

Within a Dream Expressing the Dream

夢中説夢

Eihei Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo Muchu Setsumu
translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Taigen Dan Leighton

The path of all buddhas and ancestors arises before the first forms emerge; it cannot be spoken of using conventional views. This being so, in the realm of buddha ancestors there is the active power of buddhas going beyond buddhas. Since this realm is not a matter of the passage of time, their lives are neither long nor short, neither quick nor slow. This cannot be judged in an ordinary manner. Thus, the dharma wheel has been set to turn since before the first sign of forms emerged. The great merit needs no reward, and becomes the guidepost for all ages. Within a dream this is the dream you express. Because awakening is seen within awakening, the dream is expressed within a dream.

The place where the dream is expressed within a dream is the land and the assembly of buddha ancestors. The buddhas' lands and their assemblies, the ancestors' way and their seats, are awakening throughout awakening, and express the dream within a dream. When you meet such speech and expressions, do not regard them as other than the buddhas' assembly; it is buddha turning the dharma wheel. This dharma wheel encompasses all the ten directions and the eight facets of a clear crystal, and so the great oceans, Mt. Sumeru, the lands, and all buddhas are actualized. This is the dream expressed within a dream, prior to all dreams.

Every dewdrop manifested in every realm is a dream. This dream is the glowing clarity of the hundred grasses. What requires questioning is this very point. What is confusing is this very point. At this time, there are dream grasses, grasses within, expressive grasses, and so on. When we study this, then roots, stems, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits, as well as radiance and color are all the great dream. Do not mistake them as merely dreamy.

However, those who do not wish to study buddha dharma believe that expressing the dream within a dream means speaking of unreal dream grass as real, like piling delusion upon delusion. But this is not true. When you say, "Within confusion is just confusion, "still you should follow the path in the vast sky known as "delusion throughout delusion." You should endeavor to investigate just this thoroughly.

The expressing of the dream within a dream is all buddhas. All buddhas are wind and rain, water and fire. We respectfully maintain these names of buddhas, and also pay homage to those names of other buddhas. To express the dream within a dream is the ancient buddhas; it is to ride in this treasure boat and directly arrive in the practice place. Directly arriving in the practice place is riding in this treasure boat. Meandering dreams and direct dreams, holding and letting go, all freely flow like gusting breezes.

The dharma wheel is just like this; turning the great dharma-wheel-world is immeasurable and boundless. It turns even within a single particle, ebbing and flowing ceaselessly within the particle. Accordingly, whenever such a dharma is turned, even an antagonist nods and smiles. Wherever such a dharma is turned, it freely circulates like the flowing breezes.

Thus, the endless turning of dharma traverses the entire land. In the all-embracing world, cause and effect are not ignored, and all buddhas are unsurpassable. Know that being present in all situations, the guiding way of all buddhas in the amassing of expressions of dharma is boundlessly transforming. Do not search for the limits of dharma in the past and future.

All things leave and all things arrive right here. This being so, one plants twining vines and gets entangled in twining vines. This is the characteristic of unsurpassable enlightenment. Just as enlightenment is limitless, sentient beings are limitless and unsurpassable. Just as cages and snares are limitless, emancipation from them is limitless. The actualization of the fundamental point is: "I grant you thirty blows." This is the actualization of expressing the dream within a dream.

Thus, a tree with no roots, the ground where no light or shade falls, and a valley where no shouts echo are no other than the actualized expressions of the dream within a dream. This is neither the realm of humans nor of heavenly beings, and cannot be judged by ordinary people. Who could doubt that a dream is enlightenment, since it is not within the purview of doubt? Who could recognize this dream, since it is not related to recognition? Since unsurpassable enlightenment is unsurpassable enlightenment, so the dream is called a dream.

There are inner dreams, dream expressions, expressions of dreams, and dreams inside. Without being within a dream, there is no expression of dreams. Without expressing dreams, there is no being within a dream. Without expressing dreams, there are no buddhas. Without being within a dream, buddhas do not emerge and turn the wondrous dharma wheel. This dharma wheel is no other than a buddha together with a buddha, and a dream expressed within a dream. Simply expressing the dream within a dream is itself the buddhas and ancestors, the assembly of unsurpassable enlightenment. Furthermore, going beyond the dharma body is itself expressing the dream within a dream.

Here is the encounter of a buddha with a buddha. No attachments are needed to the head, eyes, marrow, and brain, or body, flesh, hands, and feet. Without attachment, one who buys gold sells gold. This is called the mystery of mysteries, the wonder of wonders, the awakening of awakenings, the headtop above the head. This is the daily activity of buddha ancestors. When you study this headtop, you may think that the head only means a human skull, without understanding that it is the crown of Vairochana Buddha. How can you realize it as the tips of the bright, clear hundred grasses? Who knows that this is the head itself?

Since ancient times the phrase “the headtop placed above the head” has been spoken. Hearing this phrase, foolish people think that it cautions against adding something extra. Usually they refer to something that should not occur when they say, “How can you add a head on top of a head?” Actually, isn’t this a mistake?

The expression of the dream within a dream can be aroused by both ordinary people and sages. Moreover, the expression of the dream within a dream by both ordinary people and sages arose yesterday and develops today. Know that yesterday’s expression of the dream within a dream was the recognition of this expression as expressing the dream within a dream. The present expression of the dream within a dream is to experience right now this expression as expressing the dream within a dream. Indeed, this is the marvelous joy of meeting a buddha.

We should regret that, although the dream of the buddha ancestors’ bright hundred grasses is apparent, clearer than a hundred thousand suns and moons, the ignorant do not see it. What a pity! The head that is “the head placed above the head” is exactly the headtops of a hundred grasses, thousands of types of heads, the ten thousand kinds of heads, the heads throughout the body, the heads of the entire world unconcealed, the heads of the entire world of the ten directions, the heads of teacher and student that join in a single phrase, the headtop of a one hundred foot pole. “Placing” and “above” in “placing the headtop above the head” are both heads. Study and investigate this.

Thus, the passage “All buddhas and their unsurpassable, complete enlightenment all emerge from this *[Diamond] Sutra*” is exactly expressing the dream within a dream, which has always been the head placed atop the head. This sutra, while expressing the dream within a dream, brings forth buddhas with their unsurpassed enlightenment. These buddhas, with their enlightenment, in turn speak this sutra, which is the established expression of the dream within a dream.

As the cause of a dream is not obscure, the effect of the dream is not ignored. This is indeed one mallet striking one thousand or ten thousand blows, one thousand or ten thousand mallets striking one or half a blow. As it is so, a thing of suchness expresses the dream within a dream; a person of suchness expresses the dream within a dream. A thing beyond suchness expresses the dream within a dream; a person beyond suchness expresses the dream within a dream. This understanding has been acknowledged as crystal clear.

What is called, “talking all day long about a dream within a dream, “is no other than the actual expression of the dream within a dream.

An ancient buddha said, “Now I express the dream within a dream for you. All buddhas in the past, present, and future express the dream within a dream. The six early generations of Chinese ancestors express the dream within a dream.”

Study and clarify these words. Shakyamuni Buddha holding up the flower and blinking is exactly the expression of the dream within a dream. Huike doing prostrations and attaining the marrow is also the expression of the dream within a dream.

Making one brief utterance, beyond understanding and beyond knowing, is the expression of the dream within a dream. As the expression of the dream within a dream is the thousand hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara that function by many means, the power of seeing colors and sounds, and hearing colors and sounds, is fully maintained. The manifesting body is the expression of the dream within a dream. The expressions of dreams and of myriad aspects of dharma are the expression of the dream within a dream. Taking hold and letting go are the expressions of the dream within a dream. Directly pointing is expressing the dream; hitting the mark is expressing the dream.

When you take hold or when you let go, you need to study the common balancing scale. As soon as you understand it, the measuring of ounces and pounds will become clear, and will express the dream within a dream. Without knowing ounces and pounds, and without reaching the level balance, there is no actualization of the balance point. When you attain balanced equilibrium, you will see the balance point. Achieving balance does not depend on the objects being weighed, on the balancing scale, or on the activity of weighing, but just hangs on emptiness. Thus, deeply consider that without attaining balance you do not experience solidity. Just hanging on its own in emptiness, the expression of the dream within a dream allows objects to float free in emptiness. Within emptiness, stable balance is manifested. Stable balance is the great way of the balance scale. While suspending emptiness and suspending objects, whether as emptiness or as forms, expression of the dream within a dream joins settled balancing.

There is no liberation other than expression of the dream within a dream. The dream is the entire great earth; the entire great earth is stable. Thus, the inexhaustibility of turning the head and pivoting the brain [actualizing freedom] is just your awakening of the dream within a dream—identifying with and actualizing the dream within a dream.

Shakyamuni Buddha said in a verse [in the *Lotus Sutra*]:

All buddhas, with bodies of golden hue,
splendidly adorned with a hundred auspicious marks,
hear the dharma and expound it for others.
Such is the fine dream that ever occurs.
In the dream you are made king,
then forsake palace and household entourage,
along with utmost satisfaction of the five sense desires,
and travel to the site of practice
under the bodhi tree.
On the lion’s seat
in search of the way, after seven days
you attain the wisdom of the buddhas,
completing the unsurpassable way.

Arising and turning the dharma wheel,
you expound the dharma for the four groups of practitioners
throughout thousands of millions of kalpas,
expressing the wondrous dharma free of flaws,
and liberating innumerable sentient beings.
Finally you enter parinirvana,
like the smoke dispersing as the lamp is extinguished.
If later in the unwholesome world
one expounds this foremost dharma,
one will produce great benefit,
like the merit just described.

Study this discourse of the Buddha, and thoroughly investigate this buddha assembly of the buddhas [in the *Lotus Sutra*]. This dream of buddhas is not an analogy. As the wondrous dharma of all buddhas is mastered only by a buddha together with a buddha, all dharmas awakened in the dream are genuine forms. In awakening there are aspiration, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana. Within the dream there are aspiration, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana. Every awakening within a dream is the genuine form, without regard to large or small, superior or inferior.

However, on hearing the words in the passage, *In the dream you are made king*, people in the past and present mistakenly think that, due to the power of expounding *this foremost dharma*, mere night dreams may become like this dream of buddhas. Those who think like this, have not yet clarified the Buddha's discourse.

Awakening and dreaming are from the beginning one suchness, the genuine reality. The buddha dharma, even if it were an analogy, is the genuine reality. As it is not an analogy, *made king in the dream* is the genuine truth of the buddha dharma.

Shakyamuni Buddha and all buddhas and ancestors each arouse the mind, cultivate practice, and attain universal true awakening within a dream. This being so, the Buddha's path of transforming the saha world throughout his lifetime is indeed created in a dream.

In search of the way, after seven days is the measure of attained buddha wisdom. As for what is described, "*Turning the dharma wheel . . . throughout thousands of millions of kalpas . . . liberating innumerable sentient beings*", these fluctuations within a dream cannot be traced.

All buddhas, with bodies of golden hue, splendidly adorned with a hundred auspicious marks, hear the dharma and expound it for others. Such is the fine dream that ever occurs. These words clearly show that this *fine dream* is illuminated as *all buddhas*.

There is the *ever occurring* of the Tathagata's words; it is not only hundreds of years of dreaming. *Expounding it for others* is manifesting the body. *Hearing the dharma* is hearing sounds with the eye, and with the mind. It is hearing sounds in the old nest, and before the empty kalpa.

As it is said that, *All buddhas, with bodies of golden hue, splendidly adorned with a hundred auspicious marks*, now we can directly realize beyond any doubt that this *fine dream* is itself *all buddhas with bodies*. Although within awakening the buddhas' transformations never cease, the buddha ancestors' emergence is itself the creation of a dream within a dream. Be mindful of not slandering the buddha dharma. When you practice not slandering the buddha dharma, this path of the tathagatas is immediately actualized.

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