

On ‘Each Buddha on His Own, Together with All Buddhas’

(Yui Butsu Yo Butsu)

Translator’s Introduction: The title of this text is a phrase that Dogen often employs. It is derived from a verse in the *Lotus Scripture*: “Each Buddha on His own, together with all Buddhas, is directly able to fully realize the real form of all thoughts and things.”

The Buddha Dharma is something that ordinary people cannot recognize. For this reason, from olden times, worldly people did not awaken to the Buddha Dharma, nor did those of the two Lesser Courses* thoroughly explore It. Because It was realized by the Buddha all by Himself, He said that each Buddha on His own, together with all Buddhas, has been directly able to fully realize It.

When you have thoroughly awakened in spite of yourself, it will be nothing like what you thought it would be before you had awakened. In whatever way you may have imagined it would be, what you awaken to will not at all resemble what you had imagined, for actual awakening bears no resemblance to what one may imagine it to be. Thus, it is useless to try to imagine what it is like beforehand.

When you have your awakening, you will not know why it has come about as it has. Should you reflect upon this, you will see that, prior to your awakening, whatever you thought it would be like is neither here nor there when actually experiencing an awakening. And even though it will be different from all the various ways that you may have previously thought, this does not mean that those views are fundamentally wrong and have played no part in your awakening. Even your past views comprised an awakening of sorts. However, because your thinking has been topsy-turvy, you may think that such views have been useless, and you may speak of them as being so. Whenever you think that your views are useless, there is something that you need to recognize: namely, that you are afraid that an awakening will be overpowering. If your previous ideas about enlightenment could bring forth a true awakening, then you may feel that your realization is unreliable.¹ Since genuine enlightenment does not depend on some special capability and goes far beyond the time prior to your realization, your awakening is assisted simply by

* See *Glossary*.

1. Because those ideas did not produce an awakening when you first had them.

the innate power of realization. Keep in mind that delusion is something that has no physical existence, and keep in mind that enlightenment is also something that has no physical existence!

Whenever there is a person of unsurpassed enlightenment, we call such a one 'a Buddha'. When the unsurpassed enlightenment of a Buddha arises, we call this state 'unsurpassed enlightenment'. Those who do not recognize how someone looks at the time of his or her being in such a state must surely be befuddled. This so-called 'look' is that of being untainted. 'Being untainted' does not mean being deliberately devoid of any purpose or refusing to make choices, nor is it being compulsively preoccupied with trying to be aimless or glossing over everything. How could there possibly be an untainted state in which someone is devoid of any purpose and refuses to make choices! For instance, upon meeting someone, the untainted person does not bring to mind judgmental thoughts concerning just how that other person looks. And with both flowers and the moon, such a one does not think of adding anything to their present brightness and color. Such a one does not attempt to evade the feelings that a spring day is spring just as it is, or that the beauty or dreariness of an autumn day is autumn just as it is, and he or she will be aware that this is not to be taken as being separate from himself, or even as being part and parcel of himself. But such a one may reflect upon the sounds of spring and autumn as being part of himself or as being separate from himself. And there is nothing that such a one is adding to himself nor does he have any thought that even now he still has a self. This means that such a one will not see the four elements* and the five skandhas* of the present as himself, nor will he trace them back to someone else. Hence, we should not treat the images in the mind which are evoked by flowers and moon as being ourself, though we are prone to do so. If we consider that which is not ourself to be our self, well then, we do so, but when we illumine the condition where there is no color that repels us nor any that attracts us, then our everyday behavior as monks who have realized the Way conceals nothing, for this is what our original Buddha Nature is.



A person of olden times, Meditation Master Chōsa Keishin, once said the following:

The whole of the great earth is our own Dharma Body, but we may not be clear about the term 'Dharma Body'.² If you are not clear

2. 'The Dharma Body' refers to our True Being.

about what the Dharma Body is, it will be impossible for you to turn yourself around even ever so slightly.³ And still, there will be a way of extricating yourself. And what is the way whereby people extricate themselves?⁴

For those who may fail to express what this way of extricating themselves is, the very life of the Dharma Body will immediately cease to exist for them, and they will sink down into the sea of suffering for ever so long. Were the question raised like this, how would you respond so that you would keep your Dharma Body alive and not sink into the sea of suffering? At such a time you should say something to express that the whole of the great earth is your very Dharma Body. If what you offer is indeed this fundamental principle, then at the very moment when you would say, "The whole of the great earth is my very Dharma Body," you would do well not to speak. And also, at the time when you would be silent, you may get to the heart of what goes beyond words.

A monk of ancient times, who remarked that he did not say what went beyond saying, once commented, "In death there are occasions when one may be truly alive, and in life there are occasions when one may be truly dead; and there are those who are dead and are continually dead, and there are those who are alive and are continually alive." This is not a case where an ordinary person is trying to force things to be a certain way; it is precisely what accords with the Dharma. Thus, on the occasion when the Buddha turned the Wheel of the Dharma, He had such a glow from It, and such a voice for It, that you could recognize that He came into bodily form in order to aid all sentient beings. We call this His wise discernment that sees beyond birth and decay.

'His coming into bodily form in order to aid all sentient beings' means that His aiding all sentient beings is His manifesting what His Body is. When we focus on His giving aid, we do not call to mind His coming into bodily form, and when we see His coming into bodily form, we harbor no doubts as to His giving aid. You need to comprehend that the Buddha Dharma is being fully realized in His giving spiritual aid, and then you need to give expression to this and fully experience it. Pay attention and give expression to His act of manifesting and to His bodily form, for they are in no way different from His giving aid. All this stems from the fact

3. 'Turning oneself around' translates a technical Buddhist term, which means 'relinquishing one's delusions and defiling passions, and thereby realizing enlightenment'.

4. The last sentence can also be taken to be a declarative statement: "And the What is the Way whereby people extricate themselves."

that the Buddha manifested His bodily form in order to aid all sentient beings. In His fully actualizing this purpose from the dawning of His realization of the Truth to the evening of His entering parinirvana, His expressing the Truth would have been freely given, even if He had not spoken a word.



The Old Buddha, Meditation Master Chōsa, once said in verse:

*The whole of the great earth is the Body of a True Human
Being,*

*The whole of the great earth is the gateway to liberation,
The whole of the great earth is the Solitary Eye of
Vairochana,**

The whole of the great earth is our own Dharma Body.

In other words, what we are calling real is, in essence, our True Being. You need to realize that ‘the whole of the great earth’ is not some provisional term, for our being is its true form. If someone were to ask you, “Why have I never known this before?” say to that one, “Give me back my words, ‘The whole of the great earth is my own True Body.’” Or tell that person to say, “The whole of the great earth is the real Human Being,” even though this is something he already knows.

Also, what is described as “The whole of the great earth is the gateway to liberation” means that there is nothing to get entangled with or to embrace. The phrase ‘the whole of the great earth’ is closely connected with the moment and with the years, with the mind and with its expressions, and so intimately are they related that there is not the slightest gap between any of them.⁵ What is unbounded and extends far out beyond us is what we should call ‘the whole of the great earth’. Should you seek to enter this gateway to liberation or to come out on the other side of it, this would not be possible. And why is that so? We need to reflect on whence springs the question. However much we might desire to visit a place that does not exist, that would be impossible to do.⁶

Also, when it comes to “The whole of the great earth is the Solitary Eye of Vairochana,” we may speak of the One Eye of the Buddha, but do not think that It must be just like the eye of a human being. People have two eyes, so when we speak of eyes, we are just talking about human beings and we do not speak of their having two or three. What we are being taught here is spoken of as being the Eye

5. That is, what physically exists is inseparable from time and mind.

6. That is, enlightenment is not a place and, in that sense, is not something to be reached.

of Buddha, or the Eye of the Dharma, or the All-seeing Celestial Eye, and so forth. You are not learning about ordinary eyes. To understand It as being an ordinary eye is hopeless. What you need to learn now is that the Eye of the Buddha is solitary and that the whole of the great earth is contained within It. There may be a thousand eyes or myriad eyes, but first of all the whole of the great earth is the One among them. There is nothing wrong in saying that it is the One among so many, and at the same time, you would not be mistaken in realizing that a Buddha has just one, solitary Eye. Eyes may be of various kinds, so it should come as no surprise to our ears when we hear that there are occasions when there are three Eyes, and occasions when there are a thousand Eyes, and occasions when there are eighty-four thousand Eyes.⁷

Also, you need to hear that the whole of the great earth is your own Dharma Body. That which seeks to know what we truly are is the resolute heart of someone who is truly alive. Even so, those who see what their True Self is are few. Only a Buddha alone knows this Self. Others who are off the Path, such as non-Buddhists, vainly take their unreal, false self to be their True Self. The Self that Buddhas speak of is synonymous with the whole of the great earth. Thus, whether we know or do not know our True Self, in either case, there is no 'whole of the great earth' that is other than our True Self.

But let us leave to those of other times what we are talking about at this moment.



Long ago, there was a novice monk who asked the Venerable Abbot Hōju Chinshu, "When a hundred thousand myriad conditions come at me all at one time, what should I do about them?"

The Venerable One responded, "Do not try to control them."

The essence of what Chinshū is saying is "Let come what may. In any event, you cannot influence what comes." This is on-the-spot Buddha Dharma. It is not about conditions. You should not understand these words as being a rebuke, but understand them as sheer Truth. Even if you were to consider how you might control conditions, they are beyond being controlled.

7. The Three Eyes are an awakened person's two conventional eyes plus the opened spiritual Third Eye. The Thousand Eyes are those associated with the Thousand-armed Kanzeon, who is the manifestation of the all-seeing, all-helping Compassion inherent in Buddha Nature. The Eighty-four Thousand Eyes are those that a Buddha has for seeing through the eighty-four thousand forms of delusion.



An Old Buddha once said:

The whole earth with its mountains and rivers has come into being in much the same way that we human beings have. The Buddhas of the three temporal worlds of past, present, and future have customarily done a practice that is the same as the practice that we ordinary human beings do.

Thus, on the occasion of someone's being born, when we look at the whole earth with its mountains and rivers, what we do not see is that person's being born has now added another layer upon the whole earth of mountains and rivers that existed before he or she was born. Having said this does not mean that his words may not have a deeper meaning. So, how can it be understood? If you do not give up by saying, "I can't understand this," then by all means, you will be able to understand, for you will be able to ask about it. Since they are words that have already been voiced by a Buddha, you should listen to them, and by having listened, you may also come to understand them.

One way that you may come to understand them is to inquire from the perspective of someone who has been born, "What is this 'being alive?'" Who of us has clarified from beginning to end what it is? Though we do not know our end or our beginning, even so, we have come to be alive. Well, it is like our seeing the great earth with its mountain and rivers and treading upon it, even though we do not know its limits. Do not be argumentative, holding to the opinion that the great earth with its mountains and rivers is in no way like our life. You need to be clear about His having said that the great earth with its mountains and rivers is exactly the same as our being alive.

Further, the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds have already done the practice, completed the Way, and fully awakened Themselves. How, then, are we to understand this notion of the Buddhas being the same as us? Well, first off, we need to understand what the practice of a Buddha is. The practice of a Buddha is done in the same manner as the practice of the whole earth, and it is done together with all sentient beings. If it were not so, all the practices of the Buddhas would not yet exist. Therefore, from the first arising of one's intention up to the attainment of its realization, beyond any question, both the realizing and the practice are done together with the whole of the great earth and with every single sentient being.

Doubts may arise concerning this, but keep in mind that when we attempt to clarify matters that appear to be all mixed up with issues that are unknowable, the voice of such doubts is heard, so do not be skeptical about the arising of doubts

being the way it is with ordinary humans. This is a teaching you need to be aware of, for you need to know that when we give rise to the intention that the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds hold to, there is invariably the underlying principle that we do not exclude our own body and mind.

However, to deliberately harbor doubts about this is already a defaming of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds. When we tranquilly reflect upon this, the principle that our body and mind are behaving exactly like that of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds, as well as the principle that we are giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, will both be apparent. If, in reflecting, we shed light upon the before and after of this body and mind of ours, the One we will be searching for is beyond an 'I' and beyond an ordinary, mundane person. So, do not be rigid in your thinking and do not believe that you have stagnated and are therefore separated from the three temporal worlds. Such thoughts, however, do not belong to you. When the Original Mind of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds is practicing the Way, what could possibly come from left field to turn It aside? In short, the Way should be called, 'That which goes beyond intellectual knowing and not knowing'.



One of old once said in verse:

*Even what we cast aside is nothing other than the Body
of the Dharma Lord;⁸
That It permeates the three temporal worlds is beyond
dispute.
The mountains and rivers, along with the great earth
itself,
Completely reveal the Dharma Body of the Awakened
Lord.*

We people today should learn from what this person of old said. Since everything is already the Body of the Dharma Lord, there appeared a Lord of Dharma who understood that there is nothing different from the Body of the Dharma Lord. This Mind of His is like a mountain upon the earth and resembles the earth holding up mountains.

Once you have arrived at the heart of the Matter,* the time when you did not understand will not have impeded your arrival. Further, getting to the heart of the

8. 'To cast aside' is synonymous with Dōgen's 'to drop off body and mind'.

Matter has not changed the fact that, previously, you did not understand. Even so, in your getting to the heart of the Matter and in your previous non-understanding, there have been the times of spring and the sounds of autumn. The reason why you have not understood even these is because your ears have been wandering about within their voices, despite the fact that they have been giving expression to It ever so loudly. As a result, their voices have not entered your ears. Your getting to the heart of the Matter will occur when their voices have penetrated your ears and you have entered a meditative state. Do not fancy that your having arrived at the heart of the Matter is of little importance and that your non-understanding was something large. You need to realize that because you will be beyond what you conceived of as being 'you', you will not be different from the Lord of Dharma.

As to the meaning of 'the Body of the Dharma Lord', the Eye is like the Heart of It, and the Heart of It will be like the Body. Not a single hair separates the Heart from the Body, for They will be fully revealed. You will understand that within the brightness of the Light and within giving expression to the Dharma, there exists the Body of the Dharma Lord as just described.



There is a saying from olden days, "If you are not a fish, you do not know what is in the mind of a fish, and if you are not a bird, you do not know how to follow the traces of birds." People who have been able to grasp the principle of this are rare indeed. Those who fancy that this simply means that humans do not know what the mind of a fish or the mind of a bird is have misunderstood it. The following is the way to understand this. A fish together with other fish invariably know what is on each other's mind. Unlike humans, they are not ignorant of each other's intentions, so that when they are about to swim upstream through the Dragon's Gate, they all know this and they all alike make their intention as one.⁹ And when they are about to swim through the nine rapids of Chekiang, again they all know this and make their intention as one, but it is only the fish that know what this intention is.

Also, when birds are flying through the sky, no beast on the ground, even in its wildest imaginings, knows what the traces of their tracks are, much less sees and follows them. Such a beast does not have even an inkling that such tracks exist. At the same time, a bird can see the various ways a swarm of hundreds of

9. It is said that when a fish swims up through the rapids of the Dragon's Gate at Chekiang, it is transformed into a dragon. This has been used in Zen Buddhist texts as a metaphor for someone like Prince Siddhārtha becoming a Buddha, together with all other beings.

thousands of small birds have flown off, or see the traces of birds that have flown south or north. For birds, these traces are no more hidden than the tracks left on a path by a cart or than the hoofprints of horses seen on grass, since birds see the traces of birds.

This principle also applies to Buddhas. It is apparent to Them how many eons a Buddha has spent in training, and They know who is a small Buddha and who a large Buddha, even among Those who have gone uncounted. This is something that cannot possibly be known when someone is not yet a Buddha. And there may be someone who asks, “And why, pray, can I not know it?” Well, since it is with the Eye of a Buddha that someone sees the traces of a Buddha, one who is not a Buddha is not yet in possession of the Eye of a Buddha. The number of those who can see are a number that only a Buddha can count. Without realizing it, They have all been able to follow the traces of the Buddha’s Path. If these traces are visible to your Eye, you are undoubtedly in the presence of Buddhas and will be able to compare Their footprints with those of others. In making that comparison, you will be able to recognize the traces of a Buddha, as well as the magnitude and depth of the traces that that Buddha has left, and, through consideration of that Buddha’s traces, your own traces will become clear to you. When we learn what these traces of a Buddha are, we call them the Buddha Dharma, that is, our True Self.

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