

# TWO ZEN CLASSICS

Mumonkan and Hekiganroku

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- *I will not doubt the words of an old oshō.* “An old oshō” means Ryūtan, and at the same time means the true Dharma.
- *Someday or other, he will climb the highest of the peaks and establish our Way there.* Someday when he has reached maturity (which he has not yet attained) he will become a great Zen master. Ryūtan had not yet given Tokusan his full approval, but Tokusan was still unaware of this.
- *He hurriedly poured on muddy water to annihilate everything at once.* Mumon’s language here is peculiar. He means that Ryūtan annihilated all delusive thought in Tokusan and at the same time blew the bit of live coal in him to make it burn brighter.
- *It was all a farce.* As usual Mumon is being satirical. Here he means that to make a fuss about Tokusan’s poor experience was a farce.
- *Hearing the name cannot surpass seeing the face.* Before you attain realization, realization is of the greatest importance.
- *Seeing the face cannot surpass hearing the name.* When realization is attained, it is to be regarded as if it were of no value.
- *He may have saved his nose.* He may have attained realization. That would be a gain.
- *But alas! he lost his eyes.* He is still short of maturity. That is a loss.

## Case 29 The Sixth Patriarch’s “Your Mind Moves”

The wind was flapping a temple flag, and two monks started an argument. One said the flag moved, the other said the wind moved; they argued back and forth but could not reach a conclusion. The Sixth Patriarch said, “It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves; it is your mind that moves.” The two monks were awe-struck.

**MUMON’S COMMENT** It is not the wind that moves; it is not the flag that moves; it is not the mind that moves. How do you see the patriarch? If you come to understand this matter deeply, you will see

that the two monks got gold when buying iron. The patriarch could not withhold his compassion and courted disgrace.

### MUMON’S VERSE

Wind, flag, mind moving,  
All equally to blame.  
Only knowing how to open his mouth,  
Unaware of his fault in talking.

**NOTES** *The wind was flapping a temple flag.* When a master delivered a sermon at a temple, a flag was hoisted at the gate to announce it to the public. Two monks started an argument; one said the wind was moving, while the other said the flag was moving. It was true that the wind was moving the flag, but it was also true that the flag was moving. At first they may have enjoyed their argument, but presently it became heated. They became excited, each bent on defeating the other. In short, their minds lost their anchors and started drifting. But the monks were unaware of the disturbed condition of their minds. That was what the Sixth Patriarch, Enō, pointed out. They were led to introspect into their own minds. Perhaps it was rare for the people of those days to reflect upon the condition of their own minds. Enō’s words took them by surprise.

• *It is not the mind that moves.* Mumon seems to contradict Enō’s words. But again, this is Mumon’s peculiar way of talking. Actually, Mumon has borrowed these words. They were first said by a nun who lived in a detached temple belonging to Kyōzan’s monastery. Some monks from a distant district who wanted to have interviews with Kyōzan stopped at the nun’s temple. In the course of the evening’s conversation, they discussed the Sixth Patriarch’s words in the present case. The nun, hearing them, rejected their words and said, “It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves, it is not the mind that moves.” The enlightened mind does not move. And that was what the Sixth Patriarch really meant: Your mind is moving; don’t let it move. This is not only Mumon’s warning; it is the warning of all Zen.

• *Courted disgrace.* It is a Zen master’s way to employ illogical language, indifferent to his own inconsistencies.

• *Unaware of his fault in talking.* He is fully aware but takes no notice of his error.