

## 32 YANGSHAN'S "MIND AND ENVIRONMENT"

**INTRODUCTION** The ocean is the world of dragons—disappearing and appearing, they sport serenely. The sky is the home of cranes—they fly and call freely. Why does the exhausted fish stop in the shoals and a sluggish bird rest in the reeds? Is there any way to figure gain and loss?

**CASE** Yangshan asked a monk, "Where are you from?"  
The monk said, "From Yu province."  
Yangshan said, "Do you think of that place?"  
The monk said, "I always think of it."  
Yangshan said, "The thinker is the mind and the thought-of is the environment. Therein are mountains, rivers, and the land mass, buildings, towers, halls and chambers, people, animals, and so forth; reverse your thought to think of the thinking mind—are there so many things there?"  
The monk said, "When I get here, I don't see any existence at all."  
Yangshan said, "This is right for the stage of faith, but not yet right for the stage of person."  
The monk said, "Don't you have any other particular way of guidance?"  
Yangshan said, "To say that I have anything particular or not would not be accurate. Based on your insight, you only get one mystery—you can take the seat and wear the robe. After this, see on your own."

**COMMENTARY** Yangshan in the past once asked a monk, "Where do you come from?"  
The monk said, "From Yu province." Yangshan said, "I'd like to hear

news of Yu province—what is the price of rice there?" The monk said, "When I came, I happened to go right through the market-place, and broke the bridge as I walked over it." Yangshan then stopped.

Yangshan was 'Little Shakyamuni'—he didn't have only one way of guiding people. This particular case is exactly the way a student enters the gate, where he goes to work and gains power. Yangshan asked the monk from Yu province, "Do you think of that place?" Suppose the monk had said "No"—then what? Yangshan certainly would have another strong point. But the monk instead said, "I think of it always." True words—he should repent. Yangshan said, "What thinks is the mind, what is thought of is the environment; in the environment there are a thousand differences—are there so many in the mind which thinks?" Yunmen once said, "Yangshan, because of his kindness and compassion, had a conversation in the weeds." After all the monk too was sharp; he said, "Here, I don't see any existence at all." Nowadays hardly one of ten thousand people reaches this state; if they do, then they point to themselves and carry a board, not knowing that by delighting in the road one ultimately fails to reach home. Yangshan had 'traveled the mountain path,' so he specially pointed out a living road.

In the past, as Yangshan was meditating in front of the monks' hall in the middle of night he didn't see the mountains, rivers, buildings, people, or even his own body—all was the same as space. The next morning he reported this to Guishan, who said, "I reached this state when I was at Baizhang's—this is just the achievement of melting illumination which dissolves illusions; later on, when you are teaching, there can be no one who surpasses this." I say, no one but Yangshan could realize this; no one but Guishan would recognize it.

The *Heroic March* Scripture says, "When stirring thoughts end and floating ideas vanish, this is like removing defilement from the mind of aware radiance; the whole course of life and death, from beginning to end, is completely illumined—this is called the ending of the cluster of conception. Such a person can transcend the defilement of afflictions. When you look into the basis, dissolving illusory conceptions is the fundamental." Here we also see Gui and Yang, father and son, wondrously according with the Buddha's mind.

Yangshan one day presenting his understanding said, "If you have me

see for myself, at this point there is no state of completion, and nothing to cut off either." Guishan said, "According to your point of view, there are still phenomena, and you haven't yet got away from mind and objects." Yangshan said, "Since there is no complete state, where are there still mind and objects?" Guishan said, "Just now, didn't you make such an interpretation?" Yangshan said, "Yes." Guishan said, "If so, then this is completely mind and objects—how can you say there are none?" Yangshan saw that this monk still had this, and judged according to principle, saying, "This is all right for the stage of faith, but not yet for the stage of person." To cite the *Adamantine Concentration Scripture*, there is the stage of faith, the stage of contemplation, the stage of cultivation, the stage of practice, and the stage of relinquishment; now as he speaks of the stage of faith and the stage of person, they're not necessarily completely the same. Master Zhu-an Gui said, "In the opening and closing of the mouth you distinguish 'this side' and 'that side'—where there are words and no words you distinguish the stage of faith and the stage of person." This too is a particular interpretation.

Guishan questioned Yangshan, "Huiji, speak quickly, without going into the clusters and elements." Yangshan said, "I, Huiji, don't even set up faith." Guishan said, "Do you not set it up after having faith, or do you not set it up without having had faith?" Yangshan said, "I'm just Huiji—who else should I have faith in?" Guishan said, "If so, then you have a fixed disciple nature." Yangshan said, "I don't even see 'Buddha'." Chan Master Haosheng of Qingju, in the ox-herding pictures, said at the sixth chapter, "The stage of faith is gradually matured, and one is generally aware of wrong states; although one distinguishes purity and defilement, it is like a sword cutting mud. One still retains the halter—one cannot yet rely on faith; therefore (the ox is) half white, half black." His verse says,

*Although long having herded in the fields,  
The hand leading the rope gradually loosens.  
Going along holding, not dark and muddled,  
Progressing in training, he doesn't follow close by.  
(The ox) sporting on clear ground,  
(The ox-herd) always keeps holding the long whip.*

*The fragrant grasses on the green mountains are slender;  
With one flavor they daily satisfy hunger.*

At the twelfth chapter, he says, "The state of person is fundamentally empty; body and mind are without attachment, gain and loss are cleared away. The hidden mysterious path is far beyond discrimination; as for the absolute word, attempt to discuss it and you fail." The verse says,

*Falsely he creates toil, watching over the ox;  
The ox is not, neither is the person.  
Right in the middle forgetting conception,  
Beyond there is a mysterious subtlety;  
Fine dust rises in the ocean,  
Snow flies in a huge furnace.  
Meeting, seeking understanding,  
It does not fall within the scope of your mental function.*

I say, Yangshan doesn't even set up faith, Qingju says the state of person is originally empty: if you can pick them out within the sayings of these two teachers, the stage of faith and the stage of person are clearly visible; that is what is called retreating into oneself, not missing one out of ten thousand.

The monk said, "Don't you have any other particular way of guidance?" There are thorns in the soft mud. Yangshan said, "To say that I have anything particular or not would not be accurate." If there is, you add frost to snow; if not, you die at the phrase. Therefore he pointed out one mystery, telling him to see it on his own.

In the wellspring, emptiness is the seat, myriad practices are the robe. Some say the seat is quiet meditation, and the robe is the patchwork vestment covering the head. Some say the seat means opening the hall and ascending the high seat, and the robe means the Dharma vestments adorning the body. Each of these is reasonable. But tell me—"after this, see on your own"—see what? Ask of Tiantong; his verse says,

VERSE *All-embracing, with no outside;  
Penetrating with no obstruction.  
Gates and walls like cliffs,*

*Doors and locks redoubled.  
When the wine is always sweet, it lays out the guests;  
Though the meal is filling, it ruins the farmers.  
Bursting out of the clear sky, the garuda takes wing on the wind;  
Treading over the blue sea, thunder follows the roaming dragon.*

COMMENTARY Tiantong first versifies “Think back on that which thinks—are there so many things there?” Yunmen said, “If you can understand, you engulf all before you—if you can’t understand, you still engulf all before you.” This is ‘all-embracing, with no outside.’ Mountains, rivers, towers, buildings, people, animals, and so forth—one and many do not impede each other, person and environment merge—this is ‘penetrating with no obstruction.’

National Teacher Deshao said,

*Crossing the summit of the mystic peak,  
It's not the human world;  
Outside of mind there are no things—  
Filling the eyes are blue mountains.*

‘Crossing the summit of the mystic peak’ is the environment which is thought of; ‘it is not the human world’ is the mind which thinks. ‘Outside of mind there are no things’ is ‘I don’t see any existence at all.’ ‘Filling the eyes are blue mountains’—just this one phrase separates this monk and National Teacher Deshao by the stage of faith, the stage of person, one mystery, three mysteries, so that ‘Gates and walls are like cliffs, doors and locks are redoubled’—after all, it is difficult to see each other.

Also in the verse the monk’s viewpoint is likened to a drunken guest or a ruined farmer, while Yangshan’s instruction is like a garuda bird or a roving dragon. In the *Lotus Scripture* is the metaphor of someone who goes to the house of a close friend, gets drunk on wine and goes to sleep; at that time the friend has to go do some official business; he takes a priceless jewel and fastens it inside the other’s clothing, while the man, being in a drunken sleep, is not aware of this at all. Zhaozhou said, “I’ve heard that once filled you forget a hundred hungers; today my body itself

is this." Zhaozhou, once fulfilled, forgot a hundred hungers; he should receive the fine offerings of humans and gods. This monk, full of food, ruins the farmers; he can hardly digest even a drop of water. Clear-eyed people should discern.

Sanskrit *garuda* is called 'bird with beautiful wings' in our language; beating a wind, it parts the ocean, directly seizes a dragon and swallows it. When Confucius asked Laozi about rites, he said, "I see Laozi as like a dragon." A roaming dragon appears and disappears in the clouds and mist; it is not the same as one that hides away. This versifies "This is right for the stage of faith, but not for the stage of person. Based on your insight, you've just got a single mystery; after this see for yourself." Why make him shift his body and change his steps? 'As long as there is a road to ascend, there is also an eminent person to traverse it too.'

ADDED  
SAYINGS:  
CASE

Yangshan asked a monk, "Where are you from?"—He shuts the door and digs for understanding.

The monk said, "From Yu province."—The public proof is clear.

Yangshan asked, "Do you think of that place?"—Just when he'd forgotten!

The monk said, "I always think of it."—A familiar place is hard to forget.

Yangshan said, "The thinker is the mind and the thought-of is the environment."—So actually he's even set up subject and object.

Therein are mountains, rivers, the land, buildings, towers, halls and chambers, people, animals, etc.—think back on the thinking mind; are there so many things there?—You yourself create the distinction, my good man.

Here, I don't see any existence at all—There's still this.

This is right for the stage of faith, but not yet right for the stage of person—The snow remaining in the garden, the sun will melt, but who will you have sweep out the red dust inside the room?

Don't you have any other particular way of guidance?—Now he comes on like this.

To say that I have anything particular or not would not be accurate—He shoots through the double gate.

Based on your insight, you only get one mystery—There's already the moon in the boat.

After this, see on your own—He even adds wind to the sails.

ADDED  
SAYINGS:  
VERSE

*All-embracing, with no outside*—So big there's nothing it doesn't contain.

*Penetrating without obstruction*—So fine there's nothing it doesn't go into.

*Gates and walls like cliffs*—Better not grope.

*Doors and locks redoubled*—Not worth a snap of the fingers.

*When the wine is always sweet, it lays out the guests*—Wake them up and I'll strike.

*While the meal is filling, it ruins the farmers*—They're buried in the same pit.

*Bursting out of the clear sky, the garuda takes wing on the wind*—Piercing the blue sky.

*Treading over the blue sea, thunder follows the roaming dragon*—The early spring season when the insects are roused.