

Teachings of the Buddhas and Zen Ancestors on True Self

Compiled by Kokyo Henkel

Mahaparinirvana Sutra (Great Complete Unbinding Sutra, chapters 3 and 12, ~ third century)

(translated by Eric Greene; there are *many* other references to true self throughout this sutra)

No self is birth and death; self (atman) is the Tathagata. What is impermanent are voice-hearers and the individually awakened; what is permanent is the Tathagata's dharma body. Suffering is all outside ways; happiness is nirvana. Impurity is conditioned dharmas; purity is the true dharma of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. This is called 'not inverted.' Because of not being inverted, [one] knows the letter and the meaning. If one wishes to be separate from these four mistaken inversions, one should understand permanence, happiness, self, and purity in this way... Kashyapa asked the Buddha: "World-honored One, is there any self anywhere in the twenty-five modes of existence (all of samsara)?" The Buddha said: "Good son, the Tathagata's treasure-store (tathagatagarbha) is the self (atman). All sentient beings have the Buddha-nature (buddha-dhatu), and this is precisely the self. This self has, from the beginning, been constantly covered by innumerable afflictions, and therefore sentient beings are unable to see it."

Shrimaladevi Sutra (Lion's Roar of Queen Shrimala Sutra, ~ fourth century)

(translated by Alex and Hideko Wayman)

(Queen Shrimala said,) Lord, the domain of omniscient knowledge which is the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata has never been seen before, even by the pure knowledge of the Disciples and the Self-Enlightened. When sentient beings have faith in the Tathagata and those sentient beings conceive [him] with permanence, pleasure, self, and purity, they do not go astray. Those sentient beings have the right view. Why so? Because the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata has the perfection of permanence (nitya-paramita), the perfection of pleasure (sukha-paramita), the perfection of self (atma-paramita), the perfection of purity (shuba-paramita). Whatever sentient beings see the Dharmakaya of the Tathagata that way, see correctly. Whoever see correctly are called the sons of the Lord born from his heart, born from his mouth, born from the Dharma, who behave as manifestation of Dharma and as heirs of Dharma.

Meditation on Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Sutra (closing sutra of the Lotus Sutra, ~ fourth century)

(translated by Kojiro Miyasaka and Pier P. Del Campana)

Shakyamuni Buddha is called Vairochana Who Pervades All Places, and his dwelling place is called Eternally Tranquil Light, the place which is composed of permanency-paramita, and stabilized by self-paramita, the place where purity-paramita extinguishes the aspect of existence, where bliss-paramita does not abide in the aspect of one's body and mind, and where the aspects of all dharmas cannot be seen as either existing or nonexisting, the place of tranquil emancipation or prajna-paramita.

Asanga's Ratnagotravibhaga & Autocommentary (Chinese attribute com. to Saramati) (fifth century)

(Opening the Jewel Mine / Precious Disposition, "When the Clouds Part" translated by Karl Brunnholzl)

1:35 The fruition (of buddhahood) consists of the paramitas (perfections/transcendences) that are the qualities of purity, self (atman), bliss, and permanence... The four kinds of paramitas are the qualities of the dharmakaya of the Tathagata.

Commentary by Asanga: By way of being the opposite of the tirthikas (heretics), who are other [than us] and regard the five appropriating skandhas (upadana-pancha-skandha) as a self, taking delight in clinging to a nonexistent self, the attainment of the paramita of the supreme self should be regarded as the fruition [of bodhisattvas'] having cultivated prajnaparamita. Thus, all tirthikas, who are other [than us], claim that [certain] entities such as form, which do not have the nature of that [which they appear as], are the self. [However,] since these entities as they are apprehended by those [tirthikas] are deceiving in terms of the characteristic of being a self, they are never a self. On the other hand, the Tathagata has attained the paramita of the supreme lack of self of all phenomena through the wisdom of [realizing] true reality just as it is. Since this lack of self, just as it is seen by the [Tathagata], is undeceiving in terms of its

characteristic of not being a self, it is taken to be a self at all times. [Thus, here,] it is the very lack of self that is referred to as “self,” just as [the prajnaparamita sutras] speak of “abiding in a nonabiding manner.”

1:37 Because the [dharmakaya] is naturally pure and free from latent tendencies, it is pure. It is the supreme self (atmaparamita) because the reference points of self and no-self (atma-prapancha and nairatmya-prapancha) are at peace.

Commentary of Asanga: (The dharmakaya’s paramita of self) is free from reference points of a self due to having abandoned the extreme of the tirthikas and free from reference points of no-self due to having abandoned the extreme of the shravakas.

Asanga’s Mahayanasutralamkara and Vasubandhu’s Commentary (fifth century)

(Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature, translated by Robert Thurman)

9:23 In pure voidness buddhas achieve the supreme self of selflessness (nairatmyatmagralabhatah), and realize the spiritual greatness of the self by discovering the pure self (atma).

Vasubandhu: This shows the supreme self (paramatma) of the buddhas in the uncontaminated realm. Why? Because hers is the self of supreme selflessness. Supreme selflessness is completely pure suchness, and that is a buddha's "self," in the sense of "intrinsic reality." When this is completely pure, buddhas attain superior selflessness, a pure self. Therefore, by attaining a pure self buddhas realize the spiritual greatness of self. Thus it is with this intention that buddhas are declared to have a supreme self in the uncontaminated realm.

14:37 Having realized intellectually that beings are mere creations (samskara), selfless (niratmakam), and a mere expanse of suffering, and having abandoned the view of the useless (meaningless) self, (the bodhisattva) discovers the view of the great self (mahatma-drshti) which has the great goal (meaning).

14:38 She has here a view of self (atma) without a view of self, intense suffering without any suffering, and she accomplishes the goals of all, expecting no reward, just as one accomplishes one's own benefit (without asking) oneself (for reward).

Vasubandhu: "The view of the useless self" refers to the addicted materialistic view. "The view of the great self which has the great goal" is the view of the self which has attained the awareness of the sameness of self and beings. It has a great goal because it causes the accomplishment of the goals of all beings. "Without a view of self" means being without the useless (view of self). The view of self with the great goal is attained by one who is without suffering produced in his own continuum, yet who suffers intensely because of its production in the continua of all beings.

Huineng’s Platform Sutra (Sixth Chinese Chan Ancestor, Daikan Eno, eighth century)

(translated by Red Pine)

19. Good friends, see the fundamental purity of your own (ji 自) nature. Cultivate and put to work for yourselves the dharma body of your own nature. Practice for yourselves the practices of a buddha. Begin and complete for yourselves the path to buddhahood. (“See self-nature’s self-purity; self-cultivate and self-make self-nature’s dharmakaya. Self-practice is buddha-practice.”)

Shitou’s Record (Sekito Kisen, eighth century)

(Zen’s Chinese Heritage, translated by Andy Ferguson)

Shitou had a great revelation while reading (Sengzhao’s) *Zhao Lun*. In that text he came upon a passage that said, “The one who realizes that the myriad things are one’s own self is no different from the sages.” He exclaimed “The sages do not have a self (ko 己) – nor is there anything that is not their self (ko).”

Dongshan’s Awakening Verse (Tozan Ryokai, ninth century)

(translated by Thomas Cleary in commentary to case 49, Book of Serenity)

Just don't seek from others, or you'll be far estranged from Self (ga 我). I now go on alone; everywhere I meet It: It now is me (ga); I (ga) now am not It. One must understand in this way to merge with thusness.

Dongshan's Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi (translated by San Francisco Zen Center)

It is like facing a jewel mirror; form and image behold each other – you (jo) are not it, in truth it is you.

Mazu's Record (Baso Doitsu, eighth century)

(translated by Cheng Chien Bhikshu)

Though the reflections of the moon are many, the real moon is only one. Though there are many springs of water, water has only one nature. There are myriad phenomena in the universe, but empty space is only one. There are many principles that are spoken of, but 'unobstructed wisdom is only one.' Whatever is established, it all comes from One Mind. Whether constructing or sweeping away, all is sublime function; all is oneself.

Baizhang's Record (Hyakujo Ekai, ninth century)

(translated from the Chinese by Thomas Cleary)

But all things, existent, nonexistent, ordinary, sacred, may be likened to gold ore; the self is like the veins of gold. When the gold and ore are separated, the real gold is exposed. If there is someone who is seeking money or treasure, you then turn the gold into money and give it to them. It's also like wheat flour, its substance pure, without any mineral salts; if someone wants cake, you turn the flour into cake and give it to them. It's also like a wise minister who skillfully interprets the meaning of the king—when the king is going to travel and asks for saindhava, then the minister brings a horse; at mealtime, when the king wants saindhava the minister serves salt. These all symbolize people who study the hidden essence.

Linji's Record (Rinzai Gigen, ninth century)

(translated by Burton Watson)

Here in this lump of red flesh there is a True Person with no rank (position). Constantly he goes in and out the gates of your face. If there are any of you who don't know this for a fact, then look! Look!" At that time there was a monk who came forward and asked, "What is he like - the True Person with no rank?" The Master got down from his chair, seized hold of the monk and said, "Speak! Speak!"... If you want to be no different from the patriarchs and buddhas, then never look for something outside yourselves.

Changsha's Record (Chosa Keishin, ninth century)

(translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi)

The entire world of the ten directions is a single eye of a monk.

The entire world of the ten directions is the everyday words of a monk.

The entire world of the ten directions is the whole body of a monk.

The entire world of the ten directions is the radiant light of the self (jiko自己).

The entire world of the ten directions is within the radiant light of the self.

In the entire world of the ten directions, there is no single person that is not the self.

Yuanwu's Letters (Engo Kokugon, eleventh century)

(translated by J.C. and Thomas Cleary)

All the myriad things are neither opposed to nor contrary to your true self. Directly pass through to freedom and they make one whole. It has been this way from time without beginning... If you can cut off clinging to objects and inwardly forget your false ideas of self, things themselves are the true self, and the true self itself is things: things and true self are one suchness, opening through to infinity.

Yuanwu's Blue Cliff Record

(translated by J.C. and Thomas Cleary)

Case 40: Nan Ch'uan's It's like a Dream (also case 91 in Book of Serenity)

As the officer Lu Hsuan was talking with Nan Ch'uan, he said, "Master of the Teachings Chao said, "Heaven, earth, and I have the same root; myriad things and I are one body." This is quite marvelous." Nan Ch'uan pointed to a flower in the garden. He called to the officer and said, "People these days see

this flower as a dream.”... Seng Chao’s overall meaning says that nature all returns to self. Have you not seen how his discourse says, “The ultimate man is empty and hollow, without form; yet none of the myriad things are not his own (ga) doing. Who can understand that myriad things are his own self (jiko)? Only a sage, I (say).” Although there are spirits and there are humans, there are the wise and the sage, each is distinct, but all alike have one nature and one substance. An Ancient said, “Heaven and earth, the whole world, is just one self (jiko); when cold, it is cold throughout heaven and earth; when hot, it is hot throughout heaven and earth. When it exists, all throughout heaven and earth exists; when it doesn’t exist, heaven and earth do not exist. When affirmed, all throughout heaven and earth is; when denied, all throughout heaven and earth is not.”... That is why it was said, “In the heavens and on earth, only I alone am honorable.” As Shih T’ou read the Discourse of Chao, when he got to this place, “Understand myriad things as oneself,” he was vastly and greatly enlightened.

Case 46: Ching Ch’ing’s Sound of Raindrops

Ching Ch’ing asked a monk, “What sound is that outside the gate?” The monk said, “The sound of raindrops.” Ch’ing said, “Sentient beings are inverted. They lose themselves (ko) and follow after things.” The monk said, “What about you, Teacher?” Ch’ing said, “I almost don’t lose myself.” The monk said, “What is the meaning of ‘I almost don’t lose myself’?” Ch’ing said, “Though it still should be easy to express oneself, to say the whole thing has to be difficult.”

Appendix: Fa Yen Wen I

(Fa Yen and Ti Ts’ang) went on to discuss the Chao Lun, a fourth century Chinese Buddhist treatise; when they got to the point where it says, “Heaven and earth and I have the same root,” Ch’en asked Fa Yen, “Are the mountains, rivers, and earth identical to your own self, or separate?” Fa Yen said, “Separate.” Kuei Ch’en held up two fingers; the master said, “Identical.” Ch’en again held up two fingers, then got up and left.

Fayan, in commentary to case 19 of Book of Serenity

(translated by Thomas Cleary)

Superintendent Ze was Chan Master Xuanze of Baoen Monastery in Jinling; Fayan asked him, “Who have you seen?” Xuanze said, “I saw Master Qingfeng.” Fayan said, “What did he say?” Xuanze said, “I asked what is the student’s self (jiko),” and Qingfeng said, “The god of fire comes seeking fire.” Fayan said, “How do you understand this?” Xuanze said, “The god of fire is in the province of fire; to seek fire by fire is like seeking the self by the self.” Fayan said, “Even understanding in this way, how could you get it?” Xuanze said, “I am just thus; I don’t know what your idea is, Master.” Fayan said, “You ask me and I’ll tell you.” Xuanze asked, “What is the student’s self?” Fayan said, “The god of fire comes seeking fire.” Xuanze was suddenly enlightened at these words.

Hongzhi’s Record (Wanshi Shogaku, twelfth century)

(translated by Taigen Daniel Leighton with Yi Wu)

The dharma realm in the ten directions arises from the single mind. When the single mind is still, all appearances are entirely exhausted. Which one is over there? Which one is myself? Only when you do not differentiate forms, suddenly not a single dust is established, not a single recollection is produced. Discern that even before the pregnant womb and after your skin bag, each moment is astonishing radiance, full and round without direction or corners, discarding trifles. Where truly nothing can be obscured is called self-knowledge. Only thus knowing the self is called original realization, not even a hair received undeservingly. Magnificent, subtly maintaining uniqueness, genuine hearing is without sound. So it is said that perceiving without eye or ear is where the wonder is verified and fulfilled. Light streams forth from there and many thousands of images appear. Every being is actually it, altogether in the realm where patch-robed monks function on their own. It is essential only not to borrow from other people’s homes. To cultivate our house you must clearly and intimately experience it for yourself.

Guidepost for the Hall of Pure Bliss

By seeking appearances and sounds one cannot truly find the Way.
The deep source of realization comes with constancy, bliss, self, and purity.
Its purity is constant, its bliss is myself.
The two are mutually dependent, like firewood and fire.
The self's bliss is not exhausted, constant purity has no end.
Deep existence is beyond forms. Wisdom illuminates the inside of the circle.
Inside the circle the self vanishes, neither existent nor nonexistent.

Dogen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye (thirteenth century)

(translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi)

Valley Sounds, Mountain Colors (Keisei Sanshoku)

Once a monk asked Changsha, "How do you turn mountains, rivers, and the great earth into the self?" Changsha said, "How do you turn the self into mountains, rivers, and the great earth?" Saying that the self returns to the self is not contradicted by saying that the self is mountains, rivers, and the great earth.

Time-Being (Uji)

The way the self arrays itself is the form of the entire world... Thus, the self setting itself out in array sees itself. This is the understanding that the self is time.

Mountains and Waters Sutra (Sansuikyo)

Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment. Because they have been the self since before form arose, they are emancipation actualized.

Ungraspable Mind (Shin Fukatoku)

This self is ungraspable mind... The ungraspableness of mountains, rivers, and the great earth is within the self; the ungraspableness is the mind.

Reading a Sutra (Kankin)

Although it is called the self, it is not bound by "you" and "I." It is a vital eyeball, a vital fist.

Buddha Nature (Bussho)

Hearing the term "buddha nature," many students mistakenly regard it as the self explained by Shrenika, a teacher outside the way. They think this because they have not met a true person, the true self, a true teacher. They mistakenly regard the conscious mind, which is caused by the movement of air and fire, as the awareness and understanding of buddha nature.

Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas (Gyobutsu Yuigi)

When "Buddha is none other than the self" comes thus, the awesome presence of *I am like this* and *You are also like this* indicates "I alone know this."

The Buddha's Teaching (Bukkyo)

Know that what is called buddha mind is the Buddha's eyeball, a broken wooden dipper. Since it is all things and the three realms, it is mountains, oceans, lands, the sun, the moon, and stars. The buddhas' teaching is myriad things in all places. What is called outside is right here, arriving right here. Since authentic transmission is conducted from self to self, the self is within authentic transmission. You authentically inherit one mind from one mind. Thus, there is one mind in authentic transmission. *The dharma of one mind, the supreme vehicle*, is mud, stone, sand, and pebbles... Shakyamuni Buddha said, "I expound these nine divisions of dharma to suit all beings. This is the basis for entering the Great Vehicle. Thus, I expound these scriptures." Know that *I* is the Tathagata. His face, eyes, body, and mind are expressed. This *I* is already the nine divisions of dharma. The nine divisions of dharma are the *I*. Each phrase, each verse, expounded now is the nine divisions of dharma. Because of *I*, the nine divisions of dharma are expounded *to suit all beings*. This being so, all birth of sentient beings is born inside this. That is why *I expound these scriptures*. All death dies inside this. That is why *I expound these scriptures*. All beings follow *I expound these nine divisions of dharma*. *To follow* is to follow others, the self, all beings, birth, *I*, and this. As all beings are invariably *I*, they are every line of the nine divisions of dharma.

Great Enlightenment (Daigo)

In the great nation of Tang China means within the eyeball of self (jiko).

Ocean Mudra Samadhi (Kaiin Zammai)

It is not that there is a person *in the ocean*. The ocean of “I am in the ocean” is not an abode of people in the world. It is not where sages love to be. It is just “I am alone in the ocean.” Thus, the Buddha said, *I am always in the ocean expounding*. This ocean does not belong to inside, outside, or in-between. It is just *I am always expounding the Lotus Sutra*. The Buddha does not abide in the east, west, south, or north. The whole boat is empty; it returns full of moonlight.

Confirmation (Juki)

Accordingly, all buddhas have confirmation; buddhas going beyond buddhas have confirmation. The self is confirmed. Body and mind are confirmed. When you complete study and fully understand confirmation, you fulfill your study and fully understand the buddha way. Before having the body, there is confirmation. After having the body, there is confirmation. There is confirmation that is recognized by the self, and there is confirmation that is not recognized by the self. There is confirmation recognized by others, and there is confirmation not recognized by others. Know that confirmation actualizes the self. Confirmation is the self of actualization. Thus, what has been directly transmitted between buddha and buddha, between ancestor and ancestor, is none other than confirmation. There is not a single thing that is not confirmation. How can it be otherwise for mountains, rivers, earth, Mount Sumeru, or great oceans?... When the self understands, hears, and speaks the true self, invariably the fundamental point is actualized by confirmation.

Radiant Light (Komyo)

To see and hear the radiant light of the self (jiko) are the actual realization of encountering buddha, the actual realization of seeing the Buddha. The entire world of the ten directions is the self. This self is the entire world of the ten directions. There is no way to avoid it. Even if there is a way to avoid it, it is the vital path of going beyond the self.

Flowers in the Sky (Kuge)

Self is invariably *you*. It is four great elements and five skandhas. Because it is [as Linji said] “let it be a true person of no rank,” it is beyond self and other. This being so, what is indefinite is called self. *Thusness* is to accept what is as it is.

The Ten Directions (Jippo)

[Changsha said,] “The entire world of the ten directions is the radiant light of the self.” *The self* (jiko) means nostrils before the birth of your parents. The nostrils, being by accident in the hand of the self, are called the entire world of the ten directions. Yet, the self is right here, actualizing the fundamental point (genjo koan), opening the hall, and seeing the Buddha (kenbutsu)...

[Changsha said,] “In the entire world of the ten directions, there is no single person that is not the self.” Thus, each practitioner, each fist, in the ten directions, cannot help but be the self. There are no ten directions that are not the self. Each and every self is the ten directions. The ten directions of each and every self are intimately immersed in the ten directions. Because the life vein of each and every self is altogether in the hand of the self, the self passes on the original nourishment to the self.

Self-Verification Samadhi (Jisho Zammai)

Thus, both following a teacher and following a sutra are following the self. A sutra is no other than a sutra as the self. A teacher is invariably a teacher as the self. This being so, to visit teachers everywhere is to visit the self everywhere. To take up one hundred grasses is to take up the self. To take up myriad trees is to take up the self. Study the self that always endeavors thus. In this study, drop away, merge with, and realize the self. Thus, in the great way of buddha ancestors, there are the essentials of self-realization (jisho), and self-enlightenment... Speaking to another is self speaking to self. It is self and self, hearing and speaking together. One ear speaks and one ear hears. One tongue speaks and one tongue hears. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, root, consciousness, and objects are all like this. Furthermore, one body and one mind realize and practice. This is the ear itself hearing and speaking, the tongue itself hearing and

speaking. Even if you spoke of the dharma of impermanence to others yesterday, you speak of the dharma of permanence to yourself today.

Only Buddha and Buddha (Yuibutsu Yobutsu)

A teacher of old said: "Although the entire universe is nothing but the dharma body of the self (jiko), you should not be hindered by the dharma body. If you are hindered by the dharma body, you will not be able to turn freely, no matter how hard you may try. But there should be a way to be free from hindrance.

What, then, is the way for all people to be free from hindrance?..." If you are asked in this way, how can you answer so as to keep the dharma body alive and avoid sinking in the ocean of suffering? In that case, say, "The entire universe is the dharma body of the self." When you say that the entire universe is the dharma body of the self, words cannot express it. When words cannot express it, should we understand there is nothing to be said? Without words, ancient buddhas said something... Also learn that the entire universe is the dharma body of the self. To seek to know the self is always the wish of living beings.

However, those who see the true self are rare. Only buddhas know the true self. People outside the Way regard what is not the self as the self. On the other hand, what buddhas call the self is the entire earth. Thus, there is never an entire universe that is not the self, with or without our knowing it.

Keizan's Transmission of Light (fourteenth century)

(translated by Francis Cook)

Shakyamuni Buddha

Shakyamuni Buddha saw the morning star and was enlightened, and he said, "I, and the great earth and beings, simultaneously achieve the Way."... The so-called "I" (ga) is not Shakyamuni Buddha, and Shakyamuni Buddha also comes from this "I." Not only does Shakyamuni come from it but the great earth and beings also come from it. Just as when a large net is taken up and all the many openings of the net are also taken up, when Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened, the great earth and all beings were enlightened. Not just the great earth and beings but all the Buddhas of the past, future, and present were also enlightened... If you want an intimate understanding of enlightenment, you should get rid of "you" and "Gotama" at once and quickly understand this matter of "I." "I" is the great earth and beings as "and." "And" is not "I" as the old fellow Gotama. Examine carefully, deliberate carefully, and clarify this "I" and this "and." Even if you clarify the meaning of "I," but you fail to clarify "and," you lose a discerning eye. This being so, "I" and "and" are neither identical nor different. Truthfully, your skin, flesh, bones, and marrow are totally "and." The "Lord of the House" is "I." It has nothing to do with skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, nor has it anything to do with the four elements or the five aggregates. Ultimately, if you wish to know the "Undying Person in the Hermitage," is it not something separate from this present skin bag? Thus, do not think of it as the great earth and beings.

5th Ancestor Dhrtaka

Truly, this home departure reveals the Self which is a selfless Self. Therefore, it cannot be distinguished in terms of body or mind. This Self which is a selfless Self is the eternal Way. It cannot be fathomed in terms of birth or cessation. It is not the Buddhas, nor is it sentient beings; how much less is it the four great elements, the five aggregates, the three realms, or the six paths! The Mind has no form. Even though there is hearing, seeing, and perception; in the end, it neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor is still.

32nd Ancestor Hongren

Once you are able to clarify this realm, even though you change forms and move from life to life, how can that hinder the Self (ko) or alter Mind?

34th Ancestor Daoxin

Though you may speak of Mind or the objective world, and though you may speak of defilement or awakening, these are all just names for one's [true] Self. Therefore, mountains and rivers are not apart from it, nor is it different from you and your external environment. When it is cold, you become totally cold; when it is hot, you become totally hot.

40th Ancestor Dongan

Even though you mistakenly look for your own head, this [looking, itself] is your head. As the founder Eihei [Dogen] said, "Who am I? I am the one who asks 'who'."... The winds [of discrimination] cannot enter this place of knowing. Thus, people, when you penetrate it thoroughly and fully, [you will realize that] you have possessed it since time immemorial and that it has not been absent for a second. Even though you seek it through thought, that [itself] is the Self and nothing else. Even reflecting inwardly on yourself is not discrimination; it is Self and not something new. Using eyes, ears, and mouth, opening your hand and moving your feet – these are all Self. Fundamentally, it is not grasped with hands or seen by the eyes. Therefore, it cannot be discussed in terms of sounds and forms, and it is not approached with ears and eyes. When you see it fully, you will doubtlessly know that there is an "I" and know that there is a Self. If you want to know this place, when you toss out right and wrong for the first time and do not depend on others or get involved with them, this Mind shines naturally with a brightness brighter than the sun and moon. Its purity is purer than frost and snow. Thus, it is not blind, unaware of right and wrong. This Self is spontaneously manifested pure and bright. People, do not think that there is no one apart from speech, silence, movement, and stillness, or no one unconnected with skin, flesh, bones, and marrow... When you finally arrive and settle properly in the true reality, you will not be able to say that it exists, because it is empty and clear. You will not be able to say that it is nonexistent because it is bright and keenly aware. It cannot be discriminated with the body, mouth, or mind, nor can it be discerned with mind, conceptualization, or perception.

Menzan's Self-Enjoyment Samadhi (eighteenth century)

(Jijuyu Zammai, translated by Shohaku Okumura, revised by Kokyo Henkel)

The Buddha's awareness, called "the wondrous mind of nirvana," is perfect and always quietly illuminating itself. Therefore, you must understand that "zen" is just a provisional name. Self-Enjoyment Samadhi is the "true Dharma eye storehouse, the wondrous mind of nirvana" (shobogenzo-nehanyoshin, of Wumenguan Case 6) and "unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment" (anuttara-samyak-sambodhi). This is also called the "storehouse of great light" (daikomyozo, of Ejo). It is also referred to as "Limitless Meanings Samadhi" (muryogisho-zanmai, of the Lotus Sutra), "Precious Mirror Samadhi" (hokyo-zanmai, of Dongshan), "King of Samadhis" (zanmai-o-zanmai, of the Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra), and "The Storehouse of Vairochana symbolizing the Whole Universe Samadhi" (birushana-zo-zanmai, of the Flower Ornament Sutra). This is "essential function of the Buddhas and the functional essence of the Ancestors" (of Hongzhi). Understand this clearly and believe that this Self-Enjoyment Samadhi is "dropping off body and mind, body and mind dropped off" (shinjin daturaku, daturaku shinjin, of Rujing). All of these terms, taken from the various teachings of the Buddhas and Ancestors, are names for the zazen we practice... So devote yourself diligently to this samadhi, cherishing every second. Now I will explain in detail the way to clarify and rely on this samadhi.

This is done simply by not clouding the light (komyo) of your Self (jiko). When the light of the Self is clear, you follow neither dullness nor distraction. The Third Ancestor said (in Xinxinming), "It is empty, clear, and self-illuminating, with no exertion of the mind's power." This is the vital point of the practice-enlightenment of this samadhi. "It is empty, clear, and self-illuminating" means the light of the Self shines brightly. "No exertion of the mind's power" means not to add the illusory mind's discrimination to the reality. When you make mental struggle, the light becomes illusory mind, and brightness becomes darkness. If you do not make mental struggle, the darkness itself becomes the self-illumination of the light. This is similar to the light of a jewel illuminating the jewel itself. For example, it is like the light of the sun or the moon illuminating everything – mountains and rivers, human beings and dogs, etc., equally, without differentiation or evaluation. Also, a mirror reflects everything without bothering to discriminate. In this Self-Enjoyment Samadhi, just keep the light unclouded, without being concerned with the discrimination of objects. This is the meaning of Hongzhi's expression: "The essential function of the Buddhas and the functional essence of the Ancestors; knowing without touching things, illuminating without facing objects."