

Also by John Daido Loori

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Zen Master Dōgen's

THREE HUNDRED KŌANS

WITH COMMENTARY AND VERSE BY

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Shambhala

BOSTON & LONDON

2009

NOTES

1. Never mind where he came from. Where did you come from?
2. When in doubt, honesty is always the best policy.
3. This is not a casual question. Please don't take it lightly.
4. Too bad. He took it lightly.
5. Mañjuśrī's heart is huge. He won't give up easily.
6. Today we have encountered a person who is fast asleep.
7. It seems as though he is pushing back, but not really.
8. Isn't it nice? He doesn't omit anyone.
9. What else could he say, since he has no idea about what is happening?
10. For more than a thousand years, monastics the world over have been trying to bite into this.

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Baizhang's "Gate of Essential Nature"

MAIN CASE

During a work period at his monastery, Baizhang Huaihai was plowing the ground.¹ A monastic heard the sound of the drum ending the work period.² At that moment he held up his hoe, burst into laughter, and went back to the monastery.³

Baizhang said, "Wonderful. This is Avalokiteśvara entering the gate of essential nature."⁴

After Baizhang returned to the monastery, he sent for the monastic and asked, "What did you see to make you laugh like that?"⁵

The monastic said, "I was hungry. As soon as I heard the drum, I returned to have the noon meal."⁶

Baizhang laughed.⁷

COMMENTARY

In the practice of the Zen school, it is important to avoid chasing after sounds and clinging to forms. In spite of the fact that it is possible to clarify

the mind upon hearing a sound, one should still transcend discriminating consciousness and avoid attaching to phenomena. How do you transcend discriminating consciousness and avoid attaching to phenomena?

Among the myriad sounds, there is perceiving and there is understanding. In reality, there's only whole body and mind intimacy. Hearing intimately is not like ordinary hearing. Ordinary hearing is done with the ear. In intimacy there is hearing with the eye and seeing with the ear. How do you hear with the eye and see with the ear? Let go of the ear, and the whole body and mind is nothing but the ear. Let go of the eye, and the whole universe is nothing but the eye.

CAPPING VERSE

Seeing forms and hearing sounds intimately
is the whole body and mind seeing and hearing.
It's not like reflections in a mirror
or echoes in the valley.

NOTES

1. A day of no work is a day of no food.
2. Does the sound come to the ear, or does the ear go to the sound?
3. Like reaching back for a pillow in the middle of the night.
4. When lightning strikes the mountain, thunder rolls through the valley.
5. It's important to know if this is apparent or real.
6. When the wind comes from the east, the leaves gather in the west.
7. Among the three kinds of laughs, what kind of laugh is this?

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Yaoshan's "Nonthinking"

MAIN CASE

When Yaoshan was sitting in meditation,¹ a monastic asked,² "What do you think about as you sit in steadfast composure?"³

Yaoshan said, "I think not-thinking."⁴

The monastic said, "How do you think not-thinking?"⁵

Yaoshan said, "Nonthinking."⁶

COMMENTARY

Abide in neither thinking nor not-thinking. Thinking is linear and sequential—a separation from the reality that is the subject of thought, and thus is an abstraction rather than the reality itself.

Not-thinking is suppressive—it cuts away thoughts the moment they arise, making the mind into a great impenetrable mountain: dead and unresponsive. Nonthinking has no such edges. It is the boundless mind of samādhi that neither holds on nor lets go of thoughts. It is the manifestation of the buddha mind in which the dualism of self and other, thinking and not-thinking, dissolves. This is the dharma of thusness that is the "right thought" of all the buddhas of the ten directions.

CAPPING VERSE

When the dharma wheel turns,
 it always goes in both directions.
 The still point is its hub, and from here,
 all of our myriad activities emerge.
 Rather than give solace to the body,
 give solace to the mind.
 When both body and mind are at peace,
 all things appear as they are:
 perfect, complete, and lacking nothing.

NOTES

1. What is he doing? Even Kashō Buddha didn't attain it with hundreds of kalpas of zazen.
2. Why doesn't he leave the old man alone?
3. Eh? What are you thinking in asking such a question, venerable monastic?
4. He is much too kind. It really can't be explained. He's just setting the monastic to thinking.

5. Now they are both in the same hole. Just shut up and sit!

6. How kind. But say, what does it mean?

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Yangshan's Karmic Consciousness

MAIN CASE

Guishan asked Yangshan, "If someone says that all sentient beings have only karmic consciousness, which is vast and there is nothing to depend upon, how would you prove it?"¹

Yangshan said, "I have a way to prove it."²

Then, as a monastic passed by, Yangshan called out to him, "Reverend!" The monastic turned his head.³

Yangshan said, "Master, this is karmic consciousness, which is vast and there is nothing to depend upon."⁴

Guishan said, "This is a drop of lion's milk that splatters away six gallons of donkey's milk."⁵

COMMENTARY

Karmic consciousness is a result of past actions conditioned by delusion. Delusion exists as a result of consciousness, consciousness results from ignorance, and ignorance is dependent on mind. Yet mind is originally pure. It has no origination or cessation. It is without doing or effort, without karmic retribution, without superiority or inferiority. It is still, serene, and intelligent.

We should understand that one's original, unchanging self-nature is neither holy nor profane, neither deluded nor enlightened. The delusions of ordinary beings and the enlightenment of the buddhas are one reality, which has nothing to do with the senses or its objects nor mind or its environment.

This being the case, tell me, what is it that Yangshan uncovered when he examined the monastic that caused Guishan to say, "This is a drop of lion's milk that splatters away six gallons of donkey's milk"? Haven't you heard of