

## On the Spiritual Discourses of the Mountains and the Water

(*Sansuikyō*)

**Translator’s Introduction:** If readers are not already familiar with the Zen Buddhist use of metaphorical language, they may find the following comments useful in grasping what Dōgen is talking about in this Dharma discourse, which is baffling if its terms are taken only in their literal sense.

It has been said that when the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, meaning ‘meditation’ in the Zen Buddhist sense, was introduced into China, the Chinese had no word that was its equivalent, so the Sanskrit word was spelled out by using two Chinese characters according to their pronunciation: *chan-na* (pronounced like English ‘john-nah’). Over time, the term was shortened and the Mandarin pronunciation altered slightly to *ch’an* (pronounced like ‘tchahn’). In Japan, this character was pronounced as *zen*. Although there were other Chinese characters that had already been used for transliterating the Sanskrit sound *dhyā*, the one chosen in the present instance also carried an ancient meaning, one relevant to Dōgen’s discourse: ‘to bow respectfully to mountains and flowing water’.

In the present discourse, Dōgen takes up the difference between the general, conventional use of the terms ‘mountain’ and ‘(flowing) water’ and their special use by the Chinese Zen Masters for pointing to spiritual matters. As previously indicated in notes to Dōgen’s earlier Dharma discourses, the term ‘mountain’ has several implications in Zen contexts. In this discourse in particular, ‘mountain’ is most often used as a descriptive epithet for one who is sitting in meditation, as still as a mountain among mountains (that is, one who is training among other members of the Buddhist Sangha), as well as for a wise and saintly person whose path has led him or her to seek a spiritual abode in a mountain, in both a literal and a figurative sense. Hence, the Chinese Zen Masters are referred to as ‘mountains’, and because their training never comes to an end but is ever green, they are referred to as ‘verdant mountains’. And because they are not rigid or static in their practice, they are sometimes referred to as ‘flowing mountains’.

One of the meanings of ‘water’, in the Zen sense, is ‘the Water of the Spirit’, that is, Buddha Nature in general as well as one’s own Buddha Nature. In this translation, the use of this term is rendered as ‘the Water’ where context makes the meaning unambiguous. Someone’s ‘walking on the water’ is thus descriptive of that person’s doing his training and practice by following the ever-shifting, ever-flowing path of Buddha Nature.

Dōgen does not always signal which of the various meanings of ‘mountain’ and ‘water’ he intends, but often keeps his references fluid. Thus, as with his Discourse 11: On ‘Just for the Time Being, Just for a While...’ (*Uji*), readers may find it worthwhile to read this chapter through twice, once referring to the footnotes to get the immediate sense, and then just reading it to experience the flow.

The ‘mountains and water’ of which I am speaking at the present moment are a manifestation of the words and ways of former Buddhas.<sup>1</sup> Both terms, residing in their place within the Dharma, have completely fulfilled their function for these Buddhas. Because these words signify conditions that actively exist in the time periods before these Buddhas disappeared into the realm of spiritual Emptiness,<sup>2</sup> they refer to something that exists here and now, and because they signify the Self before any sign of these Buddhas’ existence has appeared, they transcend anything that manifests before our very eyes. The various spiritual merits of the mountains are so vast and far reaching that the merits from our practice of ‘riding the clouds’ will certainly be attained because of the mountains.<sup>3</sup> The wondrous effects from our ‘going on with the wind to our back’, beyond doubt, will liberate us, thanks to the mountains.<sup>4</sup>



The monk Dōkai of Mount Daiyō, in instructing his assembly, said, “The verdant mountains are constantly moving on, and the Stone Maiden, in the dark of night, gives birth to Her Child.”<sup>5</sup> The mountains are never lacking in the spiritual

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1. That is, ‘mountains’ and ‘water’ are not only terms used by previous Masters but also, as metaphors, can embody the way in which these Masters functioned.
  2. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett often referred to this ‘emptiness’ as “the fullest emptiness you can ever experience.” She herself used the term ‘the Immaculacy of Emptiness’ to describe It in a way that did not contain a connotation of a negative and ‘devoid’ sort of emptiness.
  3. ‘Riding the clouds’—originally, a Taoist term—refers to rising to higher levels. Here, it probably refers to trainees realizing higher spiritual levels, thanks to the Buddhas and the Ancestors, as well as to one’s fellow trainees.
  4. ‘Going on with the wind to our back’—another Taoist term—refers to being supported by a favorable tailwind, again, probably to be understood as spiritual help and support from the Sangha.
  5. To paraphrase the first half, Buddhist Masters who are literally, or figuratively, always ‘sitting’ in meditation (the mountains) and whose training and practice is ‘alive’ (verdant) are constantly moving on (or, more literally, ‘progressing apace’), ‘always becoming Buddha’. The second phrase has multiple meanings which arise from the resonance of the saying. For example, on one level, the epithet ‘The Stone Maiden’ refers to That Which Is, from which all things arise, without having to depend on any external ‘impregnating’ agent and without the process being visible (happening ‘in the dark of night’). On another level, the Stone Maiden refers to the trainee whose intent to realize Truth is active, but whose mind is as hard as rock. Yet, despite this hardness, it will, through training, crack open, and the Child of Enlightenment will be born.

merits with which they are undoubtedly endowed. This is why they constantly reside at ease and are constantly moving on. By all means, you must examine in great detail the spiritual merits of their moving on. The moving on of a mountain will be just like the moving on of those who wander through life in ignorance,<sup>6</sup> so, even though you may think that it seems the same as the human activity of walking, nevertheless, do not doubt ‘the moving on’ of mountains.

What this Ancestor of the Buddha expressed has already pointed to this ‘moving on’; this was his ‘getting to the very root of the Matter’.\* So, you should thoroughly pursue what he was pointing out to his assembly about ‘always moving on’. Since it is a ‘moving on’, it is constant. Although the moving on of the verdant mountains is more swift than the wind, those who live amidst the mountains do not perceive this, much less recognize it. ‘Being amidst the mountains’ refers to things blossoming forth within the everyday world. Those who live apart from the mountains neither perceive nor recognize them. They are people who lack an eye for seeing mountains: not only do they not perceive or recognize them, they do not see or hear them, nor do they comprehend what they are all about. Whoever harbors doubts about the moving on of mountains is one who does not yet recognize his own moving on. It is not that they themselves do not move on, it is that they do not yet recognize their own moving on and have not clarified what it is. To recognize your own moving on will certainly be no different from recognizing the moving on of the verdant mountains.

A verdant mountain is already beyond being ‘sentient’ and beyond being ‘non-sentient’: you yourself are already beyond being ‘sentient’ and beyond being ‘non-sentient’. So, you must not harbor doubts about the moving on of the verdant mountains at the present moment. People do not know that they must scrutinize and clarify what ‘verdant mountains’ means if they are to measure all the existent worlds about them.

It is necessary to scrutinize what ‘the moving on of mountains’ signifies. You have to look with utmost care at both ‘stepping forward’ and ‘stepping back’. You need to carefully explore moving on—both the steps that move you forward and those that move you back—and never cease in this for even a moment, from the time before there is any sign of something coming into existence until the Lord of Emptiness\* appears.

If this ‘moving on’ had come to rest, the Buddhas and Ancestors would never have appeared. If this ‘moving on’ had reached some culminating point, the

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6. That is, without any preconceived notion or plan.

\* See *Glossary*.

Dharma of the Buddha would not have reached us today. Stepping forward has not ceased, nor has stepping back. When there is a stepping forward, it does not stand in opposition to stepping back; when there is a stepping back, it does not stand in opposition to stepping forward. We characterize this as ‘the mountain’s flowing’ or as ‘the flowing mountain’.

Because a verdant mountain trains in order to master ‘moving on’ and Enō learned through practice to ‘go walking upon the Water’,<sup>7</sup> your learning these things through your practice is synonymous with a mountain’s learning them through practice. Without the mountains’ altering their body or mind, they have been going all around and about, learning through practice, with the look of a mountain about them.

Do not slander the mountains by saying, “Verdant mountains are incapable of moving on,” or “No mountain to the east of us is capable of walking upon water.” It is because of the baseness of some people’s views of things that they doubt the phrase ‘mountains walk on’, just as it is due to their inexperience and scant knowledge that they are startled by the words ‘a flowing mountain’. Nowadays, although we may say that they have not thoroughly explored even the phrase ‘flowing water’ in all its varied meanings, it is actually just a matter of their being immersed in pedestrian views and drowning in ignorance. As a result, they take as their form and name, or as their very lifeblood, whatever they esteem as their ‘cumulative qualities’. Its walking on exists; its flowing exists. There is a time when a mountain gives rise to the Child of the Mountain. In accordance with the principle that a mountain becomes an Ancestor of the Buddha, the Ancestors of the Buddha have made Their appearance in this manner.

When people have eyes before which a mountain is manifesting as grass and trees, earth and stones, or walls and fences, they do not doubt what they see nor are they disturbed by it, and it is not the whole of what is manifesting. Even though a time may occur when a mountain appears to them as being adorned with the Seven Treasures,\* this is not the real refuge. Even if they see manifesting before them the realm in which all the Buddhas are carrying out the Way, it is never a place to crave for. Even if they have above their heads the sight of a mountain manifesting the indescribable spiritual virtues of all the Buddhas, Truth is not limited merely to

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7. This phrase would be conventionally translated as ‘The mountain to the east of us goes walking upon water’, but the reference is actually to a well-known Zen saying that Dōgen discusses later, “Tōzan goes walking upon the Water.” Tōzan (‘The East Mountain’) was an epithet for the Sixth Chinese Ancestor Daikan Enō; it is unrelated to the name Tōzan, meaning ‘Cave Mountain’, by which several other monks are known, such as Tōzan Ryōkai.

this. The fully visible manifestation of each and every thing is the physical body of each and every thing along with the environment in which it exists. So, such views as those above are not to be taken as the manner in which Ancestors of the Buddha put the Way into practice: they are merely what people can see when looking through a hollow straw.

Splitting ‘subjective’ mind apart from ‘objective’ environment is what the Great Sage Shakyamuni warned us about; intellectually expounding on ‘mind’ or expounding on ‘nature’ is not something that Ancestors of the Buddha undertake. Having theories about mind or about nature is a profession for those who are apart from the Buddhist Way; to be bogged down in words and phrases is not speech that leads to liberation. There is a state that is free from such conditions as these. It has been described as “The verdant mountains are constantly moving on,” and as “Enō went walking upon the Water.” You need to explore this state in the greatest detail.



The statement “The Stone Maiden, in the dark of night, gives birth to Her Child” refers to the time when the Stone Maiden gives birth to Her Child as ‘in the dark of night’. Generally speaking, there are stones that are male and stones that are female, as well as stones that are neither male nor female, and all of these quite nicely fill up the heavens and fill up the earth. And there are heavenly stones and there are earthly stones, which those who wander without a preconceived goal speak of, though persons who really know them are rare indeed.<sup>8</sup>

One needs to understand the principle of Her ‘giving birth to a Child’. At the time of Her giving birth to the Child, are Parent and Child made separate? You must devote yourself to exploring through your training not only that ‘the Child becoming the Parent’ is the full manifestation of ‘giving birth to the Child’, but also that ‘the time when the Parent becomes the Child’ is the full manifestation of ‘giving birth to the Child’. You must thoroughly penetrate what is being said here.



Great Teacher Ummon Bun’en once said, “Enō went walking upon the Water.” The meaning of what is fully manifested through these words is that all

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8. To paraphrase one level of meaning, male and female stones refer to those who are ‘Stone Maiden’ trainees as explained in footnote 5. These ‘stones’, as well as conventional stones, occur in both heavenly and earthly worlds. Though people may speak of spiritually developed beings as heavenly (‘beings spiritually beyond me’) or as earthly (‘real people’), those who can actually distinguish between them are rare indeed.

mountains are Enō, and every Enō goes walking upon the Water. This is why this Ancestor of the Buddha fully manifested Mount Sumeru amidst the nine mountains, and fully realized It through his training, along with realizing other things as well.<sup>9</sup> People call him Enō. But how could there possibly be the slightest gap between Ummon's and Enō's Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow, or between Ummon and his living within his own realization through training?



In the nation of Great Sung China today, there is a certain type of unreliable person that has now grown to be quite a crowd. They have gotten to the point where they cannot be bested by the few true people. This bunch says such things as the following:

Just like the comments about Enō's walking on water or the one about Nansen's buying a scythe, what is being said is beyond anything that reason can grasp. In other words, any remark that involves the use of intellect is not the Zen talk of an Ancestor of the Buddha, whereas a remark that goes beyond anything that reason can handle is what comprises a 'remark' by an Ancestor of the Buddha. As a consequence, we would say that Meditation Master Ōbaku's applying a stick to his disciples or Meditation Master Rinzai's giving forth with a loud yell go far beyond rational understanding and do not involve the use of intellect. We consider this to be what is meant by the great awakening to That which precedes the arising of any discrimination. The reason why the ancient virtuous Masters so often made skillful use of verbal phrases to cut through the spiritual entanglements of their disciples was precisely because these phrases were beyond rational understanding.

Fellows who talk like this have never met a genuine teacher, nor do they have an eye for learning through training. They are foolish puppies who are not even worth discussing. For the past two or three centuries in the land of Sung China, such devilish imps and 'little shavers' like the Gang of Six have been many.<sup>10</sup> Alas, the Great Way of the Buddha's Ancestors has become diseased! This

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9. A reference to the eight symbolic concentric rings of mountains with Mount Sumeru as their center, a metaphor for having achieved a full centering of oneself within one's meditation.
  10. 'The Gang of Six' refers to six monks during the Buddha's time whose wayward behavior prompted the framing of monastic rules and regulations. 'Little shavers' was a term applied

explanation of those people cannot compare even with that of the shravakas\* who follow the Lesser Course;\* it is even more confused than that of non-Buddhists. These fellows are not laity nor are they monks; they are not gods or humans. And when it comes to exploring the Buddha's Way, they are more befuddled than beasts. The stories which the 'little shavers' refer to as going beyond anything that reason can grasp only go beyond anything their reason can grasp: it was not that way for any Ancestor of the Buddha. Just because they said that such stories are not subject to rational understanding, you should not fail to learn through your training what the intellectually comprehensible pathways of the Ancestors of the Buddha are. Even if these stories were ultimately beyond rational understanding, the understanding that this bunch has cannot hit the mark. Such people are in great number everywhere in Sung China, as I have personally witnessed. Sad to say, they did not recognize that the phrase 'the use of intellect' is itself a use of words, nor realize that a use of words may liberate us from the use of our intellect. When I was in Sung China, even though I laughed at them for their foolish views, they had nothing to say for themselves; they were simply speechless. Their present negation of rational understanding is nothing but an erroneous view. Who taught them this? Even though you may say that they have not had someone to teach them of the true nature of things, nevertheless, the fact remains that, for all intents and purposes, they still end up being offspring of the non-Buddhist notion that things arise spontaneously, independent of any form of causality.



You need to recognize that Enō's walking on the Water is the Bones and Marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Various kinds of water manifested under Enō's feet. This is why various mountains ride the clouds or tread the heavens. Above the crests of various types of water are various types of mountains which go walking up and down on the Water. As the various mountains go walking through the various types of water, the tips of their feet often make the water dance; thus, their walking may go seven steps in one direction or eight in another.<sup>11</sup> That is, there is no time when training and enlightenment do not exist.

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to monks who shaved their heads so that they could partake of monastic food and lodging, but who had no interest in spiritual training.

11. That is, 'mountains' are able to move about freely in their daily training.



As for the Water, It is neither strong nor weak, nor is It wet or dry, nor does It move or stay still, nor is It cold or hot, nor does It exist or not exist, nor is It deluded or awakened. When frozen solid, It is harder than a diamond, so who can smash It? When melted, It is more yielding than diluted milk, so who can tear It to bits? This being so, we cannot doubt the qualities of the various forms of existence that manifest before our very eyes.

For now, just concentrate on learning to recognize, through your training, the moments when you are able to open your eyes and see the Water in the whole universe as the Whole Universe. And ‘learning through training’ does not refer just to the times when ordinary people or those in loftier positions see the Water; there is your learning through training in which the Water sees the Water. Because the Water puts the Water into practice in order to realize what the Water is, there will be your thorough investigation of the Water’s expressing through words what the Water is. In this way, you will manifest the pathway upon which we ourselves meet our Self. Until then, you must go back and forth on that road of life upon which others are all involved with making a study of ‘other’, until you leap free.



To speak in general, what people see as a mountain or as water differs in various ways. There are those who, upon catching sight of what I am calling ‘the Water’, see It as a string of pearls, but they fail to see such a necklace as the Water.<sup>12</sup> They undoubtedly consider the form in which we humans perceive something as what the Water is. What they see as a pearl necklace, I see as the Water. And there are those who see the Water as a wondrous flower, but this does not mean that they are using an actual flower for the Water. Hungry ghosts,\* upon encountering the Water, may see It as a raging inferno, or as thick, congealing blood. Dragons and other denizens of the deep may see It as a palace or as a stately mansion. Some may see It as the Seven Treasures or as the Wish-fulfilling Jewel,<sup>13</sup> and others as various sorts of trees, or as fences and walls, and others as the

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12. For instance, they may see someone’s Buddha Nature as being a beautiful adornment, not as that person’s true, innate nature.

13. The Wish-fulfilling Jewel, sometimes called the Mani Jewel, refers to the Buddha Nature which is inherent in all living beings. Meditation Master Gensha Shibi called it “The One Bright Pearl”. Dōgen discusses this at length in Discourse 4: On ‘The One Bright Pearl’ (*Ikka Myōju*).

immaculate, liberated Dharma Nature, and others as someone's True Body, and others as someone's physical appearance along with that person's mental nature. When humans see the Water via any of these means, this can be the cause of their liberation from commonplace 'life'.

Although what is seen may differ completely according to the one who sees It, we should not be too hasty in accepting this as absolutely so. Are there really 'all sorts of ways' of seeing any single object? Have you committed an error by taking the plethora of images for what is actually one object? Then, at the very peak of your efforts, you will need to make a further effort. If what I have just been saying is so, then, likewise, there cannot be just one or two ways for training to realize the Truth and for assiduously practicing the Way, and the realm of the Ultimate can be of a thousand kinds and ten thousand sorts.

Further, when we think about the fundamental meaning of this, even though we may say that the varieties of the Water are many, it may seem to some as if there were no one, fundamental Water or as though the Water had no variety. Thus, the various ways in which the Water appears do not depend on one's mind or on one's body, nor do they arise from one's karma\*-producing actions, nor do they depend on oneself or on someone else: they possess that freedom from delusion which is dependent on the Water Itself. Thus, the Water is beyond being earth, water, fire, wind, space, or consciousness, beyond being blue, yellow, red, white, or black, beyond being form, sound, odor, taste, sensations, or thoughts, and even so, the Water naturally manifests fully as earth, water, fire, wind, and so forth.

Because this is the way things are, it would be difficult to say clearly what has created our nation and its palaces as they appear before us today or to say what they will be made into. To say that they depend on the Wheel of Space and the Wheel of Wind is not what is true for me or true for others, for it is the product of speculation based on the suppositions of a narrow outlook.<sup>14</sup> This view has been asserted based on some people's thinking that nothing could continue to exist if it did not have some place to hang onto. The Buddha said, "All thoughts and things are ultimately free of any attachments, so there is no place where they permanently abide." You need to keep in mind that even though all thoughts and things are inherently free of any attachments, they do have some place where they exist.

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14. According to an ancient Indian view, the universe is comprised of the five elements (referred to here as 'Wheels'), with the more solid elements being dependent on the less solid, the Wheel of Wind (i.e., gaseous matter) and the Wheel of Space being the least substantial.



When human beings look at water, they only see it as something that ceaselessly pours out and flows on. This flowing has many forms, each being a part of the human perspective. It flows over the earth and out of the sky, now surging upwards, now pouring downwards, streaming along in the bends of a river and coursing through deep chasms. It rises up to make clouds and comes down to form pools.

The Chinese scholar Wen-tsu once remarked, “It is the way of water to rise up to the heavens and become rain and dew, and to fall to earth and become rivers and streams.” Today, those who wander in ignorance still speak in this manner. It would be most shameful for those who call themselves the offspring of the Buddha’s Ancestors to be more in the dark about the meaning of this than such folk as these, for what he is really saying is “The way of the Water is not something that water is aware of, yet water is fully capable of functioning, and it is not something that the Water is not aware of, yet the Water is fully capable of functioning.”

As Wen-tsu said, “It rises up to the heavens and becomes rain and dew.” Be aware that the Water ascends to ever so many lofty places in the heavens above to form rain and dew, and rain and dew take a variety of forms according to the worlds in which they appear. To say that there is some place that the Water does not reach is a teaching of the shravakas of the Lesser Vehicle or an erroneous teaching of non-Buddhists.<sup>15</sup> The Water extends into the tongues of fire, and into our thoughts and deliberations and distinctions, and into our perceptions, and into our Buddha Nature.

Consider the statement, “It falls to earth and becomes rivers and streams.” When the Water descends to earth, It becomes rivers and streams. Some varieties of rivers and streams frequently turn into wise, perceptive persons. In the opinion of the everyday stream of the ordinary and the befuddled, water is unquestionably that which exists in rivers, streams, oceans, and seas. This is not so, for the rivers and seas have come into existence within the Water. Thus, there is the Water even in places where there are no rivers or seas. It is just that when the Water descends to earth, It creates the effect of ‘rivers and seas’.

Also, do not work it out that, when there is some place where the Water has formed rivers and seas, there are no social worlds or Buddhist lands. Even in a single drop, immeasurable Buddhist lands manifest before our very eyes. Hence, it

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15. This is a reference to the mistaken notion of an *icchāntika*, that is, someone who is believed to be totally devoid of Buddha Nature.

is not a question of water existing within a Buddhist land or of a Buddhist land existing in the Water. The existence of the Water is in no way dependent on the three temporal worlds or on the worlds of thoughts and things. Even so, the Water is the spiritual question that manifests before our very eyes. Wherever Buddhas and Ancestors go, the Water invariably goes. Wherever the Water goes, Buddhas and Ancestors invariably manifest. Because of this, Buddhas and Ancestors have always regarded the Water as Their body and mind, as Their very thoughts.

Since the preceding is so, there is no document within or outside Buddhism that says that the Water does not run upwards. The path of the Water circulates every which way—up above and down below, far and wide. So, within Buddhist Scriptures, it is said that fire and wind climb up above, earth and water go down below. This ‘up above and down below’ is something to investigate in particular. Consider carefully the ‘up above and down below’ of the Buddha’s Way. It means that the place where earth and water go is ‘down below’; it does not mean that down below is some ‘place’ where earth and water go.<sup>16</sup> Where fire and wind go is up above. Even though the universe of thoughts and things does not completely depend on the measurements of the four directions, or upon up and down, we temporarily fabricate our universe in accordance with the four, five, or six elements.<sup>17</sup> The Heaven Beyond Deliberate Thought is not always ‘up above’; the Hell of Incessant Suffering is not always ‘down below’. Incessant suffering is one person’s whole universe; being beyond deliberate thought is another person’s whole universe.

Hence, when a dragon or a fish views water as a palace, it will not be like a human being seeing a palace, nor will such a creature perceive the water to be something that is flowing on. Were some onlooker to say to the dragon or the fish, “Your palace is flowing water,” the creature would at once be startled and filled with doubt, just as some of you may have been startled earlier when you heard it asserted that mountains flow like water. Further, it may be possible to maintain that a similar assertion can be made about the railings, steps, and pillars of palaces and mansions. Calmly consider this principle and keep turning it about in your mind, for if you do not learn how to go beyond these borderline expressions, you will not let go of the body and mind of one who wanders in ignorance, or fully realize what the domain of the Buddhas and Ancestors is, or fully realize what the domain of

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16. That is, ‘down below’ refers to a direction, not to any specific place.

17. The four elements are earth, water, fire, and wind; the five are the four elements plus space; the six are the five elements plus consciousness.

those who wander in ignorance is, or fully realize what the palace of one who wanders in ignorance really is.

Now, we humans may clearly perceive the very essence of the sea or the very heart of a river to be water, but what sort of thing a dragon or a fish may perceive to be water, or may make use of as water, we do not yet know. Do not foolishly assume that other creatures make use of water in accordance with how we perceive water.

Now, when we Buddhist trainees learn about the Water, we should not blindly cling to just the everyday, human view of water; we need to go on and investigate through our practice the Water of the Buddha's Way. How we view the term 'Water' as used by the Ancestors of the Buddha is something we need to investigate through our practice. We also need to investigate through our practice whether or not the Water actually exists within the traditional families of the Buddha's Ancestors.



The mountain, from times immemorial, has served as the place of residence for great saintly ones. Both the wise and the saintly have considered the mountain to be their innermost place and to be their body and mind. And thanks to the wise and the saintly, mountains have manifested before our very eyes. People in general tend to regard mountains simply as gathering places for ever so many great saints and wise ones, but for those who enter a mountain, there will not be a single person whom any of them will meet; only the natural functioning of a mountain will manifest, and nothing more. And furthermore, no traces of their having entered will be left behind.

When someone with the perspective of the secular world encounters a mountain, and when someone with the perspective of one amongst mountains meets this mountain, how their minds think of this mountain or how their eyes see this mountain will be vastly different. The conventional human perception of 'something flowing' and the conventional human perception of 'something not flowing' will not be at all like the perceptions of dragons and fish. Ordinary people, as well as those in lofty positions, strive to secure a place within their own sphere; other species may look upon this with suspicion, or may even give rise to doubtful thoughts. Thus, you should investigate the phrase 'mountains flow' with the Ancestors of the Buddha, and do not abandon the matter when you find yourself surprised or in doubt. Taken in one context, they flow; taken in another, they do not flow. One time round, they flow; another time round, they do not flow. If you do

not investigate the matter in this way through your practice, it will not be the Tathagata's Wheel of the True Teaching.



A former Buddha once said, "If you would avoid incurring unrelenting, hellish karma, do not malign the Tathagata's Wheel of the True Teaching." You should engrave these words on your skin, flesh, bones, and marrow; you should engrave them on the outer circumstances and inner conditions of your body and mind; you should engrave them on what is immaterial; you should engrave them on what is material. They have already been engraved on trees and on stones; they have already been engraved on both cultivated fields and places of human habitation.

Generally speaking, we say that mountains belong to some country or region, but it is to those who love mountains that they really belong. Invariably, when a mountain loves its Host, the lofty virtues of the saintly and wise enter the mountain. When those who are saintly and wise dwell in the mountains, the mountains belong to them; as a result, the trees grow luxuriant and boulders abound, the birds are wondrous and the animals are surpassing fine. This is because they are under the influence of the virtues of one who is saintly and wise. You need to recognize that the truth of the matter is that mountains are fond of those who are wise, and that they are fond of those who are saintly.

From the past to the present, it has been a good example for us that emperors have often gone up a mountain to bow to a wise one and to respectfully question a great saintly one. At such a time, they show their respect with all the formalities due their teacher: they do not follow the ordinary ways of behaving towards people. When an emperor extends his loving influence over his subjects, he never uses it to coerce mountain sages, for clearly, mountains are separate from the world of human society. In the legendary times of the Chinese Flower Kingdom, on the occasion when the Yellow Emperor paid a respectful visit to Kuang-cheng, who was the guardian spirit on Mount Kung-tung, he crawled on his hands and knees, groveling obsequiously and begging the spirit for instruction.

Also, once Shakyamuni Buddha had left the palace of His father the king, He entered the mountains. Even so, His royal father did not feel rancor towards the mountains. Nor did His royal father distrust those in the mountains who were teaching the prince. The twelve years that He trained in the Way were largely spent in the mountains. His realization as Lord of the Dharma also took place whilst in the mountains. Truly, even universal monarchs whose chariot wheels roll everywhere do not undertake to forcibly control the mountains.

To be sure, a mountain is not the realm of ordinary folk, nor is it the realm of those who dwell in lofty places. You cannot really perceive what a mountain is by means of the standards used by those who wander in ignorance. If mountains are beyond comparison with the everyday notion of ‘flowing’, who then, pray, can doubt that a mountain flows, and that a mountain does not flow, as well as whatever else a mountain may do?

And, from distant times, there have been wise ones and saintly ones who were even wont to live on the water. Whilst living on the water, some caught fish, some caught humans, and some caught the Way. These are all in the traditional mainstream of ‘being in the Water’. Along with this, there will be those who catch themselves, those who catch the Hook, those who are caught by the Hook, and those who are caught by the Way. Long ago, no sooner had the monk Tokujō left his Transmission Master Yakusan to go live at the heart of the river than he became acquainted with the wise and saintly one of the Hua-tung River.<sup>18</sup> Was it not a fish he hooked? Was it not a person he hooked? Was it not the Water he hooked? Was it not someone from the Water he hooked? The one who can really ‘see’ Tokujō is Tokujō. Tokujō encountering of That One is his meeting ‘the True Person’.



Not only is there water in the world, there is a world within the world of water. Not only is it like this in water, there is also a sentient world in clouds, and a sentient world in wind, and a sentient world in fire, and a sentient world in earth, and a sentient world in the realm of thoughts and things, and a sentient world in a blade of grass, and a sentient world in a monk’s traveling staff. Wherever there is a sentient world, there is, of necessity, a world of Buddhas and Ancestors in that place. Such a principle should be well explored indeed! Hence, the Water is the very palace of the True Dragon: It is beyond flowing or falling. If we recognize It only as something that flows, the word ‘flowing’ slanders the Water. One reason for this is that the use of the word forces It to be something not flowing. The Water is simply the Water as It is, in and of Itself. It is the natural functioning of the Water as the Water and is beyond ‘flowing’. As soon as you penetrate through your practice both the flowing of a single drop of water and its non-flowing, the complete penetration of all thoughts and things will immediately manifest before your very eyes. With mountains, too, there are mountains hidden within treasures,

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18. After Tokujō left his Master, he ferried a small boat across the river. He tried to teach Zen to those boarding his ferry boat. He often lifted his oar out of the water and said, “Do you understand?” One of those whom he met in this way later became his Dharma heir.

mountains hidden within marshes, mountains hidden within the sky, mountains hidden within mountains. And there is learning through practice that there are mountains which are hidden within That Which Is Hidden.

The Old Buddha Ummon Bun'en once said, "Mountains are mountains; water is water." What these words mean goes beyond saying that mountains are mountains: it is saying that Mountains are mountains. Therefore, you need to investigate Mountains through your practice. If you thoroughly investigate Mountains in your practice, this will be your effort in the mountains. In this way, the Mountains and the Water will naturally produce the wise as well as the saintly.

*Given to the assembly at Kannondōri in Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple on the eighteenth day of the tenth lunar month in the first year of the Ninji era (November 3, 1240).*

*I made this copy in the chaplain's quarters at Kippō-ji Temple, Yoshida Province, Echizen Prefecture, on the third day of the sixth lunar month in the second year of the Kangen era (July 9, 1244).*

*Ejō*