

[Chapter Three]

Genjō-kōan

The Realized Universe

Translator's Note: Genjō means “realized,” and kōan is an abbreviation of kofu-no-antoku, which was a notice board on which a new law was announced to the public in ancient China. So kōan expresses a law, or a universal principle. In the Shōbōgenzō, genjō-kōan means the realized law of the universe, that is, Dharma or the real universe itself. The fundamental basis of Buddhism is belief in this real universe, and in Genjō-kōan Master Dōgen preaches to us the realized Dharma, or the real universe itself. When the seventy-five–chapter edition of the Shōbōgenzō was compiled, this chapter was placed first, and from this fact we can recognize its importance.

[83] When all *dharma*s are [seen as] the Buddha-Dharma, then there is delusion and realization, there is practice, there is life and there is death, there are buddhas and there are ordinary beings. When the myriad *dharma*s are each not of the self, there is no delusion and no realization, no buddhas and no ordinary beings, no life and no death. The Buddha's truth is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are beings and buddhas. And though it is like this, it is only that flowers, while loved, fall; and weeds while hated, flourish. 23c

[84] Driving ourselves to practice and experience the myriad *dharma*s is delusion. When the myriad *dharma*s actively practice and experience ourselves, that is the state of realization. Those who greatly realize¹ delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded about realization are ordinary beings. There are people who further attain realization on the basis of realization. There are people who increase their delusion in the midst of delusion. When buddhas are really buddhas, they do not need to recognize themselves as buddhas. Nevertheless, they are buddhas in the state of experience, and they go on experiencing the state of buddha.