pleasant world. They are here right now, always busy, living fully a life that fills the heavens and the earth.

To this Setcho says, "He has raised it up!"

He is saying that Tangen has expressed it well and the seamless monument is finished.

In Japan the first person who built a temple and did zazen was the wife of the emperor of Saga, Danrin Kogo. When she died, her final words were, "Do not make a grave for me. Use my corpse to fill a hungry dog's belly."

The Dharma's not about a physical body or some conceptual version of an ideal body. The whole universe is this body. Yet if we say that the Dharma is only a theory of consciousness, that is solipsism. If we divide it into mind and things, that is conceptualization. The root source of mu is not a thing or a thought. It's the truth of becoming one with the heavens and the earth. That is the seamless monument and the state of mind of calm seas and the clear rivers. The Dharma has to be alive in this way.



*Mountains endless
into the distance,
layer upon layer of
blue*

Enzan kagiri naki
heki so-so

遠山無限碧層層

This line is part of a couplet from Setcho Zenji's poem for the twentieth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Ryuge's Meaning of the Coming from the West":

I never tire of the evening
clouds before the dark
descends--

Mountains endless into the
distance, layer upon layer of
blue.

Ryuge Koton Zenji was a Dharma successor of Tozan Ryokai Zenji, the founder of the Soto School. He later lived in Myosaiichi, and he died in the year 923. While on pilgrimage

during his youth, Ryuge Zenji went to do sanzen with Master Suibi Mugaku Zenji. This master lived in the state of Seian in Nanzan and had received his Dharma transmission from Tanka Tennen, who received his from Baso Doitsu Zenji.

Ryuge had achieved deep clarity and understanding in his own way. He asked Suibi Mugaku Zenji, "What is the meaning of the coming from the West?" Daruma Daishi traveled from India to distant China, bringing Zen and laying the foundation for it to take root there.

This state of mind, what was it?

We do zazen, but to awaken we must completely become that state of mind of Daruma.

Daruma wasn't holding on to an intellectual explanation. He was polishing and refining the state of mind and way of being. He did this to a profound extent for all beings. So what's the deepest base of Zen? What is Zen? This is the question Ryuge was asking.

Suibi replied, "Pass me the meditation brace." A meditation brace, or chin tree, is a support that allows one to remain upright in a zazen posture even if one should fall asleep. It's a board with a half circle carved out of the top to provide a place for the chin to rest so the sitter won't fall over if sleep comes during zazen.

In telling Ryuge to bring him the board, Master Suibi offered a living response to Ryuge's question about the meaning of Daruma coming to the West. But the answer wasn't in the board itself; it was in Suibi and the state of mind of Daruma that he had realized and was expressing.

In this expression of Daruma Daishi we find the mind of all humans. Master Suibi was not saying this in an intellectual way. It was a living, breathing Daruma, not some Daruma of another time and place, who responded, "Pass me the meditation brace." That state of

mind that lives and functions in each and every day, that very of mind of Daruma, is what has to be seen—not some analysis of another person.

This awakened mind has to be realized, clarified, polished, and put to work in our daily lives. We have to express it every moment. Then, there is no Daruma or Buddha apart from oneself, completely removed from all dualism. From here arises the ability to manifest the necessary functioning. This is the true marrow of Zen.

Ryuge was honest and innocent. He responded "yes" to Master Suibi's request and, in doing so, expressed the meaning of Daruma coming to the West. But Ryuge was moving only in accordance with the other person. Until that true internal master is able to make use of each situation completely and totally, it's not yet living, not yet fully realized.

When Master Suibi was asked about the meaning of Daruma coming to the West, he made a completely irrelevant response, asking Ryuge to pass the meditation board. He went beyond the question he was asked and in that manifested the state of mind of Daruma. He wasn't moved around by any person, thing, or circumstance.

Ryuge also replied simply and clearly, saying "yes" without hesitation. But it's apparent that he was moving in accordance with an 'other'. He was too honest. Lacking a true center and without a vivid life energy, he stumbled. He might have taken the meditation board and said to Master Suibi, "Why don't you really open your eyes!" Or perhaps he could have hit the master or the side of the seat with the board. Those would have been obvious responses.

Suibi took the meditation board and immediately hit Ryuge with it. He acted with no hesitation and no gap. Instead of being moved around by the other, he manifested the true way of being.

Ryuge then answered, "Since you hit me, I let you hit me, but in essence there is still no meaning in the Patriarch's coming from the West." Where is the Zen in hitting someone? It comes from doing something without even knowing you are doing it, being without thought and without form, and not functioning in any conceptual way. Zen is not indulgent. Right on the front lines in society, where everything is happening, where bombs are falling, where the crises are, where people are confused and suffering and deluded, in the very midst of all that, how can we act to liberate the world? If we are moved about by people's suffering, our abilities can't be realized. We fall into duality and end up saying, "This is beyond my abilities."

Unless we can function clearly in times of crisis, there is no use for Zen. Ryuge had a certain amount of understanding, but he was caught on it. He had no true freedom. He couldn't make use of each situation and act appropriately in each moment from the true inner master. He wasn't yet awakened this way.

Ryuge left Seian and went to Kahoku in the North, where he called on Rinzai. He encountered Rinzai from this same place, asking, "What is the meaning of Daruma coming from the West?" Rinzai answered, "Please hand me that cushion. I am going to do zazen now."

Ryuge, so earnest, just having arrived, gave Rinzai the cushion. Rinzai hit him hard, saying, "I have no need for a cushion!"

Ryuge replied again, "You can hit me if you want. That's up to you. But there's no Zen there." Ryuge wanted to defend his own state of mind no matter the cost.

Here Setcho Zenji gives a verse:

In Dragon Tusk Mountain the
dragon has no eyes.

Ryuge thought that there were tusks to this dragon, but there weren't even any eyes! There was no real functioning here!

Defending our own state of mind won't keep alive the true line of Daruma's sect. Daruma's line is not so indulgent; his Zen is not that simple and comfortable. Daruma couldn't have brought Zen to China by holding on to his own state of mind. There's no way you can function freely by defending yourself. That is why Ryuge couldn't even use a cushion or a meditation board well.

Setcho poeticizes:

If you can't use the meditation
brace and cushion,
Who would you have say this?
What do you want
to do with the meditation brace
and cushion?

Usually Setcho gives only one poem for each case, but in this case he offers two. Perhaps he could not convey his message thoroughly enough with just one.

I told you to give it to me. But even if you give it to me, I'll have nothing to do with it. Putting my body on a cushion and mimicking Daruma has no meaning. Using the meditation board and taking a rest, I have no interest in resting. Daruma's meaning is not expressed in that way. To imitate Daruma isn't the point.

Perhaps once upon a time a meditation board was the symbol of enlightenment. But there isn't a need for such form. We have to know Daruma's mind before he went to China, before he left India, before he was born, before the Buddha taught the Dharma. If we don't know this, we are making our tea by steeping the leaves of Daruma's teachings for a second or third time. We have so much appreciation for the sutras, yet we are only smelling the farts of the Buddha. Without any of that to demonstrate the true meaning of Buddha Dharma, "What meaning is there in the coming from the West." There can only be this.

Stop the cluttered thinking and go outside and see! The evening clouds are just starting to wrap around the

mountains. The sun is setting behind the western mountains, but the sky is still glowing red. The mountains follow one another in such a way that we feel we can see the very edge of the universe. Our original mind is that huge. We're born with this state of mind; we have to look closely at its rich, immense scenery and receive it within.

Maybe Daruma Daishi did go to China from India, but the meaning isn't in the form of his going. Daruma Daishi did not teach that way. Instead, he taught us to slice away all of our mental notions and dualistic perceptions. He taught us to know this state of mind.

Ryuge wasn't acting out of dualism. He was only superficially enlightened, but his world was an honest one, and for that he had thrown away everything. We should admire him for that.

Life is not about playing with a concept of satori. We all make many mistakes, and at times we become resentful and need to review our behavior. There is no absolute way to live. But if we become caught on whether we are being true or mistaken, life becomes restrictive and pathetic. The world isn't like that.

Mountains endless into the distance,
layer upon layer of blue

We have to be honest. But even an honest person makes mistakes. This is not about right or wrong but about how we express our state of mind. We think about this, and we are aware of that; it seems that we do have some intention, and then again we have no intention; there does seem to be some meaning, but then there seems to be no meaning.

If we live from our small-minded ego and become blinded by our faulty thinking, the world becomes a hell. If each day we work to let go of our ego and our fixed views, we can live freely in this huge and magnanimous state of mind. We have to taste the flavor of this. In order to know this mind, we do all of the koans in sanzen. Getting stuck and not knowing where to turn, how to proceed, we become desperate and

realize this world of going beyond and going beyond again. Finally, we arrive at today and can see clearly how it is. Then we can see Ryuge's worth and how huge Suibi's and Rinzai's functioning is.

We have to see that this mind is not about someone else but about our own wisdom and functioning. We have to let it become our flesh, blood, and bones and in every single day learn from whatever comes our way, drinking it all down again and again, until every last thing is melted into our body. And when we reach that point, there isn't any more good or bad; there's nothing to resent. It's all been washed away completely. Only one who has let go of everything can know this clarity.

When we taste today's state of mind, we're so thankful to the teacher who has hit us so often and to all of the patriarchs who created the barriers. All of this is the grace of the Dharma. In society there are those who praise us and those who curse us, and they are all the patriarchs' work. By not running away from either praise or insults, we further polish and fulfill our human character. This is what is most important.

Mountains endless into the distance,
layer upon layer of blue

As we look back, the mountains we have passed through form a continuous line behind us. As we look ahead, we see mountain after mountain with no end. We know this infinite state of mind and live in this boundless world. This is what Setcho Zenji tells us in his poems.



Throw it away!

Ho Ge jaku

放下著

Master Joshu Jushin was still training disciples at the age of 120. One of those disciples, Genyo Sonja, asked him, "When I am holding on to nothing at all, not one single thing, and nothing is occurring, and there is not even anything to say, it is all prior to that. How about that?"

Joshu answered, "Throw that away too!"

Genyo Sonja pursued his question further, "I just told you that I am holding on to nothing at all. How can I throw that away?" He had not yet seen clearly the true base of "nothing at all."

Joshu couldn't give any attention to that without holding on to it too. He said, "Throw it away!"

Genyo Sonja continued, "What should I throw away? I told you I hold on to nothing. What is there to throw away?" He was very earnest.

Joshu replied, "Then carry it around. Lug it along with you."

Here we can see the deep and subtle flavor of Joshu's character. The very mysterious functioning that came from this deep character is what liberated Genyo Sonja.

The line of the Sixth Patriarch especially dislikes that preconceived idea of Zen as holding on to an idea of "nothing at all." The Sixth Patriarch said if we get caught on an idea of purity of mind, then we sully what is already pure. We are pure from the origin. To give rise to thoughts about it is extra and unnecessary. Getting caught on an idea of purity is delusion.

Our mind from the origin is pure, free from random thoughts and extraneous ideas. To self-consciously try to construct a mind of purity is to get caught on an idea about purity. To try to be pure is not pure. Yet, even if we become deluded, there's nothing real to that delusion; it's only an attached state. Purity is like a mirror--there's nothing in it whatsoever. But if we think about it, that thought about purity trips us up.

During zazen if we try to think about not thinking, we're filling our mind with thoughts about a mind that is free of thoughts. That's a mistaken notion that only muddies our original pure mind.

Takuan Zenji wrote letters to the feudal lord in the Tajima region, and these missives were gathered into the collection entitled *The Unfettered Mind*. In these letters he wrote clearly that "unfettered" means not to be caught

anywhere. When we become caught, we allow a gap. Our true nature is to stop nowhere, to catch on nothing. People fixate on ideas of right and wrong, of what's good and what's bad. We're constantly judging and weighing. People love to spending time gossiping, comparing and criticizing other people. This is a habit without merit.

In an empty mirror, everything can be reflected exactly as it really is. A man is reflected as a man, and a woman as a woman. An old person is reflected as an old person, and a young person as a young person. A beautiful person is reflected as a beautiful person, and an ugly person as an ugly person.

That which doesn't reflect each thing exactly as it is not a mirror. Our mind knows the good and bad of all people naturally--it knows everything! But while knowing each person, we shouldn't judge. When we stop and judge, we become stagnant and easily moved around. A mirror can clearly reflect everything that comes before it because it does so without judging. This is how we need to see.

We do this by doing zazen. But if we add in self-conscious awareness, that becomes an obstruction. We can't try to aim for purity or pursue invented ideas. To open our mind and accept everything without getting snagged on anything or following it around is what is most important.



Beat the drum!

Kai Ta Ku

解打鼓

This line is from the forty-fourth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Kasan's `Beating the Drum.'" "

The father of modern haiku poetry, Masaoka Shiki, devoted his life to reviving and revitalizing the declining form. Even while sleeping, he continued deepening that haiku state of mind. He came to understand that, while he'd at first thought Zen meant being able to die at any time or place, in fact it meant the capability of living through any situation or circumstance, no matter how difficult.

He also came to know that the challenge didn't have to be met with force. In fact, it could only be done by becoming soft and flexible. One needed to become a complete fool--but not a fool in the usual meaning of the word, for that type of fool wouldn't be able to live in an aligned way in society.

This koan provides a good example of a complete fool. Kisshu Kasan lived from 891 to 960 in Hoken State in Bokushu, China, where he was born. At the age of seven he was ordained by Seppo Zenji, and at eighteen he received transmission from him. Two years later, Seppo died and Kisshu Kasan went to train with Master Kyuho Kusan Igen Zenji, from whom he received transmission as well.

One day Kasan told his monks: There are three approaches for realizing the Way. One is to study the sutras and the Buddha's teachings, increasing your knowledge and mental understanding. But regardless of how much information you acquired this way, the inner wealth was lacking. It is all only borrowed from somewhere else. There is no deep wisdom in that.

The second approach is to realize all things completely, to study everything, digest it fully, leaving no traces of having learned it.

As it says in the *Song of Enlightenment*,

Have you not seen the idle man of Tao who has nothing to learn and nothing to do,

Who neither discards wandering thoughts nor seeks the truth?

The real nature of ignorance is Buddha-nature.

This is the way of the sage and the path of the Buddha--and of God as well.

But there is still another way, one that goes beyond both study and cutting off study. One who has really gone beyond has learned everything and then let go of the Buddhist view to the stage of having forgotten that he had ever learned anything at all. Going beyond both theology and philosophy is the true way, the most sincere way. Even the joy and wonder of awakening must be let go. Such a person might seem a fool, an idiot; we might also call him a holy fool or a sage. Completely beyond judgment, he appears an ignorant normal person.

Jo Hoshi expressed this also in the *Hozo Ron*. One of Kasan's monks had been snagged by Jo Hoshi's words and inquired of Kasan, "How is going beyond theology and philosophy the most sincere way? What does it mean to know it all, but have no learning, and then to forget completely everything you know about it?" There is no medicine to cure a fool! Kasan's answer was unusual: "Beat the drum!"

The sound of the drum came naturally from Kasan's mouth. Where had he learned those notes, that true clear sound?

The monk thought maybe the master was confused or even senile when he heard this. He said, "How about that which is the most profound principle of the truth?" He was asking about the true razor's edge, beyond the place where there's such a concept of lay or ordained. What is the grist of the Buddha Dharma?

"Beat the drum!"

The monk was still one step behind. Next he asked, "What about the mind, as it is, being the Buddha? What about 'not mind not Buddha?'" He was asking Kasan about the expression of Baso Osho. Maybe he hoped Kasan would change his way of expressing it.

Master Kasan said, "Beat the drum!"

The monk asked further, "You're treating me like someone who's immature, unripe. If Daruma Daishi or the Sixth Patriarch came in here, someone profound and advanced, asking to be shown the truth, how would you answer them?"

Master Kasan said, "Beat the drum!"

The monk couldn't do anything about it. He couldn't explain or move in any direction.

Master Kiso of Rosan had received transmission of the Dharma. Every single day he would show up in the administrative quarters during the work period and ask what work was being done. One day the monks told him they were cleaning the rocks. In order to make tofu, they had to grind soybeans, and to make udon they had to grind flour, so it was important to have good milling and grinding stones. Master Kiso said, "It's good to have milling stones, but the stick in the middle, don't let that turn around too!" Then he went back to his quarters. The stone of the grinding mill has to go round and round, or nothing will happen. But if the stick that's in the middle of the turning stone moves, nothing will be ground.

We sit in a train or a plane to travel to another place. While the train moves fast, and the plane even faster, the seats in them don't move. The faster the train or plane moves, the more imperative it is to have the seats fastened securely to the floor. It's the same with awareness. We can't be moved around by events. There are epidemics; there are wars; there are crises. There are times when we're small-minded and conceited and times when we get depressed. No matter what's happening, we've got to act appropriately. We can do that when we have a center that's not moved around by anything. When we're centered, we function freely and easily. We can respond to circumstances without being muddled by them. No matter how much we're praised, we

don't become excited or big-headed; no matter how much we're insulted, we don't get upset or pissed. We take it all equally because in our mind we don't get caught on anything.

Kiso was saying that we have to embrace and become this state of mind. When we can live this way seamlessly, then no matter what situation we encounter, we know how to act. Even if we have great good fortune, we won't become lazy and lax because of it. Our mind will have a true anchor. Priest Kasan, no matter what he was asked, no matter how challenging the question was, always answered the same thing: "Beat the drum!"

We have to become like Master Kasan, who in answering every question fully engaged the deep resonance of the drumbeat. To realize this way of living his life, Master Kasan went through many difficulties and much suffering. We can't realize this place by imitating others. In this is the truth of religion.

Katsu!
The precious sword
of the vajra king!

Katsu! Kongo-o oken

喝! 金剛王寶劍

This phrase comes from the *Records of Rinzai*.

Master Rinzai is known for his great shout of "KATSU!" Master Tokusan



is known for hitting with the stick. For those of us in the line of Rinzai, the great shout of Rinzai and the hitting with the stick of Tokusan are effective, energetic means for giving life to our vivid energy. That one word, *katsu*, deeply manifests our most human quality, that place where there's no room for any mental idea to be inserted.

Rinzai is famous for this shout. The *Records of Rinzai* begins with the master ascending the platform before his assembled monks and asking for their questions.

One monk responds, "What about the cardinal principle of the Buddha Dharma?"

Rinzai, without hesitation, gives a great shout. But the meaning isn't in the shout itself. Rinzai's "Katsu" pierces through our dualistic ideas and emotions and explanations. Its truth lies in the great life energy it manifests.

The monk who had asked the question had a deep essence. Usually someone who is shouted at in this way doesn't know what is going on or how to respond. But this monk prostrated meticulously. Rinzai acknowledged, "As an opponent in argument this young reverend is rather good!"

It would be meaningless to attempt summarizing the 5,048 sutras of the Buddha, and the whole of his life, in a single expression. The shout of Rinzai wasn't a summation of the teachings; it was the actual essence of the Buddha. The Buddha Dharma can't be conveyed by explanation. Only by being in this very moment and experiencing the life energy that fills the entire universe can we express it. Our awareness as it is, just that, is the truth of the Buddha Dharma.

In this way Rinzai answered each person's question with the expression of this actual essence. He would say that we have been born in order to clarify the true Self. He told his monks, "Does anyone else have a question? If so, let him ask now! But the

instant you open your mouth you're already way off." If they gave even the slightest bit of attention to twisted mental ideas, they were moving away from truth and toward irrelevance. The Buddha said that the ultimate truth can't be found in words or phrases. That which exists right here, right now, exactly as it is, is the eternal.

The truth can't be explained or understood intellectually. Whatever can be grasped intellectually isn't actual truth. Rinzai concluded, "Your faith is insufficient, therefore we have banded words today. . . . I had better withdraw." He was saying that the more he talked, the more he injured and damaged the original true face. Enough! He finished with a great shout and came down from the platform.

Each shout has its own essence and is given in accordance with circumstance. About one hundred years ago at Shofukuji monastery there was a great Master named Ashi Kyodo. When he was young he was named abbot of another temple, Shorinji. This was before he even had an idea about the Dharma at all. One of the main supporters of the temple had lost his daughter, and since Ashi Kyodo was the abbot, he performed the funeral service. Afterward, the supporter was deeply grateful and came to give thanks to the young abbot. Then he asked, "That great shout you gave for her, did she become a Buddha with that?"

Ashi Kyodo, who didn't really know what training was and had been made an abbot before he knew much about Buddhism, didn't know how to answer. He replied honestly, "In fact, I gave a great shout, but I do not know what the essence of it was." He had done it just for the ritual, and for this he apologized honestly.

When the temple supporter heard that, he grabbed the money he had given the priest for the funeral, and with the tray it had been on he hit the priest, saying, "How could you, with only a little bit of understanding, possibly say you have guided my daughter! My daughter--is

she a Buddha or not? How can you be so lacking on this matter? How dare you work as an abbot without knowing the answer to this great matter?" In this way the supporter showed his deep distress. Ashi Kyodo couldn't sit down and couldn't stand up, so uncomfortable was he at being verbally attacked.

That night he was sleepless. Tossing and turning, he was tormented by his lack of depth and maturity. The only understanding he had was how little he understood. He knew that there wasn't any point in performing an empty ritual that had no essence or truth to it. He had no essence to manifest; no realization to manifest from. He thought, "This isn't any good. I can't guide others without that."

He couldn't leave his temple or his duties there, but he had to do something about this lack of understanding. During the morning he made his normal rounds to all the homes on his temple route and chanted the appropriate sutras. Then, each afternoon, he walked five hours to a temple in Osaka where he could sit zazen, do sanzen, sit yaza all night long, and then do sanzen again in the morning before making the five-hour return trip to his own temple.

He did this every day and thus was seldom at the temple where he was the abbot. In the midst of this severe schedule, Ashi Kyodo realized that his temple had run out of potable water; he needed to dig a new well. He tried to decide which was more important, to dig the well for the water or to realize kensho himself. He made a deep new vow and did the digging in the few hours a day he was at his own temple, and then during his walks back and forth to Osaka he gathered rocks for the well's opening.

Pushing himself in every quarter of his life he eventually had a profound breakthrough. He opened the enlightened eye. The great shout of Rinzai became the great shout of Ashi Kyodo. When we make that shout our own, through our own great efforts we fulfill our path. That shout has the wind

of realization within it. It had become the source for this priest's awakening.

To his assembled monks, Rinzai said, "Sometimes a shout is like the Jeweled Sword of the Vajra King; sometimes a shout is like the golden-haired lion crouching on the ground; sometimes a shout is like a weed-tipped fishing pole; sometimes a shout doesn't function as a shout. How do you understand this?"

Do you understand? This isn't just a great shout done however you might feel like doing it. This shout works to cut away all desires and incidental thoughts completely and totally. It kills Buddhas and kills patriarchs; it kills everything that we've ever been thankful to. It takes everything away completely. This is the jeweled sword of the vajra king.



Marvelously

Myo Ō

妙應



responding in every direction

Mu ho

無方

This line is from the preface to the *Records of Rinzai*: “Marvelously responding in any direction, he left not a trace behind.”

Hoko So collected the teachings of Rinzai in the year 1002. In 1129 the work was reedited by the court official Ba Bo, who added this preface. Ba Bo praises Rinzai, describing his great ki and great functioning: “Illumination and action are simultaneous, fundamentally without front or back. A mirror confronting a form, an empty valley echoing a sound.”

The emperor of Gi, Ryo No Butei, had a mirror that was renowned for its brightness and clarity, and this mirror was given the name “Ryoka.” Rinzai’s ki and his bright and sparkling functioning were both said to be as clear as this mirror. Going before the master was no different than standing in front of this bright and clear mirror. This is the way in which Ba Bo poeticizes.

One day a scholar asked Rinzai, “The Three Vehicles’ twelve divisions of teachings make clear the Buddha Nature, do they not?” He was asking Rinzai why he always said to put down the 5,048 sutras and all of their many interpretations. Are they not all telling of Buddha Nature? Why did Rinzai disparage them so?

Rinzai answered without a pause, “This weed-patch has never been spaded!” That’s a fine state of mind! He was saying that the words of the Buddha are everywhere--just like weeds. If you think about these weeds all the time, you will never know the truth. Your path will be so covered with them, you won’t be able to find your way home. In this way Rinzai instantly saw through the scholar’s question.

The scholar answered, “Surely the Buddha would not have deceived people!”

Rinzai responded, “Where is the Buddha?” The scholar was silent. There was nothing more he could say.

The scholar had been trying to make

himself look good, but Rinzai could see through that easily. That day the mayor was also present, and the scholar had wanted to show off his learning. But Roshi was not so easily deceived. He said, “Get out, get out! You’re keeping the others from asking questions.”

This was Rinzai’s way of telling the scholar to return to his seat. Facing Rinzai was like revealing yourself before a clear mirror. You’d be seen completely revealed. “Illumination and action are simultaneous, fundamentally without front or back. A mirror confronting a form, an empty valley echoing a sound.”

When you hit the bell, it rings in response, and then that sound becomes an echo that can be heard from even further away. Within that sound, there’s nothing intentional or invented. It’s our mind right there, just as it is, with nothing to hide. Rinzai was like that sound which rings unobstructed through the valley. He’d answer each question with resounding immediacy.

He was often asked, “What is the ultimate point of the Buddha Dharma?” In one part of the *Records* he is asked, “What about the cardinal principle of the Buddha Dharma?” In response, he held up his fly whisk. He took the whisk, a short wand with a fluffy mane of hair that was employed for brushing away flies and mosquitoes, and held it straight up as if to say, “This is the Buddha Dharma.” He was being asked about the Buddha Dharma, and with no hesitation he held up the whisk. When Rinzai did this, the monk gave a huge shout. Then Rinzai took the fly whisk he was holding and hit the monk.

If we look at just this one exchange and Rinzai’s actions, we have to wonder: What’s he saying? What’s he doing? What exactly is happening? What’s being communicated? It’s quite impossible to grasp.

In Buddhism there are 5,048 sutras and many different sects. But if Buddhism were only a matter of form, it’d be of small use in society. Rinzai said, “Mind

is without form and pervades the ten directions." The Buddha Dharma is the rule of mind, our way of giving expression in society. It's been said that it's the treasure of the country in which all citizens partake; because these are the laws of the mind, we can't go against them. The rule of mind is the True Dharma; that is what the Buddha taught during forty years of trying every possible way to convey his realization. All of these ways of telling it are gathered into the 5,048 sutras, but they're still nothing but explanations. What Rinzai refers to is only the prescription, not the actual medicine. "Mind is without form and pervades the ten directions." Our mind has no form, no color, and no substance. The Buddha explained it this way, and then he explained it that way, but after all was said and done, he denied having uttered one word. The law of our very mind is the Dharma.

In the same way that scientists use the laws of science to describe how things work in the physical world, the Buddha realized the laws of our mind works. This is the Dharma. The truth has to be expressed beyond any inequality; if it is not something that anyone can understand, it's not the truth. This truth is something with which everyone is endowed. There's only One Mind, and to realize that is to realize the Buddha Dharma. In order to be able to directly realize this, we have the form of religion.

What's the ultimate point of the Buddha Dharma? To know its razor's edge, you don't need to drag out the *Lotus Sutra* or read the *Heart Sutra* or explain the *Flower Garland Sutra*. Our mind has no color, no form, no substance, yet it lives through functioning. There's nothing that can be shown, so the Buddha held out a flower. Within this very action is the Buddha Dharma.

The monk who asked Rinzai about the ultimate point of Dharma prostrated to thank the master for his teaching. Rinzai gave a great shout as if to say, "Do you understand?" Then he hit him.

This is how Rinzai responded to the

point of each question and saw clearly the other person's innermost essence. He manifested that function of mind himself.

Another monk came and asked, "What about the cardinal principle of the Buddha Dharma?"

Again the master raised his whisk. The monk gave a great shout. The master struck him.

Then another monk came in and asked the same thing: "What about the cardinal principle of the Buddha Dharma?" Again, Rinzai held up his whisk. The monk gave a great shout. But this shout can't be just imitation. Rinzai was strict on this point, and he could see very clearly whether or not the monk was responding with true essence. Rinzai reversed the roles and gave a great shout. He was testing to see if the monk was the real thing. The monk fumbled by hesitating. He was trying to fake it. Rinzai said, "This fake and fraud!" and hit the monk. This way of Rinzai's functioning was always clear, direct, and real. He acted without pretense or self-conscious invention. He could see immediately whether another person was functioning from a deep realization or not, and he responded appropriately.

Rinzai then said, "You of the assembly, those who live for Dharma don't shrink from losing their bodies or their lives." Searching for truth isn't so simple a matter! It can't be done without putting your life on the line! Among the monks were some who had been there for three or four years and still didn't understand a thing. They thought they were hopeless and asked, "How can we understand?"

When the monks presented Rinzai with this kind of self-centered whining, he'd tell them they had to put their lives on the line, or nothing would work. This is true for everyone. If your life is on the line, it will work; otherwise, it won't. If your life is not on the line, you can't see what is there to be seen.

You have to throw away all your idle

thinking and all of your desires. You have to toss everything, completely and totally. From birth there is nothing whatsoever, and this has to be realized by becoming that state of mind of life that puts it all on the line. Nothing can be realized by searching with your intellect. That's useless. You'll not be able to deceive anyone into thinking you've resolved this great matter. It won't work like that. In this way he would teach all of his students, demonstrating both his great functioning and his great kindness.

There wasn't the tiniest gap there, only marvelous responding. In each place and in every situation, truth is expressed and the great Dharma manifested, without the slightest shadow intruding.

Sometimes Rinzai would teach, as it's written in the *Records of Rinzai*, "In this lump of red flesh is a true man without rank who is always coming and going from the face of every one of you. Those who have not yet proved him, look, look!" This five-foot lump of red flesh is the physical body that bleeds when it is cut. From morning until night, we are not separate from this physical body. Within it, there's one true person of no rank. This true person can't be assigned a value, yet it's a Buddha within all of us. He's never been deluded and doesn't need to train. Neither does he have social position. In society we live as male or female, as rich or poor, as young or old, as smart or stupid, but this person of no rank isn't fixed in any of those attributes. In each person there is a quietly aware Buddha, a true master, a true Dharma eye, an original face. It's referred to by all of these names.

In the physical world there are fat people and thin people, those born into rich families and those born into poor ones. There are those who went to school and who graduated from college and those who didn't. Each person has a unique appearance and personality, not unlike a thumbprint. But in this physical body there is something utterly separate from any of that, without form and without nature. It's not something

we've cultivated from training, nor have we tried and tested it from achieving satori.

We don't need to train or awaken to be endowed with this. Just as we were when we are born, exactly as we are right now, we are all, already, a very splendid grand master. Through our eyes and through our ears and through our mouth, through all of our feelings, this true master comes and goes continually. Going out it becomes a beautiful flower, the majestic mountains and rivers, the singing of the birds. Within, it becomes our hunger and our sleepiness, our thirst and our pain. It is boundlessly surging and can reach anywhere in the universe. It's not some master stuck somewhere in our physical body but an essence that comes and goes freely. We see the rivers, and it becomes the rivers; we see the mountains, and it becomes the mountains; we hear the birds' song, and it becomes that sound. We must realize this splendid person of truth, this Buddha that is in each person's body. That is all kensho is.

If we can know this, we know mu. The function of the teacher is to see clearly whether we are still insufficient in that realization. Everyone has this life energy that fills the heavens and the earth, but we have to free it. We have to pierce through that shell of ego filter. When we've broken through this barrier, it is as Mumon said: "Meeting the Buddha, you kill him; meeting the patriarchs, you kill them. On the brink of life and death, you command perfect freedom." You die into mu, and it surges through your body and fills your being. Just as a taut balloon explodes when pricked by something sharp, when we're full and taut with this mu, something touches it and it explodes throughout the heavens and the earth. In amazement we become the energy of the universe as it spills through our eyes, our ears, our nose, our mouth, our whole body, filling everything. We each have to realize this mu ourselves.

"On your lump of red flesh is a true man without rank who is always going

in and out of the face of every one of you. Those who have not yet proved him, look, look!" This is a sharp and thorough teaching!

A monk came forward and asked, "What about the true man without rank?" He was already a true person of no rank, but he didn't know it! Instead he was completely befuddled, asking about something that was already his. Rinzai immediately came down from the high seat, grabbed the young man's collar, and said, "Speak, speak!"

That monk couldn't say anything. He hesitated, fumbling for words, but he couldn't get out a sound!

Rinzai let go of him and said, "The true man without rank--what a dried piece of shit he is!" And with that, Rinzai returned to his quarters.

This is how Rinzai's functioning, marvelously responding in every direction to the Great Dharma, was expressed thoroughly without leaving behind the teeniest trace. While expressing himself as thoroughly as possible, he never sat anywhere long enough to warm his seat. He left no footprints wherever he went. This is the kind of functioning Rinzai was capable of.

Another time, it's said that he was invited to the Ho-pei prefectural office, where Constant Attendant Wang, head of the prefecture, requested that the Master take the lecture seat. As Rinzai mounted the platform, Mayoku stepped forward and asked, "The Great Compassionate One has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which is the true eye?"

The question referred to Kannon, who has one thousand hands, with an eye in each one. This thousand-handed Kannon has an eye on each hand, but which is the truly seeing eye? It was a very sharp question!

Rinzai responded, "The Great Compassionate One has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which is

the true eye? Speak, speak!" He was saying that he and Mayoku were both enlightened; we are all enlightened. So which eye is the true eye of enlightenment? If all sentient beings are endowed with Buddha Nature, which eye doesn't exude the compassion of true Buddha Nature?

He turned Mayoku's question right back at him. "The Great Compassionate One has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which is the true eye? Speak, speak!"

Allowing no room for an intellectual riposte, he took Mayoku's weapon and made it his own. He became the true Dharma eye itself and pierced through Mayoku.

Knowing a response was necessary, Mayoku tugged at Rinzai's sleeve. Without any resistance, Rinzai immediately stepped down from the high seat. Without hesitation, Mayoku went up and took his place. This is true functioning of master and guest. You are me, and I am you. If we don't grasp this state of mind, we'll never know a world free from friction.

Rinzai then said, "How do you do?" Mayoku hesitated, not because he had nothing to say, but rather because this was his true functioning.

Mayoku was now absolute master, but he didn't rest on his laurels. Although he was master and sat on the high seat because he had to, he wasn't caught by his position. Next Rinzai pulled on Mayoku's sleeve. Mayoku came down from the high seat and Rinzai returned to his original place. Mayoku became Rinzai who became Mayoku--both were truly free and functioning openly. This way of functioning has to come forth naturally.

The head of a company can't hold on to his position forever. The worker won't do the same job forever. The worker has to be able to do every kind of work. The head of the company has to be able to do all the work as well, and sometimes the worker has to know what is involved in running the company. This exchange

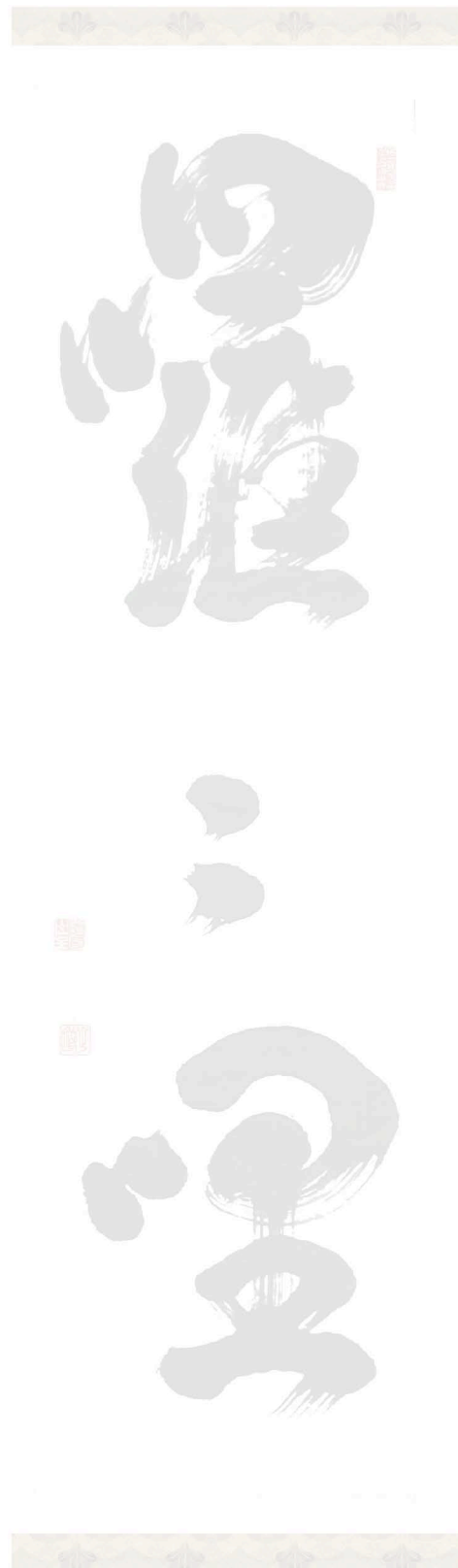
of the positions of host and guest can't be done through an ego filter. Mayoku came down and left and Rinzai came down and left. There was a world of no remnants whatsoever; they functioned within the true play of samadhi.

Within that world of guest and master playing thoroughly together, Rinzai always functioned in accordance with the other. By seeing the person clearly, Rinzai freely taught the Buddha Dharma, marvelously responding in any and all directions. If we function like this, then in each moment and on every occasion we can manifest Rinzai's marvelous responding.

Ra ra ri
Ra ra ri
囀 囀 哩

This line is from the records of Master Kido.

When playing, Japanese children often sing a song that translates literally as "This and this, that and that." The lilting voices of children at their singsong play are a joyful sound.



In the Records of Kido it is written,
In the autumn evening's chill
wind,
in the cold wind,
the leaves are drying up,
being blown in the autumn
wind

The dying leaves are often seen as symbolic of a world inconsolable over its losses. But within the death of the leaves is the joy of their return in the spring.

Showing its front, showing its
back,
the freely dancing maple leaf

Do we look at these lines as sad and lonely, or do we look at them as expressing the joy of rebirth? Each person will see it in a different way, in accord with their essence.

This and this
That and that

This is truly a poem of rebirth. Expressed in the children's voices is the great joy that can bring one back from death. We must know this joy of being born anew, and here is where the deepest essence of Buddhism lies.

Kido next speaks of bringing in the firewood and describes the fire with no smoke. A fire with no smoke is one that doesn't burn. A fire that doesn't burn is also a fire that burns eternally. In this state of mind, we discover the mind of Zen.

This is hard to understand, so Mumon Ekai tells us, "In order to master Zen, you must pass the barrier of the patriarchs."

To realize the deepessence of the Buddha Dharma, we have to go through the barriers set up by the ancients. Unless we can break through these divisions and pierce through those walls, we'll remain eternally deluded, caught

looking on the world from a small self. This is not the Buddha Dharma.

"To attain this subtle realization, you must completely cut off the way of thinking." To realize that deepest essence one has to die completely. Just once, that ongoing flow of awareness has to cease.

From the time of our birth we are constantly distracted by thoughts of "It must be like this" or "No, it must be like that." From morning until night, we add thoughts and ideas to everything we do, never able to let go of them all. But these thoughts arise from that minute quantity of information and learning we have gathered since birth. Being alive is not about that. We get caught in our own small world, a world of our own making, and begin defending it. We become so tangled up in our ideas that we can't move.

Based on our own unclear opinions and undependable ideas, we judge anything and everything, without stopping. We were born with a huge expansive mind, but because we don't recognize it, we suffer. Just once, we have to cut the root of all of that attached thinking and all of those opinions. We have to return to the purity of the mind that we were born with, that mind of a newborn baby.

Mumon continues, "To attain this subtle realization, you must completely cut off the way of thinking. If you do not pass the barrier, and do not cut off the way of thinking, then you will be like a ghost clinging to the bushes and weeds."

If we don't cut away all of our attachments, our life energy is tangled up in that very small amount of information and experience that we've gathered since our birth, in the same way that a tree spirit is bound to a tree. We're a slave of information, a servant of our surroundings and our narrow awareness of them. If we maintain that kind of phantom, no matter how much we try to work for society or how much we try to liberate people, it remains a fantasy and bears no relation to reality.

Mumon Ekai continues, "Now, I want to ask you, what's the barrier of the patriarchs? Why, it is this single word 'Mu.'"

This mu of Joshu is given as a koan to beginners. One monk asked Joshu, "Someone like me who is so foolish, who is always looking for something external to be thankful to, like a stray dog looking for something to eat in a garbage can, how could there be any Buddha Nature in me? Where is there any such thing as Buddha's wisdom in me?" The monk asked in this way, and Joshu without hesitation said, "Mu."

Mumon tells us, "That is the front gate to Zen."

"If you pass through it, you will not only see Joshu face to face, but you will also go hand in hand with the successive patriarchs, entangling your eyebrows with theirs, seeing with the same eyes, hearing with the same ears. Isn't that a delightful prospect?"

If you pass this barrier of Mu and can realize this truth, you have met Master Joshu in person. Not only that, but you know the Buddha and Daruma Daishi and travel with them in every moment of your daily life. You'll see the world with the exact same eyes as all of the patriarchs. You'll hear the sounds of society with the very same ears as the patriarchs. You'll be able to hear innocently and see innocently. What's more important than this?

This isn't about there being nothing at all. As Rinzai has said, "The Dharma body is without form yet extends throughout all the ten directions." It has no shape, yet it can extend to the furthest reaches of the universe. It's said that through the eyes it sees into every corner, through the ears it hears every sound. Free from mental obstructions, we dwell in our Buddha Nature and hear innocently. Caught in our own ideas, we can't function like that. This truth is the important point of Buddhism.

And so Mumon Ekai says that with every one of our 360 joints and bones and our 84,000 pores we must become that mu

completely. From the top of our head to the bottom of our feet, we have to throw ourselves into this mu with our whole body and being.

Throwing ourselves into this mu, we bring everything into oneness. From morning until night and from night until morning, whether sitting or standing or walking, "mu mu mu mu." We do that and only that, diving into that breath of mu. When this ripens, even if we want to spit it out we can't. We can't swallow it either. We can't stop it even if we try! This state of mind has to be entered, or we can't meet up with the true mu. If we are doing it only with our self-conscious awareness and intention, it can't completely be mu. Finally, while we are doing a "mu" we lose all understanding of that mu. We lose any ability to judge and to discriminate.

When we become one with that mu completely, "All the illusory ideas and delusive thoughts accumulated up to the present will be exterminated." Everything that has piled up in our mind until now, all of those experiences and ideas about things and education, that have accumulated like the sludge in the gutter, has to be swept away. It's all obstructing our original purity. We do mu as our great cleaning and leave nothing behind. We get rid of everything, exhaling it all with that mu until any idea of what to think or what we should be trying to understand is gone too.

Everything we've learned becomes useless. We become true fools. But if we don't let go of every last dreg of that fixed awareness that says things have to be like this or like that, we won't be able to see and hear directly. We have to clean it all out to that end.

We say we're seeing and say we're hearing, but "when the time comes, internal and external will be spontaneously united." We don't know if we're seeing or are being seen, if we're hearing or are being heard. There's no longer space for anything to be inserted between the seer and what is seen, between the hearer and

what is heard. We become the flower; we become the bird. We continue with that "mu mumumu," and while we are seeing things there aren't any thoughts or ideas or judgments of them at all. We are hearing, but there's no idea or thought or opinion about what we're hearing, only "mu mu mu . . ."

"You will know this, but for yourself only, like a dumb man who has had a dream." We know it thoroughly but can't express it to anyone. The ancients referred to this as the place of no dualism, of no inside or outside. This is the Great Death. As Mater Kido has said, we know this place of being like a dried leaf in the autumn wind, that great joy of returning home. The place of having died completely.

"As far as we can see there are no flowers and no maple leaves, is only a small hut in the distance, the dusk of an autumn evening."

Yet this state of mind is not a stagnant one, it doesn't stop here. "Then all of a sudden an explosive conversion will occur, and you will astonish the heavens and shake the earth. It will be as if you snatched away the great sword of the valiant general Kan and held it in your hand. When you meet the Buddha, you kill him; when you meet the patriarchs, you kill them. On the brink of life and death, you command perfect freedom."

Even though we know the absolute state of mind of mu, we still know it only for ourselves. Here there's no functioning and no way to express our experience. But that's not all of it yet. From this place, we'll encounter something that will pierce it through.

Ra ra ri
This and this
That and that

The true life energy has to be reborn within. The Buddha entered that state place of no outside and no inside, which was pierced through by the sight of the morning star. For Hakuin it was

the sound of the morning bell; with that GOOOOONG he broke through that state of mind of everything being one. Master Kyogen heard the "crack!" of a piece of tile hitting the green bamboo and realized that state of mind. This and this, that and that, Ra ra ri, Ra ra ri! Everyone knows this great joy and wonder and raises their voices in celebration!

With that sword of General Kan we have no more fear and are assured that we'll pass through any barriers. No matter what hideous reaches of the six realms we might fall into, we've no fear. Our vow is manifested, and we know we have everything we need for liberating people. To be in hell is the same as to be at play. With this state of mind, we truly taste joy even in the midst of suffering.

Ra ra ri
This and this
That and that

We have to know this joy and dance with it! For each of us, that joy is always there. We can't shut it off with our limited perceptions but have to know this joy in its most genuine way by letting go of all of our obstructions and unnecessary thoughts. Then we can know life's energy directly.

*Dragons gather,
phoenixes wheel in the
air*

Ryu atsumari ho tobu

龍聚鳳翔

These words often appear on banners during New Year's celebrations. They have no definitive origin.

The dragon is a mythological creature. In China it's long been a symbol of the emperor. The phoenix is legendary in its own way. It's said that whenever a saint comes into the world, without fail the phoenix reveals itself. This phoenix is a felicitous bird that lives in the empress tree, eats bamboo shoots and nuts, and drinks holy water. Its feathers are of five colors, and its voice golden. It's said that when the phoenix flies, all the other birds dance along beside it. The male phoenix is called the "ho," and the female phoenix is called the "o." Both together are the "ho-o."

A very advanced person is described as being a combination of the dragon and the phoenix. More advanced is the dragon-elephant, which can both fly through the heavens and walk on the earth. And a person of great scholarly

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ability and political wisdom is referred to as a blue dragon.

It used to be said that the dragon is to water what the elephant is to land, and a person of training who carried the Buddha Dharma was compared to a dragon-elephant. Of course it's in the context of such words that the Buddha Dharma flourished. I believe that honorary titles like these form the origin of the phrase "Dragons gather, phoenixes wheel in the air."

In one section of the *Records of Rinzai*, Rinzai goes to Sanfeng. When he arrives, Master Hei asks him, "Where did you come from?"

When he answers that he's come from Obaku's place, Master Hei presses him further, asking what Obaku has taught him.

Rinzai answers:

The golden ox met with disaster
last night,
And no one has seen a trace of
it since.

This golden ox was put in the red-hot fire and melted, so where did he go? His form's nowhere to be found.

Master Hei replies that Rinzai's words can't be understood by mental constructs and reasoning:

The autumn wind blows a flute
of jade;
Who's the one who knows the
tune?

In this way he counters Rinzai. The golden wind of the autumn passes through the dried lives of the bamboo grove, and the sound leaves no remnants at all. To be able to teach with nothing remaining is truly a superior and wonderful thing.

Yet, although Rinzai's words arise from that place where no dualism can reach, there are not so many who can understand them. Maybe just me and

Rinzai, Hei suggests with profound relish. Rinzai responds,

He goes right through the
myriad-fold barrier,
And stays not even within the
clear sky.

In our training we move through the most difficult of the koans, the five ranks, and the ten profound precepts, but we don't stop there. We have to throw away all of the 1,700 koans and also all of the views influenced by Buddhism or a Dharma, until we arrive at true emptiness with no holiness. There's no Buddha there to be thankful to, nor anything to hold on to. There's not even any Dharma. Only emptiness and no holiness.

In this place of no dualism, there's nothing to give attention to and no advanced person to be sought.

Master Hei counters, "Your question is much too lofty."

Without hesitation, Rinzai responds:

The dragon's given birth to a
golden phoenix
Who breaks through the azure
dome of heaven.

The dragon has given birth to a phoenix. The phoenix is piercing through the blue sky, and we can't know where it's gone. The dragon is Obaku, who's not hanging out somewhere waiting for praise to find him, and the golden phoenix is most likely Rinzai himself.

Rinzai went above and beyond Master Hei until finally Master Hei couldn't speak a word. In this way, Rinzai used words like these. We're able to gather like dragons and wheel in the air like the phoenix to spread the Buddha Dharma. But it must be the actual Buddha Dharma, and not the mere form of Buddhism. Walking with our feet on the ground, actually living the Dharma, we know the way of a true person of training.