

# 曹源一滴水

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Thoughts On My Master, Yamada Mumon Roshi

After retiring from the job he had been requested to do as head abbot of Myoshinji, his daily life at Reiunin Temple, where he had lived so long, was truly exemplary of the words found in the Preface to the Records of Rinzai: 'Still using the copper pitcher and iron bowl, he closed his room and stopped his words.

As the pines grew old and the clouds idled, he found boundless contentment within himself.'

Mumon Roshi was attended to by Noritake Shunan Roshi, abbot of Reiunin in the very same way that the close disciple Ananda had attended to Shakamuni Buddha. The Roshi of Shofukuji Monastery in Kobe, Taitso Kono Roshi, was also present to bid final farewell to the Roshi who was resting at his knees.

The other two monks who had attended him in a way impossible to imitate, used their whole bodies and spirits in every moment of their care for the Roshi. Seeing his daily condition and health directly and intuitively they

then planned their day accordingly. They took care of the greeting of the numerous guests, the attention to the calligraphy writing and never missed a day of taking the Roshi for his exercise walk around the grounds of Myoshinji. When travelling some distance from the temple they were wary and always did it without causing strain and overexertion for the Roshi, moving in a synchronicity with the Roshi's breath that amazed the doctors. They were the ideal people for the job working in oneness with the Roshi, with no difference at all between self and other.

Mumon Roshi actually was not the kind of person who hates doctors; he was simply completely honest with himself. While doing training with Ekai Kawaguchi he toppled over with tuberculosis from the severity of the training there. Even those hospitals specializing in tuberculosis could offer him no possibility of a cure. A short while after having been turned down by the hospital and pronounced incurable, he was left in a small isolated room in his family house- left to await his oncoming death. He reached the lowest depths of his whole life there, when in the midst of his suffering he was able to perceive the inconceivable power of Great Nature which surges through all of us. At that time he composed the poem:

'All things are embraced within the Universal Mind,  
told by the cool wind this morning.'

In this poem, frequently heard quoted in later years at Shofukuji Monastery, he related his experience of that moment.

This is a story which actually took place when I was an attendant at Shofukuji. Mumon Roshi was a person very fond of bathing in hot springs. One of his followers urged him, "You know, Roshisama, morning baths are very good for you. It's said that the energy for one's whole day's work comes from a bath in the morning. If you continue everyday then it fills you with good energy."

At the public hot springs Tenno Onsen the first bath of the morning was

taken by all the monks of Shofukuji following the final dawn sanzen of Rohatsu Sesshin. They were looked down upon by the stars in the dawn sky as they walked down the streets still frozen over with the early morning frost. One could hear the loud and rhythmical sound of the geta (wooden sandals) walking in a line with Mumon Roshi at the head, followed by the upper, monks with the new monks at the end of the line. Entering together the first bath of the morning, scrubbing each other's back in harmony, a state of Mind difficult to understand if one hasn't been a monk.

The kindness of the Tenno Hot Springs continues even today. Maybe it was in remembering this atmosphere that for a period lasting quite a while, Mumon Roshi would do the morning sutra service, give sanzen, eat breakfast and then, just as the eastern sky was becoming light, he would take his attendant and go to the same nearby hot springs. After warming his body thoroughly he would go to Kobe Station and ride the shaking jam-packed rush hour train to Kyoto to go to Hanazono College. But that very thing about which we worried most eventually became a reality; probably from travelling in such a crowded train, he caught the flu. In spite of continuous attention of the attendant who would stay with him to massage him day and night, and who increased his efforts further when the Roshi's fever became very high, his whole body became bright red. The attendant was so concerned about his severe condition that he called on a close friend who was a doctor and received some medicine. When he brought the medicine to the Roshi, the Roshi glared at him, saying severely: "You know I never take medicine. What are you doing something so useless for? If you have so much free time, bring me loquat leaves!" On the loquat leaves that he brought to him the Roshi wrote Chinese characters with sumi (charcoal ink) and in his sleeping position from within the fever which had continued for a week, he added the final phrase: "This is the 35th anniversary of my mother's death- she saved me!"

He would often tell the patients to whom he administered the loquat leaf treatment: "Don't think about things so much, just let go and trust. If you

totally entrust to nature, you will naturally get better."

I was able to accompany Mumon Roshi frequently on trips abroad, when he was teaching on ships which were giving university courses. One trip was a twenty day study cruise. It was a ship often used for young men and women; The Coral Princess, a ship of the Hong Kong line. It left Yokohama harbour in February, and when passing Iyoto (sulfur island) in the Pacific, only three days out of Japan, it met with a great storm- it was this time of the year when sudden arising storms were frequently encountered. The ship, which was passing right through the center of the storm, was rolling heavily, over and over, and then it began to pitch vertically as well- if it were just the rolling from side to side, then it would be only the smaller things inconveniently sliding off the desk, and finding it hard to keep one's balance. When the vertical up and down pitching began it was like the feeling of an elevator coming down quickly from the top of a high building. When a 10 000 ton passenger ship is tossing and turning in the huge waves which are playing with it, the brain begins to spin and lose its balance; anyone who is standing, and, of course, anyone who is lying down, is vomiting continually. The huge propellers are flailing emptily in the air, lifted up out of the water, with a sound and vibration which I remember making you feel like your head is being hit with a hammer. Even the people who work on the ship and should be used to this, found themselves very seasick; all the shops and dining rooms were closed. When the time for the scheduled lecture arrived, we went to the lecture room- of course, the only person in the classroom along with the Roshi was the one attendant. If you didn't grab firmly on the arms of the chair, your body would be thrown out of your seat. We returned to our room with no choice, tried lying down which only made one want to throw up. As I was desperately trying to endure this, I looked over at the next bed, and there was the Roshi grandly giving in to the motion of the ship. In fact, he looked as if he was truly enjoying it. Although I had no such composure, I still had an attendant's responsibility.

still had an attendant's responsibility. While in anxiety and awe at what was happening I took an opposite approach, and for as long as was possible I kept running around within the ship. By doing this I didn't get seasick, but two days later when the heavy storm finally subsided, I was totally exhausted. The ship's staff and passengers of over 200 people were all miserable with seasickness. Watching Roshisama's amiable face as he encouraged each person whose normal color had not returned yet, I was again impressed by the way of curing without medicine.

A person very much relied upon by the Roshi in his later years was Dr. Sone of the Sone hospital. He would say that no matter how devoted an attendant was, if he didn't have knowledge of medical treatment he didn't differ much from an uninformed outsider. For this kind of personal care and attention, he taught the monks what to do, centering around nutritional balance with a focus on daily health care. Even as he celebrated his venerable eighty-eighth birthday, he was still doing calligraphy for scrolls daily, and greeting guests. At his age no physical upset should be unexpected, yet according to the Roshi's own wishes it was decided in a meeting of his disciples that he would be given no health examinations and no medication, and entrust to the natural way in which things change.

This very unusual doctor, along with his family, regarded the Roshi as their own father, believing totally in the Roshi's own natural strength. Until the very end the Roshi received his attentive care.

On December 10th, starting from a low fever and a slight cold, and being a little tired, he suddenly began losing his physical strength. On the 19th he asked for his paper and brush to be brought and wrote his final poem. On the twenty-fourth in the presence of his recognized top disciple Kono Taitso Roshi, and the abbot of Reiuin Temple Shunan Noritake who was his attendant to the very end, and the few other attendants, he gave one big yawn and died.

In his final poem he wrote:

For the liberation of all beings  
There is finally nothing left to be said  
No words, no form  
Only abandoning everything  
Throughout the heavens and earths.