

# The King of Samadhis Samadhi

Zammai O Zammai

三昧王三昧

By Eihei Dogen Zenji, translated by Norman Waddell & Abe Masao

The words *Zammai O Zammai* appear in Nagarjuna's *Ta chih tu lun (Maha Prajna Paramita Shastra)*: "It is called the King of Samadhis Samadhi because all other samadhis of various kinds are included in it. It is like all the myriad rivers and rivulets of the human world flowing as tributaries into the great ocean; or like the fact that all people are vassals of the king of the realm." For Dogen, it refers to *zazen*, the authentic practice for followers of Buddhism.

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To sit crosslegged is to take a leap straightaway transcending the entire world and to find oneself within the exceedingly sublime quarters of the Buddhas and ancestors. To sit crosslegged is to trample over the heads of all the devil heretics and become the Person within the Buddhas' and ancestors' innermost precincts. This Dharma and this alone is the way to transcend the highest reaches of the Buddhas and ancestors. It is for this reason that Buddhas and ancestors practice it and never exert their efforts elsewhere.

You should know that the total world of sitting is far different from all other total worlds. In penetrating the true nature of this difference, you discern and affirm the arising of the religious mind, the practice, enlightenment, and nirvana of the Buddhas and ancestors.

At the very time of your sitting, you should examine exhaustively whether the total world is vertical or horizontal. \* At that very time, what is the sitting itself? Is it wheeling about in perfect freedom? Is it like the spontaneous vigor of a leaping fish? Is it thinking? Or not thinking? Is it doing? Is it nondoing? Is it sitting within sitting? Is it sitting within body and mind? Or is it sitting that has cast off sitting within sitting, sitting within body and mind, and the like? You should examine exhaustively in this way thousands or tens of thousands of such details. It should be the body sitting crosslegged. It should be the mind sitting crosslegged. It should be body and mind cast off sitting crosslegged.

My late master, the old Buddha, said: "The practice of Zen (*sanzen*) is body and mind falling away. It is attained only in single-minded sitting. There is no need for incense-offerings, homage-paying, *nembutsu*, penance disciplines, or sutra-readings."

In the past four or five hundred years it is my late master alone who plucked out the eye of the Buddhas and ancestors and sat within its core. There have been few in China who could compare to him. Rare are those who have understood that sitting is the Buddha Dharma, and the Buddha Dharma is sitting. Some may have known experientially that sitting is the Buddha Dharma, but none of them has known sitting as sitting. How, then, could anyone have been able to protect and uphold the Buddha Dharma as the Buddha Dharma?

Hence, there is a mind sitting, and it is not the same as a body sitting. There is a body sitting and it is not the same as a mind sitting. There is sitting with body and mind cast off, and it is not the same as sitting with body and mind cast off. Once you attain this state of suchness and attain the harmonious unity of activity and understanding possessed by the Buddhas and ancestors, you examine exhaustively all the thoughts and views of this attainment.

\* *Vertical or horizontal*—the commentary *Shobogenzo monge* (by Menzan Zuiho Zenji, 1683–1769) has: "In crosslegged sitting . . . there is no vertical time division of past, present, future; horizontally, the world of all the ten directions disappears. All is cast off. 'Vertical' and 'horizontal' are provisional names; they have no real existence."

Shakyamuni Buddha preached to the assembly of monks (in the *Ta chih tu lun*): “If you are sitting crosslegged, body and mind realize samadhi. Great virtue revered by all is yours; you are like the sun illuminating the world. Lethargy, mind-numbing, sloth are dispelled; the body is light, the body is tireless. Even awakening comes quickly and easily, sitting serenely like a dragon coiled. Faced with depictions of crosslegged sitting King Mara staggers with fright. Must he not recoil in greater terror seeing a Wayfarer seated calm and unmoved?”

Even King Mara is amazed, distressed, and filled with fear when he sees pictorial depictions of crosslegged sitting. Imagine the terror he feels when he is faced with actual crosslegged sitting itself, the merit of which is impossible to fully calculate. It then follows that wherever there is crosslegged sitting, there also is bliss and virtue beyond measure. Why?

Shakyamuni Buddha's next words to the assembly of monks were, “ ‘It is because of this that I sit crosslegged.’ He then instructed all his disciples to sit just like this. Non-Buddhists seek the Way by constantly standing on tiptoe, by remaining constantly standing, or by entwining their legs about their necks. The minds of these overzealous practitioners are sunk in a sea of falsehood. The configuration and postures they assume are unstable. Hence the Buddha taught his followers to sit crosslegged in upright posture. It is because with the body upright, the mind is easily rectified. In upright sitting the mind does not grow slothful. With an upright mind and right thought, mental activity is concentrated right before you. If the mind strays, if the body starts to waver, you can put them to rest and into your control once again. If you wish to realize samadhi, if you wish to enter samadhi, put to rest all your wandering thoughts, all the various discords and disorders in your mind. Practice in this way and you will enter into and realize the King of Samadhis Samadhi.”

We now know, without doubt, that sitting crosslegged is in itself the King of Samadhis Samadhi, the entrance into realization. All samadhis are subordinate to this king of samadhis. Crosslegged sitting is the body of suchness, the mind of suchness, the body-mind of suchness, the Buddhas and ancestors in suchness, practice-realization in suchness, the crown of your head in suchness, the direct Dharma lineage in suchness.

Bringing your present human skin, flesh, bone, and marrow together, you form the King of Samadhis Samadhi. The World-Honored One always observed crosslegged sitting. He rightly transmitted it to his disciples as well. He taught it to humans and to devas. It is, in and of itself, the rightly transmitted mind-seal of all the Seven Buddhas.

While Shakyamuni Buddha engaged in crosslegged sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, a period of fifty small kalpas elapsed; sixty regular kalpas passed, an incalculable number of kalpas passed. But whether he sat crosslegged for twenty-one days or sat for only a short time, he turned the wondrous Dharma Wheel. It is this Dharma to which the Buddha devoted his entire lifetime, teaching and enlightening others - it lacks nothing whatever. Crosslegged sitting is in itself the Buddhist sutra writings. It is at the time of crosslegged sitting that one Buddha encounters another. This is precisely the time when all beings attain to Buddhahood.

After the First Ancestor Bodhidharma came from the west, for a period of nine years he sat crosslegged doing zazen facing a wall at the Shao-lin monastery in Sung-yo. Ever since that time, up until the present day, crowns of heads and clear eyes have been found everywhere throughout China.

The lifeblood of the First Ancestor's Dharma artery is just crosslegged sitting. Before he arrived in China, crosslegged sitting was totally unknown. After he arrived, it became widely known.

For this reason, when for one lifetime or ten thousand, from beginning to end one does not leave the monastery and engages singlemindedly in crosslegged sitting from morning to night to the exclusion of all else - that is the King of Samadhis Samadhi.

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