

Primordial life—Cosmology of Buddhism

Michinori Kobayashi
(Japanese Philosopher)

Life can be described as the continuation of bewilderment by birth and death, delusion by desires and anguish by guilt feeling. When such problems are realized and pursued seriously, religious aspiration is inspired. As the problems of death, suffering and guilt are deeply realized and pierced through, then embraced with the compassion of Buddha or love of God, religious salvation is achieved. Especially, in the self-awareness religion, the followers try to attain enlightenment or awareness by becoming aware of the force of the primordial field of cosmos by casting oneself there. In this thesis, I am trying to describe the perspective of religious awareness called emancipation or enlightenment and observe the working of cosmic primordial life within each and every living beings.

Cosmic life

Every religion purport its reliance on cosmic primordial force. Yet, such cosmic primordial force is invisible, intangible but so great that create everything and support all of us from within. Any religion is a form of awe toward such cosmic primordial force and expression of awareness and conviction of the fact that we totally rely on it.

Buddhism assumes dharma which control all of us including Buddha himself. This dharma is nothing but the cosmic primordial force. Dharma is invisible and intangible cosmic primordial life. To deeply become aware of the fact that we are all alive because of such cosmic primordial life is emancipation or enlightenment.

In Mahayana Buddhism, such dharma is regarded as the body of Buddha and assumes it to be dharma body. The dharma body is invisible, intangible, no color without any form. Dharma body is the cosmic primordial force with no color nor form, yet at the same time it is the cosmic primordial life which function ubiquitously. Although it is invisible it does not mean nothing is there but functions infinitely.

If you pay attention to the aspect that the dharma body is invisible and formless force, it can be said that it is *sūnya* (empty). However, if the dharma body is merely empty, it will not work anything. On the contrary, the dharma body as true reality of the universe functions infinitely enabling everything to exist. The concept of the dharma body in Mahayana Buddhism express the idea that the fundamental force of cosmic creation is invisible, yet it functions inexhaustibly.

The Shingon Buddhism believes “Jishou-hosshin” the inherent dharma body which means the inherent nature of everything that exists in the phenomenal world, and it represents the absolute true reality that is not constrained by time and space. It is said that this inherent dharma body represents the fundamental cosmic life. Moreover, it is thought that this inherent dharma body also becomes a different type of dharma body instantly to rescue sentient beings. In Mahayana Buddhism, in general, many buddhas manifest from the dharma body to perform various functions. The fundamental cosmic life manifest in all things of the universe and makes them function.

Dharma body means the underlying non-personal cosmic force, but when it is represented as having personality, it appears as a tathagata. Thus, tathagata is thought to neither arise nor cease, never increase nor decrease, and never goes into reincarnation. Cosmic life is considered to be eternally immortal. Besides, the truth of tathagata cannot be expressed in words, it can be thought of as infinite power that cannot be grasped by human intelligence.

Furthermore, according to the story of "Avatamsaka Sutra" (The chapter of the Origination of Tathagata), the activity area of the tathagata is limitless, there is nothing to block it, and it is undefiled and infinite. The wisdom of tathagata is also infinite and limitless and covers unlimited realms. The supernatural power of tathagata also works immaculately and freely and inspire and benefit all living beings. The miraculous wisdom light of the Tathagata infinitely illuminates the world of sentient beings and the eyes of tathagata perceive unlimitedly all the things. The content of tathagata's enlightenment and its workings are infinite and unlimited. It is considered that the works of the cosmic life covers everything and unlimited.

Tathagata is called by various names in each Mahayana Buddhist scripture. In "Avatamsaka Sutra," the tathagata is called as Vairocana Buddha and symbolizes the cosmic life itself. Vairocana Buddha appears as an infinite cosmos itself, but since it is the Buddha in Dharma body and it is invisible and formless, Vairocana Buddha itself does not expound the Dharma. However, as Vairocana Buddha is translated as the omnipresent illuminating light, it is said that it resides in the Lotus matrix world and

infuse the infinite light on all over the universe and purify it. The wisdom light of Vairocana Buddha is emitted to all the directions of the infinite universe and there is nothing left to be illuminated by it. All of us and the sentient beings are illuminated by the wisdom light of the Vairocana Buddha and embraced in its limitless activities. We all are living in the midst of such working of Vairocana Buddha. And as we come out and work, and then always return there. Vairocana Buddha is the great cosmic life where all the sentient beings are from there and go back there.

This Vairocana Buddha is Mahāvairocana Tathagata in the Mahāvairocana Sūtra dedicated in the Esoteric Buddhism, but Mahāvairocana Tathagata is also symbolizing the great cosmic life. Mahāvairocana Tathagata is the immortal personality that encompasses everything in the universe embodying the universe itself consisting of the six elements, earth, water, fire, wind, void, and consciousness. This Mahāvairocana Tathagata also emits the wisdom light all over, and pours its compassion equitably on all living things. Its activity is limitless, it manifests as various figures of Buddhas and rescue sentient beings by expounding the Dharma. Since Mahāvairocana Tathagata is the Buddha in Dharma body which embody the truth itself, it expounds the eternal truth transcending time and space permanently. It is the endless work of the cosmos with great edification and vitality.

The eternally enlightened Buddha expounded in the Chapter of Tathagata's endless Life span which is regarded as the prime chapter in the Lotus Sutra also symbolizes cosmic eternal life. According to the Chapter of Tathagata's endless Life span, Shakyamuni Buddha was the Buddha historically appeared in this world, yet in fact, he already attained enlightened in the eternally long time past, he has been inspiring sentient beings since then for long. The life length of this eternal Buddha is infinite and it transcend the time and space, and neither arise nor cease. This eternal Buddha is invisible to the human eyes, yet its super natural power permeate all over. We are vitalized by this great life of this eternally enlightened Buddha. The eternally enlightened Buddha expounded in the Lotus Sutra is nothing but the cosmic eternal life.

The paradise and Buddha body

Since we are bothered by everyday things and we are always doing something in our daily life, we do not notice that the power of the great cosmic force is working in everyday life itself. Rather, we are confused in life and death, suffer from diseases and aging and bothered by our own desires, being lost in anger, hatred and grudge. But,

that is why, human beings are aware of it and envision this world as a world filled with pain and humiliation, while envisioning a world that transcends life, death and suffering of this world. Thus, since from the time when human beings perceived impermanence and suffering of the world, the idea of the two opposing worlds like, this world and the other world, this shore and other shore, this impure world and pure land, came into our minds. And, as this shore was imagined as increasingly polluted, the other shore was imagined as more and more beautiful with comfort.

In Mahayana Buddhist scriptures also, this paradise where eternal Buddha resides is depicted as a majestic world decorated with countless beautiful jewels and flowers. For example, in "Avatamsaka Sutra" (The chapter of ten stages), the paradise and Buddha land are depicted as all kinds of jewels are scattered, illuminated by infinite light, the countless numbers of lotus flower made of jewels are surrounding the huge lotus flower and beautiful music is played. In the "Lotus Sutra" also, the land of the Buddha is depicted as consisting of lapis lazuli, decorated with gold threads, beautifully decorated with treasure trees, and various bodhisattvas are enjoying pleasant lives in the castle house. The solemnity of the Buddha land envisioned by Buddhists is a religious expression of the world of cosmic life.

However, the eternal Buddha who lives in such a paradise also has to come down to this earth. Otherwise, sentient beings cannot be saved. As sentient beings who live in impure world are filled with sufferings, they need to be saved. For that purpose, the Buddha who lives in the Pure Land must limit itself and appear in this impure world. This shore and the other shore, impure world and pure land are completely opposite worlds and their differences seems to be infinite. Yet, at the same time, both of these worlds must be directly connected. Both opposites must be in the unity.

Actually, in Mahayana Buddhism, it is thought that the Buddha as Dharma body manifest itself in the form of a reward body or a response body for the sentient beings in order to save them. Because as the Dharma body is the embodiment of the eternal truth itself, it is invisible and formless. Therefore, it cannot be seen by sentient beings defiled by the desires. Therefore, the Dharma body Buddha appears as a reward body or a response body.

Reward body is the Buddha that appears in this world as a reward for the wish and practices accomplished when the Buddha was still in the position of bodhisattva. Amitabha Buddha, which Pure Land Buddhist worship, is this reward body. On the other hand, Buddha who actually has a flesh body in this Saha world, attain enlightenment through practice and works for sentient beings is a response body. Speaking from this point, Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment at the age

of 35, expounded Dharma and passed away at the age of 80 also corresponds to the response body of Buddha. In other words, it can be said that Shakyamuni Buddha is a Buddha whom the eternal Buddha manifest itself temporarily taking a human form. The fact that the "Lotus Sutra" is depicting Shakyamuni Buddha as a shadow of real Buddha which has eternal life can be considered as this correspondence with Dharma body and its response body. In any case, if a reward body or a response body of Buddha are considered as the manifestations of the Dharma body, both of them are the religious expressions of the cosmic great life's working in this world.

In Esoteric Buddhism, the great cosmic life is symbolized as Mahāvairocana Tathagata and considered that this Mahāvairocana Tathagata is within everything in the actual world. Therefore, in Esoteric Buddhism, everything from the Tathagata to even the evil goblins and animal are considered as the embodiment of the Mahāvairocana Tathagata, and they are divided into four category. They are Inherent Body, Reward Body, Response Body and Incarnated Body. Among them, the Inherent Body represent the eternal life itself, absolute truth itself and the Great cosmos itself. The Reward body represents the Buddha who appear in this real world, for his own pleasure or for rescuing the sentient beings, Samantabhadra, Maitreya, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri Bodhisattvas are those Reward Body. Response body appears for those who have no special religious capacity. Shakyamuni Buddha and other religious leaders are those Response Body. The Incarnated Body appears taking the same form of the sentient beings to inspire them. Such forms include the form of non-buddhistic gods, animals or even the evil goblins. Those four kinds of manifested body of Dharma body Buddha are categorizations of all the infinite numbers of manifested Buddha bodies in the universe, yet all of them can be identified with the single true nature of Mahāvairocana Tathagata. The sole unlimited natured Mahāvairocana Tathagata manifest by limiting itself in the all the different forms in the universe. One body appears as many bodies and many bodies are essentially one body. One is many and many are one.

In the Esoteric Buddhism, the Inherent Body represent the great cosmic life, and all other bodies are the manifestations of this great cosmic life. The great cosmic life must limit itself and work directly in the actual world. The Buddhas must appear in front of the sentient beings in order to rescue them. The great cosmic life is not working from distant place but it is working in the midst of our world and always supporting us. The theory of Buddha's bodies symbolically describes this aspect.

Ubiquity of Cosmic Life

In Mahayana Buddhist scriptures also, the appearance of the tathagatas and Buddhas are depicted with rich imagination. For example, in the "Avatamsaka Sutra" (the chapter of the Origination of Tathagata), it is repeatedly described that the wisdom light of Vairocana Buddha spread extensively over the world of sentient beings and rescue sentient beings. The wisdom light of tathagata illuminate all corners of the world, and like as sun light or moon light, it falls on the bodhisattvas, all the sentient beings and even on the hungry spirit or animals to inspire them towards enlightenment. Besides, although the great wisdom light of tathagata is single tone, the capacities of the sentient beings varies widely, so it appears as various kinds of lights.

Also, the work of tathagata that benefits all these sentient beings is expressed by a metaphor of Dharma clouds coming down, and pouring the rain of Dharma equally to all the sentient beings. In that way, the sutra expounds the infinite and immeasurable works of tathagata reaches ubiquitously over all sentient beings and in all the worlds.

Likewise, in "Avatamsaka Sutra" (The chapter of ten stages), when the Bodhisattva enters the final stage of enlightenment named Dharma Cloud State in the mediation, innumerable numbers of lotus flowers and bodhisattvas appear, light is emitted to all over the world, and all the sufferings of hell, hungry spirits, animals, asuras and human beings vanish and the worlds of Suravakas and Pratyeka-buddhas are also illuminated and all the lights are depicted to float in the air as a great wheel. Also in the chapter of Entering the Dharma Realm of Avatamsaka Sutra, it depicts that Samantabhadra Bodhisattva emits clouds of light which is equal to the number of fine dusts in the whole world from each of his pores and illuminates the whole world rescuing the suffering of all sentient beings, and furthermore the appearance of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past, present and future from each of his pores. As is said in the Chapter of the Wondrous Adornments of the Rulers of the Worlds of Avatamsaka Sutra, "The body of Buddha as extensive as the whole Dharma realm, and it appears according to the capacity of each and every sentient being." It is what Avatamsaka Sutra repeatedly tries to say. The essence of Buddha must appear in each and every corner of this world.

In the "Lotus Sutra" (the chapter of Parable of medicinal plants) also, like as the large clouds cover the world, rain uniformly, raise the plants, and help them grow according to their capacities, the Tathagata's preaching has the same taste, yet it

inspire each being according to its capacity towards enlightenment. The benefit of Buddha's dharma extends over all sentient being equally and filled among them. The same thing is said in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism also. The wisdom light of Mahāvairocana Tathagata extends filling everywhere, and there is no shadow nor the distinction of day and night. It inspire every being to show forth its own inherent merit and help it to accomplish its work. As sun always exist whether clouds hide it or not, the light of Mahāvairocana Tathagata never arise nor vanish, eternally keeps on illuminating the world. Here also the universal and everlasting workings of Mahāvairocana Tathagata is considered to be influencing all the beings in the actual world from the absolute world and rescue them.

In Mahayana Buddhism, it is considered that the eternal power and Dharma of the Buddha are ubiquitous in this world. That is why everyone can attain emancipation. The primordial cosmic life passes through the whole universe, persistent through the past, the present, and the future. If so, we must say from the beginning that we are in the ubiquitous source of life in the universe, the eternal Buddha. The whole life of the universe is always working and supporting us, even in our individual existence like a dust in the vast universe.

Innate Buddha nature

If cosmic life works in every corners of the world, its working is latent in everything in the world. Mahayana Buddhism has been calling this as "There is innate Buddha nature in every sentient being."

According to the teaching of "Nirvana sutra" (in the chapter of Noble Virtue King Bodhisattva and in the chapter of Lion's Roar Bodhisattva), Buddha nature always exists and never changes. Therefore all sentient beings have potentiality to attain enlightenment because of such Buddha nature. Such Buddha nature is shared by each and every sentient being.

In Avatamsaka Sutra (the chapter of the Origination of Tathagata) also, it is depicted that the light of tathagata shine on the every corners of universe, and everything is illuminated by it. In the Avatamsaka Sutra School, they interpret the origination expounded in Avatamsaka Sutra in such a unique way that tathagata is the origination itself. In other words, the tathagata essentially originated from the truth itself and it means the same as the Buddha nature originate in all the sentient beings. Thus all the beings are nothing but the origination of Buddha nature and all beings originally has Buddha nature within. We can become aware of our own Buddha

nature because it already exist within us and penetrate all of us. They interpret the fact that “there is innate Buddha nature in every sentient being” from the aspect of origination.

In Shingon Esoteric Buddhism also, this idea remains the same. If you take away ignorance and anxiety that covers the Buddha nature that is originally provided to the all the living beings, it is supposed that everyone can become a Buddha, with its inherent clean Buddha nature germinating. Kukai also established such idea based on "Mahāvairocana Sutra." And if you refine yourself and devote yourself for benefiting others, you can attain Buddhahood instantaneously.

Saicho also based on the Tendai's basic idea "Originally Buddha nature is within all, they automatically attain Buddhahood," he thoroughly pursued “non-duality of the unenlightened and the enlightened” or “the oneness of sentient beings and Buddha” This idea of Japanese Tendai Sect that the Buddha nature is latent in the unenlightened or sentient beings was developed further to include even the plant and tree and they claimed the possibility of enlightenment of plant and tree.

Dogen expanded this idea further to include even the non-living things. In “Shoubou Genzou,” (the chapter of the Buddha nature) Dogen boldly interpreted the wording of Nirvana Sutra saying “all the sentient beings have Buddha nature” in a unique way that “all the sentient beings and all the beings are the Buddha nature.” Then he goes “All beings are the Buddha nature and one type of them are sentient beings only.....whatever around the sentient beings are the beings of Buddha nature.” “The Buddha nature are always beings, because beings are the Buddha nature.” Or he also says “all the Buddha nature include sentient beings.”

Everything including living things and inanimate objects, all things are Buddha nature itself, and one way of being of all things are the sentient beings. Everything inside and outside of sentient being is Buddha nature itself. We can rather say that the Buddha nature contains all the sentient beings. Here living things and non-living things both are contained in the Buddha nature. It is not that everything has the Buddha nature as its attribute but it is rather better to say that everything is the Buddha nature itself and everything belongs to the Buddha nature. There are nothing in this universe which is not the Buddha nature. To express this idea, Dogen read <悉有> as “all beings” instead of traditional reading of “everyone has” and interpreted it directly connecting with the Buddha nature itself. And then he said the Buddha nature is the fence, wall, roof tile and stone.

If the primordial cosmic life is working from the beginning and each being expresses this primordial cosmic life, it can be said that everything is already

enlightened. Everything is in the realm of Buddha nature and enlightened all together. Dogen says this in his “Shoubou Genzou” that snow mountains, trees and stones are enlightened all at once in the realm of Buddhas, and manifest itself as it is and there is no difference before or after. When the cosmic life manifest itself, everything also manifest its figure. In the realm of cosmic life, everything in this universe arises all at once together.

This is also told with the images that all things are shining one another in the light of Buddha. In “Shoubou Genzou” too (in the chapter of Bright Light), quoting the words of Changsha Jingcen and Yunmen Wenyan, everything in the worlds of ten directions is nothing but an eye of the founder Buddha, a word of the founder Buddha, a whole body of the founder Buddha and a light of the founder Buddha. This light becomes a Buddha after going through its practice, sit as a Buddha, and manifest as a Buddha. Each human being has such light within and the light possesses people. Birth and death is the coming and going of the light. The one who practice, plants, trees, mountains, water and birds are also the light. Everything in this universe is the light of founder Buddha who is the light itself.

In this way, Dogen says that the whole universe is one shining gem ball in his Shoubou Genzou (in the chapter of One Gem Ball) quoting the words of Xuansha Shibe. This universe is the eye of true Dharma and one reality, the light, neutral, mild and smooth.

Then he goes “It is really lovely to see the gem ball shines so brightly illuminating each and every corners of all the worlds in the ten directions and it is entirely due to the great virtuous result of the whole Dharma realms filling all of them. Each and every being in this world shines and the whole world also shines. As the innumerable numbers of morning dews shines reflecting the morning sun light, glass, trees, insects, fishes, mountains, rivers, sun, moon, stars and all the things shines the light of cosmic life. Furthermore such a universe which contains all those things is also one of a shining life. The worlds which appears as you approach enlightenment is such all shining worlds.

If we put this in other words, we can say it as “the true reality of all phenomena” expounded in the Lotus Sutra (in the chapter of Skillful Means). The Lotus Sutra teaches that all phenomena are just as they are and all the beings are the manifestation of true reality: Saddharma. The fact that things are just as they are is the true reality of all phenomena. In spring flower bloom and in autumn leaves fall. Such all the working of nature are the manifestation of the true Dharma and true

reality. All the things in this universe are the manifestations of the great cosmic life and they are all reflecting the true reality just as they are.

Nature as an expression of cosmic life

In Japan, since long ago, there was an idea that "all the plants, trees, lands and soils can attain enlightenment" Such idea has its origin from Japanese perspective of nature which recognize the life force in all the things in nature even before the introduction of Buddhism. Then as Buddhism introduced to Japan, and deeply permeated into Japanese psyche, it developed into such idea that mountains, rivers, plants and trees all have Buddha nature and they all reflect the essence of Buddha. It was especially advocated in the Tendai and Shingon Sect in Heian Era and it was succeeded to the Kamakura New Buddhism also. Above all such idea was succeeded to the tanka poetry developed in the late Heian Era, tea ceremony, and flower arrangement, Noh play perfected in Muromachi Era and even to the Haikai (seventeen-syllable verse) in Edo Era.

Dogen also says in "Shoubou Genzou (in the chapter of Buddha Nature), "The mountains, rivers and lands are all the ocean of the Buddha nature." "Seeing the mountains and rivers are same as seeing the Buddha nature." The mountains, rivers, lands and nature are all manifestations of the Buddha nature and a gorgeous mansion constructed on the ocean of the Buddha nature. The fact that mountain is mountain, river is river, land is land is because they are the manifestations of Buddha nature. Therefore seeing the mountains and rivers is nothing but seeing the Buddha nature itself. The Buddha nature manifests in everything.

Also, in "Shoubou Genzou" (in the chapter of Sansui Kyo), It is said "The mountain and water here are the manifestations of ancient Buddha's achievement of path. Both originally reside in ultimate Dharma, completing the infinite merits. Since from timeless era, it has been eternal present, and oneself even before the appearance of anything, it transcends even being oneself."

"The mountain and water here are the manifestations of ancient Buddha's path in reality. Each maintain and water is being itself and still completing infinite merit. As it is since from timeless era, it has been eternal present, and oneself even before the appearance of anything it transcends even being oneself." The nature is figure of Buddha and materialization of truth of Buddha Dharma. It is self-manifestation of the

absolute present beyond past, present and future. The nature is the expression of real cosmic life.

Similar thing is explained also as the preaching of Dharma by senseless being. The mountain, river, plant and tree that do not have emotion nor consciousness expound Dharma just as they are. The sound of the wind blowing pine and the sound of the water flowing through the valley are all the Buddha's preaching. Moreover, according to "Shoubou Genzou" (in the chapter of the Exposition by Senseless Being), it says that such preaching is not <preaching Dharma> but <Dharma is preaching>. It says "preaching Dharma is Dharma is preaching." The preaching of Dharma is nothing but everything is manifesting itself through the mountain and water. In "Shoubou Genzou" (in the chapter of Bendouwa: Perfection of Buddha Path), it is said that plant, tree and land each emits the great light, and expounds deep and wonderful Dharma endlessly and when plant, tree and walls expound Dharma for all sentient beings, then they in turn preach Dharma for plant, tree and walls.

It also says "All of the lands, plants, trees, walls and roof tiles in the worlds of ten directions do the Buddha's work." (Bendouwa: Perfection of Buddha Path), Also it is said "when you study Sutras, real Sutras appear. Such Sutras are everything inside or outside of oneself including mountains, rivers, lands, plants and trees in whole worlds of ten directions" (Self-evident Samadhi). Everything in the great nature carries out Buddha's work, recites Sutras and manifests the real cosmic life. There, the nature and human are integrated, and human attain enlightenment in Dharma preached by the nature and the nature also attain enlightenment in the enlightenment of human. Such pure state is narrated there. The nature is the manifestation of real cosmic life and in such manifestation human also become aware of the real life within.

However, the idea that nature itself is an appearance of Buddha nature as it is, and the manifestation of Buddha Dharma is already mentioned by Saicho and Kukai who established the Heian Buddhism. Saicho, after ordained in Capital Nara, left Nara to avoid hustle of big city and settled in Mt. Hiei which was his home town.

Then, worshiping local deities of Mt. Hiei, in serene and spiritual atmosphere of mid-mountain, he carried out intensive Buddhist practices in order to obtain the true reality of all dharma depicted in the Lotus Sutra. He tried to accomplish true path in the midst of sound of Buddha Dharma preached by all the things in nature including mountains, rivers, plants and trees. In his "pledge" such an extraordinary wish of Saicho was narrated.

Kukai also confined himself in the mountains in Yoshino and Shikoku in his young age, and even after establishing Kouya-san as his main temple of his sect, he remained

through in carrying out the practices for rescuing all beings always idealizing the Buddhist practice in the midst of nature. In his "Shoryoshu"(a collection of poetry and prose which was written by Kukai) (Vol.1), he writes in his poetry of “a poem of playing in the mountain and admiring hermit” as follows.

The mountain becomes a brush, the great ocean of black ink is applied to it. The sky and earth is the container of Sutras. All phenomena are contained in a point, the six objects that instigates desires are all written in the book. Sun and moon illuminate the space and water, and no wind nor dust can disturb it. Right or evil both are the exposition of Dharma by Buddha and the distinction between me and others disappear.

Here also everything in nature is the sutra which expounds Buddha Dharma, is the preaching of Buddha. In this poem, mental state where we are integrated with whole cosmos are narrated. It is describing that the universe is filled with bright light and everything expresses it. From view point of Kukai, all the things in the universe are the appearances of Mahāvairocana Tathagata and his teachings.

“All the sentient beings have Buddha nature without exception” or “everything attains Buddhahood simultaneously” or “the true reality of all phenomena” or “all of plants, trees and lands become Buddha without exception” or “The preaching of Dharma by senseless beings,” all of them are saying same thing that everything is nothing but an expression of great cosmic life. Each and everything in this universe is shining world as a manifestation point of great cosmos appears in the world of salvation or enlightenment.

The world of Mandala

It is the mandala of the Esoteric Buddhism that expresses this most symbolically and visually. In the Mandala of the Shingon Esoteric Buddhism, there are so-called Four Mandala that are Great Mandala, Samaya Mandala, Dharma Mandala, and Karma Mandala. Among them, the well-known Great Mandala is a concrete representation of the entire phase of the universe and consists of a large collection of countless Buddha images expressed in various forms. There, the Buddha and various Bodhisattvas who have different phases in each are systematically depicted under certain rules. The myriad Buddha and various Bodhisattva painted in this mandala symbolize the parts of the universe that expresses the great cosmos in its own way.

This large mandala is usually drawn as Vajradhatu Mandala and Garbhadhatu Mandala that are named as dual Mandalas of Diamond and Womb Mandala. Among them, the Vajradhatu Mandala unfolds the world of wisdom as the unshakable

function of the essence of tathagata. It depicts our world of experience in which everything is distinguished infinitely and said to be the wisdom Dharma body of tathagata. It centers on Mahāvairocana Tathagata and the four tathagatas of Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi at four corners. Centering on them total of thirty-seven Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Among those, thirty six of them except for Mahāvairocana Tathagata are divided into four groups organized systematically signified with theory of Esoteric Buddhism.

On the other hand, Garbhadhatu Mandala, the meaning of its original name is the mandala born of the womb of great compassion, is the visualization of the mental attitude of tathagata which try to rescue sentient beings with such a feeling of compassion that a mother is affectionate to her own fetus. It is called as principle Dharma body of tathagata. In the center of the central eight-petal court located in the center of Mandala, there are Mahāvairocana Tathagata at the center and surrounding it the four tathagatas of Ratnaketu Tathagata, Samkusumitaraja Tathagata, Amitabha Tathagata and Divyadundubhimeghairghosa Tathagata, and next rank four Bodhisattvas of Samantabhadra, Maitreya, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri Bodhisattvas and also various Buddhas, vidyā-rājas and Devas are placed. Those are divided into three divisions, Buddha realm, Lotus realm and Diamond realm. The numbers of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and others are many in Garbhadhatu Mandala and in its peripheral part even the Hindu deities, hungry spirits, devils and ghosts are placed. It is to show everything is the incarnation of Mahāvairocana Tathagata and express the ideal to save all of them in the universe.

On the other hand, Samaya Mandala, Dharma Mandala, and Karma Mandala in line with the Great Mandala represent the special phase of the activity of the universe. Among them, Samaya Mandala is drawn by Buddhist tools such as Swords, Cakraratna Lotus and etc possessed by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which symbolize the work of Buddha. Specifically, it refers to the appearance of mountains, rivers, birds, animals, insects and fishes. All of them are regarded as the work of the Buddha. Dharma Mandala is drawn by Sanskrit letters, mantras, sutras and etc. They are expressed by voice or letter, and it is regarded that they are both expressions of the truth Dharma. Karma Mandala refers to the work of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, seeing all activities of the universe as mandalas, including the activities of the great nature and the people.

Every type of mandala in esoteric Buddhism is a microcosm of the universe. Everything that exists in the universe, sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, birds,

animals, insects, fishes, hungry spirits, beasts, humans, devas, vidyā-rājas, bodhisattvas, Buddhas is an incarnation of Mahāvairocana Tathagata in other words great cosmic life. Everything that exists in the universe is an expression of cosmic life and each one of them share its life. Moreover, they are mutually interconnected in the network of cosmic life. Each and every being expresses the truth of the universe, each has its own value, and each has its own individuality, and connected one another. One is many and many is one. The mandalas in esoteric Buddhism is expressing such a world view. Mandala is a magnificent expression of cosmic view, it is a grand cosmology that includes everything as an expression of cosmic life.

According to such a mandala world view, all things that appear in the immediate vicinity, such as the sound of valley, the sound of a wind blowing pine trees, the voice of birds, the voice of insects, the voice of sutra recitations, mantras and sutras are the manifestations of great cosmic life. Truth is not in an invisible and far away world, but it is represented in this reality, and it dwells in it. The essence appears in the phenomenon, and the truth is in the reality.

Kukai also says in his writing “Shoji-jissogi” <The significance of true reality of sound and letter> that whatever is addressed by everything in the universe is nothing but the truth disclosed by the universe.

Each of the five elements, earth, water, fire, wind and space has its own sound and expresses the truth.

Moreover, such a sound is expressed as a voice, and such a voice always expresses some meaning and resonates in the heart of the listener. The meaning expressed by such voice is called as a name, and when such a name is expressed by a figure, it becomes a letter.

It is always by letters that the voice expresses the name, and the occurrence of letters is from six dusts. Six dusts, in other words, six objects of (six sense organs) are color, voice, smell, taste, touch and concept, and they are all letters. The exposition of Dharma by tathagata is also by letters and such letters occur from six dusts. Six dusts are nothing but the manifestation of Mahāvairocana Tathagata ie: the universal truth. All phenomena such as five elements or six dusts are all words.

The ten realms of hell, hungry spirits, beasts, asuras, humans, devas, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are all worlds of expression. The world is tathagata’s Dharma exposition and expression. Every word in the world is the manifestation of Dharma body. Every expression is the manifestation of the truth. Only voice and letter are the reality. The voice and letter are the reality itself. Whatever is expressed is the truth just as it is. This universe itself is the world of

truth and self-expression of the truth. The truth is always uttering the words. This universe is the words and expression of tathagata. Everything in this universe is the mantra of tathagata and true reality.

For Kukai, the universe always talks to us and works on us. In the spring flowers bloom and in the autumn leaves fall. It is also the universe is talking to us and working on us. The unstinted sound of the valley is also the resonance of the cosmic life. It is the tathagata's preaching and true reality.

It is based on the idea that the true reality appear as voices and letters, Shingon Buddhism expresses the truth of the universe by Sanskrit letters. For example, as is well known, because a Sanskrit letter of ञ means denial, it symbolizes the eternal truth of immortality. Although the existence of this world is impermanent and in the constant flux of birth, aging, sickness and death, yet Sanskrit letter of ञ symbolizes that the eternal truth of the universe never arise nor generate. Therefore, this also signifies that that all existence is in the condition of śūnya.

However, the Sanskrit letter of ञ does not always mean denial. All the consonants are written always accompanied with letter of ञ. Therefore letter of ञ has positive meaning also in the sense that it create different sounds with consonants. Furthermore, every consonant is formed by combining vowels, which is the variations of this letter of ञ. For that reason, this letter of ञ also symbolizes the fundamental truth of the universe that is ubiquitous in all things and generates constant flux of everything.

Through its negative function, the letter of ञ expresses the truth of neither arising nor ceasing and the truth of śūnya of everything, yet at the same time, by its affirmative function, it expresses eternal truth ubiquitous in all things. The letter of ञ is a symbol of the fundamental truth of essential unity of negation and affirmation. If it is personified, it becomes Mahāvairocana Tathagata and if its function is illustrated, it becomes the dual Mandalas of Diamond and Womb Mandala. Esoteric Buddhism believe that not only the letter of ञ, but every letter expresses the truth of the universe and symbolizes the true realities of the universe. The truth of the universe must manifest as phenomena.

Esoteric Buddhism of Kukai sees the phenomenon as it is as truth, it consider the six elements (earth,water,fire,wind,space,and consciousness) are the body of Buddha. Everything that exists in our reality, living thing as well as non-living thing even including Buddha as the great cosmic life, is made of six elements that are essentially united mentally and physically. It consider this six elements as the symbol of Buddha and the appearance of cosmic life. It is the meaning that Kukai says in his

“Sokushinjoubutsugi” that Buddha, substantiated the universe by expounding the six elements. For Kukai, the Dharma world is not the invisible world, but the visible universe itself. The each of six elements itself express and symbolize the entire universe respectively. The earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness are the myriad Buddhas ubiquitous in the universe, the body of Mahāvairocana Tathagata. The six elements are the expression of the truth of the universe, the place where the real life of the universe dwells. In Kukai, the six elements are Dharma body of tathagata. Buddha dwells in our world and the universe itself is the body of Buddha. The truth must be concrete. Dharma body keep on expounding dharma eternally as everything in the universe. Dharma body is everything and everything is dharma body.

For Kukai, the real world is the ideal world as it is, and our real life is affirmed. Kukai’s philosophy of considering phenomena as reality is the philosophy of life which integrate the fundamental life with its infinite expressions and their diverse values. It is philosophy of absolutely affirming life. Besides expressing it not only in ideological terms but also expressing it as a symbolic ritual system, incorporating practices through the body into it. Kukai created such a magnificent religious world of Esoteric Buddhism.

Macrocosm and microcosm

If all things are expressions of cosmic life, everything is a microcosm that reflects macrocosm. When he was young, Kukai brought himself in the mountains of different places and practiced Kokuzo Gumonjiho (Ritual of Praying to Akasagarbha). It was to experience the fact that oneself and universe is one. Through this practice, he experienced that he was embraced by the mystery of universe, became one with it, then he attained immediate Buddhahood. Kukai speaks of the experience gained by this practice, "In the unstinted sound of the valley, the light of Venus arrived." It describes that everything in nature expresses the great cosmic life, and oneself also could reflect macrocosm as microcosm and became one with it. Kukai’s philosophy of Esoteric Buddhism that regards everything is the body of Mahāvairocana Tathagata and the manifestation of eternal Dharma body has its origin in this practice of him in his young age.

Tendai sect which was established by Saicho also consider that the whole universe is present even in a grain of sand and in a tip of hair. A familiar teaching of the “Triple Three Thousand fold Worlds Contained in One Mind” expresses such idea. Momentary thinking, that is, even a mind in a moment, the triple three thousand fold worlds, that

is, the entire universe is contained. Here also, it is considered even the self in a single moment reflects macrocosm as microcosm.

Dogen also talks about the same thing by raising advocate of senior master Nyojo and his verses in "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Plum Blossoms).

"When the old plum tree has a huge opening of blossoms, it is a worldly event. When such worldly event of opening of blossoms occur it is nothing but the arrival of spring. "

It is not that after spring arrives, the blossoms open but by opening of blossoms the spring arrives. It can be rather said that spring blooms in the blossoms.

The plum opens the early spring. The plum blossoms in the snow is the eyes of tathagata. When the plum blossoms bloom, Buddhas appear in this world. In a small plum blossom of microcosm, macrocosm opens up.

In "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Only by the Buddha Together with Buddha) also, he says everything on this earth is my body and everything on this earth is my approach to enlightenment and everything on this earth is single eye of Mahāvairocana Buddha.

Everything on this earth is nothing but a dharma body of oneself. One's real body is in fact the earth itself. The human body like the dust of the vast universe is also continuously connected with the universe which is actually composed of earth, water, fire and wind, and is one with the universe. There is no separation between self and earth nature, and they are one. Moreover, this earth nature is the expression of cosmic life as it is, and it is nothing but the truth of self. Self is able to gain enlightenment by being open to this unlimited earth nature. Self as a microcosm is one with macrocosm.

The same thing as this is said in "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Ten Directions). It is said that this great universe is the body of practitioner. The body of practitioner is connected with the great universe. Each part of one's own body is in touch with celestial and terrestrial world. There is no boundary between oneself and the worlds of celestial and terrestrial. The whole universe is my own body and there is nothing that is not my body. Oneself is universe and universe is oneself. Oneself as microcosm is connected with macrocosm.

However, the idea that there is a microcosm within macrocosm, there is macrocosm in the microcosm, the macrocosm and the microcosms are one, as is well known, it is already in the philosophy of Upanishad of ancient India. Upanishad's philosophy calls personal spirit which is the principle of individuality as Ātman, and the spirit of the universe which is the essence of the whole universe called Brahman. It is said that this Atman and Brahman are one and when both are united, the ultimate salvation is

achieved. The idea that my own self and universe is one, deeply influenced Mahayana Buddhism later, and flowed into the Shingon Buddhism in our country also came down to the Tendai, Zen and Nenbutsu Buddhism. All things are microcosms reflecting the macrocosms and the expressions of cosmic life. The religious world that is opened up in the state of salvation or enlightenment is nothing but the world of infinite expression of cosmic life.

The world as it is

When you realize that everything is the expression of cosmic life and nothing but a work of the universe, it becomes clear that the way everything is the Dharma just as it is. The world of Dharma is the way everything is just as it is. Dharma in other words, the truth is not something behind the visible things in front but the things exist just as they are, it is the truth and it is Dharma. In this sense, in Buddhism, Dharma means the truth at the same time it means things that exist, we must say that this has deep meaning. The truth manifest as the way the thing exist just as it is. The fact that it is said everything is preaching Dharma signifies the Dharma nature of everything. Suchness of all the things just as they are is the truth.

Kukai considered everything is Dharma body just as it is, recognized everything, and affirmed them all as he saw Dharma nature in them. In his poem collected in his “Shouryoushu,” he talks about the Dharma nature of all the existence.

The short legged seagull or the long legged seagull both are in accordance with the natural law. Even to a small ant or to a large turtle, sun light reaches equally. Only tathagata knows it very well. Everything exists in this world having its own individuality and each one of them is the manifestation of the truth just as it is and appearance of Dharma.

Indeed, in Mahayana Buddhism, especially in the philosophy of Prajnaparamita, it teaches śūnya: the non-substantial nature of everything and only śūnya is the truth. It says everything arise by the conditions and mutually dependent and there is no substantiality of its own and denies substantiality of everything. However, the philosophy of Prajnaparamita is not just teaching the non-substantiality of everything. Rather, the ultimate truth of the philosophy of Prajnaparamita lies in non-substantiating the śūnya itself. When even the śūnya is non-substantiated everything appears just as it is. The realm of śūnya is where oneself and things appear just as they are. Things are śūnya in turn means śūnya is the thing. Everything is śūnya in turn means true state of śūnya as real existence. Absolute negation must be changed

into absolute affirmation. The śūnya and existence are not something contradict but must be one.

Tendai School preached the integration of the tree aspect of truth from the view point of such perspective. When we become aware of the dependent originations of the things in front of us, existing things become provisional and truth appear as śūnya. Yet, this śūnya non-substantiate the śūnya itself, then existing things' substantiality must appear again. The provisionary is negated and becomes śūnya and the śūnya is negated and becomes provisionary, then real truth appears in the middle between the provisionary and śūnya. The existing things are just as they are and manifest the truth just as they are. Such way of being is the truth.

Dogen also says in his "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Flower in the śūnya), originally there is no flower in the world of śūnya, yet at the same time, the flower must bloom at this moment instantly. You can know it when you look at the blooming of peach, Japanese plum, plum or willow tree. Originally, flower is not flower, yet when the season comes it manifest its real nature entirely blooming flower. The śūnya also must bloom. The śūnya is not just śūnya, yet it must non-substantiate itself and become the existence just as it is. The truth of universe does not exist in the other world but manifest itself as all the existences in this world just as they are.

Dogen quoted the poems of Zen master Hongzhi Zhengjue in his "Shoubou Genzou" "Kousakura" (The chapter of Zazen Needle) and expressed Dharma nature of everything by saying that only in the state of śūnya like in the pure water or clear sky, a fish can be a fish, a bird can be a bird, manifesting its real nature of each just as it is. In the state of śūnya, everything exists just as dharma as it is. The truth of universe appears as phenomena.

When all things exist just as Dharma, all the things manifest their own nature. All the things express their own originalities. Things are being their own selves. Everything is one with itself in itself. A fish is a fish and a bird is a bird. Yet, at this time, a fish does not know that oneself is a fish. A bird is not aware that oneself is a bird. Because they are not aware, they can be a fish completely and a bird can be a bird completely. A fish or a bird manifest its own real life in the realm of truth and by that it expresses real cosmic life. There, there is no conflict between oneself and others or oneself with oneself, and in the state of cosmic self, its self can be self. The state of Samadhi of accepting oneself is such a mental state.

In the "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Genjoukouan; Realization of enlightenment), he says that fire wood become ash after burning, and it never goes back to be a fire wood again. Yet, we should never think that ash comes after a fire

wood or the fire wood is existing first. The fire wood is being itself completely and it is the fire wood from beginning to the end. We may think of order of before and after. But in fact before and after are not connected. Ash is also being ash completely and it is ash from beginning to the end. In other words, a fire wood also and ash also, each is being oneself Samadhi completely and manifest its own nature and stay in its own identity. In this sense, we should never discern that a firewood becomes ash or a firewood is first and ash is later.

Furthermore, Dogen says that the life and death of human beings are the same as this. Life is being a life completely at every moment, and death is being a death completely at every moment. If you are in life devote yourself to life completely, and if you are in death devote yourself to death completely, whether you are in your life or in death, always identify yourself, in other words be in the state of Samadhi of self - acceptance. It is the teachings of Buddhism.

Evening cicada keep sounding as long as possible without even being aware of a short summer as summer, and then die. Evening cicadas also devote oneself to life and death. That is how evening cicadas can be evening cicadas. It is only possible when we leave ourselves in the large universe itself and live in it. Even if we are lost in life and death or we are misled by our desires, both myself and others, everyone is always in the state of cosmic Samadhi as being oneself.

Dogen says the same thing again in "Shoubou Genzou" (the chapter of the Function of All the Things) quoting the words of Zen master Yuanwu and talks as following. The earth and sky are always there as we are alive or dead. And there is nothing in the earth and sky that hinder the full manifestation of the all the function of life, and never hinder the full manifestation of all the function of death. Life and death complete their functions in the inexhaustible working of universe. Plants, trees, insects, animals and all the things that exist in this world live their lives fully and die. Dogen recognized vivid workings of lives with their being in full play at every moment with their full power.

Fazang who completed the Avatamsaka Sutra School's philosophy said that all the things represent the truth, for he recognized the vivid and full working of lives in all the things in the midst of the working of great universe.

The idea of "true reality of phenomena" expounded in "Lotus Sutra" (skillful means) also says the same thing. The true reality of phenomena means the way everything exist is the truth just as it is. There is no true reality of phenomena, but phenomena are the true reality. Truth of existing thing is not hiding behind in other place but the true appearance of existing thing itself is truth. Ten suchnesses expounded in the

Lotus Sutra, such an appearance, such a character, such a substance, such a potential, such a function, such a cause, such a condition, such a result, such an effect, and such a dynamic integration of all of them equally as a whole express the existing things just as they are. Every existing thing has its appearance, character, substance, potential, function, cause, condition, result and effect, and all of them are dynamically integrated equally as a whole just as they are. There is no truth other than this way of being.

Dogen also talks on this true reality of phenomena and ten suchnesses of Lotus Sutra thoroughly in his "Shoubou Genzou" (the chapter of True Reality of Phenomena). What he says is very difficult to understand, yet in short, the true reality of phenomena does not mean there are two different things but so to say that spring dwells in a flower and human meets spring, like that only. Quoting historical allusion or view of Xuansha Shibe and Tiāntóng Rújìng, Dogen says that a swallow crows and hear the sound of little cuckoo, that is nothing but true reality is talking itself. Also in "Shoubou Genzou" (the chapter of Dharma Nature), explaining "such a character" of Lotus Sutra, he says the fact that a flower blooms and a leaf falls is nothing but such a character, and it is inconceivable that there is dharma nature apart from the actual figure of all the things just as they are.

Such dharma nature of everything, true state of śūnya as real existence or the state of Samadhi of accepting oneself are describing the same state. The existence of everything just as it is the appearance of the truth and the manifestation of the real cosmic life. The world opens up at the state of salvation or enlightenment is the world where everything is just as it is.

Truth and existence

In the West, since the ancient Greece, the real existence has been pursued in the concept of entity. Behind the phenomena that repeat generation and annihilation, they assumed the permanent existence and considered it as entity. This existence as entity exist by itself, dwells in itself and substance that make up all the contingent phenomena. Idea, individual or god are the entity that exist by itself.

However, in Buddhism, we generally do not think of such entities. Rather, everything is only relative and correlative, so we think that they do not have entity. The position of śūnya as no entity in the Prajnaparamita philosophy express such perspective. They rather think śūnya as no entity is the truth.

However, śūnya as no entity does not mean something exist in other than the all the existences. If you think that way, it would be against the perspective of śūnya as

no entity. Because denying the existence of entity behind the things is the perspective of śūnya as no entity. Rather śūnya must be considered to be functioning as being in relative and correlative, in dependent origination. That is why in Prajnaparamita philosophy, it not only says “the things are śūnya” but “śūnya is the things”.

Avatamsaka Sutra School’s philosophy stands in this position of “śūnya is the things”. The truth of śūnya as no entity is called Tathata (Real Suchness). Tathata is considered to follow dependent origination. Tathata is considered to be working out in everything. The truth is working out in everything just as it is the concept of Tathata following dependent origination. As waves arise on the water when wind blows, Tathata appear as everything by following dependent origination. Yet, as waves and water are inseparable and one thing, Tathata and everything are inseparable and one thing. We see truth in one being. There is no truth apart from being. The truth is the appearance of all being just as they are. Sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, plants, trees, birds, animals, insects, fish and everything exist just as they are. Such figures are Tathata just as they are. Everything in this universe is the manifestation of Tathata and the transformations of Tathata.

"Avatamsaka Sutra" named this as sāgara-mudrā-samādhi. The enlightenment of Vairocana Buddha is Tathata itself and it reflects the figures of everything in the world like perfectly stilled sea surface. And Vairocana Buddha who is the Tathata itself is always in Samadhi. The great cosmic life and everything is not separable but the figures reflected on the great cosmic life is everything in the universe.

Fazang who competed the Avatamsaka Sutra School’s philosophy interpreted the sāgara-mudrā-samādhi of "Avatamsaka Sutra" as the state of mind when the mind becomes perfectly clear by removing all the distracting thoughts, and the figures of everything are evenly reflected. The great cosmic life, Buddha himself, is originally in the state of enlightenment and Tathata itself. So there all the distracting thoughts are extinguished and totally clear like a stilled surface of great ocean and reflect each and everything. The world of Buddha’s enlightenment or the universe itself cannot be expounded from our side nor from Buddha’s side. Everything reflected on the state of enlightenment of Buddha is the world of bodhisattvas and can be expounded. Besides, the world of Buddha and the world of bodhisattvas, or the universe itself and everything in it are like two aspects of one thing like water and waves. As vacillation of water becomes waves, the Buddha himself or the universe itself transform into the figures of bodhisattvas and everything.

In the "Kegon-gokyoushou"<Avatamsaka Sutra as the last fifth stage of Buddha’s teaching> (in the chapter of the meaning of difference and identity of three nature of

perceptions) this is explained with metaphor of mirror. As the bright mirror reflects dirty things as well as pure things equally, and still it does not lose its brightness, Tathata reflects dirty things or pure things, yet always never lose its original purity. Rather because the mirror never lose its brightness, it can reflect dirty things or pure things. In the same way, because Tathata never lose its purity, it can reflect dirty things or pure things. And as mirror shows its brightness by reflecting dirty things and pure things, Tathata also shows its purity by reflecting dirty things and pure things. And as the mirror and everything two aspects of one thing, Tathata and everything are also two aspects of one thing. The working of everything is the working of cosmic life just as it is and everything and cosmic life is one.

Tathata can be called Dharma body or Buddha mind. In any case, it is the true reality of everything and real cosmic life itself. It actually working outwardly and exist. The undefiled Tathata truly appear and shows its unlimited virtue. Other than the existing things or apart from them, there is no Tathata. All the things that exist in this world is, from view of enlightenment, all Tathata. Sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, plants, trees, birds, animals, insects, fish and all the workings are the workings of real cosmic life.

Kukai also says in "Jujushinron" <Ten Stages of Mind Development> (Vol.9) Tathata is not different from impermanence but ever exists. The truth is considered to neither arise nor cease and ever exist. Yet, it is not separate from this world of continuous generation and extinction. Eternally existing truth must appear as the existences of this world as the continuation of generation and extinction. What Kukai tried to expound is that eternal world in actually appearing as phenomena in front of us and phenomena are expressing the phase of eternity just as they are.

In his "Sokushinjobutsu-gi" <The meaning of attaining enlightenment in this very existence>, he is comparing this with metaphor of mirror. On the inner mirror of tathagata's mind, all the things are reflected, it illuminates all of them. Therefore all the deluded people are also same as Buddha and can become Buddha in their very existences. Generally, in esoteric Buddhism, it is considered that this world is not false but in this world only the truth dwells and there cannot be any truth apart from this actual world. All the things are the manifestation of Mahāvairocana Tathagata's dharma body and real cosmic life.

The theory of Harmonious Integration of Three aspects of Truth; śūnya, provisional and Madhyamāpratipad of Tendai sect narrates the same concept of such truth in much more dynamic dialectical logic. The existences in the actual world arise by dependent origination, and essentially they are śūnya. Yet, at the same time, śūnya is

not something apart from the actual world, so it provisionally arises as phenomena. Thus in the recognition of whatever is provisional is śūnya and śūnya is provisional, there is the truth of Madhyamāpratipad. Such is the theory of Harmonious Integration of Three aspects of Truth; śūnya, provisional and Madhyamāpratipad. The truth of śūnya function as absolute negation, and the truth of provisional negate śūnya thereby affirm the all the existences and has the function of absolute affirmation. And the truth of Madhyamāpratipad expresses the truth that such negation and affirmation are the two aspects of one truth. And this theory of Harmonious Integration of Three aspects of Truth; śūnya, provisional and Madhyamāpratipad consider that three truth is one truth and three truth is three aspects of one truth. There lies the dialectical logic of negation of negation, the sublation of allelism of negation and affirmation, or relative and absolute. Besides, through such dialectical logic it expands the logic of the truth that essence is one with phenomena, and phenomena are one with essence. The truth must appear as phenomena and phenomena are the expression of the truth.

What Dogen was talking about was same as this. For example, in "Shoubou Genzou" (the chapter of Tsuki; moon as the function of everything), he talks on this quoting from Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra (The chapter of heavenly king) as "Buddha's dharma body is like empty space, it shows different shapes according to the things like the moon on the water." According to the interpretation of Dogen, whatever you see in front of you like plant, tree and all other phenomena are all nothing but real dharma body of Buddha. It is like the moon on the water. Whatever you see in front you are manifestations of truth just as they are like the moon on the water.

Also Dogen compares similar thing to mirror. In "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Ancient Mirror), he says that the ancient mirror which various Buddhas handed down always reflects same aspect, same figure and same enlightenment. When a Persian comes it reflects a Persian, when a Chinese comes it reflects a Chinese, when ancient people come it reflect ancient people, when contemporary people come it reflect contemporary people, when Buddha comes it reflects Buddha and when the founder comes it reflects the founder. On a clear mirror of the truth, everything is reflected just as it is. There everything is just as itself at the same time one with others also being one with others at the same time it is as itself. There true reality of everything is reflected. Everything is in the realm of truth and manifests its true figure.

In "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Genjoukouan; Realization of enlightenment), Dogen says as a fish is in the water, water is also in the fish. As a bird is in the sky, sky is also in the bird. A fish and water, and a bird and sky are one. In the same way, as an individual is the realm, a realm is also in the individual and individual and

realm are one. As an existence is in the truth, truth is in the existence. Existence and truth are one. The truth is existence and existence is the truth.

The similar thing is also said in "Shoubou Genzou" (The chapter of Kaiin Sanmai; Samadhi like as the tranquil surface of ocean), by interpreting the sāgara-mudrā-samādhi of "Avatamsaka Sutra" in his own way. He says that every founder Buddha has the state of sāgara-mudrā-samādhi. When Buddha expound the dharma, enlightened, implements, all are the functions of this state of Samadhi as is swing in the ocean. Its merit is as deep as the bottom of ocean, as if walking on the bottom of the ocean, still the body is above the sea water, based on the very deep truth of the Buddha dharma, do working of the Buddha dharma. Whatever is working out in front of us are all the functions of the very deep Buddha's life and the functions of deep truth. The things that repeat generation and extinction in this world are the working of deep cosmic real life just as they are.

Every individual in this universe is a microcosm that reflects macrocosm. As all things work in the universe, the universe works in all things. As fish live in the water, water lives in the fish. As the birds live in the sky, the sky lives in the birds. All things are the expression of the cosmic life, the activities of the primordial cosmic life. The existence of reality is the appearance of the true cosmic life, the true cosmic life is not separate from the existence of reality. The essence is a phenomenon, the truth is the existence. This is the truth that opens up in the world of emancipation and enlightenment.

(Source: "Kobayashi Michinori <Philosophy of life> Collection" 4 Minerva Shobo 2016 Kyoto, included in "The Sequel, What is Religion" Chapter 1)