

CASE 90

Kyōzan Speaks Out



By *Yamada Kōun*

Instruction:

Yuan says, "Only I am sober" – this is nothing but intoxication.
Kyōzan speaks of a dream; yet it is like in an awakened state.
Just say: I, Banshō, preach like this, and you all hear like this:
Just tell me, is this an awakened state or is this a dream?

Case:

Master Kyōzan went to Maitreya's abode in a dream and was led to the second seat. A venerable monk said, "Today the second seat is due to speak." Kyōzan stood up, struck the wooden anvil with a gavel, and said, "The Dharma of Mahayana is beyond the four propositions and transcends the hundred negations. I beg to tell you this!"

Verse:

In a dream, wearing a patched robe, he calls on the revered elder;
The saints and sages are sitting as [lofty] trees to his right.
When his turn comes, he does not defer and strikes loudly the wooden anvil.
He preaches [the Dharma of] fearlessness, roaring like a lion.
His heart is as serene as the ocean,
His liver as massive as a bushel.
Tears flow from the shark people's eyes;
Pearls come out of the clams' guts.
Who knows that the idle chattering leaks the activities of our [school]?
The [people with] great eyebrows should laugh that the family disgrace was raised.
"Beyond the four propositions and transcending the hundred negations":
Master Ba and his sons have given up applying medicine altogether.

On the Instruction:

Qu Yuan says, "Only I am sober" – this is nothing but intoxication. This is a very famous koan.

Master Kyōzan was the dharma successor to Isan. Together they are referred as the founders of the so-called Igyō School of Zen. Isan and Kyōzan are famous for how master and disciple were in perfect harmony with each other. It appears that many wondrous things happened to Kyōzan. One day an arhat came from India to the mountain where Kyōzan was living and met with Kyōzan. I don't know how long it takes to fly these days from India to

China. This arhat, recounting later his visit to Kyōzan, said that he had met up with a little Shakyamuni, and was very happy. Since that time, Kyōzan has been known as “Little Shakya.” This same koan appears as Case 25 in the *Gateless Gate* under the title “The Sermon from the Third Seat.” In today’s version of the koan he is sitting in the second seat. At any rate, he was given a seat toward the front, although most versions speak in terms of the third seat. In his comment to the koan, Banshō Rōjin says, “Tell me, who’s in the first seat?”

Let us return to this first line of the Instruction. Qu Yuan is a very famous figure in Chinese history. He was a man of high moral virtue, lacking any blemish in his career and possessing a strong sense of justice. He once said, “All the world is sullied, I alone am pure.” This first line of the Instruction is an allusion to those words. They are said in reference to Kyōzan. Kyōzan might have been fine. Qu Yuan, however, although he was a man with a strong sense of justice, got caught up in power struggles, losing any real freedom. He once said, “All the world is intoxicated, I alone am sober.” That might have been a fine thing to say. But there remains the question of why he found it necessary to jump in the river and drown. The fact that he said that he alone was sober was a sign that he was actually intoxicated. Why was it necessary for him to die? Thinking that he had to die when it was actually unnecessary was true intoxication. If you look at things from a correct perspective, you see that he was bound up in ideas of justice and had no real freedom. I would have liked him to have at least the freedom to shake hands with someone like Kakuei Tanaka (the Japanese Prime Minister later convicted of bribery). In the Main Case of today’s koan, Kyōzan speaks about dreams.

Kyōzan speaks of a dream; yet it is like in an awakened state. Kyōzan spoke from the second seat. This is the same as an awakened state.

Just say: I, Banshō, preach like this, and you all hear like this:

Just tell me, is this an awakened state or is this a dream? I personally would say in response, “Just this” (Japanese: tada kore kore).

On the Case:

Master Kyōzan went to Maitreya's abode in a dream and was led to the second seat. A venerable monk said, “Today the second seat is due to speak.” Kyōzan stood up, struck the wooden anvil with a gavel, and said, “The Dharma of Mahayana is beyond the four propositions and transcends the hundred negations. I beg to tell you this!” The word translated here as “venerable monk” (Sonja) means a senior monk in the assembly. He says that the person in the second seat should speak today. The wooden anvil struck with a gavel (byakutsui) is a large piece of wood that is hexagonal or octagonal in shape, and which is flat on top. A similarly shaped piece of wood is used as a gavel to strike it. This is the gavel that Kyōzan strikes. He says that the Dharma of the Mahayana transcends the four propositions and the hundred negations. The true fact is completely beyond all thinking. Then he strikes the gavel. “Clack!” That “clack!” itself is the Dharma of the Mahayana. To cry out “Katsu!” like Rinzai or stick up a finger like Gutei is the same thing. Whatever you bring up from the phenomenal world, that itself is the Dharma of the Mahayana. It is itself the essential world.

In this version of the koan, Kyōzan says, “I beg to tell you this.” In the version found in the *Gateless Gate*, he says “Hear, hear!”

On the Verse:

In a dream, wearing a patched robe, he calls on the revered elder. This refers to the Main Case and is referring to Kyōzan, wearing his patched robe and calling on the elder monk in a dream.

The saints and sages are sitting as [lofty] trees to his right. Those prominent and illustrious elders are sitting in a row.

When his turn comes, he does not defer and strikes loudly the wooden

anvil. When it is his turn to speak, he does not defer to his superiors, but strikes that anvil loud and clear. The word here translated as wooden anvil is “kenchi,” which is a collective name for all the musical instruments struck in a Zen setting, such as the wooden board or the bell.

He preaches [the Dharma of] fearlessness, roaring like a lion. The dharma of fearlessness means the preachings of the Buddha. There is also the expression *semui*, which means “bestowing fearlessness,” considered to be one of the compassionate actions of Kannon. Out of compassion for those shivering in fear, she gives them a heart of fearlessness. We have a piece of calligraphy hanging in our own San’un-Zendo with the characters *semui* written on them. The preachings of the Buddha are known as the “lion’s roar.” There is the following line in the *Shōdōka* (Song of Enlightenment).

The incomparable lion-roar of doctrine□

Shatters the brains of the one hundred kinds of animals.

In like manner, when Shakyamuni Buddha preaches, although their brains may not be shattered, they are unable to understand what he is saying.

His heart is as serene as the ocean,

His liver as massive as a bushel. In that place where so many illustrious persons are seated in rows, his heart is so serene like a calm sea and his bravery is great indeed.

Tears flow from the shark people’s eyes;

Pearls come out of the clams’ guts. The “shark people” are like mermaids and mermen. Tears are flowing without stopping from their eyes. And pearls are issuing from the clam’s insides. What is this talking about? Kyōzan, out of his great compassion, sheds tears of blood in revealing his true purpose.

Who knows that the idle chattering leaks the activities of our [school]? Who could know that, in those few words, Kyōzan reveals his true character?

The [people with] great eyebrows should laugh that the family disgrace was raised. The “people with great eyebrows” are very illustrious persons. Why is this called raising the family disgrace? What is so shameful?

“Beyond the four propositions and transcending the hundred negations”: Although Kyōzan speaks in such august terms, it is not necessary to say such things. After all, all sentient beings are intrinsically Buddha. Each thing in the phenomenal world is the complete revelation of the essential world. What need is there to speak about transcending the hundred negations and the like? “Isn’t that shameful?” the poem asks us.

Master Ba and his sons have given up applying medicine altogether. And Master Ba takes the stage. This has to do with Case 6 in this collection, which is also Case 73 of the *Blue Cliff Record*:

A monk asked Great Master Ba, "Apart from the Four Phrases, beyond one hundred Negations, please tell me directly, Master, the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West."

Master Ba said, "I am tired today, I can't explain it to you. Go and ask Chizō."

The monk asked Chizō about it. Chizō said, "Why don't you ask our master?"

The monk said, "He told me to ask you."

Chizō said, "I have a headache today, I can't explain it to you. Go and ask Brother Kai."

The monk asked Brother Kai about it. Kai said, "I don't understand anything about that question."

The monk told Great Master Ba about it. Great Master said, "Chizō's head is white, Kai's head is black."

In order to realize the true fact, we have to wipe away all delusive thoughts and concepts. But this is no easy matter.

I have always been meaning to tell you the story of Heijiro of Makabe. I wonder if any of my listeners or readers have heard of him. Makabe is the name of a small town in Ibaraki Prefecture. The story I am about to tell took place some 700-800 years ago. At that time there lived a man named Heijiro in this town of Makabe. He happened to obtain a position as a servant in a small castle although he was illiterate. At the time he entered into servitude the older lord of the castle had died and his son, who was only 17 or 18 years old at the time, had become the new lord of the castle. Heijiro had been serving him since he was a boy. One day in winter, a “snow-viewing banquet” was held. The young lord wanted to put on his sandals. Finding them warm, he fell into a rage. He assumed that Heijiro had taken the sandals and placed them under the seat of his pants to warm himself up. “What a useless servant you are!” he cried out, and gave Heijiro a kick to his head so that blood spurted out. Heijiro explained that he had actually put the sandals in his coat to warm them up for his master.

Later, after thinking things over for a while, he decided to leave the castle without anyone’s knowing of it. We must remember that Heijiro was completely illiterate, unable to read or write. Nevertheless he travelled to Koyasan and then to Kenninji Temple in Kyoto, although I do not know what his motivation was in doing so. At any rate, he eventually ended up travelling to China. He was evidently only a year or two younger than Dōgen Zenji. He ended up going to Gold Mountain in China where the Zen master Nyojun Zenji was teaching. Among Japanese who had inherited the dharma of this Chinese master and returned to Japan was the monk Zensan. There was later the Zen master known as National Teacher Shōichi, and he was evidently a brother in dharma to him. At any rate, Heijiro practiced very fervently for about thirty years. One day he was given a koan. The master wrote the character “te” in a circle and told him to practice with it. He practiced with all that was in him to solve this koan, to the point where each blade of grass seemed to be that character in the circle. Finally the character in the circle disappeared for him and he came to enlightenment. He had clearly realized the world of not a single thing. If he had been able to read the character, it might have allowed concepts to enter. But in his case the fact that he couldn’t read worked in his favor. He then became an illustrious monk and returned to Japan, where he took up residence in Zuiganji Temple in Matsushima. Late he became the abbot of a small temple in Makabe. The lord who had injured him on his head in his younger days learned that an illustrious monk was in the vicinity and he wanted very much to go and see him. He then invited that monk to visit his castle. When the monk arrived, the lord had no idea it was his former servant. In the course of discussing this and that, Hosshin Zenji, as the monk was called, suddenly asked the lord if he had any recollection of who he was. He then told him that he had once been his own servant and then related the rest of the story. Then from his robe he produced the blood-stained sandal from that time. The lord was full of remorse for what he had done. He came down from his high seat and apologized profusely before the monk. Heijiro told him that, if he not received that treatment back then, he would not be the person he was today. The lord then became a student of that monk. He passed away at age 58. Hosshin Kokushi lived to be 85 years old. This national teacher, who could not read or write, is probably the only person of his kind in Japan. Dōgen Zenji, for his part, was a genius, who might have erred on the side of reading too much. But the state of consciousness expressed in his words “body and mind fallen away” is truly wonderful. As long as you still have thoughts and ideas in your head, you cannot grasp the true fact.