



Yun-men: “You Have Missed It”
Case 30 of the Wu-Men Kuan
Excerpts of a Teisho by Metta Sheehan Sensei

The Case

A monk wanted to ask Yun-men a question and started to say, “The radiance serenely illumines the whole universe...”

Before he had even finished the first line, Yun-men interrupted him and asked, “Aren’t those the words of Chang-cho?”¹

The monk answered, “Yes, they are.”

Yun-men said, “You have missed it!”

Later Ssu-hsin took up this matter and said, “Tell me, how did the monk miss it?”

Wu-men’s Commentary

If in regard to this episode, you have grasped Yun-men’s lofty and unapproachable method and know why the monk missed it, you are in a position to be a teacher of men and gods. But if you are not yet clear about it, you won’t be able to save even yourself.

Wu-men’s Verse

A line is dropped into a swift stream;
Greedy for the bait, he is caught!
If your mouth opens just a bit,
Your life is completely lost.

In reflecting on this koan and in reading some commentaries, I came to really appreciate this comment by Master Shibayama, “One day a monk came to Master Yun-men, and trying to ask a question he started to say, “The light serenely shines over the whole universe.” Before he had finished the first line, Master Yun-men cuttingly asked him, “Aren’t those the words of Chang-cho?” What a surprisingly great Master Yun-men is! The phrase “before he had even finished the first line” graphically shows his incomparable capability. It is this phrase that makes the koan superb, and if one fails to

appreciate it he has not only missed the koan’s intrinsic value but has failed to appreciate Master Yun-men’s wonderfully drastic means, which overflow with compassion.”²

Today, I’d like to investigate this “wonderfully drastic means, which overflows with compassion”, and tomorrow we continue with the koan.

So: A monk wanted to ask Yun-men a question and started to say, “The radiance serenely illumines the whole universe...” Before he had even finished the first line, Yun-men interrupted him and asked, “Aren’t those the words of Chang-cho?” Yun-men interrupted him. He cut him off. Do you see this monk’s opportunity? Do you see the compassion and skill of Master Yun-men? He interrupted him. What happens to you when you are interrupted? How about just in that very first moment, right before aggravation arises. Why is it that interruptions can sometimes have a very strong, particular kind of edge to them? Now really, what got interrupted? There is such richness here, can you get a sense? What got interrupted?

Danan Roshi used to share stories about his work in the Gurdjieff tradition. One that I always loved hearing about was the workdays. Apparently, you would be assigned a job that you likely had no idea how to do, (woodworking, electrical, cooking etc) and just as you were getting it, figuring it out, starting to get a rhythm, someone would come and tap you on the shoulder and send you off to another completely different job. And that would happen multiple times throughout the day.

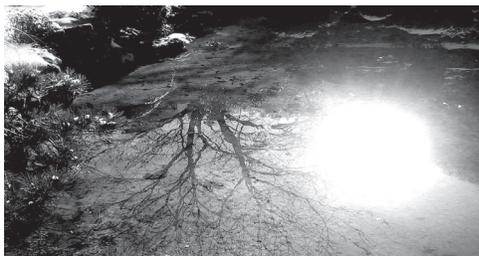
What a great teaching. Maybe we should try that on workdays.

When I was in residency, as an intern, this is exactly how it was. Just sitting down to write my notes and the nurse would call, or the pager would go off, or some

minor or major disaster/interruption would happen. We called these “duck bites” - this constant nipping at your heels. We complained about them quite a bit, but admittedly it was training.

How about this, can we view interruptions as a profound opportunity to let go, let go of the whole thing, of everything and what happens!?

You all checked yourself in here yesterday for our weekend sesshin. Why? I'll tell you, it's not to achieve



some peaceful or blissful state, to learn something new

or to get something. NO. It is to interrupt something. Interrupting the constant movement of me and mine, the chattering, the drives, the urges to itch or move away. Just stop it!

Shonen Dunley, our former Zen priest, gave a talk in the evening of a sesshin once that went like this: “Whatever it is that you are thinking about right now. Stop it!” Then he sat down.

Stop it! Just Stop it!

One day many years ago, I was screwing in a light bulb in the bathroom and I dropped it, it smashed in the sink. And everything stopped. “The sound of something struck, and I forgot everything I knew.”

This monk started to ask his question and was interrupted, a chance to forget everything he knew.

Sense into this again for a moment. What happens to you when you are interrupted? Sometimes, I'm sure, we just shift and go with it. Many times, however, irritation arises. Where does that come from? What is the energy behind it? Do you notice the contraction? The stickiness as if a fist has formed somewhere in your being. “I don't want to do that now, I'm busy, you are bothering me, you are messing up my day, my plans, go away, leave me alone, that's rude... and on and on, into whatever you're particular thought patterns are that arise from this moment of contraction. Now, breathe into that space, soften it, allow some warmth and light into it, and look there... What's there, What's really there?

How is it that sometimes we do move freely, flowing with the changing circumstances of our lives without resistance? That is our very own wisdom, functioning

just fine when we are not in the way. No one to be interrupted.

In Hekigonroku, Case #80, Chao-chou's *A Newborn Baby*, we are given the following:

“A monk asked Chao-chou, “Does a newborn baby possess the sixth sense or not?”

Chao-chou said, “It is like a ball bouncing on swift flowing water.”

Photo by Trish McInroy

The monk later asked T'ou Tzu “What is the meaning of a ball bouncing on swift-flowing water?”

T'ou Tzu said, “Moment by moment it flows on without stopping.”

That's all. Just like a ball bouncing on swift flowing water. Just like that. You are the ball and the swift flowing water. Where's the interruption?

Now what happens to that baby as he or she grows up?

Pema Chodron tells of her teacher giving the analogy of us all being like young children who have a case of scabies and that we are old enough to scratch it, but too young to understand that when we scratch it, it spreads. The urge to scratch and the itching itself represent dukkha, this background hum of dis-ease or dissatisfaction. The truth of suffering created by attachment to an illusory self. The treatment given for this intractable case of scabies by the doctor is the meditation practices, and the teachers each say that if the child wants to heal and if the child has enough love for themselves they will engage the practices, and undertake the difficult task of not scratching the itch or this urge to move away from the underlying dissatisfaction. And low and behold when we stop scratching, the urge lessens and the scabies begin to heal.²

This is why we come to retreat. This is why we practice. To interrupt the scratching. This interruption can feel like a cool breeze, a soothing salve on that itch of scabies. This is Master Yun-men's “wonderfully drastic means, which overflows with compassion” - a direct interruption.

¹The Gateless Barrier, Zen Comments on the Mumonkan”

²Zenkai Shibayama, pg 274

³ Pema Chodron, Getting Unstuck

By Francine Campone

**lethal icicle
glittering in midday sun
reborn a puddle**



Photo By Nick Gianoutsous

Jukai

Though our virtue and understanding are lacking, and our practice imperfect, still we vow to liberate all beings before we ourselves are liberated.

In the past, jukai was our name for taking the precepts for the first time or re-committing to them as sangha members. This is now known, simply, as the *Precepts Ceremony*.

Jukai is now the ceremony in which people formerly became lay ordained. In June, the first jukai, in this form, is scheduled.

Temple Doors

We enter them every time we come into the temple, and they have stood firm to the weather for nearly a century. Yes, the temple doors. A group of sangha members (and an old friend) are going to hold a work project on Saturday, April 21st, to continue the work of cleaning old, degraded varnish off, and giving them a much needed fresh coat. In past work projects, we tackled the two western doors. This time we would like to work on the upper panel areas of both the east and west entries. With enough turnout, we could even tackle the eastern doors and be done!

This has been a very rewarding work experience. It's a focused sort of work that is quiet, but also affords a wonderful chance to work side by side with Sangha members for the benefit of all. If you feel you'd like to join us, contact Mark Minor, markdminor@gmail.com. No experience necessary. We will begin about 9:00 am and work most of the day.

Also, if any sangha member(s) have access to a pickup truck, or a flatbed trailer, we will need to fetch scaffolding sections. Please contact Mark if you can help in this manner, even if you will be unable to help with the sanding/varnishing.

Vesak

The Buddha's birth, Vesak, will be celebrated on May 13. Kids, friends and relatives are welcome! Ceremony, Jataka tales, birthday cake, music, potluck, gaiety and a shenanigan or two can all be expected. With that said, a Vesak committee has been formed to take care of the organizational details. Connie Lane has agreed to head up this group. Please contact her or the office if you are willing and able to help.

By Adriana Lisboa

nowhere to go
no self to cherish
or pity
no path to follow
or fear
no oath, no aim
no breath
no other and
no other miracle
no flaw
no truth

Craig Moseley

I recently returned from an 18-day pilgrimage tracing the Buddha's life through Northern India and into Nepal. The pilgrimage visited the most sacred sites and also included other significant sites where the Buddha lived, journeyed and taught. It was an opportunity to explore the roots of my spiritual practice and better understand the Buddha's life and the culture and environment that influenced him.



The Buddha and me at The Mahabodhi Temple

Immediately before his death (Mahaparinirvana), the Buddha said to Ananda (his attendant and a dedicated monk): *

“Ananda, There are four places the sight of which will arouse strong emotions in those with faith - Which four places?”

“Here the Tathagata was born” - this is the first.

“Here the Tathagata attained enlightenment” - this is the second.

“Here the Tathagata set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma” - this is the third.

“Here the Tathagata attained final nirvana without remainder” - this is the fourth.

And the monk, the nun, the layman or the laywoman who has faith should visit these places.”

* Digha Nikaya, II, 141.

Thurman and Seth Dharma Talk at Bamboo Grove



Group Photo

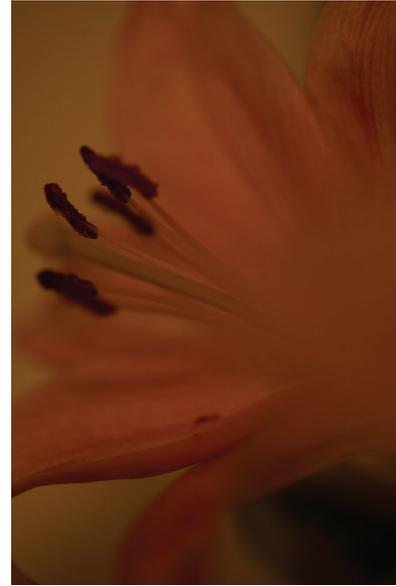


Photo by

G Keeton

Calendar Highlights

Kannon Ceremony

Sesshin

Samu

Guitar Concert

Intro. to Zen Seminar

Board of Directors

Vesak

Zazenkai

Center Closed

Board of Directors

Sangha Meeting

Samu

Jukai Ceremony

Weekend Sesshin

April 8

April 14-18

April 28

April 28

May 5 & 6

May 7

May 13

May 20

May 26-28

June 4

June 10

June 23

June 24

June 29-July 1

Guitar Alliance Concert

Steve Mullins, flamenco guitarist, composer and ethnomusicologist, joins forces with Alfredo Muro, a master of Brazilian and Latin-classical guitar at 7:30 pm on April 28th in the Zen Center Auditorium. It will be a spectacular evening of great music. Tickets are available in the ZC office and are \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). They will sell out quickly so make plans. For more information:

www.stevemullinsmusic.com

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