

Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence

by Eihei Dogen zenji

translated by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

and Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi



[excerpted from the forthcoming book Dogen: Zen Writings on the Practice of Realization]

When we wish to practise complete and utter awakening,[fn]Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. [/fn] it is difficult to encounter the right teacher. This is not a matter of such characteristics as whether they are male or female and so on; it only matters that the teacher must be one who is intimately realized and of the fullest attainment. The teacher is neither young nor old. Once, even a wild fox spirit appeared to be a monk of great virtue. A teacher's true form is the marrow of Reality which acts to benefit and guide beings. While using cause and effect,[fn]Karma.[/fn] he is not a "you," "me," or "him" for the true teacher is completely empty.

As soon as someone meets a true teacher, one should cast off one's countless conditions and immediately and vigorously study the Way. We should do zazen and study the Way whether we understand, don't understand, or half understand. In any case, we must practice whole-heartedly, like someone with his or her hair on fire trying to put it out, or like someone standing on only one foot. If this is how we are then we will not be troubled by demons that distort the Teachings. We are the same as the Second Ancestor, who cut off his own arm in order to receive the marrow of Bodhidharma. We are ourselves none other than the teacher who has dropped through the bodymind.

Acquiring the essence of the Teachings and Transmission necessarily depends on sincerity and faith. Sincerity and faith do not come from outside or inside; they arise through understanding the value of the

Teachings and transforming oneself accordingly. They are acquired by releasing the world and making the Way our true home. If one thinks even a little of one's own person, and values it more than the Teachings, one will not attain the Way nor will be able to transmit it.

Understanding the value of the Way is not "one" or "two". There is no "self" that can receive something from some "other", but for the moment let us talk in terms of "one" or "two". If we value the Teachings we can learn from a post, a lantern, all Buddhas, a fox, a demon, a man or a woman. If you receive and maintain this vast practice in your own body, if you have received the essence of all the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors in dropping through the bodymind and then countless bodyminds through countless eons are dedicated to the practice of the Way. Acquiring a mind and body is fairly easy; bunches of them arise just as numberless rice plants, hemp, bamboo and reeds grow throughout the world; but it is rare to encounter the Teachings.

Sakyamuni Buddha said,

When you meet a teacher who presents complete Awakening, do not be concerned with family or nation, appearance, faults, or behaviours. Rather, if you value her wisdom, you should provide offerings every day of a million coins of gold. Offer food fit for the shining beings. Three times daily you should honour him, and never cause him to be troubled by you. If you do this then the Way of Awakening will be maintained. Since I first gave rise to the mind which seeks the Way[fn]Hotsu-bodaishin.[/fn] up until now, this is how I have practiced, and thus I have realized unexcelled Awakening.

Therefore, you should request the Teachings from trees and stones, and you should seek the truth from rice fields and gardens. Once the great shining one Indra honoured a wild fox as his teacher and sought the Teachings from it, calling him "Great Bodhisattva." It does not matter if the teacher is in a higher or lower form through past conditions.[fn]Karma.[/fn]

Nonetheless, deluded fools who have not heard the Buddha Dharma think, "We are important monks with much seniority and will not honour younger monks even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. We have practiced for many years, and will not honour someone who has become a monk late in life, even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. Having been given the title of master, we will not honour someone who does not have a title, just because they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. We are in charge of clerical regulations, and will not honour ordinary monks, even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. We are elder monks, and will not honour laymen and laywomen, even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. We have reached a very high stage in the three virtues and the ten wisdoms,[fn]The process of complete and utter Awakening has been described by the Kegon (Huayen) school as comprised of fifty-three stages. The first ten are stages of faith. The next stages eleven to forty together are known as the three virtues. Stages forty-one to fifty are the ten wisdoms. The last three are qualities of a fully awakened Buddha.[/fn] and will not honour nuns, even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma. We are descendants of the Imperial family, and will not honour those who are not, even if they have received the Transmission of the Dharma." Such foolish people might abandon their homeland and vainly wander the dusty roads of foreign lands yet still will never see the Way of Awake Awareness.

Long ago, Great Master Zhaozhou[fn]Zhaozhou Congshen (Chao-ch'ou Ts'ung-shen, Joshu Jushin), 778-897. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records** Cases 2, 9, 30, 41, 45, 52, 57, 58, 59, 64, 80, 96 and in **Gateless Gate** 1,

7, 11, 14, 19, 31, 37.[/fn] of the Tang Dynasty aroused the mind that seeks the Way. Setting out on a pilgrimage he vowed,

*If I encounter someone wiser than myself I shall ask for instruction from him or her, even if they are only seven years old. If someone is a hundred years old, if they are inferior to me, I shall teach them.[fn]Dogen also mentions this in **Gyoji**.[/fn]*

Someone who can bow and request instruction from a seven year old child although they themselves are much older is a great person and has the heart of the ancient Buddhas. If a nun appears who has attained the Way and received the Dharma, a monk who is seeking the Truth should become her disciple, request the Teachings and prostrate before her. This is what a person who excels in practising the Way of Awakening would do just as one would act to quench a desperate thirst.

Zen Master Zhihxian[fn]Guanqi Zhihxian (Kuan-ch'i Chih-hsien, Kankei Shikan), d. 895.[/fn] was a Great Master who was a disciple of Linji.[fn]Linji Yixuan (Lin-chi I-hsuan, Rinzai Gigen), d.867. Lin-chi was the founding master of the Linji (Rinzai) Lineage. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records** 20 and 32. The **Linji-yulu (Rinzai roku): Sayings and Doings of Lin-chi** is an essential classic which exists in several reasonable translations.[/fn] When Linji saw him coming to his place for the first time, he invited him to stay there, at which Zhihxian assented. Linji said to him, "Stay with me for awhile as my disciple." Thus, Zhihxian became his disciple.

Later, he left Linji and went to see a nun named Moshan.[fn]Moshan Liaoran (Mo-shan Lia-ojan; Massan Ryonen), n.d. See Jiangde Chuandeng-lu 11.[/fn]

Moshan asked, "Where have you come from?"

"I come from Lukou." (Literally, "mouth-of-the road village.")

Moshan said, "Then why don't you come here and close your mouth?"

Zhihxian did not know what to say. He prostrated and became her disciple.

Later, he asked Moshan, "What kind of mountain is Moshan?" [Moshan means "summit mountain."]

Moshan said, "Its peak cannot be seen because it is shrouded in clouds."

Zhihxian then asked, "What kind of person dwells on this mountain?"

Moshan said, "It isn't a man or woman; it is formless."

Zhihxian asked further, "Why do you not then become a man?"

Moshan said, "Since it is not just some wild fox spirit, it doesn't need to become anything."

Zhihxian just bowed. Consequently, he recognized his own capacity to open to Openness[fn]Hotsu-bodaishin.[/fn] and served as her head gardener[fn]Enju.[/fn] for three years.

Later, when he was Abbot of a monastery, he said to the assembly, "When I was with that old guy Linji, I got

half a dipper full; from that old girl Moshan, I received the other half. Both halves came together into the complete Dharma, and even now I am still completely filled with their water of Awakening.”[fn]Dogen also discusses this story in the **Eihei Gen Zenji Shingi** in the essay **Nihin-koku Echizen Eihei-ji Chiji Shingi: Standards for Monks in Administrative Posts in Eihei-ji, Echizen.**[/fn]

Let’s look a little more into this story. Moshan was a Dharma-heir of Gaoan Dayu.[fn]Gaoan Dayu (Kao-an Ta-yu, Koan Daigu), c. 9th C.. See the **Linji Yulu (Rinzai roku)** for further on Dayu.[/fn] The strength of her Awakening was great and she became Zhihjian’s “old girl.” Linji was the Dharma-heir of the great Zen Master Huangbo[fn]Huangbo Xiyun (Huang-po I-ts’un, Obaku Kiyun), c. 9th C.[/fn] and he had great strength through vigorous practice, and he became Zhihjian’s “old guy.” “Old guy” means father and “old girl” means mother. Zhihjian seeking the Teachings from Moshan and prostrations to her are an example of true practice of the Way. He did not hesitate to receive advanced training, and is famed for seeking the Dharma without being stopped by considerations of gender.

The nun Miaoxin[fn]Miao-shan; Myoshin.[/fn] was a disciple of Huiji.[fn]Yangshan Huiji (Yang-shan Hui-chi; Gyozan or Kyozan Ejaku), 807-883. Along with his teacher Guishan (Kuei-shan Ling-yu; Isan Reiyu, 771-853), founded the Guiyang (Kuei-yang; Igyo) school. He received Transmission as well from Danyuan Yingzhen (Tan-yuan Ying-chen; Tangen Oshin), c. 9 C., of ninety-seven mandalas that he integrated into the practice of the Guiyang . Yangshan appears in **Blue Cliff Records: Bi yen lu** Cases 34 and 68 and in **Gateless Gate** 25.[/fn] When Huiji was about to select a monk to be head of external affairs[fn]One of the six administrative offices of a monastery.[/fn] he sought out recommendations from his senior monks. Several opinions were offered and in the end he said, “Even though Xianhuai zi Miaoxin[fn]Hsien-huai tzu Miao-hsin; Myoshin of Waisu.[/fn] is a woman, she has the heart of the superior person and is most suited for the post.” All the monks agreed and Miaoxin was appointed to the office. Huiji had many advanced students and no one was dissatisfied by this. Even though this was not one of the most important posts, we cannot overlook the precedent that she was selected.

Later, when Miaoxin served as head of external affairs, seventeen monks from Szechwan[fn]Szechwan; Shoku.[/fn] who were visiting the great teachers of various areas came to Yangshan[fn]Yangshan. The mountain that her teacher and his monastery were known after.[/fn] to pay their respects to her teacher. Resting in the Guest Hall over-night before climbing the mountain, they were discussing the well-known koan about the wind and the flag.[fn]See **Gateless Gate** Case 29.[/fn] None of the seventeen monks were saying anything that hit the mark. Miaoxin, on the other side of the wall, overheard them talking and commented, “Seventeen blind donkeys wandering the roads using up perfectly good straw sandals without the least regret, never even dreaming of the Way of Awakening.”

Some lay people who were with Miaoxin heard her criticism and passed it on to the seventeen monks. Not only did they not resent her criticism, they realized that they themselves had still not acquired the Way. They immediately straightened their robes, offered incense and prostrations, and renewed their vows.

Miaoxin asked them to come closer. When they stepped closer she said, “The wind doesn’t move, the flag doesn’t move, the mind doesn’t move!” Hearing this, the seventeen monks woke up.

They offered prostrations and became her disciples. Then they returned west to Szechwan without staying to see Yangshan Huiji. Truly, Miaoxin’s like cannot be found among those in “the higher stages of the three virtues and ten wisdoms.” Her actions are those of one who transmits the stream of the Buddhas and

Awakened Ancestors.[fn]Although Miaoxin was not a Dharma-heir of Yangshan, Dogen posthumously honours her with this designation.[/fn]

Therefore, when Abbots and senior disciples lack understanding, monasteries should seek out nuns who have attained the Way to come and instruct there. Elder monks, who have been ordained for a long time, if they have not attained the Way, are of no use.

One who is responsible for teaching practitioners certainly must have the open Eye of Reality. There are many fools who merely maintain appearances and are ridiculous even from a secular point of view let alone in the context of the Dharma. But many people will not honour women or nuns, even if they have received and transmit the Dharma. They do not understand the Dharma since they do not study the Dharma; they are as far removed from the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors as are beasts.

If you yield the bodymind into the Buddha Dharma, the Buddha Dharma will surely reveal itself to you. Even fools amongst humans and shining beings can recognize sincerity, and how could the true Dharma of all the Buddhas not stir sincerity in the heart? Even earth, stones, sand, and pebbles, are stirred to a sincere heart by the subtle and inconceivable Dharma.

Presently in the monasteries and temples of Song China , there are places where nuns can practice the Way, and if it is heard that a nun has realized the Way of Awake Awareness, the emperor issues an imperial edict making her the Master of a monastery. This means that she presents the Teachings in the monastery's Dharma Hall. The monastics who study under her gather and stand in the Dharma Hall to hear her teach the Dharma and there is the exchange of questions and answers. This has been the custom since ancient times.

In other words, one who has received the Dharma is a truly an ancient Buddha, and is not to be encountered as if they were the same person that we knew in the past. When a practitioner meets me (and I have acquired the Dharma), he must meet me entirely anew, on the level of the Awakened Ancestors. When I, who have acquired the Dharma, meet a practitioner, yesterday is forgotten, and I encounter him in the moment, which is just this moment.

Thus, when you enquire of the Dharma from a nun who transmits the Treasury of the Eye of True Reality,[fn]Shobogenzo.[/fn] who has passed the stage of worthy ones and the self-liberated,[fn]Arhats and pratyekabuddhas.[/fn] who has reached the last ten stages of opening to Openness,[fn]The ten bhumis.[/fn] you must honour her and she will naturally receive your homage.

Is there anything about being male as such that makes it noble? The body is sheer Openness, like the sky. Openness is open. The four elements of earth, water, fire, and air are just the four elements. The five aggregates of form, reactivity, symbolization, patterning and consciousness are just the five aggregates, however they might appear; as a woman or a man makes no difference. Women and men can both receive the Dharma. If you are serious about the Buddha Way , you cannot make such distinctions about "male" or "female". This is fundamental to the Way of Awake Awareness.

As well, there are householders in Song China who practice who have not yet "left home" to become monks or nuns. They live in small hermitages together with their spouses. It must be admitted that some people are celibate but are still sick with confusion and struggle. So, however someone lives, if they truly practice, honour their teacher, and seek the Truth, they are no different from those who have left home. Although you might be a woman, although you might be an animal, it is still the same.

If you are an elder monk a hundred years old but still do not see the truth of the Buddha Way , you are not the equal of any man or woman who has attained the Way. Such old monks should not be offered three Great Bows of homage, although they should be shown the courtesy due to a host or an elder. But they should not be especially honoured.

Any one who practices and attains the Buddha Dharma and wakes up is the teacher and guide of the fourfold community,[fn]Monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen. A traditional classification.[/fn] and the compassionate parent of living beings, even if she is a seven-year-old girl. As an example, the dragon[fn]Naga.[/fn] maiden in the Lotus Discourse[fn]The **Saddharma Pundarika sutra**.[/fn] became a Buddha. Honouring and respecting someone like her is the same as honouring all the Buddhas. This is the ancient standard of the Buddha Way . If you cannot understand this, you cannot receive the Transmission the Buddha Way and are to be pitied.

In ancient and even in more recent times there have been women who have ascended the throne in China and Japan . These countries are possessions of the throne, so the people of these are the subjects of the sovereign. The ruler is respected not as a person in particular but for their rank. So it is with nuns; they have been respected from ancient times not as particular people but because of their practice of the Buddha Way .

Nuns who have reached worthiness[fn]Become an arhat.[/fn] have the merits of the four fruitions of the path[fn]Stream entry, once returner, non returner, arhat.[/fn] and are aligned body and mind with these virtues. Who amongst humans or shining ones can surpass the virtues of the four fruitions? All fall far short. Such virtues are lacking in humans and shining ones and so are valued by them. Is there anyone who could not respect one who has aroused the realization of the Awakened Ones and Those Open to Openness[fn]The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.[/fn] and who transmits Complete Reality? Anyone who fails to honour such a one slanders himself because it is his own actual nature that the Awakened realize. Only a fool slanders the Dharma.

In Japan , the daughters of emperors and nobles are like imperial consorts and have sometimes received royal titles. Some of these women have eventually had to become nuns because of circumstances. Monks who hunger for name and gain approach these women and grovel at their feet. Such monks are worse than courtiers and grow old as mere servants of these women. It is pathetic. They were born in a tiny country on the edge of things and so do not understand what is wrong with behaving like this. In India or China these things do not happen, only in our country.

It is very sad. Monks such as these might shave off their hair but they destroy the true Dharma and collapse the possibilities of their own freedom.[fn]Or: "will suffer the penalties of heavy karmic conditions."[/fn] They are not mindful that forms are like hallucinations and mirages and so end up as the toadies of rich women, which is pathetic. They act only on the basis of pride and greed and so how will they ever come to honour that which should be honoured, the Teachings of Complete Awakening? Their dedication to the Way is weak because their determination to seek the Dharma is corrupt. Coveting riches, it does not occur to them that they can never have them because these women already own them.

In seeking the Way, our determination must be greater than any greed. If it is, then even wild grass, trees, and walls present Reality; sky and earth and the ten thousand experiences present the Teachings. You must understand this point. Even if you have encountered a true teacher, if you do not exert and arouse questioning into the Way, you will never be refreshed in the clear water of Reality. You must exert

yourselves.

As well, there are those idiotic men nowadays who think, "Women are only good for sex and food." They do not look into the delusions that give rise to such thoughts. The children of the Buddha must not be this way.

And if you despise women because they are only objects of desire, shouldn't you also detest all men? When you are deluded, men can become objects of lust, women can become objects of lust, and even things neither male nor female can become objects of lust. Things seen in dreams and hallucinations become objects of desire. Reflections in water or the sun's radiance shimmering on the ground can be used as the basis for corrupt conduct. Spirits and demons can become objects of desire. You cannot count all the things that lust can objectify so we say that there are eighty-four thousand of them. So can you then avoid everything?

The Vinaya says, "The three openings of the female and the two openings of the male are all completely forbidden." But if people merely despise and avoid objects of desire, then all men and women will despise each other. In that case there is no possibility of liberation. Look into my argument closely.

Even people outside of the Way might not have spouses, but even if they do not, if they do not open to Reality, they hold wrong views. Amongst the students of the Buddha laymen and laywomen Literally, "two groups." might have husbands or wives, but even if they do, if they are truly students of the Buddha, they do not attempt to flatten heaven and earth and pretend that this is the same as monastic practice.

Some Chinese monks have foolishly vowed, "I shall not even look at a woman for all numberless lives to come." What kind of Dharma is this vow based on? Is it the Dharma of the secular culture? Is it the Buddha Dharma? Some non-Buddhist Dharma? The Dharma of shining beings or demons? What is bad about being a woman? What is good in being a man? Some men are bad and some women are good.

If you want to study the Dharma and end contraction and struggle, forget such things as male and female. As long as all delusions have not yet been clarified, then neither men nor women have clarified them. When all delusions are clarified and True Reality is known, then there is no "male" and "female".

If you vow to never so much as look at a woman for all lifetimes to come, then what of your Great Vow, "All beings without number I vow to liberate"? If you avoid anyone, you are not a Bodhisattva. Is this the Great Compassion of the Buddhas? Such a vow is just the drunken ravings of someone besotted with the booze of the Narrow Path. Neither humans nor shining beings could believe that such a thing could be the Complete Teaching.

Further, if you say that someone is born as a woman because in past lives they have broken the precepts and so you revile women, then since even all of the Bodhisattvas have broken the precepts in past lives, you must therefore revile them as well. If you despise women because you say that they will break the precepts at some future point, then you must despise all Bodhisattvas who have aroused the mind which seeks the Way because to liberate beings there will be situations in which they must break the precepts. In these two sentences I have inserted a few words in order to fill out the background of the points made. If you despise them for these reasons then you must despise and abandon everyone. Who then will there be left in the world to practice and manifest the Buddha Dharma?

Such a vow is only the delusional and pathetic muttering of one without any understanding of the Way of Awake Awareness. If you have made such a vow, you should consider whether all of the Bodhisattvas

including Sakyamuni have ever done the wrong thing. And whether you think that their aspiration to realize the Way was somehow shallower than your own.

None of the Ancestors and masters of this Treasury of Reality, and none of the Bodhisattvas who have manifested in the world since the Buddha's time, has ever made such a vow. Perhaps then you should look into whether or not it is the Buddha Dharma you want to practice and realize. If you make this vow, you will not only refuse to liberate women, but if a woman who has realized the Dharma appears in the world, you will refuse to study under her when she presents the Dharma for humans and shining beings. If you refuse to receive the Teachings from her, then not only are you a failure as a Bodhisattva, you are not even a Buddhist.

Looking at China, we see that there are monks who have refined their practice for many years and who can count every grain of sand in the ocean of the Teachings but who are still flailing in the sea of birth and death. Yet there are women who encounter a teacher, receive his Teachings, practice zazen, and then go on to themselves become teachers of humans and shining beings. For example, there was the old lady who refused to sell rice cakes, preferring to throw them away instead.[fn]This is the encounter between Deshan and the old woman recounted by Dogen in **Shinfukatoku**. This koan also appears as **Gateless Gate** Case 28.[/fn] It is sad, but there are many male monastics who know every character in the Discourses and Commentaries but who do not even dream of the true vision of the Way of Awake Awareness.

In meeting someone like this, consider deeply his potential to open to Openness. If you were to simply avoid him as a despicable character, this is the behaviour of a follower of the Narrow Path. Running from the east to take refuge in the west, you will only find the same kind of person in the west. Even if you do not avoid them but do not attempt to help them clarify their delusions, you will find more such people both near and far. And of course, to refuse to liberate him is just the deepening of delusion.

Japan has such ridiculous things as well. There are many "sacred places" that are prohibited[fn]Kekkai.[/fn] to nuns and other women to enter, even Mahayana practice centres. This custom is sanctified by its ancient origins and people do not realize that it is wrong. Legislators and scholars have failed to be concerned with it let alone to change it. People either call it the official policy of the authorities or an ancestral custom, but actually it is rarely discussed at all. And if you call it into question, people wince like you've stabbed them in the guts.

But who are these "authorities"? Are they wise or virtuous? Are they spirits or demons? Have they attained the three virtues and ten wisdoms, or the stages of "Awakening to perfection" and "Awakening to wonder"?[fn]The last two stages of the Kegon (Huayen) school's schema of fifty-three stages of the Path.[/fn] If the argument is that past customs should never be changed, does this mean that the endless circuit of birth and death is not to be changed?

It goes without saying that our Great Teacher Sakyamuni was completely Awake. He woke up to what all beings must wake up to, he practised what must be practiced, was liberated in the way that all beings must be liberated. Can anyone today even begin to come close to such a one? In the community of his time, there were the four groups consisting of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. There were also the eight groups,[fn]Devas or shining beings, nagas or dragons, yaksas or forest-dwelling spirits, gandharvas or celestial musicians that lived on scents, asuras or violent shining beings, garudas or bird-like creatures, kimnaras or horse-headed beings, maharogas or serpentine creatures.[/fn] the thirty-seven groups, and the eighty-four thousand groups. All of these belonged to the Buddha's realm as newly cultivated fields of the

Buddha's community. In the Buddhist "prohibited areas" these days, however, there are no nuns or other females, and so no eight groups either.

The community that existed at the time that the Thus Come One [fn]Tathagata; Nyorai. An epithet of the Buddha.[/fn] dwelt in the world was perhaps the purest community that could exist. Because this realm is inhabited by shining beings and demons, the teachings within the assemblies of the Way are presented without dividing the world of humans from other worlds, or from the realms of the thousand Buddhas of past, present, and future. If the teaching made any such division, you would know that such a place is not an assembly of the Way.

The four fruitions are the ultimate stages surpassing the Narrow Path or the Vast Path. And there are many nuns who have realized the four fruitions. Whether it is here in the three realms of craving, forms, or of nothingness, or in Fields of Awakening throughout the ten directions, or in any other world, female monastics have reached this stage. Who would obstruct them?

Also, the stage of "Awakening to wonder" is the supreme stage. When the dragon maiden became a Buddha, everything throughout the Total Field was realized completely. Would you make prohibitions to limit her in this world? The virtues of her Awakening exist right now, as the radiance of the Total Field, so even though you might mark out boundaries, they contain and exclude nothing.

Also, would you try to legislate against female shining beings or demons from entering? Neither female shining beings nor demons can put an end to their delusions,[fn]The tradition is that because human beings are so ineffectual at the various states that define the realms of the various other beings, they have to shift from one state to the other state continually. Thus they have the greatest possibility of understanding impermanence and the insubstantiality of states and so the greatest opportunity to wake up from the cycle of becoming is present in birth as a human being.[/fn] and are bound within the cycle of birth and death. Sometimes they break the precepts; sometimes they do not as is the case for human and animal females. Who would try to prohibit shining beings or demons from entering anywhere when they have been where the Buddha himself taught the Dharma, and have practiced under the Buddha? Anyway, could the Buddha Dharma be the real Dharma if some places are considered more real than others? Such beliefs are only the blind delusions of stupid humans who try to fool each other with little tricks.

In the community of the Buddha Way, whether in the Narrow Path or the Vast Path, there are the gatherings of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen and this has been known from ancient times among humans and shining beings. The rank of a nun then surpasses even a great, world ruler [fn]Cakravartin.[/fn] or even that of Sakra, the greatest of the shining beings. None of their accomplishments are greater than hers. So how much less can the royalty and courtiers of some small country on the edge of the world compare with a nun? [fn]Of course this statement was treason and lese majeste.[/fn]

And yet there are areas roped off from nuns but which peasants from the rice fields, woodcutters and so on, not to mention royalty, chief ministers and other officials and retainers can enter freely. If nuns are inferior to rice farmers and every one else, then what does this have to say about achievements supposedly honoured by Buddhists in terms of practice?

But whether we are looking at it from a secular or a Buddhist point of view, nuns should not be banned from places that farmers and others can enter. This tiny country of ours still maintains such disgraceful customs.

It depresses me that although the venerable daughters of the compassionate Buddha have come to this little country, they will find the gates of such places barred to them.

And the people who live in these so-called “sacred territories” are not free of committing the ten wrong actions.[fn]The opposites of the Ten Grave Precepts (Jujuukin-kai).[fn] Living as they do within such an evil place, they should not despise those who do not do evil. Shouldn’t they consider the five worst crimes[fn]Murdering one’s father; murdering one’s mother; murdering one who is realized (an arhat); harming the sangha and causing disunity in it; deliberately drawing the blood of an Awakened One.[fn] to be very grave? Those who live in these “sacred places” are committing these crimes. Evil places such as these should be destroyed, and those who live there should be brought to an understanding of the Buddha’s Teaching. They should enter the territory of the Buddha. In this way they might begin to repay the Buddha for having profited from him with their little businesses.

Those of our predecessors who held such views about women, did they understand what was behind creating such so-called Buddhist territories that yet prohibited women? Where did they inherit this idea from? Who sanctioned[fn]Inka.[fn] them to do this?

All beings in the places dedicated to the Buddha “whether Buddhas, ordinary beings, the earth and sky” are released from bondage to delusion, and are all resolved into the root of wonder, the Dharma of all the Buddhas. All those who enter the realm of the Buddha receive the merits of the Buddha; that is, the merits of an unflinching heart and the stainless merits of body, speech, and mind.

When one area of the Total Field is sacred to the Dharma, everything in the Total Field is sacred to the Dharma. When one is bound to the Dharma, all are bound to the Dharma. There are lands bounded with water, bound with mind, and bound with space.

Understand that this place[fn]Kannondori-in Koshohorin-ji, Dogen’s monastery. [fn] has been inherited through the Transmission from teacher to disciple throughout the ages. Even if one has anointed the body with pure, sweet water, offered homage through reciting the Three Jewels, and so on up through cleansing the boundaries of the mandala and so on, one should still recite the verse:

*The territory of compassion
pervades the Total Field.
Being just as it is,
it is bound to the stainless.*

Did you, our family ancestors of previous generations, understand this is the real meaning of what you called a “sacred area”? Probably even now you would not understand that within a single mandala the Total Field is bound. You should know that you have been drunk on the booze of the Narrow Path and mistook your petty territory for something vast. I hope one day you’ll sober up from your drunken stupor from that booze and no longer transgress against the all-pervading territory “the vast realm” of all the Buddhas.

In liberating all sentient beings and gathering them up, they will honour the merits you have acquired from my teaching to you. Then none can deny that you have received the essence of the Way.

Written on this bright day in March, 1240, at Kannondori-Koshohorin-ji.