

CASE 25

Enkan's Rhinoceros Fan

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Instruction:

Lands and oceans are boundless, and yet they are not apart from here;
The matter before the countless kalpas exists in the present moment.
If you try to make him present it in front of his face, he cannot bring it out smoothly.

Tell me, where is his fault?

Case:

One day, Enkan called to his attendant, "Bring me the rhinoceros fan." The attendant said, "It is broken." Enkan said, "If the fan is already broken, bring me the rhinoceros himself." The attendant gave no answer.

Shifuku drew a circle and wrote the ideograph "ox" in it.

Verse:

As the fan is broken, he demands the rhino;
There is a reason for the character in the circle.
Who would know that the thousand-year darkness of the new moon
Subtly turns into the autumn with singular radiance?

On the Instruction:

Lands and oceans are boundless, and yet they are not apart from here. Zen koans always focus on the same matter, which can be expressed in the words "form is emptiness, emptiness is form." Or you could use the words "one is all, all is one." This fact is expressed intellectually and conceptually in various words. But koans present the fact itself. As a general rule, there are no thoughts or concepts. Today's Instruction expresses clearly and succinctly, in terms of thought, the world of Buddhism while focusing on the Main Case.

The character *satsu* (刹) in the first line is a Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit word *kṣetra*, which means “land,” but also means a universe consisting of three thousand large chilikosms. Here we can possibly understand the words “lands and oceans” as also meaning “dharma ocean” in the sense of “limitless,” and thus referring to all things in the phenomenal world. The second part of the first line (and yet they are not apart from here) means that it is right here. If we develop this very place here, it extends out limitlessly. The line is saying that that “dharma ocean” is right here and now. That is the same thing as “one is all, all is one.” When you clearly realize the world of MU, you realize that there is not one thing, and in that sense it is limitless. Later in this koan, Shifuku draws a circle. Drawing in this way, you might believe that there is a border of separation, but actually there is no boundary. This fact is expressed in various ways in the Zen tradition. For example, there are the following expressions: limitless realm (*muhen-sekkyō*) or self and other no farther way than the finest hair (*jita-gōtan*). The expression “limitless realm” (*muhen-sekkyō*) means the border of a far-distant country. The other expression means that there is not the slightest hairsbreadth of distance between you and others. There is not the slightest gap between you yourself and the limitless realm. In the end, they are saying the same thing. This expresses it in terms of space. How about the next line in the Instruction?

The matter before the countless kalpas exists in the present moment. This expresses the same thing in terms of time. A kalpa is a unit of measure expressing an unbelievably long period of time. “Countless kalpas” is “dust kalpas” in the original, in the sense of kalpas as numerous as individual grains of dust, an unimaginably long period of time. People in ancient India were fond of such expressions. If we were to attempt to express it mathematically, I don’t know how many zeroes we would have to line up after each other! This line is saying that eternity is no other than this very moment. The only thing that really exists is this very moment. That is the true reality, and everything else is just concepts and thoughts. Ideas of “eternal” or “eternity” are just concepts. Even though we use expressions like “limitless realm,” it remains a mental picture. What is the actual fact? It is just this very moment, right now. In contrast to the “limitless realm” there is “self and other no farther away from each other than the finest hair” (*jita gōtan wo hedatezu*), or the expression “the ten worlds, past and present, beginning and end, are not separate from this thought” (*Huayen Sutra*). You can understand this as meaning limitless time, extending from the limitless past to the limitless future. This line says that this limitless time is not different from the thought of the present moment. This is actually used as a koan, one that I was given to practice with by Asahina Sogen Roshi, the recently deceased abbot of Engakuji Temple in North Kamakura. All of you should try to come up with a good presentation of this koan. All of time is found in this very moment, right now. That is a fact. In the *Shōdōka* (Song on Realizing the Way) by Yōka Daishi the same thing is expressed as follows. “One level contains all levels.” He goes on to say: “In an instant eighty-thousand teachings are fulfilled.” This is the same thing as in today’s Instruction. In the *Jeweled-Mirror Samadhi* (*Hokkyōzammai*) of Tōzan Zenji, there is the line:

“So fine it enters where there is no gap, so great it transcends dimensions.” As long as there is a gap, it is not true fineness. Then there is the line in the *Shinjinmei* (Poem on the Mind of Belief) by the Third Patriarch Sōzan Daishi, where it says: “Very large and small are equal, when boundaries are forgotten.” In other words, there are intrinsically no boundaries. Even though a circle is drawn, the circle has no boundaries. The circle is drawn symbolically, and is the true fact. It is our essential self, it is the world of MU, it is essential nature. It is without limits. Listen, can you hear the cricket chirping? But who is chirping? If you listen carefully, there is nothing at all. To say it is empty is also to say that it is without boundaries. And that is actually your true self. The *Shinjinmei* continues: “Very large and small are equal, the limits cannot be seen.” All these passages are saying the same thing.

The *Gateless Gate* (Mumonkan) contains the koan Tosotsu’s Three Barriers. In the Rinzai School, when someone passes these barriers, they cook “satori mochi,” rice with red beans, to celebrate the occasion. That koan includes the following verse by Master Mumon:

*In one consciousness, we see the whole of eternity,
Eternity is nothing than right now;
If you see through this one consciousness at this moment,
You see through the one who is seeing right now.*

What is “this one consciousness at this moment”? It could be “it’s hot!” or “it’s cold!” The really important matter is seeing through the one who is seeing right now, seeing “that one.” Zen is always speaking about the same single matter.

Let us return to today’s Instruction:

Lands and oceans are boundless, and yet they are not apart from here;
The matter before the countless kalpas exists in the present moment.

If you try to make him present it in front of his face, he cannot bring it out smoothly. The author is saying that this “matter before countless kalpas existing in the present moment” should be produced now for all to see. You could say that the various Zen masters all have their own style or approach. So you must be able to present it in a way that fits the style or approach of the Rinzai School or that of the Soto School. If you’re still understanding it intellectually, it won’t come out naturally when you’re asked to produce it, because you start considering things logically.

Tell me, where is his fault? If you explain it logically, you could say the fault results from concepts and ideas getting in the way. The idea of grasping the true fact gets in the way, so that it can’t be produced readily. So you could say his secret intention is revealing that fact free of concepts, as shown in the Main Case.

On the Case:

One day, Enkan called to his attendant, “Bring me the rhinoceros fan.” This same case appears as Case 91 of the *Blue Cliff Record* (Hekiganroku), although the koan is more detailed in that other version. In the present version, Shifuku makes his appearance later

in the koan. In the version found in the *Blue Cliff Record*, it's not only Shifuku who appears. Wanshi Zenji, the compiler of the *Book of Serenity*, seems to have given highest marks to Shifuku's presentation. Frankly speaking, I don't necessarily believe that this is pure Zen, as Shifuku is getting a bit logical in his presentation. At any rate Wanshi Zenji was fond of Shifuku's presentation and included it in this version of the koan.

Enkan was a very outstanding Zen master of China's Tang Period. He resided in the temple known as Kaishōin (chin, Haichangyuan) in the locality found in Yanguan of Hangzhou district. He was also known as Master Saian (Jian) and was a dharma successor of Baso Dōitsu Zenji. I recently traveled to the Hangzhou district in China and found it to be quite spacious. It is said that Mumon Ekai, the author of the *Gateless Gate*, lived on shores of the West Lake in that district. I also visited that lake and was impressed by its beauty. Remembering that Mumon had also been there, I was deeply moved. The famous poets Bo Juyi (Po chu-i) and Su Dongpo (Su Tung-p'o) also lived here, holding posts as local administrators. Modern travellers will find the Bai Causeway (dike named in honor of Bo Juyi, who instigated its construction) and the Su Causeway (built by Su Dongpo). I was struck by the beauty of the region. And Enkan in our present koan evidently lived in that region, too, back in the Tang Period. There is an interesting story in connection with that period. You may know about the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang. Enkan was evidently on very good terms with the emperor, to the point where they lived a year or two together. That emperor had a splendid reputation after his death and was known as one of the outstanding rulers of the late Tang. But he evidently had quite a hard time in his younger years. His older brother, the Emperor Muzong, had three children who succeeded him. His oldest son was the Prince of Jing and the second son was the Prince of Wen, who turned out to be quite a violent fellow. Emperor Xuanzong, as the younger brother of Muzong, was the uncle of those two sons. Prince Wen, violent fellow that he was, persecuted Emperor Xuanzong severely, putting the latter's life in danger. Prince Guang, a vassal to the emperor, had pity on him and saw to his escape. Emperor Xuanzong then traveled through China dressed as a monk, and it was during that period of pilgrimage that he went to see Enkan. It so happened that Enkan Zenji was of a family with distant relations to the court of that time, and thus had the same name. That meant there were ties of closeness from both sides. Emperor Xuanzong had a very strong emotional attachment to Enkan.

The Emperor Wuzong was notorious for persecution of Buddhism during his reign. The *Persecution of Huichang* (jap, Eshōsata), was a major persecution of Buddhism that occurred in the first or second year of the Huichang reign period. The emperor, a great admirer of the Taoists teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, ordered the destruction of some forty thousand Buddhist temples. Some 260,000 monks and nuns were forced back into lay life. The emperor was completely ruthless in his methods. Around the sixth year of his reign he evidently went mad and died, after which Emperor Xuanzong assumed the throne. After becoming emperor, Xuanzong thought back fondly to his time with Enkan Kokushi and sent servants to bring the monk to the palace, only to learn that the Zen master had already died. In his great sorrow, the

emperor composed a poem that still exists today. That's the kind of person Enkan was. Let us turn back now to the Main Case.

Enkan called his attendant one day and asked him to bring his rhinoceros fan. As you know, a rhinoceros has a single horn. There are some commentators who consider this to be a fan made of such rhinoceros horn and others who say it was a fan with a picture of a rhinoceros painted on it. It doesn't really matter in the long run. At any rate, Enkan seems to have been quite fond of that fan. When he asked the attendant to bring his fan, I personally believe he was just making a request, with no hidden agenda, although most commentaries see the Zen exchange as starting here. At any rate, the attendant says the fan is broken. He indicates that he has already thrown it away because it was broken. I feel that, up to and including this reply of the attendant, we are still dealing with an ordinary exchange, free of Zen associations. Then comes the next line:

Enkan said, "If the fan is already broken, bring me the rhinoceros himself." Koans usually deal with things that defy our ordinary thinking. Here is where the real koan starts. If we attempt an intellectual explanation, this stick (kotsu) of mine is a good example. This stick is actually one with the universe. As I mentioned above, it's a matter of "one is all and all is one." Looking at things from that perspective, when we speak about a rhinoceros fan, we must realize that, simultaneously, the entire universe is stuck to it. That is actually what this koan is all about. When he asks the attendant to bring the rhinoceros fan, he is saying in so many words, "show me the world of enlightenment you have realized." In response, the attendant says, "it is broken," which means that he has long ago thrown away anything so useless like satori. Once you have realized, it is important to wash away any traces of enlightenment. If any dregs of satori remain, it will begin to stink of enlightenment, which is a sort of Zen sickness. It is essential to rid yourself of any stink of Zen or satori and return to your original, unadorned self. This is what the attendant is actually saying with his reply. In response, Enkan tells him to bring him the rhinoceros. What does this mean? He is saying, bring me that broken thing; bring what is remaining after all trace of satori has been washed away. In other words, "show me your true essence." In response the attendant says nothing. What does this mean? I think there are three possibilities. First, he was at a lost for words and remained silent. Or he was presenting his true self perfectly by standing there in silence. This was evidently the case in the present koan and that is how most people understand his silence.

Many august persons of old have written their comments and commentaries on what was going on in the mind of the attendant. In the *Blue Cliff Record*, such matters are discussed in detail. In the present version of the koan, however, it is Shifuku who takes over for the attendant to express his own view:

Shifuku drew a circle and wrote the ideograph "ox" in it. Shifuku is presenting what he considers to be the state of mind of the attendant. Shifuku actually lived quite a long time after Enkan. That means he was taking up the exchange between Enkan and

the attendant as found in the koan, perhaps even delivering a teisho on it and presenting his view on the part of the attendant.

In the version found in the *Blue Cliff Record*, Tôsu says, "I would not refuse to bring it forth, but I fear that the head and horns would not be complete." He is saying in effect that, since this is dealing with the essential world, the world of not a single thing, that head and horns cannot be really shown. This was his way of presenting that world. In response to Tôsu's presentation, Setchô assumes the role of a heckler and says, "I want the horns which are not complete." He is saying in effect that he wants to see precisely that place where there are no horns and there is no head. In the same version from the *Blue Cliff Record*, Hofuku also takes the stage and says, "'The Master is advanced in years, it is better to ask another.'" This comment of Hofuku is actually the most interesting part of the koan as it appears in the *Blue Cliff Record*. But Wanshi Zenji, the compiler of the *Book of Equanimity*, evidently believes that Shifuku is best with his presentation. That's because the other respondents in the *Blue Cliff Record* version do not present the rhinoceros when asked to do so, but Shifuku does, by writing the character for "ox" in the circle he has drawn. Wanshi Zenji comments on the responses of these others, but finds Shifuku's response to be the best of all. I myself feel that the drawing of a circle is presenting what I mentioned before: the limitless realm (*muhen-sekkyô*), the entire universe, the world of zero-infinite. And then he writes the character for "ox" in the circle. The world of emptiness is simultaneously the ox. Gutei Oshô would have held up a finger in the same situation. But since the koan is about a rhinoceros (translator: the Chinese characters for rhinoceros also include the character for "ox"), it would not have much connection with the koan to hold up a finger, which is why he writes the character for "ox." That's certainly interesting enough as a response.

A story relates how Baso Dôitsu Zenji once sent a letter to Kinzan which consisted solely of a circle drawn on the paper. Upon receiving the letter, Kinzan put a black dot of ink in the middle of the circle and sent it back. That's an interesting exchange! The circle is the world of emptiness. The dot is the world of phenomena; it is the ox. This is the same as Shifuku's action in the present koan.

Chapter 15 of the *Transmission of Light* (Denkôroku) is the story of how Kanadeva came to meet the Fourteenth Patriarch Nagarjuna, who is known as a restorer of Buddhism. Nagarjuna saw Kanadeva coming toward him from afar and immediately knew that he was not an ordinary person, but a possessor of great wisdom. He told his attendant to fill a bowl with water and place it before him. Kanadeva came right in front of Nagarjuna, took a needle, placed it in the bowl of water and presented it to Nagarjuna. Both of them knew what was going on. The bowl filled with water is the circle. And the needle placed in the water is like the character for "ox" written in the circle or like the dot in the circle in the letter from Baso. Well, if we were to go right out and say it, we could say it is the entire universe, the world of zero. And in that world of emptiness a single needle is placed. Of course, it mustn't necessarily be a needle. Put in words, it would be "I alone in the entire universe." This was Kanadeva's way of

showing his state of consciousness. If you keep that in mind while viewing this koan, you will probably understand what is going on when he draws a circle and then writes the character for “ox” in the center. As I am always saying, it is “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” There is nothing else than this. Let us proceed to the Verse.

On the Verse:

As the fan is broken, he demands the rhino;

There is a reason for the character in the circle. The two characters translated here as “circle” have the respective meanings of a circle formed by bending bamboo or wood and of curved fingers. The “reason” for the character in the circle is as I mentioned above. He is responding in this way to the command of Enkan Kokushi to bring the rhinoceros. This is the “reason” for his action.

Who would know that the thousand-year darkness of the new moon

Subtly turns into the autumn with singular radiance? “Thousand-year darkness” means when we cannot see the moon during the phase of the new moon. The character indicating “darkness” is actually one character of a two-character combination that means soul. Actually, either of the characters taken individually also means soul, but the Chinese principle of *yin-yang* also speaks in terms of places where the sun shines and places where it doesn’t. The first character in the combination indicates the *yang* aspect of where the sun shines, while the second indicates the *yin* aspect of darkness, and that second character is the one used here to indicate darkness, in this case, the new moon. There is also evidently the expression *shihaku* (lit, dying light) to indicate the waning moon. At any rate, the poem is referring to the new moon when we do not see the moon at all. This would correspond to the first day of the month in the lunar calendar, while the 15th day of the month would be the full moon. The present verse says that precisely that darkness subtly becomes the autumn with singular radiance. Shifuku, in drawing a circle and writing the character for “ox” in the circle, turns everything into a brilliant night of the shining autumn full moon. Precisely that darkness is no other than the full moon on an autumn night. The circle is zero. The world of zero is often expressed with the character for “black” or “dark.” To see it is black means there is not a single thing; it is the “dark” of light and dark. And “light” or “bright” means the phenomenal world in which everything is clearly revealed. The poem is saying that the world of darkness, precisely because of that wonderful activity, becomes bright like the full moon on an autumn night. This is all very much an intellectual explanation, but please use this as background information to carefully investigate this koan again, and I think you will understand what it is talking about. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. One is all, all is one. But to really experience this world, you have no other recourse but to realize it clearly in the practice of Mu.