

The Life of the Buddha

- A true and readable guide by a Zen Master-

Kido Inoue

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Do not look at errors of others

Do not criticize others who do not practice

Ask yourself what you have done and how

Dhammapada



A picture of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha (reportedly)

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Words of Recommendation

Eshin Nishimura

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Recently, I received a manuscript of the soon-to-be-published “The Life of the Buddha” from Kido Rōshi of Shorinkutsu. It was a volume of the full 140 pages in A4 size paper back and front, and it took me by surprise and made me wonder, “How could a busy person like Rōshi (Master) manage to finish such a big work?” Then sitting at the desk for three days, I read the manuscript thoroughly in tranquility.

Needless to say, there have been a large number of works on “The Life of the Buddha.” Once I read this, however, I saw how really unique it is, distinctly different from the others. This is a work that no one but Kido Rōshi would be able to accomplish, a quite exceptional version, and easy to understand.

Usually, “The Life of the Buddha” is mostly a historical and empirical work written by reviewing a range of the pre-sectarian Buddhism texts, where the value of such work is judged by objectivity and the novelty of research results.

On the other hand, this volume is full of expressions of the author’s devout belief – “the life of Lord Shakyamuni must have been this way.” This is the work of Zen Master who has penetrated the bone marrow (the core messages) of the Buddha.

This book, therefore, is abundant with descriptions of the author’s state of enlightenment and his personality that comes out of his zen practice. Rather than naming it “The Life of the Buddha,” it is a confession of the author’s faith. It looks as if Lord Shakyamuni has taken over the body of Rōshi.

In other words, it even reads as if the author who lives today is walking hands in hands with Shakyamuni of 2500 years ago. You will probably not find such an extraordinary work on “The Life of

the Buddha” anywhere else.

What is consistent throughout this book is Rōshi’s sincere search for the Way and his compassion with Buddhism. It is as if the author who lives in today’s world makes a temporary use of “The Life of the Buddha” in order to convey the way of his life full of zen.

To be honest, I have never read such a passionate Life of the Buddha! Above all, the poetic verse found at the end of each chapter and section eliminates the distance between the author and Lord Shakyamuni. It makes me feel as if Rōshi encounters the Buddha right here now.

According to the postscript, the author miraculously survived a serious traffic accident, and experienced wandering around mindlessly. This led him to the way of zazen and has become a source of his pursuit of the zen life. Readers who have not had such an experience need to be careful in reading this; otherwise it will hardly be possible to appreciate his real message.

At this juncture, I myself am belatedly forced to recognize the distance from him. I am deepening my thought that the sun is setting but still there is a long way to go. This is why I recommend this book to be read by people of all walks of life.

Preface

I will begin to tell you now a story that is hard and soft, profoundly intellectual and interesting, refreshing, yet at the same time inviting tears. You will be amused into laughter, the sting of a poisonous needle into your brain will kill your suffering. It is a very important story. I wonder if it is a panacea for the modern life, an antidote, or a deadly poison.

It is a human drama of a great hunting story, but when you swallow it, you get a thorn in your throat. Once you read it, you will get feverish with Bodaishin – aspiration for enlightenment, or the *bodhi* mind. If you have a headache, vomit, or get diarrhea, it would be my utmost pleasure. Ha, ha, a big laughter!

About two thousand six hundred years ago, an unsurpassed saint Lord Shakyamuni Buddha (hereafter, I will respectfully call him Lord Shakyamuni) appeared. It was not at all a coincidence, however. The truth he discovered after a great deal of laborious efforts is the *Dharma*¹ Gate of Emancipation². The sacred state he attained after such painstaking efforts is salvation to us. It manifests the essence of him as saint.

We are so grateful that the Dharma Gate of Emancipation that Lord Shakyamuni discovered was not kept to himself, but is a story about the Way, the true nature of oneself with which everyone is endowed. In other words, it suffices if one truly knows one's true self. It was a great discovery of the *dharma* – anyone can get the Dharma Gate of Emancipation if he practices hard.

Then, after he had attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation,

¹ *Dharma* in Sanskrit (skr.) is the universal truth or law. It also refers to the teaching of the Buddha.

² Gedatsu no Hōmon [解脱の法門].

over the period of forty-nine years until he entered *nirvana*³, Lord Shakyamuni gave us teachings on the Way to reach the supreme state of no suffering or confusion. Until the very end of his life.

What a splendid person, deserving our respect and veneration! It was about the Way that he had clarified toward making the entire world peaceful and easily solving the dangerous issues between countries today. Surprising, indeed.

Not to mention issues of individuals. The Dharma Gate of Emancipation is a wonderful state where one feels sorrow but is not attached to the sorrow, where one is poor but enjoys being poor, where one is rich but is not trapped by money, where one is content with oneself and does not envy others; the mountain, the river and the land are one's other self, cherry blossoms and autumn leaves are one's heart.

By the way, are you thankful for having been born as a human being? Or do you feel unhappy about it?

For sure, everyone wishes to live freely, full of confidence without anxiety. Pitiful are people who live in the midst of war or are affected by terrorism, panting for their unbearable suffering. There are countless children who are born in such a world unintentionally and are in extreme difficulties.

On the other hand, there are disrespectful people who indulge in extreme lavishness, who cleverly commit evil and monopolize wealth.

In reality, there is such a huge disparity and such an excessive gap in the level of personality that they worry us gravely. The human destiny is really unpredictable. There is a hope as well as an outcry in our life. Maybe this is true for everyone.

We must avoid a catastrophe of the entire mankind, without arguing about it. Our world should not be one where a man kills another. For human dignity, we have to strive to eradicate such misery and reduce the ugly disparity.

³ The ultimate and supreme state in which all the sufferings are extinct.

That is so straightforward! Everyone knows it. Then why is it that we are unable to do what is absolutely necessary? How can a person murder someone who is a good citizen and is totally unrelated to himself? How can a person in an important position openly deceive the whole society? An honest person cannot do it. Human beings are so strange.

The point is that we do not know the true cause, and, therefore, we do not know how to solve it. That is why we are unable to develop fundamental countermeasures.

Many geniuses have studied and contemplated on this problem, but the world is getting ever more dangerous. This suggests that mere thought or the latest science and technology cannot solve it. If this is a problem that could be solved by our efforts, the world should have become peaceful long time ago. The fact that it has not means that external conditions do not work for a solution. This is because our focus has been fundamentally off the mark.

The problem of today's world is the problem of 'mind.' All the problems originate from the 'mind' of individuals. The 'mind' is where everything begins.

Then, what is the 'mind'? What is the true nature of the 'mind'? This is where things get somewhat complicated, and interesting.

You have lost your wallet while traveling. You remain peaceful when you do not realize that you have lost it, because you are not aware of it. Once you realize that you have lost it, however, a problem arises. This is the point. To be aware of 'knowing' it is very important, but who is it who 'knows' it? When you clarify this point, your 'mind' becomes clear and you no longer get confused by your 'mind.'

You are free from a problem while you 'know' it and 'remember' it. Therefore, your 'mind' is peaceful. Such a mind is the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. You 'just' know it; 'just' remember it and respond to it instantly. So there is nothing to worry about it. This is the state of having no problem.

Once you reach this point, you stay peaceful with everything. You do not have an unnecessary thought, so you are totally free and are ready to accept anything. You will simply be full of kindness. Because there is no 'mind' which is a source of malice or false, you naturally believe other and help others, just as one should do. This is true honesty and sincerity.

That is to say, when you obtain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, you are in heaven right here. Everyone should wish to be able to live in such a serene state.

This is where we need to turn to the teachings of Lord Shakyamuni. Therefore, it is slightly different from simply describing the life of the Buddha.

I will illustrate what it was like after Siddhartha Gautama, who was annoyed and suffered greatly, became Shakyamuni Buddha. It is a marvelous world.

He was a matchless genius with unsurpassed knowledge. He was a great philosopher, an outstanding educator, an excellent psychiatrist, and an exceptional clinician. He was a prince, and obviously had the most respected and noble character. He was full of unbeatable will and conviction. Moreover, he was merciful and more active than anybody. He was a saint, calm as ice, feverish as fire, and sharp as a knife. He was not an ordinary person our imagination can understand.

His geographical coverage was also incomparable. The distance between the Bamboo Grove Monastery and the Jetavana Monastery was about 700 kilometers stretching from north to south, approximately between Tokyo and Okayama. During the 49 years, he travelled this distance at least 6 times. There was the east-bound route and the west-bound rout. Along with a host of highly intelligent disciples, he travelled from one city to another, one village to another and gave *dharma* teachings.

He had direct conversations with kings, ministers, other distinguished people, the rich, the Brahman, merchants,

ordinary people, and prostitutes. He stayed at the same place at least for ten days and sometimes for several months, to illuminate and invigorate the area, asking for alms, preaching, and answering questions.

Lord Shakyamuni had the most reliable knowledge and information because he gained them through direct encounters and experiences. Since his disciples had acquired yet other information, the *sangha*⁴ of Lord Shakyamuni was a sophisticated think-tank, most brilliant in the world at that time. Even if the entire world gained great wisdom, it could not surpass the wisdom of his *sangha*. We should not forget, however, that only by practicing did he become Lord Shakyamuni; prior to that he was an ordinary person, as anxious as anyone.

The story in this book is about how the prince who experienced great sufferings practiced diligently, how he attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, and how he lived thereafter. Thanks to the brilliant virtue of Lord Shakyamuni, wonderful disciples followed him one after another, and they were supported and protected by great people. A thrilling beauty also appears in the story.

What is important is the fact that the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, the core of Lord Shakyamuni's teaching, was attained by his disciples and has been successively handed down. One thousand years later, it was brought into China. It is fortunate that the *dharma* was finally introduced to Japan by great Buddhism practitioners. What is more, respected masters and patriarchs appeared one after another, and their efforts made it possible that the virtuous capacity of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation penetrated the national character and people's mindset, thus forming the feature of today's Japanese people who have rich self-efficacy in mind. We should never underestimate how deeply indebted we are.

⁴ The Buddhist monastic order including monks (*bhikkhus*), nuns (*bikkhunis*) and laypeople.

It is true that two thousand six hundred years ago Lord Shakyamuni entered *nirvana* and was cremated into ashes by his followers in tears. However, the true value of Lord Shakyamuni lies in his lively presence “now.” By following the path that Lord Shakyamuni mercifully left with us, we can surely eliminate the cause of anxieties.

As you know, total catastrophe is about to fall on the world because of our selfish greed. If the mind of every person is sound, everyone will be saved and peace will prevail naturally. No doubt everyone wishes for a valuable life. And if everyone wishes so, it should come true by practicing according to instructions of respected predecessors.

We all die in the end, equally leaving a fistful of ashes. It is a horrifyingly short life, but because it is short, we all wish to live happily together. We should make best use of the true teachings for education, culture, politics, economy and medical treatment. A valuable life is made possible by fulfilling such a commitment.

We should not let this great mercy and great compassion of Lord Shakyamuni go extinct for the sake of the peace of future generations.

It would be my great pleasure if you understand this point and keep posing a question to your “mind.” We have to realize a peaceful world as soon as possible. Our objective is grand. I would appreciate it if you could take in Lord Shakyamuni’s valuable methods of clarifying the true nature of human beings and ways of liberation, with Bodaishin and tears of gratitude.

Each person is abundantly endowed with it (the *dharma*), but it does not manifest without practice, and it cannot be gained without attaining enlightenment.

*Bendowa*⁵

⁵ By Dōgen Zenji [道元禪師](1200-1253) in1231. Master Dōgen founded the Sōtō School of Zen in Japan.

**The truth is not found in words I utter
Therefore, the brush does not leave any trace**

Master Dōgen

**The First Stage:
Previous Lives of Lord Shakyamuni**

Introduction

The life of the Buddha, Lord Shakyamuni, had several decisive turning points. It will become clear by describing them as the following five stages:

The first stage: the stage of previous lives – prior to his birth as Siddhartha Gautama

The second stage: the stage of suffering – from his birth until he exits the palace

The third stage: the stage of practice – until he attains enlightenment

The fourth stage: the stage of promulgating the *dharma* – from the first sermon until *nirvana*

The fifth stage: the stage of dissemination of the *dharma* – the Buddha since then; the spread of Buddhism from India into China and Japan

By understanding the characteristics of these five stages, you will realize that Lord Shakyamuni did not appear in this world all of a sudden. You will appreciate his invaluable life and feel grateful. The stages can also be explained by the Eight Phases of Shakyamuni: the descent from *Tusita* (heaven), entering his mother's womb, taking birth, renunciation, defeating demons, attainment of Buddhahood, teaching the *dharma*, and entering *nirvana*. Both are essentially same, and I take the first option because it is simpler and easier to understand.

Searching for the new world

It was long before Lord Shakyamuni was born. His ancestors migrated from far away to the foot of the Himalayas. To say “searching for the New World” sounds full of hope, but there was a sad story behind it.

There was a country in the upper River Ganges (the Ganga). It was called “the descendants of King Okkaka” or “a Child of Manu” – a Hindu god and the original ancestor of the human race, “the descendants of Adicca (the sun)” or Ikshvaku, and was renowned for being a virtuous country.

At one time, there were four righteous princes. However, a problem of succession occurred when one mistress gave birth to a spiteful prince. The calculating mistress, for her pity on the prince, planned to obtain the king’s goodwill and successfully took him in. The situation got worse. Men seem to be susceptible to women. In the end, the king had to expel the other four princes because of the mistress’s plot. However, this unreasonable incident led to the creation of the Shakya state. It is ironic.

The fifteenth volume of the Chinese canon, “The Five Categories of *Vinaya* (rules),” describes it as follows:

There was a king. His name was Okkaka and he had four princes. They had far-reaching wisdom and respected virtues. The first queen had a prince. Because of her mean tricks, the four princes were publicly despised---. The king called upon them and gave an order to leave, and they dressed up solemnly.

Emotions of a woman are terrifying. Affection can become brutal. The four princes had great character. They did not make any fuss, gracefully followed the king’s order, and left the palace with dignity.

A thousand grasses weep with dew
A peaceful pine tree sings in the breeze

The volume continues:

Then, the mother of the four princes and their sisters also wished to leave the palace. In addition, many warriors and craftsmen, Brahmins and wealthy men, pious laymen and other people also wished to follow them. --- when they reached the north of snowy peaks, they found a spacious and flat land, pure in all directions, rich with fruits, grains and cattle. They discussed and decided that the area was most suitable to settle down. No one objected, and they decided to stay there and build a palace and a village. --- and finally they made a great country. Several years later, the king was concerned about his four princes and asked his servant:

“Where are my four sons?”

He replied:

“To the north of the snowy peaks, near the forest of Kapila, they built a palace and developed a capital city. People work hard, the land is fertile, and the fields are productive. They do not have any problems with food or clothing.”

The king listened to the story, deeply grieved and admitted they were capable, and named them as Shakya, “capable people.”

This description explains the beginning of the Shakya state. As you can see, together with four princes, many warriors and civil servants, intellectuals and skilled people also followed them and reached the foot of the Himalayas where the land was fertile and there they began to build a country.

The father king who expelled them became anxious about them and sent inspectors to report on their situations. He was relieved to know that they were doing brilliantly. The capital city was Kapilavastu, where the palace was built and Prince Siddhartha was raised.

In latitude, it is about the same as the Okinawa and Amami islands. It was hilly there, not too hot, not too cold, endowed with

a favorable natural environment.

The world's first democratic government

It is said that the Shakya state was composed of five hundred families, and each developed its own community, collectively forming a state of noble clans. To our surprise, representatives from each community gathered and ran the state government. There was even a public hall for discussion and consultation. Such a system was developed as soon as the Shakya state was built. This indicates that the clans were deeply ethical and pious, egalitarian, sharing one origin, and respecting freedom and harmony. They all had high civic character.

The democratic republic in the West began in Thingvellir, Iceland. It was in 930 A.D. The case of the Shakya state dates back one thousand six hundred years earlier. This is marvelous from the viewpoint of political thought.

Shakyamuni valued human dignity the most and greatly praised the republic system. However, the democratic republic initiated by the Shakya state disappeared when it was conquered by the neighboring kingdom, Kosala. This tells us of the importance of defending the nation.

The rise and fall of a nation depend on its nation's power and policies, but it is difficult to maintain ideals when the nation faces a strong military pressure from outside. When defeated, people, culture, and the history of the nation are all doomed to be trampled.

Democracy was invented by human beings and is respected as the best social system. To be democratic, the government must guarantee the freedom, equality and rights of the people, and, in turn, the people must fulfill their responsibilities and duties. We live and fulfill our capabilities, maximizing freedom and rights.

Because of freedom, one can do anything as long as one observes rules. Self-responsibility is a basic precondition. This results in accepting the disparity in society.

Under democracy, we have to accept that the stronger will win, when it is protected by the law. Such a phenomenon, however, will bring about distortion, and may create danger.

We respect human rights, but the best system we have – democracy– is not perfect. What should we do with this dangerous distortion? What will you do? Eventually, it will cause a major problem. Do you not notice that something is missing in democracy?

Is there a life before birth or not?

Now I will talk about the life of Lord Shakyamuni before his birth. I know this is a problematic statement. It is difficult for modern people to accept that there is life before birth. We live at a time when materialism, empiricism, and rationalism make it impossible to believe anything that we cannot visualize or quantify, or anything that is not tangible, because it cannot be explained scientifically. This is today's mainstream thought. I can understand.

This is a correct way of thinking when we are trying to achieve a clear objective. To produce a solid result, a reliable method is needed, and ambiguity is rejected. This is the beauty of modern advanced science and technology.

However, if we ignore matters that we cannot comprehend or visualize, we will stop making progress or improvement. Even if we do not believe them, there are more things in reality that we do not understand or see. If we do not have an aspiration to improve, we will stagnate.

Research, experiments and development that open up our

future continuously work in this way. It is daunting work, because there are so many things we do not understand about the past, the present and the future. In the middle of uncertainty, we make a lot of mistakes and failures. This is why we have to repeat experiments and clarify facts. These efforts are important.

We can recover from mistakes when we find out what went wrong. It is too late after we have died and gone to hell. We have to make efforts “now.” Every moment is “now.”

Let us stop for a moment and think about “timing, *cause and condition*”⁶ – this is difficult to understand. We need parents to be born. Parents need their parents. Ultimately, this will trace us back to microbes as ancestors of all living beings. The microbes further need long life on earth. And the earth was born from the universe.

Therefore, the universe as it is today is the result of constant changes and transformations. For a transformation to happen, there have to be two absolute conditions. One is “*impermanence* (Mujō).” Another is “*selflessness* (Muga),” namely, nothing is fixed or stable. The universe, the earth and life appeared because of these two principles, the truth. These principles are the mother of everything. It is called “the *dharma* of arising from *cause and condition*” or “a life arises by *cause and conditions*,” and we simply call it Engi⁷ in Japanese. Due to *conditions*, something freely changes, emerges and deceases. Therefore, we also call it Kū,⁸ *emptiness*. Because the *dharma* was not created by human beings, it is also called “*cause and conditions* are, human beings are not.”

The world as we have it today is, thus, the result of

⁶ *Cause* (*hetu* in Sanskrit, In [因] in Japanese) is a direct cause, and *condition* (*pratyaya*, [縁]) is an indirect cause for something to arise or happen. For instance, a seed (*cause*) will not sprout without water, soils and sunshine (*conditions*). An English word in italics is a Buddhist term.

⁷ Engi [縁起], a Japanese, means to arise by *conditions*.

⁸ Kū [空] in Japanese, *sunyata* in Sanskrit. *Emptiness* or *empty* in this sense is shown in italics.

unmeasurable *conditions*. *Conditions* exist for human beings, matter (substances), and time. Since this is about limitless time and space, it cannot be understood by our intellect. Incomprehensible “time, *cause and conditions*” have long existed with regard to human beings and matter. They will continue to do so.

This means that we definitely had lives before birth, which is beyond our comprehension. Whether it sounds mythical or not, scientific or not, the dramas of this world derive from this fact. Everything is due to the past *cause and conditions*. We cannot ignore or deny the incomprehensible fact.

What is interesting is that the past life was undoubtedly “now” at that time.

“Now” has no beginning or end.

“Now” is the root and the beginning of everything and “now” is complete in “now.”

The reality of “now” always has its result and that is the future and a future life. Lord Shakyamuni explained this by referring it as “three worlds,” namely, the past, now and the future; or the past life, the present life, and the future life. Whether you believe it or not, whether it is empirically proven or not, there are only a *cause and effect* (Inga).⁹ We can believe it because Inga is true. This is the meaning of “the *dharma* of arising from *cause and conditions*.”

Mythical “now”

Speaking of being mythical, there is only “now” forever. Therefore, if you truly attain “now,” you will attain the three worlds. Is it not dramatic? Is it not wonderful? Because of this, you can be resolved that “this is it” once you become one with

⁹ Inga [因果] in Japanese, or *hetu-phala* (Sanskrit).

“now.” This is a great story. If you do not attain it, your mind is confused, you are attached to something and you are in conflict with others. When you understand that it is a dream, you do not have to worry any more. That is the state of *nirvana*.

Therefore, dreams of an awakened person are all awakened. Awakening of a dreaming person is always a dream and confusion. Even if an action of the awakened person seems to be attached to something, it is all the functioning of Jihi – *mercy* and *compassion*, and is totally different from what it seems. An eye dimmed with reason cannot see this.

There is one more important truth I have to mention here. Please consider this carefully. However long the history is, it is a transformation of “now.” By putting the phenomena of now, now, and now in a row and viewing them objectively, they become the past, the present and the future, which is the transition of time that we call history. There was it at that time.

The “now” at that time does not exist anymore. Although it does not exist anymore, we are worried about it and attached to it, and argue that it is correct or wrong. That is why conflict occurs and fighting continues until now. How foolish it is! If you truly attain “now,” it cannot happen.

Now exists

I peacefully and quietly enjoy “now”
that does not have “now”

Now has no time of now

When I say “ow,”
the time of “n” is gone

Stories about past life are such. To clarify this truth, Lord Shakyamuni became a human prince, appeared in this world, abandoned his wife and a child, became a practitioner, and

opened the Dharma Gate of Emancipation after huge efforts and solved the problem. This is the Buddha *dharma*. It is utterly different from something that smells like incense.

Snow Mountain Boy and Demon Rasetsu

The drama of the past life of Lord Shakyamuni begins here.

Lord Shakyamuni had traveled this world eight thousand times. This means that he had been born and had died in this world time after time and had gone through innumerable experiences and practices.

When he was Sessen-dōji (Snow Mountain Boy) and was practicing in the Himalayas, he happened to encounter the demon Rasetsu. The demon lived on human and animal meat. How horrible! However, he knew the truth well.

Sessen-dōji learned from Rasetsu two phrases: “Shogyō-mujō (All beings are *impermanent*),” “Ze-shoumeppō (This is the *dharma* of births and deaths).” Upon listening to this, the scales dropped from his eyes, and he was delighted as if his thirsty was cured by drinking water. He was thrilled for joy. Please remember the phrases together with the phrases that follow, as they are so important.

The boy, out of joy and peace asked Rasetsu, “Please teach me the phrases that follow.” Rasetsu replied: “I am so hungry and cannot teach you.” Sessen-dōji then said: “I am destined to die sometime, and I would be satisfied if I die with peace and joy. I will donate my body to you, so please teach me.” Rasetsu responded grudgingly and taught: “Shoumetsu-metsui (Births and deaths are already extinguished),” “Jakumetsu-iraku (The extinction brings peace).” Upon listening to them, the boy got so delighted, inscribed these important truths on the rock nearby, and donated his body to Rasetsu.

This is a famous verse called “the verse of Shogyō-mujō,” “the verse of Sessen,” or “the verse of donating a body for a sermon.” How serious he was to donate his own body for the sake of the great truth!

Whether this is true or not is not a matter of concern. We only need to take it as a source of energy for practice by fully appreciating the past life of Lord Shakyamuni. This is the tip of stories about his past life. Is it not thrilling? Tears come out for gratitude.

The meaning of the verse

“Shogyō-mujō (All beings are *impermanent*).” This is self-explanatory, but I will add some notes on it. In reality, we can take action in the way that we like, thanks to the *impermanence*. *Impermanence* means “now.” If we take this to mean extinguishing “now,” it may sound transient. But “now” exists for the future. The option is up to you, so all you have to do is to do the best “now.” Such an interpretation is developmental and delights us.

“Now” is not for settling a bill of the past, “now” is for creating the future. We cannot go back to the past, but the future will certainly come. We can move, develop or change because of *impermanence*. Being impermanent is a source of everything. It is the truth.

“Ze-shoumeppō (This is the *dharma* of births and deaths).” To stand up. To walk. To eat. You can do all these, thanks to “births and deaths.” Why? It is because the next “now” will not be born unless the present “now” dies. Otherwise, there will be no action or progress. “Now” is an active state of “Shogyō-mujō” and “Ze-shoumeppō.”

Therefore, “now” is “now” but it is not “now.” “Birth and death”

are functions that work freely. If everything stops for a while, you do not move, eyes cannot see, and ears cannot hear. This is because the past stays and overlaps with the present and this causes confusion. Then, the earth cannot exist, and no life exists. This is the absolute truth that no one can doubt.

“Shoumetsu-metsui (Births and deaths are already extinguished).” When you are studying hard, you are not conscious that you are studying. You are just studying. Some hours will pass by in a second. You must have experienced it at least a couple of times. Birth and death are actions. Your whole life is dedicated to studying at that time and you are fresh and lively. When you are totally dedicated to “now,” the moment is perfect and there is no birth or death. That is “already gone,” or already complete. That is the state of our truth. When you truly attain it, that is the moment of “the Dharma Gate of Emancipation,” namely, “enlightenment.”

“Jakumetsu-iraku (The extinction brings peace).” When you are totally dedicated to studying, studying is everything and there is no confusion, attachment or suffering. This is “Jakumetsu-iraku.” That is, the true “now” is a great peace, a great relief. It is the world free from confusion and attachment. Therefore, it is *nirvana*, peace in mind.

Because there is no better peace in mind, it is the supreme way. This is the heart of the Buddha’s teaching, the *dharma*. We understand this truth only when we experience it and attain it. However, bad habits of mind, namely the “self” interferes, prevents us from understanding this truth, causing shortsighted actions, conflict, and even war and terrorism. We practice zazen to remove these bad habits of mind.

The Second Stage: Suffering

A dream of a white elephant

The father of Siddhartha Gautama was King Suddhodana, Jobonno in Chinese, the king of white rice. It was named after the fact that the Shakyas already cultivated rice, and valued white rice. The mother was Mahamaya (Great Maya). In ancient India, Maya meant “the mysterious spiritual power of god.” The king had expected to have a child for a long time. To have a successor was his grand wish. Maya was pious and prayed for having a child every day.

One day, she had a dream of a white elephant. While she was intimately talking with the elephant, it approached her and entered her womb as if it was bowing. Soon after that, she became pregnant. Interestingly, there are numerous cases like this of having a strange dream when the mother of a great person gets pregnant. The case of the mother of Zen Master Keizan¹⁰ was one of them.

Birth of the Prince

Finally, the long awaited child was born. Queen Maya traveled to a neighboring country Koliya to deliver at her home there. It was a trip of a fairly long distance. The queen was feeling well on the carriage, full of joy. The band travelled about twenty kilometers.

When they reached Lumbini, one of eight sacred places of Buddhism, she suddenly began labor, and the whole band was upset. The captain of the band was instructed to set up a camp immediately, and the chief of female group made arrangements for delivery. With the help of an experienced midwife and efficient female servants, the delivery went smoothly. It was the birth of a

¹⁰ Keizan-Jokin [瑩山紹瑾], a Japanese zen master (1268-1325).

healthy prince.

It is said that soon after the birth, the prince walked seven steps, and declared, “Above heaven and below heaven, I am the only holy one,” his right hand pointing to heaven, his left hand pointing to the earth. It is also said that the prince was born from the underarm. It seems such legendary anecdotes are common with great persons. What is important is the fact that Lord Shakyamuni was surely born in this world after long lives of the past. Being born from the underarm, or walking seven steps upon being born, and uttering great words before learning to speak, if these were true, he could not be a human being.

It is common that the story of a great man is somewhat decorated and animated, often described as super human. It is, however, untrue to the person to exaggerate too much. There is a popular story about Yoshitsune,¹¹ a famous samurai warrior in Japan, who escaped to Hokkaido, a northern island of Japan, and migrated to Mongolia, subsequently became Genghis Khan – a small child will laugh at such a story. It is better to leave it as an anecdote without arguing about its truth or falsehood.

Joy and sorrow

It was the eighth of April, about two thousand six hundred years ago that the Prince, who later became the Gautama Buddha was born in the Shakya state. It was a day of supreme fortune for mankind, the most sacred day. How fortunate we are!

In gasshō I pray.

The king was also highly delighted to know of the birth of the prince. It was a long expected prince, and his name was already given. His name in early childhood was Siddhartha. It means one

¹¹ Minamoto no Yoshitsune [源義経], 1159-1189.

who has attained his goal, fully attained his virtues. What an appropriate name!

When Queen Maya returned to the palace, she was relieved, but it was only for a while. Alas! Her afterbirth was not well, became worse day by day, and finally one week after giving birth, she passed away. The most delightful event coincided with the saddest event. Silence for sorrow continued for the *impermanence* of life. What a destiny of unavoidable birth and death! It happens to everyone.

Cherry blossoms fall
Blossoms on the tree will eventually fall
Never keep on your mind the blossoms on the tree

Cherry blossoms fall
Blossoms on the tree will eventually fall
Who knows a storm may come during the night?

It was fortunate that the late Queen's sister, Mahapajapati took care of the Prince and he was raised with her love. The life of Lord Shakyamuni began there. Siddhartha who had such a destiny would soon encounter unusual sufferings. The growth of the Prince began with suffering. Who knows this destiny?!

The reality of destiny

I have something to say about the reality of destiny. Let's assume there are three siblings. Why do they have different faces and characters? Why will a genius be born from ordinary parents? Why will a son kill his parents?

When the society loses its order, such a child will appear and shout at his parents, "Why did you give birth to a nasty guy like

me?” Parents will reply, “We did not choose you. We wanted a smarter, gentler son who would earn a lot of money.” It is a principle that nobody knows the reality of destiny. An ordinary person argues and complains although destiny is unknown. What is truly unknown should be taken as nonexistent.

According to “the *dharma* of arising from *cause and conditions*,” a child himself was patiently waiting and searching for parents who are suitable for him. Upon finding them, the child is born in this world as a human being, according to *conditions* of his parents. That is, the child has been searching for his parents, and the parents have been waiting for the child. Even if siblings are born from the same parents, it is natural that they look different, because their past lives are different. They have similarities because they have chosen the same parents.

When a genius is born from ordinary parents, this is glorious. No one will complain. However, why a child can kill parents, and a parent can kill a child? A person will not commit such a terrible action if he has love, trust, a sound imagination, the will to act truthfully, with patience and a sense of responsibility. If these virtues are absent, one becomes inhumane, and will commit a killing when things go out of his control.

It is too late to wonder why it has gone wrong after something has happened. Because of “the *dharma* of arising from *cause and conditions*,” one has *karma* of one’s past lives. Parents have to take care not to allow such a misery to happen. A child has to practice hard to live well and nurture the virtues. After all, one is fortunate enough to be born as a human being. If we do not practice hard, we are just like an animal.

Destiny has no reality! There are only “the *dharma* of arising from *cause and conditions*” and *conditions*. Your urination is yours. You cannot eat with another person’s mouth. Wherever you are, you are totally you. Whatever you do, that is you. There is no point of complaining or grumbling. When you truly

understand this, you are “enlightened.”

Great sufferings

Prince Siddhartha was born to be sharp and extraordinarily intelligent. He frequently pondered deeply in his early childhood, seriously considered matters rather than enjoying them. The questions he had were fundamentally unusual. For instance, instead of thinking what is one plus one, he wondered why one plus one equals two; why the sun always rises from the east and sets in the west, why the moon waxes and wanes.

We are alive, because we have life. Stronger and bigger creatures live on the smaller and weaker in order to live. Why do they act in such an ugly manner? Why do we have to be cruel to live? Who am I who think and worry about matters like these?

Philosophical questions of the Prince deepened day by day. In time he explored the reason and the origin of all existence. Naturally, the questions led him to metaphysics and gradually became more serious. They annoyed him deeply causing him great suffering.

We cannot find such a story about Prince Siddhartha anywhere. But even I used to think in this way. That genius prince must have considered hundreds of times, no, thousands of times more. I am sure you will agree.

The Prince who was honest and diligent about everything knew the duties of his position to lead the state, studied and worked hard. He was especially outstanding in scholarly fields. This annoyed distinguished scholars in the state, because they were not able to answer those sophisticated questions the Prince posed. They finally reported to the king and said, “We are much ashamed but we have no more to teach Prince and we are unable to answer the Prince’s questions.”

Soon his questions brought to him the feelings of *impermanence*, sorrow and pressure. The life in the palace had no meaning any more. Those were feelings different from being desperate. His great problems had become more important and heavier than the state or his family. What could he do? The life in front of him had no meaning to him. Nobody could understand the suffering in his mind.

The Prince was destined to suffer so much from early youth, precisely because he was a great person who were born to save mankind. Prince Siddhartha appeared in this world in order to solve the great and difficult problems that had been left unresolved, invited by Queen Maya's dream of the white elephant. It is undeniable that the Prince was born to become the Gautama Buddha. For the moment, however, he was Prince, a layperson who greatly suffered.

Even if somebody should have inquired of the Prince: "What would you do? You are the prince, the king to be; you have responsibilities to make people in the state happy. Would you hang yourself? Would you go mad?" These questions would not have appealed to the Prince who was destined to solve the Great problems of the mind.

It was because of these great sufferings Prince had that later he became Shakyamuni Buddha in order to show us the way to save the mankind fundamentally. Who could have understood his sufferings?!

Gasshō, I pray.

Going out of Four Gates

From one day, the Prince often went out of the palace. It was not out of curiosity. Rather, the questions he had urged him to do so. He was not interested in ordinary people but in elderly, sick, dead people and pious religious practitioners. Soon he

appreciated what the life of people was, and then, a decisive feeling of *impermanence* and the Great questions began to swirl around in his mind.

When in the end he saw the serene lifestyle of the practitioners, he was triggered to ponder a lot in his mind. The feeling of *impermanence* turned into a wish to renounce the world and become a monk, and everything else appeared to be meaningless.

How shocking it was to have such a feeling! No one but the Prince knew it. In time, his insight into Suffering, the first Noble Truth, reached the peak and lead him to the desire and endeavor for a way of living the truth. The initial Bodaishin, the resolve to attain supreme enlightenment arose. "I must do it at any cost. For that I shall give up my life!"

This is the true resolve for Bodaishin. My tears come out for his worries. Oh, how painful! How precious!

One sutra depicts the mind of Prince as follow:

"I was leading such a wealthy life. --- but the following feeling occurred to me. I worry at the sight of an elderly person – I cannot help getting old myself... And I cannot help getting sick. But seeing a sick person, I ponder, get concerned and hate to be sick... This is not appropriate for me... Considered in this way, the meaning of living totally disappeared."

This is what the inside of the Prince's mind was like. His suffering stings my heart.

More suffering

The king was most worried. It was a grave issue for the state. He consulted his reliable servants and decided to recommend that the Prince get married. The Prince was sixteen or seventeen

years old, a right age for the marriage. All of them agreed. They could not think of any better solution. Soon, Yasodhara, the most beautiful and talented young woman in the state, was selected as a princess and a state banquet was held.

Prince Siddhartha was certainly a young male. When he was nineteen, he was celebrated with a baby boy. The joy of the king was exceptional, for his concern was the biggest. Such a wise and gentle prince should cherish the baby boy; the birth of the baby should blow out all his daily worries of adolescence. Everyone so believed.

The king summoned one of his servants, gave him a sheet of paper with the name of the baby, Rahula, and told him to convey his joy to the Prince. The servant naturally expected that that the Prince would be delighted, and conveyed the king's joy and the baby's name. On the contrary, the Prince's response was not joy, but anxiety and sorrow. He glanced at heaven and whispered, "My son, Rahula, is born. Another source of confinement has arisen."

Upon hearing these words, the servant was frozen. Female servants also stood still. What on earth was his idea! For this wise and knowledgeable Prince! Indeed, the reaction of the servants was understandable. The boy was a future king. These could not be words of the Prince when his son was born. For the Prince, love for his son was confinement, the feeling of cherishing was an attachment, and everyone's expectations were a source of further suffering. It was impossible for anyone else to understand such a mind of the Prince.

What is the matter, Prince? You have just become a father. Your wife and son are there in good health. You will be a king in time. Despite all this..., people thought.

The Prince knew it all. But then, what is this indescribable torment of suffering? How can I escape from sufferings? No, I should only solve them. But how?

Day after day, Prince kept asking himself in anguish. The birth of Rahula finally became the decisive reason the Prince left the palace.

The resolution of the Prince

The Great sufferings and the Great questions were essential conditions for the Prince to become Shakyamuni Buddha. Finally, his aspirations for the truth reached a peak. A dragon does not live in shallow water. Time waits for no one. What is the point of life living in total darkness?

Nothing was more important for him than solving the Great questions with all his life. Everything else had no meaning. He was resolved that there was no other way but to renounce the world and pursue his practice, abandoning his father, the state, the palace, honor and assets. How serious he was! What a fierce determination! Who can understand his precious Bodaishin?! It was the very beginning of the endless challenges to the way to the Buddha.

Gasshō. I pray with respect.

**The Third Stage:
Practice – until Enlightenment**

King, Yasodhara, Rahula, forgive me!

Finally, the time had come for the Prince to leave the palace. With his back facing the morning moon, he silently straddled his favorite horse, Kanthaka. The Prince was determined. He had no regrets. And his determination was not pathetic. *If I learn the way in the morning, I shall be happy to die in the evening.*¹²

Listening to the *dharma*
Is worth going through the flame
Rain, wind or snow would not stop me

He traveled for a while. The state, the palace and the family had already disappeared from his mind just like the morning dew. He got off his horse and let Kanthaka go home. A clever Kanthaka stooped his head, and went back the same way, looking back at his master. I am certain that Kanthaka, such a splendid horse, read the mind of the Prince. The crescent moon sheds light on the whole world and leaves no shade. The figure of Kanthaka disappeared. Farewell, the Prince whispered in his mind!

Practice of mendicancy

“I must solve the Great questions by all means.” He was heading to Rajagrha in the kingdom of Magadha, because the Prince had heard that there were many renowned hermits and practitioners. He traded all his gorgeous cloths with *bhikkhus*,¹³ fishermen and travelers who he met along the way. Thus, at last he became a monk with a light load and a light mind.

He devoted himself to the practice of mendicancy, with a clear

¹² From The Analects of Confucius.

¹³ A *bhikkhu* is a monk, and a *bhikkhuni* is a nun in Buddhism.

and refreshed feeling, holding a bowl, and headed to his destination. It was about six hundred kilometers from the Shakya state.

On his way of traveling south, he entered Vaishali, the capital city of the Vajji kingdom. Groves were conveniently located where spiritual practitioners were meditating under the trees. The Prince talked with them and held discussions about the Way. Any practitioner with aspirations should do so. However, none of them were as good as him. Their initial resolve for Bodaishin was nothing comparable to his.

It seems he liked this city much – it was a meaningful place to him for the rest of his life.

An unexpected encounter

Finally, the Prince reached Magadha. As usual, he walked around asking for alms day after day. The figure of his practicing mendicancy was full of serene translucency such as people had never seen. There was no unnecessary movement to each step. This manner guided him to encounter a person with whom the Prince developed a lifetime acquaintance, King Bimbisara of the great Magadha kingdom.

He was a great king. He supported the Prince after he attained enlightenment and became Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and had a great influence on him. The eyes of the king, sharp as those of a hawk, recognized one *bhikkhu* who had been Prince Siddhartha only a while ago. At a glance, the king sensed that he was not an ordinary monk. The encounter laid the *conditions* for brilliant lives for both of them.

King Bimbisara spotted the place where the monk resided, the cave at the foot of Mt. Pandava on the outskirts of the palace. So the king went to see the monk for himself and requested the

monk to come stay with him in Magadha. He was not an ordinary king anyway. Upon listening to his past status as a prince and his profound resolve to solve the problems of mankind, the king was astonished and deeply moved. The king appreciated the determined aspirations of the Prince, asked the Prince to preach to save him once attaining emancipation, and returned back to the palace.

The king made such a pure decision, and had such insight, and was quick to give up. Too much haste will result in vain. The king knew it well. Indeed, he was a well-respected king.

Meditation and hermits

For a while, Prince Siddhartha practiced meditation in the cave alone, having only one objective: to solve the mind that was troubled by the Four Sufferings and the Eight Sufferings¹⁴. However hard he practiced meditation, thoughts and feelings came up fiercely without stopping for even a second. When he tried to keep his body calm, his thoughts and feelings got even stronger. “This would not work.” He decided to practice under the guidance of a good teacher and visited Hermit Alara Kalama who was most famous at that time.

The methods of practice by Brahmins in those days were broadly divided into *dhyana* and the ascetic practice. *Dhyana* was practiced by those who were prepared for death and sought peace of mind by meditating in a quiet forest or grove. It is said that many types of meditation today belong to this stream.

The ascetic practice appeared to put oneself in an extreme environment, such as under the blazing sun, to live in poverty, to

¹⁴ The Four Sufferings (*dukkhas*) are birth, aging, sickness and death. In addition to the Four Sufferings, the Eight Sufferings include departing from whom you love, encountering one you hate, not getting what you want, and constantly suffering from the five aggregates (*skandas*).

exhaust vitality and to overcome or disperse the pain and the horror of death.

Hermit Alara Kalama was different from both. He made it his ideal not to have attachment to anything and call it *dhyana*. The teaching of the hermit sounded logical. Prince Siddhartha practiced zazen hard according to his instruction. The Prince attained some calmness of mind, but it did not help him achieve his objective. So he bid farewell and sought the advice of the other hermit, Uddaka Ramaputta.

According to Hermit Uddaka, the attachment is certainly an act of mind, but activities of the mind are neither existent nor non-existent. He taught that such a state of mind is the absolute *dhyana*. Though it was not easily understandable, the Prince followed his teaching with fresh determination. Although he practiced hard day after day, he could not reach such *dhyana* and was not freed from illusions and unwanted feelings.

The teachings of both hermits did not go beyond the boundary of thoughts and feelings. Therefore, not even the method of solid practice had been established. In short, they were merely a zazen of philosophy to think deeply in a sitting posture.

Seeing that further practice under Hermit Uddaka was of no use, the Prince left. Already he had no other teachers to turn to. The only thing he could do was to try all possible methods that seemed useful. This determination led him to the ascetic practices.

Hard ascetic days

He took on the fierce challenge of practicing ascetics at what people called “the ascetics grove.” There, determined practitioners gathered and practiced hard, risking their lives. Their training was the most ferocious in Magadha, located near

the Sena (or Sujata) village, close to the Niranjana River. Buddha-gaya, where he was to finally attain enlightenment, is across the river, not so far from there.

Here we encounter five practitioners: they are Kondanna, Assaji, Mahanama, Bhaddiya, and Vappa. They later became the first disciples of the Buddha Shakyamuni, and the oldest members of the *sangha*. They were all distinguished disciples and made important contributions.

There are various anecdotes to explain why they appear. One story says they were sent by the king to safeguard the prince. Another is that the Prince met them in the ascetic grove. Still another says that they followed the Prince and had been practicing together from the beginning. Earlier, I supported the idea of the follower practitioners from the beginning, but I have switched to the idea of safeguards, giving up the notion of fellow ascetics. This is because there is a hint which suggests that Bhaddiya, after King Suddhodana passed away, was so concerned about the Shakya state that he returned home. He was then nominated to succeed the king (or to be the chief governor) and took the position for six years. If he was not from the same family, it could not have happened.

There is little to support the idea of the follower practitioners. But regardless, this has nothing to do with the substance and we do not need to be bound by any one explanation. In any case, they were valuable fellows who stayed in the grove for six years together.

The practice was unusually hard beyond what one can imagine. They set their own agenda which included fasting, withstanding the day's heat, stopping to breathe, holding one posture; their practice outperformed others. While they were in the middle of ascetic practices, they could forget Four Sufferings and Eight Sufferings. However, they could not overcome them. They never attained the *dhyana* that solves and supersedes the Great

problems. Altogether seven years had passed since the time he spent with the hermits. Siddhartha's fatigue reached his limits.

Why did he practice ascetics? He did so because he thought that strong mental power that could withstand extreme physical practice would enable him to overcome the suffering.

The Prince reached a pessimistic conclusion: "This does not work. It is meaningless." He decided to give up ascetic practice. This decision helped him. Without that decision, it is possible that we would not have the Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. The old saying goes: "We should give up what we should give up. Otherwise, the future will be confused."

Fellow practitioners, however, did not know the Great Vows of the Prince. So they sniffed at him when he left the grove, and looked down on him. Six years later, however, they were to meet him again unexpectedly at Sarnath in Varanasi. It seems they moved to Varanasi after the Prince left them.

Lord Shakyamuni recalled those days at a later time and stated:

"I learned that the ideal those hermits had taught to me was not the way to a tranquil and peaceful *nirvana*. I was not satisfied with their teachings, so I left them. I sought after the supreme state of mind, wandered around the Magadha kingdom, and entered the Sena village in Urvera.

It was a beautiful land. A quiet grove was nearby, the river was pure, and the bank was well built. The views were splendid, villages around were well off and convenient for begging alms."

He further recollected:

"No monks or Brahmins, even if they followed the fiercest ascetic practice, would have ever done it harder than my

thorough and hardest practice.

Nor monks or Brahmins will ever practice harder than my practice in future.

Neither monks nor Brahmins in the present life have practiced harder than I did.

After such a hard practice of ascetics, I have not attained the supreme Dharma Gate of Emancipation.”

The decision that Prince Siddhartha took to give up, after going through the practice of ascetics risking his life, has deep meaning. His decision confirms “When the initial Bodaishin is not sound and correct, it will be in vain.”

There are many people who practice diligently for the way, but few know the correct ways to practice. Wrong beliefs or religion may cause terrorism or war to break out when one’s intentions are not fulfilled. Such a person does not even reflect on their behavior that is even worse than those of animals. We must be careful.

The saying goes, “If you believe everything your teacher says, it is as if you have no teacher. If you accept everything that is written, it is as if nothing is written.” A person who reflects on himself, admits his mistakes and abandons the wrong way has a wise view. The mind should always be calm and reasonable, otherwise it will make mistakes.

Sujata and milk porridge

After Prince Siddhartha left his fellows, he decided to separate from the past. He calmly bathed in the Niranjana River and purified his body.

He recalled that he had unintendedly abandoned the love of his parents and the love for his son, and had left the palace. He trusted the hermits and followed their practices but later left

them, and had gone through various ascetic practices. It seemed that those events were a long time ago, yet they seemed to have happened in a moment. They were all mere illusions to the Prince.

He rose up and returned to himself. He politely vowed to the spirit of the spring water. That was the moment his new practice began. He felt a pleasant breeze on his entire body, as if it were a sign of his determination.

Using all the strength that was left, he managed to climb to the top of the bank. But he had no more strength. Siddhartha was totally exhausted and fell down. The ascetic practices were so fierce. It is horrifying just to imagine it.

Good heaven! A girl passed by then. Her name was Sujata. Even more fortunate was that she was carrying a bowl of milk porridge. She instantly donated it to him. Truly, it was a life-saving porridge.

At first sight, the girl sensed that the monk in front of her was not an ordinary monk. She was convinced that he was such a respected monk that she could not ignore him. He had a serene purity she had never seen. He had some kind of decency she could not describe. That was possibly coming from his graceful character. Even though he was about to die in the wild, he was presenting the elegance of a person who had a powerful will.

She saw the manner with which he ate the porridge. It was so polite and shining in her eyes. She was filled with respect for him. Siddhartha thanked Sujata wholeheartedly. It was not ordinary gratitude. Certainly, it was not! As soon as he solemnly sipped a mouthful of the porridge, he made an astonishing discovery.

He was deeply moved by a precious awareness that arose deep inside him. It gave him joy and a full smile. His whole body was full of gratitude. Later, this awareness led to an important insight.

Sujata thought she had seen an exemplary person. She was raised by warm-hearted parents, and was imparted with rich

virtues. She continued to offer him a bowl of milk porridge heartily every day afterwards. The rumor spread about this pure-hearted girl, and the Sena village came to be called the Sujata village.

If it was in the midst of mountains, or on the deserted path, the Prince was surely dead. Was it sheer fortune?

At his last moment, Lord Shakyamuni talked of this story, deeply thanking Sujata and her milk porridge which gave him vitality and enabled him to attain the great enlightenment and enter *nirvana*. We should never forget the great favors that change one's destiny. This lesson is transmitted by Ananda to us.

How deeply thankful we are! Gasshō, I pray.

The Bodhi tree under which Siddhartha sat, and the stone on which he sat for zazen, are both reserved until today as the sacred place where the Greatly Indebted Founder Lord Shakyamuni Buddha was born. They are worshiped by myriad of people from all over the world. In that sacred place is a small and neat stone monument commemorating Sujata. I felt like hugging it, utterly moved by feeling the humanity of a human being.

Staring at the stone monument, I prayed silently, and sympathized with the mind of Prince Siddhartha whose life had been saved. I could not stop the tears coming out. We shall never forget his fortunate encounter with Sujata.

Gasshō.

Under the Bodhi tree, on the stone

Thanks to the help of Sujata and the milk porridge, Siddhartha was able to regain his strength, restore his high aspirations, and begin his new challenge toward solving the Great question. He spotted one place. It was under a hefty Bodhi tree and there was a conveniently shaped stone. It sufficed as long as the place

served as shelter from rain where he could sit upright in a zazen posture. It was just suitable for that. He collected a heap of dry grasses and laid them thickly on the stone. The place was done and ready.

The sky was blue, clear and high, the soaring Bodhi tree seemed to be welcoming and celebrating Siddhartha whose resolve was refreshed. He calmly sat there solemnly, with his mind concentrated.

“Under the tree, on the stone” is a phrase that refers to that place. It is outstanding evidence of the place where Lord Shakyamuni gave up ascetics and sat zazen for six years. It exhibits the long, persistent and serious practice of the Lord leading to the Great enlightenment. The place describes the Dharma Gate of Emancipation which he attained after thorough study and practice. This phrase tells us the entirety of the Bodaishin.

We, the descendants of the *bhikkhus*, should not take it lightly. Practice well and uphold Bodaishin.

Study and practice

The milk porridge which Sujata donated not only saved Siddhartha’s life but had another benefit. As soon as Siddhartha took his first taste, something important happened other than feelings of gratitude and joy. He realized that the sufferings that had annoyed him disappeared from his mind altogether instantly. Before that, Siddhartha had nothing but a mass of questions and suffering; the encounter with such a clear mind was a notable discovery.

“What a wonderful world! A true salvation is in this mind. The mind brings about suffering at one time and joy at another.”

This realization gave him a ray of hope by giving him a clear direction.

“A perception or a feeling that causes me confusion and suffering comes up by itself. It is totally an act of the mind that cannot be grasped.”

“All the problems of mind should be naturally solved if the true state of mind is clarified.”

“To do so, thinking and contemplating will not work. I must deal with the mind directly.”

“What should I do for that?”

“As long as an obstacle endlessly comes up, I cannot directly face my mind.”

“What can I do with this nuisance?”

“I have to calm it down for once to start with. Then, how?”

“It should be calmed down if I do not use my body and mind at all!”

“If it truly calms down, I should be able to encounter the true face of mind, the true mind!”

“I take action to achieve the objective and get the result.”

“To attain the result, I have to use knowledge and consider the matter well.”

“That itself is a wrong thought, a wrong feeling and a wrong perception. I shall never directly encounter the true mind by doing it!”

“Therefore, I should have no objective. In that way, I do not have to think and my mind will calm down.”

“Zazen must be most suitable for that!”

The logic of Siddhartha was indeed scientific and made sense. One must stop mental activity or totally ignore what comes up in the mind. By perfectly doing so, the obstacles will calm down and one can reach the true “mind.” The best way to do it is to do zazen. That was his logic. There was no abstract concept behind it. It was very clear, and correct.

Only Siddhartha knew how important the *conditions* those happenings with Sujata and the milk porridge were. The written story of Siddhartha does not explain all this. It is not written anywhere.

“This time, I shall never fail to attain my initial aspiration! At all costs and staking my life on it, I shall attain it!” This resolve, the Bodaislin, was the indestructible steel aspiration which even devils and evil spirits could not stop. Thus, the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, the peaceful mind of no action, was attained.

A song of a cuckoo
Must be pointing to the mountain
Correct the steering
The boatman in the night

Doing nothing

Siddhartha was convinced that doing nothing about his body and mind was the best way of studying the “mind.”

Why do I instantly respond to the sound and think “That’s a cow’s mooing,” “It’s a voice of a young woman” or “That’s a child”?

I am not thinking of anything particularly, but still my mind says “That’s a cloud,” “That’s the sky,” “It’s blue.” What a noisy mind which has not changed from before!

This is exactly the “bad habits of mind,” the cause of all evils and sufferings. To avoid it is not easy, because it is inherited from past lives over a long period of time. However, the fact that he was only concerned about this problem of mind is evidence that he faced his “mind” directly. He could not see the true state of mind because the thick cloud was covering it; but if he stopped trying to overcome the bad habits of mind, he could not see his true “mind.”

He used to be annoyed by the chain of responses to an idea – thoughts and feelings came up one after another. He tried to solve it by ways of thinking and will. That is, he was laying thought on top of thought. People rarely recognize this mistake.

A person with a weak Bodaishin will easily fall into unwanted thoughts or feelings. Even noticing this point is not easy for beginners. This is because of the “bad habits of mind.” The patriarchs of Buddhism also had a difficult time with it.

Siddhartha was deeply troubled with the work of his sense organs. It should be so, because his sense organs had been sharpened by the hard ascetic practices to the extreme beyond the capacity of ordinary people. These sharpened sense organs further stimulated his “mind” and continued to cause suffering.

Thanks to his experiences of extraordinary practice, Lord Shakyamuni was later able to preach according to the capacity of listeners. His experiences also provided the basis from which the Heart Sutra was born. This thorough insight obtained from a series of practice allowed him to say at the time of *nirvana*, “I

have talked enough of feelings...” We can see how much laborious and scientific effort the Prince made.

Shamon

Eating is a minimum necessity for life. When one does not have any food, one has to depend on the good will of others. Monks practice mendicancy. We call such practitioners *bhikkhu* or Shamon. Lord Shakyamuni was leading *bhikkhus*. As soon as a little food was donated, he would come back to his place, and after finishing it, he would immediately practice zazen.

As a prince, Siddhartha had no difficulties with any of his needs. He practiced mendicancy in this way for many years to attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. A person who does not understand this valuable meaning is not a practitioner. Such a person can never understand anything about Lord Shakyamuni.

Master Dōgen also used Shamon Dōgen for his name. It is an indication of his great humility, fully respecting Lord Shakyamuni’s practice with a deep bow and admitting that he is an undeniable *dharma* descendent of Lord Shakyamuni. Please appreciate that Master Dōgen was a reputable patriarch, the fifty-first in the lineage. Each patriarch is directly approved by his preceding master face to face, generation after generation. He lived the exact life of Lord Shakyamuni. All the patriarchs lived in this way. They are saints.

Dungeshwari Cave

It is commonly understood nowadays that Lord Shakyamuni practiced zazen in a cave called Dungeshwari for many years. It is located on a slope, about one hundred meters above a field. The

entrance is small and one has to bow to enter. The space inside looks to be six square meters or so. Throughout the year, it offers a favorable environment for zazen. Standing at the entrance, one can overlook Buddha-gaya where he finally attained enlightenment, across the Nairanjana River. It was maybe some ten kilometers away.

Beyond the river is a village of Sujata. According to local people, Lord Shakyamuni practiced mendicancy there, austere concentrating on zazen in the Dugeshwari Cave, and finally attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Buddha-gaya. This is not hard to believe.

The legendary story of Lord Shakyamuni in Japan depicted in the picture of “Descending the mountain” may find its origin here. Today, it is under the care of the Nepali government, where colorful prayer flags of a square foot each are strung in every direction, and the tranquility of the great *dhyana* cannot be found. The Vulture Peak also has a caretaker, but the guardian there does not forcefully demand donations. Is this a difference in people’s character?

On the way up to the cave, I did not see anyone along the way, but on the way down, countless beggars were lined up. The only efforts they made seem to be to hide themselves somewhere, and abruptly appear when they find a tourist and then earnestly beg donations .

I could not find any houses, farmland or cattle. Why do not they work?! They either do not know how to work, or they do not want to work. Is it the influence of the caste system? If so, it means they have not had any sensible leader for an immeasurable period of time. It is very difficult to understand what mentality and intellect they have. I wonder whether they are aware that they are mankind. It is your life! Why do not you work and be productive work? Shame on you! I had to shout in my mind, full of tears of pity for them.

The Sujata village was a village community. It did not seem to have any shortage of the daily necessities of food, clothing or housing. I did not see any adult beggars, aside from the children begging. Houses were densely clustered and the community seemed stable with good human relations.

This means there must be a leader, order and culture, which are necessary for sustaining lives. It is not so far from the Dungeshwari hill. Their clear differences may be explained by the idleness of all dwellers in the one place which shapes their ways of living and their culture. This has naturally formed their ethno-cultural differences brought about by themselves.

If there were any exchanges between them, such miserable differences would surely not have arisen. However, the great differences might have prevented feelings or awareness of any commonalities. So neither of them accepted the other. It would seem as if no improvements in their lives could be expected for decades or hundreds of years to come. The history of thousands of years is evidence and self-explanatory. Their countenances were totally different. Villagers in the poor village looked as if they were only waiting for the time to die.

Siddhartha must have felt, "I can expect nothing from this place that has nothing because of their idleness. I shall go to the Sujata village." I was convinced that this is what he felt.

But I do not mean to argue about the Dungeshwari hill. In any case, Lord Shakyamuni attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation under the Bodhi tree, triggered by the *condition* of seeing the morning star. From this moment on, only the true facts of Gautama Buddha's attainment are of foremost importance. Enlightenment was, however, six years away. He still had a long journey to reach it.

The Prince's fight

“The root origin is in the now. It is because a suffering or a thought arises ‘now.’ The clue lies in this moment.”

The Prince knew this by that time. However, the moment a thought arose and he tried to approach its origin, another thought was present already. This troubled him repeatedly.

Even though he realized that “now” and “this moment” are hints, he could not stop thoughts from coming up, however hard he tried not to do or think anything. While walking or eating, not to mention while practicing zazen, thoughts and feelings constantly arose and continued to annoy him. “I must overcome them by all means.”

This plight, however, is not unique to the Prince. It is a disturbing problem for everyone. All of us follow a natural principle of growing as soon as we are born. We all become aware that this is myself, and then, self-consciousness begins. At the same time, we become aware of the other, and the intellect will develop comparing oneself with others or criticizing the other. The increase of information promotes self-assertion which gives rise to more complicated feelings. The conflict of self-assertion between one's own and the others can lead them to a clash and even war.

This is the system of so-called wrong thoughts, wrong feelings and a wrong awareness. When the system solidifies, it becomes “bad habits of the mind” and continues annoying us. That is the “self.”

The practice of zazen is to overcome this “self.” Without this purpose, practicing zazen is a waste of time. It is futile for oneself and for the sake of peace. Those who guide the practice of zazen and who practice zazen need to study this point carefully and use it for repaying the debt of gratitude.

“This is a problem not only for me. Everybody is suffering from

the same annoyance. I shall reveal the mechanism of this system of 'self' whatever it takes. That is the whole reason I have abandoned my wife and child!"

The Prince continued fighting in the renewed resolve. Oh! How incompatibly solemn, elegant yet pathetic!

The more he calmed down, the clearer he could see the movements of his mind. Therefore, their speed and intensity troubled him all the more. Nevertheless, the firm Bodaishin of the Prince overcame the trouble.

As one becomes able to observe one's mind moment after moment, one's mind gets quiet and the crucial point emerges of itself. Before reaching that state, however, the path is hard and full of suffering. The key is to keep one's "mind" focused on the one point and never to stray.

The Prince at that time was still many steps from reaching that place. His body was calm, but inside his mind was a wild storm. He was yet to get hold of a true clue and was in total darkness. No moment is more helpless than having no clue. Those were the most difficult days for the prince and they lasted long. A person who knows it does not talk much. Tears and tears.

Gasshō, I pray.

Dominance of thinking and imaging

The confusion he was fighting overlapped with the confusion he had a moment earlier. Sometimes they were even mixed up.

"A perception, a thought or an image arises instantly. This means there is a moment before it arises. If I take hold of it, something should be clarified."

"In any case, I should watch one moment thoroughly and should not let myself be carried away with unnecessary thoughts."

"To keep my focus on watching the moment, I must eliminate

everything that tries to intervene.”

“To focus on watching the moment is to give up everything, to give no space for perceptions or thoughts to come in.”

“This is all I have to do now.”

As the Prince devoted himself to every moment in this way, fighting with “bad habits of mind,” he noticed that something dropped off. Every time he learned something. There was no other way, but the Prince had to see it through by himself and find out what works and what does not. Fortunately, this approach turned out to be effective.

Day after day, he threw away everything else and kept his focus on watching the moment of “now.”

There is no before or after the true “now.” Such “now” is called “the state of right now” or “just now.” When one truly experiences the “now,” it is the moment when all thoughts have disappeared and the *dharma* is present. It is the true *dhyana* which Lord Shakyamuni was searching for. This is a decisive focal point of zen practice. It is so-called the path for going beyond. It is the entrance. Without *dhyana*, there cannot be *dharma*.

A few more steps to go.

A thoughtless thought, a mindless mind

With the benefit of his years of practice, he was able to clearly see the moment when a thought comes up and the moment it disappears. It was a big surprise to him. When he saw something or heard something, it was already completed. He realized that. That makes sense. When something comes up in mind, it has ended at that moment and does not exist anymore. He had not noticed this fact before.

“I have long thought that ‘mind’ is constantly working, but in

reality, there is no such thing that I can call ‘mind.’”

The Prince took notice of a thought in which there was no thought, a mind in which there was no mind. Then, it also became clear to him that “because there is nothing, there is no need to do anything.”

After realizing it, his practice totally changed. As if a long haunting phantom had left, a deep calmness set in. The moment came when he was not bothered by his eyes or ears, by colors, shapes or sounds. It was not by chance; it came so frequently. Siddhartha was able to remain naturally calm. He also noticed that his body was much lighter.

Small and meaningless thoughts still turned up, but they no longer bothered him as long as he was not carried away by them. He did not care about thoughts that came up, and was able to ignore all sorts of mind.

“How strange! I can scrap all sorts of annoyances or thoughts.”

“If I do not pay attention to a thought and do not acknowledge it, it will disappear instantly!”

“I could not do this with all my efforts in the past, but now I can be doing nothing!”

“What a world I have found that is clear and empty, that has no disturbance!”

Nothing would have pleased him so much in his life. For the first time he was able to breath calmly and naturally. I am sure he enjoyed it heartily and deeply.

As if a spinning wheel fell down, his problems were solved one after another. Then, a great joy filled his mind. The suffering that had bothered him was completely gone!

He was pleased above all because the method he had established and practice he developed were be correct. If he had not noticed “the thoughtless thought, the mindless mind,” his efforts would have spun around in vain.

However, Siddhartha was not content with such small progress. Still, the storm was over, and it was significant and joyful to know that there was an open and empty space in his mind, a mind with no wind.

Needless annoyances were gone. This apparently lessened his troubles. But he was not at all convinced that this was the complete answer he was looking for. Small thoughts continued to come up, and in moments of carelessness he would fall into illusion. This is the root cause of the problem and the “bad habits of mind.” He knew it well.

“Unless I solve this, a true world of emancipation is not attained, and I shall not be content. My recent finding is too trivial. My real practice begins here.”

The time has come to see Lord Shakyamuni’s real strength.

Shōshin-tanza

Under the Bodhi tree on the stone, doing nothing, thinking of nothing, zazen was all there was. This is Shōshin-tanza,¹⁵ “to sit upright in the zazen posture” and Shikan-taza.¹⁶ It was zazen by all his body, zazen with no thought. “Shikan” means pure, no taint and no mixture. This is the true *dhyana*, true zazen. “Just” zazen.

The body moved smoothly, as water flows. Whatever he saw or heard, no image came up. Moment after moment, it was thoroughly complete. There were no interruptions. So smooth, so trouble-free. He felt so easy, and by the time he realized it, he was in a world where there was no anxiety or joy. What surprised him was that he was able to “just” do everything, and his mind was empty whatever he did.

¹⁵ [正身端坐].

¹⁶ [只管打坐].

The state of “now” that had no before or after it was clearly present. This is called “shikan” action.

It is not easy to truly sit upright in the zazen posture or to do “shikan,” in other words, to attain true *dhyana*. When one has reached this state, it suffices to spend time by “just” doing everything and wait for time to be mature - until an apple gets ripe and falls. The result will surely come. This is because one is already separated from the habits of mind, there is no past, there is only “now.” This is called “no self.”

However, unless one’s Bodaishin is strong enough, one will never go beyond this point. The self is an accumulation of past deeds, *karma*. Unless one becomes “now” thoroughly, one will not be able to drop off the past, and therefore, unable to eliminate the past deeds. To maintain *dhyana* is extremely difficult. That is, it is most difficult to keep one’s mind empty. This is because the “bad habits of mind” cut in. Zen practice is to keep up the Bodaishin, not to be carried away with unnecessary thoughts, and to keep concentration on “now.”

The Sutra on Cause and Effect

“Defeat the demons and attain the way.” A large army of demons attacked Siddhartha to prevent him from attaining enlightenment, because the light of truth will eliminate the world of evil and demons when the world of truth is clearly present.

The Sutra on *Cause and Effect* has the following:

Seeing that Siddhartha sits upright in the zazen posture, Shikan-taza, in motionless tranquility, the gods¹⁷ in heaven who protected *dharma* all rejoiced. At that time, the demons

¹⁷ The Eight Divine Generals, or *brahma*, *sakra*, and the Four Devas.

in the world of confusion took notice and were deeply bewildered. They conspired a plan. “That Shamon (Siddhartha) is sitting up in the right posture, under the Bodhi tree on the stone, doing Shikan-taza in *dhyana*. He is going to open “the Dharma Gate of Emancipation” before long, and guide people into peace in mind, and that will deprive us of our territory. We must go down there immediately and confuse him so that he will not attain enlightenment. They brought a myriad of evil armies, surrounded the Bodhisattvas, roared and played around violently shaking the earth. However, Siddhartha’s *dhyana* was solid. He stayed calm and natural, and made no movement.

In short, the sutra explains the importance of the Bodaishin. It clearly says that “bad habits of mind” are a difficult enemy to overcome and will try to confuse our minds, but that by sitting straight in the zazen posture, the Prince defeated the enemy and gained victory.

Even though Siddhartha was determined not to leave the place until he had attained enlightenment, overcoming the habits of mind was not at all easy. “To forget that I am myself,” that is, to totally become a fool and forget everything including oneself was so difficult.

After enlightenment, Lord Shakyamuni stated, “Control your mind on one thing, and anything can be accomplished.” This means that if one concentrates on the matter at hand wholeheartedly without thinking of anything else, one will forget oneself and surely accomplish it. This is the assurance by Lord Shakyamuni based on his own experience. We just need to trust it and practice accordingly.

The Sutra of Samantabhadra says:

All the annoyance and confusion arise from bad habits of mind. This gives much suffering. If you wish to escape from them, sit straight in the right posture and attain the ultimate truth. The moment you have realized the truth of “now,” all the root causes of confusion and suffering will disappear just like the morning dew. *Dhyana* has such a strength.

This is the confession by an accomplished person.

All the Buddhas and the patriarchs attained immeasurable benefits by sitting upright in the zazen posture, Shikan-taza. We must know deeply how precious zazen is.

No before or after it

Years passed by. Without spending time looking back, the Prince diligently practiced *dhyana*. The thoughts in his mind had totally calmed down. When he came back from mendicancy, no mendicancy or anything else was left in his mind. He surely walked around, but there was no track of it. Looking back, the act of mendicancy was indeed in his memory. However, such thoughts disappeared immediately and only calmness remained.

Although the “bad habits of mind” were already gone, he was still not surely aware that they had gone. The battle was not completely over. It was like dirt in a bucket that was totally distilled over time, but encountering a *condition* that stirred it up would muddy it at any time.

Siddhartha further practiced whole-hearted concentration. Chewing whole-heartedly and again chewing whole-heartedly, and thus the meal was over in a moment. There was no feeling that he had eaten; there remained no trace of eating. Seeing, hearing, turning right, or turning left, everything ended in itself.

Just as all sense organs functioned. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind functioned naturally. When he stood up, nobody was standing up. When he practiced zazen, there was no zazen.

Body and mind were empty. There were no words, no feelings. There was no intention to compare things. No thoughts that something was respectable or dirty. No feeling that he was obliged to do anything or wished to do something. Those Great problems were no longer there. A day passed in a second.

He was in the state where the notion of before or after was extinct. He already had acquired Issekigen¹⁸, a vertical eye of wisdom that sees through the truth.

Without a path, it is restless even in the mountain

With a path, my mind is quiet even in the city

Once one reaches this point, one cannot fail to attain enlightenment. When the autumn comes, the summer is gone. The Bodaishin has come to fruition. Watch when it gets ripe and falls.

¹⁸ 一隻眼.

**The Fourth Stage:
Dharma promulgation – from the First
Sermon to Nirvana**

Sight of the morning star

Siddhartha was freed from his body and mind. He had already forgotten himself, reached the state of *selflessness*. Time had passed. He had totally penetrated the state of no self. He was dead wood, a rock, or a cloud. He was not there, but this does not mean he did not exist. It was the state of the Great Death. When one reaches this point, the “bad habits of mind” will drop off naturally. This is why it is important to penetrate this state thoroughly.

He skipped supper and sat in zazen for hours and hours. It was morning. It was a matter of a moment. Mist covered the land of tranquility. When he slowly raised his eyes, the morning star came into sight. He became one with the morning star and attained enlightenment together with the star.

It was a moment of “the sight of the morning star” or “the morning star by a sight,” the great “dropping off of body and mind.” After years of diligent practice, the result came of itself.

When he came back to himself with the help of a *condition* of the morning star, everything had dropped off. He had no body or mind, no “bad habits of mind.” When he returned from death, everything was *empty*. This state of self-awareness is called “the great happening by the *dharma* of *cause and effect*.” This is a true Kenshō¹⁹, seeing through the truth. The boundary between confusion and enlightenment became clear, the problem was decisively solved, and “the Dharma Gate of Emancipation” was opened. It was the “Great Enlightenment.” Prince Siddhartha had become the Great Founder, Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. It was the moment when his long resolve was realized. Out of astonishment, joy and content, he stated,

“I have attained the Way, together with the land.

¹⁹ [見性].

Mountains, rivers, grasses and woods, all have been enlightened.”

It was a lion’s roar (the first message) of Shakyamuni Buddha. When he awoke from a dream, he realized that everything had been outright truth. There was nothing to worry about, nothing was wrong. This statement came out of thoroughly understanding that everything was enlightened. To be “enlightened” means that matters are completely accomplished or have been fully attained. This is the state of “the perfect penetration” or “having reached the other shore.”

In short, what we see, what we hear, to sit down or to stand up, is all the truth as it is. However, this does not mean that body and mind that have wrong thoughts, wrong perceptions, or a wrong awakening are all right as they are. This was the state that Lord Shakyamuni was able to reach as a result of his thorough penetration. Otherwise, what is the use of the six years of hard practice?

This is the most valuable treasure for human beings. Nothing is greater, more beautiful than Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha is the most respectable saint in the universe. Two thousand six hundred years ago from now, on the 8th of December, there was a precious event at the breaking of dawn in the morning mist. Lord Shakyamuni was about to turn thirty-two. Since he left the palace at the age of nineteen, twelve years had passed.

The Eighth of December is the Day of Enlightenment, the Eighth of April is the Day of the Birth, and the Fifteenth of February is the Day of Nirvana. The Buddha’s *dharma* descendants commemorate these sacred days and practice hard to protect the *dharma*. Practice diligently.

The Brahma's request

Enlightenment followed after more than twelve years of hard practice altogether, six to seven years of ascetic practice, followed by six years of Shōshin-tanza, sitting upright in the zazen posture. What he had attained was indescribable and unutterable. He was convinced that it was impossible to transmit the Great *dharma* with an immeasurable scale to anybody, however wonderful it was. He thought nobody would dare go through the same course of practices. He was about to keep the great satisfaction, the great joy and the great relief to himself. Could it be possible?

On the night of that day, Brahma, a god who protects the Great *dharma*, appeared at the bedside of Lord Shakyamuni and admonished,

“How can the Buddha, who has attained enlightenment after such great suffering and hard practice himself, abandon all ordinary people?!”

This is “the Brahma's Request.”

After hearing it, Lord Shakyamuni resolved, “It is true indeed. I abandoned my state, my wife, my son and everything. Today I have attained emancipation. Countless people must be suffering just as I have suffered. I should make this world a pure and peaceful place to live in. With this *dharma*, I can save all people. If I did not make the best use of the true path, I would not live up to the sacred *dharma*.”

From that time, the great mercy and great compassion of Lord Shakyamuni was activated and he worked actively for forty-nine years. If it were not for the Brahma's Request at the bedside, there would have been no *dharma*. The *dharma* was saved by a hairbreadth. Already Lord Shakyamuni had been unified with heaven and earth, and the whole universe was himself. He continued to sit in zazen under nearby trees and contemplated,

“How can I convey this state of enlightenment? How should I preach it so that everybody understands it, and how can everyone attain it?” It was a precious time of contemplation to sort out these questions.

On the part of Lord Shakyamuni, this was not extraordinary. All the process of his efforts and all the aspects of what he had attained are themselves valuable teachings. The problem was how to teach them to others. He compiled them and organized the method of conveying them in a plain discourse. It was the beginning of what later became the famous First Sermon.

Rama Sutra goes:

“Thus I thought at that time: To whom should I give a sermon first? Who will understand this *dharma* quickly?”

It was a confession and a vivid account of his recollection immediately after the emancipation. Who can fail to appreciate this great effort?

To Sarnath

Where in the world could I find a person who is worthy of receiving a sermon on this great *dharma*? If there is anyone at all, he is most probably in Sarnath. Lord Shakyamuni headed there without hesitation. It is approximately two hundred kilometers straight from Buddha-gaya. Walking on streets, it would be nearly three hundred kilometers. It was a center of Hinduism, where many practitioners gathered.

This was the first step of the next forty-nine years. The length of time or speed did not matter. There was only “now” and the Way. He arrived at Sarnath safely. Lord Shakyamuni was the earth and the earth was Lord Shakyamuni. He was already a

great and indescribably holy person. A person with true eyes would recognize and admire his great capacity.

Reunion

He was correct. First, he met the five practitioners with whom he used to practice. They were meditating under suitable trees just as other practitioners. They despised Siddhartha who had abandoned his practice, and were shocked to see the very person abruptly.

They exchanged disgraceful and inappropriate words about Shakyamuni and said, “Let us not talk to such a person.” The reunion is described in the literature as an indecent encounter.

Lord Shakyamuni, for his part, immediately recognized and approached them without hesitation. A person with Great *dhyana* has no volition nor gives any sign of being nearby. Upon seeing Shakyamuni who was full of joy, they were astonished at his countenance. They instantly felt his dignity. Thanks to their practice of many years, they were equipped with eyes to see a true person. As Lord Shakyamuni got closer, their earlier minds were changed and shaken strongly.

“Is it Siddhartha, our former co-practitioner?!”

“No, he is no longer the same Siddhartha! He surely deserves to be called a saint!”

Lord Shakyamuni in turn felt sorry for them who had long been practicing in the same wrong way. However, that was not all. He sensed that they had some distrust but had also clear zeal and aspiration for the Way.

The five practitioners stood up, overwhelmed at his appearance with grace and full of confidence. They politely bowed in *gasshō* (joining palms). They were earnest. Instantly, they all felt intimate with each other again and invited Lord Shakyamuni to

their residence.

When they sat down, they looked around him and rejoiced in the reunion. What countless joys and surprises they had! They were in tears for a while. A person with a true mind appreciates the meaning of tears. Lord Shakyamuni wanted to convey the *dharma* to them first. He was convinced that they still had the Bodaishin and capacity to understand the *dharma*.

However, it was premature for them to fully appreciate the immensity of the Great Founder Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. In any case, the reunion after six years brought them exceptional pleasure. They had a joyful conversation for some time. It was an important encounter for them and for the sake of the *dharma*.

The motions he made while having a cup of tea. His perfectly clear eye sight. The way he quietly listened to the story how the five had practiced. These gave them more than just intimacy. They felt an unshakeable confidence, serene transparency and deep stability of Lord Shakyamuni. They gradually felt unmeasurable dignity in him. They all thought that the sacred person in front of them was totally detached from the secular world.

“This is undoubtedly our true teacher!” It was a feeling out of their spiritual insight thanks to the Way to which they aspired and the Bodaishin they had. They were indeed pure practitioners.

It was natural that they remained polite and honestly apologized for their ill manners. How honest and pure they were! They no longer had any selfish feelings. Earnest people are earnest. Great people are great.

Shakyamuni was gratified to know that they had returned to the initial Bodaishin of true aspiration. His quiet utterance of the following words totally overwhelmed them.

True teachings and wrong teachings

“I sympathize that it must have been painful years for you to practice so hard. Have your sufferings been resolved? Have you attained peace of mind?”

It was his first question intended to lead them to the true path, a prelude to make them realize that practices off the mark were meaningless and to guide them to the ways of emancipation. The questions sounded so soft and easy. Not at all! They were stunned because they were suddenly given the most fundamental question. It was impossible for them to answer, since they did not even know the key to practice. The air was still.

Nevertheless, it was certainly the main question for them. All their efforts made were to solve it. Their frozen body became full of boiling fever. The eyes of Lord Shakyamuni were gazing at each of them gently as if talking in person and urging them.

The great mercy and great compassion of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha were poured onto the five practitioners, for the first time in the human history. How fortunate they were! It was the beginning of opening the eighty-four thousand gates.²⁰

“Three-wheel sermons” is Buddhist terminology. “Three wheels” are body, mouth and mind. It is a tricycle that delivers the *dharma* of the Buddha.

The body-wheel sermon is expressed by actions. The mouth-wheel sermon is made by words. The mind-wheel sermon is the one Shakyamuni contemplated for a while after attaining emancipation. The theoretical structure of his sermons was complete at this time.

The five first followers were commendable enough in sensing the magnificence of the *dharma* upon seeing how Lord Shakyamuni acted. This was due to their capacity, which enabled

²⁰ It is said that Shakyamuni provided different teachings to different people depending on their capacity and situations.

them to hold right convictions. This is the first incidence in the history of Buddhism that the body-wheel sermon of Lord Shakyamuni was conveyed. If they were restless ordinary people, it would have failed to persuade them; they would have sensed that Lord Shakyamuni was the same Prince Siddhartha as before.

This explains why it is important to keep oneself humble and to keep up the precepts. This is how those who pursue the Way should be: to reflect deeply on oneself, stay humble, and keep practicing in the right way. They sat upright and listened to Shakyamuni intently.

Lord Shakyamuni was waiting for this moment. He began to speak slowly and gently, and invitingly gave the following statement so as to let them be aware of the truth:

Dear *Bhikkhus*, at last I have completely solved the Great problem. The true “mind” has totally become clear. I am now going to talk about “the Great Dharma Gate of Emancipation.” It is unmistakable truth, *tathata*, the truth of the Great Ease, the Great Joy, and the Great Peace of Mind. Most precious is the fact that it is the Path to saving everybody. It is also an important Path to the awakened mind of immeasurable Great Mercy and Great Compassion that saves all the people.

O *Bhikkhus*, first and foremost, you must be a person full of the Bodaishin.

His voice was strong, with a feverish desire. The supreme sermon was about to begin. We should appreciate how important it is that the minds of those who listen to the sermon are one with the mind of a person who gives it. Lord Shakyamuni continued:

We left the palace, abandoned the state and have practiced in search of the real truth and the true salvation. All pious

practitioners search for the path to the truth. We need the path to salvation because we have confusion and suffering. The purpose is to solve the Four Sufferings and the Eight Sufferings, is it not? Why do they arise? Where do they come from? Do you know what the root cause of suffering is?

At that time, Kondanna, a leader of the *bhikkhus*, asked Lord Shakyamuni in the middle of his sermon:

Indeed, Lord Shakyamuni. That is the point I wish to know. I beg you, please teach me. I have practiced hard for so long, but I have not been able to solve the problem. It is painful.

He confessed, making his hands into fist and leaning forward. Assaji, Mahanama, Bhaddiya, and Vappa followed him and pled: “The same is true with me. Please teach me.”

Lord Shakyamuni was gratified with their honesty, at their Bodaishin. He was convinced that they would surely attain emancipation before long.

Kondanna, and all of you, I am very pleased. The aspiration for the Bodaishin in search for the truth is precious, and you are full of truth.

He said with a strong voice:

Well, then, reflect on your mind of “now” carefully.

They immediately put it into action. They paid utmost attention to the inside of their selves. Their concentrated earnestness shed deep light. Lord Shakyamuni had suddenly provided them with a direct path to the truth. To penetrate the truth of one’s mind. That is “enlightenment.” As expected, a bell

tolls when it is hit. A capable person will respond instantly.

After some moment of silence, Kondanna shouted in excitement. It was a matter of half an hour or so.

“Lord Shakyamuni, the chaotic self in me that has troubled me is totally gone. What has happened?”

He was stunned with joy and wonder. Assaji, Mahanama, Bhaddiya, and Vappa made the same remarks one after another. They were immediately filled with pleasure, their faces shining with confidence. The plan of Lord Shakyamuni worked beautifully. He continued:

O *Bhikkhus*, the truth exists not outside your mind. There is no other mind but yours. There is nothing but “now,” only the Bodaishin is. This is the “mind” of “now.” This is the truth itself.

They responded, “Yes, Lord.”

Just as Lord Shakyamuni explained, their minds were full of the Bodaishin and there was nothing else.

A *bhikkhu* is a pious practitioner who concentrates on his search for the Way. He satisfies his appetite by begging for alms. Shakyamuni called them as *bhikkhus*, to show his respect for them. How precious it is! He went on:

Bhikkhus, there is nothing in your mind now, is there?

He asked so in reassurance. “Indeed, there is nothing.” It was again Kondanna who affirmed this so firmly. At the same time, they were surprised. Lord Shakyamuni in front of them knew everything about what was in their minds! On knowing it, they were happy to have found a true master. In no time, Kondanna asked, “What has happened to me?”

It was a question one would make for assurance when one is

full of confidence. When he directly penetrated his mind, he saw that there was nothing else but the Bodaishin. It was a state not possible to explain or to convey to anyone. Why? Because there is nothing, it is impossible to say anything about it. It is an attained state. Anybody can understand it if he attains it. One can enjoy the pleasant feeling once one attains the state. “Mind” is not such a small world that one can see it with the intellect. Lord Shakyamuni immediately read his mind and said:

Kondanna, you are already awakened on the right path by overcoming the wrong paths. The true mind of aspiration has no evils or attachments, not even the unnecessary thought that recognizes you as yourself. With no unnecessary thoughts, there is no suffering.

Upon listening to this *dharma* talk, they were all surprised, because it was an important awakening. They realized and regretted that the past hard practices had been utterly wrong. At the same time, they could understand for the first time the great “mind” with which Prince Siddhartha left them years ago.

They embraced the great belief of the Prince, nay, the Great Sacred Shakyamuni Buddha. The difference between a true master and a false master is so apparent.

If one wishes to attain emancipation, one must follow the guidance of a true master. Lord Shakyamuni’s sermon continued further:

All of you have found a true path. That is very important awakening: there is nothing in the truth –keep nothing in your mind. There is no “bad habits of mind” on the true path. Practice hard so that you always keep this clear *emptiness* untainted. Just keep your “mind” empty. The time shall never fail to come for you to penetrate into the truth. The

Dharma Gate of Emancipation will open.

The Point of Focus

No doubt it is because they had practiced earnestly that they were able to instantly recognize the true path and to gain the point of focus. Why then did their earlier practices fail them? We must examine this carefully.

We can easily be swayed by suffering unless we maintain the aspiration for the true path. Therefore, we must exert courage to practice earnestly.

However, if we stick to formalities and habits, or follow wrong paths such as withstanding hard and painful ascetics, our practices direct us to go away from our “mind.” Then we follow utterly wrong paths, even if the practices appear to be splendid. Many people fall into this trap.

There is no “mind” outside. Once our focus leaves our “mind,” we will never be able to realize the truth that there is nothing in it. No wonder such practices fail to penetrate, however hard we may practice. This is called a “wrong path.” The five fellow practitioners spent years in vain, because they had followed the wrong path earlier.

Kondanna said in deep regret, “Lord Shakyamuni, I now precisely understand the true path. I have been able to have a glimpse of the true world that has no confusion. I was spending my time in vain, because I did not know the path to find my mind. I am most grateful to you, Lord Shakyamuni, I am saved.” The fellow practitioners agreed.

Lord Shakyamuni continued his sermon gently.

The First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

The Four Noble Truths

The First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma is the first sermon given by Lord Shakyamuni comprising the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path. The Buddha compiled it based on his experiences, and is his first and most important sermon. It is a significant *dharma* talk – the five practitioners instantly understood the meaning of his sermon and became disciples of the Buddha.

The first sermon explains the lives of human beings with four concepts, namely *dukkha sacca* – the truth of suffering, *samudaya sacca* – the truth of the causes of suffering, *nirodha sacca* – the truth of cessation of suffering, and *magga sacca* – the true path to the cessation of suffering. These are called the Four Noble Truths. They explain the logic of suffering and the path to resolving it. The sermon on the Four Noble Truths was followed by a sermon on reminders about the practice, the Noble Eight-fold Path.

Dukkha sacca

The sermon began with the *dukkha sacca*, which tells us to know the truth of ourselves seriously.

O *Bhikkhus*, the origin of the suffering of human beings is, in fact, this body and mind. That is, our very existence is the source of suffering.

They were all surprised by the unexpected beginning.
Hearing that our body that works in everyday life, and a mind

that recognizes and makes judgements are rather sources of our suffering would surprise anyone. It is natural that one will be doubtful and not understand it. The *bhikkhus*, too, were doubtful but were deeply intrigued by the sermon, the likes of which they had never heard.

This is the whole reason Lord Shakyamuni sat in contemplation for some time after he had attained enlightenment. He knew that his words would not be listened to, if they were not in logical order. If the teaching is not understood, right practice is not possible, and the great *dharma* would not be transmitted. If it is not transmitted, it cannot save anyone. That is why the Buddha carefully constructed his methodology. He went on talking, fully aware of their feelings of belief and disbelief, doubt and acceptance.

He continued as follows:

To know that this is myself. Only human beings can do this. Human beings are made of the body and the mind.

Unconsciously, they acquire bad habits of self-centered thinking. This is attachment. This is ego, or selfishness.

Ego works unconsciously, and it inflicts confusion and conflict. Finally, it turns into physical actions, robbing, quarreling, fighting, and war.

You will understand that this is originally a “bad habit” within ourselves. As long as we have it, suffering will never cease. Human beings are a mass of suffering. You will see this if you honestly look into yourself.

The logic is clear, and it is all true. This is what he means by “I have completely solved the problem.” They all felt deep respect

for him.

Samudaya sacca

Next, Shakyamuni talked about the proposition of *samudaya sacca*. It is the reason our lives in this world are full of suffering.

O *Bhikkhus*, we all regard this body and mind as ourselves and are attached to it. We always care for our “self” and try to protect it. This is the logic of animals: the stronger eat the weaker. It is an ugly state that is bound by the instinct for survival. It is the self-centered ego, the selfishness, and the attachment that I explained earlier. The ego turns into greediness, anger and ignorance. These are called the “Three Poisons.”

We, human beings, must recognize that we possess these Three Poisons unconsciously. Our body and mind are a mass of the Three Poisons.

Therefore, as long as we have such “body and mind,” we are unable to escape from attachment. Every person is a collection of the Three Poisons and the Four Sufferings – birth, aging, sickness and death. That is why we are unable to forego suffering.

Look! We all do evil. Evil arises from “bad habits of mind” in every one of us. That is the reality, and the world is the collection of such human beings. This is why living in this world means suffering. We must come to know this well. This is *samudaya sacca* – the truth of the causes of suffering.

Indeed, it is true and horrifying. The *bhikkhus* got more

attentive. The former prince was giving a sermon of vivid truth. They were deeply impressed by the Buddha's impeccable theory that contained no hint of irrationality.

Nirodha sacca

Next, Lord Shakyamuni talked about *nirodha sacca* which points to the direction of extinguishing suffering.

It is clear that the root of suffering is in this "body and mind." Therefore, we have only to extinguish this "body and mind". We are to fully concentrate and forego our "body and mind." The body and mind in their original state have no attachment. But we are not aware of this. We need to affirm the clear state of ourselves.

Listen carefully. We look through eyes and listen with ears. Whatever we do, it is a matter of the moment. Has it ever happened that what you see or hear now overlaps with what you have seen or heard in the past?

Look at the truth carefully. Such things cannot happen. If something stays and overlaps with the other, it will be a big problem, no?

There is only the moment, and there is nothing in what has passed. This is the Way of the great nature. This is the truth.

This "body and mind" is the foundation of life. However, we attach to what has passed and think about it, even though everything is finished in the moment. This is how the Three Poisons arise. This is the "bad habits of mind." Therefore, this "body and mind" is simultaneously the source that

produces the Three Poisons. Do you understand this?

Once we extinguish this “body and mind”, the “bad habits of mind” will also disappear. If we extinguish the body and mind, evil thoughts, suffering and the source of all bad things will disappear.

The more they listened to his *dharma* talk, the more they were amazed. His teachings were clear and transparent. But the core of his teaching was yet to come. The Dharma Gate of Emancipation was opening by the perfectly attained state and logic of Lord Shakyamuni.

Magga sacca

Finally, the Buddha explained the path called *magga sacca*, which is a practical method of *nirodha sacca*, the way to attain the extinction of suffering.

Lord Shakyamuni knew very well what suffering was. But he had completely solved them. How can one extinguish the origin of the suffering, namely, the “bad habits of mind”? He was the only saint in the universe who thoroughly knew the real state of suffering and the way to solve it.

How grateful we are that today we have the path to attaining this Great Dharma Gate of Emancipation!

Gasshō, in gratitude.

As I have just explained, you now understand that no part of our body is made intentionally, including such tools as the sense organs we are born with.

To know this fact is not enough. What is important is to open the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. For this purpose, you

must completely eliminate this “body and mind.” Otherwise, confusions, illusions and wrong thoughts will continue to bother you. You will stay attached to various phenomena; and unwanted thoughts and feelings will keep coming up, and you shall never be liberated from suffering.

To let your “body and mind” be eliminated completely, you need to achieve the perfect penetration and forget yourself. When your “body and mind” no longer bother you, the three poisons will disappear. When the three poisons disappear, the Four Sufferings will also disappear. Thus, the Dharma Gate of Emancipation will open naturally. This is *magga sacca* – the truth of paths to the cessation of suffering.

This is the summary of *magga sacca*. The Dharma Gate of Emancipation cannot be attained by way of being conscious of truth. Reliable and irrefutable practices are indispensable.

Eyes of the *bhikkhus* were motionless, their excitement had now turned to serenity, and they listened to Lord Shakyamuni intently so as not to miss any of his words. Lord Shakyamuni continued gently.

The Noble Eight-fold Path

The Noble Eight-fold Path is the way of practice for this purpose. The first is “right view,” the second is “right intention (thought),” the third is “right speech,” the fourth is “right action,” the fifth is “right livelihood,” the sixth is “right effort,” the seventh is “right mindfulness,” and the eighth is “right concentration (*dhyana*).”

That is to say, this teaches us to see, think, speak, act, live, make efforts, and contemplate in a right way, and maintain

dhyana.

The first seventh principles are highly sensible discourses on ethics and virtues. In order to live freely in society, one only needs to respect the dignity of others. These are straightforward. If everyone lives by these simple principles, the society will be healthy.

Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, said, “Overcome oneself and respect others, that is ‘benevolence’.”²¹ The right way of living is to control oneself so as to maintain social order, and that is the spirit of ‘benevolence.’ This logic is found equally in Confucianism, in western ethics and in religion.

However, this alone will never be enough to find liberation from the Three Poisons. In reality, we often succumb to the Three Poisons, fall into fallacy and shameless greed, and are filled with self-absolutism and denial of others. This is because there are limits in one’s reason and goodwill, and the Three Poisons will overwhelm us at any time causing confusion and conflict. However pious we might be, the Three Poisons will not be fundamentally eliminated.

Therefore, it is impossible to eradicate war, terrorism, and deceit; the truly peaceful world is merely a dream. Look at the real world. It is full of confusion!

Take the question of what is “right.” People claiming their own “right”ness create conflict and fighting begins. As long as there are “bad habits of mind,” “right” is only superficial. Such bad habits are directly linked with our survival instinct, and therefore, we will never escape self-righteousness. Because it is not truly “right,” it is off the mark.

This is why earnest practices are essential. Geniuses have pursued theories of ethics or philosophy, but they are not able to move beyond the world of the concept even by a single step. Such thinking is the work of cognition, since the “mind” of a person

²¹ Jin (仁).

who relies on cognition is troubled. This is the fundamental question for safety, peace and happiness. It is the great human problem. The decisive solution will be presented here.

It is the eighth “*dhyana*” that tells us what the true “right” is. When one attains *dhyana*, one is unshakably “right.” In *dhyana*, there is no ego, no past, no country, or habit. Nothing is so beautifully “right” when there is nothing in it. Because there is nothing in it, it cannot change. Once one is awakened to this “right”ness, the world is purified and will stay beautiful. The world must be integrated into the true “right” now.

That is to say, being “right” is *dhyana*, to sit straight in the right posture of zazen (Shōshin-tanza), and to fully concentrate oneself in zazen (Shikan-taza). We must hold a great Bodaishin, the resolve for enlightenment, and fully penetrate doing zazen.

Why is the most important principle of *dhyana* being placed at the end? This can be understood by seeing that the true intention of Lord Shakyamuni is to avoid the risk of wasting everyday life by carelessly underestimating that all you have to do is to do zazen.

All will be meaningless if daily life itself is not “right.” Therefore, we should try at all times to never lose ourselves, reflect on oneself well, be mindful of oneself, and practice diligently. Do what one should do. The final *dhyana* is the “path” to make the seven preceding principles “right.” I hope you understand the significance of *dhyana* which is placed last.

Kondanna who was listening to Shakyamuni intently, opened his mouth suddenly:

“O Lord Shakyamuni, I am all ears and my ears are gone. Ears and eyes have no words or logic. I understand that this body exists, but the body is nothing. Just as the wind has no before or present.”

These words directly showed his great leap of understanding. The others all deeply agreed with him.

With a smile, Lord Shakyamuni said,

O *Bhikkhus*, that is *dhyana*. When you have perfectly attained *dhyana*, you understand that you only have to experience by yourself what it is to be cold or warm, and you also understand that reality has become clear. *Dhyana* keeps your “mind” calm and pure, and extinguishes the Three Poisons. When the Three Poisons are extinguished, evil will naturally disappear.

When the “mind” is *empty*, you will understand that there is nothing in the truth in itself, and that truth is nothingness.

Hereafter, you must practice *dhyana* diligently, treat *dhyana* with utmost care, never to pollute it.

They all nodded and bowed respectfully.

Those pious practitioners who had gone through hard practices all acquired Issekigen, the “eye of penetration” at this moment. They were quick in attaining *dhyana*. Thus, the First Sermon had already found five good followers. It took two days.

Here is an important point worth noting. When one has a “body and mind,” one sees and hears things. This is confusing because of the functioning of the sense organs, and one will not be able to escape from the Three Poisons. We describe this state as “When you see and hear, you are still outside the gate.”

There is no body and mind in *dhyana*, because *dhyana* has overcome body and mind. When there is no “body and mind,” everything is just as one sees and hears, and one will not be confused. By fully concentrating on seeing and hearing without introducing the “body and mind,” one has overcome seeing and hearing. While seeing and hearing, one has transcended seeing and hearing, and one is free. This is the state we call: “Zazen is

like coming back home and sitting quietly.” It is the state in which nothing bothers one.

When you become one with something in perfect concentration, the body and mind become *empty*. This is *dhyana* and salvation. The only way to it is to experience it oneself and attain it. The five *bhikkhus* all attained this state.

The Issekigen, the “eye of penetration” is different from normal eyes, which are side by side. The Issekigen is vertical. That is, it is the eye of mind that is aware of attainment. It represents an unshakable belief, conviction. The “right” has been solidly acquired. It is the “right” of the “right.”

Assaji and Sariputra

Assaji had another name, Mesho. He was practicing more and more carefully and flawlessly. He was “just” walking with full concentration. This is called “zen in action” or “just action (Shikan-Katsudō).” It is the work of consolidating *dhyana*. Polite and flawless movement is beautiful. A person who watches it will have his mind purified. This is a *dharma* talk by the body-wheel. It is so direct that it touches one’s mind.

The person who insightfully saw it was that famous Sariputra (Sariputta in Pali). Naturally, he approached Assaji and greeted him. After listening to Assaji explain the *dharma* talk of Lord Shakyamuni, Sariputra told his friend, Maudgalyayana about Lord Shakyamuni. Maudgalyayana, too, was so delighted. Indeed, their Bodaishin was true.

Both of them, and their two hundred and fifty (or two hundred, by another source) disciples joined the *sangha* of Lord Shakyamuni at once. The *sangha* suddenly became a major one. In this way, the flawless practices of the first five disciples had influential repercussions, and the presence of Lord Shakyamuni

quickly diffused as in a pleasant breeze.

The significance of Dharma Talk according to the Occasion

Lord Shakyamuni made enormous efforts to guide to enlightenment people who have no Bodaishin, who act out of selfish demand without feeling any regret or shame and have no desire to learn *dharma*. He had to teach them as if he taught children the ABCs trying to raise them to the level of doctors. His many *dharma* talks were his means.

The First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma is plain, concise and easy to understand. It is the foundation of Buddhist practice, and therefore, Lord Shakyamuni always repeated it to his new disciples, though his senior disciples sometimes explained it in his place. The “Dharma Talk according to the Occasion” is built around the theory of *Arising by Conditions*²² he used in the first sermon.

By using the “Dharma Talk according to the Occasion,” Lord Shakyamuni gave a *dharma* talk according to the capacity of those listening to him. Every person is different. Every patient needs medication that is prescribed according to the illness. This is how various sutras as we have today were developed.

One of the *dharma* talks goes as follows:

There was an outright honest man named Culapanthaka. He often forgot even his own name and people made fun of him. He swept the monastery with a broom every day, and Lord Shakyamuni noticed him and thought: “He is honest and pure, but he lacks focus. It is a pity.” When he approached the man, the man confessed: “I am such a fool that I even forget my name.” Lord Shakyamuni replied, “A person who knows that he is foolish is not a fool. A person who believes that he is wise and behaves

²² Engi [縁起].

arrogantly is a real fool.” Upon hearing it, the man looked back at Lord Shakyamuni with shining eyes. Lord Shakyamuni instantly grasped his capacity and said, “You are pure and honest. That is very good. You shall recite and remember what I tell you now. You can do it.” He praised the honesty and diligence of the man and encouraged him. He was delighted. Lord Shakyamuni advised: “The beauty of the swept garden. The beauty of the swept garden. Keep reciting this when you sweep the garden with your mind fully focused on it.”

The man somehow managed to memorize it, and did so from morning until night every day, fully focused on it. His diligence was not ordinary. People who had made fun of him gradually began to respect him. He finally reached the state he could “just” recite it and “just” sweep, and at last he fully gave up all extra thoughts and attained emancipation. His personality changed. He was no longer the Culapanthaka he used to be. He was full of confidence. In joyful gratitude, he asked for permission to see Lord Shakyamuni and said,

“I was not sweeping.”

It was a state he had totally surpassed the act of sweeping, though he was indeed sweeping. Lord Shakyamuni was so pleased to see that the man had attained such a capacity. However, Lord Shakyamuni examined him to make sure he had attained it.

So he asked, “Who are you?”

This is an unusual hook. It was an open examination. The man, who had already overcome such “bad habits of mind,” did not get hooked by the word. He “just” picked up the broom and he “just” swept the garden. There was no Culapanthaka there. He could do so because he had attained emancipation. Lord Shakyamuni, seeing that he had truly attained it, said to people of the *sangha*,

“The important thing is to fully concentrate on one thing. Look at Culapanthaka. By fully concentrating on sweeping, he has

attained enlightenment!”

Lord Shakyamuni praised Culapanthaka in front of the gathering. True capacity cannot be hidden. He is a great practitioner called “Foremost in Holding on to practice,” one of the sixteen *arahats*.²³

Thus, Shakyamuni gave a *dharma* talk fully recognizing the person’s character. Indeed, the way he successfully convinced the first five disciples is the best example of the Dharma Talk according to Occasions. Those remarks in quotation are scant in historical description. Many of them are my own interpretation. Some may well say they are all fake. I am willing to accept that.

Lord Shakyamuni said,

“When living nowhere, the true mind will arise.”

On another occasion, the sutra says,

“The past mind cannot be obtained, the present mind cannot be obtained, the future mind cannot be obtained.”

Also, it is said,

“The Buddha enters me; I enter the Buddha.”

Still it is said,

“If you wish to know a cause in the past, look at the effect at present. If you wish to know the effect in the future, look at the cause at present.”

Also,

“In my original mind, I have nothing to seek.”

²³ An arahat is a person who has attained supreme enlightenment.

Still it is said,

“In the past, present and future, there is only one mind. There is no other *dharma* outside the mind. The three of Mind, Buddha and People are all one.”

And so on. The maxims are endless.

These words of Lord Shakyamuni are the core of all the eighty-four thousand *dharma* talks he gave and the life of Lord Shakyamuni. If one attains the true meaning of these words by sitting upright in the zazen posture, “just” doing zazen, one can directly understand the true intentions of Lord Shakyamuni. There is only one truth. This is the world words cannot explain.

It is apparent what Lord Shakyamuni intended to say. He simply wished that we would attain emancipation. That is why he used different words in each case. I am certain that Lord Shakyamuni used more than the eighty-four thousand words and phrases. Let them freely argue that what is not documented does not exist. What a joke! It is exactly like talking of Lord Shakyamuni without knowing who Lord Shakyamuni was. Ha ha ha!

If you do not accept this, you should leave. A person who has no Bodaishin, who only argues selfishly and arrogantly without concentrating on the practice of zazen, has no chance of understanding the *dharma*. In Lankavatāra Sutra, Lord Shakyamuni says, “Over the forty-nine years, I did not say one word.” Only when one truly understands its meaning, can one argue about the other. Well, then, let me see your state of understanding. Practice well.

The surrounding background and the system of Brahmin

To the east of the Shakya state, there was a similarly small kingdom of Koliya. The two kingdoms maintained friendly relationships for a long time, and marriages between them were common. So, they were regarded as the same family. The problem was the neighboring state in the west-south. It was an emerging major state, and was known to be the most powerful kingdom, Kosala. Due to its relative power, the Shakya was semi-independent and subordinate to it, and was constantly on alert against Kosala which was fond of fighting; and took an expansionist strategy and frequently caused territorial problems.

At the time of Shakyamuni's life, there were sixteen states in the area. The state of Shakya, located in the Himalaya, was regarded as a small emerging state on the outskirts. Though people had superior traits, they were not active in trading, and their state was taken as closed and uncivilized.

Those were the days under the control of Brahmins who established the four-caste system placing themselves on the top, discriminated against those below them on the hierarchy. The other three castes were Kshatriyas (the royal family and warriors), Vaisyas (ordinary citizens) and Sudras (slaves, laborers). These three classes were to serve the Brahmins.

However, the Shakya family fundamentally respected the rights of individuals, freedom and harmony. Therefore, they did not adopt the Brahmin's caste system. Naturally, they did not worship, respect or serve Brahmins, and accordingly were looked down by the Brahmins. This makes perfect sense.

Soon after enlightenment of Lord Shakyamuni, Buddhist teaching expanded rapidly, which caused various problems for the Brahmins and their followers. The Shakya family was often treated bitterly. However, most of them respected the virtue of Lord Shakyamuni and became his disciples. This explains how great Lord Shakyamuni was.

Shakyamuni's motto was to help cultivate honesty, value the

truth, and encourage people who practice diligently. He never made use of the power of gods or bound people by apocalyptic threats. He valued the mutual admission of human dignity and believed that respecting and loving each other was the true way to build a society in which people live peacefully. That was the whole point of Shakyamuni's teaching, the true *dharma* gate that urges self-discipline. It was liberation from the spells of the Brahmins.

As a result, people who had been discriminated against came to respect Lord Shakyamuni. Trading and commercial activities were flourishing in the capital city of each state, and many people were rich. They moved around quite widely and knew the surrounding world quite well. They were intelligent, patient, diligent and cooperative. They maintained a wide network and absorbed a variety of cultures.

Naturally, they were not much bound by borders, ethnicity, beliefs or traditions. The rich people and the traders paid little attention to the Brahmin's caste system, because their life was centered around their own economic activities.

On the contrary, those Brahmins who boasted of their authority, despised those who followed Lord Shakyamuni because they could not control them, and intentionally mistreated them.

Lord Shakyamuni traveled from one city to another, accompanied by many capable disciples and gave open *dharma* talks. Certainly, he preached to his disciples, but he also aimed to reach ordinary people. He knew that many high-ranked officials, members of the noble class and intellectuals also gathered when he gave *dharma* talks. During that time, most states followed the Brahmins' caste system. Lord Shakyamuni deliberately chose big cities to practice his mercy and compassion and to try and reform the caste system.

Lord Shakyamuni practiced mendicancy in a courteous,

dignified, and beautiful way, emitting gentleness. He gave sermons when he wanted, and yet he was humble. These helped the teachings of Lord Shakyamuni to spread widely. His natural posture and fairness to everyone encouraged people of different social statuses to be aware of their common humanity and raised their spirits, giving them joy and peace of mind.

Naturally, they thanked him and followed his teachings. Those in noble classes, influential figures, intellectuals, and the rich understood him deeply and paid respect also to his disciples and donated to them as well. Thus, the *sangha* expanded rapidly. It is understandable that their monasteries were soon built here and there.

Meanwhile, Brahmins were strict with precepts and customs, and they themselves had to keep them strictly. That was how they maintained dignity. To keep their minds calm, they had to stay away from cities and followed difficult and painful practices in the hills and forest by themselves. Until Lord Shakyamuni appeared, they could enjoy their dignity by following their style of living.

True religion relieves pain and gives pleasure. By sticking to a religion or conviction, the ego becomes strong, and conflict arises. We find this pattern in today's world. We need to fundamentally reexamine religion and conviction.

Vulture Peak and the Flower Sermon (Nenge-Mishō)

The venue which played the most important roles in the Buddhist *dharma* is the Vulture Peak, or Griddhakuta, where the First Patriarch was born, and where the Lotus Sutra and the Sutra of Immeasurable Life were taught. It is the supreme peak.

The Lotus Sutra says, “The Lord always stayed at Vulture Peak,” or “He always gave a sermon here.” Shakyamuni declared

that he always stays at Vulture Peak and continues to give sermons. Here, Lord Shakyamuni prays that the great *dharma* will live forever, that all the nations will live happily, that the tides will be calm in all oceans, and that the body and mind will be at peace. How deeply thankful we are. Gasshō, I pray.

One day, Shakyamuni invited people to Vulture Peak for a special reason. Everybody thought there must be an important event today. They gathered, watched Lord Shakyamuni carefully and listened to him intently.

Lord Shakyamuni picked up one of the flowers that were donated for decoration, raised it up and twisted it a little. That was all. That was the sermon of the day and the core of the event that was about to begin.

What did Lord Shakyamuni want to teach?

“Just, this is it.” It was his way to give a *dharma* talk by the body-wheel, fully representing himself in it. People could not understand the mind of Lord Shakyamuni. One of them, Venerable Mahakasyapa, however, was different. He read Shakyamuni’s mind and broke into a subtle smile (Hagan-mishō). A person who is pure and transparent has a thoroughly clear vision. Both of them were pure. Lord Shakyamuni immediately recognized that Mahakasyapa had understood.

The chapter on Shakyamuni Buddha in *the Essential Collection of the Lamp* by the lineage of zen writes,

One day, Lord Shakyamuni was at Vulture Peak. He picked up a flower and showed it to the people assembled. They were silent. Only Mahakasyapa broke into a subtle smile. Lord Shakyamuni said,

“I possess the true Dharma eye, the marvelous mind of Nirvana, the true form of the formless, the subtle Dharma Gate that is not based on words or letters, transmitted separately from the teachings. This I entrust to

Mahakasyapa.”

This incident of the subtle smile symbolizes the birth of the first patriarch. It is the most precious event. Venerable Mahakasyapa firmly received the core message of Lord Shakyamuni. He was the only person Lord Shakyamuni witnessed directly and approved. How delighted and relieved Lord Shakyamuni felt! The great *dharma* was finally transmitted. It was a truly glorious moment.

The wonderful message at the Vulture Peak
the Gate of the Emancipation
To hold a flower and to make a subtle smile
What does this mean?
Who knows the heart of the Buddhas
and their great *wisdom*?
Mahakasyapa opened the world in full bloom

The true meaning of Nenge-mishō is, “This is it. Others are not. This is not the others. Eyes are not ears. Now is not the past. The fact is not the concept.” Look well. You cannot see it with eyes that are preoccupied. See it without eyes. This is the same as saying “Just” see it! All the people gathered other than Venerable Mahakasyapa were blind.

Cherries in Yoshino blossom every year
Chop the tree and find where blossoms are
Ikkyū-Sōjun²⁴

Anyone can hold up a flower. Everyone can smile. However, it is not at all easy to “just” hold it up, and “just” smile. We practice “just” doing it. “Just” is to be pure and selfless. It is the heart of

²⁴ [一休宗純],1394-1481.

Shinjin-datsuraku²⁵ – dropping off of body and mind – no body, no mind, and it is the truth of enlightenment.

I wish you would deeply read the sixth Kōan, a zen question, in *Mumonkan*, the Gateless Gate: “Shakyamuni holds up a flower.” The commentary by Master Mumon Ekai²⁶ is superb. It describes how the true practitioners should be, showing the essence of flowers of a dead tree.

Limitless Mercy and Compassion

The sermon Shakyamuni gave did not depend on dignity, supernatural powers, eccentric logic, restrictions, or related rituals. Everyone wants to be liberated and free from anxiety. He urged those who wished to attain such a state to practice consciously. It was plain and approachable. After the First Sermon, excellent disciples and followers mushroomed in number supporting the teaching of the Buddha. The five disciples and the Ten Great disciples played central roles.

As the number of disciples increased, so did sponsors who donated monasteries here and there, counting to the hundreds and thousands, small and large.

Many questions were given to Lord Shakyamuni. Some had no Bodaishin, and asked a question wide of the mark. Those who had strong secular and selfish desires tended to ask a lot and argue with him. They were tedious and troublesome. However, Lord Shakyamuni explained to them kindly and politely. Here is an example:

To overcome different kinds of confusions, such as anger, greed, illusion, arrogance is like a snake molting and

²⁵ 身心脱落.

²⁶ Wumen Huikai [無門慧開], (1183-1260), a Chinese zen master.

discarding its old skin. A practitioner who has overcome those problems, who has a calm mind, and who has removed the bad habits of mind is like a snake that has casted off its skin.

Using such concrete examples of transformation, Lord Shakyamuni explains how practice is important. On another occasion, he said:

Make a step forward by yourself just like a horn of a rhino. Use no violent means on matters, do not annoy others, discard attachments to your children and wife. As a deer in the forest searches for food freely, so a wise man searches for independence and freedom.

Here, Lord Shakyamuni urges serious practice using a rhino horn to exemplify steady progress without diversion. He explains the point without showing concrete methods of practice. This is because explaining the supreme path to such a state will not work for ordinary people. The same is true with the following sermon which indicates how Lord Shakyamuni took trouble to give his message.

Never commit adultery with another's wife. Do not make a false speech. Do not steal others' belongings...

And,

Do not decorate yourself with flowers. Do not wear perfume...

There are countless teachings of this sort. They have nothing to do with true practices. They are simply straightforward

matters of ethics. Lord Shakyamuni's wish is to help people open "the Dharma Gate of Emancipation" and attain true peace of mind.

Why, then, did he give such roundabout sermons? Such messages can nurture a reflective mind, foster self-discipline, ploughing the soil of mind and seeds, so that the Bodaishin will grow. He began with these simple teachings, inviting people into understanding the law of *cause and effect*.

To guide people to salvation is to give utmost mercy and compassion like a mother's loves for her child. Therefore, Lord Shakyamuni felt that "All people are my children." What generosity he has! For this great personality, ordinary people in cities highly respected Lord Shakyamuni.

It was a discourse that aimed at restoring humanity, totally different from previous religions or faiths. The popularity of Lord Shakyamuni skyrocketed. Naturally, frictions arose among existing religious societies and their followers out of envy and dissatisfaction.

Enormous challenges were made by the followers of Brahmanism which had a strong presence in those days. Fame and battle are contrary to the Buddhist *dharma*, like the summer and winter. They cannot get along well. Brahmins approached Lord Shakyamuni and made nasty remarks. He smiled and said, "It would be good to leave, for those who are unripe and arrogant."

They talked of godly mighty authority, manipulated people's feelings of owe and respect, controlling the mind of society always backed up by their power. Power confines people's lives and freedom; faith restrains their heart. It is the most troublesome pattern; the danger of religion.

Lord Shakyamuni first of all wanted to liberate people by breaking the spell. He wished for true self-reliance of people who have good reason and free will.

There were frequent dialogues such as this interesting one:

One day, the chief of one village, who was a follower of Brahmanism, visited Lord Shakyamuni to challenge him: “A well trained Brahmin by performing rituals according to rules of Brahmanism is able to be reborn in heaven after his death. Can you do that?”

“Before I answer, please allow me to ask you a question. If one throws a big stone into a pond, it sinks. Then, if Brahmins gather around and perform a big ritual saying ‘Come up, the stone!,’ will the stone float up?”

“No! A stone that has sunk cannot float,” replied the village chief.

Lord Shakyamuni further asked,

“Well, then, someone threw a bottle of oil into a pond, and the bottle broke and the oil floated up. At that time, if Brahmins perform a ritual and say, ‘The oil, sink!,’ will the oil sink?” The village chief replied,

“No. The oil will float and not sink.” Lord Shakyamuni continued,

“That should be so. Those who have made right practices in their life will be reborn in heaven after their death, but those who have made wrong actions will fall into hell. Chief, this is my answer.”

In response, the village chief said,

“I understood it well. Your *dharma* is splendid!”

Upon listening to clear answers by Lord Shakyamuni, the chief instantly took refuge in gratitude and became his earnest follower. From his pure and clean appearance, he did not seem to be attached to Brahmanism, but he had not encountered another superior path. It is possible that due to his social surroundings, he had no choice but to follow Brahminism. Those with wholesome spirits became deep followers of Lord Shakyamuni one after another, liberated from the spell thanks to his *dharma* talks.

On the other hand, there were annoying people who were religious but not straightforward.

“Hermits, ordinary people, the royalty and Brahmins made numerous sacrifices to gods. Have they overcome the suffering of living and aging?” Even beautiful habits which are against the law of *cause and effect* may blind and confuse us about what we should do today. We should not be spellbound by religion, prayer, fengshui, lucky days, thoughts, fortune-telling or palm reading.

Lord Shakyamuni says,

“They aspire, praise, yearn and donate. They hope to gain benefits and attain their desires. People who are devoted to making donations are always greedy with their worldly lives. They have not overcome the suffering of living and aging.”

Donations or kindness with underlying motives are all confusion and a ticket to hell.

On another occasion, a person asked Lord Shakyamuni, “If those who are devoted to making donations have not overcome the suffering of living and aging by their prayers, who among the gods and the people have overcome suffering?”

In reply, Lord Shakyamuni said,

“A person who has perfectly understood and clarified such a situation in this world, who is not distressed by anything in this world, who is full of peace of mind, who has no confusion or suffering, who has nothing to desire. He is the person who has overcome living and aging.”

Such a session of question and answer continued endlessly. How laborious it was! Nevertheless, Lord Shakyamuni believed in that the people would awaken someday, and kept offering sermons tirelessly.

What is amazing about Lord Shakyamuni is that he adjusted his speech according to the capacity of the audience. If he began with a supreme *dharma* talk, nobody would have understood it. Therefore, he talked patiently even if roundabout, as if peeling

off layers of thin skin. If a listener does not yet have the Bodaishin, he will not appreciate the precious tears of Lord Shakyamuni, hence such endless dialogue. His mercy was all there was. What a truly precious lord! Gasshō.

Disasters

Three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance are the representatives of suffering. They are dangerous feelings that may accompany jealousy, hatred, or fury and can sometimes prompt one into killing. Where there is fame or prosperity, next to it is always jealousy. Out of jealousy of Brahmins and other religious bodies, Lord Shakyamuni and his community were bitterly treated.

This is an incident that happened at Jetavana Monastery. As the capital of Kosala, it was a major commercial city and was prosperous like Rajagrha in Magadha. The place was lively with people from all walks of life. Naturally, the authority of the Brahmins was enormous, and so was their jealousy.

The Jetavana Monastery was the first center of Lord Shakyamuni's propagation in this area. The fact that the monastery was built scared Brahmins beyond words. Their priority was to disgrace people's respect for the monastery, Lord Shakyamuni and his disciples at all costs. They used all possible means to give Lord Shakyamuni trouble.

One day, a beautiful wandering prostitute, Cinca-Manavica, appeared during the *dharma* talk, and spread a false rumor, "I was raped by Shakyamuni and am pregnant." Indeed, her belly was swollen and attracted people as if she was in her last month. Lord Shakyamuni and his disciples quietly watched how things would play out. She talked in a loud voice, with big gestures. Then, alas, her belt loosened and the filling fell out; her trick was

revealed.

Everyone laughed and she had no choice but to run away. Greed, an abnormal character and jealousy combine to give rise to madness. That has not changed from the olden days.

The Brahmins tactics were well planned. First, they tamed the prostitute. She came into the monastery when other people were leaving; when people gathered she would leave. When everyone became suspicious about such behavior, she shouted, "Shakyamuni seduced me and I got pregnant." That was their scenario. She gradually inflated her belly and made such a noise.

It was a time-consuming and well-planned plot. No wonder people were deceived. Lord Shakyamuni anticipated this kind of incident, but he was impeccably built with virtue, Great Mercy and Great Compassion, without discrimination.

Seeing this failure, the Brahmins thought of an even more vicious plot. They cheated Sundali, another prostitute into a trick, and spread a rumor that she became intimate with Lord Shakyamuni. Later they killed her and buried her in Jetavana Monastery. How cruel! What unforgivable devils!

They then told King Pasenadi of her disappearance and said, "According to rumor such and such, she might be hidden in the Jetavana Monastery."

The wise king was a devoted follower of Lord Shakyamuni and fully believed that disciples in the monastery would not be involved in such a matter. Uncomfortable with the Brahmins' behavior, the king let them search the monastery. Sundali's body was found. The king was convinced that the Brahmins were responsible and observed them, waiting for an opportunity to arrest them all.

The conspirators came out proudly. They placed the body in the cart and showed it around the city, speaking ill of the Jetavana Monastery and their entire community. They successfully stirred up the people's antipathy. When the monks of the monastery

went around asking for alms, they were bitterly shut out and came back depressed. They reported what had happened to them to Lord Shakyamuni.

Lord Shakyamuni quietly said to them, “Leave it alone. Within seven days or so, the rumor will disappear.” He did not bother himself about it. And as he anticipated, the rumor totally disappeared. The plot was uncovered and the conspirators were arrested. King Pasenadi had it thoroughly investigated. The chief villain may have been executed.

A good horse runs when he sees the shadow of the whip. Lord Shakyamuni knew of the King Pasenadi’s quick response. The incident led to greater respect and trust in Lord Shakyamuni, the Jetavana Monastery and its *bhikkhus*. The harassment increased people’s trust and respect for Buddhism, which flourished. King Pasenadi reinforced the guards against the conspirators and their criminal acts stopped.

Interestingly, when King Pasenadi spoke with Lord Shakyamuni, they talked directly face-to-face, but when he spoke with the Brahmins, he kept the curtain drawn talking from a distance. The King trusted and respected Lord Shakyamuni, but distrusted the Brahmins who he targeted for reform.

By way of background, at that time Brahmins took the lead in all festivals, they controlled the government as if they were ministers. They had their own town and village, and led luxurious lives. They protected their followers and did what they could to maintain their privileges.

Kosala was an emerging kingdom, and had to accept the traditions of the Brahmins as conciliatory measures. In the end, the kingdom was absorbed under their influence and the society’s color was tainted by that of the Brahmins’.

The powerful Brahmins were included: Canki, Tarukkha, Pokkharasati, Janussoni, and Todeyya. Thirty more masterminds worked to keep people under depravation. It was a

difficult time.

It is easy to see the trouble facing King Pasenadi. The kind of disasters that befell Lord Shakyamuni, then, are also understandable. It is not difficult to imagine how King Pasenadi relied on Lord Shakyamuni who had many excellent disciples.

On yet another occasion, when Lord Shakyamuni was begging for alms and approached the house of a Brahmin called Bharadwaja, the Brahmin shouted at him, “This meager nasty monk! Do not get close to this sacred area!” Here again, the great mercy and compassion of Lord Shakyamuni worked to save the Brahmin. The *dharma* talk he made embracing and feeling pity for these people’s thoughtless ignorance awakened them and they became his followers.

The talk he gave at that time was also powerful, but it focused on ethics and not the true Dharma Gate he would have intended. It went, “Those who have anger, those who have hatred, those hypocritical evils, malicious people with wrong views, we call them vulgar people...” and the talk went on. Lord Shakyamuni Buddha gave a perfect account of the truth. He was never hostile, instead persuaded people using clear logic and the tears of a merciful mind, to awaken their Bodaishin. It is truly an expression of “All the people are my children.” How honorable and precious!

Gasshō, I pray.

After leading the evil Angulimala into confession and awakening his Bodaishin, Lord Shakyamuni’s teaching spread even farther and his disciples increased. More monasteries were built. Jetavana was the most prominent monastery in Shravasti, followed by Migāra-mātupāsāda and Rajakarama. Lord Shakyamuni mostly stayed in one of these monasteries when he was in Shravasti. They say there was a time when nearly two thousand *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* lived there, and two-thirds of the citizens of Shravasti became Buddhists.

Among the main troublemakers was Devadatta. He persistently attacked Lord Shakyamuni, one time even dropping a gigantic stone down a cliff trying to hit Lord Shakyamuni. It was close but fortunately he escaped by a hairbreadth; only his foot was injured.

Devadatta was not satisfied with this. He seduced Ajatashatru, a Magadha king, into getting an elephant drunk and releasing it to charge the Buddha. But the elephant stopped just in front of Lord Shakyamuni. Failing again, he continued to commit criminal deeds, and fell into endless hell. The law of *case and effect* cannot be avoided.

One day, Lord Shakyamuni visited the king of Veranja as invited, together with his five hundred *bhikkhus* to preach sermons. However, a severe famine that year made it difficult to follow the plan. Lord Shakyamuni and his disciples spent a week calmly eating wheat and other horse feed. In time of hardship, it is important just to concentrate on the present moment and keep the mind quiet. That is the way of Lord Shakyamuni. That is the Buddha.

Why did he visit with such a large group? His intention was to give *dharma* talks to the people by asking for alms and to calm the people's minds. When their minds are honest and clean, society will be stable. The king's policies will work well. The mind of Lord Shakyamuni is limitlessly grand, full of mercy and compassion.

According to Saint Nichiren²⁷, nine major disasters befell the Buddha. There must have been countless smaller incidents. In the middle of his tireless efforts to save people from their suffering and give them pleasures, the Buddha was often involved with trouble. The more difficulties he encountered, the more his true greatness shone. Troubles provided opportunities to show the magnificence of The Dharma Gate of Emancipation,

²⁷ [日蓮], 1222-1282.

the power of staying calm.

Good luck is not always good. And bad luck is not necessarily bad. If someone comes out suddenly and asks Lord Shakyamuni, “Wait a moment, what if good luck and bad luck cross over?” The Buddha would happily respond, “I cherish your words.” When one’s Bodaishin is true, the Dharma Gate of Emancipation is present. There is no need to worry about suffering or enlightenment. Gasshō.

A convenient means

It is suspicious when one says, “A lie can be justified as a means to an end.” He who lies will also steal. We heard the saying in our childhood. Falsehood is the root of evil, the origin of impurity, and cannot be allowed in today’s world where a skillful liar can be commended. However, there is no justification for acts that rot the mind of the people. More wrong *causes* produce more wrong *effects*. Failing to distinguish right from wrong will destroy the world. The way to uphold the dignity of our nation lies in truth.

One day, a fool confessed to Confucius, “My father committed theft. I am honest, am I not?” Confucius replied, “Do you have benevolence?” He meant to say, “Do you have no mind to respect and to save your father? You are a helpless fool!” Children help their parents, and parents save their children. That should be the way. Though people should be honest, it is foolish and even dangerous to openly speak ill of others and disclose private things. The absence of real sympathy deprives society of tenderness. If we lose humane feelings, it is all over.

Venerable Purna, one of the leading disciples, asked the Buddha about a *convenient means*²⁸. He wanted assurance from him. Lord Shakyamuni replied, “A *convenient means* is to use the

²⁸ *Upāya* in Sanskrit, Hoben in Japanese.

right means for the right objective that is enlightenment.” It is so straightforward, eliminating all confusion. That is indeed the work of Lord Shakyamuni. Only he could make such a clear and prompt reply. Venerable Purna was convinced and bowed.

The Buddha said, “To foster the Bodhisattva in the minds of others, one must first have *mercy* and *compassion* in one’s own mind. A mind full for caring others. This is the mind of *maitri* and *karuna*, *mercy* and *compassion*.”

Venerable Purna instantly asked, “Is it acceptable to make up a false story, if the intention is to think compassionately of the other as a *convenient means*?” It was a tricky question.

Lord Shakyamuni replied,

“You must not confuse lies with *convenient means*. They are totally different in nature. A *convenient means* is not false. A *convenient means* is a milestone toward enlightenment, a parable that guides people to the right way.”

And he went on as follows.

“One day, a mother who lost her only son came and told me that she had visited shamans, magician, doctors and ascetics to ask them to revive of her son. Nothing worked. She pled for this and was prepared to sacrifice her own life.”

This is all preface. The Buddha was probably challenging Purna, “What would you say to her?” Nothing is more painful than losing one’s child. Tears can only be embraced by other tears. The Buddha of great mercy and great compassion certainly had tears to help. In such a case, the best way to show mercy and compassion is to offer a way to lift the sorrow as soon as possible. This is *dharma* talk by the mind-wheel. He used this example as a *convenient means*.

“I spoke to the woman in sorrow as follows. ‘You must be in acute pain. I understand it well. I shall make your wish come true and save your son’s life. I need just one thing to make it happen —a few mustard seeds. Bring them to me. But you must get them from a family that has not lost anyone in the family. Now, go out and look.’ Then the woman said, ‘Yes, I will get some mustard seeds,’ and went out, leaving the dead body of her son.”

This is the main story. It has deep implications that illustrate “the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*.” It is a means to the Bodaishin. The mother in the midst of deepest sorrow was ready to sacrifice anything for her son. However great the love of mother, if it ignores the truth of the law of *cause and effect*, one will simply suffer in vain. Being in such pain as to be ready to sacrifice oneself is deeply painful. Why is it that only I am suffering so much? This is an illusion. Mercy and compassion are *convenient means* to awaken one who is lost in illusion.

She desperately visited houses in the village, searching for a family where no one had died, but she could not find one. Finally, she understood the words of Lord Shakyamuni. Any person born will inevitably die. A life once dead cannot be revived. Realizing the truth of the law of *cause and effect*, she vividly felt the transience of *impermanence*.

“When she came back, she silently buried the body of her son, held up the Bodaishin, and joined the disciples.” This is the conclusion of the Buddha’s *dharma* talk on *convenient means*. Listening to this talk, Purna was deeply moved, wholeheartedly persuaded, and gratified. That is good.

“A lie can be justified as a means to an end” is like water used to prime a well or planting seeds to help people who are in a different dimension. The Buddha used anecdotes as means out of compassion to teach the woman about the law of *cause and effect*.

A convenient means is a fiction that should be truly useful for the person concerned. It is a good lie, as it were. All the renowned literatures of the world are of this sort.

Here is the most famous case of Buddha's use of a *convenient means*. He said,

“A wealthy man's house caught fire. The master was absent. When he returned, he was astonished, because his children were still playing in the house. They were so absorbed in play that they did not notice the fire.

The father shouted at his children, ‘Children, run away! Come out!’ His children, however, were so obsessed by play that they did not listen to their father.

Then, the father said, ‘Children, here I have a special rare toy. Come out now and play with it.’ Hearing this, the children ran out of the house in fire and able to escape from the disaster.”

Is this not an excellent parable? The next one also has a deep meaning. The Buddha said,

“A doctor who had several children went out for a trip. When he came back, he found that the children had mistakenly taken poison and were agonizing in great pain. In astonishment, he prepared medicine for them.

The children with honest minds took it and recovered, but the ones who did not would not take it.

The doctor, their father, decided to take bold steps to cure them. He told his children,

‘I will go on a long journey. I am getting old and may die at any time. When you are informed of my death, take the medicine I place here and get cured.’

Then he set off for a journey.

After some while, he sent a message that he had died.

The children were deep in sorrow at this news and moaned, 'Oh, father has died. We no longer have anyone to turn to.' In the midst of despair, they remembered their father's request and took the medicine, and got well."

On another occasion, the only son of a wealthy man became a monk, wandered around and lost contact with his family. After a while, his father spotted him and told him that he was his son. However, the son would not believe it. This is a fictional story about the father's painful efforts to help his son realize that he was son of a wealthy man, and heir to a fortune (namely the Buddhahood).

This *convenient means* is most often cited in sutras as a metaphor to spark the Bodaishin in the listener.

The Amitabha Sutra exaggerates the metaphor to illustrate the scenes from heaven:

The country where Amitabha resides is surrounded by four jewels of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and crystal. In a pond of the golden land sprout lotus flowers that emit beautiful colorful light, a melodious music plays all the time, --- elegant birds are tweeting, there is no disease, no suffering, no crime --- and everyone enjoys endless life.

This is hard to believe, and the extravagant promises resemble a new cult or religion that may confuse people. Though it is not all lie to say that the land where Amitabha lives is world of gold, silver and gems. *Dhyana* is a pure land, a most precious and supreme treasure house. The Buddha is urging us, "Do not you want to go to such a wonderful and pure land? If you want to do so, you must first establish the Bodaishin." It is the Buddha's great mercy and compassion.

Such an improvised metaphor has rich implications. Lord

Shakyamuni is truly a genius improviser and a novelist in evoking the Bodaishin. You may wonder how he can create a story instantaneously. Because he always molds his *dharma* talk according to the mind-wheel which best suits the person's needs, he can create a convincing fiction in no time. You can see the limitless mercy and compassion of the Buddha.

Lord Shakyamuni frequently used these short, very simple metaphors based on the law of *cause and effect* to help people understand that a good *cause* produces a good *effect* and a bad *cause* produces a bad *effect*. In this way, people were directed to lead their lives carefully, reflecting on the totality of their behavior, following the law of *cause and effect*.

The Buddha used no super-natural powers. "Divine power," "the wonderful power of Avalokitesvara's wisdom," or "the power of Avalokitesvara's mindfulness" refers to the power of *dhyana*. They describe how magnificent *nirvana* is attained by emancipation. Nothing is more magnificent than the world where the mind is liberated.

The Ten Principal Disciples

1. Sariputra²⁹

Let us now turn to the Ten Principal Disciples. Please be careful as they may be called by different names. Their births and deaths are mostly unknown. In any case, all ten great disciples are superb and extraordinary. First of all, they all have enthusiastic Bodaishin, and accordingly their lives are unusual. Their stories are spontaneous, therefore fascinating, which also

²⁹ Sharihotsu [舍利弗] in Japanese.

explains why it is difficult to establish their stories. I have to rely on the capacity of readers.

As far as the *dharma* is concerned, the words and character of the patriarchs and those awakened ones including Lord Shakyamuni can mean enormously different things whether one has the Bodaishin or not. You may consider that the life of *dharma* lies in the Bodaishin.

Sariputra is also called Sariputta. His name repeatedly appears in the Heart Sutra. He was born into a family of Brahmins in Magadha as one of seven siblings. His knowledge and intellect were unsurpassed. When he was eight years old, he traveled the kingdom. At that time, he encountered an annual event held in Magadha where a debate contest was held in the presence of the king.

There were four upper seats. One was for King, another for the Prince, and the other two were for the debaters. Upon hearing this, Sariputra calmly took one of the debaters' seats composedly.

The king and ministers took it for fun and let the bold boy join the debate. Alas! One after another, he defeated the other contestants in his argument. Finally, a great debater appeared and the debate began. Sariputra responded perfectly and won all debates.

The king was astonished and gave him the title, "Foremost in Wisdom." He also gave Sariputra a plot of land and let him lead the scholarly work of the kingdom. He was a genius.

Together with his *dharma* friend Maudgalyayana, he practiced under the guidance of Hermit Sanjaya. Apparently, Hermit Sanjaya was a highly respected person. What if he had first encountered Lord Shakyamuni? To be blessed with good *conditions* or not will change one's life. Time waits for no one and we have to value *conditions*.

By sixteen, he had attained the state of forgetting himself, and he already knew what *emptiness* was. He had the *dharma*

condition to meet Lord Shakyamuni by encountering Assaji. A person with Issekigen looks different even when he is asking for alms. Sariputra, who understood everything by hearing a single hint and could see a thousand miles ahead in one glance could not have missed Assaji. This exemplifies “A person who has an eye is afraid of a person who has an eye.” True practitioners echo each other.

“Who is your teacher?” asked Sariputra. This is not a question an ordinary person will ask at the first encounter. Assaji recognized Sariputra as a highly attained practitioner and replied politely. I suppose Sariputra asked a lot of difficult questions.

Assaji who had already learned the dignified truth of *dharma* explained the whole of the First Sermon enthusiastically. He was deeply moved by Sariputra’s amazing ability to learn and wanted to introduce him to Lord Shakyamuni.

Although Sariputra knew what *emptiness* was, he did not know how important it was. The scales have dropped from his eyes while listening. He realized the real meaning of *emptiness*, and he experienced that a stuff that was stuck in his mind had disappeared. He was greatly pleased. A person who has practiced hard for a supreme goal will feel great joy when he attains it.

Assaji, on his part, could totally share Sariputra’s joy. I can see that they appreciated the conversation all the more. Oh, this is the Way! They both cherished the moment.

This *dharma condition* opened a new life for Sariputra. He was so determined to meet Lord Shakyamuni that he told his friend Maudgalyayana everything that had happened. Maudgalyayana was a person of equally great ability and was gratified at the story. A true friend indeed!

Both Maudgalyayana and Sariputra had their followers, counting two hundred fifty or so and they all followed the two and became disciples of Lord Shakyamuni.

Even a genius like Lord Shakyamuni was struck by Sariputra's intelligence. He praised Sariputra saying, "Even if all the knowledge of India was put together, it would be merely the sixteenth of that of Sariputra."

Both Sariputra, Foremost in Wisdom, and Venerable Maudgalyayana, Foremost in Supernatural Powers, had deep knowledge, a keen sense of values, leadership, persuasiveness and management ability. They immediately received the respect of other disciples. With their support, the *sangha* of Lord Shakyamuni was organized well and made great progress.

Before encountering the three brothers of Kasyapa, Lord Shakyamuni had fifty followers or so. Now his followers expanded to more than one thousand three hundred.

Sariputra and Venerable Maudgalyayana fetched back the five hundred disciples who had been dissuaded by Devadatta and left the *sangha*. Let Devadatta go to hell through his own *karma*, but those misled disciples should not be left behind. This is another example of the capacity of Sariputra and Venerable Maudgalyayana.

Naturally, Lord Shakyamuni would be most delighted if his disciples attain enlightenment. However, Sariputra fell sick before he attained the state approved by Lord Shakyamuni, and left without attaining the final goal of the great emancipation, and returned to his home in the Nalaka village where he passed away. It was a half year after the death of Venerable Maudgalyayana.

His death was greatly mourned for the loss of a great figure.

How fortunate to have a true friend,
a peach tree in the valley is reflected on the water
Who knows the serenity of the eternal wisdom of *prajna*
Trying to look back at it,
a white cloud extends ten thousand miles

Not a bit of dust in the air, the *emptiness* dances in a dream
Kido, with reverence

2. Venerable Maudgalyayana³⁰

Maudgalyayana was a son of a Brahmin in Kolita village of Magadha. He had a beautiful countenance, a reputation as a most promising child prodigy, and mastered all his studies. Sariputra, his close friend from childhood lived in the neighboring village. Maudgalyayana was tired of watching other children playing meaninglessly, and one day both of them determined to become monks together. Maudgalyayana was an extraordinary intelligence from birth.

His character was full of honesty and determination, and he did not compromise easily. Such straightforwardness led him to misery in the end. He died slightly earlier than Sariputra, but around the same time.

His attainment was equivalent to that of Sariputra, outstanding among the Ten Principal Disciples. It is clear why Lord Shakyamuni trusted both of them. Seeing that the Buddha's *sangha* expands at an outperforming pace like a rising dragon, the five disciples at the First Sermon gave way entirely, lived on the outskirts and followed Lord Shakyamuni quietly.

There are also numerous anecdotes about Venerable Maudgalyayana. The Bon-odori dance, Japan's traditional summer event, has him at its origin. It is a practice of remembering ancestors known as Urabon-e. This evolved into a story of his supernatural powers.

With his supernatural powers, he could see through matters that ordinary people could not see. We do not know when he acquired those powers.

³⁰ Moggallna in Pali, Mokuren [目連] in Japanese.

One day, Venerable Maudgalyayana longed for his mother and searched for her using his powers. She was found in the Path of the Hungry Ghost, hung on a rope upside down, undernourished to skins and bones. He was astonished and saddened. He offered his mother food right away, but when she was about to eat, it turned to fire. Maudgalyayana cried out for sorrow and reported the details to Lord Shakyamuni and inquired the reasons.

Lord Shakyamuni explained “the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*.” “It is caused by her wrong deeds in a past life. She was too greedy and is now being accused by the *dharma* of *cause and effect*.” Venerable Maudgalyayana was instantly convinced and asked, “Then, how can I save my mother?” Good for him! He exercised the power of his mercy and compassion.

One cannot eat with another’s mouth. The world of *causes and effects* is one’s own, and the other person cannot do anything about it. However, this is the Buddha. He taught Venerable Maudgalyayana that there was the way that could turn the Path of hell and hungry ghost into the world of the Buddha with the power of mercy and compassion.

“Six *paramitas*” is one of key Buddhist terminology. They are six virtues at the core of the Bodhisattva. They are generosity, keeping of precepts, patience, diligent practice, *dhyana*, and wisdom. The practice of Buddhism is to live by these precepts right now precisely.

First comes generosity because of its significance, along with the horror of selfish greed and the difficulty of overcoming it. Greed is the opposite of giving and a source of evil. If one has a mind of giving, greed does not arise. Depending on whether an act comes from generosity or from greed, the effect will make a huge difference, like the difference between heaven and hell.

To bail out a person who has plunged into the Path of the Hungry Ghost, one has to vow and practice the true Way. The Way cannot be found without a person. Therefore, Lord

Shakyamuni indicated, "Make a gift to a true practitioner." Making an offering to a person who is truly practicing will increase the enlightenment in the world. Shining the Way will help many people and accumulate a great virtue.

Venerable Maudgalyayana practiced zazen with a large number of practitioners and afterwards offered them food. He continued to do so until the fifteenth of July to fulfill the instruction given by the Buddha. He used his supernatural powers and looked at his mother. She was on the way to heaven, convinced of the importance of giving and of detaching from selfish greed. Maudgalyayana danced for joy. Everyone around was pleased to see this and joined the dance. This is said to be the origin of the Bon-odori.

In this episode, Lord Shakyamuni shows the importance of mercy and compassion together with the significance of the six *paramitas*. A world without mercy and compassion is full of conflict and will ultimately perish. The world now has a whiff of this.

There is another anecdote.

Lord Shakyamuni did not begin a sermon at a gathering. When Ananda asked the reason, Lord said flatly, "I cannot give a sermon because there is an impure person among us." Then Venerable Maudgalyayana used his supernatural powers and spotted the impure *bhikkhu* and threw him out of the gathering. It appears that they confronted those who were hostile non-Buddhists, which in turn sparked hatred among them, resulting in tragedy. Venerable Maudgalyayana was attacked by violent opponents.

The right *dharma* has a dark side. A person without the Bodaishin is a non-Buddhist. The world without it can be in perfect darkness. Even Venerable Maudgalyayana encountered such a tragedy. Indeed, it is difficult to anticipate the law of *cause and effect*, even for the Buddhas of Three Worlds and patriarchs.

Sariputra, upon learning of the attack on Maudgalyayana, rushed to him as he was about to die. Sariputra lamented, “You of all people have supernatural powers!” Venerable Maudgalyayana replied, “My past deeds are so grave that I cannot use my powers now. I must die.” “Wait with me for a moment!” Sariputra desperately took care of his friend, but Venerable Maudgalyayana finally died. It was a sad end, unsuitable for someone as virtuous as him.

A number of incidents continued after this and Lord Shakyamuni was much disheartened. His interpretation was that a good *cause* produces a good *effect*, and a bad *cause* produces a bad *effect*. He concluded that due to the law of *causes and effects*, the *causes* and *conditions* of his previous lives had caused these bad incidents. You may refer to different accounts of the story.

Nothing is better than “forgetting oneself.” Soon after that, Sariputra also died and Lord Shakyamuni lost both of his trusted disciples. I sympathize with the depth of the Buddha’s sorrow.

Venerable Maudgalyayana had only one regret: he was unable to exert the last push to attain great enlightenment. I am sure he was deeply disappointed in himself. Enlightenment surely is. All one has to do is to follow the *dharma* of *causes* and *effects* and “just” be. Reaching this state of achievement, everyone is Venerable Maudgalyayana. A person who knows it will know. A person who does not know it will not.

The moon is fresh
A cricket is singing

I too wish to make an offering of no-offering to Venerable Maudgalyayana, Foremost in Supernatural Powers. Gasshō, I pray.

What does heaven utter?
What does the earth say?
Penetrating ten directions in zazen,
thousand eyes will open
Forgetting right or wrong,
will even erase Maha-Prajna
Still one will often miss the point

Kido, with reverence

3. Mahakasyapa³¹

Mahakasyapa is the first patriarch. He was the son of a rich Brahmin who lived near Rajagrha in Magadha. He was said to be born under a Bodhi tree. He became disciple to a hermit at the age of eight, and before long he attained the deepest essence. Such an outstanding boy! He pled with his parents to be a monk, but they forced him to marry to continue their blood line. He was around twenty and could not refuse. Using his intelligence, he put down conditions for a bride-to-be. His parents were troubled and asked eight Brahmins for help in finding a woman that would meet the requirements.

The *dharma conditions* were amazing. They located such a woman and the marriage arrangements were made. She was still sixteen years old, and she, too, was thinking of becoming a nun. Both Mahakasyapa and the woman sent a letter by messenger declining the marriage. However, the messengers met along the way and tore up the letters thinking of their families' future and their own. How smart those messengers were!

Mahakasyapa disguised himself as a beggar and went to her house to see. They learned that they were both determined to discard the secular life and knowing their mutual vows, they

³¹ Makakasho [摩訶迦葉].

married. They were smart people indeed. After all, out of their Bodaishin, they shaved hair and changed into rough clothes, not listening to others who tried to stop them, and became a monk and a nun.

When they reached a fork in the road, they made a decision. Together, they would surrender to their feelings, so they each took a different road to pursue their practice. How determined they were! What a strong Bodaishin she had! And she was most beautiful! It was a pity that her beauty caused her all sorts of problems. She was raped a number of times. However, she was a strong woman and did not curse her misfortunes or fall into sorrow. Her name was Bhadda Kapilani. She was also daughter of a Brahmin.

After the separation, Mahakasyapa followed the Brahmin practice. He did not know the true *dharma*. It was not easy to encounter the right master. However, while Mahakasyapa was meditating under a tree, Lord Shakyamuni passed by and they met coincidentally. Lord Shakyamuni quietly approached and spoke to him.

Seeing early plum blossoms, a person composed a poem.

A plum tree in the snowy village
Had blossomed last night in some branches

Another person who read the poem advised him, “*Some branches* will kill early blossoms. Change it to *one branch*.” Surprised, he vowed gratefully and followed his guide as master for the rest of his life.

Although it is not known what Lord Shakyamuni told him, Mahakasyapa was so gratified and requested, “You are my master! Please allow me to be your disciple.” When one has courage, intention will follow. Maybe, Mahakasyapa’s face was not that of an ordinary person. Lord Shakyamuni in response

gave a few words and left. He probably explained the core of Shikan-taza, “just” doing zazen.

Anyone can do zazen. The appearance is the same. What matters is inside; the difference can be as wide as heaven and earth. Mahakasyapa did “just” zazen, while others may be sitting the meditation of a non-Buddhist.

On the eighth day, Lord Shakyamuni visited Mahakasyapa again. Likely his visit was to examine Mahakasyapa in anticipation of his attainment of enlightenment.

Noticing Lord Shakyamuni, Mahakasyapa stood up quietly, “just” took off his robe, “just” folded it and offered it to the Buddha to sit. Seeing that his action was natural and traceless, Lord Shakyamuni was pleased.

When Lord Shakyamuni stood up, he said, “Mahakasyapa, the robe was soft and comfortable.” In return he took off his rag-made robe and gave it to Mahakasyapa. Such a remarkable relationship between master and disciple needs no comment. Lord Shakyamuni approved Mahakasyapa.

Life and death are to be pitied
like a cloud that changes form
In a dream I have walked
on the path of confusion and awakening
Having focused on just one thing,
I am awakened and describe
In a simple dwelling deep in the grasses,
the rain falls in the night

Later, Mahakasyapa met up with his wife Bhadda Kapilani, and they walked together asking for alms. However, they were bothered by people who made groundless stories about them. Lord Shakyamuni was deeply moved and did not disdain her having been raped. He said, “A person whose mind is not polluted

is not sinful.” Nevertheless, she was concerned that her presence cause Mahakasyapa problems and silently left him. What a practitioner with a pure Bodaishin! She is much to be praised and prayed for.

Mahakasyapa saw her off in sincerity, and at last became a disciple of Lord Shakyamuni. He stayed at the Bamboo Grove Monastery for a while, but then moved to a quiet forest and lived there alone and penetrated deep practice. That is why he is praised as “Foremost in Ascetic Practice.” Ascetic practice is to beg for alms, to wear a rag-made robe, and to practice *dhyana* diligently and calmly. He looked extremely shabby and people looked down on him. Mahakasyapa on his part had done away with himself. He simply practiced living the Way every day. He was not a weak person who would be bothered by such words. Even their evil words became the source of earnest practice. He rather pitied those people.

Lord Shakyamuni allowed Mahakasyapa to sit beside him. The way people looked at him changed from that moment on. It was an intention of the Buddha to make a silent but stern sermon to people with the message, “Look at Mahakasyapa and learn from him.” Thereafter, people called him Venerable Mahakasyapa respectfully.

The most insightful anecdote about Venerable Mahakasyapa is doubtlessly the great event of the Flower Sermon on the Vulture Peak when he became the first patriarch. The detail will be described in the section on Venerable Ananda.

When Venerable Mahakasyapa noticed the departure of the eighty-year old Shakyamuni, seven days had already passed. Lord Shakyamuni was on his way south to Magadha. “The Lord left without a word because he anticipated his death. He was worried about his county that had been destroyed. He must be heading home.” Without hesitation, Venerable Mahakasyapa followed Lord Shakyamuni.

Along the way, he encountered a messenger who informed him that the Buddha had died three days earlier. With deep regret, Venerable Mahakasyapa and his group hurried.

When they reached Kushinagar, many people had gathered and were mourning the loss of Lord Shakyamuni. The Buddha was about to be cremated. Bidding farewell had to be in the presence of Venerable Mahakasyapa who was entrusted with protecting the Great Dharma to send Lord Shakyamuni into ashes.

Forty-nine days after the sad ceremony, Venerable Mahakasyapa summoned five hundred *arahats* at Rajagrha and chaired the First Council to collect the teachings of the Lord Buddha, at the request of King Ajatashatru of Rajagrha.

Venerable Mahakasyapa emphasized the Bodaishin in particular. One will go out of the Buddhist way and depart from the true intention of Lord Shakyamuni if one does not have the Bodaishin. Ananda, who used to be an attendant of Lord Shakyamuni continued to attend Venerable Mahakasyapa, the greatest patriarch.

The Bodaishin leads one to another's Bodaishin. After many years of earnest practice, the time had finally come at dawn. Ananda attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. There was no more life or death. He boldly appeared in front of his senior disciples. Look! Look!

Venerable Mahakasyapa instantly recognized what had happened. It was the revival of the smile at the Vulture Peak.

Venerable Mahakasyapa said, "Take down the pole at the gate."³² That is, "You finally made it. Nothing is more pleasing than this!" He approved Ananda's attainment.

In this moment that the entirety of "**the true Dharma eye, the marvelous mind of Nirvana, not based on words or letters,**

³² Dharma has been transmitted. No more *dharm*a teaching is needed. The pole is a symbol of *dharm*a.

transmitted separately from teachings, from mind to mind” which he was entrusted by Lord Shakyamuni was successfully transmitted to Venerable Ananda. The lineage of the Shakyamuni Buddha was upheld. It was barely in time. I appreciate again the joy of Venerable Mahakasyapa day by day.
Gasshō.

After fulfilling his greatest duty, Mahakasyapa disappeared alone from the public scene into the mountains.

Thereafter, the time of Venerable Ananda set in and the whereabouts of Venerable Mahakasyapa were not known. I have no doubt he continued to lead people into enlightenment and salvation, teaching the absolute truth using the limitless power of nature, and showing that life and death is the great teaching of *impermanence*.

Many years of ascetic practices
 tell what is right or wrong
By the smile at holding a flower,
 the gate of emancipation was attained
Who knows there is no difference
 in the teachings of Patriarchs
In the space the Buddha *dharma*
 he extinguishes *emptiness* and non-existence

I devoutly believe in the great mercy and compassion of Venerable Mahakasyapa, the eminent patriarch.

Kido, with reverence

4. Subhuti³³

³³ Shubodai [須菩提].

Subhuti was born in the capital of Kosala as a son of a major Brahmin merchant. Subhuti was also commonly called Sunyata. He was extraordinarily distinguished as a prodigy. By the time he reached age 10, it is said, he had learned everything and there was nothing more to learn. His IQ must have been close to 300. For their intelligence and hard work, his family had been wealthy for generations. The Jetavana Monastery was donated by his uncle Sudatta.

After he had acquired Issekigen, he was praised as venerable “Foremost in Understanding *Emptiness*,” “Foremost in No-fighting,” and “Foremost in Receiving Offerings.” However, in his childhood, he was rough and short-tempered. Because of his intelligence and knowledge, he was arrogant and selfish. He looked down on people, and finally made fun of his parents. His parents were no fools. They thought that their son had promise, but he was not living in a way that was good for him. He should experience how the severity of real life. So, they disowned him. Spare the rod and spoil the child. It was not certain how old he was at that time.

It was at the Jetavana Monastery where Subhuti met Lord Shakyamuni. His father and uncle recommended that he visit the monastery. When Subhuti heard Lord Shakyamuni’s sermon, the teachings touched his mind directly. He was deeply moved and instantly became a disciple of Lord Shakyamuni. What a commendable person!

This anecdote tells us that an overly privileged upbringing can be problematic. And exceeding intellect can make one arrogant. Still this is different from being a villain or con man, thief or murderer, who are clearly public nuisances. He was honest and sincere at heart, but he was not reflective enough. Even if one is wise, not understanding oneself is sheer absurdity.

Lord Shakyamuni immediately recognized Subhuti’s extraordinary capacity and gave a sermon of high order. Lord

Shakyamuni knew that a person who seriously pursues the way is not easily satisfied. He was correct. Subhuti's thirsty and longing mind was watered, suddenly activated, and inflamed with a powerful Bodaishin. It was a most promising start.

Because of his fierce practices, he was unapproachable at the beginning. When the Bodaishin is flaring, one is so determined; one does not look back, as if one is mad. This fire would burn anything. In several years, he had arrived at the state of totally forgetting himself.

The dirtier the beginning, the more grandeur enlightenment. When Subhuti attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, great joy brought him tears of compassion. His character changed at once and the past was gone. Here we find the significance of Kenshō, thorough understanding of oneself. The whole purpose of sitting upright in zazen is to attain Kenshō. No Kenshō, no *dharma*.

He was no longer Subhuti of the past. Nothing he saw or heard bothered him. I hope you have grasped the importance of penetrating truth. Subhuti had attained a state the senior disciples could not reach. The dirt of the past turned into source of great enlightenment and brightened the light on earth.

Foremost in Understanding *Emptiness* is an honorary title given for his non-attachment to anything, doing everything smoothly, and being able to talk on the *dharma* freely. Subhuti was self-content and gentle. No wonder he was also respected as Foremost in No-fighting. He received the respect of countless people and, therefore, a lot of offerings. For this, he was also called Foremost in Receiving Offerings.

There is an interesting episode about an offering to Subhuti. One day, he accompanied Lord Shakyamuni together with a host of other followers. This was when they were moving from the Jetavana Monastery to the Bamboo Grove Monastery. King Bimbisara made an offering to Subhuti, giving him a place to live.

Unfortunately, by mistake it did not have a roof. He did not care. He lived there with a composed mind and practiced *dhyana* deeply.

O Penetration, the ceiling is full of stars,
up above the floor
Taking heaven and the earth into my stomach,
I am a beggar

State Master Daitō³⁴

When one has penetrated truth this far, heaven is everywhere. I wish I could exchange a cup of Sake with him here. Shakra, a god in heaven, did not let it rain out of respect for the virtues of Subhuti. Though respectful, the farmers were in trouble. Indeed, having no rain is a big problem.

Farmers began to cry out, “It is because Subhuti’s dwelling has no roof.” Now this time King Bimbisara was embarrassed. “How could this happen?! My goodness!” As soon as the king found his mistake and hurriedly provided the roof, it rained, and everybody was happy. What a pleasant story!

Whether this story is true or false is not the point. We should take note of the sheer foolishness of Subhuti and his dignified capacity to stay calm. We truly need a friend like him in this difficult moment in our lives. Nothing is more beautiful than having no self. The ability to stay calm is by itself a *dharma* talk by the body-wheel. His dignity and virtue grew.

Venerable Mahakasyapa, Subhuti’s senior disciple, and other *dharma* brothers were doubtlessly pleased. Subhuti is a great patriarch who often appears in sutras for his popularity. However, it is not certain where he died or at what age, as is the case with other principal disciples.

³⁴ [大燈国師], 1282–1337.

discussed, and Aniruddha unilaterally decided he would renounce the world. However, his parents fiercely rejected this and it did not go smoothly. The story begins from here.

He repeatedly pled his parents, but they would not agree. His mother was particularly stubborn. Like mother, like son, he was even more stubborn. Finally, the mother laid down condition for her agreement. This became a family competition, against two champions.

Aniruddha's mother said, "If Bhadraka also becomes a monk, I will agree." Bhadraka was one of Aniruddha's friends and of the same clan. He was well-known for his sharpness and leadership. Bhadraka's mother was very proud of her only son.

Aniruddha's mother was convinced that such a proud mother would never allow her son to become a monk. That is why she made that condition. But she was shortsighted. Bhadraka also had heard Lord Shakyamuni's sermon and had already acquired an enthusiastic Bodaishin to attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. The stubborn mother lost her bet. What a pity but what a pleasant story!

Thus, it was easy for Aniruddha to persuade Bhadraka. The sorrow of the two mothers were deep, but the two young men who had strong Bodaishin were no longer bothered by such worldly feelings. In any case, the time will certainly come when people will be separated from each other. That is a rule. Nothing can escape from the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*. This is the Way

At this time, seven wished to be ordained. Among them was Devadatta who later became a troublemaker. When admitted, they followed Lord Shakyamuni, moved into the Jetavana Monastery and practiced hard. This shows how splendid the Dharma Gate of Emancipation is. The Bodaishin is indeed valuable. It is the source of great mercy and great compassion.

In fact, the true greatness of Aniruddha is yet to be explained.

One day, he dozed off while Lord Shakyamuni was giving a sermon. It does happen occasionally. It shows how intently he was practicing day and night. He was just tired.

Noticing it, Shakyamuni asked, “What is your Bodaishin? What is the point of your determining renunciation?” It was only an ordinary reminder, but sounded bitter to Aniruddha and he took it as an accusation.

Though nodding off during the practice is obviously not allowed, young people’s practice can become extreme, beyond their physical capacity. They practice without fear of dying. While plausible, one should not follow such a path, and the *dharma* teacher should not let it happen. Fatigue is harmful for practice, research or study, or for any physical or mental activities. It can even endanger one’s life. The teacher must be aware of this. Otherwise, promising potential will be spoiled.

Lord Shakyamuni was indeed aware of it, and, therefore, he did not impeach him. However, ...

Aniruddha swore that he would never close his eyes to sleep, and he pursued the practice of not sleeping or lying down. Such is the severity of the true Bodaishin. When he learned of it, Lord Shakyamuni explained to him the basic principles of practice.

“True practice is not to go to the extreme or to the ascetic. If one destroys the *dharma* body, one will no longer be able to attain enlightenment.”

He advised Aniruddha to sleep. Aniruddha’s Bodaishin, however, simply longed for enlightenment and continued with his practice, even resisting Lord Shakyamuni’s advice. Before long, he reached the limit of hard practice. The doctor is not responsible for whether the patient takes his medicine or not. Oh, dear.

Aniruddha should not have bothered the Buddha in this way. As anticipated, a misfortune occurred and Aniruddha lost his sight, because he kept his eyes open all the time. In its place, he

attained Issekigen, that is, the “eye of mind” or the “divine eye.”

We refer to true enlightenment as “wisdom.” And the act of wisdom is called the divine eye. The divine eye can see things that eyes cannot see, and hear sounds that ears cannot hear. Because he acquired such abilities, Aniruddha was called Foremost in the Divine Eye. He is one of the ten principal disciples. He was selected as great person.

In the dialogue with Lord Shakyamuni, there are questions and answers about enlightenment, *dhyana*, and “Precepts, *Samadhi*, and Wisdom.” They are essential for the Buddhist practitioners. Many people misunderstand them, so we should learn them gratefully.

Aniruddha, after reaching one state of attainment, needed confirmation from Lord Shakyamuni. So, he asked a series of questions: “When I am fully in one with everything in a daily life, eating, walking, working etc., is that *dhyana*? Is it enough?” He was able to ask this question because he had attained a high state of understanding. Questions such as these arose out of Aniruddha’s experiences, not out of theory or reason. They are full of confidence and highly worth answering.

Lord Shakyamuni replied:

“That is correct, in theory. First, sit upright in zazen and pursue *dhyana*. Reaching it is enlightenment. But it is only a temporary goal. If you set the goal at this point, you will make no progress beyond that.

The point of everything lies in “now” and “now.” This is to practice the Precepts. There is no beginning or end to them. There is no *dhyana* or “enlightenment” apart from the matter itself.

Just as “now” has no end, you should not stay at “enlightenment.” That is to say, true *dhyana* means true wisdom, which is the work of “now” and “now.”

True wisdom is great mercy and great compassion, and there cannot be any beginning or end to it. Nothing can stay. If it does, it is not true wisdom.

There is no beginning or end to “now” because it is eternal. That is the never-changing and never-ending truth. That is enlightenment.

What a wonderful *dharma* talk! Lord Shakyamuni cited the three *dharma* of Precepts, *Samadhi*, and Wisdom, that *dhyana* is never-changing, never-ending and is constant. Since “now” is free and has no obstacles, it is impossible to separate Precepts, *Samadhi*, and Wisdom. However, he divided them for a *convenient means*. He was careful because there was a danger of mixing the sacred and evil.

At this point, Aniruddha realized that precepts are by themselves *samadhi* and wisdom; that when *samadhi* is true, it is precepts and wisdom; and they are all embodied completely in “now.” He was convinced and relieved.

For his true diligence, Aniruddha acquired the undying Divine Eye at the cost of losing the sight of his two eyes. The pleasure of having the great treasure was beyond description. Lord Shakyamuni observed Aniruddha both for his disability and for his great *dharma* power. He must have held deep compassion and love for him.

After that, Aniruddha accompanied Lord Shakyamuni when he moved to the Bamboo Grove Monastery and the Jetavana Monastery and continued practicing *dhyana* deeper and deeper.

Along the way, he appears to have visited his home town with his *dharma* friends, but there is hardly any account of it in the record.

One of the anecdotes about Aniruddha goes as follows:

When Lord Shakyamuni finally entered *nirvana*, disciples and villagers gathered and mourned deeply. Those *bhikkhus* whose practice was immature were torn apart just like a broken rock, screamed out and twisted about. Those who had attained enlightenment withstood the pain, trying to acknowledge that this is the destiny of *impermanence*.

Aniruddha stood by the side of dying Lord Shakyamuni. As the most senior of the disciples, he encouraged Ananda in his deepest grief, and prepared for the cremation ceremony. All through the night he gave a sermon to those who were lamenting loudly just as the Buddha used to give to them.

Aniruddha used his Divine Eye and asked the opinion of protective gods, instructed Ananda to inform the Malla tribal people in Kushinagar of the Lord Shakyamuni's passing and organized transport of the Buddha's sacred body to the Malla tribe's mausoleum at Makutabandhanam. After fully preparing for the cremation with incense, flowers and music, the unexpected happened. However hard Aniruddha tried to light the fragrant woods, they would not catch fire. At that moment, Aniruddha saw through the mind of Lord Shakyamuni, and told the people surrounding them, "Lord Shakyamuni is waiting for the arrival of Mahakasyapa. Fire will not burn until then."

Three months after Shakyamuni entered *nirvana*, Mahakasyapa convened the First Council. Upali and Ananda recited words by Lord Shakyamuni, others confirmed their accuracy, and Aniruddha used the Divine Eye to see whether Lord Shakyamuni approved. He provided as the final verification.

About one kilometer away from the Parinirvana Stupa in Kushinagar where the Buddha entered *nirvana*, there is a mound-shaped Ramabhar Stupa. It is the place where

Shakyamuni was reportedly cremated. It is located at the village of Anrudhwa, named after Aniruddha. Aniruddha missed Lord Shakyamuni so much that he never left. At his last moment, he requested Ananda to call the Malla people and prepare for the funeral. He died in the bamboo forest in Anrudhwa village.

This description has some ambiguous points. The established story says that only Ananda accompanied Lord Shakyamuni all the time. I wonder how Aniruddha, who was blind, suddenly managed to be at the site of the Buddha's *nirvana*. And they say he gave instructions there. Aniruddha could have done so, if he was present, but Ananda was capable enough and behaved with fortitude. Ananda was not so feeble as to need Aniruddha's guidance.

If it is true that Aniruddha attended the First Council, he had to travel from Kushinagar to the Bamboo Grove Monastery and then return to the venue of Lord Shakyamuni's *nirvana*. The distance is some 400 kilometers. There is no record of anyone accompanying him.

At the First Council, it is said that the Divine Eye of Aniruddha was used for the final confirmation. However, the Tripitaka was compiled by the words of Ananda who recited the Buddha's teachings starting with "Thus I have heard, ..." followed by confirmation by the five hundred *arahats*. This pattern was applied to the Second and Third Councils.

According to only one account, Aniruddha indeed traveled with Lord Shakyamuni. If so, it would be impossible for Aniruddha to be uninvolved when Lord Shakyamuni took seriously ill in Beluvagamaka (Beluva) during the rainy season. It would have been for some months. Even if he was elsewhere, Ananda must have informed him. There is no record of Aniruddha's accompanying Lord Shakyamuni. My belief is that he was not with Lord Shakyamuni.

I wonder if some admirers of Aniruddha made up these stories

over time. Although the stories are interesting, I find inconsistencies here and there. Whether one believes them or not is up to the reader. However, to believe all discourses is the same as believing no discourse.

The story cited here undervalues Ananda, and disgraces highly virtuous Aniruddha. One needs to have a *dharma* eye to see the truth.

An eye of no-eye can see the limitless *dharma* world. It is an imperishable eye. Study this.

Actions and vows of the *bodhi* open a thousand eyes
A divine eye is wholesome
and has supernatural powers
Let it be so
just now already manifests the *dharma*
The limitless *empty* moon is contained in the water

Kido

6. Venerable Purna³⁶

Venerable Purna is also called Venerable Punna in Pali. He was a distinguished monk respectfully referred to as Foremost in Preaching. They say he loved to drink a lot of alcohol. His enlightenment, the power of Issekigen, was highly assured by Lord Shakyamuni who entrusted reputable disciples to instruct novice practitioners. Venerable Purna was the master among such disciples.

It is not certain what *condition* led Purna to the state of “forgetting himself.” Those who practice *zazen* want to know this most important point. At any rate, his preaching was reliable in content, and in good logical order, much favored by the Buddha.

³⁶ Furuna [富楼那].

His speech got even sharper after he had a sip, freely commanding his abundant knowledge. All the other disciples listened to him intently in admiration. His preaching must have been so powerful.

Lord Shakyamuni was uniquely tolerant and allowed drinking alcohol, but it was only for Purna. It was because his talented preaching triggered the awakening of the Bodaishin in many people, and his unmeasurable virtue was effective in purifying people's minds.

Those were the days when ordinary people's lives were restricted under the Brahmin system. Fairness, freedom and human dignity and other human rights were, as it were, in the hands of Brahmins. In such a social environment, Lord Shakyamuni could not resist encouraging those who had attained enlightenment to go out and give a *dharma* talk to people whenever there was a *condition* such as asking for alms. Thus, Purna was proactive in promoting the sound awareness of people.

The rapidly expanded *sangha*, the Shakyamuni's community of practice, was managed under the overall leadership of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. There, the most experienced including the ten greatest disciples gave *dharma* talks on the Buddha's teachings. Purna played the brilliant role of his spokesman.

At one time, he asked Lord Shakyamuni about "*convenient means*" as described earlier. Just like Lord Shakyamuni, Purna was able to come up with a metaphor one after another, and he wondered if it was acceptable to make up stories.

Purna was convinced by listening to the Lord Shakyamuni's discourse on the *convenient means* and he confidently gave a *dharma* talk. Even Sariputra and Ananda commended his talk highly, saying to the novice practitioners: "Listen carefully to the Purna's *dharma* talk." It must have been impressive.

Purna also had a large number of supporters. He always gave marvelous talks and received generous offerings from devoted

followers. He once presented himself at an unexpected and dangerous spot to give a *dharma* talk, though his supporters tried to stop him. His ability and confidence were clearly based on his state that had forgotten himself. As a result, he saved as many as ninety-nine thousand people from their suffering! His magnificent capacity was beyond words. The shots of drink that Lord Shakyamuni permitted would have been a special bonus.

The following descriptions are taken from stories about Purna by different sources. Please read them with care.

- (1) He was intelligent from his childhood and was familiar with the teachings (Vedas) of Brahmanism. He avoided leading a secular life and went into the Himalayas where he practiced hard to attain the four stages of *dhyana* and the five supernatural powers. When he learned about Lord Shakyamuni, however, he moved to Sarnath and became his disciple.
- (2) According to the description in the *Abbhuta-nidana-sutra*, he abandoned the secular life out of jealousy, practiced for twenty years and mastered non-Buddhist teachings. When he returned to Rajagrha and challenged Lord Shakyamuni to debate, he was completely defeated and became his disciple instead.
- (3) His father was a great maritime merchant and his mother was a maid. Purna left his birthplace, lived by selling firewood and fragrant wood. In time, thanks to his business talent he succeeded his father, and became a great merchant. One day, when he heard his fellow merchants reciting Lord Shakyamuni's *dharma* teachings, he was greatly moved and asked through Sudatta who donated the Jetavana Monastery to meet Shakyamuni. Purna was subsequently ordained.
- (4) He was born into a Brahmin family in the suburbs of Kapilavastu of Kosala, and was a most respected wealthy

man during the reign of King Suddhodana. His mother was Anna Kondanna's sister, one of Lord Shakyamuni's first five disciples.

And so on.

Though repetitious, I say it is a great pity that no reference can be found about how Venerable Purna attained enlightenment. This suggests that those who compiled Purna's stories did not have an eye for it. History tells us a lot. What matters is what efforts one makes before accomplishing something. Only with such an account will the greatness of people in old times shine. When it comes to "mind," differences between old and modern times, East and West, are not important.

Venerable Purna is the only disciple Lord Shakyamuni permitted drinking and still entrusted to give *dharma* talks. I, too, would like to listen to his *dharma* talk, over a night or two. A cup of the lotus flower can store then thousands of people present. How pleasant it will be. Side dishes are fried dragon and pickled Mt. Sumeru on a bamboo leaf, to eat with a mouthless mouth. I hear the voice of Venerable Purna who wants somebody to understand this. When one penetrates, one will understand it. Study this.

Overcoming a thousand thoughts, nothing to say
Heaven and the earth appear all of a sudden
Ninety-nine thousand people have found a torch
After solving tens of thousands of problems,
one finds nothing special

Kido

7. Katyayana³⁷

Katyayana, also called Mahakatyayana or Kaccana, is venerable, Foremost in Explaining Dharma. He was born as a son of a distinguished figure in the Avanti kingdom, one of sixteen great kingdoms. His father was a Brahmin who supported the king. Katyayana was raised in high society, and regarded as a most promising boy. He was a popular and handsome prodigy.

As the fame of Lord Shakyamuni spread, his teachings were frequent topics of conversation among the king and ministers. Buddha's teachings differed from Brahmanism in a number of ways and were thought to apply to government and industry. The king decided to send seven key statesmen to the Jetavana Monastery. Katyayana was one of them. Their important mission was to invite Lord Shakyamuni to Avanti if possible, or failing that, to come to a deep understanding of the *dharma* of supreme *bodhi*. The fact that the virtues of the Buddha were widely spread reflects how well he was accepted by the people.

Upon arrival, the delegates conveyed the king's request. Lord Shakyamuni appreciated the king's wishes, but persuaded the delegation that he could not leave behind a host of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*.

The visitors were surprised at the orderly behavior of the *bhikkhus* and were deeply impressed every time they listened to Lord Shakyamuni's sermon. Katyayana was most deeply inspired. He immediately understood his teachings and became a *bhikkhu*. What a marvelous act of Katyayana! When Lord Shakyamuni sensed a person's strong desire to learn, he responded most positively and welcomed the new follower.

To accomplish the king's mission, Katyayana performed zazen day and night, he practiced and he practiced hard. He was

³⁷ Kasen'nen [迦旃延].

surrounded by other brilliant followers, so he was able to keep his focus on his practice. Finally, the time came for him to reach the state of forgetting himself. Lord Shakyamuni was highly gratified and praised the depth of his understanding and the manner in which he beautifully explained the *dharma*.

As Lord Shakyamuni was quite busy, he left most matters to his senior disciples. Still, he did not allow his disciples to indulge in arguing or debating *dharma* teachings. He did this because such an act would inevitably stimulate the desire to defeat the other. He was quite cautious in such matters.

Though Katyayana was Foremost in Explaining Dharma, this does not mean that he was good at arguing about the *dharma* or was skillful in debate. Rather, he was skilled at interpreting the teachings of Lord Shakyamuni. The Dharma Gate of Emancipation cannot be explained in words. However, silence provides no guide to people. Thus, *dharma* talks were necessary as an introduction. Nevertheless, it was difficult for inexperienced people to talk of the *dharma* and they often made mistakes. Vibhanga Sutra notes several such anecdotes. Here are some.

Lord Shakyamuni remarked,

“A *bhikkhu* should observe himself not to distract his mind, not to get detached externally, not get too rested, not be attached to anything, and not to fear. When this is done, no suffering will be assembled or aroused thereafter.”

Upon saying this, he left the place.

This talk is full of treasures. For those *bhikkhus* who were enlightened, they were drops of sweet nectars. Other *bhikkhus* who were not awakened could not understand them. They were confused and asked Katyayana for clarification. He explained to them in detail, interpreting Lord Shakyamuni’s intention. After

his explanation, the *bhikkhus* were fully convinced, and out of joy they reported the *dharma* talk made by Katyayana back to Lord Shakyamuni. Shakyamuni responded,

“Katyayana has a good understanding of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. If you had asked me, I would have given you the same explanation.”

A Verse of a Wise Man of One Night begins with “Do not follow the past, do not wish for the future.” This is also by Katyayana, explaining Lord Shakyamuni’s words. Thanks to his simple commentary, people were deeply moved and touched Lord Shakyamuni’s true meaning. Another source says this verse was composed by Ananda.

Katyayana was called Foremost in Explaining Dharma, because his logic and capacity to express the *dharma* were particularly outstanding.

At last the time had come for Katyayana to go back home. What had happened to other six statesmen are not known; they had possibly gone back much earlier. The king who had been anticipating his return welcomed him. He appeared transparent in dignity.

The king immediately listened to Katyayana’s *dharma* talk. Listening intently, the king admired the supreme state of enlightenment Lord Shakyamuni had attained. As Katyayana’s talk was splendid beyond expectations, the king had the ministers and other statesmen listen to his talk and use it to improve state administration. Doing so, he in time became a highly virtuous king who piously worshiped the Lord Shakyamuni’s *dharma*.

There are different narratives about this. Some people tell a miserable story such as this:

“The king of Avanti was famous for being cruel and merciless. Lord Shakyamuni, feeling pity for the king and people in the state, sent a Brahmin, Katyayana, to disseminate his teachings.

Katyayana was about to be killed by the king who believed in another religion. But finally, Katyayana led the king to turn to the *dharma* teachings.”

This is groundless and not worth attention.

As for Katyayana, he was grateful for the king’s gracious treatment, but left the palace to save people and broadly disseminate the *dharma* gate of supreme *bodhi*. He asked for alms in town to lead a simple life and practiced zazen under a tree in the grove. This is a person who has truly pursued the path. This is precisely the Bodaishin.

To do one’s best for the benefit of people
Without caring about oneself
Is the way one should follow

Meiji Emperor³⁸

Understandably, the honorable king did very well. He donated simple food at one time and nourishing meals at others to Katyayana who slept under a tree. Katyayana “just” received it with gratitude and deep appreciation. This is a self-contented person who does not expect anything from others. Seeing that Katyayana’s attitude did not change according to what he received, the king respected him deeply.

The king then tested a Brahmin and noticed that he was dissatisfied with simple food but highly pleased with an elaborate meal. “How utterly different!” The king quietly thought, and supported Katyayana even more.

Is this not a king with a sharp sense of the spirit? We should not underestimate him. He deserves to be called a great king.

While Katyayana was propagating the Buddha’s teachings in remote places, he occasionally received a harsh protest. This is not difficult to imagine at such a time when other religious

³⁸ 1852-1912.

teachings had such a strong influence on people, mentally and culturally. On the other hand, however, Katyayana did receive direct and indirect support from influential people. Such a king could not have left Katyayana, the state treasure, unsupported.

Katyayana had vast influence and greatly contributed to the dissemination of *dharmā* teachings. It is said that the narratives of *Dhammapada* handed down in the Theravada lineage contain such references. It is not known when and where he passed away at what age.

Staying free and natural,
a sleeping dragon keeps the ocean calm and flat
Staying upright having nothing to hold on to,
this is the great way
Staying free and having nothing to hold on to,
this is the great enlightenment
The eternal past has come,
a dream rests in a serene silence

Kido

8. Venerable Upali³⁹

Venerable Upali is Foremost in Observing the Precepts. He was one of the seven who were ordained with Aniruddha and Ananda. His initial Bodaishin, however, was not inspired in the same way as the others, not out of his devout belief in the *dharmā* or by regarding Lord Shakyamuni as his master. It is here that we find his seriousness and intelligence at the time of his renunciation.

He was born in a family of the Sudra, as a slave in the lowest caste. He was a barber. For his skill and intelligence, he was favored by high-ranked officials and the noble class. He was wise,

³⁹ Upari [優波離].

courteous, and richly endowed with a virtuous character.

The caste system was rigid, and a marriage outside one's caste was not allowed, however hard one worked. A totally undesirable system, to be sure. In rural parts of India, traces of this system are still found today.

Upali was cherished by people around him. When the six young royal family members were to be ordained, they gave Upali a load of valuables they had. The six were about to become *bhikkhus* and did not need them. This shows how serious they were.

The six gave Upali gemstones, swords, robes along with others and set off for their journey wearing one simple cloth and with a few belongings. Upali was astonished. He was simply surprised at their Bodaishin with which they gave away everything.

While staring at them, one thing occurred to the mind of Upali, a rumor about Lord Shakyamuni. People were talking feverishly about the lofty story of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, which he did not understand a bit.

Indeed, he was not an ordinary person. Upali himself did not have a clear sense of aspiration, but his Bodaishin was awakened by seeing the noble acts of those he attended with trust and respect. A person who is endowed with virtuous *conditions* may raise his Bodaishin to any stimulus. This is what we call "timing, *cause* and *condition*," or the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*.

"What kind of world is it that noble and respected people seek to attain to the point of abandoning everything?" The moment Upali had this thought, his worldly thoughts suddenly disappeared.

"Now, I have nothing to lose in my life. I shall decide my life by myself! I will go with them!" He instantly made up his mind and followed them. How pleasant it is to witness his pure mind! This determination ultimately led him to become a great patriarch.

Jump in,
and with its strength
a frog comes up

The other six warmly welcomed Upali who soon caught up with them, and treated him as one of their group. By that time, they had totally relinquished their sense of social class. The Seven Samurai marched on, determined to live for the *dharma*.

I wish we had more brave people like him today. If you do not become one, who will?!

Lord Shakyamuni said, “Pure poverty is always pleasant. Polluted wealth is always annoying.” The group must have been tasting the profound understanding that nothing is greater and more beautiful than having no sense of self. Distance was nothing for those seven who had embraced the Bodhisattva. They arrived at the Jetavana Monastery with a pure and calm mind and soon met Lord Shakyamuni. Because they knew each other well, Lord Shakyamuni was wholeheartedly gratified and admitted them into his *sangha*. Then, the most beautiful thing happened.

At the moment of ordainment, an issue arose of who should be the first to be ordained among them. World peace is made possible by order, which is composed of rules and is based on what is considered most appropriate. Such orders depend on economic or military power, virtuous capacity, social status, age, academic attainment or record, negotiation skills, appearance, network, among others, and the influence of each on the other

In the Buddhist *sangha*, seniority simply depends on the order of ordination. This remains true today. The younger brother respects the older brother, and the older brother warmly takes care of the younger brother. To ordain seven of them at one time was a headache even for Lord Shakyamuni. A really important story began here. It is even more beautiful than the sky full of stars. Note its lessons carefully.

All six spoke with the same words as follows:

“Dear Lord Shakyamuni, please admit Upali first and give precepts to him. He deserves most to become our senior brother to be respected as a leader. We have been prideful and arrogant, but Upali has served us well. He has been humble and honest. He should be our senior brother. We believe we can relinquish our arrogance by following him.”

Lord Shakyamuni was moved as well. How magnificent! They had already discarded their selves. Heaven had no words. The earth had nothing to say. Lord Shakyamuni pleasantly accepted their proposal.

Upali who was slightly older than the other six cried out in exhilaration. They were all happy to have been ordained as *bhikkhus* and wept for joy, swearing together to attain enlightenment. This is how Barber Upali began his new life as Leader Upali, receiving the respect of six former royal members. Certainly, Upali practiced enormously hard.

His determination was unshakable. He practiced the teachings of the Buddha straightforwardly without any misunderstanding. He was pure and serious and was quickest in forgetting his self. His manner of honest practice soon became the *sangha's* standard to maintain its purity. Everyone began to call him “Foremost in Observing the Precepts” and paid respect to him. Thus, he became a model monk for the entire *sangha*.

The precepts given by Lord Shakyamuni were not meant to bind or confine his disciples. They were merely rules for everyone to pursue sound practice. For example, one went, “Do not chat unnecessarily. It will bother other practitioners.” The precepts pointed to obvious issues that help smooth practice so they could concentrate fully on the Bodaisshin. They were not enforced but were the “paths” one should observe and put into practice.

All there is to the Dharma Gate of Emancipation is Kenshō, seeing through to the true nature of oneself. It requires practices

of “now” and “just” without giving space for anything else to come in. Zen practice is to become one with the matter in front of you. One will clearly see this truth only when one “just” does it. This is Kenshō, the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

After attaining Kenshō, Upali wished that everyone else could be emancipated as he had been and immaculately instructed others not to be careless. Novice monks had no idea of how to practice. He gave them advice so that they would not follow their individual ways of practice. He did this out of his mercy and compassion.

Upali and Lord Shakyamuni exchanged detailed questions and answers about key points in the practice and the basic ideas behind the precepts.

Monk Upali inquired,

“Daily practices are summarized by ‘body, mouth and mind.’ Please explain the meaning.”

Lord Shakyamuni responded,

“This is about the three aspects of our work: the work of the body, the work of the mouth, and the work of the mind. A person’s state is decided by these three types of work. The practice of Buddhism is to keep ‘body, mouth and mind’ pure.”

This is a very plain explanation. Indeed ‘body, mouth and mind’ are ourselves and our lives. There is nothing else. We need to know well that conscious plans are all illusion.

Upali asked,

“I can easily understand that the work of body is action and the work of the mouth are words. How can I understand the work of the mind?”

Lord Shakyamuni explained,

“The work of the body or mouth is easy to understand

because it comes out as an action or words. Although the work of mind is invisible, volition is still the source of the various actions of mind. Still all actions are not necessarily the work of the mind. We sometimes act against our own will. An action that appears good may have arisen from an ill mind or vice-versa. Therefore, taking good care of the mind is the essence of practice.”

Upali asked,

“People often contradict themselves between their actions and intentions. Even some act appears to be good in theory, we may act completely against our will. Does this mean that a seemingly good act is not really right if it contradicts his will?” This question pin-points the essence of the matter.

Lord Shakyamuni replied,

“That is true. However good an action appears to be, it becomes evil if it arises from an evil will or something other than a pure mind. Actions may be good or bad, depending on one’s mind. All depends on ‘mind.’”

The monk asked,

“Then, what should we do to ensure everyone can attain a good ‘mind?’” At last the ultimate question is raised.

Lord Shakyamuni responded,

“Daily life itself is, as it is, practice. As I always explain, practice the *dhyana* earnestly by Shikantaza – just to sit straight in the zazen posture and Shikan-katsudō – just to act focusing on what you are doing. This is the right ‘mind.’ In other words, never lose sight of the entire daily life: ‘now’ and ‘now’ of ‘body, mouth and mind.’ To attain ‘the Dharma Gate of Emancipation’ is to relinquish the three actions of

'body, mouth and mind.' That is to say, precepts and *dhyana* are the 'way' to forget yourself by completely focusing on what you are doing."

Lord Shakyamuni means that life is, as it is, directly 'now', directly the 'way', directly 'precepts', and directly *dhyana*.

The monk asked,

"Are the precepts you have just explained ways to relinquish three poisons, after all?" Practitioners who have acquired Issekigen ask deep questions, indeed!

Lord Shakyamuni replied,

"Exactly. All the precepts are reminders to help relinquish the three poisons and to be emancipated. Our training is to put this into practice. The three actions of 'body, mouth and mind' become the three poisons of 'greed, anger and ignorance,' which cause suffering. The three poisons and the three actions arise from 'mind.' 'Mind' arises 'now,' and therefore, the point of practice is to carefully concentrate on *dhyana* all the time, and this is to follow the precepts."

Finally, Lord Shakyamuni revealed everything he had to say. The essence of his preaching over forty-nine years is expressed in these remarks. A person who truly practice this is truly worthy of respect.

In gratitude, Upali said,

"Dear Lord, I have understood it well that to live according to the precepts, that is, to make right practice, is the way to be emancipated from non-enlightenment and is the way of the Buddha."

Upali was fully convinced as if he was drinking the sweet juice of *dharma*. I bet he respectfully made three vows. Gasshō.

The foregoing demonstrates the key points of Buddhist practice. If one practices “now” thoroughly, it is *dhyana* and one will certainly attain enlightenment. If “body, mouth and mind” come from the Bodaishin, they follow the precepts, and “body, mouth and mind” are *dharma* in themselves.

When the Bodaishin is genuine, there is no self. When there is no self, there is no evil perception, and “now is direct precepts.” Because “precepts are oneself,” one is full of *dharma*. Precepts are no longer necessary.

Precepts have become necessary because there are so many people who have no Bodaishin. The Buddha’s way is to be right, not to try to prosper. What is essential is the genuine ‘now.’ When Buddhism become popular and prosper, Buddhism was already in decay. This is because impurities will also increase with popularity. Concrete ways of being careful have led to the formation of precepts.

Lord Shakyamuni highly valued Upali’s intention and carefully responded to *bhikkhus* whose Bodaishin was weak. This was solely out of his respect for the great *dharma*. What is indeed most respectable is the Bodaishin. Study this well.

It is said that the precepts were compiled by taking much of Upali’s opinion. At the first Buddhist Council, Upali was chiefly responsible for compiling the precepts. Needless to say his abilities and intelligence were significant factors. He is an excellent living example of cutting the caste system into pieces.

Two thousand six hundred years ago, a mere barber awakened his Bodaishin and became a patriarch of the three worlds living through the past, the present and the future. Thus, his life is handed down until the present projecting light in the world. Because the ‘Bodaishin is, as it is, direct precepts,’ we do not have to worry too much about the details of each precept.

We should not become a person who will count somebody’s

treasures and find oneself not even worthy of a cent. No precept is more precious than the practice of ‘now’ and ‘just.’

Bodaishin. Bodaishin.

What is the essence of the Buddhist *dharma*?
With thunder and rain, the land enjoys getting wet
The candle light of the *dharma*
 brightens the world in surprise
A pure wind blows
 through thousands of mountains beyond time

Kido

9. Ananda⁴⁰

It is now the turn of Ananda, handsome and distinguished Foremost in Remembering Teaching the Most. The Guardian of the *dharma*. He is also one of the seven royal members. Together with Mahakasyapa, Sariputra, Maudgalyayana and Vimalakirti, Ananda appears most frequently in sutras.

The popularity of Ananda comes, above all, from his becoming the Second Patriarch of the lineage, who successfully maintained the thread of life of the Buddhist *dharma*.

His next achievement was the respectful manner with which he attended Lord Shakyamuni, which he did perfectly until the very last moment of Shakyamuni’s *nirvana* in the orchard at Kushinagar. Truly touching!

Another is his accurate recitation at the First Council. It was as if Shakyamuni himself was giving the sermon. It was so accurate that everyone commented: “Yes, that is exactly what I heard. I find no errors.” The teachings of Shakyamuni were thus transmitted by recitation and affirmation. Later they were

⁴⁰ Anan [阿難], or Ananda [阿難陀].

compiled into what we have today as sutras. “Thus, I have heard” is the beginning of many important sutras, thanks to Ananda’s whole-hearted dedication.

Yet another accomplishment was the establishment of a *sangha* for *bhikkhunis*, female monks, after his repeated plea to Lord Shakyamuni.

These are most of Ananda’s great accomplishments, but adding a little spice I would like to present some anecdotes.

Ananda was so able enough to become Guardian of the *dharma*, but his intelligence got in the way of attaining enlightenment. So it took longer for him to attain Kenshō than the others. All is well that ends well. Ananda was approved by Mahakasyapa and became the Second Patriarch. Nothing is more important than this fact.

He guided Sanavasa into the Third Patriarch and maintained the marvelous thread of his life, fulfilling his gratitude to Lord Shakyamuni. The way to repay a debt of gratitude to the Buddha is to transmit the *dharma* to a successor. We owe Ananda enormously for maintaining the *dharma* and for his great achievements. He lived until age one hundred twenty years.

He abandoned his intelligence and devoted himself fully to the practice. This represents truly marvelous courage. An intelligent person finds it difficult to become a fool by discarding his intelligence. I deeply love his Bodaishin.

Given his personality, it was natural that there are many stories about Ananda. When he became a disciple, Lord Shakyamuni was fifty-five and Ananda was twenty-five, according to one narrative.

I have already explained that Ananda was an attendant to the Buddha. The story about how he became attendant is interesting. It is cited from a sutra, Madhyama Agama, and goes as follows:

When Shakyamuni reached the age of fifty-five, he said, “I am getting old and my stamina is weakening. I need an attendant.”

Ananda had just become a disciple. It is difficult to imagine a story where such a novice suddenly became an attendant.

Putting such questions aside, the monk's leaders, hearing Lord Shakyamuni's wish to have an attendant, said, "The Lord's need for an attendant is understandable for someone of his age. Let's get down to identifying one." So, they listed candidates from the first five disciples who listened to the First Sermon and several other names.

However, Lord Shakyamuni did not agree with them. The candidates were superb but he felt bad asking such senior disciples to take care of him. Or perhaps, it appears that he may already have in mind that the novice Ananda would be appropriate. Ananda had an exceptionally good memory, was young and most carefree. The Buddha's decision makes a great deal of sense.

Maudgalyayana used his supernatural powers and learned that Lord Shakyamuni had such a wish and explained it to others accordingly. No one had any hesitation, as it was a wish of Lord Shakyamuni. So, they requested Ananda to take this heavy burden.

However, somehow Ananda did not accept the request easily. He felt honored, but he had some worries about taking on the weighty role of attending Lord Shakyamuni. He continued to resist, saying, "It is impossible for me to fulfill such an important role." That sounded reasonable, but Ananda knew it was really a burdensome role.

But the leaders were persistent and finally Ananda surrendered. He was quite bright. He set down three conditions for accepting the request.

First, I shall not receive any thing from Lord Shakyamuni, because if I do so I will be envied by other disciples.

Second, I shall not get any portion of food intended for Lord Shakyamuni. Lord Shakyamuni's food is rich and I do not want

others to think that I have accepted the request for delicious food.

Third, I shall not see Lord Shakyamuni for my own convenience. If I do that, I will not be able to prevent others from doing the same.

Ananda was determined to be strict when performing his duty as an attendant. It seemed as if he had been seeing Lord Shakyamuni whenever he wanted.

The leaders were impressed by these conditions, they agreed and thus Ananda became Lord Shakyamuni's attendant. After that, Ananda always stayed by the Buddha's side, except when he was out seeking alms. He attended the Buddha with dedication until the time he entered *nirvana*.

As an attendant, he had so many things to do. He placed a top priority on listening to and memorizing all the teachings. He took care of all the details of Lord Shakyamuni's daily life, from washing and mending clothes, pulling up an umbrella on rainy days, massaging the Lord's feet after a long walk, conveying a request to see the sick, and so on. When something bad happened, he asked Shakyamuni to give a talk; on other occasions he apologized or was scolded in place of Shakyamuni on someone else's misbehaviors. He played roles of spokesperson, nurse, guard, you name it. He always saw to it that the *dharma* was upheld peacefully.

He had a thoughtful, kind, honest and sincere character; he was an exemplary attendant.

Interestingly, each of the Great Ten Disciples had a peculiar habit. Drinking, dancing, singing, caring for women, debating, and so on. Ananda was quite handsome, and exceedingly gentle. After getting permission to found *bhikkhunis' sangha*, the *bhikkhuni*' became all the more fond of Ananda. There might have been one or two romantic stories about him.

Some say Ananda was fond of women. This must have been a

disaster because of his beauty and kindness. Customarily, monks got food by walking around asking for alms. They sometimes went in a group, and other times alone. They had many supporters as they were renowned practitioners who gave great *dharma* talks when asked. It seems that those feverish supporters followed their favorite monk as if he was a movie star. There is an anecdotal story about Ananda. Be it a glory or a tragedy, it goes as follows.

This is a story of Ananda when he received a marriage proposal. One summer day, he was asking for alms in the village of Mathanga where people of an outcaste tribe lived. He came across a village girl who was fetching water and asked her for a small bowl of water for donation.

The girl, Pracriti, declined the request and said, “I am an outcaste person and am not entitled to make a donation...” A pitiful and pretty girl behaving in such a polite manner appealed to him. Ananda repeated his request, “I am a disciple of Lord Shakyamuni. I am taught that a person is born to be equal without being noble or mean. I believe in it. So please give me some water.”

Pracriti offered a bowl of water respectfully. It was very tasty. He returned the bowl and gently smiled at her joining his palms in *gasshō*.

That was all. But it evoked a deep affection in Pracriti’s heart. She begged her mother, who had supernatural powers, to induce Ananda to meet her again. It was close. Ananda was almost seduced but came back to himself. He returned to the monastery in haste and asked for Shakyamuni’s help. Shakyamuni who had anticipated Ananda’s trouble instantly recognized the situation and removed her spell.

However, from the next day, Pracriti put on make-up beautifully, followed Ananda while he went around asking for alms, saying to people, “This is my husband.” Ananda was

terribly annoyed.

Ananda asked for Shakyamuni's help again. Shakyamuni sent for Pracriti and explained to her how troublesome and impure human affection was. Pracriti was convinced and lived quietly in a *bhikkhuni* monastery as a nun.

Oh, shameful
to wake up
and find the bed wet

Ananda must have felt sorry for Lord Shakyamuni asking for help on such a matter. Still, the situation is understandable enough from the viewpoint of human feelings. I have compassion for both of them. A simple smile, eyes or words can sometimes reach deeply into one's mind. Falling in love at first sight is a typical case. Nothing was wrong with Ananda, but it was a big misfortune for a monk to be approached by a woman like her.

This story may create envy by men who have no chances with women. That is how Ananda became known as a monk who was fond of women and had an aptitude for love. I feel so sorry for Ananda's misfortunes.

One is not guaranteed happiness for one's beauty. The opposite can be true. The *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition* is so free as to make someone happy or unhappy, joyful, angry, sad or pleased. If one has no Bodaishin, one can easily succumb to love affection or greed. That is why Lord Shakyamuni cautions that we have to practice all the time in pursuit of the truth of "now," reminding ourselves of the Bodaishin.

One phrase in a sutra goes, "the power of a child is crying, the power of a woman is in jealousy." Lord Shakyamuni was always correct and this phrase points to situation that is contrary to *dhyana*. When a beautiful nun goes out asking for alms, the danger is apparent. The Buddha once rejected the ordination of

women knowing difficulties that can arise even with serious practice. He was so thoughtful so as not to keep women from encountering such risks. This was another manifestation of his deep and valuable compassion.

As an attendant, it was difficult for Ananda not to get involved in unwanted problems. It was a pity but unavoidable that he would have a difficult time practicing *dhyana* in such circumstances. It makes sense that it took Ananda a long time to acquire Issekigen.

After the Buddha died, Ananda switched his sorrow into the Bodaishin and continued to practice zazen every day under the guidance of Mahakasyapa. Mahakasyapa used a whip on the brilliant horse in place of Lord Shakyamuni. He threw difficult questions at Ananda, “Come in through a key hole.” If he had thoroughly attained emancipation, he could have done it easily. The usual enlightenment of Issekigen did not work for Ananda in dealing with Venerable Mahakasyapa. He could not solve the question and surrendered. Mahakasyapa had an important goal of transmitting the Dharma Gate of Emancipation that he had received from Lord Shakyamuni to Ananda at any cost. Otherwise, Lord Shakyamuni would have died there. It could be a serious problem for the *dharma*.

The question Mahakasyapa posed was an instrument intended to smash Ananda’s bad habits of mind. If the body and mind are smashed while one is alive, everything will be relinquished and the Dharma Gate of Emancipation will be present. That was the purpose for the question. It was what is called a Kōan, a zen question.

At first, Ananda was used by the Kōan, but later he learned to use it. To use a Kōan means to become one with it without introducing one’s mind. It is to be thoroughly present in “now.” Initially, he could not do so because his *dhyana* was still shallow.

Ananda continued his practice and finally his sincere efforts

matured into forgetting himself, and decisively reached enlightenment. He firmly grasped the true meaning of Shakyamuni's teachings. Out of the highest joy, he ran to Master Mahakasyapa.

It was a long-awaited moment for Mahakasyapa. He had to see whether Ananda's emancipation was true or not, a promise he had made with Lord Shakyamuni.

Ananda inquired, "Other than the golden robe, what did Lord Shakyamuni hand on to you?"

Mahakasyapa called out, "Ananda!"

Ananda replied, "Yes." In response to being called "Ananda," he replied "Yes." There was no other meaning in it, not even Ananda. Mahakasyapa recognized that.

Mahakasyapa said, "Lay down the flagpole at the gate." He meant his flag, the *dharma* teaching, was fully transmitted, that it was Ananda's turn from that time on.

That was all. Mahakasyapa approved Ananda in a word. I bet Mahakasyapa was highly gratified in tears because he had fulfilled his promise to the Buddha. A bowl of water was poured into another bowl. Thus, Shakyamuni approved Shakyamuni.

This short conversation has the essence of *dharma*. I shall make some commentary on it. On the surface, Ananda literally asked, "I hear you have been given a golden robe from Lord Shakyamuni as a token of his approval. What else did Lord Shakyamuni convey to you?" The true point of his question, however, was elsewhere. What Ananda meant is this:

The obstacles in his mind had dropped off. **"I have attained enlightenment together with the great earth and all beings. Mountains, rivers, grasses and trees all have attained enlightenment."** I have truly attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. When everything is *empty*, nothing is needed.

Should there be anything else?

For such a sharp question, even Venerable Mahakasyapa was totally made naked and could not hide himself. He had to admit Ananda with applause.

Instead of saying, “You worried me taking so long to reach here. But you finally made it. Wonderful,” Mahakasyapa said, “Lay down the flagpole at the gate.” Those were his words of approval. And he handed down the robe he received from Lord Shakyamuni.

It was a declaration to mean: “Now I entrust everything to you. I believe you will do well. I shall retire.” That was how the Dharma Gate of Emancipation was handed down safely to the Second Patriarch. How delightful!

Later, Ananda raised Sanavasa and handed down the valuable robe to him as an indication of approval of the Third Patriarch. A bowl of water was poured into another bowl and the *dharmā* was transmitted. I hope you understand from this story that finding a true person and transmitting the *dharmā* is never an easy work.

A shape and its shadow are one,
 prajna is transmitted
Thousands of phrases are thrown away,
 the essence will arise
What is meant by “to die is to live”?
A flagpole is laid down,
 heaven and the earth are fully understood

Kido

About the Golden Robe

Lord Shakyamuni wore a simple robe made of recycled cloth

throughout his life as a *bhikkhu*. He refused all offerings of beautiful outfits by royal and noble people saying, “Please give it to the ordinary people.” One day, however, somebody sent him a golden robe. It was from Mahapajapati, his nursing mother. That is the robe. Of course, he himself did not wear it even once, but handed it over to the First Patriarch, Mahakasyapa, as a token of his attaining the great *dharma*, on the important occasion of Hagan-mishō at the Flower Sermon.

Ever since then, the robe had been handed over to subsequent patriarchs generation after generation as evidence of approval down to the Thirty-third Patriarch, Daikan-Enō⁴¹, the sixth patriarch in the zen lineage. He received it from the fifth patriarch in 661 AC. Over a period of nearly one thousand years, the robe sent by the nursing mother of Shakyamuni had been carefully handed over as evidence of transmission from mind to mind. How wonderful!

Stepping aside a bit, in 667 AC, Prince Shōtoku⁴² in Japan wrote Commentaries on The Srimala Sutra, “Shōmankyo-Gisho.” It is a sutra is about Mallika, Queen of Pasenadi. Prince Shōtoku seems to have had a lot of interest in the life of Mallika who deeply devoted herself to Buddhism. She is documented as a fake wife sent by the Shakya state. A curious story, is it not? So much for now.

However, under the sixth patriarch, a number of Shakyamuni Buddhas were raised. There was only one robe, though. It was not appropriate to say that only the one who received it was genuine. It was no more useful to mark approval by physical evidence. Knowing that the robe would cause disaster at a later time, Master Enō had decided to cease the tradition of handing down the golden robe that had lasted for ten centuries. He knew the true intention of Lord Shakyamuni’s supreme *bodhi*, and

⁴¹ Dajian Huineng [大鑑慧能], 638-713.

⁴² Shōtoku-taishi [聖德太子], 574-622.

wished to universally expand the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

I am sure that the sixth patriarch bowed toward the West-heaven in tears worshipping Lord Shakyamuni and repeatedly worshiped the thirty-three predecessors, when he secretly burnt an incense and hid the robe in Sokei, where he stayed, so that no one knew where it was.

This also meant the joyful fact that the *dharma* was spreading widely. I vividly see it. Such is the weighty value of the great *dharma*. It is an act of the great mercy and compassion transmitted by Lord Shakyamuni, returning a favor and showing gratitude. I, too, burn incense, make a bow here. My *dharma* tears are identical to those of the sixth patriarch.

The year and the place of this anecdote are not known. I deeply feel compassion for the sixth patriarch. Please examine his true intention.

Although the true essence of Lord Shakyamuni was entrusted together with the robe, the robe itself was not the essence. The *dharma* cannot be described in words. Letters are of no use, because it is a state beyond words and letters; it has no beginning or end. Study the twenty-third Kōan question, “Fushi-Zen’aku (do not think good or bad)” of *Mumonkan, The Gateless of Gate*.

Today’s monks dance for joy in gorgeous robes. Do not they know the tears of the Buddha and the patriarchs? Oh, how deeply regrettable!

10. Venerable Rahula⁴³

Rahula was a son of Lord Shakyamuni. He was a smart one whom people called Foremost in Diligent Study. Lord Shakyamuni was married at sixteen, and at nineteen Rahula was born. The presence of a son, Rahula, was a decisive factor in Lord

⁴³ Ragora [羅睺羅].

Shakyamuni's renunciation of the world. His Bodaishin became so strong it was as if it could penetrate a mountain, and he abandoned everything including his son and became a monk. How strong his Bodaishin was! At the age of nineteen. (Some say he was twenty-nine.)

Though Rahula was left behind, he was a king-to-be. No one could have treated him casually. On the contrary, he was cherished, and brought up with compassion.

Nothing is known about Rahula before he encountered his father, Lord Shakyamuni. It is likely, however, that he lived a life commensurate with his position and was raised accordingly. His inner image of his father was informed by the stories of people around him.

Nobody could say what it was like. However, knowing that his father was a great person whom everyone of different classes respectfully called "Lord Shakyamuni," I bet Rahula had a deep respect and yearning for his father. The fact that Rahula developed growing respect for his father shows that his senior servants and attendants were wholesome and well-educated people who did not make ill-minded rumors.

The biggest question I have is why such little fuss was made about the renunciation of Rahula, who was indispensable for the Shakya State. It appears as if the incident took place simply. I am sure it was a serious event. The king, his mother and all the others must have felt a risk for the state and panicked.

Though fortunate for the sake of the *dharma*, it was a grave incident for the state. After all, Rahula sailed out on a supreme boat of the Bodaishin.

When Lord Shakyamuni returned home for the first time after his enlightenment, he was around thirty-eight. He attained enlightenment after six years of ascetic life, and an additional six years of zazen practice, all together totaling nearly thirteen years of hard efforts. He instantly saved five people. Soon after that, he

had over one thousand three hundred disciples.

The remarkable expansion and the influence of the Buddhist *sangha*, following King Bimbisara's donation of the Bamboo Grove Monastery, was such that Lord Shakyamuni had a hard time dealing with it. He also visited Vaishali. Six years passed quickly.

Lord Shakyamuni turned thirty-eight when he saw his father, the King. The King, upon seeing his son, was deeply moved at his elegant virtue and dignity full of purity, and called for a painter and to have him draw a picture of the Shakyamuni Buddha.

By the way, there is a photo today which is said to have copied this picture of Lord Shakyamuni. On another account, it is a photo of a statue of Lord Shakyamuni which was taken back from India when the United Kingdom ruled the seven seas and was freely collecting valuables, and is kept today at the British Museum.

I visited the museum three times while I travelled to attend international conferences, but my trials to examine the statue were in vain. The photo was brought into Japan during the Meiji era and its copy is found in a number of places. One is at Shorinkutu, my training center. The solemnity is indeed that of Lord Shakyamuni and I worship it every day. The picture is placed at the front cover of this book.

When Rahula encountered Lord Shakyamuni, he was already nineteen years old, the age at which Prince Siddhartha had left the palace. At that time Rahula was suffering greatly from deep confusion, and he put sharp questions to his father. I believe he asked a series of questions, as he was midst of his suffering.

Shakyamuni was well aware of the fierce feelings and conceptions that arouse out of his son's intelligence. It was natural for Lord Shakyamuni not to be indifferent to Rahula's suffering. He tried to bestow the *dharma* gate of great mercy and compassion. Nevertheless, for Shakyamuni, Rahula was merely

a man in his adolescence, though he was his son.

As usual, Shakyamuni explained the Way of attaining the great *dharma* plainly. The *dharma* talk he made in anticipation of Rahula's maturity was "the *dharma* of perceiving breath." It says, "be thoroughly one with breath" in full concentration.

Suffering, in short, is a "bad habit of mind" which sees one thing as two. The truth is in one and only "now." As long as this truth is not clear, the mind will make up unnecessary worries. One is entangled in one's own thought. The mind is an automated self-generation system which keeps producing new concepts one after another. The way to destroy the "bad habits of mind" which creates thoughts, perceptions and illusions is to become just one thoroughly with the matter.

It is not difficult. Just a simple *dharma* message that says, "Make one breath wholeheartedly." The habit of mind that constantly runs around like a mouse is merely a phenomenon of the one moment of "now." It can be overcome by breaking "the habits of mind" which are drawn around by thoughts.

Release tension from the body and the mind, never follow what comes up in the mind and "just" focus on breathing. This simple "*dharma* of perceiving breath" directly penetrated Rahula's mind.

He fully trusted his father's words and put them directly into practice. They were true. Strangely enough, he recognized he was gradually awakening. All kinds of suffering were melting down and he felt easy. It was because the truth of his "now" was getting clearer.

Rahula got a glimpse of the reason his father set to search for the Way even giving up himself, and having already decided to renounce the world. He was not tainted by worldly desires. He was pure. Should I say that his Bodaishin was inherited from Lord Shakyamuni, or that the sky was blue, or was Rahula simply reckless? We should examine his decision with the Bodaishin.

By the time Rahula made up his mind to become a *bhikkhu*, he was sometimes able to breath purely. And so, he was able to understand the value of the great *dharma* and the transience of worldly matters. Thus, he found no difficulty in throwing away his reputation and status like a clot of soil. It appears no one around could understand Rahula's mind. How regrettable and fearful to see the absence of the Bodaishin!

One commentary goes that Yasodhara, his mother, seduced Rahula to see and ask Lord Shakyamuni to give him all his assets. For an ordinary person, such a story makes sense. As a matter of fact, Rahula became a *bhikkhu* and is counted as one of the Ten Great Disciples. If Yasodhara was that mean, she would not have been able to bring up Rahula respecting Lord Shakyamuni. She was a pure and honest woman; she later left the palace with other female servants and travelled hundreds of kilometers to see Shakyamuni and finally became a subleader of the *bhikkhuni sangha*. She was indeed a former wife of Shakyamuni. The foregoing commentary is not worth attention. It is not respectful of Yasodhara and Venerable Rahula. Even if others do, I will not accept it. Study this.

It is to be celebrated that Rahula was ordained to be a *bhikkhu*. He was entrusted to the senior disciple, Sariputra. He must have been at a loss suddenly shifting from the glorious world where people treated him respectfully to the way of practice where there was nothing. He did not know anything about the secular world or what the way of practice was.

It would have been no wonder if he had received a special treatment as son of Lord Shakyamuni. There may have been a few occasions Rahula behaved somewhat arrogantly. That was natural for him. However, wise Rahula could not possibly behaved badly in such a sacred place. Moreover, he was under the custody of Sariputra. Here again, there is a story about Rahula that does not fit well for him.

Before long, Rahula received respect from people who called him Foremost in Diligent Study – the one who practiced precepts strictly like nobody else. He was a respected venerable, one of the Ten Great Disciples. His life undoubtedly shows that he was indeed a son of Lord Shakyamuni.

It is strange that not much is documented on his life thereafter. There is no record to show that he attended the moment of Shakyamuni's entering *nirvana*. He was nearly sixty then, and it is possible he had passed away. The absence of his story arouses our imagination.

Abandoning the royal treasures
and living at ease
Foremost in Diligent Study of Just Now
Mountains are blue
and waters are green in the spring
No one knows the state of his golden life

Kido

How pleasant!
Thoughts clear up
And the body is abandoned
The sky of the transient world
Has no cloud

Great People

1. Vimalakirti⁴⁴

You must feel as if you are wandering into an unknown footpath deep in the mountains. You may laugh at me. Regrettably, I have no poetic talent. Please enjoy my flavorless style of writing.

Whether one is a monk or lives in the secular world, the only objective of practicing zazen is to remove bad habits of mind. If one attains it, he is a man of enlightenment. Here was an extraordinary lay practitioner who exceeded most *bhikkhus*. That is Vimalakirti, the subject of this section.

His state of enlightenment was horrified even by the Ten Great Disciples. The Sutra of Vimalakirti is the one that describes *dharma* stories explained in detail by Vimalakirti. The stories are very interesting; the contents are highly logical and eloquently speak of the essence, and, therefore, they are not easy to understand. Our Prince Shōtoku highly appreciated and commended the sutra and he translated it by himself. Shamefully, I have not read it.

Now, the main character here is Vimalakirti. He was born into a wealthy family. But he renounced everything and lived to fulfill the *dharma*. However, it is not known how he attained enlightenment. This being said, it is quite clear what had attracted a man of such a strong Bodaishin.

When he listened to Lord Shakyamuni's *dharma* talk, he realized there was a pure and trouble-free Way. He was impressed. Filled with joy, he practiced to master the state of "just now," exactly as Lord Shakyamuni explained. Master Dōgen said, "Where the practice is fulfilled, there is enlightenment." He

⁴⁴ Yuima-koji [維摩居士].

penetrated perfection and forgot himself. That is him, Vimalakirti. His attainment of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation is evidence of his enlightenment.

He was a pleasant guy who scolded and motivated *bhikkhus* while he himself was a lay person. He said, “That is not enough! There is a mountain upon the mountain. Raise up the Bodaishin and continue the practice!” He was good at finding the shortcomings of practitioners. He was a rare person and Shakyamuni did not recommend he be a monk. Rather, he placed Vimalakirti as a role model to show that lay persons could also attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

He was quite bitter to others and somewhat mischievous. His state of attainment having swallowed three thousand worlds was remarkable. He was very intimate with the Buddha, just like water to water, sky to sky.

Interestingly, Vimalakirti even teased Venerable Mahakasyapa and Ananda. Certainly, this took place before the occasion of the Flower Sermon. I bet Mahakasyapa after his great enlightenment went to see Vimalakirti for a greeting. He provided favorable *conditions* for Mahakasyapa and Ananda motivating them to practice further for enlightenment. Vimalakirti’s bitter stings were effective.

One time, Lord Shakyamuni was anxious about this wild Vimalakirti, who had not shown up for a while. So, he asked his disciples about Vimalakirti and learned that he had caught a cold and was laying down. Shakyamuni had something in mind and decided to send somebody to see Vimalakirti.

He tried to send one of the ten disciples and other leaders, but none of them wanted to go. This was because they had all been torn apart in the past and knew they would be knocked down again if they visited him. Shakyamuni was smiling at heart. He said within himself, “You are inferior to a lay person, because your Bodaishin is not strong enough!” He wanted to send

someone all the more, and instructed Manjusri to go and see Vimalakirti. It was at a later time people said in praise “the wisdom of Manjusri.”

On hearing that the esteemed Manjusri would be visiting Vimalakirti, all those who once flatly refused the request accompanied him to see how it would go. They numbered thirty-two. They fit in Vimalakirti’s small room without any difficulty.

To see by ears and to hear by eyes
One will have no doubt
Drops of rain under the eaves
Become gems naturally

Master Hakuin⁴⁵

Vimalakirti had no Vimalakirti. If one understands this, it is no wonder the small room could accommodate so many visitors.

Vimalakirti felt flattered to receive so many distinguished monks to see him in bed and welcomed them to his room. It was, however, a bit unusual of a visit. It was all for the *dharmā*. The best gift they brought was the *dharmā*. It was the best medicine for Vimalakirti’s cold.

Since they had all gone to the trouble of visiting Vimalakirti, they surely had some messages to give him. Since they had come all the way to see him, he had to receive them. Each of the visitors said something, but Vimalakirti did not like any of them. He flatly refused those trivial messages. They were all frightened as in the past.

At last it was turn for Manjusri, the highly respected monk, to provide an anticipated synopsis. The greatest question and answer session began. Manjusri was good enough to be a challenger, so Vimalakirti started to speak first.

He asked,

⁴⁵ Hakuin-Ekaku [白隱慧鶴], 1686-1769.

“What is the state of the Bodhisattva’s entry into the *dharma* gate of non-duality?”

Indeed, it was Vimalakirti’s very question. His first ball was a fast ball. It is the same as asking, “What is *emptiness*?” “What is nothingness?” “What is the *dharma*?” or “What is the universe?” He intended to see whether Manjusri clearly understood the truth.

It was the tough kind of question that Manjusri was anticipated. He replied,

“If the right answer is as I believe, all the *dharmas* have no words and no theories, nothing to show and nothing to know, thus they are detached from questions and answers. That is the state of the Bodhisattva’s entry into the *dharma* gate of non-duality.”

One should know by hearing this that Manjusri has Issekigen. It sounds melodious but has some smell. While saying that “they are detached from questions and answers,” Manjusri’s answer contained a certain challenging question in it. It was the evidence that the trace of enlightenment was hanging in his answer. Vimalakirti did not fail to recognize its weakness. He knew that Manjusri also sensed its weakness, and therefore, waited for further remarks by Manjusri. He was correct, Manjusri continued,

“Each of us has given some messages. Now it is your turn, Vimalakirti. What is the state of the Bodhisattva’s entry into the *dharma* gate of non-duality?” That was bad. It was exactly what Vimalakirti had been waiting for. Now, it was Vimalakirti’s turn. Everyone waited breathlessly for his words.

However, Vimalakirti remained silent, because there was nothing more to say than the fact that “just now” is the *dharma* gate of non-duality. Saying nothing was most appropriate. He

showed the true nature, the *dharma* gate of non-duality by he himself becoming it. It was as if Bodhidharma⁴⁶ faced the wall for nine years.

“Just this is this.” Because there is nothing, even the Buddha or the patriarchs cannot say anything about it. Even Yama (Enma) cannot judge it. Vimalakirti stared at them as if he was checking to see if anyone there understood it.

The author of the Vimalakirti Sutra described this scene as: “Vimalakirti remained silent.” There was no other way of explaining the scene. It was impossible for Vimalakirti to show what the “silence of no silence” or the “speaking of no-speaking” was. It would mean that the “silence” was hanging somewhere in the mind. This is the silence that people at a later time acclaimed as “the silence of Vimalakirti is like thunder,” and horrified the world even more.

I can hear but cannot see you,
a grasshopper in the field

Bloomless,
but its body is tranquil,
a willow tree

A skilled hawk hides its talons. That was Vimalakirti. Manjusri lost the debate because he still had something to say about the *dharma* gate of non-dualism, and thus he tainted it. One will not understand the true meaning of “silence” unless one truly becomes the “silence.” This is to study the “silence.” In a nutshell, be “now” “just.” As it were to say, die once and you will see it.

They were stimulated by the bitter experience with Vimalakirti. It was exactly as Lord Shakyamuni anticipated, a splendid scene

⁴⁶ Bodai-Daruma [菩提達磨], 483-540?

that impressed them showing there was no difference between being a *bhikkhu* and a lay person in pursuing the *dharma*. All that was out of the Buddha's dedication to the great *dharma*. Lord Shakyamuni wanted to remind them that keeping up the Bodaishin was key. Vimalakirti exhibited it in his way of "silence" and "speaking of no-speaking."

Indeed, Mahakasyapa and Ananda subsequently attained full enlightenment. Without the "silence" of Vimalakirti, there would have been no Nenge-mishō, Mahakasyapa's subtle smile. We are deeply indebted to Vimalakirti for saving the great *dharma*.

"Keeping the mind straightforward is the way of practice." Vimalakirti's caution lives forever. Vimalakirti is everywhere now. If your mind carelessly searches a mind elsewhere, Vimalakirti will stab one. The silence of Vimalakirti is like thunder. You do not have to cover your ears at the roaring thunder. See it without eyes, hear it without ears. This is not at all easy.

Thunder and lightning
are just thus
The space of freedom,
even the Buddha and patriarchs hardly catch it
Trying to consider its meaning,
it will be rejected
Just silence,
the source of a medicine or sickness for all beings

Kido

At the Adachi Museum of Art in Shimane Prefecture, there is a carving of Vimalakirti. It is placed at one corner and many people fail to notice it, but it is a masterpiece. The full unapproachable body is the work of Denchu Hirakushi⁴⁷ who threw himself thoroughly into Vimalakirti. When a famous tea

⁴⁷ [平櫛 田中], 1872-1979.

master, Tenshin Okakura⁴⁸, saw it, he was deeply impressed and requested that an appropriate pedestal be prepared. The statue is sitting on a marvelous pedestal suitable for a statue of the Buddha. I have seen it many times. And it impresses me every time.

No one is so beautiful
Among those who gather to admire
The moonlight

Bashō⁴⁹

2. Manjusri⁵⁰

Bodhisattva Manjusri, we have just seen, is the guardian of wisdom. A sacred statue we find at the center of the zen hall, where we do zazen, is this Bodhisattva Manjusri. He attained enlightenment a bit after that of Vimalakirti, and he made some mistakes which are described in “A Woman Exits from *Samadhi*,” the forty-second question of *The Gateless Gate (Mumonkan)*. But later, he managed to catch up as a result of stimulating each other and continuously practicing hard with firm determination never to fail, and he reached a dignified state on a par with Vimalakirti.

One day, Lord Shakyamuni noticed Manjusri outside the gate and asked him, “Manjusri, why do not you come in?” Manjusri replied, “I do not find myself outside the gate of the *dharma*. Why do you invite me in?”

Shakyamuni nodded deeply in approval. Thereafter, Manjusri has been respectfully admired as “Wisdom of Manjusri.”

⁴⁸ [岡倉天心], 1863-1913.

⁴⁹ [芭蕉], 1644-1694.

⁵⁰ Monju-bosatsu [文殊菩薩].

He once had a great debate with Mahakasyapa on account of the *dharma*. Both of them were practicing *dhyana* inspiring themselves with the Bodaishin. The scene of the debate is described in a number of pieces of literature. Manjusri gradually came to be deemed a divine figure, for his intelligence and *bodhi* wisdom. That is why Manjusri appears so frequently in sutras.

Manjusri is Sanskrit and means excellent brain, universal brain, respected brain, or by the modern translation, a wonderful happiness. He is called so for his “wisdom of oneness between matter and the *dharma*.” This places him as a teacher of the Seven Buddhas, as described in the sutras. Accordingly, there are many discourses about Manjusri.

The reason behind his popularity is that there is the theoretical Manjusri in the light of the *dharma* on the one hand, and the factual and historical Manjusri on the other. A religion grew up venerating Manjusri as its founder. He also appeared on Mt. Seiryō-zan, the Clear Cool Mountain, and in the northeast of Manchuria. Many people worship Manjusri in different places.

“Manjusri, Three by Three” is the thirty-fifth zen question of *the Blue Cliff Record (Hekiganroku)*, which narrates the example of when he appeared on the Clear Cool Mountain. From a theoretical viewpoint of the *dharma*, Manjusri would naturally appear anywhere beyond space and time. What matters is the essence of the *dharma*. Therefore, study the meaning of the question and practice diligently at this *condition*, otherwise, Shakyamuni will die.

It would be fun to talk more on Manjusri as illustrated in *Hekiganroku*, but I have no space here to do so. Please study it yourself.

Similarly, “Lord Shakyamuni ascends to the high-seat,” the ninety-second question of *Hekiganroku*, is another example. I would like you to study the intimacy of Shakyamuni and Manjusri who join their minds to transmit the Dharma Gate of

Emancipation, with wholehearted mercy and compassion. You will understand why Manjusri appears here and there.

There are so many good examples that explain his ability. His conversation with Sudhanakumara, Boy Sudhana, is an interesting one.

Manjusri let Sudhana go and pick up some medicine. Sudhana said, “Everything in the world is a medicine.” Manjusri responded, “Pick up some medicine and show it to me.” Sudhana picked up a stalk of grass and presented it to Manjusri. Manjusri accepted it and showed it to the audience saying, “This medicine can either kill a person or can cure him.”

It may have been that they were pulling up weeds in the garden. Manjusri casually asked Sudhana, “Pick a medicinal one.” This was an examination. Sudhana responded, “All the universe is a medicine – nothing is not a medicine.” He was full of confidence. The match was a draw. Manjusri continued the screening, “Not such an ordinary one. Give me a special one.” I knew it, thought Sudhana and “just” pulled up a plank of weed in front of him and “just” handed it over to Manjusri. It was trouble-free and pure. This we call no-intention, no-action. Nothing is a better medicine than being “just.” Manjusri saw Sudhana’s state of attainment directly and applauded.

Showing the grass in hand, Manjusri explained to the audience that the special medicine of being “just” can eradicate confusion and give life to the *dharma*. Be “just,” learn after Sudhana. By this, Manjusri approved Sudhana.

Medicine or grass is not important here. Manjusri simply tested Sudhana to see if he had truly penetrated being “just.” At the same time, he used the occasion to encourage the people gathered. The case shows how a master should be; the wisdom of

Manjusri.

There is even the Sutra of Manjusri. He was a bodhisattva who played freely at every moment and place to help Lord Shakyamuni. We call Lord Shakyamuni, Manjusri and Samantabhadra the three most venerable. I do not know exactly why the two bodhisattvas are by the side. Lord Shakyamuni is the greatest master of all times, and we commonly admire the wisdom of Manjusri and the compassion of Samantabhadra. Maybe they are his right hand and left hand.

We can never understand the fullest capacity of Manjusri from written accounts. We can only ask people how they practice.

The fore three three and the back three three
This is the way to know the true *dharma*
Who has ever seen Manjusri?
One can only see him by reaching the outer sky

Kido

3. Three Kasyapa Brothers

It is natural to first guide a person who is endowed with the *condition* for enlightenment. Lord Shakyamuni stayed for a while with the five monks after his First Sermon. He needed to confirm their enlightenment, because they were to become leaders as the first disciples.

The *dharma* lineage of Lord Shakyamuni emphasizes emancipation as the primary objective; therefore, it gives the highest priority to the state of “just now” – to act with the “whole mind” and become one with matter. When one has become perfectly one with it, the body and mind will disappear and the Dharma Gate of Emancipation will be manifest.

After confirming their state, Lord Shakyamuni left them and

set off on a journey. The solitary journey unexpectedly brought about an important *dharma condition* for the *sangha* to expand greatly. More than fifty people became his disciples after encountering him in the grove. The rain of mercy had thus begun to sprout buds.

Among existing non-Buddhist *sanghas*, there was a conspicuously influential one which worshiped fire. The three Kasyapa brothers were its central leaders. The eldest was Uruvilva, the second was Nadi, and the third Gaya. They were all outstanding Brahmins. They each had five hundred, three hundred and two hundred disciples respectively, one thousand in total. All of them were bright and polite, had outstanding abilities and virtues, and everybody knew them.

One time, Lord Shakyamuni asked for a night stay at Uruvilva's. He was much older than Shakyamuni and was a distinguished leader. He had an insightful and unusual eye to recognize the other's personality. Lord Shakyamuni's appearance had no hint of carelessness, and so, Uruvilva saw his character. A person with a good eye will understand it. The Great Kasyapa felt, "This *bhikkhu* is of exceeding capacity; he must be worthy of spending a night together." With joy, they had profound conversations on the Way. Shakyamuni was a man of no self and no mind. Uruvilva was a man of self and mind. Shakyamuni had emancipated himself and, therefore, had the mind of *nirvana*. Uruvilva had a sense of relativity between the other and himself and, therefore, lived in the six realms of *samsara* – the perpetual cycle of reincarnation.

I believe Uruvilva had a difficult time because Shakyamuni was perfectly transparent and *empty*, and therefore, was impossible to grasp or find fault with. No one is greater than a person who has no self. Lord Shakyamuni was too great even for the Great Kasyapa. The more he used his mind, the bigger enemy he found within himself. The Great Kasyapa must have shivered

as the bottom of his heart was seen through by Lord Shakyamuni.

Uruvilva spoke highly about the supernatural power of the god of fire, which in fact was a superstitious illusion. Lord Shakyamuni sensed his strong abilities but felt pity for him. The fundamental discourse of Buddhism is, in short, “the law of *cause and effect*.” It is highly scientific, theoretical and yet it is beyond the grasp of theory. “Reason is not matter; matter is not reason.” The absolute truth has no birth or death; it does not increase or decrease.

Lord Shakyamuni explained this point, citing the central material of Uruvilva’s discourse, “fire,” and completely destroyed its validity. He explained that the truth of no birth-no death will be manifest if he extinguishes the fire in his mind that makes illusions, instead of worshipping it. This straight message directly reached the mind of Uruvilva. The Great Kasyapa was capable enough to be amazed and impressed at the talk of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. He already had been equipped with great intelligence and the ability to understand the Lord Shakyamuni’s words.

Uruvilva was born into a wealthy and deeply pious family. He was quite intelligent and respected, who pursued absolute peace of mind and firm conviction. He realized at that time that the true Way he was earnestly searching for was the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

When Lord Shakyamuni explained that the Way is to extinguish the body and mind, the Great Kasyapa was shocked and his vision brightened. He used to have that belief himself, but it was not perfect. He felt uneasy about something impure that kept coming up in his mind. He had no further way to overcome it.

When he heard of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, his mind became clear, although only for a moment. The mind was lighter; and it brought about an indescribable happiness to him. This

gave him a decisive conviction.

He instantly made a vow as a disciple and asked Lord Shakyamuni for the Way. What a *dharma condition*! He instantaneously understood the teaching that the truth lies in the “now” and the truth is in the mind. He was indeed extraordinary.

His Bodaishin was genuine. Out of his great capacity, he abandoned all previous beliefs and convictions immediately when he was convinced that Lord Shakyamuni was his true guide. For a great leader of five hundred disciples, it would not be easy to give up his belief and conviction. Without a strong determination, no man of an age could possibly become a *bhikkhu* and practice in a totally different world.

You may wish to know what made him bold enough to change his ways. The answer is simple. It was because his *dharma condition* matured. Because he was always searching for the true Way It was a consequence of his strong Bodaishin.

If only one has a true mind of pursuing the Way, one will never be burnt by the flame of the three poisons. One will always be self-content and will not have an anxious mind to envy others. Great Kasyapa was such a person who had a pure and clean mind. The Bodaishin has been greatly valued since ancient times because of its ability to purify by itself. We find his greatness in that he regarded encountering his true teacher as the supreme joy. I cannot help bowing deeply. Gasshō, I pray.

Such an excellent character of the Great Kasyapa attracted younger two brothers who wholeheartedly respected him, took a pride in him and followed him all the time. When they knew that Uruvilva had abandoned everything and had become a disciple of Shakyamuni, I bet they were much surprised. What is surprising to us is the following:

“Lord Shakyamuni must be an even greater person since our brother highly trusts and respects him. We should also follow

suit.” So, the two brothers also became disciples of Shakyamuni. What honest brothers!

We can hardly find such a beautiful story in our daily lives. What wonderful men of practice! For persons with such a pure and lofty mind with intelligence, and a firm Bodaishin, it seems that they were destined to have the *conditions* to encounter Lord Shakyamuni.

What is even more surprising is that all their disciples followed them and became *bhikkhus* of the Shakyamuni’s *sangha*. How marvelous! This shows how much the three Kasyapa brothers were respected.

This evidently explains how precious it was when the Great Kashyapa spent the first night with Lord Shakyamuni.

The *sangha* suddenly grew much larger. Lord Shakyamuni faced the challenge of securing a proper space for the practice and life of his disciples. Fortunately, there was Mt. Gayashirsha, not very far from where they were, near the small town of Gaya. There was a grove where they could practice zazen. This kind of information was made available to the *sangha*, thanks to the Kasyapa brothers. So, they headed for the new place.

Their settlement also needed to be suitable for mendicancy. A certain minimum level of conditions were necessary including commercial activities with some economic activities and the cultural level. Mt. Gayashirsha can be regarded as the first grove monastery for Lord Shakyamuni’s *sangha*. There, he made a sermon on the importance of attaining the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, comparing illusions, thoughts and perceptions to the flame.

The *bhikkhus* practiced hard, and their state of mind became clearer day by day. For the holy life of Lord Shakyamuni, Mt. Gayashirsha provided a fresh and lively space. But there were problems: the rainy season and food. It was not a place that could accommodate so many disciples.

For the sake of the great *dharma*, Lord Shakyamuni decided to move to Rajagrha, the capital of Magadha under the custody of King Bimbisara. He also had promised to emancipate the king, once he attained enlightenment. Rajagrha was a major city in those days. The marching of thousands of monks would have been a scene.

Around that time, the encounter with Assaji provided a *condition* for Sariputra, and his friend Maudgalyayana, together with their two hundred fifty followers to become Shakyamuni's disciples. Such a remarkable expansion of the *sangha* was soon known to people and the name of Lord Shakyamuni roared like thunder.

King Bimbisara understood Lord Shakyamuni's situation, and immediately donated the grove and monastery. This is the famous Bamboo Grove Monastery. Since then, the five *bhikkhus* at the time of the First Sermon withdrew from the main scenes and continued practicing without getting too close or too far from the Lord. This was because a host of capable and lively geniuses emerged in the *sangha*.

Unfortunately, the stories of the Three Kasyapa Brothers thereafter are not documented. Undoubtedly, they made great contributions, but the details are not known. It is a pity. I wonder why.

Consider just the matter in front of you
The past does not come back
The future is unknown

Sugawara Michizane⁵¹

4. King Pasenadi

⁵¹ [菅原道真], 845-823.

There are so numerous stories and anecdotes about this king. He was called by different names. I will simply use one of them here. King Pasenadi of Kosala was also a man of highly pious virtues. But he was not in his youth. When he visited the Shakya state, he was greatly surprised at the orderly and splendid way of life that Lord Shakyamuni and his disciples had established. Possibly his mind opened at that time.

At that time, his kingdom was becoming more and more imperialistic with an overwhelmingly warlike energy. His aspirations grew after being awakened by Lord Shakyamuni's supreme virtue. The king sincerely respected him. As a human being and as head of state, he built his own theory of rule, and became an impressive king who pursued building a good and ethical state.

Moreover, he was fortunate to have a splendid queen, Mallika. She is a main character in Shomankyo (Srimaladevi-simhanada Sutra), a sutra highly appreciated by our Crown Prince Shōtoku along with the Sutra of Vimalakirti and the Lotus Sutra. She apparently took after Anathapindata, Sudatta's another name, who donated the Jetavana Monastery. On a number of occasions, she saved the king with her virtuous acts.

She had a daughter, Princess Vajiri. Prince Jeta and Crown Prince Vidudabha were also said to be her sons. I do not believe the assertion that Queen Mallika was a false wife.

King Pasenadi had a younger sister, Kosaladevi, who married King Bimbisara of Magadha.

When the king invited Lord Shakyamuni to his palace, he ordered a splendid coach to welcome Lord Shakyamuni. Further evidence of his sound rule can be seen by his sending his son to the Shakya state to pursue martial arts and other studies.

Throughout his life, King Pasenadi respected Lord Shakyamuni and his *sangha*, and provided great support to the *dharma*.

His attitude to Lord Shakyamuni is described as follows:

The Shakya family is closely linked to King Pasenadi of the Kosala Kingdom. The Shakya people are obedient to the king, respect him, stand up when greeting him, join palms and behave in a polite manner. Likewise, King Pasenadi of Kosala is obedient to Lord Shakyamuni, respects him, and behaves in a polite manner. ... Gautama, the practitioner, was born in a noble family... he is influential, his appearance is beautiful, ... he has a huge number of disciples.... (*Dirghagama, The Canonical Book of the Buddha's Lengthy Discourses*).

At around age seventy-seven, King Pasenadi visited Lord Shakyamuni who was on a tour nearby, and listened to his sermon. Lord Shakyamuni often traveled between the Jetavana Monastery and other monasteries. When the king came to Lord Shakyamuni, he took off all the decorative items he wore and paid the utmost respect. Shakyamuni inquired,

“Pray tell, why do you greet in this way?” The king was even more polite than usual. Or could he be depressed for fear of something?

The king replied, “I am deeply impressed with each and every *dharma* act of Lord Shakyamuni and your disciples, at their respect to my servants. In addition, I am a king of a state, while Lord Shakyamuni is king of the *dharma*. I am eighty (seventy-seven) and you are eighty (seventy-seven). Therefore, I dedicate my entire life to worshiping and protecting Lord Shakyamuni.”

He explained the reason for his respect in this way. He envied and respected Lord Shakyamuni, conscious of the fundamental difference between him who suppresses his people with power and Lord Shakyamuni who had drawn countless great disciples who appreciated his virtues. This was their final encounter.

Though the king had a valuable opportunity to meet Lord

Shakyamuni, he did not kneel down to ask Lord Shakyamuni about the supreme *dharma*. He did not have the *dharma condition*; he was helpless. What a pity!

He was a wise king, but could not control his massive military. A half year after this final farewell, Prince Vidudabha and a number of criminals revolved against the king in his absence. The prince killed Prince Jeta, secretly plotted to avenge an insult from the past, and planned an invasion.

Thrown out of power, King Pasenadi was furious but could only to turn to his daughter. Princess Vajiri was married to Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha. It was quite far - about 700 kilometers away, comparable to the distance between Tokyo and Okayama.

After seizing the power, the son invaded and destroyed the Shakya state. Lord Shakyamuni was staying at the Jetavana Monastery with many of his disciples. He could not prevent the invasion. He could do nothing but observe the ruin of his state.

King Ajatashatru, the son-in-law, had a terrible past, having let his father King Bimbisara and mother die of hunger. King Pasenadi certainly knew the incident. When he finally reached the palace gate, he was extremely tired and weak. He collapsed there and died. He had possibly heard the terrible rumors about his son, and given his son-in-law's character, he could hardly bear the terrible worry and guilt.

The terminal moments of such a distinguished king is painful to think about. What kind of *condition* did he have? Even the Buddhas of the three worlds would not know such pain, neither have I. Gasshō, I pray.

The people of Kosala appeared to have moved in by crossing over the Himalayas, they had a rough and militant character. However, Kosala was doomed by Magadha which King Pasenadi had trusted.

5. King Bimbisara

King Bimbisara was a top state leader. Apparently, he had several wives. He was endowed with talent, full of virtues and thus appropriately capable of governing the state. He constantly faced pressures and was on alert; once war broke out, everything was endangered. Naturally, his five senses were sharpened; he had become so sensitive that he seemed to have had a third eye in back of his head. He listened to people and watched development intently.

King Bimbisara was powerful in war, yet he also valued culture and commerce. When the state is solid and stable, intellectuals, religious leaders and merchants flow in. Rajagrha was one of the most prosperous cities in those days. The city was surrounded by forests and was highly convenient for the pious practitioners. No wonder there were many hermits and practitioners there.

He seemed able to attract people without trying.

Before long, the king had become a great guardian of Buddhism. He donated the Bamboo Grove Monastery, the first large Buddhist temple. The temple served as the center for subsequent expansion. Also near was Mt. Vulture Peak, which came to be known as the most sacred in the universe.

This was for the reason Prince Siddhartha came here first. It was the right choice. Sandalwood is more fragrant than a bud. He was raised in a noble family and was exceedingly intelligent. He was full of the Bodaisin, and naturally looked more dignified than other monks. If someone saw him walking, the person would instantly be moved and attracted.

The king took notice of one *bhikkhu*, Prince Siddhartha. With a glance King Bimbisara sensed his unparalleled greatness. The king located his residence and visited him to examine Prince himself. A person with a true eye is quick to decide and move.

What is more, the king instantly appreciated Siddhartha's abilities, and invited him to stay in the palace even before they formally greeted each other. A person of a character indeed does the unthinkable.

When King Bimbisara learned of Prince Siddhartha's background, purpose and supreme determination, he developed a deep respect for the prince and worshiped him. The king returned to his palace after obtaining the prince's promise that he would deliver the king salvation if he attained enlightenment. Thinking too much into the future, one will be confused; haste makes waste. The king knew its meaning well.

After this meeting, the king deepened his sense of intimacy and respect every time he heard the wonderful work of Lord Shakyamuni and was prepared to give all possible support for him. A rumor said that Lord Shakyamuni would come with over one thousand disciples. With this news, the king's mind jumped for joy. Distinguished Lord Shakyamuni would come to his side. His mind was filled with peace by the thought. He was pleased with the secret pride that only he could do this.

As soon as the king saw the size of the *sangha*, he gladly donated the grove and the monastery to Lord Shakyamuni. This is the famous Bamboo Grove Monastery, the first Buddhist temple where numerous sutras were born and many disciples were raised. Thanks to the monastery, they could practice during the rainy season without any worries.

During the dry season, Lord Shakyamuni gave sermons at the nearby Vulture Peak. Caves and groves were conveniently located in the mountain where the Ten Great Disciples and other *bhikkhus* practiced zazen. It is also the most frequently cited mountain in sutras. Many disciples lived there and Lord Shakyamuni cherished it.

King Bimbisara once came to Vulture Peak by a coach, climbed

it up and listened to the *dharma* talk. Genjō-Sanzō⁵² describes the occasion as follows:

Vultures live here; the sky and the green are reflected on the peak, separating dark and soft colors. There is a stone footpath which Lord Shakyamuni walked on. King Bimbisara prepared the footpath.

It is the sacred mountain where Lord Shakyamuni's great mercy and compassion bore fruit. Who wouldn't cherish and worship it?!

King Bimbisara consulted Lord Shakyamuni on private matters. They were so intimate, and the king respected him deeply. One sadness was that he did not have any child. There is a horrible anecdote about this. The king's ill deed possibly resulted from his desperate wish for a son for the sake of the state.

I omit a detailed account here⁵³. However, this incident became a *condition*, and the king and the queen were placed in prison and died of hunger. Devadatta, one of Shakyamuni's disciples, seduced the prince into the plot. It might have been him, or possibly not.

When King Bimbisara was confined, Queen Vaidehi asked Lord Shakyamuni for help, but it was difficult even for him. When queen's desperate efforts to prolong the king's life was revealed, she was also imprisoned; both died of hunger.

The sad drama between parents and son is based on a plot which is difficult for ordinary people to understand. Despite the king's many honorable acts, and devoted as he was to Lord Shakyamuni and the *dharma*, the king's final moments were miserable, like King Pasenadi.

⁵² [玄奘 三藏], Xuanzang in Chinese, 602-664.

⁵³ A fortune teller said to the king, "One hermit will be reborn as your son." The king could not wait and killed the hermit who swore revenge. Prince Ajatashatru was born but misery followed.

Seven years after King Bimbisara's demise and three years after King Pasenadi's, Lord Shakyamuni passed away.

Before long, Ajatashatru, now the king of Magadha, returned to himself as if he woke up from a dream. He repented with deep regret and devoutly worshiped Lord Shakyamuni. This all arose from the *dharma* of *cause and condition*. Once the Bodaishin is awakened, "now" is no longer the same now as in the past. It is the newest "now" for the future; the universal "now." Repenting is the best cure.

The Sutra of Immeasurable Life depicts the scenes of the queen's lament and Ajatashatru's killing of his parents as incidents arising according to the law of *cause and condition*. However, Ajatashatru was fond of wars and was skillful at seizing power. He also ruined the Vajji kingdom.

It is true that King Ajatashatru made great contributions to the *dharma*. After Lord Shakyamuni entered *nirvana*, he called on Mahakasyapa to assemble five hundred *bhikkhus* for the First Council.

If the First Council was actually achieved in response to the King Ajatashatru's appeal, we cannot thank him enough. If it were not for the First Council, there could have been no Second and Third Councils. One way or another, the councils were assembled and the teachings of Lord Buddha were compiled. We must praise this work and thankfully return the favor by practicing diligently. Much appreciated.

I am sure that the King Bimbisara equally appreciated his accomplishments and together ascended to heavenly world of the awakened. Gasshō, I pray.

King Bimbisara and King Pasenadi had many things in common. Both were the king and were around the same age as Lord Shakyamuni. Both kings reverently worshiped the Buddha and protected his disciples with respect. These were important

achievements. The presence of the kings was precious in support of Lord Shakyamuni and the expansion of Buddhism. Leading disciples were close to both kings and the kings respected them and wished for their success.

The two met at least a couple of times. Prince Ajatashatru, son of King Bimbisara married Princess Vajiri, daughter of King Pasenadi. King Pasenadi's sister was queen of King Bimbisara. Their inter-marriages lasted long; they were related all in one way or another.

It was fortunate that both kings met Lord Shakyamuni and were saved. However, they did not make progress toward the Way, not as compared to our emperors in Japan. To have the powerful authority or money is important, but time waits for no one; death comes at any time. Despite the good fortune of meeting Lord Shakyamuni, they did not do well enough. They could have ignored their status as kings and devoted themselves to serious practices, as Lord Shakyamuni did.

A king has his own *dharma*. Why did not they ask Lord Shakyamuni for advice? I must scold the kings for having missed the best chance in their lifetimes. I do not mean they should have abandoned their thrones. They could have developed the *dharma* mind while being king. Lord Shakyamuni's mercy and compassion did not work because they failed to throw away the worldly desire to hold on to power. Position never matters for removing bad habits of mind!

If one has the Bodaishin, one's mind will reach the other directly. If both great leaders worked together, their kingdoms would have been peaceful and the people saved. That is why Lord Shakyamuni wished for their close relationships through the Bodaishin. Without understanding this mind, understanding Lord Shakyamuni is impossible. How sad!

It is so sad that both were killed by their sons. I cannot help feeling appreciation, compassion and pity for them. It is said that

King Ajatashatru was also killed by his own son. To underestimate the three poisons is suicidal. The *dharma* of arising from *cause and condition* works in this way. Lord Shakyamuni is crying in his grave.

Practice hard with the Bodaishin.

6. Sudatta⁵⁴

After referring to the Bamboo Grove Monastery, the next I must refer to the Jetavana Monastery, or Gion-shōja. The introduction of Heike-Monogatari, famous piece of Japanese historical literature, also refers to it.

The Jetavana Monastery was founded by Sudatta, a wealthy man living in Kosala. He was extremely rich, and at the same time, humble, virtuous, grand, and pure.

A man of high virtues values people more than money or material things, treats people with “virtue” instead of power. He is a merciful person. He was born to be gentle, and never used by money or material objects.

Seeing a person was in trouble, he could not ignore the person, whoever he or she was. He was genuinely a good person – donating food and providing all sorts of help. A person who compassionately devotes himself for the sake of others regardless of who they are is called a bodhisattva. Sudatta was commonly called a “wealthy man who helps the abandoned,” which means a rich person who helps those who have no one to turn to. A living bodhisattva!

Sudatta visited Rajagrha, the capital of Magadha, seven hundred kilometers away. One day, he was struck when he saw a *bhikkhu* full of dignity walking for alms. He was so impressed that he followed the *bhikkhu*, and reached the Bamboo Grove

⁵⁴ [須達多].

Monastery. Again, he was overwhelmed by the orderly facilities and at the *bhikkhus* who were practicing in serenity.

There, he was able to listen to Lord Shakyamuni's *dharma* talk. Sudatta, who valued the Way more than even food, was extremely gratified. He could not resist petitioning Lord Shakyamuni as follows:

"I am wholeheartedly impressed. I humbly beg you to kindly come to Shravasti, the capital of Kosala, and share your *dharma* talk on such a wonderful 'path' to everyone. I shall wait for you, building a monastery to accommodate you and your disciples." Lord Shakyamuni accepted the request with pleasure.

I believe that Sudatta knew Lord Shakyamuni well by rumors and reputation, and that is why he went to the trouble of visiting Rajagrha: to listen to his *dharma* talk directly, to greet him and, if he was indeed the splendid person rumors said, to invite him to his state capital, and turn it into a place where people could live in peace without anxiety. For a person who valued the Way so deeply, this was rather natural and highly likely, I think.

Sudatta returned home fully content with the results of his trip. He had already identified an appropriate plot of area, and after seeing the Bamboo Grove Monastery, he had an image of the entire structure and design. Thinking of the completed monastery made him happy. He took to the project as soon as he returned back.

The venue was "the forest of Prince Jeta," son of King Pasenadi. He began to negotiate with the prince immediately. The prince highly admired and respected the great achievements of Sudatta. An agreement should have easily been reached. However, Prince Jeta laid down an unexpected condition.

If Sudatta spread gold coins on the plot, then Prince Jeta would donate the entire plot. What a greedy and haughty request! Disgraceful!

Surprisingly, Sudatta immediately began to honor the request.

The Prince was astonished. He could not believe Sudatta was a man of such stupid honesty. He had not meant it; it was a bad joke. The Prince renewed his respect for Sudatta's passion and honesty, and felt ashamed.

The deal was reached instantly. Moreover, the Prince himself also donated a grove and contributed as much as he could to constructing the monastery. In this way, the splendid Jetavana Monastery was completed. It was even larger than the Bamboo Grove Monastery.

The joke between the distinguished two is gorgeous and pleasant. I bow with respect and offer one verse:

The path has no south or north;
the body has the east or the west
Words are torn into pieces; gold is coined
The Jetavana Monastery talks
of the *dharmā* of Nyoze ("as it is")
A pure wind and the clear moon,
what are they saying?

Kido

The monastery was named "Prince Jeta's grove" and the "wealthy man who helps the abandoned" combined in the Jeta-to-Help-the-Abandoned Monastery, or the Jetavana Monastery in short.

It was the perfect place for a large number of *bhikkhus* to practice. Lord Shakyamuni and his disciples rejoiced, especially, during the summer time. Later, the Migaramatupasada Monastery (Rokushimo-kodo) and other monasteries were built around the area. In the rainy season, they practiced at the Jetavana Monastery, the Bamboo Grove Monastery and the Mahavana (Great Forest) Monastery.

All Sudatta's family members, including his wife, were devout

followers of Lord Shakyamuni and took refuge in Buddhism. When Sudatta was sick, leading disciples such as Ananda and Sariputra never failed to visit and see him. His trust in the Way made it happen.

Though the Kosala kingdom turned out to be an enemy of the Shakya state, Lord Shakyamuni himself had no hostility against it. If he had, he would not be Lord Shakyamuni. Moreover, the Jetavana Monastery was located in Shravasti, the capital. The winner has his way; the loser has his way. If the winner does not know what it means to lose, he is not a winner. If one knows the mind of a loser, one no longer can wage a war. That is a true winner.

Lord Shakyamuni gave a *dharma* talk on the Way to absolute peace throughout life. He led a large number of his disciples and gave a sermon at the Jetavana Monastery from time to time to disseminate the Way to people. However, in the end, Lord Shakyamuni's compassion and teas did not move the prince of Kosala or his chief servants. Shakyamuni did not stop teaching the *dharma* of peace of "mind" regardless of people's shortcomings. I deeply respect the prominence of Lord Shakyamuni who did his best to extend great mercy and compassion for the sake of the happiness of all people. Gasshō.

I have a feeling that Sudatta trusted in the *dharma* which finds its meaning in realizing peace. The bell in the Jetavana Monastery is ringing today. Do we hear it?

7. Devadatta⁵⁵

Devadatta was Lord Shakyamuni's cousin and Ananda's older brother. He was not a great man. He did nothing to help Lord Shakyamuni, and, therefore, he is not worthy of mention here.

⁵⁵ Daiba-datta, [提婆達多].

Still, his presence is closely associated with the Buddha's life, and in this sense, he had a significant negative *condition* against Shakyamuni.

Devadatta appears in a sutra to describe the terrifying deeds of human beings. He is depicted as an extremely horrible man, but I wonder if the story was exaggerated and if he was not so bad in real life. There are many people in this world who have no Bodaishin, sense of self-reflection, humbleness, fear or compassion, and who do not care about how things should be.

Furthermore, some people are jealous, greedy, fame-seeking, deceptive, and violent, with an internal character like those of beasts. He appears to have been close to the latter group. Although pitiful, it seems difficult to reverse the description that has been established about him.

The *dharma* is to help people. Lord Shakyamuni occasionally went to town and gave *dharma* talks at open venues so that anyone could listen. It worked very well. The Lotus Sutra says:

In the grove, or in the forest, under the tree, or in the monastery, in town, or in the palace, in the mountain, the valley or the field, people should respect the *dharma*; all the Buddhas give *dharma* talks in this place, all the Buddhas enter *nirvana* in this place.

Here and “now” is the palace of *nirvana*, the absolute world. Choosing the place or time to practice the *dharma* is a false way of disseminating the *dharma*. Lord Shakyamuni would give a *dharma* talk anywhere.

Devadatta took the wrong Way because he did not have firm guiding principles for practice due to his lack of the Bodaishin. But why did he fail to have the Bodaishin? The reason can be found in his childhood. He was born into the same royal family as Prince Siddhartha. Their ages were not so different, and they

were compared to each other on a number of occasions. The Prince was a crown prince of the main family, while Devadatta was under the side branch. This relationship could not be changed which may have made Devadatta unpleasant for a long time.

Ever since the prince became the Buddha Shakyamuni, his reputation skyrocketed quickly and he was respected by people of all classes. Devadatta envied Shakyamuni who was followed by a large number of dignified disciples. A true *bhikkhu* would practice diligently according to his master's guidance and would never fail to trust or respect his master.

However, Devadatta could not trust or respect Shakyamuni. Because of his lack of genuine Bodaishin, he was attached to the past in this way and was captivated by his own "self," which resulted in rot.

This is not unique to Devadatta. It is all due to *karma*. One's own actions in this and previous lives affects one's current life. In order to be truly present "now" without being hindered by *karma*, one must turn the past decisively into the past once for all. Buddhist practices are to make it possible.

As a messenger of Lord Shakyamuni, let me explain *dharma* and the practice.

It is clear that there is only "now" and that I clearly exist "now." It is a fact that one cannot see or hear anything one second earlier or later. To the extent that this fact is confused, the memory machine keeps introducing information of the past and confuses the "now." Accordingly, all moments are confused. This is a "bad habit of mind". This is self.

When "now" becomes clear, "I" will become clear. Once awakening to this truth, one is liberated from the absurdity of being captivated by the past.

To be aware that body and mind are gone;

To be aware that there is no hatred or complaint;
To be aware that I have eliminated the past;
To be aware that I am awakened to “now”;
To be aware who I am;
To be aware that I have totally done away with attachment;
To be aware of the great joy;
To be aware of the great confidence;
The “mind” of the patriarchs has become clearly
understandable;
To be aware that past hindrances have been extinguished;
To be aware that there is no separation;
To be aware that *conditions* have eliminated the self;
To be aware that eyes do not exist when I truly see;
To be aware that everything does not exist;
To be aware that there is nothing to be aware of;
To be aware that mercy and compassion spring out within
me;

The list runs endlessly, but such awareness comes from just one experience.

In order to attain true peace of mind, one has to control one’s “mind.” I hope readers will have understood this point by now. That is all for now.

Devadatta began to make counter-arguments against Lord Shakyamuni. He said, “Practitioners should leave town and practice diligently in a remote and pure place.” This sounds sensible; however, Lord Shakyamuni is the Buddha. To save people, it is more meaningful to stay close to more people. The Buddha is for people. Mercy and compassion are for people.

It was impossible for Devadatta to understand the great mercy and compassion of Lord Shakyamuni. After all, Devadatta’s argument was a futile challenge.

He did not have the basic behavior of Lord Shakyamuni’s

disciple; he merely challenged Lord Shakyamuni out of jealousy. He began thinking of a plot to control the *sangha* and finally behaved arrogantly, filled with greed for power as if he wants to say “Let me lead the *sangha*.” As soon as he realized that this ploy did not work, he left the *sangha* with five hundred immature practitioners and traveled to Mt. Gayashirsha in Gaya. He intended to establish his own *sangha*. However, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana took note of this emergency and successfully brought the practitioners back. The plot failed.

From this incident on, Devadatta has been known as a malicious monk. Most discourses on him refer to his actions at that time. In the end, he fell into hell according to *causes* and *conditions*. So be it.

Some say that his *sangha* followed strict rules and lasted for a long time. There is even a chapter on Devadatta in the Lotus Sutra. His presence in the sutra is significant as a case to teach the law of *cause and effect*, the self, the Bodaishin and how to save a person – the core of *dharma* teachings.

To emphasize the teachings of Lord Shakyamuni, Devadatta appears to represent a man with a polluted mind. Just like Manjusri, there is Devadatta as a physical presence and Devadatta as a place in the *dharma*. The latter is used in the Devadatta chapter of the sutra. We have to distinguish these two usages and not mix them up.

The Devadatta chapter explains that if one is confused by the self, anyone can become Devadatta; if one awakens the Bodaishin and practices diligently, one can become awakened and be saved.

This is the main message of the chapter, after taking away all decorative descriptions. Sutras are the blood of Lord Shakyamuni; they tell the truth. However, sutras are merely milestones. As shown in the sutras, we only have to practice with the Bodaishin in order to be awakened. It all depends on the Bodaishin.

Ananda asked Devadatta, "Do not you wish to escape from hell?"
Devadatta replied, "If Shakyamuni comes here, I will leave."

Ananda responded, "What reason would Lord Shakyamuni have to visit hell?"

Devadatta replied, "If Shakyamuni has no reason to come here, I, too, have no reason to leave."

Can there be a shadow of a tree in hell?

The summer is ending

If one fails to be awakened to "now," one will be trapped into *samsara* to live in the six different worlds perpetually. If one penetrates the truth, one will open the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. This is the most important theory of Buddhism. The Buddha was originally an ordinary person. Once an ordinary person is awakened, he becomes the Buddha. It is a matter of whether one has a determined Bodaishin or not. With the Bodaishin, one will be awakened to "now" and use it throughout one's life; without the Bodaishin, "now" will swirl from one trapping into *samsara* for eternal confusion.

There is no second Way What is important is that we be aware that there is Devadatta in our mind and live carefully and humbly. If we keep to the confession and practice diligently, we will be self-content and not envy others. The point is to practice well. Study it.

Devadatta was trapped by hatred and love

and fell into hell

Limited was his Bodaishin,

he overcame selfish views

His Bodaishin was round,

his true presence manifested

The heavenly god shone and fell

in front of the old window

Kido

Do not step out of the right path
The moon in the spring fog

The Formation of the Bhikkhunis' Sangha and Heroines

The wrong view of being natural

Before I begin with the topic of this chapter, I need to tell you one thing so that you can understand Lord Shakyamuni well.

As I have explained, Lord Shakyamuni spent the entire forty-nine years to save people's lives. The *dharma* is necessary for people; it is their light and salvation. One can save people only by getting in touch with the *dharma*. Hospitals, doctors and medicines are not necessary if there is no sickness or disease. This is logical. It is similar to the relationship between a doctor and a patient.

However, the *dharma* is different. "Sickness without sickness" is most dangerous. To be aware of this is the first stage. Sickness without sickness means that the person is healthy and, therefore, is not concerned about his health. He does not reflect on himself, and does not care about having regular checkups (reflection and effort).

In other words, someone who is "sick without sickness" is not careful enough but is still self-content. To be convinced that the current situation is satisfactory is called "the wrong view of being natural." The lack of self-awareness is a major sickness. The indifference and non-awareness are the foundation of

irresponsibility. Lord Shakyamuni was concerned with this fundamental sickness and loudly cautioned us of the dangers of non-reflection.

His concern was on how to correct a person who is selfish and makes no efforts to clean himself; to transform the person of non-humanity who pushes for the self, justifying this as the means to reach his objective or desired end. Conflicts and fighting are caused by such people who cause many other to suffer.

The contamination of the world originates from the ignorance of people who do not know that their own minds are contaminated. In short, we should be compassionate about everything. To become such a person, one should practice to abandon one's self, by sitting upright in zazen to open the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. This is the true intention of Lord Shakyamuni, but it took him great deal of efforts before arriving at this stage.

This is only a matter of general ethics or a common sense, too superficial for Lord Shakyamuni. Nevertheless, in reality, unless one begins to reflect on oneself and raise one's aspirations, one will not commit to hard practice. Lord Shakyamuni was conscious of this point and persistently explained it to people. He worked on this laboriously. The following *dharma* talk is an example.

“Indeed, the worldly matters come and go restlessly. People in the world have nothing to rely on. They are all captivated by pleasure. How regrettable it is!

This is the reality of the world; people are in the midst of suffering and do not know how to live well. Therefore, according to the law of the nature, they cannot help but suffer further.

People take good care of themselves, but do not know how to

give to others. Moreover, they are driven by greedy longing, filled with all sorts of confusions, for which they suffer all the more, and further suffer from the results.

Prosperity does not last long. It passes by quickly. No pleasure in this world lasts long either.

That is why we should abandon worldly matters, search for being wholesome, and aspire to attain eternal life. Without aspiring for the way, what kind of pleasure will longing provide?”

Sincere practitioners do not need this type of reminder, but this comes from the mercy and compassion of Lord Shakyamuni. Awakening one’s Bodaishin truly is indeed difficult. Most of the sutras spend considerable spaces for this purpose. We should realize and be thankful for the great mercy and great compassion Lord Shakyamuni spent on it. If we know it, we must appeal to our sincerity and get to practice right “now.” That is the best way to thank Lord Shakyamuni.

Courageous women

Back to the main story. For Lord Shakyamuni, one’s social status, young or old, male or female, ethnicity, and past did not matter. However, in the beginning, he did not admit women to his fellowship to renounce the world and did not have a *sangha* for women. He knew the danger of relations between men and women. They easily fall in love. This is unavoidable for sustaining the species; but that is another story.

Lord Shakyamuni’s intention was highly important to ensure the purity of practice. He was concerned with one more aspect.

There was risk and difficulties associated with a life of females asking for alms or living in a group. However, one incident changed his mind. This is a story about that.

King Suddhodana, Lord Shakyamuni's father, passed away at around the age of eighty (other assertions exist). At that time, Lord Shakyamuni was forty-five (other assertions exist). After the king's death, Queen, Mahapajapati, a foster mother of Lord Shakyamuni, and his wife repeatedly requested to be ordained. He did not accept it for the reasons above.

One day, a large group of women arrived at the Mahavana Monastery in Vaishali where Lord Shakyamuni was staying. They were miserable in appearance, bleeding from their feet. They could hardly stand for hunger and fatigue. Though they were repeatedly rejected to become his disciples, they followed him after he had left.

Vaishali is some five hundred kilometers away. Those women arrived on foot all the way dressed like *bhikkhunis*. They numbered between two and five hundred. Ananda's mother was among them. I am deeply impressed that they somehow manage to reach their destination! I cannot describe the scene without tears.

However, Lord Shakyamuni still did not admit them. I bet they felt as if they were in hell and thought how merciless he was. Quite understandable.

Women store the *dharma*, they say
True, they gave birth
To Shakyamuni and Bodhidharma
one after another

Ikkyu-Sōjun

Ananda's tears and a female sangha

In Europe, some say Buddhism, or zen, is a cold and merciless religion. From a certain perspective, it may well appear to be so. This is one such case.

“To kill Mǎ Sù in tears”⁵⁶ is an anecdote from old China. It was all for the sake of transmitting the great *dharma*. We have to accept it. If we introduce humane feelings into the Dharma Gate of Emancipation, the *dharma* will not be handed down. This is where we find the great compassion of the *dharma*. If we do not uphold what is most important, the Way is no longer the Way. When we do not see this point, problems can arise from trivial matters.

How lonely it is to feel
That nobody understands my anguish
But I

Kino Tsurayuki⁵⁷

Ananda had already acquired Issekigen by that time. His conviction was extraordinary. He knew Lord Shakyamuni's intention very well, but he still approached the Lord and tried to persuade him: it is inhumane to ignore them, a woman can attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation as long as she has the Bodaishin – these are your words. He wept and wept and made his plea logically.

Ananda's tears represented those of other followers and finally Lord Shakyamuni was moved. It was the only occasion in which Ananda who was diligent and honest acted against the teachings of Lord Shakyamuni. His tears worked as expected, and induced

⁵⁶ The great warrior leader Shokatsu-Ryo (Zhūgě Liàng) executed Mǎ Sù, his capable advisor after losing a battle.

⁵⁷ [紀貫之], 872-945.

the Lord to cry for joy. I can vividly see how serious Ananda was. He did well. Well done, Ananda.

What Ananda did was of great virtue for the *dharma*. Tears for joy are precious. Tears, tears, joy, joy. Gasshō.

Now that Lord Shakyamuni admitted women's renunciation, he established Eight Precepts for *Bhikkhunis*. The first precept is:

A *bhikkhuni* must respect any novice *bhikkhu* as her senior.

This is an important precept. His intention was to prevent seduction of man and woman into affairs, by not letting a *bhikkhu* recognize a *bhikkhuni* as a woman, and not letting a *bhikkhuni* be recognized as a woman. In short, need to keep themselves dignified at all the times. This should not be misinterpreted as male chauvinism. This is the main message of the Eight Precepts.

In addition, it appears Ambapali had an influence on Lord Shakyamuni when he admitted female *sangha*. She had her own grove in Vaishali where the life was mostly carefree, endowed with security and affluence, without many problems.

This is how the *sangha* for *bhikkhunis* was finally established, led by Mahapajapati who was around sixty-five years old.

King Pasenadi of Kosala donated a monastery for the *bhikkhunis* and supported them. The great mercy and compassion of Lord Shakyamuni has transmitted his virtues widely among kings, senior officials and wealthy people. It is easy to imagine that more and more monasteries were built for *bhikkhunis*.

The *bhikkhuni's sangha* was a group of women who had beauty and intelligence, whose lives were highly unique. Many of them came from royal families, bureaucrats, and wealthy merchants of high social status. They were, as it were, celebrities.

It is common in this world that those who aspire to keep their

minds pure and peaceful rather than seek high rank or wealth
have a beautiful mind and strong will.

The god always stays in the worldly dust
Do not worry about praying for it
Obstacles to the moon⁵⁸ does not bother me

Izumi-Shikibu⁵⁹

The town of Vaishali

The first monastery for *bhikkhunis* was built at Vaishali, the capital of Vajji. It was a republic state with an atmosphere similar to the Sakya state. Lord Shakyamuni visited there repeatedly. In fact, he first visited as soon as five years after attaining enlightenment. Subsequently, the Mahavana Monastery was built there.

Much later, when the Lord set off from the Bamboo Grove Monastery at his eighty, he also stopped by there. The journey at that time straddled over three states. The terminal was the Jetavana Monastery in Kosala. On the way, he stopped at the ruined Kapilavastu and he wanted to see Shravasti, remembering King Pasenadi who passed away there.

It was, however, the last journey for Lord Shakyamuni who closed his sacred life of eighty years in Kushinagar.

It was also the place where the Second Council was held. Two hundred years later, in 244 BC, King Ashoka invited a thousand senior monks there and the Third Council was held. It continued for nine months, examined Tipitaka – sutra (teachings), *vinaya* (rules) and *abhidharma* (discourses) and the compilation served as the foundation of the Complete Buddhist Canon.

⁵⁸ “Obstacles to the moon” is a pun. Another meaning is the menstrual period.

⁵⁹ [和泉式部], 976-1030.

Thus, Vaishali is an important and sacred place.

Heroines – distinguished women

Mahapajapati

It would be useful to describe some famous Buddhist heroines. One common and marvelous feature they shared was that they practiced diligently at the risk of their lives. True Bodhisattva is to extinguish one's self and concentrate on one thing forgetting oneself. Nothing is stronger and more beautiful when there is no self.

First comes Mahapajapati. She is an aunt of Lord Shakyamuni and his foster mother, a younger sister of Queen Maya who gave birth to him and passed away one week later. Although she was affluent, I imagine her life was never easy. However, the hard times she experienced helped her when she managed the *sangha*. She exhibited splendid leadership.

She had experienced the transiency of human life and her sense of *impermanence* was stronger than anybody else's. She had a strong Bodhisattva; she apparently developed *dhyana* and acquired *Issekigen*. This was the result of practicing *zazen* diligently and selflessly. She was stable and an smart leader of the female *sangha*.

She always maintained neutrality, handled small and big matters well. The presence of such a capable Mahapajapati made it possible for the *sangha* to grow well. She was loved by all, had a lot of disciples and thus was indispensable for the *sangha*. She was an immediate disciple of Lord Shakyamuni, the first nun, and an exemplary *bhikkhuni* much respected by everyone.

No information is recorded about when she died, or what her words were at her final moment.

When in a dream

To recognize I am dreaming is a dream

To say the dream is an illusion is also a dream

State Master Musō⁶⁰

I am sure she set off for the eternal journey having said something like this.

Uppalavanna

Her name is translated into Chinese as Lotus-color Bhikkhuni. She was daughter of a wealthy merchant in the capital of Kosala. Because of her beauty, she was named Lotus-color. It means the most beautiful flower, the most beautiful color.

Uppalavanna was turning of age with beauty, intelligence and special insight. Her fame spread widely. The sons of kings and wealthy merchants came to propose one after another; she was much annoyed. As a result, following the suggestion of her father, she became a nun. That is unique indeed.

There are many legendary stories about her, but because of her beauty, she also faced many problems.

Though we do not know process by which she practiced, she was born to be pure and honest. She followed the advice of Lord Shakyamuni and other seniors so immaculately that soon she penetrated deeply and attained enlightenment.

Her strong insight was further enhanced and she was called Foremost of Supernatural Power, praised by people along with Khema who was called Foremost of Wisdom. I will talk about her

⁶⁰ Musō-Soseki [夢窓 疎石], 1275-1351.

afterwards. They were intimate friends, both were capable and beautiful, comparable to none.

She was full of intelligent and wisdom and was comparable to Sariputra or Venerable Maudgalyayana. That is enough description of her virtues. She had known that this transient world is not trustworthy and thus she had transcended everything since adolescence. She was guided by the *dharmā* and lived a true life with her Bodaishin that never stopped growing. She was a distinguished heroine.

Along with Khema, her beauty, her state of penetration, and her affluence made Uppalavanna quite influential. She emitted an aura of one in a million. This attracted everyone's heart; no one could refuse her, as if they were spellbound. Many powerful figures and intelligent people became feverish practitioners thanks to her attractive character and the power of *dharmā*.

As I keep saying, no one is more powerful and beautiful than a person who has genuinely practiced "just." Having no sense of gain or loss, no self or others, these women were full of confidence. Simply being with them, people were affected and saved.

Again, there is no information about how and at what age she passed away. I will wait for new information to be found.

I wish someone loved me
As much as I love her
Will I still suffer much then?
I want to try it out

(a poet of 9th century)

Khema

She was an exceptional *bhikkhuni*, so people called her Foremost of Wisdom. She was daughter of Ksatriya, an upper

caste in Magadha, and was an exceptional beauty. At the request of King Bimbisara, she became his wife (mistress). The story of her renunciation is also extraordinary.

Because of her exceeding beauty and intelligence, she was somewhat bigheaded. As she was even a bit arrogant with Lord Shakyamuni, the king worried and consulted him. She was a typical nasty woman despite her superb beauty.

So, Lord Shakyamuni projected on her the illusion of a woman more beautiful than Khema so that she would understand the *impermanence* of life. The imaginary woman gradually got older, losing her beauty and became ugly in decay. Khema was horrified, overwhelmed by *impermanence*, and became a nun.

Her intelligence was outstanding and everyone called her Foremost of Wisdom. She became a close friend of Uppalavanna; they were compared to Sariputra and Maudgalyayana.

Lord Shakyamuni also praised them and said, “You two are most distinguished *bhikkhunis*” and advised other *bhikkhunis* to follow them as guides. This shows how exceptional they were.

In any case, Khema was a wife, one the mistresses, of King Bimbisara, the great king of Magadha. After her renunciation, she lived in the suburbs of Shravasti with Uppalavanna and they practiced together. Shravasti was the capital of Kosala and the home base for King Pasenadi. Though the two states were distant, they appeared to have many exchanges.

I do not know what *conditions* prompted Khema to move from Shravasti to Rajagrha. She was aware that Princess Vajiri, a daughter of King Pasenadi had married Prince Ajatashatru, a son of King Bimbisara, and I assume she got some information about Uppalavanna and joined Lord Shakyamuni’s journey.

One day, Khema was given a question by King Pasenadi. The king was a friend of Lord Shakyamuni. His aspiration was so strong that his meeting with Lord Shakyamuni was like attending a zazen session. He had acquired some confidence by

then and wanted to examine whether the attractive Khema was a dragon or a snake. He possibly knew that Khema was wife of King Bimbisara, but he was trapped in those thoughts. He underestimated a woman who had attained enlightenment.

She certainly had acquired Issekigen: she easily cleared questions about the *dharma*, *emptiness* and precepts. The king could not continue questioning any further, because he was a frog facing a snake. Anyway, she was Foremost of Wisdom.

When she was about to leave, she seriously posed a counter-question: “An out-breath is not bothered by worldly *conditions*; an in-breath does not fall into the dark world. It always preaches the Sutra of Thus (As It Is). Do you get it?”

I am sure she challenged the king with such a question because she knew the king did not have Issekigen. Whether a king or anybody else, she easily beat those who questioned her with such limited capacity.

To ask a *dharma* question to a zen practitioner is same as challenging a warrior with a sword. When the challenger takes out a sword, the person challenged will counter seriously. Khema had no body or mind. She approached the king with no mind. King Pasenadi was a man with a mind. His mind was upset. No wonder he was overwhelmed. He was astonished.

If it was Ambapali (to appear next) who would accept any challenge except by a child or an insane person, she would have given the king a smack and asked, “What is this?!” asking him to express the meaning of the moment. The king was fortunately not to be beaten bitterly.

I wonder why Uppalavanna who was usually with Khema was not there at that time. It is a pity. If Foremost in Wisdom and Foremost in Supernatural Power contested King Pasenadi together, he would have been overthrown and had to plead for his life.

Knowing it will eat a snake
The voice of a pheasant
Sounds scary

Bashō

Days after, the king met Lord Shakyamuni and told him of the conversation he had with Khema. The Lord commended her wonderful answer. The king realized she was a woman of wisdom and had a penetrated state of mind. He was impressed. I would rather want to ask the king why he did not ask Lord Shakyamuni “What is the *dharma*?” What a waste of a golden opportunity! He did not have the Bodaishin. He was attached to the kingdom, to its fame and power. These trappings are the biggest enemy of good practice. Even King Pasenadi had such faults, which prevented him from success.

I wonder what King Bimbisara would have said if he had heard this story. No doubt he would have laughed aloud at the scene with delight. Why not? Knowing that his wife had beaten the head of the great kingdom, he should be delighted. King Bimbisara’s son’s wife is daughter of King Pasenadi. I am sure they had frequent communication. It is possible that King Pasenadi behaved badly intentionally wanting to please King Bimbisara. This is interesting.

“A distinguished person harmonizes well with the other but does not lose his personality” (Confucius). Otherwise, a leader cannot manage the state. However, it is reckless to challenge someone without knowing who he is. One may be trapped or badly injured.

If the two kings and Lord Shakyamuni had stayed close, it is highly likely they talked of the Way in depth and discussed how to manage the state; it could have triggered a favorable competition between them. That would have kept calamities from happening.

Before long, the queen of Pasenadi was ordained. The king and these women could possibly have stimulated it.

Though Khema was arrogant at first, she had transformed herself thanks to the guidance of Lord Shakyamuni and her own hard practice. Later, she was welcomed everywhere in Shravasti. She had such affluent beauty and intelligence, and she was not attached to anything. Her sincere and devout practice had made it possible. This was the beauty of a woman who had totally forgotten her self.

She received myriad donations, but she gave all of them to other *bhikkhunis*. She took care that their practices were fruitful. Thus, she was much respected by all. To practice “just” “now” made it possible.

No information is available how long she lived. But it is known that *bhikkhunis* built a stupa for her and prayed for her day after day. That is the most eloquent evidence of her superiority. All stems from her Bodaishin.

In full bloom, many people come and praise
Compassion is to visit
When the blossoms have fallen

State Master Musō

Ambapali

Ambapali was a well-known prostitute whose fame spread far and wide. She was not an ordinary prostitute; she was an unparalleled courtesan and had numerous patrons among the royal class. They said that the prosperity of the town of Vaishali depended on her. Only a very wealthy man with a clever strategy could approach her.

She was endowed with matchless beauty, style and intelligence.

She practiced hard to master dancing, singing and musical instruments. So attractive, she was always busy with customers. She earned a great deal of money and owned a number of mango groves.

While Lord Shakyamuni was staying at the Great Forest Monastery, he gave a weekly *dharma* talk publicly so that anyone could listen to him. One day, Ambapali was among the audience. This was before the female *sangha* was established.

Ambapali had already realized the transience of worldly pleasure. Inside her, she was uneasy and unsatisfied due to one thing in the darkness that could not be purchased with money.

It was a coincidence that Ambapali unexpectedly happened to encounter the teaching of *dharma*. Each and every word of Lord Shakyamuni shed light on her darkness. She sensed a flash and felt as if she came out of a jungle. Absent-minded, she was like an empty shell. Already she had forgotten herself somewhat by that time.

At that moment, large teardrops fell from her selfless eyes. They were more beautiful than pearls. The *dharma* talk that Lord Shakyamuni gave was the first true gem for Ambapali's mind. After her heart was deeply touched, she frequently visited Lord Shakyamuni's *dharma* talk and her Bodaishin was purified. She wholeheartedly respected Lord Shakyamuni and donated a grove and a monastery. She was no ordinary person, indeed.

The monastery she donated is the Mango Grove Monastery, one of the Five Great Monasteries. The others are the Bamboo Grove, the Jetavana, the Mahavana (Great Forest) and the Griddhakuta (Vulture Peak) Monasteries. Some people include other monasteries.

Ambapali already gained firm insight when she first heard the sermon. She was diligent, stable and excelled in all aspects. She practiced enthusiastically with a strong and extraordinary belief, unmistakably on the right path.

She had already penetrated, forgotten herself and acquired Issekigen. In no way could she go astray any more. Her true self had not changed.

Seeing her perfection in all aspects, Lord Shakyamuni advised his disciples, “Be careful not to be captivated by Ambapali. Do not have your mind moved by her. ‘Just’ look.” It was his way of teaching them how to keep the mind stable. In reality, there were some disciples who were captivated by her beauty and humane attractiveness. Ananda, following the order of Lord Shakyamuni, warned the *sangha*. However, Ambapali was not to blame.

Everything is the manifestation of “the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*.” No one knows what the moment of *conditions* to meet someone will be transformed and developed into. It was one *condition* that Ambapali met Lord Shakyamuni. Being captivated by meeting her was another *condition*. What we know is the truth that the mind can be changed into anything by *conditions*, but that it leaves no trace. The mind has no substance. The moment one attains this truth is the moment of enlightenment.

There is another episode about Ambapali. When she learned that Lord Shakyamuni and his group had arrived in town, she joyfully rushed to them in a carriage and attended to listen to his *dharma* talk, such as on “what is the importance of life and death?” She was so pleased to deepen her understanding of the *dharma* every time she listened to his sermons. As a token of her gratitude, she offered to donate an evening meal to all members of the *sangha* the next day. Lord Shakyamuni accepted it.

When the news of Lord Shakyamuni’s arrival spread in the town, other royal people gathered around him one after another, and they also offered him dinner. Lord Shakyamuni gently declined, saying, “I have already accepted Ambapali’s offer, and I have to keep the promise.” He continued, “Any promise has to be kept. One should not make a promise that one cannot keep. If we

want a person to be wise, we should treat him with respect, and if we wish to get the fruit, we should follow the Way.” This is the work of Great Lord Shakyamuni.

Even if the mountain splits and the ocean dries up
My trust in you will never be shaken

Minamoto no Sanetomo⁶¹

Those royal members were also Ambapali’s guests and knew her well. So, they regretfully left the grove appreciating Lord Shakyamuni’s *dharma* talk.

On the way back, they encountered Ambapali. Both were on the carriage. While running, one of them shouted at her grumbling, “It was a big pity. Due to your offer, our offer was declined...” Yes, I understand you well.

For her part, she already had overwhelmed them. There was no hope for them. Ambapali laughed aloud and approached them in tandem. Enjoying the chat with them, her carriage bumped theirs as if teasing them. What a feverish woman!

She said to them, “There you go. You do not understand Lord Shakyamuni at all. That the truth in a person never changes.” She meant that, therefore, they should practice harder. They all cherished her abilities and respected her. There were only the *dharma* and Lord Shakyamuni. Truly commendable is her state of attainment. Much to be appreciated.

Later, she renounced the world and was much respected by people. Indeed, she was outstanding and extraordinary. She preferred to be alone, practice alone quietly – a true person of the Way contrary to her dazzling appearance. With her attractive beauty and being a shining star herself, I bet hundreds of followers gathered at her grove and practiced well.

⁶¹ [源実朝], 1192-1219.

Time is me
I am time
The spring brings flowers
The autumn plays with foliage
Only time stays unchanged

This must have been passing through her mind at the time. She beat many people, I am sure. And many got a glimpse of enlightenment under her guidance. She seems to have had quite a number of her followers and disciples. No details are known, though.

The town of Vaishali had long been prospering. *Bhikkhus* asking for alms were solemn in dignity. Unknowingly, the noble, the rich and those in power were influenced and invigorated. When the mind is purified, the community naturally stays in order. The town became even more lively and prosperous. Ambapali and Lord Shakyamuni had such a strong influence. The following verse would be reading Ambapali's mind:

What can I compare my mind to?
Nothing is suitable
Or maybe
The autumn night moon

She is one of persons I wish to meet.

Dhammadinna

Lord Shakyamuni named Dhammadinna "Foremost in Preaching." She surpassed everyone in discussions. Her splendid preaching and responses to *dharma* questions are compiled in the Culla Vedalla Sutra, included in the *Majjhima Nikkaya*. After

attaining enlightenment, she did not stay at the monastery but returned to her husband. The reason is wonderful.

“I have attained enlightenment and am liberated. I must help people who are in trouble because ‘now’ is not clear for them.” At the root of such great confidence was the mind of mercy and compassion Lord Shakyamuni transferred to her. It was so extraordinary that the sutra was compiled about her.

Her husband did not know she had attained such a supreme state and suspected her wife had come back in the middle of her practice unaccomplished. However, he observed that she had a different atmosphere about her, different from before. She appeared to have no confusion and her speech was clear. So, he asked a question to examine her.

The story about her renunciation had another taste. Her husband, Visakha, was a famous and very wealthy merchant. He had practiced zazen out of respect for Lord Shakyamuni. Dhammadinna was born to be intelligent, and she was beautiful. Visakha fell in love with her and they married.

However, he changed one day. His practice matured and he acquired Issekigen. I imagine he practiced diligently. He had abandoned worldly desires and even his family and wife. No wonder Dhammadinna was surprised. An ordinary person would not understand such state of mind.

One day, Visakha told Dhammadinna that he had attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation under the guide of Lord Shakyamuni. It was worth celebrating and appreciating. The problem was in his statement:

“You do not have to care about me any longer. You are free to pursue your own happiness.” It meant she was free to do anything; she was abandoned.

Ordinarily, there would be a quarrel or a fight. However, Dhammadinna was no ordinary person. So, she was determined to renounce the secular world. What courageous determination!

When she conveyed her aspiration to her husband, he accepted it. His mind was equally pure.

I am seventy-eight years old, but have never heard of a wonderful couple like this. They were an exemplary couple. Moreover, he called for a golden carriage and sent her to the *bhikkhuni* monastery. So commendable that I have nothing more to say.

Only they knew their feelings. It would not hurt to put ourselves in the mind of Dhammadinna and of Visakha just once in a lifetime

To completely abandon everything is not easy for anyone to do. When a true Bodaishin springs up, a world of wonder opens. A few will believe this and practice hard. The world in the meantime simply gets polluted.

She was different. No doubt she practiced hard day and night, season after season. Finally, a fish swam up the river and became a dragon. When she returned home, her mind was beyond her husband's reach. She entered her home as if nothing had happened. But she was a different person.

Lord Shakyamuni was at the Bamboo Grove Monastery at that time.

Visakha posed a *dharma* question for Dhammadinna. And he was totally beaten. It was a serious fight between the two who had practiced so hard. There is no room for the private mind in the *dharma*. Where there is a hint of weakness, one will be slain.

Visakha was astonished at her perfect and clear answers. The state of her penetration was deeper than his own and it pleased and surprised him all the more. How fortunate they were to be able to discuss the Dharma Gate of Emancipation so freely and deeply between wife and husband and to recharge the pleasure of the *dharma*!

The Culla Vedalla Sutra is the record of this conversation. It is naturally about the *dharma* and is outstanding for its

philosophical depth and clear perspectives on the religious mind. It was only made possible thanks to the depth of Dhammadinna's penetration and the clarity of her thinking. Lord Shakyamuni highly appreciated their conversation. Please study it well.

Visakha began by addressing his wife as "Bhikkhuni." So far, so good.

"Bhikkhuni, how does the wrong perception that one's substance exists eternally arise? And how can one detach from it?"

"An ordinary person who does not trust the sacred one does not know the teachings of the sacred one. One who is not guided by the teachings of the sacred one will have a wrong perception that (the five *skandhas* of) forms, sensations, perceptions, mental formation and consciousness are substances of one's self, that the one who has these five elements is oneself, and that the substance exists in the five elements. He will believe that these substances exist eternally."

"Disciples who listen to the sacred one regularly respect the sacred one are familiar with his teachings, and are guided correctly by the teachings of the sacred one, and are detached from those views."

"Bhikkhuni, what is the relationship between the Noble Eightfold Paths and the Threefold Training (of Precepts, *Samadhi* and *Prajna*)?"

"The Precepts of the Threefold Training are contained in Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. *Samadhi* is contained in Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right

Concentration. *Prajna* (wisdom) is contained in Right View and Right Intention.”

“Bhikkhuni, what is *samadhi*? How is it manifested? What are its means? And how can it be attained?”

“*Samadhi* is the state of mind when one is firmly concentrated and not confused. It is manifested in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, namely Body (*kaya*), Sensations (*vedana*), Mind (*citta*) and Dharmas. The Four Right Efforts (*cattaro sammappadhānā*) are the means of *samadhi*. To diligently practice them is the way to attain *samadhi*.”

“Bhikkhuni, what is the *karma* (action) of practice?”

“The practice has Three Actions of body, mouth and mind. Breathing belongs to the body, therefore, it is a body action. Thinking enacts speaking, therefore, it is a mouth action. Sensation and perception belong to mind, therefore, they are mind actions.”

“Bhikkhuni, how can one attain the state where sensation is extinct?”

“One can attain such state of mind when one has controlled one’s mind as if it naturally enters such a state; when one does not think one should attain the state where sensation is extinct, or that one is on the way to such a state, or that one has already attained such a state.”

“Bhikkhu, which of the Three Actions has gone extinct in a bhikkhu who has attained the state where sensation is

extinct? How has his mind come out of such a state and where will it go?”

“Sensation goes extinct first, then Body, followed by Mind. Though one’s mind is coming out of the state, he does not think it has come out. His mind is controlled as if it has reached such a state naturally. When the mind comes out of *samadhi*, Mind arises first, then Body, followed by Sensation. The mind of a *bhikkhu* who has come out of *samadhi* is inclined to going farther, is heading to going farther, and is going farther.”

Thus Visakha posed questions, and Dhammadinna answered, and so their conversations continued. A person with an eye can see the extraordinary depth of this conversation. Visakha occasionally felt uncertain and kept asking questions.

On the other hand, Dhammadinna recognized subtle faults in her husband. It was as if she was saying, “You are not enough.” Her strength was unsurpassable. Obviously, their positions of attack and defense switched.

“Visakha, your questions have been exhausted. Truly, the practice of purity is to aspire to ultimately attain *nirvana*. If you wish, you should visit Lord Shakyamuni and ask the meaning. You should accept the answer given by Lord Shakyamuni as it is.”

Young guys, if you do not want to die, die now
Once you die, you do not die any more

Ikkyu Sōjun

It was the final sting by Dhammadinna. She meant: “That is enough. It is useless to keep asking about such obvious matters. You ask them because you still have something unclear about your self.”

He hadn't understood the truth yet. Water changes its form in different waves, but it is still water. It can become another wave freely. It is endless. There is something more important than whether one is alive or dead. She flatly cut off the conversation and ended it.

She continued, "Fortunately, Lord Shakyamuni is still nearby. You should approach him and practice under him until you attain enlightenment. You cannot die yet." What power! The *dharma* sword is sharp and cuts well. The *dharma* is all there is. No body. The sutra says,

Visakha was taken aback but pleased at her remarks. He stood up, went to see Lord Shakyamuni and told him about their conversation. Lord Shakyamuni responded:

"Visakha, Dhammadinna is intelligent and wise one. If you ask for the meaning, I would answer in the same way. The foregoing is the meaning. You should accept the answer she gives."

Lord Shakyamuni praised Dhammadinna for her excellence as Foremost in Preaching.

This is a literal translation from the Culla Vedalla Sutra. Dhammadinna was a rare woman who Lord Shakyamuni highly praised. Unbeatable by attack, blooming on a dead tree. A wonderful state, indeed.

So far, I have depicted distinguished and well-known women. There are more. In our country, Empress Danrin⁶² composed a verse at her enlightenment:

⁶² [檀林], 786-850.

When I die
Never burn or bury
Leave it in the wild field
To nourish a thin dog

Also, Ryonen Bhikkhuni, a direct disciple of Master Dōgen; Eshun Bhikkhuni who burnt her face; Ryonen Bhikkhuni, granddaughter of Shingen Takeda⁶³, who also burnt her face because of her exceeding beauty; Osan and Osatsu under Master Hakuin, and so on. They were all the first class heroines.

In our modern days, Great Bhikkhuni Shoan-Daichi⁶⁴ is the most distinguished. She was one of direct disciples of Master Tōin Iida⁶⁵, although her name is not widely known. I shall put down my pen with her verse:

An old pine tree plays the melody of wind
That blows through a bamboo forest
The moon does not know
A shadow of the monastery

The Story of Kapilavastu

The scene of Kapilavastu that was destroyed in battle with Kosala is vividly described by a host of stories. They are mostly along the same lines.

King Pasenadi in the neighboring state admitted the supremacy of the Shakya clan and even adopted their manners into national policies. Seeking evidence, he sent his son, Crown Prince Vidudabha to study at Kapilavastu. He received Lord

⁶³ [武田信玄], 1521-1573.

⁶⁴ [照庵大智], The fourth head of Shorinkutsu (1902-1984).

⁶⁵ The Great Master Tōin Iida [飯田欽隠](1863-1937) founded Shorinkutsu.

Shakyamuni twice preparing a special hall for the purpose. According to a reliable document, he visited Lord Shakyamuni in his late years, and exchanged meaningful conversations with him.

Between the Shakya clan and Kosala, the latter had clear superiority in military and national power. However, the Shakya clan was far ahead as a whole, in terms of intelligence, courage and stable lives of its people. Therefore, King Pasenadi wanted to welcome a wife from the Shakya clan out of his pure intention. He wished to gain the trust of the Shakya clan.

However, the Shakya clan decided, “No way we can give our royal blood to such a cruel state.” Accordingly, he suggested a woman of a lower caste, disguising her as a princess.

Crown Prince Vidudabha was born of this woman and ruined the Shakya clan. He had an elder and talented brother, Prince Jeta. Prince Jeta resembled his parents; he had a pious mind, was honest and a heart of mercy and compassion. He had a grove where Sudatta donated the Jetavana Monastery. He made a great contribution to Buddhism. However, he was murdered by his brother Prince Vidudabha. How tragic Prince Jeta was! And what a disgraceful brother!

The end of the Shakya clan began from that point. King Pasenadi sent his son Prince Vidudabha to study at Kapilavastu. He appeared to have a troublesome character and a sense of dissatisfaction mounted among his servants and attendants. Being a person who would kill his brother, I suppose his behavior was rough and selfish.

Finally, on one occasion of misbehavior, his attendants reached their limit, and one of them disclosed the top secret of the state, “Your mother was...” The prince broke into anger at the news and went back home, swearing, “Unforgivable! I shall definitely ruin this small state as this.” It led to serious consequences.

A half year after King Pasenadi bid farewell to Lord Shakyamuni, Prince Vidudabha and his traitors overthrew the

king. The prince was plotting to invade the Shakya clan by instigating the military, secretly looking for a chance to revenge the insult of the past.

Though the king was highly virtuous, he was unable to control the overgrown military and was overthrown. He was left with nothing but to seeking asylum from his daughter and her husband: Princess Vajiri and Prince Ajatashatru in Magadha.

After assuming the kingship, Vidudabha invaded the lands of the Shakya clan with his vast military troops. Lord Shakyamuni set off from the Jetavana Monastery and sat in zazen, appealing to the small conscience of King Vidudabha. It worked twice, but finally the clan was ruined just before Lord Shakyamuni arrived. His wish was in vain. What kind of *condition* was it?! I would not know. Gasshō, I pray.

Following Lord Shakyamuni, Maudgalyayana, Ananda and other *bhikkhus* rushed from the Jetavana Monastery, only to stare at this misery in vain. I can see tears in their mind.

King Vidudabha celebrated victory and successful revenge at the riverside palace. Coincidentally, a heavy storm attacked the area. The palace was struck on fire by thunderbolts, and the king drowned in a flood. Such was the bad *effects* of a bad *cause*.

Lord Shakyamuni and his *sangha* stayed at the Jetavana Monastery for practice during the rainy season. After that, they set off for the Bamboo Forest Monastery, some seven hundred kilometers away. They arrived there in February the next year.

A few years thereafter, Lord Shakyamuni, at the age of eighty, began his final tour.

Here, I find something unclear about the established story about Kapilavastu. I wonder if it is only me who doubts the *cause* and process leading to its *effect*. The Shakya clan were respected people who ran the state by introducing a democratic parliamentary system for the first time in history. Is it possible

for such an honest and prosperous state to develop an indecent and untruthful plot against the king of another state?

If it were true that the whole state disdained King Pasenadi, the leader and his attendants were indeed disgraceful. In Kapilavastu, Lord Shakyamuni's father was supported by wise senior attendants. I cannot believe that they would behave in such a disgraceful manner.

The son of the false princess was Prince Vidudabha. If they used such a devastating lie, they knew that a simple mishap could lead to fatal consequences. It is difficult to imagine they would let a simple-minded guy who would disclose state secrets attend to the crown prince. Nevertheless, these situations are described as if they were true.

What is strange to me is that the secret had already been disclosed when Prince Vidudabha was studying at Kapilavastu. King Pasenadi must have known the real situation then, but there is no record he complained about it. It is impossible for the king of such a large kingdom to remain silent about such disgraceful behavior. I do not understand why.

Queen Mallika is described as a false princess. She was perfectly capable and saved the situation on a number of occasions. The king was mentally nurtured by her esteemed virtue. Her exemplary life is recorded in the Srimaladevisimhanada Sutra which emits light in the three worlds of the past, the present and the future.

It is strange not to doubt the false princes. A document to counter-argue this matter on the Kapilavastu side could prove that the secret was groundless and the state's false charge could be rectified.

Therefore, I asked an expert to look into it. His answer was: "The arguments by both states vary to some extent. The established discourse is mostly according to the editor who has a position closer to favor Kosala." There it goes.

I wonder why there is no counterargument about the false princess. Could it be because writers on the side of the Shakya clan were incomplete and only documented Vidudabha's cruel acts?

As long as a reliable record of the truth is missing, the editors in subsequent ages may have failed to capture the truth. Or else, those who compiled the story were in favor of Kosala and intentionally failed to note the matter. In the absence of counterargument, the court judge has no other way but to admit the story.

I am merely a zen practitioner. However, as a person who strives to tackle the "mind," I am concerned about the real reason for the invasion. Hence, my hypothesis is as follows. It may well be a useless counterargument after two thousand six hundred years. Still, as a counsel for defending the Shakya clan, I am filing a claim to reinvestigate the matter and reinstitute their reputation.

It is true that King Pasenadi had a respected character. He wished to build a kingdom as good as the state of Shakya. However, ethnically, the people of Kosala were Aryan, a warlike race. Overgrown military power was constantly overrunning the borders. They underestimated the small state of the Shakya. When the military grows too big, they tend to ignore sound policies and the guidance of civil servants; they can take over behind the king's back.

Such a state will make up any story to justify invasion. This is the horrifying aspect of the invasive state. It makes defending the state difficult.

The virtuous king could not be perfect in raising his people well. He could not prevent his son's overrun and failed to control the army. The son was unmanageable anyway. It is possible that the prince was scolded by a servant (not even a minister) for misbehavior during the study in the Shakya state, and then he

committed an outrage for revenge.

It would appear that the Kosala side created an excuse for the invasion to sound reasonable along the lines of the false princess. Due to the volume of accounts with vivid details of the scene, my counterargument now will not be of any help.

Still, another motive for the invasion was the fertile land, which was rich in fruits and various food products. In particular, Kosala envied their rice harvest. Once a wish is conceived, greedy men tend to use any means to get it. This type of person has confused today's world with such "bad habits of mind."

Kosala thus destroyed the world's first democratic state of Shakya, against our wishes. It was a major incident that took place three years before the most honored leader, Lord Shakyamuni, entered *nirvana*.

The prime suspect of this cruel and inhuman deed is already confirmed. Indeed, it was the naughty son. He was motivated by greed and hatred, coupled with his twisted and cruel character. I am convinced that the false princess was a fake.

I demand capital punishment that he be sent to permanent hell. At this high court of *cause and effect*, by the judge of the Great King Yama, the retrial ended in favor of my side. Well done. The punishment is already executed. I am happy with this ending.

The Shakya state would not have made such an ignoble and calculating plan. Here, today, the honor of the government and people of the lost state of Shakya is restored. I take pride. One who knows justice but does not carry it out has no courage. This is the soul of the Japanese. This is the *dharma*. The truth.

Whether my position is true or not shall be decided by the *dharma* eye in the future. However, those who have no Bodaishin shall have no voice on this matter. By hunting related documents, a released arrow will not go more than three feet. It will never penetrate into the "mind."

Who was the woman who became queen of King Pasenadi?

That is an unresolved mystery. She had such virtue, such tactics and talent, with the ability to act. She could not be of ordinary blood, though we have no way to trace it. When the facts are known, that will correct the historical error and we can return her favor. However, for the moment, my assertion is only a hypothesis.

A man of attainment hits the mark on the steel
Live fully
And keep your Yamato-damashii⁶⁶ high

Meiji Emperor

A letter tells nothing

All that I have described broadly in chronological order is not for the sake of historical narratives of the life of Greatly Indebted Founder Lord Shakyamuni. It is my humble writing out of a wish to transmit the teachings of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

After preaching *dharma* messages for forty-nine years out of great mercy and compassion, Lord Shakyamuni concluded the talk saying, “A letter tells nothing,” as documented in the Lankavatara Sutra. We should be thankful for this phrase. However, many people will feel lost and wonder about Lord Shakyamuni’s true intention. I wish you would open your *dharma* eyes and try hard to reach the core of peace of mind.

“A letter tells nothing” means,

“Do not be bothered by words. As I have taught, as I have done, abandon everything, sit straight in the right posture, and just do zazen. Then, ‘the Dharma Gate of Emancipation’ will be yours.”

⁶⁶ Yamato-damashii is Japanese spirit.

The phrase has such deep implications. It means that there is nothing in words and letters in themselves. I hear the voice of Lord Shakyamuni saying: It is meaningless if you do not practice now.

“Bhikkhus, always listen to the *dharma* talks I have given, always contemplate them, always bear them in mind, and never abandon them. If you practice according to the teachings, you will be filled with happiness.”

“The core of my teachings is to master your mind. Therefore, you should control your greed and overcome your self. Keep your body right, your mind right, and speak words of truth. Stop being greedy (do not search for the truth outside you and live peacefully in the present moment); get rid of anger, stay away from the evil, and always be aware of *impermanence*.” – truth exists only in the now. Give up all thoughts and feelings, and practice with your mind focused.

“When your mind is attracted by the evil and attached to greed, you must suppress it. Do not follow (the evil) mind; be the (true) master of your mind.”

“To be an awakened one or a beast depends on the mind. When the mind is confused, you will be a hungry ghost; when it is enlightened, you awaken. All is up to the mind. Therefore, keep your mind right, and make sure it does not stray from the way. (Penetrate your true self.)”

“Bhikkhus, according to this teaching (do not look outside, concentrate on the matter at hand), be harmonious, be respectful and never fight with others. Live together well, like water and milk (when your mind is purely focused, there

arises no evil thought, and therefore, no conflict). **Do not attack each other like water and oil** (the thought of separation – like it or dislike it – will form the self). **Keep my teachings together, study together, practice together, encourage each other, and enjoy together the pleasure of the way** (the freedom of not being attached to anything).”

“Do not spend your mind on the meaningless or spend time on the useless. Pick up flowers of enlightenment and get the fruit of the way (now is the fruit. Simply know that this is the world).”

“Bhikkhus, I myself have attained these teachings and taught them to you. You shall keep them well, practice on every occasion according to the teachings (do ‘just’ and ‘now’). **Those of you who do not practice accordingly have not met me, though having met me; are far away from me, though we are staying together. Those who practice accordingly are with me, though they are away from me** (Lord Shakyamuni is in this eye, this ear, this mouth, this ear, and this sound. Be aware that everything is identical to what Lord Shakyamuni experienced).”

What splendid teachings! When you are truly awakened in “now,” you are always with Lord Shakyamuni, he said. He also said, “To be an awakened one or a beast depends on the mind.” It is up to the mind. Therefore, keep control of the mind every day. Do not be fooled by an evil mind. Be truly in “now” and “just” without having an evil mind. Then, you will be master of the correct mind. So said Lord Shakyamuni.

You will see from this that Lord Shakyamuni is telling us not to grasp the teachings as knowledge; practice “now” “just” seriously so that no thought or no evil mind can enter you. The

way to do it is to sit upright and just do zazen. That is the shortest way to full penetration. Full penetration is to attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. There is no treasure, truth or pleasure other than this. That is why the Buddha's way is the supreme way. Nothing is more precious than this.

Once you understand this, hundreds and thousands of days of practices boil down to this one day. Every day is this one day. The eighty-four thousand *dharma* gates stem from this only "just" "now." This is the true meaning of "A letter tells nothing." Lord Shakyamuni's great mercy and great compassion are limitless. There is no other truth. It is manifest in our daily life. Penetrate "This Mind is the Buddha (Sokushin-Zebutsu)." That is Lord Shakyamuni's wish and the eighty-four thousand *dharma* gates are open to attain it.

Words are merely means. One should not be attached to them. The phrase in the Lankavatara Sutra which goes "For forty-nine years, a letter tells nothing" is the antidote. If you wish to come back to life, do "just" "now." How grateful! Gasshō.

An indirect sermon

When a new generation comes in, disharmony is inevitable. King Ajatashatru of Magadha wished to expand his territory. However, he had a shadow of doubt and, therefore, sent his minister, Vassakara, to Lord Shakyamuni who was staying at Rajagrha. This violent ruler who starved his parents in prison appears to have had a bit of conscience.

The minister conveyed the haughty will of King Ajatashatru, "The kingdom of Vajji is rich, fertile and fruitful. Because of its prosperity, they refuse to surrender. I intend to conquer it and get my fair share. What would you say?" and asked for Lord Shakyamuni's opinion. The Lord did not respond immediately; he

knew that the poison in the king's mind was fiercer than fire. Indeed, Lord was great.

Instead, Lord Shakyamuni asked Ananda the following. "Tell me about the kingdom of Vajji, just by answering my questions." So, he presented the seven questions.

First, do the king, his ministers and citizens gather together and consult about what is right?

Second, are the leaders and people harmonious and do they respect each other?

Third, do they understand what is lawful and what is not? Do they observe the law?

Fourth, do people treat their parents with filial piety and respect teachers and leaders?

Fifth, do they respect ancestors and worship the divine?

Sixth, do couples, men and women, remain faithful, chaste and sincere?

Seventh, do people follow monks and educators? Do they pay respect and cooperate with them?

Ananda responded, "They all do so. They are faithful without exception." These are truly the foundation of democracy. It resembles the Imperial Rescript on Education in my country. How pleasant!

Minister Vassakara returned home and reported to the king, "The state is rich. The leader and his people are harmonious and follow the law faithfully. They are not an opponent we can fight

and beat.” When a leader leads well, his followers never fail to follow him. When his followers follow well, the leader never fails to appreciate them. Thus, peace was maintained. This was a marvelous example of an indirect sermon by Lord Shakyamuni.

I miss such a great person in today’s world. This is a serious risk! An honest person has no enemy. When there are no honest leaders, honest people will leave. People’s minds will be confused, and the nation will be ruined. As anticipated, when the kingdom of Vajji got a new king, the seven points were disregarded in the absence of a true leader, and the state fell into confusion and was ruined. Just as the *dharma* of arising from *cause* and *condition*.

An ancient wise saying went, “When the *dharma* goes extinct, the state goes extinct.” The way is to practice the seven virtuous points, having no mind of self. How can we discard the selfish mind? We only have to concentrate on the Bodaishin. It is because the Bodaishin can purify the “mind.” We owe this to the tears, great mercy and compassion of Lord Shakyamuni. Study this well.

It seemed Lord Shakyamuni was somewhat tired of the king and thought it was high time to leave. Before long, he did so.

A Journey to passing

The departure

The setting sun extends shadows
A flock of birds fly back home leaving a call
One leaf falls and the autumn sets in
At the end of the autumn, first we see fallen leaves

It was the mature moment of “timing, *cause and condition*. Now or never. Two great disciples of Sariputra and Venerable Maudgalyayana were both gone. Lord Shakyamuni was eighty years old.

“It is now!” He was determined and began to prepare for a journey. The route was familiar to him. He had taken it repeatedly. There were cities, villages and monasteries along the way. Lord Shakyamuni had no hesitation or regret.

For this sudden journey
I have not prepared offerings for the guardian deity
In the foliage I shall walk
Trusting the wish of gods

Michizane

He vowed deeply at Vulture Peak and set off on his journey. Aged as he was, his mercy shed light on the three worlds limitlessly. That’s the spirit of Lord Shakyamuni!

His only companion was Venerable Ananda, who was trustworthy. The future of the great *dharma* was safe, entrusted as it was to Mahakasyapa, the First Patriarch. The great enlightenment would continue; and he had two healthy well-

trained legs. What else did he need? Light-minded, heaven and the earth accompanied him. How pleasant!

A Sermon at the Pataliputra village

Lord Shakyamuni left the Jetavana Monastery saying, “I shall travel for a while with Ananda.” Passing through Nalanda, they arrived at Pataliputra. Alas, a fort was being built there by Minister Vassakara as a part of the city’s plan. Lord Shakyamuni instantly saw that it was a fortress to invade Vajji, but did not object. I am sure Vassakara felt somewhat awkward.

Soon, Lord Shakyamuni’s arrival was known to the whole village and many followers gathered. He gave a sermon on the “Five Losses of Breaking the Precepts and the Five Benefits of Observing the Precepts.”

To break the precepts and to observe them are opposite and whether one breaks or observes them depends on one’s state of mind. To observe the precepts is to keep one’s self pure and true. To keep one’s self true is to do what one should do “now” not introducing a selfish mind but “just” doing it.

Observing the precepts, one is equipped with five virtues and the Way will manifest. However, breaking them, ill *causes* will bring about ill *effects*. One will be disdained by destiny and will go to hell. So went the sermon.

Minister Vassakara guided Lord Shakyamuni around the solid stronghold built to take advantage of the location. Lord Shakyamuni, however, did not mention any words of approval or disapproval. He simply commended the hard work and the job well done. He predicted that the village would become a future capital.

It was built so well. And indeed it became the capital. They say it is today’s Patna. The port city was used as the base for invading

Vajji, and enjoyed prosperity from trading.

It is said that the gate by which Lord Shakyamuni left the village is named Gautama Gate, and the ford across which he crossed the River Ganges is named Gautama Ford out of respect to him.

A crisis

The pier he used to cross River Ganges was in the neighboring kingdom of Vajji. In such a place, there was a monastery. That was how frequently Lord Shakyamuni visited there. Wherever he went, his followers gathered and he gave a *dharma* talk.

Since he did not care who followed him, the band gradually inflated and by the time they approached the capital of Vaishali, there were nearly five hundred people according to one document. The rainy season began and Lord Shakyamuni decided to stay in the village of Beluva. It was a small village and could not accommodate so many people, so he stayed there only with Ananda.

Out of fatigue, Lord Shakyamuni became severely sick. He was eighty. Ananda was upset and gravely concerned for whatever might happen. The sickness was so serious. It was really close.

No need to worry. Lord Shakyamuni was a state of having surpassed life and death, dropping them totally. Because sickness is also manifestation of *dharma*, he expressed with his own body that there was truth in it and he rested easy having not a bit of worry. Sickness is sickness. Look at me.

By that he manifested how great the Dharma Gate of the Emancipation was, the evidence that he is the Greatly Indebted Founder, Lord Shakyamuni.

Although Ananda had acquired Issekigen, he could not help but being confused in the face of such a grave situation. Here, we

see the importance of practice after enlightenment. Ananda knew it well. Lord Shakyamuni used this opportunity as a superb *condition* to endow Ananda who had not fully penetrated with valuable *dharma*. Though his body was sick, Lord Shakyamuni's mind remained peaceful, full of mercy and compassion.

“Ananda, trust in the *dharma*. Trust in you. Do not allow the mind of suspicion to come in. Do not trust in others. Grasp the moment of ‘now.’”

Lord Shakyamuni said. Not life, not death, not “not.” The great state of having no body and mind. It is the most sacred of the sacred, the most valuable of the valuable. Gasshō.

Lord Shakyamuni spend his days in peace and at ease while his last moment was approaching, “just” leaving everything to *conditions*. This is what it is to rest in peace. This is the state of mind in great peace. He was in heaven. Or *nirvana*. This is the core meaning of the Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

As long as there are *conditions* to live, one will not die. Fortunately, he regained health. Who would not be pleased?! The rainy season was about to be over. Ananda was much relieved. That is understandable. Tears of joy filled him. I deeply bow.

Sweet coming-home Vaishali

Judging that he had sufficiently recovered, Lord Shakyamuni departed for Vaishali. It was a home coming home for him. His eighty-year-old body was still fragile. He set off for the journey aware that he could perish at any time. He was determined.

So, his walk was steady. His mind of great mercy and compassion crystalized into actions to solve people's sufferings.

Nothing else. Even one day today is too precious to spare. He knew what to do. Until the last moment, he was determined to guide as many people as possible to enlightenment. Lord Shakyamuni was all mercy and compassion. How precious!

Gasshō.

Apart from the Vulture Peak, Vaishali was the third place he visited most frequently. The town had all the positive requirements for the success of *dharma*. It is natural that Vaishali was origin of many sutras and disciples. Though Lord Shakyamuni arrived full of passion, the aftereffects of his illness lingered along with fatigue from his restless efforts. Fortunately, Vaishali had monasteries where he could have a rest. Everyone obviously knew Lord Shakyamuni was coming.

For a long time, the town was the center of Jainism. This was logical since it was the birthplace of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism. There was an assembly hall as the town had a democratic parliament. Ministers, influential people, and wise men gathered, discussed and made decisions as in the Shakya state. Those wise men were Jains, but they spoke highly of Lord Shakyamuni, Buddhism, *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* for their well-known virtues.

General Siha was a leader of the massive army and a devout Jain. He heard the wise men speaking highly of Lord Shakyamuni and their deep respect for him and wanted to find out who he was. He visited the Mahavana Monastery to see Lord Shakyamuni and challenged Lord Shakyamuni by presenting his views.

At first, he spoke of the ill words about Lord Shakyamuni that had been spreading around in town to test his response. It was not surprising that some people at the center of Jainism might have evil in mind and speak ill of Lord Shakyamuni. He knew it all.

Lord Shakyamuni praised each and every of the General's

correct word, corrected the mistakes, and added the ideas that were missing. Gradually, the General clarified his ambiguity and queries and felt refreshed. He was filled with joy for being able to touch the truth at the bottom of his heart. Unconsciously, he had been guided into a true Bodaishin.

With full respect for Buddhism, the General asked if he could become Lord Shakyamuni's disciple. He was fortunate to have a favorable *dharma condition*. This is what "timing, *cause and condition*" means. Despite his fatigue, Lord Shakyamuni preached a sermon. The General quickly developed a good understanding of the sermon. So Lord Shakyamuni advanced his *dharma* talk and explained the true meaning of Shōshin-tanza, sitting straight in the right posture. How lucky the General was!

The General was honest and diligently practiced zazen like no one else. Soon he penetrated the truth and attained the state of forgetting himself. As a true man of the way, he surprised everyone and became unbeatable as a military leader. I wish I could learn what happened to him thereafter.

Time after time
The waves beat rocks
And tear themselves apart
Making a fuss in vain

Lord Shakyamuni was pleased with the unexpected encounter with General Siha and successfully guiding him to penetration. His stay at Vaishari was meaningful and a happy time.

Before Lord Shakyamuni departed, people assembled at the Mahavana Monastery. No one talked of it, but they all knew that his last moment was approaching. The numbers of audience grew rapidly. This *dharma* talk ended up being his last, and conveyed the essence of all his sermons.

To be born human being is the most difficult of the difficult, the most precious of the precious *conditions*. It is as difficult as threading a needle that lies at the bottom of the ocean. Today, you live as a human being as a result of accumulated virtuous acts in your previous lives. Because you are born to be a human being, you must live virtuously.

That is, you must attain the Dharma Gate of Emancipation by precisely practicing “just now” without sparing *impermanent* and sacred “now.”

In any case, there is no other way but to practice the Way. Truly and diligently sit straight in the right posture and just do zazen.

I sincerely hope you will open this immortal *dharma* gate. Open the supreme Dharma Gate of Emancipation.

Bhikkhus, remove the cloud of “self.” When you relinquish the clouds in your mind, you will become one with the limitless shining world in its entirety. The Buddha-*kaya*, or the Buddha’s body, is everywhere in the *dharma* world. Know what is sufficient. Discard greed, and you will gain peace in your mind which will accommodate everything and much more. By becoming one with this limitless and spotless “mind,” true love and faith will be yours and the world will be emancipated.

The wonderful *dharma* talk continued. Everyone there felt as if they were enjoying sweet nectar.

Bhikkhus, I am already eighty. The wheels are eroded, the wings are rotten. I can no longer fly. Oh, bhikkhus, I shall

enter *nirvana* in three months.

And thus, he concluded the talk. There were followers intimate with Lord Shakyamuni there and he thought it a good time for him to share what was on his mind.

The people assembled were astonished at these saddest words, words they least wanted to hear or think about. They remained silent. After a month or so of recuperation, Lord Shakyamuni regained considerable power, and resumed his journey without hesitation. A large number of his followers saw him off. It was customary to give some words to send distinguished people off, but on this occasion, people were just praying tearfully. How saddened they were!
Gasshō.

He visited every town and every village to guide people to salvation. Lord Shakyamuni continued his journey giving *dharma* talks one after another. He visited Bhandagama, Hatthigama, Ambagama, and Jambugama before arriving at Bhoganagara where Cunda had a grove where he could stay. Lord planned to stay there for a while and examine his practice.

At Bhoganagara, he gave a sermon aimed at the future on the Four Great References. The four are not land, water, fire and wind, the four basic elements often referred to. They are the four important teachings. Lord Buddha anticipated that his teachings would be explained in various different ways. So, he set out references to be sure the correct meaning was conveyed:

When a *bhikkhu* or a renowned scholar says “This is what I heard from Lord Shakyamuni. Therefore, this is the right *dharma* teaching,” you should neither approve or disapprove it but refer to the sutras, rules (*vinaya*) and commentaries (*abhidharma*). If the teaching agrees with them, you can trust that it is correct.

Then he explained the precepts, *samadhi* and *prajna* (wisdom) as ways people could keep themselves on the correct path.

Noting that Lord Shakyamuni needed to speak of such basic teachings, it seems there may not have been a single practitioner who had attained thorough penetration into “now” and “just.” If there was one, he would not have had to give such a roundabout *dharma* talk. He wished they would understand the genuine *dharma* such as the following.

The chapter on the Manifestations of the Buddha of Avatamsaka Sutra goes as follows:

“His unique, solid and firm body is seen in the midst of all dusts⁶⁷; therefore, it has no birth and has no form; thus it manifests itself in any appearance.”

Though it appears that the world is filled with both virtuous and evil dusts, they are merely a transient manifestation of “now.” There is no substance and nothing stays unchanged. That is why this world is able to manifest various forms beautifully and gives convenience and comfort to us. All forms are attributed to one. Ultimately, the essence of matter is one. This is the only eternal truth. This is the solid and firm body. You should know that it will never die even if the body dies. The Buddhist practice is to reach this point. Never detach your mind from the manifestation of the real “now.”

The Diamond Sutra has it:

“If you say I die, you are not my disciple; if you say I do not die, you are not my disciple.”

⁶⁷ Dusts here mean six sense objects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible sensations, and mental objects.

A person who argues about death or no death, existence or no existence, confusion or enlightenment is not my true disciple. Leave it to “just” “now.” Do not leave it to any matter and do not use your mind. The only thing you have to do is sit up straight in the right posture. To die is to relinquish suffering, that is emancipation.

The sutra continues:

“If you wish to know the meaning of the Buddha nature, you should observe the timing, *causes and conditions*. If the timing is right, the Buddha nature will manifest itself.”

Also it says,

“Comparing *emptiness* with enlightenment is still merely a bubble in the ocean.”

Yet also,

“The Buddha body is everywhere in the world of *dharma*.”

If you are self-sufficient in “now,” you are enlightened. The Buddha wanted them to penetrate into this state and stay there at peace. Lord Shakyamuni felt unfulfilled, but he could not do any more. He had to wait for spring to come. It was a pity, but emancipation depended on the strength and weakness of their Bodaishin.

The presence of great disciples is what prompted him to preach on this core message of the *dharma* teachings. Until the very last moment, he never stopped extending his mercy and compassion on everyone according to their capacity. How grateful we are!

After staying a while, he moved to the outskirts of the city. He began to walk to Cunda's grove.

Cunda's sincerity

Lord Shakyamuni's walk suddenly aged. Ananda was worried. He had to attain the great enlightenment while the Lord is alive. That's the spirit! Now that the farewell was approaching, Ananda was serious to accomplish the great *dharma*, the best way to repay his debt of gratitude.

The divine mirror of Lord Shakyamuni was able to reflect everything in the mind of Ananda. I bet he was saying loudly, "Never live every 'now' lightly." This is the very point for which we are thankful to the true teacher. It was enough for every step to be genuine. The moment would never fail to come sooner or later, so he believed.

The saying goes, it is better to travel one foot in action than one mile in intellect. It is important to work on every small thing diligently rather than to make haste and get entangled in trying to achieve too big a goal. This is a key point for practitioners.

As expected, after Lord Shakyamuni's *nirvana*, Ananda's efforts materialized. He was approved by Venerable Mahakasyapa and became the Second Patriarch. He was on the way at that time.

Lord Shakyamuni was in Pavain in the Malla state. He visited Pavain a number of times and there was a wonderful grove there. The person Lord cared about most there was Cunda, a son in a metalworking family. Cunda was honest, talented, and diligent. Lord Shakyamuni stopped by to examine his state in moving toward enlightenment.

Who would have known what this visit of mercy and compassion would have led to?! Even the Buddhas of the three

worlds would not have anticipated it. It happened precisely because of the *dharma* of arising from *cause and condition*.

Highly pleased, Lord Shakyamuni gave a *dharma* talk to the gathered practitioners. Indeed, Cunda had moved closer to attaining enlightenment. However, there was not enough time for Lord Shakyamuni to see his great attainment. Therefore, he told Cunda how to find the right master to follow.

You have to be careful. There are different types of *bhikkhus*. They range from those who have attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation to those who are evil, captured by illusion and wrong views, even though they may behave as if they were enlightened. Distinguish between the excellent path, the pleasant path, the lively path and the evil path. What is important is once you have met a master on the excellent path, respect him faithfully, and always practice hard to help disseminate the right path.

Everybody bowed deeply. It is difficult, as always, to find the right master.

Cunda was filled with the joy of *dharma*. He decided to treat all the practitioners there for breakfast, and he did everything he could. Mushrooms, pork, and other delicious food were offered.

Alas! Because of age and fatigue, the treat turned to poison for Lord Shakyamuni. He developed a bad stomachache and he left the place quietly. He explained to Ananda that he did not want to see Cunda accused of his illness and death because of the breakfast Cunda had offered. Lord Shakyamuni was totally full of mercy and compassion. Who would not be moved to tears by this great mind, great love, and great tolerance?

Gasshō in reverence. Tears, and tears.

Whether poisonous mushrooms or the pork, it is likely there

was carelessness in preparation and serving of the meal. It was prepared through the night for a huge number of guests, by people who were not used to such occasions. Even today, nobody knows the exact reason.

Sometime after departure, Lord Shakyamuni began to suffer from bleeding and his pain sharpened. However, he did not stop, whipping his aged body and pretending he was all right. How incredible!

Though Ananda had learned basics of the medical treatment from a renowned doctor, Giva, he did not recognize these symptoms and he had no idea what to do. All he could do was to respect Lord Shakyamuni's will and accompany him on his journey.

The pain of Lord Shakyamuni, the feeling of Ananda, both are too much to bear. Oh, how painful! How intolerable!

Gasshō, I pray.

Under Twin Sala Trees

It was the fifteenth of February, still in the dry season. A hawk was drawing circles in the air. It was the most pleasant season. Lord Shakyamuni's gastric bleeding continued and he got weaker and weaker. He felt he had traveled far. Ananda could not bear the sight of Lord Shakyamuni who was apparently thirsty. They finally managed to arrive at the sala grove. Lord Shakyamuni showed symptoms of dehydration. The river was nearby.

Lord Shakyamuni sat down without vigor. Seeing that he lay against a tree, Ananda hurriedly fetched water. The Lord received a bowl of water, his hands shaking. He had no more strength.

It took some time for him to drink even a few drops of water. He drank three or four times, but then he could not hold the bowl

any more. As if to say, “Oh, I am sorry,” the Lord raised his hand a bit. Then he said, “I am tired. I want to lie down for a while.” Ananda was restless. He did not know how to manage the scene.

As instructed, Ananda hurriedly prepared a place for Lord Shakyamuni to rest under twin sala trees. Then he gently guided the Lord. Lord Shakyamuni was solemnly tranquil. Using his skinny right arm as support, he slowly bent down and lay down using his other arm as a pillow. When he noticed weirdly oozing blood, Ananda thought it was all over. He tried to stop them, but tears flowed out of his mind.

The sun was still high, but it was apparently setting. Birds were singing in sad and merciless tones, as if they were speaking to the sunset.

Ananda’s teardrops were flowing now, and finally, he fell by the side of Lord Shakyamuni and cried out. Out of love and pity for Ananda, the Buddha gently touched his head and smiled. The Buddha also had tears on his cheek, lights of mercy and compassion. Ah, but there was nothing to be done.

The Last Sermon

The shadows of trees in the grove grew long. The two shared a quiet moment. Taking advantage of a moment when his pain diminished somewhat, Lord Shakyamuni presented his last sermon to Ananda. It was on “Self Light (*atta dipa*), Dharma Light (*dharma dipa*) and two offerings.”

“What more do you want me to explain? I have given *dharma* talks to everyone without discrimination. Ananda, the Buddha does not hide the true *dharma* from his disciples. No secret teaching is left untold. I have already explained the entire truth, about the body, feelings, the mind, about all the

dharma.

Shed the light unto yourself and go forth by yourself (*atta dipa*). Uphold the true *dharma* (*dharma dipa*). Be aware that the problem is always about your mind. Take your Bodaishin as your master. Take sitting upright in the zazen posture as your light and keep practicing.

Do not seek the truth outside you. Ultimately, watch where your footsteps fall⁶⁸ (the truth is within you).”

This is “*atta dipa* and *dharma dipa*.” More directly, always be careful to uphold “just” “now;” never be diverted. They are sacred words, the right way of the Buddha, the awakened one.

Another message went as follows.

“Do not let Cunda suffer from thinking that my life ended because of the meal he had offered. Someone else may say that I had passed away because of the food Cunda had donated. That is a wrong view.

In my life, I received two superb offerings.

One was the milk porridge donated by Sujata. Thanks to it, I was able to regain my strength. Her offering produced the fruit of my emancipation. Another is this offering by Cunda. Thanks to his offering, I am able to enter the Great Gate of Nirvana. Cunda did a virtuous thing.”

Both the offering by Sujata which guided the Prince to the Buddha and the offering by Cunda which provided the *conditions* for *nirvana* are equally precious and virtuous. The offering by Cunda was a great one. Lord Shakyamuni conveyed this message to Ananda so as to remove Cunda’s feeling remorse.

What a great spirit the Lord had! His great *mercy* and

⁶⁸ Kyakka-Shōko [脚下照顧].

compassion were as big as the universe. What could possibly be more honorable? Ananda intently listened to the words of Lord Shakyamuni with tears and upheld those words. We all must repay our debts of gratitude. Let us reflect on ourselves.

The words of the last sermon were inscribed in Ananda's heart. He felt strong as if a dragon gained the water. Face to face in tears, the two smiled at each other.

In the distance there were voices. Gradually approaching, their figures appeared. There were more than expected. Cunda as well as many others had sensed that something was wrong about the way Lord Shakyamuni and Ananda left. Talking after seeing them off, they got worried and followed the two back to the grove.

Worrisome rumors spread fast among the many disciples, and the line of followers grew long. They spotted Ananda in a grove. Voicelessly they approached, and then stood there unable to move. They saw Lord Shakyamuni.

At that moment, the air froze in silence. Everybody could see that it was Lord Shakyamuni's last moment. They were all stunned.

The trees' shadows extended longer. The gathering quietly grew large. The sky above was beautiful as if promising a clear day with a pleasant breeze. It was a solemn evening the likes of which no one had ever seen. Some began to cry.

Even more solemn was Lord Shakyamuni. With his peaceful and holly countenance, he began a *dharmā* talk filled with mercy and compassion. He could not ignore the disciples and countless followers who were gathering. It was indeed his last sermon, his most famous sacred talk. With feeble breath, the Buddha used all his remaining strength and began to talk in a thin voice.

The following is the essence. I hope it can be widely spread through the world.

Gasshō, I pray.

*The Sutra of the Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching*⁶⁹

(Translated into Chinese by Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva⁷⁰)

When Shakyamuni Buddha first turned the Wheel of Dharma, he crossed over the Venerable Ajnatakaundinya. The very last time he spoke the *dharmā*, he crossed over the Venerable Subhadhra. All of those whom he should have crossed over had already been crossed over. He lay between the Twin Sala trees and was about to enter *nirvāna*. At this time, in the middle of the night, all was quiet, without any sound. Then for the sake of all of his disciples, he spoke on the essentials of the *dharmā*.

All of you Bhikkhus, after my *nirvāna*, you should revere and honor the *pratimoksha* (the root of freedom). --- You should know that it is your great teacher, and is not different from my actual presence in the world. --- Regulate yourselves by eating at the appropriate time and by living in purity. --- With an upright mind and proper mindfulness you should seek to cross over. --- Know the limits and be content with the four kinds of offerings. --- The precepts are the root of proper freedom; therefore, they are called the *pratimoksha*. By relying on these precepts, you will give rise to all *dhyāna* concentrations, and reach the wisdom of the cessation of suffering. ---Therefore, you should know that the precepts are the dwelling place for the foremost and secure merit and virtue.

All of you Bhikkhus, if you are able to abide by the precepts, restrain the five sense organs, not allowing them to enter the five

⁶⁹ The translation of this sutra is based on The Buddhist Text Translation Society, Dharma Realm Buddhist University, available at <http://www.purifymind.com/Bequeathed.html>

⁷⁰ 344-413.

desires as they please. --- the injury from the plundering done by the five sense organs brings misfortunes which extend for many lives. Because they are so harmful, you cannot be careless. --- Since the five sense organs have the mind as their ruler, you should restrain the mind well. --- Those who allow their minds to wander freely lose the goodness that people do. By restraining it in one place there is no affair which cannot be completed. For this reason, Bhikkhus, you should vigorously subdue your mind.

All of you Bhikkhus, you should receive various kinds of food and drink as if you were taking medicine. Whether they be good or bad, do not take more or less of them --- receive peoples' offerings to put an end to distress, but do not seek to obtain too much and spoil their good hearts. ---

All of you Bhikkhus, during the day, cultivate the *dharma* with a vigorous mind, and do not allow opportunities to be lost. Do not lax in the first and last periods of the night ---. Be mindful of the fire of *impermanence* which burns all the world. Seek to cross yourself over and do not sleep. --- The poisonous snake of afflictions is sleeping in your mind --- Therefore, you should always have a sense of shame, --- without it, one is no different from the birds and beasts.

All of you Bhikkhus, even if someone were to dismember you piece by piece, your mind should be self-contained. Do not allow yourself to become angry. --- Patience is a virtue beyond which neither upholding the precepts nor the ascetic practices are comparable. One who is able to practice patience can be called a great person, one who has strength; if you are unable to happily and patiently undergo the poison of malicious abuse, as if drinking sweet dew, you cannot be called a wise person who has entered the Way. ---

All of you Bhikkhus, rub your heads ---, wear the garments of a Buddhist monk, and carry the alms bowl to use in begging for your livelihood---. If thoughts of arrogance arise you should quickly destroy them---. For the sake of liberation, you should humble yourself and practice begging for food.

All of you Bhikkhus, a mind of flattery is contradictory to the Way. Therefore, you should have a straightforward disposition of mind. --- all of you should have an upright mind, and use a straightforward disposition as your basis.

All of you Bhikkhus, you should know that people with many desires suffer much, because they constantly seek for their own benefits. People who reduce their desires, who are free of seeking or longing do not have so much trouble. --- People who reduce their desires have, as a consequence, a mind which is peaceful, without worry or fear. When situations arise, they are always satisfied and never discontent. One who reduces his desires can realize *nirvana*. This is my teaching on reducing desires.

All of you Bhikkhus, if you wish to be free from all suffering and difficulty, you should be content. --- Those who are not content, even if they are rich, they are poor. Those who are content, although they might be poor, they are rich. Those who are discontent are always dragged along by their five sense organs, and are pitied by those who are content. This is my teaching on contentment.

All of you Bhikkhus, seek quietude, the Unconditioned peace, and happiness. You should be apart from confusion and disturbances, and dwell alone in seclusion. --- For this reason, you should renounce your own group and other groups, and dwell alone in

seclusion in order to contemplate the basis for the cessation of suffering. --- One who is bound and attached to the world drowns in a multitude of suffering, like an old elephant sunk in mud, unable to get out. This is my teaching on seclusion.

All of you Bhikkhus, if you are vigorous, nothing will be difficult for you ---. It is like a small stream flowing for a long time which is able to bore through stones. If, on the other hand, the mind of one who cultivates frequently becomes lax, it is like trying to light a fire with friction but resting before there is any heat; though one wants to make a fire, fire is difficult to obtain. This is my teaching on vigor.

All of you Bhikkhus, seeking for a Good and Wise Advisor, or for a wholesome benefactor, does not compare with mindfulness. --- If your mindfulness is firm and strong, though you enter among the thieves of the five desires, they cannot harm you. Like entering a battle wearing armor, you have nothing to fear. This is my teaching on mindfulness.

All of you Bhikkhus, if you collect your mind, you will be able to concentrate. Because the mind is concentrated, you can see the production and destruction of the appearances of *dharmas* in the world. For this reason, you should constantly and vigorously cultivate your concentration. --- for the sake of the water of wisdom, cultivate *dhyana* concentration so that it does not leak away. This is my teaching on concentration.

All of you Bhikkhus, if you have wisdom, you will be without greed or attachment. Always examine yourselves, and do not allow yourselves to have faults, for it is in this way that you will be able to obtain liberation with *dharma*. --- This is my teaching on wisdom.

All of you Bhikkhus, --- if you wish to be one who attains the happiness of still tranquility, you only need to be good and eliminate the evil of idle discussions. This is my teaching on not having idle discussions.

All of you Bhikkhus, --- You should always exert yourselves and practice vigorously. --- I am like a good doctor who understands illnesses and prescribes medicine. Whether the patient takes the medicine or not is not the responsibility of the doctor. Moreover, I am like a virtuous guide who points out a good path. If those who hear it do not take the path, it is not the guide's fault. ---

"All of you Bhikkhus, do not be grieved or distressed. If I were to live in the world for a *kalpa* (an eon), my association with you would still come to an end. There are no meetings without a separation. --- You should know therefore, that everything in the world is impermanent. Meetings necessarily have separations, so do not grieve. Every appearance in the world is like this, so you should be vigorous and seek for an early liberation. Destroy the darkness of delusion with the brightness of wisdom. The world is truly dangerous and unstable, without any durability. My present attainment of *nirvana* is like ridding myself of a malignant sickness. The body is a false name, drowning in the great ocean of birth, sickness, old age and death. How can one who is wise not be happy when he gets rid of it, like killing a hateful thief?

All of you Bhikkhus, you should always single-mindedly and diligently seek the way out of all the moving and unmoving *dharmas* of the world, for they are all destructible, unfixed appearances.

All of you, here I stop; there is nothing more to say. Time is passing, and I wish to cross over to Nirvana. These are my very last instructions.

The feeble voice of the Buddha finally lost its strength under the twin sala trees. The Great Respectable Founder Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, upon ending his talk, moved to *nirvana*. For eighty years, he taught the *dharma* of one dew and departed in this way. This is Lord Shakyamuni's last moment, his most graceful and saddest. Two thousand six hundred years ago. It took place in the grove at Kushinagar.

Master Dōgen was deeply moved at this final and most supreme sermon and wrote a chapter on "Eight Awakenings of Great People (Hachidainingaku)" showing limitless gratitude for the Buddha. It says,

"All the disciples of the Buddha shall study this. Those who do not know it and do not study it are not disciples of the Buddha."

The great sacred sutra continues to make huge influences ever since. What should we do to pay our debt of gratitude? Who would not sit upright and do *zazen*? Gasshō, I pray.

As in the preface, **"When Shakyamuni Buddha first turned the Wheel of Dharma, he crossed over the Venerable Ajnatakaundinya. The very last time he spoke the dharma, he crossed over the Venerable Subhadhra,"** after the great enlightenment, Lord Shakyamuni gave his first sermon to the five practitioners who were still on their way to emancipation. Over the forty-nine years after that, he successfully witnessed the great attainment of Mahakasyapa and gave the *dharma* talks which are known as the Eighty-Four Thousand Dharma Gates.

At the last, old Subhadhra stopped by and saw that Lord Shakyamuni was lying under the twin sala trees. He could not refrain from asking Lord to give a final *dharma* talk. “No way,” refused Ananda and tried to protect Lord Shakyamuni.

Instantly seeing that Subhadhra was no ordinary person, Lord invited him personally, and began to give a sermon. As expected, their wavelengths met. He abandoned his self and penetrated enlightenment. He was truly a man of capacity. It is certain he had practiced everything whole-heartedly in his daily life. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to grasp the supreme *dharma* talk and for their wavelengths to converge.

Subhadhra asked to be ordained. Lord Shakyamuni saw his ability and immediately admitted him as a *bhikkhu*. Subhadhra was a real gem at the closing curtain, the last disciple. He offered a flower at the Lord’s departure to *nirvana*.

Gasshō, I pray.

Mahaparinirvana

is another *dharma* state of “now”

With his own body,

he preached myriads of virtues

You must observe his most sacred mind

Tireless utmost efforts are not enough

Kido, respectfully,
worshipping hundred times

A wisp of smoke

Life-and-death do not exist in life and death. When one is alive, there is no death. When one is dead, there is no life. Look at it deeply. That was a *dharma* talk on *impermanence* with his own body-wheel. What else could be more solemn and precious! It was

his final farewell. Because everything is *empty*, it was a sacred body.

When an ordinary person dies, he has to be cremated. However, the passing of a precious and holy person is helplessly sad for everyone. Everyone cried. Heaven cried, and all the gods wept.

Lord Shakyamuni would cry if everyone would not stop crying. He was waiting for someone to say “Life and death are crucial. Everything is *impermanent* and changes fast. Give your answer!” Some courageous person should stand up. Otherwise, Lord would feel so regret and not be able to die!

Ananda was firmly by his side. They should not let Lord Shakyamuni feel regret. So Ananda gave a *dharma* talk on “Life and death are crucial” and made arrangements for the sacred body of the Lord to be transported to Makutabandana. Everybody prepared for the cremation.

Sticks of fragrant wood were piled up most generously and the sacred body of Lord Shakyamuni was carefully placed on them. People chanted words of Lord Shakyamuni and waited for the arrival of Venerable Mahakasyapa, the only other one who had attained the great enlightenment.

At that time, Mahakasyapa was traveling south of Magadha, giving a *dharma* talk, when he learned that Lord Shakyamuni had left on a journey accompanied only by Ananda. Heart to heart, he was convinced that Lord had determined this was the journey to his last moments. *Bhikkhus* sensed his seriousness and followed Mahakasyapa. The number gradually increased to some hundreds.

His sad prediction hit the mark. He heard from one traveler that Lord Shakyamuni had entered *nirvana*. Anuruddha also joined the bhikkhus and they gathered speed. They arrived at the sacred body a week later.

People were impatiently waiting for the arrival of Venerable Mahakasyapa. When he finally arrived, Ananda felt relieved; he

wailed. A quiet moment lasted for some while. Mahakasyapa's first instruction was to prepare a torch. Venerable held the torch high and walked around the sacred body three times. Then he gently offered the torch to the pile of wood and the cremation flame instantly grew, and burned it all. It was the moment of stately succession of the First Patriarch.

Lord Shakyamuni had said, "I live here all the time." It was always "now," always here. The "now" of two thousand six hundred years ago was undoubtedly "now" at that moment. Because "now" has no beginning or ending, it is in a surpassed state. The path toward attaining it is the practice of Buddhism. Lord Shakyamuni spent forty-nine years of his life working only to disseminate this immeasurable and limitless truth.

Lord Shakyamuni's sacred body disappeared in a wisp of smoke. The sacred smoke reached the three worlds and everybody in all the spheres saw it. Who could doubt it? How gratified we are in all our tears!

I pay my deepest respect to the Great Mercy, Great Compassion, the Greatly Indebted Founder, Lord Shakyamuni.

Gasshō, with sincerity.

The dignified king of enlightenment,
in the spring without boundaries
The mind and head are extinguished,
Like last night's dream
The body is abandoned;
nirvana is attained
In the old wind a lotus flower blooms;
the *dharma* is covertly transmitted

Kido, respectfully

The remains were divided into eight for the most intimate ones. Others collected ashes and built a stupa. Two hundred years later,

King Ashoka unified India. He deeply worshipped Lord Shakyamuni and built a marvelous statue in his honor. He then held the Third Council in Vessarie to compile the original Buddhist holy sutras. It is said that the remains of Lord Shakyamuni were collected and distributed to deserving places.

They were subsequently further divided and some of them has reached Japan and are enshrined at Nittaiji Temple, a non-lineage temple in Nagoya. The remains came from the sacred body of the Greatly Indebted Founder, Lord Shakyamuni, of two thousand six hundred years ago. Gasshō, I pray.

The blind Venerable Anuruddha found it difficult to leave. They say he built a hut nearby and lived there for the rest of his life. That is a clean and pure state of mind. No Buddhas above, no people below. True, it was a hint of tranquility, an example to countless people.

Wherever to fall, autumn leaves do not mind
I will leave myself to the wind of the night

The Fifth Stage
The Buddha since then

Where is Lord Shakyamuni now?

After cremation, only the remains and ashes of Lord Shakyamuni were left. So far so good. Nothing was abnormal about it. It was the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. Now that he has passed away, Lord does not exist anymore. One may naturally think so. However, this is only so in the worldly life. Lord Buddha did not exist only in his physical body. The physical body was not Lord Shakyamuni who surpassed the three worlds, who surpassed the Dharma Gate of Emancipation. It is totally wrong to believe that the body was Lord Shakyamuni. Dead or not dead, life or death, being or non-being, time and space had all been surpassed. That is the state of Lord Shakyamuni's emancipation. Then, where is he now?

Lord Shakyamuni lives in the truth of death and lives in the "now" of death. "Now" is the truth. It is eternally "now," and, therefore, on the right or on the left, all that we see around us are manifestations of Lord Shakyamuni. Horizontally and vertically, he explains the *dharma* freely.

The Buddha is not attached to anything. Because he is not attached to anything, he can be anything according to *conditions*. He is, at any time. That is that, this is this. That is the true nature of the Buddha. Lord Shakyamuni taught this truth to us.

"Well, do you know where I am now? If you know it, show me." I can hear the voice of Lord Shakyamuni. If you are confused at this point, Lord Shakyamuni will be saddened. "Do not get attached to my ruins. Sit upright in the practice of zazen." His voice is clear and sharp.

Facing the wall for nine years

That must be so. The Buddha had thoroughly overcome the

suffering and confusion of the past lives by sitting in zazen for six years under the Tree, on the Stone. He attained it by tough practice. No zazen, no Buddha.

The mind of Lord Shakyamuni when he saw the morning star had been transmitted to Venerable Mahakasyapa and on to the Second Patriarch. Ananda fully repaid his gratitude by raising the third, Sanavasa. Well done.

Then Great Sanavasa transmitted the *dharma* to Upagupta, and further onward to Prajnatarā, the Twenty seventh. When Prajnatarā trained Bodhidharma, the Twenty-eighth, he told Bodhidharma, “There is no longer a person of sufficient ability in India. Travel to the east.” Bodhidharma followed his master’s instruction and traveled to the east. It was a more difficult journey. It took him three years to arrive at Guangzhou in China. Incredibly, he was one hundred twenty years old.

Finally, the Dharma Gate of Emancipation was brought to China by Bodhidharma. Thus, the true light of *dharma* went extinct in India. We call it the Travel of Dharma to the East. Accordingly, the Great Bodhidharma is the respected first patriarch of China. We respectfully call him “the First Patriarch of China, the Enlightened Great Master Bodhidharma.” He is a saint of the greatest importance to us.

He sat upright in zazen facing the wall for nine years at the Shaolin Temple in Wei. During that time, nobody knew that zazen is to do zazen.” However, one day, a man came to ask for the teaching, offering his cutoff arm and standing in the snow. This was the Great Master Eka⁷¹.

He penetrated into the state: “I have searched for the mind, but it was impossible to get.” Thus, a bowlful of water was transmitted to the Great Master Eka successfully. The second patriarch in China was born and the Dharma Gate of Emancipation was rightly conveyed. It is all the blood of the

⁷¹ Huike [慧可], 487-593.

Bodaishin.

I have originally arrived at this place
The *dharma* is transmitted and confused minds are saved
A lotus flower has opened five petals
The results are natural

This is the famous “verse of Bodhidharma transmitting the *dharma*.” Lord Shakyamuni appeared as the Great Master Bodhidharma.

Dye your mind into scarlet
That drops on the snow at Shaolin
Even though it is yet not deep

The Second Patriarch cuts off his arm

Horrifying calamities befell the great *dharma*. Bodhidharma was poisoned and the second patriarch hung. Fortunately, the *dharma* had already been transmitted to the third patriarch, Sousan (Sengcan). It was so close. Dharma Teacher Jo (Zhao) and Gantou (Yantou) were both beheaded. Transmitting the true *dharma* has always been difficult and at great dangerous risk.

Daikan-Eno, a lumberjack, abandoned his mother and came to Zen Master Taiman-Kōnin⁷², the Thirty-second Patriarch after Lord Shakyamuni, or the fifth following Bodhidharma. Master Dōgen highly praised the great Bodaishin that had detached love and gratitude, describing it, “Cutting off an arm would have been easy for Eka; discarding his mother’s love must have been difficult for Eno.” At that time, Eno had already penetrated enlightenment. He acquired Issekigen without a master. The

⁷² Hongren [弘忍], 602-675.

fifth patriarch was greatly pleased. For eight months, Kōnin allowed Eno to stay by his side and live by cleaning rice. One day, Kōnin gave notice to the entire temple:

“If there is one who accords with the mind of the Buddha and all the patriarchs, he shall be the sixth patriarch.” He meant that the one who has become one with Lord Shakyamuni, Mahakasyapa, Ananda, --- down to Bodhidharma will be the successor. This announcement agitated the monks in the temple.

This body is a Bodhi tree
The mind is like the table of a clean mirror
Clear it diligently at times
Never allow dust on it

This is a verse made by Jinshū⁷³, the best of one thousand monks. Everybody thought he would be selected to be the sixth. Even the fifth patriarch said that the one who followed this manner would gain great virtue, because the last two phrases were important lessons. People are not able to attain enlightenment because they lack such efforts.

Bodhi originally has no tree
A clean mirror is not for reflection
All things are nothing in their original nature
Where can a dust be?

The Dharma Gate of Emancipation cannot be compared to anything. A clean mirror or a reflection is illusion. Everything is *empty*. Where can duct or confusion be?

This is a famous verse by the humble lumberjack who became the sixth patriarch. When the fifth read it, he instantly approved it contently: “That is my mind.” That night, he handed over the

⁷³ Shenxiu [神秀], 606-706.

sacred bowl and the sacred robe which had been handed down from Lord Shakyamuni's time. He approved emancipation of Eno, his role was accomplished and the *dharmā* was transmitted. Eno, the lumberjack, was now the sixth patriarch, the Great Master Daikan-Eno, the Thirty-third and the sixth in China. He was the most distinguished of the patriarchs, the most famous and most studied.

In any case, he was not safe. The catastrophe of losing the *dharmā* had to be avoided and the Buddha's mind-seal, the proof of approval, had to be saved at any rate. He was set to escape from the temple during the night and thus the only seed was protected. It was really dangerous. You should read "Do Not Think it Good or Bad," the twenty-third Kōan of *Mumonkan*.

Under Enō's guidance, a number of distinguished masters were raised. The two great masters of Seigen-Gyōshi⁷⁴ and Nangaku-Ejō⁷⁵ were both especially strong, comparable to Mahakasyapa. Each raised generation after generation's upholders of the great *dharmā*.

After one century, the mind-seal of Lord Shakyamuni sprouted gloriously and shone in the world. As predicted by Bodhidharma, one lotus flower opened five petals.

A zen phrase says, two-seven in the west, two-three in the east. Two-seven refers to the twenty-seven patriarchs of India. Two by three is six, which points to the sixth patriarch. We often say in Japan four-six hours which refers to one day.

The Bodaishin was transmitted to the Bodaishin. Before long, the flowers of the Five Houses and the Seven Sects blossomed. The five houses are: Sōtō (Caodong), Unmon (Yunmen), Hogen (Fayan), Igyo (Guiyang), and Rinzai (Rinji)⁷⁶. The Rinzai House later in the Song dynasty gave rise to Ōryō (Huanglung) sect and

⁷⁴ Qingyuan Xingsi [青原行思], 660-720.

⁷⁵ Nanyue Huairang [南嶽懷讓], 677-744.

⁷⁶ 曹洞, 雲門, 法眼, 滙仰, 臨濟.

Yōgi (Yangchi) ⁷⁷sect. They are different rivers, but the water has the same origin.

A saint said, “People play. I practice. A day of practice is a day one should appreciate. A century of being idle is a century to be regretted and pitied.” We should make our best efforts each day. That is how the Buddha within us lives. That is Sokushin-Zebutsu, Just this Mind is the Buddha. Practice diligently.

A True Buddha in Japan (Master Dōgen)

The flowers of the *dharma* beautifully spread over the four oceans. It was the Kamakura era in Japan. An elite man appeared whose name was Dōgen. In his childhood, he read the Four Books and the Five Classics, the nine fundamental textbooks of Confucianism. By the time he turned nine, he read through Shunju-Sashiden (Chunqiu Zuoshizhuan) compiled by Confucius, and Kusharon (Abhidharma-kosa-bhasya), a very difficult Buddhist textbook by Vasuvandhu. At thirteen, he was ordained at Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hieizan. While he practiced hard, he read all the books and sutras stored by the temple twice. In the end, he asked a question:

“Originally one has the true *dharma*, and the Buddha nature manifests itself. What for, then, does the Buddhas of the three worlds awaken the Bodaishin to attain the way?”

With this great question, he consulted a senior monk, but the answer did not satisfy Dōgen. Although Hieizan was a venerable temple, Dōgen found nothing to study there anymore. He made up his mind to leave Hieizan. He was fifteen years old. How can a man of such an age do all these? I am shocked.

⁷⁷ 黄龍, 楊岐.

Back in the city of Kyoto, he visited another highly respected and virtuous person, but his words did not convince Dōgen. Then he heard that Zen Master Eisai⁷⁸ had brought back zen from China. He rushed to see him and asked about zen. He was convinced and practiced hard. However, in less than a year, Master Eisai passed away.

Dōgen continued to follow Myozen, a senior disciple and successor of Master Eisai for six more years. But it was not enough. Together, they traveled to China and spent three years searching for a true master. Fortunately, with their *dharma condition*, they were able to meet Great Master Nyojo (Rujing)⁷⁹, the Fiftieth Patriarch directly under Lord Shakyamuni. Nyojo highly commended this monk of great ability from abroad.

One day, Dōgen noticed an old monk who was drying shiitake mushrooms on a hot sunny day. He felt pity on the monk and asked him,

“Why do not you let a young monk do such a work?”

The old monk replied,

“The other is not me.” That would be the practice by another person.

Dōgen then asked,

“If so, how about working after the sunlight weakens?”

The old monk replied,

“What time should I wait for?” If not now, when should I do it? Are you a true practitioner? What are you looking at?!

Dōgen bowed and left.

⁷⁸ Also Yosai [栄西], 1141-1215.

⁷⁹ Rujing [如浄], 1163-1228.

This short conversation gave birth to Master Dōgen. It was astonishing to Dōgen, as if he was forced to drink boiling water. For the first time, he became aware of the “now” that has no before or after, the very origin of the *dharma*. He could not wait to rush to the zen hall. There was nowhere else to go. “What have I been doing!?” I bet Dōgen regretted much of his earlier life. I can see it clearly. His Bodaishin was now stronger and more serious. Smoke comes out before the flame. He was determined to go further to get the fire.

Day and night, he concentrated on zazen. It was a different zazen. On one occasion, a monk sitting next to him fell asleep. Master Nyojo hit him with a kyosaku stick with all his strength. This was a manifestation of his mercy and compassion. The sound of the kyosaku “awakened” Master Dōgen. After full concentration on zazen day after day, Master Dōgen thoroughly penetrated forgetting himself and attained the great extinction.

This was the same scene as Lord Shakyamuni when he saw the morning star. At that moment, he attained the Dharma Gate of Emancipation and acquired the mind-seal of Lord Shakyamuni. His great enlightenment came in less than ten days.

He uttered loud with joy,

“Body and mind are dropped off! Body and mind are dropped off!”

Master Nyojo stated in praise,

“Dropped off body and mind. Dropped off ‘dropped off’.”

Herewith, the seal of approval was given face to face, and Master Dōgen became the fifty-first patriarch.

Master Dōgen remarked,

“My study of Buddhism has been accomplished here.”

Thus, confidently he stated that he had surely reached the

great emancipation achieving his aspirations. At the age of twenty-eight, fifteen years after he was ordained. Who would not cry for this hard work and out of gratitude! I do not know how to stop my tears. Gasshō.

Around this time in China, Zen Master Mumon-Ekai⁸⁰ compiled the *Mumonkan*, and Master Mansho⁸¹ compiled the *Shoyoroku*, both of which are most important collections of zen questions. It was a golden age for zen.

Master Dōgen returned home, protecting and embodying the great *dharma* of Lord Shakyamuni. The *dharma* had traveled over three countries and for the first time, the true *dharma* reached our nation. This was in the reign of Emperor Gohorikawa, in the year 1227 by the western calendar. How gratified we are!

Gasshō.

When Master Dōgen returned, he confessed to the world;

“I came home empty-handed. I do not have a single writing on the *dharma*. I have just learned that eyes are horizontal and the nose is vertical. Every morning the sun rises from the east, and every evening it sets in the west. A cock crows at the fifth time of night (at dawn) and a leap year comes every three years⁸².”

This is a beautiful phrase by Master Dōgen, one that expresses his own attainment. It corresponds precisely to that of Lord Shakyamuni. Thereafter, Dōgen persistently saved people from confusion and suffering.

⁸⁰ Wumen Huikai [無門慧開], 1183-1260.

⁸¹ Wansong Xingxiu [万松行秀], 1166-1246.

⁸² By a lunar calendar.

Twenty-four streams

The Dharma Gate of Lord Shakyamuni spread widely throughout Japan, and came to be known as the Sōtō, Rinzai and Ōbaku schools. The Five Mountains of Kamakura (the five temples of Engakuji, Kenchoji, Fukujuji, Jochiji and Jomyoji) and the Five Mountains of Kyoto (Nanzenji at its top and Tenryuji, Sokokuji, Kenninji, Tofukuji, and Manjuji) played central roles in disseminating the teachings widely. And many masters from abroad stayed in Japan such as Zen Master Mugaku-Sogen⁸³, the founder of Enkakuji and Zen Master Rankei-Doryu⁸⁴, the founder of Kenchoji. They are virtues of the Buddha in our country.

At the same time, many monks traveled to China and opened their eyes as great masters. Altogether, twenty-four streams were created and many great leaders appeared. They brought back the latest zen documents which were subsequently published by those major temples.

Transmission of a high quality culture

To my surprise, many monks and practitioners in those days studied Kaiankokugo by State Master Daitō, with commentaries by Master Hakuin. Numerous patriarchs appear in this book. It is evidence that the patriarchs' records were already widely available in our country. It is surprising to see how fast a high quality culture was transmitted. The capacity of our nation then was much beyond what we imagine.

Starting with Zenmonhokun (Treasure Teachings on Zen Gate) by Kenchōji in 1287, Engo-Shin'yō (The Core of Mind by Master Engo), Keitoku-Dentōroku (Jingde Record of the Transmission of

⁸³ [無学祖元], 1226-1286.

⁸⁴ [蘭溪道隆], 1213-1278.

the Lamp), Gotō-egen (Five Lights Collection), Jū-gyū-zu (Ten Ox-herding Pictures), *Hekiganroku* (Blue Cliff Record), over twenty volumes of foreign works were published along with Japanese works as well.

By the way, the technology of woodblock printing was introduced into Japan during the Asuka era (6 – 8 century, A.C.). Buddhist sutras and texts stored at Horyuji and other temples today date back to 770, the oldest existing printed materials in the world whose printing has been verified. How splendid was the level of our culture!

Emperors and Zen

What truly humbles me is that many emperors practiced zazen and attained a remarkable state. Emperor Godaigo⁸⁵ was approved by State Master Daitō, the Fifty-seventh Patriarch. When he attained enlightenment, the Emperor remarked,

For twenty years I have practiced hard
The spring has come,
 but a smoky old wind stays unchanged
If I wore cloth and ate meals in such a way
There would have been no dust on the earth

What a splendid state!

His predecessor, Emperor Hanazono⁸⁶ was also approved by State Master Daitō. In his diary, he wrote,

“The supremacy of Buddhism, the ultimate state of the mind,

⁸⁵ 1288-1339.

⁸⁶ 1297-1384.

lies in zen. All the other teachings of Mahayana and Theravada are not comparable. I have kept my mind in line with its deepest meaning, and have done everything accordingly. By doing so, I have clarified all matters. I am most pleased. I have found a gemstone under my robe without searching for it. How delightful! How delightful!”

The emperor subsequently built Myoshinji Temple wishing to share the virtues of Buddhism and the pleasure of attainment with everyone. He invited State Master Kanzan⁸⁷ to open the temple. He personally translated the chapter of the Lotus Sutra. His “Record of the Practice of Buddhism” represents his enlightenment. Every Buddhist practitioner should read it.

Emperor Gonara⁸⁸ received the approval of State Master Daikyu⁸⁹. He wrote in his letter to Master Daikyu,

“At the end of my life, when I formally met Tokunin Bhikkhu⁹⁰ at the sacred mountain peak of Mt. Sumeru, I have been fully liberated. Ever since, I am not doubted by the patriarchs. How should I repay this debt of gratitude? I respectfully bow.”

What a precious state! We gratefully respect the mind of those emperors.

Emperor Gomurakami⁹¹ and Emperor Reigen⁹² were also experienced zen practitioners. Even emperors attained enlightenment. By their leadership aided by the virtues of Buddhism, our spiritual foundation has been raised up to an unparalleled level. Thanks to their practices following the eyes of the Buddha and the minds of the patriarchs, our nation has

⁸⁷ Kanzan-Egen [関山慧玄], 1277-1360.

⁸⁸ 1495-1557.

⁸⁹ Daikyū-Sōkyū [大休宗休], 1468-1549.

⁹⁰ The first of 53 masters Sudhana, a Buddhist practitioner, met on his way to attaining enlightenment.

⁹¹ 1328-1368.

⁹² 1654-1732.

gratefully benefited from the widely disseminated *dharma*.

In those days, a zen master, State Master Musō, was much respected by royalty. One day, the emperor asked him, “What is the *dharma*?!”

Master replied,
“Dear Emperor, Listen. The *dharma* taught by Lord Buddha is the only way to lead the nation.”

He stately explained the way to peace of people. He is the founder of Tenryuji Temple.

Virtues of the Dharma

Where there is a Bodaishin, there is a sacred person. Master Tsūgen-Jakurei⁹³ is a distinguished master who scared people with his “Bury Alive Hole.” He certainly should be, because he is the fifth patriarch under Master Dōgen. He made a newly arrived practitioner sit upright in zazen besides a hole. If the practitioner could not get enlightened, he dumped him into the hole. No master in the three countries was ever so strict.

Namba-Tetsugen (Dharma State Master, Tetsugen-Dōkō⁹⁴), when he had attained the great enlightenment, decided to publish “Issaikyo (the Comprehensive Sutras)” out of his respectful gratitude to the *dharma*. Though he traveled around the country to seek donations, he faced a major famine. He spent all the money he received saving people; and he re-started seeking donations. Another famine broke out, and he spent everything again. On the third try, he finally succeeded in the first publication of Issaikyo in our country. At his funeral, thirty thousand people gathered to mourn. How impressive! It was all out of great mercy and compassion, gratitude and respect for the

⁹³ [通幻寂靈], 1322-1391.

⁹⁴ [鉄眼道光], 1630-1682.

dharma.

In the middle of the Edo period, the decline and the decay of Buddhism became apparent. However, Master Hakuin (the seventy-third patriarch), Master Tenkei⁹⁵, Master Menzan⁹⁶, Master Manzan⁹⁷, Master Bankei⁹⁸ and other highly distinguished zen masters emerged and they re-established the *dharma* of the Buddha and the patriarchs. What a fortunate country we live in!

Indeed, a large number of zen leaders disseminated the teachings of the Buddha, which spread like fire in the dry field. The imperial family, the noble classes, samurai warriors, merchants, poets, tea masters, novelists, ordinary people, prostitutes among others practiced zen, and this had a strong influence on the culture, arts, politics, education, economy and personality of this country. We greatly owe the *dharma* for what we are today.

In more recent years, a zen master appeared who surpassed the three major zen schools (Sōtō, Rinzai and Ōbaku). Zen Master Tōin-Iida was a true patriarch of the *dharma*. He attained a state of enlightenment which exceeded even that of Mahakasyapa, Bodhidharma, and, as it were, all the patriarchs. He was man of great wisdom who attained an unsurpassed state of enlightenment, comparable only to State Master Daiō⁹⁹, State Master Daitō, and Incompatible Master Kanzan. Therefore, he is referred to as a Genius only found once every Five Hundred Years.

Then Prime Minister Wakatsuki, his cabinet ministers, and other major figures attended this zen master. He led a zen community called Kozen-Gokokusai, to uphold zen and defend

⁹⁵ Tenkei-Denson [天桂伝尊], 1648-1735.

⁹⁶ Menzan-Zuihō [面山瑞方], 1683-1769.

⁹⁷ Manzan-Dōhaku [卍山道白], 1636-1715.

⁹⁸ Bankei-Yōtaku [盤珪永琢], 1622-1693.

⁹⁹ Master Daiō, also Nampo-Shmy [南浦紹明], 1235-1309.

the nation. Chofu Nakadate, Masami Oishi, Jiteki Okada, Eiichi Shibusawa, Shimpei Goto, Korekiyo Takahashi, Hisaya Iwasaki, Ichiro Hatoyama were also members of the community counting some four hundred including political and business leaders, medical doctors, lawyers, scholars among others. It was the most significant zen community in this country. I deeply miss the master. He passed away in 1937.

Nevertheless, he raised five *dharma* successors and surely maintained the life of the *dharma*. Although they all passed away, their disciples still survive today in the outer fields and work to protect the *dharma* with a thin voice. The great *dharma* light is on the brink of blowing out. What shall we do with the great lament, great mercy and great compassion of the Buddha and the patriarchs!?

Time has passed. The zen community today has mostly fallen into disrepair and we can seldom hear the voice of the *dharma*. How deeply regrettable! Almost all local temples are owned by individuals and major temples serve tourists today.

Is there not anyone who can protect the *dharma* at the risk of life and body? Those who fall in a contaminated world rise up in the contaminated world. I cannot find a person of this conviction. The *dharma* is about to be extinguished. Throw away the body, life and wealth! “Now” or never.

If no one stands up among those who read this statement, we will not be able to escape the condemnation by the Lord Shakyamuni and the patriarchs. I smash the desk with my fist in tears. Ah!

My deepest apologies! Bodaishin!

A little cuckoo

Its bleeding cry is not heard

By anyone but the moon in Ariake Bay

(a warrior at the Edo era)

Zazen and science – an extra note

Visualizing Zen

Today, zen is studied scientifically from various angles. My zen center jointly works on research with the psychiatry and neurosciences innovation center of a university's school of medicine. With the consent of participants, we record results from a survey, MRI tests, documentation from the moment of arrival at the center until their departure. The data is used for treatment, education, to develop self-control and for peace.

MRI tests are taken before and after the training under two different conditions. First, it is taken under natural conditions without noise. Then, zen questions or something else are given to trainees. These questions cannot be answered with using intellect but the trainee must answer each question within ten seconds.

At that time, confusion appears instantly and clearly. This is another test under the second conditions. I ask every first-time visitor to take these tests. After that, zen practices begin, and one week later, at the time of departure, the second set of tests are taken.

The confusion caused by these questions can be explained as follows:

The sound heard by ears gets connected with information of the past. Therefore, mere sound is inevitably converted into words that contain a notion which is the cause of confusion. In this reality, if this situation persists, the intellect or the feeling cannot be released from its confines in the past. This is attachment, the mechanism from which illusion arises and conflict among nations or religions arises.

It is a mental action which is connected with the self-preservation instinct hidden in the body. This explains why war does not disappear from the world. It is a “bad habit of mind.” The purpose of doing zazen is to be rid of it.

After only one week of practicing zazen, the visitor will take another set of tests. The same questions will be asked as at arrival. Then, there is very little confusion arising from irritation at those irrational questions. Even if there is momentary agitation, it quickly goes away and tranquility returns. Why is this? How to explain this wonderful phenomenon? Here lies a fundamental clue for salvation.

The reason for stability

Zazen is the way to drop off self-contradiction by penetrating the truth. Self-awareness only begins after acquisition of the “intellectual capacity to know that this is me.” This is the acquisition of words and notions. Contamination of thoughts, feelings and information of the past and the present occurs, due to this intellectual capacity. This is the conflict that arises from self-awareness, and this is the state of confusion.

If one has no self-awareness, there is no attachment, therefore, there is no confusion or conflict. Zazen awakens the original “mind” before self-awareness, or the “intellectual capacity to know that this is me,” arises. That is how one can be released, fundamentally, from self-confinement. This is “emancipation (Gedatsu).”

There is no correct answer to the irrational question. However, self-awareness comes in and the person is bound by words. Because he does not understand that there is “none,” he searches for the answer. This is confusion. It happens because he does not know the truth.

Searching for an answer that does not exist is useless. There is sense in responding to it. If this is attained, no useless intellectual or emotional response will arise. This explains the state, the state of understanding it but not being attached to it.

To put it another way, right zazen stabilizes the brain and leads one to a mental concentration which integrates intellect, emotion and volition (Chi-Jō-I). As the integration advances and mental concentration deepens, self-awareness gradually disappears. That is, the person becomes seeing itself, hearing itself. The whole body becomes one with the sound. When you are one with studying, time passes instantly.

Because there is no self-awareness, there are no “bad habits of mind,” no intervening of unwanted ideas. You will not be influenced by what you see, hear, perceive or know, and you will be free of confusion. When you know this truth clearly, you will become peaceful.

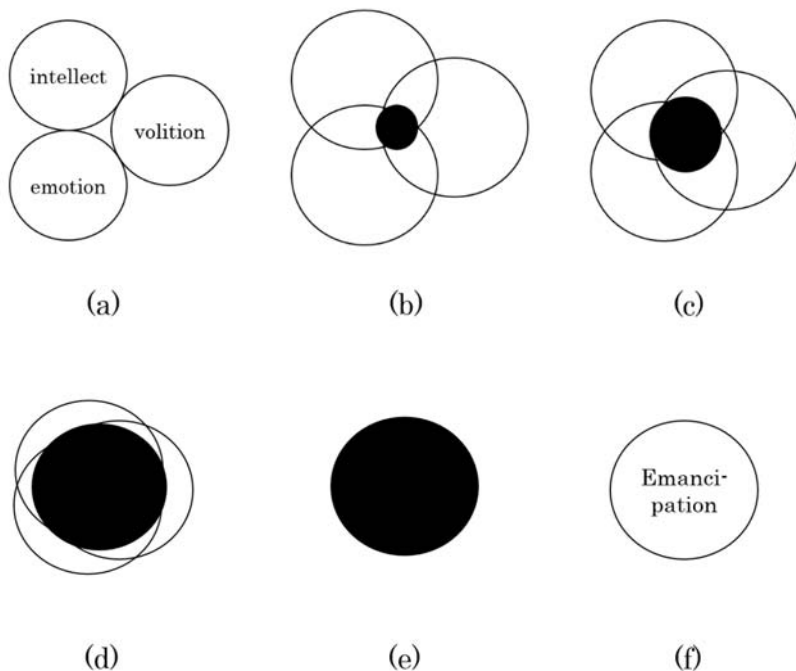
Since this is the tiny result of practicing zazen for a short period of time, it is not so useful. However, one can be convinced that the enlightenment does exist. We are relieved by knowing the truth. The truth is the fact. It is to be aware of the true “now.” In order to see the truth, one must be conscious once of one’s self that is pure white before self-awareness emerges.

Human beings do not know how to overcome confusion because we do not know the truth of “now.” For the sake of the future of the world, we must overcome these “bad habits of mind” by any means.

Advanced technologies are on the way to make it possible to visualize and informatize the mind and clarify the mechanisms by which zazen purifies and enhances the mind. However, **even if this is possible, it does not mean one can overcome the “bad habits of mind.” This is the point of decisive difference between zazen and science.** Zen provides fruits and gives one peace. Science explains the matter deeply and creates knowledge, but it

does not give peace.

The relationships of Three States



The above figures represent the relationships of “intellect, emotion and volition.” The mental mechanisms can be roughly explained by these three states. The black part at the center is where the three actions are integrated, and this is the most important part of the mental mechanism. Simply, you may take it as a situation in which “intellect, emotion and volition” are balanced. It is an area of personality which produces sociability, virtue, autonomy and supremacy. It also explains the state of

mental conditions, the difference between confusion and peace. The ultimate objective is to acquire peace and happiness.

I need to draw your attention to the fact that the level of a person's intellect fluctuates greatly between high and low, and so emotion swings widely between stability and instability. Sometimes, it is difficult to focus on one thing, but it is easy to concentrate on what one likes to do. Reality is strongly influenced by whether one likes it or not, whether one stands to gain or lose from it. In this way, our minds constantly change according to time, place and occasion.

This is evidence that the "mind" has no substance. At the same time, it means the "mind" is free. The importance of doing zazen, penetrating the truth and attaining enlightenment lies in knowing this truth of the "mind."

The figures, in this sense, are quite rough. They only roughly capture the balance of intellect, emotion and volition. It would be dangerous to see them as representing mental structures or the mind. Still, they are useful as a reference to understand the mind generally. The broader the area, the greater the integration. With full integration, nothing interferes and one is freed of attachment. When your mind is fully concentrated, the mind is clear, evil thoughts disappear and at the same time, honesty sets in.

Here, we find the significance of human beings. This is also the purpose of education. We also find the satisfaction of life here.

The worst is (a). It is the state of sickness. When the three are so isolated, volition or intellect cannot control the mind. Such a person may commit a suicide, become desperate and do unbelievable things such as killing or injuring others. The sense of public order is lost, everything becomes a source of stress, and even a small thing will drive such a person mad. Being unable to control one's actions is caused by the disconnect between reason and will. That is the source of evil emotions.

In such a condition, one is unable to listen to others, unable to

focus on writing properly. This is because, even if the intellect draws up a design, the information cannot be accurately transferred to movement, and thus one's fingers do not move as designed.

In state (b), the three areas share a small space. As a result, intellect, emotion and volition are unable to function soundly. Such a person can barely participate in social life, but tends to play selfishly and create problems. Such a person has a personality disorder whose words and deeds are inconsistent, making it difficult to take part in normal human relations. Under such a condition with minimal ability to distinguish fallacy and truth, a highly intelligent person may become incredibly dangerous. Even if his emotions tell him that something is wrong, this sense of being wrong cannot be transmitted to intellect and volition. Such a situation can only lead to distress.

Because it is difficult to control matters at the second extent to (a), feelings of gain or loss, likes and dislikes, grumbling and jealousy, anger and hatred easily come out, tormented by one's own mind. To bail oneself out of such a condition, he will use an excuse or a lie. Since all this comes from his instinct for self-protection, such a person has no sense of guilty or self-reflection and is unable to escape from his problems.

(c) is an average state. It is situated between (b) and (d), representing the majority of cases and is most ordinary. When the feelings of such a person are pure, his state becomes (d); when polluted, it becomes (b). When one pretends to be a person of goodwill and continues doing things accordingly, his state becomes (d). Such a state is shaky and depends on the feeling.

This means that the inner mind swings widely depending on whether conditions are favorable for the person or not. What is different from (b) is that such a person can balance reflection, responsibility and effort. It is possible to say that it is a sound mind. However, the wide range of swings cause stress, and he

cannot free himself from annoyance. This may drive him into gambling where he may drown. If he can control his feelings (emotions) by the power of volition, he is intellectually capable, though his stress may be great. He can be saved by his efforts.

(d) is in the state where the three are integrated by more than half. Swings of mental conditions, unnecessary thoughts, and evil thoughts are limited and things are stable. A person in this state has little stress. Excessive stress for this person rather sharpens the five senses, enhances self-reflection and a future orientation, and serves as to motivate him to do better.

Senses of judgement, feelings and will are always interlinked, and therefore, emotions are stable and decisions are made quickly without hesitation. The entire motion is beautiful. Because the three motions will not be separate, sound decisions can be made, human relations are favorable, and the trust naturally builds confidence.

With such mental capacity, a person can understand others' positions deeply. When one attains this state, one can owe success to the others and thus uplift others. Having a rich personality, even if his IQ is not so high, his personal virtue enables him to work out matters smoothly. A person of ability is in this state. A leader should behave in this way, to say the least. A man of virtue is much more appreciated than a person with a high IQ.

The state of (e), in short, is found in a person who can diligently concentrate on any matter. Such a person can clearly see that everything is perfect at every moment of now, and therefore, no attachment arises. He is not diverted and is fully concentrated on the matter at hand; no confusion or conflict arises. In this situation he lives each day fully. To explain this state according to zen, he is in *dhyana*. A person in this state has no anxiety, loneliness, or dissatisfaction. Because his feelings are never distracted, he is always reasonable and tranquil.

He does feel joy, pleasure or sadness, but does not get attached

to it; he is never bound by feelings or any matter. How free and easy this state is! However, this is still a state of calmness. Once the bucket is shaken, dirt will come up. That is the limitation of this state. This is the upper limit of an ordinary person.

A person in (f) is in a different state of mind. This is “emancipation.” When a person is truly one with “now,” and the past and the present are clearly differentiated, the three are perfectly integrated and nothing remains. When one penetrates fully, the body and the mind disappear. This is a state where one is not concerned with anything. We emphasize this state by referring to it as “disappearance.” In Buddhist terminology, we say “body and mind have dropped off” or “dropped off body and mind.” Because there is no body or mind, the self, national borders, ethnicity, or the past, male or female, young or old does not bother this person. This state has gone beyond the ordinary so that gains or losses, or evil thoughts does not bother him. Every response is naturally geared toward the best. “The Dharma Gate of Emancipation” refers to this state.

Nothing interferes with the “mind” and, therefore, it is “now” in all moments, a person can be free and smooth in doing anything. Because he is truly alive, he can die truly at ease without having any anxiety or attachment. This is the state of “surpassing life and death.”

Why is zen necessary?

Self-consciousness, or the self, is a phenomenon of unnecessary attachment and a source of confusion. If one can get rid of this nuisance, “now” is fully present, and one can naturally control every movement. Since there is no extra concern, there is no space for evil to come in.

As I explained earlier, all the five sense organs merely collect

stimuli. They perform a momentary function that cannot be measured. The five senses are their work and function. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body are sense organs; forms, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings are senses. These are pure functions and responses where there is no room for past information or thoughts to come in. Once the truth of this “now” becomes clear, its difference from the intellect, concepts or the past becomes clear. Because there is no trace of the “mind,” anxiety disappears. People have unstable minds, because they do not clearly see this fact.

You may be surprised to know that the mind of childhood is state (e). such a mind goes beyond the senses of good and bad, gains and losses. Those senses do not exist. It is just great nature. However, perceptions of the five organs and the intellect which can discern matters gradually begin to act; the “mind” becomes blurred and nurtures the root of fighting and suffering, moving into (d) and (c).

This is the foundation of early childhood education. The state (e) is where the self is forgotten, children concentrate on the matters at hand. This is the most rewarding condition. We should let her enjoy it as much as she wants, as long as she is safe. In the whole lifespan, it is only during early childhood when one can fully concentrate on matters and do so mindlessly. One acquires the basic material relationship of *cause and effect* during this period.

Failures and being hurt are important basic knowledge acquired by experience. These lessons develop body functions and mechanisms for controlling one’s actions. Because the five sense organs, the five senses, the intuition and the body are all perfectly integrated, this is a most pleasant and fulfilling moment with no unpleasant or unsatisfied feeling. The more a child enjoys this state, the more stable integration of intellect, emotion and volition will be acquired. That is the sound

formation of mentality and the foundation of human character.

At this state of (e), there is no anxiety, the mind functions actively without any interference. Whatever one is doing, with rich ideas and acting freely, learning from failures, one can enjoy a sense of achievement and exhilaration. The broad mind is thus nurtured and is no more hurt by small damage. The mind does not grow informed by the intellect. It simply increases within a person what is originally natural. Growing in this way, one can stay in the mental condition of at least state (d).

It is not easy for an adult to reach state (e), but a small child is already in that state. If parents stay away from home, the present environment will damage the children in this state. For the child's well-being, it is desirable for him to stay with his mother until reaching school age.

Parents and teachers these days do not know the importance of the five sense organs or the five senses, so they do not see the point of raising children. They do not know how active and lively the body and the mind should be, and therefore, they are not aware that they themselves are interfering with the children's sound development. Since there is no awareness, there is no room for them to improve. This is a national crisis, but... It is high time we thought carefully and examined what early childhood is.

Now, let us go back to the main story. Once you are aware that you do not need to think of anything, you only have to "just" listen, "just" see and "just" think, and thus, you will not be confused. You can now understand why some people are not bothered by irrational questions.

It is easy to live in harmony with other persons without having conflicts. Each person only needs to be detached from the bindings of the past, have a "mind" that is not swayed by what he gets from his eyes or ears moment by moment. Then, naturally, the "bad habits of mind" such as complaints, dissatisfaction, or unnecessary criticisms will disappear at the same time as the

body and mind are dropped off. Tranquility will stay. It is not the usual meaning of tranquility; so we call it *nirvana* tranquility (Nehan-Jakujō). It is as matter of course that such people will live their life with confidence and dignity.

What is important is that you practice to attain such a state. Have dreams that are pure and wonderful. When you have hope, the Bodaishin will arise. When you have a truly feverish hope, you will want to do it. If you do it, results will follow. An important objective or dream is indeed necessary. For the sake of future generations.

I recommend zazen because it is the only “path” which will take you to such a state naturally if you practice properly. When you truly penetrate the truth, you can reach the state of (f), emancipation. But only a guide who has attained emancipation can guide you.

Recommendations to scientists

The questionnaire we use in our project is for collecting data. Like the MRI, it needs to be administered under standard conditions. There is one form of the questionnaire on zazen which was developed by a researcher at a university. From my point of view, it is not sufficient. It is probably a global standard as a questionnaire on zazen. In any case, without a sufficient number of the informants, no analysis can be made. Truly enlightened practitioners and true guides are urgently needed.

It is a great pity that so far I have known only one professional researcher on this matter at HiRōshima University who has attained state (e). Because of the absence of scientists who have experienced it and know what it is, a huge volume of valuable data is not properly analyzed. This is a problem.

You should practice zazen according to instructions. An instructor always spotlights the next steps indicating how to live. So the practitioner only needs to follow the instruction. When you practice this way, your interior changes every moment. It is the world only you know. Changes in awareness or feelings are alien to anyone other than the instructor, the practitioner and those who have experienced it.

What zen searches for is different from what science does. However, they share the same objectives in the pursuit of human happiness and peace. The University of Tokyo has a zen hall. Hiroshima University has a zen community since before the World War II. Both Dr. Kitaro Nishida¹⁰⁰ of Kyoto University and Dr. Shinichiro Nishi¹⁰¹ of Hiroshima University were worldly renowned great scholars of ethics, education and philosophy.

They were feverish zen practitioners. Both Dr. Nishi and Dr. Ichiro Moritaki attended Master Giko Inoue¹⁰² and tirelessly pursued the “mind” through practice of zazen at the university.

Zen and science both share one common human objective going beyond the times to enrich lives. Since there is no life without materials or the environment, it is a matter of course to pursue the soundness of “mind, science and technology.” Certainly it is desirable to do anything in the state of mind (f). If one is at least not at state (d), some nuisance within oneself will mislead you.

One may work for the rice harvest; but there will arise a difference between looking for husks, straws or rice. Zen grows rice to harvest rice. It will never forget the weather, water, and the paddy field. All are one. Rice is harvested as a crystallization of wish, love and hard work.

Husks and straws will grow even if they are unattended. But without rice, life cannot be sustained. When you get rice, husks

¹⁰⁰ 1870-1945.

¹⁰¹ 1873-1943.

¹⁰² Tōten-Gigo [洞天義光], 1883-1968, the third head of Shorinkutsu.

and straws comes automatically. This is the precise difference between the false and the true. It is up to mind. The fundamental difference between science and zen is the difference of the initial resolve for the Bodaishin. Obviously, their destinations and results will differ. We have to be aware that this difference is inevitable and both will have to accept it.

After the end of the war, Tatsuo Morito¹⁰³, then president of Hiroshima University, together with Dr. Moritaki, opened a zazen community at the university inviting Master Giko. A fertile land has been cultivated over the years, and that is how this university is making world-class achievements in this area.

For a scientist to research zazen, he or she must practice zazen seriously. Just like harvesting rice, only by practicing zazen earnestly can he or she understand zazen. Is that not the spirit of a true scientist?

With the power of such experience, the scientist can give life to valuable data. She can analyze it in a way it can be utilized in various ways.

If a scientist carelessly says that he has successfully interpreted this incomprehensible world of “mind” using knowledge and imagination, as if he has scienced zazen and has solved the issue of mind, people who intend to practice zazen seriously will be confused. Please refrain from it.

In the not so distant future, a valuable paper will be published by the university along with the data. Please look forward to it.

My humble expectation is that all education administrators, education scholars, educators, neuroscientists, psychological doctors and philosophers truly practice zazen. Then, based on valuable data, let’s have a discussion at the global level and deepen the understanding. Only by doing so will truly useful and important points be produced. And if we use the research results for peace, medical treatments, education, politics, economy and

¹⁰³ A member of the Lower House, Minster for Education (1888-1984).

the purification and stability of the mind, we can share our happiness together. So I believe.

I sincerely pray that scientists and researchers who have a true Bodaishin will appear. I am seventy-eight years old. I fear that this “path” will go extinct from the world. The world will soon be in total darkness if the “path” to true salvation disappears.

Bodaishin. Bodaishin.

Postscript

Although I am a silly monk of no virtue, I pay gratitude to the Buddha's virtues. The ultimate savior is oneself. However, when it comes to searching for the right way, nothing is superior to sitting upright in zazen, having been handed down by Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.

When I was in my second year of high school, I was careless and had a traffic accident. I could have lost my life. My clothes were torn into stiches. It seems that after I was hit, I was dragged for quite a distance. When my injuries were cured, I was deemed to have fully recovered; that was the judgement according to the level of treatment in those days. I caused Master of Zenkyuin in Toyohashi a huge amount of trouble, for which I cannot apologize enough.

Three years later, the aftereffects began to appear. I could not sleep; I had pain all over my body; and I began to suffer from whiplash. My emotions were distracted, I lost my proper judgement, my memory deteriorated, my heart beat was extraordinary (at 120 a minute), just like after running one hundred meters. It was intolerable. I was diagnosed having a heart distress. I had never heard of such an illness.

I came back home without fulfilling my goal of repaying my debt of gratitude to Lord Shakyamuni. Finally, hearing and visual illusions began. While pretending to be calm and trying to contain my fear, anxiety and irritation, my face became black.

When driving a car, the road deceived me. I thought it was straight. No, what I saw as curving was the reality. Follow my eyes! Every day was like this and I was completely exhausted. I felt that I might have a critical accident soon. So I was prepared for a sad end.

I pled with Master Giko and Great Bhikkhuni Daichi, “I leave my life with you, please help me.” Thus I entered the world of the zen hall. At first, I could not resist the irritation, and I had a hard time trying to control my emotions. Fortunately, there was nobody else. So, I brought my futon mattress into the hall and began zazen as soon as I woke up. When I got too sleepy, I lay down. The Master brought every meal into the zen hall and gave me a proper instruction and examinations. There was nothing but zazen and there was not an inch for anything else to come in.

In two weeks, my stressful illusion calmed down, and I regained regular breathing. But it took ten more years for me to fully recover. A killer hormone damaged my brain. I did not go to the hospital, nor did I use a new medication. That was how I regained myself. Three months later I took a bath and washed my face, when I left the zen hall.

Thereafter, I continued practicing zazen under my severe master for twenty-two years, though there were tiny changes. Today, I am refreshed. The gratitude for my true salvation should be directed to cultivating the way to peace in the world and peace in the mind, education, medical treatment and purification of the mind. The way to purify the world is through the Lord Shakyamuni’s Dharma Gate of Emancipation. This has been my conviction.

By the way, the situation of a broken “heart” can only be understood by a person who has suffered from it. Quite a few of those who commit crimes that frighten society are of this type. Zazen has a great effect, medicinal, educational, and mental ones. We should use it more.

Peace and trust on each other – they are most needed in today’s world. We must give away falsehood and build ourselves up with “sincerity.” Otherwise, a global catastrophe could take place at any time. The world is so shaky now. Only by purifying the mind, can economy, science and technology, and politics be of use to

society. Everything begins with the “mind.” It is too late when the catastrophe has arisen.

Thus, my conviction has grown that I have to disseminate the truth of the Buddha and the patriarchs to the whole world. My original plan in writing this book was not such a trivial work. I wanted to describe the people of the Shakya clan and their institutions, political system, and a detailed account of Kapilavastu, Kosala and Magadha, including their military operations.

I also wanted to give a fuller account of Brahmins and other established religious groups, the features of major cities. So, I shared my intention with a capable lay practitioner. He agreed with me, and was quick to collect information. His name is Yoshinobu Sugimoto. He sent me three boxes of literature and information from the National Library and other sources, including some thick copies of books. I bet it cost him a lot.

I regret I have extended my work too much to be manageable. Everything is incomplete. In the end, this is all that I could do. How I wish to apologize him! With this feeble work, I express my response to his sincerity. I keep stock of all the information he collected, hoping it will contribute to future work.

It is indeed precious that the *dharma* taught by the Buddha has spread widely over this country, immediately after Buddhism was brought to Japan. This is all due to the painful work of the patriarchs. This foundation is very important. I am truly grateful.

What has been fortunate with our country is that we have a Tennō, an emperor. An emperor has no family name. This is a matter of gratitude. Why? That he has no family name means that the status was not gained by bloody power as happened in Europe. How come?

A great person appeared. He was merciful, full of wisdom, courageous and able to make good decisions. Because he was a man of virtue, warm and kind, because he could provide amicable

solutions to problems, useful advice on matters about which he was consulted, everyone placed a deep trust and respect in him. Not only because he was good at waging war.

In time, people began to call him “Tennō (Heavenly King)” indicating their respect. Strangely enough, no one speaks of the significance why he does not have a family name. It is evidence that what he does is not out of a wish for violent power or greedy selfishness.

We had the venerable Prince Shōtoku (literally, sacred virtue). He instituted the Constitution of Seventeen Articles to give shape to the form of the nation. Article One goes, “Harmony should be respected.” How wonderful! We should be aware of this serenity in the philosophy of national foundation, different from other countries.

Subsequently, the prince introduced a system of administrative ranks with a view to clarify duties and responsibilities, and measurement units to set standards, such as length, weight, width, volume as well as awards and punishments. Following a common standard can prevent misunderstanding and conflict. He provided a basic direction to governing the nation.

Two hundred years later, there appeared Great Master Kobo¹⁰⁴ (literally, Spreading the Dharma) and Great Master Denkyo¹⁰⁵ (literally, Disseminating the Teachings) who trained numerous patriarchs. Great Master Kobo opened the first school in the world. He established a specialized college for monks, the noble classes and bureaucrats using Toji Temple which Emperor Saga donated to him. He set up a private school to serve the general public called, “Sōgei-Shuchiin,” an institute of general arts and seeds of wisdom using a part of the residence of Mimori Fujiwara. The school did not last long, but in any case, it was the beginning of schooling. It dates four hundred years earlier than the

¹⁰⁴ Kūkai [空海], 774-835.

¹⁰⁵ Saichō [最澄], 767-822.

University of Oxford.

By the work of such reputable monks, the spirits of mercy and compassion, diligent efforts, respect and hard work swiftly spread nation-wide. “Diligence will win over poverty. Humbleness will win against disaster.” These spirits became part of our national character thanks to the hard work of great people of the past. We are deeply indebted to them. We should not forget them and we should transmit their spirits and accomplishments to future generations.

It was on this ground that the virtues of Buddhism sprouted in this nation and our national character was developed. We are extremely thankful. This self-efficacy, the spiritual backbone of our nation is what we can be proud of. It is our national treasure. Tennō is, for the sake of people all over the world, for the happiness of everyone. That is why Tennō always upholds precepts and prays every day and night so as not to betray the trust and the respect of people.

If there is a sin
Heavenly God, punish me
For people are children I gave birth to

In the summer night
I sit up into the early morning
There are too many I ponder for the world

In the world of four oceans
That all came out of my womb
How can waves make noise?

Meiji Emperor

This is the greatness of Tennō’s mind. Tennō has nothing to do with freedom, lavishness, individual rights and such worldly

notions. Indeed, a mind worthy of respect.

We must avoid total catastrophe by all means. Everything depends on the “mind.” By studying the true intentions of Lord Shakyamuni which traveled three nations and has transmitted the *dharma* for two thousand six hundred years, by nurturing the mind of self-efficacy, by abandoning wars and terrorism, we thus enable all people to live in peace. That is my wish.

I cannot stop praying that true practitioners of the Way will come out sooner. I would be happy if readers understand my wishes, my grumbling and pleas.

Finally, I offer my sincere respect and gratitude to the Greatly Indebted Founder, Lord Shakyamuni, those patriarchs who transmitted the *dharma* to the three countries. My appreciation also goes to the lay practitioner Mr. Yoshinobu Sugimoto who donated resources, Ms. Mariko Nishizawa, the vice-president of Chichi Publishing Co., Ltd., my disciple Shōryu Uesugi who searched for information on numerous occasions. Above all, and at the very end, I deeply appreciate Dr. Keishin Nishimura, Professor Emeritus and former President of Hanazono University who kindly provided words of recommendation and proof read my manuscript.

In recalling my life, I am shameful of having no accomplishments. I deeply regret this.

Kido

I put down my pen reciting “Shorinkutsu Lesson on Bodaishin” at the very end:

Bodaishin-kun (Lesson on Bodaishin)

You, practitioners, have come to this Shorin
and sit in zazen for the Way.

This is “just” the crystallization of the Bodaishin.

Indeed, what is truly valuable is the Bodaishin.

I wish you all, with this Bodaishin,

practice diligently around the clock,

and fully penetrate the state logic cannot reach.

Time flies like an arrow.

Be aware not to distract your mind.

Watch yourself. Watch yourself.

May the merit of this practice benefit all beings in the world

May we and all the people together attain the emancipation

(Parable of Phantom City, Lotus Sutra)

Genko Kido

The fifth patriarch in the lineage of Shorinkutsu

Index of Buddhist Terms

Japanese [日本語]	English	Sanskrit
Bodaishin [菩提心]	the <i>bodhi</i> -mind	<i>bodhi-citta</i>
Bonnō [煩惱]	suffering , attachment,	<i>kleśa</i>
Buppō [仏法], Hō [法]	the teachings of the Buddha; truth, law	<i>dharma</i>
Chi-Jō-I [知情意]	intellect, emotion (feeling), volition (intention)	
En [縁]	<i>conditions</i> ; indirect causes	<i>pratyaya</i>
Engi [縁起]	arising by <i>conditions</i>	
Gedatsu [解脱]	emancipation	<i>vimokṣa</i>
Gedatsu no Hōmon [解脱の法門]	the Dharma Gate of Emancipation	
Go [業]	Action by intention which leads to future consequences	<i>karma</i>
Hannya [般若]	wisdom	<i>prajna</i>
In [因]	<i>causes</i> ; direct causes	<i>hetu</i>
Inga [因果]	<i>cause and effect</i>	<i>hetu-phala</i>
Jihi [慈悲]	mercy and compassion	<i>maitri</i> and <i>karuna</i>
Ka [果]	<i>effects, results</i>	<i>phala</i>
Kenshō [見性], Satori [悟り]	enlightenment	
Kū [空]	<i>emptiness</i>	<i>śūnyatā</i>
Muga [無我]	<i>selflessness</i>	<i>anattā</i>
Mujō [無常]	<i>impermanence</i>	<i>anitya</i>

Nehan [涅槃]	The state of mind in which all the sufferings are extinct.	<i>nirvana</i>
Shikan-taza [只管打坐]	just do zazen (shikan: just; taza: to do zazen)	
Shōshin-tanza [正身端坐]	to sit straight (upright) in the right (zazen) posture	
Tada [只]	just , whole-heartedly	
Zenjō [禪定]	A stable state of mind achieved through thorough meditation	<i>dhyāna</i>