

The Harmony of Difference and Equality

The mind of the great sage of India
is intimately transmitted from west to east.
While human faculties are sharp or dull,
the way has no Northern or Southern Ancestors.
The spiritual source shines clear in the light;
the branching streams flow on in the dark.
Grasping at things is surely delusion;
according with sameness is still not enlightenment.
All the objects of the senses
interact and yet do not.
Interacting brings involvement.
Otherwise, each keeps its place.
Sights vary in quality and form,
sounds differ as pleasing or harsh.
Refined and common speech come together in the dark,
clear and murky phrases are distinguished in the light.
The four elements return to their natures
just as a child turns to its mother.
Fire heats, wind moves,
water wets, earth is solid.
Eye and sight, ear and sound,
nose and smell, tongue and taste.
Thus for each and every thing,
depending on these roots, the leaves spread forth.

Trunk and branches share the essence;
revered and common, each has its speech.
In the light there is darkness.
but don't take it as darkness;
In the dark there is light,
but don't see it as light.
Light and dark oppose one another
like front and back foot in walking.
Each of the myriad things has its merit,
expressed according to function and place.
Phenomena exist, like box and lid joining;
principle accords, like arrow points meeting.
Hearing the words, understand the meaning;
don't set up standards of your own.
If you don't understand the way right before you,
how will you know the path as you walk?
Practice is not a matter of far or near,
but if you are confused, mountains and rivers block
your way.
I respectfully urge you who study the mystery,
don't pass your days and nights in vain.

*Translation by Soto-Shu Liturgy Conference,
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