

Honolulu Diamond Sangha



Winter 2022

RECORD OF EASE, Case 79: Changsha Takes a Step

By Michael Kieran

The Case:

Changsha directed a monk to ask Hui Heshang, "What about when you hadn't yet seen Nanquan?"

Hui sat still for quite a while.

The monk asked, "What about after seeing him?"

Hui said, "No difference."

The monk returned and told Changsha about this. Changsha said:

A person sitting on top of a
hundred-foot pole

has entered the Way but not yet
gotten real.

Step forward from the top of the
hundred-foot pole,

the world of the ten directions
confirmed as your whole body.

The monk said, "From the top of a hundred-foot pole, how do you step further?"

Changsha said, "Mountains of Lang, rivers of Li."

The monk said, "I don't understand."

Changsha said, "The four seas and five lakes all belong to the royal sphere."

Today we have the extraordinary master Changsha Jingcen. Changsha was a successor of the great Nanquan Puyuan and a dharma brother of Zhaozhou.

After Changsha had become a teacher, he once took the teaching seat in the dharma hall and said to the assembly:

If I were to wholly bring up the Chan teaching, there'd be weeds ten feet deep in the teaching hall. Nevertheless, I can't help but tell you that the whole universe in all directions is the eye of a monk, the whole universe in all directions is the whole body of a monk, the

whole universe in all directions is the light of the self, the whole universe in all directions is within one's own light. In all the universe, in all directions, there is nothing that is not oneself. I always tell you, the Buddhas of all times, along with the sentient beings of the universe, are the light of great prajñā wisdom. Before the light is emitted, where do you sentient beings comprehend? Before the light is emitted, there isn't even any news of Buddhas or sentient beings — where do the mountains, rivers, and earth come from?

The exchange in today's case demonstrates and lays bare this same wisdom. Let's examine it closely.

While Changsha was studying with Nanquan, he had a brother monk by the name of Hui, who after studying with Nanquan went to live as a hermit in the forest. Once Changsha sent one of his monks to check on Hui.

The monk asked Hui, "What about when you hadn't yet seen Nanquan?"

Hui sat still for a little while.

The monk asked, "What about after seeing him?"

Hui said, "No difference."

It seems brother Hui had become stuck in the dark cave of "it's all the same." This is a serious occupational hazard for students of Zen. The danger comes with the territory because in our zazen we often do experience a great peace and serenity when the thinking and discriminating mode of our mind finally turns off. This

experience can be incredibly blissful and encouraging. For that reason it's also easy to stop and linger there, taking it to be some sort of ultimate state, and then later hanging on to memories of that blissful condition and seeking it as the purpose of one's practice. But as the old saying goes, "Though gold dust is precious, in the eyes it obscures the vision."

This seems to be where Hui was stuck. Surely there was some difference between before Hui started practicing with Nanquan and after.

When the monk returned to Changsha and reported the exchange with brother Hui, Changsha said:

A person sitting on top of a
hundred-foot pole
has entered the Way but not yet
gotten real.
Step forward from the top of the
hundred-foot pole,
the world of the ten directions
confirmed as your whole body.

In his teishō on the Case master Wansong, co-author of the Record of Ease, says of Hui:

It's like someone having taken his grandparents' house and business, and those of all his relatives, and sold them off on the same ticket. Then he puts the ticket into a crystal jar, which he keeps with him where ever he goes, guarding it like his eyeballs.

Such a waste. Masters through the ages have cautioned about this pitfall. Listen to Dahui Zonggao:

Once you have achieved peaceful stillness of body and mind, you must make earnest effort. Do not

immediately settle down in peaceful stillness—in the Teachings this is called “The Deep Pit of Liberation,” much to be feared. You must make yourself turn freely, like a gourd floating on the water, independent and free, not subject to restraints, entering purity and impurity without being obstructed or sinking down. Only then do you have a little familiarity with the school of the patchrobed monks.

Dahui knew well whereof he spoke. When he first met his teacher Yuanwu, Yuanwu brought up the following case and asked for Dahui's view on the matter:

A monk asked Yunmen, ‘From whence come all the Buddhas?’
Yunmen answered, ‘The East Mountain walks over the water.’

Dahui offered some forty-nine replies and Yuanwu approved none of them. Sometime later, when Yuanwu had taken the high seat in the lecture hall, he said, “A monk asked Yunmen, ‘From whence come all the Buddhas?’ Yunmen answered, ‘The East Mountain walks over the water.’ Then he said, “But I am not this way. ‘From whence come all the Buddhas?’ A fragrant breeze comes of itself from the South and in the palace pavilion a refreshing coolness stirs.”

Hearing these words, Dahui suddenly found past and future completely cut off, and a vast stillness pervading all his activities. Thinking he had been enlightened he went immediately to Yuanwu and told him what had happened.

Dahui said, “I'm already joyous and lively, and I can't understand anymore.” Yuanwu said, “It wasn't easy for you to get this far. Too bad that having died, you are unable to come back to life.” Dahui continued his practice with Yuanwu for quite a while longer until he was finally able to step from the top of the 100-foot pole.

So, how *do you* take a step from the top of the 100-foot pole? Wherever you are in your practice, whatever you have realized so far, and wherever you are in your life, old, young, successful, struggling, there is not one of us here who is exempt from this imperative.

Some have asked, is it volitional? Is it through one's own single-minded effort and will that we take this step, or is there an element of grace involved in stepping from the top of the pole?

The answer is “yes... , step off” into the unknown!

The poet Robert Bly tells an interesting Eskimo folk story that is instructive here. The tale revolves around a young woman who, after difficulties in life and love, ends up living her life in a place called “the moon palace.” It's cool and safe hanging out there in the moon palace, watching life go on all around, but the young woman recognizes that she is not really living her life but is somehow separate from it, just watching it go by. Still, not knowing what else to do, she goes on living there in the moon palace, living by reflected light, seeing others working, doing things in the community, enjoying their families, but she wonders how can they be that interested in doing those things. In time however she tires of the moon palace and wants to come down.

As soon as she is clear that she wants to come

down, a wise old woman appears, and says, "Oh, you want to come down from the moon palace? That's no problem at all." Then the old woman takes a few steps and opens a little trap door in the floor of the moon palace and says, "Look down there—you see the earth down there and all the people." Then she pulls out a rope and drops it down through the trap door and says, "Now listen very carefully to me—here's what you must do. Lower yourself down the rope *with your eyes closed*. You mustn't look at all as you are lowering yourself down. Just lower yourself down bit by bit and when you feel that you are almost to the earth, *let go and jump with your eyes open*. It's very important that you let go and jump with your eyes open at the end. Don't let yourself all the way down. That's it. Do you understand?" The woman said she understood and so the old woman wished her well and departed. As the woman crawled through the trap door before closing her eyes and beginning her descent, she couldn't help noticing that instead of appearing to be many miles away as it had in the past, the earth was actually quite close, maybe only 9 or 10 feet away. Then she closed her eyes and began her descent down the rope little by little. Unfortunately, according to the folk tale, she became so taken with the drama of her own journey down that she didn't open her eyes and jump before her feet touched the ground. Because of this, the folk tale says, when her feet did touch the ground, she immediately turned into a spider and spent the rest of her life spinning webs.

So we have to take that step; when the time comes we have to let go and jump.

But when does that time come? This is only Day 2 of our sesshin. I know many of you

don't feel like you're anywhere near the top of a 100-foot pole. How do we get to the top of the pole? Climb, climb, climb! And yet, isn't that what we've been doing since the day we were born—climbing just to stay alive, just to live and love and maybe even achieve something—maybe even trying to make the world a better place?

There are many ways to appreciate this metaphor of sitting atop a 100-foot pole. And the most significant for us right now is sitting right there on your cushion, on the afternoon of Day 2 of this 7-day sesshin. All our lives have led up to this.

"How shall I step from the top of a hundred-foot pole?" That is the question the monk from Changsha's assembly asks him. Good for him. He understands that Changsha is not just talking about brother monk Hui. He sees his own predicament and turns Changsha's words around and applies them to himself.

"How shall I step from the top of a hundred-foot pole?"

Changsha lays it bare for him, "Mountains of Lang, rivers of Li."

The monk still doesn't see it and says, "I don't understand."

Changsha replies, "Four seas and five lakes all belong to the royal sphere."

In Blue Cliff Record there's an interesting case with another hermit who seems to know something about how to take the step from the top of the 100-foot pole:

The Hermit of Lotus Flower Peak held up his staff before the assembly and said, "When the ancients reached here, why didn't they stay?"

The assembly was silent.

Answering in its stead, he said,
"It has no power for the Way."

Again he asked, "After all, how is it?" The assembly again was silent, and again he answered for the monks, saying, "My staff across my shoulder, paying others no heed, going straight to the thousand, myriad peaks."

For more than twenty years he asked this question, "When the ancients reached here, why didn't they stay?" And for more than twenty years, there was never even one person who could answer. Why was this? Of course there were those who came and laid out their explanations and presented their clever responses. Yet none could reach the hermit's point.

When the hermit held up his staff and said, "When the ancients reached here" — what place is he pointing to as his whereabouts?

When the ancients reached where? Master Yuanwu says of this hermit: "Look! He gets up by himself, falls down by himself; lets go by himself, gathers up by himself."

The Buddha Way is not something to believe or not believe. It is something to walk with your own two feet. Whatever you believe or don't believe is fine, but whatever that is, it is not the Buddha Way and it will not free you.

Yaoshan asked novice Gao, "I hear that your home province of Changan is a very noisy place."

The novice said, "My province is peaceful."

Yaoshan joyfully said, "Did you realize this from reading sūtras or

from making inquiries?"

The novice said, "I didn't get it from reading scriptures or from making inquiries."

Yaoshan said, "Many people do not read sūtras or make inquiries — why don't they get it?"

The novice replied, "I don't say they don't get it—it's just that they don't take it up."

"Mountains of Lang, rivers of Li." Maui's fishhook hanging down to the horizon in the southern night sky, clouds over the Ko'olau, misty rains of Wai'oma'o. When you step from the top of the pole and the grid of today and tomorrow, inside and outside, self and other falls away. Wai'oma'o valley itself takes a step and the tradewinds drink tea. But I have to tell you, there's no need to wait for something to happen. When you practice wholeheartedly, you'll find the grid already has enormous holes in it. There are great timeless universes yawning wide open right where we sit, walk, and stand.

STEP OFF!

Unexpected Ways

By Suzan Edwards

In the summer of 2000, shortly after first encountering Zen, I attended a 7-day sesshin. As we were packing up, I expressed astonishment at the experience to my seasoned roommate and she said something that has always stuck with me. "*This will change you in unexpected ways.*" The depth of her insight was lost on me at the time, but I began to appreciate its truth as I gradually dropped away more and

more traits and behaviors that I thought defined who I was. One of the 'unexpected ways' that changed is my relationship to time; something I will try and share with you here.

Suzan in the year 2000 experienced time as *something that was passing*. It was a commodity that I balanced and juggled to be efficient and productive, to set and reach goals achieved through multitasking and continuously mentally jumping ahead to the next act. I measured my days by the things that I had accomplished, whether for my work, my family, or myself. At the close of each day, I would replay events, sift through feelings, look for things to like or dislike, things to compare with and file for future reference. In this life defined by doing, I turned each day into stories.

In my early days of zazen, I was learning to directly encounter the world as it is and I wanted to bring something of that way of knowing to my astronomy students. This led to my creating a class I called *Time*, founded on the astronomical roots of timekeeping and revealing through experiential learning how our understanding of time is shaped by human constructs of measuring it, watching it, resisting it, and philosophizing about it. One of my goals was for my students to question their everyday understanding of time. We would start the semester sharing personal wonderments about time, followed by my sharing historical quotes. I mention two here:

St Augustine, 5th century:

For what is time? Who can readily and briefly explain this? Who can even in thought comprehend it, so as to utter a word about it? But what in

discourse do we mention more familiarly and knowingly, than time? And, we understand, when we speak of it; we understand also, when we hear it spoken of by another. What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not...

Thomas Carlyle, 19th century:

The silent, never resting thing called time, rolling, rushing on, swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean tide... this is forever very literally a miracle; a thing to strike us dumb.

This was the beginning of a personal journey reflecting on time and as the semesters rolled by, my own doubts about time continued to unfold, especially as I immersed more deeply in zazen and encountered Zen writings on the topic.

Attributed to the Buddha:

If you live without being imprisoned by the past, not being pulled away by the future, not being carried away by the forms and images of the present moment, living each moment of your life deeply, that is the true way of living alone.

This seemed like excellent advice and I took it as a goal to be fully present in each moment. Live deeply! It took the Old Woman by the roadside questioning Deshan to help me recognize that I was simply grasping at the idea of living in the present moment:

Gateless Barrier 28 Comment:

The Diamond Sutra says that past mind cannot be grasped, present mind cannot be grasped, and future mind cannot be grasped. Which mind do you intend to refresh?"

While such teachings as these had a profound impact on my orientation toward time, the one that really gave me pause was the fascicle *Uji* in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* (Treasury of True Dharma Eye). According to Shinshu Roberts in her book *Being-Time: A Practitioner's Guide to Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō Uji* "the two characters u-ji (有時) are usually translated as *arutoki* or 'for the time being.' Instead, Dōgen separates the two characters (u meaning being, and ji meaning time) and reassembles them as the one word *uji*," often translated as being-time or time-being.

**Pat Enkyo O'Hara offers this insight on Uji:**

Impermanence is time itself, being itself—yet time and being are not at all as we imagine them to be.

My initial encounters with this fascicle were fairly impenetrable. I continue to revisit it, seeking to bring some of it into my own lived experience. Surprisingly, I was aided in this

quest by the novel *A Tale for the Time Being*. The author, Ruth Ozeki, is a novelist, filmmaker, and Zen Buddhist priest. Ruth is a student of Norman Fisher, who founded the Everyday Zen Foundation and is affiliated with the San Francisco Zen Center. Ruth's book begins with her own colloquial translation of the opening verse in Uji:

An ancient buddha once said:

For the time being, standing on
the tallest mountain top
For the time being, moving on
the deepest ocean floor
For the time being, a demon with
3 heads and 8 arms
For the time being the golden 16 ft
body of buddha
For the time being, a monk's staff
or a master's fly swatter
For the time being, a pillar or a
lantern
For the time being any Dick or Jane
For the time being the entire earth
and the boundless sky

The three main characters in her novel are the narrator Ruth, who finds a diary washed up on the shores of an island in British Columbia, a young Japanese woman Nao, encountered only as the voice in the diary, and Jiko, Nao's 104 year-old great grandmother, a Zen Buddhist nun and abbess of a remote temple in northern Japan. Time itself is in some ways also a character through an adept use of magical realism. Both Ruth and Nao slowly change their own orientations to time, initially seeing Uji as meaning 'A time being is someone who lives in time, and that means you, and me, and every one of us who is, or was, or ever will be.' By the end of the novel, through the inspiration of

Jiko, they both develop a new relationship to time, not as separate beings in time, but *as time-beings*, beings who are time.

I too have evolved in my orientation to time since 2000. I might say I now primarily orient to a life of time-being rather than a life of time-doing, immersing in each activity but not accumulating stories of my accomplishments. I no longer mentally catalog events but let them go when they are over. Friends will say ‘remember when ... ?’ And I say ‘no!’ At first, I was alarmed I was losing mental acuity, but have come to recognize that holding onto stories just filled my head with persistent distracting thoughts. Instead, time is now something intimate—a woven togetherness of time and being. My roommate’s comment in 2000 was prescient and indeed my Zen practice *has* changed me in unexpected ways. I acknowledge zazen as the primary agent of change.

I close with the final lines of the *Hsin Hsin Ming*, *Sengtsan’s Faith Mind*, as translated by Richard B. Clarke:

*The Way is beyond language, for in it
there is no yesterday, no tomorrow,
no today.*

Afterward: This is based on a talk I gave at a Honolulu Diamond Sangha zoom meeting on August 16, 2020. I would like to thank those Sangha members at the talk who asked me challenging questions, many of which I remember and return to. I since found that Clark Ratliffe gave a Dharma Talk and wrote a Fall 2018 Newsletter entry on Uji. He invites us to approach Uji as ‘becoming time’. I urge you to revisit his insight to approach Uji as ‘becoming time’.

Practicing Sangha Care

By Kendra Martyn



Photo by Markus Winkler

“All beings without limit
I vow to carry over.” I repeat this vow every time I practice zazen, samu or other formal activity held at Pālolo Zen Center, as well as when I hike in the

woods or mountains or along the coasts during hiking zazenkai or Hele Mālie. It feels like the heart of my practice.

“All beings” as the Buddha taught is all inclusive, for there is no self and no other. There is just “all beings” carried all at once. I’m getting the sense that what we do throughout each day is the act of “carrying over.” How we do it involves cutting off the ceaseless klesha, mastering the measureless dharma gates and fulfilling the Buddha’s endless ways. We do it together—the Four Infinite Vows enacted. It’s sangha care.

“Sangha care” has been on my mind for a while, first getting seeded as a concept at the Spring Sangha meeting in 2019 and then taking fuller roots as it was explored later in a Way of Council meeting—a way used by indigenous cultures of sitting in circle to listen and hear the voice and wisdom of their people. For me it

was interesting how those roots grew and spread from tiny tendrils to a force for pushing open a dharma gate. In 2020, the Board began to consider the possibility of forming a Sangha Care Committee, an organized entity that might better serve some of the needs of our sangha— such as rides to and from a doctor’s office or hospital after a surgery, help at home if encountering a disability, help with grocery shopping, or cooking, or finding a ride to the zendo for practice, etc. Later at another quarterly meeting the sangha decided to form a study committee to explore how a future committee might be structured to implement such acts of care, and to make a recommendation as to whether forming a Care Committee would be worthwhile.

Several people volunteered to be on this study committee, including myself. We met by Zoom and many good ideas were explored while we sought to determine whether formation of a Care Committee would be helpful.

Unexpectedly, early on during our meetings I became aware of klesha. Klesha are mental - emotional entanglements that disturb the mind and incite unwholesome deeds of body, speech and mind. Of course, in retrospect I realize it shouldn’t have been unexpected, after all klesha are ceaseless. Klesha was displayed in disrespectful and uncomfortable interactions between committee members. We all observed and felt it, yet we all lacked the skillful means to respond appropriately, so we went on through the meetings’ agendas acting as if nothing had happened; each of us leaving with a heavy heart—some with hurt, anger and frustration.

The irony of the situation was palpable—a committee formed to study sangha care was not caring for its members. **We missed it!!**

Our focus was on a committee, not on caring. Yet still, one of the measureless dharma gates was opened to me—an opening revealing with great clarity that what we needed was not a Care Committee, but sangha “care.” What we needed was not to create something to facilitate care in the future, but to treat each other with respect and kindness right there on the spot. Something that was possible all along—Buddha’s way.

I don’t believe anyone on that study committee was deliberately disrespectful or unkind to anyone else. And the lack of skillful means to appropriately respond to the situation was the painful impetus to open the dharma gate, allowing me to see that what I needed was right there. It took time for me to see that I was not a bystander, no one can be—there are always consequences, and my inaction during the meetings was rich with consequences. It took time before I could see that an appropriate response could have been simply pointing out that I was uncomfortable with the way we were speaking to each other and suggesting that we stop the meeting to practice zazen, and then begin anew. I see now that it can be a caring act to point out when someone’s words and deeds are not kind or respectful. If I find myself again in a similar situation, I believe I will act more skillfully and speak up. I’m grateful that klesha can be a dharma gate, and for all the opportunities the sangha makes here at Pālolo Zen Center to fulfill our infinite vows together, elbow to elbow.

Administrator, HDS: Lish Troha

Temple Keepers, PZC: Michiyo Sato-Young and Jacoby Young

NL Editor & Layout: Kendra Martyn

Editorial Board: Kathy Ratliffe, Clark Ratliffe, Michael Kieran

Change comes to PZC – a new team of Temple Keepers

Michiyo Sato-Young and Jacoby Young assumed the position of Temple Keepers at PZC starting in February. They will help the sangha maintain its temple and grounds and play an important role in the HDS Residency Program. They are not new to the sangha, having started a practice here several years ago. They come with their dog, Gobo—a new friend for our cat, Iliahi.



And a new administrator



We are also happy to have Lish Troha join our sangha and become the HDS administrator. Lish is an aspiring writer, living nearby in Pālolo Valley. She is the new voice answering your phone calls and emails, and she will be in the PZC office most weekdays from 10 am to 2 pm. Please welcome her.

Rohatsu January, 2022

After 8 days in isolation wearing masks and social distancing, sangha members got close and revealed their bright, smiling sesshin faces.



Photo by Clark Ratliffe

Highlights from the Calendar

PZC is open for in-person zazen and dokusan on Sunday mornings from 9 to 11 am and Wednesday evenings from 7 to 9 pm, adhering to our covid-safety forms. Deviations from this schedule and other activities and important dates are listed below. Please check our website regularly for the complete calendar and for updates: www.diamondsangha.org

March

3/5: Sat. 9:30 to 11:30 am. Zoom program. Zazen followed by talk and/or discussion.

3/6: Sun. 9 am to noon. Sunday Workday.

3/11 to 3/16: Spring Sesshin. Gather on 3/11 at 5 pm. Temple closed.

3/19: Sat. 9 am to noon. Orientation to practice. Advanced signup required. Please contact administrator at info@diamondsangha.org.

3/20: Sun. Hele Mālie signup deadline.

3/27: Sun. 9 am to 4 pm. Hiking Zazenkai. Trailhead to be announced. Bring lunch.

3/30: Wed. 7 to 9 pm. Zazen, dokusan and Q&R with Michael.

April

4/3: Sun. 9:30 am. til noon. Zoom Program. Zazen followed by Annual meeting.

4/17: Sun. 9 to 11 am. Zazen, Hanamatsuri.

4/23: Sat. 9 am. to noon. Orientation to practice. Advanced signup required. Please contact administrator at info@diamondsangha.org.

4/24: Sun. 9 am to noon. Sunday Workday.

4/27: Wed. 7 to 9 pm. Zazen, dokusan and Q&R with Michael.

May

5/8: Sun. 9 to 11 am. Zazen, and Hele Mālie travel day.

5/9-5/13. Hele Mālie.

5/15: Sun. 9:30 to 11:30 am. Zoom Program. Zazen followed by talk and/or discussion.

5/20: Fri. Summer sesshin sign up deadline.

5/22: Sun. 8:30 am to 4 pm. Hui Pū Mai. Zazen, dokusan and talk or council. Bring lunch.

5/25: Wed. 7 to 9 pm. Zazen, dokusan and Q&R with Michael.

5/28: Sat. 9 am to noon. Orientation to practice. Advanced signup required. Please contact the administrator at info@diamondsangha.org.

5/29: Sun. 9 am to noon. Sunday Workday.

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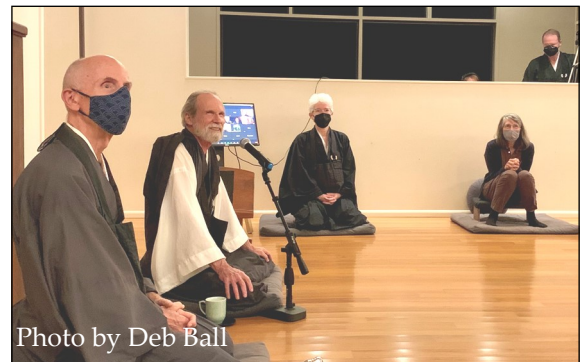


Photo by Deb Ball

Dharma Study with Nelson Foster and Michael Kieran, October 2021.

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