

LAYMAN SELFSAME
(Jinen koji: a miscellaneous play)

Layman Selfsame says nothing about the season, nor is it ghastly, poetic, or sublime. Instead, it is a thriller with some song and dance worked in. The role of the Layman is a real showpiece for an actor, and originally that actor was Kannami. Kannami wrote the play, and loved to perform it.

Nowadays actors give the Layman an air of dignified maturity, but Kannami played him as a youth of about sixteen. Whether or not there ever was a real Layman Selfsame--one document says he was the disciple of a certain thirteenth-century Zen master--Kannami's Layman Selfsame is not nearly as far from the Lady of Mouth-of-Sound as one might think. He is indeed a character who appears all through Japanese theater: the handsome, irresistibly charming youth who turns out to be the perfectly gallant lover, the ultimate sword fighter, or . . . a Bodhisattva. Not that Layman Selfsame is an announced Bodhisattva, however. He has no time for fancy titles. He is much too busy working (with incomparable nonchalance and effectiveness) for the good, and succoring maidens in distress.

The Layman's name in Japanese is Jinen; this is the same word that, read shizen, means 'nature' in the modern language. His title, koji, refers to a kind of lay monk who had not taken formal vows or shaved his head. Jinen Koji, in other words, means Mr. Natural, Mr. Himself, Mr. Just-As-He-Is. He is always precisely the same as himself, and equal to all things.

It is delightful to compare Layman Selfsame with such plays as

Komachi on the Gravepost or Granny Mountains, which announce the deep truth that good and evil are one. For the Layman says, 'When it comes to understanding good and evil, the girl is good and the traders are evil, and both paths, good and evil, are as plain as plain can be right here.' Good and evil may be one, but in action, right is not the same as wrong, or down as up.

As Layman Selfsame is a hero of the Dharma, one should know what the Dharma is. The basic meaning of this Sanskrit word is 'law,' but in Buddhism a dharma is first of all a thing or event. All dharms, or things, change from and into something else. No dharma has unvarying, permanent existence, and anything one can taste, touch, smell, see, hear, or name (for consciousness is one of the six senses) is a dharma. A dharma is not unreal, but it is provisional. It is a form-in-transformation, like a wave. Any wave on the sea is water. Thus the Heart of Wisdom Sutra says, 'Form (dharma, wave) is nothingness (the eternally real, water) and nothingness is form.'

Hence this 'nothingness' is also dharma, in this sense usually written Dharma. As 'law,' Dharma means 'the way things are,' 'the way it is.' The Dharma-body of the Buddha is everything, yet no particular thing; it is the way all things, or dharms, truly are. But since emptiness is also form, Dharma also means Wave: the Teaching and practice of the Buddha. Sometimes this teaching takes such human form as that of Layman Selfsame, of the Lady of Mouth-of-Sound, or of the historical Buddha. In truth, though, the voice of the Dharma-body comes from all things. All things are, and manifest, Dharma equally. Therefore, not only is 'each sound of beings feeling and non-feeling'

a song, but it is really, though infinitely diverse, the same song: the voice of the Dharma.

There is an old saying, found at least in some Japanese Zen writings, that singing and dancing are the voice of the Dharma. No doubt that is why the Layman has been known to dance on the preacher's high seat, and no doubt that is why Kannami himself, and Zeami, can pass on so much without seeming to, from the stage. Their way is what the Layman calls 'Playful Words and Gorgeous Language.' 'Gorgeous Language,' kigyō, is one of the ten sins any Buddhist is enjoined not to commit. And yet, because 'Back links it is that lift one high,' and others high as well, the Bodhisattva, to lead beings on toward illumination, may well use the highly attractive devices of art.

Thus Layman Selfsame does after all have his subtleties. He is remarkable, in fact, for being as much Sideman as Doer, for his role is analogous to that of the husband in The Block. (The slave trader, whose profession flourished in medieval Japan, is a purely technical Sideman.) He is deeply involved, but he is a spectator at the same time. As his steadfast attentiveness saves the girl only in the furthest place, at the last moment, the play is a regular fourth-position play after all.

(Fool enters and stops at main spot.)

NANORI
off-sp

FOOL

I'm a fellow who lives near Cloud Lodge Temple in the Eastern Hills. There's an acolyte here, called Layman Selfsame, who's preaching the Dharma a whole seven days. Today's the day his vow will be met. Everyone! Gather round and lend an ear!

(He goes to start of bridgeway, facing curtain. After next line he kneels on one knee at stagehand spot, back to stage.)

*
off-sp

Tell him to please come right away!

(Doer enters, wearing kasshiki mask. He faces front from bridgeway, and addresses an imagined throng.)

*
off-sp

DOER

Request pledge cards, if you please, for the rebuilding of Cloud Lodge Temple!

(He goes to center and sits there on a stool provided by Fool. Fool then sits at Fool's spot.)

*
off-str*

DOER

sp Evening brings rain cloud lodge temple,
waiting for the moon I'll pass the time with a
turn at preaching Dharma, says he, mounts the
Master's High Seat, rings the Dedication Bell:
(joining palms) s In reverence and awe I declare:
to the Lifelong Master Teacher, Shakyamuni of the
Precious Name, to the Buddhas of the Three Ages, to
the Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions, humbly I
speak, and to all protecting powers offer the Heart
of Wisdom Sutra.

(During above passage, Child enters and starts down bridgeway. She has a robe over her arm and carries a letter. Seeing her, Fool mutters, 'Oh, the poor thing!' and takes robe and letter from her, then sits her down near mark post. Fool then spreads robe on the ground before Doer and, dropping to one knee, offers Doer the letter.)

MONDO
off-sp

DOER Ah, is this a prayer petition you're giving me?

FOOL Well, there's a beautiful robe here. Do please hurry up and read the prayer petition.

(Doeer takes the letter. Fool returns to Fool's spot, while Doer opens letter and holds it reverently lifted with both hands.)

*
off-str*

DOER sp 'Reverently I declare: concerning a request for prayers to comfort the departed. Herewith, one offering for the Three Treasures and for all monks. To wit, from my earnest desire that the souls of my two parents instantly know the Buddha-fruit, I humbly donate to the Three Treasures ^S one humble shroud.'

(He lowers letter, visibly moved.)

The Indian pauper woman offered a garment to the monks to assure her own future life; but now a pauper girl for her parents . . .

(He lifts letter again and goes on reading.)

AGEUTA
on-w

CHORUS 'One humble shroud so costly one humble shroud so costly, this sorry life I'd quickly leave and with dear father, with dear mother, come to birth on one same lotus throne.'

(He touches the letter to his forehead, then hides tears.)

So to all reads Layman Selfsame, wetting his
ink-black sleeves, till the whole throng, one
by one, leaves no sleeve unwet with tears leaves
no sleeve unwet with tears.

(During above passage, Sideman and
Sideman's Second enter. Sideman stands at first
pine, facing front, while Sideman's Second kneels
on one knee at second pine.)

NANORI
off-sp

SIDEMAN

You have before you a slave merchant from the lands
to the east. I've just been up to Miyako, where I
purchased many persons. Among them, I bought a girl
of no more than thirteen or fourteen. Yesterday, she
begged leave to go away for a while, so I allowed
her to do so. However, she isn't back yet.

(He turns to Sideman's Second.)

MONDO
off-sp

Hey, are you there? That young girl we had yesterday
said something about memorial prayers for her parents,
so I suppose she must be attending the preaching.
Layman Selfsame's at Cloud Lodge Temple, so let's go
have a look.

SIDE SECOND

That's fine with me.

(They start toward stage. Sideman imme-
diately spots Child.)

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN

I knew it! There she is! You go bring her here.

(He motions to Sideman's Second, who goes
up to Child.)

SIDE SECOND

Get up!

(He leads her toward Sideman's spot.
Startled, Fool stands and heads for first pine.)

FOOL You won't get away with this!

 (Sideman turns to Fool and brandishes a
 sword.)

SIDEMAN I've business with her.

FOOL Oh well, if you've business with her, go ahead.

 (Sideman walks coolly past Doer to Sideman's
 spot. Sideman, Sideman's Second, and Child all sit
 in a line. Fool rushes down to mark post and drops
 to one knee facing Doer.)

MONDO
off-sp

DOER What is it?

FOOL Well, sir, it's the girl who gave you the prayer
 petition just now. Two toughs came and took her away
 with them. I told them they wouldn't get away with
 it. But they said they had business with her, so I
 let them go.

DOER Ah, this is terrible! From the start there was some-
 thing striking about that girl. And when she gave me
 the prayer petition, the way she wrote 'humble shroud'
 instead of just 'robe' did surprise me somewhat. As
 far as I can see, she traded her own person for that
 robe, so as to bring comfort to her parents, and then
 offered it up with her prayer petition. And in that
 case, the men just now must have been slave traders.
 Since they had their claim and we had none, you could
 hardly have stopped them.

FOOL If they were slave traders, they must have gone down
 to the East. (jumping up) I'll run to Ōtsu-Matsumoto
 and stop them there!

DOER Just a minute!

 (Fool kneels on one knee again.)

 You'd never be able to manage it. I myself will take

this robe, exchange it for the girl, and bring her back here.

FOOL But that'll waste all the preaching you've done so far.

DOER Oh no, people could hear me preach a hundred or a thousand days. But when it comes to understanding good and evil, the girl is good and the traders are evil, and both paths, good and evil, are as plain as plain can be right here. Do you see what I mean?

(At approximately this point, Sideman and Sideman's Second turn their backs to the stage and, as though invisible, prepare for the next scene. They bare their right arm and shoulder, and each grasps a punting pole in his left hand. Then, as Doer concludes his preaching, Fool folds the robe into a long band and drapes it round Doer's neck from the rear. At 'at one,' Doer stands, holding the two ends of the robe in his left hand. The effect of the brilliantly patterned cloth against his somber garment is very striking. Fool removes stool and takes it to stagehand's spot, then exits. Doer proceeds, chanting, toward bridgeway.)

*
off-str

DOER The preaching is over for today. (joining palms and bowing) I pray with this merit to touch all things, that beings and I at one grow to

ISSEI
off-str

the Buddha-way I've to practice,

CHORUS yes, renounce the self did she and I must save her.

(Doer's progress signifies his journey to Lake Biwa, over the Osaka Pass. Now, Sideman and Sideman's Second stand and take their poles in both hands.)

ISSEI
off-str

SIDEMAN AND SIDE SECOND Now outward whither bound with white waves breaking down the ship lanes hurry, hurry on!

(Doer has arrived at third pine. He spots Sideman, and steps quickly toward him while pointing with his fan.)

DOER Boat I have none, but in the way

CHORUS of the Law I preach, let your hearts rest, and
stop!

 MONDO
 off-str*

DOER ^{sp} Ahoy, the boat out there! I've got to talk to
you!

SIDEMAN This isn't the ferry for Yamada or Yabase. What's
it you're calling us for?

DOER (standing now at main spot) I'm not a traveler,
either. I'm not calling any ferry. You're the boat
I want to talk to.

SIDEMAN Do you? What kind of boat do you think this is?

DOER A slave traders' boat. I want to talk to you.

SIDEMAN No good, you're shouting too loud! What's that?
What's that?

DOER Of course, of course, you're afraid other people will
hear; of course you feel I'm shouting too loud. I
didn't say 'slave traders,' I said 'stave traders.'
I was talking about the staves you have aboard.

SIDE SECOND ^s Timber, yes, 'hewers of timber' there are
indeed, ^{sp} but 'stave traders,' definitely not.

DOER The barber's a shave trader, and any tinker you could
call a stove trader, ^s so now you sail with staves
aboard, why not call you stave trader?

SIDEMAN ^{sp} You're certainly fun to listen to. All right, all
right, what is it you want?

DOER I'm a preacher called Layman Selfsame. I've come to
tell you how angry I am at the way you interrupted my
preaching.

SIDEMAN ^S In your own preaching you speak the truth, ^{SP}
and in us there's nothing false.

(Doer tosses robe toward Sideman.)

DOER Well anyway, here's a robe that used to belong to
you. It shouldn't ever have left your boat, says he,

(Doer picks up his skirts, mimes wading
out to the boat and seizing the gunwale.)

dipping skirts into the waves, he grasps the gun-
wale and arrests the craft.

SIDEMAN Oho! Now I'm furious! But nonetheless, I respect
the cloth and so won't hit you. All this is that
girl's fault, cries he,

(As though beating Child, he strikes his
pole with his fan.)

and with an oar savagely beats her.

DOER Beaten, she makes no cry. Why, she may be dead!

SIDEMAN Why need she be dead?

(Doer goes to Child and makes her stand.)

He pulls her to her feet, and see:

DOER ^S ropes bind her fast;

UTA
on-str

CHORUS her mouth is gagged with cotton wads, and though
she weeps her cries cannot escape.

(In the spirit of comforting Child, Doer
strikes excitement pose.)

MONDO
off-sp

DOER Oh you poor thing! I'm going to take you back with
me. Don't you worry!

(He sits Child down again and moves to
center.)

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN All right, Layman Selfsame! Get out of my boat, fast!

DOER Give her to me. You have the robe, my friend, so let me have the young lady.

SIDEMAN I'd be glad to, but there's one problem.

DOER What's that?

SIDEMAN Well you see, we in the trade have a cardinal rule. And if you'd like to know what it is, it's that once we've bought someone, we can't ever give the person back. So I can't let you have her.

DOER I understand perfectly. But we in my trade also have a cardinal and inflexible rule. And that is, that as long as we're unable to save a person whom we chance to find in dire distress, we can't go back to our cell. So, since your rule can't be broken, and mine can't be broken either, I'm not about to get out of your boat, even if you take me and the girl to the very depths of the North.

SIDEMAN If you don't get out, I'll put you to torture.

DOER Torture's an exercise in self-denial.

SIDEMAN I'll have your life!

DOER (firmly sitting himself down) Take it. But I'm not getting out.

SIDEMAN You say I can have your life, but you're not getting out?

DOER That's right.

SIDEMAN (muttering to himself) This Layman Selfsame's really got me.

(Grumbling so, Sideman gets out of boat and wades to shore, so to speak, by moving up to drums. Sideman's Second follows him.)

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN Well? Are you there?

SIDE SECOND What do you want?

(The pair face each other before drums.)

SIDEMAN I want to know what we're going to do about this.

SIDE SECOND As far as I'm concerned, we're going to have to give her back. When you really think about it, it'd be just terrible if the story got around that two slave traders from up north came to Miyako and couldn't get anyone, so they bought themselves a preacher called Layman Selfsame and took him home instead. No, we've got to give her back.

SIDEMAN I quite agree. But I'd hate just to hand her back. Let's have some fun with the preacher before we do it.

SIDE SECOND An excellent idea.

(They cover their right arm and shoulder again, and take fan in hand. Sideman's Second goes to sit near Sideman's spot. Sideman stands near main spot and addresses Doer.)

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN Quick now, out of the boat!

DOER Well, well, Captain, you look pretty cheerful!

(Doer stands and goes to main spot. Sideman sits at Sideman's spot. It is understood that they have reached the slave traders' own province.)

SIDEMAN No, I'm not cheerful in the least. Anyway, my friend here says that the first time he went to Miyako, he heard about Layman Selfsame's dancing. He says for you to do a dance.

DOER Layman Selfsame has never danced in his life.

SIDEMAN That's a lie. Last year when you preached as you just did, you woke up your drowsing audience by dancing right there on the High Seat. We heard about it even out here. So give us a dance.

DOER Oh yes, that's Playful Words and Gorgeous Language; that's all right. If I do you a dance, then give me the young lady.

SIDEMAN We'll see the dance first. If we like it, you can have the young lady.

SIDE SECOND Here's a formal hat. Put it on and dance.

(Sideman's Second gives the hat, which he himself has received from stagehand, to Doer. Doer withdraws to stagehand's spot and puts it on, then comes out to main spot.)

MONDO
off-sp

DOER All things considered, they'll probably give the young lady back to me in the end. But they'll hate to just hand her over. I can see they're going to give Layman Selfsame a hard time, and try to embarrass him. (turning to Sideman) It's just too selfish of you!

SIDEMAN Yes? What is it that's selfish?

ISSEI
off-str

DOER (facing front) Cape Kara in Shiga's single pine,

CHORUS all alone, ah, what feels a man?

CHU-NO-
MAI

(With the last words above, Doer begins to dance. He ends up at main spot as the text resumes.)

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN Your dance was too short. We didn't see enough.

DOER Then I'll relate to you the origin of boats.

KURI
off-str

Now then, concerning the origin of boats: their
source is found in the Yellow Emperor's reign,

(He goes before drums and faces front.)

CHORUS and their stream flows from Kateki's pondering.

SASHI
off-str

DOER For then there also lived a rebellious subject known
as Shiyū.

CHORUS His Majesty moved to crush him, but the waters of
Ōgō intervened and he could not attack.

(Below at 'icy gales,' Doer comes down
front; at 'one leaf,' opens and looks down; at
'spider,' sweeps right up to drums, then comes
forward at little; at 'in the air,' looks up; at
'single leaf,' glides down front and stamps beat;
at 'perilously,' moves to mark post; at 'reached,'
sweeps left up to drums; at 'why of course,' comes
to center, does a leftright; at 'Yellow Emperor,'
turns to right; at 'crushed,' faces front, then
marks pause with a leftright and opens fan; at
'therefore,' strikes fan high pose, then with full
leftright comes down front; at 'since then too,'
turns right up to main spot; at 'noble's craft,'
goes to mark post, then, with fan displayed, sweeps
left up to drums; at 'Dragon Prow,' marks end of
dance with a leftright.)

KUSE
on-str

CHORUS Among the Yellow Emperor's subjects was a knight
called Kateki. Once Kateki looked out across his
garden pond. Late fall was the season; icy gales
were scattering the willow leaves. One leaf
floated on the water till a spider, tossed up
in the air, dropped in too; but riding on that
single leaf, inch by inch, most perilously
before the blustering wind the leaf drove on and
reached the shore. Kateki, struck by the
spider's ploy, thought, 'Why, of course!' and

right away, purposefully, built a ship. The Yellow Emperor went on board, rowed across the water, and easily crushed Shiyū. Eighteen thousand years ago, they say it was, when he brought peace to his whole realm.

DOER Therefore the graph for 'boat'

CHORUS joins 'lord' to 'advance.' Moreover, since this reign, the Son of Heaven's own ship is called Dragon Barge, and a skiff is said to be 'one leaf'; and since then too, a noble's craft often is termed Swan-and-Dragon Prow.

MONDO
off-sp

SIDEMAN I must say, it's really too good of you to eulogize our boat as a 'Swan-and-Dragon Prow.' Anyhow, show us, if you please, some sasara-rasping.

DOER Then give me a piece of bamboo.

SIDEMAN It just so happens that we've no bamboo on board.

DOER Never mind.

KATARI
off-sp

Those hard, those painful practices the Buddha did were to save all beings. The Layman, likewise, means to save the young lady, even if he's to get ground to bits in the process. Now, regarding the origin of the sasara:

(Below, at 'onto his fan,' Doer opens fan; at 'buzz buzz,' sweeps rosary over fan, then folds fan; at 'rosary,' holds rosary before him and examines it, then grasps fan with pivot end pointing away from him; at 'buzzing them,' does so; at 'ripples o,' stamps several beats as though playing with waves; at 'Kara,' turns right while rubbing rosary and fan together, and goes to main spot; at 'not only that,' stamps several beats.)

There was in the Eastern Hills a certain monk who,
when pine needles fell on his fan, swept them off,
buzz buzz, with his rosary. Ever since, we've had
the sasara. This Layman, likewise, for rasp will
use his rosary, one hundred and eight beads,
and for bamboo his own fan's ribs, buzzing them
together. Here we are now on Shiga Coast

NORIJI
onori-str

CHORUS

and ripples o! and ripples o! Shiga Coast's
Cape Kara pine with top needles goes buzz buzz
like the sasara my rosary; not only that, but
my hands I rub now in abject prayer:

(He faces Sideman, goes down on one knee
and joins palms.)

I beg of you, please help me!

MONDO
off-str

SIDEMAN

Now I see you're rubbing your hands to me, I'll let
you have the girl. But while you're at it, beat the
waist drum for us.

(Doer withdraws to stagehand spot, ties up
his long, hanging sleeves, hangs the drum around
his waist, takes a drumstick in each hand, and
comes out to main spot.)

NORIJI
onori-str

CHORUS

Of old the drum was noise of waves

(Doer dances, beating the drum. The
dance is short, and in a manner which recalls the
vigorous folk style.)

of old the drum was noise of waves rolling in
to pound the shore; when raincloud wandering
thunder god rumbles, bangs out his own sound,
rain comes falling pitter patter scrub bamboos
buzz rubbed so; ponds' hard ice cracks and

booms the beaten drum, sasara buzzing
playful words are these and yet voice of the
Dharma; to Perfect Wisdom's shore at last
borne,

(Doer goes up to Child, has her precede
him to main spot.)

UTA
on-str

from the boat ratatat boom he leads her out

(Child exits. Doer opens toward front
from main spot.)

and together up to Miyako they've gone up to
Miyako they've gone.

(Doer faces side and stamps final beat.)