SANSUIKYO: The Mountains and Waters Sutra

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The chapter titles and the chapter and paragraph numbers are added for the convenience of the readers. They exist neither in Dōgen's original nor in Bielefeldt's translation.

1. MOUNTAINS AND WATERS ARE THE EXPRESSION OF OLD BUDDHAS

(1) These mountains and waters of the present are the expression of the old buddhas. Each, abiding in its own Dharma state, fulfills exhaustive virtues. Because they are the circumstances "prior to the kalpa of emptiness," they are this life of the present; because they are the self "before the germination of any subtle sign," they are liberated in their actual occurrence. Since the virtues of the mountain are high and broad, the spiritual power to ride the clouds is always mastered from the mountains, and the marvelous ability to follow the wind is inevitably liberated from the mountains.

2. MOUNTAINS

2-1. Blue Mountains Are Constantly Walking

(2) Preceptor Kai of Mount Dayang addressed the assembly, saying, "The blue mountains are constantly walking. The stone woman gives birth to a child in the night."

(3) The mountains lack none of their proper virtues; hence, they are constantly at rest and constantly walking. We must devote ourselves to a detailed study of this virtue of walking. Since the walking of the mountains should be like that of people, one ought not doubt that the mountains walk simply because they may not appear to stride like humans.

(4) This saying of the buddha and ancestor [Daokai] has pointed out walking; it has got what is fundamental, and we should thoroughly investigate this address on "constant walking." It is constant because it is walking. Although the walking of the blue mountains is faster than "swift as the wind," those in the mountains do not sense this, do not know it. To be "in the mountains" is "a flower opening within the world." Those outside the mountains do not sense this, do not know it. Those without eyes to see the mountains, do not sense, do not know, do not see, do not hear the reason for this. To doubt the walking of the mountains means that one does not yet know one's own walking. It is not that one does not walk but that one does not yet know, has not made clear, this walking. Those who would know their own walking must also know the walking of the blue mountains.

(5) The blue mountains are not sentient; they are not insentient. We ourselves are not sentient; we are not insentient. We can have no doubts about these blue mountains walking. We do not know what measure of Dharma realms would be necessary to clarify the blue mountains. We should do a clear accounting of the blue mountains' walking and our own walking, including an accounting of both "stepping back and back stepping."11 We should do an accounting of the fact that, since the very time "before any subtle sign," since "the other side of the King of Emptiness," walking by stepping forward and back has never stopped for a moment.

(6) If walking had ever rested, the buddhas and ancestors would never have appeared; if walking were limited, the Buddhadharma would never have reached us today. Stepping forward has never

ceased; stepping back has never ceased. Stepping forward does not oppose stepping back, nor does stepping back oppose stepping forward. This virtue is called “the mountain flowing, the flowing mountain.”

(7) The blue mountains devote themselves to the investigation of walking; the East Mountain studies “moving over the water.” Hence, this study is the mountains’ own study. The mountains, without altering their own body and mind, with their own mountain countenance, have always been circling back to study [themselves].

(8) Do not slander mountains by saying that the blue mountains cannot walk, nor the East Mountain move over the water. It is because of the baseness of the common person’s point of view that we doubt the phrase “the blue mountains walk”; because of the crudeness of our limited experience, we are surprised by the words “flowing mountain.” Without having fully penetrated even the term “flowing water,” we just remain sunk in our limited perception.

(9) Thus, the accumulated virtues [of the mountain] brought up here represent its very “name and form,” its “vital artery.” There is a mountain walk and a mountain flow. There is a time when the mountains give birth to a mountain child. The mountains become the buddhas and ancestors, and it is for this reason that the buddhas and ancestors have thus appeared.

(10) Even when we have the eyes [to see mountains as] the appearance of grass and trees, earth and stone, fences and walls, this is nothing to doubt, nothing to be moved by: it is not the complete appearance [of the mountains]. Even when there appears an occasion in which [the mountains] are seen as the splendor of the seven treasures, this is still not the real refuge. Even when they appear to us as the realm of the practice of the way of the buddhas, this is not necessarily something to be desired. Even when we attain the crowning appearance of the vision of [the mountains as]

the inconceivable virtues of the buddhas, their reality is more than this. Each of these appearances is the particular objective and subjective result [of past karma]; they are not the karma of the way of the buddhas and ancestors but narrow, one-sided views.12 "Turning the object and turning the mind" is criticized by the Great Sage; "explaining the mind and explaining the nature" is not affirmed by the buddhas and ancestors; "seeing the mind and seeing the nature" is the business of non-Buddhists. "Sticking to words and sticking to phrases" are not the words of liberation. There are [words] that are free from such realms: they are "the blue mountains constantly walking" and "the East Mountain moving over the water." We should give them detailed investigation.

(11) "The stone woman gives birth to a child in the night." This means that the time when "a stone woman gives birth to a child" is "the night." There are male stones, female stones, and stones neither male nor female. They repair heaven, and they repair earth. There are stones of heaven, and there are stones of earth. Though this is said in the secular world, it is rarely understood. We should understand the reason behind this "giving birth to a child." At the time of birth, are parent and child transformed together? We should not only study that birth is realized in the child becoming the parent; we should also study and fully understand that the practice and verification of birth is realized when the parent becomes the child.

2-2. East Mountains Walking in the Water

(12) The Great Master Yunmen Kuangzhen has said, "The East Mountain moves over the water."

(13) The import of this expression is that all mountains are the East Mountain, and all these East Mountains are "moving over the water." Therefore, Mount Sumeru and the other nine mountains are all appearing, are all practicing and verifying [the Buddhadharma]. This is called "the East Mountain." But how could Yunmen

himself be liberated from the “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” of the East Mountain and its life of practice and verification?

(14) At the present time in the land of the great Song there is a certain bunch of illiterates who have formed such a crowd that they cannot be overcome by the few real [students]. They maintain that sayings such as this “East Mountain moving over the water” or Nanquan’s “sickle” are incomprehensible talk. Their idea is that any saying that is involved with thought is not a Zen saying of the buddhas and ancestors; it is incomprehensible sayings that are the sayings of the buddhas and ancestors. Consequently, [they hold that] Huangbo’s “stick” and Linji’s “roar,” because they are difficult to comprehend and cannot be grasped by thought, represent the great awakening preceding the time “before the germination of any subtle sign.” The “tangle-cutting phrases” often used as devices by earlier worthies are [they say] incomprehensible.

(15) Those who talk in this way have never met a true teacher and lack the eye of study; they are worthless little fools. There have been many such “sons of Māra” and “gang of six” shavepates in the land of Song for the last two or three hundred years.16 This is truly regrettable, for it represents the decline of the great way of the buddhas and ancestors. Their understanding is inferior to that of the hīnayāna śrāvakas, more foolish than that even of non-Buddhists. They are not laymen; they are not monks. They are not humans; they are not gods. They are dumber than beasts that study the way of the buddha. What you shavelings call “incomprehensible sayings” is incomprehensible only to you, not to the buddhas and ancestors. Simply because you yourself do not comprehend [the sayings] is no reason for you not to study the path comprehended by the buddhas and ancestors. Even granted that [Zen teachings] were in the end incomprehensible, this comprehension of yours would also be wrong. Such types are common throughout all quarters of the state of Song; I have seen

them with my own eyes. They are to be pitied. They do not know that thought is words; they do not know that words are liberated from thought. When I was in the Song, I made fun of them, but they never had an explanation, never a word to say for themselves — just this false notion of theirs about "incomprehensibility." Who could have taught you this? Though you have no natural teacher, you are natural little non-Buddhists.

(16) We should realize that this [teaching of] "the East Mountain moving over the water" is the very "bones and marrow" of the buddhas and ancestors. All the waters are appearing at the foot of the East Mountain, and therefore the mountains mount the clouds and stride through the heavens. The mountains are the peaks of the waters, and in both ascending and descending their walk is "over the water." The tips of the mountains' feet walk across the waters, setting them dancing. Therefore, their walking is "seven high and eight across" and their "practice and verification are not nonexistent."

3. WATERS

(17) Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither being nor nonbeing, neither delusion nor enlightenment. Frozen, it is harder than diamond; who could break it? Melted, it is softer than milk; who could break it?

(18) This being the case, we cannot doubt the many virtues realized [by water]. We should study the occasion when the water of the ten directions is seen in the ten directions. This is not a study only of the time when humans or gods see water: there is a study of water seeing water. Water practices and verifies water; hence, there is a study of water telling of water. We must bring to realization the road on which the self encounters the self; we must move back and forth along, and spring off from, the vital path on which the other studies and fully comprehends the other.

(19) In general, then, the way of seeing mountains and waters differs according to the type of being [that sees them]. In seeing water, there are beings who see it as a jeweled necklace. This does not mean, however, that they see a jeweled necklace as water. How, then, do we see what they consider water? Their jeweled necklace is what we see as water. Some see water as miraculous flowers, though it does not follow that they use flowers as water. Hungry ghosts see water as raging flames or as pus and blood. Dragons and fish see it as a palace or a tower, or as the seven treasures or the mani gem. [Others] see it as woods and walls, or as the Dharma nature of immaculate liberation, or as the true human body, or as the physical form and mental nature. Humans see these as water. And these [different ways of seeing] are the conditions under which [water] is killed or given life.

(20) Given that what different types of beings see is different, we should have some doubts about this. Is it that there are various ways of seeing one object? Or is it that we have mistaken various images for one object? At the peak of our concentrated effort on this, we should concentrate still more. Therefore, our practice and verification, our pursuit of the way, must also be not merely of one or two kinds, and the ultimate realm must also have a thousand types and ten thousand kinds.

(21) If we reflect further on the real import of this [question], although we say there is water of the various types, it would seem there is no original water, no water of various types. Nevertheless, the various waters in accordance with the types [of beings] do not depend on the mind, do not depend on the body [of these beings]; they do not arise from [different types of] karma; they are not dependent on self; they are not dependent on other. They are liberated dependent on water. Therefore, water is not [the water of] earth, water, fire, wind, space or consciousness; it is not blue, yellow, red, white, or black; it is not form, sound, smell, taste,

touch, or idea. Nevertheless, the waters of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and the rest have been spontaneously appearing [as such].

(22) This being the case, it becomes difficult to explain by what and of what the present land and palace are made. To say that they rest on the wheel of space and the wheel of wind is true neither for oneself nor for others; it is just speculating on the basis of the suppositions of an inferior view and is said only out of fear that, without such a resting place, they could not abide.

(23) The Buddha has said, "All things are ultimately liberated; they have no abode."

(24) We should realize that, although they are liberated, without any bonds, all things are abiding in [their own particular] state. However, when humans look at water, they have the one way that sees it only as flowing without rest. This "flow" takes many forms, of which the human view is but one. [Water] flows over the earth; it flows across the sky; it flows up; it flows down. [Water] flows around bends and into deep abysses. It mounts up to form clouds; it descends to form pools.

(25) The Wen Tzu says, "The tao of water, ascending to heaven, becomes rain and dew, descending to earth, becomes rivers and streams."

(26) Such is said even in the secular world; it would be shameful indeed if those who call themselves descendants of the buddhas and ancestors were more stupid than the secular. [This passage] says that, although the way of water is unknown to water, water actually functions [as water]; although the way of water is not unknown to water, water actually functions [as water].

(27) "Ascending to heaven, it becomes rain and dew." We should realize that water climbs to the very highest heavens in the highest quarters and becomes rain and dew. Rain and dew is of various kinds, in accordance with the various worlds. To say that there are

places to which water does not reach is the teaching of the hīnayāna śrāvaka, or the false teaching of the non-Buddhist. Water extends into flames; it extends into thought, reasoning, and discrimination; it extends into awareness and the buddha nature.

(28) “Descending to earth, it becomes rivers and streams.” We should realize that, when water descends to earth, it becomes rivers and streams, and that the essence of rivers and streams becomes sages. The foolish common folk think that water is always in rivers, streams, and seas, but this is not so: [water] makes rivers and seas within water. Therefore, water is in places that are not rivers and seas; it is just that, when water descends to earth, it works as rivers and seas.

(29) Moreover, we should not study that, when water has become rivers and seas, there is then no world and no buddha land [within water]: incalculable buddha lands are realized even within a single drop of water. Consequently, it is not that water exists within the buddha land, nor that the buddha land exists within water: the existence of water has nothing whatever to do with the three times or the Dharma realm. Nevertheless, though it is like this, it is the kōan of the actualization of water.

(30) Wherever the buddhas and ancestors are, water is always there; wherever water is, there the buddhas and ancestors always appear. Therefore, the buddhas and ancestors have always taken up water as their own body and mind, their own thinking.

(31) In this way, then, [the idea] that water does not climb up is to be found neither in Buddhist nor non-Buddhist writings. The way of water penetrates everywhere, above and below, vertically and horizontally. Still, in the sūtras it is said that fire and wind go up, while earth and water go down. But this “up and down” bears some study — the study of the up and down of the way of the buddha. [In the way of the buddha,] where earth and water go is considered “down”; but “down” here does not mean some place to

which earth and water go. Where fire and wind go is “up.” While the Dharma realm has no necessary connection with up and down or the four directions, simply on the basis of the function of the four, five, or six elements, we provisionally set up a Dharma realm with directions. It is not that the “heaven of nonconception” is above and the “Avīci hell” is below: Avīci is the entire Dharma realm; the heaven of nonconception is the entire Dharma realm.

(32) Nevertheless, when dragons and fish see water as a palace, just as when humans see palaces, they do not view it as flowing. And, if some onlooker were to explain to them that their palace was flowing water, they would surely be just as amazed as we are now to hear it said that mountains flow. Still, there would undoubtedly be some [dragons and fish] who would accept such an explanation of the railings, stairs, and columns of palaces and pavilions. We should calmly consider, over and over, the reason for this. If our study is not liberated from these confines, we have not freed ourselves from the body and mind of the commoner, we have not fully comprehended the land of the buddhas and ancestors, we have not fully comprehended the land of the commoner, we have not fully comprehended the palace of the commoner.

(33) Although humans have deeply understood what is in seas and rivers as water, just what kind of thing dragons, fish, and other beings understand and use as water we do not yet know. Do not foolishly assume that all kinds of beings must use as water what we understand as water.

(34) When those who study Buddhism seek to learn about water, they should not stick to [the water of] humans; they should go on to study the water of the way of the buddhas. We should study how we see the water used by the buddhas and ancestors; we should study whether within the rooms of the buddhas and ancestors there is or is not water.

4. MOUNTAINS AND WATERS ARE DWELLING PLACES FOR SAGES

(35) From the distant past to the distant present, mountains have been the dwelling place of the great sages. Wise men and sages have all made the mountains their own chambers, their own body and mind. And through these wise men and sages the mountains have appeared. However many great sages and wise men we suppose have assembled in the mountains, ever since they entered the mountains no one has met a single one of them. There is only the expression of the mountain way of life; not a single trace of their having entered remains. The "crown and eyes" [of the mountains] are completely different when we are in the world gazing off at the mountains and when we are in the mountains meeting the mountains. Our concept of not-flowing and our understanding of not-flowing should not be the same as the dragon's understanding. Humans and gods reside in their own worlds, and other beings may have their doubts [about this], or then again, they may not.

(36) Therefore, without giving way to our surprise and doubt, we should study the words "mountains flow" with the buddhas and ancestors. Taking up one [view], there is flowing; taking up another, there is not-flowing. At one turn, there is flowing; at another, not-flowing. If our study is not like this, it is not "the true Dharma wheel of the Thus Come One."

(37) An old buddha has said, "If you wish to avoid the karma of Avīci hell, do not slander the true Dharma wheel of the Thus Come One."

(38) These words should be engraved on skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, engraved on interior and exterior of body and mind, engraved on emptiness and on form; they are engraved on trees and rocks, engraved on fields and villages.

(39) Although we say that mountains belong to the country, actually they belong to those who love them. When the mountains love their owners, the wise and virtuous inevitably enter the mountains. And when sages and wise men live in the mountains, because the mountains belong to them, trees and rocks flourish and abound, and the birds and beasts take on a supernatural excellence. This is because the sages and wise men have covered them with their virtue. We should realize that the mountains actually take delight in wise men, actually take delight in sages.

(40) Throughout the ages, we have excellent examples of emperors who have gone to the mountains to pay homage to wise men and seek instruction from great sages. At such times [the emperors] respected [the sages] as teachers and honored them without standing on worldly forms. For the imperial authority has no authority over the mountain sage, and [the emperors] knew that the mountains are beyond the mundane world. In ancient times we have [the cases of] Kongtong and the Hua Guard: when the Yellow Emperor made his visit, he went on his knees, prostrated himself, and begged instruction. Again, the Buddha Śākyamuni left his royal father's palace and went into the mountains; yet his royal father felt no resentment toward the mountains nor distrust of those in the mountains who instructed the prince. [The prince's] twelve years of cultivating the way were largely spent in the mountains, and it was in the mountains that the Dharma King's auspicious event occurred. Truly, even a "wheel-turning king" does not wield authority over the mountains.

(41) We should understand that the mountains are not within the limits of the human realm or the limits of the heavens above. They are not to be viewed with the calculations of human thought. If only we did not compare them with flowing in the human realm, who would have any doubts about such things as the mountains' flowing or not flowing?

(42) Again, since ancient times, wise men and sages have also lived by the water. When they live by the water they hook fish. Or they hook people, or they hook the way. These are all "water styles" of old. And going further, there must be hooking the self, hooking the hook, being hooked by the hook, and being hooked by the way.

(43) Long ago, when the Preceptor Decheng suddenly left Yueshan and went to live on the river, he got the sage of Huating River. Is this not hooking a fish? Is it not hooking a person? Is it not hooking water? Is it not hooking himself? That the person got to see Decheng is [because he was] Decheng; Decheng's accepting the person is his meeting the person.

(44) It is not the case simply that there is water in the world; within the world of water there is a world. And this is true not only within water: within clouds as well there is a world of sentient beings; within wind there is a world of sentient beings; within fire there is a world of sentient beings; within earth there is a world of sentient beings. Within the Dharma realm there is a world of sentient beings; within a single blade of grass there is a world of sentient beings; within a single staff there is a world of sentient beings. And wherever there is a world of sentient beings, there, inevitably, is the world of buddhas and ancestors. The reason this is so, we should study very carefully.

(45) In this way, water is the palace of the "true dragon"; it is not flowing away. If we regard it only as flowing, the word "flowing" is an insult to water: it is like imposing "not flowing." Water is nothing but water's "real form just as it is." Water is the virtue of water; it is not flowing. In the thorough study of the flowing or the not-flowing of a single [drop of] water, the entirety of the ten thousand things is instantly realized. Among mountains as well, there are mountains hidden in jewels; there are mountains hidden in marshes, mountains hidden in the sky; there are mountains

hidden in mountains. There is a study of mountains hidden in hiddenness.

5. CONCLUSION: MOUNTAINS ARE MOUNTAINS, WATERS ARE WATERS

(46) An old buddha has said, “Mountains are mountains and waters are waters.”

(47) These words do not say that mountains are mountains; they say that mountains are mountains. Therefore, we should thoroughly study these mountains. When we thoroughly study the mountains, this is the mountain training. Such mountains and waters themselves become wise men and sages.

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

Book 29

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