

Avalokiteshvara

正法眼藏觀音

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Yunyan, who would later become Great Master Wuben, asked [his senior dharma brother] Daowu, who would later become Great Master Xiyi, “What does the bodhisattva of great compassion do with so many hands and eyes?”

Daowu said, “Like someone reaching back for the pillow at night.”

Yunyan said, “I got it. I got it.”

Daowu said, “What did you get?”

Yunyan said, “All over the body is hands and eyes.”

Daowu said, “You have said it well. But it’s eight or nine out of ten.”

Yunyan said, “I am just this. How about yourself, brother?”

Daowu said, “Wherever the body reaches, it is hands and eyes.”

Although there have been a number of statements about Avalokiteshvara before and after Yunyan and Daowu, they are not as good as the statements made by these two. If you want to study Avalokiteshvara, you should thoroughly investigate their words.

The *bodhisattva of great compassion* is Avalokiteshvara—“One who perceives the cries of the world,” also called, “One who has complete freedom in perceiving.” This bodhisattva is regarded as the father and mother of all buddhas. Do not assume that this bodhisattva has not mastered the way as much as buddhas. In fact, Avalokiteshvara was True Dharma Illumination Tathagata in a previous life.

Study and focus on Yunyan’s words: *What does the bodhisattva of great compassion do with so many hands and eyes?* There are schools [of Buddhism] that cherish Avalokiteshvara, and schools that have no relationship with this bodhisattva.

Yunyan had a connection with Avalokiteshvara and pondered the bodhisattva together with Daowu. Not only one or two, but hundreds and thousands of Avalokiteshvaras are with Yunyan.

Yunyan and his dharma descendants alone make Avalokiteshvara truly Avalokiteshvara. How is this so? The Avalokiteshvara expressed by Yunyan is thoroughly expressed, while the Avalokiteshvara expressed by others is not. The Avalokiteshvara expressed by others merely has twelve faces. Yunyan’s Avalokiteshvara is not like that. The Avalokiteshvara expressed by others merely has one thousand hands and eyes. Yunyan’s Avalokiteshvara is not like that. The Avalokiteshvara expressed by others merely has eighty-four thousand hands and eyes. Yunyan’s Avalokiteshvara is not like that. How do we know this?

The *so many hands and eyes* of the bodhisattva of great compassion expressed by Yunyan is not limited to eighty-four thousand hands and eyes, not to speak of such numbers as twelve or thirty-two or -three. *So many* means a great many. It is as many as possible, not limited to any number. As it is not limited to any number, it is not limited to beyond boundary and measure [not limited to the infinite]. Study the scale of *so many* in this way. It even goes beyond the boundary of beyond boundary and measure.

When Yunyan asked this question, Daowu did not disapprove of it. He saw deep meaning in the question.

Yunyan and Daowu studied shoulder to shoulder in Yaoshan’s community and journeyed together for forty years. Investigating ancient and new cases, they rejected incorrect views and confirmed each other’s understanding. Having been together like this, Yunyan presented his understanding on that day, and Daowu confirmed it.

Know that the words, *many hands and eyes* were equally expressed by these two ancient buddhas. The words *many hands and eyes* were studied simultaneously by Yunyan and Daowu.

What does the bodhisattva of great compassion do? This is a question directed to Daowu. This question is not the same as that of the bodhisattvas of ten stages or three classes. This question brings forth an expression of understanding. It brings forth hands and eyes.

As the question— *What does the bodhisattva of great compassion do with so many hands and eyes?*—was presented, there are old buddhas and new buddhas who have become buddhas through the power of working on this question. The question can be, “How does the bodhisattva use so many hands and eyes?” “How is it?” “How does the bodhisattva manage [so many hands and eyes]?” or “What do you say?”

Daowu said, *Like someone reaching back for the pillow at night.* He meant that it is just like searching for the pillow at night. *Reaching back* means groping for it. *At night* means in utter darkness. It is as clear as “looking at a mountain in the daytime.”

Using the hands and eyes is *like someone reaching back for the pillow at night.* Study the use of the hands and eyes in this way. Investigate a nighttime which is thought of in the daytime, and a nighttime experienced in the nighttime. Investigate a nighttime that is neither daytime nor nighttime. *Someone reaching back for the pillow* may not be understood as Avalokiteshvara using the hands and eyes, but there is no way to escape it.

Is the so-called *someone* merely someone? Or is it an ordinary person, yet not ordinary? If you understand *someone* as an ordinary person in the buddha way, and do not take it as “merely someone,” then there is something to study about *reaching back for the pillow.*

The pillow has some points that must be investigated. *Night* is not merely the night of the day and the night of humans and devas. Know that what is expressed here is not grabbing, pulling, or pushing the pillow.

When you investigate Daowu’s words, *reaching back for the pillow at night*, see and don’t miss that there are eyes that can see the night. There is no limit to the hand reaching out for the pillow. If the hand reaches backwards, is there an eye that can see what is behind? Clarify the meaning of an eye at night.

Is this a world of eyes on hands? Is this someone who has eyes on hands? Do eyes and hands fly like a flash of light? Have the eyes and hands been working in one or many ways, from beginning to end?

If you investigate the use of so many hands and eyes, the bodhisattva of great compassion may only appear to be a bodhisattva of hands and eyes. If someone questions this, say, “How does the bodhisattva of hands and eyes use so many bodhisattvas of great compassion?”

Know that even though the hands and eyes do not hinder each other, how you use them is how you let them be used, and how you use them as they are.

In understanding things as they are, *the hands and eyes all over* are never hidden, nor are they waiting for the moment of understanding *the hands and eyes all over.* Even though there are these or those hands and eyes that are not hidden, they are not the self, mountains or rivers, sun face or moon face, and not “Mind itself is buddha.”

Yunyan said, *I got it, I got it.* He did not mean he understood Daowu’s words. The *I got it, I got it* makes his experience of the bodhisattva using the hands and eyes a true experience. Daowu used his words boundlessly just like this. He entered that very day boundlessly just like this.

Daowu said, *What did you get?* This means that although Yunyan’s *I got it* does not hinder *I got it*, Daowu’s response was: *What did you get?*

Already there was *I got it*, and you got it. Is it not that the eyes got it, and the hands got it. Is *I got it* actualized or not actualized?

While it is [true] I who *got it*, it is [true] you who was asked: *What did you get?* This requires investigation.

Regarding Yunyan’s words *All over the body is hands and eyes*, when people lecture on *reaching back for the pillow*, many of them explain that there are hands and eyes all over Avalokiteshvara’s body. To describe Avalokiteshvara that way may be explaining Avalokiteshvara, but this is not thoroughly expressing the bodhisattva.

Yunyan's words, *All over the body is hands and eyes*, do not mean that there are hands and eyes all over Avalokiteshvara's body. Even if *all over* means all over the world, the very body, hands, and eyes [of Avalokiteshvara] are not covered by this *all over*. Even if the body, hands, and eyes have the power to cover everything, they are not the hands and eyes that would confiscate goods from the marketplace. No views, practice, or words can exactly express the power of the hands and eyes.

So many hands and eyes means more than one thousand, ten thousand, eighty-four thousand; more than beyond boundary and measure. This is not only so for *All over the body is hands and eyes*, but also for expounding dharma to awaken sentient beings, and for the land radiating light.

In this way, Yunyan's words mean that all over the body is no other than hands and eyes. It is not that there are hands and eyes all over Avalokiteshvara's body. Investigate this. Do not be surprised that Avalokiteshvara uses and manages the hands and eyes that are no other than all over the body.

Daowu said: *You have said it well. But it's eight or nine out of ten.* This means that Yunyan's expression was well presented. *You have said it well* means Yunyan is right, and there is nothing unexpressed. If Daowu had meant that Yunyan did not express right understanding, he would only have said, *It's eight or nine out of ten.*

Study the true meaning of Daowu's words. Even when someone expresses ten out of ten, if it is without mastery of the way, it is not complete. On the other hand, when what should be presented is presented, someone expressing eight or nine out of ten should be regarded as someone who has expressed ten out of ten.

The moment of hitting the mark, which can be expressed in one hundred, one thousand, or ten thousand ways, Yunyan expressed in merely eight or nine out of ten with little effort. Truly, his capacity is wondrous. Bringing forth the entire world of the ten directions with one hundred, one thousand, or ten thousand efforts is better than bringing forth nothing. And yet, bringing it forth with a single effort is extraordinary. This is the meaning of *You got eight or nine out of ten.*

However, hearing the buddha ancestor's words—*You got eight or nine out of ten* – people assume that Yunyan expressed only eight or nine while he should have expressed ten out of ten. If buddha dharma were like that it would not have reached today. The *eight or nine* is like one hundred or one thousand. It means so many. From one point of view, it means beyond eight or nine. You should study the dharma talks of buddha ancestors in this way.

Yunyan said, *I am just this. How about yourself?* He said *just this* in response to Daowu's *You got eight or nine out of ten*. It is like "I leave no trace," or, "the arms are long but the sleeves are short" [This is the way it is]. It is not that he said *I am just this* because he had not expressed his understanding well enough.

Daowu said, *Wherever the body reaches, it is hands and eyes*. He did not mean that the hands and eyes reach as hands and eyes. The hands and eyes that reach wherever the body reaches is expressed as, *Wherever the body reaches it is hands and eyes*.

Thus, Daowu did not say that the [Avalokiteshvara's] body is hands and eyes. While using so many hands and eyes so many times, the hands and eyes are invariably *Wherever the body reaches it is hands and eyes*.

You might be asked, "How does the bodhisattva use so many bodies and minds?" Then you might say, "Wherever the body reaches, it is just this."

Between Yunyan's *all over the body* and Daowu's *wherever the body reaches*, it is not that one has expressed thoroughly and the other has not. Yunyan's *all over the body* and Daowu's *wherever the body reaches* cannot be compared with each other. Each one has expressed it thoroughly in regard to *so many hands and eyes*.

In this way, the Avalokiteshvara expressed by Old Man Shakyamuni has only one thousand eyes, twelve faces, thirty-three bodies, or eighty-four thousand manifestations. Yunyan and Daowu's Avalokiteshvara has numberless hands and eyes. However, it is not a question of more or less. When you practice the numberless hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara, expressed by Yunyan and Daowu, all buddhas experience Avalokiteshvara's samadhi eight or nine out of ten.

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Postscript

Since buddha dharma was brought from India [to China], many buddha ancestors have talked about Avalokiteshvara, but none of them match Yunyan and Daowu. That is why I am presenting only this case now.

Yongja, Great Master Zhenjue, said, “Not to see even one dharma is called a tathagata. This is the one who perceives with freedom [Avalokiteshvara].”

This confirms that the Tathagata and Avalokiteshvara both reveal their own bodies, but they are not separate bodies.

Mayu and Linji had dialogues on the true hands and eyes. It is one of the many dialogues on Avalokiteshvara.

Yunmen spoke of Avalokiteshvara who “sees form and clarifies the mind, hears sound and realizes the way.”

Which form or sound does Avalokiteshvara not see or hear?

Baizhang spoke of Avalokiteshvara “entering reality.”

In the assembly described by the *Lankavatara Sutra*, there is Avalokiteshvara of Complete Mastery.

In the assembly described by the *Lotus Sutra*, there is Avalokiteshvara who manifests the universal gate.

Avalokiteshvaras described by these ancients all work together with buddhas, mountains, rivers, and earth. Although working together with buddhas, mountains, rivers, and earth, these Avalokiteshvaras are still one or two manifestations of countless hands and eyes.

