

On ‘Respectful Bowing Will Secure for You the Very Marrow of the Way’

(*Raihai Tokuzui*)

Translator’s Introduction: Dōgen’s title, *Raihai Tokuzui*, in addition to the translation given above, can also be rendered as ‘Respectfully Bowing to Those Who Have Realized the Very Marrow of the Way’. The text is in two parts. The first, delivered to his monks in the spring of 1240, deals with being willing to learn from any who give voice to the Dharma, be they male or female, human or animal, living or dead, animate or inanimate. The second, given in the fall of the same year, specifically addresses various questions on learning from women. For unexplained reasons, the second part was not incorporated in the earlier versions of the *Shōbōgenzō*, but was kept under lock and key in Dōgen’s temple, Eihei-ji. This may be due in part to the strong tone of this section, which might be misunderstood as being improperly critical of the practices and attitudes of other monks and other Buddhist traditions. When read in context, however, it is likely that Dōgen’s initial talk on gratitude towards those who teach the Dharma, which includes female monks, garnered some negative reactions, and he found it necessary, to borrow his metaphor, to drive the wild foxes of delusion out from their lairs. Hence, his remarks are colored by strong rhetoric, along with his insistent use of the phrase ‘and also’ to punctuate his remarks, for he seems determined to rid his monks of any and all negative, conventional, non-Buddhist cultural attitudes towards women, including those arising from some long-standing practices within Buddhist communities.

At that time when a person undertakes spiritual training and practice in order to realize *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*—that is, supreme, fully perfected enlightenment—it is extremely difficult to acquire a teacher and guide. Whether that guiding Master has the physical features of a male or a female, or whatever, is irrelevant, but it must be someone who is spiritually outstanding, one who is truly ‘with It’ here and now.¹ Whether he or she is someone of the past or a present-day person is of no matter; even one who has the nagging manner of a wild fox may prove a good spiritual friend,² for this is the countenance of one who has secured

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1. To be “‘with It’ here and now” is an attempt to render the term *immo* when used in its Chinese slang meaning for the condition of persons or things being just what they truly are, without any sense of an existence separate from time and without any sense of a false self.
 2. In Zen literature, the epithet ‘wild fox (or jackal)’ is usually applied to a person who is, as yet, unawakened to the Truth, one who tags after someone who is voicing the Dharma, and

the very Marrow, one who will be a spiritual guide and of benefit to you. This is someone who does not deceive others about cause and effect, and who will treat you, me, and others as spiritual equals.

Once you have encountered a teacher and guide, from then on you should discard your myriad involvements, cease frittering away your time, and devote yourself to diligently practicing the Way. You should do your training and practice, even though you may still be attached to discriminatory thinking; you should do your training and practice, even if you have gone beyond discriminatory thinking; you should do your training and practice, even though you may be half-hearted in the attempt. Study with urgency, as though you were extinguishing a fire on your head: study with joy and hopefulness, as though you were standing on tiptoes.³ Should you behave in this way, you will not be disturbed by bad-mouthing demons. Besides, the Second Chinese Ancestor's 'cutting off his arm to obtain the Marrow' of his Master's Teachings was a unique deed.⁴ I myself had become 'the teacher who has cast off body and mind' before I was fully aware of it.

Securing the Marrow and communicating the Dharma inevitably depend on sincere devotion and a trusting heart. Sincerity and trust do not in the least come from outside ourselves, nor is there any place within from which they emerge. Simply, beyond doubt, those who have done this emphasize the Dharma and play down themselves. These people flee society's world and make the Path their dwelling place. If they were then to pay heed to their false self, prizing that above the Dharma, then the Dharma would not be Transmitted to them and they would never realize the Way. This attitude of prizing the Dharma has not been limited to just a single case, so perhaps we can look at a few cases, without turning to any of the many other instructive examples.

It has been said, "Prizing the Dharma means that if our guide and teacher—be it one who is a supporting pillar* of the temple or a temple lantern,* a Buddha or a wild fox, a hungry ghost* or a divine being—is presenting the Great Dharma and has personally realized Its Marrow, we should respectfully serve him for

persists in asking nagging and vexatious questions. The term is sometimes applied in a positive sense to a Buddhist Master who keeps at his disciples, urging them in the direction of realizing the Truth through his probing questions.

3. A Buddhist metaphor similar to the English phrase 'walking on air'.
4. 'Cutting off one's arm' is being used metaphorically to refer to giving up one's willfulness at all costs. Such a 'severing' is done by applying Manjushri's Sword of Wise Discernment. Dōgen is not recommending self-mutilation.

* See *Glossary*.

immeasurable eons, with our bodies and minds as a resting place for the Teaching.” Obtaining a body and mind comes easily enough—like the rice, hemp, bamboo, and reeds that sprout up throughout the world. What is rare is encountering the Dharma.



Shakyamuni Buddha once said:

Should you meet teachers who expound supreme enlightenment, do not inquire into their family pedigree, do not look at their personal appearance, do not despise their shortcomings, do not be concerned with their behavior. Simply, out of respect and esteem for spiritual wisdom, feed such persons daily with hundreds of thousands of ounces of gold, bestow upon them food fit for the gods, make them offerings to meet their needs, and scatter celestial flowers upon them as a reverential offering.⁵ Thrice every day—morning, noon, and evening—reverently bow to pay your respects, without letting any feelings of resentment arise in you. When you behave in this way, there will undoubtedly be a way to enlightenment for you. From the time when I first gave rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, I have trained and practiced in this manner so that today I am realizing supreme enlightenment.

In accordance with this, we should pray that the trees and stones give voice to the Dharma for us: we should hold in our hearts the wish that the fields and the villages also give voice to It. We should ask It of the pillar of a temple: we should have the walls and fences explore It thoroughly with us.

In olden times, there was a celestial emperor, one Shakrendra, who respectfully bowed to a fox as his teacher and asked it about the Dharma, and, according to tradition, he gave it the title of Great Bodhisattva,* without concern whether, due to some deed in a previous life, it was a creature noble or humble.⁶ Even so, those foolish and deluded ones who have not paid attention to the Buddha’s Teachings express such views as: “I am a great monk, so I need not bow to some youngster’s realization of what Dharma is.” “I am one who has trained for a long time, so I need not bow to the realization of what Dharma is by someone

5. What is being described here as ‘gold’, ‘food’, ‘celestial flowers’ and ‘reverential offerings’ are all metaphors for offerings of gratitude for the teacher’s Dharma.

6. Dōgen will relate this story later in Discourse 87: On Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (*Kie Buppōsō Hō*).

who has come to training late in life.” “I have had the office of Teacher of Buddhism bestowed upon me, so I need not bow to one who lacks such a title.” “I am a business officer of the temple, so I need not bow to other monks.” “I am the monastery’s disciplinarian, so I need not bow to a lay person who has realized what Dharma is, be they male or female.” “I am one ‘thrice wise and ten times saintly’,* so I need not bow to female monks or any other such, even though they have realized what Dharma is.” “I am one of imperial descent, so I need not bow to ministers, their family members, or any in their retinue who have realized what Dharma is.” Since befuddled persons like these have vainly separated themselves from the legitimate Realm of the Buddhas and wandered off onto the pathways of other realms, they neither see nor hear of the Buddha’s Way.

Long ago during the T’ang dynasty in China, Great Master Jōshū Shinsai, upon giving rise to the intention to seek the Way, set out on a pilgrimage of Zen monasteries, saying at the time, “Even though it be someone seven years old, if he or she is spiritually my superior, I will ask that person to instruct me. Even though it be someone a hundred years old, if he or she is spiritually less advanced than I, I will give him or her instruction.” This old arhat* was bound to bow even when asking for teaching from a seven-year-old! Rare indeed is such an intention, and such was the aim of a Buddha of old.

When a female monk who has realized both the Way and the Dharma becomes head of a temple, male monks who, in seeking the Dharma, wish to train under a Master will join her community, respectfully bowing as they ask her about the Dharma, for she is a splendid model for their training and study. It will be for the trainee like receiving something to drink when he is thirsty.



In the land of China, Meditation Master Shikan was a highly venerated monk dwelling in Rinzai’s temple. The first time Rinzai chanced to see Shikan coming his way, he suddenly grabbed hold of him, whereupon Shikan responded, “As you wish.” Releasing him, Rinzai said, “I was just about to give you a thumping.” Thereupon, Shikan became Rinzai’s disciple.⁷

Later, Shikan left Rinzai’s temple and paid a visit to the female Master Massan, whose name means ‘the peak of the mountain’.

7. Shikan’s lack of fear plus his respectful attitude of acceptance of Rinzai’s method of teaching was the basis for his being immediately accepted by Rinzai as a disciple. A ‘thumping’ refers to any means Rinzai might employ to arouse a monk from his spiritual torpor.

Massan asked him, “What place have you recently come from?”

Shikan replied, “From Luk’ou.”

Massan said, “Why haven’t you put a lid on that mouth of yours?”⁸

Shikan was at a loss for words. Accordingly, he respectfully bowed, as one does when performing the ceremony of taking a Master.

Arising, Shikan asked Massan, “What could this mountain peak be?”⁹

Massan replied, “Its apex does not emerge.”

Shikan asked, “What kind of person dwells in this mountain?”

Massan answered, “One whose characteristics are neither masculine nor feminine.”

Shikan asked, “Why do you not transform yourself into a male?”¹⁰

Massan replied, “Not being a fox spirit, why should I transform myself into anything?”¹¹

Shikan respectfully bowed. Then, giving rise to the intention to seek Buddhahood, he served her as the temple’s head gardener for three years.

Later, when Shikan had become head monk of his own temple, he said as instruction to his community, “I received half a ladleful when I was with your grandfather Rinzai and the other half when I was with your grandmother Massan. Now that I have completely drunk a whole ladleful, it has been nourishment enough to satisfy me even to this very moment.”

8. Luk’ou, the name of a village, means ‘the mouth of—or entryway into—the path’. Since Massan was not asking a social question but a spiritual one, her response, which is based on ‘path’ being a reference to the spiritual Path, is asking Shikan why he is going about baldly claiming to have attained the Way, that is, to have realized Buddhahood.

9. A reference to her name, Massan, which means mountain peak.

10. A reference to a section of the *Lotus Scripture*, in which the Dragon King Sāgara’s 8-year-old daughter, because she had already realized enlightenment, was capable of transforming herself into whatever it would take to quell the doubts of those who did not believe that a female could attain realization.

11. In China, fox spirits are believed to have the ability to transform themselves into manifestations of other beings. One example of this is contained in the kōan story of “Hyakujō’s Fox”, which Dōgen will explore later in his Discourse 73: On the Great Practice (*Daishugyō*).

Now that you have heard of this way of his, you may hanker to know something about those former times. Massan was a model disciple of Master Daigu and had the strength and authority from the Transmission line to be a spiritual *jō* for Shikan. Rinzai was a Dharma heir of Ōbaku Unshi and had the strength and authority from his single-minded meditation to be a spiritual *ya* for Shikan. *Ya* is a respectful Chinese word for father, and *jō* is a respectful one for mother. Meditation Master Shikan's respectful bowing to the female monk Massan Ryōnen and his seeking the Dharma from her is a model of intent that we should follow. It is an example of constancy and integrity for those of us who study the Way in these latter days of the Dharma; it can be said to break down the barriers erected by discriminatory thinking.



The female monk Myōshin was a disciple of Kyōzan. At the time when Kyōzan was engaged in selecting a monk to serve as the temple's Head of Foreign Relations and Secular Affairs, he asked, among others, the monks who had long served in offices, as well as those seniors who had served as his personal attendants, which person would be ideal for the post. Since many opinions were voiced, Kyōzan finally said, "My disciple Myōshin is, indeed, a woman; even so, she has the strength of will associated with courageous men. Surely, she should be appointed Head of Foreign Relations and Secular Affairs." All the members of the community concurred with him, and Myōshin was then given this post. At that time, none of the other dragon elephants* in Kyōzan's community thought ill of him or of her. Although this post was not one of the truly lofty positions in a temple, as the person appointed, she would no doubt have been conscientious in her service.

One day while she was serving in this post, a group of seventeen monks from the independent state of Shu [which is now part of Szechwan Province] arrived on a Zen-style pilgrimage to call on Masters and inquire of the Way. Intent on going up to seek an audience with Kyōzan, they were lodged in the temple for the night. While resting, they began an evening discussion, taking up the account of Great Ancestor Daikan Enō's 'wind and banner', but what each of the seventeen said was not on track.¹² At this time Myōshin, who was in the room next door,

12. Great Master Keizan's *Denkōroku* recounts the pertinent event: [Whilst still a layman,] Enō had taken up lodging on a temple verandah when a strong wind began to flap the temple banner, whereupon he heard two monks engaging in an argument with each other. One was saying that it was the banner that was moving, the other that it was the wind that was moving. The debate went back and forth without their being able to agree on the principle.

overheard what they had said and commented, “Seventeen blind donkeys have, to no avail, worn out who knows how many pairs of straw sandals without ever having caught sight of the Buddha Dharma even in their dreams!”

Also present at the time was a lay worker who overheard Myōshin’s disapproving comment about the monks and told them what she had said. The seventeen, to a monk, felt no rancor at Myōshin’s disapproval, but instead, felt embarrassed at not being able to say what Daikan Enō was talking about. Accordingly, they put on their formal robes and, making an offering of incense, respectfully bowed to her, requesting her to respond. Myōshin said to them, “Come right in front of me.” The seventeen had barely taken a step towards her when she said, “This is not the wind moving, nor is This the flag moving, nor is This your mind moving.” Upon her expressing the Matter* in this way, the seventeen, to a one, fully understood. They bowed, as disciples do when offering respect to their teacher. They immediately returned to the western state of Shu, without ever having gone up to visit Kyōzan.

Truly, her level of spiritual understanding is not surpassed even by those thrice wise and ten times saintly; her speech and actions are in direct descent from the Buddhas and Ancestors. For this reason, even today, when there is a vacant post for an Abbot or one who teaches in the Abbot’s stead, we should invite a female monk who has realized what Dharma is to take the position. Even though a male monk be one of greater age and longer residence, if he has not realized what Dharma is, why would you want him instead? The one who is the head monk for a community must undoubtedly be someone spiritually clear-eyed. A person who is as dissipated in body and mind as he is limited in outlook, however, will be so hard-headed that he will often be the laughing stock of ordinary people. When it comes to the Buddha’s Dharma, such a one is not even worth mentioning as a candidate. Likewise, there have no doubt been lay women and female monks of long standing who have not gone along with making bows to the monastic teachers who have passed on the Dharma to them. Because such women have neither understood nor practiced the Dharma, they are close to being animals and far from being Buddhas or Ancestors.

Should people deeply commit their hearts to sincerely devoting body and mind to the Buddha Dharma, the Buddha Dharma will undoubtedly compassionately reveal Itself to such people. Among people of all stations, even the foolish and befuddled are sensitive to sincerity, so why would the genuine

Enō said to them, “Might a member of the laity be permitted to call a quick end to this lofty debate? Frankly, it is not the wind or the banner that is moving, kind sirs, it is your minds that are moving and nothing more.”

Teachings of all the Buddhas not respond compassionately to sincerity? Even the dirt, stones, sand, and pebbles are not impervious to feelings of sincerity.

In present-day Sung China, there are female monks who have hung up their bowl bag in a temple.¹³ Should word get around that one of them has realized what Dharma is, an imperial decree will be issued by a government office that she should be appointed Abbess of her own temple, and as a result, she will begin to teach in the Monks' Hall of the temple in which she is presently residing. The community of monks from the Abbot on down will go to seek her Teaching, and stand there listening to her Teaching, with the male monks asking her to answer their spiritual questions as well. This has been, and still is, the standard procedure. Once such a woman has realized what Dharma is, then she is truly an Old Buddha, so we should not look upon her as we did in the past. When we are having an audience with her, our contact will be from a new and special standpoint. When we meet her, we should face her with an attitude of 'today is today', regardless of how things were in the past. For example, a female monk to whom the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching has been Transmitted should respectfully be bowed to and asked for the Teaching by those in the four stages* of arhathood, those who are pratyekabuddhas,* and those thrice wise and ten times saintly, and she will acknowledge this bow. Why should only males be worthy of respect? Boundless space is simply boundless space; the four elements* are simply the four elements; the five skandhas* are simply the five skandhas. And they are no different for women. When it comes to realizing the Way, everyone may realize It. In any case, anyone who has realized what Dharma is should be deeply respected: do not concern yourself with whether it is a man or a woman. This is a most excellent rule of the Buddha's Way.

Also, in Sung China the term 'lay devotee' refers to a Buddhist gentleman who has not left home to become a monk. Some such gentlemen build a retreat for themselves and their wives, whereas others live alone in celibacy. It must be said, though, that they will still be troubled by various delusions and defiling passions as dense and entangling as a jungle. Nevertheless, once one of them has clarified the Matter, trainees will gather about him like clouds and mist, respectfully bowing and seeking spiritual benefits, behaving the same as they would towards a Master who had left home and become a monk. Be it a woman or be it an animal, you should do the same.

Someone who has not yet even dreamt of the Truth of Buddhism, even if he be an old monk of a hundred years, will not be the equal of a man or woman who

13. That is, they have entered a temple to train.

has realized what Dharma is; he should not be revered, but simply paid common respect, as between guest and host. Even a seven-year-old—were he or she to train in and practice Buddhism, and then say something that is Buddha Dharma—can be a teacher and guide for monks and laity, male and female. This child will be a compassionate parent to all sentient beings, just as was, for instance, the dragon king's daughter who had become a Buddha. We should make offerings and pay respect to such a one the same as we would to all Buddhas and Tathagatas. This is an ancient custom of the Buddha's Way. Those who may still be in ignorance and who lack the direct Transmission are to be pitied.

Recorded on the Clear, Bright Day in the second year of the En'ō era (April 28, 1240) at Kannondōri in Kōshōrin-ji Temple.



And also, in past and present China and Japan, there have been women who have occupied the Imperial Throne. As each of these countries comes under the dominion of their imperial person, the people serve as this person's subjects. These imperial persons are not revered as individuals, but are respected instead for their social position. In the very same manner, ever since ancient times, female monks have not been revered as individuals, but humbly respected for having realized what the Dharma is.

And also, whenever there are female monks who have become arhats, the spiritual merits from their complying with the four stages to arhathood will come forth. These spiritual merits will always accompany them, and who among ordinary people of any social station could possibly equal the spiritual merits of these four stages? All the heavenly ones in the three worlds of sensual desire, form, and beyond form are in no position to surpass them. Nevertheless, when someone renounces worldly views, this is something that all heavenly beings revere. So, who would possibly fail to revere a Tathagata who passes on to us the True Teaching, or a bodhisattva who has given rise to the greatest of intentions? Anyone who fails to respect such a person is a strange one indeed! Should any of you possibly fail to respect supreme enlightenment, you would be a foolish and befuddled being who slanders the Dharma.

And also, in our country, imperial daughters, as well as daughters of high ranking ministers, have, on occasion, followed the retiring imperial consort into a monastery and have been given the Empress's 'cloister name' as an honor. Some of these women have shaved their heads; others have not. Be that as it may, monks in

name only who covet fame and crave gain are known to go in and out of the doors to the Empress's domicile, knocking their heads against the slippers of these women. Such people are even lower than the low. And worse still, how many of these male monks have grown old playing the role of slave to these women?¹⁴ Alas, how pitiful that, for those born in a small, out-of-the-way country like ours, a form of wickedness like this has gone unrecognized. It does not exist in India or T'ang China. Only in our country, sorry to say, does this practice exist. These men have shaved their heads and then thoughtlessly transgressed the True Teachings of the Tathagata. Their defiling act, it must be said, is deep and heavy. How lamentable that, in losing sight of the fact that the worldly path is as the false flowers of fantasy and delusion, they have tied themselves down to the role of a slave. They have acted in this manner for the sake of some diverting and vain worldly way. In the name of that enlightenment which is unsurpassed, why have they passed over reverencing someone—be it male or female—who has truly realized that Teaching which is to be revered? It is simply because their resolve to esteem the Teaching is shallow and their determination to seek the Teaching is not broad in scope.

When someone is entangled with coveting jewels, he does not consider that he ought not to have them because they are a woman's jewels: when someone attempts to seek the Dharma, his determination should surely outdo this. When, indeed, it does, the sprouting grass and the trees, as well as the walls and the fences, dispense the True Dharma, and the myriad things that make up heaven and earth likewise bestow the True Dharma. This is a principle that, without fail, you need to be aware of. Even if you meet a genuine spiritual friend but have not yet given rise to this intention to seek the Dharma, you will be unable to take in the delightful, thirst-quenching waters of the Dharma. So, make a diligent effort.

And also, even today there are people, wretched from their folly, whose unconverted thinking has not gone beyond looking upon women simply as objects in the world of sensual desire. Disciples of Buddha should not be this way. Should you detest women because you think that they must be objects in the world of sensual desire, would you also detest all men? What causes staining and defilement to arise is treating men as comprising one world and women as another. In addition, looking upon someone as being neither male nor female is also to treat that person as 'an object apart'; even looking at that person as though a phantasm or an illusory flower is likewise treating him or her as 'an object apart'. There have

14. In other words, even those ladies-in-waiting who 'shaved their heads'—that is, had formally entered monastic life—were not behaving as female monks should, but were manipulating these ambitious, worldly monks for their own personal purposes.

been those who have engaged in a sexual act in connection with some reflection in water, and there have been sexual acts committed in connection with the sun in the sky. Deities have been used as such objects, as have hungry ghosts. Connections such as these are surely beyond count. It is said that there are eighty-four thousand worlds of them. Shouldn't these all be things to be given up? Are they not things that should all be ignored?

It says in the *Vinaya*:¹⁵ “The two orifices of a male and the three orifices of a female are alike when it comes to committing a grievous breakage of the Precepts; those doing so may not dwell within the monastic community.” Thus, if you dislike women because you think that they must be objects in the world of sensual desire, then males and females will end up mutually disliking each other, and it is unlikely that there will be any opportunity for either to find a way to the Other Shore. You should explore this principle in detail.

And also, among non-Buddhists there are those who are unmarried. Although celibate, they have not comprehended the Buddha's Dharma, and, because of their false views, they are outside the Way. Also, among the Buddha's disciples there are lay men and women who are husband and wife. Even though living as husband and wife, they are disciples of the Buddha, and thus no one among ordinary people of any station is their equal.

And also, in T'ang China there have been foolish and befuddled monks who, having given rise to the intention to commit themselves to the Way, have said, “I will never look at a woman in this or any future lifetime, no matter how long such a life may be.”¹⁶ On what teaching is this vow founded? Is it founded on the rules of society? Or on the Buddha's Dharma? Or on the teachings of some non-Buddhist? Or on the doctrines of some distracting demon from the world of sensual desire? What fault is there in being female? What virtue in being male? When it comes to being wicked, there have been men who were wicked; when it comes to being virtuous, there have been women who were virtuous. To respectfully ask to hear the Teaching and to long to leave the world of delusion behind certainly do not depend on one's being male or female. When people have not yet cut themselves off from their delusions, they are equally attached to delusion whether they be male or female. When people cut themselves off from delusion and reach certainty as to what is Real, again, there is no dividing line between males and

15. The *Vinaya* is a part of the Buddhist Canon which outlines and discusses the meaning and application of the Buddhist Precepts and various monastic rules and regulations.

16. This vow is probably based on a misunderstanding of one of ten vows listed in the *Avatamsaka Scripture*: “May my eye not look upon a woman (as a sexual object).”

females. Further, should you vow never to look at a woman, ought you to forsake women even at the moment when you take the Bodhisattva Vow to save all sentient beings from suffering, howsoever innumerable they may be? Were you to forsake women, you would not be a bodhisattva, so how could you speak of Buddhist kindness and compassion? This vow to never look at a woman is simply the raving words of one who has drunk too deeply of the wine that those who rigidly follow the Lesser Course* are wont to brew. No one of any station should believe this to be what Truth is.

And also, should you despise women because you think that in ancient times they have committed some offense, then you must despise all bodhisattvas as well. Or, should you despise women because you think that at some later date they will surely commit some offense, then you must despise all bodhisattvas who have given rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood. If you despise women in any such ways, you must despise every single person, so how will you make manifest the Buddha's Dharma? Words like the ones uttered by such monks are, sad to say, the wild remarks of foolish people who do not understand what the Buddha taught. If the matter were like this vow, did the Venerable Shakyamuni and the bodhisattvas who were alive during His lifetime all commit offenses? Have Their enlightened minds been shallower than yours? You would do well to quietly think about this. Since the Ancestors and Masters associated with the Treasure House of the Dharma, as well as the bodhisattvas who lived during the Buddha's lifetime, did not take this vow, as part of your training and study you should look to see whether there is any place in the Buddha's Teachings where this could possibly have been taught. Were the matter like this vow, not only would you fail to ferry women to the Other Shore, you would also be unable to come and hear a woman who, having realized what Dharma is, has come out among the people to give voice to the Dharma for the sake of people in all stations of life. To fail to come and hear her is to fail to be a bodhisattva and, consequently, to be outside the Path of Buddhism.

If we now take a look at present-day Sung China, among the monks who seem to have trained and practiced for a long time, there are those who are uselessly counting the grains of sand in the ocean¹⁷ and are drifting on the waves that arise upon the sea of birth and death. But there are women who seek out a spiritual friend to train under, and diligently do their training until they become a teacher and guide for people of all stations. It is like the old woman who threw away her rice cakes rather than selling them. Sad to say, even though her customer

17. An allusion to those who waste their time, caught up in studying the words in Scriptures without comprehending their meaning in context.

was a male monk, he was so busy counting sand grains in the ocean of Scriptural writings that he had still not seen what the Buddha was teaching, even in his dreams.¹⁸

To speak in broader terms, upon seeing an object in the world of desire, it would be good for you to learn to clarify what it is that you are looking at. To learn only to flee when you are frightened by something is the teaching and practice of those in the Lesser Course who rigidly follow what they have learned by rote. Were someone to attempt to abandon the populous east to live in seclusion in the sparsely-settled west, it would not mean that there are no objects in the world of desire to be found in the west. Even though such persons may think that they have succeeded in fleeing, to the extent that they have not yet clarified the matter of sensual desire, whether they keep their distance or come up close, there will be a world of desire. But this is not intended to be a full explanation, for the long threads of sensual desires will prove to extend even deeper.

And also, in Japan there is a situation which is truly ridiculous and worthy of laughter. It relates to what is called 'The Grounds of the Enclosed Realm' by some and 'The Training Ground of the Greater Course' by others, places that female monks and lay women are not permitted to enter.¹⁹ This mistaken custom has been handed down for ever so long, and people have never questioned what it is all about. Those who have studied the ancient ways have never attempted to change this practice nor have scholars ever taken up the matter. Some refer to this practice as 'what an incarnation of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva does'; others speak of it as 'the tradition of our ancient predecessors'. Moreover, they have never called the matter into question. It is enough to make a person split a gut laughing. Just what is 'an incarnation of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva'? Is it a worldly-wise person or a saintly one? A god or a hungry ghost? One who is ten times saintly or one who is thrice wise? One who has realized what supreme enlightenment is or one who has realized the wondrous, full enlightenment of a Buddha? Furthermore, if we are not

18. A reference to a kōan story involving a famous scholar of Buddhist Scriptures who was unable to express Their meaning in his own words when asked to do so by an old woman selling rice cakes. When he failed, she refused to sell him a rice cake and he had to go hungry. Dōgen will discuss this in detail later in Discourse 17: On 'The Mind Cannot Be Held Onto' (*Shin Fukatoku*).

19. These terms are used in some Buddhist traditions for a monastery or the main training halls of a monastery. In Japan, it was a common practice to exclude women on the pretext of maintaining a strict adherence to the Precepts. However, as Dōgen will assert, this practice actually arises from a cultural bias and is both unsupported and unjustified by the Buddha Dharma.

to alter anything from the past, are we not to abandon our drifting through the realms of birth and death?

And besides, the Venerable Shakyamuni, our Great Teacher, is *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. What had to be clarified, He made completely clear; what had to be done, He did fully; what needed to be explained, He fully explained. Is there a single person today who surpasses Him? And yet, in the Buddha's community during His lifetime, there were all four groups—male monastics, female monastics, lay men, lay women—and there were the eight categories of heavenly and demonic beings, and there were the thirty-seven categories of Venerable Ones who reside in the Diamond Mandala, and there were the eighty-four thousand categories of thoughts and things. In that all of these form the enclosure of the Buddha Realm, they are patently the Buddha's community. So, what Buddhist community is without female monastics, or lay women, or lay men, or the eight categories? We should not pray for a more pure and immaculate Enclosed Realm than that of the Buddha's community when the Tathagata was in the world, because such would be the realm of the demons of greed and desire. The manner of organizing a Buddhist community is such that it never differs, be it in the Buddha's own realm or in any other realm, including the realms of all the ten thousand Buddhas in the three temporal worlds.

What are called 'the Four Fruitions of Arhathood' refer to ultimate stages.²⁰ Whether a person is following the Greater or the Lesser Course, there will be no difference in the spiritual merits accruing from realizing these ultimate stages. Indeed, female monks who have experienced the Four Fruitions are many indeed. Within the three worlds of desire, form, and beyond form, as well as in any of the Buddha lands throughout the ten directions of the universe, what world may they not reach? Who can ever possibly prevent anyone from doing his or her daily training in the Way?

And also, the wondrous, fully perfected enlightenment is the highest level. Since women are already acting as Buddhas, which of all the Teachings may they not thoroughly master?²¹ Who could presume to hamper them or prevent them from realizing the goal? They already have spiritual merits that are said to illumine the whole universe in all ten directions, so who can put limits on them?

20 These are the fruitions of the four stages of arhathood referred to previously in this discourse.

21. 'Acting as a Buddha' is synonymous with keeping the Precepts.

And also, would you hamper a celestial female who is in one of the heavens of the world of desire so as to prevent her from realizing the goal, or do the same to a daughter of some deity? Such celestial women have not as yet severed themselves from delusive views. They are still sentient beings who are drifting, and there are times when they commit acts that break the Precepts, and there has never been a time when this was not so, just as with female humans and animals who at times defile themselves, and there has never been a time when this was not so. Who is the one who would block these celestial women from the way of heaven or the way of the gods? They are already paying visits to the Buddhist communities in the three temporal worlds and have come to do spiritual training wherever a Buddha is. If you make a distinction between a place where a Buddha is and what a Buddhist community is, how will you accept either one in faith as a place of the Buddha Dharma? This is, simply, the height of folly of worldly people crazed by delusion: they are foolish when they fail to regret that someone has not wrested their wild fox of delusion from its dark and cavernous lair.

And also, the classification of disciples of the Buddha—be they bodhisattvas of the Greater Course* or shravakas* of the Lesser Course—is the same for both: first, male monastics; second, female monastics; third, lay men; fourth, lay women. This classification is known to those in the heavenly worlds as well as to those in the human worlds, and has been familiar since ancient times. Be that as it may, when it comes to the second group of Buddhist disciples, they surpass even a saintly ruler who makes the wheels of governance roll on, and they surpass even Shakrendra, Lord of the Thirty-three Heavens. There is no spiritual place that one of this group cannot realize, to say nothing of the ranks of rulers and high ministers in a small out-of-the-way nation like ours.

Now, when we look at a 'Training Ground' where they say female monks must not enter, male field hands, simple rustics, farmers, and woodcutters are given entrance with impunity, to say nothing of rulers, high ministers, officials of all types, and councilors: whoever is male may enter. Were we to discuss the understanding of the Way of a field hand, say, and a female monk, or the spiritual level they have realized, what quality would we ultimately come to ascribe to each? No matter whether we are discussing the matter in worldly terms or in Buddhist ones, the place that a female monk may realize cannot possibly be realized by a field hand or a simple rustic.²² Small nations that are excessive in their turbulent and riotous behavior, first of all, have left the traces of their

22. Not because such persons are spiritually deficient, but because it is improbable that they are devoting themselves to the spiritual training that a monk is undergoing.

excess.²³ How lamentable that there is any place where a disciple of that Kindly Parent of the Three Temporal Worlds, upon arriving in a small country, is barred from and may not enter.

And also, some fellows who may dwell in a place they call 'the Enclosed Realm' show no dread of the ten evil acts and fully commit the ten most serious forms of them.²⁴ In a realm where defiling acts are cultivated, is it simply a matter of despising those who do not cultivate them?

Further, the five treacherous deeds* are considered even more serious, yet some who live within 'the Grounds of the Enclosed Realm' are apparently committing such acts. Devilish realms like these should, beyond question, be smashed.²⁵ Such monks would do well to study the edifying instructions given by the Buddha and thereby to enter into the Realm of Buddhas, which, of course, includes repaying one's indebtedness to the Buddha for His kindness. I wonder whether those of old who constructed such 'Enclosed Realms' really understood their purpose. From whom did they receive Transmission: from whom did they receive the seal* of Buddha Mind? As it has been described, the person who truly enters the Great Realm wherein all Buddhas are enclosed cuts himself free from any attachments, not only to 'all Buddhas' but also to 'sentient beings', not only to 'the physical world' but also to 'emptiness', and thus returns to the Source, Which lies within the wondrous Teachings of all the Buddhas. Accordingly, any sentient being who takes but one step into this Realm will nevertheless receive the spiritual merits of a Buddha. They will receive the merits from not having deviated from the Path, as well as the merits from realizing Immaculacy. When someone is attached to one place, then he is attached to the whole realm of thoughts and things: when someone is involved with one serious breakage of the Precepts, he is tied to the world of all thoughts and things.

There is a realm enclosed by Water, and there is an enclosing of this realm by Mind, and there is an enclosing of this realm by the Unbounded. You need to realize that, within this realm, beyond doubt, there is a Transmission and a passing on of the Buddha seal. Furthermore, once this realm has been enclosed, the Sweet

23. Dōgen wrote this during the height of a series of clan wars that had already been devastating many areas of Japan for almost a century.

24. That is, the ten evil acts arising from breaking the Ten Precepts and the more serious forms of such breakage.

25. The term 'devilish' refers to those conditions wherein a trainee is faced with a delusive obstacle to his training which he allows to divert him from the Path.

Dew has flowed into it, the ceremony of Taking Refuge in the Triple Treasure has been performed, and the realm has been consecrated, then it is as the poem says:

*This realm completely permeates
the worlds of thoughts and things
And, by its very nature,
is bound to Boundless Immaculacy.*

I wonder whether those old men of former times who spoke of what is now habitually called 'the Enclosed Realm' understood the meaning of this poem. For, when you try to think about it, my dear monks, the mind cannot directly grasp that the whole universe of thoughts and things is enclosed within this Enclosure. Beyond doubt, should you drink of the wine of those who rigidly follow the Lesser Course, you will mistake the tiny world of self for the Great Matter.

I pray that you will quickly sober up from your habitual drunkenness on delusion and that you will not deviate from "The whole universe is the Great Realm of all Buddhas." In your trying to rescue all sentient beings from their suffering and ferry them across to the Other Shore, they will respectfully bow to you and venerate the merits from receiving your spiritual instructions. Who among them will not call this 'securing the very Marrow of the Way'?

Written at Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple on the day before the winter season in the first year of the Ninji era (October 16, 1240).