

A Statement on Buddha Dharma

“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”

- Ludwig Wittgenstein, 20th century philosopher,

Buddhism can be said to be a system of wisdom accumulated by innumerable predecessors about “what cannot be expressed” or the Buddha Dharma.

From a Buddhist viewpoint, there are two kinds of perception, conceptual knowledge and trans-conceptual wisdom. The first is conceptual knowledge based on dualistic thinking, in which subjectivity and objectivity function relative to each other. At first glance it seems clear, but the more it is wielded in darkness, the more one can be hurt and the more one can become lost. On the other hand, trans-conceptual wisdom emerges by accessing the world as it actually is, prior to our ordinary cognition begins to function by distinguishing the subject from the object.

Buddha Dharma can never be “comprehended” by conceptual knowledge because it constitutes a dualistic way of recognizing existence; it distinguishes objects in fixed and logical ways and labels them with words. In the Zen tradition, words are said to be obstacles to accessing Buddha Dharma, and attempts are made to destroy and nullify the function of words.

Despite this, Buddhism has not been silent. Our predecessors have made incredible efforts to speak with words in an attempt to illuminate the contours of Buddha Dharma, which are intrinsically beyond words.

This Camphor Tree Village is a locus of hope, where travelers gather around the bonfire to talk about Buddha Dharma, where the exchange of voices creates polyphony that transcends conceptual distinction created by words, and where the echoes of these conversations shall spread widely from the past to the future.

Now is the time to return to the fundamentals of Buddha Dharma, to reevaluate its significance and potentiality in our current time and to contribute to a sustainable society where all sentient beings can coexist in the world, where all phenomena co-arise for the peace and tranquility of future generations.

In this world where the light of Buddha Dharma is illuminated, there would be no substantialized entity in form or shape. There would no room for attachments based on human dualistic thinking into good and bad, joy and sorrow, etc. Nevertheless, to honor those ancestors who contemplated on and attempted to talk about “what cannot be expressed” as much as words would allow them, we would like to archive their words in a collection of works as a gift to those who will come after us.

One who is called upon and awakened by the Dharma – the true reality of this world – is called a Buddha. This Buddha is liberated from all attachments and awakened from the dream of dichotomous delusion. In fact, in Buddhism, anyone has the capacity to become a Buddha. And each person will manifest Buddha Dharma in a uniquely personal way. At the same time, the workings of Buddha Dharma will manifest openly and widely throughout any society.

What will you receive from the words of the ancestors, who were fascinated by “what cannot be expressed”? These ancestors had explored it, struggled with it, and became good friends with it. We hope that these words about Buddha Dharma will become the source of creativity for you and the place of reliance when you are lost.

We, hereby, declare to establish the Camphor Tree Village, centered on the Buddha Dharma.

[Everything] co-arises with [something,] letting us arise with each other (co-arising.)

We call [various things] empty (emptiness.) …

Nothing arises without [anything] co-arising.

Therefore, there is nothing that is not empty.

(Nāgārjuna's Middle Way, Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā, translated from the Japanese by Shōryū Katsura)

December, 2022

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