

The old pine
is talking prajna wisdom

Kosho hannya wo danzu

古松談般若



This line forms a couplet with, "The mysterious bird is singing the truth." It is from the *Ninten Ganmoku*, which portrays the flow of China's Zen through the Rinzaï, Soto, Igyo, Hogen, and Unmon schools.

The poet Sotoba wrote these lines:

The mountain--Buddha's body.
The torrent--his preaching.
Last night, 84,000 poems.
How, how to make them understand?



Practicing at a mountain temple, Sotoba sat all night in deep samadhi. The valley's streams resonated, sarasarasarasara, but he could not tell if he was the sound of the stream's flow or if the sound of the stream's flow was him. Had he become the stream and was he flowing there? He tasted clearly the flavor of becoming totally one with this world around him.



Normally we see our body and the relative world as separate; we live a life apart. When our world and our body meld, we experience the awakening of the Buddha. We join with this world of material things, and become a perfect whole.

Our zazen can't be for playing around with our own thoughts. This world is filled with problems; our bodies are imperfect too. But putting it all aside and becoming one with this world, completely and totally, is what has to be tasted.

"Last night 84,000 poems": listening to the river's song, we become its verses. Daito Kokushi said, "If we see it with our ears and hear it with our eyes it is beyond doubting, the rain dropping from the eaves." At the beginning we heard the raindrops dualistically, dripping as they fell.

Then the raindrop became me, and I became the raindrop as we merged. I'm the raindrop and falling--drip, drip, drip.

This mind of seeing with our ears and hearing with our eyes is beyond any doubt. The dualistic world has disappeared completely; our entire body is one with the whole world.

The willow is the subtle form of Kannon

The wind blowing through the pines is the Buddha teaching through the pines

The sun rises, and we can make out the mountain scenery. In all directions, the light brings forth the forms--this is truly Kannon Bodhisattva appearing. One after the next, as the mountains appear they're our body. This is the state of mind where we are the world and the world is us.

The wind blowing through the pines is the Buddha's teaching. As the trees bend and moan, that sound is the very teaching of the Buddha. We don't think about receiving it but with our whole being we become it. Sotoba is relating the experience of awakening, and we have to know this in our deepest mind. In the *Lotus Sutra* it says, "A Buddha appears in the world to open the treasury of truth, to indicate its meaning, to cause sentient beings to see into it, to cause sentient beings to enter it and abide in it." In this way it's said that the Buddha came into this world so that all beings might be able to open that same eye of wisdom and live from there.

Before his enlightenment, the Buddha studied with two sages, Ararakarama and Utaramaputara. Because he wanted to go beyond their teaching of not thinking, he went to the mountains in order to deepen further. He deepened and deepened that absolute Mu of not thinking anything at all--not even thinking about not thinking. Then, in one moment, on the eighth of December, he realized that absolute Mu when he saw the morning star. Until then he had known an absolute Mu that was completely focused into a single point. This mind then exploded and became the heavens and earth; as the whole universe this energy merged, becoming the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the grasses, the animals, the birds, the sun. All of the ten thousand things expressed the radiance of his life energy completely. When we experience this, that which is seeing and that which is being seen are one and the same; they may appear separate, but they are one. We realize the truth of an absolute infinite great self. We are the world and the world is us, and there is no "me" to suffer.

As Rinzai Zenji has said, "In our eyes it will be seeing, in our ears it will be hearing, in our mouth it will be eating, in our hands it will be grasping, and in our feet it will be walking." That which is hearing, that which is seeing, is not the slightest bit separated from anything. To realize this true self we open our wisdom eye. Humans are born into this world in order to open this eye in the same way that plants are born into this world in order to bring forth flowers.

When we live in accordance with the great way of nature and open our wisdom eye, then,

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The mysterious bird is singing the truth

Everything in existence is teaching prajna wisdom, and the truth is expressed everywhere.

We can't do zazen only to forget our body and let go of our thoughts. Realizing emptiness is not the goal. Having realized emptiness, we then have to become a truly dignified, quality person. No matter what we encounter, it arises from our wisdom and polishes our wisdom, enabling the bright light of the Buddha Dharma to shine brightly and illuminate everything. In becoming this world we discover our true worth.