

## GENJŌKŌAN

## “The actualization of enlightenment”

WHEN all things are the Buddha-dharma, there is enlightenment, illusion, practice, life, death, Buddhas, and sentient beings. When all things are seen not to have any substance, there is no illusion or enlightenment, no Buddhas or sentient beings, no birth or destruction. Originally the Buddhist Way transcends itself and any idea of abundance or lack—still there is birth and destruction, illusion and enlightenment, sentient beings and Buddhas. Yet people hate to see flowers fall and do not like weeds to grow.

It is an illusion to try to carry out our practice and enlightenment through ourselves, but to have practice and enlightenment through phenomena, that is enlightenment. To have great enlightenment about illusion is to be a Buddha. To have great illusion about enlightenment is to be a sentient being. Further, some are continually enlightened beyond enlightenment but some add more and more illusion.

When Buddhas become Buddhas, it is not necessary for them to be aware they are Buddhas. However, they are still enlightened Buddhas and continually realize Buddha. Through body and mind we can comprehend the form and sound of things. They work together as one. However, it is not like the reflection of a shadow in a mirror, or the moon reflected in the water. If you look at only one side, the other is dark.

To learn the Buddhist Way is to learn about oneself. To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to perceive oneself as all things. To realize this is to cast off the body and mind of self and others. When you have reached this stage you will be detached even from enlightenment but will practice it continually without thinking about it.

When people begin to seek the Dharma [outside themselves] they are immediately far removed from its true location. When the Dharma has been received through the right transmission, one's real self immediately appears.

If you are in a boat, and you only look at the riverbank, you will think that the riverbank is moving; but if you look at the boat, you will discover that the boat itself is actually moving. Similarly, if you try to understand the nature of phenomena only through your own confused perception you will mistakenly think that your nature is eternal. Furthermore, if you have right practice and return to your origin then you will clearly see that all things have no permanent self.

Once firewood is reduced to ashes, it cannot return to firewood; but we should not think of ashes as the potential state of firewood or vice-versa. Ash is completely ash and firewood is firewood. They have their own past, future, and independent existence.

Similarly, when human beings die, they cannot return to life; but in Buddhist teaching we never say life changes into death. This is an established teaching of the Buddhist Dharma. We call it "non-becoming." Likewise, death cannot change into life. This is another principle of Buddha's Law. This is called "non-destruction." Life and death have absolute existence, like the relationship of winter and spring. But do not think of winter changing into spring or spring to summer.

When human beings attain enlightenment, it is like the moon reflected in the water. The moon appears in the water but does not get wet nor is the water disturbed by the moon. Furthermore, the light of the moon covers the earth and yet it can be contained in a small pool of water, a tiny dewdrop, or even one miniscule drop of water.

Just as the moon does not trouble the water in any way, do not think enlightenment causes people difficulty. Do not consider enlightenment an obstacle in your life. The depths of the dewdrop can contain the heights of the moon and sky.

When the True Law is not totally attained, both physically and mentally, there is a tendency to think that we possess the complete Law and our work is finished. If the Dharma is completely present, there is a realization of one's insufficiencies.

For example, if you take a boat to the middle of the ocean, beyond the sight of any mountains, and look in all four directions, the ocean appears round. However, the ocean is not round, and its virtue is limitless. It is like a palace, or an adornment of precious jewels. But to us, the ocean seems to be one large circle of water.

So we see that this can be said of all things. Depending on the viewpoint we see things in different ways. Correct perception depends upon the amount of one's study and practice. In order to understand various types of viewpoints we must

study the numerous aspects and virtues of mountains and oceans, rather than just circles. We should know that it is not only so all around us but also within us—even in a single drop of water.

Fish in the ocean find the water endless and birds think the sky is without limits. However, neither fish nor birds have been separated from their element. When their need is great, their utilization is great, when it is small, the utilization is small. They fully utilize every aspect to its utmost—freely, limitlessly. However, we should know that if birds are separated from their own element they will die. We should know that water is life for fish and the sky is life for birds. In the sky, birds are life; and in the water, fish are life. Many more conclusions can be drawn like this. There is practice and enlightenment [like the above relationships of sky and birds, and fish and water]. However, after the clarification of water and sky, we can see that if there are birds or fish that try to enter the sky or water, they cannot find either a way or a place. If we understand this point, there is actualization of enlightenment in our daily life. If we attain this Way, all our actions are the actualization of enlightenment. This Way, this place, is not great or small, self or others, neither past or present—it exists just as it is.

Like this, if we practice and realize the Buddhist Way we can master and penetrate each dharma; and we can confront and master any one practice. There is a place where we can penetrate the Way and find the extent of knowable perceptions. This happens because our knowledge co-exists simultaneously with the ultimate fulfilment of the Buddhist Dharma.

After this fulfilment becomes the basis of our perception do not think that our perception is necessarily understood by the intellect. Although enlightenment is actualized quickly, it is not always totally manifested because [it is too profound and inexhaustible for our limited intellect].

One day, when Zen Master Hōtetsu of Mt. Mayoku<sup>1</sup> was fanning himself, a monk approached and asked, “The nature of the wind never changes and blows everywhere, so why are you using a fan?”

The master replied, “Although you know that the nature of the wind never changes you do not know the meaning of blowing everywhere.” The monk then said, “Well, what does it mean?” Hōtetsu did not speak but only continued to fan himself. Finally the monk understood and bowed deeply before him.

The experience, the realization, and the living, right transmission of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pao-ch'è of Ma-ku Shan, a disciple of Baso (Ma-tsu). Dates of birth and death are unknown.

Buddhist Dharma is like this. To say it is not necessary to use a fan because the nature of the wind never changes and there will be wind even without one means that he does not know the real meaning of “never changes” or the wind’s nature. Just as the wind’s nature never changes, the wind of Buddhism makes the earth golden and causes the rivers to flow with sweet, fermented milk.

This was written in mid-autumn, 1233, and given to the lay disciple Yō-kō-shū of Kyūshū.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Almost nothing is known about him.