

# DOGEN

TREASURY OF THE TRUE DHARMA EYE  
BOOK XXIX

THE MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS SUTRA  
Translated from the Japanese by Carl Bielefeldt

These mountains and rivers of the present are the actualization of the word of the ancient Buddhas. Each, abiding in its own dharma state, completely fulfills its virtues. Because they are the state prior to the *kalpa* of emptiness, they are living in the present. Because they are the self before the germination of any subtle sign, they are liberated in their actualization.

Because the virtues of the mountain are high and broad, the power to ride the clouds is always penetrated from the mountains; and the ability to follow the wind is inevitably liberated from the mountains.

The Master Ta-Yang Shan-K'ai addressed the assembly: "The blue mountains are constantly walking. The stone woman gives birth to a child in the night." 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. The walking of the mountains is like that of people: do not doubt that the mountains walk simply because they may not appear to walk like humans. These words of the Patriarch point out the fundamental meaning of walking, and we should thoroughly investigate his teaching on "constant walking."

Because the blue mountains are walking, they are constant. Their walk is swifter than the wind; yet 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 this truth.

Those who doubt that the mountains walk do not yet understand their own walking. It is not that they do not walk, but that they do not yet understand, have not made clear, their walking. Those who would understand their own walking must also understand the walking of the blue mountains. The blue mountains are neither sentient nor insentient; the self is neither sentient nor insentient. Therefore, we can have no doubts about these blue mountains walking.

We do not realize that we must clarify the blue mountains on the basis of innumerable dharma realms. We must carefully investigate the walking of the blue mountains, the walking of the self. And this investigation should include walking backward as well as backward walking. We should carefully investigate the fact that since that very time before any subtle sign, since the age of the King of Emptiness, walking both forward and backward has never stopped even for a moment. If

walking had ever rested, the Buddhas and Ancestors would never have appeared; if walking were limited, the Buddha dharma would never have reached the present. Walking forward has never ceased; walking backward has never ceased. Walking forward does not oppose walking backward, nor does walking backward oppose walking forward. This virtue is called "the mountain flowing, the flowing mountain."

The blue mountains devote themselves to the investigation of walking; the East Mountain devotes itself to the study of "moving over water." Hence, this study is the mountains' own study. The mountains, unchanged in body and mind, maintaining their own mountain countenance, have always been traveling about studying themselves. Do not slight mountains by saying that the blue mountains cannot walk, nor the East Mountain move over the water. It is because of the impoverishment of the common people's point-of-view that they doubt the statement, "the blue mountains walk;" it is because of the shallowness of their limited experience that they are surprised by the words, "flowing mountain." Without having fully understood even the words, "flowing water," they simply remain sunk in their ordinary perception.

Thus, the accumulated virtues of the mountain represent its name and form, its very lifeblood. There is a mountain walk and a mountain flow, and there is a time when the mountain gives 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.

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 actualization of the mountains. Even when there occurs a time in which the mountains are perceived as the splendor of the seven treasures, this is still not the real refuge. Even when the mountains appear as the realm of the practice of the Buddhas, this is not necessarily something to be desired. Even when we attain the supreme vision of the mountains as the actualization of the inconceivable virtue of the Buddhas, this is not yet the complete reality. Each of these appearances is the particular objective and subjective reward of past karma. They are not the karma of the way of the Buddhas and Ancestors, but narrow, one-sided views.

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 is not the speech of liberation. There is speech which is free from such realms; it is "the blue mountains constantly walking," "the East Mountain moving over the water." We should give this detailed investigation.

"The stone woman gives birth to a child in the night." This means that the time when "the stone woman gives birth to a child" is the "night." Among stones there are male stones, female stones, and stones neither male nor female. These stones give support to heaven and to earth. There are heavenly stones and earthly stones. Although this is said in the secular world, it is rarely understood. We should understand the true nature of this "birth." At the time of birth are both parent and child transformed? We must study and fully understand, not only that birth is actualized in the child becoming the parent, but also that the practice and verification of the phenomenon of birth occurs when the parent becomes the child.

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. Solidified, it is harder than diamond: who could break it? Melted, it is softer than milk: who could break it? This being the case, we cannot doubt the many virtues realized by water. We should, then, study that occasion when the water of the ten directions is seen in the ten directions. This is not a study only of the time when people or *devas* see water: there is a study of water seeing water. Water practices and verifies water; hence, there is a study of water speaking water. We must bring to realization the path 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.

In general, then, the way of seeing mountains and rivers differs according to the type of being that sees them. There are beings who see what we call water 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. Or, again, they 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 tower, or as the seven treasures or as the *mani* gem. Others see water 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.

Thus, what different types of beings see is different; and we should reflect on this fact. Is it that there are various ways of seeing one object? Or is it that we have mistaken various images for one object? We should concentrate every effort on understanding this question, and then concentrate still more. Given this multitude of perspectives, it follows that the training on the way of practice and verification must also not be merely of one or two kinds, and the ultimate realm must also have a thousand types and ten thousand kinds.

If we reflect on the real import of this, although we say there are many types of water, it would seem there is no original water, no water of various types. Nevertheless, the waters which vary in accordance with the different types of beings



do not depend on body or mind; they do not arise from karma; they are not dependent on the self or the other: dependent on water, water is liberated.

Therefore, water is not 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 water of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and the rest is spontaneously appearing. This being the case, it becomes difficult to explain by what and of what this 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 the small understanding, and is only said out of fear that without such a resting place, things would not abide.

The Buddha has said, "All dharmas are ultimately liberated; they have no abode." We should realize that although they are liberated, without any bonds, all dharmas are abiding in their own state. However, when human beings look at water, they see it only as flowing without rest. This "flow" takes many forms, and our way of seeing is just a one-sided human view. Water flows over the earth; it flows across the sky; it flows up; it flows down. Water flows around benids and into deep abysses. It mounts up to form clouds; it descends to form pools.

The *Wen-tzu* says, "The tao of water, ascending to heaven becomes rain and dew, descending to earth becomes rivers and streams." Such is said even in the secular world. It would be shameful indeed if those who call themselves descendants of the Buddhas and Ancestors had less understanding than the ordinary person. This passage says that, although the way of water is unknown to water, water actually functions as water; and although the way of water is not unknown to water, water actually functions as water.

"Ascending to heaven, it becomes rain and dew." We should realize that water climbs to the very highest heavens, and becomes rain and dew. And this 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 doctrine of the Hinayana *sravaka*, or the false doctrine of the non-Buddhist. Water extends into flames; it extends into thought, reasoning, and discrimination; it extends into enlightenment and the Buddha nature.

"Descending to earth, it becomes rivers and streams." We should realize that when water descends to earth, it becomes rivers and streams. And the essence of rivers and streams becomes sages. The foolish common people 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 acts as rivers and seas.

Moreover, we should not think that when water has become rivers and seas, there is then no world and no Buddha land within water: even within a single drop of water incalculable Buddha realms are actualized. 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. And yet, water is the koan of the actualization of water.

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.

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 sutras 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 Buddhism, where earth and water go is considered "down;" but "down" 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 and 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 *asamjnika* heaven is above and the *avici* hell below: *avici* is the entire dharma realm; *asamjnika* is the entire dharma realm.

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 common people; we have not fully comprehended the land of the Buddhas and Ancestors; we have not fully comprehended the land of the common people; we have not fully comprehended the palace of the common people.



Although human beings have 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. When those who truly 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 Buddhism. 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.



From time immemorial the mountains have been the dwelling place of the great sages; wise ones and sages have all made the mountains their own chambers, their own body and mind. And through these wise ones and sages, the mountains have been actualized. However many great sages and wise ones 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 actualization of the life of the mountains; not a single trace of their having entered remains.

The countenance of the mountains is completely different when we are in the world gazing off at the mountains, and when we are in the mountains meeting the mountains. Our consideration and our understanding of nonflowing should not be the same as the dragon's understanding. Humans and *devas* reside in their own worlds, and other beings may have doubts about this, or, again, they may not. Therefore, without giving way to our surprise and doubt, we should study the words, "mountains flow," with the Buddhas and Ancestors. Taking one view, there is flowing; taking another, there is nonflowing. At one time there is flowing; at another, non-flowing. If our study is not like this, it is not the true dharma wheel of the Tathagata.

An ancient Buddha has said, "If you wish to avoid the karma of *avici* hell, do not slander the true dharma wheel of the Tathagata." 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.

Although we say that the mountains belong to the country, actually they belong to those who love them. When the mountains love their master, the wise and the virtuous inevitably enter the mountains. And when the sages and wise ones 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 ones have covered them with virtue. We should realize that the mountains actually take delight in wise ones and sages.

Throughout the ages we have excellent examples of emperors who have gone to the mountains to pay homage to wise ones and seek instruction from great sages. At such times the emperors respected the sages as teachers and honored them without abiding by worldly forms. For the imperial authority has no power over

the mountain sage, and the emperors knew that the mountains are beyond the mundane world.

In ancient times we have the examples of K'ung-t'ung and Hua Feng. When the Yellow Emperor made his visit to Kuang Ch'eng-tzu, he went on his knees, prostrated himself, and begged instruction. Again, Shakyamuni Buddha left his father's palace and went into the mountains; yet his father felt no resentment toward the mountains, nor distrust of those in the mountains who instructed the prince. His twelve years of cultivating the Way were spent largely in the mountains, and it was in the mountains that the Dharma King's auspicious event occurred. Even a veritable *cakravartin* does not wield authority over the mountains.

We should understand that the mountains are not within the human realm, nor within the realm of heaven. They are not to be viewed with the suppositions of human thought. If only we did not compare them with flowing in the human realm, who would have any doubt about such things as the mountains flowing or not flowing?

Again, in ancient times, wise ones and sages have also lived by the water. When they live by the water, they catch fish, or they catch people, or they catch the Way. These are all traditional water styles. And going further, there must be catching the self, catching the hook, being caught by the hook, and being caught by the Way.

In ancient times when Te-ch'eng suddenly left Yueh-shan and went to live on the river, he got the sage of the Hua-t'ing River. Is this not catching fish? Is it not catching people? Catching water? Is it not catching himself? For anyone to meet Te-ch'eng, they must be Te-ch'eng; Te-ch'eng's teaching someone is his meeting himself.

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, within fire, 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, 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 the Buddhas and Ancestors. This truth we should study very carefully.

Thus, water is the palace of the true dragon; it is not flowing away. If we regard it as only flowing, the word *flowing* is an insult to water; for it is the same as imposing *nonflowing*. Water is nothing but the real form of water just as it is. Water is the water virtue; it is not flowing. In the thorough study of flowing, or the



nonflowing, of a single drop of water, the entirety of the ten thousand dharmas is instantly realized.

As for mountains, 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. An ancient Buddha has said, "Mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers." The meaning of these words is not that mountains are mountains, but 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 rivers themselves spontaneously become wise ones and sages.