

Kuge: Flowers of Space

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Our Founding Ancestor composed this verse:

*A single flower blooms, five petals open,
and fruit ripens by itself.*

Learn through your practice the moment when the flower blooms, as well as its form and colour in the light. The flower's body is five petals, and the blooming of five petals is a flower. The standard of the single flower comes from [Bodhidharma's verse], "Originally I came to this land to transmit the Dharma and liberate deluded sentient beings." [fn]Bodhidharma's verse:

Originally I came to this land to Transmit the Dharma and liberate beings. A single flower blooms, five petals open, and fruit ripens by itself.

[/fn] The form and colour in the light are learned through practice. "Fruit ripening by itself" is natural activity. "Natural activity" means causing causes and the affect of effects. This world has causes and it has effects. We cause the causes of this world and are affected by the effects that are the world. The "self" of "itself" [fn] "Jinen" means "by itself" or "naturally." Here Dogen discusses the "ji" of "jinen", the self of itself is not a self. [/fn] is you, those four elements and five aggregates. The "true person without

position”[fn]“Shitoku mu-i shinjin,” a famous phrase originating with Linji.[/fn] is used for this kind of “self” because it is not an “I” or a “someone”. “Being so” means approving this.[fn]Here Dogen discusses the “nen” of “jinen”. “Nen” as a suffix to “jinen” produces “by itself” or “naturally” and cannot really be used as a noun but Dogen does so anyway.[/fn] “Ripens by itself” is the moment of flowers opening and fruits ripening, the moment of transmitting the Dharma and liberating the deluded.

For example, the time and place of the opening and blooming of the blue lotus[fn]Ubara, Japanese for the Sanskrit “utpala”.[/fn] are in the midst of fire and at the time of flames. These sparks and flames are the place and time of the blue lotus opening and blooming. All sparks and flames are within the place and time of the place and time of the blue lotus opening and blooming. Know that in a single spark are hundreds of thousands of blue lotuses, blooming in the sky, blooming on the earth, blooming in the past, blooming in the present. Experiencing the actual time and place of this fire is the experience of the blue lotus. Do not drift by this time and place of the blue lotus flower.

An ancient said, “The blue lotus blooms within fire.”[fn]Chingede Chuandengl 29.[/fn] To understand “within fire” you must know where this lotus blooms. Do not be attached to the viewpoints of humans or of shining beings or you will not understand this “fire within”. If you doubt this, you might as well also doubt the existence of a lotus in the water, or a flower on the branch. If you want to doubt something, you should doubt the stability of an objective world. But you don’t. Only the Ancestors realize that “when the flower blooms the world arises”.[fn]In the Chingde Chuandengl 1, Prajnatarā’s Transmission verse to Bodhidharma is:

The many seeds grow on the ground of Awareness; the nature can be recognized through things. When the fruit ripens, Bodhi is fulfilled; when the flower blooms, the world arises.

[/fn] A “flower blooms” is “three by three in front, three by three behind”.[fn]Hekiganroku 35, Sanbyakasoku 127. Zensansan, gosansan.

Manjusri asked Wuzhao, “Where have you come from?” Wuzhao said, “The south.” Manjusri asked, “How is the Buddha Dharma being practised in the South?” Wuzhao said, “In this Age of the Decay of the Teachings, monks barely observe the Precepts.” Manjusri asked, “How large are the Communities?” Wuzhao said, “Some are three hundred, others five hundred.” Then Wuzhao asked Manjusri, “How does the Buddha Dharma fare here?” Manjusri said, “Sacred and profane live together, snakes and dragons are intertwined.” Wuzhao asked, “Are they many or few?” Manjusri answered, “Three by three in front, three by three behind.”

[/fn] To fill such numbers is the gathering together and raising up of numberless particles. When this truth comes to you, you can understand how spring and autumn come. It is not that there are flowers and fruit only in spring and autumn. Being-time is always flowering and fruiting. Flowers and fruit are each supported and maintained by their own moments and each moment is supported and maintained by flowers and fruit. The “hundred grasses” all have flowers and fruit, all trees have flowers and fruit. Trees of gold, silver, copper, iron, coral, crystal, and so on, all have flowers and fruit. Trees of earth, wind, water, fire, and space all have flowers and fruit. Human trees have flowers, human flowers have flowers, and withered trees have flowers. In all of this are the “flowers of space”[fn]Koku. “Ku” means empty or space, “ko” means “air”.

Empty air or space.[/fn] spoken of by the Buddha. People of narrow knowledge and small insight do not know of the form and colour in the light of petals and flowers and so would only understand this to mean “non-existent flowers”. Understand that speaking of “flowers of space” in the Way of Awake Awareness is not even known of let alone understood by those outside of the Way. Only the Buddhas and Ancestors realize the blossoming and falling of flowers in the sky, flowers on the ground, realize the blossoming and falling of the flowering of the world and so on; only they know that the flowers of the sky, the ground, the world are the sutras. This is the standard through which there is study of Awake Awareness. Since flowers in space are the vehicle in which the Buddhas and Ancestors travel, the worlds of the Buddhas and the Teachings are simply these flowers of space.

However, when the common dullard hears of the Thus Come One’s words “clouded eyes see flowers in space” they imagine that these are the “clouded eyes” of usual people. They understand that diseased eyes can perceive nonexistent flowers in empty air. Through becoming attached to this perspective, they think it means that the three worlds, the six realms, Buddha-nature, and Buddhas have no existence but are seen as existent by the deluded. They think that by eliminating the delusions of clouded eyes we will not see flowers in space because space is originally without flowers. I am sorry, but these people do not know the time of, the beginning and ending of, the “flowers of space” that the Thus Come speaks of. What Buddhas speak of when they say “clouded eyes” or “flowers in space” is a truth that cannot be understood by usual people or those that are not within the Way. It is through practising this flower of space[fn]Kono kuge indicates a single flower.[/fn] that Awakened Ones and the Thus Come receive the robe, the [Teaching] Seat, and [a Master’s] Room, and fulfill the fruition of the truth. The standard of “raising a flower and blinking” is a manifestation of “flowers of space”. The unbroken and authentic Transmission to right now of the Eye of Reality, unsurpassable radiant Knowing,[fn]Shobogenzo-nehan-myoshin.[/fn] is called “clouded eyes” and “flowers in space”. Awakening, cessation, the Body of Reality, the inherent nature and so on are just two or three petals opened by this flower of space.

Sakyamuni Buddha says,

*It is like a person with clouded eyes
seeing flowers in empty air.
When the disease of cloudy eyes is cured,
the flowers in empty air vanish.*

None of the scholars have clear understanding of what is being said. Since they do not realize space,[fn]Ku.[/fn] they cannot understand “flowers in space”. Since they do not understand “flowers in space”, they do not understand “cloudy eyes”, cannot see a person with such “clouded eyes”, and cannot become a person of “cloudy eyes”. Through meeting one with such “cloudy eyes”, we can understand “flowers in space” and can see “flowers in space”. Having seen “flowers in space”, we then see “flowers in space vanish”. The Narrow Path has the opinion that once “flowers in space” vanish, they cannot appear again. But if you cannot see “flowers in space”, what can you see? If you think of “flowers of space” as something to be eliminated, then the great matter following from “flowers in space” and their seeding, ripening, and vanishing is never realized. The usual scholar of the day thinks of space as the place where the energy of the sun[fn]Yo or yang, in the sense of bright and creative energy.[/fn] shines, or that where the sun and moon and stars hang is space; and so they think that the phrase “flowers in space” means that forms appear like clouds drifting in empty air or like flowers blown east to west, up and down, with the falling and

rising gusts of wind. They do not realize that the four elements as the creating and created, all of the knowns[fn]Shoho or “true things” or “dharma as they are” means things as the configuration of knowing and known.[/fn] of an “objective” world, primordial Awakening,[fn]Hongaku. An important Tendai Teaching that all beings are inherently Awake. Dogen was of course originally ordained as a Tendai monk and this background formed a recurring thread of tension in both his Teachings and his life circumstances.[/fn] the original nature and so on are all called “flowers of space”. And so further, they do not realize that the four elements which configure knowns are also created by knowns, they do not know that the “objective” world abides as a configuration of knowns but only know knowns as things of an “objective” world. They understand “flowers in space” to exist because of “clouded eyes” and do not understand that “clouded eyes” exist because of “flowers of space”. Know that the “person with clouded eyes” spoken of by the Buddha is a person of primordial Awakening, a person of ineffable realization, a person of the Buddhas, a person of the three worlds, a person that moves beyond the Buddhas. Do not dully believe this “cloudiness” as delusion and look for true reality elsewhere. This is a small view. If “cloudiness” and “flowers” are delusions, then the attachment to this wrong view of delusion is deluded and that which is attached is deluded. With all of this delusion, nothing logical can be said. Nothing could be true, and so to establish “cloudiness” and “flowers” as delusion would be impossible.

Realization is “cloudiness” and the numberless aspects of realization are each part of an array of “clouds”. Delusion is also “clouded” and the numberless aspects of delusion are also an array of “clouds”. For now, let us say that “clouded eyes” are balanced and “flowers in space” are balanced; since “clouded eyes” are unborn then “flowers in space” are unborn; when all things are truly known as knowns[fn]Shoho. “Truly known as knowns” is an expansion of the term to make clear the context of meaning.[/fn] then “cloudy flowers” are truly known. This cannot be said to be a matter of past, present, or future or of beginning, middle, and end because they are not blocked by coming and going. They cause coming and going to come and go. Coming within space[fn]Kochu.[/fn] and going within space, coming in “clouded eyes” and going in “clouded eyes”, coming in “flowers” and going in “flowers”. All other times and places are also like this.

The study of “flowers in space” can take many forms. There is the view of “cloudy eyes”, the view of clear eyes; what is seen by the Buddha’s eyes and what is seen by the eyes of the Ancestors; what is seen by eyes of the Way and what is seen by the blind. There is a view of three thousand years, a view of eight hundred years, a view of hundreds of eons, a view of numberless eons. Although all of these are seeing “flowers in space”, there are many kinds of “space” and so there are many kinds of “flowers”.

Know that space is a single grass.[fn]Isso.[/fn] Space inevitably flowers just as the hundred grasses all flower. To express this, the Thus Come One said, “Space is originally without flowers.” Although primordially there are no flowers, now there are flowers. This is how it is for peach and plum, apricot and willow. It is like saying, “Yesterday the apricot trees had no flowers, but now the apricots flower in spring.” The arriving of the season is when the flowers bloom, in the blooming of flowers is the time when the flower arrives. The precise moment of this time of flowering is not arbitrary. Apricot and willow flowers always bloom on apricot and willow trees. Looking at the flowers you know that they are apricot or willow, and by looking at apricot and willow trees you can distinguish their flowers. Peach and plum flowers never bloom on apricot and willow trees. Apricot and willow flowers bloom on apricot and willow trees and peach and plum flowers always bloom on peach and plum trees. The blossoming of “flowers of space” is just like this too; they are not blooming on some other kind of plant or tree.

Seeing the colours of these “flowers in space,” you can have a sense of the limitlessness of the fruits of space. Seeing the blossoming and falling of “flowers in space”, you can learn the spring and autumn of “flowers of space”. The spring of “flowers of space” is just like the spring of all flowers. Just as “flowers in space” are myriad, so are there myriad moments of spring. This is how the springs and autumns of all times are.

Understanding “flowers in space” as unreal but other flowers to be real is to be ignorant of the Buddha’s Teachings. On hearing the Teaching that, “space is originally without flowers,” thinking that “flowers in space” originally did not exist but that now they do is a small and narrow view. We should step forward and take a panoramic view. An ancient Ancestral Adept[fn]Dazu Huike (Taiso Eka). Chingde Chuandeng lu 3.[/fn] said, “Flowers have never appeared.” To unfold this point, the truth is that flowers have never arisen, that flowers have never vanished, that flowers have never been flowers, that space has never been space. Don’t be mired in fatuous views of existing or not-existing and thus confuse the time of flowering with a before and after. It is like the colours of flowers; colour is not limited to flowers and all seasons also have blues, yellows, reds and whites. Spring brings on flowers and flowers bring on spring.

The layman Zhanghuo[fn]Zhangzhou (Chang-cho, Chokutsu).[/fn] was a student of Shishuang.[fn]Shishuang Qingju or Qingzhu (Shih-shuang Ch’ing-chu, Sekiso Keisho), 807-888. Not to be confused with Ciming (Shishuang) Quyuan. A Dharma-heir of Daowu Yuanzhi, in the line of Yaoshan Weiyuan. He practiced as rice steward under Guishan before studying with Daowu. Dongshan Liangjie had a monk track him down and he was appointed abbot on Mount Shishuang. His community there was noted for never laying down to sleep and was called the “Dead Tree Hall.” He appears in Records of Silence 68, 89, 96, 98. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) section 75.[/fn] The verse he wrote expressing his realization goes like this:

“Luminosity shines through worlds numberless as the sands of the Ganges.”

This luminosity manifests “the Monks’ Hall, the Buddha Hall, the Kitchen, the gates.”[fn]A reference to a saying by Yunmen. See also “Komyo.”[/fn] The “worlds numberless as the sands of the Ganges” is manifested by luminosity and manifests luminosity.

“All beings, common and sages, are my family.”

It is not that there are not common people and sages, but that saying “common” and “sage” stains it.

“When no single thought arises, the total body is manifest.”

Thoughts arise one by one and each are unborn. This non-arising is where the total body is manifest. This is why he says, “no single thought arises”.

“As soon as the six senses stir, they are covered in clouds.”

Although there are six senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness, this is not just two times three; they should be “three in front, three behind”. “Stirring” is like Mount Meru, like the earth, like the six

senses and like “as soon as stirring”. As “stirring” is like Mount Meru, so “not stirring” is also like Mount Meru. For example, it makes clouds and rain.

“Eliminating disturbances just doubles the disease.”

There has been disease up until now. Then there is the “disease” of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors. Intellectualizing about disturbances and trying to remove them doubles disease. At the moment you try to “eliminate” there is “disturbance”. They come together and yet are not together. “Disturbance” includes within itself its own “elimination”.

“Aiming at Suchness is also wrong.”

To turn away from Suchness is wrong and aiming at Suchness is also wrong. Suchness approaches and turns away and each moment of aiming or turning is itself Suchness. Is there anyone who can know this “wrong” to be Suchness?

“Going along with the circumstances of the world without hindrance...”

“Worldly circumstances” “go along” with “circumstances of the world” and “going along” is a “circumstance of the world” in its “going along”. This is called being “without hindrance”. As for being beyond “hindrance” and “without hindrance”, we should study the “hindrance” of the eyes.

“Nirvana and birth and death are just flowers in space.”

“Nirvana” is Complete and Utter Awakening. This is the place of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors and of the disciples of Buddhas and Ancestors. “Birth and death are the true human body.”[fn]Yuanwu Keqin (Yuan-wu K’o-ch’in, Engo Kokugon), 1063-1135. Compiled the Blue Cliff Records from Xuedou’s collection and capping verses.[/fn] Nirvana, and birth and death are all of these things but they are just “flowers in space”. The roots and stalks, stems and leaves, flowers and fruit, colours and light of “flowers of space” are each the blossoming of “flowers of space”. “Space flowers” give forth “space fruit” and drop “space seeds”. Since the three worlds we now perceive are the “five petals opening” of “flowers of space”, “the best is to see the three worlds with the three worlds”.[fn]A reference to the “Lifetime of the Thus Come” chapter of the Lotus Discourse.[/fn] This is the “true form” of “all things”.[fn]Shoho-jisso.[/fn] This is the “flower form” of “all things”. All things and anything that can be imagined are “flowers of space” and “fruit of space”. You should learn through practice that these are the same as apricot, willow, peach, and plum trees.

Zen Master Furong[fn]Furong Lingxun (Fu-jung Ling-hsuan, Fuyo Dokai), no date.[/fn] of Fuchou in Great Song upon his first encounter with Master Zhizhen of Guizhong-si[fn]Guizhong Zhichang (Chih-ch’eng Kuei-chung, Kisu Chijo), a Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. Zhizhen (Chih-chen, Shishin) was an honorific.[/fn] asked, “What is Buddha?”

Guizhong responded, “If I were to tell you, will you believe it?”

Furong said, “How could I not believe the true words of the Master?”

Guizhong said, "You are yourself it."

Furong asked, "How should I maintain this?"

Guizhong said, "If there is a single cloud in the eye, flowers in the sky tumble in all directions." [fn]Chingde Chuandeng lu 10.[/fn]

This saying of Guizhong, "When there is a single cloud in the eye, flowers of space tumble in all directions" expresses maintaining the Buddhas. Just remember that this "tumbling in all directions" of "clouded flowers" is what all Awakened Ones realize. And the flowers and fruit in the eye of space are what the Buddhas maintain. Through "clouds", the eyes are actualized. Flowers in space manifest the eyes and the eyes realize flowers in space. You could say, "If there are flowers of space in the eye, then a single cloud tumbles in all directions." On the other hand, "If the eyes are there in space, all clouds tumble in all directions. Thus, "cloudiness" is the "presentation of complete activity", [fn]A saying of Yuanwu Keqin. See "Zenki".[/fn] "eyes" are the "presentation of complete activity", space is the "presentation of complete activity", and "flowers" are the "presentation of complete activity". "Tumbling in all directions" is the "thousand eyes" and "the whole body is eyes". [fn]Hekiganroku case 89.

Yunyan asked Daowu, "What does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion use all of those hands and eyes for?" Daowu said, "It's like someone reaching out and groping for a pillow in the night." Yunyan said, "I understand." Daowu said, "How do you understand it?" Yunyan said, "There are hands and eyes all over the body." Daowu said, "You have said much but only brought out about eight-tenths of it." Yunyan said, "What would you say, elder brother?" Daowu said, "The whole body is hands and eyes."

[/fn] Wherever and whenever there is an eye, there are always "flowers in space" and "flowers in eyes". "Flowers in eyes" are called "flowers in space". The expression of "flowers and eyes" should be open and clear.

Thus, the Great Master Guangzhou [fn]Langye Huijiao (Lang-yeh Hui-chiao, Roya Ekaku), no date. Guangzhou (Kuang-chao, Kosho) was an honorific.[/fn] said,

*How wonderful! The Buddhas throughout the ten directions
are originally just the flowers in our eyes.
And if we want to know about these flowers in our eyes
they are originally the Buddhas throughout the ten directions.
If we want to know the Buddhas of the ten directions,
they are not flowers in our eyes.
If we want to know the flowers in our eyes,
they are not the Buddhas of the ten directions.
If you can understand this,
the Buddhas of the ten directions are to blame.
If you don't understand,
those with only hear-say knowledge do a little dance,
and those who make up their own enlightenment put on make up.*

You should know that it is not that the Buddhas of the ten directions are not real but that they are originally “flowers in the eyes”. The place where the Buddhas of the ten directions abide is “in the eyes”. Any place other than “in the eyes” is not the abode of the Buddhas. “Flowers in the eyes” do not exist nor do not not-exist, are neither nothing nor a substance; they are themselves “the Buddhas of the ten directions”. Now if you want to know only “the Buddhas of the ten directions”, then they are not the “flowers in our eyes”. And if you only want to know the “flowers in our eyes”, then they are not “the Buddhas of the ten directions”. This “wanting to know” and “are not” are manifestations of the wondrous, they are great wonders. The meaning of “sky flowers” and “earth flowers” spoken of by the Buddhas and Ancestors is “graceful play”.^[fn]From a verse by Tiantong Ruji, deeply considered in “Muchu Setsumu.”

Dreaming of true or false, Rolling up and rolling out, The wind gracefully plays.

^[/fn] Even those who teach only from the sutras or from their commentaries have the opportunity to hear of “flowers of space” but only Buddhas and Ancestors use this opportunity to experience the life-pulse of flowers of the earth. The sayings of the Awakened Ones and the Ancestors capture the life-pulse of flowers of the earth.

Zen Master Huiche of Shimen^[fn]Shimen Huiche (Shih-men Hui-ch’*e*, Sekimon Etetsu), no date.^[/fn] of Great Song was a great Master of that line. A monk asked, “What is the jewel in the mountain?” The point of this question is like asking, “What is Buddha?” It is like asking, “What is the truth?” The Master said, “Flowers of space unfold on the ground. Throughout the country, there is no way to buy.”

This saying cannot be compared with other sayings. Usually, Teachers only talk about “flowers of space” as “flowers of emptiness” and only talk about arising in emptiness and going in emptiness.^[fn]O-ku. “In emptiness”. Dogen has used throughout phrases like kuchu or within emptiness. The former has a more conceptual cast, the latter a much more intimate and embodied sense.^[/fn] None have yet known “of space”^[fn]Juku. “Of space” or grounded in space.^[/fn] let alone “of the ground”.^[fn]Juchi. “On the ground” as in Shimen Huiche’s verse.^[/fn] Only Shimen understood it. The meaning of “on the ground” is that the “beginning, middle, and end” are “on the ground”. “Unfold” is to “release”.^[fn]Shimen’s word “hotsu” means to “unfold, open out from, to shoot out”. Dogen’s word “kai” means “to open” and “to reveal, to disclose.”^[/fn] Right now is the unfolding of the “whole earth”, the releasing of the whole earth.

“Throughout the country, there is no way to buy.” It is not that “throughout the country” there is no “buying”. It is that “no way”^[fn]Mumon. No gate, no opening, no way.^[/fn] cannot be bought.

“Flowers of space” unfold from the ground and the whole earth blooms from these flowers. Remember this: “flowers of space” means bringing both ground and space into bloom.

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