

Shinji Shobogenzo Book 2, Case 48.

Written by News Administrator

Tuesday, 30 July 2013 16:21 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 July 2013 16:56

Koan Commentaries

Master Tozan Ryokai became a disciple of Master Ungan Donjo, and asked; *Who can hear the non-emotional preaching the Dharma?*

Master Ungan said: *The non-emotional can hear the non-emotional preaching the Dharma.*

Master Tozan said: *Do you hear this preaching?*

Master Ungan said: *If I listened to it, you could not hear my preaching of the Dharma.*

Master Tozan said: *If that is true, then I will not listen to the Master's preaching.*

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Master Ungan said: *You do not listen to even my preaching of the Dharma; how can you listen to the preaching by the non-emotional?*

Then Master Tozan made a poem and presented it to Master Ungan.

The poem said:

How great and wonderful it is. How great and wonderful!

The Dharma preaching of the non-emotional is a mystery

If we listen to it with ears, we cannot hear it.

If we listen to it through the eyes, then we can understand.

Commentary by Nishijima

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Master Tozan Ryokai asked about the preaching of the Dharma by non-emotional beings. Non-emotional is originally “mujo,” which means inanimate or insentient, and often refers to nature. So the preaching by non-emotional beings means the preaching of nature, which was discussed by many Buddhist monks.

However, in Shobogenzo Mujo-seppo (The Non-Emotional Preaches the Dharma). Master Dogen’s understanding of this phrase was wider and included the whole of nature – human beings as well as mountains and rivers and so on. His view was that inanimate things could preach the Dharma, and so could human beings, when they are not emotional.

Commentary by John Fraser

A marked feature of Chinese Buddhism is a positive view of the environment, of this world. Grasses, trees, snow falling; all are said to preach the dharma. The eruption of the suchness of things, their vivid being/doing interrupts our delusive patterns of thinking. You could say that the world in its feeling suchness is a miracle.

In the story, Tozan falsely imagines that there is a difference between – say – the cedar trees, just as they are, and Ungan, just as he is; in his preaching, in his silence, in his doing, in his being.

But at the same time, Ungan’s preaching is different from the preaching of the cedar trees. But if we chanced upon Ungan in zazen, among the cedar trees, his preaching and that of the cedar trees would be from the same voice

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