

On the Meditative State of One's True Nature

(Jishō Zammai)

Translator's Introduction: In the first part of this discourse, Dōgen explores what the proper attitude of mind is for one who is serious about coming to know what one's True Nature is and how It functions.

In the latter part of the discourse, Dōgen devotes considerable time to presenting stories concerning the Rinzai Master Daie, who is credited with introducing the method of kōan study that is particular to the Rinzai tradition. Dōgen's purpose seems to be to describe someone who exemplifies the failure to realize the meditative state of his True Nature. Because what is happening in these stories is not always easily grasped and the significance of the exchanges may not be immediately apparent, it has seemed worthwhile to supply more extensive footnotes for the sake of modern readers.

What has been authentically Transmitted by the Buddhas from the Seven Buddhas* on is that the meditative state of one's training is identical with one's inherent enlightenment. In other words, we sometimes submit ourselves to what a good spiritual friend advises and sometimes we submit ourselves to what Scriptural texts advise, for these are both the Eye of the Buddhas and Ancestors. This is why the following dialogue occurred.

The Old Buddha Daikan Enō once put the question to a monk, asking, "And is this a substitute for training and enlightenment?"¹

The monk replied, "It is not that there is no training and enlightenment, but rather, there is nothing to be had that will stain It."

So, keep in mind that one's training and enlightenment being unstained by attachments is a characteristic of Buddhas and Ancestors. It is the meditative state of the Buddhas and Ancestors being experienced like a flash of lightning, like a gust of wind, like a roll of thunder.

* See *Glossary*.

1. The monk in question was Enō's Dharma heir, Nangaku Ejō. Enō's question was in response to Ejō's statement, "Were I to try to put the One Matter into words, they would miss the mark."

At the very moment when we submit ourselves to what a good spiritual friend advises, sometimes we see half of each other's Countenance, sometimes we see half of each other's Body, sometimes we see the whole of each other's Countenance, and sometimes we see the whole of each other's Heart and Mind. And there are times when we both see half of our own self and times when we both see half of each other's self. There are times when we become aware that a deity's head is enveloped in hair and times when we notice that a demon's countenance has sprouted horns.² There are times when we come, attending on others so that we might rescue all manner of beings from their suffering, and there are times when we go, transforming ourselves amongst those with whom we live. In situations like these, we do not know how many thousands of myriad times we have discarded our sense of self for the sake of the Dharma. And we do not know for how many billions of eons we have sought the Dharma for the sake of our own self. This is our basing our life upon submitting ourselves to what a good spiritual friend advises, and it is the state of our exploring through our training what Self is and how we may submit ourselves to that Self. There was the occasion when Makakashō broke out into a smile when he saw the twinkle in Shakyamuni's eye. And Eka bowed to Bodhidharma in deepest respect upon realizing the latter's Marrow, which is connected with Eka's having 'cut off his arm'.³

In summary, from the sequence of the Seven Buddhas down though the Sixth Chinese Ancestor and beyond, good spiritual teachers who have encountered the Self have been more than just one or two. And good spiritual teachers who could see It in others are not limited to the past nor are they limited to the present.

When we submit ourselves to Scriptural Writings, we thoroughly explore Their Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow. When we let go of our own skin and flesh, bones and marrow, the Peach Blossom is seen jutting out from our Eye, and the sound of the Bamboo is heard thundering in our Ear.

In general, when we are following the path of studying Scriptures, Scriptures truly come forth. What we call Scriptures are the whole world of the ten quarters, the great earth with its mountains and rivers, grasses and trees, self and other. And They are our eating meals, putting on our clothes, and doing our daily activities. When we study the Way by submitting ourselves to each of the Scriptural texts,

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2. That is, there are times when the Master seems to resemble a lay person, just as there are times when the Master seems like a raging bull.
 3. The Second Chinese Ancestor, Taiso Eka, is said to have cut off his arm in order to find the Truth. This 'severing' may refer to giving up one's attachments rather than to a literal, physical act.

one by one, the thousands of myriad volumes of Scriptures that we have not yet encountered are emerging right in front of us. Fortunately, They contain verses stating the Matter* with words of affirmation and poems clearly stating It with words of negation.⁴ When we have succeeded in encountering Them, we employ our body and mind to explore Them through our training, exhausting long eons and making use of Them over long periods of time. Through this, we ultimately reach our goal of understanding Them thoroughly. When we explore Them by letting go of body and mind, we scrape out all traces of duality and leap beyond the first signs of anything arising, while, at the same time, we inevitably realize the merits of accepting and retaining the Scriptures.

The Sanskrit texts of India that have been translated into Chinese books of Dharma number barely five thousand scrolls. Among these are the three vehicles, the five vehicles, the six divisions, and the twelve divisions. All these are Scriptural texts that you should study and follow. Even if we were to attempt to stay aloof from Them, we could not. Thus, sometimes They are ‘the Eye’ and sometimes They are what ‘my Marrow’ is.⁵ When horns on the head are right, then a tail will be right.⁶ Whether we receive Them from others or impart Them to others, They are just one’s Eye springing to life as we drop off self and other. They are simply the conferring of ‘my Marrow’ as we free ourselves from the delusion of self and other. Because both the Eye and ‘my Marrow’ are beyond self and beyond other, the Buddhas and Ancestors have continued to accurately Transmit Them and confer Them from the distant past, to this present moment, and to the next present moment. There is the traveling staff* as a Scripture, which gives free expression to the Dharma in every conceivable way, spontaneously breaking up ‘emptiness’ and breaking up ‘existence’. And there is the ceremonial hossu* as a Scripture, as it sweeps away snow and sweeps away frost. And there are the one or two sessions of seated meditation as Scriptures. And there is the kesa* as a Scripture, which has ten scrolls per volume. These are what Buddhas and Ancestors safeguard and keep to. Following such ‘Scriptures’ as These, we awaken to training and realize the Way. And there are times when we bring forth into existence the face of someone in a lofty position or the face of some ordinary

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4. That is, some statements express what the Matter is, whereas other statements express what the Matter is not.
 5. ‘Eye’ refers to spiritual ‘seeing’ as the Master ‘sees’, and ‘my Marrow’ refers to what one ‘sees’, which is completely in accord with one’s Master.
 6. To paraphrase, in either case the Scriptures are right from beginning to end.

person, and times when we bring forth the countenance of the Sun or the countenance of the Moon, as we do our utmost to realize our pursuit of Scriptures.

At the same time, whether people are following a good spiritual teacher or following the Scriptures, all such persons are following their True Self. The Scriptural texts are, naturally, the Scriptural texts of Self, and good spiritual teachers are, naturally, good spiritual teachers of Self. Thus, you should investigate through your training that thorough training means thoroughly training oneself, that studying the hundreds of things which sprout up like grass means studying oneself, that studying the myriad things that take root and branch out like trees means studying oneself, and that this self is, of necessity, synonymous with making such an effort. By exploring like this through your training, you drop off self and you promise enlightenment to yourself.

Accordingly, in the Great Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors there are tools for awakening to one's True Self and for realizing what that Self truly is. If there were no Buddhas or Ancestors who were genuine Dharma heirs, there would be no genuine Transmission. But there are tools that Dharma heir after Dharma heir has received, for were there not the Bones and Marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors, there would not be a genuine Transmission.

Because we explore the Matter in this way, when we pass on the Transmission for the sake of others, we confer it by saying such things as "You have gotten what my Marrow is" and "I have the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching which I confer on Makakashō." Expressing It for someone's sake does not necessarily depend on self and others. To express It for the sake of others is to express It for one's own sake. It is one's Self and another's Self harmoniously hearing and expressing the same thing. One ear is hearing and one ear is expressing: one tongue is expressing and one tongue is hearing. The same holds true for the sense organs of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, as well as for their forms of consciousness and their sense objects. Further, there is one Body and there is one Mind, and there is enlightenment and there is training. It is the hearing and expressing of one's ears, and it is the hearing and expressing of one's tongue. Even though we may have expressed an exception to the rule yesterday for the sake of others, today we are expressing the established rule for our own sake. In this way, the faces of the sun line up one after another, as do the faces of the moon.

To give expression to the Dharma for the sake of others and to put the Dharma into practice for oneself is to hear the Dharma, to clarify what It is, and to realize It for many lives. Even in this life, if we are sincere in giving expression to It for the sake of others, it will be easy for us to realize the Dharma. If we help others to hear and promote the Dharma, we will establish good causes for our own learning of the Dharma. We will establish good causes both physically and

mentally. Should we hinder others from hearing the Dharma, then we ourselves will be hindered in hearing the Dharma. To express the Dharma, as well as to hear It over many lives in many bodies, is to hear the Dharma over many generations. It is to hear It once more in this generation as well as hearing the Dharma that has been genuinely Transmitted to us from the past. We are born in the Dharma and we die in the Dharma, and so, having had the Dharma genuinely Transmitted to us whilst being within the whole universe of the ten quarters, we listen to It in life after life and train with It in body after body. Since we have made life after life manifest in the Dharma and have made body after body into Dharma, we bring together each molecule of dust and the whole realm of thoughts and things, and we help them to realize the Dharma.

Thus, having heard a verse whilst in eastern regions, when we come to some western region, we should give expression to it for someone's sake. This means that we do our utmost, first and foremost, to listen to it and give expression to it in our own way and that we simultaneously practice and experience our eastern self and our western self. In any case, we should delight in having our own body and mind keep close company with the Buddha's Teaching and with the words and ways of the Ancestors, to say nothing of our hoping and intending to do so, and to our putting Them into practice. We should extend our practice from an hour to a whole day until we have extended it from a year to a whole lifetime. We should give free rein to the Buddha Dharma as our very essence. In this way, we will not pass through life after life in vain pursuits.

At the same time, if you have not yet fully clarified the Matter, do not think that you cannot express It for someone's sake. Were you to wait until you had fully clarified It, you would not be equal to the task even for immeasurable eons. Even if you clarify what a human Buddha is, you will need to clarify what a celestial Buddha is. Even if you clarify what the heart of a Mountain is, you will need to clarify what the heart of the Water is. Even if you clarify what the causes and conditions are for the arising of thoughts and things, you will need to clarify what makes the causes and conditions for the arising of thoughts and things an irrelevant issue. Even if you clarify what the environs of the Buddhas and Ancestors are, you will need to clarify what is above and beyond Buddhas and Ancestors. If you are aiming at first completely clarifying these within your lifetime and only then acting for the benefit of others, you are not doing your utmost, nor are you being stout-hearted, nor are you exploring the Matter through your training with your Master.

In short, as someone who is studying the words and ways of the Buddhas and Ancestors, after you have explored through your training a single method or a single model, you then enthusiastically let your intention to help others rise to the very heavens. Accordingly, we let go of 'self and other'. Further, if you thoroughly

awaken to your Self, you will have thoroughly awakened to others. And if you can thoroughly awaken to others, you will have thoroughly awakened to your Self. Even though we call the model of a Buddha ‘One who has been born wise’, if such a person has not received the Teaching through a Master, that person cannot realize It through direct bodily experience. If those born wise have not yet encountered a Master, they do not know what is beyond being born wise and they do not know what the Unborn and Unknowing is. Even though we speak of those who have been born wise, that does not mean that they will know the Great Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors; only by exploring It through their training with their Master will they come to know It. Being thoroughly awakened to one’s Self and being thoroughly awakened to the Self of others is the Great Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors. They just need to turn their attention to exploring their own beginner’s mind and do the same with exploring the beginner’s mind of others. In bringing out from that beginner’s mind the harmonization of self and other, they will be able to arrive at harmonization with the Ultimate and they will be able to promote the diligent efforts of others just as they do their own.

At the same time, upon hearing such phrases as ‘awakening to one’s True Self’ and ‘realizing what that Self truly is’, rude and boorish people think that they do not need to receive Transmission from a Master, but need only to do self-study. This is a great mistake. Those who erroneously consider everything to be based on their personal ruminations and discriminations and have not received the Teaching through a Master are non-Buddhist followers of Indian naturalism.⁷ How could that bunch who do not understand this possibly call themselves persons of the Buddha’s Way? What is more, upon hearing the phrase ‘awakening to one’s True Self’, they reckon that it refers to the accumulation of the five skandhas,* and so equate it with the self-discipline of the Lesser Course.* There are many folks who do not understand the difference between the Greater Course* and the Lesser Course, and many of them call themselves offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Even so, what bright-eyed person would be deceived by such folks?



During the Shaohsing era (1131-1162) in Great Sung China, there was a certain Sōkō, later known as Meditation Master Daie of Mount Kinzan. He was originally a scholastic student of Scriptural texts and commentaries. During his travels from teacher to teacher, he became a follower of Meditation Master Shōri in Hsüanchou Province, with whom he studied Ummon’s comments on kōan* stories,

7. Indian naturalism is the belief that everything arises spontaneously, without a cause.

as well as Setchō's verse and prose commentaries on kōan stories, which was the beginning of his formal training under a Master. Failing to grasp Ummon's turn of mind, he eventually went to train under Abbot Tōzan Dōbi, but Dōbi did not permit Sōkō to enter his private quarters. Abbot Dōbi was a Dharma heir of Abbot Fuyō Dōkai; he was head-and-shoulders above those idle ones who seat themselves in the back row. Even though 'Meditation Master' Sōkō did the training for a rather long time, he did not succeed in getting hold of his Master's Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow, much less did he even know that there is an Eye amidst the dust motes of defiling passions.⁸

And then there was the time when he had just heard of the practice in the Way of the Buddha's Ancestors of burning incense on one's elbow whilst requesting the Record of Transmission.⁹ All eager, he begged Abbot Dōbi for the Record of Transmission. However, Abbot Dōbi refused his request.

In time, the Abbot said to Sōkō, "If you want to receive the Record of Transmission, do not be in such a hurry. Just by all means do your utmost to be diligent in your training here and now. What you are asking the Buddhas and Ancestors for is never given indiscriminately. It is not that I am unwilling to bestow It. It is simply that you are not yet equipped with the Eye."

Sōkō now responded, "Having been endowed with genuine eyes from the first, I have awakened to my True Self and have realized what that Self truly is, so how can you be so arbitrary and not give It to me?"

Abbot Dōbi laughed and left it at that.



Later, Sōkō went to train under Abbot Tandō Bunjun.

One day Tandō asked Sōkō, "And why are you lacking half your nose today?"¹⁰

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8. Since Sōkō was the name given to Daie upon being ordained as a novice monk, Dōgen's referring to him as Meditation Master Sōkō is clearly sarcastic, implying Daie's propensity for putting himself above his teachers, a trait that becomes more evident in what follows.
 9. This was apparently a symbolic reenactment of Eka's offering up his arm when requesting Transmission from Bodhidharma.
 10. Tandō is asking in effect, "Why don't you let go of that arrogant attitude of yours, so that you can realize the fullness of your innate True Nature?"

Sōkō replied, “I am a disciple in the monastery of the Hōbō Peak.”¹¹

Tandō responded, “Inaccurate, and far from the mark!”

Once when Sōkō was reading a Scripture, Tandō asked him, “What Scripture are you reading?”

Sōkō replied, “The Diamond-Cutting Scripture.”¹²

Tandō then asked him, “It says in that Scripture, ‘This Teaching is impartial; there is no higher or lower,’ so why is Mount Ungo exalted and Mount Hōbō devalued?”¹³

Sōkō responded, “This Teaching is impartial, without high or low.”¹⁴

Tandō responded, “You have certainly succeeded in making yourself into a full-fledged scholastic,” and had him go do seated meditation.¹⁵

On another occasion, Tandō was watching a government official placing adornments on figures of the Ten Lords who preside over the ten hells. He asked Sōkō, who was still a novice who had not yet been Chief Junior,¹⁶ “What is this official’s family name?”

Sōkō responded, “His family name is Ryō.”

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11. Hōbō Peak is the mountain on which Tandō’s monastery lies, and by extension is a reference to Abbot Tandō himself. In effect, Daie is holding the Abbot responsible for his not having fully realized his True Self—an extremely rude remark.
 12. This is the Scripture that Daikan Enō heard being recited, which triggered his kenshō.
 13. Mount Ungo was a Sōtō monastery, whereas Mount Hōbō was a Rinzai monastery. Tandō is trying to point out to Sōkō his arrogant, judgmental way of thinking.
 14. Sōkō’s response is merely a mouthing of Scripture. He does not see the relevance of his Master’s remark to his kōan of intellectual arrogance.
 15. In Zen contexts, the term translated here as ‘a full-fledged scholastic’ is a strong rebuke, implying that someone is content to merely pursue intellectual interests, which he is not all that good at in the first place, rather than to do the practice needed to resolve the One Great Matter.
 16. The Chief Junior is a novice monk who has been given the responsibility to oversee the behavior of junior monks for a variable period of time, in accordance with the guidance of the senior officers of the temple. A novice who has not yet done his stint in this position is considered to be still quite new to the ways of monastic life.

Tandō, stroking his own head with his hand, said, “My family name was Ryō, so how come I lack a hat like his?”

Sōkō replied, “Even though you lack a hat, your nose closely resembles his.”

Tandō remarked, “You are wide of the mark!”¹⁷

One day, Tandō said to Sōkō, “Veteran novice Sōkō, you have been able to comprehend at once what my ‘meditate here and now’ means. Were I to let you explain it, you could put it in your own words. Were I to let you demonstrate how to do it, again, you could demonstrate it. Were I to let you compose comments on it in verse or prose, expound it to trainees, give the monks informal talks on it, or request teaching from a Master, you could also do any of these. But there is just one thing that you do not yet have in place. Do you know what it is?”¹⁸

Sōkō responded, “What is that thing that I do not yet have in place?”

Tandō answered, “There is just one bit of understanding that you lack: HAH!¹⁹ If you are lacking this one bit of understanding, then whenever we are in my private quarters and I give teaching for your sake, you have the mind of meditation, but as soon as you leave my quarters, it is completely gone. Whenever you are clearly pondering the Matter, you have the mind of meditation, but as soon as you do the least bit of drifting off into sleep, it is completely gone. If that is the way you are, how can you possibly be up to handling the matter of life and death?”

Sōkō replied, “That is precisely what Sōkō is suspicious of.”

After a few years had passed, Tandō showed signs of illness. Sōkō asked him, “Venerable Abbot, a hundred years from now who

17. Sōkō’s remark is ambiguous, but it sounds as if he were saying, ‘The only difference between you and some government official is that you lack a fancy hat.’”

18. This question has a double meaning, the other being “Do you know what It is?”

19. HAH! represents the spontaneous sound made upon realizing what It truly is. It is also what is known as a kwatz, a sudden shout by a Master, used to interrupt the flow of intellectual thought in a disciple.

should I rely upon that I may resolve this Great Matter of life and death?”²⁰

Tandō responded to his request by saying, “There is a Master by the name of Engo Kokugon. He is from the State of Pa. I do not know him personally. Even so, if you meet him, I am sure you will be able to resolve this Matter. Once you have met him, do not go around visiting other Masters. In generations yet to come, explore the mind of meditation through your training.”

When we examine just this one part of the stories, it is clear that Tandō still had not endorsed Sōkō. Even though time and time again Tandō aimed at opening Sōkō up, the latter ultimately kept missing that one experience, and there is no way of compensating for that, for one cannot omit that experience. Obviously, we can trust to Abbot Dōbi’s clearly seeing Sōkō’s makeup by his denying him the Record of Transmission yet continuing to encourage him, saying that there was still something that needed doing. Sōkō did not thoroughly explore his own statement, “That is precisely what Sōkō is suspicious of,” nor did he drop it off, or break it open, or give rise to the Great Doubt, or break through that doubting.²¹ In fact, his impertinence in asking for the Record of Transmission was his attempt to rush past his exploring the Matter with his Master. It was the utmost limit of a mind for which there was no such thing as Truth. It was an extreme lack of respect for the ancients. We must say that it was not only lacking in discretion, it was lacking in the markings of the Way. It was the height of negligence in the practice. Greedy for fame, craving personal gain, he attempted to crash his way into the private quarters of the Ancestors of the Buddha. It is so pitiful how he failed to understand what the Ancestors of the Buddha were saying to him in their talks and writings. He did not grasp that to study and train is to awaken to one’s True Self. He did not hear that to delve deeply into the writings of myriad generations is to come to realize what that Self truly is. Without proper study, there are errors like these and there is self-deception like his. Because this was the way ‘Meditation Master’ Sōkō was, in his assembly there was not a single disciple, or even half a one, who had a trustworthy nose ring, but there were many who were pretend monks.²² Failure to

20. The phrase ‘a hundred years from now’ was a polite way of saying ‘after you are dead’, as it implies that the Master will surely live for another century.

21. The Great Doubt is “I could be wrong.”

22. A nose ring is used in training a water buffalo. The term is often used in Zen contexts to refer to the practice of mastering self-control.

intuitively grasp what the Buddha Dharma is and failure to intellectually understand what the Buddha Dharma is are both just like this. Beyond any question, novice trainees here and now should explore the Matter in detail with their Master. Do not be negligent out of pride.



After Tandō's passing, Sōkō, in accord with Tandō's recommendation, went to train under Meditation Master Engo at Tennei Temple in the capital city. One day, upon Engo's entering the Dharma Hall, Sōkō reported to Engo that, thanks to Engo, he had had a spiritual awakening. Engo said, "Not yet. Even though a disciple's state may be like what you describe, nevertheless, you have still not clarified what the Great Dharma is."

On another day, whilst giving a Dharma talk, Engo quoted the words of the Venerable Abbot Goso Hōen on asserting existence and non-existence. Upon hearing this, Sōkō grasped a principle that brought him great comfort. Once again, he reported his understanding to Engo. Engo laughed and said, "It is not I who has deluded you!"

This is the story of how 'Meditation Master' Sōkō subsequently trained under Engo.

While in Engo's assembly, he served in the post of Abbot's Secretary, but there is no visible evidence of his attaining any understanding before or after that. Even when he was giving formal or informal talks, he offered nothing of what he had grasped. You need to know that his biographer speaks of his having had a spiritual awakening and records that he had grasped a principle that brought him great comfort, but there is nothing to support this.²³ Do not think of him as someone of prominence, for he was simply another person who was training under a Master.

Meditation Master Engo was an Old Buddha, as venerable as anyone within all ten quarters. Not since Ōbaku had there been one so worthy of veneration as Engo, for he was an Old Buddha who would be rare in any other world. Even so, ordinary folks and those in lofty positions who have recognized this are few, for the everyday world is a sad place indeed.

23. That is, his biographer quotes what Sōkō said he had experienced, but he does not record Engo's responses.

Now when we examine Old Buddha Engo's giving voice to the Dharma and investigate Sōkō's Dharma talks, it is clear that the latter still did not have wise discernment that came up to that of his Master, nor did he have wise discernment that resembled that of his Master, and what is more, he never realized wise discernment that surpassed that of his Master even in his dreams. So, you need to recognize that 'Meditation Master' Sōkō did not have abilities that even equaled half those of his Master. He merely parroted lines from texts like the *Avatamsaka Scripture* and the *Shurangama Scripture*, but he never grasped what 'the Bones and Marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors' means. From Sōkō's point of view, he considered the Buddha Dharma to be merely the opinions supported by the greater and lesser hermits—those who are led by the spirit that permeates grasses and trees.²⁴ If this is what he imagined the Buddha Dharma to be, then clearly he did not know what the Great Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors is. After Engo, he did not wander off to other temples or seek out good spiritual friends, but as head of a large temple, he functioned haphazardly as the monk who greets incoming novices.²⁵ The sayings he has left behind do not even approach the outskirts of the Great Dharma. At the same time, folks who do not recognize this are apt to think that it is not shameful to classify 'Meditation Master' Sōkō with the ancients, whereas those who see and know have decisively concluded that he was not enlightened. Ultimately, he had not clarified what the Great Dharma is and just irresponsibly babbled on.

Thus, you need to recognize that, in truth, Abbot Dōbi of Mount Tōzan had clearly made no mistake in what he saw in Sōkō's future. Folks who trained under 'Meditation Master' Sōkō ultimately became jealous and resentful of Abbot Dōbi, and have not stopped being so even to this very day. All Abbot Dōbi did was to refuse to acknowledge Sōkō's claim. Abbot Tandō's refusals to acknowledge Sōkō's claims were far stronger than Dōbi's, for he found fault with Sōkō every time he encountered him. Even so, Abbot Tandō is not resented by Sōkō's

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24. 'Hermits' in this context refer to those who have removed themselves from worldly ways of thinking. The greater hermits were those who resided among ordinary folks, practicing the Bodhisattva vows. The lesser hermits were those who resided in mountains and forests, practicing to acquire merit which they could then transfer to all sentient beings. 'The spirit that permeates grasses and trees' is an allusion to the Buddha Nature that is innate in all things that 'sprout up and grow tall'.
25. That is, despite his being nominal head of a large temple, he was unable to spiritually lead novices beyond the level of newcomers.

followers. Oh, how embarrassed we should feel for those who have been resentful in the past and are still so in the present!

In general, offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors in Great Sung China have been many, but trainees who have learned what Truth is have been few, so there are few who teach what is true. You should clearly recognize this principle in these stories. It was no different in Sōkō's Shaohsing era. The present is incomparably worse than that era. Today, folks who do not even know what the Great Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors is have become the masters for novices.

You need to realize that the genuine passing on of the Record of Transmission in India and China by Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor is the genuine Transmission that has come down from Seigen's mountain. After it came down from Seigen's mountain, it was naturally Transmitted to Tōzan, which is something unknown to any but ourselves throughout all the ten quarters. Those who know this are all offspring of Tōzan and they bestow their fame upon their trainees. Still, throughout his life, 'Meditation Master' Sōkō did not understand what the phrases 'awakening to one's True Self' and 'realizing what that Self truly is' meant. How much less could he have penetrated his own spiritual question through his training! And even less, how can any present-day trainees who are descendants of Zen veteran Sōkō possibly understand the words 'awakening to one's True Self'?

Hence, the word 'self' and the word 'other' as used by the Buddhas and Ancestors refer to the Body and Mind of the Buddhas and Ancestors: they are the Eye of the Buddhas and Ancestors. And because they are the Bones and Marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors, they transcend what 'getting the skin' would mean to those of ordinary mind.

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Ejō