

## On ‘The Flowering of the Dharma Sets the Dharma’s Flowering in Motion’

(*Hokke Ten Hokke*)

**Translator’s Introduction:** According to Dōgen’s postscript to this discourse, he originally prepared it for a monk named Edatsu whom he had ordained. Edatsu’s decision to become a monk was apparently deeply influenced by his encounter with the *Lotus Scripture*, for the discourse is heavily laden with allusions to and quotations from that work. Indeed, most of the descriptive terms and phrases Dōgen employs are taken from Kumārajīva’s well-known Chinese version of this Scripture, and someone familiar with that translation would quite likely recognize the various contexts from which these terms and phrases were borrowed. Some of these have been identified in this translation by the addition of some phrase, such as ‘which the *Lotus Scripture* calls’.

The title of Dōgen’s discourse does not derive directly from the *Lotus Scripture*, but is based on terms used by the Sixth Chinese Ancestor Enō in a kōan story that Dōgen recounts. These terms carry multiple meanings which often apply simultaneously throughout the discourse, so that no single English rendering can fully encompass what the Sino-Japanese text is conveying, though all the meanings are pointing to the general topic of the consequences from expressing the Dharma.

To begin with, *hokke* can equally be rendered as ‘the Flower of the Dharma’ and ‘the flowering of the Dharma’, the latter in the sense of ‘the appearing or emerging of the Dharma’ as well as of ‘giving expression to the Dharma’. It is also an allusion to *Hokke Kyō*, the abbreviated Sino-Japanese title for the *Lotus Scripture*. *Ten* primarily signifies such actions as ‘turning’, ‘revolving’, ‘setting in motion’, ‘arousing’, and ‘giving rise to’. These two terms are combined into the two phrases *hokke ten* and *ten hokke*, which, according to Dōgen, are of Enō’s coining. *Hokke ten* can be rendered by such phrases as ‘being set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma’, and ‘being turned by the Flower of the Dharma’ (that is, by the *Lotus Scripture* itself and the Dharma that is expressed in it). *Ten hokke* can be rendered in various ways, such as ‘setting in motion a flowering of the Dharma’, ‘revolving (that is, perusing) the *Lotus Scripture*’, and ‘turning the Flower of the Dharma’, this last being an alternate way of saying ‘turning the Wheel of the Dharma’. All of these meanings are implicit within whichever term is used in the present translation. Hence, the title might also be rendered as “The *Lotus Scripture* Sets in Motion the Dharma’s Flowering”.

This discourse may prove to be one of the more difficult discourses in the *Shōbōgenzō*. It would be worth the reader’s while to go through the work slowly several times to catch the beauty of the underlying Teaching.

*Expounded for a certain person from Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple.*

What exists everywhere within all Buddhist lands is simply the flowering of the Dharma. Everywhere and at all times, all Buddhas—along with Their assemblies of those who would realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment—experience the setting in motion of the flowering of the Dharma and They experience being moved by that flowering. This state is equivalent to what the *Lotus Scripture* describes by such phrases as ‘the Bodhisattva\* Way as practiced from the very first, without retreating or deviating’, ‘the profundity and breadth of the wise discernment of all Buddhas, which is beyond measure’, as well as ‘the clear and calm samadhi\* that is difficult to comprehend and difficult to enter’.

Just as with Manjushri\* Buddha in the *Lotus Scripture*, this state has the aspect of ‘being just what one is’, which is a characteristic of each individual Buddha, just as it is of all the other Buddhas, all of Whom take the Great Ocean as their Buddha Land.

On the other hand, Shakyamuni Buddha emerged in the world with His realizing that, as He put it, “Only I recognize the genuine character of things, as do all Buddhas everywhere.” This is equivalent to the time when He said, “Having fully awakened to the One Great Matter,\* I alone desire to help sentient beings open up to It, manifest It, awaken to It, and enter It, just as all Buddhas have done.”

And these phrases from the *Lotus Scripture* also refer to Samantabhadra,\* for He has succeeded in helping the Dharma’s flowering to arise in others in ways that are beyond the intellectual mind’s ability to grasp or fathom. Also, He has succeeded in causing the profound, vast, and far-reaching supreme, fully perfected enlightenment to flow throughout Jambudvīpa.\* In that He has done this, the earth is able to produce the three kinds of grasses and the two kinds of trees, large and small, and the rain is able to moisten them all.<sup>1</sup> He alone accomplishes the exhaustive practice of helping the Dharma’s flowering to arise in others in ways that are beyond our ability to know. Samantabhadra’s proclaiming of the Dharma had not yet reached an end when the great assembly gathered on the Divine Vulture Peak to hear the Buddha give voice to the Dharma. The Venerable Shakyamuni

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\* See *Glossary*.

1. This is a reference to “The Parable of the Herbs” in the *Lotus Scripture*, where ordinary, conventional human beings are likened to small grasses, the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who follow the Lesser Course to various shrubbery, and the bodhisattvas who follow the Greater Course to three types of vegetation: tall grasses (such as bamboo), small trees, and large trees. In the parable, the rain is likened to the rain of Dharma which the Buddha showers down upon them so that they may all come to their spiritual fruition.

gave proof of Samantabhadra's comings and goings throughout the universe by means of the radiance emanating from the white hairs between His eyebrows.<sup>2</sup>

Shakyamuni's meeting with those in His assembly had not yet reached its midpoint when they experienced a flowering of the Dharma, which was set in motion by Manjushri's affirmation that Maitreya\* would imminently realize Buddhahood. When they experienced this flowering of the Dharma, which was good through and through—beginning, middle, and end—Samantabhadra, the various Buddhas, Manjushri, and all the great assembly must surely have been carried to the Other Shore. This is why the flowering of the Dharma has manifested in the world as the fulfillment of the One Great Matter for which we train by relying on the One Vehicle.

Because this manifestation is the One Great Matter, each Buddha, on His own, fully realizes the aspect of Truth within all thoughts and things, just as all other Buddhas have done. This Teaching is, beyond doubt, what the *Lotus Scripture* calls 'the One Vehicle to Buddhahood, which Buddhas alone confirm and which They help all future Buddhas to fully realize'. The various Buddhas, including the Seven Buddhas,\* have each helped Buddha after Buddha to fully realize the Truth, just as They helped Shakyamuni Buddha to fulfill His mission.

The lands from India in the west to China in the east are among the Buddhist lands throughout the ten directions. What has been fully realized in these lands, even up through the Thirty-third Ancestor, Meditation Master Daikan Enō, is the One Vehicle which was taught by each and every Buddha. It is the One Vehicle of all Buddhas. Our reliance solely upon It is, without doubt, the One Great Matter. It manifests in the world now: It manifests right here. Seigen's Buddhist modes of deportment have been handed down to us today and Nangaku's gates to the Dharma are still open in the world, all due to the Tathagata's knowing and seeing the True Nature of the world.<sup>3</sup> Surely, we are being aroused by the flowering of the Dharma when we say that this is what each Buddha on His own, together with all other Buddhas, have truly realized in full. It is what Those who succeeded Shakyamuni Buddha and what the Buddhas who have been Their successors have all opened up to, manifested, awakened to, and entered.

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2. That is, there was a radiance that seemed to pour forth from Shakyamuni's brow. Those who saw this radiance associated it with the manifesting of Samantabhadra, whose name means 'Universal Goodness and Loving-kindness'.

3. Seigen and Nangaku were Enō's two Dharma heirs.



We also call this Scripture the *Scripture on the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Teaching*, for it is the Teaching that trains bodhisattvas. Because this Scripture contains all thoughts and things, both the Divine Vulture Peak and the vast sky exist, as well as the great ocean and the great earth, with the Flower of the Dharma as their native land. As such, this Scripture describes how Truth appears: It is 'just what is, as it is'. It is 'the abode of the Dharma' and 'the invariable state of the Dharma'. It is 'the impermanence of all actions'. It is 'the reason for the One Great Matter for which we train'. It is 'what the Buddha experienced directly'. It is 'what is abiding within the world of appearances'. It is 'what is real'. It is 'the lifespan of a Tathagata'. It is 'what is profound and immeasurable'. It is 'the meditative state of the flowering of the Dharma'. It is 'Shakyamuni Buddha'. It is 'setting the Flower of the Dharma in motion'. It is 'the Flower of the Dharma moving'. It is 'the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching' and 'the Wondrous Heart of Nirvana'. It is 'manifesting in physical form in order to ferry sentient beings to the Other Shore'. And we have the Scripture's promise that "All will ultimately realize Buddhahood," and we have the charge to preserve It.



During the time of the great T'ang dynasty, a monk named Hōtatsu once came to visit the assembly of Meditation Master Daikan Enō at Hōrin-ji Temple on Mount Sōkei, which is in the region of the eastern road in South China.<sup>4</sup> He said of himself, "I have already read the *Lotus Scripture* aloud three thousand times."

Our Ancestor replied, "Even though you were to recite It ten thousand times, if you have not grasped what It is teaching, you won't even reach the point where you know what your shortcomings are."

Hōtatsu responded, "Student that I am, what a ninny I've been. Up till now, I have just recited It, merely sticking to the words. So, how could I possibly have grasped what they mean?"

Enō replied, "Just as an experiment, recite It, and I will explain It for you."

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4. Underlying this narrative of the encounter between Hōtatsu and Enō is the fact that Enō had had a kenshō when, as a very young man, he overheard a passage from the *Diamond-Cutting Scripture* being recited by someone. He himself was illiterate, but had the ability to understand the import of Scriptural passages when they were read to him.

Hōtatsu then began to recite the Scripture. When he reached the section on skillful means, Enō said, “Stop here. The basic point of this Scripture is to tell us the reason behind the Buddha’s originally coming into this world. Even though It sets forth many allegories, none ever goes beyond this basic point. And if we ask what was behind this, it was simply the One Great Matter for which we train. ‘Just the One Great Matter’ is, of course, ‘what the Buddha came to know directly’. It was ‘His opening up to It, manifesting It, awakening to It, and entering It’. This Matter is, naturally, what a Buddha comes to know directly. Anyone who is equipped with this direct knowing is already a Buddha. By all means, you should have faith here and now that what a Buddha directly knows is right within your very own heart.” Enō then added a poem to set this forth:

*When the mind wanders onto deluded paths,  
It is being set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma;  
When the heart awakens,  
The Dharma’s flowering is set in motion.*

*However long you recite this Scripture, should it be while  
still unawakened to the Self that is true,  
You will then create an enemy to Its meaning.  
To read It without opinion’s bonds is the proper way,  
But read It bound to fixed ideas, and It becomes error’s  
way.*

*When you cease to judge whether you are bound or not,  
You ride forever long within the cart by the White Ox  
drawn.*

When Hōtatsu heard this poem, he said the following to Enō, “It says in this Scripture that even if all beings—from the greatest shravakas\* to the bodhisattvas—were to exhaust the resources of their thinking in measuring the Buddha’s spiritually wise discernment, they could not fathom it. Now, you seem to be saying that, if even ordinary people who wander through life in ignorance were to inquire into the Matter for which we train, it could lead them to spiritually awaken their own minds, and that this is precisely what a Buddha realizes through direct experience. But it is difficult for those of us who are not as highly gifted as you to escape from our doubts and skepticism. Further, in this Scripture it speaks of three vehicles, but what is the

distinction between the large ox-cart and the cart drawn by a white ox?<sup>5</sup> I pray that you, venerable monk, will once more favor us with your comments on these matters.”

Enō responded, “The intent of the Scripture is clear. It is just that you are wandering off on your own and thereby turning your back on it. Your worry that those of the Three Vehicles\* are incapable of fathoming the Buddha’s spiritually wise discernment is due to your own way of measuring things. Even though their intellectual resources are being exhausted through their speculations, somehow they will arrive from however far away they may be. As the *Lotus Scripture* says, ‘Right from the start, the Buddha explained this for the benefit of ordinary people who are wandering in ignorance; He did not explain it for the benefit of Buddhas.’ Although they are not really turning their backs on their faith in this principle, people sometimes do leave their seat of training. But even so, unbeknownst to them, they are sitting in the cart drawn by the White Ox, even while they continue their search for the Three Vehicles outside the gate. In relation to what you have asked, the words of the Scripture clearly state that ‘There are not two vehicles, nor are there three.’ How come you have not realized this? ‘The Three Vehicles’ refers to expedient teachings, for it refers to a time that has passed; ‘The One Vehicle’ refers to the genuine Teaching, for it refers to the present moment in time. You should simply leave behind what is expedient and come back to what is genuine. When you return to the genuine, the Genuine will not be just a name. You need to recognize that what you have is a wondrous and rare Treasure, and that It is fully passed on to you so that It may proceed from you to others, that they may receive It for their use. What is more, even though there is no notion of ‘my father’ or of ‘my son’, nor any attribute of ‘being useful’, this is what we call ‘being set in motion by the *Lotus Scripture*’. From one eon to the next, day and night, the Scripture never leaves our hand, and there is no time when we are not reciting It.”

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5. The present allusion, as well as many which follow, derive from the parable of the burning house in the *Lotus Scripture*. In that parable, a father attempts to rescue his three children who are playing within a burning house by promising them that they can play with three vehicles—a small sheep-drawn cart, a medium-sized deer-drawn cart, and a large ox-drawn cart—which he says lay outside the gate. When the children go outside the gate they find but one cart, which is drawn by a white ox.

Hōtatsu had, by now, opened up to the Truth and, bouncing up and down with joy, he offered Enō a poem of praise:

*The three thousand times that I have recited this  
Scripture  
Have been surpassed by Enō's solitary verse.  
Because I was not yet clear as to the purpose of my  
coming into this world,  
How was I to halt the folly of my troubled life?  
'Sheep', 'deer', and 'ox' provide but expedient means.  
At beginning, middle, and end, they promote the virtuous  
and the good.  
Who within the burning house know  
That, from the first, they are lords within the Dharma?*

Having been offered this poem, the Ancestor said, "After this, you would do well to call yourself the monk who esteems the *Lotus Scripture*."

That is how the account of Meditation Master Hōtatsu's encounter with Daikan Enō went. The term 'flowering of the Dharma' in such phrases as 'the flowering of the Dharma sets in motion' and 'being set in motion by the Dharma's flowering' began to be used from the time of this event; such phrases had not been heard before then. Truly, the ones to clarify the meaning of 'what a Buddha directly knows' will be those belonging to the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching: they will be Buddhas and Ancestors. This is beyond what can be understood by those textual scholars who vainly count words as if they were pebbles or grains of sand, as we can see from Hōtatsu's past.

To clarify for yourself the fundamental meaning of 'the flowering of the Dharma', you need to realize fully what the Ancestral Master Enō opened up and revealed as the One Great Matter for which we train. Do not try to amuse yourself by inquiring into the other Buddhist vehicles. Now, what the Ancestral Master set forth is the True Nature of the real appearance, real innate nature, real embodiment, real strength, real cause, and real effect of what is set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma. Before the Ancestral Master's time, this was something not yet heard of or even existing in China.



When we speak of 'what is set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma', we are referring to the mind's wandering off onto deluded paths. And the mind's

delusive wandering, accordingly, refers to what is set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma. That is to say, our mind's wandering off is precisely what is set in motion by the Dharma's flowering. What this means is that, even though the mind's delusions are synonymous with the myriad thoughts and things that arise, the form their True Nature takes is what is aroused by the flowering of the Dharma. This 'being set in motion' is not something to rejoice in, or watch for, or obtain, or arrive at; even so, what the Dharma's flowering sets in motion is precisely 'neither two things nor three'. Since the flowering of the Dharma is our having only One Vehicle to Buddhahood, because it is the flowering of the form of things as they really are, we speak of 'being able to set in motion what moves'. Even so, it is just the One Vehicle to Buddhahood, just the One Great Matter for which we train, just the ever-moving about of the mind as it is, and nothing more. So, do not reproach yourself for your mind's delusions. As the Scripture says, "Whatever is done by you is the way of bodhisattvas," and "The fundamental practice of the Bodhisattva Way is our serving and paying homage to all the Buddhas." Our opening up to this Way, manifesting It, awakening to It, and entering It are, all together, what is set in motion by the Dharma's flowering each and every time. There are our delusions about what is within the burning house, and our delusions about being at the threshold of the gate, and our delusions about what lies outside the gate, and our delusions about what being on the other side of the gate is like, and our delusions about being within the gate.<sup>6</sup> Because, in our delusion, we give rise to such notions as 'being within the gate' and 'being beyond the gate', to say nothing of 'being at the threshold of the gate' and 'being within a burning house', we will, of necessity, open up to It, manifest It, awaken to It, and enter It whilst upon the cart drawn by the White Ox.

When you consider entering the gate from the burning house while riding upon this finely adorned cart, will it be because you are looking hopefully towards the open fields beyond as the place you need to enter, or because you recognize the burning house as the place you need to leave, or because you realize that the threshold of the gate is merely a point to be passed through? You certainly need to realize that when you are within this cart an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering the burning house may occur, and that when you are within the open fields beyond the gate an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering the burning house may occur, and that at the threshold of any gate an

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6. To paraphrase, people, as a matter of course, speculate on, and thus harbor delusions about, what defiling passions are, what turning one's heart around and vowing to train is, what nirvana is, what the fulfillment of training and practice means, and what doing the training and practice is.



opening up to it, manifesting it, awakening to it, and entering it may occur, and that at any single gate to the Universal Gate an opening up to It, manifesting It, awakening to It, and entering It may also occur. At each instance of opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering, there is an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering the Universal Gate. There is set in motion an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering a gate. There is an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering what lies outside the gate. And, within the burning house, there is an opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering the open fields beyond.

As a result, the burning house is beyond the intellective mind's ability to fully grasp, and the open fields are beyond that mind's ability to completely know. Who will make into a conveyance the three mundane worlds through which they spin and ride it as the One Vehicle? Who will go back and forth through their opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering as though such events were a gate? When we seek conveyance from the burning house, how many times the wheel of samsara must turn! When we look upon the burning house from the open fields, how very distant it appears to be! Have you fully realized that the Divine Vulture Peak rests serenely in the open fields? Have you incorporated into your training and practice that open fields are flat and level on the Divine Vulture Peak? That place where 'sentient beings take their delight and play' has continually existed as the Buddha's Pure Land, which can never be destroyed.<sup>7</sup> We must meticulously make this our fundamental practice.

In our wholehearted desire to meet Buddha, do we pursue through our spiritual exploration and practice that Buddha is ourself, or do we pursue through our spiritual exploration and practice that Buddha is some other? There have been times when the Truth was realized as an individual entity, and there have been times when the Truth was realized as the Whole Body. Our appearing together with the Buddha on the Divine Vulture Peak is due to our not begrudging even our own lives. There is an opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering which is the Buddha's continually abiding here, voicing the Dharma, and there is an opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering which is the Buddha's skillful means in manifesting what nirvana is. It is our not seeing Buddha, though Such is near; so who, pray, lacks the faith to wholeheartedly grasp That Which Is Beyond Our Grasp? The place that is ever filled with both celestial and human beings is none other than the Realm of Shakyamuni and Vairochana,\* a realm that is continually

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7. This is taken from "The Immeasurable Life of the Tathagata" section of the *Lotus Scripture*. One translation of this can be found in *Buddhist Writings on Meditation and Daily Practice*, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1994), pp. 27-38.

tranquil and radiant. We who are naturally installed in the Four Realms do, indeed, dwell in the Buddha Realm that is the All.<sup>8</sup> When we are looking at some dust particle, it does not mean that we do not see the whole realm of the universe, and, in our affirming the whole realm of the universe, it does not mean that we are denying any dust particle. So, when all the Buddhas affirm the realm of the Dharma, it does not mean that They exclude us from Their affirmation, which is good in the beginning, middle, and end. Thus, not only is the present moment an aspect of Their affirming that things are just what they are, but also any alarm, doubt, fear, or awe that we may experience in response to Their affirmation can in no way deny the innate nature of what They are affirming. Simply, these responses are only the difference between looking at dust particles with the directness of a Buddha and our sitting down amidst these particles. When we seat ourselves down within the realm of the Dharma, it is not spacious; when we sit amidst dust particles, they are not confining. As a result, without the Buddha's promise of our realizing Buddhahood, there would be no need to sit and, in that all Buddhas promise it, there is no need for alarm or doubt due to spaciousness or limitations, because all the Buddhas have already fully realized the substance and strength of the flowering of the Dharma.

So, should we consider that our present characteristics and innate nature are practicing within the realm of the Dharma or within dust particles? Our characteristics and nature have no alarm or doubt, nor do they have any fear or awe, for they are simply what is profound and enduring: they are that which the basic practice sets in motion within the realm of the Dharma. Our looking at this universe of dust particles and seeing the realm of the Dharma is beyond anything we could ever create or measure. That which we measure and create should also take lessons from what is measured and created by the flowering of the Dharma. When we hear the phrase 'opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering', we should understand it in relation to a Buddha's desire to help sentient beings. We should take as our model a Buddha's manifesting what a Buddha knows directly, His awakening to what a Buddha knows directly, and His entering into what a Buddha knows directly, all of which is called 'the flowering of the Dharma setting

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8. 'The Four Realms' is a Tendai Buddhist technical term for certain spiritual stages. The first is the Realm of Dualistic Thinking, where ordinary, conventional people are seen as living side-by-side with those who are saintly. The second is the Realm of Skillful Means, where inhabitants are guided by the Dharma but have not yet fully realized Its import. The third is the Realm of Bodhisattvas, where marked spiritual results have been achieved and hindrances have been removed. The fourth is the Realm of Continual Tranquility and Radiance.

in motion our opening up to, manifesting, awakening to and entering that which a Buddha knows directly through experience'. In this way, the Dharma Flower's setting in motion our opening up, manifesting, awakening, and entering will be our path to full realization.

In other words, our crossing over to what all the Buddha Tathagatas came to know directly is what is set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma, which is, as the Scripture says, 'great, vast, profound, and far-reaching'. The prediction of our ultimately realizing Buddhahood is, therefore, our own opening up to what a Buddha directly knows, and it is what the flowering of the Dharma sets in motion, which is beyond anything that others teach. This is what is referred to by the statement, "The mind's wandering off onto deluded paths is what is set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma."



What is called "The mind's awakening sets the flowering of the Dharma in motion" is synonymous with the turning of the flower-like Dharma Wheel. That is to say, when the flowering of the Dharma has thoroughly exerted its influence in arousing us, we, in turn, manifest its influence, just as it is, in arousing ourselves. Our making this manifest is our setting the Flower of the Dharma in motion. Even though what was set in motion by the flowering of the Dharma in the past has continued on, unceasingly, even up to the present, we are, in turn, naturally setting the Flower of the Dharma in motion. Even though our donkey work has not yet come to an end, our horse work will present itself.<sup>9</sup>

Through our reliance on just the One Vehicle, we will accomplish the One Great Matter for which we train as It manifests right here before us. The multitudes of bodhisattvas in the thousands of worlds had long been greatly venerated saintly ones of the Dharma Flower. They poured out from the land upon hearing the Buddha turn the Wheel of the Dharma on the Divine Vulture Peak. They poured forth from the land, being aroused by themselves, and they poured forth from the land, being aroused by some other. We should not make our turning of the Dharma Flower be only for what pours forth from the earth: we should also make it be for

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9. In several earlier texts Dōgen has alluded to the saying by Meditation Master Reiyū Shigon that one should not wait until the donkey work is done before beginning to do the horse work. In the Zen Buddhist tradition, 'donkey work' is associated with ceasing from evil by using our will to cut through our spiritual fetters, which are the source of our suffering; 'horse work' is associated with doing good by our giving voice to the Dharma to help others to realize the Truth. In the present context, Dōgen gives this traditional understanding a twist, by asserting that doing one's training, in itself, helps others to realize the Truth.

what pours forth from open space. And it is not only the earth and open space that can pour forth. We should also discern with a Buddha's wise discernment the pouring forth of the flowering of the Dharma.

Generally speaking, the time of the Dharma's flowering is inevitably one in which, as the *Lotus Scripture* puts it, "The parent is young and the child is old." This does not mean that the child is not a child, nor does it mean that the parent is not a parent: you should simply explore this as "The child is the one who is old and the parent is the one who is young." Do not follow worldly disbeliefs and thereby be disconcerted, and that which is a worldly disbelief is also a time of the Dharma's flowering. On account of this, we should make our turning of the Dharma Flower be 'that singular time when the Buddha was dwelling in the world'. We come pouring forth from the earth when we are aroused by opening up to, manifesting, awakening to, and entering It, and we come pouring forth from the earth when we are aroused by what a Buddha knows through direct experience. At this time of turning the Flower of the Dharma, there is the mind's awakening due to the Flower of the Dharma, and there is the flowering of the Dharma due to the mind's awakening.

And, the description of the bodhisattvas as 'coming from down below' is synonymous with their 'coming from within space'. This 'down below' and this 'within space' are nothing but the turning of the Dharma Flower, and they are nothing but the lifespan of a Buddha. We should do our turning of the Dharma Flower so that the Buddha's life, the flowering of the Dharma, the realm of the Dharma, and our wholeheartedness manifest both 'down below' and 'within space'. For this reason, what we call 'down below' and 'within space' are nothing but manifestations before our very eyes of the turning of the Dharma Flower. Generally speaking, in our turning of the Dharma Flower at this time, there is that which causes 'the three kinds of grasses' and 'the two kinds of trees' to come to their fruition. This does not mean that we should expect to realize the Truth, nor does it mean that we should be skeptical if we do not.

When we arouse ourselves and give rise to enlightenment, this is what constitutes the southern quarter.<sup>10</sup> This fulfilling of the Way, from the first, was present on the Divine Vulture Peak, where the assembly originally convened in the southern quarter. And there are Buddha Lands in all ten quarters where an assembly has convened in open space, and each is a separate body that sets in motion the flowering of the Dharma. This body of bodhisattvas is already making their turning of the Dharma Flower into the Buddha Lands in all ten quarters, and

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10. In the *Lotus Scripture*, the southern quarter is associated with being free of all impurities.

there is no place within those lands where even a single dust particle can enter. There is the turning of the Dharma Flower as “All forms are, in fact, devoid,” which means ‘being beyond anything’s seeming to disappear or emerge’. There is the turning of the Dharma Flower as “That which is devoid is, in fact, any form,” which means ‘being beyond anything’s having birth or death’. We cannot call it ‘existing in the world’, much less would it be simply ‘annihilation’. The One who is an intimate friend to me is an intimate friend to you, me, and everyone else. Because we must not neglect to respectfully bow to our Intimate Friend, we must take care to clearly recognize the times when the pearl in the king’s topknot is bestowed and the times when the pearl in the robe is bestowed.<sup>11</sup> There was the turning of the Dharma Flower wherein the jewel-encrusted stupa,\* which was five hundred yojanas\* high, appeared before the Buddha, and there was the turning of the Dharma Flower wherein a Buddha sat within the stupa, which measured two hundred and fifty yojanas wide. There was the turning of the Dharma Flower as ‘a stupa springing forth from the earth and taking up its abode in the sky’, wherein the mind was without obstructions and form was without restrictions, and there was the turning of the Dharma Flower as ‘a stupa springing forth from the sky and taking up its abode in the earth’,<sup>12</sup> which was restricted by the mind and restricted by the body. The Divine Vulture Peak existed within the stupa, and the jewel-encrusted stupa existed on the Divine Vulture Peak. The jeweled stupa made a jeweled stupa of the sky: the sky made an unbounded sky of the jeweled stupa.<sup>13</sup> With the former Buddha within the stupa sitting alongside the Buddha of the

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11. References to two parables in the *Lotus Scripture*. In the first, the giving of the Dharma is likened to a king taking the pearl from his topknot and openly bestowing it upon his valiant and capable servant. In the second, it is likened to a rich man who, after serving his impoverished friend a sumptuous meal, slips a precious pearl into the man’s robe while the man is sleeping. In the former situation, the servant is aware of the value of what has been bestowed upon him, whereas in the latter, the poor man does not realize what has been given him, much less recognize its value, and he continues through life suffering from feelings of deprivation, even while truly being rich beyond his wildest dreams.
  12. The four preceding descriptions of aspects of the turning of the Flower of the Dharma are related to another chapter in the *Lotus Scripture*, wherein a stupa of enormous height and width appears in the sky before the Buddha whilst He is turning the Wheel of the Dharma on the Divine Vulture Peak. Seated within the stupa is a Buddha of long ago, Prabhātaratna Buddha, ‘The Buddha Who Abounds in Jewels’. The stupa that settles upon the earth is Dōgen’s addition.
  13. This sentence is difficult to render into readily comprehensible English, since Dōgen uses the words ‘jeweled stupa’ and ‘sky’ not only as nouns but also as verbs: “The stupa stupas in the sky, and the sky skies the stupa.”

Divine Vulture Peak, the Buddha of the Divine Vulture Peak experienced the realization of Truth along with the Buddha within the stupa. When the Buddha of the Divine Vulture Peak experienced this realization upon entering the stupa, He entered into the turning of the Dharma Flower, while the physical world and His own body remained intact. When the Buddha within the stupa emerged on the Divine Vulture Peak, He emerged while still in the domain of former Buddhas, and He did so despite His having been extinct for ever so long. Do not follow the views of those ordinary people who wander in ignorance or those of the two Lesser Courses\* concerning the meaning of the emergence of the former Buddha and the meaning of the Buddha of the Divine Vulture Peak commencing to turn the Wheel of the Dharma, but just concentrate on setting in motion the flowering of the Dharma.

'Being extinct for ever so long' is an epithet for someone who has experienced the Truth directly. Only those who have the perspective of a Buddha are endowed with this epithet. What the Scripture calls 'within the stupa' and 'before the Buddha', as well as 'the stupa' and 'unbounded space', are beyond a literal understanding of 'the Divine Vulture Peak', beyond 'the realm of Dharma', beyond 'a halfway stage', beyond 'the whole universe'. Nor are they concerned with 'some place within the Dharma'. They are simply different from any form of discriminatory thought.



Not only is there the turning of the Flower of the Dharma by manifesting in the form of a Buddha for the sake of giving voice to the Dharma, there is also the turning of the Flower of the Dharma by manifesting in the form of a sentient being for the sake of giving voice to the Dharma. There is the turning of the Flower of the Dharma which manifested as 'Devadatta',<sup>14</sup> and there is the turning of the Flower of the Dharma which manifested as 'their departing is also fine'.<sup>15</sup> Do not measure your waiting as being 'sixty eons long', while you look up to the Buddha for help with hands in gasshō.\* By cutting short your measuring of your wholehearted waiting, what will arise after a while is what is called 'so many

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14. The name of a chapter in the *Lotus Scripture*. Devadatta was Shakyamuni's cousin and disciple. While a senior monk, he caused a schism in the assembly, with five hundred novices following him. Although maintaining that he was still Shakyamuni's disciple, he attempted to kill Shakyamuni. Despite these acts, Shakyamuni predicts in this chapter that Devadatta too will ultimately attain Buddhahood.

15. A reference to what Shakyamuni Buddha said when a group of monks and lay persons left the Divine Vulture Peak midway in His discourse, thinking that they already 'knew it all'.

immeasurable eons', but even so, it is still impossible to put a measurement on the Buddha's wise discernment. How much, pray, does this wholehearted waiting serve as a gauge of the Buddha's wise discernment? Do not think of this turning of the Dharma Flower as simply the Bodhisattva Way as practiced from the very first. The turning of the Dharma Flower at that sole sitting on the Divine Vulture Peak is a turning of the Dharma Flower in the form of the Tathagata giving voice to the Greater Course\* this very day. The Flower of the Dharma is the Flower of the Dharma right now; should you not perceive or recognize It, It will be beyond your mind's ability to fully grasp or fully understand.<sup>16</sup> Thus, what is 'five hundred ink drops' for some is but the smallest fraction of time in the turning of the Dharma Flower, for It expounds that the lifetime of Buddha is the ever-flowing of Mind as It is.<sup>17</sup>



In conclusion, in the several centuries since this *Lotus Scripture* was transmitted to China and employed to set in motion the flowering of the Dharma, those folks who have fashioned commentaries and interpretations for it have abounded. And, due to this Scripture, some of those who have obtained the Dharma have been eminent people. But none of them has caught the meaning of 'the Flower of the Dharma turning' or made use of the import of 'setting the Flower of the Dharma in motion' as our exalted Ancestor, the Old Buddha Daikan Enō, did. Now we hear this teaching, now we encounter it: we can encounter an Old Buddha meeting an Old Buddha. How could this fail to be the Land of Old Buddhas! What a joy it is that the Flower of the Dharma has existed for eon after eon! What a joy it is that there is a flowering of the Dharma day and night! Because the Flower of the Dharma continues from eon to eon and flowers throughout both day and night, even though our own bodies and minds wax and wane in strength, this very waxing and waning is also the flowering of the Dharma. Everything, just as it is, is a rare treasure, a luminous radiance, a place for training in the Way. Everything, just as it is, is great, vast, profound, and far-reaching in its influence; everything is the profound, vast, and far-reaching supreme, fully perfected enlightenment; everything is the mind's wandering off into delusion at the turning of the Dharma Flower; everything is the mind's awakening which turns the Flower of the Dharma;

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16. A reference to the children in the burning house who were so absorbed in their play that they did not perceive or recognize what was really going on.

17. In the *Lotus Scripture*, 'five hundred ink drops' constitutes the time it takes to let five hundred drops fall at the rate of one drop per every thousand lands traveled through.

everything is truly the Flower of the Dharma setting in motion the Dharma's flowering.

*The mind's wandering is its being turned by the Flower  
of the Dharma:*

*The mind's awakening is its turning of the Flower of the  
Dharma.*

*If what we fully realize is like this,*

*It is the Flower of the Dharma setting in motion the  
flowering of the Dharma.*

When we make offerings to It, bow in respect to It, honor It, and praise It, the Flower of the Dharma is the flowering of the Dharma.



I have written this on a day during the summer retreat in the second year of the Ninji era (1241) to present to a meditator named Edatsu. I am overjoyed that he is leaving lay life behind in order to train in the Way. Just to shave one's head once, even that, is a precious act. To shave one's head again and again: this is to be a true child who has left lay life behind. His leaving lay life behind today is a karmic\* recompense, in and of itself, arising solely from the influence of his revolving the Flower of the Dharma in the past. The flowering of the Dharma today must certainly be a flowering which brings to fruition the Flower of the Dharma. It is not Shakyamuni's Dharma Flower, nor is it the Dharma Flower of the Buddhas: it is the Dharma Flower's flowering of the Dharma. Edatsu's being set into motion by the flowering of the Dharma in the past habitually revolved around his not perceiving or recognizing the characteristics of things as they really are. But the flowering of the Dharma today is no longer beyond his mind's ability to fully grasp or understand. In times long past, he breathed It out and breathed It in: at the present time, he breathes It out and breathes It in. This is what we should expect for a flowering of the Dharma that is so marvelously exquisite we cannot even begin to imagine It.

*Written by the founder of Kannondōri in Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple, the mendicant monk who went to  
Sung China in order to receive and then transmit the Dharma.*

*Dōgen*

*Copied on the third day of midsummer in the second year of the Ninji era (June 13, 1241).*

*Ejō*