

40. Expressions

All buddhas and ancestors are expressions. Thus, when buddha ancestors intend to select buddha ancestors, they always ask, "Do you have your expression?"

This question is asked with the mind and with the body. It is asked with a walking stick or a whisk. It is asked with a pillar or a lantern. Those who are not buddha ancestors do not ask this and do not answer this, since they are not in the position to do so.

Such an expression is not obtained by following others or by the power of oneself. Where there is a thorough inquiry of a buddha ancestor, there is an expression of a buddha ancestor.

Within the expression, those in the past practiced and became thoroughly realized; you in the present pursue and endeavor in the way. When you pursue a buddha ancestor as a buddha ancestor, and understand the buddha ancestor's expression, this expression spontaneously becomes the practice of three years, eight, thirty, or forty years. It makes an utmost effort, and creates an expression.

[Dogen's note on the back of the page says:] The thirty years or twenty years [of practice] are the years and months created by expressions. These years and months bring their efforts together to help create expressions. [End of Dogen's note]

Then, even for decades, there is not a single gap in expression. Thus, the understanding at the moment of thorough realization should be authentic. As this understanding is recognized as authentic, what is expressed now is beyond doubt. This being so, there is an expression right now, an understanding right now. An expression right now and an understanding in the past are a single track, myriad miles. The practice right now is practiced by the expression and by the understanding.

The grip of this practice accumulates in months and years and lets go of the practice from the months and years in the past. When it is about to drop away, the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow also affirm the dropping away; the nation, land, mountains, and rivers together affirm the dropping away. When you intend to get to the dropping away as an ultimate treasure place, this intention is a manifestation [of the expression]. So, at this very moment, an

expression is actualized without being waited for. Although this is not an effort of the mind or the body, a spontaneous expression arises. When it is expressed, you won't feel unfamiliar or suspicious.

And yet, when you express such an expression, you beyond-express a beyond-expression. Even if you recognize that you express within an expression, if you do not thoroughly realize beyond-expression as beyond-expression, it is not yet the face of a buddha ancestor, nor is it a buddha ancestor's bones and marrow.

In this way, how can the expression of bowing three times and standing in the original position [by Huike] be the same as an expression of those who view the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow [as separate from one another]? The expression of those who view the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow cannot touch or include the expression of bowing three times and standing in the original position. An encounter of you with other as an encounter of separate beings remains an encounter of other with you as an encounter of separate beings.

You have expression and beyond-expression. Other has expression and beyond-expression. Expression has you and other. Beyond-expression has you and other.

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Zhaozhou, Great Master Zhenji, said, "If you sit steadfastly without leaving the monastery for a lifetime, and do not speak for five or ten years, no one will call you speechless. After that, even buddhas will not equal you."

In this way, when you think of the practice and endeavor of not leaving the monastery for a lifetime, staying in the monastery for five or ten years, going through frost and flowers, the steadfast sitting that has been sat through is a certain expression. Walking, sitting, and lying down *without leaving the monastery* is the practice of *no one will call you speechless*. Although how the lifetime comes about is beyond our knowledge, if you activate *without leaving the monastery*, you do not leave the monastery.

What kind of invisible path is there between the lifetime and the monastery? Just investigate steadfast sitting. Do not avoid no-expression. No-expression is expression from beginning to end.

Steadfast sitting is one lifetime, two lifetimes, not merely one time, two times. If you sit steadfastly without speaking for five or ten years, even buddhas will not ignore you. Indeed, such steadfast sitting without speaking is something buddha eyes cannot see, buddha power cannot pull away, and buddhas cannot question.

What Zhaozhou meant is that the expression of beyond-expression in steadfast sitting is why buddhas cannot call the person speechless or beyond speechless. Thus, not leaving the monastery for a lifetime is not leaving expression for a lifetime. Sitting steadfastly without speaking for five or six years is expression for five or six years.

It is not leaving beyond-expression for a lifetime, or expression beyond attainment for five or six years. It is cutting through one hundred, one thousand buddhas, by sitting. It is one hundred, one thousand buddhas cutting through you by sitting.

This being so, what is expressed by buddha ancestors is not leaving the monastery for a lifetime. Even if you are speechless, you have expression. Do not assume that a speechless person cannot express.

It is not that one who can express is not speechless. A speechless person can also express. The speechless voice is heard. Listen to the speechless voice.

Without being a speechless person, how can you encounter a speechless person, how can you speak with someone who is speechless?

When you are already a speechless person, how do you encounter one, how do you speak with one? Investigate in this way and thoroughly study someone who is speechless.

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In the assembly of Xuefeng, Great Master Zhenjue, there was a monk who built a thatched-roof hermitage at the foot of a mountain. He did not shave for years. No one knew what was happening in the hermitage, and his life in the mountain was solitary. He would go to the nearby valley brook, fetch water with the wooden dipper he himself had made, and drink it. Indeed, he was a "valley drinker."

As he spent days and months in this way, his practice was noticed by another monk who went to see him and asked, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from India?"

The hermit said, "The valley is deep, the dipper handle is long."

The monk was so shocked that he did not bow, nor did he ask for teaching. He went up to the mountain and told Xuefeng the story.

Hearing this, Xuefeng said, "It is quite amazing. If he is like that, I should go over and check him out."

What Xuefeng meant was that the hermit seemed amazingly accomplished but he wanted to examine how he was doing.

So, one day, Xuefeng had his attendant monk carry a razor and rushed to the hermitage. As soon as Xuefeng saw the hermit, he said, "If you have expression, I will not shave your head."

Be aware of this statement. Xuefeng's words sound like he would not shave the hermit's head if the hermit had expression. How is it? Is it that if the expression was truly expression, Xuefeng would not shave the hermit's head? You should listen to this expression with the power of listening. Speak about it to those who have the power of listening.

Hearing Xuefeng's words, the hermit washed his head and came back to Xuefeng. Is this bringing expression or beyond-expression?

Xuefeng shaved his head.

This story is indeed like the emergence of an udumbara blossom — rare to encounter and rare to hear. It is beyond the realm of seven or ten sages. It is beyond the understanding of three or seven wisdom beings. Teachers of sutras and treatises or practitioners of supernormal powers cannot measure it. To encounter the emergence of a buddha is to hear a story such as this.

Now, what is the meaning of Xuefeng's words, *If you have expression, I will not shave your head?* When people who have not yet attained expression hear this, those with capacity may be astonished and those without may be confused.

Xuefeng did not ask the hermit about a buddha, and the hermit did not speak of the way. Xuefeng did not ask him about samadhi, and the hermit did not speak of dharani. Although Xuefeng's words may have sounded like a question, they were expression. Examine this thoroughly.

In this situation, when the hermit was challenged by Xuefeng's expression, he was not confused, because he had genuine understanding. Without hiding his style of practice, he

washed his head and came back to Xuefeng. This is a dharma realization which even a buddha with buddha wisdom cannot get near. It is emergence of a [buddha] body, expounding of dharma, awakening of sentient beings, and coming with a washed head.

If Xuefeng had not been a true person, he would have thrown down the razor and burst into laughter. However, he was a true person with great capacity, so he shaved the hermit's head.

Indeed, if Xuefeng and the hermit had not been "only a buddha and a buddha," it would not have happened this way. If they had not been one buddha in two buddhas, it would not have happened this way. If they had not been a dragon and a dragon, it would not have happened this way. Although a dragon's pearl is tirelessly spared by the dragon, it naturally falls into the hand of a person of understanding.

Know that Xuefeng checked out the hermit and the hermit encountered Xuefeng. With expression and beyond-expression, one got his head shaven and the other shaved his head.

Thus, good friends of expression have a way to visit unexpectedly. Friends beyond-expression have a place to be acquainted without expectation. Where there is the practice of getting acquainted, expression is actualized.

Written and presented to the assembly of the Konnondori Kosho Horin Monastery on the fifth day, the tenth month, the third year of the Ninji Era [1242].

Footnote: 40. Expressions — *Dōtoku*

Twelve days after the presentation of "Within a Dream Expressing the Dream," Dogen shared this text with his assembly. The "expression" here means words, or expressions beyond words that emerge from one's genuine understanding of reality, unique to the person. In this text, Dogen offers examples of speaking and not speaking.

Colophon: "Written and presented to the assembly of Konnondori Kosho Horin Monastery on the fifth day, the tenth month of the third year of the Ninji Era [1242]."

Translated by Peter Levitt and the Editor.

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