

## MOUNTAINS and RIVERS SUTRA (Dogen Zenji - 2240)

Mountains and rivers right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Both mountains and rivers abide in their true form and actualize true virtue. Mountains and rivers transcend time and are alive in the eternal present. They are the original self and they are emancipation-realization. Mountains are high and wide. The movement of clouds and the inconceivable power of soaring in the wind comes freely from the mountains.

Priest Daokai of Mount Furong said to the assembly, "The green mountains are always moving. A stone woman gives birth to a child at night." Mountains possess complete virtue with nothing lacking. They are always safely rooted yet constantly moving. You should study the meaning of "always moving." You should study the green mountains. Just because the movement of mountains is not like the movement of human beings, do not doubt that it exists. You should study the green mountains' walking and your own walking. You should study walking backwards. If walking stops, buddha ancestors do not appear. Walking forward does not obstruct walking backwards. Walking backwards does not obstruct walking forward. This is called the mountains' flow and the flowing mountains.

Enlightened vision is actualized in the mountains, grasses, trees, earth, rocks, or walls. Do not doubt this. Even if there is a moment when you see mountains as seven shining treasures, this is not yet returning to the source. Even if you see mountains as the realm where all buddhas practice, do not attach to this understanding. Even if you attain the highest understanding of mountains as all the inconceivable qualities of the buddhas, the true state is not yet revealed. These are all conditioned views, dependent upon the observer. This is not the understanding of the buddha ancestors, but just like looking through a bamboo tube at a corner of the sky.

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." 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 parent when your child is born, but also that you become a child. This is the actualization of giving birth in practice-realization. You should investigate this thoroughly.

Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither hot nor cold, neither existent nor nonexistent, neither deluded nor enlightened. All beings do not see mountains and rivers in the same way. Some beings see water as a jeweled ornament and some beings see water as wondrous blossoms. Hungry ghosts see water as raging fire and dragons see water as a palace or pavilion. Some beings see water as

a wish-fulfilling jewel, some see it as the dharma nature of true liberation, the true human body, or as the form of body and essence of mind. Human beings only see water as water. Water is seen as dead or alive depending upon the mind of the beholder.

Thus the views of all beings are not the same. Do not limit your view to that of human beings. There many ways to see one thing and ways to see many things seen as one. You should pursue this beyond the limits of pursuit. Endeavors in the practice-realization of the way are not limited to one or two kinds. The ultimate realm has one thousand kinds and ten thousand ways.

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

Water is not concerned with past, future, present or the phenomenal world. Even in a drop of water, innumerable buddha lands appear. Ordinary people think that water is always in rivers or oceans, but this is not so. Rivers and oceans exist in water. Even where there is not a river or an ocean, there is water. It is just that when water falls to the ground it manifests as rivers and oceans. Where buddha ancestors reach, water never fails to appear. Because of this, buddha ancestors take up water and make it their body and mind, make it their thought.

Mountains have been the abode of great sages from the limitless past to the limitless present. Wise people and sages all have mountains in their inner chamber, as their body and mind. 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. There is just the activity of mountains. There is no trace of anyone having entered the mountains. Although mountains belong to the nation, mountains belong to people who love them. You should know that mountains are fond of wise people and sages.

From ancient times people and sages have often lived near water. When they live near water they catch fish, catch human beings, and catch the Way. Therefore, thoroughly investigate mountains, thoroughly investigate water. When you investigate thoroughly, it is the work of mountains and water. Then mountains and waters of themselves become wise persons and sages.