

September 30, 2005

Autumn

Baoning recited a verse:
A cold autumn wind
drones in the pines.
The Wayward traveler
thinks of her home.

Then he asked, "Who is the traveler? Where is her home?" After a long pause, Baoning said, "There's soup and rice in the meditation hall."

A monk asked Yunmen, "When the tree withers and the leaves fall, what's happening?"

Yunmen replied, "It's revealing the golden wind."

[Golden Wind is the deity of autumn]

The Heart Sutra

Hakuin's *Commentary on the Heart Sutra*:

The ogre outside shoves the door,
The ogre inside holds it fast.
Dripping sweat from head to tail,
Battling for their very lives,
They keep it up throughout the night
Until at last when the dawn appears
Their laughter fills the early light –
They were friends from the first.

Someone asked, "What does *form is emptiness, emptiness is form* mean?"

Changsha said, "Listen to this verse of mine:
An obstruction is not a barrier,
A passage is not empty.
When you understand this,
Mind and matter are one."

Koans for Interesting Times

A high-ranking samurai was also a keen Zen student. Fighting broke out all over the country and he was wounded in battle; in spite of the pain he galloped to a temple to see the teacher there. A tea ceremony was going on, and the teacher put a cup in front of him, asking, "How are things?"

The warrior immediately crushed the cup under his foot and said, "Heaven and earth completely broken up."

The teacher asked, "When heaven and earth are broken up, what's that like for you?"

The warrior stood with his hands crossed over his breast. The teacher hit him, and he involuntarily cried out from the pain of his wounds.

The teacher said, "Heaven and earth not quite broken up yet."

When Enkakuji temple was destroyed by fire in 1374, the Buddhist and Confucian books that its founder had brought from China were reduced to ashes. Priests from a nearby shrine came to the temple, distressed about the loss of these ancient texts.

Fumon, the master of Enkakuji, said to them, "None of the texts has been burned."

"Then where are they?" asked a priest doubtfully.

The teacher drew a circle and said, "They are in here."

The priests didn't understand, and one of them asked, "Would you show us the Tang edition of the Mahavairochana Sutra?"

Fumon held up one hand. The priests didn't know what to make of this.

Another of them asked, "Will you show us the later translations of the Lotus Sutra?" Fumon held up one hand.

A Confucian scholar asked to see a copy of the Four Confucian Classics, and Fumon again held up his hand.

Then a teacher of the Shingon school asked, "What is that supposed to mean?"

Fumon said, "The covers got burned, but you can still hold the texts in your hand."