

CASE 21

Ungan Sweeps the Grounds

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Instruction:

Shedding delusion and enlightenment, transcending sacred and profane. Although there are not many matters, to set up master and guest and distinguish between noble and lowly is a separate single house. It is not that there is no measuring of ability in assigning work. How do you understand having the same spirit and being on the same branch?

Case:

When Ungan was sweeping the ground, Dōgō said, "You are working hard, aren't you!"

Ungan said, "You should know there is one who does not work hard."

Dōgō said, "Is that so? You mean there is a second moon?"

Ungan raised his bamboo broom, and said, "What number of moons is this?"

Dōgō was silent.

Gensha said later, "That is precisely the second moon."

Unmon also said later, "The man-servant greets the maid-servant politely."

Verse:

He nonchalantly borrows it to clean up the gate of the senses.
Knowing how to use it, he acts on the occasion to bring everything to a stop.
The adept at playing with snakes before Elephant-Bone Peak,
Knows shame in his older years about what he did in his youth.

On the Instruction:

Here we have an exchange between Ungan and Dōgō. Each is checking the other's Zen understanding. As I imagine most of you gathered here today know, if we ask what the patriarchs and ancient worthies were attempting to teach, they were trying somehow to convey the world of oneness. That doesn't mean intellectual explanations. Instead, they were attempting to bring their listeners to an experiential awareness of the world of oneness. This is not something that you can attempt to grasp with logic. The only way is to do it directly in an enlightenment experience. They wanted to bring others to a realization of this world. And they were really making every possible effort to do so. If we attempt to explain the world of oneness in terms of an intellectual theory, we end up with reductionism or some other "ism." But we're not talking about any ideology or philosophy here. They were doing everything in

their power to bring their listeners to a direct experience of the world of oneness. That is also the case regarding today's koan. The two protagonists in today's case have fully realized that world of oneness; you have the feeling that they are like two mirrors reflecting each other. Let us proceed now to the Instruction.

Shedding delusion and enlightenment, transcending sacred and profane. We are talking here about transcending the world of dualistic opposition. The world of everyday common sense is always the world of dualistic opposition in terms of subject and object, self and other, delusion and enlightenment, holy and ordinary, right and wrong, good and bad, long and short. These are all products of dualistic opposition. But to the background to those pairs (although "background" is perhaps not the best term), there is the world of emptiness. Although they are in opposition to each other, they are at the same time one. To give an example, imagine painting a picture on a canvas. You apply different colors to the pure white canvas. We do not readily realize that the canvas is white. Rather than the white, it is the world of color or form that we clearly see. We do not see "the world of white." I would like to bring you all to a *direct experience* of that world of white, not just as a concept. To say "shedding delusion and enlightenment" does not mean that they are not there. Precisely where there is delusion and enlightenment there is nothing. In the oft-cited *Heart Sutra* this is expressed in the lines: "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

The same goes for transcending sacred and profane. "Sacred" here can be understood as all the Buddhas and patriarchs, in particular the Buddhas, of which there are very many. These are usually considered to be quite separate entities from us. We make a clear division between such saints or sages and ordinary people. We feel that there is a clearly defined difference between such holy ones and ordinary people. But when we view things from the basis of "the world of white," so to speak, they are the same. This is also found in the *Hotsuganmon* that we just recited together prior to this teisho:

Before enlightenment ancient buddhas were the same as us.

After enlightenment we will be exactly as those ancient ones.

As I am always saying, it's like a ruler. On the front side are various markings for inches or millimeters. On the back side there are no markings. But it is the same, single ruler. The only real way to transcend holy and profane is to realize the world of emptiness. I just spoke in terms of "the world of white," but actually there isn't even white. We are speaking about grasping the world of not a single thing, the world of emptiness. Then you can say, as in the Instruction, "there are not many matters." In other words, there are no more problems. This is often known as the "leisurely person of the Tao," the person with nothing left to do. And, to continue with the Instruction, although there are not many matters (i.e., although there is nothing at all), on that stage of nothing at all we set up master and guest. That is, we make a distinction between master and guest for the time being, although there are no such distinctions from the standpoint of the essential world. Nevertheless, if you only see things from that single aspect, it is like a man with one leg. That's because it is always one with the phenomenal world. So, precisely where there is not one thing we "distinguish between noble and lowly," as it says in the Instruction. Otherwise, you come up with so-called blind equality or pernicious oneness as expressed as follows: Aren't parents and children the same human beings? Aren't the company president and the clerk the same? If we speak only in terms of a *theory* of essential equality, that is certainly the case. But we are speaking about experience of the world of oneness, after which we can then make a distinction between noble and lowly. And when that happens, it is "a separate single house." A separate house has been erected. The patriarchs of old were like this. You have the various schools of Zen Buddhism: Soto, Rinzai, Unmon, Igyō, Hōgen. They all built their own houses, so to speak, by setting up master and guest and distinguishing between noble and lowly. Their only desire was to lead others in spiritual practice. And thus, in this process of leading others, the unique characteristics of the separate schools or families arose. If we leave out this world of phenomena and only permit the world of the essence, no teaching of others is possible. Why? Because there are no others. There is the saying: "In wishing to save all beings, I find that there are no sentient beings."

Although I want to save them, there is not a single person. It's like being alone on a desert island. If we view the statement "all sentient beings are by nature Buddha" as meaning that there are no beings to save, we are mistaken. You should realize this if you come to an experience of this world of not one thing. This is the essential world. But, viewing things from the standpoint of the phenomenal world, all are deep in delusion and we make all possible efforts to save them. As a result, the unique style or characteristics of a school or family of Zen comes into being.

It is not that there is no measuring of ability in assigning work. How do you understand having the same spirit and being on the same branch? It's the same whether it's a temple or everyday life in society. You're involved in finding out what a certain person can or cannot do. From the essential standpoint there are no such distinctions. But in everyday life there are, with some people having a larger capacity than others. We cannot overlook this aspect. At the same time, however, they are exactly the same. They are all perfect, just as they are. The Instruction is talking about the phenomenal aspect where such distinctions are necessary. We gauge the abilities of individuals and assign them the tasks that fit those abilities. Monks in the temples also have different jobs and positions. The *fukuji* is the head monk, but there are also monks entrusted with bookkeeping. A person with a good voice might be asked to lead recitation of the sutras, since assigning it to a person with a poor voice would not be very efficient. The same is true in a company. But here we're not speaking about upper and lower positions. It's not the relationship between master and guest. Instead, it's a matter of "having the same air and being on the same branch." They are brothers in the dharma, so to speak, both of them disciples of Yakusan Igen Zenji. Today's exchange also took place while they were both still students at his temple. They both breathed the same air or spirit of his teaching as they developed as Zen persons growing on the same branch. The Instruction points out to us that the exchange in the Main Case is between such people. As I said above, it's like two mirrors reflecting each other.

How do you understand having the same spirit and being on the same branch? How do you apprehend an exchange between persons such as those just described in the Instruction? An example will be given now and we should look carefully.

On the Case:

When Ungan was sweeping the ground, Dōgō said, "You are working hard, aren't you!" As you know, the daily schedule at a Zen temple includes *samu* or work meditation. Even at our San-Un Zendo, the sesshin participants do meditative work every day. Ungan was probably engaged with his fellow monks in samu. Seeing this, Dōgō called out, "You are working hard, aren't you!" The monks of old used every possible occasion as an opportunity to engage each other in the dharma. I don't imagine any one of us would say something like this while cleaning during *samu*. What does Ungan say in response?

Ungan said, "You should know there is one who does not work hard." You say that I'm working hard, but don't you realize that there is one who does not work at all? To speak in terms of working hard is to speak of the phenomenal world. No matter how much you move around and work hard in that world, from the essential point of view, you don't lift a finger. If you are not familiar with it, he says, you must realize that there is a world where there is no working hard. He is of course familiar with both aspects, but if he had just said that, there would have been no real Zen exchange. What does Dōgō say in reply?

Dōgō said, "Is that so? You mean there is a second moon?" When your eyes are not focused correctly, the moon might appear to be hazy, as if there were two moons. This is a reference to delusion. Although there is actually only one, it appears as if there were two. This is what he is saying with his statement about two moons. Are you saying that there are two different worlds, a world where you're working hard and a world where you're not working hard?

Ungan raised his bamboo broom, and said, “What number of moons is this?” That’s a very sharp and trenchant response.

Dôgô was silent. We needn’t assume that Dôgô lost the dharma exchange simply because he remained silent. The koan has come to its conclusion, its denouement. There is really nothing left to say or add. So he remains silent. It would not do to say something like “Oh, that’s a second moon!” Silence is golden, and knowing this, Dôgô keeps mum.

Gensha said later, “That is precisely the second moon.” As the word “later” indicates, Gensha wasn’t present at the time of the exchange. He heard about that exchange at a later date. He says that they have fallen away from the essential world. To keep silent is the best reply.

Gensha Shibi Daishi was also rated very highly by Dôgen Zenji. Originally a fisherman, he was out fishing one day with his father, when the older man fell from the boat. Gensha tried to save him from drowning but was unable to. Feeling keenly the impermanence of life, he turned to Buddhism. In rating the Zen masters of the past in his *Shôbôgenzô*, Dôgen Zenji is very severe in his estimation, and only a choice few met up to his standards. Another one singled out for special praise was Tôzan Gohon Daishi (the founding patriarch of the Soto School of Zen). And another, as just mentioned, was Gensha Shibi Daishi.

Gensha’s critical comment in today’s koan is really wonderful.

Unmon also said later, “The man-servant greets the maid-servant politely.” Then Unmon has his say, although, in his case as well, we shouldn’t imagine that he was on the scene of the exchange between the two monks. He says that Ungan and Dôgô engaged fervently in a vivid exchange, but that was just like a manservant and a maid being polite to each other. “It’s so funny I can hardly bear to look,” he seems to say. From Unmon’s standpoint in his critical comment, it’s as if the two monks are exchanging greetings in a most stately way, as if filled with deep meaning. Unmon and Gensha were both students of Seppô Zenji. As the verse to Case 24 of this koan collection indicates, the question on whether there is a second moon is an attempt to somehow make clear the world of oneness. Persons who have realized this world are at ease, but their numbers are few. Zen has no *raison-d’être* other than the effort to make this world known to others. If it were only a matter of understanding it as a kind of philosophy to give lectures on, then Zen would have no meaning.

On the Verse:

He nonchalantly borrows it to clean up the gate of the senses. What did he borrow? It was the broom to clean up matters once and for all when he held it up and asked, “What number of moons is this?” He did it very nonchalantly and without anything special in mind. To clean up the gate of the senses means to clean up the mind, to rid our minds of all the collected garbage and make it clean. In his teisho on this koan, Yasutani Roshi says it is the gate of the senses such as sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. He has cleaned up the gateway or entrance to the mind, although actually he was cleaning the mind itself. That means he was cleaning away all delusions with his question, “What number of moons is this?”

Knowing how to use it, he acts on the occasion to bring everything to a stop. He knows well how to use that broom, acting appropriately according to the time, place and occasion. So there was nothing more to say, and Dôgô remained silent in reply.

The adept at playing with snakes before Elephant-Bone Peak,

Knows shame in his older years about what he did in his youth. This is Old Man Banshō, the author of the verse, offering his critical comments about Gensha and Unmon. He points his spear at them in offering a few sharp barbs. “Hey you, Gensha and Unmon!” he seems to say. “You might talk big, but aren’t you ashamed in recalling the sins of your youth when you were still green? Now you’re both aged monks making fine statements, but aren’t you ashamed?”

This is said in reference to Case 24 of the *Book of Equanimity*:

Seppō, instructing the assembly, said, "There's a poisonous snake on the South Mountain. All of you should have a good look at it."

South Mountain was the name of the mountain where Seppō resided. A poisonous snake has a head like a turtle, and a hood, which indicates that it's a viper. It's also been said from olden times in the Orient that persons with jowls are dangerous and should be approached with caution! In response to this statement of Seppō, Chōkei spoke up.

Chōkei said, "Today in the Zen hall there is a great one who has lost his body and life."

This same line could also be translated as follows "Today in the Zen hall there are many persons who have lost their body and life." But the translation above puts the emphasis on Chōkei, who seems to be speaking about himself: "There's a fellow here who was bitten by that poisonous snake and lost his life." Iida Tōin Rōshi, for example, sees the koan in that way. The koan continues:

A monk told this to Gensha, who said, "Only Elder Brother Ryō could say something like that. However, I wouldn't talk like that." The monk asked, "What then would you say, Master"? Gensha replied, "Why does it have to be 'the southern side of the mountain'?"

It's as if he's saying, "Isn't that snake everywhere, and not just on South Mountain?" What need is there to speak about South Mountain? This is Gensha's view. And then Unmon makes his own response:

Unmon threw his staff down in front of Seppō and acted frightened.

It's as if he were running away in fright from the snake. "Watch out!" he seems to say. This is the full presentation of the essential world.

In the Verse for today's koan, Old Man Banshō is speaking to the two of them and chiding them about those "shameful" actions in the past. He seems to say, "Considering that playacting of yours in your younger days, aren't you ashamed now to be talking so big?"

As I am telling you repeatedly, each of the koans must be viewed from the perspective of the world of oneness. All koans are attempts to somehow make people realize that world. To realize the world of oneness, you have to realize that the content is empty. The phenomenal world is the world of duality. To realize that it is actually one, you have to realize that the content is empty. Otherwise you can't really realize oneness. This is a wondrous world. While being two, it is actually one. While being one it is actually two. Normally we are only living in the world of duality. Only Zen teaches us that, although it is two, it is actually one. I would like you all to realize this fact clearly.