

# Manifest completely the golden wind

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These words are found in the 27th case of the Blue Cliff Record. They are the words of Unmon Bunne, the master who was so well known in the Tang Dynasty. The wind of the house of the Unmon line was known to be golden like this. Unmon used words like "kan," or gate; "ro," or revealed; and "Iiii," or nonsense. Short yet fully manifesting the truth, those brief words offered a succinct and deep expression of the truth. They had an immeasurably deep profundity, a mysterious truth, while at the same time expressing a very high quality state of mind. It was probably in the later part of Unmon Bunne Zenji's life that a monk came to him and asked, "How is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" The monk was asking: When all of the small storms and large storms are over and all of the leaves have fallen and the branches are bare, what is this like?

The question is not only about nature but also about humans' state of mind when we have finished suffering from the desires and attachments of life, when the ignorant and greedy and angry mind has become quiet and we are no longer thinking about this and that, when the problems of life and death and nirvana are no longer a consideration. When no explanation is necessary, when there is no longer any distinction between an ignorant person and a Buddha, when every difference has been swept away, that state of mind a finger can't touch--how is that? This is the question the monk was asking. With this statement alone he showed that he had the essence to be able to ask such a question. He was saying, "I have no more need for desires and attachments, for becoming a Buddha or being concerned with birth or death." He was asking how a person like himself with no more desires or confusion or delusion--how someone with a state of mind where all of that has been extinguished--could become liberated.

Thus he asked, "How is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" The monk had experienced that place where all the leaves and flowers have fallen, like the Buddha in Nirvana, and was asking how to deepen further. Of course we have to experience and pass through this state of mind as well, or we will stay deluded and be thrown around by every little thing that comes along. When every thought blows us around, no human trust is possible. If we cannot experience thoroughly this state of mind of the monk, we cannot call it the Buddha Dharma or say we have

realized Zen.

But there is a dangerous trap here. This monk who has come forth with this state of mind is carrying it around with him, pointing it out and sitting firmly right on top of it. This is his joy and his satisfaction, but if he stays there, satisfied, how will he work with those people who are suffering in society? How will he resolve that responsibility? He could remain stuck in this great trap. This serene and clear state of mind is the source point for liberating those in society who are burning up and suffering deeply, but if we sit down and remain on that source point, how will we be able to bring liberation to those people?

"How is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?"

This state of mind is the ultimate point of zazen. Doing zazen we think about this and we think about that; we have all kinds of problems. But as we continue with our zazen we forget our body and align our breathing, and little by little as the thoughts rise and fall, rise and fall, and we continue aligning, finally our body and our breathing become settled. Within our mind the waves and winds settle. This serenity with nothing to think about--without any extraneous thoughts--is the ultimate point of zazen.

Yet while this is the ultimate point of zazen, if we think this is absolute that is a great big trap, and there is no freedom there. Only interested in our own good fortune, we become narrow and rigid. Our zazen is not for our own personal happiness; there can be no such narrow conditions on it or we are turning our back on society and only searching for our own personal pleasure. We fall into idealism then. Even when we know this ultimate point of zazen, its essence is still insufficient.

As Takuan Zenji taught, when our mind is unmoved, not stopped on anything, this is the state of mind of truth. While reflecting everything that comes along, the unmoved mind does not linger anywhere. In just this way Takuan Zenji describes also the essence of zazen. For our zazen to become ripened does not mean that we hold on to an idea of nothing at all. Rather, we become truly full and taut, like a balloon that is ready to explode at the slightest touch. With this state of mind of being full and taut, stretched completely full, we can face all of the problems and challenges and heavy sufferings of society without being pushed and pulled. We can traverse the heavens and traverse the earth. With this state of mind, while being in the middle of all of those challenges, we drink them all down. To be in this state of mind is living zazen.

Unmon Daishi answered this monk without hesitation, "Manifest completely the golden wind!" With every part of our body and being--in every pore--let ourselves be poured through by that golden wind. The golden wind is the autumn wind, the wind that crosses the skies during the rich, full harvest. As all of the crops--the rice and the wheat--ripen and bear fruit, those full and abundant ripened plants form a golden sea under the great blue sky, vividly alive and stretching as far as the eye can reach. That refreshing wind that blows across that golden sea under the blue sky, that autumn wind, the harvest wind, blows everywhere. This ripened, abundant state of mind is what Unmon responded with. The monk came to Unmon Daishi with a withered winter state of mind, where all living things have passed away, where nothing remains alive, and to this monk Unmon Daishi replied, going beyond that, "Manifest completely the golden wind." Expand throughout the heavens and throughout the whole earth!

From this state of mind Unmon Daishi in a few words went beyond all human delusions and problems and sufferings, even the question of life and death. As the priest Ryokan also said,

When we are to meet a calamity  
The best way to avoid calamity is just to confront it.  
When the time to die has come,  
The best way is to meet death.

Instead of becoming overwhelmed by what comes along, this state of mind of Ryokan drinks all of it down, and then sees how to live through it, how to give it life. This state of mind is not chilly and reserved, but drinks all of that down as well. When the challenges we face are so overwhelming they take our breath away, at that very time, how can we give life to our deepest wisdom? Instead of being crushed by a difficulty, how can we make use of it, how can we give it life? All of humanity's wisdom for resolving these questions is included in this fullness of the golden wind.

Ryokan's words are not about running away or escaping life's reality. When our zazen has ripened and ripened and ripened, we forget our body and forget our thinking, and with our interior

essence we extend throughout the heavens and the earth. Without this full tautness, when we find ourselves in severe and challenging circumstances we will not be able to see clearly how to resolve them. Our zazen is not about depending on a world where "the tree withers and the leaves fall." The ultimate point of zazen is to do it from the very top of our head to the very bottoms of our feet, with every cell and pore completely and totally. When our state of mind is so full and taut it reaches every corner of our being, with this body we know the fullness of the universe. Fresh and new, we again and again create a new world and give life to all things. This state of mind is our truth. If there is any delusion or confusion mixed in there, or if thoughts about something else arise, then this essence becomes diluted and fades. If we have any self-conscious awareness or awareness of being like the tree that withers and the leaves that fall, our zazen does not expand in this way.

For our zazen to ripen and our mind to open, we have to realize that absolute possibility and freedom and love of all people, to become a true master in this way. We must awaken to this state of mind. Where is there happiness or good fortune other than this in life? Unmon Daishi is speaking from the state of mind of a master of the world of zen as he answers this monk's question. This place which hadn't been reached yet was completed with his answer.