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Kalyani Unkule

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Internationalisation Zen

Kalyani Unkule
O.P. Jindal Global University, India

Zen is the attainment of instant wisdom based on a poignant experience.

The Zen solution to analysis paralysis is to surrender the analysis and for once, fully inhabit the paralysis. The wisdom of Zen is as enduring as it is fleeting so I will not try to bend and twist it into an illuminating framework for the global higher education scenario of our time. But if I were to hazard a suggestion as to how we might walk the path of Zen right now, it would be this: frantic attempts to salvage the situation will not work because they stem from an attachment to the way we have been doing things. We are called to be still, bear witness, and practice not doing until our constructs slowly begin to thaw and completely dissolve eventually.

Below are seven Zen koans. Each is an invitation to access all our potent faculties to read situations and respond rather than relying solely on the conditioned mind. They are stories which aptly convey the monumentality of the mundane and the vacuity of the vaunted. All the koans below are from Kubose's (1973) compilation "Zen Koans." Any sensations/responses that arise as you read each koan are the right answer. If no sensations arise, then, welcome to Zen.

1. **No Cold No Heat** - A monk asked Tozan, "How can we escape the cold and heat?" Tozan replied, "Why not go where there is no cold and heat?" "Is there such a place?" the monk asked. Tozan commented, "When cold, be thoroughly cold; when hot, be hot through and through." (p. 4)
2. **The Girl Comes Out of Meditation** - Once upon a time, Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, went to an assemblage of Buddhas. By the time he arrived, all had departed except for the Buddha Sakyamuni and one girl. She was Seated in a place of highest honor, deep in meditation. Manjusri asked the Buddha how it was possible for a mere girl to attain a depth of meditation that even he could not attain. The Buddha said. "Bring her out of meditation and ask her yourself." So Manjusri walked around the girl three times [a gesture of reverence], then snapped his fingers. She remained deep in meditation. He then tried rousing her by invoking all his magic powers; he even transported her to a high heaven. All was to no avail, so deep was her concentration. But suddenly, up from below the earth sprang Momyo, an unenlightened one. He snapped his fingers once, and the girl came out of her meditation. (p. 22)
3. **Zuigan Calls His Own Master** - Zuigan called out to himself every day, "Master." Then he answered himself, "Yes, sir." And after that he added, "Become sober." Again he answered, "Yes, sir." And after that he continued, "Do not be deceived by others." "Yes, sir; yes, sir," he answered. (p. 31)

4. **Tipping Over a Water Vase** - Hyakujo wished to send a monk to open a new monastery, He told his pupils that whoever answered a question most ably would be appointed. Placing a water vase on the ground, he asked, “Who can say what this is without calling its name?” The chief monk said. “No one can call it a tree stump.” Isan, the cook monk, tipped over the vase with his foot and went out. Hyakujo smiled and said, “The chief monk loses.” And Isan became the master of the new monastery. (p. 33)
5. **Inner Culture** - Daiji said to his monks, “Brothers, it is better to dig inwardly one foot than to spread Dharma outwardly ten feet. Your inner culture of one inch is better than your preaching of ten inches.” In order to balance and clarify this statement, Tozan said, “I preach what I cannot practice, and practice what I cannot preach.” (p. 36)
6. **Obaku and the Wine-Guzzlers** - Obaku addressed the monks, “You guzzlers of wine! If I had gone on as many pilgrimages as you in search of Zen, wherever should I be today? Don’t you know that in all this land there is no Zen teacher?” A monk came forward and said, “But surely there are those who reform the disciples and govern them. What about them?” Obaku said, “I didn’t say there was no Zen, merely that there is no teacher of Zen.” (p. 39)
7. **Isan Summons Two Official Monks** - Master Isan sent for the treasurer, but when he appeared, Isan said, “I sent for the treasurer, not you.” The treasurer did not know what to say. The Master next sent for the chief monk, but when he came, Isan said, “I sent for the chief monk, not you. The chief monk, also, was dumbfounded. (p. 42)

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Kalyani Unkule is Professor and Vice Dean (International) at Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, India. Her research complements her practice in intercultural dialogue and impact-driven projects in higher education internationalisation and spiritual learning. Email: kalyani.u7@gmail.com.
