

TEISHO

October 9, 1993  
Cazadero Music Camp, California

This is Case No. 11 from the Blue Cliff Record called "Huang-po's Gobblers of Dregs". The Introduction is like this.

The great capacity of buddhas and ancestors is completely within this person's control. The lifeline of humans and gods is subject to this person's direction. With a casual word or phrase she astounds the crowd and stirs the masses. With one device, one object, she smashes chains and knocks off fetters. Meeting transcendental potential she brings up transcendental matters. But tell me, who has ever appeared like this? Is there anyone who knows where this person is? To test I cite this story. Look!

Here's the case itself.

Huang-po instructing the community said: All of you students are gobblers of dregs. If you go about traveling in this way, if you go about like this, when will you meet today? Don't you know that there is no zen teacher in all of the land of China.

At that moment a student came forward and said: What about all those people who teach meditation and lead communities?

Huang-po said: I did not say that there was no zen; it's just that there are no teachers of zen.

Please sit comfortably.

Huang-po was a great master from the classical period of zen in China and is famous on many counts. He was the teacher of Lin-chi. He was about seven feet tall, apparently, and his teacher was Pai-chang, who was a tiny little person about five feet tall so they made quite an interesting couple. There are many stories about his fierce clarity. He was always just really interested in the dharma and interested in deepening his wisdom. This was the main point for him.

There's one good story about him. He met a magical being once and he wasn't too sure about this man, but decided to travel with him. They travelled along together talking and laughing and telling stories. This person seemed unusual. He had unusual eyes and there seemed something odd about him. Huang-po was curious and walked along with him. They came to a swollen valley stream and Huang-po stopped and looked at his companion. His companion said, "Come on," and just walked across the water in the story. Then he looked back and said, "Come across; come across." Master Huang-po upbraided him saying, "You foolish fellow. If I'd known you were a mere wonder worker, I would have broken your legs." And the other monk sighed in admiration, according to the story, and said, "You're a true vessel of the teachings of the Great Vehicle." After this he disappeared.

When Huang-po met Pai-chang, his teacher, Pai-chang said, "Magnificent. Imposing. Where have you come from?" Huang-po said, "Magnificent and imposing, I've come from the mountains." Pai-chang said, "What have you come for?" Huang-po said, "I have

not come for anything else than this." Pai-chang then let him into his community.

Let me look at the koan here because I think it's a very interesting and deep one. He said, "You are all eaters of dregs." This is some brewers dregs. A kind of low grade drug. "If you go about like this, if you go travelling about like this, when will you meet today?" It's kind of self-explanatory.

The first serious retreat I was ever at was actually in a Tibetan community. It was a silent retreat, but everybody except for about three of us talked. What people talked about was all the teachers they'd been to see. I hadn't seen any teachers. I didn't know a thing, but it was great. All these people at this retreat had been all over the world talking to different teachers--lama this and roshi that. They spent most of the silent retreat talking about the different teachers they had visited. There's something about that sort of shopping consciousness that can get into meditation. Huang-po's pointing out that we have to go right where we are. We have to go down deep and right where we are is the right place to be and to start. It's not that we cannot travel to see teachers, but that's not it. It's just another activity of life. It's just another fine thing collecting fine teachers like collecting fine porcelain. Just another hobby. An addition to the ego level of consciousness. What are the ways that we go about? I think this varies. If we go about like this, when will we meet today? It sort of holds the whole course of zazen. How many things do we grasp onto and chase out after?

Much later a great master called Yen-tou said, "You must come out of your own breast and cover heaven and earth. The family treasure doesn't come in through the gate." So, while ever we're looking; while ever we're hungry; while ever we're chasing diversions; even, while ever we're being good and righteous, there's always that separation being set up. Zazen is about forgetting that separation. We just sink into this moment and there is no other moment and there's never been another moment in the whole history of the universe. All moments are contained in this and all the rest is like stories (??) and operating stories (??).

Even when we meditate there are ways in which we chase out after things. Very often we can make meditation a rather artificial thing. I think one of the characteristics, I hope, about our community is that we're not interested in that kind of zazen. That the true zazen will be something quite authentic and quite matter of fact. It's not ordinary in a plain sense because it is penetrates through all space and time. It is a matter of not adding anything to who we are. We don't need to be somebody different. We don't need to create or manufacture a state of mind. Nothing is needed. We have all the provisions for the journey already. To understand this and to really see what is in front of our noses, that's the important thing.

For a long time I tried to manufacture a particular state of mind working with my first koan. Maybe this was a good thing because I discovered a lot about the different states of mind. And you know we pass through many different states of mind in zazen and in sesshin especially. But none of them is it. We do not need to cling to tranquility or peace or clarity anymore than we need to be over impressed by sleepiness or sorrow or grief. All these things they rise in the mind and they fall away. They're just

pilgrims circumambulating the temple. When you really come home; when you really meet today, you'll find that you don't need to make great efforts. It's that we stop moving away from it is what we do.

There's a student in this story. This is a drama not just a lyric poem. Huang-po says, "Don't you know that there's no teachers of zen in all the land of China." And the student comes forward and says, "Well, what about all those who teach meditation and live in communities together?" What about those people sitting up (???) in Cazadero? And Huang-po said, "I did not say that there is no zen, just that there are no teachers of zen." Hsueh-tou, the poet who collected this, isn't very impressed with this last thing, he says, "He can't explain." It's simple. He can't explain. When he said, "If you go about like this, when will you meet today?" Hsueh-tou says, "He said it. You wear out your sandals."

The student misses, really, what he's holding out, but he comes back and that's a good thing. It's always good to come back and to keep pressing to try to find out what is true. What is true is a great matter so it's worth asking and making a fool of yourself for. And Huang-po, really, just then holds up the same sign saying, "Look here," when he says, "I do not say that there is no zen; it's just that there are no teachers of zen."

So one of the great discoveries that we make on the way is to pay attention to what is actually within us and before us. It's not that we get seduced by it and run off with it. We've noticed the traffic on the mind road. This doesn't mean we get into every car that comes by or jump every freight train. In fact, it's necessary not to. But in that noticing there is a great spaciousness (???) about. We're not identified with our impulses so much and not so much identified with just the way we think things are. Things are not that way. This is the one thing we can rely on. Things rise and we witness them and we note them and they fall away and we notice that, too. Something else rises and sometimes there is nothing for awhile. Sometimes there is nothing for a long while and then something else will arise and we notice it and it falls away. Sometimes everything is so crowded it's hard to notice anything, so we notice how crowded it is. In the midst of this we get deeper and deeper and sometimes it's gradual and sometimes we just fall like a stone and it doesn't matter. Whichever it is, we just notice that, too. And we don't have preferences about the way it is for us. It's really important. "The Great Way is not difficult," says the Hsin-jin Ming (sp??) as it starts out, "It just avoids picking and choosing." So, here is the good place to be. We don't pick and choose about that. We are here. We trust the integrity and intention that brought us here. We sink into the zazen and to the moment.

Even when the light begins to dawn in zazen, we don't get attached to that either. If you start to see what the world is really made up of, if it comes apart in tiny glowing, luminous pieces for you, don't be attached to that either. It's important to just keep walking. It doesn't matter where you're at in the way--if you're at the beginning or far along--the instructions are the same: Keep walking with an open heart while the wonder comes over you.

Huang-po knew one of the emperors and this emperor's story, I think, is worth telling. When this emperor was a young boy, he

was a smart alec. He was keen and clever. Playing, when the emperor, who was his uncle, had stepped down from the throne, he jumped on the throne, one day. His uncle just patted him on his head and laughed and said, "You (???) child." Then in due course the emperor died and one of the emperor's sons came to the throne. The emperor's son was envious of his cousin and now that he was the emperor he had something to do about it. He never forgot that he had sat on the throne before he had, even though only in play. Finally, he had Tsuang-sung (??), his cousin, almost beaten to death and thrown out in the back gardens and drenched with filthy water to revive him. After that Tsuang-sung, not surprisingly, went into hiding. He went into hiding in a zen community and had his head shaved. He travelled around studying the dharma. I think this is a very important moment in all our lives. When something has shocked us, we can do a number of things. We can try and seek revenge, for example. We can deny that it happened. There are many things we can do with a loss or a difficulty that are essentially an attempt to go back and be unconscious the way we were before we got the shock, saying, "Thank you very much world. I do not want to understand this. I think I'll go back and be unconscious the way I was before." But this person did not do that. Suddenly, he realized that this was a different time and his life must be completely new. So he went into a temple and learned how to meditate. He received the invitation to an initiation from life and hid out in the zen temples.

One day Huang-po was paying his respects. He was bowing before a buddha and Tsuang-sung saw him and said, "If you don't seek from buddha and don't seek from dharma and don't seek from sangha, what are you seeking by bowing in respect?" Huang-po said, "I don't seek from buddha; I don't seek from the dharma; I don't seek from the sangha. I always pay my respects just like this." Very clear and strong. Both of them, actually. Tsuang-sung said, "What's the use of paying any respect?" Immediately Huang-po slapped him. Tsuang-sung said, "Too coarse." Huang-po said, "What kind of place is this to talk about coarse and refined," and slapped him again.

Later Tsuang-sung came to the throne. His evil cousin must have died and suddenly they called on him, plucked him out of the temple and put him on the throne. He bestowed on Huang-po the title, the Coarse Acting Ascetic. Later Prime Minister Pei (sp??), who was also a friend of Huang-po, when he was at court he suggested that Huang-po be given a more appropriate title of Boundless Cha'n Master.

So each difficulty. If we think of our small difficulties, think of the great difficulty of this man related to the emperor and being beaten almost to death and humiliated and thrown into the garden. And just leaving it all behind. Leaving the wealth and the riches and living in the temples. Being cold and hungry; being slapped by Huang-po, and finding in that his wisdom.

All the small difficulties, too, are little doors. They are not such a big door as the emperor had, but they are little doors for us to walk through. It's best if we receive the invitation if we don't want to go back to that unconscious time before we had the difficulty. We have to accept that this is a new time and here we are. In that way we will meet today.

Let's keep it going.

# # #