

TEISHO  
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This is the fourth story in the Blue Cliff Record.

Introduction

Under the blue sky in the bright sunlight you don't have to point out this and that any more. But the causal conditions of time and seasons still require you to give the medicine in accordance with the disease. Tell me, is it better to let go or is it better to hold on? To test that like this (???). Look! (???)

The story

When Te-shan (sp???) arrived at Kuei-shan (???), he carried his bundle, (his pilgrim's bundle), with him into the teaching hall where he crossed from east to west and from west to east. He looked around and said: Nothing! No one! Then he went out.

But when Te-shan got up to the gate of the temple he said: Still I shouldn't be so hurried. So he reentered the hall with full ceremony to meet Kuei-shan. This time Kuei-shan was sitting there.

Te-shan held up his sitting mat (???) and said: Teacher!

Kuei-shan reached for his whisk whereupon Te-shan shouted, shook out his sleeves and left.

Sei-to(sp???), the poet who collected these stories, added a comment: The critical examination is finished.

Te-shan turned his back on the teaching hall, put on his sandals and departed.

That evening Kuei-shan asked the head of the temple: Where is that newcomer who just came?

Oh, at that time he turned his back on the teaching hall, put on his sandals and left.

Kuei-shan said: Hereafter, that young fellow will go to the summit of a lonely peak, build a grass hut and go on scolding the buddhas and reviling the ancestors.

Suei-to added the comment: He's added frost to snow.

Please sit comfortably.

Zen seems to produce great characters. Good story material. Te-shan was one of the great characters in zen history. He was originally a scholar who lived in the far north where there wasn't too much zen. He was a great student of the Diamond Sutra so he was known as the Diamond Master, Diamond Chou (sp???). His name was Chou. He heard about the zen tradition in the south.

He had very much the idea that enlightenment came after eons of practice and many, many, many lifetimes. The zen people in the south said you can do it in this lifetime. He heard about this teaching of the southern school and resolved to go and quell these barbarians and demons immediately. The person who wrote the Blue Cliff Record said, "You can see what a fine, fierce fellow he was just from this."

He was never beaten in an argument and so he put all his sutra commentaries in his bundle and traveled south, maybe a thousand miles on foot, probably earning his way by teaching as he went. Finally, he came into zen territory and he stopped at one of the famous zen tea ladies' places. He sought to buy refreshments from this old woman. The Chinese slang word for refreshments means to refresh the mind. So he walks in and asks her if he can refresh his mind.

She says, "Your reverence, what sort of literature do you have there in your cart?" Actually, he has a cart full of his writings and commentaries on sutras.

He says, "Notes and commentaries on the Diamond Sutra."

She says, "Well, your reverence, I hear that the Diamond Sutra says, 'Past mind cannot be grasped. Present mind cannot be grasped. Future mind cannot be grasped.' Which mind does your reverence wish to refresh?"

The Diamond Sutra Master was dumbfounded and couldn't say anything. He was stopped. You get a blow on the head and everything stops time and space.

But as Wu-men (sp???) says, he did not expire completely under her words, however, but asked, "What should I do?"

She said, "Down the road there is an old fellow called Lung-tan (sp???). You should pay him a visit."

Maybe Lung-tan was a teacher; maybe a friend. We don't know. Lung-tan means dragon pool.

He arrived at Lung-tan's temple and, apparently, although he had just had the wind knocked out of him, he got it back pretty quickly because he banged on the gate and said, "This place is called dragon pool, but there's no pool and I don't see any dragons around."

At which Lung-tan, who was an old man, looked out and said, "Yes."

The story is then is that he attended on Lung-tan. He came into the temple and settled and then that night he went to see Lung-tan in Lung-tan's quarters and he questioned him sincerely far into the night.

So you can see that there is something interesting about Te-shan because though he came full of his conviction, full of words and thoughts and full of his conviction to destroy people like Lung-tan, as soon as he was blocked and stopped, he sincerely turned around and decided to seek for knowledge.

He questioned Lung-tan sincerely far into the night. It grew late and Lung-tan said, "Why don't you go to bed?" Te-shan made his bows and lifted the blinds to withdraw, but was met by

darkness. Turning back he said, "It is dark outside." (Many people have commented it's dark inside, too.) Lung-tan lit a paper candle and handed it to Te-shan. Te-shan was just about to take it and Lung-tan blew it out. At that moment Te-shan had sudden realization and began making bows. He didn't leave at all. He made bows. Lung-tan said, "What truth do you see that you make bows?" Te-shan said, "From now on I will not doubt the words of an old teacher who is renowned everywhere under the sun."

The next day Lung-tan at teisho time took the high seat before the assembly and said, "I see a brave fellow among you. His fangs are like the saw trees (???); his mouth is like a blood bowl. Give him a blow and he won't turn his head. Someday he will climb the highest peak and establish our way there."

Then Te-shan rode up in his cart with his notes on the Diamond Sutra right in front of the zen hall and built a big fire with them saying, "Even though you have exhausted the abstruse doctrines, it's like placing a hair in vast estates. Even though you have learned all the secrets of the world, it's like letting a single drop of water fall into an enormous valley." And he burned up all his notes.

Then, making his bows, he took leave of his teacher. He had a total of one night's training; however, it was a rather intense night, I think. Then he went off on pilgrimage.

One of the first stories we have of him after that is the story I told you in the beginning. Carrying his pilgrim bundle he goes to Kuei-shan, who was, perhaps, considered the great teacher of his time, known for his subtlety and non-dramatic style of teaching. He was very subtle and penetrating. So he goes into his hall and you can tell he hasn't changed very much, really, because he walks straight in carrying his pack into the meditation. Walks from east to west and west to east. Thump, thump, thump; thump, thump, thump. Looks around and says, "Nothing! Nothing!," and leaves. Didn't think much of this place. (???) actually says, "Mu! Mu!" The *Mutra Veka* (sp???) is a book that's been built up in layers over centuries and there's some notes from this part of the layers. This is Suei-to, the poet, I think, who says, "He's a frog carrying a board. A wild fox spirit." Somebody carrying a board on his shoulder can only see out of one side. The board blocks the other side of the view. "You board carrying fellow," he says of himself (???). Anyway, so he's got all this vigor and that's his presentation.

One of the first questions when you meditate with this koan is what does he mean when he walks across the hall like that and says, 'nothing; nothing; nothing' and walks back again? Suei-to, the poet, says, "He's full of zen, but for what?" You can see that he's absolutely full of his enlightenment experience. It's just burning in him and he's very excited by it. He's demonstrating it in his own way.

Then he goes and he thinks, "Well, maybe I was a bit hasty." So he comes back again. This time, time has passed and Kuei-shan is sitting in his seat and everybody's there. So he walks in and goes as if to make bows to the teacher, which is a standard practice of meeting, and he says, "Teacher!" And he has a rather vigorous style. Kuei-shan reaches for his whisk, which you sort of wave in a ceremonial manner when somebody bows, a sort of

blessing. Te-shan shouts, "HAH!" and flourishes this thing and walks out. So then this is his presentation. Kuei-shan just puts down the whisk again and stays sitting there.

One of the things to look into here is what did both of these people mean. What was in both their hearts in this interaction? Suei-to says about Kuei-shan sitting there with his whisk, "He watches this fellow with cold eyes. He's the kind of man who would grab a tiger's whiskers." So he likes the way that Kuei-shan just sits there very quietly is his response. He, too, just sitting there showing the dharma. Just the way as you just sit on your cushion through the long afternoon whether you know it or not, you are completely embodying the buddha nature and the way. It's very important to remember that. It's very important to find out how you're embodying the buddha nature and the way as you sit here.

Te-shan turns his back on the teaching hall, puts on his sandals and leaves. He doesn't waste time and hang around as you can tell. He left his teacher after meeting him for one day. Burned his notes after one experience. He interacts with the person who is considered the greatest teacher of his age and this is the sum total of his interaction. And he leaves again.

Kuei-shan asks the head monk, "Who's that newcomer who just came?" The head monk says, "At that time he turned his back, put on his sandals and departed." Kuei-shan says, "He will go to the summit of a lonely peak, build himself a grass hut and go on scolding the buddhas and reviling the ancestors." Why does he scold the buddhas and revile the ancestors? What's this have to do with anything? Suei-to adds the comment, "This is adding frost to snow." It's kind of obvious already.

Te-shan's life was perhaps more interesting than he ever wanted it to be because he also lived through a period of great persecution. He actually went off and lived in obscurity for about thirty years just practicing the way and teaching a few people. No big assembly or anything. Then an emperor came to power who decided to destroy buddhism and went around destroying temples and killing buddhists with vigor. Lots of massacres and so on in 845. Te-shan went up in the mountains and hid in a cave, waited it out and meditated. Spent his time in a cave. There was another great teacher who ran a little ferry boat at that time. He became invisible within the people. That emperor eventually passed away, as emperors will, and the next emperor restored the monastery and was looking for somebody to head the temple. He heard about the person who later became known as Te-shan, whom we know as Te-shan, and kept inviting him to come and take over this temple and be a famous teacher. He invited him repeatedly and the master did not come. The messengers would come and couldn't find Te-shan, or Te-shan would politely say his health was poor and he couldn't possibly make the journey. Then the emperor sent somebody who arrested the master for having violated the laws regarding tea and salt and dragged him to the prison and dragged him into the emperor. The emperor said, "This is the way to get you to stay in that temple." So that's how he came into his temple.

The emperor had him dragged before him and Te-shan said, "There's nothing in the self, so do not seek falsely. What is attained by false seeking is not real attainment. You just have nothing in your mind and no mind in things. Then you will be empty and true, tranquil and sublime. Any talk of beginning or end will

all be self-deception. The slightest entanglement of thought is the foundation of the lower worlds. A momentarily aroused feeling is a hindrance for ten thousand eons. The name master and the label ordinary person are merely empty sounds. Exceptional form and common appearance are both illusions."

Then what he did was settle down and he became known as a rather stern teacher. He was the person who said, "If you say yes, I give you thirty blows; if you say no, I give you thirty blows." He was rather hard to approach. But, you know, in his own life he became just like Kuei-shan. People would say something to him and he'd just sit there and that would be his answer. So he, too, became so full of zen he hardly even had to say anything. His students, he had Hsueh-fang, Wai-feng (sp???), and Yen-t'ou. He had great students. The beginning of the koan tradition coalesced around him. People debating all the stories back and forth. That's how books like this came down to us. He was an ancestor of Hsueh-tou who collected this book.

So you see we are in an ancient tradition of putting up with a lot of inconveniences for the sake of the dharma and really following it to the ends of the earth. If you really want to find your true face, if you really want to know who you are, then it is worth it to go to all this inconvenience. It is worth it to cross your legs and sit still and see what happens. When you let everything become quiet, then the world truly reveals itself in all its splendor. Not only this world, but you see through all worlds. You can only do this by perseverance and a kind of love. It is always said that it takes great doubt, great faith and great perseverance to attain the way. Each of them is important. If your doubt is not great, then you are kind of lazy about really trying to penetrate. You just have trivial cynicisms and doubts. They don't count. Great doubt is to really inquire into this life and to find that it has no basis at all. Great faith is a kind of trust that if we inquire, it will be worth it. Great perseverance you know all about. We just continue and we take another step. There's always one step that appears in front of us and it's very important to find out what that step is and then to take it. If you have a problem in your zazen, bring up that question. What is the step I must take? Then you will see and then you must take it. It will reveal itself clearly to you if you ask sincerely.

Each person has her or his own spirit. The tea lady had her spirit. She was waiting there quietly and she saw somebody good come along and she trapped him and then she pushed him out. Huang-po did this with Lin-chi (Rinzai). He came to Huang-po and Huang-po trapped him and then pushed him off to a person (???). Each person has his own style. Lung-tan waiting in his temple. Te-shan went roaring about the countryside and that was his style, that was his way of presenting the dharma. You must find your own path and be faithful to it. Please, at this time in sesshin as the river tends to widen out and get serene and slow, it is important to have courage and go forward. Don't just float along on your raft. Please keep it up.

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