

Mountains and Waters Discourse (1) (Sansui Kyo) By Zen Master Dogen
Translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi

1

Mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. 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 realization.

2

Because mountains are high and broad, the way of riding the clouds is always reached in the mountains; the inconceivable power of soaring in the wind comes freely from the mountains. (2)

3

Priest Daokai of Mt. Furong said to the assembly, "The green mountains are always walking; a stone woman gives birth to a child at night." (3) Mountains do not lack the qualities of mountains. Therefore they always abide in ease and always walk. You should examine in detail this quality of the mountains walking. Mountains' walking is just like human walking. (4) Accordingly, do not doubt mountains' walking even though it does not look the same as human walking. The Buddha ancestors' words point to walking. This is fundamental understanding. You should penetrate these words.

4

Because green mountains walk, they are permanent. (5) Although they walk more swiftly than the wind, someone in the mountains does not realize or understand it. "In the mountains" means the blossoming of the entire world. People outside the mountains do not realize or understand the mountains walking. Those without eyes to see mountains cannot realize, understand, see, or hear this as it is. If you doubt mountains' walking, you do not know your own walking; it is not that you do not walk, but that you do not know or understand your own walking. Since you do not know your walking, you should fully know the green mountains' walking. Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient. (6) At this moment, you cannot doubt the green mountains' walking.

5

You should study the green mountains, using numerous worlds as your standard. You should clearly examine the green mountains' walking and your own walking. You should also examine walking backward and backward walking and investigate the fact that walking forward and backward has never stopped since the very moment before form arose, since the time of the King of the Empty Eon.

6

Green mountains master walking and eastern mountains master traveling on water. (7) Accordingly, these activities are a mountain's practice. Keep its own form, without changing body and mind, a mountain always practices in every place. Don't slander by saying that a green mountain cannot walk and an eastern mountains cannot travel on water. When your understanding is shallow, you doubt the phrase, "Green mountains are walking." When your learning is immature, you are shocked by the words "flowing mountains." Without full understanding even the words "flowing water," you drown in small views and narrow understanding. Yet the characteristics of mountains manifest their form (8) and life-force. (9) There is walking, there is flowing, and there is a moment when a mountain gives birth to a mountains child. Because mountains are Buddha ancestors, Buddha ancestors appear in this way. (9) Even if you see mountains as grass, trees, earth, rocks, or walls, do not take this seriously or worry about it; it is not complete realization. Even if there is a moment when you view mountains as the seven treasures shining, this is not the true source. Even if you understand mountains as the realm where all Buddhas practice, this understanding is not something to be attached to. Even if you have the highest understanding of mountains as all Buddhas' inconceivable qualities, the truth is not only this. These are conditioned views. This is not the understanding of the Buddha ancestors, but just looking through a bamboo tube at the corner of the sky. Turning an object and turning the mind (10) is rejected by the great sage. Explaining the mind and explaining true nature (11) is not agreeable to Buddha ancestors. Seeing into mind and seeing into true nature (12) is the activity of people outside the way. Set words and phrases are not the words of liberation. There is something free from all of these understandings: "Green mountains are always walking," and "Eastern mountains travel on water." You should study this in detail.

7

"A stone woman gives birth to a child at night" means that the moment when a barren woman gives birth to a child is called "night." There are male stones, female stones, and nonmale, nonfemale stones. (13) They are placed in the sky and in the earth and are called heavenly stones and earthly stones. These are explained in the ordinary world, but not many people actually know about it. You should understand the meaning of giving birth to a child. At the moment of giving birth to a child, is the mother separate from the child? You should study not only that you become a mother when your child is born, but also that you become a child. (14) This is the actualization of giving birth in practice realization. You should study and investigate this thoroughly.

8

Great Master Kuangzhen of Yunmen said, "Eastern mountains travel on water." (15) The reason these words were brought forth is that all mountains are eastern mountains, and all eastern mountains travel on water. Because of this, Nine Mountains, Mt. Sumeru, and other mountains appear and have practice realization. These are called "eastern mountains." But could Yunmen penetrate the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow of the eastern mountains and their vital practice-realization?

9

Now in Great Song China there are careless fellows who form groups; they cannot be set straight by the few true masters. They say that the statement, "The eastern mountains travel on water," or Nanquan's story of a sickle, is illogical; what they mean is that any words having to do with logical thought are not Buddha ancestors' Zen stories, and that only illogical stories are Buddha ancestors' expressions. In this way they consider Huangbo's staff and Linji's shout as being beyond logic and unconcerned with thought; they regard these as great enlightenments that precede the arising of form. "Ancient masters used expedient phrases, which are beyond understanding, to slash entangled vines.": People who say this have never seen a true master and they have no eye of understanding. They are immature, foolish fellows not even worth discussing. In China these last two or three hundred years, there have been many groups of bald-headed rascals. What a pity! The great road of Buddha ancestors is crumbling. People who hold this view are not even as good as listeners of the Small Vehicles and are more foolish than those outside the way. They are neither lay people nor monks, neither human nor heavenly beings. They are more stupid than animals who learn the Buddha way. The illogical stories mentioned by you bald-headed fellows are only illogical for you, not for Buddha ancestors. Even though you do not understand, you should not neglect studying the Buddha ancestors' path of understanding. Even if it is beyond understanding in the end, your present understanding is off the mark. I have personally seen and heard many people like this in Song China. How sad that they do not know about the phrases of logical thought, or penetrating logical thought in the phrases and stories! When I laughed at them in China, they had no response and remained silent. Their idea about illogical words is only a distorted view. Even if there is no teacher to show you the original truth, your belief in spontaneous enlightenment is heretical.

10

You should know that "eastern mountains traveling on water" is the bones and marrow of the Buddha ancestors. All waters appear at the foot of the eastern mountains. Accordingly, all mountains ride on clouds and walk in the sky. Above all waters are all mountains. Walking beyond and walking within are both done on water. All mountains walk with their toes on all waters and splash there. Thus in walking there are seven paths vertical and eight paths horizontal. This is practice-realization.

11

Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither existent nor non-existent, neither deluded nor enlightened. When water solidifies, it is harder than a diamond. Who can crack it? When water melts, it is gentler than milk. Who can destroy it? Do not doubt that these are the characteristics water manifests. You should reflect on the moment when you see the water of the ten directions as the water of the ten directions. This is not just studying the moment when human and heavenly beings see water; this is studying the moment when water sees water. This is a complete understanding. You should go forward and backward and leap

beyond the vital path where other fathoms other.

12

All beings do not see mountains and waters in the same way. (16) Some beings see water as a jeweled ornament, but they do not regard jeweled ornaments as water. What in the human realm corresponds to their water? We only see their jeweled ornaments as water. Some beings see water as wondrous blossoms, but they do not use blossoms as water. Hungry ghosts see water as raging fire or pus and blood. Dragons see water as a palace or a pavilion. Some beings see water as the seven treasures or a wish-granting jewel. Some beings see water as a forest or a wall. Some see it as the Dharma nature of pure liberation, the true human body, or as the form of body and essence of mind. Human beings see water as water. Water is seen as dead or alive depending on causes and conditions. Thus the views of all beings are not the same. You should question this matter now. Are there many ways to see one thing, or is it a mistake to see many forms as one thing? You should pursue this beyond the limit of pursuit. Accordingly, endeavors in practice realization of the way are not limited to one or two kinds. The ultimate realm has one thousand kinds and ten thousand ways. When we think about the meaning of this, it seems that there is water for various beings but there is no original water-there is no water common to all types of beings. But water for these various kinds of beings does not depend on mind or body, does not arise from actions, does not depend on self or other. Water's freedom depends only on water. Therefore, water is not just earth, water, fire, wind, space, or consciousness. Water is not blue, yellow, red, white, or black. Water is not forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or mind-objects. But water as earth, water, fire, wind, and space realizes itself. For this reason, it is difficult to say who is creating this land and palace right now or how such things are being created. To say that the world is resting on the wheel of space or on the wheel of wind is not the truth of the self or the truth of others. Such a statement is based only on a small view. People speak this way because they think that it must be impossible to exist without having a place on which to rest.

13

Buddha said, "All things are ultimately liberated. There is nowhere that they abide." (17) You should know that even though all things are liberated and not tied to anything, they abide in their own phenomenal expression. However, when most human beings see water they only see that it flows unceasingly. This is a limited human view; there are actually many kinds of flowing. Water flows on the earth, in the sky, upward, and downward. It can flow around a single curve or into bottomless abysses. When it rises it becomes clouds. When it descends it forms abysses.

14

Wenzi said, "The path of water is such that when it rises to the sky, it becomes raindrops; when it falls to the ground, it becomes rivers." (18) Even a secular person can speak this way. You who call yourselves descendants of Buddha ancestors should feel ashamed of being more ignorant than an ordinary person. The path of water is not noticed by water,

but is realized by water. It is not unnoticed by water, but is realized by water. "When it rises to the sky, it becomes single raindrops" means that water rises to the heavens and skies everywhere and forms raindrops. Raindrops vary according to the different worlds. To say that there are places water does not reach is the teaching of the listeners of the Small Vehicle or the mistaken teaching of people outside the way. Water exists inside fire and inside mind, thought, and ideas. Water also exists within the wisdom of realizing Buddha nature. "When it falls to the ground, it becomes river" means that when water reaches the ground it turns into rivers. The essence of rivers becomes wise people. Now ordinary fools and mediocre people think that water is always in rivers or oceans, but this not so. Rivers and oceans exist in water. Accordingly, even where there is not a river or an ocean, there is water. It is just that when water falls down to the ground, it manifests the characteristics of rivers and oceans. Also do not think that where water forms rivers or oceans there is no world and there is no Buddha land. Even in a drop of water innumerable Buddha lands appear. Therefore it is not a question of whether there is only water in the Buddha land or a Buddha land in the water. The existence of water is not concerned with past, future, present, or the phenomenal world. Yet water is actualization of the fundamental point. Where Buddha ancestors reach, water never fails to appear. Because of this, Buddha ancestors always take up water and make it their body and mind, make it their thought.

15

In this way, the words "Water does not rise" are not found in scriptures inside or outside of Buddhism. The path of water runs upward and downward and in all directions. However, one Buddhist sutra does say, "Fire and air go upward, earth and water go downward." (19) This "upward" and "downward" require examination. You should examine them from the Buddhist point of view. Although you use the word "downward" to describe the direction of earth and water, earth and water do not actually go downward. In the same way, the direction fire and air go is called "upward." The Phenomenal world does not actually exist in terms of up, down, or the cardinal directions. It is tentatively designated according to the directions in which the four great elements, five great elements, or six great elements go. The Heaven of No Thought should not be regarded as upward nor the Avichi Hell as downward. The Avichi Hell is the entire phenomenal world; the Heaven of No Thought is the entire phenomenal world.

16

Now when dragons and fish see water as a palace, it is just like human beings seeing a palace. They do not think it flows. If an outsider tells them, "What you see as a palace is running water," the dragons and fish will be astonished, just as we are when we hear the words, "Mountains flow." Nevertheless, there maybe some dragons and fish who understand that the columns and pillars of palaces and pavilions are flowing water. You should reflect and consider the meaning of this. If you do not learn to be free from your superficial views, you will not be free from the body and mind of an ordinary person. Then you will not understand the land of Buddha ancestors, or even the land or the palace of ordinary people. Now human beings well know as water what is in the ocean and what

is in the river, but they do not know what dragons and fish see as water and use as water. Do not foolishly suppose that what we see as water is used as water by all other beings. Do not foolishly suppose that what we see as water is used as water by all other beings. You who study with Buddhas should not be limited to human views when you are studying water. You should study how you view the water used by Buddha ancestors. You should study whether there is water or no water in the house of Buddha ancestors.

17

Mountains have been the abode of great sages from the limitless past to the limitless present. Wise people and sages all have mountains as their inner chamber, as their body and mind. Because of wise people and sages, mountains appear. You may think that in mountains many wise people and great sages are assembled. But after entering the mountains, not a single person meets another. (20) There is just the activity of the mountains. There is no trace of anyone having entered the mountains. When you see mountains from the ordinary world, and when you meet mountains while in mountains, the mountains' head and eye are viewed quite differently. Your idea or view of mountains not flowing is not the same as the view of dragons and fish. Human and heavenly beings have attained a position concerning their own worlds which other beings either doubt or do not doubt. You should not just remain bewildered and skeptical when you hear the words, "Mountains flow"; but together with Buddha ancestors you should study these words. When you take one view you see mountains flowing, and when you take another view, mountains are not flowing. One time mountains are flowing, another time they are not flowing. If you do not fully understand this, you do not understand the true Dharma wheel of the Tathagata. AN ancient Buddha said, "If you do not wish to incur the cause for Unceasing Hell, do not slander the true Dharma wheel of the Tathagata." (21) You should carve these words on your skin, flesh, bones, and marrow; on your body, mind, and environs; on emptiness and on form. They are already carved on trees and rocks, on fields and villages.

18

Although mountains belong to the nation, mountains belong to the people who love them. When mountains love their master, such a virtuous sage or wise person enters the mountains. Since mountains belong to the sages and wise people living there, trees and rocks become abundant and birds and animals are inspired. This is so because the sages and wise people extend their virtue. You should know it as a fact that mountains are fond of wise people and sages. Many rulers have visited mountains to pay homage to wise people or to ask for instruction from great sages. These have been important events in the past and present. At such times these rulers treat the sages as teachers, disregarding the protocol of the usual world. The imperial power has no authority over the wise people in the mountains. Mountains are apart from the human world. At the time the Yellow Emperor visited Mt. Kongdong to pay homage to Guangcheng, he walked on his knees, touched his forehead to the ground, and asked for instruction. (22) When Shakyamuni Buddha left his father's palace and entered the mountains, his father the king did not resent the mountains, nor was he suspicious of those who taught the prince in the

mountains. The twelve years of Shakyamuni Buddha's practice of the way were mostly spent in the mountains, and his attainment of the way occurred in the mountains. Thus even his father, a wheel-turning king, did not wield authority over the mountains. You should know that mountains are not the realm of human beings nor the realm of heavenly beings. Do not view mountains from the scale of human thought. If you do not judge mountains' flowing by the human understanding of flowing, you will not doubt mountains' flowing and not-flowing.

19

On the other hand, from ancient times wise people and sages have often lived near water. When they live near water they catch fish, catch human beings, and catch the way. For long these have been genuine activities in water. Furthermore there is catching the self, catching catching, being caught by catching, and being caught by the way. Priest Decheng abruptly left Mt. Yao and lived on the river. (23) There he produced a successor, the wise sage of the Huating. Is this not catching a fish, catching a person, catching water, or catching the self? The disciple seeing Decheng is Decheng. Decheng guiding his disciple is his disciple.

20

It is not only that there is water in the world, but there is a world in water. It is not just in water. There is also a world of sentient beings in clouds. There is a world of sentient beings in the air. There is a world of sentient beings in fire. There is a world of sentient beings on earth. There is a world of sentient beings in the phenomenal world. There is a world of sentient beings in a blade of grass. There is a world of sentient beings in one staff. Wherever there is a world of sentient beings, there is a world of Buddha ancestors. You should thoroughly examine the meaning of this.

21

Therefore water is the true dragon's palace. It is not flowing downward. To consider water as only flowing is to slander water with the word "flowing." This would be the same as insisting that water does not flow. Water is only the true thusness of water. Water is water's complete virtue; it is not flowing. When you investigate the flowing of a handful of water and the not-flowing of it, full mastery of all things is immediately present.

22

There are mountains hidden in treasures. There are mountains hidden in swamps. There are mountains hidden in the sky. There are mountains hidden in mountains. There are mountains hidden in hiddenness. This is complete understanding. An ancient Buddha said, "Mountains are mountains, waters are waters." These words do not mean mountains are mountains; they mean mountains are mountains. Therefore investigate mountains thoroughly. When you investigate mountains thoroughly, this is the work of the mountains. Such mountains and waters of themselves become wise persons and sages.

Notes:

1. Mountains and waters are viewed as a sutra, or actual expression of the Buddha's enlightenment.
2. "Riding the clouds" and "following the wind" represent the state of freedom in meditation.
3. Jiatai Record of the Universal Lamps, Chap 3
4. In the realm of nonduality, mountains and human beings are not separate. 5. In the realm of wholeness, one's experience goes beyond the limited span of time. 6. Here again the experience in meditation of the wholeness of mountains and human beings is indicated.
7. From a nondualistic viewpoint, mountains have inconceivable function beyond stillness and motion.
8. Form: gyomo, literally forms and names.
9. Because the enlightenment is manifested in mountains, Buddha ancestors appear.
10. This expression usually means to be free from bondage of object and mind, but in this case the duality of object and mind where one is not completely free is suggested. 11. This means explaining mind and true nature separately. In other cases Dogen uses this phrase in the sense that explaining mind is itself an expression of Buddha nature. 12. The ultimate understanding of a Buddha mind (kenshin) and that of Buddha nature (kensho). But in this case Dogen criticizes viewing a Buddha mind or Buddha nature as fixed or substantial.
13. In China there are legends in which men became stons and stones became women (Record of Extraordinary Stories).
14. The teacher and his disciple are one upon transmitting Dharma.
15. Extensive Record of Yunment, Zen Master Kangzhen, chap. 1
16. Four views on water.
17. Great Treasure Heap Sutra, chap. 87
18. Suvarna Prabhasottama Sutra, cha. 1.
19. In the inner chamber of Buddha ancestors there is no self and others. 20. "Song of the realization of the way" by Yongjia Xuanjue.
21. Zhuangzi (Chuangtzu) chap. 4.
22. Chuanzi Decheng.

At the hour of the Rat, eighteenth day, tenth month, first year of Ninji {1240}, this was taught to the assembly at Kannondori Kosho Horin Monastery.

Translated by Arnold Kotler and Kazuaki Tanahashi