

正法眼藏

Shōbōgenzō-zuimonki

随聞記

Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji  
recorded by Koun Ejō



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# Introduction

## 1. Zen Master Eihei Dōgen and Koun Ejō

*Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* consists of the dharma talks of Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253) who transmitted Sōtō Zen from China to Japan. These talks were originally recorded by Koun Ejō Zenji, Dōgen's dharma successor, and probably edited by his disciples after Ejō's death.

In this introduction, I'd like to briefly introduce Ejō Zenji since he is not as well known in the West as Dōgen Zenji.

Ejō was born of a noble family, the Fujiwara, in Kyoto, in 1198. In 1215, at eighteen years of age, he was ordained as a Tendai monk under Master Ennō at Yokawa on Mt. Hiei. He studied the fundamental philosophy of Buddhism; the Kūsha (Abhidharmakosa-bhāṣya) Jōjitsu (Satyasidhi-sastra), and Tendai (Tientai) teachings etc. However, he realized that studying for fame and profit or for high position in the Buddhist order was meaningless. Arousing bodhi-mind, he wanted to leave the monastery just as many other Buddhist leaders did in that age.

According to the *Denkōroku* (The Record of Transmitting the Light) of Keizan Jōkin, who received ordination from Ejō and later became the successor of Tetsō Gikai, Ejō once visited his mother.

His mother said; “I allowed you to become a monk not because I wanted you to rise to a high position and associate with the upper class. Just do not study or practice for fame and profit. I hope only that you will practice in poverty, wear black robes, hang a bamboo hat on your back, and walk on your own feet [instead of riding in palanquins].”

Upon hearing this, Ejō changed his robes and never went back to Mt. Hiei. He visited Shōkū (1177–1247), a disciple of Hōnen and the founder of the Nishiyama School of Pure Land Buddhism in order to study the *nenbutsu*. Later, he practiced Zen with Bucchi Kakuan (?–?), a disciple of Dainichi Nōnin (?–?).

At that time, Zen and Nenbutsu were the two main movements of the so called “New Buddhism”. One of the two leaders of Zen was Myōan Eisai (1141–1215). Eisai went to China twice, his second time staying there for five years to study Rinzai Zen. He received dharma transmission from Koan Eshō (Xūān Huaichang, ?–?) and introduced Zen to Japan. Another leader of Zen was Dainichi Nōnin. He did not go to China, but rather practiced Zen by himself and attained enlightenment. Since he was slandered by people because he had not received dharma transmission, he sent two of his disciples to China with a letter containing his understanding of Zen. Nōnin’s disciples visited Setsuan Tokkō (Zhuoan Deguang, 1121–1203), and received *inka* for Nōnin. His school was called the Nippon-Darumashū (Japanese Dharma School). Kakuan was Nōnin’s successor. Not only, Ejō, but also Ekan and his disciples, Gikai, Giin, Gien, and others, who later became Dōgen Zenji’s disciples forming the Japanese Sōtō School, were

originally disciples of Kakuan. Ejō practiced with Kakuan several years and received *inka* from him.

In 1227, Dōgen Zenji came back from China after five years of practice there and stayed at Kenninji, where he had practiced Zen with Myōzen (1184–1225), a disciple of Eisai, for seven years before leaving for China. In the same year, Dōgen Zenji wrote *Fukanzazengi* to promote the practice of zazen which he studied under Tendō Nyojō (Tientong Rujing).

Hearing of Dōgen Zenji's reputation, Ejō thought to himself; "So far I have practiced and accomplished the method of meditation of the Tendai School, have completed the essential practice of Pure Land Buddhism, and have been practicing Zen at Tōnomine [with Kakuan] and attained *kensho*. What else does he (Dōgen) have to transmit?"

In 1228, Ejō visited Dōgen Zenji at Kenninji to examine what Dōgen Zenji had learned in China.

According to the *Denkōroku*, for the first two or three days, everything Dōgen Zenji said was in total agreement with Ejō's understanding. So Ejō was delighted because he thought what he had attained was the same as that taught in China, and that his enlightenment was genuine. But later, perhaps since Dōgen Zenji recognized Ejō was a sincere practitioner and capable of understanding the true dharma, he started to speak differently. At first Ejō was astonished and tried to argue, but soon realized what Dōgen Zenji was saying was much deeper than his own understanding. He aroused bodhi-mind again and desired to practice with Dōgen.



Dōgen Zenji said, "I have received transmission of the true Way and am attempting to promote it in Japan. I am staying in this temple for the time being, but later I will find my own place to practice. After I have found a place, visit me again. You cannot practice following me here."

This was the first meeting between Dōgen and Ejō. Dōgen was twenty-nine and Ejō was thirty-one.

In 1230, Dōgen Zenji left Kenninji, and moved to a hermitage in Fukakusa. During that year he wrote *Bendōwa* (Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way);

"...I returned home in the first year of Shotei (Sheting 1227). Spreading this dharma and saving all living beings has become my vow. It feels like I am carrying a heavy burden on my shoulders. For the time being, however, I will set aside my vow of propagating this dharma, as I have to wait for the proper time for it to flourish. Now, for a while, I will live alone moving from one place to another like a cloud or a water-plant and follow the way of the ancient sages. However, suppose there are some sincere practitioners who are not concerned with gaining fame or profit and, who have true aspiration to seek the Way. They will be vainly led astray by false teachers and lose sight of any correct understanding, consequently becoming drunk in their own confusion and sinking into delusion forever. How will it be possible for them to nurture the true seed of *prajna* (ultimate wisdom)? And how can they ever expect to attain the Way? Since I am now spending a life like a cloud or a water-plant, how will they be able to visit me and practice with me? Feeling compassion for those people, I have decided to compile the

things I learned about the way of practice in Chinese Zen monasteries and the teachings I received from my teacher. I wish to leave them for sincere practitioners of the Way to enable them to know about the true dharma of the Buddha.”

It is obvious that *Bendōwa* was for people like Ejō. Dōyū Takeuchi, the author of *Eibei-niso Koun Ejō Zenji Den* (The Biography of Koun Ejō, the Second Abbot of Eihei-ji-monastery), has surmised that the eighteen questions and replies in *Bendōwa* were mainly based on the discussion with Ejō at their first meeting at Kennin-ji.

In the spring of 1233, Dōgen Zenji founded Kōshōji in Fukakusa. In that year, he wrote *Shōbōgenzō Genjō Koan*, and *Shōbōgenzō Makahannyaharamitsu*, which became the first and second chapters of the seventy-five-volume version of *Shōbōgenzō*. He also refined *Fukanzazengi*. Thus, Dōgen began his active life of propagating the dharma.

In 1234, Ejō visited Dōgen Zenji again and became his disciple. In the *Denkōroku* we read, “ [Dōgen Zenji] spent two years with no one visiting him. Finally, Ejō came to practice with him. It was the first year of Bunreki (1234). Dōgen Zenji was delighted and permitted him to stay. They talked about the Way of the patriarchs for several days and nights.”

Until he moved to Echizen (presently Fukui Prefecture) to found Eihei-ji in 1243, Dōgen Zenji put all his efforts during the next ten years into founding the sangha at Kōshōji. He built the first formal *sōdō* in Japan, educating the monks and writing many chapters of the *Shōbōgenzō* as well as other works such as *Gakudō-*

*Yōjinsū*, *Tenzokyōkun*, etc. Ejō received the “Bodhisattva Precepts” on August 15, 1235, and formally became his disciple. Ejō received dharma transmission in 1236, the year the *sōdō* was built at Kōshōji. Ejō was appointed the first *shuso* (head monk) for the first practice period there and gave lectures in behalf of Dōgen Zenji. (see 4–5 of *Zuimonki*) Thus, Ejo became Dōgen Zenji’s closest assistant. *Zuimonki* is a record of Dōgen Zenji’s informal dharma talks to his disciples, visiting monks and lay students during the period 1235 to 1237.

Later on, until Dōgen Zenji’s death in 1253, Ejō assisted him as his personal attendant (*jisha*) even when he was in charge of other things. It is said that Ejō missed seeing Dōgen for but ten days because of sickness during the twenty years of their association.

After they moved into Eiheiji, Dōgen Zenji had Ejō carry out all the ceremonies in his place. When asked why he replied, “My life will not be long. You will live longer than I and surely will propagate my Way. Therefore, I value you for the sake of the dharma.”

After Dōgen Zenji passed away in 1253, Ejō took over the abbotship of Eiheiji. Ejō himself died in 1280 when he was eighty-three years old.

Ejō’s sole writing consisted of a work entitled *Kōmyōzō-Zanmai*, written when he was eighty-one years old. He did, however, work on the compilation of the *Shōbōgenzō* and other writings. Today we can read Dōgen Zenji’s teachings thanks to his dharma successor, Ejō.

## 2. *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*

As I have mentioned above, *Zuimonki* is the record of Dōgen Zenji's informal talks to his students at Kōshoji Monastery. These talks took place during the first three years of Ejō's discipleship; Dōgen Zenji was thirty-six at the beginning of this period while Ejō was thirty-eight. During this time, Dōgen Zenji was working on founding a place where he could transmit the dharma he had studied in China, educate monks, and propagate the practice of zazen. It was a revolution in Japanese Buddhism; it changed from a Buddhism supported by the emperor, the aristocracy, and other rich people who expected to be served and have prayers said for their personal prosperity and for governing the people, to a Buddhism for practitioners with pure aspiration, not seeking after fame and profit.

Needless to say, Dōgen Zenji's main work is the *Shōbōgenzō*. But through reading *Zuimonki* we will be able to understand what kind of attitude we should maintain in practicing the Way, since Dōgen Zenji talked using very concrete examples.

The foundation of the various admonitions in *Zuimonki* is the seeing of impermanence. In 1–4, he said.

“To learn the practice and maintain it is to abandon ego-attachment, following the instructions of the teacher. The essence of this is being free from greed. For being free from greed, first of all, you have to part from egocentric-self. For parting from egocentric-self, seeing impermanence is the primary necessity.”

In *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* (Points to Watch in Practicing the Way), Dōgen Zenji also said that arousing bodhi-mind is seeing impermanence.

“When we truly ‘see’ impermanence, egocentric mind does not arise, nor do thoughts of fame and personal benefit. Being anxious that the days and nights are passing quickly, practice as though your head were enveloped in flames. Reflecting on the frailty of your body, practice with diligence following the example of the Buddha.”

Throughout *Zuimonki*, Dōgen talked about the importance of seeing impermanence, (1–4, 1–20, 2–6, 2–14, 2–25, 3–2, 3–3, 6–8, 6–9).

Seeing impermanence and parting from egocentric-self (1–4, 1–19, 3–3, 4–1, 5–9, 5–16, 5–20, 6–12) is the foundation of the practice of the Way shown by Dōgen Zenji. That is also to carry out the teachings of impermanence and egolessness of Shakyamuni Buddha with our whole body and mind in our daily lives. Here we should be careful about not confusing ‘seeing impermanence’ or ‘egolessness’ with a sort of pessimism. Precisely since everything is impermanent and changes swiftly we have to value our time. Because of egolessness we can work for others.

From the foundation of ‘seeing impermanence’ and ‘parting from egocentric-self’, the following attitudes are derived:

- (1) Gainingless-ness; (1–9, 3–3, 3–10, 5–23),
- (2) Following one’s teacher and the Buddha’s teaching; (1–4, 1–13, 2–4, 2–12, 2–19, 2–24, 3–3, 5–2, 6–17),
- (3) Being free from personal views; (1–13, 4–1, 4–3, 4–7, 5–

- 2, 5-13, 6-17),
- (4) Giving up worldly sentiments; (1-21, 2-1, 2-4, 3-13, 5-9),
  - (5) Having compassion or parental mind and working for benefiting others; (1-7, 1-12, 1-19, 1-20, 3-3, 3-6, 3-7, 6-10, 6-15),
  - (6) Living in poverty and not clinging to food and clothing; (1-16, 2-3, 2-6, 3-4, 3-7, 3-11, 3-12, 4-14, 4-15, 5-2, 5-5, 5-21, 5-22, 6-3, 6-4, 6-5),
  - (7) Not seeking fame and profit; (1-16, 1-19, 2-3, 2-15, 3-5, 4-8, 5-15, 5-20),
  - (8) Casting aside clinging to body and mind; (3-1, 3-3, 5-1, 6-2, 6-17),
  - (9) Not fighting and being in harmony with others; (1-10, 4-13, 5-7, 5-22),
  - (10) Arousing sincere aspiration; (2-14, 2-20, 5-5, 5-12, 6-16),
  - (11) Concentrating on one practice; (1-5, 1-11, 1-14, 6-13),

The keystone of these attitudes is the practice of *zazen-shikantaza*; (1-1, 1-2, 1-4, 1-14, 2-6, 2-9, 2-22, 2-25, 2-26, 4-4, 4-14, 5-10, 5-16, 5-23),

One more thing Dōgen Zenji emphasized is the importance of entering a monastery and practicing with others (6-9).

In short, seeing impermanence, parting from egocentric-self, practicing the buddha-dharma only for the sake of buddha-dharma, concentrating on sitting *zazen* without thoughts of gain, living in

poverty, and working for the benefit of others is the way of life Dōgen Zenji urges us to follow in *Zuimonki*.

This sort of attitude towards life seems to go completely against the ordinary system of values of modern humanity. But, are these teachings applicable only to people who practiced in Zen monasteries in Thirteenth Century Japan? Have they nothing to do with us living in the Twentieth Century?

Today we put too much importance on an abundant material life, prosperity, and fulfilling our egocentric-desires. However, such a system of values itself seems to be bringing about the ruin of human civilization. Is it possible to call this improvement in human civilization "progress"? I doubt it.

Here is an entirely different way of life or system of values. Instead of fulfilling desires, it is a way which emphasizes clarifying one's true Self and manifesting it through practicing and functioning. This is the Way of the bodhisattva.

Dōgen Zenji said in *Genjō Kōan*.

"To study the Buddha-Way is to study the Self. To study the Self is to forget the Self. To forget the Self is to be enlightened by all things. To be enlightened by all things is to drop off the body and mind of self and others."

I believe that to study and clarify the Self is most essential-wherever, whenever, and for whomever.

I truly wish this humble translation can be helpful for people who have the aspiration to clarify their true Self.

### 3. Regarding the text

The *Zuimonki* manuscript published by Menzan Zuihō in 1770 has received the widest audience. This text is called the *rufubon* or the popular version. The publication by Iwanami-bunko in 1929 is based on the *rufubon*.

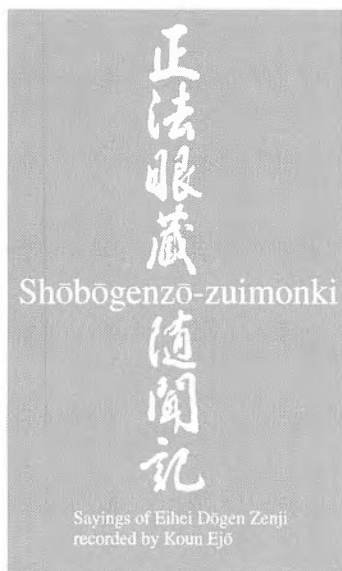
In 1942, an older version was found by Dōshū Ōkuḃo at Chōenji Temple in Aichi Prefecture. This one is referred to as the *Chōenji-bon*. The *Chōenji-bon* was published by Chikuma Shobō along with a modern Japanese translation with footnotes by Mizuno Yaoko in 1963.

The present English translation is based on the Iwanami-bunko version, although I have also crosschecked it with the *Chōenji-bon*. I also looked at and appreciated *A Primer of Sōtō Zen—A Translation of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* by Reiho Masunaga (East-West Center Press, 1971) and *Record of Things Heard From the Treasury of the Eye of the True Teaching* by Thomas Cleary (Prajna Press, 1980). I attempted this translation not because I thought these earlier translations were not good, but because I wanted to study *Zuimonki* more deeply for myself. I read *Zuimonki* for the first time when I was a student and it made a strong impression on me. Actually, that was one of the reasons I became a monk. Since then *Zuimonki* has been a strong force in my life. When I have a problem I recall Dōgen Zenji's admonitions about the matter as well as those of my teacher's. And now, I wish to follow this way of life taught by Dōgen Zenji.



For the footnotes, I referred to *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms* by Hisao Inagaki, Nagata Bunshōdō, 1984.

Shohaku Okumura



Book

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1

# Shōbōgenzō-zuimonki

## Book 1

### 1-1

One day Dōgen said,

In the *Zoku-kōsōden*<sup>1</sup> (Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks), there's a story about a monk in the assembly of a certain Zen master. The monk worshipped a golden image of the Buddha as well as the relics of the Buddha<sup>2</sup>. Even in the dormitory<sup>3</sup>, he constantly burned incense and prostrated himself before them, honoring and making offerings.

One day, the master said to the monk, "The image and relics of the Buddha which you worship will eventually be harmful to you."

The monk was not convinced.

The master continued, "This is the doing of the demon Pāpiyas<sup>4</sup>. Throw them away right now."

As the monk was leaving in anger, the master shouted after him, "Open the box and look inside!"

Although angry, the monk opened up the box; he found a poisonous snake lying coiled up inside.

As I think about this story, the images and relics of the Buddha should be revered since they are the form and bones left by the Tathāgata<sup>5</sup>; nevertheless, it is a false view<sup>6</sup> to think that you will be able to gain enlightenment only through worshipping them. Such a view will cause you to become possessed by the demon and the poisonous snake.

Since the merit of the Buddha's teaching does not change, reverence of images and relics will certainly bring blessings to human and heavenly beings<sup>7</sup> equal to paying reverence to the living Buddha. In general, it is true that if you revere and make offerings to the world of the Three Treasures<sup>8</sup>, your faults will disappear and you will gain merit; the karma that leads you to the evil realms<sup>9</sup> will be removed, and you will be reborn in the realms of human and heavenly beings. However, it is a mistaken view to expect to gain enlightenment of the dharma in this way.

Since being the Buddha's child<sup>10</sup> is following the Buddha's teachings and reaching buddhahood<sup>11</sup> directly, we must devote ourselves to following the teaching and put all our efforts into the practice of the Way. The true practice which is in accordance with the teaching is nothing but *shikantaza*<sup>12</sup>, which is the essence of the life in this *sōrin* (monastery)<sup>13</sup> today. Think this over deeply.

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1 The *Zoku-kōsōden* (Xu-gaosengzhuan) was compiled by Nanzan Dōsen (Nanshan Daoxuan, 596–667) the founder of the Nanzan-ritsu School. This thirty-volume collection includes the biographies of the monks from the Liang dynasty (502–557) to the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618–907).

- 2 Skt., *sarira*. After Shakyamuni died, his relics were divided into eight portions and enshrined in the *stupas* erected by his lay students in the various districts in India. Since then, the Buddha's relics have been an object of worship for lay people.
- 3 *Shuryō* in Japanese, is a hall for studying, having tea, or taking a rest in Zen monasteries. Kannon Bodhisattva is enshrined in the *shuryō*.
- 4 *Tenma-hajin* in Japanese. *Tenma* means a heavenly demon, the king of the Paranirmitavasavartin-heaven (*takejizai-ten*) and is so called because he causes hindrances to those who follow the Buddhist Way. *Hajun* (Papiyas in Skt.) is the name of the demon.
- 5 *Nyorai* in Japanese, one of the epithets for the Buddha. Literally, *Nyorai* means 'thus-come' or 'thus-gone', popularly construed as "the one who has come from (gone to) thusness."
- 6 A wrong view which goes against the dharma, or which prevents people from seeing reality as it is, or which neglects the principle of cause-and-effect.
- 7 Human-beings and heavenly-beings are still in the realm of samsara. The original Japanese for 'a blessing' is *fukubun* which means the causes which bring about happiness in the human and heavenly world. In contrast to *fukubun* is *dōbun*, the cause for the Way which transcends samsara, that is, the human and heavenly world.
- 8 The Three Treasures in Buddhism are: (1) the buddha, one who is awakened to reality and teaches it, (2) the dharma, the reality and the teaching which points to the reality, and (3) the sangha, the community of people who follow the teaching. The world of the Three Treasures is quite different from the realm of samsara based on delusions or desires.
- 9 Samsara is categorized into six realms: hell, the realm of insatiable spirits, animals, asura demons, human, and heavenly beings. The first three are called the evil realms while the other three are called the good realms. Sometimes, the first four are called the evil realms and the last two are called the good realms.

- 10 Human beings become the Buddha's children by receiving the Buddha's precepts through ordination.
- 11 In the *Shōbōgenzō Sanjūshichihon-bodaibunpō* Dōgen said, "The great teacher Shakyamuni abandoned succeeding to his father's rank of king not because it was ignoble, but because he was to succeed to the rank of buddha which was incomparably precious. The rank of buddha is the rank of a homeless monk. This is the rank revered by all heavenly and human beings. This is the rank of supreme awareness (*annutara-samyak-sambodhi*)."
- 12 Literally, this means 'just sitting.' In *Bendōwa*, Dōgen quoting his teacher wrote, "According to the unmistakably handed down tradition, this buddha-dharma, which has been singularly and directly transmitted, is supreme beyond comparison. From the time you begin to practice under a teacher, incense burning, bowing, *nenbutsu*, as well as the practices of repentance or of reading the sutras, are unnecessary. Simply practice zazen (*shikantaza*), dropping off body and mind."  
*Shikantaza* is zazen which is practiced without expecting any reward, even enlightenment. It is just being yourself right now, right here.
- 13 Literally *sōrin* means a forest in which various kinds of trees are living together. In a monastery, all practitioners with their different characters, capabilities, and backgrounds live together with unified bodhi-mind; thus Zen monasteries are called *sōrin*.

## 1-2

Dōgen also said,

[You] should maintain the precepts and eating regulations<sup>1</sup> (one meal a day before noon, etc.). Still, it is wrong to insist upon them as essential, establish them as a practice, and expect to be able to gain the Way by observing them. We follow them just because they are the activities of Zen monks<sup>2</sup> and the lifestyle of the Buddha's children. Although keeping them is good, we should not take them as the primary practice. I don't mean to say, however, that you should break the precepts and become self-indulgent. Clinging to such an attitude is an evil view and not that of a Buddhist practitioner. We follow the precepts or regulations simply because they form the standard for a Buddhist and are the tradition of Zen monasteries. While I was staying at Chinese monasteries, I met no one who took them as the primary concern.

For true attainment of the Way, devoting all effort to zazen alone has been transmitted among the buddhas and patriarchs<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, I taught a fellow student of mine, Gogenbō, a disciple of Zen-Master Eisai<sup>4</sup>, to abandon his strict adherence of keeping the precepts and reciting the Precept Sutra<sup>5</sup> day and night.

Ejō asked, "When we practice and learn the Way in a Zen monastery we should keep the pure regulations made by Zen Master Hyakujō (Baizhang)<sup>6</sup>, shouldn't we? In the beginning of the Regulations (Hyakujō-Shingi), it says that receiving and maintaining the precepts is prerequisite. In this tradition, the

Fundamental Precept has also been handed down. In the oral and face-to-face transmission of this lineage, the students are given the precepts transmitted from the West (India). These are the Bodhisattva Precepts. Also, it says in the Precept Sutra, that people must recite the Sutra day and night. Why do you have us discontinue this practice?"

Dōgen replied, "You are right. Practitioners of the Way certainly ought to maintain Hyakujo's regulations. The form of maintaining the regulations is receiving and observing the precepts and practicing zazen, etc. The meaning of reciting the Precept Sutra day and night and observing the precepts single-mindedly<sup>7</sup> is nothing other than practicing *shikantaza*, following the activities of the ancient masters. When we sit zazen, what precept is not observed, what merit is not actualized? The ways of practice carried on by the ancient masters have a profound meaning. Without holding on to personal preferences, we should go along with the assembly and practice in accordance with those ways.

- 
- 1 During the Kamakura Period in which Dogen lived, there were some who neglected the precepts and regulations and others who put emphasis on observing them. Representatives of the former were the Pure-land-Buddhists, especially Shinran, an example of the latter was Eisai. It seems that Dogen sought the middle-way, that is keeping the precepts without clinging to them, without expectation of some reward from observing them. Dōgen emphasized just keeping them and practicing without the defilements of human sentiments.
  - 2 *Nōsō*, in Japanese, literally means a monk who wears a patched robe. The patched robe refers to the *kesa* (*kesaya* in Sanskrit) made of abandoned rags.



- Monks cut abandoned rags into pieces and sewed them together. Since Zen monks wore patched robes, they were called patch-robed monks. Dōgen also used the word “*nossu*” in the same way.
- 3 In *Shōbōgenzō Shobōjissō* Dōgen wrote, “The manifestation of the buddhas and patriarchs is the manifestation of ultimate reality. So being buddhas or patriarchs is being just as-it-is. In order to be as-it-is. We have to learn and practice the tradition of the buddhas and patriarchs.”
  - 4 Here, Dōgen called him *Yōjō Sōjō*, which is another name for Zen Master Eisai (1141–1215). *Sōjō* is a title of the first rank in the Buddhist hierarchy. Originally, Eisai was a Tendai priest. When he visited China a second time and stayed there for five years, he studied Rinzaï Zen and introduced it into Japan. He founded Kenninji where Dogen later practiced Zen under Myōzen, one of Eisai’s disciples. Dōgen respected Eisai very much and in *Zuimonki* praised his deeds. There is some controversy among scholars as to whether he actually met Eisai or not.
  - 5 This refers to the *Bonmōkyō* (Brahmajala-sutra), translated by Kumarajiva. This sutra presents the mahayana precepts for bodhisattvas, which are called Bodhisattva Precepts or Fundamental Precepts, consisting of ten major precepts and forty-eight minor ones. Recent scholars believe this sutra was written in China.
  - 6 *Shingi* in Japanese (Ch., Qinggui): the regulations which students should observe when practicing in Zen monasteries. The first *shingi* were compiled by Hyakuō Ekai (Baizhang Huihai). This is why Hyakuō (720–814) was thought of as being the founder of Zen monasteries. The *Hyakuō-shingi* no longer exists. In the *Zennen-shingi* (Chanyuan-qinggui), however, the first chapter is on receiving the precepts and the second chapter is on maintaining them. In the first chapter we read, “In learning Zen and seeking the Way, the precepts are of primary (importance). If you don’t depart from evil deeds and protect yourself from wrong, how is it possible to be a buddha or a patriarch? ”
  - 7 In the chapter on the thirty-fourth minor precept of the *Bonmōkyō*, it is

written that the precepts should be maintained and recited day and night.

## 1-3

On one occasion Dōgen said,

In the assembly of Zen master Busshō (Fuzhao)<sup>1</sup>, there was a monk who, when he was sick, wanted to eat meat<sup>2</sup>. The master allowed him to do so. One night the master himself went to the infirmary and saw the sick monk eating meat in the dim lamplight. A demon was clinging to the monk's head, eating the meat. Although the monk thought he was putting it into his own mouth, it was not him, but the demon who was eating. After that whenever a monk fell ill, the master allowed him to eat meat because he knew he was possessed by demons.

Thinking about this story, we must carefully consider whether to allow it or not. There was also an instance of eating meat in the assembly of Goso Hōen (Wūzū Fāyan)<sup>3</sup>. Whether allowing or prohibiting it, all the ancient masters surely had their own deep considerations.

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1 Busshō (Fuzhao) is the honorific title of Setsuan Tokkō (Zhuaan Deguan, 1121–1203), the teacher of Musai Ryōha (Wuji Liaopai, 1149–1224). Musai was the abbot of the Tendō (Tiantong) Monastery when Dōgen went to China. After Musai died, Tendō Nyojō (Tiantong Rujing) became the

abbot of the monastery. This section is not found in the Chōenji-bon version of *Zuimonki*.

- 2 According to the third minor precept of the *Bonmōkyō*, eating meat is prohibited for mahayana Buddhists because it cuts off seeds of great compassion.
- 3 Goso Hōen (Wūzū Fāyan, ?–1104). A Zen master of the Chinese Rinzai lineage. It is said that he and his descendants established the kōan Practice.

## 1–4

### One day Dōgen said,

You should know that if you were born into a family following a certain occupation or if you had entered a certain path, you would first have to devote yourself to learning the work of the family or the path. It is no good to study that which has nothing to do with your path or specialty.

Now, since you have left home and joined the family of the Buddha and become monks, you should learn the practice of the Buddha. To learn the practice and maintain the Way is to abandon ego-attachment<sup>1</sup> and to follow the instructions of the teacher. The essence of this is being free from greed. To put an end to greed, first of all, you have to depart from egocentric self. In order to depart from egocentric self, seeing impermanence is the primary necessity.

Many people in the world want to have a good reputation and to be appreciated not only by others but also by themselves. However they are not always well spoken of or praised. If you gradually abandon your ego-attachment and follow the sayings of your teacher, you will progress. If you argue back [pretending] to know the truth, but remain unable to give up certain things and continue to cling to your own preferences, you will sink lower and lower.

For a Zen monk, the primary attitude for self-improvement is the practice of *shikantaza*. Without consideration as to whether you are clever or stupid, you will naturally improve if you practice zazen.

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- 1 Assuming there is an ego existing in the body which is a temporal compound of various elements, thinking it to be eternal or substantial and attaching oneself to that ego. Egocentricity. This is a fundamental delusion. Our practice is to see egolessness and the impermanence of all existence, and to live on that basis without greedy desires. Concretely, our desires manifest themselves by seeking fame and profit. This is why Dōgen put emphasis on practicing the buddha-dharma only for the sake of the buddha-dharma, without expecting any reward, i.e. fame and profit.

## 1–5

Dōgen said,

It is not possible to study extensively and obtain wide knowledge. Make up your mind and just give up trying to do so. Focus your attention on one thing. Study the things you have to know and the traditional examples of them. Follow the way of practice of your predecessors. Concentrate your efforts on one practice <sup>1</sup>. Do not pretend to be a teacher or a leader of others.

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- 1 To choose one practice and concentrate on it is a characteristic of Japanese Buddhism; *zazen* for Dōgen, chanting the *nenbutsu* for Hōnen and Shinran, and the *daimoku* (chanting *Namu-myōhō-rengekyō*) for Nichiren etc.

## 1–6

Once Ejō asked,

“What is the meaning of not being blind to cause and effect?”<sup>1</sup>

Dōgen replied, “Not moving cause and effect.”

Ejō asked, “How can we be released then?”

Dōgen said, “Cause and effect are self-evident.”<sup>2</sup>

Ejō inquired further, “Then does cause bring about effect or does effect bring about cause?”

Dōgen said, “If it is so in every case, what about Nansen’s<sup>3</sup> killing the cat? When his students could not say anything, Nansen immediately killed the cat. Later, when Jōshū (Zhāozhōu) heard about the incident, he put his straw sandal on his head and went out. This was excellent action.”

Dōgen added, “If I had been Nansen, I would have said, ‘If you cannot speak, I will kill it; even if you can speak, I will kill it. Who would fight over a cat? Who can save the cat?’ On behalf of the students, I would have said, ‘We are not able to speak, Master. Go ahead and kill the cat!’ Or, I would have said for them, ‘Master, you only know about cutting it (the cat) into two with one stroke, yet you do not know about cutting it into one with one stroke.’”

Ejō asked, “How do you cut it into one with one stroke?”

Dōgen said, “The cat itself.”

Dōgen added, “If I had been Nansen, when the students could not answer, I would have released the cat saying that the students had already spoken. An ancient master said, ‘When the great-function manifests itself, no fixed rules exist.’”<sup>4</sup>

Dōgen also said, “This action of Nansen’s that is, cutting the cat, is a manifestation of the great-function of the buddha-dharma. This is a pivot-word<sup>5</sup>. If it were not a pivot-word, it could not be said that mountains, rivers, and the great earth are the excellent pure and bright Mind<sup>6</sup>. Or it could not be said that Mind itself is the Buddha. Upon hearing this pivot-word, see the cat itself as nothing but the Buddha-body. Upon hearing this word, students must immediately enter enlightenment.”

Dōgen also said, “This action, that is, cutting the cat, is nothing

other than Buddha's action."

Ejō said, "What shall we call it?"

Dōgen said, "Call it cutting the cat."

Ejō asked, "Is it a crime or not?"

Dōgen said, "Yes, it is a crime."

Ejō inquired, "How are we able to be released from it?"

Dōgen said, "Buddha's action and the criminal action are separate, yet they both occur in one action."

Ejō asked, "Is this what is meant by the *Pratimoksa*<sup>7</sup> Precepts (case by case emancipation)?"

Dōgen said, "Yes, it is. Though it all right, it's better not to use such a method."

Ejō asked, "Does the term 'violation of the precepts' refer to the crimes committed after having received the precepts? Or are the crimes committed before receiving the precepts also called 'violation of the precepts'?"

Dōgen replied, "Violation of the precepts applies only to those crimes committed after having received the precepts. Crimes committed before receiving the precepts are just called crimes or evil deeds. They should not be called 'violation of the precepts'."

Ejō asked, "Among the forty-eight minor precepts<sup>8</sup>, there is one which states that crimes committed prior to receiving the precepts are called violations."

Dōgen replied, "That's not true. What it means is that a person about to receive the precepts should repent<sup>9</sup> of evil deeds committed in the past. According to the ten major precepts or the forty-eight minor precepts, such evil deeds are called violations.

The crimes committed before are not called ‘violation of the precepts’.”

Ejō asked, “In the Precept Sutra, it says that when a person receives the precepts, he should repent of the misdeeds committed until then. The master has to teach the major and minor precepts and have the student recite them. However, in the next section of the sutra, it says that you should not preach about the precepts to people who have not yet received them. How should we resolve this contradiction?”

Dōgen replied, “Receiving the precepts and reciting the precepts are different. Reciting the Precept Sutra for the sake of repentance is nothing other than reading the sutras. Therefore, a person who has not yet received the precepts also recites the Precept Sutra. It cannot be wrong to explain the Precept Sutra to him. What the latter part of the sutra says is that you should not preach the precepts to people who have not received them for the purpose of gaining profit. You should certainly teach the precepts in order to have people repent of their evil deeds.”

Ejō asked, “Although it is said that a person who has committed the seven-grave-crimes<sup>10</sup> cannot be permitted to receive the precepts, the former part of the sutra says that the seven-grave-crimes should also be repented. What does this mean?”

Dōgen replied, “They should certainly be repented. The meaning of the passage, ‘They are not permitted to receive the precepts’ is for the purpose of inhibiting the commission of the seven-grave-crimes. The former sentence means that even if one violates the precepts, he will be pure when he receives the precepts



again. When he repents, he is pure. It is different from a person who has not yet received the precepts.”

Ejō asked, “If one who has committed any of the seven grave crimes is permitted to repent, can he receive the precepts again?”

Dōgen replied, “Yes. The late Master Eisai himself insisted on this. Once a person who has committed one of the seven grave crimes is allowed to repent, he is also permitted to receive the precepts. The teacher should allow a person who has repented to receive the precepts, even one who has committed the seven-grave-crimes. Even if the teacher himself violates the precepts by doing so, as a bodhisattva, for the sake of saving that person, he has to allow him to receive them.”

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- 1 This is a quotation taken from a story about Hyakujō Ekai (Baizhang Huihai) and an old man. (The eighth case of the *Shōyōroku*, the second case of the *Mumonkan*).

Whenever Hyakujō gave lectures, there was an old man who was always in attendance. When the monks left after the lecture, he also left. One day the old man did not leave. Hyakujo asked him, “Who is standing in front of me?” The old man said, “At the time of Kashapa-buddha in the distant past, I was living on this mountain. Once a student asked me whether a person of the great-practice would fall into causality or not. I replied to him, ‘No, (such a person) would not fall into causality.’ Because of that answer I became a wild fox for five hundred lives. I beg you to please give me a pivot-word.” Hyakujō replied, “(Such a person) is not blind to causality.”

Dōgen made his own commentary on this story in *Shōbōgenzō Daishūgyō* (The Great Practice) and *Shōbōgenzō Jinshin-inga* (Having profound Faith in Cause and Effect).

- 2 In the Chōenji-bon version, this passage reads, "Cause and effect are self-evident and occur simultaneously," making the connection between this sentence and the following one more natural.
- 3 This refers to the story about Nansen Fugan (Nanquan Puyuan, 749–834) and his disciples. (The ninth case of the *Shōyōroku*, the fourteenth case of the *Mumonkan*).  
 One day the monks of the Eastern and Western Halls in Nansen's monastery were arguing over a cat. Nansen saw it, took the cat and said, "If someone can speak, I won't kill the cat." None in the assembly spoke. Nansen cut the cat in two. Later, Nansen related the incident to Jōshū (Zhāozhōu Congshen, 778–895) and asked him what he thought about it. Jōshū took off his sandal, put it on his head, and left. Nansen said, "If you had been there, you would have saved the cat."
- 4 This expression is found in the third case of the *Hekiganroku* (The Blue Cliff Records).
- 5 A powerful word or phrase by which the basis of a person hearing it will be turned around.
- 6 In his *Shōbōgenzō Sōkushinzebutsu*, Dōgen quoted from an old master, "What is the excellent pure and bright mind like? Mountains, rivers, and the great earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars." And Dōgen said, "It should be clearly understood that the Mind is mountains, rivers, and the great earth, the sun, the moon and the stars."
- 7 In the *Yuikyōgyō* (The Sutra of the Last Discourse), the Buddha said, "Monks, after my death, respect and follow the *pratimoksa*. If you do, you will be like a person who has been given a light in the darkness, or like a pauper who has acquired a great treasure."
- 8 See 1–2, footnote 5.
- 9 At the meeting of *fusatsu* (Skt. *uposata*) as well as at the time of receiving the precepts at ordination, one repents of all wrong doings in the past. The following verse on repentance is chanted during sutra chanting.  
 "All the karma ever created by me

in the past, through greed, anger, or self-delusion  
which has no beginning, born of my body, speech, and thought  
I now make complete and open confession of it."

- 10 The seven-grave-crimes are hurting buddha's body, killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing the teacher from whom one has received ordination, killing the teacher with whom one studies, causing disunity in the sangha, killing a sage (*arhat*).

## 1-7

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

Do not use foul language to scold or slander monks. Even if they are bad or dishonest, do not harbor hatred against them nor abuse them thoughtlessly. First of all, no matter how bad they may be, when more than four monks gather together<sup>1</sup>, they form a sangha, which is a priceless treasure of the country. This should be most highly respected and honored. If you are an abbot or a senior priest or even a master or a teacher, if your disciples are wrong, you have to instruct and guide them with a compassionate and parental heart<sup>2</sup>. In doing so, however, when you slap those who should be slapped or scold those who should be scolded, do not allow yourself to vilify them or arouse feelings of hatred.

When my late master Nyojō<sup>3</sup> was the abbot of Tendō Monastery, while the monks were sitting zazen in the *sōdō* (monks hall)<sup>4</sup>, he

slapped them with his slipper or scolded them with harsh words in order to keep them awake. Yet each of them was thankful to be hit and highly respected him.

Once in a formal speech he said, "I have gotten old. I should have retired from the monastery and moved into a hermitage to care for myself in my old age. Nevertheless, I am the abbot and your teacher, whose duty is to break the delusions of each one of you and to transmit the Way; therefore, I sometimes use harsh language to scold you, or beat you with the bamboo stick. I regret having to do this. However, this is the way to enable the dharma to flourish in place of the Buddha. Brothers, please have compassion on me and forgive me for my deeds."

Upon hearing these words, all of us shed tears. Only with such a spirit can you teach and propagate the dharma. Even though you may be an abbot or senior priest, it is wrong to govern the community and abuse the monks as if they were your personal belongings. Further, if you are not in such a position, you should not point out others' faults or speak ill of them. You must be very, very careful.

When you see someone's faults and think they are wrong and wish to instruct them with compassion, you must find a skillful means to avoid arousing their anger, and do so as if you were talking about something else.

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1 In India, a sangha was a group of more than four (or five) people living together for practice.

2 *Rōbashi* in Japanese, literally means the mind of an old woman. In the

*Tenzo Kyōkun* Dōgen mentions three-minds; *kishin* (joyful mind), *rōshin* (parental mind), and *daishin* (magnanimous mind). He said, “*Rōshin* is the mind or attitude of a parent. In the same way that a parent cares for an only child, keep the Three Treasures in your mind.”

- 3 Tendō Nyojō (Tiantong Rujing, 1163–1228) became the abbot of Tendō Monastery in 1224 when he was fifty-eight years old. Dōgen met him the following year (1225) and became his disciple. He practiced with Nyojō for about two and half years. Dōgen's questions and Nyojō's replies were recorded in Dōgen's *Hōkyōki*. Dōgen received dharma transmission from Nyojō and returned to Japan in 1227.
- 4 *Sōdō* is the abbreviation of *Shōsōdō* (the hall of the holy monk, that is, Manjusri-Bodhisattva), so called because Manjusri is enshrined in the center of the hall. Around the center, there is a platform about two feet high called a *tan* on which each person has a space of one *tatami* (straw mat). There, the monk eats, sleeps, and practices *zazen*. This kind of *sōdō* was probably established during the Tang dynasty, around the time of Hyakuō Ekai (Baizhang Huihai).

## 1 – 8

Dōgen also related the following story:

When the late General of the Right Imperial Guard (Minamoto Yoritomo)<sup>1</sup> was first the assistant secretary of the *Hyōe-fu*<sup>2</sup>, he once attended a special party. He took a seat near the privy councilor<sup>3</sup>. There was a man who was making a disturbance.

The Vice-minister<sup>4</sup> told Yoritomo to restrain him.

Yoritomo replied, "Give your order to Rokuhara<sup>5</sup>. He is the general of the Taira Clan."

The Vice-minister said, "But, you are right here."

Yoritomo said, "It is not my position to restrain him."

These were admirable words. He was able to govern the country because of such an attitude. Students of the Way today should have the same attitude. You should not scold others if you are not in the position to do so.

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- 1 Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–1199) was the first *shōgun* (general) of the Kamakura Shogunate. He was the third child of Minamoto Yoshitomo. Yoritomo was appointed General of the Right Imperial Guard in 1190, and became the *Seii-dai-shōgun* in 1192. He was the first samurai who actually took political power.
  - 2 This was an office of the *samurai* class which guarded the Imperial Court and the emperor when he went out.
  - 3 Privy councilor is a translation of *Daifu*. Yoritomo was appointed assistant secretary of the *Hyōe-fu* in 1159, when he was thirteen years old. During the following year the Minamoto-clan was defeated by the Taira-clan, Yoritomo's father was killed, and he was expelled to Izu. Dōgen's grandfather Matsudono Motofusa became the privy councilor in 1160. It is supposed that Dōgen heard this story from his grandfather. (*Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, Mizuno Yaoko P.63)
  - 4 The Vice-minister is a translation of *Dainagon*.
  - 5 Rokuhara is the name of a place in Kyoto where the Taira-clan had their estate. The Taira-clan was the rival of the Minamoto-clan and had more power at that time. The clans continued to fight until Yoritomo established his own shogunate government in Kamakura. In Japan from ancient times, people have been called by the name of the geographical

place they lived in.

## 1-9

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

Once there was a general whose name was Rochūren (Lu-zhong-lian)<sup>1</sup>. While residing in the country ruled by Heigenkun (Pingyuan-jun), he subdued the enemies of the court. Although Heigenkun praised him and wanted to reward him with much gold, silver, and other things, Rochūren refused, saying, "I put down enemies only because that is the role of a general. I did not do it to gain some reward or possessions." So saying, he never received the reward. Rochūren was famous for his righteousness and integrity.

Even in secular society, those who are wise carry out their tasks solely for the sake of fulfilling their roles. They do not expect any reward. Students of the Way must have the same mental attitude. Once you have entered the Buddha-Way<sup>2</sup>, you should practice the various activities just for the sake of the buddha-dharma<sup>3</sup>. Do not think of gaining something in return. All teachings, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, exhort us to be free from the expectation of gaining a reward.

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1 A famous Chinese general in the age of the Warring States (403-221

B.C.). This story is taken from *Shiki* (Shiji), compiled by Shibasen (Simaqian). For Japanese, this sort of Chinese hero was like the Greek or Roman hero for European people.

- 2 Way (*Dō* in Japanese, *Dao* in Chinese) is a translation of the Sanskrit words *marga* or *bodhi*. *Marga* is the path along which we should walk (practice) to become a Buddha. *Bodhi* is awareness or enlightenment. So Buddha Way has two meanings combined, one is the way leading to enlightenment and the other is the buddha's enlightenment itself. So, the Buddha Way is the way we should walk in our daily activities in the direction of the Buddha, while each one of the activities is nothing other than a manifestation of the Buddha's enlightenment. This is the meaning of Dōgen's expression *shushō-ichinyō* (practice and enlightenment are one).
- 3 Buddha-dharma means (1) the truth or reality to which the Buddha awakens, (2) the teachings which show us the reality, and (3) the law or morals which form the way of life in accordance with that reality or teaching. Another meaning of this word is existence or things (the myriad dharma).

## 1 – 10

In a dharma talk, Dōgen said,

Even if you are speaking rationally<sup>1</sup> and another person says something unreasonable, it is wrong to defeat him by arguing logically. On the other hand, it is not good to give up hastily saying that you are wrong, even though you think that your opinion is reasonable.



Neither defeats him, nor withdraw saying you are wrong. It is best to just leave the matter alone and stop arguing. If you act as if you have not heard and forget about the matter, he will forget too and will not get angry. This is a very important thing to bear in mind.

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- 1 The original Japanese is *dōri* (Ch., daoli), which means, (1) principle, truth, (2) reason, argument.

## 1 – 11

### Dōgen instructed,

Impermanence is swift; life-and-death is a vital matter<sup>1</sup>. For the short while you are alive, if you wish to study or practice some activity, just practice the Buddha-Way and study the buddha-dharma. Since literature and poetry are useless, you should give them up. Even when you study the buddha-dharma and practice the Buddha-Way, do not study extensively. Needless to say, refrain from learning the Exoteric and Esoteric scriptures of the teaching-schools<sup>2</sup>. Do not be fond of learning on a large scale, even the sayings of the buddhas and patriarchs. It is difficult for us untalented and inferior people to concentrate on and complete even one thing. It is no good at all to do many things at the same time and lose steadiness of mind.

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- 1 Life-and-death or birth-and-death. This is also a translation of *shoji*, or in Sanskrit, *samsara* which means transmigration within the six realms of delusions. In *Shōbōgenzō Shōji* (Life-and-death), however, Dōgen said, “Life-and-death is the precious Life of the Buddha. For human beings, clarifying the reality of life-and-death is the great matter.”

Impermanence is also usually used in a negative sense, though Dōgen quoted the Sixth Patriarch in *Shōbōgenzō Busshō* (Buddha-nature), “Therefore, grass, trees, and bushes are impermanent, and are nothing but Buddha-nature. Human beings and things, body and mind are impermanent, and are nothing but Buddha-nature. The earth, mountains, and rivers are impermanent, because they are Buddha-nature. Supreme awareness (*Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) is impermanent, since it is Buddha-nature. The great Nirvana is Buddha-nature since it is impermanent.”

- 2 The teaching-schools is a translation of *Kyōke* or *Kyōshū*, those schools based on written scriptures. For example, *Kegonshū* is based on the *Kegonkyō* (*Avatamsaka-sutra*). This is in contrast to believers of the *Zenke* or *Zenshū*, which insist that Zen is based on Buddha-mind alone, not on the Buddha’s verbal teachings. Exoteric teaching is a translation of *Kenkyō*, a general term for all the Buddhist teachings, both *hinayana* and *mahayana* other than the Esoteric teachings (*mikkyō*). *Mikkyō* means the mystic teachings which were directly revealed by the Dharma-body Buddha, Dainichi (*Mahavairocana*). This school arose in India after the *hinayana* and *mahayana* schools. In Japan, *Mikkyō* was systematized by Kūkai (774–835) and became the Shingon School. This is also known as Vajra-yana Buddhism.

## 1 – 12

### Dōgen instructed:

There is a story about how Zen master Chikaku (Zhiyue)<sup>1</sup> aroused bodhi-mind and became a monk. He had been a government officer. He was a man of talent and righteousness. While he was a provincial governor, he appropriated official money unlawfully and gave it to the people. One of the officers around him reported this to the emperor.

Upon hearing this, the emperor was astonished; all of his ministers also thought it strange. Still, since the crime was not a minor one, the decision was made to put him to death.

The emperor said, "This officer is a man of talent and a wise man. He dared to commit this crime. He might have had some profound motivation. When his head is about to be cut off, if he looks regretful and full of grief, cut it off quickly. If not, undoubtedly he had a deeper motivation so do not kill him."

When the Imperial envoy brought him out to cut off his head, he did not show regret or grief; rather he looked joyful. He said to himself, "I give this life to all living beings."

The Imperial envoy, surprised and amazed, reported it to the emperor.

The emperor exclaimed, "It's exactly as I thought! He must have had some deeper reason."

When the emperor asked the officer what his motivation was, he said, "I wanted to retire from government office, throw my life

away by giving it to all living beings to form an association with them, be born into the family of Buddha (become a monk), and practice the Buddha-Way whole-heartedly.”

The emperor was moved by his reply and allowed him to become a monk. Therefore, he was given the name Enju (Yansho), meaning ‘prolonged life’, since he had been saved from capital punishment.

Monks today also have to arouse aspiration like this at least once. Arousing such an aspiration means thinking little of your own life, having deep compassion for all living beings, and entrusting your bodily life to the Buddha’s teaching. If you have already aroused such aspiration, protect it; do not lose it even for a moment. It is impossible to realize buddha-dharma without arousing such aspiration.

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- 1 Chikaku Zenji (Zen Master Zhijue) is the honorific title of Yōmyō Enju (Yongming Yanshou, 904–975). He served as a government officer and became a monk when he was twenty eight years old. He was one of the disciples of Tendai Tokushō (Tientai Deshao), the second patriarch of the Hogen (Fayan) School of Chinese Zen.

## 1 – 13

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

In the tradition of the patriarchs, the true way of understanding dharma-talks [on Zen practice] is to gradually reform what you have known and thought by following your teacher's instruction.

Even if up to now, you have thought that a buddha has excellent characteristics<sup>1</sup> like Shakyamuni<sup>2</sup> or Amitaba<sup>3</sup>, radiates a halo, has the virtue of preaching the dharma and benefiting living beings, you should believe your teacher if he says that buddha is nothing but a toad or an earthworm, and throw your former ideas away. However, if you look for some excellent characteristics, a halo, or other virtues of a buddha on the toad or the earthworm, you still have not reformed your discriminating mind. Just understand what you see right now is buddha. If you continually reform your discriminating mind and fundamental attachment in this way according to your teacher's instruction, you will naturally become one with the Way.

Students today, however, cling to their own discriminating minds. Their thinking is based on their own personal views that buddha must be such and such; if it goes against their ideas, they say that buddha cannot be that way.

Having such an attitude and wandering here and there in delusion, searching after what conforms to their preconceptions, few of them ever make any progress in the Buddha-Way.

Suppose that you have climbed to the top of a hundred-foot pole<sup>4</sup>,

and are told to let go and advance one step further without holding bodily life dear. In such a situation if you say that you can practice the Buddha-Way only when you are alive, you are not really following your teacher. Consider this carefully.

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- 1 According to various Buddhist legends, the Buddha had thirty-two major physical characteristics and eighty marks of physical excellence.
- 2 Shakyamuni (the sage of the Shaka clan), the founder of Buddhism. Born to King Suddhodana and Queen Maya in Kapilavastu, in central India, he was called Siddhartha and also Gautama. He married and had a son, but abandoned his family to seek the Way of salvation when he was twenty-nine years old (nineteen years old, according to another tradition). After nine years of practice, he attained enlightenment and was called Buddha (the Awakened One). He preached the Way to many people and thus the Buddhist order (sangha) was formed. He died at the age of eighty. There are different opinions as to his dates; e.g. 565–486 B.C. according to J. Takakusu, 463–383 B.C. according to H. Nakamura. Theravada has a different tradition, according to which the Buddha's dates are 624–544 B.C.
- 3 Amitaba is one of the most popular buddhas in Mahayana Buddhism. According to the *Muryōju-kyō* (*Sukhavati Vyūha*), Amitaba was previously a king. When he met a buddha called Sejizaiō (Lokesvararaja), he too wished to become a buddha. He then renounced the world and became a monk, his Buddhist name becoming Hōzō (Darmakara). He took forty eight vows and performed various bodhisattva practices to fulfill them. After many aeons of time, he fulfilled them, and became the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. His land in the West, which derived from his vows and practices, is called Gokuraku (Skt. Sukhavati) or paradise. The eighteenth vow was that anyone who had sincere faith in him (Amitaba) and recited his name, that is, chanted the *nenbutsu*, would be reborn in the Western paradise

through his power. Amitaba is a transcendental buddha, as opposed to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, and is generally regarded as the reward-body (*J.*, *hōjin Skt.*, *sambhogakaya*). The school of Buddhism centering around Amitaba is known as Pure Land Buddhism (*jōdo-kyō*). It arose in India, grew in China, and developed more fully in Japan.

- 4 This was taken from a verse of the Chinese Zen Master Chōsa Keishin (Changsha Jingcen, 854–935).

The immovable person at the top of the hundred-foot pole,  
Although he has entered [the Way], he is not truly [a man of the Way],  
[He should] advance one step further from the top of the hundred-foot pole.

The ten-direction world is the whole body [of the person].

## 1 – 14

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

Even people in the secular world must concentrate on one thing and learn it thoroughly enough to be able to do it in front of others rather than learn many things at the same time, without truly accomplishing any of them.

This holds all the more true for the buddha-dharma, which transcends the secular world, and has never been learned or practiced from the beginningless beginning. We are still unfamiliar with it. Also, our capacity is poor. If we try to learn many things about this lofty and boundless buddha-dharma, we will not attain

even one thing. Even if we devote ourselves to only one thing, because of our inferior capacity and nature, it will be difficult to clarify buddha-dharma thoroughly in one lifetime. Students, concentrate on one thing.

Ejō asked, "If so, what thing or what practice should we choose to devote ourselves to among the various ways of practice of the buddha-dharma?"

Dōgen replied, "It depends upon one's character or capability, however, up to now, it is zazen which has been handed down and concentrated on in the communities of the patriarchs. This practice is suitable for all people and can be practiced by those of superior, mediocre, or inferior capabilities. When I was in China, in the assembly of my late master Tendō Nyojō, I sat zazen day and night after I heard this truth. When it was extremely hot or cold, monks there stopped sitting for a while because they were afraid of getting sick. At the time, I thought to myself, 'I may become sick and die. Still, I should just practice zazen. What is the use of clinging to this body? How can I refrain from practice when I am not sick? Dying from illness because of practice accords with my original wish. First of all, I am fortunate to be able to practice and die in an assembly under a good teacher in great China, and to be buried by such great people with an authentic Buddhist funeral. If I were to die in Japan, it would be impossible to have a funeral service performed by such people according to the Buddhist rituals. If I were to die during practice before clarifying enlightenment, I would be born into the family of Buddha again because of having established the relationship. It is meaningless to live long without



practicing. It is useless. Furthermore, even if I wished to keep my body secure and healthy, I might drown in the ocean or meet an accidental death; how regrettable it would be<sup>1</sup> !

With such resolve, I continually sat upright day and night. Yet I never once got sick. Now, each of you should practice exclusively and wholeheartedly. Ten out of ten of you will attain the Way. My late master Tendō encouraged us in this way.”

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- 1 Just after Dōgen met Tendō Nyōjō, his Japanese teacher Myōzen who came to China with him died in the infirmary of the monastery. Also the voyage between China and Japan was very hazardous. So there was no exaggeration in Dōgen's resolution.

## 1-15

### Dōgen instructed,

It is rather easy to lay down one's own life, and cut off one's flesh, hands, or feet in an emotional outburst. Considering worldly affairs, we see many people do such things even for the sake of attachment to fame and personal profit.

Yet it is most difficult to harmonize the mind, meeting various things and situations moment by moment. A student of the Way must cool his mind as if he were giving up his life, and consider if what he is about to say or do is in accordance with reality or not. If

it is, he should say or do it.

## 1–16

**Dōgen instructed,**

Students of the Way, do not worry about food and clothing. Just maintain the Buddha's precepts and do not engage in worldly affairs. The Buddha said to use abandoned rags<sup>1</sup> for clothing and beg for food. In what age will these two things ever be exhausted? Do not forget the swiftness of impermanence nor be disturbed vainly by worldly affairs. As long as your dewlike human life lasts, think exclusively of the Buddha-Way and do not be concerned with other things.

Someone asked, "Although fame and profit are difficult to give up, since pursuing them is a great obstruction to practicing the Way, they should be abandoned. Hence, I gave them up. Although clothing and food are minor things, they are big matters for practitioners. Wearing clothes made of abandoned rags and begging for food are the practices of superior people. Moreover, that has been the custom in India. The monasteries in China have permanent property<sup>2</sup> belonging to the community, so they do not need to worry about such things. However, the temples in this country have no such property and the practice of begging has not been transmitted at all. What should inferior people like me who

cannot endure such practice do? If someone like me tries to gather alms from lay believers, he will be committing a sin by receiving a donation without having virtue. Earning one's living as a farmer, merchant, warrior, or craftsman is an improper way of life for a monk. And, if I leave everything to fate, I will remain very poor as a result of inferior karma. When I suffer from hunger or am benumbed by the cold, I will be troubled and my practice will be hindered.

Someone advised me saying, 'Your way of practice is extreme. You don't understand this age and do not reflect upon your capability. Our nature is inferior and this is the degenerate-age<sup>3</sup>. If you continue to practice in such a way, it will become a cause of backsliding from the Way. Seek the support of some patron, take care of your body by living in a quiet place without worrying about food or clothing, and practice the Buddha Way peacefully. This is not greed for property or belongings. You should practice after having provided for your temporal means of livelihood.'

Although I listened to his advice, I do not yet believe it. How should we consider these things?"

Dōgen replied, "Just study carefully the conduct of Zen monks, along with the lifestyle of the buddhas and patriarchs. Although the customs of the three countries are different, those who truly study the Way have never practiced in the manner you have described. Just do not be attached to worldly affairs but study the Way in a straightforward manner."

The Buddha said, "Do not keep anything except robes and a bowl. Give away any extra food you have received through begging

to hungry living beings.”

Do not store up even what you have been given, nor run around searching for things. In a non-Buddhist text it is said that if we learn the Way in the morning we should not mind dying in the evening<sup>4</sup>. Even if we might die of cold or starvation, we should follow the Buddha’s teaching if only for one day or one hour.

In ten thousand *kalpas* and thousands of lives, how many times are we born and how many times do we die? This cycle of lives is *samsara*, caused only by blind clinging to worldly affairs. To die of starvation following the Buddha’s teachings for this one life brings about eternal peace and joy (Nirvana). Moreover, I have never read in the collection of all the Buddhist sutras of a single buddha or patriarch who transmitted the dharma in the three countries, dying of starvation or cold. In this world, inherently each person receives a certain amount of food and clothing as a gift. It does not come by being sought after nor does it stop coming by not seeking after it. Just leave it to fate and do not worry about it. If you refrain from arousing bodhi-mind in this life, excusing yourself on the grounds that this is the degenerate-age, in what life will it be possible to attain the Way?

Even if you are not as superior as Shubhuti<sup>5</sup> or Mahakashapa<sup>6</sup>, you should practice to your fullest capability. In a non-Buddhist text it is said that a man who loves women will do so even though they might not be as beautiful as Mōshō (Maoqiang) or Seishi (Xi-shi)<sup>7</sup>, and that a person who admires horses will do likewise even if they are not as great as Hito (Fei-tu) or Rokuji (Lu-er)<sup>8</sup>. One who likes the taste (of food) will like (whatever it might be), regardless

of whether or not it is as delicious as dragon's liver or phoenix marrow. We simply have to use as much wisdom as we possess. Even laymen have this attitude. Buddhist practitioners must be like this.

Moreover, the Buddha offered twenty years of his life to us living in this degenerate-age. Consequently, the offerings and support by human and heavenly beings to the monasteries in this world have not ceased. Though the Tathāgata had mighty powers and virtues and was able to use them at will, he spent a summer practice period eating wheat used for horse fodder<sup>9</sup>. How can his disciples today help but look up to this (example)?

Someone asked, "Rather than meaninglessly receive the offerings of human or heavenly beings while breaking the precepts, or wastefully spend the legacy of the Tathāgata without arousing bodhi-mind, wouldn't it be better to live as a layman, engaging in ordinary jobs, keeping oneself alive to continue the practice of the Way?"

Dōgen replied, "Who said to break the precepts or be without bodhi-mind? You have to force yourself to arouse bodhi-mind and practice the buddha-dharma. Moreover, it is said that the legacy of the Tathāgata is equally given without concern as to whether one maintains the precepts or breaks them; regardless of whether one is a beginner or an advanced practitioner. Nowhere is it written that you have to return to the mundane life or stop practicing, because you have broken the precepts or lack bodhi-mind. Who has such bodhi-mind from the beginning? Arousing what is difficult to arouse, practicing what is difficult to practice...in this way, you will

naturally progress in the buddha-dharma. Each one of us has buddha-nature. Do not meaninglessly deprecate yourself.

Also, in *Monzen* (Wen-xuan)<sup>10</sup>, it is written, 'Prosperity of the country is brought about by a single wise man. The way of the ancients dies out because of a later fool.' This means that if a single man of wisdom appears, the country will flourish, and if a single fool appears, the way of the ancients will disappear.

Consider this well."

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- 1 *Funzōe* in Japanese (Skt., *Pamsukola*). In India, the *kesa* (*kasaya*), the robes of the Buddhist monks were made of abandoned rags found in garbage pits, graveyards and so on. In *Shōbōgenzō Kesakudoku* (The Virtues of the Kasaya), Dōgen said, "As the unchanging way of the buddhas, *funzōe* (abandoned-rag robes) are best (for monks' clothing)."
  - 2 In Chinese Zen monasteries, since monks worked to support themselves, they owned land and other things called *Jōjūmotsu*. Later on, Zen monasteries were supported by the emperor, the government, or the nobility, and received these things from them.
  - 3 *Masse* in Japanese, is the period of *mappō*, in which the Buddha's teachings decline. It is the last of the three periods following the Buddha's death. During the period of the true-dharma, (*shōbō*) lasting 500 (some say 1,000) years, the Buddha's teaching is properly practiced and enlightenment can be attained. During the period of the semblance-of-the-dharma (*zōhō*), lasting 1,000 (some say 500) years, the teaching is practiced but enlightenment is no longer possible. During the period of the last decadent-dharma (*mappō*), lasting 10,000 years, only the teaching exists though it is not practiced and there is no enlightenment. People believed that the last period began in 1052 A.D., which greatly influenced Japanese Buddhism in the Heian and Kamakura periods.

- 4 This is a quotation taken from the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of The Analects of Confucius, (*Ch., Lunyu, J., Rongo*).
- 5 Subhuti was one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha. It is said that he had a profound understanding of sunyata (emptiness).
- 6 Mahakashapa was also one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha. According to the Zen tradition, he received dharma-transmission from the Buddha and became the first patriarch of India.
- 7 Both of them were symbols of Chinese beauty. They lived in the period of *Shunjiū* (Chunqiu, Spring and Autumn, 770–476 B.C.)
- 8 Hito (Fei-tu, Flying Rabbit) and Rokuji (Lu-er, Green Ear) were famous horses.
- 9 A certain king once invited the Buddha and his five hundred disciples to spend a ninety-day summer practice period in his country. The Buddha and his assembly went to the country, but the king forgot to make daily offerings of food, so they suffered from malnutrition. There was a man owning five hundred horses, who offered half of his horse fodder to the Buddha and his disciples. The Buddha received the offering in order to continue the practice period.
- 10 *Monzen* (Wenxuan) is an anthology of classical Chinese literature compiled around 530 A.D. It was popular in Japan as a text for students of literature.

## 1-17

In a miscellaneous talk, Dōgen said,

Men and women in secular society, both young and old, often pass the time talking about lewd things. They do so to amuse their minds and beguile themselves. It seems as though idle talk entertains their minds and diverts them from boredom for a while. Monks, however, should completely avoid such talk.

Even in secular society, when well educated and sincere people discuss some serious matter with due courtesy they do not engage in such talk. They do so only when they are drunk or unrestrained. Needless to say, monks must concern themselves only with the Buddha-Way. Only a few eccentric and immoral monks engage in such indecent talk. In the monasteries in China, since they never engage in small talk, they do not speak of such matters. In our country also, while Eisai, the Abbot of Kenninji Monastery was alive, one never heard such talk. Even after his death, while a few of his disciples were still at the monastery, people did not speak of such things. Lately, in the last seven or eight years, the young monks sometimes indulge themselves in idle talk. This is really shameful.

In the Scriptures, it is said, "Though coarse and violent actions may sometimes cause people to wake up, worthless speech obstructs the true Way." Be it even a word which comes to the lips unintentionally, useless talk hinders the Way. Still more, lewd talk will excite the mind. You must be most careful. Without forcing



yourself not to use such language, if you realize it is bad, you will be able to reform gradually.

## 1 – 18

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

Most people in the world want to show off their good deeds and hide their bad deeds. Since this frame of mind goes against the minds of the unseen deities<sup>1</sup>, their good deeds go unrewarded, and their bad deeds done in secret bring about punishment. Consequently, they conclude that there is no recompense for good deeds, and little merit in the buddha-dharma. This is a false view. We must certainly revise it. Do good things secretly while people are not watching, and if you make a mistake or do something bad, confess and repent of it. When you act in this manner, good deeds you have done in secret will have recompense, and wrongdoings will be revealed and repented so that punishment can be dispelled. Therefore, there will naturally be benefit in the present, and you will be sure of the future result.

At the time, a certain layman came and asked, “These days, although lay people make offerings to monks and take refuge in the buddha-dharma, much misfortune occurs; for this reason evil thoughts have arisen and people think they should no longer have faith in the Three Treasures. What do you think about this?”

Dōgen replied, "This is not the fault of the monks or the buddha-dharma, but of the lay people themselves. The reason is as follows. For example, they revere and make offerings to monks who observe the precepts and eat in accordance with the regulations (one meal before noon) while in public eyes, but they withhold offerings to shameless monks who break the precepts, drink liquor, and eat meat, judging them to be worthless. This biased discriminating mind goes entirely against the spirit of the Buddha. Because of this, their faith and reverence is in vain and there is no reward. In various parts of the precepts-texts, there are admonitions against this frame of mind. You should make offerings to any monk regardless of whether or not he has any virtue. In particular, never judge his inner virtue by his outward appearance. Although monks in this degenerate age look somewhat strange in their outward appearance, there are worse minds and deeds. Therefore, without discriminating between good monks and bad ones, respect all the Buddha's disciples, make offerings and take refuge with a spirit of equality. Then you will surely be in accordance with the Buddha's spirit, and the benefits will be extensive.

Also, consider the four phrases, 'unseen action, unseen response; seen action, seen response; (unseen action, seen response; seen action, unseen response)'. There is also the principle of karma and its effect in the three periods of time; karma returning in the present life, in the next life, or in some later life<sup>2</sup>. Study these principles very closely."

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1 Unseen deities such as Brahma-deva, Indra, the dragon-kings, Yama. Etc.

Originally, these were deities borrowed from Hinduism and other religions. Buddhists came to think of them as the protective deities of the buddha-dharma.

- 2 In *Shōbōgenzō Sanjigō* (The Karma of the Three Periods of Time), Dōgen commented on this principle of karma and its effect, “In learning and practicing the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs, from the outset, we should study and clarify this principle of karma and its effect on the three periods of time. Otherwise, we will fall into false views. Not only that, we will also fall into the evil realms and suffer for a long time.”

## 1 – 19

**In an evening talk Dōgen said,**

“Suppose someone comes to talk about his business, and asks you to write a letter to solicit something from someone, or to help him in a lawsuit, etc. but you turn down his request excusing yourself on the grounds that you are not a man [of the secular world<sup>1</sup>], that you have retired and have nothing to do with mundane affairs, and that it is not appropriate for a recluse to say something that is not suitable to lay people. Although this may seem like the way of a recluse, you should examine your deeper motivation. If you reject the request because you think you are a monk who has left the secular world and people might think ill of you if you say something unsuitable for a recluse, this still shows ego-attachment to fame and profit.

“In each situation that you are faced with, just consider carefully; do anything which will bring even a little benefit to the person who is before you, without concern for what people will think of you. Even if you become estranged from your friends or quarrel with them because they say you did something bad and unbecoming of a monk, it is not important. It would be better to break off with such narrow-minded people. Even though outwardly it may seem to other people that you are doing something improper, the primary concern should be to break off your ego-attachment inwardly and throw away any desire for fame. A buddha or bodhisattva cuts off even his own flesh and limbs when someone asks him for help. How much more, then, should you be willing to help someone who asks you just to write a letter. If you reject his request, being concerned with your reputation, you are showing deep attachment to your ego. Although others may think that you are not a holy man and say inappropriate things, if you throw away your concern for fame and bring even a little benefit to others, you correspond with the true Way. We find many examples of ancient sages who appear to have had this attitude. I also consider this true. It is an easy thing to help a little by writing a letter when your supporters or friends ask you to say something which is a little bit unexpected.”

Ejō responded, “That is really true. Of course it is all right to tell others what is good and beneficial to them. But, how about the case in which someone wants to take another’s property by some evil means, or someone tries to slander another? Should we still transmit such messages?”

Dōgen replied, “It is not for us to decide whether it is reasonable or not. We should explain to the person that we are sending the letter because someone asked us to do so, and tell him to deal with it reasonably. The person who receives the letter and has to deal with the problem should decide whether it is right or wrong. It is also wrong to ask the person to do something unreasonable about matters which are out of our field.

And, although it is apparently wrong, if you have a friend who respects you and whom you feel you could not go against, either for good or bad, and he requests your support to do something wrong and unacceptable through you, listen to his request once, and in your letter write that you have been asked importunately, and that the matter should be dealt with reasonably. If you treat each situation in this way, no one will hold a grudge. You must consider things like this very meticulously in every encounter or situation. The primary concern is to cast aside the desire for fame and ego-attachment in whatever situation.”

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- 1 The word Dōgen used is *binin* which literally means ‘non-human’. In ancient Japan, monks were sometimes called *binin*, because they abandoned the secular world. In the age of Dōgen, people who left degenerate temples were called *binin*, *yosutebito* (one who abandons the world), or *tonseisha* (escaper from the world). They practiced in various ways and eventually formed the so-called New Buddhism of the Kamakura period. Here Dōgen criticizes some of those who were indifferent towards helping others on the excuse of being hermits.

## 1 – 20

In an evening talk Dōgen said,

“Nowadays, almost all people, both lay and clerical, want to make it known to others when they do something good, and prevent others from noticing when they do something bad. Because of this, they lose correspondence between their inner and outer selves. You should aspire carefully to make the inside correspond with the outside, repent of faults, and hide your real virtue. Do not adorn your outward appearance. Offer good things to others and accept bad things yourself.”

Someone asked, “Surely, we should maintain an attitude of hiding our true virtue and not adorning our appearance. And yet, for buddhas and bodhisattvas, it is essential to have great compassion and benefit living-beings. If ignorant monks or lay people find faults, they will become guilty of slandering the priesthood. Even if they do not understand true inner virtue, if they see monks of good appearance, respect them, and make offerings to them, there must be some merit which brings about happiness. How should we think about this?”

Dōgen replied, “Although you do not adorn your outward appearance, it is irrational to become self-indulgent. If you carry out bad deeds in front of lay people on the pretext of hiding your true virtue, this is certainly a terrible violation of the precepts.

“Although some merely wish to gain fame as people of bodhi-mind, and not have their faults known by others, the heavenly

beings, the guardian deities, and the three-treasures, are secretly watching them. What is being admonished against here is an attitude which feels no shame before unseen beings, and covets the esteem of worldly people. You should consider things only for the sake of the flourishing of the dharma and the benefit of living beings, all the time and in whatever situation. Speak after making careful consideration; act after giving attentive thought; do not act rashly. Ponder over what is reasonable in whatever situation you encounter. Our life changes moment by moment, it flows by swiftly day by day. Everything is impermanent and changing rapidly. This is the reality before our eyes. You do not need to wait for the teaching of masters or sutras to see it. In every moment, do not expect tomorrow will come. Think only of this day and this moment. Since the future is very much uncertain, and you cannot foresee what will happen, you should resolve to follow the Buddha-Way, if only for today, while you are alive. To follow the Buddha-Way is to give up your bodily life and act so as to enable the dharma to flourish and, to bring benefit to living beings.”

Someone asked, “According to the Buddha’s teachings, should we practice begging for food?”

Dōgen replied, “Yes, we should. Yet we have to take into consideration the customs and the conditions of each country. In whatever situation, we should choose what is best for the benefit of living beings in the long run and for the progress of our own practice. As for the manners of begging, since the roads in this country are dirty, if we walk around wearing Buddhist robes, they will become soiled. Also, since people are poor, it may be

impossible to beg in the same way as in India, that is, at every house along the street with no regard for whether they are poor or rich. [If we cling to such a way], our practice might regress and we would be unable to function magnanimously for the benefit of living beings. Only if we keep practicing the Buddha-Way in a humble manner following the customs of the country will people of all classes support us by making offerings of their own accord and will practice for ourselves and for the benefit of others be fulfilled.

What is best for the sake of the Buddha-Way and for the benefit of others should be considered in each situation. Forget personal profit and do not be concerned with your reputation.”

## 1 – 21

### Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, you must be very careful on several levels in giving up worldly sentiment. Give up the world, give up your family, and give up your body and mind. Consider this well. Even among those who retreat from the world and live secluded in the mountains or forests, there are some who fear that their family, which has continued for many generations, will cease to exist, and who become anxious for their family members or their relatives.

Although some people depart from home and give up family or property, they have not yet given up their bodies if they think that



they should not do anything physically painful and avoid practicing anything which may cause sickness, even though they know it to be the Buddha-Way.

Further, even if they carry out hard and painful practices without clinging to their bodily lives, if their minds have not yet entered the Buddha-Way and if they resolve not to act against their own will even if such actions are the Buddha-Way, they have not yet given up their minds.

正法眼藏  
随闻记

Shōbōgenzō-zuimonki

Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji  
recorded by Koun Ejō

Book

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2

## Book 2

### 2-1

#### Dōgen instructed,

Practitioners, only if you subdue the mind<sup>1</sup>, is it easy to abandon yourself and the world. Being concerned about your worldly reputation regarding speech and behavior, refraining from doing evil because people will think ill of you, or doing good at every opportunity because people will respect you as a Buddhist practitioner, you are still being moved by worldly sentiments. Moreover, wantonly committing evil deeds shows that you are an entirely depraved person.

Finally, forget evil intentions, forget your own body, and carry out your activities solely for the sake of the buddha-dharma. Just be alert in every encounter. As for beginners in practice, subdue evil in your mind, and carry out good with your body without being concerned whether they are worldly or human sentiments. This is the meaning of abandoning body and mind.

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1 *Jōbuku* in Japanese means taming, training, controlling, or subduing the mind. In the *Tenzō Kyōkun*, Dōgen compares our minds to wild horses and our emotions to monkeys swinging in the trees.

## 2-2

### Dōgen instructed,

Once, while the late *Sōjō* (Archbishop) Eisai<sup>1</sup> was at Kenninji, a poor man came and said, “My family is so destitute that we have had nothing to eat for several days. My wife and children are about to die of starvation. Please have compassion on us.”

At the time, there was no clothing, food, or other possessions in the temple. Although Eisai contemplated what to do, he was at a loss. There was a little bit of thin copper allocated for making the halo for the *Yakushi-Buddha*<sup>2</sup> which was under construction. The abbot took it and broke it apart, rolled it up, and gave it to the poor man, telling him to exchange it for food to relieve his family’s hunger.

The man was very delighted and left.

Eisai’s disciples, however, reproached him [Eisai] saying, “That is nothing other than the halo for the statue of the Buddha. You gave it away to the layman. Is it not a sin to use the Buddha’s property for personal use?”

The *Sōjō* replied, “Yes, it is. Yet think of the Buddha’s will. The Buddha cut off his flesh and limbs and offered them to living beings<sup>3</sup>. Even if we gave the whole body of the Buddha to people who are actually about to die of starvation, such an action would certainly be in accordance with the Buddha’s will.”

He went on, “Even if I fall into hell because of this sin, I have just saved living beings from starvation.”

Students today should also consider the innermost heart of this venerable predecessor. Do not forget it.

Once, some monks in Eisai's assembly said, "The buildings of Kenninji are located very close to the river. Surely the time will come when they will be destroyed by a flood."

The Sōjō replied, "We should not worry about the inevitable destruction of this building in the future. Even at Gion-shōja<sup>4</sup> (the Jetavana Monastery) in India, only the cornerstones remain. However, the merit of having founded a monastery is never lost. Also, the virtue of practicing the Way right now, even only for one year or half a year, must be enormous."

Now, as I think about it, since founding a monastery was a truly great event in his lifetime, it was completely natural to try to avoid future disaster, and yet, along with that frame of mind, Sōjō Eisai had such an attitude deep in his heart. We really ought to consider this carefully.

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1 See 1–2, footnote 4.

2 Yakushi (Medicine Master) is the name of a popular buddha whose full name is Yakushi-Ruriko (Master of Medicine of the Emerald Light); *Skt., Bhaisajya-guruvaidurya-prabha*, Buddha of the Land of the Emerald in the East. As a bodhisattva, Yakushi-Ruriko made twelve vows, one of which was to cure disease.

3 In the *Jataka*, a collection of stories on the previous lives of the Buddha, there is one in which the bodhisattva offered his own body to a starving tiger. Many similar tales are found in this collection.

4 The Jeta Grove monastery; (*Skt., Jetavana-vihara*). The first Buddhist

monastery donated to the Buddha by his lay student Sudatta (J., Shudatsu).

## 2-3

**In an evening talk Dōgen said,**

During the reign of Taisō (Tài-zōng) of the Tō (Tàng) dynasty<sup>1</sup>, Gichō (Wèi Zhēng)<sup>2</sup>, one of the ministers, remarked to the emperor, “Some people are slandering your Majesty.”

The emperor replied, “As a sovereign, if I have virtue<sup>3</sup>, I am not afraid of being slandered by people. I’m more afraid of being praised despite the lack of it.”

[Here is an example of how] even a lay person had such an attitude. Monks should, first of all, maintain this attitude. If you have compassion and bodhi-mind, you need not worry about being defamed by ignorant people. You have to be very careful of being thought of as a man of the Way despite having no bodhi-mind.

**Dōgen also related,**

Buntei (Wèn Dì)<sup>4</sup> of the Zui (Suí) dynasty said to himself, “I must nurture virtue secretly and wait until I have matured.”

What he meant was to practice virtue, wait until he himself had matured, and then, govern the people with benevolence. As a monk, if you have not yet aroused this spirit, you should be

cautious. Only if you practice the Way inwardly, will the virtue of the Way naturally manifest itself outwardly. Without expectation or desire to be known by people, if you just follow the teachings of the Buddha or the Way of the patriarchs, people will believe in the virtue of the Way of their own accord.

There is a trap for students here; [others as well as oneself] may believe that being respected by other people and amassing a large amount of property is a manifestation of the virtue of the Way. You must realize in your heart that to believe such a thing is to be possessed by demons. Be most careful about this. In a certain scripture, this is called the 'deeds of demons'. Considering the examples of the three countries (India, China, and Japan), I have never heard that being rich and revered by ignorant people was a manifestation of the virtue of the Way. Since ancient times, all people with bodhi-mind have been poor, endured physical pain, wasted nothing, were compassionate, and led by the Way. These people have been called true practitioners.

Manifesting virtue does not mean having an abundance of material wealth, nor being proud of receiving large offerings.

There are three steps in the manifestation of virtue. Firstly, it becomes known that the person is practicing the Way. Next, people who aspire to the Way come to that person. And lastly, people learn the Way and practice with him in the same way. This is called the manifestation of the virtue of the Way.

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1 Taisō of the Tō dynasty (597–649) was the second emperor of the dynasty. He reigned from 627 to 649.

- 2 One of the ministers of Taisō (580–643).
- 3 *Jin* in Japanese (Ch., ren) is the most important concept of Confucianism. This may be understood as benevolence, kindheartedness, perfect virtue, philanthropy etc.
- 4 Buntei was the founder of the Zui (Suí) dynasty (541–604). He reigned from 589 to 604.

## 2-4

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

A student of the Way must abandon human sentiments<sup>1</sup>. To abandon human sentiments is to practice following the buddhadharma. Most people in the world are being dragged about by the *hinayana* mind<sup>2</sup>, discriminating good from evil, distinguishing right from wrong, seeking after what is good while discarding what is bad. This is caused by the *hinayana* mind. First of all, just give up worldly sentiments and enter into the Buddha-Way. To enter the Buddha-Way, refrain from making judgments based on discrimination between good and evil, don't hold dear your physical and mental conditions; follow the verbal teachings and ways of acting without being concerned with good and evil. What you think is good or what others in the world think is good is not always good. Therefore, forget others' views; cast aside your own mind and follow the teachings of the Buddha. Even though your



body suffers and your mind is in distress, resolve to abandon body and mind, and practice what the Buddha and patriarchs, our venerable predecessors, practiced, even if it is painful or causes you distress. Even if you think something is good and accords with the Buddha-Way and want to practice it, do not carry it out if it has not been done by the buddhas and patriarchs. In doing so, you grasp the dharma-gate (teachings on dharma) perfectly.

Cast aside both mind and thoughts based on the various teachings you have learned in the past, and gradually turn your mind into the words and deeds of the buddhas and patriarchs you are encountering right now. In doing so, your wisdom will grow and *satori* will open by itself. Abandon even your understanding of what you have learned from writings of the teaching-schools if there is reason to do so, and see things from the perspective I have mentioned. Studying the dharma-gate is nothing but parting from (samsara) and attaining the Way.

If deep in your heart you think what you have accomplished through studying for many years with great effort cannot be given up easily, such a mind itself is one bound by life-and-death (samsara).

Consider this carefully and thoroughly.

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- 1 In this case, human sentiments, refer to both thoughts and emotions based on egocentricity, discrimination, and preference. These are the roots of delusions.
  - 2 Here, *binayana* mind means the attitude of practicing only for the sake of self emancipation or of escaping from samsara by one's own effort. As the

spirit of a bodhisattva, we should vow to save all living beings. In *Shōbōgenzō Hotsubodaishin* (Arousing Bodhi-mind), Dōgen said, “To arouse bodhi-mind is to vow and work for the salvation of all living-beings before saving oneself.”

## 2-5

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

The biography of the late Sōjō Eisai of Kenninji was written by the vice-minister Akikane<sup>1</sup>, a lay monk. At first he refused to do it saying, “It should be written by a Confucian scholar, because such scholars forget their own bodies and devote themselves to studying from early childhood. Therefore, there are no mistakes in their writings. For ordinary people, working for the government and social intercourse are their primary concerns; they study on the side. Although there have been some eminent people, there have been mistakes in their writings.”

As I think of this, ancient people forgot their bodies in order to study even non-Buddhist texts.

Also Dōgen said,

The late Sōjō Kōin<sup>2</sup> said, “Bodhi-mind is studying the dharmagate (teaching) of ‘the three-thousand worlds in a single moment of thought,’ and keeping them in one’s mind. This is called bodhi-

mind. To meaninglessly wander around in confusion with a bamboo-hat<sup>3</sup> hanging around one's neck is called a deed influenced by a demon.”

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- 1 Minamoto Akikane (?–1215) Lay monk is a translation for *nyūdō* (one who has entered the Way), which means a person who has received ordination and become a monk, yet lives at home with one's family. Vice-minister is a translation for *chūnagon*.
- 2 Kōin (?–1216) became the abbot of Onjōji (or Miidera) in Ōtsu. Later he became a student of Hōnen and practiced Nenbutsu (Pureland-Buddhism). When Dōgen was a teenager, he visited Kōin to ask the question he had while studying Buddhism on Mt. Hiei. According to Dōgen's biography, Kōin suggested Dōgen visit Eisai to resolve his question and to practice Zen.
- 3 When monks traveled they wore bamboo hats. What Kōin meant was that running around here and there without studying and practicing the fundamental teachings was a mistake.

## 2–6

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

The late Sōjō Eisai often admonished, “Monks, do not think that I give you the clothing, food, and other provisions you use. They are all offered by various heavenly beings. I merely play the role of distributor. Also, each one of you is fully endowed with the

necessities for your lifetime. Do not run around seeking after them. Do not think that I feed you or that you have to be grateful to me.” I think these are most admirable words.

Also, in great Song China, when the assembly was under the direction of Zen Master Wanshi (Hōngzhi)<sup>1</sup>, Tendō Monastery had enough provisions for one thousand people. Thus, seven hundred people inside the *sōdō* and three hundred people outside the *sōdō*<sup>2</sup> could be fed. However, due to the excellence of the master, many monks gathered like clouds from all over the country. There were one thousand people inside the *sōdō* and five or six hundred people outside.

One of the officers remarked to Wanshi, “The temple provisions are sufficient for only one thousand people. We do not have enough food for everyone staying here. Please take this into special consideration and send the extra monks away.”

Wanshi replied to him, “Each one of them has his own mouth. It is not your business. Do not worry about it.”

I believe that everyone has a certain amount of food and clothing granted from birth. It does not come about by worrying over it, nor will it cease to come by not seeking it. Even lay people leave such things to fate; being concerned with loyalty and filial piety. How much more should monks who have left home be unconcerned with trivial matters [besides practice]. We have the fortune given to us by Shakyamuni; we also have the food and clothing offered by the deities. Moreover, we have the natural share of life we were allotted when we were born. Without chasing after it or worrying over it, we are sure to receive as much as we need.

Even if we chase after and secure a great fortune, what will happen to it when impermanence suddenly comes? Therefore, students must not be concerned with extra matters. Simply practice the Way wholeheartedly.

Also, someone said, "We are living in the last-period (of the dharma)<sup>3</sup>, and ours is a country remote from the Buddha's land. The buddha-dharma can flourish here and its benefit spread widely only by living at ease in a quiet hermitage without worrying about food and clothing coming from lay supporters, and by practicing the Buddha-way only after being sufficiently provided for." Now, as I think about this, it is not so.

When people gather together to study who are only able to see the form [of things] and who cling to their egos, surely not a single one among them will arouse bodhi-mind. Even if a thousand or ten thousand people who were attached to profit and indulging, only in their desire for possessions were to gather together, it would be worse than if no one were to come. This is because only the karma which causes falling into the evil realms of samsara (hell, the realm of insatiable spirits and animals) would accumulate naturally of itself and there would be no aspiration [to practice] the buddha-dharma. If we remain pure and poor and practice the Way while enduring hardship in begging for food, eating wild nuts or fruit, and enduring hunger, a single person hearing about us and coming to practice will be one possessing true bodhi-mind. I think this is the way the buddha-dharma can truly flourish. To have no [disciples] because of hardship or pure poverty and to have many people gather together because of abundant food and clothing while

lacking the buddha-dharma is six of one and half a dozen of the other.

**Dōgen also said,**

Most people today mistakenly think that constructing buddha-images and building *stūpas* helps the buddha-dharma flourish. Even though we might erect huge temples adorned with polished jewels and gold, we cannot attain the Way by these works. This is nothing more than merit for lay people enabling their wealth to enter into the world of the buddha and allowing people to do good. Although they might receive a great result from a small cause, for monks to be involved in such things has nothing to do with the flourishing of the buddha-dharma. To learn even a single phrase of the dharma-gate (teaching) or to practice zazen even for a single period while living in a thatched hut or under a tree shows the true flourishing of the buddha-dharma.

At present I am appealing for donations and working as much as possible to construct a *sōdō*.<sup>4</sup> Still, I do not think that this necessarily contributes to the flourishing of the buddha-dharma. Only because there are few people who are studying the Way right now and because I am spending my days leisurely, do I think it better to engage in these activities than be idle. I hope this will enable deluded people to form a connection with the buddha-dharma. Moreover, I am working on this project for the sake of founding a *dōjō* for zazen practice for people studying the Way in this age. I will have no regrets even though what I have wished for and begun might not be realized. I do not mind if but one single

pillar is erected as long as people in later generations think that someone had the aspiration to carry out such a project.

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- 1 Wanshi Shōgaku (Hongzhi Zhengjue, 1097–1157) was a contemporary of Daie Sōkō (Dahui Zonggao, 1089–1163) who advocated the *kōan* practice of the Rinzai School and criticized Sōtō Zen, calling it *mokushō-jazen* (an evil zen of silent-illumination). Later, Wanshi wrote *Mokushōmei* in which he used the expression positively and clarified the essence of mokushō-zen (silently-illuminating zen). Dōgen called this *shikantaza*. He respected Wanshi deeply and praised him in his writings, calling him Wanshi-kobutsu (Wanshi the Old Buddha).
- 2 In Zen monasteries there are people who stay inside the *sōdō* and concentrate on practice while others take care of the various things needed to support the practice. They take turns each practice period; one period living in, the next period supporting it.
- 3 See 1–16, footnote 3.
- 4 At the time Dōgen was working on raising funds to build a *sōdō* or *Jūundō* (second *sōdō*).

## 2–7

Once, someone urged Dōgen to go to *Kantō*<sup>1</sup> to help the Buddha-dharma flourish.

Dōgen refused. “If someone aspires to practice the buddha-dharma, he will come and study it even if he has to cross

mountains, rivers, and oceans. If he lacks such resolution, there is no certainty that he will accept it, even if I go and urge him (to practice it). Shall I fool people merely for the sake of material support? Isn't this just greed for wealth? Since it would just tire me out, I feel no necessity to go."

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- 1 Kantō refers to the eastern part of Japan, in this case Kamakura, where the shogunate (government) was located. At the time, the *samurai* who took over political power from the court in Kyoto accepted Zen Buddhism. Several Chinese Zen masters came from China; for example, Rankei Dōryū, Mugaku Sogen, etc, and a number of Zen temples were founded there. The person was suggesting that Dōgen go there to gain the support of the shogunate government. Later, however, after Dōgen moved into Eihei-ji, he did visit Kamakura and stayed there for half a year.

## 2-8

**Dōgen also said,**

People who study the Way should not read the scriptures of the teaching-schools, nor study non-Buddhist texts. If you wish to study, read the collections of sayings [of the ancient Zen masters]. Put aside all other books for the time being. These days, Zen monks are fond of reading literature, composing poetry and writing dharma-discourses. This is wrong. Write down what you think in your mind, even though you cannot compose poetry. Write down



the teachings of the dharma-gate, even though your style is unpolished. People without bodhi-mind will not read it if it is not polished. Such people would only play with words without grasping the reality [behind them], even if the style were embellished and there were excellent phrases in it.

I have been fond of studying literature since childhood, and even now I have a tendency to contemplate the beauty in the words of non-Buddhist texts. Sometimes I even refer to *Monzen* or other texts; still, I think it is meaningless and should be completely abandoned.

## 2-9

### One day Dōgen instructed,

Once, while in China, I was reading a collection of sayings by an ancient master. At the time, a monk from Shisen (Sichuan), a sincere practitioner of the Way, asked me, “What is the use of reading recorded sayings?”

I replied, “I want to learn about the deeds of the ancient masters.”

The monk asked, “What is the use of that?”

I said, “I wish to teach people after I return home.”

The monk asked, “What is the use of that?”

I replied, “It is for the sake of benefiting living beings.”

The monk queried further, “Yes, but ultimately, what is the use?”

Later, I pondered his remarks. Learning the deeds of the ancient masters by reading the recorded sayings or *kōans*<sup>1</sup> in order to explain them to deluded people is ultimately of no use to my own practice and for teaching others. Even if I don’t know a single letter, I will be able to show it to others in inexhaustible ways if I devote myself to just sitting and clarifying the great matter<sup>2</sup>. It was for this reason that the monk pressed me as to the ultimate use [of reading and studying]. I thought what he said was true. Thereupon, I gave up reading the recorded sayings and other texts, concentrated wholeheartedly on sitting, and was able to clarify the great matter.

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- 1 In Chinese Zen, the Zen masters’ deeds and sayings were recorded and recognized as *kōans* which literally means a government decree, or a law which should be studied and followed.
  - 2 The most important thing to be done in one’s life: deliverance from transmigration and awareness of the Way.

## 2–10

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

Do not expect to be respected by others unless you have true inner virtue. Since people in this country are ignorant of such virtue

and praise others highly based only on their outward appearances, students without bodhi-mind are easily dragged down into the evil paths (the six realms of samsara), and become the kindred of demons. It is easy to be respected. To halfheartedly pretend to have abandoned your body and parted from the world is only a matter of outward appearance. Such is not a sincere attitude. One who appears to be an ordinary person of the world, and goes on harmonizing his inner mind is a person of true bodhi-mind.

Therefore, an Ancient said, "Empty inside, following along outside." This means being without ego-centric mind inside and getting along with others outside. If you completely forget your own body and mind, enter into the buddha-dharma, and keep practicing in accordance with the laws of the buddha-dharma, you will be good both inwardly and outwardly in the present and the future.

Even though you have entered into the buddha-dharma and have abandoned yourself and the world, it is wrong to thoughtlessly abandon that which should not be abandoned. In this country, among those who are famous as men of the buddha-dharma or of bodhi-mind, there are some who do not consider how others see them and behave badly without any reason, saying they have abandoned the self. Or they do such things as becoming drenched while walking in the rain, and think they have become free of attachment to the world. They are entirely useless both inwardly and outwardly. Nevertheless, people in the world often consider them respectable and free from attachment to the ordinary world.

In their midst, if one maintains the precepts of the Buddha,

keeps the regulations, practices for oneself, and instructs others in following the Buddha's teachings, people think that he clings to fame and profit and ignore him. Yet for us that is the way to follow the Buddha's teaching and cultivate inner and outer virtue.

## 2-11

**In an evening talk, Dōgen said,**

Students of the Way, it is of no value to be known by people in the secular world as a person of wisdom or wide knowledge. If there is even a single person who is really seeking the Way, you should not refuse to explain the dharma of the buddhas and patriarchs to whatever extent you are able. Even if someone has made an attempt on your life, if he asks sincerely to hear the true Way, you must not hold a grudge but explain the dharma to him. Except in such cases, it is entirely useless to display your knowledge of the scriptures of the Exoteric or Esoteric teachings or of non-Buddhist texts. If someone comes and asks you about these things, you needn't feel bad at all in replying that you don't know. Since you feel ashamed of being despised for your ignorance and you consider yourself stupid, if you study the Buddhist and non-Buddhist classics widely to become a man of knowledge and study various things to understand secular affairs or to show your knowledge, this is a terrible mistake. This is truly meaningless for

studying the Way. On the other hand, pretending not to know what you know is also wrong precisely because it is a difficult (pose to take) and is unnatural, creating a respectable image and giving an appearance of humility. It is best not to know from the outset.

In my childhood, I was fond of studying non-Buddhist classics<sup>1</sup> and other texts. Until I went to China and received the dharma transmission, I had been reading both Buddhist and non-Buddhist books, in order to become familiar with the local Chinese language. I thought it was important, and in fact, it was an extraordinary thing in secular society. People also appreciated it as unusual and wonderful.

Although in a sense it was necessary, when I reflect on it now, it was a hindrance to studying the Way. When you read Buddhist scriptures, if you understand the meaning of the sentences phrase by phrase, you will grasp the reality expressed through the words. However, people tend to pay attention to the writing styles—such as antitheses, rhythms, and tones. They judge them as good or bad, and then think about the meaning as an afterthought. Therefore, it is better to understand the meaning from the beginning without caring about such things. In writing dharma-discourses as well, trying to write in accordance with the rules of rhetoric or being unable to write without thinking of rhyming and [maintaining proper] tones are the fault of having too much knowledge.

Let the language and style develop as they may; what is most important is to write down in detail the truth you want to communicate. Even though people in future generations might think that your rhetorical technique is poor, it is essential for the

Way to enable them to understand reality. It is the same for other fields of study.

I have heard that Kū-Amidabutsu of Kōya<sup>2</sup> was an eminent scholar of both Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism. After he abandoned<sup>3</sup> his temple and entered the Nenbutsu School<sup>4</sup>, a Shingon priest visited him and asked about the doctrine of the Esoteric teachings of the school. He replied, "I have forgotten everything. I don't remember a single word." Thus, he did not answer the priest's question. This should be the ideal bodhi-mind. He must have remembered something, but he did not talk about things he thought were useless. I think that people who wholeheartedly practice *nenbutsu* must be like this. Students today should also cultivate this attitude. Even if you used to know about the philosophy of the teaching-schools, it would be better to forget it completely. Needless to say, you should not begin studying it now.

People of the Way who truly devote themselves to practice should not read even the collections of the recorded saying of the Zen masters. You should understand through this example the uselessness of other kinds of books.

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1 According to *Kenzei-ki* (the oldest biography of Dōgen), Dōgen was reading *Rikō Hyakuei* (The Hundred Poems of Liqiao) by the time he was four years old. At seven, he was reading *Mōshi* (Maoshi), *Saden* (Zouzhuang), and at nine, he was reading *Kusharon* (Abhidharma Kosa). The text says that Dōgen was as brilliant as Monju. When he became sleepy while studying, he stuck a needle in his thigh. He studied unusually hard

encouraging his mind.

- 2 Kū-amidabutsu is another name for Myōhen (1142–1224). He studied Sanron (Nagarjuna's philosophy), and Shingon (Esoteric Buddhism). He practiced in Nara and on Mt. Kōya. Later he became a disciple of Hōnen, the founder of Japanese Pure-Land Buddhism, and changed his name to Kū-Amidabutsu.
- 3 The word Dōgen used is *tonsei* which literally means to escape from the world. Originally it meant to leave the secular world and become a monk. But in the Kamakura period it denoted a person who had already become a monk and had left even the society of monks to concentrate on practice.
- 4 This school concentrated on the recitation of Amida's name, 'Namu-Amidabutsu', which means, "[I pay] homage to Amida Buddha."

## 2-12

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

With regard to actions and speech in society, today in this country many people are concerned with personal fame and reputation. They think good-bad, right-wrong, and consider that if they do one thing others will think well of them or if they do something else others will think poorly of them. They even worry about the future. This is entirely wrong. People in the secular world are not necessarily good.

Let people think whatever they may think. Let them even call you crazy. If you spend your whole life practicing in accordance

with the Buddha-Way and refrain from what goes against the buddha-dharma, you needn't worry about what people think about you. *Tonsei*<sup>1</sup>, (retreat from the world), means being free from the sentiments of worldly people. Just learn about the deeds of the buddhas and patriarchs and about the compassion of the bodhisattvas, repent of your actions which are secretly illuminated by various *devas* and protective deities, and go on practicing in accordance with the Buddha's regulations. You needn't care about anything else.

On the other hand, it is wrong to shamelessly indulge yourself and do evil things, trying to excuse yourself on the grounds that it does not matter if others think ill of you. Just practice wholeheartedly in accordance with the buddha-dharma, paying no attention to how others see you. In the buddha-dharma such indulgence and shamelessness is prohibited.

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1 See 2-11, footnote 3.

## 2-13

Dōgen also said,

Even according to secular morality, when changing clothes, sitting, or lying down in places where no one can see you, or in a dark room, failing to hide what should be hidden, having no



propriety is criticized as being shameless before the *devas* and demons. You should hide what should be hidden, and be discreet about that which requires discretion just as if someone were watching.

In the buddha-dharma, the precepts speak of the same attitude. Therefore as a practitioner of the Way, (you should) keep the Buddha's precepts in mind, refraining from committing evil even though no one might see you or notice (what you do); do not discriminate between inside or outside or between bright or dark.

## 2-14

**One day, a student asked,**

“Although many years have passed since aspiring to learn the Way, I have not yet had any realization. Many of the ancient teachers said that the Way does not depend on intelligence or sagacity. Therefore, I don't think we should demean ourselves because of our inferior capacity. Is there something about this that has been handed down in the tradition which I should keep in mind?”

**Dōgen instructed,**

“You are right about not relying on intelligence, talent, quick-wittedness, or sagacity in learning the Way. Still, it is wrong to

mistakenly encourage a person to become blind, deaf, or ignorant. Since studying the Way does not require having wide knowledge or highly talented abilities, you should not show disdain toward anyone because of their inferior capacity. True practice of the Way must be easy. Nevertheless, even in the monasteries in great Song China, there are only one or two people out of several hundred or thousands of practitioners who realize the dharma and attain the Way in the assembly of one teacher. Therefore, there must be things handed down which we should keep in mind.

I believe this. It depends only on whether one's aspiration is firmly determined or not. A person who arouses true aspiration and studies as hard as his capacity allows will not fail to attain [the Way]. We have to be careful to concentrate on and directly carry out the following practice: first of all, just maintain the aspiration to earnestly seek [the Way]. For example, a person who desires to steal a precious treasure or to beat a powerful enemy or win over a beautiful woman of high nobility will constantly seek an opportunity to accomplish these tasks in any situation or occasion, though various things are changing, since his mind is always occupied with this desire. If his desire is that enthusiastic, he will not fail to fulfill it.

In the same way if the aspiration to seek the Way is earnest enough when you practice *shikantaza* (just sitting), study the *kōans* or meet your teacher, though the aim is high you will hit the mark, and though it is deep you will fish it out. Without arousing such aspiration, how can you complete the great matter of the Buddha-Way in which the samsara of life-and-death is cut off in a single

moment? Only if you have a mind unconcerned about inferior intelligence or dull faculties, or ignorance or dullness, will you surely attain enlightenment.

Next, to arouse such an aspiration, think deeply in your heart of the impermanence of the world. It is not a matter of meditating using some provisional method of contemplation. It is not a matter of fabricating in our heads that which does not really exist. Impermanence is truly the reality right in front of our eyes. We need not wait for some teaching from others, some proof from some passage of scripture, or some principle. Born in the morning and dead in the evening, a person we saw yesterday is no longer here today –these are the facts we see with our eyes and hear with our ears. This is what we see and hear about others. Applying this to our own bodies and thinking of the reality (of all things), though we expect to live for seventy or eighty years, we die when we must die.

During our lifetime, though we may see the reality of sorrow, pleasure, love of our families, and hatred of our enemies, these are not worthy matters. We could spend our time letting go of them. We should just believe in the Buddha-Way and seek the true joy of Nirvana. Much more so for the aged whose lives are already more than half over. How many years still remain? How can we relax our study of the Way? This is still not close enough to reality. In reality, it is only today or even this moment that we can thus think of worldly affairs or of the Buddha-Way. Tonight or tomorrow we may contract some serious disease, or may have to endure such terrible pain as to be unable to distinguish east from west. Or we

may be killed suddenly by some demon, encounter trouble with brigands, or be killed by some enemy. Everything is truly uncertain.

Therefore, in such an unpredictable world, it is extremely foolish to waste time worrying about various ways of earning a living in order to postpone one's death, uncertain as it is, to say nothing of plotting evil against others.

Precisely because this is reality, the Buddha preached it to all living beings, the patriarchs taught only this truth in their sermons and writings. In my formal speeches and lectures too, I emphasize that impermanence is swift; life-and-death is the great matter. Reflect on this reality again and again in your heart without forgetting it, and without wasting a moment. Put your whole mind into the practice of the Way. Remember that you are alive only today in this moment. Other than that, [practice of the Way] is truly easy. You needn't discuss whether you are superior or inferior, brilliant or dull."

## 2-15

**In an evening talk, Dōgen said,**

People not escaping from the secular world seems to be the result of clinging to bodily life. Actually, however, they are not thinking of themselves at all. They are not considering things from

a broader perspective. This is also due to not having met good teachers or friends. If they seek *profit* they should desire the profit of eternal happiness and offerings from dragon-gods<sup>1</sup> or heavenly beings. If they think of fame, they should aspire to obtain the fame of a buddha, a patriarch or an ancient sage. Doing so, wise people in future generations will respect them.

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- 1 A dragon-god (Skt., *nāga*) is one of the eight gods and demi-gods who protect Buddhism. A kind of snake-like creature believed to have supernatural power to form clouds and cause rain to fall at will. Of the dragons which protect Buddhism, the eight dragon-kings are often mentioned in Buddhist texts.

## 2–16

**In an evening talk, Dōgen said,**

An ancient sage remarked, “If I learned the Way in the morning, I wouldn’t mind dying in the evening.” Students of the Way should have this same attitude. During aeons of life-and-death, how many times have we been born and have we died in vain? If we do not save ourselves, when, by rare chance, we have been born [in a human body] and are able to encounter the buddha-dharma, when will we (be able to save ourselves)? Even though we might cherish our body and hold it dear, we cannot keep it forever.

Abandoning our life which we must leave behind sooner or later, if only for a day or a few moments for the sake of the buddha-dharma, will surely be the cause of eternal happiness.

It is regrettable to spend our days and nights vainly thinking of our livelihood tomorrow without casting aside the world which should be cast aside, without practicing the Way which should be practiced. Just make up your mind to learn the Way and die today. If you don't have the materials to keep you alive until tomorrow it doesn't matter if you die of cold or hunger. First of all, arouse such resolution. In doing so you will be able to practice the Way without fail.

Without this sort of aspiration, you will be unable to attain the Way regardless of how many millions of years or thousand times of life-and-death you practice. If you ostensibly continue practicing the buddha-dharma but secretly worry about such things as clothing for winter or summer and livelihood for tomorrow or the next year, then despite the appearance of learning the Way opposed to the ordinary world (it is equally useless). There could be such a person, but as far as I know such an attitude cannot be in accordance with the teaching of the buddhas and patriarchs.

## 2–17

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

Students of the Way, it goes without saying that you must consider the inevitability of death. Even if you don't consider this right now, you should be resolved not to waste time and refrain from doing meaningless things. You should spend your time carrying out what is worth doing. Among the things you should do what is the most important? You must understand that all deeds other than those of the buddhas and patriarchs are useless.

## 2–18

Once Ejō asked,

“As an activity of Zen practitioners, mending or patching old or tattered clothing instead of throwing it away, seems to be clinging to things. Yet abandoning old clothing and wearing new robes shows that we are seeking after new things. Both of these are wrong. Ultimately, what should we do?”

Dōgen replied,

“If we are free from holding on to what we have yet do not seek after what we don't have, either way is all right. Still, it would be

better to mend torn clothing, in order to keep it for as long as possible and not pursue acquiring new clothing.”

## 2-19

During an evening talk, Ejō asked,

“Shall we carry on the obligation of fulfilling our gratitude to our fathers and mothers?”<sup>1</sup>

Dōgen replied, “Filial piety is most important. Yet there is a difference between lay people and monks in how to fulfill it. Lay people follow the teachings in the *Kōkyō*<sup>2</sup> etc. and serve their parents in life and in death. All people in the world know that. Monks abandon their debt of gratitude and enter the realm of non-doing (*mui*)<sup>3</sup>. Our manner of paying off the debt of gratitude should not be limited to one particular person. Considering that we have debts of gratitude to all living beings equal to our own fathers and mothers, we must transmit all the merits of our good deeds to the whole dharma-world. If we limit it specifically to our own parents in this lifetime, we go against the Way of non-doing.

In our day-to-day practice and time-to-time study, following the Buddha-Way continuously is the only true way of fulfilling our filial piety.

Lay people hold memorial services and make offerings during *chūin*<sup>4</sup> (the forty-nine days after a person’s death).



As Zen monks, we should know the depth of the real debt of gratitude to our parents. We should see that debt as being the same as our gratitude to (the rest of) all living beings. Choosing one particular day to practice something good and transmitting the merit to one special person doesn't seem to accord with the Buddha's compassion. The passage about the anniversary days of the death of one's parents and siblings in the Precept-Sutra<sup>3</sup> refers to lay people.

In the monasteries in China monks hold ceremonies on the anniversary of their master's death but not on the anniversaries of their parents' deaths."

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- 1 The Japanese word is *Hōon*. *Hō* means to repay. *On* means kindness, favor, grace. *Hōon* can be translated as 'to requite a kindness' or, as in this case, pay a debt of gratitude. Filial piety was one of the most important concepts in Confucian thought in China, Korea, and Japan.
  - 2 *Kōkyō* (Xiaojing) (Scripture on Filial Piety) is one of the most important classics of Confucianism. In this text, Confucius insisted that filial piety is the foundation of all virtues and social morality.
  - 3 *Mui* does not mean not-active. It means to act freely, like fish swimming in the water, or birds flying in the sky without a trace.
  - 4 An intermediate state between death and the next life. It is said that a dead person remains in this suspended state for seven weeks.
  - 5 In the *Bonmō-kyō* (Brahmajala-sutra) we read, "On the anniversary day of the death of your father, mother, or brothers, invite a priest to give a talk on the sutra of the bodhisattva precepts..."

## 2 – 20

### One day Dōgen instructed,

The distinction between being brilliant or dull applies only when thorough aspiration has not yet been aroused. When a person falls from a horse various thoughts arise before he hits the ground. When something occurs which is so serious that one's body may be damaged or one's life may be lost, no one will fail to put all his intellect to work. On such occasions, whether brilliant or dull, anyone will think and try to figure out what is best to do.

Therefore, if you think you will die tonight or tomorrow or that you are confronting a dreadful situation, encourage your aspiration and you will not fail to attain enlightenment. A person who seems superficially dull but has a sincere aspiration will attain enlightenment more quickly than one who is clever in a worldly sense. Although he could not recite even a single verse, Cūdapanthaka<sup>1</sup>, one of the disciples of the Buddha, gained enlightenment during one summer practice period because he had earnest aspiration.

We are only alive now. Only if we learn the buddha-dharma, earnestly wishing to attain enlightenment, will we be able to do so before dying.

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1 Cūdapanthaka (J., Shurihandoku) was one of the Buddha's disciples. He was dull and unable to memorize even one verse in four months. The Buddha gave him the job of cleaning the monks' sandals, and this enabled

him to attain enlightenment.

## 2 – 21

### One evening, Dōgen instructed,

At a Zen monastery in China sometimes they sift the wheat and rice, etc, throwing away the bad grains and keeping the good ones to cook. A certain Zen master admonished in a verse, “Though you split my head into seven pieces, do not winnow the rice.” What he meant was that monks shouldn’t fuss about arranging fine meals, rather they should eat whatever is available. When it is fine they should eat it as it is, and when it is poor, they should eat it without dislike. Get rid of your hunger and support your life with the faithful donations from patrons or pure food from temple belongings alone and devote yourself to the practice of the Way. Do not choose good from bad on the basis of taste. Now each of you in my assembly should also have this attitude.

## 2 – 22

On one occasion someone asked,

“How do you feel about the following view? Upon hearing that one’s own self is the buddha-dharma and that it is futile to seek anything outside of oneself, what if a student were to believe this deeply, give up practice and studying, and spend his whole life doing good and bad according to his nature?”

Dōgen taught,

“In this view, the person’s words and reality are contradictory. Giving up practice and abandoning study because of the futility of seeking anything outwardly, sounds as though something is being sought after by the act of giving up. This is not non-seeking.

Just realize that practice and study themselves are the buddha-dharma. Without seeking anything, refrain from engaging in worldly affairs or evil things even if you have the mind to do so. Do not think of or hate the boredom of the practice of the Way. Just practice wholeheartedly. Practice without even seeking after the completion of the Way or the attainment of the result. This attitude is in accordance with the principle of non-seeking.

Through Nangaku’s (Nányuè)<sup>1</sup> polishing a tile to make a mirror, he was admonishing Baso’s seeking to become a Buddha. Still he did not restrain Baso from sitting zazen. Sitting itself is the practice of the buddha. Sitting itself is non-doing. It is nothing but the true form of the Self. Apart from sitting, there is nothing to seek as the

buddha-dharma.”

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- 1 When Baso Dōitsu (Māzū Daoyi, 701–788) was sitting by himself in a hermitage, his teacher Nangaku Ejō (Nányuè Huirang, 677–744) visited him and asked “What do you intend to become by sitting zazen?”

Baso said, “I intend to become a Buddha.”

Nangaku then picked up a piece of tile and began to polish it on a stone in front of the hut.

Baso asked, “Master, what are you doing?”

Nangaku replied, “I am polishing the tile to make a mirror.”

Baso said, “How can you make a mirror by polishing a tile?”

Nangaku replied, “How can you become a buddha by practicing zazen?”

## 2–23

**One day Dōgen said in his instructions,**

Many monks these days say that they should follow worldly customs. I don't think this right. Even in the secular world, wise people say that it is impure to follow the way of the world. For example, Kutsugen (Qūyuán)<sup>1</sup> said “Everyone in the world is drunk; only I am sober.” He refused to go along with the ordinary ways of people and finally threw himself into Sōrō River (Cāngláng) and drowned.

Much more even, does the buddha-dharma go entirely against worldly ways. Lay people eat in abundance; monks eat once a day.

Everything is contrary. And finally, monks become people of great peace and joy (Nirvana). For this reason the way of monks is totally opposed to the way of the secular world.

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- 1 Kutsugen (Qūyuán, 343?-227?B.C.) was a politician and a poet in China. He lived in the Period of the Warring States.

## 2-24

### One day Dōgen instructed,

In the order of governing the world, from the emperor down to the common people, each person who has an occupation carries out his own function. Being unsuitable for a position is called “disorganization of the world.” When the manner of governing is in accordance with the will of heaven, the world is at peace and the people are at ease. That is why the emperor rises at one o’clock in the morning and starts the work of governing the world. It is not an easy thing. This is the case with the buddha-dharma too, only the functions and the activities to carry out are different. In the case of the emperor, he personally performs the duties of governing with all his intelligence, considering the precedents from previous ages, while seeking ministers endowed with virtue and ability. When his way of governing is in accordance with the will of heaven it is called a “well-governed world.” If the emperor is negligent in

his duties, he goes against the will of heaven, the world becomes disorderly and the people suffer.

The emperor, nobility, high officials, senior officials, common officials, and common people are all in charge of some respective function. A person who executes his duties can be called humane. If someone goes against his duties, he will receive punishment from heaven because he has caused disorder in heaven.

Therefore, students of the buddha-dharma, even though you have left home and parted from the secular world you should not want to spend an easy life. You should not waste time even for a moment. Although in the beginning it may seem profitable, later on it will be the cause of evil influences. Following the way of monks (who have left home), you should fulfill your duties and throw yourself into your practice. In governing the secular world, even if one pursues the precedents, rules, or examples of former rulers, sometimes one has to follow the examples of one's contemporaries since there is no certain way which has been handed down by the ancient sages or other great people. For the children of the Buddha, however, there are definite precedents and scriptural teachings. There are also teachers who have received the transmission of such traditions. We are capable of reflection. In each action of moving, standing, sitting, and lying down, if we think of the precedents and follow our predecessors in our practice, there is no reason to fail in attaining the Way. In the secular world people wish to be in harmony with the will of heaven. Buddhist practitioners wish to be in harmony with the will of Buddha. The tasks are the same but the result (for the Buddhist) is superior. For

great peace and joy (Nirvana) which is never lost once attained depends only upon having the aspiration to make this phantom-like body follow the will of Buddha in this lifetime. Nevertheless, the Buddha's teachings never encourage making our body suffer meaninglessly. If you follow the demeanor and behavior prescribed in the precepts, your body will be at ease, your behavior will be appropriate, and you will not disturb other people. Therefore abandon bodily pleasures caused by egocentric views and thoroughly follow the Buddha's precepts.

## 2-25

Also Dōgen said,

When staying at Tendō Monastery in China, while the old master Nyojō was abbot there, we sat zazen until about eleven o'clock at night and got up at about half-past two to sit zazen. The abbot sat with the assembly in the *sōdō*, never taking even one night off.

While sitting, many monks fell asleep. The abbot walked around hitting them with his fist or his slipper, scolding them and encouraging them to wake up. If they continued to sleep, he went to the *shōdō*<sup>1</sup>, rang the bell, and called his attendants to light the candles. On the spur of the moment he would say such things as; "What is the use of sleeping? Why do you gather in a *sōdō*? Why



did you become a monk and enter this monastery?”

Consider the emperor and officials of the government. Who among them leads an easy life? The emperor governs with justice. The ministers serve with loyalty on down to the commoners. Who leads an easy life without laboring? You have avoided these labors and entered a monastery, but now spend your time wastefully. What on earth for? Life-and-death is the Great Matter. Everything is impermanent and changes swiftly. The teaching-schools and the Zen-schools both emphasize this. This evening or tomorrow morning you may become sick or die. Still you have no idea how your death may come or what kind of sickness you may contract. It is utterly foolish to pass the time you are alive meaninglessly sleeping or lying down while you fail to practice the buddha-dharma. Since you are like this, the buddha-dharma is dying. When people devotedly practiced zazen, the buddha-dharma flourished throughout the country. As of late, the buddha-dharma is falling into decay because no one promotes zazen.”

I personally saw him encourage the monks in his assembly in this way, and I saw him make them sit zazen.

One time, his immediate attendant said, “The monks in the *sōdō* are tired and sleepy. They may fall ill or lose their aspiration because of the long hours of sitting. Please shorten the time of zazen.”

Angrily the abbot replied, “We must never do that. People without bodhi-mind who temporarily stay in the *sōdō* would sleep even if we sat for only half an hour or less. Practitioners with bodhi-mind who aspire to practice are happier the longer they are

able to sit and therefore, practice much harder. When I was young I visited various teachers in different regions. I was encouraged by an old master among them who said to me, "In the past I used to hit the monks so hard that I almost broke my fist. But since I am now old and weak I cannot beat them so hard. Consequently no good monks develop. Since few teachers encourage sitting, the buddha-dharma is dying. I'll beat them even harder!"

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- 1 A hall behind the *sōdō* where the head monk gives talks on behalf of the abbot.

## 2–26

**Dōgen also said,**

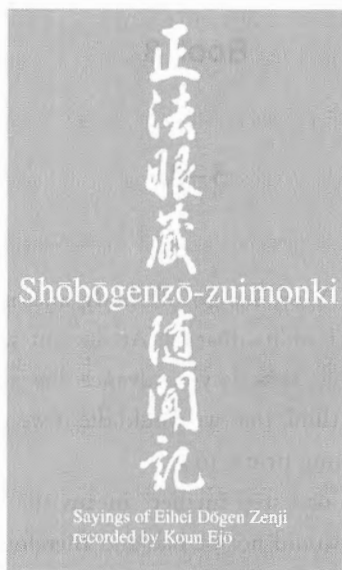
Is the Way attained through mind or body? In the teaching-schools it is said that since body and mind are not separate, the Way is attained through the body. Yet it is not clear that we attain the Way through the body, because they say "since" body and mind are not separate. In Zen the Way is attained through both body and mind.

As long as we only think about the buddha-dharma with our minds we will never grasp the Way, even in a thousand lifetimes or a myriad of eons. When we let go of our minds and cast aside our views and understandings the Way will be actualized. One sage

clarified True Mind (Reality) when he saw peach blossoms and another realized the Way when he heard the sound of tile hitting a bamboo.<sup>1</sup> They attained the Way through their bodies. Therefore, when we completely cast aside our thoughts and views and practice *shikantaza*, we will become intimate with the Way. For this reason the Way is doubtlessly attained through the body. This is why I encourage you to practice zazen wholeheartedly.

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- 1 This refers to Reiun Shigon (Lingun Zhixian, ?-?) and Kyogen Shikan (Xiangyan Zhixian, ?-840] who were the disciples of Zen Master Isan Reiyu (Guishan Lingyou, 771-853).



Book

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3

## Book 3

### 3-1

Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, let go of<sup>1</sup> body and mind and enter completely into the buddha-dharma. An ancient said, "At the top of a hundred foot pole, how do you advance one step further?"<sup>2</sup> In such a situation, we think that we would die if we were to let go of the pole and so we cling firmly to it.

Saying "advance one step further" means the same as having resolved that death would not be bad and therefore one lets go of bodily life. We should give up worrying about everything from the art of living to our livelihood.

Unless we give up worrying about such things it will be impossible to attain the Way even if we seem to be practicing earnestly as though trying to extinguish a fire enveloping our heads. Just let go of body and mind in a decisive manner.

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1 *Hōge* in Japanese means to let go, throw away, give up, abandon, lay down, etc. Someone asked Jōshū (Zhāozhōu), "I have nothing. How is that?"

Jōshū replied, "Throw it away (*hoge-jaku*)."

2 See 1-13, footnote 4.

## 3-2

Once, a certain nun asked,

“Even lay women practice and study the buddha-dharma. As for nuns, even though we have some faults, I feel there is no reason to say that we go against the buddha-dharma. What do you think?”

Dōgen admonished,

“That is not a correct view. Lay women might attain the Way as a result of practicing the buddha-dharma as they are. However, no monk or nun<sup>1</sup> attains it unless he or she has the mind of one who has left home. This is not because the buddha-dharma discriminates between one person and another, but rather because the person doesn't enter the dharma. There must be a difference in the attitude of lay people and those who have left home. A layman who has the mind of a monk or nun who has left home will be released from samsara. A monk or a nun who has the mind of a lay person has double faults. Their attitudes should be quite different. It is not that it is difficult to do, but to do it completely is difficult. The practice of being released from samsara and attaining the Way seems to be sought by everyone, but those who accomplish it are few. Life-and-death is the Great Matter; impermanence is swift<sup>2</sup>. Do not let your mind slacken. If you abandon the world, you should abandon it completely. I don't think that the names provisionally used to distinguish monks and nuns from lay people are at all important.”

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- 1 'Shukke' (Leaving home) in Japanese, means one who has renounced home-life to become a monk or a nun.
- 2 These phrases originally appear in the *Rokuso-Danryo*, (The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch).

### 3-3

In an evening talk, Dōgen said,

Among lay people these days I see that those who have attained successful results<sup>1</sup> [by their deeds] and have enabled their families to prosper are all honest, straight-forward, and kind to others. Because of that, their families will survive and prosper in later generations. Even if dishonest people and those who harm others seem to receive a good reward and are able to maintain their livelihood for a while, their fortunes will decline in the end. Or even if they seem to spend their own lifetimes without trouble, their descendents will inevitably wane.

Furthermore, doing good for others because of one's desire to be well thought of or to ingratiate oneself seems better than doing evil. However, such actions are not truly doing good for others since one is still thinking of oneself.

One who does good for others or for the future without being noticed and without considering for whom his acts are good is truly a good person. A monk should cultivate a mind even much

more superior to this.

Have compassion for living beings without distinguishing between the intimate and the unrelated and maintain an attitude of saving all equally. Never think of your own profit in terms of worldly or supraworldly benefit<sup>2</sup>. Even though you are neither known nor appreciated, just do good for others according to your own heart and do not show others that you have such a spirit.

The secret of keeping this attitude is, first of all, abandoning the world and casting aside your own body. No desire to be well thought of by others arises, but only if you have truly thrown away your own body. However, if you think “let others think what they may” and you do evil, indulging in this or that, you go against the will of the Buddha. Simply do good without expectation of reward or fame, be truly gainless<sup>3</sup>, and work for the sake of benefiting others. The primary point to bear in mind is to separate from your ego. To keep this mind you have to awaken to impermanence. Our life is like a dream. Time passes swiftly. Our dewlike life easily disappears. Since time waits for no one, try to do good to others and follow the will of the Buddha as long as you are alive.

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1 *Kabō* in Japanese, means effect, reward, or retribution for some act done.

2 Supraworldly benefit (In Japanese, *Shusseken no riyaku*) means benefit for clarifying the Way, not benefit for fulfilling one's desires.

3 *Mushotoku* in Japanese, means nothing to gain, or no desire to gain anything, or being free from the discrimination between subject (one who gains) and object (things to be gained). This expression is found in the *Diamond-Sutra*. “The Lord (Shakyamuni) said, So it is, Subhuti, so it is. Not even the least dharma is there found or got at. Therefore is it called



'utmost (anutara), right and perfect enlightenment'". (Translated by Edward Conze). In the Heart Sutra we find, "...there is no knowledge, no attainment, [and] no realization, because there is no attainment." (Translated by D. T. Suzuki)

### 3-4

**In an evening talk Dōgen said,**

Students of the Way should be thoroughly poor. When we look at people in the secular world, men of property inevitably have two kinds of troubles; anger and dishonor. If they have some treasure, others wish to steal it, and when they try to protect it anger immediately arises. Or in talking about some matter, argument and negotiation eventually escalate to conflict and fighting. Proceeding in this way anger will arise and result in dishonor. Being poor and unselfish, releases people from these problems and they find peace. Proof is right in front of our eyes. We don't need to search for it in the scriptures. Not only that, ancient sages and wise predecessors criticized being wealthy, and heavenly deities, buddhas, and patriarchs have all denounced it. Nevertheless, foolish people accumulate wealth and bear so much anger; this is the shame of shames. Our wise predecessors, ancient sages, buddhas, and patriarchs have all been poor yet aspired to the Way.

These days the decay of the buddha-dharma is occurring right

before our eyes. From the time I first entered Kenninji Monastery<sup>1</sup>, over a period of seven or eight years I saw many changes gradually taking place. They had built storerooms in each temple building, each person having his own utensils. Many became fond of fine clothing, stored up personal possessions, and indulged in idle talk. No one cared about the forms of greeting one another nor about prostrating before the Buddha. Looking at these things, I can imagine what other places must be like.

A person of the buddha-dharma should not possess any treasure or property other than robes and a bowl. What is the need for a closet? You should not own things which have to be hidden from others. You try to hide things because you are afraid of thieves; if you abandon them you will be that much more at ease. When you don't want to be killed even though you have to kill, your body suffers and your mind is anxious. However, if you make up your mind not to retaliate, even if someone tries to kill you, you will not need to be careful or worry about thieves. You will never fail to be at ease.

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- 1 Dōgen began to practice with Myōzen at Kenninji, in 1217, when he was eighteen years old. He stayed there until he went to China in 1223. After he came back from China he stayed at Kenninji again for a few years.

### 3-5

#### One day Dōgen instructed,

When Kaimon (Haimén) Zenji<sup>1</sup> was the abbot of Tendō Monastery in China, there was a *shuso* called Gen (Yuán). He had grasped the dharma and was awakened to the Way; his practice surpassed even that of the abbot. One night, he visited the abbot's room, lit incense, prostrated himself, and asked to be allowed to be the *shuso* of the rear-hall.<sup>2</sup>

At the time, the master wept, "Since becoming a novice, I have never heard of such a thing. For a monk practicing zazen, it is a great mistake to ask to be the *shuso* or to receive the title of Elder. You have already awakened to the Way more than I have. Do you seek the position of *shuso* for the sake of promotion? I would allow you to be the *shuso* of the front-hall or even the abbot. Your attitude is low-minded. Indeed, by this I can see why the rest of the monks have not yet attained enlightenment. The decline of the buddha-dharma can be seen from such an attitude."

Afterwards, he shed tears and wept with sorrow. Although Gen left ashamed of himself and actually declined the position, the master appointed him as the *shuso*. Later Gen recorded the conversation, shaming himself and showing his master's excellent words.

When I think about this, I see that the ancients put people to shame if they wanted to make themselves important, to become head of the people, or to attain the title of Elder. Just awaken to

the Way; be concerned with nothing else.

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- 1 Kaimon Shisai (Haimen Shizhai, ?-?) was a disciple of Setsuan Tokko (Zhuoan Deguang), See 1-3, footnote 1.
- 2 The Japanese word is *godō shuso*. In ancient Zen monasteries there were two *shuso* (head monks). One was the *zendō shuso*, the other was the *godō shuso*. *Zendō* means the front part of the *sōdō* and *godō* means the rear part of the *sōdō*. The *zendō shuso* had the overall responsibility while the *godō shuso* assisted him. Today, however, only the *zendō shuso* remains and is now simply called the *shuso*, while the *godō* has come to mean the instructor above the *shuso*.

### 3-6

#### One evening Dōgen instructed,

After acceding to the throne, Taisō of the Tō dynasty lived in the old palace. Since it was in disrepair, moisture entered inside and the emperor became ill from the chilly winds and mist. When his ministers proposed building a new palace, the emperor replied,

“This is the busy farming season. The people would certainly be troubled. We should wait until autumn to build it. Being afflicted by moisture is due to not being accepted by Earth. Being affected by wind and rain is due to not living in accordance with Heaven. If I go against Heaven and Earth, I cannot maintain my health. I will be in accordance with Heaven and Earth when I no longer cause

the people to suffer. If I act in harmony with Heaven and Earth my body will not be afflicted.”

So saying, he did not build the new palace and dwelt in the old one after all. Here even a lay person thought of the people more than his own health. So much more should (you as) children of the Buddha succeed to the way of the Tathāgata and have compassion towards all living beings as if each of them were your only child<sup>1</sup>. Don't scold or cause people trouble even if they are your attendants or servants. Moreover, show respect for your fellow students and practitioners, your seniors or other elder people, as if they were the Tathāgata; this is all clearly written in the precepts. Therefore, students today should also think of doing good for others without distinguishing between people of the upper or lower class, or the intimate or unrelated, even though their deeds are not seen and are not known to others. Whether it be a great or small matter, you should not be a nuisance to others and hurt others' feelings.

During the time the Tathāgata was alive, many non-Buddhists slandered and hated the Tathāgata. One of the disciples of the Buddha asked,

“Tathāgata, you have always held gentleness as being fundamental and have had compassion in your heart. All living beings should equally respect you. Why are there some who do not follow you?”

The Buddha replied, “When I led an assembly in the past, I often admonished my disciples by scolding them and finding fault with them. Because of that, things like this happen in the present.”

This passage can be found in the scriptures on the precepts.

Therefore, even if you lead a group of practitioners as an abbot, when you admonish your disciples and remonstrate with them, you should not use abusive or critical words. Those who have aspiration will follow you, even if you admonish and encourage them with gentle words. Students, you should never scold family members, fellow practitioners, or others with harsh words. Be careful about this.

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- 1 In the *Lotus Sutra* we find the following verse.

Now this triple world,  
All is my domain;  
The living beings in it  
All are my sons. (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, translated by Bunno Kato)

### 3-7

Also, Dōgen instructed,

Zen monks should always bear in mind maintaining the way of practice of the buddhas and patriarchs.

First of all, do not covet property. The depth of the compassion of the Tathagata cannot be fathomed even by analogies. Everything he did was for the sake of all living beings. He never did even the slightest thing which was not beneficial to living beings. Since he was the crown prince of the *cakravarti-rāja* (wheel-turning king)<sup>1</sup>,

he could have ascended the throne and ruled the whole world as he liked. He could have cared for his disciples with treasures and raised them with his wealth. Why did he give up such a position and practice begging by himself? He refused to store up wealth and practiced begging for food because it was more beneficial for living beings in later generations and for his disciples in practicing the Way.

Since then all well known patriarchs in India and China have lived in extreme poverty and practiced begging for food. All the patriarchs in our lineage have solely encouraged not accumulating wealth. Also, in the teaching-schools when people praise our school they primarily praise our [attitude toward] poverty. In the books handed down to this age as well, the poverty [of Zen monks] has been recorded and praised. I've never heard of anyone who was rich in material wealth who also carried out the buddha-dharma. All sincere practitioners of the buddha-dharma have worn patched rags and have always begged for food. The reason the Zen School was considered good and Zen monks different from others was that when Zen monks first lived among others in the temple buildings of the teaching or the precept-schools<sup>2</sup>, they abandoned caring for their bodies and lived in poverty. We should remember this as the primary style of practice in this (Zen) school.

[Not clinging to wealth] is not something we should look for written proof of in the holy scriptures. In my own case, I used to own land for farming as well as other property. I had my own wealth as well. Comparing the conditions of my body and mind then with my present condition of poverty, of barely possessing

robes and bowls, I feel that my state of mind [my life] right now is better. This is the actual proof.

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- 1 The ideal king conceived of in India was the one who ruled the world with the wheel which he obtained at the time of enthronement. There were four kinds of kings, according to the different qualities of the wheel.
- 2 Before Zen monasteries were established around the age of Hyakujō Ekai (Baizhang Huihai, 720–814). Zen monks stayed in the temple buildings of the other schools, or wandered here and there. They didn't have their own monasteries.

### 3–8

**Dōgen also said,**

An ancient has said that if you are not an equal of the person, do not speak of his conduct. This means that if you have not learned and understood another's virtues, when you see the person's faults you should not criticize him. You should think that he is a good person though his action is bad; good people also do bad things. Accept only his virtues, not his faults. The saying that a wise man looks at another's virtues and not his faults means the same thing.



### 3-9

#### One day Dōgen instructed,

You should not fail to carry out virtues in secret. If you do good deeds secretly, you will surely receive unseen protection and manifest benefit. You should respect images of the Buddha even if they are very crude, being made of mud, wood, or clay. Even if the sutras are written on coarse scrolls made of yellow paper and attached to a red roll<sup>1</sup>, you should take refuge in them. Even if there are shameless monks who violate the precepts, you should look up to them and believe in the sangha. If you are respectful and prostrate yourself with faith in your heart, you will surely receive happiness. Although you might meet shameless monks, crude images of the Buddha, or coarse sutra scrolls, if you do not have faith in them and respect them, you will certainly receive punishment. Images of the Buddha, sutra scrolls, and monks are the Buddha's legacy and are the foundation of happiness for human and heavenly beings. Therefore, if you take refuge in them and revere them, you will surely receive their benefit. If you don't have faith, you will receive punishment. No matter how uncommonly crude it may be, you should respect the world of the Three Treasures.

It is terribly wrong to be fond of committing evil deeds on the pretext that a Zen monk does not practice good nor accumulate virtue. I've never heard of any of our predecessors who have served as exemplars indulging in evil deeds.

Zen master Tanka Tennen (Dānxiá Tānrán)<sup>2</sup> burned a wooden statue of the Buddha. Although it seemed to be nothing but an evil deed, his deed was a means of showing the dharma. When we read the record of this master's deeds, we find that his sitting was always in accordance with the prescribed rules and while standing he always followed good manners. His manner was always courteous as if he were meeting a noble guest. Even when he sat for a short while, he sat cross legged and held his hands in the *shashu* position<sup>3</sup>. He protected temple property as though caring for his own eyes. He never failed to offer praise when he saw someone practicing diligently. Even if they were small, he appreciated good deeds. His own actions in his daily life were especially wonderful. His record remains as a mirror in Zen monasteries.

This applies not only to Zen Master Tanka Tennen but to all the various masters who have attained the Way, and to patriarchs who have clarified the Way and have been recognized as exemplars; all maintained the behavior prescribed by the precepts, conducted themselves with dignity, and appreciated even minor goodness. I have never heard of any master of the Way who disregarded goodness.

Therefore students, if you wish to follow the Way of the patriarchs, never make light of goodness. Purify your faith. All goodness gathers together where the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is practiced. Once you have clarified that all dharmas (beings) are the buddha-dharma, you should know that evil is definitely evil and that it causes one to depart from the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs. Good is always good and connects with the

Buddha-Way. If this is so, how can you underestimate the world of the Three Treasures?

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- 1 The Buddhist scriptures were used to be printed on yellow paper and attached to a red stick.
- 2 Tanka Tennen (Dānxiá Tānrán, 739–824) was a disciple of Sekitō Kisen (Shitou Xiqian). While he was staying at Erinji (Huilin-temple) during a cold winter, he burnt a wooden statue of the Buddha to warm himself. Monks there renounced him for it.  
He said to them, "I'm burning this to take *sharira*." (the Buddha's relics). Someone said, "How can you get *sharira* from a piece of wood?" Tennen replied, "If we can't, then why do you find fault with me?" In this story Tanka showed that the statue of the Buddha is not the real Buddha. We should see the formless Buddha beyond the form of the statue.
- 3 *Shashu* is a way of holding the hands. Put the thumb of the left hand in the middle of the palm and make a fist around it. Place the fist in front of the chest. Cover the fist with the right hand. Keep the elbows away from the body forming a straight line with both forearms. In some Zen monasteries, monks keep their hands in this position while walking and standing.

### 3–10

**Dōgen also said,**

Now if you wish to practice the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs, you should practice the Way of the previous sages and

emulate the conduct of the patriarchs with no (expectation of) profit; expect nothing, seek nothing, gain nothing.

Even if you quit seeking and give up expectations of buddhahood, if you stop practicing and continue engaging in your former evil deeds, you will still be guilty of seeking and will fall back into the old nest<sup>1</sup>.

Without having the slightest expectation, maintain the prescribed manner of conduct. Think of acting to save and benefit living-beings, earnestly perform all good deeds, and give up former evil ones. Do this solely for the sake of becoming the foundation of happiness for human and heavenly beings. Without stagnating in good deeds of the present, continue practicing your whole lifetime. An ancient called this 'breaking the bottom of the lacquer pail'<sup>2</sup>. The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is like this.

- 
- 1 The old nest is what we are always going back to. A kind of frame we are unable to get out of, that is, the tendency or the system of values formed by our upbringing, experiences, and so on. It is the Karmic (or conditioned) self.
  - 2 A container for lacquer. It is so black that you cannot distinguish between things. This is a metaphor for delusions, ignorance, and ego-attachment. Breaking the lacquer pail means to get free from conditioned human sentiments.

### 3-11

One day a monk came and asked about what to be careful of in learning the Way. Dōgen replied,

“First of all, a person studying the Way should be poor. If you possess great wealth, you will definitely lose aspiration.

If a lay person learning the Way still clings to wealth, covets comfortable housing, and keeps company with relatives, despite having the aspiration he will confront many obstacles in learning the Way.

Although many lay people have learned the dharma since ancient times, even those who were known as good practitioners were no match for monks. Since monks do not possess any property except for three robes and one bowl, never worry about where to live, and are not greedy for food and clothing, they will obtain benefit as long as they devote themselves to learning the Way according to their capacity. This is because being poor is being intimate with the Way.

Hōon (Páng yùn)<sup>1</sup> was a layman but he was not inferior to the monks; his name has remained among Zen practitioners. When he began to learn Zen, he took all his family possessions and was about to throw them into the sea. People tried to dissuade him by saying, “You should give them to others or use them for the sake of Buddhism.”

He replied to them, “I am throwing them away because I think they are harmful. Since I know them to be harmful, how can I give

them to others? Wealth is poison which sickens both body and mind.”

In the end, he threw them into the sea.

After that, he made bamboo baskets and sold them to earn his living. Though he was a layman, because he abandoned his wealth, people thought he was a good person. So much more should a monk completely give up wealth.”

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1 Hōon (?–808) was a lay disciple of Baso Doitsu (Mazu Daoyi).

### 3–12

**A monk said,**

“In the monasteries in China, since there are provisions belonging to the sangha which comprise the permanent property of the temple and are used to support the monks’ practice, the monks need not worry about their livelihood. Because there are no such things in this country, abandoning all possessions will become an obstacle to practicing the Way. I think it is a good idea to have people who offer clothing and food to support our practice. What do you think? ”

**Dōgen replied,**

“I disagree. Unlike in China, sometimes people in this country

support monks beyond reason and offer things beyond their means. I don't know about others, but I have experienced this and found this to be true. I have spent more than ten years without any possessions and I have never worried about how to obtain them. To think of accumulating even a little bit of wealth is a great obstacle. Without thinking of how to gain or store up things you will naturally receive as much as you need to stay alive for a while. Each person has his allotted share; heaven and earth bestow it on us. Even though you don't run around seeking it, you will receive it without fail.

Needless to say, children of the Buddha will receive the legacy of the Tathagata, they will obtain it without seeking it. These things will naturally be there only if you abandon everything and practice the Way. This is clear proof."

### 3-13

**Dōgen also said,**

Students of the Way often say that if they do such and such people in the world will reproach them. This is totally wrong. Even though people criticize you, if it is the activity of the buddhas and patriarchs and in accordance with the sacred teachings, you should follow and practice it. Even if people in the world praise you, if it is not prescribed in the sacred scriptures nor what the patriarchs

have done, you should not practice it. [This is because] even if people in the world, be they intimates or strangers, praise or criticize you and you follow their opinions, when you face death and fall into the evil-realms pulled by your own evil deeds, none of them can save you. Moreover, even if you are reproached and hated by everyone, if you practice relying solely on the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs you will surely be saved. So do not refrain from practicing for fear of being slandered by others. Furthermore, those who slander you or praise you are not necessarily those who have penetrated and attained the practice of the buddhas and patriarchs. How is it possible to judge the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs by worldly values of good and evil?

Therefore, do not depend on the sentiments of worldly people. If an action should be carried out according to the Buddha-Way, practice it wholeheartedly.

### 3-14

**A monk said,**

“My aged mother is still alive. I am her only son. She lives solely by my support. Her love for me is especially deep and my desire to fulfill my filial duties is also deep.

I am somewhat engaged in worldly affairs and have relationships with people; with their help I obtain clothing and food for my



mother. If I leave the world and live alone in a hermitage, my mother cannot expect to live for even one day. Yet it is difficult for me to stay in the secular world without being able to enter the Buddha-Way completely because of the necessity of taking care of her. Still, if there is some reason I should abandon her and enter the Way, what might it be?"

**Dōgen instructed,**

"This is a difficult matter. No one else can decide for you. After carefully considering it, if you truly aspire to practice the Buddha-Way it would be good for both you and your mother to somehow prepare or find a means to ensure your mother's livelihood and enter the Buddha-Way. What you earnestly wish for you will definitely attain. If you wish to beat a strong enemy, to gain favor with some noble lady, or to obtain some precious treasure, if your desire is strong enough you will surely find some means to attain your wish. It will certainly be completed with the unseen help of the beneficent deities of Heaven and Earth.

The Sixth Patriarch (Cáoxi Huineng)<sup>1</sup> was a woodcutter in Shinshū (Xinzhōu) Prefecture. He sold firewood to support his mother. One day at the market place he aroused bodhi-mind while listening to a customer recite the *Diamond-Sutra*<sup>2</sup>. He left his mother and went to Ōbai (Huángméi)<sup>3</sup>. It is said that he obtained ten ounces of silver and used it to supply clothing and food for his mother. I think this was given from Heaven because of the sincerity of his aspiration. Ponder this thoroughly. This is most reasonable.

Taking care of your mother until she dies and afterwards

entering the Buddha-Way without any problems would seem to be the natural order of events and the ideal way of fulfilling your true aspiration. Yet no one knows what will happen, since there is no certainty that an old person will die sooner than a younger person. Your mother may live a long time and you may die before she does. In such a case, since your plan did not work, you would regret not having entered the Buddha-Way and your mother would feel guilty for not having permitted you to do so. There would be no merit for either of you and both of you would feel guilty. Would that be of any value?

If you abandon your present life and enter the Buddha-Way, even if your mother dies of starvation, wouldn't it be better for you to form a connection with the Way and for her to permit her only son to enter the Way? Although it is most difficult to cast aside filial love even over aeons and many lifetimes, if, having being born in a human body you give it up in this lifetime, when you encounter the Buddha's teachings you will be truly fulfilling your debt of gratitude. Why wouldn't this be in accordance with the Buddha's will? It is said that if one child leaves home to become a monk, seven generations of parents will attain the Way.

How can you waste an opportunity for eternal peace and joy by clinging to your body in this uncertain ephemeral world? Consider this and ponder these points thoroughly on your own."

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1 Huineng (638–713) was the Sixth Patriarch of Zen in China. He lived in Sokei (Cáoxi). The story of his life was recorded in the *Rokuso-Dankyo* (The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch).

- 2 *Vajracchedika-prajnaparamita-sutra*. (Translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva (343–413). This is usually called the Diamond Sutra in English.
- 3 Ōbai (Huángméi) is the name of the place where the monastery of the Fifth Patriarch was located.

正法眼藏  
随闻记

Shobōgenzō-zuimonki

Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji  
recorded by Koun Ejō

Book

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4

## Book 4

### 4-1

**One day in a speech, Dōgen instructed,**

Students of the Way, you should not cling to your own views. Even if you have some understanding, you should practice self-reflection; there must be something lacking to your understanding and there might be a more profound understanding for you. Visit various teachers far and wide and investigate the sayings of our predecessors. Yet do not cling too firmly even to the words of those of former times. Nevertheless, thinking that your views might be mistaken, even though you believe them to be true, if there is something superior you should follow it.

### 4-2

**Dōgen also said,**

The National Teacher Echū (Huizhong) of Nanyō (Nányáng)<sup>1</sup> asked the imperial attendant priest<sup>2</sup> Rin (Lin), “Where did you come from?”

The attendant priest replied, "I came from south of the city."

The Master said, "What is the color of the grass there?"

The attendant priest replied, "It is yellow."

The Master inquired of a young boy who was serving as the master's personal attendant, "What is the color of the grass south of the city?"

The boy said, "It is yellow."

The Master said, "Even this boy can receive the purple robe and talk about the profound truth to the emperor at the court."

He meant here that the boy could be a teacher of the emperor since he gave the true color [of the grass]. The view of the attendant priest did not go beyond common sense.

Later someone said, "What is wrong with the attendant priest that he did not exceed common sense? The boy also spoke of the true color. This is the real teacher."

In so saying he did not accept the opinion of the National teacher. From this we understand that we should not necessarily rely on the words of the ancients but we should grasp just true reality. Although having doubt is not good, it is also bad to attach ourselves to what we shouldn't take for granted or to refrain from questioning what we should question.

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1 Nanyō Echū (Nányáng Huizhong, ?–775) a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch.

2 In China there were some attendant priests who served at the *butsuden* (Buddha Hall) in the imperial palace.

## 4-3

### **Dōgen also instructed,**

The primary point you should attend to is detaching yourself from personal views. To detach yourself from personal views means to not cling to your body. Even if you have thoroughly studied the words and stories of the ancient masters and have been practicing zazen continuously and immovably like iron or rock, if you cling to your body and do not detach yourself from it you will be unable to attain the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs in ten thousand aeons or a thousand lifetimes.

Even though you think you may have realized the provisional teachings and the true teachings or the authentic Exoteric and Esoteric scriptures, if you have not detached from the mind which clings to your body, it is like vainly counting another's wealth without possessing even a half-penny of your own. I implore you to sit quietly and seek the beginning and the end of this body on the ground of reality. Your body, hair, and skin, were originally comprised of the two droplets from your father and mother. Once the breath stops, they scatter and finally turn into mud and soil on the mountains and fields. How can you cling to your body? Moreover, looking at your body from the basis of the dharma, which among the gathering and scattering of the eighteen elements<sup>1</sup> can you identify as your body? There are differences between the teaching schools and those other than the teaching schools (Zen)<sup>2</sup>. However, they both show the ungraspability of the

body from beginning to end and assert egolessness as the essential point in practicing the Way. If you first realize this reality, the true Buddha-Way will manifest itself clearly.

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- 1 The six sense-organs are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, the tactile body, and the mind, while the six objects of the sense-organs are color and shape, sound, odor, taste, tangible objects, objects of the mind. The six consciousnesses correspond to the six sense-organs and their objects, visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, taste consciousness, tactile consciousness, and nonsensuous consciousness.
- 2 This refers to the schools based on written teachings such as the Kegon, the Tendai, the Sanron Schools, etc., and the Zen School which insists that Buddha-mind should be shown directly without using verbal teachings.

#### 4-4

##### One day Dōgen instructed,

An ancient has said, "Associating with a good person is like walking through mist and dew; though you will not become drenched, gradually your robes will become damp."<sup>1</sup> This means that if you become familiar with a good person, you will become good yourself without being aware of it.

In ancient times a boy who attended Mater Gutei (Jūdi)<sup>2</sup>, without noticing when he was learning or when he was practicing, realized the Way because he had served as a personal attendant to



the master who had been practicing for a long time.

Similarly if you practice zazen for a long time you will suddenly clarify the Great Matter and will know that zazen is the true gate [to the buddha-dharma].

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- 1 This is a quotation from the *Isankyōsaku* (Guishan-Jingce), written by Isan Reiyū (Guishan Lingyou, 771–853).
  - 2 Whenever Gutei was asked questions, he did nothing but raise a finger. One day, someone asked his attendant what the master's teaching was, the boy mimicked his master's action and raised a finger. When Gutei heard this, he cut off the boy's finger. The boy ran away crying. Gutei called the boy's name. When the boy turned his head, Gutei raised his finger. The boy suddenly became enlightened.

## 4–5

In the second year of Katei (1236A.D.)<sup>1</sup>, on the evening of the last day of the twelfth month, Master Dōgen appointed me [Ejō] to be the *shuso*<sup>2</sup> (head monk) of Kōshōji. After an informal speech<sup>3</sup> Dōgen asked me as the *shuso* to take up the whisk<sup>4</sup> and give a lecture for the first time. I was the first *shuso* of Kōshōji.

In his short speech Master Dōgen brought up the matter of the transmission of the buddha-dharma in this lineage.

“The First Patriarch<sup>5</sup> came from the West and stayed at Shōrin (Shaolín) Temple. He sat facing the wall waiting for someone [to

whom he could transmit the dharma] and anticipating the time [when the dharma would spread]. In December of a certain year Shinkō (Shényuang) came to practice under him. The First Patriarch knew that he was a vessel of the Supreme Vehicle<sup>6</sup>, so he taught and guided him; both the dharma and the robe were transmitted to him. Their descendants spread throughout the country and the true-dharma has prevailed down to the present day.

“I have appointed a *shuso* for the first time at this monastery. Today I have asked him to take up the whisk and give a lecture. Do not worry about the small number in this sangha. [To Ejō] Do not mind that you are a beginner. At Funyō (Fényáng)<sup>7</sup> there were only six or seven people; at Yakusan (Yāoshān)<sup>8</sup> there were less than ten. Nevertheless, all of them practiced the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs. They called this the flourishing of the monasteries’.”

Ponder the fact that someone realized the Way by hearing the sound of bamboo; that another clarified the Mind at the sight of peach blossoms<sup>9</sup>. How could it be possible to differentiate smart bamboo trees from dull ones, or deluded ones from enlightened ones? How could there be shallow or deep, wise or stupid among flowers? The flowers bloom every year yet not everyone attains enlightenment by viewing them. Stones often strike bamboo yet not everyone who hears the sound clarifies the Way. Only through the virtue of long study and continuous practice, with the assistance of diligent effort in the Way, does one realize the Way or clarify the Mind. This did not occur because the sound of the bamboo was especially wonderful, nor because the color of the peach blossoms was particularly profound. Although the sound of bamboo is

marvelous, it does not sound of itself; it cries out with the help of a piece of tile. Although the color of peach blossoms is beautiful, they do not bloom of themselves; they open with the help of the spring breeze.

Practicing the Way is also like this. This Way is inherent in each of us; still our gaining the Way depends upon the help of co-practitioners. Though each person is brilliant, our practicing the Way still needs the power of other people [in the sangha]. Therefore, while unifying your mind and concentrating your aspiration, practice and seek the Way together. A jewel becomes a vessel with polishing; a human being becomes benevolent and wise with refining. What jewel glitters from its inception? Who is brilliant from the outset? You must polish and refine. So do not demean yourselves and do not relax in your practice of the Way.

An ancient said, 'Do not spend your time in vain.' Now I ask you, does time stop though you hold it dear? Or does it continue even though you lament? You must know that it is not time that passes in vain; it is the person that spends it in vain. This means that human beings, just the same as time, have to devote themselves to the practice of the Way instead of spending their time in vain.

"Thus, put your minds together in studying and practicing. It is not easy to uphold the dharma by myself [so I have asked the new *shuso* to assist me]. The Way the buddhas and patriarchs have practiced has always been like this. There were many who attained the Way by following the teaching of the Tathāgata (Shakyamuni), but there were some who ascertained the Way through Ananda<sup>10</sup>.

*Shuso*, you must not deprecate yourself saying that you are not a vessel [of the dharma]. Give a lecture to your fellow practitioners on the story of Tōzan's (Dòngshān) three pounds of sesame".<sup>11</sup>

Dōgen got down from his seat, the drum was struck again, and the shuso [I] took the whisk. This was the first 'taking the whisk' at Kōshōji. I was thirty-nine years old.

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- 1 In December of 1235, Dōgen began to raise donations for building the *sōdō* at Kōshōji. Construction was completed in October, 1236. This was the first formal *sōdō* in Japan.
  - 2 See 3–5, footnote 2.
  - 3 *Shōsan* literally means 'small meeting'. Usually *Shōsan* were held in the abbot's quarters where he would give a talk while *jōdō* is called *daisan*, the big meeting which is held in the *battō*, the dharma-hall.  
In the *Eibei-kōroku* Dōgen said, " *Shōsan* is the teaching of the family of the buddhas and patriarchs. In Japan, even the name was unknown. Needless to say, the custom behind the name had never been carried out. Twenty years have passed since I introduced it and began practicing it (in Japan)."
  - 4 *Hinpotsu* in Japanese, literally means taking up the whisk. Actually, it refers to a lecture given in place of the abbot by the head monk or other senior monk. It is so called because the person who gives the lecture takes up the whisk of the abbot.
  - 5 The first patriarch of Chinese Zen, that is, Bodhidharma (?–495, 346–495, ?–528, or ?–536). He transmitted the dharma from India to China. According to legend, Bodhidharma met Butei (Wudi) of Ryō (Liang) and went to Shōrinji where he sat zazen for nine years. During that period, Shinkō (Shényuang) came and eventually became his disciple. Shinkō changed his name to Eka (Huiko). He became the second patriarch.
  - 6 Zen monks call Reality the Supreme Vehicle, because it transcends the discrimination between *mabayana* and *binayana*.

- 7 Funiyō Zenshō (Fényáng Shanzhao, 947–1024) A Chinese Zen master in the Rinzai School.
- 8 Yakusan Igen (Yāoshān Weiyān, 751–834) A disciple of Sekitō Kisen (Shitōu Xiqian).
- 9 See 2–26, footnote 1.
- 10 Ananda was one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha. He was the attendant of the Buddha for more than twenty years and committed all his sermons to memory. After the Buddha's death Ananda recited the sermons he had memorized, which were later compiled into a collection of sutras.
- 11 Tōzan Shusho (Dongshan Shouchu). A disciple of Unmon Bunen (Yumen Wenyan, ?–949).  
A monk asked him, "What is the buddha?"  
Tozan said. "Three pounds of sesame."

## 4–6

### One day Dōgen instructed,

A lay person said, "Who does not want to have fine clothing? Who does not love rich flavors? However, people who aspire to learn the Way enter the mountains, sleep under the clouds, and endure cold and hunger. Do not think that the ancients did not suffer; they endured suffering in order to abide in the Way. People in later generations hear this and revere the Way, respecting the virtue of our predecessors."

Even among lay people, the wise are like this.

[People practicing] the Buddha-Way must not fail to have this attitude. Not all the ancients had golden bones; not all the contemporaries of the Buddha were superior vessels [of the dharma]. According to the Precepts texts [Vinaya-pitaka]<sup>1</sup>, there were various monks. Some had incredibly evil minds. However, it is written that all eventually attained the Way and became Arhats<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, even though we are low-minded and inferior, we should immediately arouse bodhi-mind, understanding that if we arouse such a mind and practice, we will definitely attain the Way. All the ancients endured pain and cold, still they practiced amidst their distress. Students today, even if you are suffering from physical pain or mental anguish, you should force yourselves to practice the Way.

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- 1 The collection of precepts. One of the three categories of the Buddhist scriptures. The Precepts texts contain rules of conduct and the rationale or stories regarding why such rules were laid down. The Buddha made rules each time a student did something wrong.
- 2 A saint who has completely destroyed evil desires within himself and attained emancipation from the cycle of samsara.

**Dōgen instructed,**

Students of the Way, the reason you do not attain enlightenment is because you hold onto your old views. Without knowing who taught you, you think that 'mind' is the function of your brain - thought and discrimination. When I tell you that 'mind' is grass and trees<sup>1</sup>, you do not believe it. When you talk about the Buddha, you think the Buddha must have various physical characteristics and a radiant halo. If I say that the Buddha is broken tiles and pebbles<sup>2</sup>, you show astonishment. The views you cling to are neither what has been transmitted to you from your father nor what you were taught by your mother. You have believed them for no particular reason; they are the result of having listened for a long time to what people have said. Therefore, since it is the definite word of the buddhas, and patriarchs, when it is said that 'mind' is grass and trees, you should understand that grass and trees are 'mind', and if you are told that 'Buddha' is tiles and pebbles, you should believe that tiles and pebbles are the 'Buddha'. Thus, if you reform your attachment, you will be able to attain the Way.

An ancient said, "Though the sun and the moon shine brightly, the floating clouds cover them over. Though clusters of orchids are about to bloom, the autumn winds blow causing them to wither." This is found in the *Jōgan Seiyō* (Zhēng-guan zhèng-yao)<sup>3</sup>, comparing a wise king and his evil ministers. Restating this, "Even

if the floating clouds cover the sun and the moon, they will not stay long. Even if the autumn winds wither the flowers, they will bloom again." If the king is wise enough, he will not be turned around, even if the ministers are evil. It should be the same in maintaining the Buddha-Way. No matter how evil minds arise, if you keep steadfast and maintain (aspiration) and practice for a long time, the floating clouds will disappear and the autumn winds will cease.

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- 1 In the *Zekkan-ron* (A Dialogue on the Contemplation of Extinction) translated by Gishin Tokiwa, there is a dialogue about grass and trees. Gateway asks, "Does the Way lie only in the spiritual body? Or does it also lie in grass and trees?" Attainment says, "There is no place where the Way does not pervade."
- 2 There is a dialogue about broken tiles between Nanyō Echū (Nányáng Huizhong) and a monk. The monk asked, "What is the mind of the ancient buddha?" The master said, "Fences, walls, broken tiles, and pebbles."
- 3 The *Jōgan-Seiyō* (Zhengguan Zhèng-yao). A ten volume collection of discussions on politics among the emperor Taisō of the To dynasty and his ministers. This was studied in Japan too, as a textbook by students belonging to families of the nobility and the *samurai* class.



## 4-8

### One day Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, as beginners, whether you have bodhi-mind or not, you should thoroughly read and study the scriptures, sutras, and śāstras<sup>1</sup>.

I first aroused bodhi-mind because of my realization of impermanence. I visited many places both near and far [to find a true teacher] and eventually left the monastery on Mount Hiei to practice the Way. Finally I settled at Kenninji. During that time, since I hadn't met a true teacher nor any good co-practitioners, I became confused and evil thoughts arose.

First of all, my teachers taught me that I should study as hard as our predecessors in order to become wise and to be known at the court, and famous all over the country. So when I studied the teachings I thought of becoming equal to the ancient wise people of this country, or to those who received the title of *Daishi* (Great teacher)<sup>2</sup>, etc.

When I read the *Kōsōden*, *Zoku-kōsōden*<sup>3</sup> and so on, and learned about the lifestyles of eminent monks and followers of the buddhadharma in Great China, they were different from what my teachers taught. I also began to understand that such a mind as I had aroused was despised and hated in all the sutras, śāstras, and biographies. I finally realized the truth; even if I think of gaining fame, it would be better to feel small [ashamed] before the ancient wise people and sincere people of later generations, than to be well

thought of by inferior people of today.

If I wish to be equal to someone, then it would be better to feel ashamed [standing] before the eminent predecessors of India and China, and [work] toward being their equal. So, I wish to become equal to the various heavenly beings, unseen beings, buddhas, and bodhisattvas.

Having realized this truth, I considered those in this country with the title of 'Great teacher' and so on as dirt or broken tiles. I completely reformed my former frame of mind. Look at the life of the Buddha. He abandoned the throne, and entered the mountains and forests. He begged for food his whole life even after he had completed the Way.

In a Precepts text<sup>4</sup>, it is said, "Knowing that home is not home, abandon home and become a homeless monk."

An ancient said, "Do not be arrogant and consider yourself equal to superior wise people. Do not deprecate yourself and think of yourself inferior."

This means that both are [a kind of] arrogance. Though you may be in a high position, do not forget that you may fall. Though you may be safe now, remember that you may have to face danger. Though you may be alive today, do not think that you will necessarily be alive tomorrow. The danger of death is right at your feet.

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1 Commentaries on the sutras. One of the Tri-Pitaka (three categories of Buddhist scriptures), that is, the sutras, the sastras, and the vinaya (precepts texts).

- 2 In China and Japan, *Daisi* or 'great teacher' was an honorific title given by the emperors.
- 3 See 1-1, footnote 1.
- 4 The fourteenth chapter of the *Makasōgiritsu* (Precepts of the Mahasangika School).

## 4-9

### Dōgen instructed,

An ignorant person thinks and speaks of senseless things. There is an aged nun working for this temple. It seems that she is now ashamed of her humble situation, so she tends to talk to others about how she used to be a lady of the upper class. Even if people believe her, there is not any merit in it. It is entirely meaningless.

I think everyone tends to hold such sentiments like hers. However, such sentiments clearly show a lack of bodhi-mind. One should reform this kind of mentality and become more compassionate.

Also there is a certain lay monk<sup>1</sup> who completely lacks bodhi-mind. Since he is a close friend, I would like to tell him to pray to the buddhas and gods to arouse bodhi-mind. But he will definitely get angry and it may cost us our friendship. However, unless he arouses bodhi-mind, it is useless just to be close friends.

1 See 2–5, footnote 1.

## 4–10

### One day Dōgen instructed,

There is an old saying, “Reflect three times before speaking.” This means that prior to saying or doing something, you should reflect on it three times. This ancient Confucianist wanted to say that after reflecting three times, if it is considered to be good each time, you should say or do it. When wise people in China say to reflect on things three times, they mean many times. Pondering before speaking, considering before acting; if it is good each time you think about the matter, you should speak or do it.

Zen monks also must be like this. Since there might be something wrong in what you think and what you say [without knowing it], first reflect on whether it is in accordance with the Buddha-Way or not, and ponder over whether it is beneficial to yourself and others. If it is good, do it or say it. Practitioners, if you hold onto this attitude, you will never go against the will of the Buddha your entire lifetime.

When I first entered Kenninji, all the monks in the sangha protected their body, mouth, and mind from evil deeds, according to their capability, and firmly resolved not to say or do anything that was bad for the Buddha-Way or harmful to others. [After

Abbot Eisai passed away], while the influence of his virtue remained, the monks were like this. These days, there is no one who maintains such an attitude.

Students today, you must know this, if something is definitely beneficial to yourself and others, as well as to the Buddha-Way, you must forget your own [egotistical] self and say or do it. You should neither say nor do anything meaningless. When elder monks are talking or doing something, younger ones should not interrupt them. This is a regulation set down by the Buddha. Consider this well.

Even lay people have the determination to forget themselves and think of the Way. Long ago, there was a person whose name was Rin-Shōjo (Lin-Xiāngrú) in the country of Chō (Zhào)<sup>1</sup>. Although he was of humble birth, because of his wisdom, he was taken into service by the king of Chō to administer the affairs of the country.

Once as envoy of the King, he was sent to take a piece of jade called Chōheki (the jade of Zhào)<sup>2</sup> to the country of Shin (Qin). Since the king of Shin had said he would exchange fifteen cities for the jade, Shōjo was dispatched to carry it. At that time, the rest of the ministers conspired against him; "If such a precious gem is entrusted to a man of low birth like Shōjo, it would look like there is no one capable in this country [to whom it could be entrusted]. It is shameful for us. We will be looked down upon by people of later generations. We should kill him while he is on his way and steal the jade."

At the time, someone secretly told this to Shōjo and advised

him to decline the mission in order to save his life.

Shōjo said, "I dare not decline. It will be my pleasure to be known by later generations that Shōjo, envoy of the king, was killed by evil ministers while on his way to Shin with the jade. Even though I might be killed, my name as a wise man would remain."

So saying, he left for Shin. When the other ministers heard of his remark, they said, "We cannot kill a person like this." So, they gave up the plot.

Finally Shōjo met the king of Shin and gave him the jade. However, he realized that the king of Shin was not about to give the fifteen cities for it. Shōjo thought out a plan and said, "There is a flaw in this jade. I'll show you."

So saying, he took the jade back, and continued, "From your demeanor, your Majesty, you seem to begrudge the fifteen cities. If so, I will break this jade with my head hitting it against the bronze pillar!"

Glowing at the king with angry eyes, he moved toward the bronze pillar as if he were really going to break the jade. The king of Shin said, "Don't break the jade. I'll give the fifteen cities. Keep the jade while I make the arrangements."

Afterward, Shōjo had one of his men secretly take the jade back to his own country.

Later, the kings of Chō and Shin met at a place named Menchi (Mianchi) for a party. The king of Chō was a skillful lute player. When the king of Shin asked him to play, the king of Chō played without consulting Shōjo. When Shōjo heard, he was angry because

his king had obeyed the order of the king of Shin. He said, "I will make the king of Shin play the flute." He approached the king of Shin and asked, "Your Majesty, you are skilled at playing the flute. The king of Chō would appreciate listening to you very much. Please play."

The king of Shin refused. A general of Shin reached for his sword and rushed toward Shōjo. Shōjo glared furiously at the general who became frightened and retreated without drawing his sword. Finally, the king of Shin played the flute.

Later Shōjo became the prime minister and administered the affairs of the country. One time, another minister envious of Shōjo's higher status, tried to kill him. Shōjo fled and hid himself here and there. Appearing to be afraid of the minister, Shōjo purposely avoided any encounter with the minister even when he had to go to the court.

One of Shōjo's retainers said, "It is easy to kill that minister. Why do you hide yourself in fear?"

Shōjo said, "I'm not afraid of him. With my eyes I have defeated the general of Shin. I also took back the jade from the king himself. Of course I can kill the minister. However, raising an army and gathering troops should be for defending our country against our enemies. As its ministers, we are now in charge of protecting the country. If the two of us quarrel and fight with each other, one of us will die. Then, one half will be lost. If that happens, neighboring countries will take delight and attack us for sure. Therefore, I hope for the two of us to remain unharmed to protect our country together. This is why I don't fight with him."

Upon hearing this, the minister became ashamed of himself and called on Shōjo to express his regret. The two of them then cooperated in the task of governing the country.

Shōjo forgot himself and carried out the Way. Now in maintaining the Buddha-Way, we should have the same attitude. It is better to die for the Way than to live without it.

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- 1 Chō (Zhao) was one of seven strong countries during the Period of the Warring States (465–221B.C.). In 221B.C., China was unified by the Shin (Qin) dynasty.
  - 2 Heki (bi) is a round flat piece of jade with a hole in the center used for ceremonial purposes in ancient China.

## 4-11

**Dōgen instructed,**

It is hard to tell what is good or bad. Worldly people say that it is good to wear silk brocade and embroidery and bad to wear robes made of coarse cloth and abandoned rags. In the buddha-dharma, the latter is good and pure while luxurious garments embroidered with gold and silver are considered bad and defiled. In the same way, everything else is opposite.

In my case too, since I sometimes write poetry or prose some worldly people praise me, saying it is extraordinary. And yet, there



are some who criticize me for knowing such things despite being a monk who has left home and is studying the Way. Ultimately, which shall we take as good and abandon as bad?

It is said in a scripture, “Being praised and belonging to pure things is called good; being despised and belonging to impure things is called evil.” It is also written, “Things which bring about suffering are called evil; things which invite joy are called good.”

In this way, we should carefully figure out in detail, and take up what is really good and practice it; see what is really evil and discard it. Since a sangha is born out of (the realm of) purity<sup>1</sup>, things which do not arouse human desires are considered good and pure.

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1 The realm of being free from the defilement of delusive desires.

## 4-12

Dōgen instructed,

Many worldly people say, “I desire to practice the Way, but the world is in its last period (which is degenerate)<sup>1</sup> and I have only inferior capabilities. I cannot endure the formal practice which accords with the dharma. I want to find an easier way which is suitable for me, make a connection [with the Buddha], and attain enlightenment in the next lifetime.”

This is entirely wrong. Categorizing the three periods of time – the true Dharma, the semblance Dharma, and the last Dharma – is only a temporary expedient. Monks in the time of the Buddha were not necessarily outstanding. There were some who were incredibly despicable and inferior in capacity. Therefore, the Buddha established various kinds of precepts for the sake of evil and inferior people. Without exception, everyone is a vessel of the buddha-dharma. Never think that you are not a vessel. Only if you practice according to the teaching, will you gain realization without fail. Since you have a mind, you are able to distinguish good from evil. You have hands and feet, and therefore lack nothing for practicing *gasshō* or walking. Therefore, in practicing the buddha-dharma, do not be concerned with whether you are capable or not. Living beings in the human world are all vessels (of the buddha-dharma). It would not be possible if you had been born as an animal or something else.

Students of the Way, never expect to practice tomorrow. You should practice following the Buddha only today and this moment.

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- 1 This is one of the three periods of the dharma; the *shōbō* (the true Dharma), the *zōbō* (the semblance Dharma), and the *mappō* (the last Dharma). These three signify the three periods following the Buddha's death. In the period of the true dharma, lasting 500 (or 1,000) years, the Buddha's teaching is properly practiced and enlightenment can be attained. In the period of the semblance Dharma, lasting 1,000 (or 500) years, the teaching is practiced but enlightenment is no longer possible. In the period of the last Dharma, lasting 10,000 years, only the teaching exists, no practice, no enlightenment exist. In Japan it was believed that the last period began in

1052 A.D.. The idea of *mappō* heavily influenced the Buddhist movements during the Kamakura Period.

## 4-13

### Dōgen instructed,

It is said in the secular world that a castle falls when people start to whisper words within its walls. It is also said that when there are two opinions in a house, not even a pin can be bought; when there is no conflict of opinions, even gold can be purchased.

Even in the secular world, it is said that unity of mind is necessary for the sake of maintaining a household or protecting a castle. If unity is lacking, the house or the castle will eventually fall. Much more, should monks who have left home to study under a single teacher be harmonious like the mixture of water and milk. There is also the precept of the six ways of harmony<sup>1</sup>. Do not set up individual rooms, nor practice the Way separately either physically or mentally. [Our life in this monastery is] like crossing the ocean on a single ship. We should have unity of mind, conduct ourselves in the same way, give advice to each other to reform each other's faults, follow the good points of others, and practice the Way singlemindedly. This is the Way people have been practicing since the time of the Buddha.

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- 1 These are mentioned in the *Yōrakukyō* (Yingluo-jing); the unity of the three actions- those of body, mouth, and mind, keeping the same precepts having the same insight, and carrying on the same practice.

## 4-14

### Dōgen instructed,

When Zen Master Hōe (Fānghuì) of Mt. Yogi (Yángi)<sup>1</sup> first became the abbot, the temple was dilapidated and the monks were troubled. Therefore, an officer said it should be repaired. The master said, "Even though the building is broken down, it is certainly a better place for practicing zazen than on the ground or under a tree. If one section is broken and leaks, we should move where there are no leaks to practice zazen. If monks could attain enlightenment by building a hall, we should construct one of gold and jewels. Enlightenment does not depend on whether the building is good or bad; it depends only upon our diligence in zazen."

The next day, in a formal speech he said, "I have now become the abbot of Yōgi (Yáng-gi), and the roof and walls have many cracks and holes. The whole floor is covered with pearls of snow, the monks hunch their shoulders from the cold, and sigh in the darkness." After a pause he continued, "It reminds me of the ancient sages sitting under the trees."

Not only in the Buddha-Way, some have this same attitude in (the way of) politics. Emperor Taisō of the Tō dynasty did not build a new palace.

Ryūge (Lóngyá)<sup>2</sup> said, “To study the Way, first of all, you learn poverty. After having learned poverty and become poor, you will be intimate with the Way.” From the time of Shakyamuni, up to the present day, I have never seen or heard of a true student of the Way who possessed great wealth.

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- 1 A disciple of Sekisō Soen (Shishuang Chuyuan). He was the founder of the Yōgi branch of the Rinzai School. His successors established the kōan practice.
  - 2 Ryūge Koton (Lóngyá Judun). A disciple of Tōzan Ryōkai (Dongshan Liangjie), the founder of the Sōtō School in China.

## 4–15

One day a visiting monk asked,

“These days, the way of retreating from the world<sup>1</sup> is to prepare food and other necessities for oneself beforehand so as not to have to worry about them later. This is a trivial matter, yet it supports the practice of the Way. If it is lacking, our practice will be disturbed. According to what I have heard about how you practice, you make no such preparation and leave everything to fate. If this is really so,

you will have trouble later on, won't you? What do you think?"

Dōgen replied,

"Everything (I do) has precedents. I don't rely on my personal views. All the buddhas and patriarchs in India and China lived in this way. The blessings of the 'White Hair'<sup>2</sup> will never be exhausted. Why should we take personal plans for our livelihood? Besides, it is impossible to know what will happen tomorrow. This is not my personal opinion but what all the buddhas and patriarchs have carried out. If we run out of food and have nothing to eat, only then should we look for a means (to gain something). We should not think about these things in advance."

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1 See 2–12, footnote 3.

2 Skt. *Urna*. The Buddha's White Hair refers to one of the Buddha's thirty-two marks, the curl of hair on his forehead. It is said that it continually radiated great light. What Dōgen meant here is that all offerings from people or nature are nothing but the Buddha's legacy.

## 4–16

Dōgen instructed,

I heard the following story from someone, though I'm not sure if it is true or not. The late councilor Jimyōin<sup>1</sup>, who was a lay monk, once had a treasured sword stolen. The perpetrator was

among his retainers. The other warriors arrested the man and brought him to the councilor. Jimyōin said, "There's been a mistake. This is not my sword." He then gave the sword back to the warrior.

Although it was undoubtedly his sword, he returned it because he was considering the shame of the warrior. Although everyone knew it, the situation ended without trouble. Therefore, the councilor's descendants flourished. Even among lay people there are those who have a big heart like this.

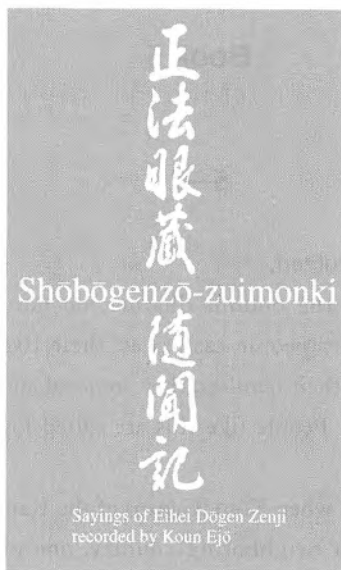
How much more should a monk have the same attitude. Since it is a matter of course that a monk have no wealth, he should consider his wisdom and virtue as his treasure. Even when someone has done wrong that goes against bodhi-mind, he should not express his criticism directly and judge the person to be evil. One should search for skillful means and speak in such a way as not to anger people.

It is said that the dharma does not last long if it is expressed violently. Even if you scold a person according to the dharma, if you use rough language, the dharma will not remain long.

A petty person of inferior faculties soon becomes angry and thinks of his disgrace when he is criticized with harsh words. He is unlike a superior and magnanimous person. A magnanimous person, even when he is hit, never thinks of revenge. Now in our country, there are many petty people. We should be very careful.

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1 Ichijō Motoie (1132–1214). Councilor is a translation of *Chūnagon*, a court ranking which is below *Dainagon* (Vice Minister).



Book

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5



## Book 5

### 5-1

#### One day Dōgen instructed,

For the sake of the buddha-dharma, do not withhold your bodily life. Even lay people cast away their lives for the Way without concern for their families; they are loyal and maintain their straightforwardness. People like this are called loyal ministers or wise men.

In ancient times, when Kōso (Gaozu) of the Kan (Han)<sup>1</sup> dynasty went to war with a neighboring country, one of his minister's mother lived in the enemy country. The officials of the Imperial army suspected that the minister might be of two minds. The emperor was also afraid that he might go over to the enemy because of his mother, which would result in losing the war.

At the same time, his mother thought her son might change allegiance because of her, and admonished, "Do not betray your country because of me. If I remain alive, you might be divided in your loyalty."

She threw herself upon a sword and died. Since her son was never of two minds, it is said that he devoted himself to his duties in the war with loyalty and firm determination. This holds true even more so for a Zen monk aspiring to practice the Buddha-Way.

When you are completely without a divided heart, you are truly in accordance with the Buddha-Way.

In practicing the Buddha-Way, there may be some who inherently have compassion and wisdom from the outset. Others who lack such qualities will be able to attain the Way if they study sincerely. They need only cast away both body and mind, dedicate themselves to the great ocean of the buddha-dharma, leave everything to the teachings of the buddha-dharma, and cease from holding onto their personal biased views.

In the reign of the founder of the Kan (Han) dynasty, a wise minister remarked, "Remedying the disorder of the political way is like untying a knotted rope. Do not be in a hurry. Loosen it only after having examined the knot closely."

The Buddha-Way is the same. You should practice it after having deeply understood the principles of the Way. The dharma-gate is understood thoroughly only when you have strong bodhi-mind. No matter how intelligent and brilliant you may be, if you lack bodhi-mind, do not detach from egocentricity, and are unable to abandon fame and profit, you will not be able to become a man of the Way nor be able to understand reality.

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1 Emperor Kōso (Gaozu, reigned 206–195 B.C.) was the founder of the Former Kan (Han) dynasty (206 B.C.–8 A.D.). This story is about Ōryo (Wangling) and his mother.

## 5-2

### Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, do not learn the buddha-dharma for the sake of your own egos. Learn the buddha-dharma only for the sake of the buddha-dharma. The most effective way for doing this is to completely throw away your body and mind leaving nothing, and dedicating yourselves to the great ocean of the buddha-dharma.

Then, without being concerned about right and wrong, without clinging to your own views, even if it is difficult to do or to endure, you should do it being forced to by the buddha-dharma. Even if you really want to do something, you should give it up if it is not in accordance with the buddha-dharma. Never expect to obtain some reward for practicing the Buddha-Way. Once you have moved in the direction of the Buddha-Way, never look back at yourself. Continue practicing in accordance with the rules of the buddha-dharma, and do not hold on to personal views.

All the examples among past practitioners were like this. When you no longer seek anything on the basis of your (discriminating) mind, you will be in great peace and joy (Nirvana).

Among lay people too, those who have never kept company with others and have grown up only within their own families, behave as they want and put priority on fulfilling their own desires. They never think of others' views and do not care how others feel. Such people are always bad. You have to be careful of the same thing in practicing the Way. Keep company with others (in the

sangha), and follow your teacher without setting up personal views. If you continue reforming your mind (in this way), you will easily become a man of the Way.

In practicing the Way, first of all, you must learn poverty. Give up fame and abandon profit, do not flatter, and put down all affairs; then you will become a good practitioner of the Way without fail. In Great Song China, those who were known as eminent monks were all poor. Their robes were tattered, and they were short of other provisions.

When I was at Tendō Monastery, the recorder<sup>1</sup> was a senior monk called Dōnyo (Daoru), a son of the prime minister. But, since he had completely left his family, and no longer coveted worldly profit, his robes were so tattered he was hard to look at. His virtue of the Way, however, was known by others and he became the recorder of that great temple.

Once I asked, “Senior Dōnyo, you are a son of a high government official and a member of a wealthy and noble family. Why are the things you wear so shabby? Why do you live in such poverty?”

Senior Dōnyo replied, “Because I have become a monk.”

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1 ‘Recorder’ is a translation of *shōki*, the officer in charge of making public documents, letters etc., in the Zen monastery.

## 5-3

### One day Dōgen instructed,

A lay person said, "A treasure is an enemy which harms one's life. This has happened in the past, and it happens in the present as well."

This is a reference to the person in the following story. Once there was a man who had a beautiful wife. A man who had power commanded the man to give him the woman. The husband was reluctant to give up his wife. Finally, the powerful man raised his troops and surrounded the house. When the wife was about to be taken away, her husband said, "I will give up my life for you."

His wife replied, "I will also give my life for you."

Saying this, she jumped from a lofty building and killed herself. Later the husband who failed to die told the story.

There is another story. Once there was a wise man who was the governor of a province. He had a son who had to leave on an official matter. Calling on his father to say farewell, the father gave him a bolt of fine silk.

The son said, "You are a man of high integrity. Where did you get this silk?"

The father replied, "It was left over from my salary."

The son left, gave the silk to the emperor, and told him what his father had said. The emperor admired the father's wisdom.

The son said, "My father hid his name. I revealed his name. My father's wisdom is truly superior to mine."

The story means that even though a bolt of silk is trivial, a wise person does not take it for his private use. It also shows that a truly wise person hides his name. Since it was his salary, he said he would use it<sup>1</sup>.

Even a lay person was like this. How much more should a monk learning the Way not hold personal preferences. Moreover, if he would like to follow the true Way, he should hide his name.

Dōgen also said; “Once there was a *sennin*<sup>2</sup>”.

A man asked him, “How do you become a *sennin*?”

The *sennin* replied, “If you want to become a *sennin*, you should devote yourself to the Way of *sennin*.”

Therefore, students, if you wish to attain the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs, you should devote yourself to the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs.

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- 1 Part of this story seems to have been lost or omitted when it was transcribed, though the overall point is that a truly great or wise person hides his wisdom.
  - 2 A legendary wizard living in the mountains and capable of performing miracles. A hermit. Literally, *sennin* means a person living in the mountains. This story refers to the people who practiced Taoism, and left society. It is said that they attained the supernatural powers of wizards, and gained immortality.

## 5-4

Dōgen instructed,

Once there was a king. After having established his government, he inquired of his ministers, "I have governed this country well. Am I a wise king?"

His ministers said, "Your Majesty, you have governed very well. You are very wise."

One of the ministers, however, said, "You are not wise."

The king asked, "Why not?"

The minister replied, "After establishing your government, you handed it over to your son, instead of to your younger brother."

The king was offended and expelled the minister.

Later, the king asked another minister, "Am I a benevolent king?"

The minister replied, "Yes, you are very benevolent."

The king asked, "Why?"

The minister replied, "Benevolent rulers all have loyal ministers, and loyal ministers offer straightforward remarks. That minister's opinion was very straightforward. He was a loyal minister. If you were not a benevolent king, you would not have had such a minister." The king was impressed by this and called the minister back.

Dōgen also said,

During the time of the Shikōtei (Shihuangdi, the first emperor) of Shin<sup>1</sup>, the crown prince wanted to enlarge his flower garden.

A minister said, “Wonderful! If you enlarge the flower garden and many birds and animals gather there, we will be able to defend our country against the troops of the neighboring country with the birds and animals.” Because of this remark, the crown prince gave up the project.

At another time, the prince wanted to build a palace with lacquered pillars. A minister said, “It really should be done. If you lacquer the pillars, the enemy will not invade.”

So, this was also stopped.

The essence of Confucianism is to stop doing wrong and encourage doing good by using skillful words. Monks also should have this kind of skillfulness when teaching others.

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- 1 Shikōtei (Shihuangdi, ?–210 B.C.) He was the first emperor of the Shin (Qin) dynasty and became famous for building the Great Wall of China.

## 5–5

**One day, a monk asked,**

Ultimately, which is better, an intelligent person without bodhi-mind or an ignorant person with bodhi-mind?” Dōgen replied, “Many ignorant people with bodhi-mind eventually regress. Intelligent people, though lacking bodhi-mind, eventually arouse the aspiration for the Way. There are many examples in this



age to prove this. Therefore, first of all, diligently learn the Way without being concerned with whether you have bodhi-mind or not.”

To learn the Way, just be poor. In both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts, we find people who were so poor that they did not have a fixed place to live; one wandered floating on the water of the Sōrō (Cānglang) River<sup>1</sup>, some hid themselves in Mt. Shuyō (Shouyang)<sup>2</sup>, some sat in the upright posture (zazen) on the ground under a tree, and others built huts in graveyards or deep in the mountains. There were also those who were so wealthy that they built palaces painted with vermilion lacquer, and adorned them with gold and jewels. Both kinds of people are found in the texts. However, those who were poor and without possessions were praised as models for later generations. When admonishing about evil deeds, the texts criticized those who were wealthy with abundant possessions as being people of extravagance and arrogance.

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1 This refers to Kutsugen (Qūyuán). See 2–23, footnote 1.

2 This refers to Hakui (Boyi) and Shukusei (Shuqi), the sons of a king of the In (Yin) dynasty. When the In was conquered by the Shū (Zhou) dynasty, they hid themselves in Mt. Shuyō (Shouyang), finally starving to death.

## 5-6

### Dōgen instructed,

A monk who has left home should never be overjoyed upon receiving offerings from others. Nor, however, should such offerings be refused.

The late *Sōjō* (Eisai) said, "It goes against the precepts of the Buddha to rejoice upon receiving offerings. It also goes against the good will of the donor to be ungrateful."

What we should bear in mind on this point is that the offerings are not to ourselves, but to the Three Treasures (buddha, dharma, and sangha). So, in acknowledging thanks, you should say, "The Three Treasures will surely accept your offerings."

## 5-7

### Dōgen instructed,

There is an old saying which goes, "Although the power of a wise man exceeds that of an ox, he does not fight with the ox." Now, students, even if you think that your wisdom and knowledge is superior to others, you should not be fond of arguing with them. Moreover, you should not abuse others with violent words, or glare at others angrily.

Despite having been given great wealth and receiving the favors of some person, people in this age would definitely have negative feelings if the donor were to display anger and slander them with harsh words.

Once, Zen Master Shinjō Kokubun (Zhēnjing Kenwen)<sup>1</sup> told his students, “In former times, I practiced together with Seppō (Xuefēng Taoyuan). Once Seppō was discussing the dharma loudly with another student in the monk’s dormitory. Eventually, they began to argue using harsh words, and in the end, wound up quarreling with each other. After the argument was over, Seppō said to me, ‘You and I are close friends practicing together with one mind. Our friendship is not shallow. Why didn’t you help me when I was arguing with that man?’ At the time, I could do nothing but feel small folding my hands and bowing my head.

Later, Seppō became an eminent master, and I too, am now an abbot. What I thought at the time was that Seppō’s discussion of the dharma was ultimately meaningless. Needless to say, quarreling was wrong. Since I thought it was useless to fight, I kept silent.”

Students of the Way, you also should consider this thoroughly. As long as you aspire to make diligent effort in learning the Way, you must be begrudging with your time. When do you have time to argue with others? Ultimately, it brings about no benefit to you or to others. This is so even in the case of arguing about the dharma, much more about worldly affairs. Even though the power of a wise man is stronger than that of an ox, he does not fight with the ox.

Even if you think that you understand the dharma more deeply

than others, do not argue, criticize, or try to defeat them.

If there is a sincere student who asks you about the dharma, you should not begrudge telling him about it. You should explain it to him. However, even in such a case, before responding wait until you have been asked three times. Neither speaks too much nor talks about meaningless matters.

After reading these words of Shinjō, I thought that I myself had this fault, and that he was admonishing me. I have subsequently never argued about the dharma with others.

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- 1 Shinjō Kokubun (Zhēnjīng Kenwen, 1025–1102) and Seppō Dōen (Xuefēng Taoyuan, ?–?) were both disciples of Kōryū Enan (Huanglong Huinan, 1002–1069), founder of the Kōryū branch of the Rinzai School. In the *rufubon*, the name appearing is Unpō (Yunfeng) instead of Seppō (Xuefēng).

## 5–8

### Dōgen instructed,

Many of the ancient masters have cautioned not to spend one's time in vain. It has also been said not to pass one's time wastefully. Students of the Way, value every moment of time. This dew-like life disappears easily; time passes swiftly. For the little while you are alive, do not engage in other affairs. Just devote yourself to

learning the Way.

People today say that they cannot abandon their debt of gratitude to their parents, or they can not disregard the order of their lord, or they cannot part from their wives, children, and relatives. Or they excuse themselves saying that their families would not be able to survive, or that people would slander them. Or, they say they cannot afford monk's supplies, or they are not capable of enduring the practice of the Way.

Since they consider the matter with such sentiments, they cannot leave their lords, fathers and mothers; or abandon their wives, children, or relatives. They go on following worldly sentiments and cling to their wealth. Consequently, they spend their whole lifetime in vain and cannot help feeling regret upon departing from this life.

Sit tranquilly and ponder reality, and promptly determine to arouse bodhi-mind. Neither your lords nor parents can give you enlightenment. Nor can your wives, children, or relatives save you from the suffering [of life-and-death].

Wealth cannot cut off the cycle of birth-and-death. People in the world cannot give you any help. If you do not practice on the grounds that you are not a vessel of the dharma, when will you be able to attain the Way? Just cast aside all affairs and devote yourself to the practice of the Way only. Do not have expectations of any later time (to practice).

## 5-9

### Dōgen instructed,

In learning the Way, you must depart from your ego. Even if you have been able to study a thousand sutras or ten thousand commentaries, if you do not free yourself from ego-attachment, you will eventually fall into the hole of demons.

An ancient master said, "If you lack the body and mind of the buddha-dharma, how is it possible to become a buddha or a patriarch?" To depart from your ego means throwing your body and mind into the great ocean of the buddha-dharma, and practicing by following the buddha-dharma no matter how much pain or anxiety you may have.

You might think that if you beg for food, people will think ill of you. As long as you think in this way, you will never be able to enter the buddha-dharma. Forget all worldly sentiments, and just practice the Way, relying only on Reality.

Underestimating yourself, thinking that you are not capable of practicing the buddha-dharma is also due to ego-attachment. To be concerned with the views of others and to care about human sentiments is the root of self-attachment. Just study the buddha-dharma; don't follow worldly sentiments.

## 5-10

One day Ejō asked, “What should we practice diligently in the monastery?”

**Dōgen instructed,**

“*Shikantaza* (Just sitting)! Whether you are upstairs or under a lofty building sit in samadhi<sup>1</sup>. Without engaging in idle talk, be like one who is deaf and dumb; always devote yourself to sitting alone.”

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- 1 Literally, the Japanese expression *rōjō kakka* means the upstairs or downstairs in a large building, though in this expression, Dōgen means sit samadhi *wherever* you are.

## 5-11

**One day in a speech Dōgen said,**

Daidō Kokusen (Dādao Guquan)<sup>1</sup> said, “Sitting in the wind and sleeping in the sun is better than wearing rich brocades like people today.” Although this is a saying of an ancient master, I have some doubts about it. Does “people today” refer to worldly people who covet profit? If so why did he mention it? It is most stupid to

compete with such people. Or does it refer to people who are practicing the Way? If so, why did he say doing what he did was better than wearing brocades? As I examine his frame of mind, it sounds as if he still values brocades. The sages were not like this. They attached themselves neither to gold and jewels, nor to broken tiles and pebbles.

Therefore Shakyamuni-Tathāgata accepted milk gruel offered by the cowmaid, as well as grain used to feed horses<sup>2</sup>. He accepted both with equanimity.

In the buddha-dharma, there is nothing valueless nor valuable, yet among people there is shallow and profound. Nowadays, when people are given gold and jewels, they consider them valuable and refuse them. But if they are given wood or stone, they consider such things cheap, so they accept them and hold attachment to them. Gold and jewels have been taken from the earth, wood and stone also come from the earth. Why do people refuse one because it is expensive and covet the other because it is cheap? When I inquire into such a mind, it would seem that if they obtained something expensive they would worry about building attachment to it. However, even if they acquire something cheap and love it, they will be guilty of the same fault. Students should be careful about this.

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1 Daidō Kokusen (Dādao Guquan, ?-?) was a disciple of Funyō Zenshō (Fényáng Shanzhao, 947-1024).

2 Milk gruel is an example of fine food while grain used as feed for horses (see 1-16, footnote 9) represents coarse food. Buddha Shakyamuni received



both equally without discrimination.

## 5-12

**Dōgen instructed,**

When my late teacher Myōzen<sup>1</sup> was about to go to China, his former teacher Myōyō Ajari<sup>2</sup>, who was living on Mt. Hiei, became seriously ill, and was about to die.

At the time, Master Myōyū asked Myōzen, “I am old and sick; my death must be near at hand. Please put off going to China for a while, take care of me as I am very sick, and conduct a funeral service for me when I die? After I have passed away, carry out what you really wish to do.”

Myōzen gathered together with his fellow priests and disciples to consult with them. He said, “Since the time I left my parents’ home in my childhood, I have been brought up by this teacher and now I have grown up. My debt of gratitude for his raising me is very great. Also, due solely to his upbringing I learned the dharma-gate which is beyond the ordinary realm of the verbal teachings of *mahayana* and *hinayana*, or the provisional and the real. Thanks to him, I came to understand causality, learned right from wrong, surpassed my fellow monks and gained honor, and now I aspire to go to China to seek the dharma because I understand the truth of the buddha-dharma. But this year he has become seriously ill due

to old age, and is lying on his death bed. He will not live much longer and he cannot expect to see me again. Therefore, he strongly urges me to postpone my trip. It is difficult to go against my teacher's request. Moreover, my going to China to seek the dharma for the sake of benefiting sentient beings without holding my life dear, derives from the great compassion of the bodhisattva. Is there any reason to go against the request of my teacher and go to China, or not? Tell me what you think."

At the time, all of his disciples said, "Give up going to China this year. Your aged master's illness is critical. He will surely die. If you stay only for this year and go to China next year, you wouldn't be going against your teacher's wish and you wouldn't be neglecting your great debt of gratitude.

What is wrong with going to China half a year or a year from now? It wouldn't go against the bond between master and disciple, and still you would be able to carry out your wish to go to China."

At the time, as the least experienced monk, I said, "If you think that your enlightenment of the buddha-dharma is what it should be, you should put off your trip to China."

My late master said, "That is so. Practice of the buddha-dharma should be like this. If I practice this way for my whole lifetime, I think I will be released (from samsara) and attain the Way."

I said, "If that is so, you should stay."

After all of us had given our opinions, Myōzen said, "All of you agree that I should stay. My resolution is different. Even if I put off my trip for the time being, one who is certain to die will die. My remaining here won't help to prolong his life. Even if I stay to

nurse him, his pain will not cease. Also, it would not be possible to escape from life-and-death because I took care of him before his death. It would just be following his request and comforting his feelings for a while. It is entirely useless for gaining emancipation and attaining the Way. To mistakenly allow him to hinder my aspiration to seek the dharma would be a cause of evil deeds. However, if I carry out my aspiration to go to China to seek the dharma, and gain a bit of enlightenment, although it goes against one person's deluded feelings, it would become a cause for attaining the Way of many people. Since the merit is greater, it will help return the debt of gratitude to my teacher.

Even if I were to die while crossing the ocean and failed to accomplish my aspiration, since I would have died with the aspiration to seek the dharma, my vow would not cease in any future life. We should ponder Genjō Sanzo's<sup>3</sup> (Tripitaka Master Xuánzang) journey to India. Vainly spending time which is easily lost, for the sake of one person would not be in accordance with the Buddha's will. Therefore, I have firmly resolved to go to China now."

So saying, he finally went to China. For my late teacher, having true bodhi-mind was like this. Therefore, students, you should not become involved in useless matters and lose time in vain, using your parents or teacher as an excuse, nor set aside the Buddha-Way which is superior to all other ways. Do not waste time.

At the time Ejō asked, "For the sake of truly seeking the dharma, we must eliminate the hindrance caused by our obligation to our parents or teachers, existing only in the realm of delusion. It

is just as you said. And yet, even if we completely renounce our obligation and affection for our parents or our teachers, when we aspire to the practice of a bodhisattva, we should put aside personal benefit and put primary importance on benefiting others. If so, when the aged teacher was seriously ill, and no one but Myōzen could nurse him, if he was only thinking in terms of his own practice without helping his teacher, it would seem to go against the bodhisattva practice, wouldn't it? A *mahāsattva*<sup>A</sup> (a magnanimous person) does not discriminate between things in doing good. Shouldn't we consider the buddha-dharma according to the circumstances and the particular situation? By this reasoning, should he not he stayed to help his teacher? Why did he only think of seeking the dharma instead of caring for his aged teacher in his final illness? What do you think?"

**Dōgen instructed;**

"Whether acting for the benefit of others or acting for your own benefit, if you abandon the inferior one and take the superior one it should be the good practice of the *mahāsattva*. To care for infirm aged parents in poverty is only the temporary pleasure of illusory love and deluded sentiment of this brief life. If you go against your deluded sentiments and learn the Way of no-defilement, even though you may receive some resentment, it will become a positive factor [in entering the buddha-dharma which is] beyond the world. Consider this well."

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1 Butsujubō Myōzen (1183–1225). Born into the Soga family, he received

his ordination under Myōyō at Shuryōgon-in Temple on Mt. Hiei. Later practiced Zen with Zen Master Eisai. Myōzen went to China with Dōgen, but died in China when he was forty two years old. Dōgen brought back Myōzen's ashes, and buried them in Kenninji. In his *Sharisōdenki*, Dōgen briefly described and praised Myōzen's life.

- 2 *Ajari* is *Acarya* in Skt., which means teacher. In Japan this is the title of a qualified teacher in Esoteric Buddhism.
- 3 Genjō (Xuánzang, 600–664). A Chinese priest who went to India, staying there for twelve years. He brought back 657 volumes of Sanskrit texts, and translated 1330 fascicles of scriptures into Chinese. Sanzō means Tri-Pitaka (the three categories of the Buddhist scriptures, sutras, sastras, and vinaya). Sanzō is an honorific title of a priest who has mastered and translated Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit to Chinese.
- 4 *Mahāsattva* literally means a great person. This is another name for a bodhisattva.

## 5–13

### One day Dōgen instructed,

Many people in the world say that although they listen to the words of the teacher, they do not accord with their own thinking. This attitude is a mistake. I don't understand how they can say such things. Do they say it because the principles in the sacred teachings do not agree with what they think, and believe the teachings to be wrong? If so, they are utterly foolish. Or is it that

what the teacher said did not agree with their own preference? If so, why did they ask the teacher in the first place? Or do they say it on the basis of their ordinary discriminating thoughts? If so, this is illusory thought from the beginningless beginning. The vital attitude in learning the Way is to give up and reform your egotistical views. Even if they go against your own preferences, if they are your teacher's words or statements from the sacred scriptures, you must follow them completely. This is an essential point you should be careful about in learning the Way.

Formerly, one of my fellow practitioners who visited various teachers was very attached to his own views. He refused to accept whatever went against his ideas, and held onto only what agreed with his own views. He spent his whole life in vain and never understood the buddha-dharma.

I realized from observing his attitude that learning the Way must be different from that. So, I followed my teacher's words and attained the truth of the Way completely. Later, I found the following passage in a sutra I was reading, "If you wish to learn the buddha-dharma, do not hold onto the [conditioned] mind of the past, present, and future."<sup>1</sup>

I truly understood that we must gradually reform previous thoughts and views and not hold firmly to them. In one of the Classics it is said, "Good advice sounds harsh to the ear." This means that useful advice always offends our ears. Even though it may be contrary to our liking, if we force ourselves to follow and carry it out, there should be benefit in the long run.

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- 1 This refers to a certain system of values, preconceptions, prejudices, etc. formed by our experiences or the education we received from our parents, teachers, and friends etc, in the society.

## 5-14

**One day, in a talk on various subjects, Dōgen said,**

Originally, there is no good or evil in the human mind. Good and evil depend on the situation. For example, when we arouse bodhi-mind and enter some mountain or forest, we think that staying in the mountains is good and living in human society is bad. But then, we get bored and leave the mountain thinking it bad. This is because the mind has no fixed characteristics; it changes in various ways depending on the circumstances. Therefore, if you encounter good circumstances, your mind becomes good; if you encounter bad circumstances, your mind becomes bad. Do not think that your mind is bad by nature. Just follow good circumstances.

## 5-15

On another occasion, Dōgen said,

The human mind definitely changes depending on others' words. In the *Daichidoron* (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsastra)<sup>1</sup>, it is written,

“For example, it is like a foolish person who has a precious jewel in his hands. Someone sees him and says, ‘You are so vulgar; you hold things in your own hands.’ Hearing this he thinks, ‘This jewel is precious, yet my reputation is also important. I don’t want to be thought of as being vulgar.’ Worrying about this and being pulled around by [the idea of his] reputation, he finally follows another’s words. He decides to put the jewel down and has his servant take it. And, in the end, he loses the jewel.”

This is how the human mind works. There are some who do not follow advice, being trapped by ideas about their reputations, although they think it is undoubtedly good for them. Also, there are some who follow advice for the sake of establishing their own fame, even though they know it is obviously harmful to them.

When you follow something good or bad, your mind is pulled by goodness or badness. Therefore, no matter how evil your mind may be, when you follow a good teacher and become intimate with good people, your mind will naturally become good. If you associate with bad people, even though in the beginning you may think they are bad, eventually you will follow such people’s minds, you will get used to being with them. And finally become really bad without realizing it.



Or, though determined in your mind not to give something to someone, if they press you too strongly, you give it to them unwillingly, even though you hate them. And, though you decided to give it to them, you might not if you don't have a good opportunity.

Therefore, even if you don't have bodhi-mind, once having become familiar with good people and having met good circumstances, you should listen to and look at the same things again and again. Do not think that you don't need to listen because you have heard it once before. Even if you have aroused bodhi-mind once, though it may be the same thing each time you hear it, your mind will become more refined and you will improve even more. Moreover, even if you still lack bodhi-mind, and don't find it interesting the first or second time, if you listen to a good person's words again and again, just like walking through the mist or dew, your clothing naturally gets wet without noticing it; you will naturally feel ashamed and true bodhi-mind will arise.

For this reason, even though you have understood the sacred scriptures, you must read them again and again. You must listen to your teacher's words repeatedly, even though you have heard them before. You will find more and more profound meanings. Do not be involved in matters which obstruct your practice of the Way. Even if it is painful and difficult, you should become familiar with good friends and practice the Way with them.

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1 The *Mahaprajnaparamita-sastra* 100 vol. This is a commentary by Nagarjuna (ca 150–ca 250 A.D.) on the *Mahaprajnaparamita-sutra*.

## 5-16

Dōgen instructed,

Once Zen master Daie (Dahui)<sup>1</sup> had a swelling on his buttocks. A doctor took a look at it and said it was critical.

Daie asked, "Is it so serious that I might die?"

The doctor replied, "Possibly."

Daie said, "Well, I am going to die anyway, so I shall practice zazen that much harder."

He pushed himself to sit and, eventually the swelling broke and went away.

The mind of this ancient master was like this. When he got sick, he sat zazen all the more. Students of today, despite being well, don't let up practicing zazen!

I think that sickness changes depending upon the mind.

When someone has hiccups, if you tell a lie [with the intention of] making him feel dejected, he will be shocked and try to say something, forgetting about his hiccups.

On my way to China, I suffered from diarrhea on the ship<sup>2</sup>, yet when a storm came up and people on the ship made a great fuss, I forgot about the sickness and it went away.

Considering this, I think if we devote ourselves to the practice of the Way and forget everything else, no illness will arise.

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1 Daie Sōkō (Dahui Zongkao, 1089-1163), a disciple of Engo Kokugon (Yuanwa Kequin). Dōgen criticized Daie in several parts of the *Shōbōgenzō*,

but in *Zuimonki* he praised him because of his sincere attitude towards practice.

- 2 Dōgen left Kyoto on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1223, arrived in Hakata in Kyushū in the middle of March, and sailed for China toward the end of March.

## 5-17

### Dōgen instructed,

There is a proverb, “Unless you are deaf and dumb, you cannot become the head of a family.”

In other words, if you do not listen to the slander of others and do not speak ill of others, you will succeed in your own work. Only a person like this is qualified to be the head of a family.

Although this is a worldly proverb, we must apply it to our way of life as monks. How do we practice the way without being disturbed by the slandering remarks of others, and without reacting to the resentment of others, or speaking of the right or wrong of others? Only those who thoroughly devote even their bones and marrow to the practice can do it.

## 5-18

Dōgen instructed,

Zen Master Daie said, "You must practice the Way with the attitude of a person owing a vast debt and being forced to return it despite being penniless. If you have this frame of mind, it is easy to attain the Way."

In the *Shinjinmei* (XinXinming)<sup>1</sup>, we read; "The supreme Way is not difficult, just refuse to have preferences." Only when you cast aside the mind of discrimination will you be able to accept it immediately. To cast aside discriminating mind is to depart from ego.

Do not think that you learn the buddha-dharma for the sake of some reward for practicing the Buddha-Way. Just practice the buddha-dharma for the sake of the buddha-dharma. Even if you study a thousand sutras and ten thousand commentaries on them, or even if you have sat zazen until your cushion is worn out, it is impossible to attain the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs if this attitude is lacking. Just casting body and mind into the buddha-dharma and, (practicing) along with others without holding onto previous views, you will be in accordance with the Way immediately.

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1 *Shinjinmei* was written by the Third Patriarch Sosan (Sengcan, ?-606). *Shinjin* means Faith and Mind, or Faith-in-Mind.

## 5-19

### Dōgen instructed,

An ancient master said, "The provisions and food in storage belonging to the monastery should be entrusted to the officers<sup>1</sup> who understand cause and effect. Let these officers administer the various tasks; dividing the monastery into departments and distributing the work." This means the abbot of the monastery should not take charge of any major or minor matter whatever; rather he should concentrate only on practicing zazen, and encourage the members of the assembly.

It is also said, "It is better to master even a small skill than to own thousands of acres of productive rice paddies."

"When you do a favor for others, do not expect a reward. After having given something away, harbor no regret."

"Keep your mouth as silent as your nose, and no disasters will reach you."

"If your practice is lofty, people naturally respect you; if your talent is great, others will follow you of themselves."<sup>2</sup>

"Despite plowing deep and planting shallow, you may still suffer natural disaster. All the more so will you receive the effect of your evil if you profit only yourself while harming others."

Students of the Way, when you learn the sayings [of the ancient masters], you must look at them and examine them very closely with fullest attention.

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- 1 There were six major officers in ancient Zen monasteries. Each of them was in charge of his respective function in the monastery. The six are *tsūsu*, *kansu*, *fūsu*, *inō*, *tenzo*, and *shissui*.
- 2 In the *Chōenjibon* version, this sentence reads, “A person whose practice is firm will naturally be respected; though one who is highly talented will be put down by others.”

## 5 – 20

### Dōgen instructed,

An ancient master said, “At the top of a hundred foot pole, advance one step further.”

This means you should have the attitude of someone who, at the top of a hundred foot pole, lets go of both hands and feet; in other words, you must cast aside body and mind.

There are various stages involved here. Nowadays, some people seem to have abandoned the world and left their homes. Nevertheless, when examining their actions, they still haven't truly left home, or renounced the world.

As a monk who has left home, first you must depart from your ego as well as from [desire for] fame and profit. Unless you become free from these things, despite practicing the Way urgently as though extinguishing a fire enveloping your head, or devoting yourself to practice as diligently as the Buddha who stood on tiptoe<sup>1</sup>

(for seven days), it will amount to nothing but meaningless trouble, having nothing to do with emancipation.

Even in the great Song China, there are people who have departed from attachment [to their family] which is hard to let go of, abandoned worldly wealth which is difficult to give up, joined communities of practitioners, and visited various monasteries. Some of them, however, have been spending their lives in vain because they practice without understanding this key point. They neither realize the Way nor clarify the Mind.

Although in the beginning they arouse bodhi-mind, become monks and follow the teachings, instead of aspiring to become buddhas or patriarchs, they only concern themselves with making it known to their patrons, supporters, and relatives about how respectable they are or how high the status of their temple is. They try to get people to revere them and make offerings to them. Furthermore, they claim that other monks are all vicious and immoral; that only they are men of bodhi-mind and good monks. They try to persuade people to believe their words. People like this are not even worth criticizing; they are like the five evil monks (at the time of the Buddha) who lacked goodness<sup>2</sup>. Without exception, monks with such a frame of mind will fall into hell. Lay people who don't know what they really are, think that they are respectable men of bodhi-mind.

There are some who are a little better than these people. Having abandoned their parents, wives, and children, and no longer coveting offerings from patrons, they join the communities of practitioners to practice the Way. However, though they feel

ashamed of being idle, since they are by nature lazy, they pretend to be practicing when the abbot or the *shuso* is watching. However, when no one is around, they waste their time, neglecting to do what they should be doing. They are better than lay people as irresponsible as themselves, but still cannot cast away their ego, or (their desire for) fame and profit.

There are also those who are not concerned with what their teacher thinks or whether the *shuso* or other fellow practitioners are watching or not. They always bear in mind that practicing the Buddha-Way is not for the sake of others but only for themselves; such people desire to become buddhas or patriarchs with both body and mind. So they truly practice diligently. They really seem to be people of the Way compared with the people mentioned above. However, since they still practice trying to improve themselves, they have not become free from their ego. They want to be admired by buddhas and bodhisattvas, and desire to attain buddhahood, and complete awareness. This is because they still cannot throw away their selfish desire for fame and profit.

Up to this point, none of these people have yet advanced beyond the hundred foot pole; they remain clinging to it.

Just cast body and mind into the buddha-dharma, and practice without desire either to realize the Way or to attain the dharma. Then you can be called an undefiled practitioner. This is what is meant by not staying where buddha exists; and running quickly from where no-buddha exists<sup>3</sup>.

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1 This refers to a story in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha in a previous



lifetime. When he was a bodhisattva, upon seeing an ancient Buddha (Pusya) in samadhi, he recited verses of praise standing on his tiptoes for seven days. From this story, 'standing on one's tiptoes' has come to mean being very diligent in practice.

- 2 According to a Buddhist legend, there were five evil monks who were so lazy that they did not practice or chant sutras, etc. Since no one supported them, they pretended to practice zazen to gain offerings from lay people.
- 3 A monk went to bid farewell to Jōshū (Zhāozhōu).

The master asked, "Where are you going?"

The monk replied, "I'm going to visit various places to learn the buddha-dharma."

Jōshū took up the whisk and said, "Do not stay where buddha exists; run quickly from where no-buddha exists."

The place "no-buddha exists" means being free even from attachment to the buddha. In the *Fukanzazengi*, Dōgen said, "Do not seek to become buddha."

## 5-21

### Dōgen instructed,

Do not make arrangements in advance for obtaining food and clothing. Only when you run out of food and have nothing to cook, should you beg for food. Even planning ahead regarding who to ask for what you need is the same as storing food. This is evil food gained by improper means.

A Zen monk should be like a cloud with no fixed abode, like

flowing water with nothing to rely on. Such is called a monk.

Though possessing nothing except robes and a bowl, if you rely on some patron or close relative, you and they are both bound to each other, so the food becomes impure. It is impossible to realize the pure and great dharma of the buddhas with a body and mind fed and maintained by impure food. Just as cloth dyed with indigo becomes indigo-blue, and cloth dyed with *kihada* (Chinese cork tree) becomes yellow, a body and mind dyed with food gained by improper means becomes a body of impure-life. Desiring to attain the buddha-dharma with such a body and mind is like pressing sand to get oil.

Just handle everything in accordance with the Way in each situation. To plan in advance goes entirely against the Way. You should consider this very carefully.

## 5–22

**Dōgen instructed,**

Students must know that every human being has great faults. Among them, arrogance is the worst. Arrogance is equally admonished against in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts. In a non-Buddhist text, it is written, “There are some who are poor but do not flatter. However, there are none who are rich but not arrogant.” The text admonishes us not to become arrogant even

though we might be rich. As this is a most important matter, give it careful consideration.

If you are of humble birth and compete with people who belong to the upper class hoping to surpass them, this is a typical (example of) arrogance. However, this is easy to watch out for.

In the secular world, relatives gather around but do not criticize those who are wealthy and blessed. Since a rich person takes it as a matter of course, he becomes arrogant, and the poor people around him become envious and resentful. How can such a person prevent himself from increasing the suffering and resentment of others? It is difficult to caution this sort of person, and it is hard, for the person himself too, to practice self-restraint.

Even when the person does not intend to be arrogant, if he does what he wants, humble people around him feel pain and resentment. To prevent this is called restraining arrogance. A person who enjoys his wealth as a reward, and pays no attention to the poor people who envy him is called an arrogant person.

In a non-Buddhist text it is written, "Do not pass in front of a poor (man's) house riding in a chariot." This means that even if you are able to ride in a vermilion chariot, don't do it in front of poor people. Buddhist scriptures also admonish against this.

Nevertheless, students or priests today want to surpass others in intelligence and knowledge of the Buddhist teachings. Don't be arrogant because of your wide knowledge. To speak of the faults of inferior people, or to blame mistakes on your senior or fellow practitioners is terrible arrogance.

An ancient person said, "It is not bad to be defeated in front of

the wise, but do not win in front of the stupid.” When someone misunderstands what you know well, speaking ill of him is your own error.

When talking about the dharma, do not slander your predecessors or senior priests. Take careful consideration on this point, especially when ignorant and benighted people may become envious or jealous.

While I was staying at Kenninji, many people asked about the dharma. Among them, there were some strange opinions or mistaken views. However, I kept this deep in my heart; I only talked about the virtue of the dharma as it is, instead of criticizing the mistaken views of others. I avoided trouble in that way. A foolish person firmly attached to his own opinions always gets angry, saying that his virtuous predecessors have been slandered. The wise and sincere person realizes and reforms his own mistakes and those of his virtuous predecessors without having them pointed out by others, only if he understands the true meaning of the buddha-dharma. You should ponder this thoroughly.

## 5 – 23

**Dōgen instructed,**

The most vital concern in learning the Way is to practice zazen. In China, many people attained the Way entirely through the

power of zazen. If one concentrates on practicing zazen continuously, even an ignorant person, who does not understand a single question, can be superior to an intelligent person who has been studying for a long time. Therefore, practitioners must practice *shikantaza* wholeheartedly without bothering to concern themselves with other things. The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is nothing but zazen. Do not pursue anything else.

At the time, Ejō asked, "In learning both sitting and reading, when I read the collections of the old masters' sayings or *kōans*, I can understand one thing out of a hundred or a thousand words, though I have never had such an experience in zazen. Should we still prefer to practice zazen?"

Dōgen replied, "Even if you may seem to have some understanding while reading *kōans*, such studies will lead you astray from the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs. To spend your time sitting upright with nothing to be gained and nothing to be realized is the Way of the patriarchs. Although the ancient masters encouraged both reading and *shikan* zazen, they promoted sitting wholeheartedly. Although there are some who have gained enlightenment hearing stories (of the masters), the attainment of enlightenment is due to the merit of sitting. True merit depends on sitting."

正法眼藏

Shōbōgenzō-zuimonki

随闻记

Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji  
recorded by Koun Ejo

Book

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6

## Book 6

### 6-1

Dōgen instructed,

If you have to concern yourself with criticism from others, you should consider the opinion of a person with *clear eyes*<sup>1</sup>.

When I was in China, Master Nyojō of Tendō Monastery chose me as his personal attendant saying, “Although Dōgen is a foreigner, he is a man of capacity.” I declined it unequivocally.

I refused knowing it was important for establishing my reputation in Japan and for the sake of practicing the Way. This is because I thought there might have been someone with clear eyes in the assembly who was critical of a foreigner becoming the abbot’s attendant in such a great monastery, implying there were no men of ability in the great Song China. I had to be very careful. I wrote what I thought in a letter to the abbot. When Master Nyojō read it, he understood my respect for his country and my feeling of shame before people having *clear eyes*, so he did not ask me again.

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1 This means a person who has the intelligence to see Reality.

## 6-2

Dōgen instructed,

Someone said, "I am sick. I am not a vessel of the dharma. I cannot endure the practice of the Way. Having heard the essentials of the dharma, I wish to live alone, departing from the world, nourishing my body and taking care of my sickness until my life is over." This is a terrible mistake. The sages in the past did not necessarily have golden bones. Ancient practitioners did not all have superior capabilities. Not such a long time has passed since the Buddha's death. Even in the age of the Buddha not everyone was sharp witted. Some were good and others were not. Among the monks, there were some who did incredibly evil things, and others who had a very low intellect. None of them, however, demeaned themselves or failed to arouse bodhi-mind; none failed to study the Way on the grounds of not being a vessel of the dharma.

If you do not learn and practice the Way now, in which lifetime will you become a person of capability or a person without sickness? Just do not think of your body and mind, arouse bodhi-mind, and practice. This is most important in learning the Way.



## 6-3

### **Dōgen instructed,**

Students of the Way, you should not be greedy for food and clothing. Everyone has an allotted share of food and life. Though you might seek after more than your share, you will never be able to obtain it. Moreover, for us students of the Buddha-Way, there are offerings from donors. The food obtained from begging will not be exhausted. There will also be provisions belonging to the monastery. These are not the products of personal work. Fruits and berries, food gained from begging, and offerings from faithful believers are the three kinds of pure food. Food obtained from the four kinds of occupations<sup>1</sup>, farming, commerce, soldiering, and craftmaking is all impure. This is not food permissible for monks.

Once there was a monk who died and went to the realm of the dead. King Yama<sup>2</sup> said, "This person's allotted life has not been exhausted yet. Let him go back."

One of the officers of the realm of the dead said, "Although the life allotted him has not yet been exhausted, the food allotted him has already been consumed."

The King said, "Then, let him eat lotus leaves."

After the monk returned from the realm of the dead, he could not eat ordinary human food, so he maintained what remained of his life "eating only lotus leaves."

Therefore, the food allotted to monks who have left home, because of the power of learning the Buddha-Way, will not be

exhausted. Not a single White Hair of the Buddha<sup>3</sup>, nor the twenty-year legacy of the Buddha's life will be exhausted, even if they are used forever. Devote yourself only to the practice of the Way, and do not seek after food and clothing.

In books on medicine, it is said that only if the body, blood, and flesh are well maintained, will the mind also become healthy. Even more so, in practicing the Way should you keep the precepts, make your life pure, and restrain yourself, following the activities of the buddhas and patriarchs. In doing so, your mind will also become tranquil.

Students of the Way, when you want to say something, reflect on it three times; if it is beneficial to both yourself and others, then say it. If it is not, remain silent. However, these things are difficult to carry out. Keep them in mind and educate yourself gradually.

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- 1 These four occupations represent various ways of making a living, and of the various classes in the society.
  - 2 The lord of the dead. Yama is the judge of the merits and sins of the dead.
  - 3 See 4–15, footnote 2.

## 6-4

### In a talk on various subjects, Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, do not worry about food and clothing. Although Japan is a small country, far removed (from the Buddha's country), there are quite a few people who were famous as scholars of the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings, and who have become known to later generations. There are also many people who devote themselves to poetry, music, literature, and the martial arts. I have never heard of even one of them who had an abundance of food and clothing. They became known because they all endured poverty and forgot about other matters, so they could devote themselves completely to their own profession.

This is all the more true of people learning the Way in this tradition of the patriarchs. They have abandoned their occupations in society, and never seek after fame and profit. How could they become wealthy? Although this is the degenerate age, there are thousands of people in the monasteries in China who are learning the Way. There are some who came from remote districts or left their home provinces. In any case, although they never worry about their poverty, almost all of them are poor. Their only concern is that they have not yet attained the Way. Sitting either in a lofty building or under it, they practice [zazen] wholeheartedly as if they had lost their mother.

I personally met a monk from Shisen (Sìchúan) who had no possessions because he had come from a remote district. All he had

was a few pieces of ink stick<sup>1</sup>. They cost about two or three hundred *mon*<sup>2</sup> in China, which is about twenty or thirty *mon* in Japan. He sold them, bought very low quality Chinese paper, and made an upper robe and lower robe with it. Whenever he stood up or sat down, he made strange noises, though he never paid any attention to it.

Someone said to him, “Go back home and bring some personal belongings and clothing.”

He replied, “My home is far away. I don’t want to waste time on the road home, and lose time to practice the Way.”

He practiced the Way all the more, without being concerned with cold weather. This is why many prominent people have appeared in China.

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- 1 Chinese ink stick is made from pine roots or vegetable oil. It is used for painting and calligraphy.
  - 2 The minimum monetary unit in ancient China and Japan, the equivalent to a few pennies.

## 6-5

Dōgen instructed,

I have heard that at the time of the founder of the monastery on Mt. Seppō<sup>1</sup> (Xuéfeng), the temple was so poor they sometimes had

no food to cook or sometimes had to eat green beans<sup>2</sup> steamed with rice. They lived such a poor life while learning the Way. In later years there were never less than fifteen hundred monks staying at the monastery.

Ancient people practiced in such a way. Today, we should also be like this. This degeneration of monks is often caused by wealth and fame. In the time of the Buddha, Dēvadatta<sup>3</sup> aroused jealousy since he received daily offerings of five hundred cartloads of provisions. Wealth was harmful not only to himself, but made other people commit evil deeds. How can sincere people who learn the Way become wealthy? Even if it is an offering made from pure faith, if it accumulates in abundance, you must see it as a *debt* and want to return it.

People in this country make donations for the sake of gaining personal profit. It is only natural in the human world to give more to people who approach with a flattering smile. However, if you do so to curry favor with others, it will surely become an obstacle to your practice of the Way. Just endure the hunger and the cold and devote yourself completely to the practice of the Way.

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- 1 Seppō Gison (Xuéfeng Yichun, 822–908) was a disciple of Tokusan Senkan (Deshan Xuanjian).
  - 2 In the *Tenzo Kyōkun* Dōgen wrote, "First, take out any insects in the rice. And carefully winnow out any green beans, rice bran, or tiny stones." Green beans (*rokusu*) were not usually eaten.
  - 3 Dēvadatta was a cousin of Shakyamuni and became his disciple. It is said that he attempted to take over the leadership of the Buddhist sangha after Prince Ajatasatru took refuge with him and offered five hundred cartloads

of provisions daily.

## 6-6

**One day Dōgen instructed,**

An ancient person said, "Listen, see, attain."

Further, "If you haven't attained, see. If you haven't yet seen, listen."

He meant that seeing is superior to listening, attaining is superior to seeing. If you haven't attained, you should see. If you haven't seen, you should listen.

## 6-7

**Dōgen also said,**

The essential point to be careful about in practicing the Way is casting aside your tendency (from the past) to cling to certain things. If you first change your physical behavior, your mind will be reformed as well. Firstly, carry out what is prescribed to do and avoid what is prohibited in the precepts; then your mind will reform of itself.

In China, there is a custom among lay people of gathering at their ancestral shrine and pretending to cry, to demonstrate their filial piety toward their fathers and mothers. Eventually, they actually begin to cry. Students of the Way! Even if you don't have bodhi-mind in the beginning, if you force yourself to practice the Buddha-Way, eventually you will arouse true bodhi-mind. Especially beginners in the Way should just practice [the Way] following the other members of the sangha. Do not be in a hurry to study and understand the essential points and ancient examples. It is good to understand such things without misinterpretation when you enter the mountains or seclude yourselves in a city. If you practice following the other practitioners, you will surely attain the Way. It is like making a voyage. Even though you don't know how to steer the ship, if you leave everything to the skill of the sailors, whether you understand or not, you will reach the other shore. Only if you follow a good teacher and practice with fellow practitioners without harboring personal views, will you naturally become a person of the Way.

Students of the Way, even if you have attained enlightenment, do not stop practicing. Do not think that you have reached the pinnacle. The Way is endless. Even if you have attained enlightenment, continue to practice the Way. Remember the story of Ryōsui (Liáng sùì) who visited Zen Master Mayoku (Mágū)<sup>1</sup>.

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1 The lecturer Ryōsui (Liáng sùì, ?-?) visited Mayoku (Mágū, ?-?) a disciple of Baso (Matsu). Upon seeing Ryōsui coming, Mayoku took a hoe and went to hoeing up weeds. Although Ryōsui went to where Mayoku was

working, Mayoku paid no attention to him, went back to his room, and shut the gate. Ryōsui visited Makoku again the next day. Makoku shut the gate again. Ryōsui knocked on the door.

Mayoku asked, "Who is it?"

"It's Ryōsui!"

When the lecturer called out his own name, he suddenly attained enlightenment, and said, "Master, do not deceive Ryōsui. If I had not come to see you, I would have been deceived by the sutras and śāstras my whole life."

When Ryōsui went back, he gave a speech to his class, "All you know, Ryōsui knows. What Ryōsui knows, you don't know."

Then he quit giving lectures and had the people leave.

## 6–8

### Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, you should not postpone beginning to practice the Way. Just do not spend this day or even this moment in vain. Practice diligently day by day, moment by moment.

A certain lay person had been sick for a long time. Last spring he promised, "As soon as I have recovered, I will abandon my wife and children and build a hermitage near the temple. I will join in the meetings of repentance (*fusatsu*)<sup>1</sup> held twice a month. I also want to practice daily and listen to your lectures on the dharma. I would like to spend as much as possible the rest of my life being in



accord with the precepts.”

After that, he received various treatments, and recovered a little bit. But then, he had a relapse and spent his days in vain. In January of this year, his condition suddenly became critical, and he suffered increasing pain. Because he hadn't had enough time to bring the materials to build the hermitage he had been planning, he rented a room to stay in temporarily. Within a month or so, however, he passed away. He died peacefully since he had received the Bodhisattva precepts and had taken refuge in the Three Treasures the night before his death. So it was better than having stayed at home, clinging to the bonds of affection for his wife and children dying in madness. However I think it would have been better for him to have left home last year when he first made up his mind to do so. He could have lived close to the temple becoming familiar with the sangha and ended his life practicing the Way. Considering this, I feel that the practice of the Buddha-Way should not be put off until a later day. It is due to your lack of bodhi-mind that, you think since you're sick you can begin to practice after you have recovered. Whose body doesn't become sick composed as it is of the four elements!<sup>2</sup> The ancient masters did not necessarily have golden bones. They practiced without concern for anything else only because they thoroughly aspired (to practice the Way). It is like forgetting petty matters when encountering a great problem. Since the Buddha-Way is *the* vital matter, you should resolve to complete it in this lifetime and not waste even a single day or hour.

An ancient master said, “Do not pass time wastefully<sup>3</sup>.” When you are receiving some treatment, but instead of getting better the

pain gradually increases, you should practice while the pain is still not too bad. After the pain has become severe, you should determine to practice before your condition becomes critical. And when your condition has become critical, you should resolve to practice before you die.

When you are sick, sometimes the illness passes, sometimes it gets worse. Sometimes it gets better even without any treatment. And, sometimes it gets worse even though you are being treated. Take this carefully into consideration.

Practitioners of the Way, do not think of practicing after shelter has been assured, and robes and bowls etc. have been prepared. Although you may be living in dire poverty, while waiting until robes, bowls, and other equipment have been prepared, can you prevent death from approaching? If you wait until shelter has been prepared and robes and bowls are ready, you will have spent your whole lifetime in vain. You should have the resolution that without robes and bowls, even a lay person can practice the Buddha-Way. Robes and bowls are simply the ornaments of monkhood.

True practitioners of the Buddha-Way do not depend on such things. If they are available, let them be with you, but do not deliberately seek after them. On the other hand, do not think of not owning them when you have them. In the same way, if it is possible to cure your sickness, it goes against the Buddha's teachings to try and die intentionally and not receive treatment. For the sake of the Buddha Way neither hold your life dear, nor be careless about it. When possible, use moxa or decocted herbal medicines which do not obstruct your practice of the Way. Anyway,

it is a mistake to put aside your practice of the Way and put primary importance on curing your sickness, planning to practice only after you have recovered.

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- 1 *Fusatsu* (*Skt., Uposata*) is a regular meeting of monks and other members of the sangha. It is held twice a month, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the lunar month, at which time the precepts are recited and any transgressions repented.
- 2 The four basic elements of the material world: (1) *chidai*, the earth element, which represents solidity and forms the support for all things, (2) *suidai*, the water element, which moistens and contains all things, (3) *kadai*, the fire element, which represents heat and enables all things to mature and, (4) *fūdai*, the wind element, which represents motion and causes things to grow.
- 3 This is a quotation from the *Sandō-kai* (Centong-gi), a poem composed by Zen Master Sekitō Kisen (Shitou Xigian).

## 6-9

Dōgen instructed,

In the ocean, there is a place called the Dragon-Gate<sup>1</sup>, where vast waves rise incessantly. Without fail, all fish once having passed through this place become dragons. Thus, the place is called the Dragon-Gate.

The vast waves there are not different from those in any other

place, and the water is also ordinary salt water. Despite that, mysteriously enough, when fish cross that place, they all become dragons. Their scales do not change and their bodies stay the same; however, they suddenly become dragons.

The way of Zen monks is also like this. Although it is not a special place, if you enter a *sōrin*<sup>2</sup> (monastery), without fail you will become a buddha or a patriarch. You eat meals and wear clothes as usual; thus you stave off hunger and keep off the cold just the same as other people do. Still, if you shave your head, put on a *kesa*, and eat gruel for breakfast and rice for lunch, you will immediately become a Zen monk. Do not seek afar to become a buddha or a patriarch. Becoming one who either passes through the Dragon Gate or not depends only on entering a *sōrin* (monastery), just the same as the fish.

There is a saying in the secular world, "I sell gold, but no one will buy it." The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is also like this. It is not that they begrudge the Way; even though it is always being offered, no one will accept it. To attain the Way does not depend on whether you are inherently sharp or dull witted. Each one of us can be aware of the dharma. Slowness or quickness in attaining the Way depends on whether you are diligent or indolent. The difference between being diligent or indolent is caused by whether your aspiration is resolute or not. Lack of firm aspiration is caused by being unaware of impermanence. Ultimately speaking, we die moment by moment, not residing for even a little while. While you are alive, do not spend your time in vain.

There is an old saying, "A mouse in a storehouse starves for

food. An ox plowing the field never eats his fill of grass.” This means that even though living in the midst of food, the mouse is starving; even though living in the midst of grass, the ox is short of grass. Human beings are also like this. Even though we are in the midst of the Buddha-Way, we are not living in accordance with the Way. Unless we cut off the desire for fame and profit, we cannot live in peace and joy (nirvana) throughout our lifetime.

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- 1 *Ryūmon* in Japanese, (Ch., Longmen). Actually this is the name of a gorge along the Huanghe (the Yellow River).
- 2 See 1-1, footnote 13.

## 6-10

**Dōgen instructed,**

Whether they seem good or bad, the deeds of a person of the Way, are results of deep consideration. They cannot be fathomed by ordinary people.

A long time ago, Eshin Sōzu (Genshin)<sup>1</sup> once had someone beat a deer that was eating grass in the garden and drive it away.

Someone asked him, “You seem to lack compassion. Why did you begrudge the grass to the deer and have it, driven away?”

The Sōzu replied, “If I did not beat it and drive it away, the deer would eventually become familiar with human beings. And if

it ever went near an evil person, it would surely be killed. This is why I drove it away.”

Although he seemed lacking in compassion by beating the deer and driving it away, deep in his heart he had compassion.

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- 1 Genshin (942–1017) was a Tendai priest and a great exponent of Pure Land thought. He is popularly called Eshin Sōzu because he lived in Eshin-in at Yokawa on Mt. Hiei. He lost his father when he was young and went up to Mt. Hiei to study Buddhism under Ryōgen. His *Ōjōyāshū* laid the foundation for the Japanese Pure Land teaching. Sōzu is a rank in the Buddhist hierarchy in Japan.

## 6–11

### One day Dōgen instructed,

When someone asks about the dharma or the essentials of practice, Zen monks must reply on the basis of the true dharma. Do not answer on the basis of expedient means that are not true, thinking the person is not a vessel (of the dharma), or is incapable of understanding because he is only a beginner.

The spirit of the Bodhisattva Precepts<sup>1</sup> is that even if a person who is a vessel of *hinayana* asks the way of *hinayana*, you should reply only on the basis of *mahayana*. This is the same as the Tathāgata taught during his lifetime. The provisional teaching as

an expedient means is really of no value. Ultimately, only the final true teaching is beneficial. Therefore, without being concerned with whether the person can grasp it or not, you must answer only on the basis of the true dharma.

When you see a person, value his true virtue. Do not judge him on his outward appearance or superficial characteristics.

In ancient days, a person came to Confucius<sup>2</sup> to become his student. Confucius asked him, "Why do you want to be my disciple?"

The person replied, "When I saw you going to the court, you looked very noble and dignified. So, I wanted to become your student."

Confucius then asked one of his students to bring his cart, garments, gold, silver, and other treasures. He gave them to the person saying, "It is not me that you respect." And he sent him away.

**Dōgen also said,**

The *Kanpaku* (the Chief Advisor to the Emperor) of Uji<sup>3</sup> once came to the bathhouse in the court, and watched the person in charge making a fire.

He saw the *Kanpaku* and said, "Who are you? Why did you come to the bathhouse in the court without permission?"

The *Kanpaku* was driven out. Then, he took off the shabby clothes he had been wearing and changed into a magnificent costume. When he appeared dressed up the man in charge of the fire spotted him from a distance, became frightened, and fled. The

Kanpaku put his robes on the top of a bamboo pole and paid homage to them. Someone asked what he was doing.

He replied, "I am respected by others not because of my virtue but because of this costume."

Foolish people respect others in this way. Their respect towards words or phrases in the scriptures is the same.

An ancient person said, "Though the words (of statesmen) fill the land, there is no fault on their tongue. The actions (of statesmen) influence the whole country, but there is no one who bears a grudge against them." This is because they have said what they should say and carried out what they should have carried out. These are the words and actions of ultimate virtue and the essence of the Way. Even in the secular world, if people speak and pass judgment with one-sided personal evaluations, there will be nothing but mistakes. The speech and deeds of Zen monks have been established by our predecessors. Never hold onto personal one-sided views. This is the Way the buddhas and patriarchs have been practicing.

Students of the Way, you should reflect on your own selves. To reflect on your self means to examine how to maintain your own body and mind. You are already the children of the Buddha Shakyamuni. So you must learn the Way of the Tathgata. There is a code of conduct that has been carried out by previous buddhas regarding the manners of body, speech, and mind. Each one of you should follow them.

Even in the secular world, it is said that clothes should be in accordance with the law, speech should be based on the Way. Much



more so then should Zen monks never follow their own selfish ideas.

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- 1 See 1–2, footnote 7.
- 2 Confucius (551–479B.C.) was a great Chinese philosopher, the founder of Confucianism.
- 3 Fujiwara Yorimichi (992–1074). He built Byōdōin Temple in Uji near Kyōto.

## 6–12

### **Dōgen instructed,**

These days, many people who are learning the Way listen to a talk on the dharma, and above all want their teacher to know that they have a correct understanding and want to give good replies. This is why the words they listen to go in one ear and out the other. They still lack bodhi-mind and remain self-centered.

First of all, forget your ego and listen quietly to what others say, and later ponder it well. Then, if you find some faults or have some doubts, you may make criticism. When you have grasped the point, you should present your understanding to your teacher. Waiting to claim immediate understanding shows that you are not really listening to the dharma.

## 6-13

Dōgen instructed,

During the reign of Taisō of the Tō dynasty, a foreign country presented the emperor with a horse that could travel thousands of miles a day. After receiving the horse, he thought to himself joylessly,

“Even if I travel thousands of miles on this excellent horse, it is useless if no retainers follow me.”

Therefore he summoned Gichō (Wèizhìng)<sup>1</sup> and asked him about it.

Gichō replied, “I agree with you.”

So, the emperor returned the horse with a load of gold and silk on its back.

Even an emperor in the secular world did not keep what was useless; he returned it. Much more so for Zen monks; besides robes and a bowl, there is nothing at all which is useful. Why store up useless things? Even among lay people, those who completely devote themselves to a certain way do not think it necessary to possess property such as rice paddies, gardens, or manors. They consider everyone in the whole country their own people or family.

In his will to his son, Chisō Hōkyō<sup>2</sup> said, “You must concentrate your efforts on the Way exclusively.”

Needless to say, as children of the Buddha, you should abandon all affairs and devote yourselves to one thing wholeheartedly. This is the primary thing to bear in mind.

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1 See 2–3, footnote 2.

2 In the *Rufu-bon*, Suke no Hōkyō. Hōkyō (Dharma Bridge) is a rank in the Buddhist hierarchy. Nothing is known about him.

## 6–14

### Dōgen instructed,

Students of the Way, when you practice with a certain teacher and learn the dharma, you should listen thoroughly again and again until you completely understand. If you spend time without asking what should be asked, or without saying what should be said, it will certainly be your own loss. Teachers always await questions from their disciples and give their own comments. You should ask again and again to make sure even of things that you have already understood. Teachers also should ask their disciples whether they have really understood or not, and thoroughly convince them (of the truth of the dharma).

## 6-15

**Dōgen instructed,**

The mental attitude of a person of the Way is somewhat different from that of ordinary people. One time when the late Sōjō (Archbishop) of Kenninji (Eisai) was still alive, the temple ran completely out of food. At the time, one of the patrons invited the Sōjō over and offered him a bolt of silk. The Sōjō rejoiced and carried it back to the temple himself, instead of having someone else carry it for him. He gave it to the temple officer who was in charge and told him to use it to pay for the following morning's gruel, etc.

However, a certain layman asked, "A shameful affair happened, so that I need a few bolts of silk. If you have any, could you kindly let me have them?"

The Sōjō immediately took back the silk from the temple officer and gave it to the man. At the time, the officer and all the other monks were extremely upset by this. Later the Sōjō said, "You may think it was wrong. However, my thinking is that you gather together here because of your aspiration for the Buddha-Way. It should not matter even if we run out of food and starve to death. It is more beneficial to save people in the secular world right now who are suffering from a lack of something they need."

Truly, the consideration of a person of the Way is like this.

## 6–16

### Dōgen instructed,

All the buddhas and patriarchs were originally ordinary people. While they were ordinary people, they certainly did bad deeds and had evil minds. Some of them were undoubtedly dull or even stupid. However, since they reformed their minds, followed their teachers, and practiced (the Way), they all became buddhas and patriarchs. People today should also be like this. Do not underestimate yourselves because you think you are dull or stupid. If you do not arouse bodhi-mind in this present lifetime, when can you expect to be able to practice the Way? If you force yourselves to practice now, you will surely attain the Way.

## 6–17

### Dōgen instructed,

There is a proverb about the way of the emperor, “If one’s heart is not empty, it is impossible to accept loyal advice.” What this means is that without holding personal views, one follows the opinions of loyal ministers and carries out the way of the sovereign according to how things should be.

The attitude of Zen monks practicing the Way should be the

same. If you hold on to personal views even slightly, the words of your teacher will not enter your ears. If you don't listen to your teacher's words, you cannot grasp your teacher's dharma. Forget not only the different views on the dharma, but also worldly affairs, and hunger and cold as well. When you listen being completely purified in body and mind, you will be able to hear intimately. When you listen with this attitude, you will be able to clarify the truth and resolve your questions. True attainment of the Way is casting aside body and mind and following your teacher directly. If you maintain this attitude, you will be a true person of the Way. This is a primary secret.



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# Shōbōgenzō-zuimonki

Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji  
recorded by Koun Ejō

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SOTOSHU SHUMŪCHO



# Chart of the Zen Lineage

