

On the Marvelous Spiritual Abilities

(*Jinzū*)

Translator's Introduction: The term *jinzū* was widely used both within and outside Buddhism to refer to what were considered esoteric, supernatural, or even magical powers, which many persons apparently sought, often with the motive of gaining power and prestige or of having some advantage over others. Traditionally there were six of these abilities which, in Buddhism, functioned as: (1) the ability to freely deal with external situations or circumstances as needed (2) the ability to see what is truly going on, (3) the ability to hear what someone is truly saying, (4) the ability to know what someone's true intentions are, (5) the ability to recognize what someone's karma from a past life is, and (6) the ability to know when someone has cleansed that karma. All but the sixth were presumably attainable by anyone; only Buddhas and arhats could realize the last one.

On the basis of remarks made by various Ancestral Masters, Dōgen explains that there is a greater ability, one that surpasses all other marvelous abilities. This marvelous spiritual ability involves one's natural functioning in everyday life after having dropped off body and mind with its attendant greeds, hatreds, and delusions; that is, it is just the everyday doing of whatever needs to be done. Performing these everyday acts is, in itself, an expression of this greater marvelous spiritual ability. Further, in that such behavior involves the natural functioning of one's six senses, Dōgen identifies them as the six marvelous spiritual abilities.

The marvelous spiritual ability that we are speaking of here is the very food and drink of those who are in the Buddha's family, and the Buddhas have not wearied of it even to the present day. There are the six marvelous abilities, and there is the one whole marvelous spiritual ability, and there is the transcending of marvelous spiritual abilities, and there is the unsurpassed spiritual ability. The last is our three thousand acts of a morning and our eight hundred acts of an evening, which we take as the normal state of things. Though it is said that this spiritual ability arises along with Buddhahood, it goes unrecognized in Buddhas: though it is said that it vanishes along with a Buddha, it does not thereby destroy a Buddha. When a Buddha goes up to the high heavens, it likewise goes along: when a Buddha comes down to earth, it comes along too. It is present both when Buddhas do the practice to realize the Truth and when they have proved the Truth for Themselves. They are as still as the snow-capped peaks and resemble the trees and

rocks.¹ The Buddhas of the past were the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha. They came to Him out of devotion to the kesa* and invariably held aloft a stupa.* At one such time, Shakyamuni Buddha said, “The marvelous spiritual ability of all Buddhas is a wonder to behold.” This is why you need to know that, in the present as well as in the future, things will be no different.



Meditation Master Isan Reiyū was an Ancestor of the thirty-seventh generation directly from the Tathagata Shakyamuni. He was a Dharma heir of Hyakujō Ekai. Of the present-day Ancestors of the Buddha who have appeared throughout the world, many are not distant descendants of Isan, and they are distant descendants of Isan.

Once when Isan was lying down asleep, his disciple Kyōzan Ejaku came in to call upon him. Thereupon, Isan rolled over, turning his face to the wall as he lay there.

Kyōzan said, “It is just me, your disciple Ejaku. Pray, venerable monk, stay just as you are.”

Isan made an effort to rise just as Kyōzan was leaving, and he called out, “Ejaku, my disciple!”

Kyōzan came back.

Isan said, “This old monk would like to tell you his dream. Please listen to it.”

Kyōzan lowered his head, preparing to listen. Isan said, “Try and interpret my dream, and I’ll listen.”

Kyōzan fetched him a basin of water and a hand towel.

Isan then washed his face. After he had finished washing his face, he sat for a bit, whereupon his disciple Kyōgen Chikan came in. Isan said to him, “Disciple Ejaku and I have just been putting into practice our marvelous spiritual ability, which is on a level above all others, one that is not the same as those found in the Lesser Course.”*

Kyōgen said, “Your disciple Chikan was just sitting outside, so I am aware of all that went on.”

1. ‘Snow-capped peaks’ is often used in Zen Buddhism as a reference to those who have been successfully training for a long time. Similarly, ‘trees’ are trainees who have not yet cut down the tree of self, and ‘stones’ are trainees who are now unresponsive to the arising of defiling passions.

* See *Glossary*.

Isan said, “My disciple, you should endeavor to express it.” Thereupon, Kyōgen made a cup of tea and brought it to him.

Isan, praising them, said, “The marvelous spiritual ability and wise discernment of the two of you have far surpassed even that of Shariputra and Moggallana.”²

If you would know what the marvelous spiritual ability of those in our Buddha family is, you should explore through your training what Isan has asserted. Because it is not the same as the inferior abilities of the Lesser Course, a person who undertakes this exploration is, as a consequence, called a student who is exploring the Matter,* and anyone who does not undertake this exploration is not such a student of Buddhism. It is this marvelous spiritual ability and wise discernment that Successor after Successor has mutually Transmitted. What is more, do not undertake to study the spiritual abilities of non-Buddhists and those of the Lesser Courses in India, and do not take up what is studied by scholastics and their like.

Now, in exploring Isan’s marvelous spiritual ability, even though it is spoken of as being unsurpassed, it is beyond that, for it is on a level above and beyond anything else. That is to say, after Isan had lain down, there was his turning of his face towards the wall as he lay there, there was his endeavoring to arise, there was his calling out to his disciple Ejaku, there was his referring to his having had a dream, there was his sitting for a short while after he had washed his face, and there was Kyōzan’s lowering his head to hear and his fetching a basin of water and a towel.

Nevertheless, Isan said, “Disciple Ejaku and I have just been putting into practice the marvelous spiritual ability, which is on a level above all others, one that is not the same as those found in the Lesser Course.” We need to explore what this marvelous spiritual ability is, for it is what the Ancestral Masters who truly Transmit the Buddha Dharma have spoken of. Do not fail to mention the telling of a dream or the washing of the face, for you must ascertain that such actions are marvelous spiritual abilities that are on a level above all others.

To say that it is ‘not the same as those found in the Lesser Course’, means that it is not the same as the small ideas and small opinions associated with the Lesser Course, nor will it be anything like those of the ‘three times wise and ten times saintly’.* These persons all practice the five lesser spiritual abilities, and they only attain a small idea of their True Self: they do not come near to the greater spiritual ability of the Ancestors of the Buddha. This is an ability of Ancestors of

2. Shariputra and Moggallana were two of Shakyamuni Buddha’s ten chief disciples. The former was known for his wise discernment and the latter for his spiritual abilities.

the Buddha, a marvelous spiritual ability that goes beyond Buddhahood. People who would model themselves on this marvelous spiritual ability must not be impressed by devilish people and others who are outside the Way. Academic students of Scriptures have not yet heard of such an ability or, if they have heard of it, they find it difficult to trust in. Those of the Two Lesser Courses, those who are outside the Way, those who lecture on Scriptures, scholarly commentators, and the like, are taught about the lesser spiritual abilities but do not learn about the greater marvelous spiritual ability. All Buddhas abide in and keep to the greater marvelous spiritual ability, and They Transmit this marvelous spiritual ability of Buddhas. Were it not for this ability, the basin of water and the towel would not have been fetched, nor would Isan have lain there with his face turned towards the wall, nor would he have washed his face and then sat up for a bit.

Such things as the lesser spiritual abilities do also exist, enveloped within the capacity of this greater spiritual ability. The greater marvelous spiritual ability is in contact with the lesser spiritual abilities, but the lesser spiritual abilities are not aware of the greater marvelous spiritual ability. These lesser spiritual abilities have been described as ‘a hair swallowing the vast ocean’ and ‘a poppy seed enclosing Mount Sumeru’. They are also synonymous with ‘the upper part of the body emitting water and the lower part of the body emitting fire’.³ Also, the first five spiritual abilities, and even the sixth spiritual ability, are all lesser spiritual abilities. Those people who devote themselves to these abilities have not yet experienced the marvelous spiritual ability of a Buddha, even in their dreams. The five spiritual abilities, along with the sixth spiritual ability, are called lesser spiritual abilities because they are all tainted by their practice being considered as separate from enlightenment and because they are confined to some time or some place. They reside in life but do not manifest after one’s death; they belong to oneself but do not belong to someone else. Though they may manifest in this land of ours, they may not manifest in all other countries; though some may manifest them without trying, others cannot manifest them when they would.

3. This is an allusion to a passage in the *Lotus Scripture*, wherein a mother asks her two sons to display various wondrous abilities for the sake of their father, a Brahman who does not follow the Buddhist Way, so that he will join the three of them in going to visit the Buddha. With their father in mind, the two sons perform various wondrous transformations, such as “walking, standing, sitting, and reclining within space, the upper part of their bodies emitting water and the lower part of their bodies emitting fire.” A similar act, called the ‘Twin Wonder’, was performed by the Buddha when He went back to visit His family after His enlightenment.

This greater spiritual ability is not like that. The Teachings, practice, and realization of all Buddhas alike are made fully manifest through their marvelous spiritual ability. Not only is it fully manifested within the vicinity of all Buddhas, it is also fully manifested above and beyond Buddhahood. The marvelous spiritual ability, which is the way Buddhas teach, is truly mind-boggling. It manifests even before someone has a body, and its manifestation is not confined to past, present, or future. Were it not for the marvelous spiritual ability of the Buddha, then all the Buddhas' rousing Their mind to realize Buddhahood, Their training and practice, Their enlightenment, and Their realizing nirvana would not yet exist. Right this minute, the inexhaustible Ocean of the Dharma Realm is constantly present and unchanging, all of which is the marvelous spiritual ability of Buddha. Not only does a single hair swallow up this vast Ocean, a single hair sustains and retains this vast Ocean; a single hair manifests this vast Ocean; a single hair disgorges this vast Ocean; a single hair uses this vast Ocean. Do not take as your lesson from this that when a single hair swallows up and disgorges the whole Dharma Realm, then, since there is only one whole Dharma Realm, the Dharma Realm can no longer exist.

A single poppy seed's enclosing all of Mount Sumeru is also like this. And there is a poppy seed that naturally disgorges Mount Sumeru and a poppy seed that naturally manifests the Ocean of the Inexhaustible Treasure House of the Dharma Realm. There is also a single poppy seed that intentionally spits out Mount Sumeru and a single poppy seed that intentionally makes the Ocean of the Inexhaustible Treasure House of the Dharma Realm manifest. When a single hair and a single poppy seed disgorge the vast Ocean, they spew It out in one instant and spew It out for ten thousand kalpas.* Because ten thousand kalpas and one instant, alike, have been spewed out from a hair and a poppy seed, from whence have the hair and the poppy seed been obtained? They have been obtained precisely from the marvelous spiritual ability. Since this 'having been obtained' is synonymous with the marvelous spiritual ability, it means that this ability simply gives birth to itself. Furthermore, you need to explore the fact that it does not appear and disappear within the three times of past, present, and future. All Buddhas joyfully disport within this marvelous spiritual ability.



Lay Disciple Hō'on was an eminent person who was seated among the Ancestors. He not only trained under Baso Dōitsu and Sekitō Kisen but also had many meetings and encounters with Masters who truly walked the Way in our tradition. He once said in verse:

*The marvelous spiritual ability manifests its enlightened
functioning
In our carrying water and our hauling firewood.*

You need to thoroughly explore this principle through your training. ‘Carrying water’ refers to the custom of loading up and toting water. Sometimes a disciple loads up and totes this water for his own sake, and sometimes he does it for the sake of others. This is what is meant by being a Buddha of marvelous spiritual abilities. Although knowledge itself is a transient thing, the marvelous spiritual ability is always a marvelous spiritual ability. Even if someone is unacquainted with it, what it teaches is not subject to fading out or to disappearing. Even if people are ignorant of it, what it teaches arises spontaneously. Even if they do not know that carrying water is a marvelous spiritual ability, the spiritual ability of carrying water is not subject to regression.

‘Hauling firewood’ means carrying wood for fuel. For instance, it is like what the Sixth Ancestor did of old. Even though he may not have recognized his marvelous spiritual abilities in his three thousand acts of a morning or may not have had the marvelous spiritual abilities in mind during his eight hundred acts of an evening, these acts were still a full manifestation of his marvelous spiritual ability.

Truly, those who meet and pay attention to the enlightened functioning of the marvelous spiritual ability of all the Buddhas and Tathagatas will, beyond doubt, realize the Way. This is why the realization of the Way by all the Buddhas—every one of Them—has unquestionably been fully accomplished through the effects of this marvelous spiritual ability. As a consequence, you should explore through your training that even though we were speaking just now of ‘the emitting of water’ of the Lesser Course as being a lesser spiritual ability, ‘carrying water’ is a greater spiritual ability. Carrying water and carrying firewood have never been abandoned, for people have not neglected them. Thus, these actions have been passed down from the distant past to the present day without a single person, even for a moment, falling away from them or turning them aside: this is due to the functioning of their marvelous spiritual ability. This is the greater marvelous spiritual ability, which is beyond any similarity with the inferior abilities of the Lesser Course.



Once when Tōzan Ryōkai was attending on Ungan Donjō, Ungan asked him, “What is the enlightened functioning of my disciple Ryōkai’s marvelous spiritual ability?”

With hands folded in shashu,* Tōzan then came and stood right in front of him.

Ungan again asked him, “What is the enlightened functioning of your marvelous spiritual ability?”

Tōzan then, wishing him well, bowed in respect and took his leave.

In this account, the marvelous spiritual ability is present as Tōzan’s hearing his Master’s words and completely understanding the import behind them and as the particulars of what he did in response fitting together with the Truth, like a box with its lid. By all means, recognize that the enlightened functioning of Ungan’s marvelous spiritual ability has certainly produced descendants, persons who did not spiritually regress. Ungan must certainly have been one of the Highest Ancestors, a person spiritually unsurpassed. Do not idly speculate on whether he or his descendants could in any way resemble non-Buddhists or those of the Two Lesser Courses.

In the Buddha’s Way, there are spiritual transformations and spiritual abilities associated with the upper part of the body and the lower part of the body. The whole universe in all ten directions, right now, is the one whole True Body of a shramana.⁴ Strange as it may seem, the waters from the nine mountains and the eight oceans to the Ocean of Buddha Nature and the Ocean of Buddha Wisdom are the waters emitted from the upper part of his body, the lower part of his body, and the middle part of his body. In addition, they are the waters that are emitted from the upper part of what is not the body, the lower part of what is not the body, and the middle part of what is not the body. This extends to the emitting of fire also. And this is not limited to such things as water, fire and wind, it is also the upper part of his body emitting Buddhas, and the lower part of his body emitting Buddhas, and the upper part of his body emitting Ancestors, and the lower part of his body emitting Ancestors, and the upper part of his body emitting immeasurable kalpas of time, and the lower part of his body emitting immeasurable kalpas of time, and the upper part of his body emitting the Ocean of the Dharma Realm, and the upper part of his body absorbing the Ocean of the Dharma Realm. And what is

4. Although ‘shramana’ is a term widely used in reference to Buddhist monks in general and novices in particular, more specific definitions describe a shramana as someone who has renounced the world, has let go of the defiling passions of greed, hatred, and delusion, and practices compassion for all beings. Hence, the term could equally well apply to a lay Buddhist who is completely committed to the practice of the Way. Similarly, even though the grammatical gender of the Sanskrit word shramana is masculine, its usage by Dōgen is neutral and would not have excluded women.

more, his spitting out six or seven nations of the world or his swallowing up two or three of them is no different. The four elements, the five elements, the six elements, all elements, or immeasurable elements at this very moment, alike, are his marvelous spiritual ability which gives rise to them and makes them disappear: they are his marvelous spiritual ability to swallow them up and to spit them out.⁵ It is his swallowing up and spitting out each and every aspect of the great earth and the vast expanse of space at every moment. Being twirled about by a poppy seed becomes a measure of his spiritual ability: being dangled by a hair becomes a measure of his spiritual ability. They arise along with That which is beyond anything our consciousness can recognize, and they abide in That which is beyond anything our consciousness can recognize, and they take Their true refuge in That which is beyond anything our consciousness can recognize. The ever-changing characteristics of the marvelous spiritual ability of Buddhas have no connection with something short or something long, so, in all seriousness, how can one possibly undertake to evaluate Them simply by making comparisons?



Long ago, when a holy man who had attained the first five spiritual abilities was attending on the Buddha,⁶ he asked Him, “The Buddha has six spiritual abilities and I have five of them. What, pray, is that sixth one?”

The Buddha then called out to him, saying, “Holy man with the five spiritual abilities!”

The holy man responded with a “Yes?”

The Buddha said, “That is the one spiritual ability which you should have asked me about.”

We need to explore this account carefully. How could the holy man possibly have known that the Buddha had six spiritual abilities? The Buddha had immeasurable spiritual abilities and wise discernment, and was not limited to merely six abilities. Even though the holy man said that he saw just six abilities, it was beyond him to attain even six spiritual abilities, so how much less could he allow for other spiritual abilities, even in his dreams? Now, let us ask something. Even though the holy man would have said that he had seen the Venerable

5. The four elements are earth, water, fire, and wind; the five are the four elements plus space; the six are the five elements plus consciousness.

6. A ‘holy man’ refers to a Hindu ascetic.

Shakyamuni, could he truly say that he had ‘seen Buddha’?⁷ Even though he might say that he had ‘seen Buddha’, could he truly say that he had met the Venerable Shakyamuni? Even though one can encounter the Venerable Shakyamuni, even though one may say that he has ‘seen Buddha’, we need to ask, has such a person encountered ‘the Holy One with five spiritual abilities’ yet? Through exploring these questions, we can learn the use of the vines that embrace and the vines that are severed.⁸ How could saying that the Buddha has six marvelous spiritual abilities possibly reach even the level of counting the riches of one’s neighbor?

Now, what is at the heart of the Venerable Shakyamuni’s saying, “That is the one spiritual ability which you should have asked me about?” He does not say that the holy man has the one spiritual ability, nor does He say that the holy man lacks it. Even though He gave expression to the natural functioning of that one spiritual ability, how could the holy man have possibly penetrated what that one spiritual ability is? For, even though the holy man had five abilities, they were not five of the abilities encompassed within the six spiritual abilities that the Buddha had. Even though the abilities of the holy man were seen through by the Buddha’s use of His spiritual abilities, how could the holy man’s abilities possibly see through to the spiritual abilities of a Buddha? If the holy man had seen through to even one spiritual ability of the Buddha, he could have seen right through to Buddha from this spiritual ability. When we look at a holy man, there is that which resembles a Buddha’s spiritual abilities, and when we look at the behavior of a Buddha, there is that which resembles the abilities of a holy man, but you should realize that the latter’s abilities are not what the marvelous spiritual abilities of a Buddha are. When there is no penetration to the Truth, the five spiritual abilities are in no way akin to Buddha.

At the heart of what the Venerable Shakyamuni was saying is, “Of what use is your asking about the sixth spiritual ability? You could have asked about any of the abilities,” and “You should have asked about the unsurpassed spiritual ability and about the one marvelous spiritual ability, for in no way is a holy man a match for the one spiritual ability.” Thus, the marvelous spiritual abilities of a Buddha and the abilities of others bear the same name of ‘spiritual abilities’, yet the spiritual abilities of the two are different by far.

7. To ‘see Buddha’ is a Zen term for seeing Buddha Nature either in oneself or in another.

8. ‘The vines that embrace’ refers to the Master-disciple relationship in which both supply support for each other. ‘The vines that are severed’ refers to entangling relationships that need to be severed. Dōgen will explore these two references in Discourse 47: On ‘The Vines That Entangle: The Vines That Embrace’ (*Kattō*).



Thus it was that Rinzai Gigen once quoted the following poem by a man of old:

*The ways in which the Tathagata displayed His whole
being
Were for the purpose of responding to how people felt.
Fearing lest people give rise to nihilistic views,
He provisionally put forth hollow terms.

His speaking expediently of His 'thirty-two bodily marks'
And of His 'eighty physical characteristics' was but an
empty sound,⁹
For His physical body is not His True Body,
And That which is beyond characteristics is His True
Form.*

Great Master Rinzai then commented on this poem:

A Buddha has six spiritual abilities that boggle the mind. But all heavenly beings, holy men, asuras,* and mighty demons also have spiritual abilities, so surely they must be Buddhas as well. Right?

O my fellow Buddhist trainees, make no mistake! When the asuras were defeated in battle against Indra, Lord of the Trayastrimsha Heavens, they took eighty-four thousand of their kith and kin under their governance, and concealed themselves within the hollows of lotus roots. Surely this was not being saintly, was it?

In what I, a mountain monk, have just imparted to you concerning these lesser spiritual abilities, all refer to karmically* inherited powers or powers induced by drugs or sorcery. Well, the six marvelous spiritual abilities of a Buddha are not like those powers. When Buddhas enter the realm of forms and colors, They are not captivated by forms or colors; when They enter the realm of sounds, They are not captivated by sounds; when They enter the realm of odors, They are not captivated by smells; when They enter the realm of tastes, They are not captivated by tastes; when They enter the realm of tactile sensations, They are not captivated by what They physically

9. The thirty-two marks were considered to be the signs of a true world ruler, whereas having the eighty characteristics in addition to these thirty-two marks was viewed to be the signs of a genuine Buddha.

feel; when They enter the realms of thoughts and things, They are not captivated by whatever arises there. Thus, when someone arrives at the point where form and color, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts and things are all characteristics that are empty of any substance, there can be nothing that binds this follower of the Way, who has gone beyond karmic conditionings. Even though these characteristics are what the five skandhas* spew forth, they are simply the bases for this follower's marvelous spiritual abilities as he treads the earth.

O my fellow Buddhist trainees, the True Buddha has no set shape and the True Dharma has no fixed form. You are simply fashioning imitations and creating forms built upon what is ephemeral. Though you may even attain those things you seek, they will all be ghosts of wild foxes and will not be the true Buddha, for these ghosts are nothing but the views and opinions of non-Buddhists.

Accordingly, the six marvelous spiritual abilities of all Buddhas are not something that can be matched by any of the various lofty beings and devilish people or by those of the Two Lesser Courses, nor are they something such persons can fathom. The six marvelous spiritual abilities of the Buddha's Way are what have been directly Transmitted only to the disciples of the Buddha within the Buddha's Way, one-to-one, and They have not been passed on to other persons. The six marvelous spiritual abilities of a Buddha are directly Transmitted within the Buddha's Way. Those to whom they have not been directly Transmitted, one-to-one, cannot comprehend the six marvelous spiritual abilities of a Buddha. You should explore through your training with your Master that those to whom the six marvelous spiritual abilities of Buddhas have not been directly Transmitted, one-to-one, will not be persons within the Way of the Buddhas.



Hyakujō Ekai once said:

When our eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are undefiled by the various material and immaterial things that arise, we call this 'receiving and keeping to a four-line Dharma poem' and also 'the four stages* of arhathood'. And when the six sense gates leave no trace, we call this 'the six marvelous spiritual abilities'. Simply, at this very moment when we are smoothly going on, unhindered by all the various material and immaterial things that arise, and having brought to an end our dependency on our discriminatory thinking, then this too

is called the ‘the six marvelous spiritual abilities’. Not claiming these marvelous spiritual abilities as one’s own is what we call not ‘possessing’ spiritual abilities. The tracks of Bodhisattvas* who do not ‘possess’ spiritual abilities, as spoken of here, cannot be traced, for They are persons above and beyond Buddhahood. They are the most mind-boggling of persons. In and of Themselves, They are as great as the gods.

The marvelous spiritual abilities that Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor have Transmitted are just like this. The marvelous spiritual abilities of all Buddhas are above and beyond Buddhahood. As such, They are indeed the most mind-boggling of persons and as great as the gods in and of Themselves. They are Bodhisattvas who do not ‘possess’ spiritual abilities. They are persons who have ended Their dependency on discriminatory thinking. They are persons who have spiritual abilities but do not act upon them. They are persons who are not hindered by anything that arises. The Buddha’s Way, right now, has the six marvelous spiritual abilities. All Buddhas have habitually Transmitted and kept to Them for ever so long. There is not even one Buddha who has failed to Transmit and keep to Them, for if such a one did not Transmit and keep to Them, he would not be a Buddha. These six marvelous spiritual abilities of the Buddhas make Their senses clear so that the six sense gates leave no traces.

As someone of old said in verse about Buddhas leaving no trace:

*Their wondrous spiritual functioning through Their six
senses will be both empty and not empty
And the halo of light of Their manifestation will take
forms and be beyond form.*

‘Their taking forms and being beyond form’ will be Their leaving no traces. When, without leaving traces, we do our training and practice, explore the Matter through our training with our Master, and realize enlightenment, we do not create disturbances through our sense gates. ‘Not creating disturbances’ means that ‘one who creates disturbances deserves thirty blows from the Master’s staff’.

So, you need to thoroughly explore the six marvelous spiritual abilities through your training in accord with the preceding. Apart from the legitimate descendants in our Buddha family, who would even hear that this principle exists? Others have simply mistaken their meaningless feasting on externals for the daily behavior of returning to one’s True Home. Further, even though the four stages of arhathood are common fare in the Buddha’s Way, there is no academic scholar of the Scriptures who has been genuinely Transmitted. How could that bunch who are bent on counting grains of sand—those folks who are aimlessly wandering about in

delusion—possibly realize the fruits of these stages? The sort of people who are satisfied with having realized something small have not yet even come close to exploring the Matter in depth; Buddhas have Transmitted the Way only to Buddhas. The so-called ‘four stages of arhathood’ are synonymous with receiving and retaining a four-line Dharma poem. What we call ‘receiving and retaining a four-line Dharma poem’ is our eyes, ears, nose, and tongue all being undefiled by the various material and immaterial things that arise. ‘Being undefiled’ means ‘not being stained with desires’. ‘Not being stained with desires’ refers to our everyday mind: it is our continually cutting through whatever arises here and now. The genuine Transmission of the six marvelous spiritual abilities and the four stages of arhathood within the Buddha’s Way has been like this. If teaching is in any way different from this, you must recognize that it is not the Buddha Dharma. Thus, the Buddha’s Way is invariably arrived at through the function of one’s marvelous spiritual abilities. Who could possibly doubt that, in arriving There, a drop of water swallows and spews forth a vast ocean, and a speck of dust picks up, and lets go of, a lofty mountain? These are simply one’s marvelous spiritual abilities, and nothing else.

Given to the assembly at Kannondōri in Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple, on the sixteenth day of the eleventh lunar month in the second year of the Ninji era (December 19, 1241).

Copied by me in the office of the Abbot’s chief assistant at Kippō-ji Temple in Echizen Province on the first day of mid-spring in the second year of the Kangen era (March 11, 1244).

Ejō