

禅画禅语 Chan Heart, Chan Art

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11. SPACE WINKS

One time at a Dharma function, Emperor Suzong of the Tang Dynasty sought instruction from Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong, asking him many questions. However, the Chan Master did not even give him a glance. Emperor Suzong very angrily said, "I am the Son of Heaven of the Great Tang! How dare you not look at me?"

Without directly responding, Imperial Master Huizhong instead asked Emperor Suzong of the Tang Dynasty, "Oh, great emperor, have you ever seen space?"

"I've seen it!"

"Then, let me ask, has space ever winked at you?"

Emperor Suzong could say nothing in response.

In our lives, what we care about most are interpersonal relationships. Who is nice to me? Who treats me badly? Every day, we worry about gains and losses. If we are not haggling over money, then we are worrying about love. Besides these concerns about money and love, there are also the concerns about

being respected. Throughout the day, we want people to praise us, we want people to hold us in high esteem, and we want people to notice us. Contrast this with space. Space does not need us to wink at it. Why would we need space to wink at us? The true principle of the Dharmakaya is like space. It vertically penetrates the three time periods; horizontally permeates the ten directions; fills the universe; and includes heaven and earth. According to conditions, it proceeds and responds. There is no place it is not. Emperor Suzong did not understand this. No wonder Imperial Master Nanyang asked, "Has space ever winked at you?"



12. NOT BELIEVING IS THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

A student monk requested instruction from Imperial Master Huizhong: "The ancient sage said,

The verdant green bamboo all are Dharmakaya;
The luxuriant yellow flowers are nothing but prajna.

Non-believers think this wrong; believers think it is inconceivable. But I do not know what is correct?”

Imperial Master Huizhong replied, “Such is the state of beings like Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. It is not something that ordinary people and Hinayana practitioners can believe or accept, so the *Flower Ornament Sutra* says, ‘The Buddhakaya permeates all dharma realms, universally manifests before all beings, and following conditions, responds to seekers completely. Yet, it eternally dwells in this bodhi seat.’ Since the green bamboo does not go beyond the dharma realms, what is not the Dharmakaya? In addition, the *Prajna Sutras* say, ‘Form is limitless, thus, prajna is also limitless.’ Since yellow flowers do not go beyond form, what is not prajna? Therefore, the sutras originally are undetermined Dharmas, and the Dharma originally is without many seeds.”

After the student monk listened to this, he still did not understand. He then asked, “As to that statement, are the believers correct? Are the non-believers correct?”

Imperial Master Huizhong, hinting at an even higher state of mind, answered, “The believers are the mundane truth; the nonbelievers are the ultimate truth.”

Astonished, the student monk said, “The non-believers ridicule it as wrong view! How can the Chan Master say they are the ultimate truth?”

“The non-believers, themselves, do not believe the ultimate truth, itself, is the ultimate truth. Because it is the ultimate truth, ordinary people denounce it as wrong. Those with wrong views—how can they speak the ultimate truth?” Imperial Master Huizhong concluded.

Just then, the student monk awakened to the ultimate truth, which is not easy to believe.

When the Buddha first attained enlightenment, he lamented that what he had awakened to went against sentient beings’ beliefs. Sentient beings think sensual pleasures are real; the Buddha realized sensual pleasures are false. Sentient beings think that Buddha nature and suchness do not exist; the Buddha held they do. As a result, in the ways of the mundane world, there is

no one who does not use belief or non-belief as standards, there is no one who does not use speaking of good or bad as standards. The truth is that those on the Buddha Way belong to the Buddha Way, and those with wrong views belong to wrong views.



13. I'M AN ATTENDANT

The Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong was grateful for his attendant's thirty years of service and wanted to repay him by helping him attain awakening. One day, he called out, "Attendant!"

As soon as the attendant heard the Imperial Master call him, he immediately responded, "Imperial Master, what do you need?"

The Imperial Master said helplessly, "Nothing!"

After a while, the Imperial Master again called out, "Attendant!"

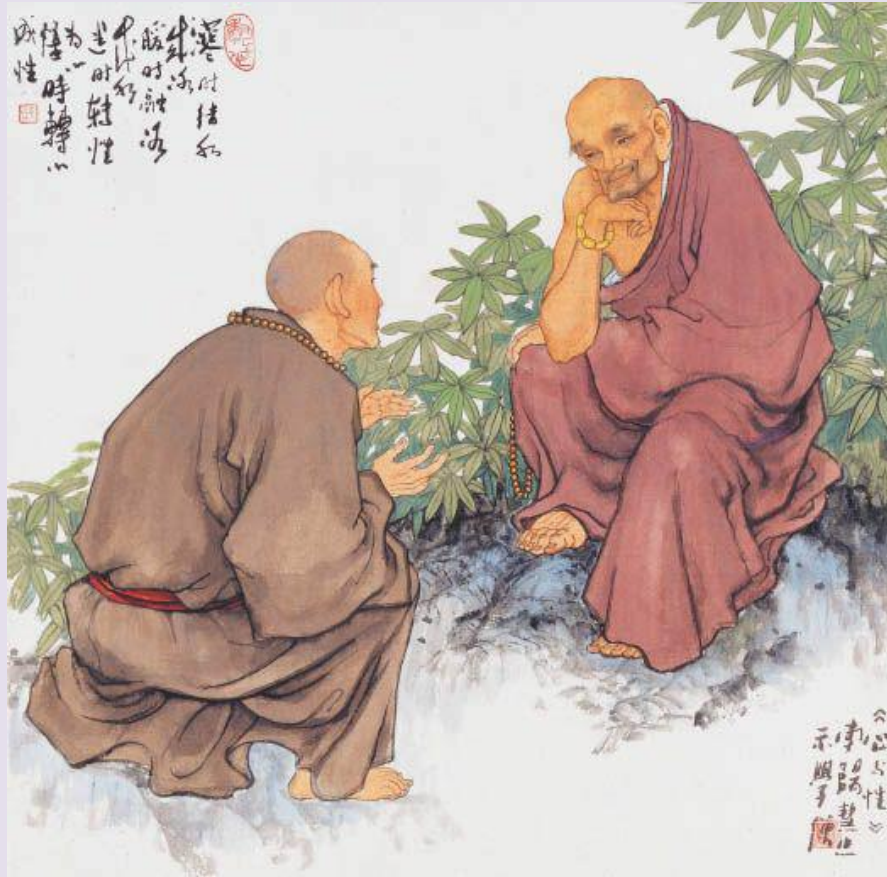
The attendant immediately replied, "Imperial Master, what do you need?"

Once again, the Imperial Master said helplessly, “ Nothing!”
After many times of this, the Imperial Master changed his
approach towards the attendant, crying out, “Buddha! Buddha!”
Completely at a loss, the attendant asked in return, “Imperial
Master, whom are you calling?”
The Imperial Master had no choice but to instruct clearly,
“I’m calling you!”
The attendant did not understand, so he said, “Imperial
Master, I’m an attendant, not a Buddha!”
This time, Imperial Master Huizhong could only sigh with
lament, “In the future, do not blame me for letting you down,
when in fact, it is you who has let me down!”
The attendant still obstinately said, “Imperial Master! No
matter what, I will never let you down and you will never let me
down!”
The Imperial Master said, “The truth is, you’ve already let
me down.”

*Imperial Master Huizhong and the attendant—who let whom
down? Let us not discuss it. However, the attendant only
recognized himself as an attendant and was afraid to shoulder the
title of Buddha. This is extremely regrettable. The Chan School
stresses, “directly shouldering responsibilities.” What we call the
mind, Buddha, and sentient being are no different. However,
sentient beings only recognize themselves as sentient beings and
do not recognize themselves as Buddhas. They sink in the cycle of
birth and death, and are unable to return home. This is very sad!
Chan Master Wumen said,*

*Wanting others to shoulder an iron cangue without openings,
Implicates the descendants, giving them no rest.
Wanting to support the door and prop up the house,
You must climb up a mountain of knives barefoot!*

*The Imperial Master, advanced in years and of solitary mind,
used the method of “pressing an ox’s head down to eat the grass”
on the attendant to make him awaken. It could not be helped that
the attendant was only an attendant, not a Buddha.*



14. MIND AND NATURE

There was a student monk who went to Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong's place to study. He asked for instruction, saying, "Chan is another name for mind, and 'mind' is the true nature of suchness that is neither increased in Buddhas nor decreased in the ordinary. The patriarchs of the Chan School changed the term 'mind' to 'nature.' May I ask the Chan Master, what is the difference between 'mind' and 'nature'?"

Huizhong replied without the slightest reservation, "When deluded, there is a difference; when awakened, there is no difference."

The student monk then, taking it a step further, asked, "The sutras say, 'Buddha nature is eternal; the mind is impermanent.' Why would you say that there's no difference?"

Imperial Master Huizhong patiently explained by way of analogy: "You're only relying on words, and not relying on the meaning. For example, when it's cold, water solidifies into ice; when it's warm, ice melts into water. When deluded, nature solidifies into mind; when awakened, mind melts into nature."

Mind and nature are originally the same. Depending on delusion or awakening, there is a difference.”

The student monk finally came to a deep understanding.

In Buddhism, there are many names for “mind” and “nature,” such as: “the original face,” “Tathagatagarbha,” “Dharmakaya,” “the ultimate truth,” “intrinsic nature,” “suchness,” “the essence,” “true mind,” “prajna,” “Chan,” etc. This is nothing other than applying various ways for us to recognize ourselves. Although there is a difference between delusion and awakening, there is no difference in true nature. For example, gold is gold, yet it can be made into earrings, rings, bracelets, and various kinds of gold objects. Although these objects may be different, they are really all gold. Understand this: though the terms mind and nature are different, they both actually refer to our own essence.