

On the One Hundred and Eight Gates to What the Dharma Illumines

(Ippyakuhachi Hōmyōmon)

Translator’s Introduction: Except for the final paragraphs in this text, which were written by Dōgen, this work is comprised of a lengthy quotation in Chinese from the *Scriptural Collection of the Past Deeds of the Buddha (Butsu Hongyō Jikkyō)*.

Gomyō Bodhisattva,* the One Who Is a Guardian of Wisdom’s Light, then brought to a close His study of the family into which He was to be reborn.¹ At that time, there was a celestial palace in the Tushita Heaven named Lofty Banners. Its length and width were equal—sixty yojanas.* From time to time, the Bodhisattva would go up into this palace and give voice to the essence of the Dharma for the sake of the celestial beings residing in the Tushita Heaven. On this particular occasion, the Bodhisattva went up into this palace and, having finished His peaceful seated meditation, He gave instruction to the celestial ones of the Tushita Heaven, saying, “You who are celestial beings, by all means come gather around Me, since My present being will soon descend into a human form. I now wish to explain in their entirety the gates to what the Dharma illumines, for they are known as the gates which are the skillful means for comprehending the forms that all thoughts and things take. I leave these Teachings as My final instructions for you, that you may remember Me by Them. If you listen to what these gates of the Dharma are, they will surely produce great joy and delight within you.”

When the great assembly of celestial beings in the Tushita Heaven—including the beautiful celestial women and their entourage—heard what the Bodhisattva had just said, they came up

* See *Glossary*.

1. Gomyō Bodhisattva was in the Tushita Heaven, prior to His rebirth as Shakyamuni Buddha.

and gathered about Him. Seeing the multitude that had gathered in the celestial palace, He desired to give expression to the Dharma for their sake.

Employing His marvelous spiritual abilities, He produced atop the original palace of Lofty Banners a celestial palace so grand and spacious that it covered the four continents.² So delightful was it in its ordered grandeur that few things could be likened to it. Lofty in its majesty, it was encrusted with masses of jewels. Among all the celestial palaces within the world of desire, there was none to compare with it. When the celestial beings within the world of form saw this extraordinary palace, they felt as if their own palaces resembled burial mounds.

Gomyō Bodhisattva had already performed valued deeds, planted virtuous roots, brought about much happiness, and was now endowed with much merit. He ascended to the Lion's Seat,* which He had so magnificently created, and sat down upon it. While seated on this Lion's Throne, Gomyō Bodhisattva adorned it with intricate patterns of jewels beyond measure. He spread over this seat all manner of celestial robes, and perfumed that seat with various types of wondrous incense which He burned in innumerable bejeweled censers. He brought forth all manner of marvelously scented flowers which he scattered over the ground. Around his lofty Dharma Seat were many treasures of great value. Hundreds of thousands of myriad light beams shone forth, magnificently illuminating this palace of His. From top to bottom, the palace was hung with jeweled nets, and from those nets hung many golden bells, whose tinkling sound was wondrous indeed. Countless light rays of various types shone forth from this great palace. This priceless palace was hung with thousands of myriad banners of various brilliant hues. From that great palace hung all sorts of tassels. Beautiful celestial maidens by the hundreds of thousands of millions, each carrying various varieties of the Seven Precious Jewels,* sang the praises of the Bodhisattva in songs that told of His countless past merits. The guardian lords of the earth were there by the billions, standing to His left and right, protecting this palace. The Guardian Lord Indras by the millions made prostrations before this palace, and millions of celestial Brahmas made their

2. That is, the four that lie to the north, south, east, and west of Mount Sumeru.

venerative offerings. Also, millions upon millions upon millions of bodhisattvas came to protect this palace, and the Buddhas of the ten quarters were there by untold millions, keeping watch over it. Practice and training previously done over countless eons as well as acts of freeing others from their suffering were achieving their spiritual reward. Good causes and their accompanying conditions were being fulfilled and were being promoted day and night, so that immeasurable merit was making everything magnificent. All of this is too difficult to express, too difficult to put into words.

The Bodhisattva, sitting upon that great exquisite Lion's Dharma Seat, addressed this multitude, saying, "Now, O you celestial beings, as to the hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines, when bodhisattvas and monks are in a Tushita Heaven palace awaiting their next rebirth, and are about to descend through conception to be born in the human world, they must, of necessity, proclaim and voice to this celestial host these one hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines, leaving them for the remaining celestial beings to memorize. O you celestial beings, with a heart of utmost sincerity, listen closely to and absorb what I am now going to voice, which is the one hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines."



Right trust is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we keep our persevering mind from being defeated.

A pure heart is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it is not sullied by defilements.

Joy is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it is evidence of a tranquil mind.

A loving feeling of ease is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it purifies our mind.

Being proper in our bodily behavior is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for due to that, the actions of our body, speech, and mind are pure.

Being pure in our speech is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it eradicates the four evil attitudes associated with beings in the hells, asuras, hungry ghosts,* and beasts.*

Being pure in our intentions is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for this eradicates the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion.

Being mindful of Buddha is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby our perception of a Buddha is clear.

Being mindful of the Dharma is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby our seeing what is Dharma is clear.

Being mindful of the Sangha is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it helps us to be steadfast in our pursuit of the Way.

Being mindful of generosity is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for due to that we do not expect rewards.

Being mindful of the Precepts is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for due to that we fulfill all our vows.

Being mindful of the highest is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we give rise to a heart that seeks the Truth far and wide.

Being benevolent towards others is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby good roots take hold in all of life's situations.

Being compassionate is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not kill or harm any living being.

Being morally good is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we rid ourselves of all that is not morally good.

Renunciation is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we weary of the five greeds and abandon them.³

3. That is, being greedy for possessions, sexual pleasures, food and drink, fame, and sleep.

Reflecting on impermanence is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we perceive the cravings of those in the three temporal worlds of past, present, and future.

Reflecting on suffering is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we give up all cravings.

Reflecting on there being no unchanging, permanent self is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we refrain from fettering ourselves by thinking that such a false self is what we truly are.

Reflecting on the tranquil realm of nirvana is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not disrupt the intention we hold in our heart.

Repentance is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we experience tranquility within our hearts and minds.

Humility is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby the malevolence of others vanishes.

Sincerity is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for, having it, we will not deceive lofty or mundane beings.

Truth is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for, having it, we will not deceive ourselves.

Our pursuing the Dharma is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for we are humbly submitting ourselves to the pursuit of the Dharma.

The Three Refuges in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for they cleanse the three evil paths that those in hells, those who are asuras, and those who are beasts pursue.⁴

4. Traditionally, the three are beasts, those in some hell, and hungry ghosts. At the same time, asuras may resemble hungry ghosts in their constant hunger for power.

Recognizing the good intentions of others is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not ignore their good roots.

Repaying our indebtedness to others is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not cheat or disregard others.

Not deceiving ourselves is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not go around praising ourselves.

Acting for the sake of sentient beings is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we do not slander others.

Expressing the Dharma for the sake of others is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it is our acting in conformity with the Dharma.

Being aware of the limitations of time is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we do not treat lightly the words spoken for our benefit.

Weeding out self-pride is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we fulfill wise discernment.

Not giving rise to wicked intentions is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we protect ourselves and others.

Recognizing that hindrances do not actually exist is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then our mind is free of doubts.

*Trusting that we may understand is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we can fully comprehend the One Great Matter.**

Reflecting on what is impure is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we may abandon the mind that is tainted with craving.

Ceasing from quarreling is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we eradicate being offended and accusing others.

Not being foolish is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we cease killing living beings.

Taking pleasure in the meaning of the Dharma is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we are seeing what the meaning of the Dharma is.

Love of the illumination of the Dharma is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we attain the illumination of the Dharma.

Seeking to hear much of the Dharma is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for this leads to the right understanding of how all thoughts and things appear.

Right skillful means are a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for they go hand-in-hand with Right Actions.

Knowing the true name and form of all thoughts and things is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for this clears away all manner of obstacles.

Seeing how to eliminate causes is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we are able to free ourselves from suffering and delusion.

Freeing our mind free of 'friend' and 'enemy' is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for when we are in the midst of those who are hostile or friendly towards us, we treat them all with impartiality.

Helping others with subtle provisional teachings is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for we know what the suffering of others is.

Treating all elements as equal is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then it eradicates any need for having to harmonize everything.

Our sense organs are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for therewith we practice the Authentic Path.

Realizing that all things are beyond birth and death is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for then we realize what 'cessation of suffering' really means.

Our body as an abode for our awareness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it brings all thoughts and things to a tranquil state.

Our feelings as an abode for our awareness are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for they eradicate all entanglements with outer inducements.

Our mind as an abode for our awareness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we can see that our mind is like a phantom.

The Dharma as an abode for our awareness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby our wise discernment is not blurred.

The four kinds of Right Effort are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for they eradicate all evil and produce all manner of good.⁵

The four foundations of the marvelous spiritual abilities are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for they lighten both body and mind.⁶

What lies at the root of our faith is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we do not blindly follow the many words of others.

What lies at the root of our right effort is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we easily attain many forms of wise discernment.

What lies at the root of our mindfulness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we easily perform various positive deeds.

What lies at the root of our concentration is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it our heart and mind become immaculate.

What lies at the root of our astuteness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we see what all thoughts and things really are.

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5. The four kinds of right effort are to prevent faults from arising, to abandon faults when they have arisen, to produce merit, and to increase merit that has already arisen.
 6. The four foundations are concentration of the will, concentrated effort, concentration of thought, and concentrated investigation into the principle of Reality.

The power of faith is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it surpasses the powers of demons.

The power of right effort is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we will not regress or turn aside.

The power of mindfulness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we will not blindly follow others.

The power of concentration is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we rid ourselves of all idle thoughts.

The power of astuteness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we free ourselves from the two extremes of dualistic thinking.

Mindfulness, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it is like the wisdom inherent in all thoughts and things.

The ability to distinguish between the true and the false, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it illumines all thoughts and things.

Right effort, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we easily comprehend what enlightenment is.

Joyfulness, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we attain various types of concentration.

Ridding ourselves of all evil, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we are already managing what we do.

Concentration, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we recognize the equality of all thoughts and things.

Letting go of attachments, which is a characteristic of enlightenment, is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we weary of the world and can abandon all that arises.

Right view is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we can realize the Saintly Path and exhaust the stream of rebirths.

Right thought is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we eliminate all discriminatory judgments, as well as any lack of discernment.

Right speech is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we will recognize that all names, voicings, and words are simply like vibrations.

Right livelihood is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we rid ourselves of all our evil ways.

Right action is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we arrive at the Other Shore.

Right mindfulness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we do not intellectualize all thoughts and things.

Right concentration is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we can attain the meditative state that is beyond scattered thoughts.

The mind that aspires to realize the Truth is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it does not dismiss the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Reliance on the Three Treasures is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we do not hanker after lesser courses.

Right belief is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we receive the Buddha's supreme Dharma.

Progressing is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we fully perfect the practice of developing good roots.

The practice of charity is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we continue in every moment to perfect a pleasant countenance, to adorn the Buddha lands, and to teach and guide sentient beings who are stingy or greedy.

The practice of moral conduct is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we distance ourselves from the hardships of evil paths so that we may teach and guide sentient beings who are acting contrary to the Precepts.

The practice of patience is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we give up all hate, arrogance, flattery, and foolishness so that we may teach and guide sentient beings who are plagued by such feelings.

The practice of zealousness is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we acquire all manner of morally good thoughts and things so that we may teach and guide sentient beings who are lazy or inattentive.

The practice of meditation is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we may perfect all manner of contemplative practices so that we may teach and guide sentient beings who are mentally scattered.

The practice of wise discernment is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it we may eliminate the darkness of our ignorance and attachment to our opinions so that we may teach and guide sentient beings who are foolish or confused.

Provisional teachings are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of them we display ourselves in accordance with the everyday dignified behavior of a monk, so that we may teach and guide others and thereby fulfill the Dharma of all Buddhas.

The four exemplary acts are gates to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of them we are accepting of all sentient beings, and when we fully realize enlightenment, we give the Dharma as alms to all sentient beings.⁷

Spiritually teaching and guiding sentient beings is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for we neither seek self-gratification nor tire of teaching and guiding.

Acceptance of the True Teaching is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it eliminates the defiling passions of all sentient beings.

Garnering good fortune is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it profits all sentient beings.

Doing meditative practices is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it perfects the ten abilities.⁸

Being tranquil is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it perfects the meditative state of a Tathagata with which we are equipped.

Being astute is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for by means of it our wise discernment is realized and perfected.

Entering the realm of unimpeded eloquence is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for once having received the Eye of the True Teaching, one acts to fulfill It.

Entering into all manner of spiritual actions is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for once having received the Eye of a Buddha, one acts to fulfill It.

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7. The four are offering alms, using kindly speech, showing benevolence, and being in sympathy with. They are also called the Four Wisdoms. Dōgen discusses these in more detail in Discourse 45: On the Four Exemplary Acts of a Bodhisattva (*Bodaisatta Shishōbō*).
 8. The ten are: ridding oneself of attachments, deepening one's devotion, effectively teaching and guiding others, understanding what people are thinking, spiritually satisfying people, being unceasing in exerting oneself, being accepting of all true teachings while not abandoning the Mahayana, exuding one's Buddha Nature through every pore of one's being, helping turn all people toward the Dharma so that one may lead them to Its perfection, and spiritually satisfying all kinds of people with even a single phrase.

Fulfilling one's expressions of homage is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for once such a one has heard the Dharma of any and all Buddhas, that person can accept and maintain It.

Attaining unimpeded eloquence is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it creates delight in all sentient beings.

Being a willing follower is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for one is acting in obedience to the Teaching of Buddhas.

Realizing the Teaching of non-arising is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for thereby we receive affirmation of It.

Having realized the position of being beyond regression or turning aside is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for it is possessed of the Dharma of all the Buddhas of the past.

The wisdom that guides us from one spiritual position to another is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for when the crown of our head is aspersed, we will have fulfilled all manner of wise discernment.

The position of those who have had their head aspersed is a gate to what the Dharma illumines, for having been born and become monks, they have finally been able to realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment.⁹

At this time Gomyō Bodhisattva, having finished His instructions, addressed this whole celestial assembly, saying, “All you celestial beings, by all means keep in mind that these are the one hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines, which I bequeath to you celestial beings. May you accept and keep to them, holding them always in your thoughts. I pray, do not forget them or lose sight of them.”

9. The aspersing of the head marks the point when one goes from being a bodhisattva to becoming a Buddha.

These, therefore, are the one hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines. When all bodhisattvas who are bound to be reborn one final time are about to descend from the Tushita Heaven to be born in the land of Jambudvīpa,* they invariably proclaim the one hundred and eight gates to what the Dharma illumines for the sake of the celestial multitudes in the Tushita Heaven, and thereby pass on the Teaching to those celestial ones, for this is the invariable method of Buddhas.

Gomyō Bodhisattva was the name of Shakyamuni Buddha when He was in the fourth celestial heaven at the point of being reborn one more time. In the Chinese T'ien-sheng Era an imperial aide named Lee compiled the *T'ien-sheng Era Record of the Far-reaching Torch*, in which is recorded what he called 'The One Hundred and Eight Gates to What the Dharma Illumines'. Those who have explored, clarified, and understood it are few, whereas those who do not know of it are as common as rice grains, flax stalks, bamboo canes, and river reeds. I have now brought them together for the sake of you people who are beginners, as well as for you old-timers. Those of you who aspire to ascend to the Lion's Seat in order to be teachers of lofty persons and commoners should explore them in detail. Unless you have lived in the Tushita Heaven as one who is bound to only one life more, none of you is a Buddha yet, so, my practitioners, do not vainly indulge in pride. For bodhisattvas who have but one life more, there is no intermediary stage.¹⁰

10. This is the interval between death and rebirth.