

Only a Buddha and a Buddha

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Buddha-dharma cannot be known by a person. For this reason, since olden times no ordinary person has realized buddha-dharma; no practitioner of the Lesser Vehicles has mastered buddha-dharma. Because it is realized by buddhas alone, it is said [in the Lotus Sutra], "Only a buddha and a buddha can thoroughly master it."

When you realize buddha-dharma, you do not think, "This is realization just as I expected." Even if you think so, realization invariably differs from your expectation. Realization is not like your conception of it. Accordingly, realization cannot take place as previously conceived. When you realize buddha-dharma, you do not consider how realization came about. You should reflect on this: What you think one way or another before realization is not a help for realization.

Although realization is not like any of the thoughts preceding it, this is not because such thoughts were actually bad and could not be realization. Past thoughts in themselves were already realization. But since you were seeking elsewhere, you thought and said that thoughts cannot be realization.

However, it is worth noticing that what you think one way or another is not a help for realization. Then you are cautious not to be small-minded. If realization came forth by the power of your prior thoughts, it would not be trustworthy. Realization does not depend on thoughts, but comes forth far beyond them; realization is helped only by the power of realization itself. Know that then there is no delusion, and there is no realization.

When you have unsurpassed wisdom, you are called a buddha. When a buddha has unsurpassed wisdom, it is called unsurpassed wisdom. Not to know what it is like on this path is foolish. What it is like is to be unstained. To be unstained does not mean that you try forcefully to exclude intention or discrimination, or that you establish a state of nonintention. Being unstained cannot be intended or discriminated at all.

Being unstained is like meeting a person and not considering what he looks like. Also it is like not wishing for more color or brightness when viewing flowers or the moon.

Spring has the tone of spring, and autumn has the scene of autumn; there is no escaping it. So when you want spring or autumn to be different from what it is, notice that it can only be as it is. Or when you want to keep spring or autumn as it is, reflect that it has no unchanging nature.

That which is accumulated is without self, and no mental activity has self. The reason is that not one of the four great elements or the five skandhas can be understood as self or identified as self. Therefore, the form of the flowers or moon in your mind should not be understood as being self, even though you think it is self. Still, when you clarify that there is nothing to be disliked or longed for, then the original face is revealed by your practice of the way.

A teacher of old said: "Although the entire universe is nothing but the dharma body of the self, 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 cannot say clearly how to free all people, you will soon lose even the life of the dharma body and sink in the ocean of suffering for a long time."

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.

There is birth in death, and there is death in birth. Death is entirely death, and birth is entirely birth. This is so not because you make it so, but because dharma is like this. Therefore, when Buddha turns the dharma wheel, there is insight such as this and expression such as this. Know that it is also like this when Buddha manifests a body to awaken sentient beings. This is called "awareness of no-birth."

"Buddha manifests a body and awakens sentient beings" means that awakening sentient beings is itself the manifestation of the buddha body. In the midst of awakening sentient beings, do not pursue manifestation. Seeing manifestation, do not look about for awakening.

Understand that in the midst of awakening sentient beings, the buddha-dharma is totally experienced. Explain it and actualize it this way. Know that it is the same with manifestation and having the buddha body.

This is so because "Buddha manifests a body and awakens sentient beings." This principle is clarified in that from the morning of attaining the way until the evening of parinirvana, Buddha discoursed freely, without words getting in the way.

An ancient buddha said: "The entire universe is the true human body. The entire universe is the gate of liberation. The entire universe is the eye of Vairochana. The entire universe is the dharma body of the self."

"The true human body" means your own true body. Know that the entire universe is your own true body, which is not a temporary body.

If someone asks you why we do not usually notice this, say, "Just reflect within yourself that the entire universe is the true human body." Or say, "The entire universe is the true human body - already you know this."

Also, "The entire universe is the gate of liberation" means that you are not at all entangled or captivated. What is called "the entire universe" is undivided from the moment, the ages, mind, and words. This limitless and boundless experience is the "entire universe." Even if you seek to enter or go through this gate of liberation, it cannot be done. How is this so? Reflect on the question raised. If you intend to seek outside what it is, nothing will be attained.

"The entire universe is the eye of Vairochana" means that buddhas have a single eye. Do not suppose that a buddha's eye is like those of human beings.

Human beings have two eyes, but when you say "a human eye," you don't say "two eyes" or "three eyes." Those who study the teaching should not understand that "the eye of a buddha," "the eye of dharma," or "the celestial eye" is like the two eyes of human beings. To believe that it is like human eyes is lamentable. Understand now that there is only a buddha's single eye, which is itself the entire universe.

A buddha may have one thousand eyes or myriad eyes. But presently it is said that the entire universe is the one eye of Vairochana. Therefore, it is not mistaken to say that this eye is one of many eyes of a buddha, just as it is not mistaken to understand that a buddha has only one eye. A buddha indeed has many kinds of eyes - three eyes, one thousand eyes, or eighty-four thousand eyes. Do not be surprised to hear that there are eyes such as these.

Also learn that the entire universe is the dharma body of the self. To seek to know the self is invariably 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. But what buddhas call the self is the entire universe. Therefore, there is never an entire universe that is not the self, with or without our knowing it. On this matter defer to the words of the ancient buddhas.

Long ago a monk asked an old master, "When hundreds, thousands, or myriads of objects come all at once, what should be done?"

The master replied, "Don't try to control them."

What he means is that in whatever way objects come, do not try to change them. Whatever comes is the buddha-dharma, not objects at all. Do not understand the master's reply as merely a brilliant admonition, but realize that it is the truth. Even if you try to control what comes, it cannot be controlled.

An ancient buddha said, "The mountains, rivers, and earth are born at the same moment with each person. All buddhas of the three worlds are practicing together with each person."

If we look at the mountains, rivers, and earth when a person is born, his birth does not seem to be bringing forth additional mountains, rivers, and earth on top of the existing ones. Yet the ancient buddha's word cannot be mistaken. How should we understand this? Even if you do not understand it, you should not ignore it. So, be determined to understand it. Since this word is already expounded, you should listen to it. Listen until you understand.

This is how to understand. Is there anyone who knows what his birth in its beginning or end is like? No one knows either birth's end or its beginning; nevertheless everyone is born. Similarly, no one knows the extremities of the mountains, rivers, and earth, but all see this place and walk here. Do not think with regret that the mountains, rivers, and earth are not born with you. Understand that the ancient buddha teaches that your birth is nonseparate from the mountains, rivers, and earth.

Again, all buddhas of the three worlds have already practiced, attained the way, and completed realization. How should we understand that those buddhas are practicing together with us? First of all, examine a buddha's practice. A buddha's practice is to practice in the same manner as the entire universe and all beings. If it is not practice with all beings, it is not a buddha's practice. This being so, all buddhas, from the moment of attaining realization, realize and practice the way together with the entire universe and all beings.

You may have doubts about this. But the ancient buddha's word was expounded in order to clarify your confused thinking. Do not think that buddhas are other than you. According to this teaching, when all buddhas of the three worlds arouse the thought of enlightenment and practice, they never exclude our body-and-mind. You should understand this. To doubt this is to slander the buddhas of the three worlds.

When we reflect quietly, it appears that our body-and-mind has practiced together with all buddhas of the three worlds and has together with them aroused the thought of enlightenment. When we reflect on the past and future of our body-and-mind, we cannot find the boundary of self or others. By what delusion do we believe our body-and-mind is apart from all buddhas of the three worlds? Such delusion is groundless. How then can delusion hinder the arousing of the thought of enlightenment and the practicing of the way by all buddhas of the three worlds? Thus, understand that the way is not a matter of your knowing or not knowing.

A teacher of old said, "Chopping down is nothing other than chopping down; moving about is beyond discussion. Mountains, rivers, and earth are the entirely revealed body of the dharma king."

A person of the present should study this phrase of the teacher of old. There is a dharma king who understands that the body of the dharma king is not different from chopping down, just as mountains are on earth, and the earth is holding up mountains.

When you understand, a moment of no-understanding does not come and hinder understanding, and understanding does not break no-understanding. Instead, understanding and no-understanding are just like spring and autumn.

However, when you do not understand, the pervasive voice of dharma does not reach your ears; in the midst of the voice your ears dally about. But when you understand, the voice has already reached your ears; samadhi has emerged.

Know that no-understanding cannot be discerned by a self, the dharma king's understanding is just like this.

In the dharma king's body the eye is just like the body, and the mind is the same as the body. There is not the slightest gap between mind and body; everything is fully revealed. Similarly you should understand that in illumination and discourse the dharma king's body is revealed.

There has been a saying since olden times: "No one except a fish knows a fish's heart, no one except a bird follows a bird's trace.

Yet those who really understand this principle are rare. To think that no one knows a fish's heart or a bird's trace is mistaken. You should know that fish always know one another's heart, unlike people who do not know one another's heart. But when the fish try to go up through the Dragon Gate, they know one another's intention and have the same heart. Or they share the heart of breaking through the Nine Great Bends. Those who are not fish hardly know this.

Again, when a bird flies in the sky, beasts do not even dream of finding or following its trace. As they do not know that there is such a thing, they cannot even imagine this. However, a bird can see traces of hundreds and thousands of small birds having passed in flocks, or traces of so many lines of large birds having flown south or north. Those traces may be even more evident than the carriage tracks left on a road or the hoofprints of a horse seen in the grass. In this way, a bird sees birds' traces.

Buddhas are like this. You may wonder how many lifetimes buddhas have been practicing. Buddhas, large or small, although they are countless, all know their own traces. You never know a buddha's trace when you are not a buddha.

You may wonder why you do not know. The reason is that, while buddhas see these traces with a buddha's eye, those who are not buddhas do not have a buddha's eye, and just notice the buddha's attributes.

All who do not know should search out the trace of the buddha's path. If you find footprints, you should investigate whether they are the buddha's. On being investigated, the buddha's trace is known; and whether it is long or short, shallow or deep, is also known. To illuminate your trace is accomplished by studying the buddha's trace. Accomplishing this is buddha-dharma.