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# THE GATELESS GATE

Translated by Eiichi Shimomissé

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## PREFACE

by Mumon

Our teaching makes our mind the principle and the gateless gate its very gate. Since it is the gateless gate, how can one pass through it?

Are you not aware of the insight that purports, "Those who have entered the gate are no family treasures. What is gained as a result of cause and effect has beginning and end, and thus will become nothing." Such remarks are like raising up waves in the windless ocean, or gouging a wound into healthy skin. Those who cling onto words are fools who believe that they can catch the moon with a stick or can scratch their itchy foot through a leather shoe. How can they "see" reality as it actually is?

In the Summer of the first year of Shjoting (1228) Ekai (Mumon) was lecturing on koan of the ancient masters to the monks at the monastery of Luingsiang temple in East China. He intended to use the koan as bricks for battering the gate in order to inspire the pursuer of Zen according to his ability. His notes were unwittingly collected. There is no order as to the beginning or the end. In total there are 48 cases, now called "The Gateless Gate."

If anyone, like eight-armed Nata who bravely goes straight forward, ventures into Zen practice, no delusion will disturb him. The Indian and Chinese patriarchs will beg for their lives in his commanding presence. If, however, he hesitates even a moment, he is just a person that watches from a narrow window for a speedy horseman to pass by and misses everything in a wink.

"The Great Way has no gate,  
A thousand roads enter it.

When one passes through this gateless gate,  
He freely walks between heaven and earth."

## **CASE 1. JOSHU'S DOG**

A monk asked Joshu, "Has the dog the Buddha nature?"  
Joshu replied, "Mu (nothing)!"

Mumon's Comment:

For the pursuit of Zen, you must pass through the barriers (gates) set up by the Zen masters. To attain his mysterious awareness one must completely uproot all the normal workings of one's mind. If you do not pass through the barriers, nor uproot the normal workings of your mind, whatever you do and whatever you think is a tangle of ghost. Now what are the barriers? This one word "Mu" is the sole barrier. This is why it is called the Gateless Gate of Zen. The one who passes through this barrier shall meet with Joshu face to face and also see with the same eyes, hear with the same ears and walk together in the long train of the patriarchs. Wouldn't that be pleasant?

Would you like to pass through this barrier? Then concentrate your whole body, with its 360 bones and joints, and 84,000 hair follicles, into this question of what "Mu" is; day and night, without ceasing, hold it before you. It is neither nothingness, nor its relative "not" of "is" and "is not." It must be like gulping a hot iron ball that you can neither swallow nor spit out.

Then, all the useless knowledge you have diligently learned till now is thrown away. As a fruit ripening in season, your internality and externality spontaneously become one. As with a mute man who had had a dream, you know it for sure and yet cannot say it. Indeed your ego-shell suddenly is crushed, you can shake heaven and earth. Just as with getting ahold of a great sword of a general, when you meet Buddha you will kill Buddha.

A master of Zen? You will kill him, too. As you stand on the brink of life and death, you are absolutely free. You can enter any world as if it were your own playground. How do you concentrate on this Mu? Pour every ounce of your entire energy into it and do not give up, then a torch of truth will illuminate the entire universe.

Has a dog the Buddha nature?

This is a matter of life and death.

If you wonder whether a dog has it or not,

You certainly lose your body and life!

## CASE 2. HYAKUJO'S FOX

Whenever Hyakujo delivered a Zen lecture, an old man was always there with the monks listening to it; and when they left the Hall, so did he. One day, however, he remained behind, and Hyakujo asked, "Who are you?"

The old man replied, "Yes, I am not a human being, but in the far distant past, when the Kashapa Buddha (the Sixth Buddha of the Seven Ancient Buddhas) preached in this world, I was the head monk in this mountain area. On one occasion a monk asked me whether an enlightened man could fall again under the law of *karma* (cause and effect), and I answered that he could not. Thus I became a fox for 500 rebirths and am still a fox. I beg you to release me from this condition through your Zen words."

Then he asked Hyakujo, "Is an enlightened man subject to the law of *karma*?" Hyakujo answered, "No one is free from the law of *Karma*."

At the words of Hyakujo the old man was enlightened, and said with a bow, "I am now released from rebirth as a fox and my body will be found on the other side of the mountain. May I request that you bury me as a dead monk?"

The next day Hyakujo had the Karmadana, or deacon, beat the clapper and he informed the monks that after the midday meal there would be a funeral service for a dead monk. "No one was sick or died," wondered the monks. "What does our *Roshi* mean?" After they had eaten, Hyakujo led them to the foot of a rock on the furthest side of the mountain, and with his staff poked the dead body of a fox and had it ritually cremated.

In the evening Hyakujo gave a talk to the monks and told them this story of the law of *Karma*. Upon hearing the story, Obaku asked Hyakujo, "You said that because a long time ago

an old Zen master gave a wrong answer he became a fox for 500 rebirths. But suppose every time he answered he had not made a mistake, what would have happened then?" Hyakujo replied, "Just come here to me, and I will tell you the answer!" Obaku then went up to Hyakujo--and slapped the teacher's face. Hyakujo, clapping his hands and laughing, exclaimed, "I thought the Persian had a red beard, but here is another one with a red beard!"

Mumon's Comment:

"The enlightened man is not subject to *Karma*." How can this answer make the monk a fox? "The enlightened man is not free from the law of *karma*." How can this answer release him from his fox's life? If you have one eye in regard to this, then you understand Hyakujo's (the old man's) dramatic 500 rebirths.

Free from *karma* or subject to it,  
They are two sides of the same die.  
Subject to *karma* or free from it,  
Both are irredeemable errors.

### **CASE 3.**

## **GUTEI'S FINGER**

Gutei raised his finger whenever he was asked a question about Zen. A boy attendant began to imitate him in this way. When a visitor asked the boy what his master had preached about, the boy raised his finger.

Gutei heard about the boy's mischief, seized him and cut off his finger with a knife. As the boy screamed and ran out of the room, Gutei called to him. When the boy turned his head to Gutei, Gutei raised up his own finger. In that instant the boy was enlightened.

When Gutei was about to die, he said to the assembled monks, "I received this one-finger Zen from Tenryu. I used it all my life and yet could not exhaust it" and then he passed away.

Mumon's Comment:

Where Gutei and the boy attained enlightenment is not at the tip of the finger itself. If this simple truth is not comprehended, Tenryu, Gutei, the boy and you also will be bound together once and for all.

Gutei made a fool of old Tenryu,

With the sharp blade he did simply harm the boy.

That's nothing compared to the Mountain Spirit when he raised his hand

And split Kasan (the great mountain) in two.



**CASE 4.**  
**WAKU'AN'S "WHY NO BEARD?"**

Waku'an (looking at Bodhidharma's picture) complained,  
"Why has that Barbarian no beard?"

Mumon's Comment:

If you study Zen, you must study it with all your heart. When you attain enlightenment, it must be true enlightenment. When you really meet Bodhidharma face to face, then you finally have gotten it right. However when you start explaining it with words, you have fallen into duality.

Do not explain your dream  
Before a fool.  
The barbarian has no beard,  
How could you add obscurity to clarity?

## **CASE 5.**

### **KYOGEN'S MAN HANGING IN THE TREE**

Kyogen said, "It (Zen) is like a man (monk) hanging by his teeth in a tree over a precipice. His hands grasp no branch, his feet rest on no limb, and under the tree another man asks him, 'Why did Bodhidharma come to China from the West (India)?' If the man in the tree does not answer, he misses the question, and if he answers, he falls and loses his life. Now what shall he do?"

Mumon's Comment:

(In such a predicament) though your eloquence flows like a river, it is all to no avail. Even if you can explain all of the Buddhist sutras, that also is useless. If you can rightly answer the question, you walk the road of killing the living and reviving the dead. But if you cannot answer, you should wait for ages and ask Maitreya, the future Buddha.

Kyogen had really bad taste,  
And spreads the poison everywhere,  
He stuffs with it the monks' mouths,  
And lets their tears stream from their dead eyes.

## **CASE 6.**

### **THE BUDDHA'S FLOWER**

Once upon a time when Buddha was in Grdhrakuta mountain, he twirled a flower in his finger and held it before his congregation. Everyone was silent. Only Maha Kashapa wholeheartedly smiled. Buddha said, "I have the eye of the true teaching, the heart of Nirvana, the formless form, the mysterious gate of Dharma. Beyond the words and beyond all teachings to be transmitted, I now pass this on to Maha Kashapa."

Mumon's Comment:

Golden-faced Gautama impudently forced the good people into depravity. He sold dog meat under the name of mutton. And he thought he made it! What if all the audience had laughed together? How could he have handed the eye of the true teaching or if Kashapa had not smiled, how could he have transmitted the teaching? If you say it could be transmitted, he is like a golden-faced old huckster swindling at the city gate, and if you say it cannot be transmitted, how does he hand it on to Maha Kashapa?

At the turning of a flower,  
The snake (his disguise) shows his tail.  
Maha Kashapa smiles,  
Every monk does not know what to do.

## **CASE 7.**

### **JOSHU'S WASHING THE BOWL**

A monk told Joshu, "I have just entered this monastery. I beg you to teach me." Joshu asked, "Have you eaten your rice porridge?" The monk replied, "I have." "Then," said Joshu, "Go and wash your bowl."

At that moment the monk was enlightened.

Mumon's Comment:

Joshu opened his mouth, showed his gall-bladder (true mind) and the depth of his heart. If this monk did not really listen to and grasp the truth, he indeed mistook the bell for a pitcher.

He made it so simple and clear,  
It might take a long time to catch the point,  
If one realizes that it's stupid to search for fire with a lantern  
light,  
The rice would not take so long to be done.

**CASE 8.**  
**KEICHU'S WHEEL**

Gettan asked a monk, "If Keichu (the ancient mythological wheel maker) made one hundred carts, and if we took off the wheels and removed the hub uniting the spokes, what would then become apparent?"

Mumon's Comment:

If anyone can answer this question instantly, his eyes will be like a meteor and his mind like a flash of lightning.

When the hubless wheel turns,  
Even the master would be at a loss what to do,  
It turns above heaven and beneath earth,  
South, north, east, and west.

## **CASE 9.**

### **DAITSU CHISHO BUDDHA**

A monk asked Seijo, "Daitso Chisho Buddha did *zazen* (meditated) for ten kalpas in a Meditation Hall, could not realize the highest truth, and so could not become fully emancipated. Why was this?" Seijo said, "Your question is a very appropriate one!" The monk asked again, "Why did he not attain Buddhahood by doing *zazen* in the Meditation Hall?" Seijo replied, "Because he did not."

Mumon's Comment:

You may know the Old Indian, but you are not allowed to have an understanding of Him. If an ordinary man attains enlightenment, he is a sage. When the sage is concerned about an understanding, he is only an ordinary man.

Rather than putting the body to rest, let the heart rest.

When the mind is realized, then one need not worry about the body.

If the mind and the body have completely become one,

This is the perfect life of sage, and praise is utterly meaningless.

**CASE 10.**  
**SOZAN AND POOR SEIZAI**

A monk named Seizai said to Sozan, "I am alone and poor. I beg my teacher to bestow upon me the alms of salvation." Sozan said, "Acarya Seizai!" "Yes, Sir?" replied Seizai. Sozan said, "Someone has drunk three bowls of the wine of Haku of Seigen, but says that he has not yet even moistened his lips."

Mumon's Comment:

Seizai overplayed his hand. Then what is his real state of mind? Sozan with his one eye sees through the recesses of his mind and comprehends what he really meant. However this may be so, where did Acarya Seizai drink the wine?

The poorest like Hanzen,  
His spirit like that of Kou.  
He could barely make his living,  
And yet wishes to rival the wealthiest.

## **CASE 11.**

### **JOSHU'S HERMIT**

Joshu went to a hermit's and asked, "What's up? What's up?"(="Have you any *Zen*?") The hermit lifted up his fist. Joshu said, "The water is too shallow to anchor here," and went away. Joshu visited the hermit once again a few days later and said, "What's up? What's up?" The hermit raised his fist again. Then Joshu said, "Well given, well taken, well killed, well saved." And he bowed to the hermit.

Mumon's Comment:

The raised fist was the same both times. Why was one accepted, the other rejected? Just say, where is the confusion between the two?

If you can answer this by a word of true comprehension, then you realize that Joshu's tongue has no bone and that he can absolutely freely use it. Even though this is so, the hermit might have seen through Joshu both times. If you wonder whether the first hermit be superior (or inferior) to the second, then you have no one eye.

His eye is a meteor,  
Zen's movement is like lightning.  
The sword that kills the man,  
is the sword that saves the man.



## **CASE 12.**

### **ZUIGAN CALLS HIMSELF "MASTER"**

Every day Zuigan used to call out to himself, "Master!" and then he answered himself, "Yes, Sir!" And he added, "Awake, Awake!" and then answered, "Yes, Sir! Yes, Sir!"

"From now onwards, do not be deceived by others!" "No, Sir! I will not, Sir!"

Mumon's Comment:

The master, Zuigan, sells out and buys himself. He has a lot of puppets of gods and devils that he plays with. Why is this so? With one mask he asked, and with another he answered. With another mask he said, "Awake!" and another, "Don't be cheated by others!"

If you adhere to any one of these, you are totally mistaken. If, however, you imitate Zuigan, then all these are no other than the fox's disguises.

Some who search the Way of Zen do not realize true self,  
For they recognize only the ego-soul.  
This ego-soul is the seed of birth and death,  
Foolish people take it for the true original self.

## **CASE 13.**

### **TOKUSAN'S BOWL**

One day Tokusan came to the dining room from the Meditation Hall, holding his bowl. Seppo saw him coming and asked, "The dinner drum is not yet beaten. Where are you going with your bowl?"

Tokusan went back at once to his room. Seppo told about this incident to Ganto, who said, "Tokusan as he is, has not penetrated into the ultimate truth of Zen."

Tokusan heard of this and sent an acolyte to ask Ganto to come to him. "I have heard," told Tokusan, "you are not approving my Zen." Ganto whispered to Tokusan what he meant. Tokusan said nothing, leaving Ganto there.

Next day, ascending the rostrum, Tokusan delivered an entirely different sermon to the monks. Ganto went forward in the Hall, clapped his hands, laughed and said, "What a happy thing! The old man has got hold of the ultimate truth of Zen. From now on, no one in heaven and on earth can surpass him."

Mumon's Comment:

As for the ultimate truth of Zen, neither Tokusan nor Ganto even dreamt of such a thing. When you look into the matter, they are only a set of dummies how about puppets- dummies sounds like stupid..

Whoever understands the first truth  
 Understands the ultimate truth.  
 The last and the first  
 Are they not one and the same?

## **CASE 14.**

### **NANSEN CUTS THE CAT IN TWO**

Nansen saw the monks of the eastern and western halls fighting over a baby cat. He seized the cat and said, "If (any of) you can say (a word of Zen), you can spare the cat. Otherwise I will kill it." No one could answer. So Nansen cut the cat in two .

That evening Joshu returned and Nansen told him what had happened. Joshu thereupon took off his sandals and, placing them on his head, walked away. Nansen said, "If only you had been there, you could have saved the cat."

Mumon's Comment:

Why did Joshu put his sandals on his head? If you can answer this question with one word, you understand Nansen's efforts. If not, you are utterly in danger.

Had Joshu been there,  
The opposite would have been done.  
Joshu would have snatched the knife,  
And Nansen would have begged for his life.

## **CASE 15.**

### **TOZAN'S SIXTY BLOWS**

Tozan went to Un-mon and Un-mon asked him where he had come from. Tozan answered, "From Sato!" Then Un-mon asked, "Where were you then during the Summer?" Tozan answered, "At Hoji Temple in Konan Province." Un-mon further asked Tozan, "When did you leave there?" Tozan replied, "I left on August 25." Un-mon told Tozan, "You deserve 60 blows, but I will forgive you today!"

The next day Tozan knelt and deeply bowed to Un-mon and said, "Yesterday you forgave me the 60 blows, but I still do not understand in what respect I was wrong." Then Un mon told Tozan, "You are really a good-for-nothing rice eater! No wonder you wandered around Konan and Kosei for nothing!" At this very moment, Tozan was awakened.

Mumon's Comment:

Un-mon had Tozan feed on the genuine fodder of Zen, showed him the one way of living activity, and helped him from becoming extinct. All night long Tozan swam in the waves of Yes and No until he got nowhere. When the dawn broke, again Tozan went to Un mon to be awakened. After all Tozan was not so seasoned.

Now I will ask you: Did Tozan deserve 60 blows? If you say Yes, then not only Tozan, but everyone also deserves 60 blows! If you say No, Un-mon is a swindler. If therefore you understand this clearly, Tozan and you breathe the same air!

The lion roughly teaches her cubs,  
She kicks them away and the cubs jump.

Un-mon's thrown words hit right on Tozan's heart,  
While Un-mon's first arrow is light, the second arrow hits  
deep.

## **CASE 16.**

### **UN-MON'S SEVEN-FOLD ROBE**

Un-mon said, "The world is vast and wide; for what is it you put on your seven-piece robe at the sound of the bell?"

Mumon's Comment:

When one meditates and studies Zen, one extinguishes the attachment to sound and color. Even though some have attained enlightenment by hearing a sound, or an awakening by seeing a color, these are ordinary matters. Those who intend to master Zen freely master sounds or colors, see clearly the nature of things and every activity of mind. Even though this is so, now tell me: Does the sound come to the ear, or does the ear go to the sound? But when both sound and silence are forgotten, what would you call this state? If you listen with your ear, it is hard to hear truly, but if you listen with your eye, then you begin to hear properly.

If you are awakened, all things are one and the same,  
If you are not awakened, all things are varied and distinguished.

If you are not awakened, all things are one and the same,  
If you are awakened, all things are varied and distinguished.

## **CASE 17.**

### **ECHU'S THREE CALLS**

Echu, called Kokushi, the teacher of the emperor, called his attendant, Oshin, three times and three times Oshin answered, "Yes!" Kokushi said, "I thought that I had offended you, but in reality you offended me!"

Mumon's Comment:

Kokushi called Oshin three times. His tongue fell to the ground (from talking too much). Oshin answered three times and revealed his harmony with the Tao. Echu, getting old and lonely, attempted even to hold the cow's head down to feed on the grass. Oshin did not trouble to show his Zen, for his satisfied stomach had no desire to eat. When the nation is prosperous, everyone is too proud (to eat plain food), now just say who offended which one?

When prison canga is iron and has no hole,  
(Echu's) followers have neither peace nor rest.  
When you intend to uphold the teaching of Zen,  
You must climb a mountain of swords with bare feet.

**CASE 18.**  
**TOZAN'S THREE POUNDS OF FLAX**

A monk asked Tozan, "What is the Buddha?"  
Tozan answered, "Three pounds of flax!"

Mumon's Comment:

Tozan's Zen is like a clam. When the two halves of the shell open, you can see the whole inside. However, now tell me, "What is Tozan's real insides?"

Just "Three pounds of flax!" pops up,  
His words are close, and yet his heart is closer.

Anyone who explains this or that, yes and no, is himself the man of yes and no.



## **CASE 19.**

### **NANSEN'S ORDINARY MIND**

Joshu asked Nansen, "What is the Way?" Nansen answered, "Your ordinary mind--that is the Way." Joshu said, "Can it be grasped (for study)?" Nansen replied, "The more you pursue, the more does it slip away." Joshu asked once more, "How can you know it is the Way?" Nansen responded, "The Way does not belong to knowledge, nor does it belong to non knowledge. Knowledge is illusion. Non knowledge is beyond discrimination. When you get to this Way without doubt, you are free like the vastness of space, an unfathomable void, so how can you explain it by yes or no?" Upon hearing this, Joshu was awakened.

Mumon's Comment:

The question Joshu asked Nansen was dissolved by a stroke. After being enlightened, Joshu must further his pursuit 30 more years to exhaust that meaning.

Hundred flowers in Spring, the moon in Autumn,  
The cool wind in Summer and Winter's snow.  
If your mind is not clouded with things,  
You are happy at any time.

**CASE 20.**  
**SHOGEN'S STRONG MAN**

Shogen said, "Why is it that a man of strength cannot lift up his own legs and stand up (for Zen)?" And again, "It is not with our tongue that we speak."

Mumon's Comments:

Shogen said it by turning his heart inside out, and no one was there to receive it. If anyone should comprehend Shogen, then come to me and receive my blows. To know the genuine gold, you must see it through fire.

Raising my foot I turn upside down the Scented Ocean,  
Bowing my head I look down on the Four Dhyana Heavens.  
Such a body of full strength has no place to rest,  
Please finish this verse yourself!

**CASE 21.**  
**UN-MON'S DRIED DUNG**

A monk asked Un-mon, "What is Buddha?" Un-mon answered him, "Dried dung."

Mumon's Comments

We must say that being so poor, Un-mon cannot appreciate plain food, or he is so busy that he cannot even scribble properly. He is disposed to support his school with dry dung. Look at how devastated the Buddhist teaching has been!

Lightning flashes,  
Sparks of striking flint.  
In a blink of your eyes,  
You have passed by (and missed it).

## **CASE 22.**

### **KASHAPA'S FLAG POLE**

Ananda asked Maha Kashapa, "Buddha gave you the golden woven robe of successorship. What else did he give you?"

Kashapa said, "Ananda!"

"Yes!" answered Ananda.

"Knock down the flagpole at the gate!" said Kashapa.

Mumon's Comments:

If you can give a "turning word" (a momentous word for awakening), you will see the meeting at Mount Grdhrhuta? still in session. If not, no matter how much you make struggles to study from the age of Vipasyin, you cannot attain enlightenment.

How is Ananda's question, compared to Kashapa's answer of heart.

How many people have since then opened their eyes.

Elder brother calls and younger brother answers--the family disgrace.

This spring does not belong to Yin and Yang.

## **CASE 23.**

### **ENO'S GOOD AND EVIL**

Eno, the sixth patriarch, was pursued by Monk Emyo up to Daiyurei. The patriarch, seeing Emyo coming, laid the robe and the bowl on a rock, and said to him, "This robe represents the faith. Is it to be fought for by force? You may take them now." Emyo went to move the bowl and the robe and yet they were as heavy as mountains. He could not move them. Hesitating and trembling, Emyo asked the patriarch, "I come for the teaching, not for the robe. Please enlighten me!" The patriarch said, "What is primordially Emyo (i.e., your true self), if you do not think this is good nor do you think this is evil?" At that moment Emyo was greatly awakened. His whole body was covered with sweat. Emyo cried, bowed, and said, "Is there or is there not any other (deep) significance (in Zen) than your secret words and teachings a minute ago?" The patriarch answered, "What I have told you is no secret at all. Once you have realized your own true self, the depth (in Zen) rather belongs to you!" Emyo said, "When I was at Obai with the other monks, I never realized what my true self was. Now you have dispersed the clouds of my ignorance to realize it, just like a man capable of discerning warm and cold by tasting water. From now on you are my teacher!" The patriarch said, "We both have Obai for our teacher. Guard your own self!"

#### Mumon's Comments:

We should say that the sixth patriarch was in an emergency. This revelation of his, however, resembles the deed of an overly protective grandmother, who peeled a fresh lichi (a dessert fruit), removed its stone and put it to her grandchild's mouth ready for

him to swallow.

You describe it in vain, you picture it to no avail,  
Praising it is useless, cease to worry about it at all.  
It is your true self, it has nowhere to hide,  
Even if the universe is annihilated, it is not destroyed.

## **CASE. 24**

### **FUKETSU'S SILENCE AND WORDS**

A monk asked Fuketsu, "Without words or without silence transgressing, how can one be unmistakably one with the universe?"

Fuketsu said, "I often think of March in Konan (Southern China). The birds sing among hundreds of fragrant flowers."

Mumon's Comments:

Fuketsu's mind was quick as lightning, snatching the road and walking on it. Regrettably Fuketsu was not able to sit on the words of the "ancestors." If anyone should penetrate into this, he would be absolutely free. Without words, without phrases, now say what Zen is.

Fuketsu did not say such a fine phrase,  
Without uttering words, he already let it be known.  
If Fuketsu had become talkative,  
You do not know what to do.

## **CASE 25.**

### **KYOZAN'S SERMON FROM THE THIRD SEAT**

In a dream Kyozan went to Maitreya's Pure Land and sat in the third seat. A monk there beat the gavel and said, "Today the one in the third seat will give a sermon." Kyozan arose, hit the gavel and said, "The truth of Mahayana is beyond any verbal expression! Listen, listen!"

Mumon's Comments:

You tell me, did Kyozan preach, or did he not? If he opens his mouth, he is lost. If he seals his mouth, he is lost, too. Whether he opens or seals his mouth, Kyozan is 108 thousand miles away from truth.

In the bright daylight  
And yet in a dream he talks a dream.  
Indeed a possessed word, a possessed word,  
He is deceiving the entire crowd.



**CASE 26.**  
**TWO MONKS ROLL UP THE BLINDS**

Hogen of Seiryō came to the hall to speak to the monks before the midday meal. He pointed with his finger to the bamboo blinds. At this moment two monks rose and rolled the blinds up. Hogen observed, "One has it, the other hasn't it."

Mumon's Comments:

Now tell me, which one has it and which one has not? If any one of you has one eye, he will see through the failure on Hogen of Seiryō. However, never be concerned about the gain or the loss.

When the blinds are rolled up, the great sky is bright and clear,

The great sky is not yet in accord with Zen.

It's better to throw everything away from the sky,

And make sure to have not even a draft blow through.

**CASE 27.**  
**NANSEN'S NO MIND, NO BUDDHA**

A monk asked Nansen, "Is there any teaching no master has ever preached before?"

Nansen replied, "Yes, there is." "What is it?" asked the monk. Nansen answered, "It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not things."

Mumon's Comments:

Being asked a question, Nansen gave away his entire treasure (words) and suffered a run of bad luck.

Nansen was too kind and lost his treasure,  
Verily words have no power.  
Even if a mountain may become a blue ocean,  
Nansen will never make it comprehensible to you.

## **CASE 28.**

### **RYUTAN'S CANDLE**

One night Tokusan went to Ryutan to ask for his teaching. After Tokusan's many questions, Ryutan said to Tokusan at last, "It is late. Why don't you retire?" So Tokusan bowed, lifted the screen and was ready to go out, observing, "It is very dark outside." Ryutan lit a candle and offered it to Tokusan. Just as Tokusan received it, Ryutan blew it out. At that moment the mind of Tokusan was opened. "What have you realized?" asked Ryutan to Tokusan, who replied, "From now on I will not doubt what you have said."

The next day Ryutan ascended the rostrum and declared to the monks, "Among you there is one monk whose teeth are like the sword tree, his mouth is like the blood bowl. Strike him with a stick, he won't turn his head to look at you. Some day he will climb the highest peaks and carry out my teaching there."

On that day, in front of the lecture hall, Tokusan burned to ashes his commentaries on the sutras and declared, "In comparison to this awareness, all the most profound teachings are like a single hair in vast space. However deep the complicated knowledge of the world, compared to this enlightenment it is like one drop of water in the ocean." Then he left the monastery.

#### Mumon's Comments:

Before Tokusan passed through the barrier, his mind was eager, his mouth was anxious, with a purpose in his mind, he went south, to refute the doctrine of "A special transmission outside the sutras." When he got on the road to Reishu (near Ryutan's monastery) he asked an old woman to let him have

something to "point his mind" (literally a snack, then something to put the mind at ease at the same time). The old woman asked Tokusan, "What is all that writing you are carrying?" Tokusan replied, "That's the manuscript of my notes and commentary on the Diamond Sutra." Then the old woman said, "That Sutra says, the past mind cannot be held, the present mind cannot be held, the future mind cannot be held. All of them are but unreal and illusory. You wish to have some refreshments. Well then, with which of your minds do you want to have the refreshments?" Tokusan found himself quite dumb. Finally he asked the woman, "Do you know of any Zen master around here?" "About five li away lives Ryutan," said she. Tokusan arrived at Ryutan's monastery with all humility, quite different from when he had started his journey. Ryutan in turn was so kind he forgot his own dignity. It was like pouring muddy water over a drunken man to sober him. After all, it was an unnecessary comedy.

Rather than hearing the name, seeing the face is better,  
Rather than seeing the face, hearing the name is better.  
But how much you help the nostrils,  
Look what you have done to the eyes!

## **CASE 29.**

### **ENO'S FLAG**

The wind was flapping a temple flag, and two monks were arguing about the flag. One said, "The flag is moving." The other said, "the wind is moving." They could not agree, no matter how hard they debated. The sixth patriarch, Eno, happened to come by and said, "Not the wind, not the flag. It is the mind that is moving!" The two monks were struck with awe.

#### Mumon's Comments:

It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves, it is not the mind that moves. How shall we understand the sixth patriarch? If you gain an intimate grasp of its meaning, you will see how the two monks, intending to buy iron, got gold. The patriarch could not repress his compassion for the two monks, and so we have this disgraceful scene.

Wind, flag, and mind moves,  
All confirmed as guilty of error.  
Only we know our mouth is opened,  
we do not know our speech went wrong.

**CASE 30.**  
**BASO'S VERY MIND**

Daibai asked Baso, "What is the Buddha?"  
Baso answered, "The mind is the Buddha."

Mumon's Comments:

If you fully understand Baso's meaning, you are wearing Buddha's clothes, eating Buddha's food, speaking Buddha's words, doing Buddha's deeds, that is to say, you are Buddha himself. But Baso misled not a few people into erroring the principles of Zen. He does not realize that if we explain the word "Buddha" we must rinse our mouths for three days afterwards. If he is a man of understanding, he would cover his ears and run away hearing Baso say, "The mind is the Buddha!"

Under blue sky, in bright sunlight,  
One need not search around,  
Asking around what Buddha is,  
is liking the stolen goods in one's pocket and declaring oneself innocent.

## **CASE 31.**

### **JOSHU INVESTIGATES AN OLD WOMAN**

A (travelling) monk asked an old woman the way to Taizan. The old woman said, "Go straight ahead." When the monk proceeded a few steps, she said to herself, "This monk with such spirit also goes off like that!" Afterwards, another monk told Joshu about this, and Joshu said, "Wait until I go and investigate the old woman." The next day off Joshu went and asked the same question and the old woman gave the same answer. Upon his return, Joshu told the congregation of monks, "I have investigated the old woman of Taizan."

Mumon's Comments:

The old woman sat in the tent and planned the campaign, but she did not know that there was the famous bandit who knew how to take the enemy commander prisoner. Old Joshu sneaked into her tent and menaced her fortress, but he wasn't a real general. Indeed both had their faults. Now I would like to ask you: "What was the point of Joshu's investigating the old woman?"

The question was the same,  
The answer was the same.  
Sand in the rice,  
Thorns in the mud.

**CASE 32.**  
**A "PAGAN" ASKS BUDDHA**

A "pagan" asked Buddha, "With words, with silence, will you tell me (the Way)?" Buddha silently kept meditating. The "pagan" bowed and thanked the Buddha, saying, "With the compassion you have cleared away the clouds of my mind and have made me enter into the awakening." After he left, Ananda asked the Buddha what he had attained. The Buddha said, "A good horse runs even a shadow of the whip."

Mumon's Comments:

Ananda was Buddha's disciple but his understanding was not like that pagan. Now tell me, "How afar are the disciple and the non-disciple?"

Treading on the sharp edge of a sword,  
Running over jagged ice.  
Not climbing on the ladder,  
Letting your hands off the cliff.



**CASE 33.**  
**NEITHER MIND NOR BUDDHA**

A monk asked Baso, "What is the Buddha?" Baso replied, "Not mind, not Buddha."

Mumon's Comments

If anyone understands what Baso said, he has mastered Zen.

If you meet a sword master on the road, give him the sword.  
Unless you meet a poet on the road, do not offer a poem.  
If you meet a man, tell him the three quarters of the Way,  
and never tell him the rest.

**CASE 34.**  
**NANSEN'S NO WAY**

Nansen said, "Mind is not Buddha. Knowledge is not the Way."

Mumon's Comments:

Growing old, Nansen forgot to be ashamed. With his stinking mouth open he spread the scandal of his own house (such as knowledge is not the Way) to others. However, few appreciate their indebtedness to him.

When the sky is clear the sun appears,  
when rain falls, the earth becomes moistened.  
How wholeheartedly he explains,  
how few have faith in him and his words.

## **CASE 35. TWO SOULS**

Goso asked a monk, "Sei, the Chinese girl, who was separated from her soul. Which was the real Sei?"

Mumon's Comments:

If you obtain genuine awareness of reality, you will know that the soul passes from one husk to another as travellers lodged in an inn. But if you have not obtained the awareness, you should not run around in confusion when the four elements are suddenly ready to become separated (i.e., to die), like a crab with its seven arms and eight legs thrown into the boiling water. Never say that I did not warn you.

The moon in the clouds is one and the same,  
Valleys and mountains are various.  
Fortunes above fortunes,  
Is it one, or is it two?

**CASE 36.**  
**GOSO'S NO WORDS, NO SILENCE**

Goso said, "When you meet a Man of the Way on the road, greet him not with words, nor with silence. Tell me, how will you greet him?"

Mumon's Comments:

If you can answer Goso exactly, it will be extremely heartening. If you cannot answer properly yet, then you must do your best to watch out everything.

Meeting the man of the Way on the road,  
Greeting him not with words, nor with silence.  
Give him an uppercut,  
Then he will understand you at once.

**CASE 37.**  
**JOSHU'S OAK TREE IN THE GARDEN**

A monk asked Joshu, "With what intention did Bodhidharma come to China?" Joshu answered, "The oak tree in the front garden."

Mumon's Comments:

If you grasp Joshu's answer precisely, there is no Shakyamuni Buddha before you and no Maitreya Buddha after you.

Words do not express fact,  
Phrases do not reveal the delicate motion of mind.  
He who accepts words is lost,  
He who adheres to phrases is deluded.

**CASE 38.**  
**GOSO'S BUFFALO**

Goso asked, "A water buffalo goes out of his "enclosure." The head, the horns, and the four legs go through, but why doesn't the tail, too?"

Mumon's Comments:

If you can open your one eye (to the question) and say an awakening word, you will be able to repay the Four Obligations and help the Three Bhava being saved. If you still have not gotten it, take a close look on the tail and awake yourself.

If the buffalo goes through, he will fall into the abyss,  
If he retreats into the enclosure, he will be butchered.  
This little bit of a tail,  
that is a strange thing indeed!

## **CASE 39.**

### **UN-MON AND TRAP INTO WORDS**

As soon as a monk stated Un-mon, "The radiance of the Buddha quietly and restlessly illuminates the whole universe", Un-mon asked him, "Are these you **are** reciting not the words of Chosetzu Shusai?" The monk replied, "Yes, they are." Un-mon said, "You are trapped in words!" Afterwards Shishin brought up the matter once more and said, "Tell me, how was the monk trapped in words?"

Mumon's Comments:

If you are able to grasp Un-mon's unapproachable accomplishments and follow through the monk's corruption (of being trapped into words), you will be the leader of humans and Devas. If not, you cannot even save yourself.

A fish meets the fishhook in a rapid stream,  
Being too greedy for the bait, the fish wants to bite.  
Once his mouth widely opens,  
His life is already lost.

## **CASE 40.**

### **KICKING THE DRINKING WATER JAR**

During his stay under Master Hyakujo, Isan was a cooking monk. As Master Hyakujo wished to send a monk to found the new monastery called the Great Mount I, Maser Hyakujo told the chief monk and all other monks that he would choose the one who would demonstrate himself as the best among them. Then Master Hyakujo brought out a drinking water jar, put it down and said, "You cannot call it a water jar. Then, what will you call it?" The chief monk said, "One cannot call it a wooden stick." Then, when Master Hyakujo turned to Isan, Isan kicked the jar and walked away. Master Hyakujo laughed and said, "The chief monk lost it to Isan." He made Isan the founder of the Great I-san Monastery.

Mumon's comments:

Master Isan had indeed rare courage, but he could not jump out of Master Hyakujo's trap. After examination of the outcome, Isan took over the heavier burden for the easier job. Why? Look, Isan took off the cook's headband and put himself **in** steel cuffs (of the founder of the monastery).

Throwing away strainers and cooking spoon,  
Isan kicks the jar and **settles** the disputes.  
Unhindered by the multiple hurdles,  
He gives a kick on the toe,  
Even Buddha becomes pieces.



## **CASE 41.**

### **BODDHIDHARMA'S PEACE OF MIND**

Bodhidharma sit facing the stone wall. The Second Patriarch, Suika, stood long in the thick snow. Finally, he severed his own arm and presented it to Bodhidharma. He said, "Your student cannot pacify his mind. You, the First Patriarch, please, give me peace of mind!" The First Patriarch replied, "Bring that mind, I will calm it down!" The Second Patriarch said, "I search **for it** everywhere, but I cannot find it!" Bodhidharma replied, "I have already pacified it for you!"

Mumon's Comments:

That toothless old chap from India proudly travelled ten thousand li over the ocean (to China). This was indeed as if he deliberately raised waves where there was no wave. At last, he got only one disciple, who was maimed by cutting **off** his own arm. Alas, he was a fool indeed.

The First Patriarch from India taught straight forward,  
A series of all the troubles has initiated from him.  
The one who disturbed the calm world,  
Is Bodhidharma, you indeed!

## **CASE 42.**

### **A WOMAN COMES OUT OF MEDITATION**

When the wisest Bodddhisattva Manjusuri, who is supposed to be next in order to Shakyamuni Buddha, found that the Buddha' gathering was adjourned and each was going back to his/her land. Observing one woman still deep in meditation near Shakyamuni, Manjusuri properly bowed and asked Shakyamuni Buddha, "That woman has been able to reach that state of enlightenment and why have I not?"

Shakyamuni replied, "Bring her from the samadhi and ask her yourself!"

Manjusuri went round the woman three times and snapped his fingers and yet she was undisturbed in meditation. So Manjusuri held her high up in his hand and brought her to the first of three meditative heavens (totally detached from any lust) and exhausted all his mystical powers in vain (to awaken her). Observing this, Shakyamuni said, "Even a hundred thousand Manjusris could not awaken her from samadi. There resides Mo-myo (Avidya) Bodddhisattva, the lowest of all, below this place past twelve hundred million lands. He alone can raise her from her deep meditation." No sooner had the Shakyamuni spoken than that Bodddhisattva sprang up out of the earth, bowed and paid his homage to Shakyamuni. By Shakyamuni order, Mo-myo Bodddhisattva snapped his fingers. Instantly the woman came out of meditation and stood up.

Mumon's Comments:

The old chap, Shakyamuni, is extraordinary indeed, able to produce such a village theatre stage. Now then, tell me: "Why was Manjusri, the highest and wisest of the seven

Boddhisattva, unable to bring her out of meditation? Why was Mo-myo Boddhisattva, the lowest of all, able to do so? Should you obtain and live this complete understanding of it, you will attain the great samadi within this mundane world of delusion and attachment."

Whether the one who could bring her out of meditation, or the other who could not,

Both of them obtained freedom.

The one wore the mask of god, the other, a devil's mask in that theatre,

Even the failure is artistic indeed.

**CASE 43.**  
**SHUZAN'S BAMBOO SPATULA**

Master Shuzan held out his bamboo spatula and asked, "If you call this a bamboo spatula, you give umbrage (to the principle of Zen). If you call this no bamboo spatula, you violate the law (of common-sense). What will all of you call this?"

Mumon's Comments:

Should you call this a bamboo spatula, you would give umbrage. Should you call this no bamboo spatula, you would betray the law. Both to speak out will not do, and no word will be of any use either. Quickly say, quickly say!"

Bringing out the bamboo spatula,  
Shuzan demanded the order of life or death.  
Being put to either the umbrage, or the betrayal,  
Even Buddha and Patriarchs would beg for their lives.

## **CASE 44.**

### **BASHO'S STAFF**

Master Basho said to his disciples, "If you have the staff, I will give it to you. If you have no staff, I will take it away from you!"

Mumon's Comments:

This staff helps you to cross the river with the shattered bridge. The staff leads you back to your village in the moonless dark night.

If you call it the staff, then you will go right into hell like an arrow.

Whether one is deep or shallow,  
It lies in the palm of the hand which holds the staff.  
The staff supports the heaven and maintains the earth,  
Wherever the staff freely goes,  
It will propagate the true teaching.

## **CASE 45. WHO IS HE?**

To Tozan, Master Hoen the Fifth Patriarch said, "Shakyamuni and Maitreya Bodhisattva, both are His slaves. Well, tell me: Who is He?"

Mumon's Comments:

Should you be able to clearly realize who he is, it would be as if you met your own father at the crossroads, as you do not have to ask your own father who he is.

Do not use another's bow and arrow.

Do not ride somebody else's horse.

Do not discuss someone else's faults.

Do not try to know some other person's business.

**CASE 46.**  
**PROCEED BEYOND THE TOP**  
**OF THE 100 FOOT HIGH POLE**

Master Sekiso said, "You are at the top of the 100 foot high pole. How will you make a step further?" Another Zen Master of Ancient Times said, "One who sits on top of the 100 foot pole has not quite attained true enlightenment. Make another step forward from the top of the pole and throw one's own body into the 100,000 universes."

Mumon's Comments:

Should there be any who is able to ~~make~~ a step forward from the top of the 100 foot pole and hurl one's ~~entire~~ whole body into the entire universe, this person may call oneself a Buddha. Nevertheless, how can one make a step forward from the top of the 100 foot pole? Know thyself!

Should one be content and settle on top of the 100,000 foot pole,

One will harm the third eye,

And will even misread the marks on the scale.

Should one throw oneself and be able to renounce one's life,

Like one blind person leading all other blind persons,

One will be in absolute freedom (unattached from the eyes).

## CASE 47. TOSOTSU'S THREE BARRIERS

Master Tosotsu, setting up the three barriers, always **tried** the pursuer of the Way:

"To search **for** the Way, the Zen student tries to grasp one's own nature and be enlightened."

"Now where is your true nature?"

Secondly,

"Once having grasped one's own nature, one is free from birth and death. If then, one's eyeballs have dropped dead, how can one be free from life?"

Thirdly,

"Being free from birth and death, one instantly knows where to go after death."

"Being dead and the body dispersed into the four elements, where then does one go?"

Mumon's Comments:

Whoever can pass these three barriers will be a master anywhere. Whatever happens, this person should be able to become the founder of Zen. Should one be not yet capable of answering these three questions, this person must diligently chew them well to finally comprehend them. Humble meals fill one's stomach, and chewing them well, one will never starve.

To instantly realize is to see endless time.

Endless time is this very moment.

If one sees through the thought of this very moment,

At this very moment, one can see through the one who sees through.



## CASE 48. THE ONE ROAD OF KEMPO

A student monk asked Master Kempo, "I understand that all Buddha of the whole universe enter the one road into Nirvana. Where is this one road?"

Kempo raised his walking stick, drew the figure "one" and said, "Here it is."

Later, this monk went to Umon to ask the question. Umon, turning around his fan, said, "This fan will reach the thirty-third heaven and hit the nose of Sakra Devendra, the highest deity in these heavens. It is like the giant carp of the Eastern Sea tipping over with its tail a rain cloud to have the rain pour down."

### Mumon's Comments:

The one master walks on the deep ocean and raises dust. The other, standing on the tip of the high mountain, fills the heaven with white waves. The one holds the point, while the other liberates everything, together each supports the profound teaching with one hand. Kempo and Umon are dangerous, like two equally powerful camels colliding. No one in the world equals them. Seen from the truth, however, even Kempo and Mumon did not know where this one road really is.

They reach the goal before taking the first step.

They complete the speech before their tongue moves.

Even if they have **had** foresight long before, the origin of the road lies away ahead of their foresight.

## THE EPILOGUE BY MUMON

The words and the actions left by Buddha and the patriarchs in these forty-eight Ko-ans are as precise as laws and judgements, and therein nothing superfluous is contained. They turn the student monk's brain upside down and hollow out his eyeballs. They are here in order that each one of you will immediately grasp truth and must not try to obtain it vicariously from others. Should there be anyone who thoroughly appropriates everything, the person would seize the true meaning of all forty-eight Ko-ans, as listening to a small portion of them. To such a person, there is no gate to enlightenment, nor steps ~~of~~ **to** the search. He may go through the gate ~~without any~~ no concern of the gatekeepers, as Gensho said, "It is the gateless that is every entrance to realization, and to be aimless is the genuine aim of the master." Haku-un also said, "Why ~~can~~ one not go through this very gate, although it is so obvious?" Such stories are indeed as meaningless as mixing milk with red clay. If you can pass these forty-eight Ko-ans through the Gateless Gate, you will step on me Mumon under your foot. If you cannot pass through the Gateless Gate, you will betray yourself. As often said, it is easy to illuminate the realization that everything is empty, but it is difficult indeed to elucidate the knowledge of distinctions. If you are able to edify the wisdom of differences, the universe will be well ~~in~~ at peace.