

Deep in The Mountains III : Sambhogakaya
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When we do dream haiku, we bring in any dreams that we've had during the retreat, and sometimes a dream that came from the time leading up to the retreat that seems to be somehow significant for the retreat itself. We call it haiku because we don't tell our dreams as epic poems. We pick a salient image or a moment from the dream, an impression from the dream, and present that as succinctly as possible. We make no comment on it. We just lay one haiku down next to the other and see what happens and then go back into the silence.

That is a practice of the night, and what we have now is a practice of the day, which is to enter the great dream of the world. So please make yourselves comfortable. I only ask that you're receptive, and you can lie or lean or do as you wish. You may close your eyes.

At our Vernal Equinox retreat several months ago, we began with the "Incantation of the Dharma of The Lunar Countercurrents". It occurred to me that this might be a good preparation for entering the great dream of the world. So here is "Incantation of The Dharma of The Lunar Countercurrents" :

*Stillness ... Silence ... What happens in the dark ... Insubstantiality ... Transience ... The dream ...
Endarkenment ... The great broken heart of the world ... The bodhisattva's deliberate wound ... Being
permeable ... Being marked, stained and dyed ... Dissolving ... Experiencing objectless devotion ... Not being
certain ... Not knowing ... Unmaking ... Not naming ... Forgetting ... Putting down ... Interrupting the
habits of the heart mind ... Interrupting karmic chains ... Subverting ... Letting go ... Taking the charge off
questions ... Neither asserting nor defending ... Not seeking ... Not acquiring ... Not attaining ... Not
exerting will ... Stopping ... Sitting ... Resting ... Listening ... Wondering ... Being spontaneous ... Being
surprised ... Surprising yourself ... Trusting ... Turning back ... Turning the light around ... Returning
home ... The turning word ... Reversals of meaning, as "blessing poverty." Paradoxical identities, as
"samsara is nirvana." The bare ground, hazy moon, falling flowers, blue dragon's cave ... Dragon murmur
in a withered tree ... Deep in the mountains ... Lost in the weeds ... Under the sea ... Riding the currents ...*

Leaning back against a tree older than the forest it stands in ... Lying down on the dark earth ... Seeing spring in the budless branches ... Opening the hand

Embedded deep in the Mahayana is the understanding that it is not enough to hate suffering. You *have* to love something more, something for which you're willing to give up suffering, and in so doing, end dualism.

Sometimes it is our great privilege to drop into the river of dreaming just beneath our feet, the eternal flow of the dream of all beings, which together create the world, moment by moment. There we experience how the world is endlessly imagining itself into existence, endlessly generating — and generated by — the specific and individual things of which it is made.

The Great Horse Ancestor¹ says that the universe is the samadhi of dharma nature, out of which no being has ever fallen. The universe is the deep meditative state of the universe itself, which contains all things. But this deep meditation doesn't just hold everything; it actually *becomes* earth, wind, flame and water, and then mountains, rivers and trees, skin and bones, flesh and blood, as Keizan Jokin² added to what the Horse Ancestor said. You and I and the floor stretching between us are the samadhi of the universe.

In meditation, in retreat, we can fall through the bottom of our individual states into this deep meditation of the universe as a whole, like individual waves sinking back into the ocean for awhile. Who is it who stands in the dreaming river of co-creation? Who falls through the bottom of our own heart-minds into the meditation of the universe itself? Who is both wave and ocean at the same time?

The Mahayana says that everything, including us, has three bodies. The first body is called the “nirmanakaya.” It's the material body, the body of stuff and karma and the laws of physics. It's where there are patterns and lines.

Another body is the “dharmakaya,” which is the body of the vastness, what in physics is called the field of fields, the great mysterious, which is possible to experience but impossible

¹ Mazu Daoyi, whose surname Ma means 'horse' — eighth-century Chinese ancestor of the koan tradition

² Medieval Japanese Zen teacher

to understand. In between these two bodies is the sambhogakaya, which is sometimes called the dream body. It's the world of energy, the world of the possible, the world where everything inter-permeates everything else, the world of imagination, samadhi, meditation visions, myths, the archetypes, and dreams.

You *do* have all of these bodies. Linji said, "Your instant of pure, undivided light is the dharmakaya buddha in your own house. Your instant of non-discriminating light is the sambhogakaya buddha in your own house. And your instant of differentiated light is the nirmanakaya buddha in your own house."

We enter the dream through our sambhogakaya bodies. It's the body that stands in the middle between dharmakaya and nirmanakaya, between the vastness and the material world. And it is the place where those two others meet. It's called both the body of realization and the body of enjoyment. As body of realization it looks in one direction with your *prajna*, your insight, towards the vastness. It looks in the other direction with your *karuna*, your compassion, your love, toward the phenomenal world.

Because it is the place of possibility, it has many names. So in addition to the body of realization and the body of enjoyment, it's also called the body of all forms because it is the realm of inter-permeation where we enter the dream of life, the common dreaming of all things that brings the world into existence, moment after moment. This is the realm of the dreaming of all things : the ancient dreams of rocks, the merely old dreams of the shimmering aspen, the new dreams of birds, the vast recirculating dream of the waters—aquifer to spring to stream to river to ocean to clouds to rain to aquifer to spring to stream and so on, forever—that vast recirculating dream of which we only ever see moments. These dreams have shapeliness and coherence, which is why we can say, *rock ... aspen ... river*.

We humans are somewhere between birds and trees in our dreaming. Black Elk stood in that place in his great vision—stood in the sambhogakaya—and he said, "While I stood there, I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw. For I was seeing, in a sacred manner, the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together as one being."

When we see with the eyes of the sambhogakaya and hear with its ears—when we understand with *that* mind—we know the grace of all the others who exist, and they are calling from inside our own hearts. We know the awesome grandeur of the simplest things,

how *all* things—everything, each thing without exception, nothing left out—all things are preaching the dharma all the time. The world is that alive, that vivid, that inspired: the *teisho* of all the actual bodies.³

The hand of your body of all forms can not only touch objects, but it can also see, hear, taste, think, and so on. The koans talk again and again of how it is when you can hear with your eyes and see with your ears that you'll have reached an essential understanding. And when you have stood in the body of all forms, you know two things : you know that they are not being fanciful when they say that, and they're saying that inhabiting the sambhogakaya is crucial, as import as knowing the dharmakaya.

In meditation with our dream body eyes, we see all those things that people with scientific instruments tell us are real, like the granularity of the air, the discontinuous rising and falling of moments, moment after discreet moment, like the frames of a film. Or we see the movements of energy in the world, without any filters, without any organizing principals that say, "that is a tree" and "that is the wind." We see only the energy.

It is only our unfamiliarity with sambhogakaya events that makes us want to hold onto them, to give them great significance and meaning. If we were living with the sense organs of *that* body, open as our sense organs of our nirmanakaya—our physical bodies—are open, one body would overlap the other. Two kinds of perception would be happening simultaneously until it became *one* kind of perception, and it wouldn't be necessary to attach special meaning to sambhogakaya events because they too would have become ordinarily luminous.

Walter Benjamin said that everything is a reality in a dream, always in flux, always remolded in meaning by what comes after, always delaying their full meaning. It is only our unfamiliarity with sambhogakaya events that causes us to confuse the great dream of the world with delusion. In the vast sweep of the universal dream, our delusions are the minutest of epiphenomena. Rising and popping in less than an instant, they barely register with Mahamaya, the Great Dream, the mother of Siddhartha and every other buddha body that has ever, and will ever, arise.

The great dream is real, just not the way we ordinarily think of real. The *Lankavatara Sutra* says that things are not as they seem, nor are they otherwise. So how do we treat such

³ *Teisho* is the Japanese word for a dharma talk, the presentation of the shout | This is a reference to something Dogen said

things? How do we treat everything in the great dream of the world that is not as it seems and yet not otherwise, either? Let us take Emerson's advice, who said that we should treat other people as though they were real, because they might well be.

How do we enter this place with a kind of humility and openness? Gertrude Stein wrote about seeing Cezanne's paintings for the first time at a show filled with hundreds of paintings. She walked through room after room until she came to Cezanne for the first time, and she said, "And then slowly, through all this—and looking at many pictures—I came to Cezanne, and there you were—or at least there *I* was—not all at once, but as soon as I got used to it."

Let us remember, always, that there is a mystery at the heart of things that we can never penetrate. You don't wake *up* from the dream. You wake *into* the dream. There's nothing outside the dream. It's like the universe, or the multi-verses, or whatever we believe in now. There's nothing outside it. No one ever falls out of it.

The universe is the samadhi of dharma nature out of which no being has ever fallen. And awakening is finding—like Gertrude Stein—a growing consolation in this.

"While I stood there, I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw. For I was seeing, in a sacred manner, the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together as one being."

Thank you.