

On Giving Rise to the Unsurpassed Mind

(*Hotsu Mujō Shin*)

Translator’s Introduction: This discourse was given on the same day as was Discourse 85: On Giving Rise to the Enlightened Mind (*Hotsu Bodai Shin*). Considering the passage that describes how alms should be given to monastics, it is likely that this talk was given for Dōgen’s lay disciples.

An important aspect of this discourse is Dōgen’s opening remarks concerning metaphors, which offers a clue as to his use of such terms as a blade of grass, trees, tiles, stones, fences, walls, stupas, images of Buddhas, and Buddhas, all of which can readily be understood as references to what is experienced in terms of training disciples.

Our Highest Ancestor in India, Shakyamuni Buddha, once said, “The snow-capped Himalayas are a metaphor for the great nirvana.” You need to know that He is speaking metaphorically about something that can be metaphoric. ‘Something that can be metaphoric’ implies that the mountains and nirvana are somehow intimately connected and that they are connected in a straightforward manner. When He uses the term ‘snow-capped Himalayas’, He is using the actual snow-capped Himalayas as a metaphor, just as when He uses the term ‘great nirvana’, He is using the actual great nirvana as a metaphor.



Our First Ancestor in China, Bodhidharma, once said, “Any mind and all minds are like trees and stones.” ‘Mind’ here means ‘mind just as it is’. It is the mind that encompasses the whole of the great earth. Therefore, it is the mind of self and the mind of other. Any mind and all minds—those of ordinary worldly humans, those of the Buddhas and Ancestors of the whole universe in all ten directions, those of celestial and demonic beings, among others—are precisely like trees and stones, and there is no mind apart from this. These ‘trees and stones’ are not made captive by the bonds of ‘existence versus non-existence’ or ‘emptiness versus form’. By means of this mind of trees and stones, we give rise to the Mind that both seeks the Way and does the practice to awaken to It, because these are the trees of our Mind and the stones of our Mind. With the aid of these trees and stones of our Mind, we bring forth what we are thinking about here and now based upon not deliberately thinking about anything in particular. Not until we have

encountered what our tradition voices concerning the trees and stones of our Mind can we go beyond the various teachings that non-Buddhists propagate. Before then, we are not on the Buddha's Way.



The National Teacher Echū once said, “The tiles* and stones of our walls and fences are precisely what the mind of Old Buddhas is.” We should investigate in detail where, precisely, these tiles and stones of our walls and fences are, and we need to ask ourselves what it is that has appeared in this manner. ‘The mind of Old Buddhas’ is not something in the far-off fields of the Lord of Emptiness.* It is being satisfied with the morning gruel and being satisfied with the noontime meal. It is being satisfied with the grass and being satisfied with the water.¹ To treat your mind in this way and to sit like a Buddha and act like a Buddha is called ‘giving rise to the mind that seeks Buddhahood’. Speaking more generally, the causes and conditions for giving rise to the enlightened Mind do not come from any other place than the mind that seeks to be enlightened, for it is our very mind that is giving rise to the intention to search for Buddhahood. What we call ‘giving rise to the mind that seeks to be enlightened’ is the offering of a single blade of grass and thereby creating a Buddha, and it is the offering of a rootless tree and thereby creating a Scripture. It is giving alms to a Buddha by offering a handful of sand, and it is giving alms to a Buddha by offering rice water. It is offering a ball of rice to some sentient being or offering five flowers to the Tathagata. To practice some bit of good at the suggestion of another, and to do bows to the Buddha upon having been annoyed by some demon, these too are our giving rise to the mind that seeks to be enlightened. Not only that, it is knowing that one's family home is not one's True Home, and so forsaking home life, leaving family behind in order to enter a mountain monastery and practice the Way, either by relying on faith or upon one's understanding. It is to fashion images of Buddhas and to fashion stupas.* It is to read the Scriptures and to keep the name of Buddha in mind. It is to give expression to the Dharma for the sake of all beings. It is to seek out a True Master and inquire of the Way. It is to sit in full lotus position, to bow to the Three Treasures, and to make “Homage to the Buddha” one's sole invocation.

The causes and conditions of the eighty thousand aggregates that make up the whole of the Dharma, as the preceding statements have expressed, are

* See *Glossary*.

1. Being satisfied with the grass and water describes a domesticated water buffalo, a metaphor for the contentment experienced by a well-trained and awakened trainee.

positively due to giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood. There are those who have given rise to the intention in their sleep while dreaming and have realized Buddhahood. And there are those who have given rise to the intention while in a drunken stupor and have realized Buddhahood. And there are those who have given rise to the intention and realized Buddhahood amidst flying flower petals or falling leaves. And there are those who have given rise to the intention and realized Buddhahood amidst peach blossoms or a bamboo grove. And there are those who have given rise to the intention and realized Buddhahood while high in the heavens. And there are those who have given rise to the intention and realized Buddhahood while deep within the ocean. In all these cases, they have given rise to the mind of enlightenment whilst within the enlightened Mind and have given rise to the mind of enlightenment whilst within body and mind. All Buddhas have given rise to an enlightened Mind whilst within body and mind, and They have given rise to an enlightened Mind whilst within the Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow of the Buddha's Ancestor, Bodhidharma.

Thus, our present-day fashioning of such things as stupas and images of Buddhas is undoubtedly due to our giving rise to our enlightened Mind; it is our giving rise to the intention to reach Buddhahood forthwith and without giving up midway. This spiritually beneficial activity is free of any attachments. It is a meritorious activity that is free of any striving. It enables us to see the True Nature of all things. This is seeing Dharma Nature. It is the meditative state that beckons to all the Buddhas. It is the invocation that finds all the Buddhas. It is the supreme, fully enlightened Mind. It is the fruition of arhathood.* It is the full manifestation of Buddhahood. Apart from this, there is no other method that is free of all attachments and free of any striving.

At the same time, there are befuddled folks of the Lesser Course* who say:

To fashion images of the Buddha and raise stupas is to undertake activities that involve attachments. We should put them aside and not engage in them. Bringing a halt to the functioning of the worldly, selfish mind and developing a tranquil spirit is what being free of attachments means. Being free from the cycle of arising and decay and being free from striving is what Reality is. Training oneself single-mindedly to see the Ultimate Reality of Buddha Nature is to be free of attachments.

Talking in this way, they have made this their customary, worldly way of study in India and China in both the past and the present. Accordingly, they do not fashion images or raise stupas, even though they have been fostering serious breakages of Precepts. Caught in the thickets of sensory defilements, they sully themselves, yet

they fail to keep the name of Buddha in mind or to read the Scriptures. These are folks who have not only ruined their spiritual potential, which all humans of any sort have, but they have also dismissed out-of-hand the Buddha Nature of the Tathagata. Truly, how pitiful that at a time when they have encountered Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, they have become sworn enemies of these Three Treasures. Though they have climbed on the mountain of the Three Treasures, they have returned empty-handed; though they have entered the ocean of the Three Treasures, they have returned empty-handed. Even were they to encounter a thousand Buddhas and ten thousand Ancestors coming into the world, there would be no hope of their realizing enlightenment, for they have lost the means for giving rise to that intention. Their situation is like this because they have not followed what is written in the Scriptures or followed a reliable spiritual guide. The situation of many people is like this because they are following non-Buddhist ways and false teachers. You should quickly discard views and opinions such as “Fashioning such things as stupas has nothing to do with attaining spiritual wisdom.” Wash your mind clean, wash your body clean, wash your ears clean, wash your eyes clean, and you will neither look at nor pay attention to such views and opinions. Just follow the teachings of the Buddha, follow good spiritual guides, keep coming back to the True Teaching, and explore through your training with your Master what the Buddha Dharma is.

In the Great Way of the Buddha Dharma, the Scriptures of the whole universe exist within a single mote of dust, and all the Buddhas beyond measure exist within a single mote of dust. There is not a tree or a blade of grass that is separate from our body and mind. When the myriad thoughts and things do not arise, our whole mind also does not arise, and since this is the True Form of all thoughts and things, It is the true form of every single mote of dust. Accordingly, our whole mind is all thoughts and things, and all thoughts and things are our whole mind, our whole being. If there were a time when such things as fashioning stupas involved attachments, then the enlightenment that is the fruit of Buddhahood and the Buddha Nature, which is what is real, would also involve attachments. Because that which is real, namely, the Buddha Nature, is not involved in attachments, the fashioning of Buddhist images and the raising of stupas likewise do not involve attachments. Buddha Nature is the mind that is free of attachments and whose intention is to realize Buddhahood; it is the meritorious activity that is free of attachments and free of delusions. You should firmly trust and understand that such things as the fashioning of Buddhist images and the raising of stupas are simply a manifestation of the mind that seeks enlightenment. Such efforts to fulfill the wish to help rescue all sentient beings have been fostered over millions of eons, for they are the giving rise to the intention to realize

Buddhahood over millions and millions of eons. We call this encountering Buddha and hearkening to His Teaching.

You need to keep in mind that gathering wood and stones, collecting up mud and earth, gathering gold and silver, as well as the seven precious jewels,* in order to fashion an image of the Buddha or to raise a stupa, and the gathering up of one's whole mind in order to fashion a stupa or fashion an image are our piling the Boundless upon the boundless to create a Buddha, our holding aloft the Mind of the mind to fashion a Buddha, our piling a stupa upon the Stupa to fashion a stupa, our making manifest the Buddhahood of a Buddha to fashion a Buddha. This is why the *Lotus Scripture* says, "When we pay attention to such matters, all the Buddhas in the ten quarters appear." Understand that when one person realizes Buddhahood by paying attention to such matters, all the Buddhas in the ten quarters appear by paying attention to such matters. And when one person realizes Buddhahood by one thought or thing, it is all thoughts and things realizing Buddhahood.



Shakyamuni Buddha once said, "When I saw the morning star emerge, I was enlightened simultaneously with the whole of the great earth and all its sentient beings." Accordingly, giving rise to the intention, doing the training and practice, awakening, and realizing nirvana will be giving rise to the intention, doing the training and practice, awakening, and realizing nirvana, and all at the same time. The body and mind of which the Buddha spoke encompasses grasses and trees, tiles and stones, as well as wind and rain, water and fire. Finding ways to make use of these in order to help realize what the Buddha said is precisely what giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood is. Fashion your stupas and your images of Buddha by taking hold of the Unbounded, and fashion your images of Buddha and your stupas by using both your hands to scoop up Water from the mountain stream, for such actions are your giving rise to supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. And so, throughout hundreds of thousands of myriad eons, this is how one person's giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood manifests, which is the same as doing the training and awakening to the Truth.

At the same time, when you hear that giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood is a one-time thing, after which one does not experience the rising of the intention again, and that even though one's training and practice are beyond measure, the fruits of awakening are a one-time event, you are not hearing the Buddha Dharma, you are not comprehending the Buddha Dharma, you are not encountering the Buddha Dharma. The intention that arises in the mind millions of times is, beyond doubt, an arising that is a singular arising of the intention. And the

arising of the intention in millions of people is a singular arising of the intention. And a singular arising of the intention is millions of arisings of the intention. Training and enlightenment, as well as turning the Wheel of the Dharma, are also just like this. And it is like this because, if you were unaware of such things as grasses and trees, how could you possibly have a body and a mind? And if you had no body or mind, how could you possibly know of grasses and trees? And if you were unaware of grasses and trees, there would be no grasses and trees for you.² Practicing the Way by doing meditation is giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood. The arisings of the intention transcend sameness or difference. The instances of doing meditation transcend sameness or difference, and they transcend something occurring just two or three times, and they transcend being something to be rid of. You need to thoroughly explore each and every thing in this way. If the whole procedure, from beginning to end, of bringing together grasses and trees, as well as the seven treasures, in order to fashion stupas and Buddhist images were activities that involved attachments, then enlightenment would not be possible and the thirty-seven methods of training to realize enlightenment would also be activities that involve attachments.³

As to the matter of the body and mind of humans in the three temporal worlds—be they humble or lofty—if they were to undertake the training and practice whilst being all involved with attachments, it would not be possible for them to reach the Ultimate. Grasses and trees, tiles and stones, as well as the four elements* and the five skandhas,* are likewise ‘just mind’: they are likewise what the True Form of all things is. The whole universe in all ten quarters, as well as the True Nature of all things, which is Buddha Nature, are likewise manifestations of Truth. Within the True Nature of all things, which is Buddha Nature, how could there possibly be such things as grasses and trees? And how could such things as grasses and trees not be Buddha Nature, which is the True Nature of all things? All thoughts and things are not involved with attachments, nor are they free of attachments: they are the Real Form. The Real Form is the real form of all things just as they are, and being just as they are is synonymous with our body and mind at this very moment, here and now. By means of this body and mind of ours, we can give rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood. Therefore, do not despise treading on water or treading on rocks. While holding a single blade of grass aloft,

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2. ‘Grasses and trees’ is a Zen term for all manner of things that sprout up and flourish for a while.
 3. These thirty-seven methods are the topic of Discourse 70: On the Thirty-seven Methods of Training for Realizing Enlightenment (*Sanjūshichihon Bodai Bumpō*).

we create a golden body sixteen feet high, and while holding aloft a single mote of dust, we construct a stupa for our dear Old Buddha. These activities are manifestations of our having given rise to the heart of Wisdom. It is our encountering Buddha, our heeding Buddha, our becoming Buddha, and our putting Buddha into practice.



Shakyamuni Buddha once said:

You lay men and lay women who are my virtuous sons and daughters, make alms offerings to the Three Treasures—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—with the flesh of your spouses and children, and make alms offerings to the Three Treasures with your own flesh. How can all the monks who have already received the alms you've offered in good faith possibly fail to do their training?

So, be aware that making alms offerings to the Three Treasures of such things as food, clothing, bedding, medicine, lodging for monks, cultivated lands, and woodlands is your making alms offerings of your own flesh and skin, bones and marrow, as well as those of your spouse and children. Having already entered the Three Treasure's ocean of meritorious activity, you are therefore all of one and the same flavor. Because you are all of one and the same flavor, you are the Three Treasures. The meritorious activity of the Three Treasures has already manifested in the skin and flesh, bones and marrow of your own body, as well as that of your spouse and children, for it is your diligence in doing your utmost to practice the Way. Now, joining with the True Nature and form of the World-honored One, you should explore the Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow of the Buddha's Way. This present alms offering of your very being is your giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, so how could those monks who received your offering possibly fail to do the practice, and do it correctly from start to finish? Accordingly, no sooner does a single particle of thought arise than your Whole Mind will in an instant follow suit and give rise to your intention. When your Whole Mind arises right off, Unbounded Space will soon emerge.

In short, even when saintly ones and arhats awaken to the Mind that gives rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, they will be able, right off, to plant Buddha Nature's seed.⁴ Should they then do the training and practice devotedly by embracing the four elements and the five skandhas, they will realize the Way, or

4. 'Saintly ones and arhats' refers to those doing their training within the Lesser Course. The terms do not imply that such persons are necessarily monastics.

should they then do the training and practice devotedly by embracing grasses and trees, fences and walls, they will realize the Way because, in both their substance and their inherent nature, the four elements and the five skandhas are the same as grasses and trees, tiles and stones, and because they are also the same in mind and in life, as well as in body and in function.

Accordingly, within the assemblies of the Buddhas and Ancestors there have been many who did their utmost to practice the Way by taking up the mind that focused on grasses and trees. This is behavior arising from the Mind that seeks enlightenment. As a person of the Way, the Fifth Ancestor, Daiman Kōnin, once planted a pine tree. Rinzai made the effort to plant cedar and pine trees on Mount Ōbaku. And there was the old man of the Ryū clan who planted pines on Mount Tōzan. By practicing the constancy of the pine and cypress, they scraped out the Eye of the Buddhas and Ancestors.⁵ This displayed their ability to take pleasure in their living Eye, which is the Eye enlightened.

Fashioning such things as stupas and images of Buddhas is the Eye taking Its pleasure. It is to taste the arising of the intention to realize Buddhahood: it is to make use of the arising of this intention. If there were no attaining of the Eye for such things as fashioning stupas, there would be no awakening to the Truth by the Buddhas and Ancestors. After attaining an Eye for fashioning Buddhas, one creates Buddhas and creates Ancestors. Were someone to say, “Such fashioned things as stupas are ultimately reduced to dust and dirt, and so they have no real merit, whereas cultivating ‘nothing arising’ is stable practice because it is not tainted by the dust and dirt of the world,” these would not be the words of a Buddha. If stupas are reduced to dust and dirt, then the state of ‘non-arising’ will also be reduced to dust and dirt. If the state of ‘non-arising’ is not reduced to dust and dirt, then stupas likewise will not be reduced to dust and dirt. Right here is where the What is! To give expression to having attachments is to give expression to being free of attachments.



The Tathagata said in the *Avatamsaka Scripture*:

When Bodhisattvas* give rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood and make birth-and-death the foremost issue, they

5. Because the pine and the cypress trees do not lose their foliage even in the severest of winters, they have been used in the East as a common metaphor for friends who remain constant in adversity. To ‘scrape out’ the Eye of the Buddhas and Ancestors means to fully absorb Their spiritual Teaching and to make It one’s own.

wholeheartedly seek enlightened Wisdom and, being steadfast, they will not waver. The meritorious functioning of that single-mindedness is deep and vast, knowing no bounds. If I were to analyze and explain it, I would be unable to exhaust the topic, even if I had eons to do it.

You need to be clear about this: using the issue of birth-and-death to give rise to your intention to realize Buddhahood is to wholeheartedly seek enlightened Wisdom. This wholeheartedness must be as a single blade of grass or a single tree, because it is your single moment of life and your single moment of death. Even so, the depth of this meritorious activity is beyond any bounds, and its vastness is also beyond any bounds. Even were the Tathagata to speak for eons of time describing this meritorious activity, He could not fully exhaust the topic even then. He could not fully exhaust it because one's Mind remains after one's death, just as the bottom of the sea remains after the sea has dried up. It is like seeking far and wide for the boundaries of this wholeheartedness, which is as boundless as the depth and vastness of a single blade of grass or a single tree, or of a stone or a tile. When the single blade of grass or the single stone is seven or eight feet tall, so such a one's wholeheartedness is likewise seven or eight feet tall, and his heart that seeks the Way is also seven or eight feet tall.

Thus, entering into the depths of the mountains to ponder the Buddha's Way may well be easy, whereas to fashion a stupa or fashion a Buddha is ever so hard. Though both approaches are ripened by diligence and strenuous effort, the one makes use of the mind and the other is being used by the Mind, which is different by far. Time after time, giving rise to the enlightened Mind in this way makes the Buddhas and Ancestors manifest.

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Ejō