Leaving Home
A Collection of Articles on Being a Priest

compiled by Kōkyō Yakai
Leaving Home
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Introduction

This collection of scriptures, precepts, practice instructions, and articles was gathered together as a manual for priests, or those considering priest ordination in the Sōtō Zen tradition. It is a resource for study of the history and background of priest ordination, and for inspiration for present-day priest practice from all different Buddhist traditions.

In San Francisco Zen Center’s Sōtō Zen Priest Ordination Ceremony, called “shukke tokudo” 出家度 (literally “leaving home and attaining liberation/salvation/crossing over”), one becomes a priest, called “sō” 僧 (literally “priest monk/sangha”), or “sōryo” 僧侶 (literally “priest companion”), or “unsui” 雲水 (literally “clouds and water”). This is considered a novice priest monk ordination. SFZC performs the ceremony (text included here) in a very traditional way, just as it is done in modern Japan, as well as during the time of Dōgen Zenji (13th century). (Another variation of the ceremony that might have been performed by Dōgen Zenji, which includes novice monks’ precepts as well as bodhisattva precepts, is also included in this collection.) This version of the ceremony, in turn, is virtually the same as the novice monks’ ordination ceremony in the Chanyuan Qinggui, a Chinese monastic manual from the 12th century (though the Chanyuan Qinggui version includes novice monk precepts instead of bodhisattva precepts). The basic core of this ceremony is the same as the novice monks’ ordination in Buddha’s time (text included here), as well as the ceremony in every Buddhist tradition around the world. In Buddha’s time the ceremony of leaving home was called “pabbajja” (Pali) / “pravrajya” (Sanskrit) (literally “going forth”), at which time one became a novice monk, called “samanera/shramanera” or (literally “small monk contemplative”). Having the head shaved, preceptor constitutes a valid novice ordination. In Buddha’s time and in all Buddhist countries except Japan, a novice (male or female) also receives the ten novice precepts at that time. In Japan, since the time of Saichō (9th century), a novice receives the three pure precepts and the ten bodhisattva precepts instead.

“Full ordination” in Sōtō Zen is now what is called “dempō 傳法 (literally “transmission of Dharma” ) or “shihō 割法 (literally “inheritance of Dharma”). After dempō and “zuissa 傳法”瑞世（literally “auspicious debut, bowing and registering; visitation [to the two Head Monasteries]), one becomes a fully ordained priest called “oshō 和尚 (literally “upajjhaya/upadhyaya/preceptor”). In Buddha’s time (and in all Buddhist countries except Japan, up to the present) the ceremony of full ordination was called “upasampada” (literally “acceptance/admission” [into the Sangha community as a full member]), at which time one became a monk, called “bhikku/bhikshu” (literally “mendicant/beggar”), or nun, called “bhikkhuni/bhikshuni.” (Sometimes he/she was also called “samana/shramana,” literally “monk contemplative”). A motion to accept the new monk followed by three statements with silent agreement by a group of ten bhikkhus, constitutes a valid bhikshu ordination. Although no precepts are recited in the ceremony, a bhikshu agrees to live according to the 227 or 250 patimokkha/pratimoksha (“conducive to liberation”) precepts; a bhikkhuni lives according to 311 or 348 precepts (virtually the same precepts in various different traditions, except for some very minor ones). In Mahayana Buddhist countries (China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Mongolia) since ancient times, priests monks nuns have “officially” accepted all these precepts, but actually only practice according to the most major ones. In Japan, since the time of Saichō (9th century), complete bhikshu/bhikkhuni ordinations became less common, and eventually disappeared completely. In Sōtō Zen full ordination (Dharma transmission), and even more so in zuisse, one is fully “accepted” into the community of priests, and is no longer considered a “novice.” One receives the sixteen bodhisattva precepts again (Three Refuges, three pure precepts, and ten major bodhisattva precepts), but no further monastic precepts.

The biggest difference in Sōtō Zen ceremonies of leaving home as a novice priest as well as full priest ordination, compared to all other Buddhist traditions since the time of Buddha, is that there are no “monastic” precepts involved. There are only the 16 bodhisattva precepts, which are the same for lay people and priests. This radically innovative tradition begun by Saichō in the 9th century, based on the principles of the Mahayana, allowed for the shift in 19th century Japan to permit married priests, without a vow of celibacy. There are several articles here describing the history of Saichō’s wish to use only bodhisattva precepts for priest ordinations, and the much more recent transition to non-celibate priests. As this collection of articles makes clear, these were major changes in the understanding of what it means to be a priest monk. In some ways this shift is similar to Martin Luther’s reform movement of the Christian priesthood, from a celibate order to a married order. Since this is a relatively recent change in the ordained Buddhist Sangha, we have a lot to clarify about the intention, the path, the practice, the role, and the lifestyle of a priest. Furthermore, in modern Japan the priest is a clearly defined role in society, as well as a full-time occupation and “career,” whereas in America this is often not the case. Some articles here address the questions we are now facing regarding the role of Zen Buddhist priests in American society.

This collection is made up of six sections:
1. *Leaving Home in Buddha’s Time*: early sutras and vinaya from the Pali Canon, as well as later Mahayana sutras for those who have left home

2. *Leaving Home in China, Korea, and Vietnam*: how leaving home for bodhisattvas is understood in these Mahayana countries, which have a very different culture than ancient India

3. *Leaving Home in Early Japan*: Saichō’s reasons for replacing monastic precepts with bodhisattva precepts for priest ordination in the 9th century, based on the principles of Mahayana

4. *Leaving Home in Sōtō Zen*: writings of Dōgen Zenji in the 13th century, as well as articles on his understanding of precepts, and on the transition from “monk” to “priest” in the 19th century

5. *Leaving Home in Modern Times*: articles on priest/monk practice by various modern teachers from all Buddhist traditions

6. *Leaving Home for Women*: women in Buddhist history have often had a difficult time receiving full ordination and practicing as priests/nuns, as shown in these articles

Finally, as we translate these Asian terms into English (often using Christian words), here are some definitions from Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary:

- **priest** (from *presbyter*: elder): one authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, especially as a mediatory agent between man and God; clergyman.
- **clergy** (from *clergie*: knowledge, learning): a group ordained to perform pastoral or sacerdotal functions in a church (or religion).
- **cleric**: a member of the clergy.
- **minister** (from *minister*: servant): a clergymen, especially of a Protestant communion.
- **monk** (from *monos*: single, alone): a man who is a member of a religious order and lives in a monastery.
- **nun**: a woman belonging to a religious order, especially one under solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
- **monastic**: monk or nun.
- **novice** (from *novicius*: new, inexperienced): a person admitted to probationary membership in a religious community.

May this study help clarify and inspire the authentic and wholehearted practice of leaving home in Buddha’s Way, as it enters this new land, for the benefit of all living beings.

Kōkyō (Luminous Owl) Henkel
Zenshinji, full moon, March 2009
Leaving Home in Buddha’s Time
Dhammapada
Verses on Being a Monk
Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

9-10
He who, depraved, devoid of truthfulness and self-control,
puts on the ochre robe (kasaya), doesn't deserve the ochre robe.
But he who is free of depravity
endowed with truthfulness and self-control,
well-established in the precepts (sila),
truly deserves the ochre robe.

19-20
If he recites many teachings, but — heedless man — doesn't do what they say,
like a cowherd counting the cattle of others,
he has no share in the contemplative (samana) life.
If he recites next to nothing but follows the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma;
abandoning passion, aversion, delusion;
alert, his mind well-released, not clinging either here or hereafter:
he has his share in the contemplative life.

141-142
Neither nakedness nor matted hair nor mud nor the refusal of food
nor sleeping on the bare ground, nor dust and dirt, nor squatting austerities
cleanses the mortal who's not gone beyond doubt.
If, though adorned, one lives in tune with the chaste life (brahmacharya)
— calmed, tamed, and assured —
having put down the rod (of violence) toward all beings,
he's a contemplative (samana), a brahman, a monk (bhikkhu).

264-265
A shaven head doesn't mean a contemplative (samana).
The liar observing no duties, filled with greed and desire:
what kind of contemplative's he?
But whoever tunes out the dissonance
of his evil qualities — large or small —
in every way by bringing evil to consonance:
he's called a contemplative.

266-267
Begging from others doesn't mean one's a monk (bhikkhu).
As long as one follows householders' ways, one is no monk at all.
But whoever puts aside both merit and evil and,
living the chaste life (brahmacharya), judiciously
goes through the world: he's called a monk.

362
Hands restrained, feet restrained, speech restrained, supremely restrained —
delighting in what is inward, content, centered, alone: he's what they call a monk (bhikkhu).

367
For whom, in name and form in every way,
there's no sense of mine, & who doesn't grieve for what's not:
he's deservedly called a monk (bhikkhu).
Thus have I heard: At one time the Blessed One was living near Savatthi at Jetavana at the monastery of Anathapindika. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying: "Monks." — "Venerable One," they replied. The Blessed One then spoke as follows: "These ten subjects must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth (as a monk). What are these ten?

1. I am no longer living according to worldly aims and values.
2. My very life is sustained through the gifts of others.
3. Am I endeavoring to abandon my selfish habits?
4. Does regret over my conduct (virtue) arise in my mind?
5. Could my spiritual companions find fault with my conduct (virtue)?
6. All that is "mine", cherished and pleasing, will become separated from me.
7. I am the owner of my actions, born of my actions; whatever actions I do, for good or bad, of these I will be the heir.
8. The days and nights are relentlessly passing; how well am I spending my time?
9. Do I delight in solitude (in an "empty dwelling" for meditation)?
10. Has my practice born fruit as freedom and insight so that at the end of my life I need not feel ashamed when questioned by my spiritual companions?

These ten subjects must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth." So spoke the Blessed One, and the monks rejoiced at the Blessed One's words.

"I ask the kinsman of the Sun, the great seer, about seclusion and the state of peace. Seeing in what way is a monk unbound, clinging to nothing in the world?"

"He should put an entire stop to the root of complications and classifications: 'I am the thinker.' He should train, always mindful, to subdue any craving inside him. Whatever truth he may know, within or without, he shouldn't get entrenched in connection with it, for that isn't called Unbinding (nibbana) by the good. He shouldn't, because of it, think himself better, lower, or equal. Touched by contact in various ways, he shouldn't keep conjuring self. Stilled right within, a monk shouldn't seek peace from another, from anything else. For one stilled right within, there's nothing embraced, so how rejected? Nothing that's self, so from whence would there be against-self? As in the middle of the sea it is still, with no waves upwelling, so the monk -- unperturbed, still -- should not swell himself anywhere."

"He whose eyes are open has described the Dhamma he's witnessed, subduing danger. Now tell us, sir, the practice: the code of discipline (vinaya) and concentration (samadhi)."

"One shouldn't be careless with his eyes, should close his ears to village-talk, shouldn't hunger for flavors, or view anything in the world as mine. When touched by contact he shouldn't lament, shouldn't covet anywhere any states of becoming, or tremble at terrors. When gaining food and drink, requisites and cloth, he should not hoard them. Nor should he be upset when receiving nothing. Absorbed, not foot-loose, he should refrain from restlessness, shouldn't be heedless, should live in a quiet abode. Not making much of sleep, ardent, given to wakefulness, he should abandon sloth, deception, laughter, sports, fornication, and all that goes with it; should not practice charms, interpret physical marks, dreams, the stars, animal cries; should not be devoted to practicing medicine or inducing fertility.

A monk shouldn't tremble at blame or grow haughty with praise; should thrust aside selfishness, greed, divisive speech, anger; shouldn't buy or sell or revile anyone anywhere; shouldn't linger in villages, or flatter people in hopes of gains.

A monk shouldn't boast or speak with ulterior motive, shouldn't train in insolence or speak quarrelsome words; shouldn't engage in deception or knowingly cheat; shouldn't despise others for their life, discernment, precepts, or practices. Provoked with many words from contemplatives or ordinary people, he shouldn't respond harshly, for those who retaliate aren't calm.

Knowing this teaching, a monk inquiring should always train in it mindfully. Knowing Unbinding as peace, he shouldn't be heedless of Gotama's message -- for he, the Conqueror unconquered, witnessed the Dhamma, not by hearsay, but directly, himself. So, heedful, you should always train in line with that Blessed One's message," the Blessed One said.
"Monks, these five future dangers, unarisen at present, will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them. Which five?

"There will be, in the course of the future, monks undeveloped in body (kaya), undeveloped in virtue (sila), undeveloped in mind (citta), undeveloped in discernment (pañña). They — being undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment — will give full ordination to others and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment. These too will then be undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. They — being undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment — will give full ordination to still others and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment. These too will then be undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline (vinaya); from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma.

"This, monks, is the first future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment. They — being undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment — will take on others as students and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment. These too will then be undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. They — being undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment — will take on still others as students and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment. These too will then be undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma.

"This, monks, is the second future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. They — being undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment — when giving a talk on higher Dhamma or a talk composed of questions and answers, will fall into dark mental states without being aware of it. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma.

"This, monks, is the third future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. They — being undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment — will not listen when discourses that are words of the Tathagata — deep, profound, transcendent, connected with emptiness — are being recited. They will not lend ear, will not set their hearts on knowing them, will not regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works — the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples — are recited. They will lend ear and set their hearts on knowing them. They will regard these teachings as worth grasping and mastering. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma.

"This, monks, is the fourth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment. They — being undeveloped in body... virtue... mind... discernment — will become elders living in luxury, lethargic, foremost in falling back, shirking the duties of solitude. They will not make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. They will become an example for later generations, who will become luxurious in their living, lethargic, foremost in falling back, shirking the duties of solitude, and who will not make an effort for
the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma.

"This, monks, is the fifth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"These, monks, are the five future dangers, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them."

Anguttara Nikaya 5.80
Anagata-bhayani Sutta
The Discourse on Future Dangers (for the Sangha) (number 4)
Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

"Monks, these five future dangers, unarisen at present, will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them. Which five?

"There will be, in the course of the future, monks desirous of fine robes. They, desirous of fine robes, will neglect the practice of wearing cast-off cloth; will neglect isolated forest and wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, and royal capitals, taking up residence there. For the sake of a robe they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things. This, monks, is the first future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"Furthermore, in the course of the future there will be monks desirous of fine food. They, desirous of fine food, will neglect the practice of going for alms; will neglect isolated forest and wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, and royal capitals, taking up residence there and searching out the tip-top tastes with the tip of the tongue. For the sake of food they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things. This, monks, is the second future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"Furthermore, in the course of the future there will be monks desirous of fine lodgings. They, desirous of fine lodgings, will neglect the practice of living in the wilds; will neglect isolated forest and wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, and royal capitals, taking up residence there. For the sake of lodgings they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things. This, monks, is the third future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"Furthermore, in the course of the future there will be monks who will live in close association with nuns, female probationers, and female novices. As they interact with nuns, female probationers, and female novices, they can be expected either to lead the holy life (brahmacharya) dissatisfied or to fall into one of the grosser offenses, leaving the training, returning to a lower way of life. This, monks, is the fourth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"Furthermore, in the course of the future there will be monks who will live in close association with monastery attendants and novices. As they interact with monastery attendants and novices, they can be expected to live intent on storing up all kinds of possessions and to stake out crops and fields. This, monks, is the fifth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

"These, monks, are the five future dangers, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them."
Then the brahman Sangarava went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "I say, Master Gotama. We brahmans perform sacrifices and get others to perform sacrifices. And whoever performs a sacrifice, whoever gets others to perform a sacrifice, they have all practiced a practice of merit — the business of a sacrifice — [that benefits] countless beings. But whoever, leaving his family, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, and tames his single self, brings his single self into tune, brings his single self to Unbinding: his practice of merit — this business of going forth — is one [that benefits] only one being."

"Very well then, brahman, in that case I will cross-question you. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a Tathagata appears in the world, a worthy one, rightly-self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing and conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, teacher of human and divine beings, awakened, blessed. He says: 'Here! This is the path, this is the practice that, having practiced, I make known the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known and realized it for myself. Come! You, too, practice in such a way that you will remain in the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known and realized it for yourselves.' Thus the Teacher teaches the Dhamma, and others practice, for Suchness. And there are countless hundreds of them, countless thousands of them, countless hundreds of thousands of them. This being the case, is this practice of merit — this business of going-forth — one that benefits countless beings, or only one being?"

"This being the case, Master Gotama, this practice of merit — this business of going-forth — is one that benefits countless beings."

When this was said, Ven. Ananda said to the brahman Sangarava, "Of these two practices, brahman, which appeals to you as the less complicated, the less violent, the more fruitful, and the more rewarding?"

When this was said, the brahman Sangarava said to Ven. Ananda, "Just as with Master Gotama and Master Ananda, I worship them, I praise them [both]."

A second time, Ven. Ananda said to him, "I didn't ask you whom you worship and whom you praise. I ask you, 'Of these two practices, brahman, which appeals to you as the less complicated, the less violent, the more fruitful, and the more rewarding?'"

A second time, the brahman Sangarava said to Ven. Ananda, "Just as with Master Gotama and Master Ananda, I worship them, I praise them [both]."

A third time, Ven. Ananda said to him, "I didn't ask you whom you worship and whom you praise. I ask you, 'Of these two practices, brahman, which appeals to you as the less complicated, the less violent, the more fruitful, & the more rewarding?'"

A third time, the brahman Sangarava said to Ven. Ananda, "Just as with Master Gotama and Master Ananda, I worship them, I praise them [both]."

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, "Being asked a legitimate question by Ananda up to the third time, the brahman Sangarava evades it and does not reply to it. Suppose I were to get him out [of this dilemma]."

So the Blessed One said to the brahman Sangarava, "Brahman, what was the topic of conversation that arose today when the royal court sat gathered in the royal palace?"

"Master Gotama, this was the topic of conversation that arose today when the royal court sat gathered in the royal palace: 'In the past, there were fewer monks but more who, endowed with superior human attainments, displayed the miracle of psychic power. Now there are more monks but fewer who, endowed with superior human attainments, display the miracle of psychic power. This, Master Gotama, was the topic of conversation that arose today when the royal court sat gathered in the royal palace.'"

"Brahman, there are these three miracles. Which three? The miracle of psychic power, the miracle of telepathy, and the miracle of instruction."

"And what is the miracle of psychic power? There is the case where a certain person wields manifold psychic powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds. This is called the miracle of psychic power."

"And what is the miracle of telepathy? There is the case where a certain person reads [another person' thoughts] by means of a sign (vision), [saying,] 'Such is your thinking, here is where your thinking is, thus is your mind.' And however much he may read, that's exactly how it is, and not otherwise."
"Then there is the case where a certain person reads [another person's thoughts], not by means of a sign or vision, but by hearing the voice of human beings, non-human beings, or devas, [saying,] 'Such is your thinking, here is where your thinking is, thus is your mind.' And however much he may read, that's exactly how it is, and not otherwise.

"Then there is the case where a certain person reads [another person's thoughts], not by means of a sign or vision; not by hearing the voice of human beings, non-human beings, or devas; but by hearing the sound of the directed thought and evaluation of a person thinking directed thoughts and evaluating, [saying,] 'Such is your thinking, here is where your thinking is, thus is your mind.' And however much he may read, that's exactly how it is, and not otherwise.

"Then there is the case where a certain person reads [another person's thoughts], not by means of a sign or vision; not by hearing the voice of human beings, non-human beings, or devas; not by hearing the sound of the directed thought and evaluation of a person thinking directed thoughts and evaluating; but by having attained a concentration devoid of directed thought and evaluation, and encompassing the awareness [of the other] with his own awareness, he discerns, 'Given the way the mental fabrications of this venerable person are inclined, the directed thoughts of his mind will immediately think about this.' And however much he may read, that's exactly how it is, and not otherwise.

"This, brahman, is the miracle of telepathy.

"And what is the miracle of instruction? There is the case where a certain person gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.' This is called the miracle of instruction.

"And these are the three miracles.

"Now, brahman, of these three miracles, which one appeals to you as the highest and most sublime?"

"Master Gotama, of these three miracles, the miracle of psychic power where a certain person wields manifold psychic powers... (and) exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds: that is a miracle experienced only by him who does it; it belongs only to him who does it. It seems to me to be of the nature of an illusion.

"As for the miracle where a certain person by means of a sign or vision... by hearing the voice of human beings, non-human beings, or devas... by hearing the sound of the directed thought and evaluation of a person thinking directed thoughts and evaluating, [saying,] 'Such is your thinking, here is where your thinking is, thus is your mind.' ... [or] who by having attained a concentration devoid of directed thought and evaluation, and encompassing the awareness [of the other] with his own awareness, he discerns, 'Given the way the mental fabrications of this venerable person are inclined, the directed thoughts of his mind will immediately think about this.' And however much he may read, that's exactly how it is, and not otherwise: that is a miracle experienced only by him who does it; it belongs only to him who does it. It seems to me to be of the nature of an illusion.

"As for the miracle where a certain person gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that': this is the miracle that, of the three, appeals to me as the highest and most sublime.

"It is amazing, Master Gotama. It is astounding, how well this has been said by Master Gotama. And we hold that Master Gotama is endowed with these three marvels: Master Gotama wields manifold psychic powers... (and) exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds. Having attained a concentration devoid of directed thought and evaluation, and encompassing the awareness [of the other] with his own awareness, Master Gotama discerns, 'Given the way the mental fabrications of this venerable person are inclined, the directed thoughts of his mind will immediately think about this.' Master Gotama gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.'"

"Of course, brahman, you have affronted me with your personal statement, but nevertheless I will respond. Yes, I wield manifold psychic powers... (and) exercise influence with my body even as far as the Brahma worlds; having attained a concentration devoid of directed thought and evaluation, and encompassing the awareness [of the other] with my own awareness, I discern, 'Given the way the mental fabrications of this venerable person are inclined, the directed thoughts of his mind will immediately think about this.' I give instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.'"

"Aside from Master Gotama, is there another monk who is endowed with these three miracles?"

"Brahman, there are not only one hundred other monks... two... three... four... five hundred other monks: the monks who are endowed with these three miracles are many more than that."

"And, Master Gotama, where do those monks now live?"

"In this very same community of monks."

"Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama — through many lines of reasoning — made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."
At one time the Enlightened One, the Blessed One, was staying at Veranja near Naleru's Nimba tree with a great company of five hundred monks… At that time Veranja was short of almsfood, which was difficult to obtain; it was suffering from famine, and food tickets were issued. Nor was it easy to keep oneself going by gathering leftover scraps or by favor. At that time some horse-dealers of Uttarapathaka arrived at the rains-residence of Veranja with five hundred horses. In the horse-rings they prepared measure after measure of steamed grain for the monks. The monks rising early and taking their bowls and robes, entered Veranja for almsfood. But being unable to obtain almsfood, they went into the horse-rings for almsfood. Having brought the measures of steamed grain back to the park, they pounded them and ate them. The Venerable Ananda, having crushed a measure of the steamed grain on a stone, took it to the Blessed One and the Blessed One ate it. Then the Blessed One heard the sound of the mortar. Now tathagatas (sometimes) ask knowing, and knowing (sometimes) do not ask; they ask, knowing the right time (to ask), and they ask, knowing the right time (when not to ask). Tathagatas ask about what belongs to the goal, not about what does not belong to the goal; the breaking of the bridge of the tathagatas is among what does not belong to the goal. The Enlightened Ones, the Blessed Ones, question the monks concerning two matters, either: “Shall we teach Dhamma?” or, “Shall we declare the course of training for the disciples?” Then the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ananda, saying:

“What, Ananda, is this sound of a mortar?”

Then the Venerable Ananda told this matter to the Blessed One. “It is good, Ananda. Ananda, those who come in the future will disdain the boiled rice and the gruel won by you who are true men.”

Then the Venerable Maha-Moggallana came to the Blessed One, and having come up he greeted the Blessed One and sat down to one side. As he was sitting to one side, the Venerable Maha-Moggallana spoke thus to the Blessed One: “At present, Lord, Veranja is short of almsfood, which is difficult to obtain. It is suffering from a famine and food-tickets are being issued. Nor is it easy to keep oneself going by gathering leftover scraps or by favor. Lord, the undersurface of this great earth is fertile, even as a flawless honey-comb. Good it would be, Lord, if I were to invert the earth, so that the monks might enjoy the nutritive essence of the water-plants.”

“But what will you do with those creatures, Moggallana, who are supported by the earth?”

“Lord, I will make one of my hands broad, like the great earth, and I will make those creatures who are supported by the earth pass over it Then with the other hand I will invert the earth.”

“Take care Moggallana, please do not invert the earth, or beings may meet with derangement.”

“It would be good, Lord, if the whole order of monks would go to (the mythical region of) Uttarakuru for alms.”

“Take care, Moggallana, let not the going of the whole order of monks to Uttarakuru for alms seem good to you.”

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Now while the Venerable Sariputta had gone into seclusion for meditation, this thought arose in his mind: “Of which Enlightened Ones, of which Blessed Ones, did the holy life (brahmakariya) not last long? Of which Enlightened Ones, of which Blessed Ones did the holy life last long?” Then the Venerable Sariputta, rising up at evening time from his meditation, came up to the Blessed One and having come up he greeted the Blessed One and sat down to one side. As he was sitting to one side, the Venerable Sariputta spoke thus to the Blessed One: “Now, Lord, as I was in seclusion for meditation, this thought arose in my mind: “Of which Enlightened Ones…did the holy life last long?”

“Sariputta, while Vipassin was a Blessed One, while Sikhin was a Blessed One, and while Vessabhu was a Blessed One the holy life did not last long. Sariputta, while Kakusandha was a Blessed One, while Konagamana was a Blessed One, and while Kassapa was a Blessed One the holy life lasted long.”

“And what, Lord, is the cause, what is the reason why when Vipassin was a Blessed One, when Sikhin was a Blessed One, and when Vessabhu was a Blessed One the holy life did not last long?”

“Sariputta, the Blessed One Vipassin, the Blessed One Sikhin, and the Blessed One Vessabhu were idle in preaching Dhamma in detail to the disciples; they had little of the Suttas (scriptures and vinaya), Geyyas (scriptures with verses), Veyyakaranas (abhidhamma), Gathas (verses), Udanas (inspired utterances), Itivuttakas (sayings), Jatakas (past life stories), Abbhutadhammas (wonderful event stories), Vedallas (miscellaneous teachings); the course of training for the disciples was not made known, the Patimokkha (collection of monastic precepts) was not established. After the disappearance of these
Enlightened Ones, these Blessed Ones, after the disappearance of the disciples enlightened under those Enlightened Ones, those last disciples of various names, of various clans, of various castes, who had gone forth from various families, caused this holy life to rapidly disappear. It is as if, Sariputta, various flowers, loose on a tray, not tied together by a thread, are scattered about, whirled about, and destroyed by the wind. What is the cause? Inasmuch as they are not held together by a thread, even so, Sariputta, at the disappearance of these Enlightened Ones, these Blessed Ones, at the disappearance of the disciples enlightened under these Enlightened Ones, those last disciples of various names, of various clans, of various castes, who had gone forth from various families, caused this holy life to rapidly disappear. But these Blessed Ones were untiring in exhorting the disciples, for they read their minds with their own.

Formerly, Sariputta, the Blessed One Vessabhu, perfected, fully Enlightened One, in a certain awe-inspiring jungle-thicket exhorted and admonished a congregation of a thousand monks, reading their minds with his own, and saying: Apply the mind thus, do not apply the mind thus; pay attention thus, do not pay attention thus; forsake this; having attained this, abide in it. Then, Sariputta, when these thousand monks had been exhorted and admonished by Vessabhu, the Blessed One, perfected, fully Enlightened One, their minds were freed from outflows without grasping. Moreover, Sariputta, whoever not devoid of passion, is in terror of the awe-inspiring jungle-thicket, and enters the jungle-thicket, as a rule his hair stands on end. This, Sariputta, is the cause, this is the reason why, when Vipassin was a Blessed One, when Sikhin was a Blessed One, and when Vessabhu was a Blessed One, the holy life did not last long.

“But what, Lord, is the cause, what is the reason why when Kakusandha was a Blessed One, when Kongamana was a Blessed One, and when Kassapa was a Blessed One the holy life lasted long?”

“Sariputta, the Blessed One Kakusandha, the Blessed One Konagamana, and the Blessed One Kassapa were diligent in preaching Dhamma in detail to the disciples; they had much of the Suttas, Geyyas, Veyyakaranas, Gathas, Udanas, Itivuttakas, Jatakas, Abhudathammas, Vedallas; the course of training for the disciples was made known, the Patimokkha was established. After the disappearance of these Enlightened Ones, these Blessed Ones, at the disappearance of the disciples who were enlightened under these Enlightened Ones, those last disciples of various names, of various clans, of various castes, who had gone forth from various families, established the holy life for a very long time. It is as if, Sariputta, various flowers, loose on a tray, well tied together by a thread, are not scattered about, whirled about, or destroyed by the wind. What is the reason for this? They are well tied together by the thread. Even so, Sariputta, at the disappearance of these Enlightened Ones, these Blessed Ones, at the disappearance of the disciples who were enlightened under these Enlightened Ones, those last disciples of various names, of various clans, of various castes, who had gone forth from various families, established the holy life for a very long time. This, Sariputta, is the cause, this is the reason why when Kakusandha was a Blessed One, when Konagamana was a Blessed One, and when Kassapa was a Blessed One, the holy life lasted long.”

Then the Venerable Sariputta, having risen from his seat, having arranged his outer robe over one shoulder, held out his joined palms in salutation to the Blessed One and said to the Blessed One:

“It is the right time, Lord, it is the right time Sugata (well-farer), for the Blessed One to make known the course of training for the disciples and to establish the Patimokkha, so that this holy life may persist and last long.”

“Wait, Sariputta, wait, Sariputta. The Tathagata will know the right time for that. The teacher does not make known, Sariputta, the course of training for disciples, or establish the Patimokkha until some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha. And as soon, Sariputta, as some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha, then the teacher makes known the course of training for disciples, he establishes the Patimokkha in order to ward off those conditions causing the outflows. Some conditions, Sariputta, causing the outflows do not appear here in the Sangha until the Sangha has attained long standing. And as soon, Sariputta, as the Sangha has attained long standing, then some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha. Hence the teacher makes known the course of training for disciples, he appoints the Patimokkha in order to ward off those conditions causing the outflows. Some conditions, Sariputta, causing the outflows do not appear here in the Sangha until the Sangha has attained full development. And as soon, Sariputta, as the Sangha has attained full development, then some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha. Hence the teacher makes known the course of training for the disciples, he establishes the Patimokkha in order to ward off those conditions causing the outflows. Some conditions, Sariputta, causing the outflows do not appear here in the Sangha until the Sangha has attained chief greatness of gain (wealth). And as soon, Sariputta, as the Sangha has attained chief greatness of gain, then some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha. Hence the teacher makes known the course of training for disciples, he establishes the Patimokkha in order to ward off those conditions causing the outflows. Some conditions, Sariputta, causing the outflows do not appear here in the Sangha until the Sangha has attained great learning. And as soon, Sariputta, as the Sangha has attained great learning, then some conditions causing the outflows appear here in the Sangha. Hence the teacher makes known the course of training for disciples, and establishes the Patimokkha in order to ward off those conditions causing the outflows. Sariputta, the Sangha of monks is devoid of immorality, devoid of danger, stainless, purified, based on the essential. Sariputta, the most backward of these five hundred monks is one who has entered the stream, not liable to be reborn in any state of woe, assured, bound for enlightenment. (Majjhima Nikaya 65: five conditions providing foothold for the outflows: when the Sangha has become large, possesses great material gains, possesses great status, possesses a large body of learning, and is long-standing)
Then the Blessed One, having remained at Veranja for as long as he found suitable, returning by Soreyya, Sankassa, and Kannakujja, came to Payagapatiththa (modern Allahabad), and having come to Payagapatiththa and crossing the river Ganges, he went down to Varanasi. And the Blessed One having remained at Varanasi for as long as he found suitable, set out for Vesali for alms. In due course, wandering for alms, he arrived at Vesali. The Blessed One stayed there at Vesali in the Gabled Hall in the Great Wood.

Now at that time not far from Vesali was a village called Kalandaka. The son of a Kalandaka, the great merchant there, was named Sudinna, the Kalandaka... Sudinna the Kalandaka received the pabbajja ordination in the presence of the Blessed One, and he received the upasampada ordination. And not long afterwards the Venerable Sudinna went about with these qualities: he was a dweller in the jungle, a beggar for alms, one who wore rags taken from the dust-heap, one who went on continuous alms-begging from house to house; and he dwelt depending on a certain village of the Vajjians.

At that time the Vajjians were short of almsfood, which was difficult to obtain; they were suffering from a famine, and food-tickets were issued. Nor was it easy to keep oneself going by gathering leftover scraps or by favor. Now the Venerable Sudinna thought to himself: “At present the Vajjians are short of almsfood, which is difficult to obtain; they are suffering from a famine, and food tickets are being issued. It is not easy to keep oneself going by gathering leftover scraps or by favor. But in Vesali my relations are rich, with great resources and possessions, having immense (supplies of) gold and silver, immense means, and immense resources in corn. What if I should dwell supported by my family? Relations will give gifts for my support, they will do meritorious actions, and the monks will profit and I will not go short on almsfood.”

The mother and the father of the Venerable Sudinna waited on him and satisfied him with abundant food, both hard and soft. Then when the Venerable Sudinna had eaten and had finished his meal his mother said to him: “This family, dear Sudinna, is rich, of great resources and possessions, having immense (supplies of) gold and silver, immense means, and immense resources in corn. It is possible, dear Sudinna, while leading the low life of a layman, both to enjoy riches and to do meritorious actions. Come, dear Sudinna, enjoy riches while leading the low life of a layman and do meritorious actions.”

“Mother, I am not able to do so, I cannot. Delighted, I lead the good life.”

A second time and a third time the mother of the Venerable Sudinna spoke to him thus: “This family, dear Sudinna, is rich, of great resources and possessions, having immense (supplies of) gold and silver, immense means, and immense resources in corn. For this reason, dear Sudinna, beget offspring; do not let the Licchavis take over our heirless property.”

“It is possible for me to do this, mother,” he said.

“Where, dear Sudinna, are you staying at present?” she said.

“In the Great Woods, mother,” he said. Then the Venerable Sudinna, rising up from his seat, departed. Then the mother of the Venerable Sudinna together with his former wife went up to the Venerable Sudinna in the Great Woods, and having come up she spoke thus to him: “This family, dear Sudinna, is rich, of great resources and possessions, having immense (supplies of) gold and silver, immense means, and immense resources in corn. For this reason, dear Sudinna, beget offspring; do not let the Licchavis take over our heirless property.”

“It is possible for me to do this, mother,” he said, and taking his former wife by the arm and plunging into the Great Woods, and seeing no danger, since the course of training had not been made known, three times he induced his former wife to indulge in sexual intercourse with him. As a result she conceived. The earth-devas made this sound heard:

“Good sirs, the company of monks is without immorality, it is not beset by danger, but immorality is evoked by Sudinna, the Kalandaka.”… Thus in this very moment, in this very second, the sound went forth as far as the Brahma-world. Then the womb of the Venerable Sudinna’s former wife came to maturity, and she gave birth to a son. Now the friends of the Venerable Sudinna called this boy Bijaka; they called the former wife of the Venerable Sudinna, Bijaka’s mother; they called the womb of the Venerable Sudinna’s former wife came to maturity, and she gave birth to a son. Now the friends of the Venerable Sudinna, Bijaka’s father. At (some) later time, both (Bijaka and his mother) having gone forth from home into homelessness, realised arahantship.

Then the Venerable Sudinna was remorseful and conscience-stricken, and said: “It is surely not a gain for me, I have surely ill-gained. I have surely not well-gained, that having gone forth under this Dhamma and Discipline which are well preached, I was not able for all my life to lead the holy life (brahmacariya), complete and purified.” And because of his remorse and bad conscience, he became haggard, wretched, of a bad color, yellowish, the veins showing all over his body, melancholy, of sluggish mind, miserable, depressed, repentant, weighed down with grief. Then the monks who were the friends of the Venerable Sudinna...having rebuked the Venerable Sudinna in various ways, told this matter to the Blessed One. And the Blessed One for this reason, in this connection, having had the company of monks convened, questioned the Venerable Sudinna, saying:
“Is it true, as is said, Sudinna, that you indulged in sexual intercourse with your former wife?”

“It is true, Lord,” he said.

The Enlightened One, the Blessed One, rebuked him, saying, “It is not fit, foolish man, it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is unworthy of a samana (monk), it is not suitable, it ought not to be done. How is it that you, foolish man, having gone forth under this Dhamma and Discipline which are well taught, are not able for your lifetime to lead the holy life which is complete and wholly purified? How can you, foolish man, while Dhamma is taught by me in various ways for the sake of passionlessness, strive after passion? How can you, foolish man, while Dhamma is taught by me for the sake of being without fetters, strive after being bound? How can you, foolish man, while Dhamma is taught by me for the sake of being without grasping, strive after grasping? Is not, foolish man, Dhamma taught by me in many ways for the waning of passion, is not Dhamma taught for the subduing of conceit, for the restraint of desire, for the abandonment of clinging, for the severing of the round of becoming, for the destruction of craving, for passionlessness, for stopping, for unbinding? Has not, foolish man, the abandonment of sense pleasures been declared in many ways by me, full understanding of sense perceptions been declared, restraint in clinging to sense pleasures been declared, elimination of sensual thoughts been declared, allaying of the fever of sense pleasures been declared? It would be better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter the mouth of a terrible and poisonous snake, than that it should enter a woman. It would be better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter a charcoal pit, burning, ablaze, afire, than that it should enter a woman. What is the cause of this? For that reason, foolish man, you would go to death, or to suffering like death, but not on that account would you pass at the breaking up of the body after death, to waste, a bad destination, the abyss, hell. But for this reason, foolish man, at the breaking up of the body after death, you would pass to waste, a bad destination, the abyss, hell. Thus for this very deed, foolish man, you will enter upon what is not true Dhamma, upon village dhamma, upon a low dhamma, upon wickedness, upon secrecy, upon that which is obtained in couples. Foolish man, you are the first-doer of many wrong things. It is not, foolish man, for the benefit of unbelievers, not for the increase in the number of believers, but, foolish man, it is to the detriment of both unbelievers and believers, and it causes wavering in some believers.”

Then the Blessed One, having rebuked the Venerable Sudinna in various ways, and having spoken in dispraise of his difficulty in supporting and maintaining himself, of his arrogance, of his lack of contentment, of his clinging, and of his indolence; and having spoken in various ways of the ease of supporting and maintaining oneself, of desiring little, of contentment, of abandoning unwholesomeness, of being scrupulous, of what is gracious, of decreasing defilements, and of the putting forth of energy, and having given a suitable and befitting talk on Dhamma to the monks, he addressed the monks, saying:

“On account of this (offense), monks, I will make known the course of training for monks, founded on ten reasons: for the excellence of the Sangha, for the comfort (peace) of the Sangha, for the restraint of the shameless, for the ease of well-behaved monks, for the restraint of the outflows here and now, for the prevention of the outflows in the next life, for the benefit of non-believers, for the increase in the number of believers, for establishing the true Dhamma, and for fostering discipline. Thus, monks, this course of training should be set forth:

Whatever monk should indulge in sexual intercourse is one who is defeated (parajika); he is no longer in communion (with the Sangha).”

And thus this course of training was set forth by the Blessed One.
The Pratimoksha Sutra of the Dharmagupta School  
(Ssu-Fen Lu / Four-Part Vinaya - Part 1)  
250 bhikshu precepts currently held in China, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Tripitaka Master Buddhayashas during the Later Chin Dynasty, 405 C.E.  
(Translated into English by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Heng-ching Shih, and Karma Lekshe Tsomo, and compiled by Kokyo Henkel)

Homage to all the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha. I will now proclaim the precepts of the Vinaya so that the true Dharma will last forever. The precepts are as limitless as the ocean, like jewels that can be sought endlessly. In order to protect the sacred treasure of the Dharma, the assembly is gathered to listen to me. In order to eliminate the four parajika, the thirteen sanghavashesha, and the thirty obstructing nihsargika-payantika, the assembly is gathered to listen to me. Vipashyin, Shikhin, the sacred treasure of the Dharma, the assembly is gathered to listen to me. In order to eliminate the four parajika, the thirteen

The Four Parajika-dharma (defeat)

Venerable Ones, these are the four parajika from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.

1. If a bhikshu engages in the impure conduct of sexual intercourse, even with an animal, then that bhikshu commits a parajika and is expelled (from the order).
2. Suppose a bhikshu, in an inhabited place or a secluded area, with the intention of taking what is not given, takes something, and he is arrested by the king or a high official of the king, or tied up, or executed, or deported (with these words:) "You are a thief. You are a fool. You are ignorant." If a bhikshu takes what is not given, in such a way, then that bhikshu commits a parajika and is expelled.
3. If a bhikshu deliberately kills a human being with his own hands, gives a knife to someone (for that purpose), praises death, admires death, or exhorts death, then that bhikshu commits a parajika and is expelled.
4. Suppose a bhikshu, who is actually ignorant, praises himself saying, "I have achieved superhuman faculties," "I have penetrated the sages' wisdom and the supreme Dharma," "I know this. I see that," and at a later time, whether questioned or not, wishing to purify himself, says, "Monks, I really did not know or see what I said I did. It was deception and lies." Unless that bhikshu has overly esteemed himself, that bhikshu commits a parajika and is expelled.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the four parajika. If a bhikshu has committed any of these parajika, he is no longer allowed to live with the other bhikshus. He will be what he was before (a layperson). A bhikshu who commits a parajika may not stay
with the other bhikshus. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones are you pure in this regard? (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you are silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Thirteen Sanghavashesha-dharma (formal meeting)
Venerable Ones, these are the thirteen sanghavashesha-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.
1. Intentionally causing oneself to emit semen, or getting someone else to cause one to emit semen - except during a dream - is a sanghavashesha.
2. Lustful bodily contact with a woman is a sanghavashesha.
3. Making a lustful remark to a woman about her genitals or about performing sexual intercourse is a sanghavashesha.
4. Telling a woman that she would benefit from having sexual intercourse with oneself is a sanghavashesha.
5. Acting as a go-between to arrange a marriage, an affair, or a date between a man and a woman not married to each other is a sanghavashesha.
6. Building a plastered hut - or having it built - without a sponsor, destined for one's own use, without having obtained the Sangha's approval, is a sanghavashesha. Building a plastered hut - or having it built - without a sponsor, destined for one's own use, exceeding the standard measurements, three by one and three-quarters meters, is also a sanghavashesha.
7. Building a hut with a sponsor - or having it built - destined for one's own use, without having obtained the Sangha's approval, is a sanghavashesha.
8. Making an unfounded charge to a bhikshu that he has committed a parajika offense, in hopes of having him disrobed, is a sanghavashesha.
9. Distorting the evidence while accusing a bhikshu of having committed a parajika offense, in hopes of having him disrobed, is a sanghavashesha.
10. To persist in one's attempts at a schism, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Sangha, is a sanghavashesha.
11. To persist in supporting a potential schismatic, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Sangha, is a sanghavashesha.
12. To persist in criticizing an act of banishment performed against oneself, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Sangha, is a sanghavashesha.
13. To persist in being difficult to admonish, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in the Sangha, is a sanghavashesha.
Venerable Ones, I have recited the thirteen sanghavasesha-dharma: nine which become faults at once and four which become faults after the third rebuke. If a bhikshu commits any of these offenses, he must perform the manatva (a period of repentance and suspension of privileges) among the Sangha. Once the manatva has been performed, the absolution (a formal act of the Sangha) remains to be done. The bhikshu is to be absolved before a Sangha of twenty people. If there is even one person less than twenty and the absolution is performed, that bhikshu cannot be absolved, and the bhikshus are at fault. This is the procedure. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Two Aniyata-dharma (undetermined)
Venerable Ones, these are the two aniyata-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.
1. When a trustworthy female lay follower accuses a bhikshu of having committed a parajika, sanghavashesa, or payantika offense while sitting alone with a woman in a private, secluded place, the Sangha should investigate the charge and deal with the bhikshu in accordance with whatever he admits to having done.
2. When a trustworthy female lay follower accuses a bhikshu of having committed a sanghavashesha or payantika offense while sitting alone with a woman in a private place, the Sangha should investigate the charge and deal with the bhikshu in accordance with whatever he admits to having done.
Venerable Ones, I have recited the two aniyata-dharma. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Thirty Nihsargika-payantika-dharma (forfeiture and confession)
Venerable Ones, these are the thirty nihsargika-payantika-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.
1. Keeping a piece of robe-cloth for more than ten days without determining it for use or placing it under dual ownership - except when the end-of-varsha or kathina privileges are in effect - is a nihsargika-payantika.
2. Being in a separate zone from any of one's three robes at dawn - except when the end-of-varsha or kathina privileges are in effect, or one has received formal authorization from the Sangha - is a nihsargika-payantika.
3. Keeping out-of-season cloth for more than thirty days when it is not enough to make a requisite and one has expectation for more - except when the end-of-varsha or kathina privileges are in effect - is a nihsargika-payantika.
4. Accepting robe-cloth from an unrelated bhikshuni without giving her anything in exchange is a nihsargika-payantika.
5. Getting an unrelated bhikshuni to wash, dye, or beat a robe that has been used at least once is a nihsargika-payantika.
6. Asking for and receiving robe-cloth from an unrelated lay person, except when one’s robes have been stolen or destroyed, is a nihsargika-payantika.

7. Asking for and receiving excess robe-cloth from unrelated lay people when one’s robes have been stolen or destroyed is a nihsargika-payantika.

8. When a lay person who is not a relative is planning to get a robe for one, but has yet to ask what kind of robe one wants: Receiving the robe after making a request that would raise its cost is a nihsargika-payantika.

9. When two or more lay people who are not one's relatives are planning to get separate robes for one, but have yet to ask what kind of robe one wants: Receiving a robe from them after asking them to pool their funds to get one robe - out of a desire for something fine - is a nihsargika-payantika.

10. When a fund has been set up by a steward indicated by a bhikshu: Obtaining an article from the fund as a result of having prompted the steward more than the allowable number of times is a nihsargika-payantika.

11. Making a felt blanket/rug with silk mixed in it for one's own use - or having it made - is a nihsargika-payantika.

12. Making a felt blanket/rug entirely of black wool for one's own use - or having it made - is a nihsargika-payantika.

13. Making a felt blanket/rug that is more than one-half black wool for one's own use - or having it made - is a nihsargika-payantika.

14. Unless one has received authorization to do so from the Sangha, making a felt blanket/rug for one's own use - or having it made - less than six years after one's last one was made is a nihsargika-payantika.

15. Making a felt sitting rug (nishidana) for one's own use - or having it made - without incorporating a quarter-meter piece of old felt is a nihsargika-payantika.

16. Carrying wool that has not been made into cloth or yarn for more than thirty miles is a nihsargika-payantika.

17. Getting an unrelated bhikshuni to wash, dye, or card wool that has not been made into cloth or yarn is a nihsargika-payantika.

18. Accepting gold or money, having someone else accept it, or consenting to its being placed down as a gift for oneself is a nihsargika-payantika.

19. Obtaining gold or money through trade is a nihsargika-payantika.

20. Engaging in trade with anyone except other bhikshus, bhikshunis, or novices is a nihsargika-payantika.

21. Keeping an alms bowl for more than ten days without determining it for use or placing it under dual ownership is a nihsargika-payantika.

22. Asking for a new alms bowl when one's current bowl is not beyond repair is a nihsargika-payantika.

23. Taking thread that one has asked for improperly and getting weavers to weave cloth from it - when they are unrelated and have not made a previous offer to weave - is a nihsargika-payantika.

24. When donors who are not relatives - and have not invited one to ask - have arranged for weavers to weave robe-cloth intended for one: Receiving the cloth after getting the weavers to increase the amount of thread used in it is a nihsargika-payantika.

25. Having given another bhikshu a robe on a condition and then - angry and displeased - snatching it back or having it snatched back is a nihsargika-payantika.

26. Keeping any of the five tonics - ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, or sugar/molasses - for more than seven days, unless one determines to use them only externally, is a nihsargika-payantika.

27. Seeking and receiving a rains-bathing cloth before the fourth month of the hot season, or using a rains-bathing cloth before the last two weeks of the fourth month of the hot season, is a nihsargika-payantika.

28. Keeping robe-cloth offered in urgency past the end of the robe season after having accepted it during the last eleven days of the Rains Retreat is a nihsargika-payantika.

29. When one is living in a dangerous wilderness abode during the month after the full moon after the Rains Retreat and has left one of one's robes in the village where one normally goes for alms: Being away from the abode and the village for more than six nights at a stretch - except when authorized by the Sangha - is a nihsargika-payantika.

30. Persuading a donor to give to oneself a gift that he or she had planned to give to the Sangha - when one knows that it was intended for the Sangha - is a nihsargika-payantika.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the thirty nihsargika-payantika-dharma. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Ninety Payantika-dharma (confession)
Venerable Ones, these are the ninety payantika-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.
1. The intentional effort to misrepresent the truth to another individual is a payantika.
2. An insult made with malicious intent to another bhikshu is a payantika.
3. Tale-bearing among bhikshus, in hopes of winning favor or causing a rift, is a payantika.
4. Lying down at the same time in the same lodging with a woman is a payantika.
5. Lying down at the same time in the same lodging with a novice or layman for more than three nights running is a payantika.
6. To train a novice or lay person to recite passages of Dharma by rote is a payantika.
7. Telling an unordained person of another bhikshu's serious offense - unless one is authorized by the Sangha to do so - is a payantika.
8. Telling an unordained person of one's actual superior human attainments is a payantika.
9. Teaching more than six sentences of Dharma to a woman, except in response to a question, is a payantika.
10. Digging soil or commanding that it be dug is a payantika.
11. Intentionally cutting, burning, or killing a living plant is a payantika.
12. Persistently replying evasively or keeping silent in order to conceal one's own offenses when being questioned in a meeting of the Sangha - after a formal charge of evasiveness or uncooperativeness has been brought against one - is a payantika.
13. Criticizing a Sangha official who is innocent of prejudice within earshot of another bhikshu is a payantika.
14. When one has set a bed, bench, mattress, or stool belonging to the Sangha out in the open: Leaving its immediate vicinity without putting it away or arranging to have it put away is a payantika.
15. When one has spread bedding out in a dwelling belonging to the Sangha: Departing from the monastery without putting it away or arranging to have it put away is a payantika.
16. Encroaching on another bhikshu's sleeping or sitting place in a dwelling belonging to the Sangha, with the sole purpose of making him uncomfortable and forcing him to leave, is a payantika.
17. Causing a bhikshu to be evicted from a dwelling belonging to the Sangha - when one's primary motive is anger - is a payantika.
18. Sitting or lying down on a bed or bench with detachable legs on an unplanked loft in a dwelling belonging to the Sangha is a payantika.
19. Pouring water that one knows to contain living beings - or having it poured - on grass or clay is a payantika. Pouring anything that would kill the beings into such water - or having it poured - is also a payantika.
20. When a bhikshu is building or repairing a large dwelling for his own use, using resources donated by another, he may not reinforce the window or door frames with more than three layers of roofing material or plaster. To exceed this is a payantika.
21. Exhorting a bhikshuni about the eight vows of respect - except when one has been authorized to do so by the Sangha - is a payantika.
22. Exhorting bhikshunis on any topic at all after sunset - except when they request it - is a payantika.
23. Saying that a properly authorized bhikshu exhorts the bhikshunis for the sake of personal gain - when in fact it is not the case - is a payantika.
24. Giving robe-cloth to an unrelated bhikshuni without receiving anything in exchange is a payantika.
25. Sewing a robe - or having one sewn - for an unrelated bhikshuni is a payantika.
26. Sitting or lying down with a bhikshuni in a place out of sight and out of hearing with no one else present is a payantika.
27. Travelling by arrangement with a bhikshuni from one village to another - except when the road is risky or there are other dangers - is a payantika.
28. Travelling by arrangement with a bhikshuni upriver or downriver in the same boat - except when crossing a river - is a payantika.
29. Eating any of the five staple foods that a lay person has offered as the result of a bhikshuni's prompting - unless the lay person was already planning to offer the food before her prompting - is a payantika.
30. Travelling by arrangement with a woman from one village to another is a payantika.
31. Eating food obtained from the same public alms center two days running, unless one is too ill to leave the center, is a payantika.
32. Eating a meal to which four or more individual bhikshus have been specifically invited - except on special occasions - is a payantika.
33. Eating a meal before going to another meal to which one was invited, or accepting an invitation to one meal and eating elsewhere instead - except when one is ill or at the time of giving cloth or making robes - is a payantika.
34. Accepting more than three bowlfuls of food that the donors prepared for their own use or as presents or provisions for a journey is a payantika.
35. Eating staple or non-staple food that is not left-over, after having earlier in the day finished a meal during which one turned down an offer to eat further staple food, is a payantika.
36. Deliberately tricking another bhikshu into breaking the preceding rule, in hopes of finding fault with him, is a payantika.
37. Eating staple or non-staple food in the period after noon until the next dawn is a payantika.
38. Travelling by arrangement with a bhikshuni upriver or downriver in the same boat - except when crossing a river - is a payantika.
39. Eating food that a bhikshu - oneself or another - formally received on a previous day is a payantika.
40. Eating finer foods, after having asked for them for one's own sake - except when ill - is a payantika.
41. Handing food or medicine to a mendicant ordained outside of Buddhism is a payantika.
42. Visiting lay families - without having informed an available bhikshu - before or after a meal to which one has been invited - except during the robe season or any time one is making a robe - is a payantika.
43. To sit down intruding on a man and a woman in their private quarters - when one or both are sexually aroused, and when another bhikshu is not present - is a payantika.
44. Sitting or lying down with a woman or women in a private secluded place with no other man present is a payantika.
45. Sitting or lying down with a woman in an unsecluded but private place is a payantika.
46. When on almsround with another bhikshu: Sending him back so that he won't witness any misconduct one is planning to indulge in is a payantika.
47. When a supporter has made an offer to supply medicines to the Sangha: Asking him or her for medicine outside the terms of the offer when one is not ill, or for medicine to use for a non-medicinal purpose, is a payantika.
48. Watching a field army - or similar large military force - on active duty, unless there is a suitable reason, is a payantika.
49. Staying more than three consecutive nights with an army on active duty, unless one has a suitable reason to be there, is a payantika.
50. Going to a battlefield, a roll call, an array of troops in battle formation, or to see a review of the battle units while one is staying with an army is a payantika.
51. Taking an intoxicant, regardless of whether one is aware or not that it is an intoxicant, is a payantika.
52. Jumping and swimming in the water for fun is a payantika.
53. Tickling another bhikshu is a payantika.
54. Saying something as a ploy to excuse oneself from training under a training rule when being admonished by another bhikshu for a breach of the rule is a payantika.
55. Attempting to frighten another bhikshu is a payantika.
56. Bathing more frequently than once every two weeks when residing in the middle Ganges Valley, except on certain occasions, is a payantika.
57. Lighting a fire to warm oneself - or having it lit - when one does not need the warmth for one's health is a payantika.
58. Hiding another bhikshu's bowl, robe, sitting cloth, needle case, or belt - or having it hid - either as a joke or with the purpose of annoying him, is a payantika.
59. Making use of cloth or a bowl stored under shared ownership - unless the shared ownership has been rescinded or one is taking the item on trust - is a payantika.
60. Wearing an unmarked robe is a payantika.
61. Deliberately killing an animal - or having it killed - is a payantika.
62. Using water, knowing that it contains living beings that would die from one's use, is a payantika.
63. Agitating to re-open an issue, knowing that it was properly dealt with, is a payantika.
64. Not informing other bhikshus of a serious offense that one knows another bhikshu has committed - out of a desire to protect him either from having to undergo the penalty or from the jeering remarks of other bhikshus - is a payantika.
65. Acting as the preceptor in the ordination of a person one knows to be less than twenty years old is a payantika.
66. Complaining about a formal act of the Sangha to which one gave one's consent - if one knows that the act was carried out in accordance with the rule - is a payantika.
67. Traveling by arrangement with a group of thieves from one village to another - knowing that they are thieves - is a payantika.
68. Refusing - after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Sangha - to give up the wrong view that there is nothing wrong in intentionally transgressing the Buddha's ordinances is a payantika.
69. Consorting, joining in communion, or lying down under the same roof with a bhikshu who has been suspended and not been restored - knowing that such is the case - is a payantika.
70. Supporting, receiving services from, consorting, or lying under the same roof with an expelled novice - knowing that he has been expelled - is a payantika.
71. Speaking or acting disrespectfully when being admonished by another bhikshu for a breach of the training rules is a payantika.
72. Criticizing the discipline in the presence of another bhikshu, in hopes of preventing its study, is a payantika.
73. Using half-truths to deceive others into believing that one is ignorant of the rules in the Pratimoksha, after one has already heard the Pratimoksha in full three times, and a formal act exposing one's deceit has been brought against one, is a payantika.
74. After participating in a formal act of the Sangha giving robe-cloth to a Sangha official: Complaining that the Sangha acted out of favoritism is a payantika.
75. Getting up and leaving a meeting of the Sangha in the midst of a valid formal act - without having first given one's consent to the act and with the intention of invalidating it - is a payantika.
76. Saying to another bhikshu that he may have broken a rule unknowingly, simply for the purpose of causing him anxiety, is a payantika.
77. Eavesdropping on bhikshus involved in an argument over an issue - with the intention of using what they say against them - is a payantika.
78. Giving a blow to another bhikshu when motivated by anger is a payantika.
79. Making a threatening gesture against another bhikshu when motivated by anger is a payantika.
80. Making an unfounded charge to another bhikshu - or getting someone else to make the charge to him - that he is guilty of a sanghabhavesha offense is a payantika.
81. Entering a king's sleeping chamber unannounced, when both the king and queen are in the chamber, is a payantika.
82. Picking up a valuable, or having it picked up, with the intent of putting it in safe keeping for the owner - except when one finds it in a monastery or in a dwelling one is visiting - is a payantika.
83. Entering a village, town, or city during the period after noon until the following dawn, without having taken leave of an available bhikshu - unless there is an emergency - is a payantika.
84. Acquiring a bed or bench with legs longer than sixteen centimeters after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one cut the legs down before confessing the offense.
85. Acquiring a bed or bench stuffed with cotton down after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one remove the stuffing before confessing the offense.
86. Acquiring a needle box made of bone, ivory, or horn after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one break the box before confessing the offense.
87. Acquiring an overly large sitting cloth (larger than fifty centimeters by thirty-eight centimeters with a twenty-five centimeter border) after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one cut the cloth down to size before confessing the offense.
88. Acquiring an overly large skin-eruption covering cloth after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one cut the cloth down to size before confessing the offense.
89. Acquiring an overly large rains-bathing cloth after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one cut the cloth down to size before confessing the offense.
90. Acquiring an overly large robe (larger than two and a quarter meters by one and a half meters) after making it - or having it made - for one's own use is a payantika requiring that one cut the robe down to size before confessing the offense.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the ninety payantika-dharma. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Four Pratideshaniya-dharma (acknowledgement)
Venerable Ones, these are the four pratideshaniya-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra which are to be recited every half-month.
1. Eating staple or non-staple food, after having accepted it from the hand of an unrelated bhikshuni in a village area, is a pratideshaniya.
2. Eating staple food accepted at a meal to which one has been invited and where a bhikshuni has given directions, based on favoritism, as to which bhikshu should get which food, and none of the bhikshus have dismissed her, is a pratideshaniya.
3. Eating staple or non-staple food, after accepting it - when one is neither ill nor invited - at the home of a family formally designated as "in training," (faithful but financially poor) is a pratideshaniya.
4. Eating an unannounced gift of staple or non-staple food after accepting it in a dangerous wilderness abode when one is not ill is a pratideshaniya.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the four pratideshaniya-dharma. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is asked three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure. It is so acknowledged.

The Hundred Shaiksha-dharma (training)
Venerable Ones, these are the one hundred shaiksha-dharma from the Pratimoksha Sutra, which are to be recited every half-month.
1. I will wear the lower robe (antarvasaka) neatly. This should be learned.
2. I will wear the upper robe (uttarasanga) neatly. This should be learned.
3. I will not enter inhabited areas with the robe worn reversed. This should be learned.
4. I will not sit in inhabited areas with the robe worn reversed. This should be learned.
5. I will not wrap the robe around my neck and enter inhabited areas. This should be learned.
6. I will not wrap the robe around my neck and sit in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
7. I will not cover my head with the robe and enter inhabited areas. This should be learned.
8. I will not cover my head with the robe and sit in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
9. I will not jump and enter inhabited areas. This should be learned.
10. I will not jump and sit in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
11. I will not squat in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
12. I will not hold my hands on my hips when entering inhabited areas. This should be learned.
13. I will not hold my hands on my hips when sitting in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
14. I will not swing my body when entering inhabited areas. This should be learned.
15. I will not swing my body when sitting in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
16. I will not let my arms hang down when entering inhabited areas. This should be learned.
17. I will not let my arms hang down when sitting in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
18. I will enter inhabited areas with the body well-covered. This should be learned.
19. I will sit in inhabited areas with the body well-covered. This should be learned.
20. I will not glance left and right when entering inhabited areas. This should be learned.
21. I will not glance left and right when sitting in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
22. I will enter inhabited areas quietly. This should be learned.
23. I will sit in inhabited areas quietly. This should be learned.
24. I will not joke and laugh when entering inhabited areas. This should be learned.
25. I will not joke and laugh when sitting in inhabited areas. This should be learned.
26. I will accept food mindfully. This should be learned.
27. I will accept food within the capacity of the alms bowl. This should be learned.
28. I will accept soup within the capacity of the alms bowl. This should be learned.
29. I will accept soup and rice in equal amounts. This should be learned.
30. I will accept food in order (rice before soup). This should be learned.
31. I will not take only the food in the center of the bowl. This should be learned.
32. I will not ask for soup or rice for myself if I am not sick. This should be learned.
33. I will not cover the soup with rice or the rice with soup (in order to get more). This should be learned.
34. I will not look and compare the food in the bowl of another sitting nearby. This should be learned.
35. I will pay undivided attention to the almsbowl while eating. This should be learned.
36. I will not put too much food in my mouth while eating. This should be learned.
37. I will not open my mouth wide while waiting for food. This should be learned.
38. I will not talk with food in my mouth. This should be learned.
39. I will not throw food in the air and catch it in my mouth. This should be learned.
40. I will not scatter my food around while eating. This should be learned.
41. I will not fill up my cheeks with food while eating. This should be learned.
42. I will not make a sound while chewing my food. This should be learned.
43. I will not slurp food with my mouth open while eating. This should be learned.
44. I will not lap up food with the tongue. This should be learned.
45. I will not move my hands while eating. This should be learned.
46. I will not pick up scattered food with my hands while eating. This should be learned.
47. I will not take an eating utensil with dirty hands. This should be learned.
48. I will not dump in a layperson's house water used for washing my bowl. This should be learned.
49. I will not relieve myself, blow my nose, or spit on living grass if I am not sick. This should be learned.
50. I will not relieve myself, blow my nose, or spit in clean water if I am not sick. This should be learned.
51. I will not relieve myself while standing if I am not sick. This should be learned.
52. I will not teach Dharma to a person wearing the robe reversed and lacking respect, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
53. I will not teach Dharma to a person whose head is covered, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
54. I will not teach Dharma to a person wearing leather shoes, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
55. I will not teach Dharma to a person whose head is wrapped, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
56. I will not teach Dharma to a person with hands on hips, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
57. I will not teach Dharma to a person who is riding in a vehicle (or on an animal), unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
58. I will not sleep overnight in a stupa unless it is to guard it. This should be learned.
59. I will not store valuables in a stupa, unless it is for safekeeping (of monastic property). This should be learned.
60. I will not wear leather shoes in a stupa. This should be learned.
61. I will not enter a stupa carrying leather shoes. This should be learned.
62. I will not circumambulate a stupa wearing leather shoes. This should be learned.
63. I will not enter a stupa wearing decorated shoes. This should be learned.
64. I will not enter a stupa carrying decorated shoes. This should be learned.
65. I will not eat below a stupa, leave leftovers, or dirty the ground with food. This should be learned.
66. I will not pass below a stupa carrying a dead body. This should be learned.
67. I will not bury a dead body below a stupa. This should be learned.
68. I will not cremate a dead body below a stupa. This should be learned.
69. I will not cremate a dead body around the four sides of a stupa so that the bad smell enters it. This should be learned.
70. I will not pass below a stupa carrying the clothes or bed of a dead person, unless they have been washed, dyed, or scented. This should be learned.
71. I will not relieve myself below a stupa. This should be learned.
72. I will not relieve myself facing a stupa. This should be learned.
73. I will not carry a Buddhist image to the toilet. This should be learned.
74. I will not chew a willow branch (brush my teeth) below a stupa. This should be learned.
75. I will not chew a willow branch around the four sides of a stupa. This should be learned.
76. I will not spit or blow my nose below a stupa. This should be learned.
77. I will not spit or blow my nose facing a stupa. This should be learned.
78. I will not spit or blow my nose around the four sides of a stupa. This should be learned.
79. I will not sit with legs outstretched facing a stupa. This should be learned.
85. I will not place a stupa in a lower location and live in a higher location. This should be learned.
86. I will not teach Dharma while standing to people who are lying down, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
87. I will not teach Dharma while sitting to people who are lying down, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
88. I will not teach Dharma while sitting in an inferior seat to people who are sitting in the place of honor, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
89. I will not teach Dharma while sitting in a lower seat to people who are sitting in a higher seat, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
90. I will not teach Dharma while walking behind to people who are walking ahead, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
91. I will not teach Dharma while walking on a lower road to people who are walking on a higher road, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
92. I will not teach Dharma while off to the side of the road to people on the road, unless they are sick. This should be learned.
93. I will not hold hands on the road. This should be learned.
94. I will not climb a tree larger than the height of a person, unless it is an allowable occasion. This should be learned.
95. I will not put an alms bowl inside a bag, hang it on a pole, and carry it on the shoulder while walking. This should be learned.
96. I will not teach Dharma to a person holding a stick and lacking respect, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
97. I will not teach Dharma to a person carrying a sword, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
98. I will not teach Dharma to a person carrying a spear, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
99. I will not teach Dharma to a person carrying a knife, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.
100. I will not teach Dharma to a person carrying an umbrella, unless the person is sick. This should be learned.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the one hundred shaiksha-dharma. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is repeated three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure in this regard. It is so acknowledged.

The Seven Adhikarana-shamatha-dharma (settlement of issues)
Venerable Ones, these are the seven adhikarana-shamatha-dharma that are from the Pratimoksha Sutra, which is to be recited every half-month. If bhikshus have a dispute, they should resolve it.
1. If the case can be resolved with the presence of the parties, let the parties be present.
2. If the case can be resolved by remembering events, let them be remembered.
3. If the case can be resolved by sanity, let there be sanity.
4. If the case can be resolved by one's own admission, let the admission be made.
5. If the case can be resolved by the majority, let the majority resolve it.
6. If the case can be resolved by finding where the guilt lies, let it be found.
7. If the case can be resolved by appointing a representative from each side, let representatives be appointed.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the seven ways of resolving disputes. Now I ask you, Venerable Ones, whether you are pure in this regard. (This is repeated three times.) Venerable Ones, since you remain silent, you must be pure in this regard. It is so acknowledged.

Venerable Ones, I have recited the prologue to the Pratimoksha Sutra, the four parajika-dharma, the thirteen sanghavesha-dharma, the two aniyata-dharma, the thirty nihsargika-payantika-dharma, the ninety payantika-dharma, the four pratideshaniya-dharma, the hundred shaiksha-dharma, and the seven adhikarana-shamatha-dharma. These are from the Pratimoksha Sutra taught by the Buddha and are to be recited every half-month. If there are any further practices harmoniously agreed upon, they should be practiced.

Patience is the foremost path. There is nothing comparable in the Buddha's teaching. If one who has left the household life disturbs others, he cannot be called a renunciate.

That is the precept of Tathagata Vipashyin, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.

Just as a person with clear eyesight can avoid a treacherous road, so a wise person in the world can avoid all unwholesomeness.

That is the precept of Tathagata Shikhin, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.

Do not slander or envy others. Always maintain the precepts. Be content with food and drink. Always be happy living in solitude. Concentrate the mind and take delight in vigorous effort.

That is the precept of Tathagata Visvabhu, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.

Just as a bee feeding on flowers does not spoil their color or fragrance, but just extracts their flavor, so a bhikshu entering an inhabited place does not interfere with others' affairs or notice what they do or do not do, but is mindful only of his own behavior, whether correct or incorrect.

That is the precept of Tathagata Krakucchanda, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.

Do not lose control of the mind. Diligently study the sacred Dharma. Thus freed of anxiety and sorrow, concentrating the mind, one enters nirvana.

That is the precept of Tathagata Kanakamuni, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.
Avoid all evil, always cultivate all good, purify your mind. This is the teaching of all Buddhas. That is the precept of Tathagata Kashyapa, the unattached, the fully enlightened one.

Guard well your speech, purify your mind, avoid all evil with the body - purify the actions of all three. Being able to do this, is the path of the great sage.

That is the precept of Tathagata Shakyamuni, the unattached, the fully enlightened one, who taught for twelve years to the undefiled Sangha. Only after that was it elaborated. If a bhikshu takes delight in the Dharma and the renunciate life, has a sense of shame and remorse, and takes delight in learning the precepts, he should study what is found herein.

A wise person who can keep the precepts can enjoy these three: good reputation, material gain, and a birth in heaven after death. One should contemplate like this: wise ones diligently keep the precepts. Pure precepts give rise to wisdom. Thus is the foremost path attained. The Buddhas of the past, the future, as well as the present World Honored One, who are able to transcend all sorrow, all respect the precepts. This is the Dharma of all the Buddhas. Those who seek the path of the Buddha should, for their own sake, always respect the true Dharma. This is the teaching of all the Buddhas. The seven Buddhas, World Honored Ones, cut through all defilements, and taught seven Vinaya Sutras to free us from all fetters. They have already achieved nirvana and eliminated all false views forever. To follow the words of the Great Sage and the precepts honored by the worthy ones, this is the practice of the disciples who achieve serene nirvana. When the World Honored One achieved nirvana, great compassion arose. He gathered the assembly of bhikshus together, and this is what he taught: "Do not say, after my passing, that pure practitioners have no protector. Now that I have taught the Pratimoksha Sutra, and the excellent Vinaya teachings, even though I achieve final nirvana, treat these as the World Honored One. If this sutra remains long in the world, Buddhadharma will be widespread, and because it becomes widespread, nirvana can be achieved. If one cannot keep these precepts or observe the poshadha as one should, it will be like the sinking of the sun, when the whole world is shrouded in darkness. One should always keep the precepts, just as a yak protects its tail, always staying together in harmony, in accordance with the Buddha's words." I have recited the Pratimoksha Sutra, and the assembly's poshadha is concluded. I now dedicate all the merit of reciting the Pratimoksha Sutra that all living beings may achieve Buddhahood together as one.
The Bhikkhuni Patimokkha
The Buddhist Nuns' Code of Discipline in the Theravada Tradition
Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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Translator's Introduction

The Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, the basic code of discipline for bhikkhunis, contains 311 rules. Of these, 181 are shared with the Bhikkhu Patimokkha: four Parajikas, seven Sanghadisesas, 18 Nissaggiya Pacittiyas (NP), 70 Pacittiyas, all 75 Sekhiyas, and all seven Adhikarana-samatha rules. In addition, the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha contains 13 Pacittiya rules that are identical to rules for bhikkhus that are contained in the Khandhakas; one Parajika rule similar to a Bhikkhus' Sanghadisesa rule; one Parajika rule similar to a Bhikkhus' Pacittiya rule; two Sanghadisesa rules similar to Bhikkhus' Khandhaka rules; one NP rule similar to a Bhikkhus' NP; two Pacittiya similar to Bhikkhus' Sanghadisesa; five Pacittiya similar to Bhikkhus' Pacittiya; and eight Pacittiya similar to rules for bhikkhus that are contained in the Khandhakas. Also, the eight Patidesaniya rules for the bhikkhunis are elaborations of a single Bhikkhus' Pacittiya rule.

Thus the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha contains 89 rules for which there are no direct correspondences in the rules for the bhikkhus. Some writers have interpreted these added rules as sign of an attempt to oppress the bhikkhunis unfairly, but it should be noted that:

1. more than one third of these extra rules were formulated to protect bhikkhunis from being the direct victims of the abusive or careless behavior of other bhikkhus;
2. two of the extra rules (Pacittiya 6 and 44) prevent bhikkhunis from putting themselves in a position of servitude to bhikkhus or lay people;
3. according to the rules' origin stories, all but three of the extra rules (Pacittiya 59, 94, and 95) were formulated only after bhikkhus complained to the bhikkhus about an errant bhikkhu's behavior.

Tellingly, these last three exceptions were formulated after complaints initiated by the bhikkhus, and they touch directly on the formal subordination of the Bhikkhuni Community to the Bhikkhu Community. However, they are counterbalanced by two
rules exclusive to the Bhikku Patimokkha -- NP 4 & 17 -- that were formulated at the request of bhikkhunis to prevent the bhikkhus from abusing their position in the hierarchy in a way that would interfere with the bhikkhunis' practice of the Dhamma. For a more detailed discussion of the checks and balances in the relationships between the two Communities, see The Buddhist Monastic Code, volume II, chapter 23.

In the following translation, I have marked the correspondences between the bhikkhus' and bhikkhunis' rules in brackets. Where the brackets follow the number of the bhikkhu rule and simply contain a number, the corresponding bhikkhus' rule is in the same section in the Bhikku Patimokkha as in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha. Thus, under the sanghadisesa rules, 7 [5] means that the Bhikkhunis' Sanghadisesa 7 is identical with the Bhikkhus' Sanghadisesa 5. If the brackets follow the rule and simply contain a reference to a rule in the Mahavagga (Mv) or Cullavagga (Cv), the corresponding bhikkhus' rule is contained in the Khandhakas. If the brackets follow the rule and include the word "see" followed by a number, the corresponding bhikkhus' rule is similar rather than identical. Correspondences in the Sekhiya and Adhikarana-samatha sections are not marked, as these two sections are completely identical in the two Patimokkhas.

Rules marked with an asterisk (*) are identical with -- or directly related to -- vows included in the Eight Garudhammas, or Vows of Respect. On this topic, see The Buddhist Monastic Code, volume II, chapter 23. Some writers have argued that, because the rules in question are all pacittiya rules, and because the Vows of Respect impose a more stringent penalty than a simple confession for overstepping the vows, we must assume that the vows and their more stringent punishment were added later to the canon, in an attempt to oppress the bhikkhunis. However, a standard principle throughout the Vinaya -- formulated in Adhikarana-samatha 4 in both Patimokkhas -- is that an offender cannot be penalized until he/she has confessed to an offense. In light of this principle, the confession required by the pacittiya rules would be a first, necessary step before imposing the half-month penance stipulated in the fifth vow.

The translation here is based on the complete Pali Bhikku Patimokkha in Mohan Wijayaratna, Buddhist Nuns: The Birth and Development of a Women's Monastic Order (BN), although there were many spots where I had to rely on the Thai edition of the Pali Canon to correct mistakes in BN. I have also consulted I.B. Horner's partial English translation of the Bhikkhu Patimokkha rules in The Book of Discipline, volume three (BD); the partial Thai translation included in Mahamakut's complete translation of the Pali Canon; and the complete English translation in BN. Where my translation differs from BD, I have marked it with a (§); where it differs from BN, a (¶); where it differs from both, a (§¶).

Parenthetical insertions in the rules, if otherwise unmarked, are based on the canonical word-commentary from the Bhikkhuni Vibhanga, the part of the Vinaya Pitaka that contains the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha together with its explanatory material. If marked with the abbreviation "Comm," parenthetical insertions in the rules are drawn from the Commentary, Buddhaghosa's Samantapasadika. Technical issues are explained in the endnotes.

Parajika
1 [1]. Should any bhikkhuni willingly engage in the sexual act, even with a male animal, she is defeated and no longer in communion.

2 [2]. Should any bhikkhuni, in the manner of stealing, take what is not given from an inhabited area or from the wilderness -- just as when, in the taking of what is not given, kings arresting the criminal would flog, imprison, or banish her, saying, "You are a robber, you are a fool, you are benighted, you are a thief" -- a bhikkhuni in the same way taking what is not given is defeated and no longer in communion.

3 [3]. Should any bhikkhuni intentionally deprive a human being of life, or search for an assassin for her, or praise the advantages of death, or incite her to die (thus): "My good man, what use is this wretched, miserable life to you? Death would be better for you than life," or with such an idea in mind, such a purpose in mind, should in various ways praise the advantages of death or incite her to die, she also is defeated and no longer in communion.

4 [4]. Should any bhikkhuni, without direct knowledge, boast of a superior human state, a truly noble knowledge and vision as present in herself, saying, "Thus do I know; thus do I see," such that regardless of whether or not she is cross-examined on a later occasion, she -- being remorseful and desirous of purification -- might say, "Ladies, not knowing, I said I know; not seeing, I said I see -- vainly, falsely, idly," unless it was from over-estimation, she also is defeated and no longer in communion.

5. Should any bhikkhuni, lusting, consent to a lusting man's rubbing, rubbing up against, taking hold of, touching, or fondling (her) below the collar-bone and above the circle of the knees, she also is defeated and no longer in communion for being "one above the circle of the knees." [See Bhikkhus' Sanghadisesa 2]

6. Should any bhikkhuni, knowing that (another) bhikkhuni has fallen into an act (entailing) defeat, neither accuse her herself nor inform the group, and then -- whether she (the other bhikkhuni) is still alive or has died, has been expelled or gone over to another sect -- she (this bhikkhuni) should say, "Even before, ladies, I knew of this bhikkhuni that 'This sister is of such-and-such a sort,' and I didn't accuse her myself nor did I inform the group," then she also is defeated and no longer in communion for being "one who concealed a fault." [See Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 64]

7. Should any bhikkhuni follow a bhikkhu suspended by a Community (of bhikkhus) acting in harmony, in line with the Dhamma, in line with the Vinaya, in line with the teacher's instructions, and he is disrespectful, has not made amends, has broken off his friendship (with the bhikkhus), the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Lady, that bhikkhu has been suspended by a community acting harmony in line with the Dhamma, in line with the Vinaya, in line with the teacher's instructions. He is disrespectful, he has not made amends, he has broken off his friendship. Do not follow him, lady."
And should that bhikkhuni, admonished thus by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then she also is defeated and no longer in communion for being "a follower of a suspended (bhikkhu)." (§¶)

8. Should any bhikkhuni, lusting, consent to a lusting man's taking hold of her hand or touching the edge of her outer robe, or should she stand with him or converse with him or go to a rendezvous with him, or should she consent to his approaching her, or should she enter a hidden place with him, or should she dispose her body to him -- (any of these) for the purpose of that unrighteous act (Comm: physical contact) -- then she also is defeated and no longer in communion for "(any of) eight grounds." (§)

_Sanghadisesa_

1. Should any bhikkhuni start a legal case against a householder, a householder's son, a slave, or a worker, or even against a wandering contemplative; this bhikkhuni, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

2. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly ordain a woman thief sentenced to death, without having obtained permission from the king or the Community or the (governing) council or the (governing) committee or the (governing) guild -- unless the woman is allowable (i.e., already ordained in another sect or with other bhikkhunis) -- this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community. [See Cv.I.28-29]

3. Should any bhikkhuni go among villages alone or go to the other shore of a river alone or stay away for a night alone or fall behind her companion(s) alone: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

4. Should any bhikkhuni -- without having obtained permission from the Community who performed the act, without knowing the desire of the group -- restore a bhikkhuni whom a Community acting harmony in line with the Dhamma, in line with the Vinaya, in line with the teacher's instructions, has suspended: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community. [See Mv.I.43.1]

5. Should any bhikkhuni, lusting, having received staple or non-staple food from the hand of a lusting man, consume or chew it: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

6. Should any bhikkhuni say, "What does it matter to you whether this man is lusting or not, when you are not lusting? Please, lady, take what the man is giving -- staple or non-staple food -- with your own hand and consume or chew it": this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

7. Should any bhikkhuni engage in conveying a man's intentions to a woman or a woman's intentions to a man, proposing marriage or paramourage -- even if only for a momentary liaison: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

8. Should any bhikkhuni, malicious, angered, displeased, charge a (fellow) bhikkhuni with an unfounded case involving defeat, (thinking), "Surely with this I may bring about her fall from the celibate life," then regardless of whether or not she is cross-examined on a later occasion, if the issue pertains otherwise, an aspect used as a mere ploy, and the bhikkhuni confesses her anger: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

9. Should any bhikkhuni, malicious, angered, displeased, using as a mere ploy an aspect of an issue that pertains otherwise, charge a bhikkhuni with a case involving defeat, (thinking), "Surely with this I may bring about her fall from the celibate life," then regardless of whether or not she is cross-examined on a later occasion, if the issue pertains otherwise, an aspect used as a mere ploy, and the bhikkhuni confesses her anger: this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the first act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

10. Should any bhikkhuni, angry and displeased, say, "I repudiate the Buddha, I repudiate the Dhamma, I repudiate the Sangha, I repudiate the Training. Since when were the Sakyan-daughter contemplatives the only contemplatives? There are other contemplatives who are conscientious, scrupulous, and desirous of training. I will practice the holy life in their company," the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Lady, don't -- angry and displeased -- say, 'I repudiate the Buddha, I repudiate the Dhamma, I repudiate the Sangha, I repudiate the Training. Since when were the Sakyan-daughter contemplatives the only contemplatives? There are other contemplatives who are conscientious, scrupulous, and desirous of training. I will practice the holy life in their company.' Take delight, lady. The Dhamma is well-expounded. Follow the holy life for the right ending of suffering." And should that bhikkhuni, admonished thus by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

11. Should any bhikkhuni, turned down in even a trifling issue, angry and displeased, say, "The bhikkhunis are prejudiced by favoritism, prejudiced by aversion, prejudiced by delusion, prejudiced by fear," the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Lady, don't -- turned down in even a trifling issue, angry and displeased -- say, 'The bhikkhunis are prejudiced by favoritism, prejudiced by aversion, prejudiced by delusion, prejudiced by fear. It may be that you, lady, are prejudiced by favoritism,
bhikkhunis, "The bhikkhunis are prejudiced by favoritism, prejudiced by aversion, prejudiced by delusion, prejudiced by fear." And should that bhikkhuni, admonished thus by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

12. In case bhikkhunis are living entangled, depraved in their conduct, depraved in their reputation, depraved in their notoriety (depraved in their livelihood), exasperating the Bhikkhuni Community, hiding one another’s faults, the bhikkhunis should admonish them thus: "The sisters are living entangled, depraved in their conduct, depraved in their reputation, depraved in their notoriety. Split up (your group), ladies. The Community recommends isolation for the sisters." And should those bhikkhunis, thus admonished, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke them up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times by the bhikkhunis they desist, that is good. If they do not desist, then these bhikkhunis, also, as soon as they have fallen into the third act of offence, are to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community. (§)

13. Should any bhikkhuni say (to the bhikkhunis criticized in the preceding case), "Live entangled, ladies. Don't live separately. There are other bhikkhunis in the Community with the same conduct, the same reputation, the same notoriety, exasperating the Bhikkhuni Community, hiding one another’s faults, but the Community doesn’t say anything to them. It’s simply because of your weakness that the Community -- with contempt, scorn, intolerance, and threats -- says, "The sisters are living entangled, depraved in their conduct, depraved in their reputation, depraved in their notoriety. Split up (your group), ladies. The Community recommends isolation for the sisters," the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Lady, don't say, 'Live entangled, ladies. Don't live separately. There are other bhikkhunis in the Community with the same conduct, the same reputation, the same notoriety, exasperating the Bhikkhuni Community, hiding one another’s faults, but the Community doesn't say anything to them. It's simply because of your weakness that the Community -- with contempt, scorn, intolerance, and threats -- says, "The sisters are living entangled, depraved in their conduct, depraved in their reputation, depraved in their notoriety. Split up (your group), ladies. The Community recommends isolation for the sisters."") And should that bhikkhuni, admonished thus by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community. (§¶)

14. [10]. Should any bhikkhuni agitate for a schism in a Community in concord, or should she persist in taking up an issue conducive to schism, the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Do not, lady, agitate for a schism in a Community in concord, or persist in taking up an issue conducive to schism. Let the lady be reconciled with the Community, for a Community in concord, on complimentary terms, free from dispute, having a common recitation, dwells in peace." And should that bhikkhuni, admonished thus by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

15. [11]. Should bhikkhunis -- one, two, or three -- who are followers and partisans of that bhikkhuni, say, "Do not, ladies, admonish that bhikkhuni in any way. She is an exponent of the Dhamma, an exponent of the Vinaya. She acts with our consent and approval. She knows, she speaks for us, and that is pleasing to us," other bhikkhunis are to admonish them thus: "Do not say that, ladies. That bhikkhuni is not an exponent of the Dhamma and she is not an exponent of the Vinaya. Do not, ladies, approve of a schism in the Community. Let the ladies’ (minds) be reconciled with the Community, for a Community in concord, on complimentary terms, without dispute, with a common recitation, dwells in peace." And should those bhikkhunis, thus admonished, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke them up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times by the bhikkhunis they desist, that is good. If they do not desist, then these bhikkhunis, also, as soon as they have fallen into the third act of offence, are to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

16. [12]. In case a bhikkhuni is by nature difficult to admonish -- who, when being legitimately admonished by the bhikkhunis with reference to the training rules included in the (Patimokkha) recitation, makes herself unadmonishable (saying), "Do not, ladies, say anything to me, good or bad; and I will not say anything to the ladies, good or bad. Refrain, ladies, from admonishing me" -- the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Let the lady not make herself unadmonishable. Let the lady make herself admonishable. Let the lady admonish the bhikkhunis in accordance with what is right, and the bhikkhunis will admonish the lady in accordance with what is right; for it is thus that the Blessed One's following is nurtured: through mutual admonition, through mutual rehabilitation." And should that bhikkhuni, thus admonished by the bhikkhunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to be rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

17. [13]. In case a bhikkhuni living in dependence on a certain village or town is a corrupter of families, a woman of depraved conduct -- whose depraved conduct is both seen and heard about, and the families she has corrupted are both seen and heard about -- the bhikkhunis are to admonish her thus: "You, lady, are a corrupter of families, a woman of depraved conduct. Your depraved conduct is both seen and heard about; the families you have corrupted are both seen and heard about. Leave this monastery, lady. Enough of your staying here." And should that bhikkhuni, thus admonished by the bhikkhunis, say about the bhikkhunis, "The bhikkhunis are prejudiced by favoritism, prejudiced by aversion, prejudiced by delusion, prejudiced by fear,
in that for this sort of offense they banish some and do not banish others," the bhikkhu is to admonish her thus: "Do not say that, lady. The bhikkhu are not prejudiced by favoritism, are not prejudiced by aversion, are not prejudiced by delusion, are not prejudiced by fear. You, lady, are corruptor of families, a woman of depraved conduct. Your depraved conduct is both seen and heard about, and the families you have corrupted are both seen and heard about. Leave this monastery, lady. Enough of your staying here." And should that bhikkhuni, thus admonished by the bhikkhu, persist as before, the bhikkhu are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, then this bhikkhuni, also, as soon as she has fallen into the third act of offence, is to be (temporarily) driven out, and it entails initial and subsequent meetings of the Community.

**Nissagga Picittiya**

**Part One: The Bowl Chapter**

1. Should any bhikkhuni make a bowl-hoard (have more than one bowl in her possession), it is to be forfeited and confessed. [See Bhikkhus' NP 21]
2. Should any bhikkhuni, having determined an out-of-season cloth to be an in-season cloth, distribute it, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§)[Endnote 1]
3. Should any bhikkhuni, having exchanged robe-cloth with another bhikkhuni, later say to her, "Here, lady. This is your robe-cloth. Bring me that robe-cloth of mine. What was yours is still yours. What was mine is still mine. Bring me that one of mine. Take yours back," and then snatch it back or have it snatched back, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
4. Should any bhikkhuni, having had one thing asked for, (then send it back and) have another thing asked for, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
5. Should any bhikkhuni, having had one thing bought, (then send it back and) have another thing bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
6. Should any bhikkhuni, using a fund intended for one purpose, dedicated to one purpose for the Community, have something else bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§)
7. Should any bhikkhuni, having herself asked for a fund intended for one purpose, dedicated to one purpose for the Community, use it to have something else bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§) [Endnote 2]
8. Should any bhikkhuni, using a fund intended for one purpose, dedicated to one purpose for a group, have something else bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§)
9. Should any bhikkhuni, having herself asked for a fund intended for one purpose, dedicated to one purpose for a group, use it to have something else bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§)
10. Should any bhikkhuni, having herself asked for a fund intended for one purpose, dedicated to one purpose for an individual, use it to have something else bought, it is to be forfeited and confessed. (§)

**Part Two: The Robe-cloth Chapter**

11. When a bhikkhuni is asking for a heavy cloth, one worth four "bronzes" at most may be asked for. If she asks for more than that, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
12. When a bhikkhuni is asking for a light cloth, one worth two and a half "bronzes" at most may be asked for. If she asks for more than that, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
13 [1]. When a bhikkhuni has finished her robe-making and the frame is destroyed (her kathina privileges are in abeyance), she is to keep an extra robe-cloth ten days at most. Beyond that, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
14 [2]. When a bhikkhuni has finished her robe-making and the frame is destroyed (her kathina privileges are in abeyance): If she dwells apart from (any of) her five robes even for one night -- unless authorized by the bhikkhunis -- it is to be forfeited and confessed.
15 [3]. When a bhikkhuni has finished her robe-making and the frame is destroyed (her kathina privileges are in abeyance): If out-of-season robe-cloth accures to her, she may accept it if she so desires. Once she accepts it, she is to make it up immediately (into a cloth requisite). If it should not be enough, she may lay it aside for a month at most if she has an expectation for filling the lack. Should she keep it beyond that, even when there is an expectation (for further cloth), it is to be forfeited and confessed.
16 [6]. Should any bhikkhuni ask for robe-cloth from a man or woman householder unrelated to her, except at the proper occasion, it is to be forfeited and confessed. Here the proper occasion is this: The bhikkhuni's robe has been stolen or destroyed. This is the proper occasion in this case.
17 [7]. If that unrelated man or woman householder presents the bhikkhuni with many robes (pieces of robe-cloth), she is to accept at most (enough for) an upper and an under robe. If she accepts more than that, it is to be forfeited and confessed.
18 [8]. In case a man or woman householder prepares a robe fund for the sake of an unrelated bhikkhuni, thinking, "Having purchased a robe with this robe fund, I will supply the bhikkhuni named so-and-so with a robe:" If the bhikkhuni, not previously invited, approaching (the householder) should make a stipulation with regard to the robe, saying, "It would be good indeed, sir, if you supplied me (with a robe), having purchased a robe of such-and-such a sort with this robe fund" -- out of a desire for something fine -- it is to be forfeited and confessed.
19 [9]. In case two householders -- men or women -- prepare separate robe funds for the sake of a bhikkhuni unrelated to them, thinking, "Having purchased separate robes with these separate robe funds of ours, we will supply the bhikkhuni named so-and-so with robes": If the bhikkhuni, not previously invited, approaching (them) should make a stipulation with regard to the
robe, saying, "It would be good indeed, sirs, if you supplied me (with a robe), having purchased a robe of such-and-such a sort with these separate robe funds, the two (funds) together for one (robe)" -- out of a desire for something fine -- it is to be forfeited and confessed.

20 [10]. In case a king, a royal official, a brahmin or a householder sends a robe fund for the sake of a bhikkhuni via a messenger (saying), "Having purchased a robe with this robe fund, supply the bhikkhuni named so-and-so with a robe": If the messenger, approaching the bhikkhuni, should say, "This is a robe fund being delivered for the sake of the lady. May the lady accept this robe fund," then the bhikkhuni is to tell the messenger: "We do not accept robe funds, my friend. We accept robes (robe-cloth) as are proper according to season." If the messenger should say to the bhikkhuni, "Does the lady have a steward?" then, bhikkhunis, if the bhikkhuni desires a robe, she may indicate a steward -- either a monastery attendant or a lay follower -- (saying), "That, sir, is the bhikkhunis' steward." If the messenger, having instructed the steward and going to the bhikkhuni, should say, "I have instructed the steward the lady indicated. May the lady go (to her) and she will supply you with a robe in season," then the bhikkhuni, desiring a robe and approaching the steward, may prompt and remind her two or three times, "I have need of a robe." Should (the steward) produce the robe after being prompted and reminded two or three times, that is good. If she does not produce the robe, (the bhikkhuni) should stand in silence four times, five times, six times at most for that purpose. Should (the steward) produce the robe after (the bhikkhuni) has stood in silence for the purpose four, five, six times at most, that is good. If she should not produce the robe (at that point), should she then produce the robe after (the bhikkhuni) has endeavored further than that, it is to be forfeited and confessed. If she should not produce (the robe), then the bhikkhuni herself should go to the place from which the robe fund was brought, or a messenger should be sent (to say), "The robe fund that you, venerable sirs, sent for the sake of the bhikkhuni has given no benefit to the bhikkhuni at all. May the you be united with what is yours. May what is yours not be lost." This is the proper course here.

Part Three: The Gold and Silver Chapter

21 [18]. Should any bhikkhuni take gold and silver, or have it taken, or consent to its being deposited (near her), it is to be forfeited and confessed.

22 [19]. Should any bhikkhuni engage in various types of monetary exchange, it (the income) is to be forfeited and confessed.

23 [20]. Should any bhikkhuni engage in various types of trade, (the article obtained) is to be forfeited and confessed.

24 [22]. Should a bhikkhuni with an alms bowl having less than five mends ask for another new bowl, it is to be forfeited and confessed. The bowl is to be forfeited by the bhikkhuni to the company of bhikkhunis. That company of bhikkhunis' final bowl should be presented to the bhikkhuni, (saying,) "This, bhikkhuni, is your bowl. It is to be kept until broken." This is the proper procedure here.

25 [23]. There are these tonics to be taken by sick bhikkhunis: ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, sugar/molasses. Having been received, they are to be used from storage seven days at most. Beyond that, they are to be forfeited and confessed.

26 [25]. Should any bhikkhuni, having herself given a robe-cloth to (another) bhikkhuni, and then being angered and displeased, snatch it back or have it snatched back, it is to be forfeited and confessed.

27 [26]. Should any bhikkhuni, having requested thread, have a robe woven by weavers, it is to be forfeited and confessed.

28 [27]. In case a man or woman householder unrelated to a bhikkhuni has weavers weave robe-cloth for her sake, and if the bhikkhuni, not previously invited (by the householder), having approached the weavers, should make stipulations with regard to the cloth, saying, "This cloth, friends, is to be woven for my sake. Make it long, make it broad, make it tightly woven, well woven, well spread, well scraped, well smoothed, and perhaps I may reward you with a little something:" and should the bhikkhuni, having said that, reward them with a little something, even as much as alms food, it (the cloth) is to be forfeited and confessed.

29 [28]. Ten days prior to the third-month Kattika full moon, should robe-cloth offered in urgency accrue to a bhikkhuni, she is to accept it if she regards it as offered in urgency. Once she has accepted it, she may keep it throughout the robe season. Beyond that, it is to be forfeited and confessed.

30 [30]. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly divert to herself gains that had been intended for a Community, they are to be forfeited and confessed.

Pacittiya

Part One: The Garlic Chapter

1. Should any bhikkhuni eat garlic, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.34.1]

2. Should any bhikkhuni have the hair in the "tight places" (armpits and pelvic areas) removed, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.27.4]

3. (Genital) slapping (even to the extent of consenting to a blow with a lotus-leaf) is to be confessed. [See Bhikkhus’ Sanghadisesa 1]

4. (The insertion of) a dildo is to be confessed. (§) [See Bhikkhus' Sanghadisesa 1]

5. When a bhikkhuni is giving herself an ablution, is to be given only to the depth of two finger joints (and using no more than two fingers). Beyond that, it is to be confessed. (§)

6. Should any bhikkhuni, when a bhikkhu is eating, attend on him with water or a fan, it is to be confessed.

7. Should any bhikkhuni, having asked for raw grain or having had it asked for, having roasted it or having had it roasted, having pounded it or having had it pounded, having cooked it or having had it cooked, then eat it, it is to be confessed.

8. Should any bhikkhuni toss or get someone else to toss excrement or urine or trash or leftovers over a wall or a fence, it is to be confessed.
Should any bhikkhuni toss or get someone else to toss excrement or urine or trash or leftovers on living crops, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni go to see dancing or singing or instrument-playing, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.2.6]

**Part Two: The Darkness Chapter**

Should any bhikkhuni stand or converse with a man, one on one, in the darkness of the night without a light, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni stand or converse with a man, one on one, in a concealed place, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni stand or converse with a man, one on one, in the open air, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni -- along a road, in a cul-de-sac, or at a crossroads -- stand or converse with a man one on one, or whisper in his ear, or dismiss the bhikkhuni who is her companion, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, having gone to family residences before the meal (before noon), having sat down on a seat, depart without taking the owner's leave, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, having gone to family residences after the meal (between noon and sunset), sit or lie down on a seat without asking the owner's permission, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, having gone to family residences in the wrong time (between sunset and dawn), having spread out bedding or having had it spread out, sit or lie down (there) without asking the owner's permission, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, because of a misapprehension, because of a misunderstanding, malign another (bhikkhuni), it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni curse herself or another (bhikkhuni) with regard to hell or the holy life, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni weep, beating and beating herself, it is to be confessed.

**Part Three: The Naked Chapter**

Should any bhikkhuni bathe naked, it is to be confessed. [See Mv.VIII.28 & Cv.V.16.2]

When a bhikkhuni is making a bathing cloth, it is to be made to the standard measurement. Here the standard is this: four spans -- using the Sugata span -- in length, two spans in width. In excess of that, it is to be cut down and confessed. [See Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 91]

Should any bhikkhuni, having unsewn (another) bhikkhuni's robe or having had it unsewn, and then later -- when there are no obstructions -- neither sew it nor make an effort to have it sewn within four or five days, it is to be confessed. ($$

Should any bhikkhuni exceed her five-day outer robe period, it is to be confessed. ($$) [Endnote 3]

Should any bhikkhuni wear a robe that should be given back (one that she has borrowed from another bhikkhuni without asking her permission), it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni put an obstruction in the way of a group's receiving robe-cloth, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni block a robe-cloth distribution that is in accordance with the rule, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni give a contemplative robe (a robe that has been marked so as to be allowable for a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni) to a householder, a male wanderer, or female wanderer, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni let the robe-season (the period for receiving Kathina-donations) pass on the basis of a weak expectation for cloth, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni block the dismantling of the Kathina privileges in accordance with the rule, it is to be confessed.

**Part Four: The Sharing Chapter**

Should two bhikkhunis share a single bed, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.19.2]

Should two bhikkhunis share a single blanket or sleeping mat, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.19.2]

Should any bhikkhuni intentionally cause annoyance to (another) bhikkhuni, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni not attend to her ailing student nor make an effort to have her attended to, it is to be confessed. ($$) [See Cv.VIII.12.2]

Should any bhikkhuni, having given living space to another bhikkhuni, then -- angry and displeased, evict her or have her evicted, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni live entangled with a householder or a householder's son, the bhikkhunis should admonish her thus: "Lady, don't live entangled with a householder or a householder's son. Live alone, lady. The Community recommends isolation for the lady."

And should that bhikkhuni, thus admonished, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist.

If while being rebuked up to three times by the bhikkhunis she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, without joining a caravan of merchants, set out within the local king's territory on a journey considered dubious and risky, it is to be confessed. ($$)

Should any bhikkhuni, without joining a caravan of merchants, set out outside the local king's territory on a journey considered dubious and risky, it is to be confessed. ($$)

Should any bhikkhuni set out on a journey during the rains retreat, it is to be confessed. [Mv.III.3.2]

Should any bhikkhuni, having completed the rains retreat, not depart on a journey of at least five or six leagues, it is to be confessed.

**Part Five: The Picture Gallery Chapter**

Should any bhikkhuni go to see a royal pleasure house or a picture gallery (any building decorated for amusement) or a park or a pleasure grove or a lotus pond, it is to be confessed.
42. Should any bhikkhuni make use of a high chair or a couch stuffed with hair, it is to be confessed. [Cv.VI.8]
43. Should any bhikkhuni spin yarn (thread), it is to be confessed.
44. Should any bhikkhuni do a chore for a lay person, it is to be confessed. (§¶) [Endnote 4]
45. Should any bhikkhuni -- when told by a bhikkhuni, "Come, lady. Help settle this issue," and having answered, "Very well" -- then, when there are no obstructions, neither settle it nor make an effort to have it settled, it is to be confessed.
46. Should any bhikkhuni give, with her own hand, staple or non-staple food to a householder, a male wanderer, or a female wanderer, it is to be confessed.
47. Should any bhikkhuni use a menstrual cloth without having forfeited it (after her previous period), it is to be confessed. (¶)
48. Should any bhikkhuni depart on a journey without having forfeited her dwelling space, it is to be confessed.
49. Should any bhikkhuni study lowly arts (literally, bestial knowledge), it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.33.2 -- for a list of lowly arts, see DN 2]
50. Should any bhikkhuni teach lowly arts, it is to be confessed. [Cv.V.33.2]

**Part Six: The Monastery Chapter**

51. Should any bhikkhuni, without asking permission, knowingly enter a monastery containing a bhikkhu, it is to be confessed. [See Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 23]
52. Should any bhikkhuni revile or insult a bhikkhu, it is to be confessed.*
53. Should any bhikkhuni, in a fit of temper, revile a group (the Bhikkhu Community), it is to be confessed.
54. Should any bhikkhuni, having eaten and turned down an offer (of further food), chew or consume staple or non-staple food (elsewhere), it is to be confessed. [See Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 35]
55. Should any bhikkhuni be stingy with regard to families (supporters), it is to be confessed. [Endnote 5]
56. Should any bhikkhuni spend the rains retreat in a dwelling where there are no bhikkhus (nearby), it is to be confessed.*
57. Should any bhikkhuni, having completed the rains retreat, not invite (criticism) from both Communities with regard to three matters -- what they have seen, heard, or suspected (her of doing) -- it is to be confessed.*
58. Should any bhikkhuni not go for the exhortation or for the (meeting that defines) communion (i.e., the Uposatha), it is to be confessed.*
59. Every half-month a bhikkhuni should request two things from the Bhikkhu Community: the asking of the date of the Uposatha and the approaching for exhortation. In excess of that (half-month), it is to be confessed.*
60. Should any bhikkhuni, without having informed a Community or a group (of bhikkunis), alone with a man have a boil or scar that has appeared on the lower part of her body (between the navel and the knees) burst or cut open or cleaned or smeared with a salve or bandaged or unbandaged, it is to be confessed.

**Part Seven: The Pregnant Woman Chapter**

61. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance (upasampada) to a pregnant woman, it is to be confessed.
62. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a woman who is still nursing, it is to be confessed.
63. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a probationer who has not trained for two years in the six precepts, it is to be confessed.* [Endnote 6]
64. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a probationer who has not trained for two years in the six precepts and who has not received authorization from the Community, it is to be confessed.
65. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a married woman less than twelve years old, it is to be confessed. (§) [See Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 65]
66. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a married woman fully twelve years old but who has not trained for two years in the six precepts, it is to be confessed.* (§)
67. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a married woman fully twelve years old but who has not trained for two years in the six precepts and who has not received authorization from the Community, it is to be confessed. (§)
68. Should any bhikkhuni, having given Acceptance to her student, neither assist her (in her training) nor have her assisted for (the next) two years, it is to be confessed. [See Cv.VIII.12.2-11]
69. Should any bhikkhuni not attend to her preceptor for two years, it is to be confessed. [See Cv.VIII.11.2-18]
70. Should any bhikkhuni, having given Acceptance to her student, neither take her away nor have her taken away for at least five or six leagues, it is to be confessed. [Endnote 7]

**Part Eight: The Maiden Chapter**

71. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a maiden (unmarried woman/female novice) less than twenty years old, it is to be confessed. [Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 65]
72. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a maiden fully twenty years old but who has not trained for two years in the six precepts, it is to be confessed.
73. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a maiden fully twenty years old but who has not trained for two years in the six precepts and who has not received authorization from the Community, it is to be confessed.
74. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance when she has less than twelve years (seniority), it is to be confessed. [See Mv.1.25.6]
75. Should any bhikkhuni, even if she has fully twelve years (seniority) give Acceptance when she has not been authorized by the Community (of Bhikkunis), it is to be confessed.
76. Should any bhikkhuni -- having been told, "Enough, lady, of your giving Acceptance for the time being," and having answered, "Very well" -- later complain, it is to be confessed.
77. Should any bhikkhuni -- having said to a probationer, "If you give me a robe, I will give you Acceptance," -- then, when there are no obstructions, neither give her Acceptance nor make an effort for her Acceptance, it is to be confessed.
78. Should any bhikkhuni -- having said to a probationer, "If you attend to me for two years, I will give you Acceptance," -- then, when there are no obstructions, neither give her Acceptance nor make an effort for her Acceptance, it is to be confessed.
79. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a probationer who is entangled with men, entangled with youths, temperamental, a cause of grief, it is to be confessed.
80. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a probationer without getting permission from her parents or her husband, it is to be confessed. [See Mv.I.54.6] [Endnote 8]
81. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance to a probationer by means of left-over giving of consent, it is to be confessed. (§¶) [Endnote 8]
82. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance (act as a preceptor) in consecutive years, it is to be confessed.
83. Should any bhikkhuni give Acceptance (act as a preceptor) to two (probationers) in one year, it is to be confessed.

Part Nine: The Sunshade and Leather Footwear Chapter
84. Should any bhikkhuni, not being ill, use a sunshade and leather footwear (outside a monastery), it is to be confessed. [Sunshade: Cv.V.23.3; Footwear: See Mv.I.30, Mv.V.4.3, Mv.V.5.2]
85. Should any bhikkhuni, not being ill, ride in a vehicle, it is to be confessed. [Mv.V.10.2]
86. Should any bhikkhuni wear a hip ornament, it is to be confessed. [§] [Cv.V.2.1]
87. Should any bhikkhuni wear a women's ornament, it is to be confessed. [See Cv.V.2.1]
88. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) bathe with perfumes and scents, it is to be confessed. [See Mv.VI.9.2]
89. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) bathe with scented sesame powder, it is to be confessed. [See Mv.VI.9.2]
90. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) have another bhikkhuni rub or massage her, it is to be confessed.
91. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) have a probationer rub or massage her, it is to be confessed.
92. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) have a female novice rub or massage her, it is to be confessed.
93. Should any bhikkhuni (not being ill) have a woman householder rub or massage her, it is to be confessed.
94. Should any bhikkhuni sit down in front of a bhikkhu without asking permission, it is to be confessed.* [Endnote 9]
95. Should any bhikkhuni ask a question (about the Suttas, Vinaya, or Abhidhamma) of a bhikkhu who has not given leave, it is to be confessed.* [Endnote 9]
96. Should any bhikkhuni enter a village without her vest, it is to be confessed.

Part Ten: The Lie Chapter
97 [1]. A deliberate lie is to be confessed.
98 [2]. An insult is to be confessed.
99 [3]. Malicious tale-bearing among bhikkunis is to be confessed.
100 [4]. Should any bhikkhuni have an unordained person recite Dhamma line by line (with her), it is to be confessed.
101 [5]. Should any bhikkhuni lie down in the same lodging with an unordained woman for more than two or three consecutive nights, it is to be confessed.
102 [6]. Should any bhikkhuni lie down in the same lodging with a man, it is to be confessed.
103 [7]. Should any bhikkhuni teach more than five or six sentences of Dhamma to a man, unless a knowledgeable woman is present, it is to be confessed.
104 [8]. Should any bhikkhuni report (her own) factual superior human state to an unordained person, it is to be confessed. [Endnote 10]
105 [9]. Should any bhikkhuni report (another) bhikkhuni's gross offense to an unordained person -- unless authorized by the bhikkhunis -- it is to be confessed. [Endnote 11]
106 [10]. Should any bhikkhuni dig soil or have it dug, it is to be confessed.

Part Eleven: The Living Plant Chapter
107 [11]. The damaging of a living plant is to be confessed.
108 [12]. Evasive speech and uncooperativeness are to be confessed.
109 [13]. Maligning or complaining (about a Community official) is to be confessed.
110 [14]. Should any bhikkhuni set a bed, bench, mattress, or stool belonging to the Community out in the open -- or have it set out -- and then on departing neither put it away nor have it put away, or should she go without taking leave, it is to be confessed.
111 [15]. Should any bhikkhuni, having set out bedding in a lodging belonging to the Community -- or having had it set out -- and then on departing neither put it away nor have it put away, or should she go without taking leave, it is to be confessed.
112 [16]. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly lie down in a lodging belonging to the Community so as to intrude on a bhikkhuni who arrived there first, (thinking), "Whoever feels crowded will go away" -- doing it for this reason and no other -- it is to be confessed.
113 [17]. Should any bhikkhuni, angry and displeased, evict a bhikkhuni from a dwelling belonging to the Community -- or have her evicted -- it is to be confessed.
114 [18]. Should any bhikkhuni sit or lie down on a bed or bench with detachable legs on an (unplanked) loft in a dwelling belonging to the Community, it is to be confessed.
When a bhikkhuni is building a large dwelling, she may apply two or three layers of facing to plaster the area around the window frame and reinforce the area around the door frame the width of the door opening, while standing where there are no crops to speak of. Should she apply more than that, even if standing where there are no crops to speak of, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni knowingly pour water containing living beings -- or have it poured -- on grass or on clay, it is to be confessed.

Part Twelve: The Food Chapter

A bhikkhuni who is not ill may eat one meal at a public alms center. Should she eat more than that, it is to be confessed.

A group meal, except on the proper occasions, is to be confessed. Here the proper occasions are these: a time of illness, a time of giving cloth, a time of making robes, a time of going on a journey, a time of embarking on a boat, an extraordinary occasion, a time when the meal is supplied by contemplatives. These are the proper occasions here.

In case a bhikkhuni arriving at a family residence is presented with cakes or cooked grain-meal, she may accept two or three bowlfuls if she so desires. If she should accept more than that, it is to be confessed. Having accepted the two-or-three bowlfuls and having taken them from there, she is to share them among the bhikkunis. This is the proper course here.

Should any bhikkhuni chew or consume staple or non-staple food at the wrong time, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni chew or consume stored-up staple or non-staple food, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni take into her mouth an edible that has not been given -- except for water and tooth-cleaning sticks -- it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni say to a bhikkhuni, "Come, lady, let's enter the village or town for alms," and then -- whether or not she has had (food) given to her -- dismiss her, saying, "Go away, lady. I don't like sitting or talking with you. I prefer sitting or talking alone," if doing it for that reason and no other, it is to be confessed.

Should a bhikkhuni sit intruding on a family "with its meal," it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni sit in private on a secluded seat with a man, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni sit in private, alone with a man, it is to be confessed.

Part Thirteen: The Go-calling Chapter

Should any bhikkhuni, being invited for a meal and without taking leave of an available bhikkhuni, go calling on families before or after the meal, except at the proper times, it is to be confessed. Here the proper times are these: the time of giving cloth, the time of making robes. These are the proper times here.

A bhikkhuni who is not ill may accept (make use of) a four-month invitation to ask for requisites. If she should accept (make use of) it for longer than that -- unless the invitation is renewed or is permanent -- it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni go to see an army on active duty, unless there is a suitable reason, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, a female probationer, a male novice, or a female novice, then make use of the cloth without the shared ownership's being rescinded, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni try to frighten another bhikkhuni, it is to be confessed.

Part Fourteen: The Fire Chapter

Should any bhikkhuni who is not ill, seeking to warm herself, kindle a fire or have one kindled -- unless there is a suitable reason -- it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni bathe at intervals of less than half a month, except at the proper occasions, it is to be confessed. Here the proper occasions are these: the last month and a half of the hot season, the first month of the rains, these two and a half months being a time of heat, a time of fever; (also) a time of illness; a time of work; a time of going on a journey; a time of wind or rain. These are the proper times here.

When a bhikkhuni receives a new robe, any one of three means of discoloring it is to be applied: green, brown, or black. If a bhikkhuni should make use of a new robe without applying any of the three means of discoloring it, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni, herself having placed robe-cloth under shared ownership (vikappana) with a bhikkhu, a bhikkhuni, a female probationer, a male novice, or a female novice, then make use of the cloth without the shared ownership's being rescinded, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni hide (another) bhikkhuni's bowl, robe, sitting cloth, needle case, or belt -- or have it hidden -- even as a joke, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni knowingly deprive an animal of life, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni knowingly make use of water with living beings in it, it is to be confessed.

Should any bhikkhuni knowingly agitate for the reviving of an issue that has been rightfully dealt with, it is to be confessed.
Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in are not genuine obstructions," the bhikkunis should admonish her thus: "Do not say that, lady. Do not misrepresent the Blessed One, for it is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One. The Blessed One would not say anything like that. In many ways, lady, the Blessed One has described obstructive acts, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions." And should the bhikkhuni, thus admonished by the bhikkunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis are to rebuke her up to three times so as to desist. If while being rebuked up to three times she desists, that is good. If she does not desist, it is to be confessed.

**Part Fifteen: The View Chapter**

146 [68]. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly consort, join in communion, or lie down in the same lodging with a bhikkhuni professing such a view who has not acted in compliance with the rule, who has not abandoned that view, it is to be confessed.

147 [69]. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly and by arrangement travel together with a caravan of thieves, even for the interval between one village and the next, it is to be confessed.

148 [70]. And if a female novice should say the following: "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in are not genuine obstructions," the bhikkunis should admonish her thus: "Do not say that, lady novice. Do not misrepresent the Blessed One, for it is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One. The Blessed One would not say anything like that. In many ways, lady, the Blessed One has described obstructive acts, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions." And should that female novice, thus admonished by the bhikkunis, persist as before, the bhikkhunis should admonish her as follows: "From this day forth, lady novice, you are not to claim the Blessed One as your teacher, nor are you even to have the opportunity the other female novices get -- that of sharing lodgings two or three nights with the bhikkhunis. Away with you! Out of our sight! (literally, 'Get lost!')" Should any bhikkhuni knowingly support, receive services from, consort with, or lie down in the same lodging with a novice thus expelled, it is to be confessed.

149 [71]. Should any bhikkhuni, admonished by the bhikkunis in accordance with a rule, say, "Ladies, I will not train myself under this training rule until I have put questions about it to another bhikkhuni, experienced and learned in the discipline," it is to be confessed. Bhikkhus, [the Buddha is apparently addressing the bhikkhus who will inform the bhikkunis of this training rule] (a training rule) is to be understood, is to be asked about, is to be pondered. This is the proper course here.

150 [72]. Should any bhikkhuni, when the Patimokkha is being repeated, say, "Why are these lesser and minor training rules repeated when they lead only to anxiety, bother and confusion?" the criticism of the training rules is to be confessed.

151 [73]. Should any bhikkhuni, when the Patimokkha is being recited every half-month, say, "Just now have I heard that this case, too, is handed down in the Patimokkha, is included in the Patimokkha, and comes up for recitation every half-month; and if other bhikkhunis should know, "That bhikkhuni has already sat through two or three recitations of the Patimokkha, if not more," the bhikkhuni is not exempted for being ignorant. Whatever the offense she has committed, she is to be dealt with in accordance with the rule; and in addition, her deception is to be exposed: "It is no gain for you, lady, it is ill-done, that when the Patimokkha is being recited, you do not pay proper attention and take it to heart." Here the deception is to be confessed.

152 [74]. Should any bhikkhuni, angered and displeased, give a blow to (another) bhikkhuni, it is to be confessed.

153 [75]. Should any bhikkhuni, angered and displeased, raise her hand against (another) bhikkhuni, it is to be confessed.

154 [76]. Should any bhikkhuni charge a bhikkhuni with an unfounded sanghadisesa (offense), it is to be confessed.

155 [77]. Should any bhikkhuni purposefully provoke anxiety in (another) bhikkhuni, (thinking,) "This way, even for just a moment, she will have no peace" -- if doing it for just this reason and no other -- it is to be confessed.

156 [78]. Should any bhikkhuni stand eavesdropping on bhikkunis when they are arguing, quarreling, and disputing, thinking, "I will overhear what they say" -- if doing it for just this reason and no other -- it is to be confessed.

**Part Sixteen: The In-accordance -with-the-Rule Chapter**

157 [79]. Should any bhikkhuni, having given consent (by proxy) to a formal act carried out in accordance with the rule, later complain (about the act), it is to be confessed.

158 [80]. Should any bhikkhuni, when deliberation is being carried on in the Community, get up from her seat and leave without having given consent, it is to be confessed.

159 [81]. Should any bhikkhuni, (acting as part of) a Community in concord, give robe-cloth (to an individual bhikkhuni) and later complain, "The bhikkunis apportion the Community’s gains according to friendship," it is to be confessed.

160 [82]. Should any bhikkhuni knowingly divert to an individual gains that had been allocated for the Community, it is to be confessed.

161 [84]. Should any bhikkhuni pick up or have (someone) pick up a valuable or what is considered a valuable, except within a monastery or within a dwelling, it is to be confessed. But when a bhikkhuni has picked up or had (someone) pick up a valuable or what is considered a valuable (left) in a monastery or in a dwelling, she is to keep it, (thinking,) "Whoever it belongs to will (come and) fetch it." This is the proper course here.

162 [86]. Should any bhikkhuni have a needle case made of bone, ivory, or horn, it is to be broken and confessed.

163 [87]. When a bhikkhuni is making a new bed or bench, it is to have legs (at most) eight fingerbreadths long -- using Sugata fingerbreadths -- not counting the lower edge of the frame. In excess of that it is to be cut down and confessed.

164 [88]. Should any bhikkhuni have a bed or bench upholstered, it (the upholstery) is to be torn off and confessed.

165 [90]. When a bhikkhuni is making a skin-eruption covering cloth, it is to be made to the standard measurement. Here the standard is this: four spans -- using the Sugata span -- in length, two spans in width. In excess of that, it is to be cut down and confessed.
166 [92]. Should any bhikkhuni have a robe made the size of the Sugata robe or larger, it is to be cut down and confessed. Here, the size of the Sugata robe is this: nine spans -- using the Sugata span -- in length, six spans in width. This is the size of the Sugata's Sugata robe.

**Patidesaniya**

1. Should any bhikkhuni, not being ill, ask for ghee and consume it, she is to acknowledge it: "Lady, I have committed a blameworthy, unsuitable act that ought to be acknowledged. I acknowledge it." [Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 39]

2-8. Should any bhikkhuni, not being ill, ask for oil... honey... sugar/molasses... fish... meat... milk... curds and consume it, she is to acknowledge it: "Lady, I have committed a blameworthy, unsuitable act that ought to be acknowledged. I acknowledge it." [Bhikkhus' Pacittiya 39]

**Sekhiya**

**Part One: The 26 Dealing with Proper Behavior**

1. (2) I will wear the lower robe (upper robe) wrapped around (me): a training to be observed.
3. (4) I will go (sit) well-covered in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
5. (6) I will go (sit) well-restrained in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
7. (8) I will go (sit) with eyes lowered in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
9. (10) I will not go (sit) with robes hitched up in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
11. (12) I will not go (sit) laughing loudly in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
13. (14) I will go (sit) (speaking) with a lowered voice in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
15. (16) I will not go (sit) swinging the body in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
17. (18) I will not go (sit) swinging the arms in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
19. (20) I will not go (sit) swinging the head in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
21. (22) I will not go (sit) with arms akimbo in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
23. (24) I will not go (sit) with my head covered in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
25. I will not go tiptoeing or walking just on the heels in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.
26. I will not sit holding up the knees in inhabited areas: a training to be observed.

**Two: The 30 Dealing with Food**

27. I will receive alms food appreciatively: a training to be observed.
28. I will receive alms food with attention focused on the bowl: a training to be observed.
29. I will receive alms food with bean curry in proper proportion: a training to be observed.
30. I will receive alms food level with the edge (of the bowl): a training to be observed.
31. I will eat alms food appreciatively: a training to be observed.
32. I will eat alms food with attention focused on the bowl: a training to be observed.
33. I will eat alms food methodically: a training to be observed.
34. I will eat alms food with bean curry in proper proportion: a training to be observed.
35. I will not eat alms food taking mouthfuls from a heap: a training to be observed.
36. I will not hide bean curry and foods with rice out of a desire to get more: a training to be observed.
37. Not being ill, I will not eat rice or bean curry that I have requested for my own sake: a training to be observed.
38. I will not look at another's bowl intent on finding fault: a training to be observed.
39. I will not take an extra-large mouthful: a training to be observed.
40. I will make a rounded mouthful: a training to be observed.
41. I will not open the mouth when the mouthful has yet to be brought to it: a training to be observed.
42. I will not put the whole hand into the mouth while eating: a training to be observed.
43. I will not speak with the mouth full of food: a training to be observed.
44. I will not eat from lifted balls of food: a training to be observed.
45. I will not eat nibbling at mouthfuls of food: a training to be observed.
46. I will not eat stuffing out the cheeks: a training to be observed.
47. I will not eat shaking (food off) the hand: a training to be observed.
48. I will not eat scattering rice about: a training to be observed.
49. I will not eat sticking out the tongue: a training to be observed.
50. I will not eat smacking the lips: a training to be observed.
51. I will not eat making a slurping noise: a training to be observed.
52. I will not eat licking the hands: a training to be observed.
53. I will not eat licking the bowl: a training to be observed.
54. I will not eat licking the lips: a training to be observed.
55. I will not accept a water vessel with a hand soiled by food: a training to be observed.
56. I will not, in an inhabited area, throw away bowl-rinsing water that has grains of rice in it: a training to be observed.

**Three: The 16 Dealing with Teaching Dhamma**

57. I will not teach Dhamma to a person with an umbrella in her hand and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
8. I will not teach Dhamma to a person with a staff in her hand and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
9. I will not teach Dhamma to a person with a knife in her hand and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
10. I will not teach Dhamma to a person with a weapon in her hand and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
61. (62) I will not teach Dhamma to a person wearing non-leather {leather} footwear who is not ill: a training to be observed.
63. I will not teach Dhamma to a person in a vehicle and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
64. I will not teach Dhamma to a person lying down who is not ill: a training to be observed.
65. I will not teach Dhamma to a person who sits holding up her knees and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
66. I will not teach Dhamma to a person wearing headgear who is not ill: a training to be observed.
67. I will not teach Dhamma to a person whose head is covered (with a robe or scarf) and who is not ill: a training to be observed.
68. Sitting on the ground, I will not teach Dhamma to a person sitting on a seat who is not ill: a training to be observed.
69. Sitting on a low seat, I will not teach Dhamma to a person sitting on a high seat who is not ill: a training to be observed.
70. Standing, I will not teach Dhamma to a person sitting who is not ill: a training to be observed.
71. Walking behind, I will not teach Dhamma to a person walking ahead who is not ill: a training to be observed.
72. Walking beside a path, I will not teach Dhamma to a person walking on the path and who is not ill: a training to be observed.

Four: The 3 Miscellaneous Rules

73. Not being ill, I will not defecate or urinate while standing: a training to be observed.
74. Not being ill, I will not defecate, urinate, or spit on living crops: a training to be observed.
75. Not being ill, I will not defecate, urinate, or spit in water: a training to be observed.

Adhikarana-Samatha

1. A verdict “in the presence of” should be given. This means that the formal act settling the issue must be carried out in the presence of the Community, in the presence of the individuals, and in the presence of the Dhamma and Vinaya.
2. A verdict of mindfulness may be given. This is the verdict of innocence given in an accusation, based on the fact that the accused remembers fully that she did not commit the offense in question.
3. A verdict of past insanity may be given. This is another verdict of innocence given in an accusation, based on the fact that the accused was out of her mind when she committed the offense in question and so is absolved of any responsibility for it.
4. Acting in accordance with what is admitted. This refers to the ordinary confession of offenses, where no formal interrogation is involved. The confession is valid only if in accord with the facts, e.g., a bhikkhuni actually commits a pacittiya offense and then confesses it as such, and not as a stronger or lesser offense. If she were to confess it as a dukkata or a sanghadisesa, that would be invalid.
5. Acting in accordance with the majority. This refers to cases in which bhikkhunis are unable to settle a dispute unanimously, even after all the proper procedures are followed, and -- in the words of the Canon -- are “wounding one another with weapons of the tongue.” In cases such as these, decisions can be made by majority vote.
6. Acting in accordance with the accused’s further misconduct. This refers to cases where a bhikkhuni admits to having committed the offense in question only after being formally interrogated about it. She is then to be reproved for her actions, made to remember the offense and to confess it, after which the Community carries out a formal act of “further misconduct” against her as an added punishment for being so uncooperative as to require the formal interrogation in the first place.
7. Covering over as with grass. This refers to situations in which both sides of a dispute realize that, in the course of their dispute, they have done much that is unworthy of a contemplative. If they were to deal with one another for their offenses, the only result would be greater divisiveness. Thus if both sides agree, all the bhikkhunis gather in one place. (According to the Commentary, this means that all bhikkhunis in the sima must attend. No one should send her consent, and even sick bhikkhunis must go.) A motion is made to the entire group that this procedure will be followed. One member of each side then makes a formal motion to the members of her faction that she will make a confession for them. When both sides are ready, the representative of each side addresses the entire group and makes the blanket confession, using the form of a motion and one announcement (natti-dutiya-kamma).

Endnotes
1. When a Community’s kathina privileges are in effect, all cloth presented to their residence is in-season cloth, and it is to be distributed only among the residents who spent the rains retreat in that residence and participated in the spreading of the kathina (see Mv.VII.1.3). Other bhikkhunis have no share in it. However, if donors wish to give cloth to those other bhikkhunis, they can declare their intention, in which the cloth -- even though given “in-season” -- counts as out-of-season cloth. In this case, the later arrivals have a right to a share. In the origin story to this rule, donors make such a gift. The offending bhikkhuni, not wanting to share the gift with the later arrivals for whom it was intended, declares it to be in-season cloth, and shares it only with the bhikkhunis who spent the rains retreat in that residence.

2. The origin story here shows that lay donors, of their own initiative, set the fund aside with a storekeeper for one purpose, and then the bhikkhuni asks for it to be transferred -- apparently to another store -- and buys something else with it. This condition also applies to NP 9 & NP10.

38
This rule was formulated after bhikkhunis went off on a journey without their outer robes, thus inconveniencing the bhikkunis who stayed behind, who had to sun the robes to keep them from going moldy. The Word-commentary states that a bhikkhuni, at least once every five days, must put on or dry in the sun all five of her robes: this is the five-day outer robe period.

4. BD misinterprets not only the rule here, but also its explanatory material in the Bhikkhuni Vibhanga. The Pali of the rule is: *Ya pana bhikkhuni gihi-veyyavaccam kareyya, pacitti yanti.* BD translates it as: "Whatever nun should do household work, there is an offence of expiation." *Gihi,* however, means lay person or, more literally, "house-person," not household. This is confirmed by the word-commentary's definition of *gihi-veyyavaccam:* "She cooks congee or a meal or a non-staple food, or washes a piece of clothing or a head-wrap for a person living in a house (agarika)." In the non-offense clauses, BD translates *attano veyyavaccakarassa* as "in doing household work for herself." This omits the -kara- in the second term, thus changing *veyyavaccakara* (chore-doer) to *veyyavacca* (chore). The correct translation is, "for her own chore-doer." Thus the non-offense clauses, as a set, read: "There is no offense in congee-drink, in a community meal, in homage to a chedi, or if she cooks congee or a meal or a non-staple food, or washes a piece of clothing or a head-wrap for her own chore-doer." The Commentary explains: *

In congee-drink, etc.:* When people are making a community meal or a congee-drink for the purpose of the Community, there is no offense in her doing any cooking at all in the position of being a friend of theirs. *

In homage to a chedi:* It is all right if, being a friend, she does homage with scents, etc. *

For her own chore-doer:* Even if (her) mother and father come and are making/doing something (such as) a fan or a broom handle and so stand in the position of a chore-doer, it is all right to cook anything (for them)."

5. In the origin story, a bhikkhuni spreads lies about the road to a particular family's house, saying that it is infested with fierce dogs and a wild bull, in order to discourage other bhikkunis from going there and receiving a share of the family's donations.

6. The six precepts are the first six of the eight precepts.

7. In the origin story, the new bhikkhuni's husband seizes her right after her ordination.

8. "Left-over giving of consent" (*parivasika-chanda-dana*) means that consent has been given by the Community of bhikkhus in that territory for a particular group to conduct Community business, but then the group gets up and leaves before dealing with the issue in question (on this point, see Mv.II.36.4). In the origin story for this rule, the offending bhikkhuni dismisses the group that had received consent to carry out the Acceptance transaction and then -- under the ruse of the consent given to that group -- convenes another group of bhikkhus less likely to pay attention to the deficiencies in the candidate she is proposing.

9. Asking a question related to the Vinaya can be the first step in admonishment and making accusations (see Mv.II.15.6-8), which is why this rule is related to the eighth of the eight vows of respect (against a bhikkhuni admonishing a bhikkhu). As Horner notes in BD, the word-commentary to this rule is one of the few places in the Vinaya that apparently refers to the Abhidhamma as a text -- thus indicating that either the rule or its word-commentary is a later formulation.

10. "An unordained person": The Pali here has the feminine form -- unordained female person -- but none of the commentaries explain why.

11. "An unordained person": Again, the Pali here has the feminine form -- unordained female person -- but none of the commentaries explain why.
The Bhikkhu Patimokkha Training Rules Organized by Topic
from the Buddhist Monastic Code Volume I, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Right Speech

Lying
Making an unfounded charge to a bhikkhu that he has committed a parajika offense, in hopes of having him disrobed, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 8/129)
Distorting the evidence while accusing a bhikkhu of having committed a parajika offense, in hopes of having him disrobed, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 9/138)
The intentional effort to misrepresent the truth to another individual is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 1/260)
Making an unfounded charge to a bhikkhu — or getting someone else to make the charge to him — that he is guilty of a sanghadisesa offense is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 76/448)

Divisive speech
Tale-bearing among bhikkhus, in hopes of winning favor or causing a rift, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 3/266)

Abusive speech
An insult made with malicious intent to another bhikkhu is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 2/263)

Idle chatter
Visiting lay families — without having informed an available bhikkhu — before or after a meal to which one has been invited is a pacittiya offense except during the robe season or any time one is making a robe. (Pc 46/390)
Entering a village, town, or city during the period after noon until the following dawn, without having taken leave of an available bhikkhu — unless there is an emergency — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 85/467)

Right Action

Killing
Intentionally bringing about the untimely death of a human being, even if it is still a fetus, is a parajika offense. (Pr 3/66)
Pouring water that one knows to contain living beings — or having it poured — on grass or clay is a pacittiya offense. Pouring anything that would kill the beings into such water — or having it poured — is also a pacittiya offense. (Pc 20/317)
Deliberately killing an animal — or having it killed — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 61/420)
Using water, knowing that it contains living beings that will die from one's use, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 62/423)

Taking what is not given
The theft of anything worth 1/24 ounce troy of gold or more is a parajika offense. (Pr 2/50)
Having given another bhikkhu a robe on a condition and then — angry and displeased — snatching it back or having it snatched back is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 25/246)
Making use of cloth or a bowl stored under shared ownership — unless the shared ownership has been rescinded or one is taking the item on trust — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 59/415)

Sexual Misconduct
Voluntary sexual intercourse — genital, anal, or oral — with a human being, non-human being, or common animal is a parajika offense. (Pr 1/45)
Intentionally causing oneself to emit semen, or getting someone else to cause one to emit semen — except during a dream — is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 1/90)
Lustful bodily contact with a woman whom one perceives to be a woman is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 2/100)
Making a lustful remark to a woman about her genitals, anus or about performing sexual intercourse is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 3/110)
Telling a woman that she would benefit from having sexual intercourse with oneself is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 4/115)
Getting an unrelated bhikkhuni to wash, dye, or beat a robe that has been used at least once is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 4/182)
Getting an unrelated bhikkhuni to wash, dye, or card wool that has not been made into cloth or yarn is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 17/214)
Lying down at the same time in the same lodging with a woman is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 6/276)
Teaching more than six sentences of Dhamma to a woman, except in response to a question, is a pacittiya offense unless a knowledgeable man is present. (Pc 7/280)
Exhorting a bhikkhuni about the eight vows of respect — except when one has been authorized to do so by the Community — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 21/320)
Exhorting a bhikkhuni on any topic at all after sunset — except when she requests it — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 22/323)
Going to the bhikkhunis' quarters and exhorting a bhikkhuni about the eight vows of respect — except when she is ill or has requested the instruction — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 23/325)
Giving robe-cloth to an unrelated bhikkhuni without receiving anything in exchange is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 25/326)
Sewing a robe — or having one sewn — for an unrelated bhikkhuni is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 26/327)
Traveling by arrangement with a bhikkhuni from one village to another — except when the road is risky or there are other dangers — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 27/329)
Traveling by arrangement with a bhikkhuni upriver or downriver in the same boat — except when crossing a river — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 28/331)
Sitting or lying down alone with a bhikkhuni in a place out of sight and out of hearing with no one else present is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 30/335 & 45/389)
Sitting or lying down with a woman or women in a private, secluded place with no other man present is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 44/385)
Sitting or lying down alone with a woman in an unsecluded but private place with no one else present is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 45/389)
Traveling by arrangement with a woman from one village to another is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 67/432)

Right Livelihood

General
Deliberately lying to another person that one has attained a superior human state is a parajika offense. (Pr 4/79)
Acting as a go-between to arrange a marriage, an affair, or a date between a man and a woman not married to each other is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 5/117)
Engaging in trade with anyone except one's co-religionists is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 20/225)
Persuading a donor to give to oneself a gift that he or she had planned to give to the Community — when one knows that it was intended for the Community — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 30/256)
Telling an unordained person of one's actual superior human attainments is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 8/285)
Persuading a donor to give to another individual a gift that he or she had planned to give to the Community — when one knows that it was intended for the Community — is a pacittiya offense. (NP 30/256 & Pc 82/461)

Robes
Keeping a piece of robe-cloth for more than ten days without determining it for use or placing it under dual ownership — except when the end-of-vassa or kathina privileges are in effect — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 1/163)
Being in a separate zone from any of one's three robes at dawn — except when the end-of-vassa or kathina privileges are in effect, or one has received formal authorization from the Community — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 2/172)
Keeping out-of-season cloth for more than 30 days when it is not enough to make a requisite and one has expectation for more — except when the end-of-vassa and kathina privileges are in effect — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 3/179)
Accepting robe-cloth from an unrelated bhikkhuni without giving her anything in exchange is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 5/184)
Asking for and receiving robe-cloth from an unrelated lay person, except when one's robes have been stolen or destroyed, is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 6/186)
Asking for and receiving excess robe-cloth from unrelated lay people when one's robes have been stolen or destroyed is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 7/189)
When a lay person who is not a relative is planning to get a robe for one, but has yet to ask one what kind of robe one wants: Receiving the robe after making a request that would raise its cost is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 8/193)
When two or more lay people who are not one's relatives are planning to get separate robes for one, but have yet to ask one what kind of robe one wants: Receiving a robe from them after asking them to pool their funds to get one robe — out of a desire for something fine — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 9/195)
Making a felt blanket/rug with silk mixed in it for one's own use — or having it made — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 11/206)
Making a felt blanket/rug entirely of black wool for one's own use — or having it made — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 12/208)
Making a felt blanket/rug that is more than one-half black wool for one's own use — or having it made — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 13/208)
Unless one has received authorization to do so from the Community, making a felt blanket/rug for one's own use — or having it made — less than six years after one's last one was made is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 14/209)
Making a felt sitting rug for one's own use — or having it made — without incorporating a one-span piece of old felt is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 15/211)
Seeking and receiving a rains-bathing cloth before the fourth month of the hot season is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. Using a rains-bathing cloth before the last two weeks of the fourth month of the hot season is also a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 24/242)
Taking thread that one has asked for improperly and getting weavers to weave cloth from it — when they are unrelated and have not made a previous offer to weave — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 26/248)
When donors who are not relatives — and have not invited one to ask — have arranged for weavers to weave robe-cloth intended for one: Receiving the cloth after getting the weavers to increase the amount of thread used in it is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 27/250)
Keeping robe-cloth offered in urgency past the end of the robe season after having accepted it during the last eleven days of the Rains Retreat is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 28/252)
When one is living in a dangerous wilderness abode during the month after the fourth Kattika full moon and has left one of one's robes in the village where one normally goes for alms: Being away from the abode and the village for more than six nights at a stretch — except when authorized by the Community — is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 29/253)

Wearing an unmarked robe is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 58/413)

Acquiring an overly large sitting cloth after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one cut the cloth down to size before confessing the offense. (Pc 89/475)

Acquiring an overly large skin-eruption covering cloth after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one cut the cloth down to size before confessing the offense. (Pc 90/477)

Acquiring an overly large rains-bathing cloth after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one cut the robe down to size before confessing the offense. (Pc 92/478)

**Food**

Eating any of the five staple foods that a lay person has offered as the result of a bhikkhuni's prompting — unless the lay person was already planning to offer the food before her prompting — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 29/333)

Eating food obtained from the same public alms center two days running, unless one is too ill to leave the center, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 31/340)

Eating a meal to which four or more individual bhikkhus have been specifically invited — except on special occasions — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 32/342)

Eating a meal before going to another meal to which one was invited, or accepting an invitation to one meal and eating elsewhere instead, is a pacittiya offense except when one is ill or at the time of giving cloth or making robes. (Pc 33/348)

Accepting more than three bowlfuls of food that the donors prepared for their own use as presents or as provisions for a journey is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 34/352)

Eating staple or non-staple food that is not left-over, after having earlier in the day finished a meal during which one turned down an offer to eat further staple food, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 35/355)

Eating staple or non-staple food in the period after noon until the next dawn is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 37/362)

Eating food that a bhikkhu — oneself or another — formally received on a previous day is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 38/364)

Eating finer foods, after having asked for them for one's own sake — except when ill — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 39/367)

Eating food that has not been formally given is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 40/370)

Eating staple or non-staple food, after having accepted it from the hand of an unrelated bhikkhuni in a village area, is a patidesaniya offense. (Pd 1/480)

Eating staple food accepted at a meal to which one has been invited and where a bhikkhuni has given directions, based on favoritism, as to which bhikkhu should get which food, and none of the bhikkhus have dismissed her, is a patidesaniya offense. (Pd 2/483)

Eating staple or non-staple food, after accepting it — when one is neither ill nor invited — at the home of a family formally designated as "in training," is a patidesaniya offense. (Pd 3/484)

Eating an unannounced gift of staple or non-staple food after accepting it in a dangerous wilderness abode when one is not ill is a patidesaniya offense. (Pd 4/485)

**Lodgings**

Building a plastered hut — or having it built — without a sponsor, destined for one's own use, without having obtained the Community's approval, is a sanghadisesa offense. Building a plastered hut — or having it built — without a sponsor, destined for one's own use, exceeding the standard measurements, is also a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 6/120)

Building a hut with a sponsor — or having it built — destined for one's own use, without having obtained the Community's approval, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 7/128)

When a bhikkhu is building or repairing a large dwelling for his own use, using resources donated by another, he may not reinforce the window or door frames with more than three layers of roofing material or plaster. To exceed this is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 19/315)

Acquiring a bed or bench with legs longer than eight Sugata fingerbreadths after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one cut the legs down before confessing the offense. (Pc 87/471)

Acquiring a bed or bench stuffed with cotton down after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one remove the stuffing before confessing the offense. (Pc 88/473)

**Medicine**

Keeping any of the five tonics — ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, or sugar/molasses — for more than seven days, unless one determines to use them only externally, is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 23/236)

When a supporter has made an offer to supply medicines to the Community: Asking him/her for medicine outside of the terms of the offer when one is not ill, or for medicine to use for a non-medicinal purpose, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 47/393)

**Money**

When a fund has been set up with a steward indicated by a bhikkhu: Obtaining an article from the fund as a result of having prompted the steward more than the allowable number of times is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 10/196)
Taking gold or money, having someone else take it, or consenting to its being placed down as a gift for oneself, is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 18/214)

Obtaining gold or money through trade is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 19/220)

**Bowls and other requisites**

Carrying wool that has not been made into cloth or yarn for more than three leagues is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 16)

Keeping an alms bowl for more than ten days without determining it for use or placing it under dual ownership is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 21/231)

Asking for a new alms bowl when one's current bowl is not beyond repair is a nissaggiya pacittiya offense. (NP 22/234)

Acquiring a needle box made of bone, ivory, or horn after making it — or having it made — for one's own use is a pacittiya offense requiring that one break the box before confessing the offense. (Pc 86/470)

**Communal Harmony**

To persist in one’s attempts at a schism, before the third announcement of a formal rebuke in the meeting of the Community, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 10/140)

To persist in supporting a potential schismatic, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Community, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 11/147)

To persist in being difficult to admonish, after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in the Community, is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 12/148)

To persist — after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in the Community — in criticizing an act of banishment performed against oneself is a sanghadisesa offense. (Sg 13/150)

When a trustworthy female lay follower accuses a bhikkhu of having committed a parajika, sanghadisesa, or pacittiya offense while sitting alone with a woman in a private, secluded place, the Community should investigate the charge and deal with the bhikkhu in accordance with whatever he admits to having done. (Ay 1/157)

When a trustworthy female lay follower accuses a bhikkhu of having committed a sanghadisesa or pacittiya offense while sitting alone with a woman in a private place, the Community should investigate the charge and deal with the bhikkhu in accordance with whatever he admits to having done. (Ay 2/161)

Telling an unordained person of another bhikkhu's serious offense — unless one is authorized by the Community to do so — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 9/288)

Persistently replying evasively or keeping silent in order to conceal one's own offenses when being questioned in a meeting of the Community — after a formal charge of evasiveness or uncooperativeness has been brought against one — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 12/300)

If a Community official is innocent of prejudice: Criticizing him within earshot of another bhikkhu is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 13/303)

When one has set a bed, bench, mattress, or stool belonging to the Community out in the open: Leaving its immediate vicinity without putting it away or arranging to have it put away is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 14/305)

When one has spread bedding out in a dwelling belonging to the Community: Departing from the monastery without putting it away or arranging to have it put away is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 15/307)

Encroaching on another bhikkhu's sleeping or sitting place in a dwelling belonging to the Community, with the sole purpose of making him uncomfortable and forcing him to leave, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 16/310)

Caus ing a bhikkhu to be evicted from a dwelling belonging to the Community — when one's primary motive is anger — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 17/312)

Sitting or lying down on a bed or bench with detachable legs or on an unplanned loft in a dwelling belonging to the Community, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 18/314)

Saying that a properly authorized bhikkhu exhorts the bhikkhunis for the sake of personal gain — when in fact that is not the case — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 24/325)

Deliberately tricking another bhikkhu into breaking Pacittiya 35, in hopes of finding fault with him, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 36/360)

Speaking or acting disrespectfully when being admonished by another bhikkhu for a breach of the training rules is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 54/407)

Agitating to re-open an issue, knowing that it was properly dealt with, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 63/424)

Not informing other bhikkhus of a serious offense that one knows another bhikkhu has committed — out of a desire to protect him either from having to undergo the penalty or from the jeering remarks of other bhikkhus — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 64)

Acting as the preceptor in the ordination of a person one knows to be less than 20 years old is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 65/428)

Refusing — after the third announcement of a formal rebuke in a meeting of the Community — to give up the wrong view that there is nothing wrong in intentionally transgressing the Buddha's ordinances is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 68/434)

Consorting, joining in communion, or lying down under the same roof with a bhikkhu who has been suspended and not been restored — knowing that such is the case — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 69/437)

Supporting, receiving services from, consorting, or lying down under the same roof with an expelled novice — knowing that he has been expelled — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 70/439)

Saying something as a ploy to excuse oneself from training under a training rule when being admonished by another bhikkhu for a breach of the rule is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 71/442)
Criticizing the discipline in the presence of another bhikkhu, in hopes of preventing its study, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 72/443)

Using half-truths to deceive others into believing that one is ignorant of the rules in the Patimokkha, after one has already heard the Patimokkha in full three times, and a formal act exposing one's deceit has been brought against one, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 73/445)

Giving a blow to another bhikkhu, when motivated by anger, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 74/446)

Making a threatening gesture against another bhikkhu when motivated by anger is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 75/448)

Saying to another bhikkhu that he may have broken a rule unknowingly, simply for the purpose of causing him anxiety, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 77/449)

Eavesdropping on bhikkhus involved in an argument over an issue — with the intention of using what they say against them — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 78/451)

Complaining about a formal act of the Community to which one gave one's consent — if one knows that the act was carried out in accordance with the rule — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 79/452)

Getting up and leaving a meeting of the Community in the midst of a valid formal act — without having first given one's consent to the act and with the intention of invalidating it — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 80/455)

After participating in a formal act of the Community giving robe-cloth to a Community official: Complaining that the Community acted out of favoritism is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 81/458)

When the Community is dealing formally with an issue, the full Community must be present, as must all the individuals involved in the issue; the proceedings must follow the patterns set out in the Dhamma and Vinaya. (As 1/511)

If the Community unanimously believes that a bhikkhu is innocent of a charge made against him, they may declare him innocent on the basis of his memory of the events. (As 2/512)

If the Community unanimously believes that a bhikkhu was insane while committing offenses against the rules, they may absolve him of any responsibility for the offenses. (As 3/513)

If a bhikkhu commits an offense, he should willingly undergo the appropriate penalty in line with what he actually did and the actual seriousness of the offense. (As 4/513)

If an important dispute cannot be settled by a unanimous decision, it should be submitted to a vote. The opinion of the majority, if in accord with the Dhamma and Vinaya, is then considered decisive. (As 5/513)

If a bhikkhu admits to an offense only after being interrogated in a formal meeting, the Community should carry out an act of censure against him, rescinding it only when he has mended his ways. (As 6/514)

If, in the course of a dispute, both sides act in ways unworthy of contemplatives, and the sorting out of the penalties would only prolong the dispute, the Community as a whole may make a blanket confession of its light offenses. (As 7/515)

**The Etiquette of a Contemplative**

Training a novice or lay person to recite passages of Dhamma by rote is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 4/267)

Lying down at the same time, in the same lodging, with a novice or layman for more than three nights running is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 5/271)

Digging soil or commanding that it be dug is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 10/292)

Intentionally cutting, burning, or killing a living plant is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 11/294)

Handing food or medicine to a mendicant ordained outside of Buddhism is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 41/381)

When on almsround with another bhikkhu: Sending him back so that he won't witness any misconduct one is planning to indulge in is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 42/383)

To sit down intruding on a man and a woman in their private quarters — when one or both are sexually aroused, and when another bhikkhu is not present — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 43/384)

Watching a field army — or similar large military force — on active duty, unless there is a suitable reason, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 48/397)

Staying more than three consecutive nights with an army on active duty — even when one has a suitable reason to be there — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 49/399)

Going to a battlefield, a roll call, an array of the troops in battle formation, or to see a review of the battle units while one is staying with an army is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 50/400)

Taking an intoxicant is a pacittiya offense regardless of whether one is aware or not that it is an intoxicant. (Pc 51/402)

Tickling another bhikkhu is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 52/405)

Jumping and swimming in the water for fun is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 53/406)

Aiding another bhikkhu to warm oneself — or having it lit — when one does not need the warmth for one's health is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 56/409)

Bathing more frequently than once a fortnight when residing in the middle Ganges Valley, except on certain occasions, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 57/411)

Hiding another bhikkhu's bowl, robe, sitting cloth, needle case, or belt — or having it hid — either as a joke or with the purpose of annoying him, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 60/419)

Traveling by arrangement with a group of thieves from one village to another — knowing that they are thieves — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 66/430)
Entering a king’s sleeping chamber unannounced, when both the king and queen are in the chamber, is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 83/461)

Picking up a valuable, or having it picked up, with the intent of putting it in safe keeping for the owner — except when one finds it in a monastery or in a dwelling one is visiting — is a pacittiya offense. (Pc 84/463)

A bhikkhu should wear his upper and lower robes even all around. (Sk 1 & 2)

**Etiquette in inhabited areas**

When going or sitting in inhabited areas, a bhikkhu should:

- wear his robes so that they hang down evenly, covering his chest, knees, wrists, and everything in between.
- refrain from playing with his hands or feet.
- keep his gaze lowered except when it is necessary to look up.
- refrain from hitching up his robe so that it exposes the side of his body.
- refrain from laughing loudly or speaking loudly.
- refrain from swinging his body, arms or head.
- refrain from putting his arms akimbo.
- refrain from covering his head unless the weather is unbearably cold or hot.
- refrain from walking on tiptoe or just on his heels.
- refrain from sitting with his arms around his knees. (Sk 3-26)

**Receiving and eating almsfood**

When receiving alms, a bhikkhu should:

- be mindful to receive them appreciatively.
- focus his attention on the alms bowl.
- take bean curry only in proper proportion to the rice.
- accept no more food than will fill the bowl level to the top rim. (Sk 27-30)

When eating, a bhikkhu should:

- be mindful to eat his food appreciatively.
- focus his attention on the bowl.
- eat his food methodically, from one side of the bowl to the other.
- eat bean curry only in proper proportion to the rice.
- level his rice before eating from it.
- refrain from hiding his substantial food with rice, out of a hope of getting more.
- refrain from looking at another bhikkhu's bowl intent on finding fault with him for not sharing his food.
- refrain from making extra-large mouthfuls.
- eat his rice in rounded mouthfuls.
- refrain from opening his mouth until he has brought food to it.
- refrain from putting his whole hand in his mouth.
- refrain from speaking when there is so much food in his mouth that it affects his pronunciation.
- refrain from lifting a large handful of food from his bowl and breaking off mouthfuls with the other hand.
- refrain from nibbling bit by bit at his mouthfuls of food.
- refrain from stuffing out his cheeks.
- refrain from shaking food off his hands or scattering rice about.
- refrain from sticking out his tongue or smacking his lips.
- refrain from making a slurping noise.
- refrain from licking his hands, his bowl or his lips.
- refrain from accepting a water vessel with a hand soiled by food.
- refrain from throwing away — in an inhabited area — bowl-rinsing water that has grains of rice in it. (Sk 31-36, 38-56)

**Teaching Dhamma**

When his listener is not ill, a bhikkhu should not teach Dhamma if the listener:

- has an umbrella in his/her hand, has a staff in his/her hand, has a knife in his/her hand, has a weapon in his/her hand, is wearing shoes, boots or sandals, is sitting in a vehicle when the bhikkhu is in a lower vehicle or not in a vehicle at all, is lying down when the bhikkhu is sitting or standing, is sitting holding his/her knees, is wearing a hat or a turban, or has covered his/her head with a scarf or shawl.
- is sitting on a seat while the bhikkhu is sitting on the ground, is sitting on a high seat while the bhikkhu is sitting on a lower seat, is sitting while the bhikkhu is standing.
- is walking ahead of the bhikkhu, is walking on a path while the bhikkhu is walking beside the path. (Sk 57-72)

**Urinating, defecating & spitting**

Unless he is ill, a bhikkhu should not urinate or defecate while standing. (Sk 73-75)

Unless he is ill, a bhikkhu should not urinate, defecate or spit on living crops or in water that is fit for bathing or drinking.

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Dhamma-Vinaya
An Introduction from the Buddhist Monastic Code Volume I, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

"Now, Ananda, if it occurs to any of you — The teaching has lost its authority; we are without a Teacher' — do not view it in that way. Whatever Dhamma and Vinaya I have pointed out and formulated for you, that will be your Teacher when I am gone." — Digha Nikaya 16

Dhamma-Vinaya was the Buddha’s own name for the religion he founded. Dhamma — the truth — is what he discovered and pointed out as advice for all who want to gain release from suffering. Vinaya — discipline — is what he formulated as rules, ideals, and standards of behavior for those of his followers who went forth from home life to take up the quest for release in greater earnestness. Dhamma and Vinaya in practice function only together. Neither without the other can attain the desired goal. In theory they may be separate, but in the person who practices them they merge as qualities developed in the mind and character.

"Gotami, the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to dispassion, not to passion; to being unfettered and not to being fettered; to self-effacement and not to self-aggrandizement; to modesty and not to ambition; to contentment and not to discontent; to seclusion and not to entanglement; to energy and not to idleness; to being unburdensome and not to being burdensome'. You may definitely hold, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction.'" (Khandaka, Cullavagga X.5)

Ultimately, the Buddha said, just as the sea has a single taste, that of salt, so too the Dhamma and Vinaya have a single taste: that of release. The connection between discipline and release is spelled out in a passage that recurs at several points in the Canon: "Discipline is for the sake of restraint, restraint for the sake of freedom from remorse, freedom from remorse for the sake of joy, joy for the sake of rapture, rapture for the sake of tranquility, tranquility for the sake of pleasure, pleasure for the sake of concentration, concentration for the sake of knowledge and vision of things as they are, knowledge and vision of things as they are for the sake of disenchantment, disenchantment for the sake of dispassion, dispassion for the sake of release, release for the sake of knowledge and vision of release, knowledge and vision of release for the sake of total unbinding without clinging." (Parivara XII.2)

In establishing his religion of release, though, the Buddha did not simply set out a body of recommendations and rules. He also founded a company (parisa) of followers. This company falls into four main groups: bhikkhus (monks), bhikkhunis (nuns), lay men, and lay women. Although the Buddha saw no need to organize the laity in any manner, he arranged for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis — who had given up the entanglements of the household life to devote themselves more fully to the goal of release — to develop into communities; and saw that they needed, as all communities do, ideals and standards, rules and customs to ensure their stability. This need is what gave rise to the Vinaya.

In the early years of the Buddha’s career, the texts tell us, there was no need to formulate disciplinary rules. All of the bhikkhus in his following — the Community of bhikkhus had not yet been started — were men of high personal attainments who had succeeded in subduing many or all of the defilements of their minds. They knew his teachings well and behaved accordingly. The Canon tells of how Ven. Sariputta, one of the Buddha’s foremost disciples, asked the Buddha at an early date to formulate a Patimokkha, or code of rules, to ensure that the holy life the Buddha had founded would last long, just as a thread holding together a floral arrangement ensures that the flowers are not scattered by the wind. The Buddha replied that the time for such a code had not yet come, for even the most backward of the men in the Community at that time had already had their first glimpse of the goal. Only when mental effluents/outflows (asava) made themselves felt in the Community would there be a need for a Patimokkha.

As time passed, the conditions that provided an opening for the effluents within the Community eventually began to appear. The Bhaddali Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 65) presents the Buddha at a later point in his career listing these conditions as five:

Ven. Bhaddali: “Why is it, venerable sir, that there used to be fewer training rules and more bhikkhus established in the knowledge of Awakening? And why is it that there are now more training rules and fewer bhikkhus established in the knowledge of Awakening?” [Bhaddali, who has been unwilling to abide by the training rules, seems to be suggesting that the rise in the number of training rules is itself the cause for fewer bhikkhus’ attaining Awakening. The Buddha, however, offers a different explanation.]

The Buddha: “So it is, Bhaddali. When beings have begun to degenerate, and the true Dhamma has begun to disappear, there are more training rules and fewer bhikkhus established in the knowledge of Awakening. The Teacher does not lay down a training rule for his disciples as long as there are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Community. But when there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Community, then the Teacher lays down a training rule for his disciples so as to counteract those very conditions.

“There are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Community as long as the Community has not become large. But when the Community has become large, then there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents arise in the Community, and the Teacher then lays down a training rule for his disciples so as to counteract those very conditions... When the Community possesses great material gains... great status... a large body of learning... when the Community is long-standing, then there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents arise in the Community, and the Teacher then lays down a training rule for his disciples so as to counteract those very conditions.”
Thus the rules themselves were not the cause for degeneracy in the Community, and the conditions that provided a foothold for the effluents were not themselves effluents. Rather, the growing complexity of the Community provided the opportunity for bhikkhus to act on the basis of their defilements in a growing variety of ways, and the rules — although they could not prevent any of the five conditions — had to become correspondingly complex to counteract the opportunities those conditions provided for unenlightened behavior.

Even when these conditions did arise, though, the Buddha did not set out a full code at once. Instead, he formulated rules one at a time, in response to events. The considerations that went into formulating each rule are best illustrated by the events surrounding the formulation of the first.

Ven. Sudinna, the story goes, had strong faith in the Buddha and had been ordained after receiving his parents' grudging consent. He was their only child and, though married, was childless. His parents, fearing that the government would confiscate their property at their death if it had no heir, devised various schemes to lure Ven. Sudinna back to the lay life, but to no avail. Finally, his mother realized that he was firm in his intention to stay a bhikkhu and so asked him at least to have intercourse with his former wife so that their property would have an heir. Ven. Sudinna consented, took his wife into the forest, and had intercourse three times.

Immediately he felt remorseful and eventually confessed his deed to his fellow bhikkhus. Word reached the Buddha, who called a meeting of the Community, questioned Ven. Sudinna, and gave him a rebuke. The rebuke fell into two major parts. In the first part, the Buddha reminded Ven. Sudinna of his position as a samana — a contemplative — and that his behavior was unworthy of his position. Also, the Buddha pointed out to him the aims of the teaching and noted that his behavior ran counter to them. The implication here was that Ven. Sudinna had not only acted inconsistently with the content of the teaching, but had also shown callous disregard for the Buddha's compassionate aims in making the Dhamma known.

"Misguided man, it is unseemly, unbecoming, unsuitable, and unworthy of a contemplative; improper and not to be done... Have I not taught the Dhamma in many ways for the sake of dispassion and not for passion; for unfettering and not for fettering; for letting go and not for clinging? Yet here, while I have taught the Dhamma for dispassion, you set your heart on passion; while I have taught the Dhamma for unfettering, you set your heart on being fettered; while I have taught the Dhamma for letting go, you set your heart on clinging.

"Misguided man, haven't I taught the Dhamma in various ways for the fading of passion, the sobering of pride, the subduing of thirst, the destruction of attachment, the severing of the round, the depletion of craving, dispassion, stopping, unbinding? Have I not advocated abandoning sensual pleasures, understanding sensual perceptions, subduing sensual thirst, destroying sensual preoccupations, calming sensual fevers?... Misguided man, this neither inspires faith in the faithless nor increases the faithful. Rather, it inspires lack of faith in the faithless and wavering in some of the faithful."

The second part of the rebuke dealt in terms of personal qualities: those that a bhikkhu practicing discipline is to abandon, and those he is to develop.

"Then the Blessed One, having in various ways rebuked Ven. Sudinna, having spoken in disparage of being burdensome, demanding, arrogant, discontented, entangled, and indolent; in various ways having spoken in praise of being unburdensome, undemanding, modest, content, austere, scrupulous, gracious, self-effacing, and energetic; having given a Dhamma talk on what is seemly and becoming for bhikkhus, addressed the bhikkhus."

This was where the Buddha formulated the training rule, after first stating his reasons for doing so.

"In that case, bhikkhus, I will formulate a training rule for the bhikkhus with ten aims in mind: the excellence of the Community, the peace of the Community, the curbing of the shameless, the comfort of well-behaved bhikkhus, the restraint of effluents related to the present life, the prevention of effluents related to the next life, the arousing of faith in the faithless, the increase of the faithful, the establishment of the true Dhamma, and the fostering of discipline."

These reasons fall into three main types. The first two are external: 1) to ensure peace and well-being within the Community itself, and 2) to foster and protect faith among the laity, on whom the bhikkhus depend for their support. (The origin stories of the various rules depict the laity as being very quick to generalize. One bhikkhu misbehaves, and they complain, "How can these bhikkhus do that?" The third type of reason, though, is internal: The rule is to help restrain and prevent mental effluents within the individual bhikkhus. Thus the rules aim not only at the external well-being of the Community, but also at the internal well-being of the individual. This latter point soon becomes apparent to anyone who seriously tries to keep to the rules, for they foster mindfulness and circumspection in one's actions, qualities that carry over into the training of the mind.

Over the course of time the Buddha formulated more than 200 major and minor rules, forming the Patimokkha that was recited fortnightly in each Community of bhikkhus. In addition, he formulated many other minor rules that were memorized by those of his followers who specialized in the subject of discipline, but nothing is known for sure of what format they used to organize this body of knowledge during his lifetime.

After his total nibbana, though, his followers made a concerted effort to establish a standard canon of Dhamma and Vinaya, and the Pali canon as we know it began to take shape. The Vinaya was organized into two main parts: 1) the Sutta Vibhanga, the 'Exposition of the Text' (which from here on we will refer to simply as the Vibhanga), containing almost all the material dealing with the Patimokkha rules; and 2) the Khandhakas, or Groupings, which contain the remaining material organized loosely according to subject matter. The Khandhakas themselves are divided into two parts, the Mahavagga, or Greater Chapter, and the Cullavagga, or Lesser Chapter. Historians estimate that the Vibhanga and Khandhakas reached their present form no later than the 2nd century B.C.E., and that the Parivara, or Addenda — a summary and study guide — was added a few centuries later, closing the Vinaya Pitaka, the part of the Canon dealing with discipline.
Ordination in the time of the Buddha (and in the modern Theravada Tradition)
from Buddhist Monastic Code Volume II, Chapter 14, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Like so many other aspects of the Vinaya, the procedures for ordination — the patterns to be followed in accepting applicants into the Community — were not determined all at once, but grew in response to events over time. There were three main stages in their development. In the first stage, during the very early years of the Buddha's career, when an applicant asked to join the Community the Buddha would simply say, *Ehi bhikkhu...* (Come, monk.) That constituted the applicant's acceptance into the Community. As the Community grew, the Buddha sent his bhikkhu disciples their separate ways to spread the teaching. When they inspired in others a desire to join the Community, they had to bring the applicants back to the Buddha for him to accept. Seeing the difficulties this entailed — roads were poor; the bhikkhus and their applicants had to travel great distances on foot — the Buddha allowed individual disciples to accept applicants on their own, using the formula of going for the Triple Refuge. This was the second stage. In the third stage, when the Buddha felt that the Community required a more formal organization, he rescinded the going for the Triple Refuge as a means of acceptance and replaced it with a formal Community transaction, using a motion and three proclamations.

Even then, however, the rules and procedures governing ordination continued to develop in response to events recorded in the Canon. And after the closing of the Canon, traditions continued to build up around the act of ordination, so that different sects within the Theravada school have differing customs surrounding the basic core of instructions included in the Canon and explained in the commentaries. In this chapter, we will focus on the common core: the aspects of the ordination procedure that are absolutely necessary for it to be a valid Community transaction. After a few general remarks, our discussion will start with the validity of the object, i.e., the applicant for ordination, followed by the validity of the assembly and the validity of the transaction statements. Anyone interested in learning the complete patterns for ordination as currently practiced in the various Theravadin sects should consult the ordination guides that those sects have issued.

**Going-forth and Acceptance.** Ordination falls into two parts: Going-forth (*pabbajja*) and Acceptance (*upasampada*). The first is a prerequisite for the second. In the Going-forth, one leaves the home life for the homeless life, becoming a novice (*samanera*). After one's head is shaved, one dons the ochre (*kasaya*) robes, takes refuge in the Triple Gem, and undertakes the ten samanera precepts. In the Acceptance, one becomes a full-fledged bhikkhu, with full rights to live in common communion with the Bhikkhu Sangha. The Going-forth is not a Community transaction, whereas Acceptance is.

**Preliminary steps.** Prior to ordination, an applicant must have his head shaved and be clothed in the ochre (*kasaya*) robes. Then he receives the Going-forth, after which he takes dependence on a preceptor. His robes and bowl are pointed out to him, and he is then sent outside the assembly, where an experienced, competent bhikkhu instructs him about the thirteen obstructing factors to Acceptance. The instructing bhikkhu returns to the assembly and the applicant is then called back into the assembly, where he requests Acceptance. He is then quizzed in the assembly about the obstructing factors, and when his answers are satisfactory he may be given the full Acceptance.

The *Going-forth* is not a Community transaction. The Canon's requirements for the procedure are simple: the applicant is given the Three Refuges three times. Although the Canon mentions that bhikkhus (plural) are present at the Going-forth, it does not set a minimum for the quorum or any specific qualifications for the bhikkhu officiating. However, a bhikkhu who does not meet the qualifications of a bhikkhu's preceptor should not have a novice attend to him (Mv.I.36-37), which suggests that even if the applicant is simply going forth without yet taking full Acceptance, the bhikkhu officiating must meet the qualifications of a bhikkhu's preceptor.

The Commentary states further that, before giving the Three Refuges, the preceptor must bestow the ochre robes on the applicant, or must tell a bhikkhu, novice, or layman to put robes on the applicant. If the applicant comes with robes already on, he must take them off and then put them on again. (The tradition in Thailand is that a novice wear only the upper and under robes. The Commentary to Mv.I.12.4 mentions the outer cloak as part of a novice's set of robes as well. However, Mv.VIII.27.3 mentions a novices "robe," whereas a parallel passage in Mv.VIII.27.2 mentions a bhikkhu's "triple robe," which suggests that novices in the time of the Canon did not wear the outer cloak, either.) Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, the applicant should pay homage to the feet of the bhikkhus and sit on his haunches with his hands raised in añjali. Then he should be told: "Eva.m vadehi (Say this)," followed by the threefold formula for going for refuge in the Triple Gem. The Commentary insists that both sides — the preceptor and the applicant — must pronounce the refuge formula properly. That constitutes the applicant's Going-forth. It is customary to have him undertake the ten precepts immediately after going for refuge.
Instruction. After the applicant has been sent out of the assembly, a competent, experienced bhikkhu is authorized through a formal motion to instruct him about the thirteen obstructing factors. One bhikkhu may give the motion to authorize another, or may give it to authorize himself. The "instruction" is a rehearsal of the questions the applicant will be asked in the midst of the Community just prior to his full Acceptance. It is interesting to note that not all the possible disqualifications for full Acceptance are included in the list of thirteen. The Vinaya Mukha postulates either that, in the very beginning, these were the only disqualifications, or that they were reckoned the most important. The second possibility is unlikely, as only three of the thirteen are absolute.

When the instruction is complete, the instructing bhikkhu returns first to the assembly and recites a formal motion to inform the assembly that the applicant has been instructed and that the applicant should be allowed into the assembly.

After the applicant comes and requests full Acceptance, an experienced, competent bhikkhu (usually the same one who instructed the applicant) recites a formal motion to authorize himself to quiz the applicant about the thirteen obstructing factors. When he has finished the quiz, the preliminary steps are done.

Full Acceptance. The transaction statement for full Acceptance consists of a motion and three proclamations. The applicant becomes a bhikkhu when the third proclamation is finished. If two or three applicants are requesting full Acceptance at the same time, they may all be included in a single transaction statement as long as they have the same preceptor, but not if their preceptors are different. No more than three may be included in a single transaction statement.

Subsequent steps. Immediately after full Acceptance, the Canon says, the shadow (time of day) should be measured. The length of the season should be told, the portion of the day told, along with the combination (of the above three, says the Commentary). At present, the time is marked with a reliable clock or watch, and then recorded together with the date.

The Canon also states that the four supports should be told immediately, and that the new bhikkhu be given a companion who will explain to him the four things never-to-be-done (i.e., the four parajika rules). At present, the common practice is for the preceptor to explain both the four supports and the four things never-to-be-done immediately after the transaction statement. That concludes the procedure.

Training. The novice's basic training consists of the ten training rules:

- refraining from killing living beings,
- refraining from taking what is not given,
- refraining from sexual intercourse,
- refraining from speaking lies,
- refraining from alcohol and fermented liquors that cause heedlessness,
- refraining from eating in the wrong time (after noon and before dawn),
- refraining from watching dancing, singing, and music,
- refraining from adorning oneself with garlands, scents, cosmetics, and ornaments,
- refraining from high and great seats and beds,
- refraining from accepting gold and silver (money).

According to the Commentary, a novice who breaks any of the first five training rules has cut himself off from the Triple Refuge, from his preceptor, from his right to Community gains, and from his right to a lodging in a monastery. He is still a novice, though, and if he sees the error of his ways and is determined to restrain himself in the future, he may take the Triple Refuge from his preceptor again and so be restored to his former status.

The customary practice is for novices also to receive training in the Sekhiya rules and Khandhaka protocols, but there is no established standard for imposing offenses on them for breaking any of these rules.

Dependence. A novice must live in dependence on a mentor (for a minimum of five years). Both mentor and novice are expected to follow the appropriate protocols with regard to the other. One bhikkhu is allowed to have more than one novice attend to him only if he is competent to ensure that the novices do not misbehave with one another. (In the origin story to this rule, two novices attending on Ven. Upananda sexually molested each other; in a later story, one of them molested a bhikkhnī.) A bhikkhu is also forbidden from luring another bhikkhu's following away. The Commentary states that following means student novices or bhikkhus. Even if the other bhikkhu is unvirtuous, it says, one may not directly lure his following away but one may make a statement so that they will realize the undesirability of staying on with their mentor. The example it offers shows that the indirect statement does not have to be subtle: "Your living in dependence on an unvirtuous person is like coming
to bathe but smearing yourself with excrement.” If the people to whom this remark is addressed realize its truth and then ask to take dependence on one, one may accept them as one’s following without offense.

Qualifications: Preceptor/Teacher (from the Vinaya Pitaka, Khandaka Section)

"Bhikkhus, I allow a preceptor. The preceptor will nurse the attitude he would have toward a son (‘son-mind’) with regard to the student. The student will nurse the attitude he would have toward a father (‘father-mind’) with regard to the preceptor. Thus they — living with mutual respect, deference, and courtesy — will arrive at growth, increase, and maturity in this Dhamma-Vinaya.” — Mv.I.25.6

"One should not be accepted by (a bhikkhu) with less than ten rains. Whoever should (so) accept: an offense of wrong doing. I allow one to be accepted by (a bhikkhu) with ten rains or more.” — Mv.I.31.5

"One should not be accepted by a foolish, inexperienced bhikkhu. Whoever should (so) accept: an offense of wrong doing. I allow one to be accepted by (a bhikkhu) with ten rains or more who is experienced and competent.” — Mv.I.31.8

"I allow a teacher. The teacher will nurse the attitude he would have toward a son (‘son-mind’) with regard to the student. The student will nurse the attitude he would have toward a father (‘father-mind’) with regard to the teacher. Thus they — living with mutual respect, deference, and courtesy — will arrive at growth, increase, and maturity in this Dhamma-Vinaya. I allow dependence to be practiced for ten rains, and for dependence to be given by one with ten rains.” — Mv.I.32.1 (See Mv.I.53.4)

"Endowed with five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. He is not endowed with the aggregate of virtue of one beyond training ... the aggregate of concentration of one beyond training ... the aggregate of discernment of one beyond training ... the aggregate of release of one beyond training ... the aggregate of knowledge and vision of release of one beyond training. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. He is without conviction, without a sense of shame, without concern (for the results of his actions), lazy, and of muddled mindfulness. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. In terms of heightened virtue, his virtue is corrupted. In terms of heightened behavior, his behavior is corrupted. In terms of higher views, his views are corrupted. He is not learned. He is undiscerning. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. He is not competent to tend or to get someone else to tend to a sick pupil or student; to allay or to get someone else to allay dissatisfaction (in the celibate life); to dispel or to get someone else to dispel, in line with the Dhamma, anxiety that has arisen. He does not know what is an offense, nor does he know the method for removing (lit: getting up out of) an offense. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. He does not know what is an offense, what is not an offense, what is a light offense, what is a heavy offense. Both Patimokkhas, in detail, have not been properly handed down to him, have not been properly explicated, have not been properly ‘revolved’ (in terms of the ‘wheels’), have not been properly judged, clause by clause, letter by letter. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him.
"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. He does not know what is an offense, what is not an offense, what is a light offense, what is a heavy offense. He is of less than ten years' standing. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not give dependence, and a novice should not attend to him. — Mv.I.36.2-17

**Dependence (from the Vinaya Pitaka, Khandaka Section)**

"Dependence should not be given by a foolish, inexperienced (bhikkhu). Whoever should (so) give it: an offense of wrong doing. I allow dependence to be given by (a bhikkhu) with ten rains or more who is experienced and competent." — Mv.I.35.2

"Dependence should not be given to one who is unconscientious. Whoever should give it: an offense of wrong doing" ... "Dependence should not be observed under one who is unconscientious. Whoever should observe it: an offense of wrong doing" ... (Bhikkhus asked, "Now, how are we to know who is conscientious and who is not?") ... "I allow that you wait four or five days (and can decide), 'As far as I know from the common life of the bhikkhus.'" — Mv.I.72

"Monks, a pupil endowed with five qualities may be dismissed. With regard to his preceptor he does not have strong affection, does not have strong confidence, does not have a strong sense of shame, does not have strong respect, does not have strong development (in the practice). A pupil endowed with these five qualities may be dismissed. A pupil endowed with five qualities should not be dismissed. With regard to his preceptor he has strong affection, has strong confidence, has a strong sense of shame, has strong respect, has strong development. A pupil endowed with these five qualities should not be dismissed." — Mv.I.27.6

"There are these five lapses in dependence on one's preceptor: the preceptor goes away, disrobes, dies, joins (another) faction [according to the Commentary, this means another religion, but it could also mean another faction in a split Community], or, as the fifth, (gives) a command. These are the five lapses in dependence on one's preceptor.

"Endowed with five qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently (of a preceptor or teacher). He is not endowed with the aggregate of virtue of one beyond training ... the aggregate of concentration of one beyond training ... the aggregate of discernment of one beyond training ... the aggregate of release of one beyond training ... the aggregate of knowledge and vision of release of one beyond training. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently. He is without conviction, without a sense of shame, without concern (for the results of his actions), lazy, and of muddled mindfulness. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not live independently.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently. In terms of heightened virtue, his virtue is corrupted. In terms of heightened behavior, his behavior is corrupted. In terms of higher views, his views are corrupted. He is not learned. He is undiscerning. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not give Acceptance, should not live independently.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently. He does not know what is an offense, what is not an offense, what is a light offense, what is a heavy offense. Both Patimokkhas, in detail, have not been properly handed down to him, have not been properly explicated, have not been properly 'revolved' (in terms of the 'wheels'), have not been properly judged, clause by clause, letter by letter. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently.

"Endowed with five further qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently. He does not know what is an offense, what is not an offense, what is a light offense, what is a heavy offense. He is of less than five years' standing. Endowed with these five qualities, a bhikkhu should not live independently. — Mv.I.53.5-9

"I allow an experienced, competent bhikkhu to live five years in dependence, and inexperienced one all his life." — Mv.I.53.4

"I allow a bhikkhu who is going on a journey and unable to get dependence, to live independently" ... "I allow a bhikkhu who is ill and unable to get dependence, to live independently" ... "I allow a bhikkhu who is attending to the ill and unable to get dependence, to live independently even if he is requested (C: by the ill bhikkhu to take dependence under him)" ... "I allow a bhikkhu living in the wilderness and contemplating ($) in comfort to live independently, (thinking,) 'When an appropriate giver of dependence comes along, I will live in dependence with him.'" — Mv.I.73
Going-Forth (pabbajja)

Buddham saranam gacchami. I go to the Buddha for refuge.
Dhammam saranam gacchami. I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
Sangham saranam gacchami. I go to the Sangha for refuge.
Dutiyampi buddham saranam gacchami. A second time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.
Dutiyampi dhammam saranam gacchami. A second time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
Dutiyampi sangham saranam gacchami. A second time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.
Tatiyampi buddham saranam gacchami. A third time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.
Tatiyampi dhammam saranam gacchami. A third time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
Tatiyampi sangham saranam gacchami. A third time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Panatipata veramani, Refraining from killing living beings,
Adinnadana veramani, Refraining from taking what is not given,
Abrahmacariya veramani, Refraining from unchaste conduct,
Musavada veramani, Refraining from false speech,
Sura-meraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani, Refraining from distilled and fermented intoxicants that cause heedlessness,
Vikala-bhojana veramani, Refraining from eating at the forbidden time,
Nacca-gita-vadita-visuka-dassana veramani, Refraining from dancing, singing, music, and going to see entertainments,
Mala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanatthana veramani, Refraining from wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics,
Uccasayana-mahasayana veramani, Refraining from using high or large beds,
Jatarupa-rajata-patiggahana veramani: Refraining from accepting gold and silver [money]:
Imani dasa sikkhapadani samadiyami. I undertake these ten rules of training.

Acceptance (upasampada)

Scrutiny of the robes & bowl:
This is your bowl (patta). Yes, venerable sir (ama bhante).
This is the outer robe (sanghati). Yes, venerable sir.
This is the upper robe (uttarasanga). Yes, venerable sir.
This is the lower robe (antaravasaka). Yes, venerable sir.
Go stand in that spot over there.

Appointing oneself to instruct the applicant:
Venerable sirs (bhante), may the Community (sangha) listen to me. (Khemako) is Venerable (Jotiko's) applicant for Acceptance (upasampada). If the Community is ready, I will instruct (Khemako).

Instructing the applicant outside the gathering:
Listen, (Khemako). This is the time for the truth, the time for what is factual. Things that have occurred will be asked about in the midst of the Community. Whatever is so should be affirmed. Whatever is not should be denied. Do not be embarrassed. Do not be confused. They will ask you as follows: Do you have any diseases such as these? Leprosy? (No sir.) Boils? Ringworm? Tuberculosis? Epilepsy? Are you a human being? (Yes, sir.) Are you a man? Are you a free man? Are you free from debt? Are you exempt from government service? Do you have your parents' permission? Are you fully 20 years old? Are your bowl and robes (patta-civara) complete? What is your name? (Venerable sir, I am named (Khemako)). What is your preceptor's name? (Venerable sir, my preceptor is named (Jotiko)).

Calling the applicant into the gathering:
Venerable sirs, may the Community listen to me. (Khemako) is Venerable (Jotiko's) applicant for Acceptance. He has been instructed by me. If the Community is ready, (Khemako) may come.

Come.

Requesting Acceptance:
Venerable sirs, I request Acceptance from the Community. May the Community, out of sympathy, lift me up.
A second time ... A third time, venerable sirs, I request Acceptance from the Community. May the Community, out of sympathy, lift me up.

Appointing oneself to question the applicant:
Venerable sirs, may the Community listen to me. This (Khemako) is Venerable (Jotiko's) applicant for Acceptance. If the Community is ready, I will ask (Khemako) about the obstructing factors.
Listen, (Khemako). This is the time for the truth, the time for what is factual. I ask you about things that have occurred. Whatever is so should be affirmed. Whatever is not should be denied. Do you have any diseases such as these?...

(Questions and answers as before.)
Transaction statement:
Venerable sirs, may the Community listen to me. This (Khemako) is Venerable (Jotiko's) applicant for Acceptance. He is free of the obstructing factors. His bowl and robes are complete. (Khemako) requests Acceptance from the Community with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor (upajjhaya). If the Community is ready, it should accept (Khemako) with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor. This is the motion.
Venerable sirs, may the Community listen to me. This (Khemako) is Venerable (Jotiko's) applicant for Acceptance. He is free of the obstructing factors. His bowl and robes are complete. (Khemako) requests Acceptance from the Community with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor. The Community accepts (Khemako) with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor. He to whom the Acceptance of (Khemako) with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor is agreeable should remain silent. He to whom it is not agreeable should speak.
A second time ... A third time I speak of this matter. Venerable sirs, may the Community listen to me ... He to whom it is not agreeable should speak.
(Khemako) has been accepted by the Community, with Venerable (Jotiko) as preceptor. This is agreeable to the Community, therefore it is silent. Thus do I hold it.

Admonition
The Blessed One (Bhagavan) has given permission that, when one as been accepted, one be told the four supports, together with the four things never to be done.

The Four Supports (nissaya):

Alms-food
Going-Forth (pabbajja) has alms-food (pindiyalopa-bhojana) as its support. For the rest of your life you are to endeavor at that. The extra allowances are: a meal for the Community, a meal for a specific number of bhikkhus, a meal for bhikkhus invited by name, a meal given by tickets, a meal given fortnightly, a meal on the uposatha day, a meal on the day after the uposatha.

Rag-robes
Going-Forth has rag-robes (pamsukula-civara) as its support. For the rest of your life you are to endeavor at that. The extra allowances are: (robes made of) linen, cotton, silk, wool, hemp, (or) a mixture of these.

Dwelling at the foot of a tree
Going-Forth has dwelling at the foot of a tree (rukkha-mula-senasana) as its support. For the rest of your life you are to endeavor at that. The extra allowances are: a dwelling, a barrel-vaulted building, a multi-storied building, a gabled building, a cell.

Fermented urine as medicine
Going-Forth has fermented urine medicine (putimutta-bhesajja) as its support. For the rest of your life you are to endeavor at that. The extra allowances are: ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, sugar.

The Four Things Never to be Done:

Sexual intercourse
A bhikkhu who has been accepted should not indulge in sexual intercourse (methuno dhammo na patisevitabbo), even with an animal. Any bhikkhu who indulges in sexual intercourse is not a contemplative (samana), not a son of the Sakyan (sakyaputtiya). Just as a person with his head cut off could not live with the remainder of his body, in the same way a bhikkhu who has indulged in sexual intercourse is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. You are not to do this for the rest of your life.

Taking what is not given
A bhikkhu who has been accepted should not take with thieving intent what has not been given (adinnam theyya-sankhatam na adatabbam), even if it is only a blade of grass. Any bhikkhu who takes with thieving intent what has not been given — worth either one Paada, the equivalent of one Paada, or more — is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. Just as a withered leaf removed from its stem can never become green again, in the same way a bhikkhu who has taken with thieving intent what has not been given — worth either one Paada, the equivalent of one Paada, or more — is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. You are not to do this for the rest of your life.

Depriving a human being of life
A bhikkhu who has been accepted should not deprive a living being of life (sañcicca pano jivita na voropetabbo), even if it is only a black or white ant. Any bhikkhu who purposely deprives a human being of life, even to the extent of causing an abortion, is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. Just as a solid block of stone broken in two cannot be joined together again, in the same way a bhikkhu who has purposely deprived a human being of life is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. You are not to do this for the rest of your life.

Claiming unfactual superior human states
A bhikkhu who has been accepted should not lay claim to a superior human state (uttari-manussa-dhammo na ullapitabbo), even to the extent of saying, "I delight in an empty dwelling." Any bhikkhu who — with evil desires, overwhelmed with greed — lays claim to a superior human state that is unfactual and non-existent in himself — absorption, freedom, concentration, attainment, path, or fruition — is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. Just as a sugar palm cut off at the crown is incapable of further growth, in the same way a bhikkhu who — with evil desires, overwhelmed with greed — lays claim to a superior human state that is unfactual and non-existent in himself is not a contemplative, not a son of the Sakyan. You are not to do this for the rest of your life.
The Definitive Vinaya
Upali Assembly, from the Mahayana Maharatnakuta Sutra; Sutra 24 (on Bodhisattva Pratimoksha)
translated by Garma C.C. Chang in “A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras”
(excerpts)
Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling in the garden of Anathapindada, in the Jeta Grove near Shravasti, accompanied by twelve hundred fifty great monks and five hundred thousand Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas.

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At that time, Upali emerged from concentration and went to see the Buddha. After bowing with his head at the Buddha’s feet and circumambulating the Buddha three times to his right, he stood to one side and said to him, “World Honored One, as I was sitting alone in a quiet place meditating, I thought, ‘When the World-Honored One was explaining the Pratimoksha—the pure discipline—to Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, he said, “You should rather give up your body and life than break the precepts.” World-Honored One, what should be the Pratimoksha of Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and what should be the Pratimoksha of Bodhisattvas, while the Buddha stays in the world and after he enters parinirvana? The World-Honored One says I am foremost in precept-keeping. How should I understand the subtle meaning of the Vinaya? If I personally hear it from the Buddha and accept and practice it until I achieve fearlessness, then I can extensively explain it to others. Now that the Bodhisattvas and monks from all places have gathered here, may the Buddha discourse extensively on the definitive Vinaya to resolve our doubts.”

Thereupon, the World-Honored One told Upali, “Now, Upali, you should know that the pure precepts observed by Bodhisattvas and those observed by Shravakas are different both in aim and in practice. Upali, a pure precept observed by Shravakas may be a great breach of discipline for Bodhisattvas. A pure precept observed by Bodhisattvas may be a great breach of discipline for Shravakas.

“What is a pure precept for Shravakas but a great breach of discipline for Bodhisattvas? For example, Upali, not to engender a single thought of taking further rebirth is a pure precept for Shravakas but a great breach of discipline for Bodhisattvas. What is a pure precept for Bodhisattvas but a great breach of discipline for Shravakas? For example, to follow the Mahayana doctrine and to tolerate rebirths, without abhorrence, for an incalculable number of kalpas is a pure precept for Bodhisattvas but a great breach of discipline for Shravakas.

“For this reason, the Buddha teaches Bodhisattvas precepts which need not be strictly and literally observed, but teaches Shravakas precepts which must be strictly and literally observed; he teaches Bodhisattvas precepts which are at once permissive and prohibitive, but teaches Shravakas precepts which are only prohibitive; he teaches Bodhisattvas precepts which are for the depth of the mind, but teaches Shravakas precepts which guide them step by step.

“Why do the Bodhisattvas’ precepts not need to be strictly and literally observed while those for Shravakas must be strictly and literally observed? When keeping the pure precepts, Bodhisattvas should comply with sentient beings, but Shravakas should not; therefore, the Bodhisattvas’ precepts need not be strictly and literally observed while those for Shravakas must he strictly and literally observed.

“Why do Bodhisattvas keep precepts which are at once permissive and prohibitive, while Shravakas keep precepts which are only prohibitive?

“If a Bodhisattva who has resolved to practice the Mahayana breaks a precept in the morning but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom at midday, his discipline-body remains undestroyed. If he breaks a precept at midday but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom in the afternoon, his discipline-body remains undestroyed. If he breaks a precept in the afternoon but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom in the evening, his discipline-body remains undestroyed. If he breaks a precept in the evening but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom at midnight, his discipline-body remains undestroyed. If he breaks a precept at midnight but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom before dawn, his discipline-body remains undestroyed. If he breaks a precept before dawn but does not abandon his determination to seek all-knowing wisdom in the morning, his discipline-body remains undestroyed.

“For this reason, people who follow the Bodhisattva-vehicle keep precepts which are both permissive and prohibitive. If they violate any precept, they should not become dismayed and afflict themselves with unnecessary grief and remorse.

“However, if a Shravaka breaks any precept, he destroys his pure discipline. Why? Because Shravakas, to eradicate their defilements, must keep the precepts with such intensity as if they were saving their heads from fire. They aspire to nirvana only. For this reason, they keep precepts which are prohibitive only.
“Furthermore, Upali, why do Bodhisattvas keep precepts for the depth of the mind, while Shravakas keep precepts which guide them step by step?

“Even if Bodhisattvas enjoy the five sensuous pleasures with unrestricted freedom for kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as long as they do not give up their bodhicitta, they are said not to break the precepts. Why? Because Bodhisattvas are skilled in protecting their bodhicitta, and dwell securely in it; they are not afflicted by any passions, even in dreams. Further, they should gradually root out their defilements instead of exterminating them all in one lifetime.

“In contrast, Shravakas ripen their roots of virtue as hurriedly as if they were saving their heads from fire. They do not like to entertain even one thought of taking further rebirth.

“For this reason, followers of the Mahayana keep precepts for the depth of the mind, precepts which are both permissive and prohibitive and which need not be strictly and literally observed; while Shravakas keep precepts which guide them step by step, which are prohibitive only, and which must be strictly and literally observed.

“Upali, it is very hard for those who pursue the Mahayana to attain supreme enlightenment; they cannot achieve it unless they are equipped with great, magnificent [virtues]. Therefore, Bodhisattvas never feel abhorrence even if they are constantly involved in samsara for an incalculable number of kalpas. This is why the Tathagata, through his observation, finds that he should not always teach the doctrine of renunciation to followers of the Mahayana, nor should he always teach them the way to realize nirvana quickly. Instead, they should be taught the profound, wonderful, undefiled doctrine which is in unison with kindness and joy, the doctrine of detachment and freedom from grief and remorse, the doctrine of unhindered emptiness, so that after hearing it, the Bodhisattvas will not tire of being involved in samsara and will attain supreme enlightenment without fail.”

Then Upali asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, suppose a Bodhisattva breaks a precept out of desire; another does so out of hatred; and still another does so out of ignorance. World-Honored One, which one of the three offenses is the most serious?”

The World-Honored One answered Upali, “If, while practicing the Mahayana, a Bodhisattva continues to break precepts out of desire for kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, his offense is still minor. If a Bodhisattva breaks precepts out of hatred, even just once, his offense is very serious. Why? Because a Bodhisattva who breaks precepts out of desire [still] holds sentient beings in his embrace, whereas a Bodhisattva who breaks precepts out of hatred forsakes sentient beings altogether.

“Upali, a Bodhisattva should not be afraid of the passions which can help him hold sentient beings in his embrace, but he should fear the passions which can cause him to forsake sentient beings.

“Upali, as the Buddha has said, desire is hard to give up, but is a subtle fault; hatred is easy to give up, but is a serious fault; ignorance is difficult to give up, and is a very serious fault.

“Upali, when involved in defilements, Bodhisattvas should tolerate the small transgressions which are hard to avoid, but should not tolerate the grave transgressions which are easy to avoid, not even in a dream. For this reason, if a follower of the Mahayana breaks precepts out of desire, I say he is not a transgressor; but if he breaks precepts out of hatred, it is a grave offense, a gross fault, a serious, degenerate act, which causes tremendous hindrances to the Buddha-Dharma.

“Upali, if a Bodhisattva is not thoroughly conversant with the Vinaya, he will be afraid when he transgresses out of desire, but will not be afraid when he transgresses out of hatred. If a Bodhisattva is thoroughly conversant with the Vinaya, he will not be afraid when he transgresses out of desire, but will be afraid when he transgresses out of hatred.”

Then, from among the assembly, Manjushri, Prince of the Dharma, asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, all dharmas are ultimately Vinaya. Why are regulations necessary?”

The Buddha answered Manjushri “If ordinary people knew that all dharmas are ultimately Vinaya, the Tathagata would not teach them the regulations, but because they do not know that, the Tathagata gradually teaches them the rules to enlighten them.”
Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling on Mount Grdhrakuta near the city of Rajagrha, accompanied by eight thousand great monks. At that time, sixteen thousand Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas who did not regress from pursuit of supreme enlightenment, and who were destined to become Buddhas in their next life times, came from different Buddha-lands in the ten directions to join the assembly.

That day, Mahakashyapa asked the Buddha, “The World-Honored One speaks of shramanas. What is a shramana?”

The Buddha replied to Kashyapa, “A shramana is one who can:

- attain ultimate quiescence;
- keep himself under control;
- accept the teachings;
- observe the pure precepts;
- enter dhyanas;
- acquire wisdom;
- strive for liberation by understanding the meaning of reality;
- have no doubts about the three doors to liberation;
- abide securely in the practices of saints;
- skillfully cultivate the four mindfullnesses;
- avoid all unwholesome dharmas;
- securely dwell in the four right efforts;
- adeptly cultivate the four bases of miraculous powers;
- achieve the five roots—to have firm faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; not to believe in any doctrine other than the Buddha-Dharma; to strive to eradicate all defilements, avoiding all unwholesome dharmas but cultivating all wholesome ones in accordance with the truth; to know thoroughly the skilful means to acquire right knowledge and right mindfulness, keeping wholesome dharmas in mind exclusively; and to know well the skilful means to attain dhyana and wisdom; achieve the five powers so that he is not disturbed by any afflictions; cultivate well the seven factors of enlightenment [so that] he thoroughly knows the skilful means to perceive the causes and conditions of all dharmas; know well the skilful means to follow the [eightfold] noble path, which includes right view and right concentration; obtain the power of the four kinds of [unhindered] eloquence; disbelieve in heterodox doctrines; rely on the meaning [of the Dharma] rather than words, on [intuitive] wisdom rather than intellect, on the sutras which convey the ultimate truth rather than the sutras which do not, and on the Dharma rather than the person [teaching it]; be apart from the four demons; thoroughly understand the five aggregates; uproot all afflictions; reach the last lifetime [before nirvana]; shun the ways leading to samsara; be free from all craving; persevere in comprehending suffering, stopping the arising of suffering, realizing the cessation of suffering, and cultivating the path leading to the cessation of suffering, thus perceiving clearly the four noble truths; reject all heterodox doctrines after taking refuge in the Buddha-Dharma; accomplish what he set out to accomplish; eliminate all defilements; cultivate the eightfold liberation; be praised by shakras and brahmas; from the beginning devote himself to the practice of the path; delight in living in a secluded forest; establish himself securely in the noble Dharma; rejoice in Buddhist rites; be mentally undisturbed; avoid close associations, either with monks and nuns or with laypeople; enjoy being alone, like the single horn of a rhinoceros; be afraid of bustling crowds; enjoy living by himself; always fear the three realms; achieve the true fruit of a shramana;
have no longing for anything;
shun the eight worldly dharmas—gain, loss, praise, blame, fame, ridicule, pleasure, and pain;
be as steadfast and immovable in mind as the great earth;
guard against any conflict of will between himself and others;
be serene;
cultivate right practices;
achieve a mentality [as pure] as space; and
have a mind which is not tainted by or attached to forms and appearances, just as a hand moving in empty space is not hindered by anything.

Kashyapa, if a person can accomplish these, he really is a shramana.” Then Mahakasyapa said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, the Tathagata’s skillful discourse on the meritorious deeds of a shramana is extraordinary. World-Honored One, if shramanas in future ages falsely claim to be true shramanas or to practice pure conduct, then they have trespassed on the supreme enlightenment cultivated and perfected by the Tathagata for countless kalpas.”

The Buddha said to Kashyapa, “The offense of trespassing on the supreme enlightenment of the Tathagata is so monstrous that no one could ever finish describing it. Kashyapa, after I enter nirvana, you and my other great disciples will also enter nirvana, and the great Bodhisattvas of this world will go to other Buddha-lands. At that time, in my order, there will be deceitful monks (bhikshus) who will do everything with crooked minds. Kashyapa, now I am going to explain the corruption of a shramana; that is, the faults and transgressions of a shramana.

“Kashyapa, in the coming Last Era, there will be monks who will not cultivate morality or discipline, nor will they cultivate their minds or wisdom. They will be as ignorant as children; they will move toward darkness unaware. Because they will not subdue their minds, they will be corrupt shramanas. Kashyapa, what is the corruption of a shramana?

“Kashyapa, the corruption of a shramana is of thirty-two kinds. One who has renounced the household life should keep them all at a distance. What are the thirty-two?
(1) To feel desire;
(2) to feel hatred;
(3) to feel annoyance;
(4) to praise oneself;
(5) to defame others;
(6) to seek material gains;
(7) to seek profit for its own sake;
(8) to spoil others’ blessings resulting from almsgiving;
(9) to conceal one’s own misdeeds;
(10) to be intimate with lay people;
(11) to be intimate with monks or nuns;
(12) to take pleasure in noisy crowds;
(13) to seek by devious means material gains not belonging to oneself;
(14) to long for the material gains of others;
(15) not to be content with one’s own material possessions;
(16) to envy others’ material possessions;
(17) always to find fault with others;
(18) not to see one’s own errors;
(19) not to keep strictly the precepts leading to liberation;
(20) not to have a sense of shame and remorse;
(21) not to respect others, but instead to be arrogant, unreliable, and shameless;
(22) to arouse one’s passions;
(23) to contradict the twelve links of dependent origination;
(24) to hold extreme views;
(25) not to be tranquil and free of passions;
(26) to delight in samsara, not in nirvana;
(27) to enjoy heterodox scriptures;
(28) to be enveloped in the five covers so that afflictions arise;
(29) to have no faith in karmic results;
(30) to fear the three doors to liberation;
(31) to slander the profound, subtle Dharma instead of cultivating the practices leading to ultimate quiescence; and
(32) to have no respect for the Three Jewels.

All these are corruptions of a shramana. If a shramana can cleanse himself of these kinds of corruption, he is a true shramana.

“Kashyapa, furthermore, eight things can destroy the [good] deeds of a shramana. What are the eight?
(1) Not to be respectful and obedient to teachers and superiors;
(2) not to esteem the Dharma;
(3) not to have proper thoughts;
(4) to slander the Dharma after hearing it explained for the first time;
(5) to become frightened when hearing the Dharma which teaches the non-existence of sentient beings, self, life, and personal identity;
(6) to understand only conditioned dharmas, not unconditioned ones, even after hearing that no phenomena ever arise from the beginning;
(7) to fall into the huge, deep pit after hearing the gradual doctrine; and
(8) to be perplexed and confused to hear that no dharma arises, has a self-entity, or goes anywhere.

“Kashyapa, these eight things can destroy the [good] deeds of a shramana. A shramana who has left the household life should shun these eight things.

“Kashyapa, I do not say that those who shave their heads and dress in monastic robes are shramanas; I say that those who are fully endowed with virtues and good deportment are shramanas.”

“Kashyapa, a shramana dressed in a monastic robe should keep his mind far away from desire, hatred, and ignorance. Why? Because I allow only those who have no desire, no hatred, and no ignorance to dress in monastic robes. Kashyapa, shramanas who are dressed in monastic robes but have desire, hatred, and ignorance in mind and do not keep the precepts are burning their monastic robes, while those who observe the precepts single-mindedly are not. Why? Because monastic robes should be worn by those who have the attributes of a saint, dwell in ultimate quiescence, practice kindness and compassion, and are free from passions.

“Kashyapa, now, listen to me. There are twelve signs of a saint. What are the twelve?
(1) To observe the discipline;
(2) to develop meditation;
(3) to cultivate wisdom;
(4) to achieve liberation;
(5) to acquire the knowledge and awareness derived from liberation;
(6) to comprehend the four noble truths;
(7) to comprehend the twelve links of dependent origination;
(8) to fulfill the four immeasurables;
(9) to practice the four dhyanas;
(10) to practice the four dhyanas of the Realm of Formlessness;
(11) to enter right concentration, leading to the four fruits [of the Shravaka vehicle]; and
(12) to eliminate all one’s defilements.

Kashyapa, these are the twelve signs of a saint. Kashyapa, I say the monks who are not fully endowed with the twelve signs of a saint yet dress in monastic robes do not cultivate the Buddha-Dharma or approach nirvana, nor do they proceed toward ultimate quiescence; instead, they perform evil, samsaric deeds. They do not cross [the sea of] samsara, but are caught by demons; they do not maintain the true Dharma, but follow wrong doctrines.

“Therefore, Kashyapa, a monk who has left the household life but has not yet achieved the fruit of a shramana should esteem in eight ways the monastic robe which he wears. What are the eight? When he wears a monastic robe, he should bring forth:
(1) the thought of a stupa;
(2) the thought of the World-Honored One;
(3) the thought of ultimate quiescence;
(4) the thought of kindness;
(5) the thought of respecting [the robe] as a Buddha;
(6) the thought of shame;
(7) the thought of remorse; and
(8) the thought that the robe will free him of desire, hatred, and ignorance and will cause him to fulfill the right practices of a shramana in future lives.

Kashyapa, a monk should esteem a monastic robe in these eight ways.

“Kashyapa, if shramanas are not content with the four noble practices, but violate the right practices of a shramana, and do not esteem a monastic robe in these eight ways, they are false shramanas and will fall to minor hells. Kashyapa, false shramanas suffer pain in hell: their clothing, bowls, and bodies are all ablaze; the places where they sit or sleep and the things they use burn intensely, like big furnaces. False shramanas undergo such sufferings. Why do they fall to such a miserable state? Because they have committed impure deeds, words, and thoughts.

“Kashyapa, suppose a precept-breaking monk falsely claims to be a true shramana and to practice pure conduct. When meritorious, precept-keeping people make offerings to him and respectfully circumambulate him, he accepts all this without even knowing his own wickedness. That wicked monk will, because of this evil root, reap eight contemptible attributes [in a future life]. What are the eight?
(1) To be foolish;
(2) to be mute;
(3) to be short in stature;
(4) to have such ugly, distorted features that anyone who sees him laughs at him;
(5) to be born female and work as a poor servant;
(6) to be weak, emaciated, and die young;
(7) to be notorious instead of respected; and
(8) not to encounter Buddhas.

Kashyapa, if a precept-breaking monk allows precept-keeping people to pay homage and make offerings to him, he will have these eight contemptible attributes [in a future life]. Kashyapa, a precept-breaking monk should, after hearing this explained, not accept the homage and offerings of a precept-keeping monk.

“Kashyapa, if a precept-breaking monk falsely claims to be a true shramana and to practice pure conduct, he does not deserve a space wide enough for him to spit, let alone a space to raise and lower his feet, to go here and there, to bend down, or to stretch out. Why? Because in the past, great monarchs offered large tracts of land to virtuous precept-keepers to serve as their dwelling-places while they pursued the path. Kashyapa, a precept-breaking monk is not worthy of any offerings given by faithful donors, not even a space to raise and lower his feet, let alone a place with rooms for resident and visiting monks, or a place to take walking exercise. He is not worthy of any offerings given by faithful donors, such as a house, a bed, a garden, a garment, a bowl, bedding, or medicine.

“Kashyapa, now I say that if a precept-breaking monk falsely claims to be a true shramana and to practice pure conduct, he cannot requite the kindness of faithful donors, not even with a blessing as tiny as the tip of a hair. Why? Like the vast ocean, noble fields of blessings are supreme and most wonderful. A donor who, out of pure faith, sows a seed of giving in the fields of blessings may think that he has made an immeasurable gift. Kashyapa, when a wicked, precept-breaking monk accepts from a faithful donor any offering, even as little as one hundredth of a split hair, he will cause his donor to forfeit blissful rewards the size of the vast ocean; such a monk cannot repay at all the kindness of his donor. Kashyapa, therefore, a monk should have a pure mind when accepting an offering from a faithful donor. Kashyapa, this you should learn.”

At that time, in the assembly, two hundred monks who were pure in deed, had few desires, and were free from [the four] yokes wiped away their tears after they had heard this doctrine explained, and said, “World-Honored One, now we would rather die than accept even one meal from a faithful donor without first having achieved the fruit of a shramana.”

The Buddha said, “Excellent, excellent! Good men, since you feel shame and remorse, and your fear of future lives is as strong as adamant, you may be compared in this life to necklaces of precious jewels. Good men, I say now that in the world there are only two kinds of people worthy of offerings given by faithful donors. What are the two? One is those who cultivate [the Dharma] with vigor; the other is those who have achieved liberation.”

The Buddha told these monks, “If a monk has achieved liberation, practices wholesome dharmas, strictly keeps the precepts as I have taught, contemplates all phenomena as impermanent and painful and all dharmas as devoid of self, and also contemplates the ultimate quiescence of nirvana with a desire to attain it—then, even if he accepts from faithful donors a pile of offerings the size of Mount Sumeru, he will surely be able to reward the donors with commensurate blessings.

“If such a monk accepts offerings from a faithful donor, he will cause the donor to obtain great benefits and great rewards. Why? Because blessings always result from three things: constant giving of food, building temples and monasteries, and the practice of kindness. Of these three, the practice of kindness results in the supreme blessings.”

The Buddha continued. “If a monk enters the immeasurable dhyana after he accepts clothing, a bowl, bedding, food and drink, or medicine from a donor, he can cause his donor to obtain limitless blissful rewards. Kashyapa, all the vast oceans in a billion-world universe may dry up, but the blissful rewards which the donor thus acquires cannot be exhausted. Kashyapa, you should know that a precept-breaking monk damages the blessings of a donor. If a monk performs misdeeds after he accepts offerings from a faithful donor, he will waste the donor’s offerings.

“Kashyapa, therefore I discourse on the corruption of a shramana, the faults and transgressions of a shramana, the deceit and crookedness of a shramana, and the thievery among shramanas.

“Kashyapa, a precept-keeping monk should be single-minded and remain far away from all those unwholesome dharmas. Kashyapa, a shramana is one who does not let his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind be attracted by any objects. One who protects his six sense-organs from being attracted [to objects], comprehends the six miraculous powers, concentrates on the six mindfulnesses, abides securely in the six kinds of reverent harmony in a monastery, and practices the six valuable dharmas is called a shramana.”
Leaving Home in China, Korea, and Vietnam
Shramanera Vinaya, Novice Monk Precepts with Chinese Commentary
(from ‘the Essentials of the Shramanera Vinaya and Rules of Deportment’ by Master Lien Ch’ih, 1535-1615)
translated by Bhikshuni Heng Yin, with comments in parentheses by Master Hsuan Hua

1. Do not kill
Above, this refers to all the Buddhas, the sages, one’s teachers, and members of the Sangha, as well as one’s father and mother. Below, it refers to all insects, both crawling and flying. You must not deliberately kill any living creature, either by committing the act yourself, instructing others to kill, or approving of or participating in acts of killing. This is discussed extensively in the vinaya texts and need not be set forth here. In the texts it is said that if one gets lice in the winter months, one should put them in a bamboo tube, keep them warm with cotton, and feed them greasy food, for fear that they will starve or freeze to death. One should also filter one’s water, cover one’s lamp, and not raise cats, foxes, or other animals, for this is the way of compassion. Since small animals are treated with such care, how much more should you care for large ones. At present, people are unable to practice compassion in this way. Moreover, they harm living beings. Is this permissible? Therefore the texts say, “Be kind and aid the needy, causing them to be at peace. If you see someone engaged in the act of killing, you should bring forth thoughts of compassion.”

2. Do not steal
From such valuable items as gold and silver, yet extending to such small items as a needle or a blade of grass, if something is not given, one may not take it, whether it is the property of the permanent dwelling, a faithful donor, the assembled Sangha, an official, or the people. It is considered stealing to take any property at all by force, by stealth, or by fraud. This includes tax-evasion and failure to pay fees. In the texts it is recorded that a shramanera once stole seven pieces of fruit belonging to the permanent dwelling. Another shramanera stole the assembled Sangha’s pastries on several occasions. Yet another shramanera stole a small portion of the assembled Sangha’s honey. All of them fell into the hells. Therefore the texts say, “It would be better to cut off one’s hands than to take another’s property.”

3. Do not engage in sexual misconduct
The five precepts for those at home prohibit only deviant sexual conduct. The ten precepts for those who have left home prohibit sexual activity of any kind. To engage in sexual acts with any male or female at all is to break this precept. The Shurangama Sutra mentions the Bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance who practiced clandestine sexual activity. She said that sexual activity was neither killing nor stealing and incurred no offense retribution. Thereupon her body burst into flames and she fell alive into the hells. Because of lust, worldly people destroy their bodies and ruin their homes. How can one who has left the mundane life to join the Sangha continue to engage in sexual activity? Sexual desire is the primary root of birth and death. Therefore the texts say, “It would be better to die continent than to live in licentiousness.”

4. Do not engage in false speech
There are four types of false speech. The first is lying. This refers to saying that what is wrong is right, saying that one has not seen what one has, in fact, seen, and saying that one has seen what one has, in fact, not seen, and so forth, including any false and untruthful manner of speech. The second is irresponsible speech. This refers to duplicity (pretending to be other than one is), indecent speech, idle chatter, and seductive speech, including songs and poems which excite one's desires, increase one’s sorrows, and shake one’s resolve. The third is abusive speech. This refers to rudely and maliciously rebuking others, and so forth. The fourth is double-tongued speech. This refers to talking about one person’s faults to a second person, and then talking about that second person’s faults to the first person, verbally causing dissention, discord, quarreling, breaches of friendship, and so forth. This includes first praising someone and later reviling him, backbiting, bearing false witness, and speaking at length of the shortcomings of others. All such conduct is considered false speech. If a common person claims to have certified to sagehood, saying, for example, that he has obtained the fruit of stream-enterer, once-returner, and so forth, he has told a great lie and committed an offense of extreme gravity. False speech for the sake of rescuing others from danger and difficulty, as well as clever expedients and provisional devices spoken out of compassion in order to benefit others, are exceptions and are not considered violations. The ancients said, “The absence of false speech is the beginning of self-discipline.” How much the more does this apply to students of the transcendental Way. In the texts it is recorded that a shramanera once laughed derisively at an old bhikshu’s recitation of a sutra, saying that he sounded like a barking dog. The old bhikshu, however, was an arhat. Because he instructed the shramanera to repent immediately, the shramanera barely missed falling into the hells, but he was nevertheless reborn as a dog. One sentence of evil speech can bring harm such as this. Therefore the texts say, “People in the world have axes in their mouths; their evil speech can cut one right in half.”

5. Do not take intoxicants
Taking intoxicants refers to consuming any intoxicating substance (alcohol, marijuana, hallucinogens, depressants, stimulants, tobacco). In India there are many kinds of intoxicating substances made of sugar cane, grapes, and even flowers. In China there is only rice wine. All are prohibited. An exception is made in the case of serious illness which cannot be cured unless an intoxicant is taken. In such a case one must publicly announce one’s intention to the assembly before taking it. Otherwise, not so much as a bit of it may touch one’s lips. One may not sniff intoxicating substances, linger in liquor stores, or offer intoxicants to others. When I Ti invented alcohol, Yu severed relations with him. Chou made pools of wine, and the country perished. It is even more shameful for members of the Sangha to take intoxicants. Long ago there was an upasaka who, because he broke the precept against taking intoxicants, consequently broke all the remaining precepts along with it. Intoxication leads to the thirty-six mistakes, and such a transgression is not a minor one. Those who crave intoxicants will descend at death into
the hell of boiling excrement and in succeeding lives will be stupid, having lost the seed of wisdom. Intoxicants cause madness and confuse the spirit, affecting one as would a deadly poison. Therefore, the texts say, “It would be better to drink molten copper than to violate the precept against taking intoxicants.”

6. Do not wear flower garlands; do not rub fragrant creams on the body
Flower garlands refers to the Indian custom of stringing flowers into a chain and putting it on the head as an adornment. In China it refers to using such articles as silk, velvet, gold, jewelry, or ornamented kerchiefs and caps. Rubbing the body with fragrant creams refers to the custom among the wealthy in India who had servants rub expensive powdered incense on their bodies. In China it refers to such articles as perfumes, scented lotions, and cosmetics. How can those who have left home use such things? The Buddha instructed the Sangha to use three robes, all made of coarse hempen cloth. Wearing animal hair or silk is harmful to creatures and injurious to one’s own compassionate sensibilities, and should not be done. An exception is made in the case of those over seventy years of age who are extremely decrepit and who would not otherwise be warm. In this case it is permissible; otherwise it is not. King Yu of Hsia didn’t care about clothing, and King Sun wore cotton garb. They were honored among kings and ministers and yet did not take advantage of their station. How much the less should a person of the Way covet finery and adornments. Rightfully, one should wear garments which are drab in color and clothe oneself in rag robes. In the past, an eminent member of the Sangha wore the same pair of shoes for thirty years. How much the more should we of the common sort.

7. Do not sing or dance, play musical instruments, or watch or listen to such events
Singing refers to vocal music; dancing refers to recreational dancing; musical instruments refers to lutes, flutes, and the like (string, wind, and percussion instruments). One must neither engage in such activities oneself, nor intentionally watch or listen to others engage in them. In ancient times there was an immortal who, hearing the delicate and subtle sounds of a woman’s song, instantly lost his spiritual attainments. Since the harm from watching and listening can be so severe, how much the more harm can come from engaging in such activities oneself. In the present day there are stupid people who quote the sentence in the Lotus Sutra which mentions lutes and cymbals and use it as an excuse to indulge in the study of music. The sentence in the Lotus Sutra, however, refers to using music as an offering to the Buddhas, not for one’s own amusement. It is permissible to make music only when requested, in the performance of ceremonies in the Bodhimanda. Now, because of birth and death, you have cast worldly life aside in order to leave home. Can it be fitting to neglect the cultivation of your proper duties and seek instead musical skill? This precept also prohibits gambling and recreational games (competitive games and sports, watching television and movies) as such activities confuse the mind which is seeking the Way and increase one’s offenses.

8. Do not use high, broad, or large beds
The Buddha instructed the use of rope beds no higher than the width of eight of the Tathagata’s fingers. A bed higher than this is in violation of the precept. It is also a violation to use lacquer, paintings, or silk curtains, screens, cushions, and the like. The ancients made their seats of straw and slept under trees. The present day beds are a great improvement over straw. Why insist on making them higher and broader merely to indulge an illusory body? Throughout his life, the Venerable Hsieh never once lay down. Ch’an Master Kao Feng Miao vowed not to use a bed or stool for three years. On the other hand, Wu Ta received a throne of aloeswood, but destroyed his blessings and incurred retribution.

9. Do not eat at improper times
Improper times means after noon, which is not a time when the Sangha eats. The gods eat in the morning, the Buddha eats at noon, animals eat in the afternoon, and hungry ghosts eat at night. The Sangha should imitate the Buddha and not eat after noon. When the hungry ghosts hear the sound of eating utensils, fire blazes in their throats. Therefore even at noon one should eat quietly. How much the more so after noon. There once was an eminent member of the Sangha who, when he heard a Sangha member in the next room begin to cook after noon, unknowingly shed tears, lamenting the decline of the Way. For this reason, when the Buddha was in the world, the Sangha begged for their food, did not cook for themselves, and relied entirely on external conditions to provide them with clothing and shelter. This made gold and silver entirely useless. Since they were prohibited from even holding them, their purity should be obvious. In ancient times there was a scholar who, while hoeing his fields, uncovered gold but paid no attention to it whatsoever. If worldly scholars can conduct themselves in this way, what use should the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, those who claim to live in poverty, have for stored up wealth? People of the present day are unable to go out begginng. They may enter a monastery, dwell in a temple, or perhaps travel afar, and cannot avoid the use of gold and silver in paying their expenses. But one should know that this is contrary to the Buddha’s instructions and therefore be greatly ashamed. Be mindful of the suffering endured by the hungry ghosts; always practice compassion and seek to rescue them. Do not eat a great deal; refrain from fine food; do not eat in a leisurely manner. Under these conditions, it is permissible. Otherwise, it is a serious offense.

10. Do not hold gold, silver, or valuable objects
Gold and silver refers to these metals found in their crude state as well as to alloys of gold and silver. Valuable objects refers to such items as the seven gems (gold, silver, pearls, etc.) and the like, because these increase one’s greed and undo one’s karma in the Way. For this reason, when the Buddha was in the world, the Sangha begged for their food, did not cook for themselves, and relied entirely on external conditions to provide them with clothing and shelter. This made gold and silver entirely useless. Since they were prohibited from even holding them, their purity should be obvious. In ancient times there was a scholar who, while hoeing his fields, uncovered gold but paid no attention to it whatsoever. If worldly scholars can conduct themselves in this way, what use should the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, those who claim to live in poverty, have for stored up wealth? People of the present day are unable to go out begging. They may enter a monastery, dwell in a temple, or perhaps travel afar, and cannot avoid the use of gold and silver in paying their expenses. But one should know that this is contrary to the Buddha’s instructions and therefore be greatly ashamed. Be mindful of the poverty of others and always practice giving. Do not run a business, do not amass wealth (saving up much money), and do not trade (buying things and selling them for personal profit); do not adorn your clothing and possessions with the seven jewels. Then it is permissible to hold valuables. Otherwise, it is a serious offense.

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The Ten Novice Precepts
from ‘Stepping Into Freedom’ by Thich Nhat Hanh

The true basis for the life of a novice monk (shramanera) or nun (shramanerika) is the basis of the Ten Precepts and what are called in monastic Buddhism, “Mindful Manners” (rules of deportment). These are the concrete manifestations of the practice of mindful living, of a life of liberation and love. They confirm that you have left behind the world of entanglement and are moving in the direction of peace, love, and freedom. In fact, they are mindfulness itself. Without mindful awareness in each act of everyday life, these precepts and manners are lifeless, without spirit. The Ten Novice Precepts might appear as a limitation of a novice’s freedom, but in reality they protect it and bring joy and harmony to you as an individual and to your community (Sangha). When you practice the precepts, you practice concentration and insight at the same time; and precepts, concentration, and insight always help you realize peace and liberation right away. Practicing the precepts and Mindful Manners nourish your mind of love (bodhichitta) and prevent you from losing sight of the deepest goals of the monastic life. The Buddha encouraged his disciples to practice the Ten Precepts and the Trainings in Mindful Manners diligently in order to prepare for full ordination as a monk (bhikshu) or a nun (bhikshuni).

The First Precept – On Protecting Life
Aware of the suffering brought about by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of humans and all other species. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she learns to look at all beings with the eyes of compassion and thereby transforms the seeds of violence and hatred and nourishes the seeds of love. Violence and hatred cause boundless suffering. While a novice walks, sits, stands, lies down, works, speaks, eats, or drinks, she does not forget that all species are suffering. Protecting life is the first practice of someone cultivating her bodhichitta, mind of love.

The Second Precept – On Respecting What Belongs to Others
Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness in order to bring joy and peace to humans and all other species. I am determined to share my time and energy with those who are in real need. I vow not to steal or take into possession anything that belongs to my community or anyone else. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she becomes someone with whom people can rely on us and be open with us, and we can, in turn, offer stability and counsel. People can rely on us and be open with us, and we can, in turn, offer stability and counsel.

The Third Precept – On Protecting Chastity
Aware that the aspiration of a monk or a nun can only be realized when I wholly leave behind the bonds of worldly love, I vow to protect myself and to help others to protect themselves by the practice of chastity. I know that any sexual engagement will destroy my life as a monk or a nun and damage the lives of others. I am aware that having a sexual relationship will prevent me from realizing my ideal to serve living beings.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she is protecting his or her freedom. Monks and nuns practice this precept not merely by repressing sexual desire, but by following their deepest aspiration to bring happiness to many people. Because we value our commitment to cultivate true love for ourselves and everyone, we are determined not to harm or become sexually involved with anyone. People can rely on us and be open with us, and we can, in turn, offer stability and counsel.

The Fourth Precept – On Mindful Speech and Deep Listening
Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech, I vow to cultivate right speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to say only things that inspire self-confidence, peace, joy, and hope. I am determined to speak the truth in a way that brings about understanding and harmony. I vow not to say things that are untrue or that bring about division and hatred. I vow not to spread news that I do not know to be certain, nor to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I am determined to listen with deep love and compassion in order to understand the suffering and difficulties of others and to bring them comfort. I am determined not to say things that might bring about division or disharmony in my community of practice, or that can cause the community to break. I am determined not to speak to anyone about the faults of any monk or nun outside my Sangha or of another practice center, even though I may think that these faults are real.

When a novice practices this precept, he realizes the harmony of speech, views, and thought, which are three of the Six Concords for the monastic community (which also include sharing space, sharing the essentials of daily life, and observing the same precepts). She nourishes compassion and loving kindness and is able to offer happiness to everyone who is around.
The Fifth Precept – On Protecting and Nourishing Body and Mind – Not Consuming Alcohol, Drugs, or Other Items That Contain Toxins
Aware of the suffering caused by the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other intoxicants, I vow not to ingest any food or beverage that contains toxins and that deprives me of the control of my body and mind or brings about heaviness or ill-being in my body or my spirit. I am determined to practice mindful eating, drinking, and consuming, to consume only items that bring peace and joy to my body and mind. I vow not to drink liquor or wine, not to use drugs, and not to consume any other intoxicants, including books and films, that can poison me with violence, fear, craving, or hatred.
When a novice practices this precept, he or she lives wholesomely, keeping healthy and fresh in body and mind, so that favorable conditions for the practice and for serving others can arise. In accord with the spirit of this precept, novices also do not smoke cigarettes or drink beer.

The Sixth Precept – On Not Using Cosmetics or Wearing Jewelry
Aware that the true beauty of a monk or a nun is found in his or her stability and freedom, I vow to adorn myself and my Sangha with the practice of mindfulness made concrete by my training in the precepts and Mindful Manners at all moments. I realize that cosmetics and jewelry only bring about an outer show of attractiveness and foster attachment and infatuation. Therefore, I vow to live simply and dress neatly, wearing clean clothes. I resolve not to use perfume, powder, or other cosmetics or jewelry.
When a novice practices this precept, she knows that stability and freedom are produced by practicing mindful walking, standing, lying down, sitting, eating, drinking, working, speaking, and being in touch every day. Stability and freedom make life beautiful, and a novice uses them to adorn his Buddha Land. Were a novice to wear makeup or jewelry, it would be difficult to see the beauty of freedom and stability shining in her face, and people might lose confidence in the practice. When a novice practices the gathas, the Ten Precepts, and Mindful Manners, dressing simply and neatly wearing clean robes, he or she manifests a purity and lightness that can be a source of enlightenment and inspiration for many.

The Seventh Precept – On Not Being Caught in Worldly Amusements
Aware that many songs, films, books, amusements, and games can damage body and mind and waste precious time that could be used for study and practice, I am determined not to be drowned in these distractions. I am determined not to read novels, look at worldly films or books, or seek distraction by singing or listening to love songs or other kinds of music that cause negative emotions to arise. I will not waste time playing electronic games or gambling.
When a novice practices this precept, he or she knows that chanting and singing Dharma songs are ways of practicing mindfulness and sowing wholesome seeds. But artworks that water seeds of sorrow, attachment, despair, hatred, or craving can cause harm, and that is why she keeps away from them.

The Eighth Precept – On Not Living a Life of Material Luxury
Aware that a monk or nun who lives with too much comfort or luxury becomes prone to sensual desire and pride, I vow to live my whole life simply, with few desires. I resolve not to sit on luxurious chairs or lie down on luxurious beds, not to wear silk or embroidered fabrics, not to live in luxurious quarters, and not to travel using luxurious means of transport.
When a novice practices this precept, the true beauty and freedom of his life as a monk or a nun are protected.

The Ninth Precept – On Being Vegetarian and Not Eating Apart from the Sangha
Aware of the need to maintain good health, to live in harmony with the Sangha, and to nourish compassion in my heart, I vow to be vegetarian for the whole of my life and not to eat apart from the Sangha except when I am sick.
By practicing this precept, a novice shows compassion in concrete ways. By determining to be vegetarian, a monk or nun contributes even a little to the lessening of the slaughter of animals. By eating at the appropriate time and not too often, too heavily, or too late in the day, a monk or nun is able to stay light in body and mind, and this is conducive to the practice of mindful living and to sleeping well at night.

The Tenth Precept – On Not Accumulating Money or Possessions for Personal Use
Aware that the happiness of a monk or a nun is found in solidity and freedom, I vow not to allow money or possessions to become a preoccupation in my life. I am determined not to accumulate money or possessions for my own use, not to look for happiness in the accumulation of these things, and not to think that money, precious objects, or possessions will increase my true security.
When a novice practices this precept, he or she should know that looking after the property and material goods of the Sangha is a way of respecting and serving the Three Jewels and not based on a wish to be wealthy as an individual. A novice needs to remember that the aim of a monk or a nun is to practice in order to be liberated and serve people. To be overly occupied with the financial activities of the temple to the extent that there is no time left for practice is a misfortune that needs to be avoided.
The Bodhisattva Pratimoksha Precepts of the Mahayana Brahmajala Sutra
translated by Kokyo Henkel

**10 Heavy Bodhisattva Pratimoksha Precepts:**
1. not killing
2. not stealing
3. not engaging in sexual greed
4. not speaking falsely
5. not dealing in intoxicants
6. not discussing the faults of monastic and lay bodhisattvas
7. not praising oneself or disparaging others
8. not being possessive
9. not being angry
10. not slandering the Three Treasures

**48 Light Bodhisattva Pratimoksha Precepts:**
1. not being disrespectful toward Dharma Teachers or practitioners
2. not consuming intoxicants
3. not eating animal flesh
4. not eating garlic or onions
5. not neglecting to encourage others to repent violations of the precepts
6. not neglecting to make offerings to Teachers or request Dharma
7. not neglecting to listen to teachings of the Sutras and Vinaya
8. not turning away from the Mahayana because of disbelief
9. not neglecting the sick and needy
10. not possessing weapons or harmful instruments
11. not supporting war or joining an army
12. not dealing in slaves, animals, or coffins
13. not slandering others
14. not destroying nature, dwellings, or the possessions of others with fire
15. not teaching doctrines which contradict Dharma
16. not teaching false Dharma for personal benefit
17. not associating with powerful leaders for the sake of offerings or fame
18. not teaching the Sutras or Vinaya with insufficient understanding
19. not provoking disputes
20. not neglecting to liberate animals and protect them from harm
21. not angrily striking others or seeking revenge
22. not neglecting to request Dharma because of arrogance
23. not neglecting to teach Dharma to beginning students because of arrogance
24. not turning away from the Mahayana, and instead studying worldly knowledge
25. not disrupting the harmony of the Sangha or wasting the community’s resources
26. not neglecting to serve and care for guests
27. not receiving invitations or offerings to the community for personal use
28. not discriminatorily favoring one person or group over others
29. not engaging in unwholesome occupations such as prostitution, fortune-telling, or poison-making
30. not acting as a match-maker for couples or violating the precepts in any way
31. not neglecting to prevent Buddhist texts from being sold into abusive situations, or rescuing bodhisattvas from difficulties
32. not selling weapons, conducting fraudulent business transactions, or raising domesticated animals
33. not watching fighting, listening to music, playing games, or practicing divination
34. not neglecting the precepts or the resolve to realize awakening
35. not neglecting to practice with good teachers and virtuous friends, and be of firm resolve
36. not neglecting to make and maintain great vows
37. not dwelling in a dangerous location while observing annual retreats, or neglecting to recite the precepts every half-month
38. not neglecting to observe correct order by sitting in front of those who have received the precepts before oneself
39. not neglecting to teach Sutras and Vinaya to protect others from harm or free them from their difficulties
40. not discriminating among people when conferring the precepts or wearing colorful clothing
41. not teaching the Sutras or Vinaya for fame or profit or when unqualified to teach
42. not teaching the precepts to an unsuitable group of nonbelievers for personal benefit
43. not accepting offerings while not observing the precepts
44. not showing disrespect for the Sutras and Vinaya of the Mahayana, or neglecting to make offerings to them
45. not neglecting to encourage all living beings to resolve to realize awakening
46. not teaching Dharma while standing up, or to others who sit in a higher place
47. not altering beneficial precepts or establishing regulations which contradict Dharma
48. not supporting the imprisonment of practitioners for personal benefit, and diligently upholding the precepts
What is the essence of ethics (shila) for the bodhisattvas? Briefly, to possess four qualities constitutes the essence of the ethics of the bodhisattva. What are the four? To correctly receive it from someone else, to have a quite purified intention, to make correction after failure, and to avoid failure by generating respect and remaining mindful of that. Because he has correctly received it from someone else, when the bodhisattva fails in his training, then dependent upon the other, embarrassment will be born. Because of his quite purified intention, when the bodhisattva fails in his training, then dependent upon himself, a sense of shame will be born. Correcting the bases of training after failure, and generating respect so that failure will not occur in the first place, are both causes for a bodhisattva’s freedom from regret. So dependent upon a correct reception and a purified intention, shame and embarrassment are produced. With a sense of shame and embarrassment, the correct reception of ethics will be preserved. Preserving it, he will be free of regret. These two phenomena—the correct reception and the purified intention—are what induce the other two phenomena—correction after failure and respect that avoids failure. These three phenomena—the correct reception from someone else, the quite purified intention, and respect to avoid failure—should be understood to effectively prevent the failure of bodhisattva ethics. The correction of failure should be understood to constitute rectification and recovery from breakage. To undertake and proceed to train oneself in the essence of ethics endowed with these four qualities, should be understood as “wholesome,” because of benefit for oneself, benefit for others, benefit for many people, pleasure for many people, mercy for the world, and welfare, benefit, and pleasure for divine and human beings. Because “measureless” comprehends the bodhisattva bases of training, they should be understood as “immeasurable.” Because they are lived for the benefit and pleasure of all sentient beings, they should be understood to be “favorable to all sentient beings.” Because they acquire and bestow the result of supreme, right and full awakening, they should be understood to be “a great result and advantage.”

What is complete ethics? Briefly, bodhisattva ethics is comprised by the lay side and the monastic side. This is known as “complete ethics.” Furthermore, based upon the lay side and upon the monastic side there are, briefly, three sorts: the ethics of the vow [the precept of embracing standards of conduct] (pratimoksha-samvara-shila), the ethics of collecting wholesome factors [the precept of embracing wholesome qualities] (kushaladharma-samgraha-shila), and the ethics of benefiting sentient beings [the precept of abundantly benefiting living beings] (sattvartha-kriya-shila).

The ethics of the vow refers to undertaking the pratimoksha vow as one of the seven classes: monk, nun, nun-probationer, male and female novice, layman and laywoman (bhikshu, bhikshuni, shikshamana, shramanera, shramanerika, upasaka, upasika). Furthermore, it may be understood as the householder (staying home) side plus the monastic (leaving home) side.

The ethics of collecting wholesome factors: The bodhisattva, subsequent to undertaking the ethics of the vow, for the sake of the great awakening accumulates, with his body and his speech, anything that is wholesome, all of which is called, briefly, the ethics of collecting wholesome factors. What then is it? The bodhisattva who is based upon and maintaining ethics applies himself to hearing, to contemplation, to the cultivation of calm and insight, and to delight in solitude. Accordingly, he makes respectful address to his gurus from time to time, prostrating himself, rising promptly, and joining palms. Accordingly, he does respectful service to those gurus from time to time. He does service to the sick, out of compassion nursing their illnesses. Accordingly, he gives a “Well done!” to what has been well spoken. He assigns genuine praise to persons endowed with good qualities. Accordingly, he generates a satisfaction, from the bottom of his heart, at all the merit of all sentient beings of infinity; he appreciates it, describing it in words. Accordingly, he investigates all the transgressions done by others and is forbearant. Accordingly, he dedicates everything wholesome he has done with body, speech, and mind, and all that he has yet to do, to supreme, right and full awakening. He sows various sorts of correct aspiration from time to time, and makes all sorts of extensive offerings to the Precious Three. He is always engaged and constantly making vigorous initiatives in wholesome directions. He remains vigilant. He guards himself by practicing the physical and verbal bases of training with mindfulness and awareness. The gates of his senses are guarded and he is aware of moderation in food. He applies himself to wakefulness in the earlier and later parts of the night. He attends to holy persons and takes recourse in spiritual advisers. He also recognizes his own mistakes and looks at his faults; cognized and seen, they will be relinquished. And any mistake is confessed, as a lapse, to the buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and co-religionists. Ethics that procures, preserves, and increases wholesome factors such as those, is known as the bodhisattva’s ethics of collecting wholesome factors.

What is the bodhisattva’s ethics of benefiting sentient beings? Briefly, it should be understood to have eleven modes. What are the eleven modes? He ministers to the needs of sentient beings in various useful ways. He renders assistance, for example, by nursing any sufferings, such as illness, that may have occurred to sentient beings. Likewise, he shows what is relevant to worldly and transcendent goals, backed by the teaching of doctrine and backed by the teaching of means. He remains grateful to sentient beings who have helped him and furnishes proportionate assistance in return. He protects sentient beings from sundry fearful things such as lions and tigers, kings and robbers, water and fire. He dispels the sorrow in calamities to property and kinfolk. He provides all appropriate requisites to sentient beings destitute of requisites. He attracts a Dharma-following by correctly giving himself as a resource; he approaches from time to time accosting, addressing, and greeting them; he acquires food, drink, and the like for them from others. He complies with worldly convention; he comes and goes when called; briefly, he complies with the thought [of everyone] excepting those who are useless and disagreeable. He applauds the genuine good qualities of others, or reveals those that are hidden…
Our bodies were not born by themselves. Countless causes and conditions, including the genes of our ancestors and our own former actions, came together to bring them into existence. The four elements that support our bodies—earth, water, fire, and air—are not always in perfect harmony. Our bodies will not last forever. Our existence is as impermanent as the morning dew, the tree at the edge of the river, the vine climbing alongside the well. Beings who are alive in the morning have to die by evening. Days and months pass quickly, and old age and death are inevitable. How can you sit around and let your life trickle away meaninglessly?

When we decide to become a monk or a nun, we leave behind the opportunity to support our parents and serve our country. We do this because we are determined to practice wholeheartedly and realize complete liberation, to put aside old habits and learn the way to transcend birth and death. Why then would someone who has just received ordination already proclaim himself a Venerable Monk?

When you receive food offered by donors, wouldn’t it be better to meditate on the food than to think that as a monk you deserve to receive it? When you finish eating, if you sit around talking idly, it will increase everyone’s suffering later on. How many lifetimes do you plan to chase after worldly matters without looking deeply at where your life is going? Time flies like an arrow, yet you are still attached to the pleasure of the offerings you receive, and you still think that money and possessions will provide you security. The Buddha taught his monks to be satisfied with just enough food, clothing, and shelter. Why would a monk or a nun spend so much time caring for these things? By the time you wake up, your hair will be white. Listen to the wise ones. They did not become monks and nuns just to have some food to eat and a robe to wear.

The Buddha gave us precepts and Mindful Manners to help us dissipate darkness and realize enlightenment. These practices are as pure as snow. Stop doing what causes harm and overcome your confusion. Develop your beginner’s mind, and practice deeply the precepts and Mindful Manners. Otherwise, how do you expect to understand the teachings of the highest vehicle? If you don’t change your ways, how will your mind settle on it self? Ask your elders for guidance, or you may think your dreadful practice is excellent. Stop missing the chance to be with brothers and sisters more experienced in the practice. Stop wasting your time hanging out, eating, and speaking idly. How are you at all better than those lost in ordinary life? When you eat, you bang your spoon against your bowl, and when you finish, you leave the hall before others have finished. Every time you stand up or sit down unmindfully, you disturb the whole Sangha. You don’t keep up with the most elementary studies, not to mention Mindful Manners. When someone gives you feedback, you don’t listen. You only say, “I am a forest monk.” What does that mean? Who will be there to guide and teach the next generation of monks and nuns? Certainly not you.

You rarely put the teachings into practice. You act holy, but you are less developed than you were the day you entered the monastery. You have let your beginner’s mind erode. Your habit energies still pull you toward the ways of the world. When a brother comes to you seeking guidance, he has the impression he is standing in front of a brick wall. You don’t know how to help him at all. Yet when monks younger than you in the practice disobey you, you say they lack respect, and you even reprimand them.

Some day you will die. Lying on your sickbed about to breathe your last, you will be assailed by every kind of pain. Your mind will be filled with fears and anxieties and you will not know what to do or where to go. Only then will you realize that you have not practiced well. When someone is about to die of thirst, it is too late to think of digging a well. The five skandhas and the four elements in you will quickly disintegrate, and your consciousness will be pulled wherever your ancient, twisted karma leads it. Impermanence does not hesitate. Death will not wait. You will not be able to extend your life by even a second. How many thousands more times will you have to pass through the gates of birth and death?

When I think of all this, I am overwhelmed by compassion. That is why I offer you these words. You and I have been born long after the time of the Buddha and our understanding of the Buddha-dharma may be shallow, but that is no excuse for you being so lazy. If you cannot give up false pride, how will you transform body and mind? The aim of a monk or a nun is to cross over to the shore of liberation, illuminate and continue the lineage of the Holy Sangha, master every variation of Mara, repay your debt of gratitude toward your parents, teachers, friends, and numerous beings, and help bring all beings in the Triple World to the other shore. If you cannot live according to this aspiration, you are just a party crasher. Your words and actions are empty, and you disappoint all the donors who have fed you. Have you progressed at all since the day you began to practice the Buddha’s Way? Your life flows by, and you still have nothing you can take refuge in.

Look deeply. Can you see the beautiful monk or nun you once aspired to be? If you hadn’t sown at least some wholesome seeds in the past, you wouldn’t be so lucky to be a monk or a nun today. Why do you sit there with your arms folded, letting the months and years go by without practicing? If you don’t start making a sincere effort today, when will you? You allow this precious life to pass by meaninglessly. When will you cultivate the Way?

You left behind your loved ones and decided to wear the Buddha’s robe, determined to attain a vast horizon. Keep that aspiration in mind, moment after moment, and don’t let the time pass by frivolously. Even if you sincerely aspire to be a pillar of Buddha-dharma for generations to come, unless you practice you will not realize even the smallest part of your dream. Everything you say and do should be in accord with the teachings of the Buddha. Your intention must be deep, your behavior
solid. Take refuge in good spiritual friends, so you can know the wholesome from the unwholesome and learn more every day. Your parents gave you birth, but your spiritual friends help you grow. Living with wise friends is like walking in the mist; your clothes will be permeated with moisture. If you spend all your time with foolish people, your judgment will keep going astray, and you will continue creating trouble for yourself and others. The fruits of our actions are easy to see.

If these words are challenging, even insulting, let them be an encouragement for you to change. At times when you are lucky enough to have someone shine light on your practice, use the suggestions to cleanse your mind and get back on track. Train diligently and stop boasting. Devote yourself to meditation. Go beyond the surface and bring your mind into harmony with the deep, wondrous reality. Study and practice extensively under the guidance of an experienced master who has walked the path before you. Stay in close contact with wise elders. Discuss the Dharma with your teacher. Find what is difficult to see, and express your awakening in your daily life. The depth and wondrousness of the Chan School is difficult to grasp. If you want to realize it, you must apply your mind uncompromisingly. Only then can you hope for sudden or gradual awakening and arrive at the core of the matter.

The path of meditation puts an end to the Twenty-Five Realms of Existence that are contained in the Triple World, and leads to the insight that all phenomena within us and around us are without a separate self. When you realize this, your mind will stop being imprisoned by external objects. You will allow phenomena to come and go quite naturally, without being caught in the ideas of permanence or annihilation. You will still hear with your ears and see with your eyes, sounds and forms will still arise, but you will be at peace. Whether you are sitting or acting, you will be free, worthy of the robes you wear. At last, you will be able to repay the debt of gratitude to your parents, teachers, friends, and all beings. If you can continue without falling back, the fruit of awakening will ripen in you, and you will be an honored guest, coming and going from the Triple World as you please, always a model for everyone. The practice of Realization through Deep Looking is wonderful! If you firmly resolve to take the path, I am sure you will succeed.

But if you think you are not ready, devote your time to studying the sutras, helping others understand the Dharma, practicing mindful walking and standing, and acting in accord with Mindful Manners. This will help you realize your life’s ideal and become a vehicle for transmitting the Dharma to future generations. Manioc and bindweed wind themselves around pine trees and climb, sometimes one hundred yards up. With your beautiful and deep aspiration, you can climb just as vigorously. Always ask for support from great teachers and friends, and you will surely benefit the world. Practice the precepts with all your heart, and a wholesome result is certain.

Time is precious. Do not misuse the offerings given to you. Don’t miss the opportunity to show your gratitude. Do not accumulate unnecessary possessions. If you don’t practice correctly, your life will be filled with obstacles. But do not underestimate yourself. Practice heroically. Don’t give up. Touch your bodhichitta. Embrace and cherish the loftiest goals. Imitate those worth admiring, and don’t entrust your destiny to anyone else. Still your mind, end wrong perceptions, concentrate, and do not run after the objects of your senses. The only true object of your mind should be the ultimate suchness, or nirvana.

Read these words over and over again. Remind yourself of them every day. Don’t be pulled along by habit energies, or you will not be able to avoid adversity. When musicians are in harmony, the music is beautiful. When forms are upright, the shadows are clear. Everything comes into existence due to causes and conditions. Stand in awe of this teaching, and look at all situations globally, both in time and in space. Once an action has been performed, the result is already there, even if it takes a hundred thousand lifetimes to manifest. If you cannot transform your karma (action), when it ripens you will receive the consequence. The suffering of the Triple World is the result of our own actions. Practice diligently. Be determined not to let your days and months pass wastefully.

Dear younger brother, dear younger sister, it is because I have seen too clearly the misfortunes that result from misbehavior that I offer you these words of encouragement. I pray that for thousands of years to come, wherever we are, we may continue as companions along the Buddha’s path.

This body is like a dream. The Triple World is like a magic show. The past is no longer here. The future is quite uncertain. If we don’t see the truth in the present moment, we’ll return to samsara again and again. As long as we dwell in the Triple World, suffering will never end. As long as we are caught by lust and desire, our suffering will continue. There is nothing to hold on to. Because of ignorance our mind is troubled. Cherish every moment. If this life is wasted, the next will be filled with obstacles. Ignorance breeds ignorance. Because of the six pirates, we go back and forth on the six paths. We experience untold hardship in the Triple World. Do not delay finding an enlightened master. Stay near friends of the highest quality. Meditate on your own body and mind and come to the end of these thorny paths. The world is deceptive, its chains oppressive. Look deeply at phenomena, and you will transcend birth and death. If you are not fully present, you might as well be asleep. When the six sense organs are at peace, we dwell in tranquility. And when our mind is no longer subject to birth and death, all phenomena cease to get hold of us.
Chinese Chan Masters on the Practice of a Monk

Nanyue Huairang (677-744):
Leaving home is the dharma of no-birth. There is nothing that excels this in the heavenly and human worlds.

Baizhang Huaihai (720-814):
A shramana maintains discipline of diet and behavior, is tolerant, gentle, compassionate, rejoices in renunciation. This has always been the norm for monks; once one has conformed in this way, clearly he is in accord with the Buddha’s teaching – but one should not cling greedily or hold fast to it. If you long to attain Buddhahood, or attain such a thing as enlightenment, it is like your hand touching fire.

Linji Yixuan (d. 867):
Someone who has left home must know how to act ordinary, and have a true and proper understanding, must know how to tell Buddha from Mara, to tell true from false, to tell common mortals from sages… If they can’t tell Buddha from Mara, then all they’ve done is leave one household to enter another.

Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897):
A monk asked, “What is leaving home?” Zhaozhou said, “Not aspiring to acclaim, not seeking after defilements.”
A monk asked, “What is the practice of a shramana?” Zhaozhou said, “Leaving practice behind.”

Dongshan Liangjie (807-869):
Shramanas make the lofty their source; having cut off clinging ties, you should go the way of simplicity and poverty. Cut off obligations and attachments to your father and mother, abandon the formalities of sovereign and subject. Shave your head, dye your clothing; taking the robe and carrying the bowl, tread the shortest way out of the dusts and climb the stairway into sagehood. Pure as frost, clean as snow, dragons and spirits will honor you, ghosts and sprites will submit to you. Concentrate singlemindedly; when you require the profound debt of gratitude to the Buddhas, only then will the body born of your parents be saved. How could it be permissible to form a community, gather followers and associates, take up pen and ink and dash off compositions, toil in pursuit of dust for love of fame and profit, neglect the rules of ethics and destroy proper conduct? Grasping one lifetime of ease becomes myriad eons of pain; if you develop like this, you are calling yourselves Buddhists in vain… Dongshan asked a monk, “What is the most miserable condition in the world?” The monk said, “Hell is most miserable.” Dongshan said, “No. What is most miserable is to wear this monk’s robe without understanding the Great Matter.”

Furong Daokai (1043-1118):
Home-leavers are those who are disenchanted with worldly toil and seek liberation from birth and death – so rest your mind, stop worrying, and cut off clinging involvements. That’s why you are called home-leavers. How can you receive luxurious offerings and be immersed in ordinary life? You must let go of this, that, and everything in between. Regard whatever you see and hear as flowers planted on a rock. When you encounter fame and gain, regard them as dust in your eyes. It is not that this hasn’t ever been experienced or known from beginningless time, but we still continue to turn the head into the tail. Why should you suffer with greed and attachment? If you don’t stop longing now, when will you? Thus, the ancient sages teach you to let go right at this very moment. If you do so, what will remain? If you attain contentment of mind, Buddhas and ancestors will be like something extra and all the things in the world will be inevitably cool and plain. Only then can you merge with the place of suchness. Don’t you see? Longshan did not see anyone throughout his life. Zhaozhou did not speak one phrase throughout his life. Biandan gathered chestnuts for his meals. Damei made his robe from lotus leaves. The Paper-Robed Wayfarer only wore paper. Senior monk Xuantai only wore cotton. Shishuang built a Dead Tree Hall and lived there with the assembly, nobody ever lying down. What you need to do is to let your mind perish.

Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157):
Patch-robed monks make their thinking dry and cool and rest from the remnants of conditioning. Persistently brush up and sharpen this bit of the field. Directly cut through all the overgrown grass. Reach the limit in all directions without defiling even one atom. Spiritual and bright, vast and lustrous, illuminating fully what is before you, directly attain the shining light and clarity that cannot attach to a single defilement… Patch-robed monks practice thoroughly without carrying a single thread. Open-mindedly sparkling and pure, they are like a mirror reflecting a mirror, with nothing regarded as outside, without capacity for accumulating dust. They illuminate everything fully, perceiving nothing [as an object]. This is called taking up the burden from inside and is how to shoulder responsibility… In daytime the sun, at night the moon, each in turn does not blind the other. This is how a patch-robed monk steadily practices, naturally without edges or seams. To gain such steadiness you must completely withdraw from the invisible pounding and weaving of your ingrained ideas. If you want to be rid of this invisible [turmoil], you must just sit through it and let go of everything. Attain fulfillment and illuminate thoroughly, light and shadow altogether forgotten. Drop off your own skin, and the sense-dusts will be fully purified, the eye readily discerning the brightness. Accept your function and be wholly satisfied. In the entire place you are not restricted; the whole time you still mutually respond. Right in light there is darkness; right in darkness there is light. A solitary boat carries the moon; at night it lodges amid the reed flowers, gently swaying in total brilliance.
Chanyuan Qinggui
禪苑清規

Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery

The oldest surviving Chinese monastic code (Zen’en Shingi in Japanese), from the Xuzangjing (zokuzokyo), No. 1245
Written by Changlu Zongze (Choro Sosaku), in the lineage of Yunmen, in 1103
translated by Yifa in “The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China”

Preface

Compiled by Zongze, Master Chuanfa Cijue, and Abbot of the Hongji Public Chan Monastery in the Zhending Prefecture.

The following is in regard to Chan monastic precedents. Although in principle two different sets of Vinaya should not exist, there is a particular tradition [“house wind”] in the school of Chan [“patch-robed disciples”] that stands apart from the general, common regulations. This tradition holds that for those individuals who enjoy the fruits of Dharma on the way to enlightenment, who are extraordinarily pure and exalted, the general precepts need not apply. But for those monks who have not attained such lofty qualities, neglecting the Vinaya is much like coming up against a wall and, it can be said, this neglect will result in a loss of respect in the eyes of others. Therefore, we have consulted with virtuous and knowledgeable monks and have collected texts from all directions in order to complement what we already see and hear, listing everything in outline form with subtitles. Alas, the phenomenon of Shaolin [Bodhidharma’s Way] can already be compared to the wounding of healthy flesh that grows infected. The introduction of new regulations and the establishment of Chan monasteries by the Chan Master Baizhang can be regarded similarly. Further problems have been created by the spread of monasteries to all regions, numerous even to the point of intolerability. Regulations have expanded accordingly, causing complications and problems to increase as well. However, in order to sanctify the temple and raise the Dharma banner there should not be a lack of regulations in the monastery. Regarding the bodhisattva threefold pure precepts and the seven categories of the shravaka precepts, one might ask why the established laws must focus on such complicated details. The Buddha established new teachings only when a given situation required it. It is our wish that the novice pay great heed to these regulations, and as for virtuous senior monks, we hope to have the fortune to present these rules to you for your approval. This preface written on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the second year of Chongning [1103].

Prefatory Note to the Reprint: When this text was first published it gained great popularity. Unfortunately, the woodblock characters have since been worn down to the point of illegibility. We now present for circulation a new carving using larger characters. We hope that collectors of such texts will grant us the honor of inspecting this new edition. Written in the Renxu year of Jiatai [1202] by Yuba to propagate the teaching and to sincerely solicit comment.

Fascicle One

Reception of the Precepts [jukai] 受戒

All the Buddhas of the three ages say, “One must leave home and join a monastic order to attain Buddhahood.” The twenty-eight patriarchs of the Western Heaven and the six patriarchs of the Land of the Tang who transmitted the seal of the Buddha mind were all shramanas. If one solemnly purifies oneself by observing the Vinaya, then one can become an influential paragon of virtue in all Three Realms. Therefore, both meditation and the quest for the truth begin with receiving the precepts. If one cannot abstain from error and avert evil, how can he undertake these activities lightly? If his robes and bowls are borrowed, then, although he ascends the ordination platform to receive the precepts, he cannot truly obtain them. If one cannot obtain the precepts, then all his life he will be a person without the precepts, he enters the Gate of Emptiness as an impostor who usurps the donors’ offerings. If beginners, who are unfamiliar with the law and precepts, are not given instructions (told not to borrow robes and bowls, and so forth) by a teacher, then they will also be caught in the trap of living as impostors. And so now, with bitter mouth, humbly imploring, I dare to wish that you will inscribe this caveat in your minds.

To receive the precepts, the future monk must prepare three robes, bowls, a sitting mat, and new, clean clothes. If he has no new clothes, he should at least wash all his clothes before ascending the ordination platform. It is not permissible to borrow the robes or the bowls. During the ordination ceremony, he must concentrate and should not let his mind wander to other subjects. For someone who is on the way to Buddhahood, imitating the manner of the Buddha, upholding the Buddha’s precepts, and receiving the Buddha’s joy are not trivial, insignificant matters. How can he undertake these activities lightly? If his robes and bowls are borrowed, then, although he ascends the ordination platform to receive the precepts, he cannot truly obtain them. If he does not obtain the precepts, then all his life he will be a person without the precepts, he enters the Gate of Emptiness as an impostor who usurps the donors’ offerings. If beginners, who are unfamiliar with the law and precepts, are not given instructions (told not to borrow robes and bowls, and so forth) by a teacher, then they will also be caught in the trap of living as impostors. And so now, with bitter mouth, humbly imploring, I dare to wish that you will inscribe this caveat in your minds.

After receiving the shravaka precepts, the initiates should receive the bodhisattva precepts: This is the gradual path of entering the Dharma.
Upholding the Precepts [“protecting the precepts,” gokai] 護戒

After a monk has received the precepts, he must always uphold them. A monk would rather die with the law than live without the law. The Hinayana precepts listed in the Four Part Vinaya include four “defeats,” thirteen “formal meetings,” two “undetermined offenses,” thirty “forfeitures,” ninety “expiations,” four “confessions,” one hundred “myriad infractions to learn,” and seven “methods of adjudicating disputes.” The Mahayana precepts in the Brahma Net Sutra include ten major offenses and forty-eight minor offenses. Every monk must study and memorize them so he can chant them fluently. He must know what to obey and what constitutes an offense, when exceptions can or cannot be made. He must follow the Golden Voice and the Holy Words given by the Buddha alone, not commonplace people. Prohibited foods should not be eaten. (For example, onions, leeks, scallions, garlic, chives, wine, meat, fish, rabbit, cake made with milk, cheese, maggot larvae, pig fat, and goat fat—all of these items should not be eaten. Even in times of sickness, a monk should sacrifice his body even to the end of his life, rather than consume wine or meat and destroy the precepts.) Nor should foods be consumed at the wrong time, that is, in the afternoon. (For example, light snacks, “medicine stone,” fruit, rice soup, bean soup, and vegetable juice—any food not consumed at the midday meal or early meal is considered untimely food.) The evils of wealth and sensuality are more dangerous than a poisonous snake and should be greatly avoided. The monk should be compassionate and he should think of every sentient being as a newborn infant. His words must be true, and his thoughts and speech should be in harmony. He must study the Mahayana teachings and develop the inspiration for great dedication and deeds. When the shila are pure, that is, when the precepts are obeyed, the Dharma will become manifest. If the skin did not exist, then where would the hair be placed? Therefore, in the sutra it is written that the precepts must be rigorously upheld as though one were protecting a precious gem.

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Admonitions to Beginning Students
Kye Ch’osim Hagin Mun by Korean Zen Master Chinul
Translated by Robert E. Buswell in “The Collected Works of Chinul”

“Admonitions to Beginning Students” was written by Chinul in the winter of 1205 to commemorate the official opening of Suson sa at its new site on Chogye Mountain. The text is a moralistic tract, the only one in Chinul’s writings, which outlines the basic rules of conduct and decorum for the residents of the community. “Admonitions” came to be adopted by all Korean Buddhists as the standard of conduct in every monastery, and it helped to establish ethical observance as the basis of Korean Son cultivation. It is the first of three basic works on the monk’s life by three different Korean masters, works compiled during the Yi dynasty as the Ch’obalsim chagyong mun; as such, it is the first text given to Korean postulants today when they enter a monastery. In this rendering I have found helpful the Venerable Sam-woo Kim’s unpublished translation of “Admonitions” which appears in his translation and study of the Ch’obalsim chagyong mun.

Admonitions to Novice Monks
Beginners should keep far away from bad friends, and draw near to the virtuous and good. You should take the five or ten precepts and know well when to keep them and when to dispense with them.[1] You are to follow only the sacred words of the golden-mouthed Buddha; do not heed the lies of ordinary men. Since you have already left home to join the pure assembly, remember always to be gentle and flexible and to harmonize well with the others; do not be proud or haughty. Those older than you are your older brothers; those younger than you are your younger brothers. If there should be a quarrel, try to reconcile the views of the two parties and bring them together by being sympathetic to both. Do not harm others with harsh speech. To slander your fellows and bicker over right and wrong—leaving the householder’s life in this way is utterly without benefit. The calamities of wealth and sex are worse than poisonous snakes. Examine yourself and be aware of your faults: you must leave them far behind.

Unless you have good reason, do not enter anyone else’s room or compound. Do no pry surreptitiously into the affairs of others.
If it is not a sixth day [2], do not wash your underwear.
When you wash your face or rinse your mouth, do not blow your nose loudly or spit.
When serving the formal meal, do not forget the proper sequence.
When walking around, do not open your collar or fling your arms about.
When speaking, do not laugh or joke in a loud voice.
Unless it is to attend to an important matter, do not go beyond the front gate.
If someone is sick, you must care for him with compassion.
When guests visit, you should welcome them gladly.
When using utensils, you should be frugal and content with what you have.
During the meal, do not make any noise while drinking or sipping.
In raising or putting down utensils, do it calmly and carefully. Do not raise your head and look around. Do not relish the fine food and despise the coarse. Remain quiet and say nothing: guard against distracting thoughts. Remember that you only take food to protect the body from withering away so that you can attain the path. To ensure that your practice of the path does not go awry, recite the Heart Sutra to yourself and contemplate the fact that the three wheels [donor, recipient, and object donated] are pure.

You must be conscientious about attending services in the morning and evening, and chide your own laziness. Know the proper order of procession so that you make no disturbance. During chanting or invocations, you should recite the text while contemplating the meaning; do not simply follow the melody, and do not sing out of key. When gazing reverently at a holy image, do not let your mind wander to other things. You must understand that the karmic obstacles created by your own misdeeds are like the mountains or the sea; you must know that they can be dissolved through noumenal and phenomenal repentance.[3] Deeply contemplate the fact that both the worshiper and the worshiped are conditionally arisen from the true nature. Have deep faith in the fact that the response to your invocation is not spurious; it is like shadow and echo which follow form and sound.

Admonitions to Fully Ordained Monks
When residing in the dormitories, you should defer to one another and pick no quarrels. You must help and support one another. Guard against trying to win arguments. Refrain from gathering for idle talk. Be careful not to put on someone else’s shoes by mistake. Be careful to sit or lie down in the proper place.

When speaking with guests, do not spread tales about the faults of your own house; simply praise the Buddhist functions carried on in the monastery.

You should not go to the storeroom, or look at or listen to anything which could cause you to have doubts.
Unless it is for something important, do not travel around the countryside or associate with laypeople; you could incur the enmity of others and lose your desire for cultivation of the path. Even if you have to go out on important business, inform the
admit or the provost and let him know of your destination. If you enter a layperson’s house, you must firmly keep right mindfulness. Be careful not to let your mind become dissolute by the sights and sounds around you, let alone loosen your clothing, laugh and joke, talk distractedly of trivial matters, or eat or drink at improper times. Do not wrongly assume that, thereby, you are performing “unhindered practice” when actually you are deviating dangerously from the Buddhist precepts. Once you have aroused the suspicions of virtuous and good people, how can you possibly be considered wise again?

Admonitions to Son (Zen) Monks
When residing in the meditation hail, refrain from keeping company with shramaneras [novices]. Refrain from going in and out to greet people. Refrain from noticing the good and bad qualities of others. Refrain from zealously pursuing words and letters. Refrain from oversleeping. Refrain from distracting yourself with too many unnecessary activities.

When the master goes up to his seat to preach the dharma, do not be overawed by it and, as before a steep precipice, turn away. On the other hand, do not think that you are already familiar with it and become complacent. Listen to the sermon with an empty mind; then it will certainly be an occasion for you to attain enlightenment. Do not be like those sophists who have studied rhetoric and judge a person’s wisdom only by his eloquence. As it is said, “A snake drinks water and produces poison; a cow drinks water and produces milk.” If you train wisely, bodhi is produced; if you train stupidly, samsara is produced—this is my meaning. Furthermore, do not think slightly of your dharma instructors. By doing so, you create obstacles on the path and your cultivation cannot progress. You must be careful about this! The shastras say, “It is like a man traveling at night with a wicked person who carries a torch to show the way. If the man will not accept the service of his light because the person is bad, he could fall in a hole or drop into a pit.” Listening to the dharma is like treading on thin ice: you must direct your eyes and ears and listen to the profound words. Clear your thoughts of emotions and sense-objects and appreciate the recondite meaning. After the master has left the hall, sit silently and reflect upon his lecture. If you have any doubts, consult those who have understood. Ponder it in the evening; inquire about it in the morning. Try not to fall short in your understanding by so much as a strand of silk or hair. If you practice in this way, you will be able to develop right faith and be one who has embraced the path.

The beginningless habits of lust, desire, anger, and delusion bind the mind-ground; although temporarily they seem to be subdued, they arise again like malaria which strikes on alternate days. At all times you must make use of the power of the skillful means and wisdom of applied practice; take pains to guard your mind against the arising of defilements. How can you look for a way to salvation while wasting time with pointless chatter and turning your back on the mind-doctrine of Son? Strengthen your will; reprimand yourself; reprove your own laziness. Know your faults and turn toward what is good. Reform and repent [your bad conduct]; train and control [your mind]. Cultivate earnestly and the power of contemplation will grow; train continuously and your practice will become increasingly pure. If you think constantly about how difficult it is to meet the skillful means and wisdom of applied practice; take pains to guard your mind against the arising of defilements. How can you look for a way to salvation while wasting time with pointless chatter and turning your back on the mind-doctrine of Son? Strengthen your will; reprimand yourself; reprove your own laziness. Know your faults and turn toward what is good. Reform and repent [your bad conduct]; train and control [your mind]. Cultivate earnestly and the power of contemplation will grow; train continuously and your practice will become increasingly pure. If you think constantly about how difficult it is to meet the dharma, the work of enlightenment will always seem fresh. If you always remember your good fortune, you will never backslide. If you persevere in this way for a long time, naturally samadhi and prajna will become full and bright and you will perceive the recondite meaning. After the master has left the hall, sit silently and reflect upon his lecture. If you have any doubts, consult those who have understood. Ponder it in the evening; inquire about it in the morning. Try not to fall short in your understanding by so much as a strand of silk or hair. If you practice in this way, you will be able to develop right faith and be one who has embraced the path.

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I urge you to exert yourselves!

Notes
1. A common example is cited repeatedly by Son masters in lectures: if you met a hunter in pursuit of a deer and were asked which way it went, you would answer that you did not know, even if you had seen it. In this way, compassion is exercised to transgress or to repent. This is the way to overcome all transgressions instantly.

2. “A sixth day”: tradition has it that on the sixth, sixteenth, and twenty-sixth day of each lunar month the saints convene and redeem the spirits of insects. Hence if you wash your underclothes on those days and unintentionally kill lice and other insects, although the precept against lying is broken. See Ssu-fen lu 55, T 1428.22.978b.

3. “Noumenal repentance” (K. ich'am; C. li-ch'an): absolute repentance which results from recognizing that all things are unborn. Rather than performing a repentance ceremony, one simply sits in meditation and contemplates the fact that one’s transgressions are void of self-nature; once the essential principle of their innate Uncreatedness is realized, there is nothing left to transgress or to repent. This is the way to overcome all transgressions instantly.

“Phenomenal repentance” (K. sach’am; C. shih-ch’an): repentance performed via ceremonies, rituals, or chanting. By invoking the Buddha’s name and asking for forgiveness, the response from the Buddha will be forthcoming, releasing one from the effects of one’s transgressions. To repent while grasping at the characteristics of dharmas is phenomenal repentance; to recognize that everything is unconditioned is noumenal repentance. See Kim T’an-ho, Ch’obalsim chagyong mun kangui, p. 85, for discussion.
Leaving Home in Early Japan
The Candle of the Latter Dharma
Mappo to myoki, Attributed to Saicho (Dengyo Daishi, 767-822), Founder of the Japanese Tendai School

He who conforms to the One Thusness while spreading his teaching is the Dharma king; he whose virtues permeate the four seas and transmit his influence among the people is the benevolent king. This being so, the Dharma king and the benevolent king work together to reveal each other's presence and enlighten all beings; the Absolute Truth and the secular truth rely on each other to spread the Buddhist teachings. It is for this reason that the profound writings of Buddhism fill the world and sage counsel overflows under heaven. Now we foolish monks accept and obey the heavenly net of the nation's laws and respect and obey the emperor's severe decrees. There is no time for us to rest complacent.

There are three periods to the Dharma. There are also three types of people. Instructions concerning the teachings and precepts arise and disappear depending on the time, and words repudiating or praising the keeping of the precepts are employed or cast aside depending upon the audience. As for the fortunes of Fu Hsi, Wen Wang, and Confucius, the three ancient worthies of China, their rise and fall were not the same; as for the capacities of the beings of the five five-hundred year periods after the Buddha's decrease, their wisdom and enlightenment are also different. How can beings of different capacities be saved by identical means? How can all of the Buddha's teachings concerning the precepts be arranged under one principle?

For this reason, I shall detail the successive stages of the True, Imitative, and Latter Dharma and clarify the activities carried out by monks who break and keep the precepts during these respective periods. This work consists of the following three sections: (1) definitions of the True, Imitative, and Latter Dharma; (2) explanations of the behavior of monks who break and keep the precepts during the three Dharmas; (3) quotations from the Buddha's teachings and the comparison of them with the behavior of the monks of the present age.

First, the definitions of the True, Imitative, and Latter Dharmas. There are different theories concerning the length of the three periods. To begin with, one theory will be given. [K'uei-]chi of the Mahayana, quoting the Sutra of the Good Aeon, says: "After the Buddha's nirvana, the True Dharma will last five hundred years and the Imitative Dharma will last one thousand years. After these fifteen hundred years, Shakyamuni's Dharma will perish completely."

The Latter Dharma is not mentioned here. According to another authority, since the nuns did not observe the eight rules of deference, and were lax and negligent, the True Dharma was not prolonged, Therefore we shall not rely on this theory.

Further, it is stated in the Nirvana Sutra: "In the Latter Dharma there is a group of 120,000 great bodhisattvas who keep the Dharma, ensuring that it will not perish."

Since this refers to bodhisattvas of superior rank, it will not be used either.

Question: If so, what are the activities of the monks during these fifteen hundred years?

Answer: Looking at the Sutra of Maya, we find: "In the first five hundred years after the Buddha's nirvana, the seven wise sages, such as Mahakashyapa, will successively uphold the True Dharma, ensuring that it will not perish. After five hundred years, the True Dharma will perish completely. After six hundred years, the ninety-five kinds of non-Buddhist teaching will thrive, and Ashvaghosa will appear in the world to humble them. After seven hundred years, Nagarjuna will appear in the world and strike down the banners of erroneous views. After eight hundred years, the bhikshus (monks) will become self-indulgent and idle, and there will be only one or two people who attain enlightenment. After nine hundred years, menservants will become bhikshus and maidservants will become bhikshunis (nuns). After one thousand years, they will become wrathful when they hear of the Buddhist practice of contemplation of impurities and will not wish to practice it. After eleven hundred years, monks and nuns will marry and break and slander the precepts. After twelve hundred years, the monks and nuns will have children. After thirteen hundred years, they will wear the white robes of lay people. After fourteen hundred years, the four groups of disciples--monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen--will be like hunters and sell away the offerings presented to the Three Treasures. After fifteen hundred years, there will be two monks in the country of Kausambi who will quarrel with each other and eventually murder each other. Consequentially the Buddhist teachings will be stored away in the dragon's palace."

These words are also found in roll eighteen of the Nirvana Sutra, as well as the Benevolent Kings Sutra, etc. According to these sutras' words, precepts, concentration, and wisdom will disappear after fifteen hundred years. For this reason, it is stated in roll fifty-one of the Great Collection Sutra (Mahasamnipata-sutra): "After my nirvana, in the first five hundred years, the various bhikshus will abide within my True Dharma, and they will be steadfast in their liberation. ('Liberation' refers to the initial
attainment of the fruits of the Holy Path.) In the next five hundred years, they will be steadfast in their contemplation. In the next five hundred years, they will be steadfast in listening to many teachings. In the next five hundred years, they will be steadfast in building temples. In the last five hundred years, they will be steadfast in quarreling with each other, and the pure Dharma will disappear completely. (And so forth.)"

This means that in the first three five-hundred-year periods, they will be steadfast in practicing the three Dharma of precepts, concentration, and wisdom. In other words, these periods correspond to the periods of the True Dharma of five hundred years and the Imitative Dharma of one thousand years quoted above. The two periods beginning with the period wherein temples are built belong to the Latter Dharma. For this reason, it is stated in [K'uei-]chi's Reconciling the Inconsistencies of the Diamond Wisdom Sutra: "The True Dharma lasts five-hundred years, and the Imitative Dharma lasts one thousand years. After these fifteen hundred years, the True Dharma, which had been current, will perish completely."

Therefore we see that the two periods beginning with the period of the construction of temples belong to the Latter Dharma.

**Question:** If this is so, then in which period does the present world fall?

**Answer:** Although there are many theories concerning the chronology since the Buddha's nirvana, we shall consider [only] two theories here. First, the Dharma master Fa-shang and others, using the Record of Extraordinary Events in the Chou Dynasty, says that the Buddha entered nirvana in the water-monkey year of the fifty-third year of the reign of Mu Wang-man, the fifth lord of the Chou Dynasty (1122-1115 B.C.) According to this theory, from that monkey year until now, the metal-snake year of the twentieth year of Enryaku, it has been 1750 years. Second, Fei Ch'ang-fang and others, using the Spring and Autumn Annals of the country of Lu, says the Buddha entered nirvana in the water-rat year of the fourth year of the reign of K'uang Wang-pan, the twenty-first lord of the Chou Dynasty. According to this theory, from that water-rat year until now, the metal-snake year of the twentieth year of Enryaku, it has been 1410 years.

Therefore we can see that the present time is at the extreme end of the Imitative Dharma. The activities of the monks of this age are already identical to those of the Latter Dharma. Within the Latter Dharma only the written teachings exist. There is neither practice nor enlightenment. If precepts existed, then it would be possible to break the precepts. But since precepts no longer exist, what precepts are there to break? And since it is no longer possible to break the precepts, how much less can one keep the precepts? For this reason, the Great Collection Sutra states: "After the Buddha's nirvana, monks without precepts will be found throughout the province. (And so forth.)"

**Question:** Throughout the various sutras and vinayas, monks are admonished to refrain from breaking the precepts, and those who do so are not allowed in the Buddhist community. If monks who break the precepts are admonished in this way, then how much more so should the monks without precepts [be admonished]! However, here you argue repeatedly that there are no precepts to be kept in the Latter Dharma. Why should one without a wound hurt himself?

**Answer:** Your reasoning is not correct. The kinds of activities prevailing in the True, Imitative, and Latter Dharmas are disclosed in various sutras. Whether monk or layman, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, can there be anyone who opens the sutras without finding such passages? Why should I, while being attached to my evil way of life, conceal the True Dharma that maintains the country?

However, the point under discussion here concerns the fact that in the Latter Dharma, there are only nominal bhikshus. These nominal bhikshus are the True Treasures of the world. There are no other field of merit where one can plant merit. Furthermore, if someone were to keep the precepts in the Latter Dharma, this would be exceedingly strange indeed. It would be like a tiger in the marketplace. Who could believe it?

**Question:** I can see that the True, Imitative, and Latter Dharmas are described in many sutras. But in what scripture does the argument that the nominal bhikshu of the Latter Dharma is the True Treasure of the world appear?

**Answer:** In roll nine of the Great Collection Sutra, it is stated: "For example, pure gold is considered a priceless treasure. But if pure gold did not exist, then silver would be considered a priceless treasure. If silver did not exist, then brass, a false treasure, would be considered a priceless treasure. If a false treasure did not exist, then cuprite, nickel, iron, pewter, lead, or tin would be considered priceless treasures. Likewise, in the entire world, the Buddha Treasure is priceless. If the Buddha Treasure did not exist, then the pratyeckabuddha would be considered supreme. If no pratyeckabuddha existed, then the arhat would be considered supreme. If no arhat existed, then the remaining group of wise sages would be considered supreme. If the remaining group of wise sages did not exist, an ordinary man who had attained a state of concentration would be considered supreme. If no ordinary man who had attained a state of concentration existed, a pure keeper of the precepts would be considered supreme. If no pure keeper of the precepts existed, then a bhikshu who kept the precepts imperfectly would be considered supreme. If no
bhiksu who kept the precepts existed, then a nominal bhiksu who shaved his hair and beard and donned Buddhist robes would be considered the Supreme Treasure. This is because he is preeminent when compared to the practitioners of the ninety-five kinds of non-Buddhist paths. He is worthy of accepting the veneration of the people of the world and becoming the field of merit of the populace. Why? Because he is feared by sentient beings. The person who protects, cares for, and worships him will quickly attain the rank of insight in the birthlessness of dharmas. (This ends the quotation from the sutra.)"

This passage enumerates eight levels of pricelessness: the Tathagata, the pratyekabuddha, the shravaka, as well as the practitioners who have attained a state of concentration, the one who keeps the precepts, the one who breaks the precepts, and the nominal monk without the precepts. In this order, they all become priceless treasures during the time of the True Imitative, and Latter Dharmas. The first four belong to the time of the True Dharma, the next three belong to the time of the Imitative Dharma, and the last one belongs to the time of the Latter Dharma. For this reason, we can clearly see that monks who break the precepts and monks who do not keep the precepts are both True Treasures.

**Question:** Looking respectfully at the statement above, it has become clear that even monks who break the precepts and nominal bhikshus are none other than True Treasures. Why, then do the Nirvana Sutra, the Great Collection Sutra and other works state, 'If kings and ministers venerate a monk who breaks the precepts, the three calamities, those caused by famine, war, and pestilence, will arise in the country, and they will ultimately be born in hell?' Since this is so for bhikshus who break the precepts, how much more so for bhikshus who do not keep the precepts! This would mean that the Tathagata sometimes admonishes and sometimes praises monks who break the precepts. How can the words on one Sage have the error of inconsistency?

**Answer:** Your reasoning is not correct. To begin with, the Nirvana Sutra and other sutras prohibited the monks of the True Dharma from breaking the precepts, and not the bhikshus of the Imitative and Latter Dharmas. Although they are called by the same names, there is a difference in the times. To prohibit or permit according to the time: this is the purport of the Great Sage. Therefore, there is no inconsistency in the World-honored One.

**Question:** If so, then how do we know that the Nirvana and other sutras only prohibit monks of the True Dharma from breaking the precepts, and not those of the Imitative and Latter Dharmas?

**Answer:** The exposition concerning the eight levels of True Treasures in the Great Collection Sutra quoted above is the proof. It is because all become priceless treasures in their time. Only during the time of the True Dharma do the bhikshus who break the precepts defile the pure Sangha. For this reason the Buddha firmly prohibited monks from breaking the precepts and did not allow those who did so to remain in the Sangha.

As to the reason why it is so, it is stated in roll three of the Nirvana Sutra: “The Tathagata has just now bestowed the unsurpassable True Dharma upon kings, ministers, councilors, monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. These kings, the ministers, and the four kinds of Buddhists should encourage and inspire the students of the Way and enjoin them to attain the highest precepts, concentrations, and wisdom. If there should be a person who does not study these three kinds of things, is lax and negligent, breaks the precepts, and destroys the True Dharma, then the kings, the ministers, and the four kinds of Buddhists should chastise him. Such kings, ministers, etc., will gain immeasurable merit. If there is a good bhiksu who sees a person doing things that subvert the Dharma, but leaves him alone and does not scold, expel, or dispose of him, you should know that this person is an enemy of the Buddha-Dharma.”

Also, it is stated in roll twenty-eight of the Great Collection Sutra: "If there is a king of a country who forsakes and does not defend the Dharma when he sees it being subverted, then the merits accruing from the charity, precepts, and wisdom that he cultivated in innumerable past lives will all disappear. The three types of unlucky occurrences will appear in his country... At the end of his life, he will be born in the great hell."

It is also stated in roll thirty-one of the same sutra: “The Buddha said, "O great king! Protect the one single bhiksu who follows the Dharma, and do not protect the innumerable bhikshus who have committed the various evil acts. I now permit you to care for and protect only two kinds of people. One is the arhat who possesses the eightfold liberation. The second is the shrotapanna.”

We find a number of such prohibitions. All of them are prohibitions valid only for the time of the True Dharma and are not the teaching for the Imitative and Latter Dharmas. The reason why this is so is because in the closing years of the Imitative Dharma and in the Latter Dharma, the True Dharma is not practiced. Thus there is no Dharma that can be broken. What could be called the breaking of the Dharma? There are no precepts that can be broken. Who could be called the breaker of the precepts? Also, there exists no practice that the great king of that age can protect. How could the three calamities appear? How could he lose the merits accruing from his charity, precepts, and wisdom? Also, in the Imitative and Latter Dharmas, there is no
one who has attained enlightenment. How could the king be told that he is permitted to protect the two kinds of sages? Therefore you should know that all the above explanations are made with reference to the world of the True Dharma, when, because there exists the keeping of the precepts, there also exists the breaking of the precepts.

Next, during the first five hundred years of the one thousand year Imitative Dharma, monks who keep the precepts gradually decrease, and monks who break the precepts gradually increase. Although the practice of keeping the precepts exists, there is no attainment of enlightenment.

For this reason, it is stated in roll seven of the Nirvana Sutra: "Kashyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-honored One! The Buddha has explained that there are four kinds of demons. How can I distinguish between the teachings of the demons and the teachings of the Buddha? Various sentient beings will follow and pursue the teaching of the demons. There will also be those who follow and obey what was preached by the Buddha. How can I recognize these people?" The Buddha said to Kashyapa, "Seven hundred years after my parinirvana, these demon papiyas will gradually come into being and obstruct and subvert my True Dharma. The demon-king papiyas are like hunters who wear monks' robes. They will create a figure of a bhikshu, a figure of a bhikshuni, a figure of a layman and a laywoman; they will also conjure up a body of a shrotapanna...they will conjure up a body of an arhat, as well as the material body of a Buddha. By means of these defiled forms, the demon-kings will create undefined bodies and subvert my True Dharma. These demon papiyas, to subvert my True Dharma, will say thus: The Buddha was staying at Jetavana Vihara (Monastery) in Shravasti. He permitted the bhikshus to receive and accumulate ministers, maid-servants, servants, cows, sheep, elephants, horses... copper and iron kettles and cauldrons, large and small bronze basins, and other necessities; to till the fields and plant seeds; to buy, sell, and engage in business; and to accumulate rice and cereals. Because of his great compassion, the Buddha pities sentient beings and allowed all these things to be accumulated.' These sutras and vinayas are all the teachings of the demons."

It is stated above that after seven hundred years has passed since the Buddha's nirvana, the papiyas gradually come into being. For this reason, we know the bhikshus of that time gradually come to covet and accumulate the eight impure things. These deduced teachings are taught by the demons. Within these and other sutras, the age is clearly indicated and the activities of the period are described in detail. Certainly they must not be doubted. Here we have just given one quotation to illustrate the age. The rest should be understood following this example.

Next, in the latter half of the Imitative Dharma, monks who keep the precepts decrease and there are innumerable monks who break the precepts. For this reason, it is stated in roll six of the Nirvana Sutra: "The Buddha said to the bodhisattva, 'Good son! For example, suppose there is a kalaka tree with a great number of trees. In this grove, there is just one tree called the tinduka. The fruit of the kalaka and the tinduka look alike and cannot be distinguished. When the fruits had ripened, a woman picked them all. Only one tenth of them were fruits of the tinduka while nine tenths were fruits of the kalaka. This woman unwittingly brought them back to the marketplace and displayed them for sale. Ignorant people and small children, again not distinguishing between the fruits, bought the kalaka and died after eating them. A group of wise men heard of this and asked the woman, "You! Where did you get this fruit?" The woman then told them where. The people then said, "At that place there are many kalaka trees, and there is only one tinduka." The people, once they found out, laughed and threw them away. Good son! The eight impure things within the great Sangha are also like this. Within the Sangha there are many who receive and use these eight impure things. He knows that many monks receive and accumulate these prohibitive things, but he stays with them and does not shun or leave them. He is like the one tinduka tree in the grove.'"

Also it is stated in the Sutra of the Ten Wheels: "If a person, taking refuge in my Dharma, renounces the world and commits evil deeds, even though such a person styles himself a shramana, he is not a shramana; even though he styles himself a performer of pure deeds, he is not performing good deeds. Such bhikshus open and indicate the hidden treasury of merit of the all-virtuous Dharma to every heavenly being, dragon, and yaksha and become good friends in the Dharma to sentient beings. Even though they are not the kind of people who crave little and are satisfied, they shave off their hair and beards and wear the robes of the Dharma. Because of the causal relationship, they will nourish the sentient beings' good roots leading to enlightenment and open and indicate the good Way for heavenly beings. The bhiksu who breaks the precepts, even though he is [spiritually] dead, due to the remaining vigor of the precepts is like the medicinal cow's gallstone. The cow is dead, but it is like the musk of the musk deer, which is useful after the deer's death. (And so forth.)"

It is stated above that in the kalaka grove, there is one tinduka tree. This is a parable that the fortune of the Imitative Dharma has already abated, that monks who break the precepts fill the world, and that there are no more that one or two bhikshus who keep the precepts. Also, it is stated that the bhikshus who break the precepts, even though they are dead, are like the musk deer's musk, which is useful though the musk deer is dead. To be useful though dead means that they become sentient beings' good friends in the Dharma. You should know clearly that this statement means that at this time monks who break the precepts are gradually tolerated and become the fields of merit of the people of the world, is identical to the statement of the Great Collection Sutra above.
Next, after the closing years of the Imitative Dharma, the precepts do not exist at all. The Buddha, with insight into the destiny of this age, praised the nominal monk as the field of merit of the people of the world in order to save the people of the Latter Dharma.

Also it is stated in roll fifty-two of the Great Collection Sutra: "Suppose there is a nominal bhikshu in the Latter World to come who has, within my Dharma, shaved off his hari and bear and donned a robe. If there is a donor who gives donations to him in faith and venerates him, the donor will gain an immeasurable and limitless amount of merit."

Also, it is stated in the Sutra of the Wise and Foolish: "Suppose there is a donor in the future Latter World when the Dharma is about to expire. He must treat with respect a Sangha of over four nominal bhikshus, just as if they were Shariputra, Mahamudgalyayana, etc., even if the bhikshus keep wives and have children."

Also it is stated in the Great Collection Sutra: "The crime of striking and reproaching a monk who wears a robe but breaks or does not keep the precepts is the same as causing a trillion Buddhas to shed blood. If there are sentient beings who, for my Dharma, shave off their hair and beards, and wear a robe, they are all already sanctioned by the seal of nirvana, even if they do not keep the precepts. These people indicate the way to nirvana to various people and heavenly beings. These people are already within the Three Treasure, have give rise to faith and respect in their minds, and surpass the ninety-five kinds of non-Buddhist path. These people will invariably enter nirvana quickly. They excel all laymen and secular people, with the exception of the householders who have attained endurance. For this reason, heavenly beings and humans should venerate them, even if they break the precepts."

Also, it is stated in the Great Compassion Sutra: "The Buddha said to Ananda, 'In the Latter World to come, at the time when the Dharma is about to perish, there will be bhikshus and bhikshunis who, within my Dharma, after having entered the monkhood, will wander from one wine-shop to another, leading their children by the arm, and who, within my Dharma, will commit impure deeds. Such people, even if they are given to wine, will all attain parinirvana with the present Good Aeon. In this Good Aeon, a thousand Buddhas will appear in this world. I am the fourth. Next, after me, Maitreya will take my place. This goes on in this way until the final Rocana Tathagata. The order will be like this. You, Ananda, should know that even if there are, within my Dharma, people who are shramanas in their natures only, and who defile the practice of a shramana, calling themselves shramanases and looking like shramanases, they are the ones who actually wear the Buddhist robes. Within the Good Aeon, with Maitreya at the beginning and so forth on down to Rocana Tathagata, these various shramanases, in the presence of these Buddhas in the nirvana without residue, will gradually enter nirvana and will completely disappear without a trace. Why? Because for every one of these shramanases, if he even once calls out the Buddha's name and even once experiences faith, the merit created will ultimately not be in vain. This I declare because I, through my Buddha-wisdom, am well-versed in the Dharma-realm.'""

It is stated in the Vimalakirti Sutra: "Among the ten titles of the Buddha, if the Buddha explains them extensively, the merits of hearing the first three would not be exhausted, even if an aeon were to elapse. (And so forth.)"

These sutras all specify the age and say that the nominal bhikshu of the future Latter World will become the mentor of the people of the world. If one regulates these nominal monks of the world of the Latter Dharma using the precepts of the time of the True Dharma, then the teachings and the [monks'] capacities will be opposed to each other; the Dharma and the people will be incompatible. For this reason, it is stated in the vinaya, "Regulations that regulate what is not to be regulated would negate the Buddha's predictions." How can there be any crimes?

With the above, quotations of passages from the sutras for the three Dharmsas conclude.

Finally, the teachings of the Buddha will be quoted and compared with the behavior of the monks of the present age. In the age of the Latter Dharma, the Latter Dharma is reality, and the True Dharma is destroyed. The three actions, physical, vocal, and mental, and indeterminate, and the four deportments, the correct ways of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, are not followed. As the Sutra Settling Doubts Concerning the Imitative Dharma says: "If, furthermore, there are people who construct stupas and temples and venerate the Three Treasures but do not arouse a feeling of respect and honor toward them; who invite monks to reside in temples but do not offer them drink or food, clothing or medicine; who, furthermore, turn right around to beg these things from the monks, and eat the monks' food; who whether rich or poor, desire in all they do to work solely against the interest of the Sangha, impairing and causing distress in it, such people will fall into the three evil paths for a long time."

Right now, surveying the secular world, we find that such deeds are widespread. But this is simply the destiny of the age; it is not due to the people. Donors do not have the true intentions of donors to begin with. Who can censure monks for not practicing as monks?
Also it is stated in the *Sutra of the Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha*, “To ride on a horse or cart for one day disqualifies a monk for receiving meals from a donor for five hundred days.” How can the wrongs of the practitioners of the present age reveal the virtues of those properly receiving ritual meals?

Also it is stated in the *Dharma Practice Sutra*: “Even if my disciple receives a special invitation, he should not step on the king's land or drink water from the king's ground. Once he does, five hundred great demons will constantly obstruct his path, and five thousand great demons will constantly follow and revile him, calling him a great traitor to the Buddha-Dharma.”

It is stated in the *Mrgaramatra Sutra*: “Even if one gives a special invitation to five hundred arhats, they cannot be called fields of merit. If one gives alms to one evil bhikshu who resembles a true monk, one will gain immeasurable merit. Inasmuch as the followers of the Way in the present age are fond of special invitations, where can merits be planted? Why should people who keep the precepts be like this? They cannot step on the king's land, nor are they permitted to drink the king's water. Five thousand great demons must surely revile them as great traitor. Alas, why does not the Sangha of monks who keep the precepts reform their errors?”

Also it is stated in the *Benevolent Kings Sutra*: “If any of my disciples serves the government, he is not my disciple. When the offices of major and minor superintendents of monks are established, the government and the Sangha will be bound together. When that time comes, the Buddha-Dharma will be destroyed. It will be the cause of the destruction of the Buddha-Dharma and the destruction of the country. (And so forth.)”

Judging from the words of the *Benevolent Kings Sutra*, etc., to venerate the superintendent of monks is a profanity destroying the community of monks. In the *Great Collection Sutra*, etc., monks who do not keep the precepts are praised as the Treasure for the salvation of the people of the world. Alas, why should one let the locust that destroys the country remain while casting aside the Treasure that protects the country? These two groups of monks should not be distinguished from each other, and they should all partake of the meal of identical taste. Then the monks and nuns will not disappear, and the temple bell will not lose time. If things happen this way, it will be in accord with the teachings of the Latter Dharma, which are the way of sustaining the country.
Biography of the Great Teacher of Mt. Hiei (Eizan Daishiden) (compiled several years after Saicho’s death):
(Saicho said, year 818:) I have researched the origins of the Perfect School of the Lotus Sutra. (The Dharma) was preached, studied, and understood in the mountains: first on Vulture Peak, next on Ta-su (where Hui-ssu practiced), and finally on T’ien-T’ai. Students of my (Tendai) school should, therefore, practice and study in the mountains during the first part of their studies. They should do this for the sake of the nation and its people, in order to benefit sentient beings, and so that the Buddha’s teaching will flourish. By living in the mountains they shall escape from the criticisms of the mundane world, and the Buddha’s teaching will surely grow and prosper.

From now on we will not follow shavaka ways. We will turn away forever from Hinayana (strictures on maintaining) dignity. I vow that I will henceforth abandon the two-hundred fifty (Hinayan) precepts. The great teachers of Nan-Yueh (Hui-ssu) and T’ien-T’ai (Chih-i) both heard the Lotus Sutra preached and received the three-fold bodhisattva precepts (three collections of pure precepts) on Vulture’s Peak. Since then, these precepts have been transmitted from teacher to teacher. Chih-i conferred them on Kuan-ting. Kuan-ting conferred them on Chih-wei. Chih-wei conferred them on Hsuan-lang. Hsuan-lang conferred them on Chan-jan. Chan-jan conferred them on Tao-sui. Tao-sui conferred them on Saicho and then on Gishin.

I have read the Buddha’s teachings. I know that there are (strictures on) dignity for both the bodhisattva monk (bosatsu-so) and the (lay) bodhisattva (bosatsu), and that there are pure Mahayana and pure Hinayana (teachings). Now, the students of my school shall study Mahayana precepts, meditation, and wisdom. They shall abandon inferior Hinayana practices forever.

Regulations in Six Articles (Rokujoshiki, 818) (a.k.a. Regulations for Tendai-Lotus (Hokke) Annually Allotted Students):
What is the treasure of the nation? It is our religious nature. Thus those who have this religious nature are the treasures of the nation. Long ago a man (King Wei of Ch’i) said, “Ten large pearls do not constitute the nation’s treasure, but he who sheds his light over a corner of the country is the nation’s treasure.” A philosopher of old (Mou-jung) said, “He who can speak but not act is a teacher to the nation. He who can act but not speak is an asset to the nation. He who can both act and speak is a treasure to the nation. Aside from these three, he who can neither speak nor act is a traitor to the nation.”

Buddhists with religious minds are called bodhisattvas in the West, and gentlemen (chun-tzu, a Confucian term) in the East. They take the bad upon themselves in order to benefit others. This is the height of compassion. Two types of Buddhist monks exist, the Hinayana and the Mahayana. Buddhists with a religious nature are of the latter type. Today in Japan only Hinayana monks are found; Mahayana monks have not yet appeared. Mahayana teachings have not yet spread (in Japan); thus it is difficult for Mahayana practitioners to arise.

I sincerely ask that in accordance with the late emperor’s wish, Tendai yearlyordinands be forever designated Mahayana practitioners and bodhisattva monks (bosatsu-so). Thus the nine (bad) monkeys of King Krki’s dream shall be chased away (a parable meaning that nine bad monks chase away a good monk). Of the five vehicles specified by Manjushri, (the numbers of) those who follow the latter three (the Mahayana ones) will increase. With this attitude and desire we shall strive to benefit those who live now and those who come after us throughout the endless eons.

(The regulations for) the two yearly ordinands who were first appointed to spread the Tendai-Lotus School by the late Emperor (Kanmu) of Kashiwabara (are as follows):
1. Yearly ordinands of the Tendai-Lotus School shall, starting from the ninth year of the Konin era (818), be Mahayana monks. The title of ‘son of Buddha’ shall be conferred upon them, but their original names shall not be removed from the lay register (so that they will not be under the jurisdiction of the government offices established to regulate Buddhism and monks). Bodhisattva novices (bosatsu shami) shall take the Perfect ten good precepts (enjuzenai – probably bodhisattva precepts, but possibly shramaneraprecepts) at which time we shall ask for governmental approval of their initiation certificates.
2. The same year they are initiated, Mahayana novices shall be granted the precepts of the disciples of the Buddha (bushshikai – probably bodhisattva precepts, but possibly bhikshu precepts), and become bodhisattva monks (bosatsu so). At this time, governmental approval for their ordination certificates shall be requested. After they have received the great precepts (daikai – probably bodhisattva precepts, but possibly bhikshu precepts), they shall reside on Mount Hiei for twelve years and study the two courses. During this period, they shall not leave the confines of the mountain.
3. Everyday throughout the years, those in the Shamatha and Vipashyana Course (shikango) shall be required to chant extensively, and to lecture on the Lotus Sutra, Golden Light Sutra, Benevolent King Sutra, Protecting the Ruler Dharani Sutra, and other sutras which protect the nation.
4. Those who study the Esoteric ([Vairo]chana) Course (shanago) shall be required to meditate on the mantras of the Mahavairochana Sutra, Mahamayurividyarajni Sutra, Amoghapashakalparaja Sutra, Ushnishavijayadharani Sutra, and other sutras which protect the nation.
5. After twelve years, the students of the two courses shall receive appointments in accordance with their achievements in study and practice. Those who can both speak and act shall remain permanently on Mount Hiei to head the order; they are treasures of the nation. Those who can speak but not act shall be teachers of the nation. Those who can act but not speak shall be assets of the nation.
6. As is specified in the Chancellor’s directive, the teachers of the nation and those of use to the nation shall spread the Dharma and be appointed as lecturers in the provinces. During their term of office, the provincial lecturers and teachers shall have the robes for their annual summer retreat paid for with funds deposited in the provincial offices. They shall be supervised jointly by provincial and county officials. They are to benefit the nation and its people by repairing reservoirs and irrigation ditches, reclaiming uncultivated land, restoring fallen levees, making bridges and boats, planting trees and ramie, sowing hemp and grasses, digging wells and drawing water. They should read sutras and cultivate their minds. They are not to engage in private trade or farming.

   If these provisions are followed, men with religious minds shall appear one after another in the world, and the way of the gentleman shall never die. By observing the above regulations in six articles, sentient beings will be led to the Mahayana way through the gate of compassion, and the Buddha’s teaching will endure forever. The nation shall long remain strong, and the bodhisattva way will not cease.

   With profound awe, I submit these regulations for the Tendai School and respectfully request the imperial assent.

   The thirteenth day of the fifth month of the ninth year of the Konin era (818).

   Saicho, the monk who formerly sought the Dharma in China.

Petition Asking for Permission to Install Bodhisattva Monks (Sho Bosatsu Shukke Hyo)
The monk Saicho states:

   From Kashmir west, Mahayana and Hinayana are practiced separately. From Hsuan-pu (K’un-lun Mountain in west China where immortals are said to dwell) east, Mahayana and Hinayana are practiced together. Although (Buddhist practice) is different in the east and in the west, both have Buddhist wisdom as their objective. The ultimate and complete doctrine, the pure and perfect teaching, (is found in the) Lotus Sutra. (According to chapter 14 of this sutra, Mahayana monks) may not greet Hinayana monks, nor may they be in the lecture hall together. From now on, we shall encourage our students to abide by the rules set out in the sutras (such as the Lotus, Brahmajala, and Vimalakirti Sutras).

   I humbly think that the virtue of the literary and martial Konin Emperor pervades heaven and earth. His brightness is equal to the sun and moon. All precedents pale before his loyalty and filial piety. He renews etiquette and music. He gladdens the myriad nations and converts the barbarians. Heaven and earth respond to him. He presides over (the nation) and determines propriety.

   Now, the former emperor’s (Kanmu’s) desire was that the Tendai School (prosper). The language (of the Tendai works) is lofty; few monks have responded to it. Men are weak while the Dharma is profound. As a result this teaching has not yet spread, nor have students pursued it. Thus it is naturally fitting that we encourage (special) rules for this school, and thereby educate and encourage our students. Mahayana and Hinayana practitioners should live separately and vie with each other in their practice of Buddhism. Those in the mountains and those in the capital should strive in harmony to protect the nation.

   Therefore, a Chinese text (of Hsuan-tsang) states: “We must control our emotions which run about like monkeys. We must tether our minds which rampage like elephants. Unless we retreat to the mountains, we shall not succeed.”

   I respectfully request that henceforth Tendai yearly ordinands be initiated in accordance with Mahayana (teachings) at the hall on Mount Hiei on the seventeenth day of the third month of every year in honor of the late emperor, and that an imperial messenger be dispatched to certify this ceremony. This is specified in the School’s regulations. If this is done the Buddha-vehicle we transmit will continue to flourish, and the students that we teach will be pure in practice throughout the years.

   With utmost sincerity I reverently submit this memorial and humbly ask His Majesty to grant it.

   The twenty-first day of the fifth month of the ninth year of the Konin era (818).

   Submitted by Saicho, the Head of the Tendai School, the monk who formerly sought the Dharma in China.

Regulations for Tendai-Lotus Yearly Ordinands and for those who wish to turn away from Hinayana Teachings towards Mahayana Teachings (Tendai Hokkeshu nenbudosha esho kodai shiki) a.k.a. Regulations in Four Articles (Shijoshiki):
Composed of four articles in all.
A. There are three types of Buddhist temples:
   1. Exclusively Mahayana temples where beginning bodhisattva monks (bosatsu so) live.
   2. Exclusively Hinayana temples where exclusively Hinayana vinaya masters (risshi) live.
   3. Temples in which both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism are practiced (where monks keep Hinayana precepts with a Mahayana mind).

   Now after Tendai-Lotus yearly (ordinand) students and those beginning students who have willingly turned from Hinayana to Mahayana teachings have spent twelve years practicing at the chapels for the four types of meditation (constantly sitting, constantly walking, half-sitting and half-walking, neither sitting nor walking) deep in the mountains and have completed their courses, they will be permitted to provisionally receive a Hinayana ordination in order to benefit others. They may then live in temples where both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism are practiced.

   B. Both Hinayana and Mahayana seats of honor (joza) have been established in Buddhist temples:
   1. The exclusively Mahayana temple installs the Bodhisattva Manjushri as elder (joza).
   2. The exclusively Hinayana temple installs the Preceptor Pindola as elder.
The two types of bodhisattva are mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. The Bodhisattva Manjushri and the Bodhisattva Maitreya are (bosatsu). The Lotus Sutra fully presents both types of men but considers them to be one group. It distinguishes them from both bodhisattva monks. Bhadrapala (of the sixteen bodhisattvas) and the five hundred bodhisattvas are lay bodhisattvas (zaike gentleman. These precepts are broad and extensive; they have the same import for layman and monk.

C. There are two types of Buddhist precepts:
1. The Mahayana full precepts consist of the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts (of the Brahmajala Sutra).
2. The Hinayana full precepts consist of the two-hundred fifty precepts (of the Pratimoksha Sutra).

D. There are two types of Buddhist ordinations:
1. (The ordination for) the Mahayana precepts: The three teachers and the witnesses are invited as is specified in the Contemplation of Samantabhadra Sutra (the capping sutra for the Lotus Sutra). Shakyamuni Buddha is asked to be the preceptor for the bodhisattva precepts. The Bodhisattva Manjushri is asked to be the karma-acharya for the bodhisattva precepts. The bodhisattva Maitreya is asked to be the instructor acharya for the bodhisattva precepts. All of the Buddhas of the ten directions are asked to be verifying masters (shoshi) for the bodhisattva precepts. All of the bodhisattvas of the ten directions are asked to be fellow students of the bodhisattva precepts.

   (A person who is qualified) and able to transmit the precepts is asked to serve as the teacher who is present (and presides over the ceremony). If no teacher is present who is able to transmit the precepts, the candidate should for one within one-thousand ri. If no one who is able to confer the precepts (can be found) within one-thousand ri, the candidate should confess and repent (sange) with utmost sincerity. He shall surely receive a sign from the Buddha and may then administer the precepts to himself by oath in front of an image of the Buddha.

   Beginning Tendai yearly ordinand students and beginning students (of other schools) who have turned away from Hinayana to Mahayana teachings shall be granted the above-mentioned Mahayana precepts (daijokai) and thereby become fully-ordained monks (daiso).

2. (The ordination for) the Hinayana precepts: Ten teachers are asked to be present and to perform a ceremony consisting of one statement of the motion and three calls for agreement. Ten worthy monks who have been pure in keeping the precepts are asked to serve as the three teachers and seven witnesses. If one monk is missing, the ordination may not be performed.

   Now, Tendai yearly ordinand students and beginning students who have turned from Hinayana to Mahayana shall not be permitted to take these (Hinayana) precepts; however, an exception may be made for advanced practitioners.

I have pondered how upon how the Lotus Sutra calls the bodhisattva the nation’s treasure and how the Mahayana sutras preach the Mahayana practice of benefiting others. If we do not employ Mahayana sutras to prevent the seven calamities (from the sun and moon, the stars, fires, the seasons, winds, droughts, war and banditry) which afflict the world, then what shall we use? If the great disasters to come are not vanquished by the bodhisattva monks then how will they be forestalled? The virtue of benefiting others and the power of great compassion is that which the Buddhas extol and that in which gods and men rejoice. The hundred monks (who chant the) Benevolent King Sutra draw upon the power of wisdom (hannya). The eight worthies who practice the Asking for Rain (Mahamegha) Sutra follow the Mahayana precepts. If the bodhisattva is not the treasure of the nation or the benefactor of the nation, then who is? In Buddhism he is called a bodhisattva; in the secular world he is called a gentleman. These precepts are broad and extensive; they have the same import for layman and monk.

   The two types of bodhisattva are mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. The Bodhisattva Manjushri and the Bodhisattva Maitreya are both bodhisattva monks. Bhadrapala (of the sixteen bodhisattvas) and the five hundred bodhisattvas are lay bodhisattvas (zaik bosatsu). The Lotus Sutra fully presents both types of men but considers them to be one group. It distinguishes them from Hinayana monks and considers them to be Mahayana practitioners. However, this type of bodhisattva has not yet appeared in Japan. I humbly ask His Majesty to establish this Great Way and transmit the Mahayana precepts beginning from this year in the Konin era and continuing forever, and thus benefit (the people and the nation).

   This proposal shall be inscribed on the outside of the great bell and transmitted through the ages. Thus I submit the School’s regulations and respectfully ask for His Majesty’s judgment.

   The fifteenth day of the third month of the tenth year of the Konin era.

   Submitted by the Tendai-Hokke monk Saicho, who formerly traveled to China.

**Petition Asking for Permission to use the Mahayana Precepts (Shoryu daijokai hyo):**

The monk Saicho states:

   Saicho has heard that the Buddha’s precepts vary according to the faculties of the person who follows them. The aims of people differ according to whether they are Hinayana or Mahayana practitioners. The seat of honor (joza) differs according to whether it is occupied by Manjushri or Pindola. The ordination ceremony differs according to whether one or ten teachers participate.

   The late Sagely Emperor Kanmu supported the Lotus School and established it anew here. The virtue of His Majesty, the Sagely, Literary and Martial Konin Emperor, pervades heaven and earth. His brightness is equal to the sun and moon. His literary genius surpasses the old. His calligraphy is fresh. He gladdens the hearts of the myriad nations and converts the barbarians. He rules the nation and regulates propriety.

   Now, at this time, I sincerely request that the monks of both courses turn away from Hinayana rules and firmly adhere to Mahayana rules, and that in accordance with the Lotus Sutra, Mahayana rules not be mixed with with the Hinayana ones. In the third month of every year, on the anniversary of the late emperor’s death, we shall initiate those who have been pure in their
practice as bodhisattva novices on Mount Hiei. We shall also confer the full bodhisattva precepts (bosatsu daikai) and ordain them as bodhisattva monks. Then they shall live and practice on the mountain for twelve years. They shall be guards for the nation and shall benefit the people. They shall be the nation’s treasure and shall benefit the nation as is specified in the School’s regulations.

If the Emperor graciously grants this request, the late emperor’s wish (that the Tendai School) will prosper over the years (will be fulfilled), and the Mahayana precepts will be followed purely throughout the years. Originating with the Konin era, the Mahayana precepts will be transmitted. The good form transmitted the precepts will in turn protect his Majesty.

With utmost sincerity, I humbly submit this petition, and respectfully ask for His Majesty’s approval.

The fifteenth day of the third month of the tenth year in the Konin era (819).

The monk Saicho.

On Submitting the Treatise Revealing the Precepts (Jo kenkairon hyo):

Saicho states:

Last year (819) on the twenty-seventh day of the tenth month, the Sogo’s petitions were brought by the monk Kojo and shown to me. The rains have fallen, causing all to flourish; the withered trees have revived. I am overcome with humility at receiving His Majesty’s favor. Saicho is truly overcome with fear and awe, and filled with respect and happiness.

Saicho has heard that in South India, Nagarjuna set forth the eight negations (no birth, death, impermanence, permanence, identity, difference, coming, going) in order to refute wrong doctrines. In Eastern India, Ashvaghosha set forth the doctrine of One-mind and opened the Way. Dharmapala wrote a commentary on (Vasubandhu’s Thirty) Verses and defeated the wrong apprehension of emptiness. Bhavaviveka wrote a treatise to cut off all craving. Vasubandhu authored a treatise to purge the five errors (feeling of inferiority, feeling of superiority, clinging to the unreal, slandering the ultimate, clinging to a self). Saramati wrote a treatise showing the one ultimate. Among Mahayana treatises, Asanga’s Ken’yo, and among Hinayana treatises, Samghabhadrā’s Kenshu refuted heresies and revealed the true teaching. There are so many similar treatises of this kind that even a cart could not carry all of them.

In China Fa-lin of the T’ang dynasty refuted Fu-i’s wrong teachings. Seng-choa of the Ch’in dynasty demonstrated (in the Chao lun) that wisdom is No-knowledge. The venerable Fa-pao wrote the Buddha Nature Treatise (Fo-shin lun). Hui-choa of Tzu-chou wrote the Sun of Wisdom Treatise (Hui jih lun). There have been many such monks throughout the ages.

I humbly know that His Majesty has received the mandate of Heaven and has ascended the throne. He renews sagely government in the country of the true Dharma. Heaven and earth are in harmony.

[In the second fascicle of the Pu sa ying lo pe n yeh ching (Taisho 24:1021b), it states: If a Dharma-master teaches, initiates and confers the bodhisattva precepts on just one person in the world, then the merit gained by that Dharma-master is greater than if he had built 84,000 stupas. How much more so (if he grants the precepts) to two, three, hundreds or thousands? His merit is indescribable. Married couples and relatives may take each other as their teacher and confer the precepts. The recipient of the precepts enters the realms of the Buddhas and is counted among the bodhisattvas. He passes out of the sufferings of the realm of life and death in the past, present, and future. Thus you should take these precepts. It is better to take the precepts and break them than to not to take them and follow them. (One who takes the precepts and) breaks them is called a bodhisattva; (one who does not take them and) does not break them is still called a non-believer. He who takes just one precept is known as a one-precept bodhisattva, and so on with two, three, or four precepts. He who takes all ten is known as one with the full precepts.]

The Lotus School was established for the benefit of the nation by the late Emperor Kanmu. Its two (yearly) ordinands are to be Mahayana monks of the Lotus School. Its Sudden and Perfect students do not seek the three vehicles outside the gate. Of what use would the rules on dignity for the sheep vehicle be to them? They do not desire the castle in the middle of the road (on a long journey). How much less would they be likely to take a round-about detour? Tomorrow when they are given riches, they will know their father and know that they are his sons. What need is there to be a stranger (in their own house), or to (on a long journey). How much less would they be likely to take a round-about detour? Tomorrow when they are given riches, they will know their father and know that they are his sons. What need is there to be a stranger (in their own house), or to}

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The Lotus School was established for the benefit of the nation by the late Emperor Kanmu. Its two (yearly) ordinands are to be Mahayana monks of the Lotus School. Its Sudden and Perfect students do not seek the three vehicles outside the gate. Of what use would the rules on dignity for the sheep vehicle be to them? They do not desire the castle in the middle of the road (on a long journey). How much less would they be likely to take a round-about detour? Tomorrow when they are given riches, they will know their father and know that they are his sons. What need is there to be a stranger (in their own house), or to
and receive offerings). They speak of the Order as the Dharma-realm (beyond distinction), but have already fallen deeply into
the error that (Fa-)Hsien warned about (that different types of temples in the conventional world are not subject to distinction).
Though they censure me as nonsensical, they actually speak ill of their Preceptor (Chien-chen, who received the Brahmajala
precepts before the Four-Part Vinaya precepts, which is what Saicho is proposing). Theirs is the stumbling block of wrong
teaching; they go against the tradition of their teachers.

The five items that Mahadeva proposed long ago were not in accordance with the Buddha’s teaching; but the four articles we
on Mount Hiei propose are in accordance with Buddhist teachings. If you ask (the Nara monks) about the precepts, they will
say, “We are Mahayana Buddhists.” Yet they insist on retaining Pindola as elder (joza). (They) have criticized (me for studying
only) in the provinces (of China, not in the capital Ch’ang-an); but then how can one believe (their own scholars who study) at
His? If they do not recognize provisionally named bodhisattvas (they claim that Saicho’s monks had not attained the wisdom
of true bodhisattvas), then who do they recognize as being a true bodhisattva?

I believe that the five schools (Hosso, Sanron, Kegon, Ritsu, and Tendai) which receive yearly ordinands should be the
 guardians of the nation and a resource for the people. They should (serve as) boats to cross the oceans of birth and death, and as
steps leading to the other shore. Thus when the schools practice and work together, they should blend as harmoniously as salt
and plums. When the monks preach or teach together, their voices should be like the golden speech of the Buddha. How then
can monks support only their own school and suppress other schools? The monastic leaders in Nara respect only what enters
the ears and (immediately) comes out of the mouth. They do not try to cultivate their minds at all.

If no one practices purely and selflessly, then how can we prevent calamities from occurring? We are currently debating
about which of the Buddha’s teachings are Perfect and which are provisional. This is the time for the (true) way to arise; it is
the day to choose correct practice. Now, the Hinayana precepts are for those who follow Hinayana or Common teachings. The
threefold Brahmajala (collective pure) precepts are for those who follow the Unique or Perfect teachings.

Now, when novices of the Perfect School are compelled to take the Hinayana precepts, they forget about the Perfect threefold
precepts and vie for fame and profit. Thus they all backslide in their practice. From the second year of the Daido era to the
eleventh year of the Konin era, a total of fourteen years, we have had twenty-eight monks in our two courses. But for a variety
of reasons, they have scattered and gone to different places. Not even ten remain on Mount Hiei. Because the Perfect precepts
have not yet been put into effect, the foundation for proper meditation does not exist. When we see the mistakes of our
predecessors, we should correct them in order to benefit those yet to come.

Thus in this, the eleventh year of the Konin era, in order to transmit the Perfect precepts, I wrote the Treatise Revealing the
Precepts (Kenkairon) in three fascicles and the Buddha-Dharma Blood Vein (Buppo kechimyaku) in one fascicle. I respectfully
submit them to His Majesty. Again I ask that in accordance with the teachings of our School, the students of both courses of
the Tendai Perfect School be permitted to receive the precepts of the Perfect teaching and be called bodhisattva monks. In order
to encourage bodhisattva practices, the monks shall not leave Mount Hiei for a period of twelve years. During this time, they
shall cultivate the four types of meditation. In this way, the One-vehicle precepts and meditation will be transmitted in our land
forever, and practice in the mountains will continue throughout the ages. The virtue (of the precepts) will banish all misfortune.

With (this virtue) may His Majesty live forever. Receiving the (benefit of the precepts), may the people be pure and tranquil.

Saicho’s knowledge does not compare with that of I-hsing, nor does his learning compare with that of Chan-jan. Filled with
foreboding, I humbly and foolishly submit this. If His Majesty agrees to this petition, I ask that approval come straight from the
court (without going through the normal channels). Because the full import of transmitting the precepts has not yet been
realized, I submit my petitions and ask that they be granted.

[The twenty-ninth day of the second month in the eleventh year of the Konin era (820), the monk Saicho].

Biography of the Great Teacher of Mt. Hiei (Eizan Daishiden) (compiled several years after Saicho’s death):
(Saicho said, year 822:) I will not live much longer. After my death you must not (“wear mourning clothes” or “wear lay
clothing”).

Furthermore, my fellow monks on Hiei, the Buddha’s precepts state that you may not drink liquor. Anyone who breaks (this
rule) is not my fellow monk, nor is he a disciple of the Buddha. He should be expelled immediately and should not be allowed
to step foot within the boundaries of the mountain. Nor is anyone who uses liquor as medicine to be allowed within the
mountain temple’s confines.

Women may not come near the temple and certainly may not enter its sacred precincts.

You should lecture extensively on the Mahayana sutras every day. You must carefully perform your religious practices in
order that the Dharma may endure forever. You must diligently strive to benefit the nation and save sentient beings. My fellow
monks, you must not tire in your practice of the four types of meditation. Esoteric initiations and the Esoteric fire ceremony
(Skt: homa, Jap: goma) should be performed at the appropriate times. You should return your debt of gratitude to the nation by
helping the Buddha’s teachings to prosper.

(Saicho also left the following six admonitions for his disciples:)
1. Monks should sit according to the order in which they received the Mahayana precepts. On days when there is a general
assembly (which includes monks who have received the Hinayana precepts), Tendai monks should conceal their bodhisattva
practices and behave as Hinayana monks, sitting together with the Hinayana monks in the position of novices. An exception to
this rule is allowed when one monk defers to another (because of the latter’s learning or virtue).

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2. A monk’s frame of mind should be as though he were first entering the Buddha’s room, later wearing the Buddha’s robes, and finally sitting in the Buddha’s place (the Lotus Sutra states that one should take great compassion for a room, patience for a robe, and the wisdom of emptiness for a seat).

3. For robes, the man of higher faculties uses dirty rags found at the side of the road. The man of medium faculties uses rough cloth, and the man of lower faculties uses robes (of cotton or flax) received from lay donors.

4. For food, the man of higher faculties begs, but without any thought about what he receives. The man of medium faculties begs while strictly adhering to the precepts. The man of lower faculties obtains his food from lay believers (at feasts given for monks).

5. For his cell, the man of higher faculties uses a thatched hut made of bamboo brush. The man of medium faculties uses a three-room wooden house, and the man of lower faculties uses the whole monastery (hojo). You should obtain materials for building or for repairs by begging in the autumn, receiving one masu of rice in the provinces and one mon of coin in the towns.

6. For his bedding, the man of higher faculties uses bamboo brush and straw. The man of medium faculties uses one straw mat (mushiro) and one reed mat (komo). The man of lower faculties uses one bordered mat (tatami) and one straw mat.

We do not have the means to purchase large tracts of land, nor do we receive rich stipends of food. We do not dwell in the monasteries administered by the government-appointed monastic leaders. On the day when Shakyamuni, Prabhutaratna, and their manifestations assemble, they answer Manjushri’s question saying that bodhisattvas may not greet shravakas, nor may they assemble in the same lecture hall or practice walking meditation in the same place as shravakas. In the morning, you should beg for food. After offering a little (to the hungry ghosts), you should then present it to those practicing on the mountain. In the autumn, you should beg for a little cloth to cover your cold bodies. You should want nothing other than food and clothing.

Those who go out into the world in order to preach are exempt (from these rules).
The Essentials of the Vinaya Tradition

Preface:
…As it says in the first volume of [Tao-hsuan’s] Ku ei-ching-i: “When we begin [the practice of Buddha-Dharma], we first venerate the tradition of the precepts. Of the precepts there are basically three, the causes of the three bodies [of Buddha].

“First is the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline (shōrītṣugikai), which may be said to cut off all evil. This is none other than the cause of the Dharma Body (Dharmakaya). This is because the Dharma Body is essentially pure, but if obscured by evil it is not revealed; so if one practices successfully this separating from evil, such qualities [as the Dharma Body] will appear.

“Second is the precept that embraces all good dharmas (shōzenhōkai), which may be said to be the practicing of all acts of good. This is none other than the cause of the Recompense Body (Sambhogakaya), for recompense is attained by the accomplishment of all good. In the accomplishment of all good, there is nothing higher than the ceasing of evil and doing good that bring about the conditions for the Recompense Body.

“Third is the precept that embraces all sentient beings (shōshūjōkai), which is none other than having compassion and the desire for the salvation of all sentient beings. The merit of this brings about the cause of the Transformation Body (Nirmanakaya). The Transformation Body, without conscious effort, responds according to the feelings of all sentient beings; hence the great compassion of one practicing this precept saves all sentient beings. His intention and his activities are equal.”

All practices are embraced within these threefold precepts. The precept that embraces all the rules of discipline is the path of putting an end to evil. From the first production of mind [the first thought directed to attaining enlightenment] until the final, ultimate result is attained, all good acts are embraced and practiced and various practices are cultivated. Of all practices, of all good deeds, none are omitted.

Stillness of mind, wisdom; the path of ceasing evil, the path of putting down, of cutting off; the path of action, the path of good – all these are the instruction of cultivating the practice of good. The twofold adornments of merit and wisdom, practices generated by a bodhisattva having the four wisdoms that are acquired through the attainment of enlightenment, teachings revealed by the ultimate truth of the two emptinesses [of persons and dharmas] – all these are obtained with enlightenment. Such teachings as these are all the precept that embraces all good dharmas.

The precept that embraces all sentient beings: all practices are the path of action, as the ways of benefiting [saving] all sentient beings are numberless and varied. They are all produced [by the bodhisattva]. Acquired wisdom; relative wisdom; skill in expedient means; saving all beings and embracing all beings; the great compassion of the bodhisattva replacing pain – such actions are all the precept that embraces all sentient beings.

These are called the three pure precepts of the bodhisattva. Both broad and profound, they are likened to mountains and oceans. All actions are embraced within these three [precepts]. All virtues are included; this constitutes the teaching of the precepts.

First Question:
If all learnings are included within the learning of the precepts, what constitutes the learnings of meditation and wisdom?

Answer: The contents of the three learnings of the Mahayana include one another; when one is raised, all the others are included within it without any exception. In general, the learning of the precepts embraces all actions; the learning of meditation also embraces all actions; and the learning of wisdom embraces all acts of good.

Each separate teaching [in Buddhism] is common to the three learnings. So although we may speak of the “three learnings,” they are individually made up of all actions. But because the paths to enlightenment differ, all actions have been divided into
the “three learnings.” Within the rules for refraining from evil, there are the teachings of doing all good – this is meditation and wisdom. Within meditation and wisdom there are the teachings of refraining from evil – this is the learning of the precepts. All the characteristics of the various phenomena interpenetrate one another; they are definitely not separated from one another.

Right mindfulness and right intention create the supreme benefit [of enlightenment]; to reside in right views benefits all sentient beings. Accordingly, as they benefit all sentient beings, right mindfulness and intentions constitute the learning of meditation and wisdom. It is for this reason that benefiting all sentient beings is called the learning of meditation and wisdom. Right views and right thoughts themselves benefit all sentient beings. Never to abandon the basic principles of supreme meditation and supreme wisdom is none other than the task of supreme mercy and the supreme conversion of all sentient beings.

From the first thought of enlightenment, one gradually and more profoundly evolves toward the Supreme. Both inner nature and outer activities become firm and immovable; they are mutually penetrating and mutually inclusive – unhindered, one strives freely. Now, within the one true Mahayana teaching it is said of the precepts that one precept is identical to all the precepts and that the learning of meditation and wisdom does not exist without the learning of the precepts.

The mind of one is the mind of all; the learnings of the precepts and wisdom do not exist without the learning of meditation. The wisdom of one is the wisdom of all; the learnings of the precepts and meditation do not exist without wisdom. The precepts, meditation, and wisdom are all obtained within one mind. One thought and all the three learnings are mutually interpenetrated without hindrance. One act constitutes all actions, and one instant may span many eons.

The one and the many completely embrace one another; an instant and an eon mutually interfuse. They enter into all quarters perfectly and completely. Because of this principle, the threefold division of all actions constitutes the learnings of meditation and wisdom. The aspects of meditation and of wisdom of all the various good actions constitute the threefold division of the precepts.

Although all actions are completely embraced within this threefold division of the precepts, it is because the precepts [primarily] constitute this path that this is called the Vinaya tradition. Of all the teachings or practices of the Mahayana, each teaching or practice possesses the teaching of the precepts. Among the various scriptures and commentaries, many speak thus about the characteristics of all the various actions.

Beginning with the Three Refuges, and finally ending in Buddhahood, each of the various stages of the bodhisattva’s path has its practice of the precepts. In the various stages of the bodhisattva who is still in the causal state, the causes of the precepts are perfected. The result of the practice of the precepts is perfected in the highest realm, the stage that is the result [Buddhahood].

Among the seven holy gifts is the holy gift of the precepts. Among the ten inexhaustible stores is the store of the precepts. Among the three learnings, the learning of the precepts is the first. Among the six paramitas, the paramita of the precepts is the second. Among the ten stages of faith is the mind of the precepts.

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the sermon on the ten faiths has a chapter on pure conduct; the sermon on the ten abodes has a section on divine conduct; and among the ten types of divine conduct, the precepts are the essence of practice. Of the ten paramitas within these ten grades of conduct, the second is the paramita of the precepts.

As for the ten paramitas of the ten realms, [as one advances spiritually] one totally possesses all previous paramitas. Each stage contains all other stages to perfection. Before the stage of faith, in the stage of faith, and in the threefold wise stages and the ten realms, each and every stage in the bodhisattva’s career contains the practice of the precepts.

Not for one moment, not for one instant, are they separated from the precepts, for without the precepts there are no bodhisattvas. When one arrives at realm of Buddhahood, all the various practices are perfected, their many qualities are perceived, and they are all completely perfected. These many qualities that constitute the result [Buddhahood] all come from the practice of the precepts.

Buddhahood contains all the various aspects of the precepts. The fivefold Dharma Body has a Precept Dharma Body. Among the adornments of merit and wisdom is the adornment of the precepts. In attaining the thirty-two major marks of a Buddha, there are no separate causes to be practiced. The precepts are its essence. These are the marks of the Transformation Body [of the Buddha].

When one has attained the body [of the Buddha] which is attained for the enjoyment of others, there are eighty-four thousand marks and rays of light emanating from his [thirty-two] major and [eighty] minor marks. In attaining the infinitely vast number of characteristics of the Tenfold Lotus Flower Enclosure [of Vairochana Buddha], there are no separate causes to be practiced, for they are all due to the power of the precepts.

Yet among the various separate causes [leading to the attainment of the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of a Buddha] is the merit of the precepts. In this way, the meritorious teachings of cause and effect all come down to the practice of the precepts and are created through his practice. In the causes and the result of the bodhisattva’s career, both his internal enlightenment and his external benefiting of all sentient beings are created through his practice of the precepts.

**Second Question:**
What a bodhisattva of the perfect One Vehicle tradition [of the Mahayana] receives [as precepts] and what he practices as the marvelous cause [leading to] Buddhahood are these great threefold precepts. What are the characteristics of his receiving of these precepts?

**Answer:** A bodhisattva’s aspirations are broad and deep; his practice and understanding are lofty and far-reaching. He does not discard any single precept that is to be received; he does not neglect any single practice that is to be practiced. All the
practices, and the vast number of paramitas, are to be practiced. The precepts must be universal and without limit, all-embracing, and inexhaustible. The characteristics of the principles of the Mahayana are truly thus.

Based on these principles, there are two methods of carrying out the rituals of receiving these great precepts. First is the “general receiving,” so called because all the threefold precepts are received. This is none other than the karma-vachana ritual. The master Uijok established this name because it appeared in the Chan-ch’a-ch’ing. This is also called “receiving all the precepts,” since one receives all the threefold precepts. The Ts’u-en master [K’uei-chi] and T’aehyon initiated the use of this term.

Second is the “separate receiving” of the precepts. From among the threefold precepts, only the first precept that embraces all the rules of discipline is undertaken, as this one precept exhausts all aspects of the bodhisattva’s religious practice. All teachers together have established the usage of this term.

Third Question:
Why is it that only the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline can be received separately? Why is it that the other two groups of precepts – those that embrace all good dharmas and all sentient beings – cannot be received separately?

Answer: The one precept, the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline, sets up seven groups of persons within the sangha [bhikshu, bhikshuni, shikshamana, shramanera, shramaneri, upasaka, upasika]. The Buddha, for the sake of the shravakas, pointed out that within the One Vehicle this precept legislates all the precepts. The seven groups of persons within the Dharma of the Buddha are established in this manner.

Now the bodhisattva has always possessed all the precepts of this one group within the threefold precepts. Originally the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline of the threefold precepts sets up the seven classes of persons. The teachings of the “general receiving” of all the threefold precepts is thus also classified into its various grades. Neither the precept that embraces all good dharmas nor that which embraces all sentient beings possesses this principle. Hence these latter two are not received separately.

Fourth Question:
In receiving all the threefold precepts, the seven groups of persons are already delineated within the Sangha. Why then is it necessary to receive the “separate ordination”?

Answer: The ritual of the “separate receiving of the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline” is the same as [the ordination ritual] of the shravakas. The reason it is the same [for the followers of the Mahayana] as three vehicles is because such is the custom of this Saha world.

Fifth Question:
Of the two types of receiving the precepts – the “general receiving of all the threefold precepts” and the “separate receiving of the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline” – which is of long duration, and which is of short duration?

Answer: The ritual receiving of all the threefold precepts lasts forever. The separate receiving of the precept that embraces all the rules of discipline lasts only for the lifetime of the individual.

Sixth Question: Why would the bodhisattva make use of a teaching that lasts only one lifetime?

Answer: Both the practice and the understanding of the bodhisattva are broad and deep; he may practice endlessly; such would be his long practice. However, there is also the teaching that lasts only one lifetime. The bodhisattva is free to choose a precept that lasts either a long or a short time. He may accomplish its practice in any way he intends, because, be it one teaching or many teachings, there is no limitation for him.

Should he wish to practice it forever, he makes use of the receiving of all the threefold precepts. Should he wish to practice for just one lifetime, he makes use of the separate receiving of the precepts. Whether it be for a long or for a short duration, he follows his own intentions, and the teaching [i.e., the precept] will correspond to this.

Seventh Question:
The threefold precepts are based upon what texts?

Answer: The threefold precepts have their origin in the Avatamsaka Sutra, but a fuller explanation of their characteristics is taught in various places in later Mahayana scriptures and commentaries. The Avatamsaka Sutra speaks of three types of precepts, but their names are not given. Commentators upon this scripture, however, narrated the principles of the threefold precepts.

The Brahmajala Sutra contains the principles of the threefold precepts, but it does not specifically give their names. The various masters who have commented upon this text and the principles of this scripture explain in greater detail the aspects of the threefold pure precepts. The Hsien-shou master [Fa-tsang], commenting upon the Brahmajala Sutra, said, “All the threefold pure precepts constitute the Vinaya tradition.” He made a correspondence between the ten major prohibitive precepts given in this scripture and the threefold precepts. The master T’aehyon, in commenting on the scripture of the forty-eight [minor precepts, the Brahmajala Sutra], stated that each one of the forty-eight precepts fully contains the teachings of the threefold precepts.

The Brahmajala Sutra was the first sermon of the Buddha; the Ying-lo-pen-yeh-ching [Mahayana Sutra on the Bodhisattva Precepts] was preached twenty-eight years after the enlightenment of the Tathagata. In the chapter “On the Names of the Wise and Holy” in the first volume of this scripture, the ten major [bodhisattva] precepts are preached, while in the chapter “On Cause and Result” in the last volume the six paramitas are taught. Within these precepts the threefold precepts are elucidated in greater detail; these are “the self-nature precepts,” “the precepts to receive the good dharmas,” and “the precept to benefit all sentient beings.”
In the chapter “Instruction for the Multitude” it says: “O sons of the Buddha! Now on behalf of the various bodhisattvas I shall compile the fundamentals of all the precepts. These are the so-called teachings on receiving the threefold precepts. ‘The precept that embraces all good dharmas’ is the teaching of the eighty-four thousand dharmas. ‘The precept that embraces all sentient beings’ refers to compassion, mercy, joy, and equanimity and to extending one’s converting influence to all sentient beings and thus causing them all to obtain [the ultimate] bliss. ‘The precept that embraces all the rules of discipline’ refers to the ten [bodhisattva] parajikas.”

...The threefold pure precepts of the various Mahayana commentaries are very broad in their terminology, their principles, their practice, and their explanations. Nevertheless, they are most profound when taught in the Yogacharabhumi Shastra [of Maitreya/Asanga]. This is the fundamental Matrika [literally “mother:” a root commentary]...
Bodhidharma’s Precepts in Japan
by William Bodiford, in “Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya”

Precepts have a rather ambiguous status in Japanese Buddhism. On the one hand, following Saicho (767-822) and the acceptance of separate Tendai ordinations in the early ninth century, Japanese Buddhism has been characterized by widespread disregard of the basic monastic norms defined in the vinaya.... After Saicho received government permission to abandon the ordination procedures of the Four Part Vinaya (which Saicho had denounced as being "hinayana," or "inferior"), the vast majority of Japanese Buddhist monks took monastic vows no more demanding than those asked of laymen and laywomen. Many distinctions between a lay lifestyle and a monastic one were abandoned. The (superior) bodhisattva precepts followed by Japanese monks nominally apply to every social group in the Buddhist order (sangha), but overall these precepts address behaviors of concern mainly to laypeople. Several precepts in the Brahma Net Sutra stipulate, for example, that one should seek sanctification when appointed to government office and make offerings to the community of monks, indicating that these precepts govern lay, not monastic, affairs. As a result of the establishment of separate Tendai ordinations based on these lay-oriented precepts, most ordained members of the Buddhist order in Japan were freed from having to observe the vinaya rules previously associated with monks and nuns...

On the other hand, while precepts declined in status as codes governing moral behavior, their importance as an abstract concept grew to an almost absolute degree. Japanese Buddhists began to distinguish between conventional wording of the precepts (jikai) to which they assigned secondary importance, and the spiritual essence (kaitai) or ideal precepts (rikai), which became equated with Buddhahood itself. Over time, the ordination ceremony, during which a person receives the precepts, came to represent one of the most prominent ritual confirmations of final and complete salvation. In the context of these ceremonies, precepts were no longer seen simply as bodhisattva vows in contrast to the rules of monastic discipline (vinaya or ritsu). Instead they became a category unto themselves. As a result of a radical transformation in religious value, each of the individual bodhisattva precepts (bosatsu kai) was (and is) conceived of as expressing a singular Buddha precept that transcends all distinctions—whether between so-called "hinayana vinaya" and precepts, secular life and monastic life, or good and evil. Although the nature of this unified precept is explained differently in various texts and in different schools of Japanese Buddhism, in general its absolute status rests on certain widely shared assumptions: the Buddha proclaiming the precepts is the ultimate Buddha... each precept of the ultimate Buddha expresses the same unified, all-embracing ultimate reality that is Buddha nature (busho) and thus the goal of the ordination ceremony is the proper ritual confirmation of this Buddha nature, cementing the bond that unites the limited, individual person to the universal, absolute Buddha. Recast in these terms, this precept embodies awakening realized in one's own present body (sokushin) in one's own present social circumstances...

Buddhist ordinations based on the doctrine of unity of precepts and salvation can signify less than a withdrawal from secular affairs and imply much more than a preliminary step on the spiritual path. Often ordinations symbolize both the initial acceptance of Buddhism and the spiritual culmination of the path to awakening. This ambiguous symbolism played a major role in the social development of Japanese Zen especially within the Zen lineage. Many Japanese Zen rituals rest on the doctrine that the wordless awakening of the Buddhas and patriarchs is conveyed through mysterious Zen precepts (zenkai). Traditionally Japanese Zen leaders believed that these precepts had been transmitted to China by Bodhidharma, the legendary first ancestor of the Chinese Zen lineage. They further believed that Bodhidharma’s precepts were transmitted to Japan, where they became the basis of the Tendai doctrine of Perfect Sudden Precepts established by Saicho. Surprisingly, these beliefs were based not on the claims of early Japanese Zen pioneers, such as Eisai (1141-1215) or Dogen (1200-1253), but on the writings of earlier Japanese Tendai leaders. Once new Zen groups began to assert their independence from Tendai, they were able to turn the earlier Tendai association with Bodhidharma to their own advantage, arguing that they alone possessed true access to the awakening conveyed by the precepts because Saicho's Zen lineage had been lost in Japan. Ironically, as Zen leaders explicitly rejected the authority of Tendai, they unconsciously reinterpreted Zen rituals in light of Tendai doctrines...

The belief that Bodhidharma’s precepts were transmitted to Japan as the precepts of the Tendai school is derived from the One-Mind Precept Transmission Essays hereafter the Precept Essays. This Tendai text was compiled sometime around 834... by one of Saicho's disciples named Kojo (779-858)... Kojo compiled the Precept Essays to clarify the unique character of the new precepts being advocated by Saicho... Saicho saw Bodhidharma as a crucial historical precedent for "bodhisattva monks," the new category of Buddhist followers he hoped to found in Japan. In his eyes, Bodhidharma was a role model for future Tendai monks...

Kojo: “The orthodox doctrines of Tendai state that because Vairocana (Rushana) Buddha pervades all, therefore the three Buddha [bodies] pervade all and... each moment (setsuna) pervades all. If one contemplates this way, it is called contemplating defilements (bonno) which is contemplation of the dharma body. Contemplating the dharma body is called contemplation of momentariness. It is contemplation of true thusness (shinnyo) of the real appearance of things (jisso) of living beings (shujo) of one's own body, of empty sky. (T 74.650b-c).”

Kojo: “These are empty-sky immovable precepts (koku fudo kai). Moreover, abiding in the intrinsic purity that is one's own mind, being as immobile as Mount Sumeru, is empty-sky immovable meditation (koku fudo jo). Moreover, because the intrinsic purity that is one's own mind pervades all dharmas, freely and without hindrance, it is empty-sky immovable wisdom (koku fudo e). Precepts, meditation, and wisdom of this type are called Vairocana Buddha. (T 74.653a, 656a).”
According to Kojo, this objective Vairocana Buddha (i.e., the reward body known as Rushana) received the precepts from his own subjective self (i.e., his dharma body known as Dainichi Buddha). These two Buddhas are both the same yet different: the self-authenticated truth (jisho ho) of the dharma body Buddha is the fundamental precept (honkai) which remains submerged in the empty sky; the reward-body Buddha reveals only the tip of the precept (matsukai) which like the tip of an iceberg only hints at the depth of its own reality. In this way, Bodhidharma's empty sky gave an unhindered medium within which to unify Saicho's four teachings of Tendai, tantra, Zen, and precepts (en-mitsu-zen-kai). Kojo, for example, interpreted the tantric ritual of meditation on the syllable "A" (ajikan) the seed mantra of Vairocana Buddha, as the appearance of the precepts in the empty sky: “The intrinsic purity that is one's own mind is the A-syllable practice (ajimon). When one focuses one's mind on the syllable "A," the precepts become the syllable "A." When one focuses one's mind on the real appearance of things, then the precepts are that real appearance. Because precepts are the same as mind they are the same as the syllable "A." Mind is empty-sky bodhi (i.e., empty-sky awakening; koku bodai)."

Because the precepts are the same as mind, for Kojo insight into the true nature of the precepts was far more important than actually practicing the precepts. He explains that this type of insight is salvation: "The Buddha's children of the One Vehicle who understand the One Mind Precept enter the ranks of the Buddhas". In this statement, one can detect the beginning of the doctrine of precepts as the vehicle of salvation (kaijo itichi), the unity of precepts, and Buddhism... Historically, Japanese Buddhist leaders have exploited the idea of the unity of precepts and salvation in their efforts to win lay support and attract new converts. In the medieval and early modern periods (13th-18th C), lay ordination ceremonies played a major role in the popularization and regional propagation of various Buddhist orders. Precept ceremonies not only provided these laymen and laywomen with spiritual assurances, but also helped cement social bonds among those attending the same ceremony. Buddhist proselytizers used precept ordinations to convert local gods (and their devotees) into ardent supporters of Buddhism. On other occasions the same ordinations exorcised demons or ghosts. Precepts proved especially effective in calming the spirits of the dead - so much so that posthumous ordinations are still a standard feature of the funeral rites performed in many Buddhist sects...

Rival claims on the religious loyalty and financial support of social groups naturally led to sectarian assertions that true ordination with the Buddha precepts existed only within a single Buddhist lineage. Leaders of new religious groups, such as Zen and Pure Land (both of which splintered off from Tendai), buttressed their sectarian claims by either disavowing their indebtedness to earlier Tendai precept traditions or asserting that they alone maintained the original precept lore that monks within the Tendai school had forgotten...

Subsequent Japanese Zen monks readily identified Eisai's newly acquired Zen lineage as the introduction of a new precept lineage. Like previous Tendai monks, they saw this precept lineage as separate and distinct from the vinaya. Dogen, who practiced Zen for eight years under the guidance of one of Eisai's students, wrote that Eisai inherited his Zen lineage on the fifteenth day of the ninth lunar month of 1189 when his Chinese teacher, Xu'an Huaichang pronounced a transmission formula beginning with the words: ”Bodhisattva precepts are to the Zen school the circumstances of the single great affair". The phrase "single great affair" (ichi daiji) is a common Zen expression for the importance of attaining awakening. This statement, therefore, clearly connects the certification of Eisai's Zen awakening to his precept ordination. Significantly, neither this expression nor any other identification of the precepts with Zen awakening occurs in Eisai's autobiographical account of his Zen succession...

[Rinzai Zen monk Kokan Shiren (1278-1346)] identifies the precepts with Bodhidharma and asserts that their spiritual essence is found in Zen alone because only Zen represents an unbroken link back to the Buddha in India. His preface begins: “In ancient times Bodhidharma brought the Buddha mind seal (busshin'in) from south India to China: Pointing directly, a single transmission, fierce and rough. Thus were the bodhisattva precepts granted to the second patriarch and so on to the five houses and seven lineages of Zen. The granting and receiving continued without break...handed down from the Buddha Sakyamuni to this day, interlinked without missing a single generation. Therefore, of all precepts, Zen precepts are best.”...Certainly these great precepts do not resemble any of the other varieties. They convey the mind seal of Master Bodhidharma. Therefore, one who is about to be ordained should arouse pure faith.

Kokan's rhetorical stance rests on traditional Zen claims to an exclusive patriarchal lineage, which supposedly conferred a unique legitimacy on Zen masters. Kokan's understanding of the significance of this exclusive Zen lineage, however, seems to have been based on the example of Japanese tantric lineages, not Chinese practices. He automatically identifies affiliation to a Zen lineage with secret initiation into the lore and rituals of precepts. Dogen's account of Eisai's Zen succession process, as well as his characterization of the bodhisattva precepts as being "the authentic legacy of the Buddhas and ancestors," also clearly implies that Zen succession rituals necessarily entailed secret precept initiations. In various lineages of Japanese Zen, especially these two types of initiation were in fact linked. An excellent example of how these two types of initiation functioned together can be seen in the postscript to the text "Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony which was handed down by members of the Jakuen branch of Zen who served as abbots at Eiheiji Monastery from 1333 to 1560.

Although both Kokan and Dogen describe precept initiations as if they occupied a position of central importance in Chinese Zen transmission rituals, all the evidence suggests otherwise. In recent years many Japanese scholars labored to demonstrate links between precepts in Chinese Zen and Japanese Tendai, but even in their most forceful arguments they failed to make a case...It is true that early Chinese Zen texts, such as the Platform Sutra attributed to Huineng...interpret precepts in such
of monks were thus codified for public consumption. Kokan distinguished between the various types of buddhist precepts, awakening. The purpose of the ordination is not to instill morality but to confirm the inherent awakening naturally possessed by all beings. Thus behavior, either in conformity with or in violation of the precepts, is meaningless. What is important, however, is to have faith in the Zen lineage and faith in the ritual efficacy of the ordination procedure. This ritual alone conferred the status of buddha and patriarch on participants. The ordination concluded with the presentation of a Zen blood-lineage chart to each participant... A red line connected all the names together, signifying that the layperson now had a direct link to the Buddha. According to Kokan, before conducting an ordination the Zen master officiating at the ceremony should explain the precepts:

"...the 5 and the 8 precepts insure rebirth as humans or gods. The 250 lead to realization of the Hinayana goal. Only the 10 major and 48 minor bodhisattva precepts lead to accomplishment of the supreme way [i.e., awakening]. Ordination with [i.e., hinanaya] precepts can be nullified. But ordination with the bodhisattva precepts can never be revoked. Even if one violates the precepts after ordination one is still the Buddha's child. But one who refrains from both ordination and violation is a non-Buddhist. Thus a scripture states: "as the scent of champak blossoms, even when withered, smells stronger than that of all other flowers, even precept-violating monks are superior to non-Buddhists." Moreover, the Brahma Net Sutra states: "Living beings who receive ordination with the precepts enter into the ranks of the Buddhas, attaining the same great awakening. Truly they are the Buddha's children."

"How can one become a Buddha and [Zen] ancestor? Master Bodhidharma said, "One whose behavior and understanding correspond is called an ancestor." Yet there are many varieties of precepts.... But ordination with the bodhisattva precepts can never be revoked. How can this be? The 5 and 8 and other Hinayana precepts depend on physical ordinations. The bodhisattva precepts, however, are based on mind alone. If mind had a limit, then the bodhisattva precepts would have a limit. But because mind is without limit, the precepts are without limit.... Upon ordination with all ten major precepts, one becomes a fully endowed bodhisattva. Thus the precept text states: "You will become a Buddha. I have already become a Buddha." If one always believes in this way then one is fully ordained with the precepts.

"These Vajra Jeweled Precepts (kongo hokai) are the fundamental basis of all Buddhas, the basis of all bodhisattvas. They are the seeds of Buddha nature. Know that these precepts were not preached for the first time by the Buddha of this age. These have been the original precepts of all Buddhas since long before. Buddhas after Buddhas have chanted these. Thus Vairocana Buddha seated on his lotus throne chanted these jeweled precepts and bestowed them on the thousand million Sakyamuni Buddhas. The thousand million Sakyamuni Buddhas each sat under the tree of awakening, chanting these precepts fortnightly. Thereupon all the bodhisattvas chanted these precepts. All living beings consent to being ordained with these precepts. From the Buddhas and bodhisattvas above down to the most evil low-class beings below, the sagely and the common, Mahayanists and Hinayanists, all are included in the great net of these precepts. They are the profound, unobstructed, universal Buddhist teaching. Therefore, the patriarchs or the West in India and the six patriarchs of the East in China each personally handed down these precepts. In China and in Japan all the Zen patriarchs are linked together through this unbroken continuum. One who is about to be ordained should arouse pure faith and uphold this tradition. Faith is the origin of the Way. It is the mother of all virtues. Reflect on this well.

"The great bodhisattva precepts handed down in the Zen school are the great precepts of the formless basis of mind. Master Bodhidharma bestowed the Buddha mind seal and the ordination ritual. Thus outside the Zen school there are no precepts, and outside the precepts there is no Zen.

"All Buddhas and Zen patriarchs must rely first and foremost on the precept ordination to benefit living creatures. Therefore when Sakyamuni Buddha attained the supreme awakening under the tree of awakening, the first thing he did was to chant these precepts. When Bodhidharma came from the West he used these precepts to transmit the mind seal. Since then these precepts have been handed down from proper heir to proper heir, without missing a single generation. In this way they have been transmitted to me.

"To be ordained with the great precepts of the Zen school is to obtain the True Dharma and precepts of the Buddhas and patriarchs. It is to arouse the precepts of the formless basis of mind, to open the eye perceiving the True Dharma (shobo gen) to universally benefit gods and men. How could there be any doubt? How could you fail to arouse pure faith?"

Kokan argued that Zen and the precepts are one and the same. The only Zen element in Kokan's explanation of the precepts, however, is his emphasis on the special significance of the Zen lineage. In all other regards his description of this ordination ritual epitomizes the reversal of cause and effect that is characteristic of medieval Tendai doctrines of original awakening (hongaku homon). Before explaining what this reversal entails, first let us look at the traditional conception of the relationship between precepts and awakening.

Kokan's notion that the awakened awareness realized in Zen naturally corresponds to the awakened behavior described by the precepts is not remarkable in itself. This doctrine is a persistent theme in Buddhist texts. In the Vimalakirti Sutra, for example, the awakened vision of the layman Vimalakirti allows him to observe the spirit of the precepts while violating their letter. He
rebukes the monk Upali - the Buddha's disciple who was foremost in upholding the precepts of the vinaya - for failing to realize that when someone "understands the nature of mind, then no defilement [i.e., sin] exists". Passages such as this imply that only someone who has realized awakening can truly embody the precepts. The formal ordination ritual represents only the first step along the Buddhist path. Ultimately the dualistic categories of good and evil must be transcended so that the precepts are given new spiritual life. True fulfillment of the precepts, therefore, requires the realization of awakening. This view emphasizes the need for human beings to become Buddhas - or what is termed the doctrine of moving "from the seed [i.e., the ordinary human's spiritual potential] to the fruit [of awakening]". Once a person experiences awakening, the physical procedure of ordination with precepts has no ultimate significance.

Medieval Japanese Zen monks sometimes interpreted the precepts in this way. In a sermon of Bassui Tokusho, for example... "In terms of the spiritual essence of the precepts (kaitai) both observance and transgression are the one vehicle of ultimate nature, the nonduality of ideals (ri) and practices (ji). But someone who has not yet experienced seeing nature (kensho) drowns in the ocean of passion and intellect, thereby killing the Buddha that is one's own mind. Of all the types of killing, this is the worst. Therefore, true observance of the precepts is seeing nature and being awakened to the Way." Bassui's answer makes clear that the experience of awakening is all important. Nonetheless, the goal of Zen practice does not excuse moral transgressions.

In the Zen ordination ritual described by Kokan, however, these priorities are reversed. The ordination enacts a process of awakening that occurs in reverse sequence. In what is termed moving "from the fruit [of buddhahood] to the seed [i.e., the ordinary human]" the Buddha awakening embodied in precepts finds human expression through the ordination process. The ritual establishes a homology between the abstract Buddha and patriarchs and the concrete human predicament, allowing faith to replace insight. As in the practices of tantric Buddhism, in which proper ritual actions permit the practitioner to embody fully the characteristics of the Buddha, proper ritual ordination with the precepts allows the ordinary person to assume the mind of awakening regardless of one's behavior...

This ritual process also can be seen in the secret initiation documents (kirikami) that describe the ordination procedures and special precept lore handed down only to fully initiated Zen masters. The document One Mind Precept Procedure Handed Down by Bodhidharma is typical of such texts. Traditionally attributed to Eisai, it probably dates from no earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century. The text begins by describing a procedure for sanctifying water, which is used to consecrate the ordination site as well as the monk being initiated. Once this part of the ritual is complete, the Zen master is instructed to turn to his disciple:

"Anointing his forehead three times with your wand, solemnly address the Three Jewels and which are the very essence of one's own originally endowed mind, saying: "Now this disciple of sincere faith requests permission to receive from me the transmission of the One Mind Absolute Precepts. These precepts are what Sakyamuni Buddha spent eons searching for. They are the absolute awakening attained at his training site. The Dharma Kings [i.e., bodhisattvas] of the past, present, and future conceal these in their topknots; all Buddhas of the ten directions hold these in their svastikas. The sage from India, Bodhidharma, reverently received these precepts from Sakyamuni Buddha. Through twenty-eight generations of dharma succession, without conveyance, they were conveyed. Without receiving, they were received. Thus did Bodhidharma bestow them on the second patriarch, Huike Since then they have been handed down from proper heir to proper heir to me."

"You, reflect well upon [what I am about to say]. These precepts being transmitted to you convert the precepts that are your own mind into the true, absolute ordination platform. The bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future regard these as their nurturing fathers and mothers. All Buddhas of the ten directions regard these as their training site of permanent residence. Receiving these precepts (jukai i.e., ordination) is known as receiving the absolute precepts that are one's own mind. Receiving is transmission. Transmission is awakening. Living beings awakening their Buddha mind is true ordination.

"The ordination platform [can be conveyed] only by one Buddha to another Buddha. Moreover, abiding in the basis of mind, realizing true awakening, abiding in the real appearance of nature that is one's own mind, these are the true ordination platform. Even if one were to receive endless and Hinayana ordinations while standing on a physical ordination platform until the end of one's life, it would not aid liberation, because it lacks even one tenth of the efficacy [of this formless ordination platform]."

[And then Bodhidharma's One Mind Precepts are administered]

In this text, as in Kokan's explanation (which seems to address primarily laypeople and novice monks), the ritual actions transfer awakening to the person being ordained. Merely joining the Zen lineage of Buddhas and patriarchs enables that person to share in their experience of awakening. The objective, visible ordination that occurs at a particular geographical location, symbolized by the physical ordination site, creates a subjective, inner ordination that stands outside of all temporal and geographic boundaries. The inner ordination merely confirms the innate awakening that already exists. Individual precepts do not govern behavior or actions, but describe the spiritual characteristics of Buddha nature. Thus ordination signifies not the beginning of the Buddhist path, but its final culmination. Both Kokan and this initiation text, therefore, present a little known side of Zen Buddhism in which the approach to salvation depends on proper ritual consecration - not on the individual attainment of a subjective, inner experience (satori) as has been popularized in the West....although individual details differ, similar ideas can be found in almost any medieval Tendai precept treatise as well as in the precept treatises of other types of Japanese Buddhism...The awakening conveyed by the precepts eliminates any need for Zen practice. The fact that medieval Zen texts could even imply such a position reveals just how profoundly Japanese Zen ritual assumed the values of Tendai doctrines...
The association of Zen and precepts has deep roots. Any form of meditation has natural associations with self-discipline. Without controlling the body, one cannot settle the mind. Without relaxing the demands of the flesh, one cannot free the mind to reflect reality. From the very early days of Japanese Buddhism, terms referring to meditation practice and strict observance of the precepts - what was known as "pure practice" commonly appear mixed together…The Zen precepts that later generations of monks inherited from Eisai, however, owed far more to Japanese Tendai doctrines than to the vinaya. Instead of regulating behavior, the precepts conferred the mind of awakening. The ordination ritual became all important because through ordination alone could one be initiated into the Zen lineage that reached back to the Buddha. For laypeople, therefore, pure faith in this lineage mattered more than either understanding or practice. There are many reasons why Zen ordination rituals were interpreted in light of Tendai doctrines. Saicho’s rejection of the traditional rules of monastic discipline had profoundly altered the social status of Buddhist monks in Japan. Zen monks like Eisai who hoped to revive the vinaya ultimately faced a hopeless task. Tendai had occupied a position of doctrinal preeminence for more than three hundred years before the emergence of independent Zen communities. Most early Japanese Zen monks, even those who journeyed to China, had been trained initially in Tendai. Throughout the medieval period Buddhist monks of all persuasions frequently studied together and exchanged secret lore, regardless of lineage affiliations. Under such circumstances it would be more remarkable if Japanese Zen had not been influenced by Tendai doctrines. Most important of all, Zen monks saw Tendai ordination rituals as their own ordination rituals, as Bodhidharma’s precepts. However strongly Zen monks believed that their Chinese Zen lineage made them different from other Buddhists in Japan, it in fact made them the same. It was this Zen lineage that linked them to Bodhidharma and through him to Saicho.
4

Leaving Home in Sōtō Zen
In the Western Heavens and the Eastern Lands, wherever the transmission has passed between buddha ancestors, at the beginning of entering Dharma there is inevitably the receiving of the precepts. Without receiving the precepts we are never the disciples of buddha and never the descendants of the ancestral masters—because they have seen “departing from faults and guarding against wrong” as “practicing zen and inquiring into the truth.” The words “the precepts and regulations are foremost” already are the right-Dharma-eye treasury itself. To realize buddha and become an ancestor inevitably is to receive and maintain the right-Dharma-eye treasury; therefore, ancestral masters who receive the authentic transmission of the right-Dharma-eye treasury inevitably receive and maintain the Buddha’s precepts. There cannot be a Buddha ancestor who does not receive and maintain the Buddha’s precepts. Some receive and maintain them under the Tathagata, which in every instance is to have received the life-blood. The Buddha’s precepts now authentically transmitted from buddha to buddha and from ancestor to ancestor were exactly transmitted only by the ancestral master of Song Peak [Bodhidharma] and, transmitted five times in China, they reached the founding ancestor of Caoxi. The authentic transmissions from Qingyuan, Nanyue, and so on, have been conveyed to the present day, but there are unreliable old veterans and the like who do not know it at all. They are most pitiful. That “we should receive the bodhisattva-precepts; this is the beginning of entering the Dharma” is just what practitioners should know. The observance in which “we should receive the bodhisattva-precepts” is authentically transmitted, in every case, by those who have long learned in practice in the inner sanctum of the buddha ancestors; it is not accomplished by negligent and lazy people. In that observance, in every case, we burn incense and offer prostrations before the ancestral master, and ask to receive the bodhisattva precepts. Once granted permission, we bathe and purify ourselves, and put on new and clean robes. Or we may wash [existing] robes, then scatter flowers, burn incense, offer prostrations and show reverence, and then put them on. Widely we offer prostrations to the statues and images, offer prostrations to the Three Treasures, and offer prostrations to venerable ancestors; we get rid of miscellaneous hindrances; and [thus] we are able to make body-and-mind pure. Those observances have long been authentically transmitted in the inner sanctum of the Buddha ancestors. After that, at the practice-place, the presiding acharya [osho] duly instructs the receiver to do prostrations, to kneel up [choki], and, with palms together [gassho], to speak these words:

“I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Dharma, I take refuge in Sangha.
I take refuge in Buddha, honored among humans.
I take refuge in Dharma, honored as beyond desire. I take refuge in Sangha, honored among assemblies.
I have taken refuge in Buddha, I have taken refuge in Dharma, I have taken refuge in Sangha.” (Said three times.)
“The Tathagata, unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening, is my great teacher, in whom I now take refuge. From this time forward, I shall not take refuge in evil demons and non-Buddhists. It is due to [the Tathagata’s] compassion. It is due to his compassion.” (Repeated three times.)
“Good sons and daughters! Now that you have discarded the false and devoted yourself to the true, the precepts already are surrounding you. You shall receive the Three Collective Pure Precepts.”
“One: The precept of sustaining standards of conduct. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.
“Two: The precept of sustaining wholesome dharamas. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.
“Three: The precept of abundantly benefitting living beings. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“The preceding Three Collective Pure Precepts each must not be violated. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep these precepts, or not?” Answer: “I can keep them.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“These things thus you should keep.” The receiver does three prostrations, and kneels up with palms together.

“Good sons and daughters! You already have received the Three Collective Pure Precepts. You shall now receive the Ten Grave Prohibitory Precepts. They are the pure and great precepts of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.”

“One: Not to kill. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Two: Not to steal. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Three: Not to lust. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Four: Not to lie. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Five: Not to sell liquor. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Six: Not to discuss the faults of householder or homeleaver bodhisattvas. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Seven: Not to praise self or criticize others. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Eight: Not to be possessive of Dharma or material possessions. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Nine: Not to be angry. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“Ten: Not to disparage the Three Treasures. From your present body until attainment the buddha body, can you keep this precept, or not?” Answer: “I can keep it.” Asked three times, answered three times.

“The preceding Ten Grave Prohibitory Precepts each must not be violated. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, can you keep these precepts, or not?” Answer: “I can keep them.” Asked three times and answered three times.

“These things thus you should keep.” The receiver performs three prostrations. “The preceding Three Refuges, Three Collective Pure Precepts, and Ten Grave Prohibitory Precepts are what the buddhas have received and kept. From your present body until attainment of the buddha body, these sixteen precepts thus you should keep.” The receiver performs three prostrations. Then we do the Sanskrit [chant, which begins] “Abiding in the world...”[Abiding in the world like empty sky, like a lotus flower in muddy water, the mind is pure and beyond duality; thus we bow to the unsurpassed Honored One.], after which we say: “I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Dharma, I take refuge in Sangha.” Then the receiver leaves the practice-place [dojo].

This observance of receiving the precepts has been authentically transmitted by buddha ancestors without fail. The likes of Danxia Tianran and Shramanera Gao of Yaoshan have similarly received and kept [these precepts, but not the bhikshu precepts]. There have been ancestral masters who did not receive the bhikshu precepts but there has never been an ancestral master who failed to receive these bodhisattva-precepts authentically transmitted by the buddha ancestors. We receive and keep them without fail.
According to the third volume of the Large Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom, the Buddha, the World-Honored One, said, “If a bodhisattva, a great being, thinks, ‘Someday I will surely abandon the ranks of the court and leave the home life, and on that day I will attain supreme bodhi. Also, on that day, when I leave the home life, I will turn the wonderful wheel of the Dharma and cause countless, numberless beings to abandon wickedness and delusion and produce the pure Dharma vision. Then I will cause them to exterminate their impurities forever and become wise and emancipated. More over, I will cause them to become irreversible in supreme bodhi,’ then this bodhisattva who desires to accomplish such a thing should extensively study the [Sutra on the] Perfection of Wisdom.”

Supreme enlightenment is acquired on the day one leaves the home life and receives the precepts. If there is no day of home departure, there is no day of supreme enlightenment. Thus, the dawning of the day of your home departure is the dawning of the day when you achieve supreme bodhi, and the dawning of the day when you achieve supreme bodhi is the dawning of the day of your home departure. This is the day when your layman’s body, just as it is, is transformed into a Buddha’s body, and you attain supreme bodhi and preach the Dharma for the sake of all beings. Your home departure itself causes many living beings to enter the Buddha Way. It is the practice of self-benefit and benefit to others which causes them to experience supreme bodhi and acquire irreversibility.

You should understand that when you have perfected this self-benefit and benefit to others, this is itself the seeking of supreme bodhi and becoming irreversible, and this immovability is nothing other than leaving the home life and receiving the precepts. Attaining supreme bodhi enlightens us to the fact that the day of home departure is the day of supreme bodhi. What you should understand correctly is that the day of home departure is the day when the opposition between bodhi and the first thought of enlightenment is transcended. This absolute time is the time of liberation. The day of home departure is the day when you know from inner experience that the time of three incalculable eons is the eternal now of the day of home departure. This day of home departure contains within itself the time when you dwell in the boundless oceans of the eons and teach the Dharma to all beings. The time of home departure is not a small period of time, such as that required for eating a meal, nor is it the unthinkable time of sixty small eons; it is time which transcends time. It is time which freed the Buddha’s topknot. The day of home departure even transcends the day of home departure. The day of home departure is truly the day of home departure.

Clearly understand that the achievement of the Way by all the Buddhas and patriarchs was only through home departure and receiving the precepts. The life pulse of the Buddhas and patriarchs is only home departure and receiving the precepts. If you still have not made your home departure, neither are you a Buddha patriarch. Seeing the Buddha, seeing the patriarchs, is making your home departure and receiving the precepts.

Mahakashyapa left the home life to follow the Buddha in his wish to be freed of all defilements. The Buddha said to him, “Welcome, monk,” and his hair and beard spontaneously fell to the ground and his body was spontaneously covered with monks’ robes. It is clear from the traces we have of all the Buddhas that all who practiced the Way and freed themselves from defilements have made their home departure and received the precepts.

According to the third volume of the Large Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom, the Buddha, the World-Honored One, said, “If a bodhisattva, a great being, thinks, ‘Someday I will surely abandon the ranks of the court and leave the home life, and on that day I will attain supreme bodhi. Also, on that day, when I leave the home life, I will turn the wonderful wheel of the Dharma and cause countless, numberless beings to abandon wickedness and delusion and produce the pure Dharma vision. Then I will cause them to exterminate their impurities forever and become wise and emancipated. More over, I will cause them to become irreversible in supreme bodhi,’ then this bodhisattva who desires to accomplish such a thing should extensively study the [Sutra on the] Perfection of Wisdom.”

Supreme enlightenment is acquired on the day one leaves the home life and receives the precepts. If there is no day of home departure, there is no day of supreme enlightenment. Thus, the dawning of the day of your home departure is the dawning of the day when you achieve supreme bodhi, and the dawning of the day when you achieve supreme bodhi is the dawning of the day of your home departure. This is the day when your layman’s body, just as it is, is transformed into a Buddha’s body, and you attain supreme bodhi and preach the Dharma for the sake of all beings. Your home departure itself causes many living beings to enter the Buddha Way. It is the practice of self-benefit and benefit to others which causes them to experience supreme bodhi and acquire irreversibility.

You should understand that when you have perfected this self-benefit and benefit to others, this is itself the seeking of supreme bodhi and becoming irreversible, and this immovability is nothing other than leaving the home life and receiving the precepts. Attaining supreme bodhi enlightens us to the fact that the day of home departure is the day of supreme bodhi. What you should understand correctly is that the day of home departure is the day when the opposition between bodhi and the first thought of enlightenment is transcended. This absolute time is the time of liberation. The day of home departure is the day when you know from inner experience that the time of three incalculable eons is the eternal now of the day of home departure. This day of home departure contains within itself the time when you dwell in the boundless oceans of the eons and teach the Dharma to all beings. The time of home departure is not a small period of time, such as that required for eating a meal, nor is it the unthinkable time of sixty small eons; it is time which transcends time. It is time which freed the Buddha’s topknot. The day of home departure even transcends the day of home departure. The day of home departure is truly the day of home departure.
when you have overcome attachment and reached the state of dropping off mind and body. The day of achieving the Way is the
day of achieving the Way; that is, the day of home departure is the day when you achieve the Way, and the day when you
achieve the Way is the day of home departure.

The following is recorded in the thirteenth volume of the Ta chih tu lun: “When the Blessed One was staying in the Jetavana
Grove, a drunken Brahmin came to the Buddha and said that he wanted to leave the home life. At this, the Buddha had some
monks shave off his hair and dress him in the robes of a monk. The Brahmin sobered up and was surprised to discover his
altered appearance, and he left. Some monks then asked the Buddha why he had allowed the Brahmin to leave the home life.
The Buddha replied, ‘Never in all the ages up to now has that Brahmin ever thought of home departure. Now while he was
drunk, it was a small matter for him to think that he wanted to leave the home life, but because this happened, in a later time he
will really leave the home life.’” Thus, there are various conditions for home departure. It is better to break the precepts as one
who has left the home life than to observe them as a householder, because a householder cannot be liberated by the precepts.

You should understand the truth of the Buddha’s words. The fundamental requirement of the Way is home departure. He who
has not yet left the home life cannot acquire the Buddha Dharma. When the Buddha was still in the world, various non-
believers had already given up their wicked ways through their own faith, but when they took refuge in the Buddha Dharma,
they necessarily asked for home departure and the precepts.

Sometimes the Blessed One himself says in a friendly manner, “Welcome, monk,” and thereby acknowledges home departure,
and sometimes he gathers monks about him and has them shave their hair and beards and thus leave the home life and receive
the precepts. In both cases, the Dharma of home departure and receiving the precepts is fulfilled in the minds and bodies of
these people. You should understand how great are the merits of home departure and receiving the precepts. When the
Buddha’s efforts flood the minds and bodies of these people, their hair falls spontaneously to the ground and the kesa covers
their bodies. If the Buddha does not acknowledge home departure, their hair is not shaved and the kesa does not cover the body.
This means that the person has not yet received the Buddha’s precepts. This being so, home departure and receiving the
precepts is the new prediction of all Buddha Tathagatas that Buddhahood is certain.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Sons of good family, the Tathagata perceives that those who practice the Dharma in the small
vehicle are slight of merit and laden with impurities, and it is for their sake that I left the home life and attained supreme bodhi
when I was young. However, in truth, my experience of bodhi really occurred many, many ages ago. Now, in the present time,
I exercise skillful means in order to educate beings and cause them to enter the Dharma, and so I say this. Although I
experienced bodhi long, long ago, I say that I left the home life when young. ‘I attained supreme bodhi’ means ‘I made my
home departure when young.’ When I departed the home life when young, beings who followed the small vehicle and whose
merits were few and whose impurities were many left the home life with me when I was young. When I experienced the
Dharma teaching of ‘home departure when I was young,’ I experienced the Buddha’s enlightenment. So, in order to aid beings
who delight in the Dharma of the small vehicle, I say that I left the home life when young and experienced supreme
enlightenment.” This may be so, but it still may be asked what the merits of home departure are. The answer is that the merits
of home departure are countless and unlimited.
Shukke Kudoku
Virtue of Home Leaving

Shobogenzo Shukke Kudoku by Eihei Dogen Zenji, translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Paul Haller

According to Nagarjuna Bodhisattva [in the Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom]:

**Question:** It is taught that those who receive lay precepts will be born in the deva world, attain the bodhisattva way, and experience nirvana. What, then, is the use of receiving the precepts for home leavers?

**Answer:** Those who receive both types of precepts become awakened. But one type is difficult and the other is easy. Lay people engage in various works. If they wish to concentrate on the dharma of the way, their business declines. If they are focused on their business, their activity of the way declines. Without choosing one and abandoning the other, lay people need to practice dharma. This is difficult. Those who have left the household can be free from worldly affairs, distant from confusion, and practice the way wholeheartedly. So, this is easy.

Further, lay people are noisy and confused while being occupied in many things. The roots of their driving forces are the center of all unwholesome actions. That is why lay practice is difficult. Leaving the household is similar to going out into an empty field where there are no people. They can keep their minds unified and free from thinking. As their thoughts inside retreat, their affairs outside also disappear. It is said in a verse:

Sitting leisurely among trees,
quietly letting go of all unwholesome actions
and attaining a single mind free from desire—
this is pleasure beyond a deva’s bliss.

People seek wealth, profit, fame,
and desire comfortable clothes and furniture.
Such pleasure is not true comfort,
wanting profit brings no satisfaction.
While begging food in a patched robe,
in motion or stillness the mind is always unified.
The eye of wisdom observes the reality of all things.
Within various dharma gates, all equally enter this insight.
The wisdom of understanding is serene,
incomparable in the three realms.

In this way we know that maintaining the home leaver’s precepts is very easy.
Also, if you leave the household and maintain the precepts, you attain immeasurable wholesome merit, which is fulfilled.

For this reason, lay people should leave the household and receive all of the [home leaver’s] precepts. On the other hand, leaving the household is difficult from the beginning.

Once brahmans of the Jambudvipa World asked Shariputra, “What is most difficult in the buddha dharma?” Shariputra said, “Leaving the household is most difficult.”

They asked, “What is difficult about being a home leaver?”
Shariputra said, “Enjoying the life of a home leaver is difficult.”
They asked, “What is difficult in enjoying the life of a home leaver?”
Shariputra said, “Practicing all types of wholesome deeds is difficult. That is why it is good to leave the household.”

Now, when someone leaves the household, the Demon King says in lamentation, “This person wants to reduce the urge of desire, will certainly attain nirvana, and join a group of the sangha treasure.”

Again, even if those who have left the household in the buddha dharma break the precepts and commit a crime, they can be liberated after the crime is over. It is like a story told in the Sutra of the Former Life of Nun Utpalavarna:

[Nagarjuna continues:] At the time when the Buddha was in this world, Nun Utpalavarna attained six miraculous powers and became an arhat. She visited noble householders and talked about the life of home leavers. She encouraged noble women to become nuns.

They said, “We are young and beautiful. It would be hard to keep the precepts.”
Utpalavarna said, “It’s all right to break the precepts. Leave the household first.”
The women said, “If we break the precepts, we will fall into hell. How can we do that?”
Utpalavarna said, “Then go ahead and fall into hell.”
They laughed and said, “We would be punished in hell. How can we allow ourselves to fall into hell?”
Utpalavarna said, “Reflecting on my former life, I was an entertainer, putting on various costumes and speaking memorized lines. Once I put on a nun’s clothes for a joke. As a result of this action, I was reborn as a nun at the time of Kashyapa Buddha. Because of my high status and proper conduct, I grew arrogant and broke a precept. I fell into hell and experienced various punishments. In my next birth I met Shakyamuni Buddha, left the household, attained six
miraculous powers, and became an arhat. From this I know that if you leave the household and receive precepts, even if you break a precept, you can become an arhat because of the merit of the precepts you received. But you cannot attain the way if you only create unwholesome deeds without receiving the precepts. I was once a criminal falling in and out of hell. If a mere criminal dies and enters hell, no merit has been attained. So, you should know that even if you break a precept, you can receive the fruit of the way.

Also, when the Buddha was at Jita Grove, a drunk Brahman went up to him and requested that he be made a monk. The Buddha asked Ananda to shave the Brahman’s head and let him put on a dharma robe. When the Brahman became sober, he was so shocked that he had become a monk he ran away.

The disciples asked the Buddha, “Why did you make that Brahman a monk?”

The Buddha said, “He would otherwise never have the aspiration for leaving the household, even for immeasurable eons. He aroused a faint aspiration because he was drunk. Due to such causes and conditions, he will leave the household and attain the way in the future. The merit of these causes and conditions and leaving the household is immeasurable. Thus, holding the five precepts as a lay person does not equal leaving the household.

[Thus said Nagarjuna.]

The World-honored One allowed a drunk Brahman to leave the household and receive the precepts. He regarded this as planting the first seed for attaining the way. From this we clearly know that since olden times sentient beings without the merit of leaving the household have not been able to attain enlightenment—the buddha fruit—for a long time. Because this Brahman was drunk, he aroused a faint aspiration, had his head shaved, received the precepts, and became a monk. Although he became sober soon after that, he could preserve his merit and nurture the wholesome root of attaining the way. This is the golden admonition that expresses the World-honored One’s profound intention, the original meaning of the emergence of the Tathagata into this world.

All sentient beings should clearly receive this teaching with trust, and practice it in the past, present, and future. Indeed, arousing the aspiration and attaining the way always takes place in one moment. This Brahman’s merit of momentarily leaving the household is like this. How much more so is the limited and unlimited merit for a human being who leaves the household and receives the precepts! How can the merit be less than that of this drunk Brahman?

One of the Wheel-turning Kings emerged when he was over eighty-thousand years old, and, decorated with seven treasures, presided over the Four Continents. These continents were like a pure land. The kings’ pleasure cannot be described by words. It is said that one of the kings presided over a billion worlds. There are wheels made of gold, silver, copper, and iron for presiding over one, two, three, or four continents. The bodies of those who turn these wheels are not defiled by the ten unwholesome actions.

A wheel-turning king is filled with such privileges. When he finds a strand of white hair on his head, he gives the thrones to his crown prince, and immediately leaves the household. He puts on a kashaya, practices in a mountain or forest, and when his life ends, is invariably reborn in the world of the Brahma King. The white strand of his hair is put into a silver box treasured at his palace. This is transmitted to the next wheel-turning king. When the next wheel-turning king becomes old, he does the same as the previous king.

The lifespan of a wheel-turning king after leaving the household is so long that it cannot be compared with that of humans in our time. It is said that the lifespan of a wheel-turning king is over eighty thousand years and his body is equipped with the thirty-two marks, to which people today cannot come close. However, seeing white hair and knowing the impermanence of life, a wheel-turning king leaves the household without fail and practices the way in order to engage in pure conduct and accomplish merit.

Kings nowadays are not like the wheel-turning kings. If they waste the passage of time in greed without leaving the household, they may regret it in the next lifetime. Furthermore, this is a small country in the remote land, where there is the name of a king who lacks the virtue of a king. People are greedy without end. If they leave the household and practice the way, all devas will protect them with delight. The dragon god will revere and guard them. The buddha eye of all buddhas will clearly confirm them with joy.

Without having faith, the courtesan put on a nun’s robe for a joke. She was perhaps at minor fault for this action, but with the power of wearing this robe she encountered the buddha dharma in her next lifetime. A nun’s robe means a kashaya. As a result of wearing a kashaya for a joke, she left the household, received the precepts, and became Nun Uptpa at the time of Kashyapa Buddha. Although she broke precepts and fell into hell for punishment, her merit did not perish, and finally she encountered Shakyamuni Buddha. She saw the Buddha, listened to the dharma, aroused the aspiration for enlightenment, and practiced. Thus, she became free from the three realms and became a great arhat. She had mastered the six miraculous powers including the three extraordinary types of knowledge. She was certainly unsurpassable in the way.

If so, the growing merit of those who have trust from the beginning and receive a kashaya with the pure heart of faith for the sole sake of unsurpassable enlightenment should be more immediate than the merit of this courtesan. Even further, the merit of those who arouse the aspiration for enlightenment, leave the household, and receive the precepts for the sake of unsurpassable enlightenment should be immeasurable. Without having a human body, it is rare to achieve this merit.

Although there are a great number of bodhisattvas and ancestors, whether they are householders or home leavers in India and China, none of them come close to Ancestor Nagarjuna. He particularly took up the stories of the drunk Brahman and the courtesan to encourage sentient beings to leave the household and receive the precepts. Ancestor Nagarjuna’s enlightenment was predicted by the golden mouth of the World-honored One.
The World-honored One said, “There are four most excellent occurrences in the Southern Continent. They are: seeing the Buddha, hearing the dharma, leaving the household, and attaining the way.”

Know clearly that these four most excellent occurrences surpass the activities in the Northern Continent and in all deva worlds. Now, lead by the root power of wholesome actions in past lives, you have received the most excellent body [human body]. Rejoice, leave the household, and receive the precepts. Do not waste your most excellent body and leave the dewdrop-like life to the wind of impermanence. If, birth after birth, you live as a home-leaver, your merit and virtue will accumulate.

The World-honored One said:

In buddha dharma, the effect of leaving the household is wondrous. The merit of building a stupa of seven treasures, as high as the Thirty-third Heaven, is not as large as the merit of leaving the household. The reason is that an evil, stupid person can destroy a stupa of seven treasures, but cannot destroy the merit of leaving the household. This being so, if you teach men and women, let go of servants, pardon criminals, and let yourself leave the household—entering the way—the merit is immeasurable.

Thus, the World-honored One let the amounts of merit be known and compared them. Shrivaddhi heard this, and, although he was one hundred twenty years old and frail, he determined to leave the household and receive the precepts. He sat on a seat lower than youths, practiced, and became a great arhat.

Know that, through causes and conditions, a human body in this lifetime is a temporary assemblage of the four great elements and five skandhas. It always contains eight sufferings. Further, it is born and perishes moment by moment without ceasing. It is born and perishes at each of the sixty-five moments contained within one finger snap, but because of ignorance we don’t notice it. There are six billion, four hundred million, ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred eighty moments in a day and night, and the five skandhas are born and perish at each moment, but we don’t notice it. What a pity that although we are born and perish at each moment, we don’t notice it! The amount of births and deaths at each moment is only known by the Buddha—the World-honored One—and Shariputra. There are many other sages but none of them know it. With this law of birth and death in each moment, sentient beings create wholesome and unwholesome actions. Also with this law of birth and death in each moment, sentient beings arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and attain the way.

What is born and perishes in this way is the human body. Even if you cling to it, it will not stay where it is. Since olden times there has not been a single person who clung to the body and made it stay. Thus, the human body does not belong to the self. Yet, if you turn around, leave the household, and receive the precepts, you realize unsurpassable, complete enlightenment, and you realize the indestructible diamond buddha fruit. Who, among the wise, would not joyously seek this?

This being so, all the eight children of the Sun and Moon Lamp Buddha in the past gave up their monarchy of ruling the world of the four directions and left the household.

All sixteen children of Great Penetration Wisdom Excellence Buddha also left the household. When this buddha was in samadhi, he expounded the Lotus Sutra for all beings and now he is a tathagata of the ten directions. All the eight trillion beings led by the wheel-turning king, the father of this buddha, saw the king’s sixteen children leave the household and asked the king for permission to leave the household. The king gave all of them permission to do so.

Also, Wondrous Splendor King’s two children, as well as his father and queen, all left the household.

Know that when great sages emerge it is an authentic custom for them to leave the household. No one can say that they do so out of ignorance. If you learn that they leave the household out of their wisdom, you should wish to do the same.

In this present time span of Shakyamuni Buddha, Rahula, Ananda, and others all left the household. One thousand or twenty thousand members of the Shakya Clan, also left the household. Their actions are indeed excellent precedents. From the Five Monks to Subhadra [the Buddha’s first disciples to the last], those who took refuge in the Buddha all left the household. Know that the virtue is immeasurable.

This being so, if people care about their children and their grandchildren, let them leave the household as soon as possible. If they care about their parents, encourage them to leave the household.

Thus, it is said in a verse:

If there had been no past world
there would have been no past buddhas.
If there had been no past buddhas
there would have been no home leaving and precept receiving.

This is a verse of all buddha tathagatas. It denies the negation of the past world spoken of by those outside the way. So, know that home leaving and precept receiving are the dharma of all buddhas in the past. As we have the fortune of encountering the time of home leaving and precept receiving, which are the wondrous dharma of all buddhas, how could we wastefully miss home leaving and precept receiving? It would be difficult to understand the hindrance to not doing so.

Attaining the highest merit with the lowliest body is the highest achievement in the Jambudvipa World or in the three realms. Do not fail to leave the household and receive the precepts before the Jambudvipa’s human body perishes.

Ancient sages said [in the Abhidharma Maha Vibasha Treatise]:

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Even if they break the precepts, those who have left the household excel householders who maintain the precepts. For this reason, the kindness of those who expound a sutra and encourage others to leave the household is difficult to repay. Those who encourage others to leave the household help them practice venerable actions. The reward they receive excels that of King Yama, the Wheel-turning King, and Indra. For this reason, the kindness of those who expound a sutra and encourage others to leave the household is difficult to repay. Encouraging others to receive the precepts of supporting the dharma [lay practice] is not as valuable. To stay in laity is not recommended in sutras.

In this way, know that even if they break the precepts, those who have left the household excel householders who maintain the precepts. For taking refuge in the Buddha, leaving the household, and receiving the precepts are always excellent. The reward for encouraging others to leave the household excels that of King Yama, the Wheel-turning King, and Indra. Even common people or untouchables who have left the household excel the nobles. They even excel King Yama, the Wheel-turning King, and Indra. Receiving lay precepts is not like this. Therefore, leave the household.

Know that the innumerable teachings of the World-honored One were extensively collected by the World-honored One and the five hundred great arhats [in the Abhidharma Maha Vibasha Treatise]. From this we know, indeed, that principles are clear in the buddha dharma. Ordinary teachers of recent times cannot fathom one arhat’s wisdom, three types of extraordinary knowledge, or six miraculous powers. Then, how can they understand the wisdom of the five hundred arhats? Although these arhats knew what ordinary teachers of recent times didn’t know, saw what they didn’t see, and mastered what they didn’t master, it is not that the arhats didn’t know what ordinary teachers of recent times know. Therefore, do not compare the ignorant and foolish theory of these ordinary teachers with the words of arhats and three types of outstanding knowledge.

The Abhidharma Maha Vibasha Treatise says in its Chapter 120, “Even those who have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment and left the household are called sages. How much more so is it with those who have attained the dharma of patience?”

Know in this way that those who have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment and left the household are called sages.

Among the five hundred great vows of Shakyamuni Buddha, his one hundred thirty-seventh vow says, “May I attain a true awakening in the future and may people who want to leave the household in my dharma have no hindrance—such as being lazy, forgetful, crazy, arrogant, lacking reverence and wisdom, being driven by many desires, or having scattered minds! Until this is achieved, I will not be fully awakened.”

His one hundred thirty-eighth vow says, “May I attain a true awakening in the future and may women who want to leave the household in my dharma, study the way, and receive the great precepts, accomplish their wishes. Until this is achieved, I will not be fully awakened.”

His three hundred fourteenth vow says, “May I attain a true awakening in the future and if there are sentient beings who have little wholesome roots but arouse enjoyment in these wholesome roots, may I let them leave the household and study the way in the buddha dharma in their future lifetime, and let them abide at ease in the ten pure precepts. Until this is achieved, I will not be fully awakened.”

Know that all the good men and good women who have left the household now have been helped by the power of the World-honored One’s great vows in the past, have left the household, and received the precepts without hindrance. The Tathagata made these vows and caused them to leave the household. They clearly know that this is a great merit, most venerable and unsurpassable.

The Buddha said, “If you make offerings to those who follow my teaching, shave off their hair, and wear a patch of kashaya, but have not received the precepts, you will enter the castle of no fear. Because of that, I speak in this way.”

From this we know that if you make offerings to people who have shaven off their hair and wear a kashaya, but have not received the precepts, you can enter the castle of no fear.

He also said, “Even if they haven’t received the precepts, if you harm those who have left the household with me, shaved off their hair, and wear a piece of kashaya, you will destroy the dharma body and the reward body of all buddhas in the past, present, and future, and so you will fill the three unwholesome paths.”

The Buddha also said:

If sentient beings leave the household for me, shave off their hair, and wear a kashaya, even if they have not received the precepts, they will all be marked with the sign of nirvana. If you harm those who have left the household for me but haven’t received the precepts; if you annoy, insult, or denounce them; if you beat, bind, cut them with hands, a sword, or a stick, or take away their robes and bowls; or if you take away their tools for livelihood, you will destroy the true reward bodies of all buddhas in the past, present, and future, and challenge the eyes of all humans and devas. Thus, you will conceal the seeds of authentic dharma among the three treasures, make all devas fall into hell, depriving them of receiving benefaction, and expand and fill the three unwholesome paths.

From this, know that those who shave their heads and wear ink-dyed robes, even if they have not received the precepts, are marked with the sign of unsurpassable, great nirvana. If you confused them, you would destroy the reward bodies of all buddhas of the past, present, and future. Your offense would be the same as murdering your parents. Thus, we know that the merit of leaving the household is being intimate with all buddhas of the past, present, and future.
The Buddha said, “You, home leavers, should not arouse an unwholesome mind. If you do, you are not home leavers. You, home leavers, your action and speech should be in accord with each other. If they aren’t, you are not home leavers. I abandoned my parents, siblings, family members, relatives, and teachers to leave the household and practice the way. Indeed, this is the time to assemble wholesome awakening. It is not the time to assemble unwholesome awakening. Wholesome awakening is to have a tender heart toward all sentient beings as if they were babies. Unwholesome awakening is not like this.”

Thus, the self nature of a home leaver is having a tender heart toward all sentient beings as if they were babies. Unwholesome awakening is not like this. This is the time to assemble wholesome awakening. This is your action and speech should be in accord with each other. When you take the form of a home leaver, you have such virtue as this.

The Buddha said:

Now, Shariputra, if bodhisattvas, great beings, wish to attain unsurpassable, complete enlightenment on the day they leave the household, turn the dharma wheel on the same day, and have sentient beings of uncountable eons become free from dust and attain pure dharma eyes, have sentient beings of uncountable eons become free from attachment and attain liberation from desires, and have sentient beings of uncountable eons practice unremittingly in unsurpassable, complete enlightenment, the bodhisattvas, great beings, should study realizing wisdom beyond wisdom.

The study of realizing wisdom beyond wisdom spoken of here is transmitted from an ancestor to another. Unsurpassable, complete enlightenment matures on the very day of leaving the household. However, in practicing and realizing for uncountable eons and for innumerable eons, it is not bound by having limitations or beyond having limitations. Those who study should know this.

The Buddha said,

If, on the day they leave the household, bodhisattvas, great beings, arouse the thought of declining their royal heritage and wish to attain unsurpassable, complete enlightenment, they will immediately turn the dharma wheel. They will free uncountable sentient beings from dust and help them to attain pure dharma eyes. They will free uncountable sentient beings from attachment and with wisdom of mind liberate them from desires. They will help uncountable sentient beings to attain unsurpassable, complete enlightenment and unremittingly. If these bodhisattvas, great beings, aroused this thought, they should study realizing wisdom beyond wisdom.

This merit [of leaving the household] is expounded in this way by Shakyamuni Buddha who was born in the palace as the bodhisattva of the final body, declined his royal heritage, attained enlightenment, turned the dharma wheel, and awakened sentient beings.

[The Sutra on the Buddha’s Deeds in His Former Lives says:]

Prince Siddhartha went to his chariot driver Chanda, took up a sword with its handle decorated with wish-granting jewels and seven treasures. He pulled the sharp blade from the sheath with his right hand, and grabbed his snail-shaped blue lotus-colored hair with his left hand. He cut the hair off and threw it up in the air. Indra saw him do so, greatly rejoiced in Siddhartha’s rare aspiration, and caught the bundle of the prince’s hair with his heavenly robe, keeping it from dropping on the ground. Then, all the devas presented their supreme heavenly offerings.

This was when Shakyamuni Buddha was a crown prince. He climbed over a wall of the palace at midnight, went into the mountains the next day, and cut off his own hair. Then the Deva of Suddha Avasa Heaven came down, shaved his head, and made an offering of a kashaya to him. This is the auspicious event of the emergence of the Tathagata in this world. Such an occasion is normal for all buddhas, world-honored ones.

Not even one of the buddhas of the past, present, and future in the ten directions became a buddha as a householder. Because there were buddhas in the past, there is leaving the household and receiving the precepts. The attainment of the way by sentient beings invariably depends on their leaving the household and receiving the precepts. Because leaving the household and receiving the precepts is the definitive way of all buddhas, the merit is immeasurable.

Although, in the scriptures, there is a teaching about a lay person becoming a buddha, it is not an authentic transmission. Although there is a teaching of a [lay] woman becoming a buddha [by turning into a man], it is not an authentic transmission.

What is authentically transmitted by buddha ancestors is leaving the household and becoming a buddha.

[The Jingde Record of Transmission of the Lamp says:]

Dhitika, the son of a wealthy man, went to see Venerable Upagupta, the Fourth Ancestor, and expressed his wish to leave the household.

Upagupta said, “Do you want to leave the household for the benefit of your body or mind?”

Dhitika said, “I want to leave the household, but not for my body or mind.”

Upagupta said, “Who leaves the household if not for the benefit of body or mind?”

Dhitika said, “A home leaver does not have a self or self-possession. Because of having no self or self-possession, the mind is not born and does not perish. Not to have the mind that is born or perishes: this is an unchanging dharma.

All buddhas practice this way. Neither their minds nor bodies have marks.”

Upagupta said, “You are greatly enlightened and your mind has been illuminated. You should take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and nurture the sacred seed [of buddhahood].”

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Thus, Upagupta allowed Dhitika to leave the household and receive the precepts.

Now, to encounter the dharma of all buddhas and leave the household is the supreme result. The dharma is not for the self or self-possession. It is not for body or mind. It is not that you leave the household for the benefit of body or mind. This is the meaning of "leaving the household is not for body or mind." Because it is not for the self or self-possession, it is the dharma of all buddhas. This is the way of all buddhas. Because this is the way of all buddhas, it is not for the self or self-possession, and not for the body or mind.

There is nothing equal to this in the three realms. Thus, leaving the household is the supreme dharma. It is not sudden, not gradual, not permanent, not impermanent. It is not coming, not going, not abiding, not making. It is not wide, not narrow, not large, not small. It is not becoming, and not not-becoming. There are no ancestors transmitting buddha dharma person to person that have not left the household or have not received the precepts.

This is how Dhitika first met Venerable Upagupta and asked about leaving the household. In this way, Dhitika left the household, received the precepts, practiced with Upagupta, and finally became the Fifth Ancestor.

[The Jingde Record of Transmission of the Lamp says:]

Sanghanandi, the Seventeenth Ancestor, was a prince of King Splendor Treasure of Sharasvasti. He could speak soon after his birth and kept praising the Buddha’s teaching. At age seven he detested worldly pleasure and presented this verse to his parents:

Bow to my compassionate father.
Veneration to my blood mother.
I now wish to leave the household
begging you to kindly accept my plea.

But his parents insistently discouraged him. So, the prince refused to eat. Finally, his parents allowed him to leave the household while staying in the palace. They named him Sanghanandi and asked monk Dhyanartha to be his teacher. For nineteen years Sanghanandi didn’t tire of his practice. He said to himself daily, “While living at home, how can I be a home leaver?”

One night he saw a heavenly light descending all of a sudden and illuminating a straight road. Without noticing, he walked slowly on the road for ten li. When he came to a grotto in front of a huge rock, he went inside and sat quietly. Knowing that his son had left, the King expelled Dhyanartha, and searched all over the country, looking for the prince. But he could not find him. Ten years later, Sanghanandi attained dharma, had his enlightenment confirmed, became a wandering teacher, and got to the country of Magadha.

This is the first time that becoming a home leaver while being at home has been heard of. However, with the help of his wholesome action in the past, he found a straight way in the heavenly light. Then, he left his palace and got to the grotto. Indeed, it is an excellent precedent. One who detests worldly pleasure and is cautious about common dust is a sage. One who loves the five desires and does not reject them is an ordinary fool.

Emperors Dai and Su practiced intimately with monks but they still clung to their thrones and did not abandon them.

Layman Lu [Huineng] left his parents and became an ancestor. It is the merit of leaving the household. On the other hand, Layman Pang abandoned treasure but did not throw away the dust of the world. It should be regarded as extreme foolishness. You cannot compare Lu’s power of the way with Pang’s study of the ancient way. Those who are clear leave the household. Those who are ignorant stay in the household, which becomes the causes and conditions of dark [unwholesome] actions.

One day, Nanyue, Zen Master Huairan, said with admiration, “Home leaving is done to practice the way to become free from birth. There is nothing that excells this in the deva and human worlds.”

_The way to become free from birth_ is the true dharma of the Tathagata. Thus, it is excellent _in the deva and human worlds_.

In the deva worlds, there are six deva worlds in the desire realm, eighteen deva worlds in the form realm, and four types of worlds in the no-form realm. None of them excel the path of home leavers.

Panshan, Zen Master Baoji, said, “Virtuous practitioners of Zen, studying the way in our school is like the earth holding mountains without knowing how steep they are, or a stone containing a jewel without knowing how flawless it is. One who practices like this is called a home leaver.”

The true dharma of buddha ancestors are not necessarily concerned with knowing or not knowing. As leaving the household is the true dharma of buddha ancestors, its merit is clear.

Linji, Zen Master Yixun of Zhen Province, said, “Home leavers should discern what is right in everyday views, buddha from demon, and what is genuine, false, ordinary, or sacred. Those who discern in this way are called true home leavers. Those who cannot distinguish a buddha from a demon are like leaving home and entering another home. They are called sentient beings who create karma, and cannot be called true home leavers.”

_What is right in everyday views_ spoken of here means identifying with cause and effect, and identifying with the three treasures. _Discern buddha_ means to clearly reflect on the merit of the causes and effects of being a buddha. It is to clearly understand what is genuine and what is false, what is ordinary and what is sacred. If you don’t clarify the distinction between a
Demon and a buddha, you will relapse and destroy the study of the way. If you are aware of a demon’s affairs and do not follow them, your endeavor of the way is unremitting. This is called the dharma of true home leavers. There are many who groundlessly regard demons’ affairs as buddha dharma. This is a mistake of recent times. You students should quickly know demons’ affairs and clarify, practice, and realize buddhahood.

[The Maha Parinirvana Sutra says:]

When the Tathagata was entering pari-nirvana, Kashyapa Bodhisattva said to him, “World-honored One, the Tathagata, you understand all the roots [potentials] of human beings. You must have known that Sunakshatra was going to cut off his wholesome root. Then, why did you allow him to leave the household?”

The Buddha said:

Good disciple, in the past when I was going to leave the household, my brother Nanda, my cousins Ananda and Devadatta, and my son Rahula all followed me, left the household, and practiced the way. If I had not allowed Sunakshatra to leave the household, he would have succeeded to his father’s throne. Using his authority, he would have destroyed buddha dharma. For this reason, I permitted him to leave the household and practice the way.

Good disciple, if Sunakshatra had not left the household, he would have lost his wholesome roots and would have received no benefit in the uncountable lifetimes. As he has left the household, even if he has lost his wholesome roots now, if he maintains the precepts, venerates and makes offerings to old, senior, and virtuous ones, and practices the first to fourth stages of meditation, these will be wholesome causes. Wholesome causes give rise to wholesome dharma. If wholesome dharma rises, the way is practiced. If the way is practiced, unsurpassable, complete enlightenment is attained. That is why I allowed Sunakshatra to leave the household.

Good disciple, if I hadn’t allowed Sunakshatra to leave the household and receive the precepts, people would not be able to call me the Tathagata who embodies the ten powers.

Good disciple, the Buddha observes the wholesome and unwholesome potential sentient beings carry with them. Although they have these two types of potential, some of them quickly cut off all wholesome roots and maintain unwholesome roots. Why so? Because such people do not associate with wholesome friends, do not listen to the true dharma, do not think of wholesome things, and do not act according to dharma. For this reason, they lose wholesome roots and maintain unwholesome roots.

From this, know that although the Tathagata, the World-honored One, clearly knows that some sentient beings are going to lose their wholesome roots, he allows them to leave the household for the sake of giving them wholesome causes. This is great compassion. Losing wholesome roots is caused by not associating with wholesome friends, not listening to the true dharma, not thinking of wholesome things, and not acting according to dharma. Students nowadays should always associate with wholesome friends. Wholesome friends say that there are buddhas and teach that there are crimes and beneficial activities. Those who do not deny cause and effect are wholesome friends and wholesome teachers. What is explained by these people is the true dharma. To think of this principle is wholesome thinking. To act in this way is wholesome action.

This being so, encourage sentient beings to leave the household and receive the precepts whether you are close to them or not. Do not reflect on their future relapsing or not. Do not worry about their practicing or not. This is indeed the true dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Buddha said to the monks, “Know that King Yama [Judge of Hell] said, ‘When can I be liberated from this suffering, attain a human body, leave the household, shave off my hair, wear the three dharma robes, and practice the way as a home leaver?’ Even King Yama makes his wish in this way. Then, why should you not? You already have attained human bodies and have become monks. This being so, monks, be mindful of the practice of the body, speech, and mind, and do not be negligent. Put an end to the five delusions and practice the five roots. Such monks can keep practicing the way.”

Hearing these words of the Buddha, all monks rejoiced and followed his teaching.

From this, we clearly know that even King Yama looks for birth in the human world. Those who are already born as humans should quickly shave off their hair, put on three dharma robes, and practice the buddha way. This is a merit of being in the human world more excellent than that in other paths. Therefore, although being born as a human, it is utmost foolishness to greedily pursue the path of worldly, official realms, passing the whole of life in a dream as a servant of kings and ministers, while going toward darkness in the future and having no place to rely upon.

You have not only received a human body which is rare to achieve, but you also have encountered buddha dharma which is rarer to encounter. Quickly abandon all relations, leave the household, and practice the way. You can always encounter kings, ministers, and family members. On the other hand, buddha dharma is as difficult to encounter as an udumbhala blossom.

When impermanence arrives with no time, none of the kings, ministers, intimate friends, servants, family members, or rare treasures can help you. You go to the Yellow Spring [the under world of the dead] by yourself. The only things that accompany you are wholesome and unwholesome karmas. Also, when you are about to lose your human body, you will probably have a deep desire to maintain your human body. If so, while you have your human body, leave the household as soon as possible. This is indeed the true dharma of all buddhas in the past, present, and future.

There are four types of practice for home leavers, called the four dependences. They are: sitting under trees for a lifetime, wearing a robe of excrement-cleaning cloths for a lifetime, begging food for a lifetime, and taking medicine made of urine and
excrement in case of sickness for a lifetime. If you conduct these practices, you are regarded a monk. If you don’t, you are not regarded as a monk. Thus, these are the practices of home leavers.

What has been authentically transmitted until now by buddha ancestors from India and China are these practices of home leavers. If you do not leave the monastery for a lifetime, these four dependences are practiced. Know that contradicting this and creating five dependences [as Devadatta did] is a wrong practice. Who would receive them with trust? Who would have patience to listen to such teaching? What has been authentically transmitted by buddha ancestors [as the four dependences] is the true dharma. Humans who leave the household according to these four dependences are the most auspicious, unsurpassable and most venerable.

Thus, in India, Nanda, Ananda, Devadatta, Amiruddha, Mahanaman, and Bhadrika are all grandchildren of King Simhahanu, noblest of all nobles. They left the household in early times. They are excellent examples for later generations. Now, those who are not nobles should not spare their positions. What positions are spared by those who are not princes? Turning what is most venerable in the Jambudvipa World into what is most venerable in the entire three realms is home leaving. Kings of other small nations and citizens of Licchavi Nation groundlessly spare what should not be spared, are proud of what they should not be proud of, remain in what should not be remained in, and so they do not leave the household. Who should not regard them as worthless? Who should not regard them as foolish?

Venerable Rahula was the son of the Bodhisattva [the one to become Shakyamuni Buddha] and a grandson of King Shudhhodana. The king wanted to pass on the throne to Rahula. But rather, the World-honored One encouraged him to leave the household. Thus, know that home leaving is the most venerable dharma. As the World-honored One ‘s primary disciple with thorough practice and being the field of benefaction for sentient beings, Rahula still abides in this world, not having entered nirvana.

Among the ancestors who transmitted the treasury of the true dharma eye in India, there are a number of princes who left the household. Bodhidharma, the First Ancestor of China, was the third prince of the king of the Xiangzhi Kingdom. Not regarding kingship as weighty, Bodhidharma transmitted authentic dharma to China.

Know clearly that home leaving is most precious. Although you need to leave the household quickly, how can you wait for tomorrow, while leading a life that is not close to the lives of these princes? Your exhale will not wait for your inhale. It is wise to leave the household as soon as possible. Also know that the benefaction of your teacher at the time of your home leaving and receiving the precepts equals that of your father and mother.

The Guidelines for Zen Monasteries says in its first chapter:

It is taught that all buddhas in the past, present, and future have left the household and attained the way. The twenty-eight ancestors in India and the six early ancestors in China transmitted the buddha mind seal. They all were monks. They strictly observed the pure precepts and were models over the three realms. This being so, those who practice Zen and inquire about the way make the precepts a priority. How can you attain buddhahood and become an ancestor if you do not stay away from fault and prevent wrongdoing?

Even a monastery of the declining age is a fragrant forest of gardenia bush that cannot be compared with ordinary trees or grass. Its community is like milk mixed with water. When you use milk, use milk that is mixed with water. Do not use anything else. In this way, the authentic transmission of it is taught that all buddhas in the past, present, and future have left the household and attained the way is most precious. There are no buddhas in the past, present, and future who have not left the household. This is the unsurpassable enlightenment of the treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous heart of nirvana, authentically transmitted by buddhas and ancestors.

A day during the summer practice period, the seventh year of the Kencho Era [1255]. [copied by Ejo]
Writings on Monastic Precepts and Leaving Home
by Eihei Dogen Zenji

monastic precepts:

Question: Should those who are entirely engaged in zazen strictly follow the precepts? Answer: Keeping the precepts (kai) and pure conduct (bongyo - brahmacharya) is the rule of the Zen Gate and the teaching of Buddhas and ancestors.

SBGZ Bendowa

(Quoting Master Nagarjuna in Daichidoron): Someone asked, "With the lay precepts (kokkekai - staying home precepts), we are able to be born in the heavens above, to attain the bodhisattva way, and to attain nirvana. Why then is it necessary to rely on the homeleaver precepts (shukkekai - leaving home precepts)?" I replied, "Although both (lay people and monks) can attain salvation, still there is difficulty and ease. Lay people's livelihoods have all sorts of jobs and duties; if they want to concentrate their minds on the truth and the Dharma, their trade will deteriorate, and if they concentrate on practicing their trade, matters pertaining to the truth will deteriorate...Further, home life, being disorderly and noisy, with many jobs and many duties, is the root of hindrances and the seat of many sins. It is called 'very difficult.'...Ones clothed in white (lay people) should leave home and receive complete precepts (gusokukai)."...In India and China, as monks or as laypeople, bodhisattvas and ancestral masters have been many, but none has equaled the ancestral Master Nagarjuna.

SBGZ Shukke Kudoku

(Quoting Zen'en Shingi, fascicle 1): The Buddhas of the three times all say that to leave home is to realize the Way. The twenty-eight Indian ancestors and the ancestors of Tang China who transmitted the Buddha-mind-seal were all shramanas. Perhaps it was by strictly observing the vinaya (bini) that they were able to become universal models for the triple world. Therefore, in practicing zen and inquiring into the truth, the precepts and vinaya (kairitsu) are foremost.

SBGZ Shukke Kudoku, Shukke, Jukai

The first of the three Collective Pure Precepts: the Precept of Embracing and Sustaining Vinaya Manners (sho ritsu gi kai)

SBGZ Jukai, Kyojukaimon

Human beings, celestial beings, and dragons, even if only for one period of ninety days, should become bhikshus and bhikshunis and practice the retreat; this will be to meet Buddha at once.

SBGZ Ango

Nyojo said (to Dogen), "Although Ko at Yakusan, being just a novice (shramanera / shami), did not receive complete bhikshu precepts (biku gusokukai), you should not imagine that he did not receive Buddha ancestors' correctly transmitted precepts. He wore the Buddha robe and used the Buddha bowl; he was a true bodhisattva. When monks are seated in assembly, their seniority should follow the order of receiving the bodhisattva precepts, not that of receiving the novice or bhikshu precepts. This tradition of bodhisattva precept transmission is the correct one."

Hokyoki

Tanka Ten-nen and Shramanera Ko of Yakusan (two Chinese practitioners who, according to the Keitoku Dentoroku, received the bodhisattva precepts but not the 250 bhikshu precepts) have received and kept (the bodhisattva precepts). There have been ancestral masters who did not receive the bhikshu precepts but there has never been an ancestral master who failed to receive the bodhisattva precepts authentically transmitted by the Buddhas and ancestors.

SBGZ Jukai

The flotsam of recent times have said that we should not distinguish between sravakas and bodhisattvas. Contending that we should rely upon the dignified manners and the precepts and vinaya (yuigi kairitsu) of each of the two, they judge the dignified manners and behavior which are the rule for a bodhisattva of the great vehicle, by the rules of a shravaka of the small vehicle. Shakyamuni Buddha says, "A shravaka's keeping of the precepts (kai) is a bodhisattva's violation of the precepts." So the shravaka precepts that shravakas have considered to be keeping of the precepts, when viewed against the bodhisattva precepts, are all violations of the precepts. The other (practices) - concentration and wisdom - are also like this.

SBGZ Sanjushichi Bon Bodai Bunpo

Decorum in the study hall should respect the precepts of the Buddhas and ancestors, follow the deportment of the great and small vehicles, and match the Hyakujo Shingi. The Zen'en Shingi says, "All matters, whether large or small, should be in accordance with regulations." Therefore you should study the Brahmajala Sutra, the Jewel Ornament Sutra, and also the Great Bhikshu Three Thousand Dignified Manners Sutra (a vinaya text translated by An Shigao in the 2nd century - 3000 refers to 250 precepts of the Four Part Vinaya times four (walking, standing, sitting, lying) times three (past, present, future)).

Shuryo Shingi

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A Buddha ancestor said, "Even if you arouse the mind of a leprous wild fox, never practice the self-regulation of the two vehicles." (from Zhiyi’s Maka Shikan) The two vehicles refer to such as the school of the Four-Part Vinaya, and the Abhidharma Kosha School, which have spread in the world these days...Someone asked Hyakujo, "The Yogacharabhumi Shastra and the Jewel Ornament Sutra contain the Mahayana precepts. Why don’t you practice according to them?" Hyakujo said, "What I take as essential is not limited to the great or small vehicles, and does not differ from the great or small vehicles. I condense and combine the extensive scope (of regulations) to establish standards for appropriate conduct." Hyakujo said it this way, but Eihei is certainly not like this. It is not the case that it is not limited to the great or small vehicles, or not different from the great or small vehicles. What is this small vehicle? The affairs of the donkey are not complete. What is this great vehicle? The affairs of the horse have already arrived. Not the extensive scope means the extremely great is the same as the small. Not condensed means the extremely small is the same as the great. I do not combine, but gallop over and drop away great and small. Already having accomplished this, how shall we go beyond? After a pause (Dogen) said: When healthy and energetic we do zazen without falling asleep. When hungry we eat rice, and know we are fully satisfied.

Eihei Koroku 5.390

(You) should maintain the precepts and eating regulations (kaigyojisai – precepts and continuous practice of the fast). Still, it is wrong to insist upon them as essential, establish them as a practice, and expect to be able to gain the Way by observing them. We follow them just because they are the activities of patched-robe monks and the lifestyle of the Buddha's children. Although keeping them is good, we should not take them as the primary practice. I don't mean to say, however, that you should break the precepts and become self-indulgent. Clinging to such an attitude is an evil view and not that of a Buddhist practitioner. We follow the precepts and regulations simply because they form the standard for a Buddhist and are the tradition of Zen monasteries (sorin no kafu).

SBGZ-Zuimonki

(from the Zen'en Shingi, a Chinese monastic regulations text for the Zen School, frequently quoted by Dogen Zenji in SBGZ and Eihei Shingi): After a monk has received the precepts, he must always uphold them. A monk would rather die than live without the precepts. Such is the small vehicle Four-Part Vinaya: four defeat, thirteen formal meeting, two undetermined, thirty forfeiture, ninety expiation, four confessed, one hundred learnings, and seven methods for disputes (250 precepts). The great vehicle Brahmajala Sutra includes 10 major and 48 minor offenses. Every monk must study them and (be able to) chant them fluently. He must know what to obey and what constitutes an offense, when exceptions can or cannot be made. He must follow only the Golden Mouth and the Holy Words (Buddha's teaching), not commonplace people.

leaving home:

Clearly know, the Buddhas' and ancestors' realization of the truth is nothing other than leaving home (shukke) and receiving the precepts (kai). The life-blood of the Buddhas and ancestors is nothing other than their leaving home and receiving the precepts. Someone who has not left home is never a Buddha ancestor. To see the Buddhas and ancestors is to leave home and receive the precepts...This leaving home itself causes innumerable sentient beings not to regress or to stray from the supreme state of bodhi. Remember, the situation in which self-benefit and benefiting others become perfectly satisfied at this place and there is neither regression nor straying from anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, is leaving home and receiving the precepts.

SBGZ Shukke

In the time of the present Buddha Shakyamuni, Rahulā, Ananda, and so on, all left home. Further there are the thousand Shakyas leaving home, and the twenty thousand Shakyas leaving home; we should call these excellent examples. From the five bhikshus who left home at the beginning to Subhadra who left home at the end, (all) people who devoted themselves to the Buddha immediately left home. Remember, its merit is immeasurable... Remember, leaving home and receiving ordination (jugu - receiving complete precepts) are the Dharma of the past Buddhas...While this human body in Jambudvipa has still not disappeared, we should, without fail, leave home and receive the precepts.

SBGZ Shukke Kudoku

The actions of a monk (so) are beyond the great vehicle and beyond the small vehicle. There are Buddha-monks, bodhisattva-monks, shravaka-monks, and so on. None has succeeded to the right action of the Buddha-Dharma, and none has received the authentic transmission of the great truth of the Buddha-Dharma, without leaving home...How can people who are not able to leave home succeed to the position of a Buddha?

SBGZ Sanjushichi Bon Bodai Bunpo

If you have a home, leave your home. If you have beloved ones, leave them. If you have fame, abandon it. If you have gain, escape from it. If you have fields, get rid of them. If you have relatives, separate from them… It is not that buddha ancestors lacked family obligations and attachments, but they abandoned them. It is not that buddha ancestors were not bound by relationships, but they let them go.

SBGZ Gyoji I
Students of the Way, do not worry about food and clothing. Just maintain the Buddha’s precepts and do not engage in worldly affairs. The Buddha said to use abandoned rags for clothing and beg for food. In what age will these two things ever be exhausted? Do not forget the swiftness of impermanence nor be disturbed vainly by worldly affairs. As long as your dewlike human life lasts, think exclusively of the Buddha-Way and do not be concerned with other things.

Someone asked, “Although fame and profit are difficult to give up, since pursuing them is a great obstruction to practicing the Way, they should be abandoned. Hence, I gave them up. Although clothing and food are minor things, they are big matters for practitioners. Wearing clothes made of abandoned rags and begging for food are the practices of superior people. Moreover, that has been the custom in India. The monasteries in China have permanent property belonging to the community, so they do not need to worry about such things. However, the temples in this country have no such property and the practice of begging has not been transmitted at all. What should inferior people like me who cannot endure such practice do? If someone like me tries to gather alms from lay believers, he will be committing a sin by receiving a donation without having virtue. Earning one’s living as a farmer, merchant, warrior, or craftsman is an improper way of life for a monk. And, if I leave everything to fate, I will remain very poor as a result of inferior karma. When I suffer from hunger or am benumbed by the cold, I will be troubled and my practice will be hindered.

Someone advised me saying, ‘Your way of practice is extreme. You don’t understand this age and do not reflect upon your capability. Our nature is inferior and this is the degenerate-age. If you continue to practice in such a way, it will become a cause of backsliding from the Way. Seek the support of some patron, take care of your body by living in a quiet place without worrying about food or clothing, and practice the Buddha Way peacefully. This is not greed for property or belongings. You should practice after having provided for your temporal means of livelihood.’

Although I listened to his advice, I do not yet believe it. How should we consider these things?”

Dogen replied, “Just study carefully the conduct of Zen monks, along with the lifestyle of the buddhas and patriarchs. Although the customs of the three countries are different, those who truly study the Way have never practiced in the manner you have described. Just do not be attached to worldly affairs but study the Way in a straightforward manner.”

The Buddha said, “Do not keep anything except robes and a bowl. Give away any extra food you have received through begging to hungry living beings.”

Do not store up even what you have been given, nor run around searching for things. In a non-Buddhist text it is said that if we learn the Way in the morning we should not mind dying in the evening. Even if we might die of cold or starvation, we should follow the Buddha’s teaching if only for one day or one hour.

In ten thousand kalpas and thousands of lives, how many times are we born and how many times do we die? This cycle of lives is samsara, caused only by blind clinging to worldly affairs. To die of starvation following the Buddha’s teachings for this one life brings about eternal peace and joy (Nirvana). Moreover, I have never read in the collection of all the Buddhist sutras of a single buddha or patriarch who transmitted the dharma in the three countries, dying of starvation or cold. In this world, inherently each person receives a certain amount of food and clothing as a gift. It does not come by being sought after nor does it stop coming by not seeking after it. Just leave it to fate and do not worry about it. If you refrain from arousing bodhi-mind in this life, excusing yourself on the grounds that this is the degenerate-age, in what life will it be possible to attain the Way?

Even if you are not as superior as Subhuti or Mahakashapa, you should practice to your fullest capability. In a non-Buddhist text it is said that a man who loves women will do so even though they might not be as beautiful as Mosho or Seishi (Xi-shi), and that a person who admires horses will do likewise even if they are not as great as Hito or Rokuji. One who likes the taste
(of food) will like (whatever it might be), regardless of whether or not it is as delicious as dragon’s liver or phoenix marrow. We simply have to use as much wisdom as we possess. Even laymen have this attitude. Buddhist practitioners must be like this.

Moreover, the Buddha offered twenty years of his life to us living in this degenerate-age. Consequently, the offerings and support by human and heavenly beings to the monasteries in this world have not ceased. Though the Tathagata had mighty powers and virtues and was able to use them at will, he spent a summer practice period eating wheat used for horse fodder. How can his disciples today help but look up to this (example)?

Someone asked, “Rather than meaninglessly receive the offerings of human or heavenly beings while breaking the precepts, or wastefully spend the legacy of the Tathagata without arousing bodhi-mind, wouldn’t it be better to live as a layman, engaging in ordinary jobs, keeping oneself alive to continue the practice of the Way?”

Dogen replied, “Who said to break the precepts or be without bodhi-mind? You have to force yourself to arouse bodhi-mind and practice the buddha-dharma. Moreover, it is said that the legacy of the Tathagata is equally given without concern as to whether one maintains the precepts or breaks them; regardless of whether one is a beginner or an advanced practitioner. Nowhere is it written that you have to return to the mundane life or stop practicing, because you have broken the precepts or lack bodhi-mind. Who has such bodhi-mind from the beginning? Arousing what is difficult to arouse, practicing what is difficult to practice…in this way, you will naturally progress in the buddha-dharma. Each one of us has buddha-nature. Do not meaninglessly deprecate yourself.

“Also, in Monzen, it is written, ‘Prosperity of the country is brought about by a single wise man. The way of the ancients dies out because of a later fool.’ This means that if a single man of wisdom appears, the country will flourish, and if a single fool appears, the way of the ancients will disappear.

Consider this well.”

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In an evening talk Dogen said,

During the reign of Taiso of the To dynasty, Gicho, one of the ministers, remarked to the emperor, “Some people are slandering your Majesty.” The emperor replied, “As a sovereign, if I have virtue, I am not afraid of being slandered by people. I’m more afraid of being praised despite the lack of it.”

[Here is an example of how] even a lay person had such an attitude. Monks should, first of all, maintain this attitude. If you have compassion and bodhi-mind, you need not worry about being defamed by ignorant people. You have to be very careful of being thought of as a man of the Way despite having no bodhi-mind.

Dogen also related,

Buntei of the Zui dynasty said to himself, “I must nurture virtue secretly and wait until I have matured.”

What he meant was to practice virtue, wait until he himself had matured, and then, govern the people with benevolence. As a monk, if you have not yet aroused this spirit, you should be cautious. Only if you practice the Way inwardly, will the virtue of the Way naturally manifest itself outwardly. Without expectation or desire to be known by people, if you just follow the teachings of the Buddha or the Way of the patriarchs, people will believe in the virtue of the Way of their own accord.

There is a trap for students here; [others as well as oneself] may believe that being respected by other people and amassing a large amount of property is a manifestation of the virtue of the Way. You must realize in your heart that to believe such a thing is to be possessed by demons. Be most careful about this. In a certain scripture, this is called the ‘deeds of demons’. Considering the examples of the three countries (India, China, and Japan), I have never heard that being rich and revered by ignorant people was a manifestation of the virtue of the Way. Since ancient times, all people with bodhi-mind have been poor, endured physical pain, wasted nothing, were compassionate, and led by the Way. These people have been called true practitioners.

Manifesting virtue does not mean having an abundance of material wealth, nor being proud of receiving large offerings.
There are three steps in the manifestation of virtue. Firstly, it becomes known that the person is practicing the Way. Next, people who aspire to the Way come to that person. And lastly, people learn the Way and practice with him in the same way. This is called the manifestation of the virtue of the Way.

In an evening talk, Dogen said,

The late Sojo Eisai often admonished, “Monks, do not think that I give you the clothing, food, and other provisions you use. They are all offered by various heavenly beings. I merely play the role of distributor. Also, each one of you is fully endowed with the necessities for your lifetime. Do not run around seeking after them. Do not think that I feed you or that you have to be grateful to me.” I think these are most admirable words.

Also, in great Song China, when the assembly was under the direction of Zen Master Wanshi, Tendo Monastery had enough provisions for one thousand people. Thus, seven hundred people inside the sodo and three hundred people outside the sodo could be fed. However, due to the excellence of the master, many monks gathered like clouds from all over the country. There were one thousand people inside the sodo and five or six hundred people outside.

One of the officers remarked to Wanshi, “The temple provisions are sufficient for only one thousand people. We do not have enough food for everyone staying here. Please take this into special consideration and send the extra monks away.”

Wanshi replied to him, “Each one of them has his own mouth. It is not your business. Do not worry about it.”

I believe that everyone has a certain amount of food and clothing granted from birth. It does not come about by worrying over it, nor will it cease to come by not seeking it. Even lay people leave such things to fate; being concerned with loyalty and filial piety. How much more should monks who have left home be unconcerned with trivial matters [besides practice]. We have the fortune given to us by Shakyamuni; we also have the food and clothing offered by the deities. Moreover, we have the natural share of life we were allotted when we were born. Without chasing after it or worrying over it, we are sure to receive as much as we need. Even if we chase after and secure a great fortune, what will happen to it when impermanence suddenly comes? Therefore, students must not be concerned with extra matters. Simply practice the Way wholeheartedly.

Also, someone said, “We are living in the last-period (of the dharma), and ours is a country remote from the Buddha’s land. The buddha-dharma can flourish here and its benefit spread widely only by living at ease in a quiet hermitage without worrying about food and clothing coming from lay supporters, and by practicing the Buddha-way only after being sufficiently provided for.” Now, as I think about this, it is not so.

When people gather together to study who are only able to see the form [of things] and who cling to their egos, surely not a single one among them will arouse bodhi-mind. Even if a thousand or ten thousand people who were attached to profit and indulging, only in their desire for possessions were to gather together, it would be worse than if no one were to come. This is because only the karma which causes falling into the evil realms of samsara (hell, the realm of insatiable spirits and animals) would accumulate naturally of itself and there would be no aspiration [to practice] the buddha-dharma. If we remain pure and poor and practice the Way while enduring hardship in begging for food, eating wild nuts or fruit, and enduring hunger, a single person hearing about us and coming to practice will be one possessing true bodhi-mind. I think this is the way the buddha-dharma can truly flourish. To have no [disciples] because of hardship or pure poverty and to have many people gather together because of abundant food and clothing while lacking the buddha-dharma is six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Dogen also said,

Most people today mistakenly think that constructing buddha-images and building stupas helps the buddha-dharma flourish. Even though we might erect huge temples adorned with polished jewels and gold, we cannot attain the Way by these works. This is nothing more than merit for lay people enabling their wealth to enter into the world of the buddha and allowing people to do good. Although they might receive a great result from a small cause, for monks to be involved in such things has nothing to do with the flourishing of the buddha-dharma. To learn even a single phrase of the dharma-gate (teaching) or to practice zazen even for a single period while living in a thatched hut or under a tree shows the true flourishing of the buddha-dharma.

At present I am appealing for donations and working as much as possible to construct a sodo. Still, I do not think that this necessarily contributes to the flourishing of the buddha-dharma. Only because there are few people who are studying the Way
right now and because I am spending my days leisurely, do I think it better to engage in these activities than be idle. I hope this
will enable deluded people to form a connection with the buddha-dharma. Moreover, I am working on this project for the sake
of founding a *dojo* for zazen practice for people studying the Way in this age. I will have no regrets even though what I have
wished for and begun might not be realized. I do not mind if but one single pillar is erected as long as people in later
generations think that someone had the aspiration to carry out such a project.

3-4

In an evening talk Dogen said,

Students of the Way should be thoroughly poor. When we look at people in the secular world, men of property inevitably have
two kinds of troubles; anger and dishonor. If they have some treasure, others wish to steal it, and when they try to protect it
anger immediately arises. Or in talking about some matter, argument and negotiation eventually escalate to conflict and
fighting. Proceeding in this way anger will arise and result in dishonor. Being poor and unselfish, releases people from these
problems and they find peace. Proof is right in front of our eyes. We don’t need to search for it in the scriptures. Not only that,
ancient sages and wise predecessors criticized being wealthy, and heavenly deities, buddhas, and patriarchs have all denounced
it. Nevertheless, foolish people accumulate wealth and bear so much anger; this is the shame of shames. Our wise predecessors,
ancient sages, buddhas, and patriarchs have all been poor yet aspired to the Way.

These days the decay of the buddha-dharma is occurring right before our eyes. From the time I first entered Kenninji
Monastery, over a period of seven or eight years I saw many changes gradually taking place. They had built storerooms in each
temple building, each person having his own utensils. Many became fond of fine clothing, stored up personal possessions, and
indulged in idle talk. No one cared about the forms of greeting one another nor about prostrating before the Buddha. Looking at
these things, I can imagine what other places must be like.

A person of the buddha-dharma should not possess any treasure or property other than robes and a bowl. What is the need for a
closet? You should not own things which have to be hidden from others. You try to hide things because you are afraid of
thieves; if you abandon them you will be that much more at ease. When you don’t want to be killed even though you have to
kill, your body suffers and your mind is anxious. However, if you make up your mind not to retaliate, even if someone tries to
kill you, you will not need to be careful or worry about thieves. You will never fail to be at ease.

3-7

Also, Dogen instructed,

Zen monks should always bear in mind maintaining the way of practice of the buddhas and patriarchs.

First of all, do not covet property. The depth of the compassion of the Tathagata cannot be fathomed even by analogies.
Everything he did was for the sake of all living beings. He never did even the slightest thing which was not beneficial to living
beings. Since he was the crown prince of the *cakravarti-raja* (wheel-turning king), he could have ascended the throne and ruled
the whole world as he liked. He could have cared for his disciples with treasures and raised them with his wealth. Why did he
give up such a position and practice begging by himself? He refused to store up wealth and practiced begging for food because
it was more beneficial for living beings in later generations and for his disciples in practicing the Way.

Since then all well known patriarchs in India and China have lived in extreme poverty and practiced begging for food. All the
patriarchs in our lineage have solely encouraged not accumulating wealth. Also, in the teaching-schools when people praise our
school they primarily praise our [attitude toward] poverty. In the books handed down to this age as well, the poverty [of Zen
monks] has been recorded and praised. I’ve never heard of anyone who was rich in material wealth who also carried out the
buddha-dharma. All sincere practitioners of the buddha-dharma have worn patched rags and have always begged for food. The
reason the Zen School was considered good and Zen monks different from others was that when Zen monks first lived among
others in the temple buildings of the teaching or the precept-schools, they abandoned caring for their bodies and lived in
poverty. We should remember this as the primary style of practice in this (Zen) school.

[Not clinging to wealth] is not something we should look for written proof of in the holy scriptures. In my own case, I used to
own land for farming as well as other property. I had my own wealth as well. Comparing the conditions of my body and mind
then with my present condition of poverty, of barely possessing robes and bowls, I feel that my state of mind [my life] right
now is better. This is the actual proof.
Dogen also said,

Now if you wish to practice the Way of the buddhas and patriarchs, you should practice the Way of the previous sages and emulate the conduct of the patriarchs with no (expectation of) profit; expect nothing, seek nothing, gain nothing.

One day a monk came and asked about what to be careful of in learning the Way. Dogen replied,

“First of all, a person studying the Way should be poor. If you possess great wealth, you will definitely lose aspiration.

If a lay person learning the Way still clings to wealth, covets comfortable housing, and keeps company with relatives, despite having the aspiration he will confront many obstacles in learning the Way.

Although many lay people have learned the dharma since ancient times, even those who were known as good practitioners were no match for monks. Since monks do not possess any property except for three robes and one bowl, never worry about where to live, and are not greedy for food and clothing, they will obtain benefit as long as they devote themselves to learning the Way according to their capacity. This is because being poor is being intimate with the Way.

Hoon was a layman but he was not inferior to the monks; his name has remained among Zen practitioners. When he began to learn Zen, he took all his family possessions and was about to throw them into the sea. People tried to dissuade him by saying, “You should give them to others or use them for the sake of Buddhism.”

He replied to them, “I am throwing them away because I think they are harmful. Since I know them to be harmful, how can I give them to others? Wealth is poison which sickens both body and mind.”

In the end, he threw them into the sea.

After that, he made bamboo baskets and sold them to earn his living. Though he was a layman, because he abandoned his wealth, people thought he was a good person. So much more should a monk completely give up wealth.

A monk said,

“In the monasteries in China, since there are provisions belonging to the sangha which comprise the permanent property of the temple and are used to support the monks’ practice, the monks need not worry about their livelihood. Because there are no such things in this country, abandoning all possessions will become an obstacle to practicing the Way. I think it is a good idea to have people who offer clothing and food to support our practice. What do you think?”

Dogen replied,

“I disagree. Unlike in China, sometimes people in this country support monks beyond reason and offer things beyond their means. I don’t know about others, but I have experienced this and found this to be true. I have spent more than ten years without any possessions and I have never worried about how to obtain them. To think of accumulating even a little bit of wealth is a great obstacle. Without thinking of how to gain or store up things you will naturally receive as much as you need to stay alive for a while. Each person has his allotted share; heaven and earth bestow it on us. Even though you don’t run around seeking it, you will receive it without fail.

Needless to say, children of the Buddha will receive the legacy of the Tathagata, they will obtain it without seeking it. These things will naturally be there only if you abandon everything and practice the Way. This is clear proof.”

Dogen instructed,
When Zen Master Hoe of Mt. Yogi first became the abbot, the temple was dilapidated and the monks were troubled. Therefore, an officer said it should be repaired. The master said, “Even though the building is broken down, it is certainly a better place for practicing zazen than on the ground or under a tree. If one section is broken and leaks, we should move where there are no leaks to practice zazen. If monks could attain enlightenment by building a hall, we should construct one of gold and jewels. Enlightenment does not depend on whether the building is good or bad; it depends only upon our diligence in zazen.”

The next day, in a formal speech he said, “I have now become the abbot of Yogi, and the roof and walls have many cracks and holes. The whole floor is covered with pearls of snow, the monks hunch their shoulders from the cold, and sigh in the darkness.” After a pause he continued, “It reminds me of the ancient sages sitting under the trees.”

Not only in the Buddha-Way, some have this same attitude in (the way of) politics. Emperor Taiso of the To dynasty did not build a new palace.

Ryuge said, “To study the Way, first of all, you learn poverty. After having learned poverty and become poor, you will be intimate with the Way.” From the time of Shakyamuni, up to the present day, I have never seen or heard of a true student of the Way who possessed great wealth.

4-15

One day a visiting monk asked,

“These days, the way of retreating from the world is to prepare food and other necessities for oneself beforehand so as not to have to worry about them later. This is a trivial matter, yet it supports the practice of the Way. If it is lacking, our practice will be disturbed. According to what I have heard about how you practice, you make no such preparation and leave everything to fate. If this is really so, you will have trouble later on, won’t you? What do you think?”

Dogen replied,

“Everything (I do) has precedents. I don’t rely on my personal views. All the buddhas and patriarchs in India and China lived in this way. The blessings of the ‘White Hair’ will never be exhausted. Why should we take personal plans for our livelihood? Besides, it is impossible to know what will happen tomorrow. This is not my personal opinion but what all the buddhas and patriarchs have carried out. If we run out of food and have nothing to eat, only then should we look for a means (to gain something). We should not think about these things in advance.”

5-21

Dogen instructed,

Do not make arrangements in advance for obtaining food and clothing. Only when you run out of food and have nothing to cook, should you beg for food. Even planning ahead regarding who to ask for what you need is the same as storing food. This is evil food gained by improper means.

A Zen monk should be like a cloud with no fixed abode, like flowing water with nothing to rely on. Such is called a monk.

Though possessing nothing except robes and a bowl, if you rely on some patron or close relative, you and they are both bound to each other, so the food becomes impure. It is impossible to realize the pure and great dharma of the buddhas with a body and mind fed and maintained by impure food. Just as cloth dyed with indigo becomes indigo-blue, and cloth dyed with kihada (Chinese cork tree) becomes yellow, a body and mind dyed with food gained by improper means becomes a body of impure-life. Desiring to attain the buddha-dharma with such a body and mind is like pressing sand to get oil.

Just handle everything in accordance with the Way in each situation. To plan in advance goes entirely against the Way. You should consider this very carefully.

5-22

Dogen instructed,
Students must know that every human being has great faults. Among them, arrogance is the worst. Arrogance is equally admonished against in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts. In a non-Buddhist text, it is written, “There are some who are poor but do not flatter. However, there are none who are rich but not arrogant.” The text admonishes us not to become arrogant even though we might be rich. As this is a most important matter, give it careful consideration.

If you are of humble birth and compete with people who belong to the upper class hoping to surpass them, this is a typical (example of) arrogance. However, this is easy to watch out for.

In the secular world, relatives gather around but do not criticize those who are wealthy and blessed. Since a rich person takes it as a matter of course, he becomes arrogant, and the poor people around him become envious and resentful. How can such a person prevent himself from increasing the suffering and resentment of others? It is difficult to caution this sort of person, and it is hard, for the person himself too, to practice self-restraint.

Even when the person does not intend to be arrogant, if he does what he wants, humble people around him feel pain and resentment. To prevent this is called restraining arrogance. A person who enjoys his wealth as a reward, and pays no attention to the poor people who envy him is called an arrogant person.

In a non-Buddhist text it is written, “Do not pass in front of a poor (man’s) house riding in a chariot.” This means that even if you are able to ride in a vermilion chariot, don’t do it in front of poor people. Buddhist scriptures also admonish against this.

Nevertheless, students or priests today want to surpass others in intelligence and knowledge of the Buddhist teachings. Don’t be arrogant because of your wide knowledge. To speak of the faults of inferior people, or to blame mistakes on your senior or fellow practitioners is terrible arrogance.

An ancient person said, “It is not bad to be defeated in front of the wise, but do not win in front of the stupid.” When someone misunderstands what you know well, speaking ill of him is your own error.

When talking about the dharma, do not slander your predecessors or senior priests. Take careful consideration on this point, especially when ignorant and benighted people may become envious or jealous.

While I was staying at Kenninji, many people asked about the dharma. Among them, there were some strange opinions or mistaken views. However, I kept this deep in my heart; I only talked about the virtue of the dharma as it is, instead of criticizing the mistaken views of others. I avoided trouble in that way. A foolish person firmly attached to his own opinions always gets angry, saying that his virtuous predecessors have been slandered. The wise and sincere person realizes and reforms his own mistakes and those of his virtuous predecessors without having them pointed out by others, only if he understands the true meaning of the buddha-dharma. You should ponder this thoroughly.

6-3

Dogen instructed,

Students of the Way, you should not be greedy for food and clothing. Everyone has an allotted share of food and life. Though you might seek after more than your share, you will never be able to obtain it. Moreover, for us students of the Buddha-Way, there are offerings from donors. The food obtained from begging will not be exhausted. There will also be provisions belonging to the monastery. These are not the products of personal work. Fruits and berries, food gained from begging, and offerings from faithful believers are the three kinds of pure food. Food obtained from the four kinds of occupations, farming, commerce, soldiering, and craftmaking is all impure. This is not food permissible for monks.

Once there was a monk who died and went to the realm of the dead. King Yama said, “This person’s allotted life has not been exhausted yet. Let him go back.”

One of the officers of the realm of the dead said, “Although the life allotted him has not yet been exhausted, the food allotted him has already been consumed.”

The King said, “Then, let him eat lotus leaves.”
After the monk returned from the realm of the dead, he could not eat ordinary human food, so he maintained what remained of his life eating only lotus leaves.”

Therefore, the food allotted to monks who have left home, because of the power of learning the Buddha-Way, will not be exhausted. Not a single White Hair of the Buddha, nor the twenty-year legacy of the Buddha’s life will be exhausted, even if they are used forever. Devote yourself only to the practice of the Way, and do not seek after food and clothing.

In books on medicine, it is said that only if the body, blood, and flesh are well maintained, will the mind also become healthy. Even more so, in practicing the Way should you keep the precepts, make your life pure, and restrain yourself, following the activities of the buddhas and patriarchs. In doing so, your mind will also become tranquil.

Students of the Way, when you want to say something, reflect on it three times; if it is beneficial to both yourself and others, then say it. If it is not, remain silent. However, these things are difficult to carry out. Keep them in mind and educate yourself gradually.

6-4

In a talk on various subjects, Dogen instructed,

Students of the Way, do not worry about food and clothing. Although Japan is a small country, far removed (from the Buddha’s country), there are quite a few people who were famous as scholars of the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings, and who have become known to later generations. There are also many people who devote themselves to poetry, music, literature, and the martial arts. I have never heard of even one of them who had an abundance of food and clothing. They became known because they all endured poverty and forgot about other matters, so they could devote themselves completely to their own profession.

This is all the more true of people learning the Way in this tradition of the patriarchs. They have abandoned their occupations in society, and never seek after fame and profit. How could they become wealthy? Although this is the degenerate age, there are thousands of people in the monasteries in China who are learning the Way. There are some who came from remote districts or left their home provinces. In any case, although they never worry about their poverty, almost all of them are poor. Their only concern is that they have not yet attained the Way. Sitting either in a lofty building or under it, they practice [zazen] wholeheartedly as if they had lost their mother.

I personally met a monk from Shisen who had no possessions because he had come from a remote district. All he had was a few pieces of ink stick. They cost about two or three hundred mon in China, which is about twenty or thirty mon in Japan. He sold them, bought very low quality Chinese paper, and made an upper robe and lower robe with it. Whenever he stood up or sat down, he made strange noises, though he never paid any attention to it.

Someone said to him, “Go back home and bring some personal belongings and clothing.”

He replied, “My home is far away. I don’t want to waste time on the road home, and lose time to practice the Way.”

He practiced the Way all the more, without being concerned with cold weather. This is why many prominent people have appeared in China.

6-5

Dogen instructed,

I have heard that at the time of the founder of the monastery on Mt. Seppo, the temple was so poor they sometimes had no food to cook or sometimes had to eat green beans steamed with rice. They lived such a poor life while learning the Way. In later years there were never less than fifteen hundred monks staying at the monastery.

Ancient people practiced in such a way. Today, we should also be like this. This degeneration of monks is often caused by wealth and fame. In the time of the Buddha, Dévadatta aroused jealousy since he received daily offerings of five hundred cartloads of provisions. Wealth was harmful not only to himself, but made other people commit evil deeds. How can sincere
people who learn the Way become wealthy? Even if it is an offering made from pure faith, if it accumulates in abundance, you must see it as a debt and want to return it.

People in this country make donations for the sake of gaining personal profit. It is only natural in the human world to give more to people who approach with a flattering smile. However, if you do so to curry favor with others, it will surely become an obstacle to your practice of the Way. Just endure the hunger and the cold and devote yourself completely to the practice of the Way.

6-9

Dogen instructed,

In the ocean, there is a place called the Dragon-Gate, where vast waves rise incessantly. Without fail, all fish once having passed through this place become dragons. Thus, the place is called the Dragon-Gate.

The vast waves there are not different from those in any other place, and the water is also ordinary salt water. Despite that, mysteriously enough, when fish cross that place, they all become dragons. Their scales do not change and their bodies stay the same; however, they suddenly become dragons.

The way of Zen monks is also like this. Although it is not a special place, if you enter a sorin (monastery), without fail you will become a buddha or a patriarch. You eat meals and wear clothes as usual; thus you stave off hunger and keep off the cold just the same as other people do. Still, if you shave your head, put on a kesa, and eat gruel for breakfast and rice for lunch, you will immediately become a Zen monk. Do not seek afar to become a buddha or a patriarch. Becoming one who either passes through the Dragon Gate or not depends only on entering a sorin (monastery), just the same as the fish.

There is a saying in the secular world, “I sell gold, but no one will buy it.” The Way of the buddhas and patriarchs is also like this. It is not that they begrudge the Way; even though it is always being offered, no one will accept it. To attain the Way does not depend on whether you are inherently sharp or dull witted. Each one of us can be aware of the dharma. Slowness or quickness in attaining the Way depends on whether you are diligent or indolent. The difference between being diligent or indolent is caused by whether your aspiration is resolute or not. Lack of firm aspiration is caused by being unaware of impermanence. Ultimately speaking, we die moment by moment, not residing for even a little while. While you are alive, do not spend your time in vain.

There is an old saying, “A mouse in a storehouse starves for food. An ox plowing the field never eats his fill of grass.” This means that even though living in the midst of food, the mouse is starving; even though living in the midst of grass, the ox is short of grass. Human beings are also like this. Even though we are in the midst of the Buddha-Way, we are not living in accordance with the Way. Unless we cut off the desire for fame and profit, we cannot live in peace and joy (nirvana) throughout our lifetime.
Introduction from an article by David E. Riggs

Menzan is arguably the most influential, and certainly the most learned and prolific writer of the Sōtō reformers of his era. He grew up amid Sōtō priests who were strongly influenced by the Ōbaku School, but he never took their Dharmagupta Vinaya precepts and spent much of his life trying to eliminate Ōbaku influence which he regarded as deviations from Dōgen and hence improper for his vision of a reformed Sōtō school. Menzan presided over assemblies in which he lectured on the precepts and conferred the precepts upon hundreds of people who had assembled for that purpose. In his major work on the precepts, Busso shōden daikaiketsu 佛祖正傳大戒訣 (1724), Menzan asserted that the procedure which Dōgen received from Rujing was to administer the novice [shramanera] precepts (shamikai 沙灘戒), followed by the bodhisattva precepts, and that the full bhikshu precepts had never been in the lineage of Rujing. The precepts are also to be given a second time, with full explanation in the abbot’s room, when Dharma transmission is given. Menzan relied on the Busso shōden bosatsukai kyōju kaimon and the Busso shōden bosatsukai sahō as the source of the modern consensus on Dōgen’s precepts. Menzan also used, however, another more problematic text that he had previously collated from various manuscripts, the Eihei Soshi tokudo ryaku sahō 永平祖師得度略作法, also known as the Shukke ryaku sahō mon 出家略作法文 (translated here). In 1744 Menzan published this text as Dōgen’s instructions for ordination, but now it seems questionable that the text can be accepted as coming from Dōgen. It has a different series of precepts than the other texts mentioned above and there are several different extant manuscript versions with different content, none of them written earlier than the fifteenth century.

Menzan explained in his Tokudo wakumon that the novice precepts were a necessary part of the ordination of monks because the bodhisattva precepts were concerned with the mind of awakening, not with the rules of proper conduct for monks. It is also noteworthy that Menzan refers to Eisai for authority for his assertion of the importance of upholding (not just receiving) the precepts. He also addresses the problem of to what degree Dōgen is following the Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei. As Menzan and everyone else had come to recognize, Dōgen had not explicitly directed that the novice precepts should be taken. In the Shōbōgenzō “Jukai” chapter, Dōgen quoted the Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei for his authority, as usual, but he ignored in his commentary (even though he correctly quoted it) the part about taking the novice and full precepts. Dōgen’s extended discussion and detailed list of precepts is only concerned with the (now standard in the Sōtō School) set of sixteen precepts, inexplicably ignoring the other precepts in the passage he just quoted. Menzan’s position was that Dōgen assumed that no further detail was necessary and that the precepts would be taken as usual. This was soon contested by Gyakusui Tōryū 逆水洞流 (1684-1766) of Manzan Dōhaku’s lineage. In his Tokudo wakumon bengishō 得度或問辨儀章 (1755), he claimed that there was a transmission from Jakuen (who was Chinese) which included the novice precepts and that Menzan mistook this Jakuen lineage ceremony for Dōgen’s. In any event, unless further manuscripts come to light, the authenticity of this Eihei Soshi tokudo ryaku sahō edition is questionable, and on the basis of current evidence, it seems that in this case Menzan was following the general Buddhist tradition more closely than he was following Dōgen’s teachings.

1. Procedure for Shaving Head and Attaining Liberation [teido sahō 剃度作法]

Preparations [junbi 準備]

Ceremony takes place using either dharma hall [hatto 法堂] or abbot’s quarters [hōjō 方丈] as ritual site [bodhimanda 本行場]. In front [shōmen 正面], set up a buddha image [butsuzō 仏像] or ancestral portrait [soshin 祖頁] (if possible, one buddha and the two ancestors [ryōso 兩祖]), with offerings of incense, flowers, lamps, and candles [kōkatōshoku 香華灯燭]. Also, in adjacent room set up parental tablets [bumohai 父母牌] (not necessary if parents are present at ritual site; these tablets are not in Dōgen’s version of ceremony).

Next, place ordaining master’s [honshi 本師] sitting chair [za’i 坐椅] so it is to right [of images] when facing front and center [shōmen 正面]. Set up an offering table [takasu 卓子] (takajoku たかじょく) and place on it: flowers and candles [kashoku 華燭], hand-held censer [heiro 傘炉], water-sprinkling vessel [shasui 酒水器], precept clappers [kaishaku 戒尺], razor [kamisori 剃刀], ritual manual [shikihon 式本], and lineage certificate [kechimyaku 血脈] (this is not in Dōgen’s version of ceremony). Also, set up another table to (facing) right of sitting chair and place on it three robes [sanne 三衣],
wrapped in covering cloth {fukusa 袴子}. Also place on same table: nested bowls {hou 鋫盂} (oryoki {oryôki 応量器}), sitting cloth {zaku 坐具}, long robe {jikikotsu 直袈}, dharma name certificate {annyô 安名} (name to be given to person going forth from household life, written on a piece of paper).

**Entering Hall** (**nyûdô 入堂**)

When set time arrives, ring three sequences {san’e 三会} on hall bell {denshô 殿鐘}; monks of great assembly {daishu 大衆} enter hall {jôden 上殿}. Ordaining master {honshi 本師} advances before buddha {butsuzen 仏前} and burns incense {shókô 焼香}. All together make three prostrations {fudô sanpai 菩提三拜}, after which great assembly take seats {chakusa 著坐} on sitting cloths {gujô 被具}.

Ordaining master sits on chair, and begins by sprinkling water {shausi 水} to purify ritual site {dôjô 道場}. Next, attendant {jîsha 侍者} leads ordinand [“person arousing the mind of awakening,” who is to receive precepts] {hoshin no hito 発心の人} before buddha, has him/her burn incense and make three prostrations {shókô sanpai 焼香三拜}. Next, [attendant] has him/her advance before ordaining master, burn incense and make three prostrations, then kneel {seiza 静坐} with hands in gassho {gashô 合掌}. (Ordinand should be dressed in white robes (kimono){hakue 白衣}).

**Invocation** (**bushô 奉請**)

Ordaining master {honshi 本師} takes up hand-held censer {kaihe 炊𬬻}, burns incense, and quietly intones following invocation {bushô 奉請}:

Homage to the Buddhas of the ten directions {namu jippô butsu 南無十方仏},

Homage to the Dharma of the ten directions {namu jippô hō 南無十方法},

Homage to the Sangha of the ten directions {namu jippô sô 南無十方僧},

Homage to our Great Beneficent Founder of the Doctrine, Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha {namu daion kyôshu honshi shakamuni butsu 南無大恩教主本師釈迦牟尼仏},

Homage to the successive generations of Ancestor Bodhisattvas {namu rekidai soshi bosatsu 南無歷代祖師菩薩},

Homage to the Eminent Ancestor, Jôyô Daishi (this line is not in Dôgen’s version of ceremony).

{namu kôsô jôyô daishi 南無高祖承陽大師}

Homage to the Great Ancestor, Jôsai Daishi (this line is not in Dôgen’s version of ceremony).

{namu taiso jôsai daishi 南無太祖常濟大師};

May you all please respond and descend {onajiku kango wo tare 同じく感降を垂れ} and together bear witness to this ceremony. {tomoni shômyô wo nashi tamae 共に証明を作ったまえ}

(recite three times, burning incense each time).

Next, ordaining master strikes precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺} once {ichige 一下} and intones:

I humbly invite the great assembly {daishu 大衆} to recite {nen 念} [the names of Buddha].

Thereupon, great assembly chants {shôwa 唱和} Ten Buddha Names {Jôbutsumyô 十仏名} in unison {dôon 同音}.

**Verse of Worship and Praise** (**raisanmon 礼讚文**)

Next, ordaining master {honshi 本師} strikes precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺} three times {sange 三下}, intones following Verse of Worship and Praise {raisanmon 礼讚文}, after which monks of great assembly {daishu 大衆} chant {shôwa 唱和} Ten Buddha Names {Jôbutsumyô 十仏名} in unison {dôon 同音}.

Good son {zendanshi 善男子} (good daughter {zennyonin 善女人}), the source of mind is utterly still, the sea of Dharma {hôkai 法海} profoundly deep. Those who are ignorant {mayô 迷う} of this flounder in confusion for endless kalpas; those who understand {satoru 悟る} it attain liberation {gedatsu 解脱} in this very place. The path {dô 道} toward roaming freely in liberation necessarily entails the Dharma {hô 法} of leaving home {shukke 出家}. This ceremony {gishiki 儀式}, which is the same in the Way {dô 道} of all Buddhas {shobutsu 諸仏}, is the standard for attaining liberation. This is a truth which cannot be doubted. In bringing one’s body and mind into full accord with the Way {dô 道}, nothing surpasses leaving home. Why is this? Because, to cut off one’s hair is to cut off the root of attachment {aihon 愛憎}. When the root of attachment is cut off, the original body {hoshin 本身} is revealed. To change one’s clothing is to shed defilements {jinrô 塵勞}. When defilements are cast off, then this is freedom {jisai 自在}. Among all Buddhas of the three times {sanze shobutsu 三世諸仏}, there is not one who attained the Way {jôdô 成道} while remaining a householder {zaikai 在家}. Among the successive generations of ancestors {rekidai soshi 歴代祖師}, as well, there was not one who did not take on the form of a homeleaver. Thus, among all types of merit {kudokusho 功徳}, the merit of leaving home is considered most excellent. If one built a seven-jeweled stupa as high as the heaven of the thirty-three {sanjûsan ten 三十三天} the merit would be very great, but it would not amount to even one-hundredth of the merit of leaving home. No imaginable calculation can compare. A jeweled stupa gradually wears away and becomes fine particles of dust; after many years, its form can no longer be seen. Leaving home, however, increases in value and results in the fruit of Buddhahood {bukka 誼果}; through the eons, it does not lose its merit (ka 功). Thus, even before one has cast off this human body, one goes beyond the realm of ordinary people {bonbu 乳夫}; and even if one has not yet confirmed the fruit of Buddhahood {shôka 証果}, one is now a true disciple of Buddha {bussshi 仏子}. Among all living
beings {shûjô 衆生} of the three realms {sangai 三界}, one is the most honored of people; and within the six realms {rokushu 六趣} of birth {jushô 受生}, one has the most praiseworthy birth. Consider well: you are turning around body and mind {shinjin 身心}, which for long eons have been caught up in the round of rebirth {ruten 流転}, and you now will live eternally in the unborn {mushô 無生} Buddha Land {bukkoku 仏国} from which there is no falling back. Your beginningless deluded attachments {môshô 猿執} are today cut off, and your true original virtue {honnu no jittoku 本有的実徳} is fully realized {enjô 円成} at this seat. This being the case, after leaving home, heaven and earth {tenchi 天地} will no longer cover you and hold you; how could living beings {gururu 群類} possibly throw you into confusion? Your round shaved head {encho 円頂} will have nothing covering it; your rectangular robe {hôbô 方袍} will be your banner of liberation. All those who see or hear of them will receive great benefits, and your relatives will surely reap excellent fruits. Your rank will transcend the three realms, and your virtue {honshi 本師} will tower over the ten directions {ippai 十方}. As the verse says: "Throughout the rounds of birth in the three realms, the bonds of attachment {on'ai 恩愛} are hard to break; to cast off obligations {on 恩} and enter the unconditioned {mui 無為} is the true {shinjitsu 真実} repayment of blessings {hôon 報恩}."] You should think of the virtue of your father and mother in giving you birth, and in complete sincerity take leave {shutsuri 出離}, and the particular sign of an honorable person.

**Tonsure [Shaving Head] {teihatsu 剃髪}**

When chanting is finished, ordaining master {honshi 本師} strikes precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺} twice {nige 二下}; ordinand {hossin no hito 発心の人} makes one proscription {ippai 一拜} and stands. Attendant {jišha 侍者} leads ordinand before parental tablets {bumohai 父母牌}, or before parents themselves if they are in attendance, and has him/her make one proscription {ippai 一拜}. (this part is not in Dôgen’s version of ceremony). Next, make three proscriptions {sanpai 三拜} before Buddha {butscuhen 本師前}. Ordaining master chants another verse, joined by monks of great assembly, continuing chanting until tonsure {chôki 除髻} is complete. At this point, ordaining master makes three proscriptions {sanpai 三拜} before ordaining master, then kneel upright {chôki 長跪} in gassho {gassho 合掌}. Assistant {bôjin 僧人} begins by parting ordinand's hair in middle and tying it up in two knots, right and left. Ordaining master lifts razor, chants opening line of following verse; monks of great assembly {daishu 大衆} join in chanting from second line; together they intone verse three times in succession. This same procedure is followed for each of the other verses given below, as well. (However, the Verse of Seeking the Way {Gudô no ge 求道の偈}, which begins "When a bodhisattva,...", is different):

*Good {zenzai 善哉} honorable, great people {daijôbu 大丈夫} I understand impermanence {mui 無常} of the world. / Renouncing worldly realms {zokushu 俗趣} and heading toward nirvana {naion 泥洹}, I am something rare and hard to comprehend.*

**(Verse of Aspiration [Arousing the Mind] {Hossin no ge 発心の偈})**

This verse has been chanted three times, ordaining master sprinkles head of ordinand with fragrant hot water {kôto 香湯}, begins shaving, then hands razor to someone else (attendant {jišha 侍者}) to continue shaving. While that is going on, ordination master chants following verse, joined by monks of great assembly:

*Throughout the rounds of birth {ruden 流転} in the three realms {sangai 三界}. / the bonds of attachment {on'ai 恩愛} are hard to break; / to cast off worldly obligations {on 恩} and enter the unconditioned {mui 無為} is the true {shinjitsu 真実} requiting of blessings {hôon 報恩}.*

**(Verse of Tonsure [Shaving Hair] {Teihatsu no ge 剃髪の偈})**

Ordination master then chants another verse, as follows, joined by monks of great assembly, continuing chanting until tonsure is finished:

*When bodhisattvas in the rounds of birth and death {shôji 生死} / first produce the mind of awakening {hossin 発心}, / they are strong {kengo 堅固} and immovable {fukadô 不可動} / in their aspiration for bodhi {bodai 菩提}. / The merit and virtue {kudoko 功徳} of that one thought {ichinen 一心} is deep, vast, and limitless. / Even if the Tathâgata {nyorai 如来} were to expound it {funbetsu 分別} to the end of time / {gûgô 窮劫}, he could not exhaust it.*

**(Verse of Seeking the Way {Gudô no ge 求道の偈})**

**Giving Long Robe {ju jikitotsu 授直褊}**

When tonsure is finished, leaving only the tuft {shûra 周羅} (last single spot of hair), ordination master gives long robe {ju jikitotsu 授直褊} and has ordinand {hossin no hito 発心の人} put it on. Ordinand dons long robe and makes three proscriptions {sanpai 三拜}. Ordination master raises razor a second time, questions ordinand as follows: "The final spot of hair is called the shûra 周羅; only a Buddha himself can cut it off. I am now going to remove it; do you permit this or not?" Ordinand replies, "I permit it." Question and answer {mondô 問答} are repeated in this way three times, after which topknot {chôkei 頂髻} (final topknot of hair) is shaved off. At this point, ordaining master initiates chanting {ko 挙} of Verse of Changing Appearance {Kigyôge 異形偈}; monks of great assembly {daishu 大衆} join in this:
The former appearance has changed {kigyō 唯形} / but uprightness {shisetsu 志節} is preserved. / Cutting through attachments {ai 愛} and letting go of all relations, / leaving home {shukke 出家} and aspiring to the noble path {shōdō 聖道} / one vows to save {seido 聖度} all beings {issai shu 一切衆}.

(Verse of Changing Appearance {Kigyōge 唯形偈})

**Dharma Name** {anmyō 安名} (In Dōgen's version, this is called leaving home name {shukkemyō 出家名}). Ordinand {hosshin no hito 発心の人} burns incense, makes three prostrations {shōkō sanpai 燃香三拜}, and kneels upright {chōki 長跪} in gassho {gasshō 合掌}. At this point, ordaining master {honshi 本師} reads dharma name certificate {anmyō 安名} on which name given upon leaving home {shukke 出家} is written, then gives it to ordinand.

**Giving Sitting Cloth, Robes and Bowls** {ju zagu ehatsu 授坐具衣鉢}

Next, ordaining master {honshi 本師} picks up sitting cloth {zagu 坐具}, censes it with incense smoke {kō ni kunjiru 香に薰じる} and gives it. Disciple {deshi 弟子} receives it and raises it above his/her head. Assistant {bōjin 僧人} instructs disciple to intone following words:

O Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩}, great beings {daishi 大士}, please give your single-minded {isshin 一心} attention {nen 念}. I, disciple {name}, now receive and keep this nishidana {坐具 cloth} {nishidan 尼師壇}, made to measure {ōryōsa 応量作}. that it may always protect my robes {e 衣}.

Disciple repeats this verse three times. (Procedure for three infusions with incense and three recitations {sankun sanshō 三薰三唱} – i.e. giving sitting cloth, robes, and bowls – is same in each case). When finished, disciples spread out sitting cloth and makes three prostrations {sanpai 三拜}, and again kneels upright {chōki 長跪} in gassho {gasshō 合掌}. Ordaining master intones words "Verse of Sitting Cloth {Zagu no ge 坐具の偈}"; monks of great assembly {daishu 大衆} join in chanting:

Great {zenzai 善哉} is the nishidana {nishidan 尼師壇}, which all buddhas {shobutsu 諸仏} have received and used. We vow always to sit within its borders, together with all beings {issai shu 一切衆}.

Next, ordaining master gives five-panel robe {gojōe 五条衣}. Disciple intones following words:

O Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩}, great beings {daishi 大士}, please give your single-minded {isshin 一心} attention {nen 念}. I, disciple {name}, receive and hold this nishidana {坐具 cloth} {nishidan 尼師壇}, a pieced robe {kassetse 割截衣} with one long and one short {ichō ittan 一長一短} [piece in each panel]. Disciple immediately dons robe {jakue 著衣}, makes three prostrations {sanpai 三拜}, and kneels upright {chōki 長跪} in gassho {gasshō 合掌}. Next, ordaining master gives seven-panel robe {shichijōe 七条衣}. Disciple intones following words:

O Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩}, great beings {daishi 大士}, please give your single-minded {isshin 一心} attention {nen 念}. I, disciple {name}, receive and hold this antarvāsa {andae 安陀會} five-panel robe {gojōe 五条衣}, a pieced robe {kassetse 割截衣} with one long and one short {ichō ittan 一長一短} [piece in each panel]. Disciple immediately dons robe {jakue 著衣}, makes three prostrations {sanpai 三拜}, and kneels upright {chōki 長跪} in gassho {gasshō 合掌}. Next, ordaining master gives seven-panel robe {shichijōe 七条衣}. Disciple intones following words:

O Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩}, great beings {daishi 大士}, please give your single-minded {isshin 一心} attention {nen 念}. I, disciple {name}, receive and hold this samghāti {僧伽梨} seven-panel robe {kujōe 九条衣}, a pieced robe {kassetse 割截衣} with two long [pieces] and one short {ryōchō ittan 両長一短} [piece in each panel]. Disciple dons seven-panel robe, makes three prostrations, and kneels upright in gassho. (First take off five-panel robe and set it on side stand {katawara no dai 坐具の偈}) Next, ordaining master gives nine-panel robe {kujōe 九条衣}. Disciple intones following words:

O Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩}, great beings {daishi 大士}, please give your single-minded {isshin 一心} attention {nen 念}. I, disciple {name}, receive and hold this samghāti {僧伽梨} nine-panel robe {kujōe 九条衣}, a pieced robe {kassetse 割截衣} with two long [pieces] and one short {ryōchō ittan 両長一短} [piece in each panel]. Disciple takes nine-panel robe, receives it by placing on head {honshi 本師} reads dharma name certificate {anmyō 安名} attention {nen 念}. I, the disciple {name}, now receive and hold this pātra {鉢} [bowl]{hattara 鉢多羅}, the vessel which holds the appropriate amount {ōryōka 応量器}, that I may always use it.

Ordaining master chants following verse, joined by monks of great assembly:

Great {zenzai 善哉} is the pātra {hattara 鉢多羅}, which always holds an assembly of merit and virtue {kudokuju 功徳聚}. We now accept these bowls with reverence {chōdaiju 頂戴受} and set them out {tenden 展転} to transform {ke 化} living beings {gunjō 異生}.

When chanting of verse is finished, disciple makes three prostrations, stands with sitting cloth {zagu 坐具} still spread on floor.
Next, give precepts \{kai 戒\}. The giving of precepts sometimes takes place at a different time or on following day, but in most cases it follows immediately after procedure for shaving head \{teido sahô 剃度作法\}.

2. Procedure for Giving Precepts \{jukai sahô 授戒法\}

Repentance \{sange 懺悔\}

Disciple \{deshi 弟子\} burns incense and makes three prostrations \{shôkô sanpai 焼香三拜\} before ordaining master \{honshi 本師\}, and kneels upright \{chôki 長跪\} in gassho \{gasshô 合掌\}. Ordaining master strikes precept clappers \{kaishaku 戒尺\} three times \{sange 三下\}, intones following words:

If you wish to take refuge in the precepts \{kikai 命戒\}, you must first repent \{sange 懺悔\}. Although there are two procedures for the two types of repentance \{nigî ryôsan 二儀両懺\}, we have a Repentance Verse \{Sangemon 僧門文\} perfected \{jôjû 成就\} by prior Buddhas \{senbutsu 先仏\} which completely extinguishes \{shômetsu 消滅\} karmic hindrances \{zaishô 罪障\}; you should repeat it after me:

All my past harmful actions \{akugô 悪業\}, / from beginningless greed, hate, and delusion \{tonjinchi 食喰痴\}, / born through body, speech, and mind \{shinkui 身口意\}, / I now fully repent \{sange 懺悔\}.

Disciple chants this one phrase at a time, as punctuated by ordaining master’s precept clappers, repeating it three times. Disciple then makes one prostration \{ippai 一拜\}, and kneels upright in gassho.

Precepts of Three Refuges \{sankikai 三帰戒\}

Ordaining master \{honshi 本師\} in gassho \{gasshô 合掌\} intones following text:

You have now purified \{jôjô 清除\} the three types of karma \{sangô 三業\} — body, speech, and mind \{shinkui 身口意\} — and attained great purity \{daishôjô 大清浄\}. This is due to the power of repentance \{sange 懺悔\}. Next you must reverently take refuge \{kie 師依\} in the Three Treasures \{sanbô 三宝\}: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha \{buppôsô 仏法僧\}. The Three Treasures are of three kinds, each of which has its own merit and virtue \{kudoku 功徳\}, namely: the One-Bodied Triple Treasure \{ittai sanbô 一体三宝\}; the Manifested Triple Treasure \{genzen sanbô 現前三宝\}; and the Abiding-and-Maintaining Triple Treasure \{jûji sanbô 住持三宝\}. When you take refuge just once, all three kinds of merit will be fully realized \{enjô 円成\}.

Ordaining master picks up water-sprinkling vessel \{shasui 水器\}, censes it \{kô ni kunjiru 香に焚じる\}, takes anointing branch \{shasui 吹水枝\} and transfers Dharma-nature water \{hôshôsui 法性水\} from own head \{jichô 自頂\} to vessel three times, then anoints \{sosogu 撒ぐ\} head of disciple three times. Next, sprinkles water \{sosogu 撒ぐ\} to right side to requite the four benefactors \{shion 四恩\}, and sprinkles water to left side to benefit \{rijun 利潤\} the three classes of existences \{sannu 三有\} (three times to each side). When finished, ordaining master returns Dharma-nature to own head \{jichô 自頂\} from Dharma-nature water\{hôshôsui 法性水\}, again three times, then sets down water-sprinkling vessel \{shasui 水器\}. Next, he/she gives precepts of three refuges \{sankikai 三帰戒\}.

I, disciple <name>, from my present body until I obtain the buddha body \{busshin 仏身\},

go for refuge in Buddha \{namu kie butsu 南無仏依仏\},
I go for refuge in Dharma \{namu kie hō 南無仏依法\},
I go for refuge in Sangha \{namu kie só 南無仏依僧\},
I take refuge in Buddha, honored as unsurpassed \{kie butsu mujôson 師仏無上僧\},
I take refuge in Dharma, honored as flawless \{kie hō rijinson 依仏法離塵尊\},
I take refuge in Sangha, honored as harmonious \{kie só wagôson 依仏僧和合尊\},
I have completely taken refuge in Buddha \{kie butsu kyô 師仏依仏\},
I have completely taken refuge in Dharma \{kie hō kyô 依仏法依\},
I have completely taken refuge in Sangha \{kie só kyô 依仏僧依\}.

Disciple chants this one phrase at a time, as punctuated by ordaining master’s precept clappers, repeating it three times (monks of great assembly \{daishu 大衆\} chant in unison \{shôwa 唱和\} (this is not in Dôgen’s version of ceremony)). When finished, ordaining master chants as follows:

You have now abandoned wrongdoing \{ja 罪\} and taken refuge \{ki 師\} in uprightness \{shô 正\}. Now true and perfect awakening \{shishintô 直心道\} of the Tathâgata \{nyorai 如来\} is your guiding teacher \{dôshi 師導\}. From this time forth you shall declare the Buddha as teacher and not take refuge \{kie 師依\} in other paths \{yodô 余道\}, due to his great kindness \{daizô 大慈\}, great compassion \{daihi 大悲\}, and great mercy \{dai aimin 大哀愍\}.

Disciple makes three prostrations \{sanpai 三拜\} and kneels upright \{chôki 長跪\}.
Shramanera [Homeleaver] Ten Precepts (shamijūkai 沙彌十戒)

With one strike (ichige 一下) of precept clappers (kaishaku 戒尺), ordaining master (honshi 本師) says:

Next you must receive the ten shramanera [homeleaver] precepts (shamijūkai 沙彌十戒). Receiving these precepts one follows the way of the great [monastic] Sangha (daisō 大僧) and causes it to flourish (kō 興), equally benefiting oneself and supporting others. The [Sanskrit] name “shramanera” (shami 沙彌) means “diligent” (kin 勤) and “to remember” (saku 記). The precept not to kill living beings (fusesshōkai 不殺生戒).

From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

Disciple {deshi 弟子} replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer {mondō 間答} is repeated three times.

With one strike {ichige 一下} of precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺}, ordaining master {honshi 本師} says:

From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not?

Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

The precept not to speak falsely (fuinyokukai 不妄語戒).

From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not?

Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

Three Collective Pure Precepts (sanjujūkai 三聚淨戒)

Next, give three collective pure precepts (sanjujūkai 三聚淨戒). With one strike {ichige 一下} of precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺}, ordaining master {honshi 本師} says:

Having received the three refuges (sanki 三帰), and the ten precepts (jūkai 十戒), you have entered the rank {kurai 位} of a homeleaver {shukke 出家}. Next you must receive the three collective and ten major (bodhisattva) precepts (sanju jūjū 三聚十重). This is entering the rank {kurai 位} of all Buddhas (shobutsu 諸仏). This is becoming a true child of the Buddha (butsu no miko 仏子).

First is the precept of embracing and sustaining standards of conduct (shōritsugikai 摂律儀戒). From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

Second is the precept of embracing and sustaining wholesome qualities (shōzenbōkai 摂善法戒). From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.

Third is the precept of embracing and sustaining living beings (shōshujōkai 摂衆生戒). From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, “I will uphold it.” This question and answer is repeated three times.
In closing, ordaining teacher says:
I have now given you the threefold pure precepts {sanshijôkai 三支淨戒}. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold them or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold them." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Ten Major Prohibitory Precepts {jûjûkinkai 十重禁戒}

With one strike {ichige 一下} of precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺}, ordaining master {honshi 本師} says:

Next are the ten major (bodhisattva) prohibitory precepts {jûjûkinkai 十重禁戒}.

(After saying, "First is the precept not to kill living beings," ordaining master chants entire section of precept text {kaimon 戒文} in Sutra of Brahma's Net {Bonnôkyô 梵網経} that deals with not killing. Same procedure holds for each of remaining nine precepts. If rite is to be abbreviated, only name of each precept is chanted.)

First, the precept not to kill living beings {fusesshôkai 不殺戒}. A disciple of the Buddha shall not kill, encourage others to kill, kill by expedient means, praise killing, rejoice at witnessing killing, or kill through incantation or deviant mantras. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of killing, and shall not intentionally kill any living creature. As Buddha's disciple, one ought to nurture a mind of compassion and filial piety, always devising expedient means to rescue and protect all beings. If instead, one fails to restrain himself and kills sentient beings without mercy, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika [major] offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Second, the precept not to take what is not given {fuchûtôkai 不偷戒}. A disciple of the Buddha must not steal or encourage others to steal, steal by expedient means, steal by means of incantation or deviant mantras. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stealing. No valuables or possessions, even those belonging to ghosts and spirits or thieves and robbers, be they as small as a needle or blade of grass, may be stolen. As Buddha's disciple, one ought to have a mind of mercy, compassion, and filial piety – always helping people earn merits and achieve happiness. If instead, one steals the possessions of others, he commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Third, the precept not to indulge in sexual greed {futon'inkai 不貪婬戒}. A disciple of the Buddha must not indulge in sexual greed or encourage others to do so. One should not have greedy sexual relations with anyone – be they human, animal, deity or spirit – nor create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of such misconduct. Indeed, one must not engage in improper sexual conduct with anyone. As Buddha's disciple, one ought to have a mind of filial piety – rescuing all sentient beings and instructing them in the Dharma of purity and chastity. If instead, one lacks compassion and encourages others to engage in sexual relations promiscuously, including with animals and even their close relatives, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Fourth, the precept not to speak falsely {fumôgokai 不妄語戒}. A disciple of the Buddha must not use false words and speech, or encourage others to lie or lie by expedient means. One should not involve himself in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of lying, saying that he has seen what he has not seen or vice-versa, or lying implicitly through physical or mental means. As Buddha's disciple, one ought to maintain right speech and right views always, and lead all others to maintain them as well. If instead, one causes wrong speech, wrong views or evil karma in others, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. Can you uphold it or not? Disciple replies, "I can uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Fifth, the precept not to deal in alcohol [or other intoxicants] {fukoshukai 不沽酒戒}. A disciple of the Buddha must not trade in alcoholic beverages or encourage others to do so. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of selling any intoxicant whatsoever, for intoxicants are the causes and conditions of all kinds of offenses. As Buddha's disciple, one ought to help all sentient beings achieve clear wisdom. If instead, one causes them to have upside-down, topsy-turvy thinking, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Sixth, the precept not to speak of the faults of the four assemblies {fusetsukakai 不誣眾罪過戒}. A disciple of the Buddha must not speak of the misdeeds or infractions of left-home bodhisattva [monks] or staying-home bodhisattva [laypersons], or of [ordinary] bhikshus or bhikshunis – nor encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of discussing the offenses of the assembly. As Buddha's disciple, whenever one hears evil persons, externalists or followers of the Two Vehicles speak of practices contrary to the Dharma or contrary to the precepts within the Buddhist community, one should instruct them with a compassionate mind and lead them to develop wholesome faith in the Mahayana. If instead, one discusses the faults and misdeeds that occur within the assembly, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not? Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Seventh, the precept not to praise self and belittle others {fujisankitakai 不自讚毀他戒}. A disciple of the Buddha shall not praise oneself and speak ill of others, or encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of praising oneself and disparaging others. As a disciple of the Buddha, one should be willing to stand in for all sentient beings and endure humiliation and slander – accepting blame and letting sentient beings have all the glory. If instead, one
disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Eighth, the precept not to be possessive or greedy {fukentōai 不穣貪戒} (Gyōji Kihan version has: not to be possessive with the Dharma or material things {fukenhōzaikai 不穣法財戒}). A disciple of the Buddha must not be stingy or encourage others to be stingy. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stinginess. As a Bodhisattva, whenever a destitute person comes for help, one should give that person what he needs. If instead, out of anger and resentment, one denies all assistance – refusing to help with even a penny, a needle, a blade of grass, even a single sentence, verse or phrase of Dharma, but instead scolds and abuses that person – one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not?

Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Ninth, the precept not to indulge in anger {fushin'ikai 不瞋惱戒}. A disciple of the Buddha shall not harbor anger or encourage others to be angry. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of anger. As a disciple of the Buddha, one ought to be compassionate and filial, helping all sentient beings develop the good roots of non-contention. If instead, one insults and abuses sentient beings, even transformation beings [such as spirits], with harsh words, hitting them with fists or feet, or attacking them with a knife or club – or harbors grudges even when the victim confesses his mistakes and humbly seeks forgiveness in a soft, conciliatory voice – the disciple commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not?

Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

Tenth, the precept not to disparage the Triple Treasure {fuhōsanbōkai 不譭三寶戒}. A disciple of the Buddha’s shall not speak ill of the Three Treasures or encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods or karma of slander. If a disciple hears but a single word of slander against the Buddha from externalists or evil beings, one experiences a pain similar to that of three hundred spears piercing one’s heart. How then could one possibly slander the Three Treasures or encourage others to do so? One must not create the causes, conditions, methods or karma of slander, which destroys the good points of others and conceals the good points of others, thus causing them to suffer slander, one commits a Bodhisattva Parajika offense. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold this or not?

Disciple replies, "I will uphold it." This question and answer is repeated three times.

When finished giving all ten precepts, ordaining master intones the following:

I have now given you the tenfold {bodhisattva} pure precepts {jisshijōkai 十支淨戒}. From your present body until you obtain the buddha body, will you uphold them or not?

Disciple replies, "I will uphold them." This question and answer is repeated three times.

This completed, ordaining master says, "Uphold them, then, as stated," and strikes precept clappers {kaishaku 戒尺} twice. Disciple makes three prostrations {sanpai 三拝} and stands in gassho {gasshō 合掌}.

Conferral of Lineage Certificate [Blood Vein] {kechimyaku juyo 血脈授与} (this section is not in Dōgen’s version of ceremony)

Next, ordaining master {honshi 本師} picks up lineage certificate {kechimyaku 血脈}, censes it with incense smoke {kō ni kunjururu 香に薰じる} and gives it to disciple {deshi 弟子}. Disciple, in gassho {gasshō 合掌}, receives lineage certificate, holding it pinched between thumbs and forefingers. Ordaining master chants verse, saying:

When living beings {shūjō 衆生} receive Buddha’s precepts {bukkai 仏戒}, they enter the rank {kurai 位} of all Buddhas {shobutsu 諸仏}. When one’s rank is the same as the greatly awakened {daikaku 大覚}, truly one is a child of all the Buddhas {shobutsu no miko 諸仏子} (chant three times).

When chanting is finished, disciple tucks lineage certificate under crossing fold of collar {eri 衣裏} [of koromo], makes three prostrations {sanpai 三拝}, then kneels upright {chōki 長跪} in gassho {gasshō 合掌}.

Dedication of Merit {ekō 回向}

Ordaining master {honshi 本師} burns incense {shōkō 廣香}, then in gassho {gasshō 合掌} chants following eko text {ekōmon 回向文}:

At this time, in all the Buddha Lands of the ten directions {jippō butsudo 十方仏土}, auspicious signs {zuisō 瑞相} appear: the earth trembles in six ways and flowers rain down in four varieties. The Bodhisattvas {bosatsu 菩薩} ask the converters of beings {nōke 能化} [the Buddhas]. "What are these miraculous omens {kizui 奇瑞}?" Those masters of the teachings {kyōshu 教主} address those converted beings {shoke 所化}., saying:

"In the world of suffering, the Saha World {shabasekai 婆娑世界}, in the southern continent Jambudvīpa {nanenbudai 南閻浮提}, among those who have inherited the Dharma {yūhōchū 道法中} of Shakya Buddha {Shakamuni butsu 釈迦牟尼仏}, a person of trusting mind {shinjinjūsha 信心受者} has received the bodhisattva pure great precepts {bosatsu shōjō daikai 菩薩清净大戒} from a Dharma teacher {hōshi 法師} who previously received those bodhisattva precepts {bosatsukai 菩薩戒}, and has given rise to a supremely sincere mind {hatsushijūshin 発至重心}. Due to this merit and virtue {kudoku
功徳}, in a future age he/she is certain \{ketsujô 决定\} to attain Buddhahood \{jôbutsu 成仏\}. Thus, in every Buddha Land \{bukkokudo 仏国土\} these miraculous omens have appeared."

The Bodhisattvas, upon hearing this explanation, face in the direction of the recipient of the precepts \{jusha 受者\} and make prostrations \{raihai 礼拜\}, saying, "You share the same practice \{dôgyô 同行\} and the same study \{dôgaku 同学\} as us."

Hence, with all Buddhas as witnesses \{shômyô 証明\} and preceptors \{wajô 和上\}, and with the Bodhisattvas as fellow practitioners, you are able to receive these precepts. This is due to the indestructible [diamond-like] and secure \{kongô kengo 金剛堅固\} merit of the precepts \{kaitoku 戒徳\}, the Pratimoksha \{mokusha 木叉\} that never ages and never decays \{furô fukyû 不老不朽\}.

We only hope that \{tada negawakuwa 唯願\}, in the past, present, and future \{ikontô 已今当\}, you may never lose it, and that, in the beginning, middle, and end \{shôchûgo 初中後\}, every circumstance partakes of the Dharma body \{hosshin 法身\}: how could there be a realm \{sekai 世界\} where the Pratimoksha \{haradaimokusha 波羅提木叉\} does not apply? By whom shall this merit be dedicated \{ekô 回向\}? What is the merit to be dedicated? To whom shall the merit be dedicated? Although there are causes and conditions \{innen 因縁\} for every circumstance \{tôdô 当当\}, the purity of the three wheels [of giver, receiver, and gift] \{sanrin shôjô 三輪清浄\}, there is nothing to be wished for. Preserving our good karmic roots \{zengon 善根\}, together with all sentient beings \{ujô 有情\} we make a dedication of merit \{ekô 回向\} that is equally shared \{byôdôguu 平等共有\}, dedicating the merit to unsurpassed complete perfect awakening \{mujô shôtô bodai 無上正等菩堤\}.

**Verse of Purity While Abiding in the World \{Sho sekai bon 処世界梵\}**

Upon one strike \{ichige 一下\} of precept clappers \{kaishaku 戒尺\}, monks of great assembly \{daishu 大衆\} chant "All buddhas throughout space and time... etc. \{jîhô sanshî unnun 十方三世云々\}." Next, ordaining master \{honshi 本師\} strikes precept clappers once \{ichige 一下\}, chants Verse of Purity While Abiding in the World \{Sho sekai bon 処世界梵\}:

Abiding in this ephemeral world \{kokû 虚空\}, / like a lotus \{renge 蓮花\} in muddy water, / the mind \{shin 心\} is pure and goes beyond; / thus \{kei 稽\}, we bow \{shurai 首礼\} to the most Honored One \{mujôson 無上尊\}. When finished, ordaining master gets down from seat \{geza 下座\} and burns incense \{shôkô 焼香\} before Buddha \{butsuzen 仏前\}. Entire assembly \{isshû 一衆\} all together make three prostrations \{fudô sanpai 普同三拝\} and disperse from hall \{sandô 散堂\}. 
Keizan Zenji on Leaving Home
from the Record of Transmitting the Light
Zen Master Keizan’s Denkoroku
translated by Francis H. Cook in “Record of Transmitting the Light”

Chapter on Upagupta

For Buddhists, there are basically two forms of home departure, which are physical and mental. Leaving home physically means that they cast away [clinging] love and affection, leave their homes and birthplaces, shave their heads, don monks’ robes, do not have male or female servants, become monks or nuns, and make an effort in the Way throughout the twenty-four hours of each day. Whatever the time, they do not pass it in vain. They desire nothing else. They neither delight in life nor fear death. Their minds are as pure as the autumn moon; their eyes are as clear as a bright mirror. They do not seek Mind nor do they hanker [to see] their [original] natures. They do not cultivate the holy truth, much less worldly attachments. In this way, they do not abide in the stage of ordinary folk or cherish the rank of the wise and holy, but more and more become mindless seekers of the Way. These are people who leave home physically.

Those who leave home in spirit do not shave their heads or wear monks’ clothing. Even though they live at home and remain among worldly cares, they are like lotuses which are not soiled by the mud [in which they grow] or jewels which are immune to [contamination by] dust. Even though there are karmic conditions so that they have wives and children, they consider them as being trash and dust. They do not entertain [clinging] love for even a moment or covet anything. Like the moon suspended in the sky, like a ball rolling around on a tray, they live in the noisy city and see one who is tranquil. In the midst of the three realms, they clarify the fact that they dwell beyond time. They realize that exterminating the passions is a sickness, and that aiming for ultimate reality is wrong. They realize that both nirvana and samsara are illusions, and they are not attached to either enlightenment or the passions. These are people who leave home in spirit.

…If it is not one or the other, then home departure is not home departure.

Chapter on Liangshan Yuanguan

Our first ancestor [of the Soto lineage, Dongshan.] asked a monk, “What is the most painful thing in the world?” He answered, “Hell is the most painful thing.” Dongshan said, “Not so. Wearing the [monk’s] robe but not clarifying the great matter is the most painful.”… The Buddha Shakyamuni, and all other Buddhas throughout space and time say, in the “Skillful Means” chapter [of the Lotus Sutra], “All Buddhas appear in the world only for the sake of the one great matter.” That is to say, to make [beings] reveal their Buddha wisdom and vision, awaken to it, and enter it. Clarifying this is the great matter. Do not take pleasure in simply looking like a disciple of the Buddha. If you do not clarify this matter, you are virtually no different from a worldly householder. This is because you are no different in seeing with your eyes and hearing with your ears. It is not just a matter of externals; inwardly you cannot forget about attachment to the externals. This is nothing but a change in appearance. Ultimately, you are like them. In the final analysis, when your breathing stops and your eyes close, your spirit will be attracted to objects and flow through the triple world. In the end, although there may be excellent results such as rebirth among humans or celestials, you will be like a wheel turning and turning endlessly [in the paths of rebirth].

What was the original intention in getting people to leave home and escape the passions? It was just to get them to arrive at Buddha wisdom and vision. Taking the trouble to establish Zen communities and gathering together the four groups [of female and male monastics and laypeople] was only for the purpose of clarifying this matter. Therefore, we speak of the meditation hall as the place for selecting Buddhas. Those who excel are called “guides.” It is not simply in order to create an uproar by gathering together a community. It is only for the purpose of getting people to clarify the self.

Even if you look like a monk and halfheartedly join in the Zen community, if you have not clarified this matter, you are just struggling pointlessly without any results. Even less can either beginners or veterans in these corrupt times of the last days of the Dharma study thoroughly if their spirits waver, even if they try to model their mental states and physical deportment after former enlightened ones. Monks these days are not stable in their conduct and do not thoroughly learn the major and minor forms of deportment and the internal and external mental arts, so it looks as if there is no monastic deportment. Even if mental states and physical deportment are like those of antiquity, if you have not clarified the realm of Mind, these are no more than the defiled state of humans and celestials. How much more do people who do not clarify the realm of Mind or control physical deportment receive the offerings of the faithful in vain and fall into hells!

… Therefore, investigate thoroughly and meticulously. Clarify the business beneath the patch robe. This one great matter has nothing to do with the three periods of the Dharma or differences between India, China, and Japan.
Precepts and Ordinations in Soto Zen
Chapter 13 of “Soto Zen in Medieval Japan” by William M. Bodiford

The establishment and subsequent growth of Japanese Soto institutions cannot be understood without consideration of ordination ceremonies and Buddhist precepts. In contrast to meditation and koan study (which concerned only monks within the Zen monasteries), precepts transcended the confines of monastic and secular realms. Within the walls of the Zen monastery new monks were ordained by the power of their vows to follow the Buddhist precepts. Outside the monastery walls, lay ordinations attracted new patrons. When Dogen assumed the authority to ordain his own students and to teach them ordination rituals, he took a major step for the institutional independence of the Soto school. Mass ordination ceremonies brought new village groups and village temples into the Soto fold.

The role of precepts within Japanese Zen schools has not attracted much attention outside of Japan. Probably this neglect results from D. T. Suzuki’s interpretation of Zen as the inner formless spirit of religion, unencumbered by any outward trappings of dogma or ritual. Zen, like most Buddhism, however, is in many ways a religion of precepts. The various vows of Buddhas and bodhisattvas determine the attributes for which people venerate them. Likewise, the vows to observe the Buddhist precepts taken by Buddhist laypersons and clerics define the religious attitudes and types of behavior proper for each. The breadth of topics included under the rubric of precepts, therefore, is extremely comprehensive: morality, proper livelihood, definitions of the nature and goals of religious practice, as well as doctrines on the origin, meaning, methods of transmission, and spiritual power of the precepts.

The formal transmission of Zen lineages from China to Japan forced Japanese Zen monks to take a stand on many of these dogmatic issues, even if only implicitly, because these doctrines had been interpreted differently in China and in Japan. For this reason, much of the scholarship produced by Soto monks during the Tokugawa period was devoted to controversies over precepts, such as their proper role within Zen practice and the legitimacy of their transmission within the different schools of Japanese Buddhism. Fortunately, the role of precepts in medieval Soto practice can be examined without reference to each of these controversies. One mystery, however, must be examined, namely the origin of Dogen’s precepts—the starting point for the precepts taught by medieval Soto monks. The search for origins leads first to the main features of precept interpretation and ordination as practiced in China and Japan during Dogen’s youth.

Ordinations in China

In China all major controversies over the Buddhist precepts had long been settled by the time the great Ch’an monasteries of the Southern Sung dynasty were flourishing. All proper monks had to be ordained on the special precept platforms maintained at large public monasteries administered either by monks trained in the doctrinal commentaries on the precepts (i.e., monks of the Lu school) or by Ch’an monks. Presumably, the ordinations conducted by both groups of monks were largely the same. According to a Sung-period monastic code, the Ch’an-yuan ch’ing-kuei, anyone seeking residence at a Buddhist monastery was required to present three documents: ordination certificates for both his novice and full ordinations and an ordination transcript (liu-nien; Jpn. rokunen). The two ordination certificates had to be purchased from the central government’s Bureau of Sacrifice (tz’u-pu), while the liu-nien was obtained from the monastery that conducted the ordinations. All three documents recorded the names of the preceptors who conducted the ordinations as well as dates and locations. The date of the liu-nien was used to determine a monk’s monastic seniority during the summer training session.

The novice and full ordinations were conducted separately. The novice ordination consisted of the administration of vows to observe the three refuges, the five precepts of the Buddhist layperson, and the ten precepts of the novice. Although the ten precepts of the novice begin with the same five vows taken by a layperson, the entire list of precepts had to be administered again because the mental attitudes of a layperson and novice differ. The full ordination consisted of the administration of vows to observe the 250 precepts of a monk or the 348 precepts of a nun. The ordination procedures and the lists of precepts were based on the Ssu-fen lu (Jpn. Shibunritsu), a Chinese translation of the Buddhist vinaya (code of behavior) believed to have been used by the Dharmaguptika, one of the so-called Hinayana schools in India.

Chinese Buddhist monks followed the Ssu-fen lu in spite of its non-Mahayana pedigree because Mahayana scriptures proclaim that all Buddhist precepts should be observed. In Dogen’s time, Chinese monks taught that the distinction between Mahayana (i.e., great vehicle) and Hinayana (i.e., inferior vehicle) exists only in people’s attitudes, not in the precepts. Moreover, they regarded the Ssu-fen lu as fostering stronger Mahayana attitudes compared to the other similar vinaya texts that had been translated into Chinese. Yet the Ch’an-yuan ch’ing-kuei also urged Ch’an monks to follow their full ordination with an additional ordination based on the bodhisattva precepts, to promote the full development of Mahayana sentiments.

The bodhisattva precepts used at Chinese monasteries are based on the Fan-wang ching (Jpn. Bonmokyo). This scripture describes fifty-eight precepts, ten major and forty-eight minor, that are to be observed by all bodhisattvas, be they monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen. It is not known if the procedures for ordination with these precepts were fully standardized. Within the Chinese T’ien-t’ai school, for example, each of the several extant ordination manuals describes a different sequence of ceremonies. In general, bodhisattva ordinations seem to have included not only the precepts of the Fan-wang ching but also several related sets of vows found in other Mahayana scriptures, such as the three refuges, ritual confession and repentance, the four universal vows, and the three pure precepts. Because both laypersons and monks could receive the same bodhisattva ordinations, monastic seniority was always based on the date of a monk’s full Ssu-fen lu ordinations, never on his bodhisattva
ordination. Therefore the Ssu-fen lu ordinations always came first. Likewise, laypersons received their bodhisattva ordinations only after first having been ordained with the three refuges and five vows of the layperson.

Chinese Buddhists relied on the Ssu-fen lu (i.e., vinaya) precepts and the Fan-wang ching (i.e., bodhisattva) precepts for two different types of religious guidance. The Ssu-fen lu provides detailed rules for monastic decorum, whereas the Fan-wang ching describes the attitude of compassion inherent in the Mahayana emphasis on universal salvation. The Ssu-fen lu precepts often focus on extremely concrete details of monastic life. The explanation of the precept limiting a monk’s major possessions to just one bowl, for example, states that a monk shall not obtain a new bowl unless his old one is already damaged in at least six places. In contrast to such emphasis on the monks’ own circumstances, the precepts in the Fan-wang ching focus on general principals of interpersonal relations and life-style. Even the ordering of the precepts reflects different priorities. The first precept in the Ssu-fen lu is for the monk to control his own sexual desire (i.e., self-control), whereas the first precept in the Fan-wang ching forbids the killing of all sentient beings (i.e., saving others).

In some cases the different orientations of these two scriptures contradict each other. Consider, for example, the case of a woman who wishes to learn Buddhism. The Ssu-fen lu (which emphasizes controlling all desires) forbids a monk to speak more than five or six words to a woman unless other reputable male witnesses are present, even if the monk’s only intention is to instruct her in Buddhism. From the standpoint of the Fan-wang ching, however, the salvation of the woman is more important than whether or not the monk observes his own vows.

The monastic regulations (ch’ing-kuei; Jpn. shingi) governing daily life at Chinese monasteries attempt to transcend the contradictions between the vinaya (i.e., Hinayana) and bodhisattva (i.e., Mahayana) precepts. The Ch’uan-yuan ch’ing-kuei repeats the famous injunction attributed to Pai-chang Huai-hai that the essential teaching (tsung; Jpn. shu) of Ch’án life should neither be restricted by nor differ from either the Hinayana or Mahayana precepts. As cited in this text, Pai-chang asserted that monastic regulations must be based only on the actual conditions that are appropriate for Ch’án practice. Monastic regulations, therefore, represent a third category of Buddhist guidelines. Unlike either the Hinayana precepts (which focus on the suppression of one’s own evil actions) or the Mahayana precepts (which concern compassion for others), monastic regulations emphasize communal practice. All monks are required to eat, to sleep, and to meditate together in the monks’ hall. All participate in monastic chores (p’u-ch’ing) regardless of seniority or office.

**Ordinations in Japan**

Japanese Buddhists never attained the same uniformity in precepts as had been achieved in China. Monks associated with the major monasteries of Nara generally followed the same series of lay, novice, full monk, and bodhisattva ordinations as practiced in China, based on the same scriptures, namely, the Shibunritsu (Ch. Ssu-fen lu) and the Bonmokyo (Ch. Fan-wang ching). The Japanese Tendai school, however, had been established with its own ordination ceremony based on the bodhisattva precepts alone. Saicho, the founder of Japanese Tendai, had rejected the traditional ordinations administered in Nara not only because of their non-Mahayana origins but also as a means of ensuring the independence of the Tendai school. From the time that Tendai had been authorized to administer sectarian ordinances (in 822) until the time Dogen was ordained as a Tendai monk (ca. 1213) more than 390 years had elapsed. The Tendai school, its doctrinal justifications for its own precepts, and its rituals for ordinations had all taken firm root in Japan. Conflict between Tendai and the Nara temples over ordinations and precepts, however, had never disappeared. The Nara monk Jokei (a.k.a. Gedatsu; 1155-1213), for example, wrote a detailed attack on the Tendai ordinations, in which he stated that Tendai priests were mere laymen in monks’ robes, lacking knowledge of the precepts and vinaya.

Jokei based his criticism on the fact that bodhisattva ordinations can be administered to both monks and laypersons. Only traditional vinaya such as the Shibunritsu distinguish between the ordinations and precepts for monks and those for laypersons. Saicho, however, had argued that the same bodhisattva precepts and ordination could be used for both monks and laypersons without confusing the two. According to this interpretation, a layperson who had not shaved his head or left his home remained a layperson even after having received all the bodhisattva precepts. If, however, that layperson had received the tonsure and without confusing the two. According to this interpretation, a layperson who had not shaved his head or left his home remained the problem of determining what rules of behavior Japanese Tendai monks should observe. In 824, two years after Saicho’s death, the Tendai community on Mt. Hiei compiled its first set of rules for governing monastic life. When these proved inadequate, supplemental lists of rules also appeared. Ultimately these monastic rules lacked any final religious authority within Japanese Tendai doctrine. The attitudes of Tendai monks toward monastic rules were shaped by the bodhisattva precepts—which stress the spirituality underlying the precepts over strict literal observance. When the bodhisattva precepts and Tendai monastic rules were interpreted in terms of medieval Tendai doctrines of inherent enlightenment (hongaku homon), the evil conduct that the precepts were meant to control could be reduced to a mere dualistic abstraction. The Tendai patriarch Annen, for example, taught that observance of the precepts is found both in good and in evil because the precepts represent the dharma-nature (i.e., true essence) of ultimate reality (shinnyo hossho no kaiho). This rejection of any distinction between good and evil was expressed in more concrete terms as well. One medieval Tendai text asserts: “If performed naturally (musa) and without calculation (ninnun) even evil actions are not improper, [as] Kannon might appear in the guise of a fisherman and kill all manner of marine life.”
Many Tendai monks distorted these doctrines in order to rationalize their own moral laxity. Eisai, for example, confessed that in his younger years he had readily joined his fellow Tendai monks in breaking the dietary precepts against eating afternoon meals and drinking alcohol. Jokei’s attack on Tendai monks for their ignorance of the precepts had thus sought to exploit a major weakness of the Tendai community. Disregard of the precepts, however, did not reach its most extreme expression within the mainline Tendai establishment. Instead, the first open rejection of the precepts occurred among the lower-level monks of the twelfth century who abandoned the complex Buddhism of the Tendai school and left Mt. Hiei. Two groups in particular were denounced for antinomianism, the Pure Land monks led by Honen and the Zen monks led by Nonin.

Honen appears to have carefully observed the precepts. Yet the Buddhist establishment attacked his teachings for promoting precept violations. Some of Honen’s followers believed that even a lifetime of evil deeds could not prevent deathbed salvation by Amitabha Buddha. In their insistence on salvation through exclusive faith in Amitabha, the more extreme of these monks rejected any attempt to cling to the precepts. Likewise, the Darumashu had also been severely criticized for having rejected the precepts. Exactly how the precepts were rejected is unclear, but one Darumashu text asserted that the purpose of the precepts lies only in controlling the active mind. Therefore, when one attains no-mind (mushin) all precepts are left behind. Any new religious groups that denied the necessity of precepts (and, thus, ordinations) could have operated totally unfettered by government and ecclesiastical restrictions on ordinations. Therefore, the alarm that these doctrines caused civil and ecclesiastical authorities played a major role in the court’s attempts to suppress both of these groups. Prohibitions were directed first against Nonin’s Darumashu (in 1194) and then against Honen’s Pure Land teachings (in 1207). Honen’s fate does not concern us here, but we must note that the government’s 1194 prohibition of the Darumashu extended to Eisai’s Zen teachings as well.

Eisai defended his own position by attempting to clarify the distinction between his Zen and the practices advocated by Nonin. In fact, Eisai’s approach to Zen could hardly have been more different from that of the Darumashu. He sought to promote Zen not in order to reject the precepts but as a means of reviving the strict observance of the precepts within Japanese Tendai. In brief, Eisai’s attitude toward the precepts exhibited the following five characteristics. 1) Eisai argued that the essential teaching (shu; Ch. tsung) of Zen lay in observance of the precepts. He stated that anyone who repented of past transgressions and ceased from all evil automatically practices Zen, whereas anyone who violated the precepts could not even be a Buddhist. He not only professed this belief, but also practiced it, and Chinese monks wrote praise for his strict rectitude. 2) Eisai asserted that all of Buddhism depended on the precepts. He argued that the three aspects of Buddhist learning (sangaku) must be a step-by-step progression. That is, first one must observe the precepts (i.e., learn self-control), then practice Zen (i.e., meditation), and attain wisdom last. The precepts always come first. 3) Eisai sought to revive use of the Shibunritsu in Japanese Tendai. He described his own Zen study in China simply by stating that he learned three things: the transmission of the Rinzai line, the Shibunritsu, and the bodhisattva precepts. He argued that Zen monks must not choose among precepts but observe all those found both in the Shibunritsu and in the Bonmokyo. 4) Eisai rejected the saying found in some Mahayana scriptures that observing the Hinayana precepts entailed breaking the bodhisattva precepts. He argued that any Buddhist who violated the precepts not only transgressed against the Hinayana rules but also turned away from the Mahayana. Eisai asserted that true Zen monks reconcile the two by outwardly observing Hinayana rules of decorum while inwardly cultivating Mahayana compassion. 5) Finally, Eisai identified Zen with the strict observance of the precepts. He therefore represented himself (instead of Nonin) as the first true Japanese Zen teacher.

Precepts in Early Soto
Dogen began his study of Zen under the guidance of Eisai’s direct disciple Myozen, from whom he inherited Eisai’s precept lineage. Dogen spoke of Eisai only in terms of praise. One could reasonably expect, therefore, that Dogen’s attitude toward the precepts would have reflected Eisai’s positions; this was not the case, however. In every one of the five points listed above Dogen differed from Eisai, to wit: 1) Dogen told Ejo that the essential teaching (shu; Ch. tsung) of Zen is sitting in meditation. He argued in indirect reference to Eisai that it is mistaken to assert that the essentials of Zen could be found merely in observing the precepts. Dogen asserted that no Chinese monks taught such a doctrine and claimed to have corrected former students of Eisai who held overly literal interpretations of the precepts (see Shobogenzo Zuimonki). 2) Dogen repeatedly stressed that all three aspects of Buddhist learning (i.e., precepts, meditation, and wisdom) are found simultaneously within the act of Zen meditation. In the conversation just cited, he rhetorically inquired of Ejo: “When seated in meditation (zazen), what precepts are not being observed? What virtues are lacking?” 3) Dogen firmly rejected the authority of the Shibunritsu. In one particularly strong statement he asserted that the way of enlightenment (bendo) taught by the Buddhas and patriarchs could never resemble Hinayana practices and then defined Hinayana as the precepts of the Shibunritsu (see Eihei Koroku, section 5. lecture 390). Dogen alluded to Eisai when he criticized “recent second-raters” who falsely asserted that Zen monks must uncritically accept both Hinayana and Mahayana precepts (see Shobogenzo Sanjushichi bodai bungen). 4) Dogen endorsed the statement that observing the Hinayana precepts entailed breaking the bodhisattva precepts (see Shobogenzo SBB plus Shobogenzo Shoaku makusa). He even quoted this view as being the true teaching of the Buddha. Dogen argued that precepts common to both scriptures—such as the Hinayana vow not to kill and the Mahayana vow not to kill—actually differ as much as heaven and earth (see Shobogenzo SBB). 5) Finally, Dogen regarded the implementation of the Zen monastic codes as being more important than the precepts. The importance of the precepts lay in their power to ordain new monks, but the true expression of the precepts could be realized only through the routines of Zen monastic life. In other words, the observance of the precepts merely represented conformity to the daily conduct (anri) established by the Zen patriarchs (see Eihei Shingi).
Even someone who never receives an ordination or who violated the precepts cannot be excluded from Zen practice (see Shobogenzo Bendowa and Shobogenzo Shukke kudoku).

Dogen’s rejection of Eisai’s approach to the precepts implies a rejection of Ju-ching’s precepts as well. Ju-ching’s own views of the precepts are not documented, but there is no reason to believe that his teachings would have deviated from the standard Chinese approach described in the Ch’an-yuan ch’ing-kuei and in Eisai’s writings. Ju-ching would never have been recognized as a monk in China unless he had received the complete step-by-step series of ordinations with the lay, novice, Hinayana, and bodhisattva precepts.

Dogen’s writings contain no mention of his original Tendai ordination. His lineage charts record only the precept transmission that Eisai introduced from China (which Dogen inherited from Myozen) and the precept transmission that he had inherited from Ju-ching. These charts contain no indication of the content or nature of the precepts transmitted in these two Chinese lineages. Three other texts list the precepts that Dogen administered to his disciples. These three texts are the “Jukai” (Receiving the Precepts) chapter of Dogen’s Shobogenzo, Dogen’s Busso shoden bosatsu kaihokyo (a description of the ordination ritual), and the Busso shoden bosatsu kyoju kaimon (Abb. Kyoju kaimon; explanations of each precept that seems to have compiled jointly by Ejo and Senne).

According to these three texts, Dogen followed Japanese Tendai practice insofar as he based his ordinations on the bodhisattva precepts alone. Yet Dogen also deviated from the fifty-eight precepts of the Bonmokyo administered in Tendai ordinations. The precepts listed in the three texts correspond to no other standard group. All three texts list a single group of precepts in sixteen articles (jurokujyukai), consisting of the three refuges, the three pure precepts, and the ten major precepts. The ten major precepts correspond to those of the Bonmokyo, but the other forty-eight precepts also found in that scripture are not included. The standard Japanese Tendai ordination ceremony for administering the Bonmokyo precepts includes the three refuges and three pure precepts as preliminary steps, but in the Tendai ceremony these six vows are not grouped together with the fifty-eight precepts of the Bonmokyo. Dogen’s precepts, therefore, do not reflect either the standard Chinese ordinations followed by Eisai and Ju-ching or Japanese Tendai practice.

It is not known if the precepts in sixteen articles resulted from Dogen’s own innovation or if he borrowed this group from another source. The postscript to the Busso shoden bosatsu kaihokyo states that the ordination ceremony described therein is exactly the same as the one conducted by Ju-ching in 1225 when he administered the precepts to Dogen. The reliability of that assertion, however, seems doubtful. It is difficult to understand why Ju-ching would not have administered all fifty-eight precepts from the Bonmokyo; no tradition of abbreviated precepts existed in China.

Other evidence suggests a Japanese origin for the grouping of these sixteen articles. Ishida Mizumaro has pointed out that some Japanese Pure Land texts describe a set of precepts in sixteen articles administered during an abbreviated ordination ceremony (ryaku kaigi). According to these texts, this abbreviated ceremony originated within the Japanese Tendai school. Yet the chronology of the texts cited by Ishida remains unknown, and knowledge of these Pure Land teachings cannot be linked to Dogen. Until additional evidence is discovered, the true origin of Dogen’s sixteen articles will remain a mystery. In summing up the origins of Dogen’s precepts, at present we can only identify three main influences, namely: the Japanese Tendai doctrine that only Mahayana precepts should be observed, the Chinese Ch’an insistence that the precepts are realized only through daily monastic life, and a reduction of the number of the bodhisattva precepts to a single group of sixteen articles (apparently based on an abbreviated ordination ceremony practiced in Japan).

The earliest attempt to provide a detailed religious interpretation of Dogen’s precepts is found in Kyogo’s Ryakusho. The Ryakusho, however, addresses all fifty-eight precepts of the Bonmokyo, without any reference to Dogen’s single set of sixteen precepts. While this discrepancy raises questions as to how accurately the Ryakusho represents Dogen’s teachings, the text of the commentary repeatedly contrasts Dogen’s exegesis of the precepts with the interpretations taught in other Buddhist schools. The Ryakusho argues that religious insight—not literal readings—must determine the correct interpretation of any given precept. The commentary also emphasizes that the precepts embody Buddhahood. For example, consider Dogen’s assertion (mentioned above) of qualitative differences between the Hinayana and Mahayana precepts against killing. Dogen’s writings contain no explanation of the difference between these two identically worded precepts. The Ryakusho, however, explains that Hinayana precepts merely control karmic (uro) actions, whereas Mahayana precepts describe Buddha-nature (i.e., reality) itself. This Mahayana precept should be interpreted not as a vow against killing but as a realization of dynamic, living reality (i.e., as opposed to illusory, fixed—or “dead”—static entities). This realization embodied in the precepts means that the precepts are equated with enlightenment itself.

The Ryakusho also reiterates traditional Japanese Tendai descriptions of the bodhisattva precepts. First, ordination is equated with Buddhahood. Second, the Mahayana precepts even when violated are superior to the Hinayana precepts even when observed because observance of the Hinayana precepts promises only self-centered salvation, whereas violation of the Mahayana precepts can lead to salvation for others. And third, the power of the bodhisattva precepts is eternal and mutually inclusive so that an ordination with only one precept is equivalent to an everlasting ordination with all the precepts. Regardless of one’s subsequent conduct, the power of the precepts and the Buddhahood they represent can never be lost. Taken together, these three characterizations imply that the ordination ceremony itself is all-important. Observance or violation of the precepts is, at best, a secondary concern.

Already in Dogen’s time, laypersons regularly participated in the monthly precept recitations conducted at Eiheiji. Their participation in the precept recitation ceremonies provided income to Eiheiji and spiritual reassurance for themselves. The laypersons achieved ritual purity and symbolic unity with the monks by reciting the precepts together. Giin, Keizan, and Gasan
also administered ordinations to their principal patrons. A statement attributed to Gikai accurately equates the Zen use of ordinations for laypersons with the introductory consecration (kechien kanjo) used in Japanese esoteric Buddhism. Both rituals establish a direct bond between a Buddhist teacher and his lay supporter.

Soto ordinations laid the foundations for institutional independence. Contrast Gikai’s initial ordination with that of Keizan. Both Gikai and Keizan had been born in Echizen. Both went to local temples, Hajakuji for Gikai and Eiheiji for Keizan, to become monks. Gikai, however, could not receive an ordination at Hajakuji. Instead, he had to travel to the Tendai ordination platform at Mt. Hiei. Presumably, all the arrangements for Gikai’s ordination—his travel expenses, his residence and study at Mt. Hiei, and his introduction to the teacher conducting the ordination—had to be provided for in advance. In Gikai’s time, rural monks who lacked the means for such a journey never received proper ordinations. If a monk did leave his home region to travel to Mt. Hiei, there was no guarantee that he would return. In contrast to Gikai, Keizan was able to receive his full ordination without having to leave the area of his birth. From initial instruction to ordination and beyond, Keizan conducted his entire Buddhist training in his home province of Echizen.

Ordination ceremonies proved even more essential for founding new Soto temples. Again, Keizan is a perfect example. He ordained twenty-eight new Zen monks in 1324 when he formally opened Sojiji’s monks’ hail. These new monks probably represented converts from earlier pseudo-Buddhist groups. Sojiji previously had been administered by rural monks trained in Shingon ritual. If Sojiji’s former monks lacked a proper ordination in their own tradition, they might have wished to receive the precepts from a teacher of another tradition.

Instruction in the precept ordination rituals, therefore, constituted an indispensable part of a Soto Zen teacher’s training. Every monk no doubt retained some memory of his own ordination, but that experience alone did not provide him with sufficient knowledge of the special ritual instruments, documents, and the complex series of symbolic gestures. Usually a monk was initiated into these procedures only when he succeeded to his master’s dharma lineage. As revealed in Gikai’s Goyuigon, the dharma transmission ceremonies concluded with initiation in precept ordination rituals. Because of this link, ordination manuals often served to authenticate master-disciple relationships within various Soto lineages. The Jakuen line of abbots at Eiheiji provides the most well known example of this practice. In this lineage transmission of one text, the Busso shoden bosatsukai saho, symbolized the orthodox possession of Eiheiji’s abbotship.

The religious power of ordination did not stop with ecclesiastical authority; it commanded the fundamental spiritual forces of nature. In order to glimpse the spiritual powers that came to be associated with the precepts, we have to examine the ordinations of kami and spirits that commonly appear in the biographies of medieval Soto monks, beginning with Gasan’s disciples.
Precept Practice and Theory in Sōtō Zen

David E. Riggs

Introduction

Although precepts are basically sets of injunctions prescribing particular standards of conduct, they are also used in Buddhism in a wide variety of ceremonies which confer a spiritual benefit or involve a change of status, which can be from lay to ordained or from one level in the rankings to the next. Despite the antinomian rhetoric, Zen is no exception to this tendency. Zen monks usually live in an extremely complex and rule-bound society, and are also always deeply imbedded in the complex network of spiritual relationships that govern both their personal lives and their place in Buddhist society. These relationships are formalized in ceremonies of various levels, but taking the precepts in one form or another is almost always a part of these ceremonies. In this paper I will first give a general background of precepts in Zen, and then describe in some detail Tokugawa era controversies when the idea of special precepts and ordinations unique to Japanese Sōtō Zen monks and laity was fully articulated. Finally I will describe an instance of a modern precept assembly at Eiheiji and contrast this with the precept practices that have developed in Sōtō groups in the United States. My interest here is not in the question of whether or not people followed these precepts, nor in what kind of moral direction the precepts supplied. I am primarily concerned with the precept ceremony as an initiation or a consecration, and I will not be discussing the content of the precepts themselves.

In China, Ch’an monks followed the same procedures for becoming a monk as did any other Buddhist, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Japan, the Sōtō school developed its own unique set of sixteen precepts. These precept ordinations came to be the crucial ritual which established a unique identity for Sōtō clerics. The same set of sixteen precepts were also used in funerals and in lay ordination assemblies to include the lay members of the Sōtō community in the lineage of the Buddha and to engage their loyalty and continued support. In the Tokugawa period the practice arose of calling this set by the name of Zen precepts (zenkai 禪戒) and the Zen precepts assembly (zenkaie 禪戒會), emphasizing the special quality of the precepts in Zen. In modern times the the more universal name of receiving the precepts (jukai 授戒) and precepts receiving assembly (jukai 授戒會) is used. These Sōtō precepts are regarded by the tradition as an uninterrupted transmission from the time of Dōgen, but the contemporary form of the ritual and the modern interpretation of the meaning of the precepts dates only to the middle of the Tokugawa period. For over one hundred years they were the subject of an intense debate and there was a wide variation in both the ritual and its interpretation. The position which eventually triumphed was a radical interpretation which used only a set sixteen precepts unique to Dōgen and understood the taking of these precepts to entail awakening itself. Thus the taking of the precepts was and is identified with the final goal of practice, rather than the beginning of life as a Buddhist or strengthening the commitment to the Buddhist path.

The precepts used in Sōtō Zen are related to the precepts used by the Tendai school of Japanese Buddhism, but the exact form and arrangement apparently originate with Dōgen (Bodiford 1993, 169-73; Faure 1996, 55-57). Modern Japanese Sōtō Zen has settled on the view that Dōgen brought back with him from China this true Zen set of only sixteen precepts, which are traced back to Bodhidharma and the Buddha himself, and that these make the other kind of precepts (such as the full 250 precepts) irrelevant. Unsurprisingly, this is a historically untenable view, and this fact was clearly understood by the Sōtō clerics taking part in the Edo period controversies. The same scholar-monsoks who were carefully sifting textual evidence that showed that Chinese Ch’an monks were taking the same precepts and ordinations as anyone else were also involved in the Sōtō polemics to establish the correctness and superiority of the special Dōgen precepts, received in a direct line from the Chinese teacher Ju-ching.

Leaving aside the controversy over the origin of his special set, there is no doubt that Dōgen and his disciples assumed the right to ordain monks with these precepts without approval from either the government or from the established Japanese temples, and by so doing took a major step toward controlling their own affairs. Sōtō monks also conducted lay ordinations, and beginning in the medieval period, large assemblies were held which included an elaborate ceremony in which a famous teacher conferred the precepts upon the assembled laity from all social classes. In this way people from throughout the community could establish a connection with Sōtō Zen, and with its teachers. These mass precept assemblies were a major factor in the propagation of Sōtō Zen throughout the country (Bodiford 1993, 179-84).

The precepts were more than simple admission to the Buddhist community. The ceremony and its accompanying transmission charts indicated a relationship with the Buddha and thus took on a powerful charisma (Bodiford 1993, 184; Faure 1996, 220-21). From the fourteenth century, there are frequent notices of Sōtō monks pacifying and converting local kami and spirits by administering the precepts to them (Bodiford 1993-1994; 1993, 173-79). The local spirit was understood to be converted by the power of the precepts and would then become a supporter of Buddhism, which provided a way of including the prior powers in the new order. Such tales often formed a crucial part of the conversion of a pre-existing temple of another Buddhist affiliation to a Sōtō lineage temple.

For all the importance of the precepts, it is not at all clear exactly what the precepts were and upon what traditional authority they were based. In the above mentioned cases, it is usually not specified what precepts were being administered. It is not that this was an obvious matter, and in fact the precepts were the focus of extremely heated discussion within the Buddhist community, perhaps never more so than the mid-Edo period. In modern times however, it has at least become reasonable clear...
what precepts Dōgen used in Japan when ordaining his monks. There are three texts that have been established as authentic which represent Dōgen’s teachings concerning precepts. In order to establish a base line in this complex discussion, the following paragraphs will first outline how precepts were used in China and Japan generally, and then the general content of Dōgen’s three texts will be summarized. It should be emphasized however, that in early Tokugawa there was absolutely no such clarity about Dōgen’s position on precepts: the sources which enable us to now speak so confidently were not generally available or were not universally accepted as authentic. In addition there were other texts being used which now cannot be demonstrated to be authentic. To first sketch the modern understanding of Dōgen’s use of precepts is an anachronistic approach, but it has the advantage of quickly setting out the basic parameters of the rather confusing situation behind the discussion which is to follow. The pre-Tokugawa Japanese part of this overview of is based primarily on William Bodiford’s research and his summary of recent scholarship (Bodiford 1993, 164-173; Groner 1984; Welch 1967, 285-294).

**The Chinese and Japanese Background**

For Buddhist monks in China there was a standard set of precepts and procedures used to become a monk, regardless of the monk’s affiliation with any particular lineage or kind of practice. A similar situation prevailed for nuns, but I will limit my discussion to male ordinations. The ordination to become a monk was based on the novice ordination, followed by the full ordination for monks as described in one of the texts of the Indian Vinaya. In China it was the norm to use the translation called the *Four Part Vinaya* (*Ssu-fen lu*) for the list of ten novice and 250 full ordination precepts (T 22#1428). These precepts were given in elaborate ceremonies, at fixed times and in fixed locations at major monasteries, and resulted in the special position and privileges of a Buddhist monk. The change in status was recognized by the state (which required fees and documents), the entire Buddhist establishment, and of course lay society. Although the form and the details of the precepts were taken from the *Four Part Vinaya*, which was regarded as not Mahāyāna, the Chinese had long accepted these precepts as an integral part of their Mahāyāna practice by taking these precepts with a Mahāyāna attitude. Quite in addition to and entirely separate from these precepts which entailed the transition to fully ordained status in the eyes of the state and the Buddhist community was another set of vows: the bodhisattva precepts. These precepts emphasize compassion and universal salvation, instead of the details of monastic life, and the Mahāyāna attitudes prescribed are appropriate for both householders and monastics (Groner 1984, 215-220; Groner 1990). There are several lists of such precepts in the sūtra literature, but apparently the most common in China, and certainly in Japan, was the list of ten major and forty-eight minor precepts as found in the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* (T 24#1484). These precepts were taken at a variety of ceremonies along with other standard Buddhist expressions of devotion such as the three refuges, the three pure precepts, and ritual repentances. There was no standardization, and since these precepts had no legal role to play, there was no requirement for them to be standardized. The key point is that these sets of precepts were not used to make monks: they were devoid of the weighty social and legal implications of the full precepts of ordination. It is true that after taking the full ordination precepts, the newly ordained monks also went on to take the bodhisattva precepts, but for them, as for the laity, these were precepts to express and strengthen their religious devotion.

In Japan the same system was used until Saichō, after his return from China with new teachings, attempted to set up his own way of ordaining monks separate from the established temples. Eventually his Tendai community obtained the necessary state approval and in 823 ordained full status monks recognized by the state. Their ultimate authority was the *Lotus Sūtra*, and they used the detailed precepts of the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* without using the full 250 precepts as was the norm in China, and in the older Japanese lineages (Groner 1984, 272). This new way was to be the normal ordination in Tendai and came to be used by other groups as well, but it continued to be opposed by many Buddhist groups. The vagueness of these bodhisattva precepts made them of little use for the guidance of the daily life of monks, and over time other rules were composed to fill the gap, but these rules lacked the universal authority of the full 250 precepts (which monks of the older Japanese Buddhist groups continued to receive).

In this confusing situation, the attitude toward the precepts of the early Japanese Zen teachers reflects the full range of possibilities. Of particular interest is Eisai’s position upon his return from China in 1191, as seen in his *Kōzen gokokuron* (T 80#2543). Eisai was the first of the Kamakura era visitors to China to return with a Zen lineage, and he advocated strictly following the full 250 precepts as well as the bodhisattva precepts (the standard Chinese view), and stressed the importance to Zen of beginning with a thorough grounding in the precepts. This would seem unexceptional for an advocate of renewal for Japanese Buddhism, freshly returned from his trip to China. Dōgen, however, took the opposite tack in every way (Bodiford 1993, 169). Dōgen’s list of precepts is contained in the “Jukai” chapter of the *Genzō*, and there are two other independent works now accepted as authentic that give further ceremonial details and explain the meaning of these precepts: the *Busso shōden bosatsukai kyōju kaimon* (Busso shōden bosatsukai sahō) (D 2:279-281; ZS-Shūgen). These works make clear that Dōgen not only rejected the full precepts of the *Four Part Vinaya*, he also regarded meditation as in effect trumping all other kinds of practices, including following the precepts. Although there is no record of the content of the ordinances Dōgen received in China, we do know from these three texts that he administered to his own monks the first ten precepts of the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra*, (but not the forty-eight minor ones as was the practice in Japanese Tendai), plus the three refuges and the three pure precepts (which were commonly used in various ceremonies as mentioned above). Dōgen claimed that the ceremony came from Ju-ching, but this set of sixteen precepts, although attested elsewhere individually, are apparently combined in this unique way by Dōgen himself, since no prior source has ever been discovered (Bodiford 1993, 171).
Öbaku Influence and the Revival of Precept Assembly Practice

Although these precepts have now come to be the norm for Sōtō, at the beginning of the Tokugawa period the whole question was still very open. It was not at all clear what precepts Dōgen had in mind because there was so little reliable textual evidence, and apparently there was no standard customary practice in Sōtō Zen. Between Dōgen and the Tokugawa we know almost nothing about the details of Sōtō precept practices. Why was there such a sudden surge of interest in precepts in Sōtō Zen? As in so many other things in Japanese Zen of this period, one has to look to Öbaku Zen to see where things got started. One might be inclined to think that since Sōtō is a separate lineage from the shared lineage of Japanese Rinzai and Öbaku, that it was not really concerned with these Chinese monks who appeared in Nagasaki. But the Zen monks of this time were not so clearly split into Sōtō and Rinzai groups and there was a great deal of movement back and forth for teaching and learning about different practices and rituals. There were in fact many Sōtō monks that were extremely interested in whatever they could learn from the Chinese monks, and in a number of cases they studied for extended periods and then returned to their Sōtō temples bringing what they had learned. They heavily modified the Sōtō practices to bring them more into line with the Öbaku ways, which they saw as more authentic. The influence of Öbaku monks on the Sōtō school of Japanese Zen begins with this initial attraction and even a wide ranging adoption of many Öbaku ideas and practices. The initial enthusiasm was followed by acrimonious struggles that continued into the nineteenth century and were an all important part of the emergence of Dōgen as the source of Sōtō orthodoxy. In most cases, and perhaps especially for precepts, the position that became the standard for Sōtō was quite in opposition to Öbaku, but a full appreciation of that position entails its contrast to the Öbaku starting point.

I will refer to this group of Chinese and Japanese monks as Öbaku for convenience, but to do so is both anachronistic and perhaps inappropriate. In Japan the members of the lineage referred to themselves as the True Lineage of Lin-chi Zen (rinzai shōshū 至教正宗) until 1874, and in Sōtō writings of the period, the group is often referred to simply as the Ming Chinese monks. There are times, however, when the term Öbaku is used to distinguish between this recent Chinese lineage and the more established Rinzai and Sōtō lineages (S-Hōgo 3:826). Be that as it may, the term Öbaku will be used here, understanding that both the word and the connotations of a third stream of Japanese Zen in addition to Rinzai and Sōtō is problematic in many Tokugawa era contexts. The most important figure of these Chinese teachers was Yin-yüan Lung-ch'i (1592-1673), who was a major figure in Chinese Buddhist circles and an important reformer before coming to Japan (Wu 2002). When he arrived in 1654, the Chinese Buddhist community was already well established in Nagasaki, and Yin-yüan was known in Japan, at least in certain circles, from his writings. When Yin-yüan arrived, it seems that the practice of holding precept assemblies had fallen into abeyance, and one of the most popular things he did was to hold eight-day long precepts assemblies. In 1658 Yin-yüan printed his own set of ordination rules (Gukaihō 彌法戒儀), in which he both prescribed the ceremonies and discussed the meaning of the precepts (TK v7). His work followed contemporary Chinese standards, and even the name he borrowed from other works about precepts which appeared in the Ming Canon. Apparently in this area Yin-yüan was not the reformer he was in other aspects, but what he was doing must have been quite different from Japanese practice judging from the distinguished crowds he attracted. When I asked about precept assemblies recently at the head temple Manpukuji, they told me that this text was still the standard for their school, and showed me hand copied guides for precept assemblies, explaining that there were no printed materials. This is in stark contrast with the volumes of materials from Sōtō clerics printed from middle Tokugawa right up through the present.

The Öbaku assembly encourages both lay and monk participation. In the first part of the event everyone receives the three refuges, followed by the five precepts, the eight precepts and the ten novice precepts. The second main stage is for the postulant monks to receive the classic 250 precepts of mainstream Buddhism and become full monks. At the end everyone takes the ten major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts. In Yin-yüan's 1661 assembly the precepts were conferred on hundreds of people, and it later became a standard practice by abbots of Manpukuji and as well as its branch temples, and continues to this day, albeit in a shorter form. Many people received these extended precepts (the standard for any kind of Chinese Buddhism) from various Öbaku teachers, including some prominent Sōtō monks who stayed for long periods of practice and later returned to the Sōtō fold. These clerics had a profound effect on Sōtō thinking and practice. The Öbaku abbot who was directly responsible for most of the ordination ceremonies involving Sōtō monks was Mu-an Hsing-t'ao (1611-1684), the second abbot of the head temple of Manpukuji and the man responsible for training most of the Japanese Öbaku monks (Baroni 2000, 58-60). Shōe Dōjō (1634-1713) received full precepts from Mu-an in 1668 and returned in 1674 to help with the first retreat of Gesshū Sōkō (1618-1698) at Daitōji an extremely important Sōtō training temple. Mokugen Genjaku 黙玄元寂 (1629-1680) also was ordained with full precepts by Mu-an in 1670 before returning to Daitōji. Spurred by the Öbaku example, in 1671 Abbot Gesshū began to build what he called a (kechimyaku kaidan 血脈戒壇) at Daitōji. This practice continued at least until the next generation, as evidenced by the fact that Manzan Dōhaku 卍山道白 (1636-1741) who is well known as someone who campaigned for exclusive allegiance to the teachings of Dōgen, also receive an Öbaku ordination. This is revealed his edition of Dōgen's Kōroku, published in 1673, which included a preface by Mu-an which indicates that Dōhaku (I will continue to call him Dōhaku just to avoid confusion with another figure with a similar name) received the full precepts from Mu-an, a fact not recorded in Dōhaku's own chronology (Ōtani Tetsuo 1991, 31). Apparently the influence was strong and persistent, because some ninety years later Menzan Zuihō 面山瑞方 (1687-1763) complained in his set of questions and answers about ordinations
closer to Dōgen's view (1673) that most Sōtō monks were doing Ōbaku style ordinations with too many rules and ceremonies, unlike the proper Zen ordination, by which he meant the ordination passed down in his own lineage (S-Zenkai).

The crucial point here is that the example of the elaborate Ōbaku ceremonies led first to imitation and then to serious research on the part of Sōtō monks into what their own lineage had to say on the subject, and they found (apparently rather to their surprise) that Dōgen held that only his unprecedented set of sixteen precepts was necessary. It was only after unearthing previously obscure manuscripts and a great deal of wrangling that this conclusion was reached, but my point here is that it was apparently due to the powerful example offered by Ōbaku that they began this research. It was not until the nineteenth century that the position that Sōtō Zen has its own special precepts came to be fully accepted.

**Back to the Sources: The Development of the Sōtō Precepts**

The following discussion of the Sōtō response to this challenge draws on overview articles which are not further cited, in addition to the sources cited below (Kagamishima 1961, 1980; Watanabe 1993). The first major work of the Sōtō reform movement concerned with precepts was the *Taikaku kanwa* 對客開華, written by Dōhaku and published in 1715 at the end of his life (S-Zenkai). In this text he claimed that his position came directly from his teacher, Gesshō (the abbot of Daitōji mentioned earlier), who delivered many public lectures on the topic and administered precepts in what he described as the proper manner of the direct tradition of Ju-ch'ing and Dōgen. Dōhaku maintained that the correct precepts for Zen, for which the term *zenkai* 禪戒 was now being used (Dōgen did not use this term), were the one mind precepts (*ishinkai* 一心戒). These had been transmitted to China by Bodhidharma and then to Japan by Saichō, as part of his Zen lineage (which he received as well as his Tendai lineage). Dōhaku maintained that this lineage of precepts, despite the different name, had the same content as the Tendai perfect-sudden precepts (*endorokai* 瞬頓戒). Dōhaku also held that both Rinzei and Sōtō lineages originally had the same Zen precepts, but the ceremony and precepts were lost in China sometime after Dōgen returned to Japan, which explains why the contemporary Ōbaku Zen monks do not follow this form.

Before discussing the responses to Dōhaku’s (very problematic) views, it is appropriate to lay out to the background for his arguments concerning the relationship between Zen precepts and Tendai, since this is the key point upon which years of dispute rests (Bodiford 1992; Bodiford 1999). Dōhaku was arguing from passages coming at the end of the *Denjutsu isshinkai mon* which was written around 833 by Saichō’s student Kōjō (779-858) who was defending the new usage of precepts under Saichō (T 78#2379; Groner 1984, 292-298). This text mentioned Bodhidharma in connection with something called the one-vehicle precepts (*ichijōkai* 一乘戒), the meaning of which was not explained. The text also referred to the bodhisattva precepts of the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* as the one mind precepts. Neither of these terms figure in later Tendai precepts discussions, and in fact Bodhidharma and the Zen lineage were of little importance to Kōjō’s arguments. Kōjō took the step (which Saichō did not), of entirely doing away with the full precepts even in a provisional manner, and claimed that the one-vehicle vehicle precepts allow one to dispense entirely with the other precepts. Kōjō also equated precepts with the mind which perceives things as they are (*jissōshin* 實相心). This led in turn to the position that receiving the precepts entails mastery of meditation and wisdom, and thus entry into the ranks of the Buddha.

For Kōjō, the details of following the precepts were of little importance (unlike Saichō who continued to emphasize strict adherence). Kōjō’s arguments are a pastiche of quotations from Chinese writers, mostly of the T’ien-t’ai lineage, but he arrived at his own conclusions. In short, compared to Kōjō, Saichō himself was relatively conservative in that he retained more of the forms of the precepts and he emphasized their place in practice as leading toward (but not encompassing) the goal. The same differences (between Kōjō and his teacher) were still to be seen in the two sides of the precepts dispute in Sōtō of the mid Edo period. Despite strong arguments for a more conservative position, in the end the more radical position (which was apparently closer to Dōgen) prevailed. Thus *zenkai* in Japan continued to mean much more than simply precepts which are observed by monks of the Zen lineage. The mainstream Sōtō lineage view came to be that to receive the precepts was to enter the lineage of the Buddha, and without further endeavor to be ritually transformed to the status of the Buddhas and ancestors.

To return to Dōhaku, his position was not accepted at the time by everyone even within Sōtō. It was roundly denounced in every aspect by Sekiun Yūsen 石雲融仙 (1677-?), a student of Dokuan Genkō 獨窓玄光 (1630-1698), who had been Dōhaku’s great ally in the reform movement. Sekiun’s position was much closer to the standard Chinese view, which might be explained at least in part by the fact that his teacher, Dokuan, was so close to Yin-yuán’s predecessor in Nagasaki, Tao-che Ch’ao-yüan 道者超元 (1602-1662), that Dokuan was entrusted with the Chinese master’s ritual implements (symbolizing his teaching authority) when he returned to China in 1658. Despite the friendship of his teacher with Dōhaku, in Sekiun’s *Sōrin yakujū*, printed in 1719, he followed the Chinese model of precepts (that is, no special precepts for Zen), and emphasized the importance of following the precepts as an integral part of progress on the path (S-Zenkai). Sekiun was a Sōtō monk but he later took full precepts with a Shingon monk who was involved in the precepts revival of Shingon. Sekiun quite correctly wrote that Dōhaku’s assertion about Zen precepts being lost was untenable in view of the fact that the standard pure rules texts clearly indicate that the full precepts are to be administered, followed by bodhisattva precepts.

Another major Sōtō figure of this time, Tenkei Denson 天性傳尊 (1648-1753), also took full precepts from the same lineage of Shingon teachers and held the same basic position as Sekiun. However, even Tenkei’s own lineage did not continue to support this position, and Genrō Ōryū 玄樓顯龍 (1720-1813) though a member of the Tenkei lineage argued in his *Ittsui saiga* for using only Dōgen’s precepts (ZS-Shitchū).
Menzan’s Middle Way

Menzan is arguably the most influential, and certainly the most learned and prolific writer of the Sōtō reformers of this era. He grew up amid Sōtō priests who were strongly influenced by Ōbaku, but he never took their precepts and spent much of his life trying to eliminate Ōbaku influence which he regarded as deviations from Dōgen and hence improper for his vision of a reformed Sōtō school. Menzan presided over assemblies in which he lectured on the precepts and conferred the precepts upon hundreds of people who had assembled for that purpose. In his major work on the precepts, *Bussō shōden daikaiketsu* 佛祖正傳大戒訣 (1724), Menzan asserted that the procedure which Dōgen received from Ju-ching was to administer the novice precepts (*shamikai* 沙彌戒), followed by the bodhisattva precepts, and that the full precepts had never in the lineage of Ju-ching (S-Zenkai, 87-88). The precepts are also to be given a second time, with full explanation in the abbot’s room, when dharma transmission is given. Menzan relied on the *Bussō shōden bosatsu-kai kyōjū kaimon* and the *Bussō shōden bosatsu-kai sahō* 永平祖師 得度略作法 mentioned above as the source of the modern consensus on Dōgen’s precepts. Menzan also used, however, another much more problematic text that he had previously collated from various manuscripts, the *Eihei Soshi tokudo ryaku sahō* 永平祖師 得度略作法 (1744), also known as the *Shukke ryaku sahō mon* (D 2:272-278). In 1744 Menzan published this text as Dōgen’s instructions for ordination, but now it seems unlikely that the text can be accepted as coming from Dōgen. It has a different series of precepts than the other texts mentioned above and there are several different extant manuscript versions with different content, none of them are earlier than the fifteenth century (S-Kaidai 100; Bodiford 1993, 272; Kagamishima 1980, 177).

Menzan explained in his *Tokudo wakumon* that the novice precepts were a necessary part of the ordination of monks because the bodhisattva precepts were concerned with the mind of awakening, not with the rules of proper conduct for monks (S-Zenkai 191-192). It is also noteworthy that Menzan refers to Eisai for authority for his assertion of the importance of upholding (not just receiving) the precepts (194). He also addresses the problem of to what degree Dōgen is following the *Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei* (193-194). As Menzan and everyone else had come to recognize, Dōgen had not explicitly directed that the novice precepts should be taken. In the “Jukai” chapter, Dōgen quoted the *Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei* for his authority, as usual, but he ignored (even though he correctly quoted it) the part about taking the novice and full precepts (D 1:619; Kagamishima, Satō, and Kosaka 1972, 13). Dōgen’s extended discussion and detailed list of precepts is only concerned with the (now standard in Sōtō) set of sixteen, inexplicably ignoring the other precepts in the passage he just quoted. Menzan’s position was that Dōgen assumed that no further detail was necessary and that the precepts would be taken as usual. This was soon contested by Gyakusui Tōryū 逆水洞流 (1684-1766) of Dōhaku’s lineage. In his *Tokudo wakumon bengishō* 得度或間辨義章 (1755), he claimed that there was a transmission from Jakuen (who was Chinese) which included the novice precepts and that Menzan mistook this Jakuen lineage ceremony for Dōgen’s (ZS-Zenkai). At all events, unless further manuscripts come to light, the question of the authenticity of this *Eihei Soshi tokudo ryaku sahō* edition is doubtful, and on the basis of current evidence, it seems that in this case Menzan was following the general Buddhist tradition more closely than he was following Dōgen’s teachings.

Meaning of Precepts

Up until this point, I have been concentrating on what the proper list of precept should be, and ignoring what role receiving the precepts plays in the life of practice, whether of the laity or clerics. In mainstream Chinese Buddhism, and also in Eisai’s writings (for example), the precepts are an all-important part, but only a part, of Buddhist practice. They are the crucial initial step upon which the later practices of meditation and wisdom depend. The other viewpoint holds that taking the precepts in some sense completes practice, which is what came to be the Sōtō position under the name of the unity of Zen and the precepts (*zenkai iteh* 禪戒一致). This view is very similar to the Tendai notion that precepts are expressions of innate Buddha nature. The roots of this idea date back to the time of Saichō and his student Kōjō as discussed above, and were developed in the later Tendai tradition until in Dōgen’s time there are discussions of the precepts as the way to immediately realize Buddhahood, indeed a way superior to meditation (Stone 1999, 126-128). This view is also seen in *Zenkaiki* 禪戒規 (1325) by the celebrated Rinzai monk Kokan Shiren 虎關師鑑 (1278-1346) (Bodiford 1999; TK v7). Although something like this notion can be seen as early as in the *Platform Sūtra*, the idea becomes of central concern to Sōtō school writers in the Edo period, who tend to equate the formless precepts of the *Platform Sūtra* with their current Zen precepts, as seen for example in the *Jakushū Eifuku Oshō sekkai* 若州永福和尚説 (1752) of Menzan (S-Zenkai 143). That is not to say however that this was a new idea in Sōtō: from the thirteenth century onwards precepts were used to ordain lay people and even ghosts, who were thereby transformed without the need for further cultivation (Bodiford 1993, 172). Despite its long pedigree, this use of precepts as a kind of initiation into a sacred lineage conveying immediate results (instead of precepts as either rules to follow or a change of status opening the opportunity for practice) was still controversial. In the Tokugawa period Sōtō writers were sharply divided on the question of whether to understand the precepts as this kind of initiation which entailed immediate results or as the basis of beginning to practice.

Although Dōhaku championed Dōgen’s unique way, he did not hold the position of the unity of Zen and the precepts. He maintained that precepts were in a secondary position to Zen, that is to say they were a necessary condition but not in themselves the ultimate, and Menzan held largely the same view. In general, Menzan took the position that as important as it was to take the precepts, the taking was a confirmation of practice, not its completion. Menzan’s general attitudes are plainly laid out in his *Jakushū Eifuku Oshō sekkai* mentioned above, which are his lectures delivered in 1752 during a seven day
precepts assembly attended by six hundred people, including monks and male and female laity (S-Zenkai). Although he refers to his recently printed *Busso shōden daikei ketsu* for the detailed evidence, he emphasizes very clearly that for all their importance, the precepts are only one of the three main parts of the triad of precepts, meditation and wisdom, likening them to the three legs of a pot (143). Menzan also emphasizes that the ceremony for monks should not be confused with the precepts assembly ceremony which is for both monks and laity of both sexes (174-175). Further, the conferring of precepts (*jukai*授戒) as done in these ceremonies should not be confused with the transmission of precepts (*denkai*傳戒), done only in the private dharma transmission ceremony. Contrary to the tendency seen in the medieval precepts assemblies where it was believed that to receive the precepts was to attain Buddhahood, Menzan emphasizes the different uses of the precepts for the two groups of people.

After Menzan, however, the trend was strongly toward the unity of Zen and precepts, following the research of Banjin Dōtan 萬仞道坦 (1698-1775) into the the *Bonnōkyōryōkushō* 梵網經略抄 (1309) written in the first generation after Dōgen (S-Chikai-2). This all-important text explains Dōgen’s *Busso shōden kyōjukai* in terms that make it clear that Dōgen’s regarded the precepts as not being bound by textual details and moral prescriptions but entailed awakening itself (Bodiford 1993, 171-173). Banjin claimed on the basis of his reading of this commentary that Dōgen’s view was that taking the precepts entailed Buddhahood and that both Zen and the precepts were the eye of the true dharma. The question of following the precepts is of little importance; it is the taking of the precepts, the ceremony, that confers the transcendent benefit. For Banjin, the transmission from the Buddha himself to Mahākāśapa was the basis for authority in the question of precepts, not Bodhidharma much less any texts of mainstream Buddhism. Banjin’s key work is the *Busso shōden zenkaishō* 佛祖正傳禪戒鈔 (1758), which opens with an unusual list of rules, specifying that it is not to be shown outside of the group and so forth, and ends with the admonition that the blocks from which it was printed must be destroyed after fifteen years (S-Zenkai, 455). The preface opens with the statement that Zen and Precepts are but two names for the true teaching passed down from the Tathāgata to our school. The content is simply parts of the *Ryakushō* that explain Dōgen’s *Kyōju kai*mon, leaving out the parts which discuss the remaining eighty-four precepts of the *Brahma Net Sūtra*. Despite the opening prohibitions and the fact that it only a selection from a text which itself was a commentary, it was chosen to be included in the Taishō canon (T 82#2601).

### The Modern Zen Precepts Assembly at Eiheiji

This transcendental view of the precepts as the text of an initiation or consecration ceremony is the view that came to prevail in Japanese Sōtō. I will skip over the intervening developments, and how this understanding was propagated in the modern era via the *Shushōgi* (Heine, 2003). I will turn now to describing what happened this April at the annual precepts assembly at Eiheiji, the temple most closely identified with Dōgen. For this portion of the paper I will describe events primarily from the point of view of an ordinary lay participant, bringing in comments from other participants and my own observations as a lay participant.

The precepts assembly held every year at Eiheiji lasts one full week, but in other respects is utterly different from the assemblies held by Obaku leaders in the seventeenth century. The precept list is the group of sixteen as taught by Dōgen, and the event is open to participants, living or dead, with very little restriction. Yes, the deceased can participate by proxy, and receive a lineage chart just as if they had been there. This year some one hundred and ninety people came, of which nearly two thirds were women. The majority of people were in their fifties and above, but the ages ranged from nineteen to seventy-seven. Most of the participants were from Sōtō temple lay families, but there were also people who were from other Buddhist denominations and at least one young man who professed no religion other than searching for meaning. For many people this is not the first time to attend a precepts assembly, and a significant minority come every year either to Eiheiji or to another Sōtō temple lay families, but there were also people who were from other Buddhist denominations and at least one young man who professed no religion other than searching for meaning. For many people this is the necessary arrangements of the room for meals, sleeping and ceremonies, as well as meal clean up, are done not by the ordinands, but by the young monks in training, the members of the great assembly (*daishū* 大衆), who are living in the nearby training hall. Their usual routine is to eat, sleep, and meditate in one hall, the monks hall (*sōdō*僧道), not unlike what the ordinands do during this week. At 9 pm, when the ordinands return from their final evening lecture (held in a nearby modern Japanese style tatami room), the hall has been paved with sleeping mats and pillows. The ordinands file into the room in a parallel row of men and women and simply take the bed position they stop at. When everyone has found their place for the night, we are released to affix our sheet and pillow case. After arising before 3 am, we go to another hall for morning meditation, and the bedding is put away by the monks.

This same hall, where we sleep, eat, and have our piles of personal stuff is the dharma hall (*hattō*法堂), the main ceremonial hall of this most famous of Japanese training temples. This means that we get to see the daily round of ceremonies
of the notables of the Sōtō school and that we (and our disorderly stacks of junk) get to be seen by the unceasing flow of tourists in their Sunday best or their latest hip-hop grunge. The center of the room is an enormous main altar, behind which are the ashes of Dōgen, and it is this altar which is the focus of the week’s activities, both for the ordinands and the monks, as well as the tourists, for whom space is somehow made in the already full hall. The one hundred and thirty monks in training of course have to participate in some of the daily services, but most of their time is devoted to looking after the needs of the ordinands, meaning they have to get up even earlier than usual. There is an approximately equal number of more senior clerics who are in some way or other teaching or taking care of the ordinands, which means there there is at least two hosts for each guest. This is all taking place in the midst of the usual river of visitors to Eiheiji. It is not exactly a time of quiet retreat, but the ordinands display an impressive degree of quite discipline and attentiveness.

The daily routine begins with a 2:50 am wake-up followed by a twenty minute period of seated meditation, most of which time is taken up with explanations about how to meditate. Most of the day is spent in the four different ways discussed below. There are talks by either the Precepts Explaining Teacher (sekkaishi 講戒師) or by an invited cleric flown in for the day from as far away as Hokkaido. Although the talks were ostensibly concerned with the precepts, in fact they were mostly some variety of uplifting popular light stories with occasional Buddhist homilies and a brief summary of the life of Dōgen. Almost nothing was presented about the meaning of the ceremonies or about how to follow the precepts. Much of the remaining time is spent watching and chanting along with the usual liturgy of the dharma hall, seated along the edges. A few of the ordinands know the chants; most of them do not even try to follow along in the handbook that was presented to each at the reception area. Several times each day there is group practice in the Sōtō slow melodic chanting (baika ryūei sanka 椵花流詠讚歌) which has become very popular among some Sōtō groups. We worked hard and long to learn the "Hymn to Receiving the Precepts" (Ojukai gowasan 御受戒御和讃), led by young clerics who were very skilled. This is one activity where real training took place. To round out these exercises, all of which took place seated upon the hard tatami mats (no cushions were provided), twice a day for some twenty minutes the ordinands were led in a very slow procession around Eiheiji chanting (in baika style) "Homage to the original teacher Śākyamuni the Tathāgata" (namu honshi shaka nyorai 南無本師釈迦如來). These four activities left time only for eating and a daily afternoon bath.

For the ordinands as well as the other people living and visiting Eiheiji, the focus of attention is Abbot Miyazaki, universally referred to simply as Zen Master (Zenji sama 禪師様). He is one hundred and four years old and is rolled into the hall in an elaborate wheel chair, from which he conducts most ceremonies. He speaks slowly and softly, but with the aid of a splendid sound system he is quite audible throughout the hall. He gives short talks of up to ten minutes in the dharma hall, usually speaking to the ordinands about the meaning of what they are doing. For these talks no one is nodding off; the group is silent and still. He teaches that Zen and the precepts are one and the same and that to receive the precepts is to become a Buddha. And in the ceremonies of the last two days, he repeats this message again and again.

The evening of the next to the last full day is the repentance ceremony (sangeshiki 儀悔式), for which the women make themselves up and dress in the formal clothes they have been holding in reserve. The ordinands are assembled in the dharma hall, joined by the one hundred and thirty monks in training, who will also be receiving the precepts. The hall has been completely curtained off with red cloth forming an enclosed space around the altar with a pathway to an adjoining room. The ordinands (now numbering over three hundred) are instructed in the procedure and then led in single file, in the careful order of the names in the registry, into a room adjoining the dharma hall. The entire route is lined with red cloth and dimly lit, in part with real candles. As each ordinand approaches the abbot, who is surrounded by all the major teachers of the assembly, he is handed a small slip of paper upon which is written "minor infractions are endless" (shōzai muryō 小罪無量) which he then hands to the abbot, as the ordinand chants this same phrase. This is the one time that the ordinand is required to give a solo performance. The slip of paper is added to the growing mound in front of the abbot.

After all the ordinands have made this acknowledgement of their transgressions to the abbot and reassembled in the dharma hall, the abbot returns in slow procession and climbs up onto the altar, assisted, but not carried by his attendants. The register containing the name of the ordinands is burned before he abbot in a brazier, the teachers stirring carefully with long chopsticks to be sure all is consumed in this fire. The abbot tells us that our transgressions have been entrusted to him and that he warrants, with his full authority, that those transgressions have been consumed in this fire.

The quiet and solemn nature of the ceremony is suddenly broken by very loud chants, ringing of hand bells and shaking of staves as the assembly of clerics form a circle and circumambulate the assembly of ordinands. They stop every twenty paces or so and bow to the ordinands in the center, then take off again at a clip chanting loudly "Homage to the Original Teacher Śākyamuni Buddha" (namu honshi shakamuni butsu 南無本師釋迦牟尼佛). The contrast with the solemn stillness that prevailed up until now is startling and people are clearly very moved. Several of the ordinands tell me that they feel a great weight has been taken from them by the ceremony and the abbot having taking responsibility for their transgressions.

The follow morning the abbot tells us that we have become Buddha (jōbutsu 成仏) due to the connection made in this ceremony, and that he never tires of the great joy of this occasion. The morning lecture includes for the first time a few details about the precepts to a very tired but happy group of ordinands of which perhaps half are basically asleep. The mood of the group is indeed as if a cloud has been lifted. People are very cheerful and chat animatedly in the breaks for the first time. As before, people dress in their best for the final evening ceremony, the receiving of the precepts along with the lineage certificate.
(kechimyaku 血脈) containing their Buddhist name. For those who have already participated in such a ceremony, their previous precept name (kaimyō 戒名) is used, but for others, the abbot selects a name.

The central altar is again partitioned off with red curtains and we are again presented to the abbot in the order of the name registry, separated into the usual four groups of male and female, cleric or lay. After much preliminary ceremonies, the ordinals approach the abbot who is seated upon the altar with two brushes which he dips in water and then annoints the heads of the ordinands, two at a time, leaning down from his position upon the altar. When we all have been annointed, the abbot recites the precepts, and after each group the ordinands recited together "I will preserve them well." At the end of this part the abbot tells the ordinands that from now on we begin again, living as a Buddha, and that somehow we keep the precepts even if we do not keep them.

The next action by the ordinands is to ascend to the center of the altar, in groups of thirty. The main teachers of the ceremony circumambulate each group while shaking their staffs and chanting that we have entered the rank of the the Buddhhas, a position equal to that of the great awakening. After this has been done for each group, the ordinands approach the altar and received their certificate, wrapped in a paper binder with their secular name on the outside. After a formal display of the lineage chart which all have just received, the ordinands repair to a nearby room where the certificates for the deceased ordinands (mōkai 死戒) are distributed to those who have arranged to have this done for their departed relatives. About one third of the participants have arranged for this. To everyone's evident relief we are told we can sleep in (until 3:40 am), which is good, because everyone is so excited and talkative that is is some time before sleep descends.

After the usual services and a round of formal thanks, the assembly is dissolved and people return to their homes with an invitation to come back again as many times as they like. This ceremony clearly follows the line of thought which flows from Banjin's teaching. The ceremony itself is a complete religious event, one which can be repeated, and yet one from which there can be no retreat, no defeat. Although the manual which was distributed to everyone at the beginning clearly says that to receive the precepts is to become a disciple of the Buddha, the ordinands have themselves become Buddha. They go forth in a new life, unburdened by either their past transgression or the concern of trying to live up to a new standard.

**North American Sōtō Zen Precept Assemblies**

As might be expected, the Sōtō Mission temples in North America have precepts assemblies that follow closely the official head temple model. In 2003, Zōshūji in Los Angeles held a five day event that followed the same basic schedule as Eiheiji. According to the manual prepared for the occasion the rituals included baika chanting, burning of the registry of names and ascending the altar.

There are a number of independent Sōtō lineages that have developed in North America, and here I will be concerned with the lineage founded by Suzuki Shunryū in San Francisco. In his lectures about the precepts Suzuki followed the official Sōtō teaching. "When I say precepts, what you will think of is something like Ten Commandments or grave prohibitory precepts. But Zen precepts are not like that. To start with, Zen precepts means to understand zazen. So another interpretation of zazen is precepts." (Suzuki Shunryū 1971) The ceremony of receiving the precepts evolved however, into a practice that emphasizes the precepts as an aid to deepening one’s commitment and expressing one’s intention to follow a more Buddhist style of life. In this aspect the American Sōtō style is much closer to the practice advocated by Menzan and other more mainstream thinkers of the Tokugawa. The belief that we are already Buddha is acknowledged in the beginning of the ceremony with the phrase "In faith that we are Buddha we enter Buddha's Way", but the focus is on the meaning of the precepts and on how to follow them.

For American Sōtō Buddhists, who are seldom born into a Buddhist family with ties to a particular lineage, receiving the precepts has become more like a rite of passage. Students must first develop some kind personal relationship with a Zen teacher, and receive their permission to participate in a precepts ceremony. They must also sew their own miniature version of Buddha's robe worn hung from the neck (rakusu 絲子). This does not play a role in the mainstream Eiheiji Japanese ceremony, though other Japanese Sōtō groups follow a similar practice (Riggs 2004). Before the ceremony takes place the ordinands are expected to attend classes about the precepts and to deepen their understanding and commitment. These preparations usually take several months, though it can be even longer. The precepts assembly itself is very short, usually done in one hour or so, though it may be held at the same time as another event, such as a weekend meditation retreat. The elaborate repentance and burning of the registry is compressed into a simple recitation of the repentance verse (sangemon 懺悔文), used in everyday ritual. The elaborate ritual preparations of the site mandated by the Japanese Sōtō school are absent. The repentance verse is immediately followed by the receiving of the precepts and then the ordinands are presented with both their lineage certificate (as at Eiheiji) and also with the rakusu they have sewn, which has now been inscribed with their Buddhist name. There is no mounting of the altar nor is there provision for ordination being received by the deceased.

Much of the differences can be attribute to vastly different social conditions in the two countries, but it is also striking that the American ceremony lacks the emphasis on becoming a Buddha at the conclusion of the ceremony. In addition, there is no expectation of doing the ceremony more than once as a confirmation of commitment or as a religious exercise. Just as the set of precepts used by Dōgen is both old and new, so the San Francisco Zen Center precepts practice makes something quite new out of very old elements.
The Transition from Monastic to Priest in Japanese Buddhism
by Gil Fronsdal
(Delivered at a Vinaya Conference at Green Gulch Farm, 1990)

One of the most controversial aspects of the development of Buddhism in Japan was the transformation of the monastic institution of monks and nuns to a community of married priests with only a nominal relationship to religious precepts. This change was so radical that most other Asian Buddhists are extremely critical of the “degeneracy” they see in Japanese Buddhism. Part of this criticism stems from the traditional and early Buddhist ideal that the Vinaya, or the code of monastic precepts, is the “blood vein of the Buddha-dharma”. These critics insist that the health and continuation of Buddhism is dependent on a strong, traditional monastic core. Theravadin monks frequently go so far as to say that Japanese Buddhism is not Buddhism, a claim that they seldom make for other forms of East-Asian Buddhism. In this paper I will explore the factors that led to the transition from monkhood to priesthood in Japan.

While I will describe a number of factors that contributed to the development of the priesthood, my main thesis is that the Japanese seldom took the monastic ideal seriously enough to pursue it faithfully. This was mostly because they did not sufficiently adopt the ethical and soteriological rationale for Buddhist monasticism which was necessary for its health and survival. The original rationale had been a pragmatic concern for providing an ethical foundation for the cultivation of the path leading to Nirvana or Freedom. Because of the nature of both the type of Buddhism which first arrived in Japan and the political and magical functions which the Nara and Heian period Japanese used Buddhism for, there was not the motivation to follow the monastic precepts in any way except in appearance and in ritual. Without the soteriological motivation for following the precepts, the early Japanese monastics set the precedent for the historical tendency of ignoring the precepts to the extent that the most serious violations were at times institutionalized into the Japanese Buddhist establishment. I believe that this disregard for the precepts was one of the prime conditions which led to the successful abandonment of the monastic precepts in the Meiji era. However, though the precepts were mostly ignored, they were never really forgotten. The ideal of the pure monk has somehow lingered on in the Japanese psyche even down to our present time.

Even before Buddhism arrived in Japan, the monastic ideal had already undergone sufficient changes so as to provide precedents and justifications for the Japanese transformation. Perhaps foremost was the new understanding of ethics which evolved within the Mahayana movement. Pre-Mahayana Buddhism was relatively strict and literal in its interpretation of the monastic codes. While both the pre-Mahayana and the Mahayana traditions shared much of the same concern for compassionate activity, the Nikaya schools generally felt that the precepts were inviolable. In contrast the Mahayanists developed a more pragmatic understanding of compassion in which the ends often justified the means. The precepts could be violated if it resulted in a greater soteriological benefit or in the avoidance of a greater sin. This form of thinking appears in the writing of the Indian philosopher Asanga where it is called “profound morality” (gambhiriya-sila). In both his Yogacarabhumī and Mahayana-Samgraha he gives examples where the murder of one person is justified if many lives are thus saved.1

Perhaps the simplest justification for deviating from the precepts was for the purpose of defending the “True Law” of Buddhism. The Mahaparinirvāṇa Sutra makes this explicit by stating, “One who follows the five precepts is not of the Mahayana! If it is for the protection of the True Law, it is the Mahayana to not observe the five precepts”.2 This form of argument was put to frequent use in Japan. For example Nichiren, in his Risshō ankokurōn, quotes this and other similar passages of the Parinirvāṇa Sutra as justification for his militant teaching. Another example is a work from 1409 which attributes the following statement to the Tendai monk Ryogen (912-982), “Just as the troops of the Four Kings protect Sakra Devendra, so our troops of soldiers prevent, by force, all disorder in the domains we have received by donation; by their political and magical functions which the Nara and Heian period Japanese used Buddhism for, there was not the motivation to follow the monastic precepts in any way except in appearance and in ritual. Without the soteriological motivation for following the precepts, the early Japanese monastics set the precedent for the historical tendency of ignoring the precepts to the extent that the most serious violations were at times institutionalized into the Japanese Buddhist establishment. I believe that this disregard for the precepts was one of the prime conditions which led to the successful abandonment of the monastic precepts in the Meiji era. However, though the precepts were mostly ignored, they were never really forgotten. The ideal of the pure monk has somehow lingered on in the Japanese psyche even down to our present time.

Some of the various sutras in the Mahayanā Ratnakūta collection provide very clear examples of a tendency to reject or at least rethink the traditional monastic precepts. In the Sutra of the Definitive Vinaya (T 310; Sutra 24) the Buddha says, “Now, Upali, you should know that the pure precepts observed by Bodhisattvas and those observed by Sravakas are different both in aim and in practice. Upali, a pure precept observed by Sravakas may be a breach of discipline for Bodhisattvas. A pure precept observed by Bodhisattvas may be a great breach of discipline for Sravakas. ... The Buddha teaches Bodhisattvas precepts which need not be strictly observed, but teaches Sravaka precepts which must be strictly and literally observed.”3

Another sutra in the same collection goes so far as to say,
“Everything is an illusion, everything is empty, there is no self or other, there exists no human persons and no beings, no father or mother, no arhat or Buddha, no Dharma and no Sangha... there is neither crime nor criminal. If Manjusri had assassinated the Buddha, that would be the one good assassination. The Buddha himself is nothing but a name, without substance, without reality, seen as an illusion. There is no sinner who sins.”4

1 Is it significant that there is very little evidence of monks engaged in warfare in both ancient India and modern Cambodia and that in both these countries Buddhism was virtually eradicated in blood baths of violence?
Though these seemingly antinomian teachings provided available justification for some of the monastic abuses in Japan, the Mahayana tradition mostly emphasized adherence to the precepts. For example the Mahayana Brahmayala Sutra which was much more central to Chinese Buddhism than the sutras quoted above, provides a list of Mahayana bodhisattva precepts to supplement the Vinaya. First on its list of the Ten Major Bodhisattva precepts is the prohibition of killing. The tenth of the Twenty Minor Bodhisattva precepts prohibits the possession of deadly weapons and the eleventh prohibits the monk from acting as a military envoy. Continuing with a Buddhist emphasis on non-harming the sutra also forbids the eating of meat.

In addition to providing some doctrinal justification for breaking the precepts, pre-Japanese Mahayana provided ample precedence for many of the Japanese monastic developments. In India the monks and nuns had considered themselves to be an independent community governed by its own laws, above and beyond the jurisdiction of secular authority. It was the custom, continued today in Theravadan countries, that monks were of a higher status than kings. Certainly a monk was not to bow down to a ruler. This ideal ran counter to the Chinese ideal of a social hierarchy headed by the ruler. As there was little room in Chinese society for an independent self-governing Sangha, the Sangha came to be controlled by the state. With this development the monastic community began to be seen as serving the state rather than solely serving people’s spiritual needs. A striking example of this is in the twelfth century when Buddhist monks formed their own army to help repel a Mongol invasion. Motieville has pointed out that the success of the Chinese government’s control of the clergy depended on the strength of the central state. He reports that during times of a weak central government there were numerous incidents of Buddhists monks in armed revolt against the government.

All Buddhist countries seem to have examples of monks who dramatically disregarded the monastic precepts by engaging in murder, theft, sex, lies and alcohol. For example, already in 515 there are records of married warrior monks in China. However these were mostly isolated historical events. What makes Japan unique in this regard is that the violation of the precepts became institutionalized into the Sangha. For its entire feudal period Japan’s largest monasteries were highly organized war machines with large standing armies of monks. As I will describe, the significant Japanese attempts to reform the clergy and the precepts paradoxically led to ever increasing weakening in the observance of the precepts. The impression I have is that the reforms all ultimately failed because there was never enough social and monastic support for them to work.

From the sixth century to the Meiji Reformation in 1868, the monastic institutions of Japan received generous (at times lavish) support from the state and the populace. Traditionally, in Indian Buddhism, the clergy received support only if their ethical behavior was consistent with their vows. In contrast, the state and popular support of the Japanese clergy was only marginally dependent on ethics, if at all. In the first few centuries after Buddhism was establishment in Japan on the sword of Prince Shotoku’s victory over anti-Buddhist clans, Buddhism’s primary function was as a tool for the magical and political protection of the nation and rulers (and later of itself). This was largely because religion and the state were almost inseparable in ancient Japan. Motivated by politics and superstition, the ruling elite supported Buddhism for the performance of rituals and not for living an ethical lifestyle; as long as the rulers could control the clergy, the clergy’s personal affairs were disregarded.

An example of the government’s use and support of Buddhism is seen in Emperor Shomu’s order of 737 that each of the sixty-six provinces were to build a state-sponsored temple and convent in which the monks and nuns were to recite sutras for the protection and prosperity of the state. Even meditation practice eventually became prescribed for the benefit of the state as we see in such essays as Eisai’s Protecting the Nation with Zen. In the cases where the Japanese rulers tried to regulate the ethics of the clergy, this was primarily so that the rituals would be efficacious.

The close relationship between the state and the Buddhist church increased dramatically in the seventh century with the appointment of monks to state offices with state salaries. One of the motivations for this was that in 623 a monk axed his grandfather to death. The Empress Suiko had the offender punished and then declared, “When those who have chosen the Buddhist Way break their Law how can lay people be admonished? From this time on sojo and sozu shall be appointed and charged with the supervision of monks and nuns.” 8 Sojo and sozu were positions held by monks that were modeled on offices used to regulate the sangha in Southern China and in Korea. This proclamation perhaps marks the point when the early Japanese monastics were not allowed the autonomy of their own rule. Monks started to become part of the state bureaucracy.

This regulation by the state increased with the Taika Reform (645), the Taiho code (701) and the Yoru code (718). In the Taiho code was a section called “The Rules for Monks and Nuns” which contained specific regulations which tried to reinforce the monastic code (the Vinaya) and organize the growing Japanese clergy. These codes prohibited illicit sexual relationships and the consumption of alcohol and meat. Attempting to maintain control of the monastic order, these rules also forbid private ordination. It seems that in laying down these rules the government was mostly concerned with maintaining overall control of the sangha and had little concern with the internal affairs of the clerical community.

With all these early rules imposed on the monastics, the state was essentially the religious police which attempted to keep the clergy under the control of the emperor. These attempts at control were sabotaged however by the over-generous support the state provided for the monastic institutions. Fueled by their superstitious beliefs, the rulers built monasteries and temples and ordered elaborate rituals for every possible occasion. There were ceremonies for the appeasement or supplication of natural forces and spirits and for the sicknesses and deaths of the court families. This resulted in an accumulation of vast wealth and power by the clergy which reached a height during the reign of Emperor Shomu (701-756).

Emperor Shomu’s support of Buddhism was so grand that the church’s power almost surpassed that of the state.” Secure and arrogant, the clergy publicly broke the monastic precepts. The monasteries entered the business of usury and some monks entered the arena of politics. The monk Gembo was exiled from Nara in 745 for his role in supporting a coup attempt. Some years later the monk Dokyo was involved in a plot that would have placed him on the throne.
With the rapid growth of the clergy in the Nara period, many people entered the monastic ranks for non-religious reasons. Ordination and the clerical life offered the lower class their only opportunity for social mobility. For others it was virtually the only way to avoid life’s hardships. And for some it was a haven from political problems. In the middle of the Heian period, when the upper class became impoverished, many sons of court nobles became monks as a means of seeking wealth and power. Though the state tried to control the size of the monastic communities, the rulers found it necessary to ordain monks and nuns en masse in order to fulfill their ritual needs. All this brought many people into the temples who had no interest in following the monastic vows. In this climate the monastic abuses became so severe that in 754 the Chinese Vinaya master Ganjin was invited to Japan to establish the Vinaya teaching and purity the monastic community. It should be pointed out that this invitation represented an attempt to take the precepts seriously and to bring the orthodox ordination to Japan. However, after five unsuccessful attempts at crossing to Japan, Ganjin was so delayed that the Japanese government had in the meantime come up with its own ideas concerning monastic behavior. Partly as a result of his strained relationship with the government, Ganjin’s effort bore little fruit and by the end of the century the monks were again flouting the precepts.

The impression one has in reading the history of Japanese Buddhism is that the monastic precepts were grossly broken by every generation of monks. It is as if violence, power and sex were the “blood vein” of Japanese monasticism. As we have already seen, as early as 623 or about 75 years after the introduction of Buddhism in Japan, a monk was already involved in murder and in the eighth century monks were plotting for the throne. Sexual license was rampant and already in the Nara period we read of married monks. In the collection of stories called “Sand and Pebbles” from the 13th century, there is the statement, “One has rarely heard of a religious man (shōnin) during this last age who has not taken a wife.”

As I stated above, one of the unique aspects of Japanese monasticism was the phenomenon of “priest-warriors” or sohei. Sohei seem to have been lower-class members of the temple communities who lived in and around the large temples. Though it is not clear what kind of ordination and precepts these monks took, they seem to have been considered monks (so) by the Japanese. From the Heian to the Tokugawa period many of the largest monasteries maintained large forces of these sohei. McMullin reports that from 981 to 1549 there were about 250 major incidents or actions by these monks involving conflicts between temple factions, between temples and against the court and the Fujiwara regents.

Part of the need for monastic soldiers came from the need to protect and govern the large landholdings that the monasteries had acquired. The institution of sohei existed only during the feudal period when a strong central authority to establish national order was lacking. By the Kamakura period some of the large temples had achieved enough wealth and autonomy that they became virtually independent states. For example, Kofuku-ji, the Hosso headquarters in Nara, maintained police control of the entire Yamamoto province, which no Shogun official was allowed to interfere with.

In addition to maintaining standing armies, in 1543, some of the temples learned the art of making firearms from the Portuguese. In flagrant violation to the Mahayana Brahma-jala Sutra’s prohibition to possessing arms, the Shingon temple Negoro-ji quickly became one of the largest musket and mortar producers in Japan.

Though, of course, there are examples of clergy who carefully followed the precepts during this formative period of Japanese Buddhism, the widespread existence of warring soldier-monks as part of the major Buddhist institutions shows that traditional Buddhist ethics were not of great importance. In trying to understand this it is useful to realize that there were three major ethical teachings present in early Japan. Alongside of Shinto ethics there were the imported ethics of Buddhism and Confucianism.

As I described above, Buddhist ethics, especially monastic ethics, was originally meant as a means to Buddhism’s soteriological goal, regardless whether that goal was understood as being one’s own salvation or the salvation of others. A secondary motivation for ethical behavior in Buddhism was for acquiring merit; however there was never any ethical imperative to accumulate merit. As there seems to have been very little interest in Buddhist soteriology among the early Japanese, it is perhaps not surprising that they did not feel inspired to adopt Buddhism’s ethical rationale and consequently Buddhist precepts. This was, at least in part, probably because the kind of Buddhist teaching which first entered Japan was about as transcendent, superhuman and unachievable as has ever been seen within Buddhism. On the one hand it insisted on Buddhahood as the ultimate religious goal but on the other hand Buddhahood was described as being so transcendent and ultimate that it must have seemed an impossible human achievement to the early Japanese Buddhists. The abhidharma texts that were much studied by the early Japanese Buddhist scholars only confirmed this by teaching that the spiritual path required three innumerable kalpas to complete. With such an impossible spiritual goal as the rationale for pursuing monastic precepts it is not surprising that the clergy did not take Buddhist precepts seriously.

Instead of soteriology, the early Buddhists found much more meaning in Buddhist ritual. Ritual supplication of the Buddhist deities fits easily alongside the native Shinto beliefs of having a ritual relationship with the kami. Though the Japanese couldn’t become excited about soteriology they certainly were enthusiastic about the powerful new Buddhist “Kami”. Just as the historical Buddha was overshadowed in Japan by the cosmic Amida and Mahavairocana Buddhas and the pantheon of Buddhist divinities, so the historical roots of Buddhist ethics were overshadowed in Japan by ritual and superstition. In addition, many of the Sutras that first entered Japan, such as Golden Light Sutra with its Four Kings and the Lotus Sutra, helped to fuel the superstitions.

The “realistic” Shinto ethical understanding of the Japanese probably also prevented many Japanese from taking Buddhist ethics seriously. It has often been pointed out that Shinto was much more life-affirming than Buddhism. Shintoism teaches the “accepting of life and death, good and evil, as inevitable parts of the world we live in.”

The early Japanese didn’t
have the strong concept of sin that Indian Buddhism had. Certainly they had a harder time understanding the “sin” of such individual concerns as drinking and sexuality. Wrong ethical behavior was dealt with through Shinto rites of purification and not through self-restraint. It seems that Buddhist monastic precepts did not have an obvious place in early Japanese culture. Probably motivated by Shinto, one repeated theme in Japanese history is that the Japanese do not have as much need of the Buddhist precepts as other Asians because they are naturally more pure and ethically mature. This argument is seen in the writings of Saicho and is still heard in Japan today. Saicho used it as a reason why the Japanese did not need the “Hinayana” precepts. When I was in Japan several Japanese priests explained to me that the Japanese needed no precepts because they had the Japanese mentality which was incapable of serious transgressions. Interestingly, Jiun Sonja evoked the same argument for why the Japanese should take an interest in the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts. He claimed that the Ten Precepts were the natural expression of the pure heart that the Japanese had received from the Gods.

Confucianism, the third ethical system in Japan, was much more successful in penetrating Japanese culture than Buddhist ethics. Confucianism’s concern with social and cosmic order was well suited to the justification of the political and social systems and hierarchies that were evolving in Japan. Also the Confucian emphasis on the family matched well with the important position of extended families in early Japan. The Confucian criticism of Buddhist monasticism which started in China continued in Japan from the sixth century until the present. The main criticism was that the “homeleaving” of the renunciant Buddhist monks was detrimental to the strength and health of the family and therefore of the whole social order. This criticism, which was especially forceful near the end of the Tokugawa era, became a factor in the final abandonment of Buddhist monasticism in the Meiji Era.

Somewhat ironically, Buddhist monks were some of the main carriers of Confucian ethics to Japan. Especially during the Kamakura and Muramachi periods Rinzai monks effectively introduced Neo-Confucianism to the large and influential warrior class.

Before describing the changes that took place with the Meiji reformation I would like to discuss some of the earlier important “reforms” that did much to change the nature of the Japanese clergy. Paradoxically perhaps, these reforms, even the ones that aimed at purifying the monastic institutions, all ended up in weakening the Japanese monastic system.

It is not difficult to find exemplary monks in Japanese history who understood the value of precepts for the practice of Buddhism. For example Kukai wrote,

“If we wish to walk in the way of the Buddha, unless we observe the precepts, we cannot reach the goal. Never violate either the Exoteric or Esoteric Buddhist precepts; firmly observe them and maintain yourselves clean and pure.”

While Kukai added esoteric precepts to the Nikaya precepts that monks were receiving in Nara, his contemporary, Saicho, substituted them with a list of ten Bodhisattva precepts. To some extent, Saicho was motivated by a political desire to become free from the control of the Nara temples which had the sole rights to perform the ordination ceremony. However I think that we can believe Saicho’s claim that he was trying to establish a pure Mahayana lineage of monks. Since Saicho took seriously the Lotus Sutra’s criticism of “hinayana” monks and its insistence that the Bodhisattva monk should avoid them, he wished to get away from the Nikaya precepts (vinaya, shibunritsu) that Japanese monks were receiving.

Saicho’s main concern was to establish a lineage of monks whose precepts accorded with the altruistic spirit of the Mahayana. But in doing this he had no intention of diluting the ethical standards of monkhood. On the contrary, he was well aware of the ethical abuses of the Nara monks and wanted to establish a monastic community that would not be influenced by worldly concerns and desires. One of the main ways he did this was by having Tendai monks sequestered at Mt. Hiei for 12 years of intense study and meditation. In abandoning the Nikaya monastic precepts, Saicho substituted them with both the Ten Bodhisattva precepts and very strict adherence to monastic discipline; i.e. the rules and regulations of monastic life [shingi].

Saicho’s new Mahayana monkhood was extremely successful and was eventually adopted by all the important Buddhist schools that had monks. However the intense monastic training that was supposed to go along with the Ten Precepts did not survive outside of the training monasteries. And often it didn’t survive even there. The overall result of Saicho’s attempt to reform the monkhood was actually the watering down of the Japanese monastic institutions. From the blatant disregard of the precepts that was part of the whole history of Japanese Buddhism it is perhaps not appropriate to say that Saicho’s reform ultimately weakened the monastic commitment even more than it already was. However, in abandoning the Nikaya ordination which traditionally defined a Buddhist Bhikshu or monk. Saicho lowered the doctrinal wall which the Meiji reformation was to knock down completely, dealing the final blow to Japanese monasticism.

Easily as important for Japanese monasticism as the reforms of Saicho were the ethical doctrines of Pure Land schools and the revolution of Shinran. The Pure Land movements can be seen partly as a reaction against the strict monastic life and practice at Mt. Hiei. In relation to monasticism, Honen’s teaching of the universal availability of the Nembutsu practice to any person regardless of their social position undermined the spiritually superior position which the clergy held. The prevailing

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2 Actually Saicho advocated both the major Bodhisattva precepts and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts that were found in the Brahmajala Sutra. These are, 1)not to kill, 2) not to steal, 3) not to indulge in sexual relations, 4) not to lie, 5) not to buy or sell liquor, 6) not to expose other people’s faults, 7) not to praise oneself or to defame others, 8) not to begrudge one’s possessions or the Buddhist teachings to others, 9) not to hold a grudge against others or refuse to accept apologies, 10) not to slander the Triple Jewels. The 48 minor precepts include such things -as not to eat meat or foods in the onion family, not to possess weapons, not to be involved in commercial activities or arson, and not to neglect caring for the sick.
orthodox Buddhist understanding was that the monastic was superior to the lay person in spiritual status. Because of this many members of the court took monastic vows late in their lives in an effort to attain some spiritual advantage, usually in their next life. The advantage and merit attained from being a monk or nun was not necessarily felt to depend on one’s adherence to the precepts. For example the book Sanbokotoba (“The Three Jewels”) the author says that “I even revere those monks who violate the precepts”, and then quotes a sutra which says that even if a monk violates the precepts he is still superior to a king.26 Honen’s teaching by relying exclusively on the recitation of the Nembutsu implied a radical rejection of the traditional orthodoxy of the Buddhism of his time.

However, Honen himself seems to have remained committed to strict obedience to the Bodhisattva precepts he had received on Mt. Hiei. Seeing no contradiction between the precepts and Nembutsu, there is a tradition that Honen even administered the precepts to various people.27 In several of his writings he defended the practice of the precepts. For example in his Shichikai kishomon he laid down various new precepts for his followers, one of which forbids them from claiming that the Nembutsu path precludes the practice of monastic precepts.28

While Honen’s teaching equalized the status of the monkhood and the laity, it was Shinran who rejected entirely the monastic option as having any efficacy in the “age of decline” (Mappo). For Shinran following the precepts falls under the category of ineffective self-power. He wrote,

All the common and petty persons at all times constantly defile their minds with greed and lust, and their anger and hatred constantly burn the treasure of Dharma. Even though they work and practice as busily as though they were sweeping fire off their heads, their practices are called deluded and deceitful practices. If one desires to be born in the Land of Infinite Light with these deluded and poisoned good [deeds], he cannot attain it.29

For Shinran all effort, even what is usually called “good” or wholesome effort, such as following the precepts, involves some self-effort and so is selfish. The only hope for enlightenment is if we rely on some other-power which is not polluted by our self-concern. For Shinran this other-power was the inexhaustible merit which supports the vow-power of Amida Buddha. If one has total faith in Amida’s vow then “there is no room for one to be concerned with being good or bad.”30 Sometime around 1205-1206 Shinran abandoned his monastic status and married. By 1207 he was describing himself with the nebulous title of “neither priest nor layman”.31 Shinran’s new status was vague because he still retained some of the appearances of the monkhood, such as shaving his head, preaching, and probably wearing clerical robes.32 Although, as we have seen above, it was not unique or novel for Japanese monks to marry, Shinran’s abandoning of the traditional monkhood was especially significant because the large Pure Land sect that derived from him continued his example of having married “priests” who followed none of the traditional precepts.

Until the Meiji period Shinran’s Jodo Shinshu remained the only school to have a married priesthood. Since Shinshu was one of the major sects throughout the Tokugawa era this fact probably was especially significant in that it provided an important example to the Meiji government and to the Japanese people that a married Buddhist priesthood was a possibility within Buddhism.

Ironically, the Pure Land rejection of the precepts led to both an increase in immorality among some Pure Land followers and also attempts to develop quasi-monastic forms by others. An increase in immorality occurred because many people interpreted the Pure Land teaching as offering them a “license to commit evil” (zoaku muge).33 There appeared various arguments for this idea, all centered around the idea that Amida had already guaranteed their salvation and that their moral acts had no consequence for their birth in the Pure Land. As Honen, Shinran and other early Shinshu leaders wrote treatises opposing these theories, the idea of “licensed evil” probably received a significant amount of acceptance among Pure Land followers. Dobbins has suggested that the idea of “Licensed Evil” probably was somewhat influenced by the Tachikawa sector, a branch of the Shingon school which interpreted the Shingon teaching to advocate various sexual and sensual practices.34 It seems that the doctrine of licensed evil was mostly understood to refer to inappropriate relationships between men and women.

The other irony, or perhaps paradox, was the adoption of new precepts, regulations and semi-monastic forms by some Pure Land teachers. For example, Honen had his “Seven Article Pledge” (Shichikai kishomon); in 1285 the Shinshu had various sets of “regulations” associated with its meeting places (dojos); and Ippen laid the groundwork for a Jishu priesthood by making a distinction between clerical adherents who observed rules of religious austerities and commitment and lay adherents who did not.

The final elements that led to the Meiji transformation of the monkhood to the priesthood that I will describe took place in the Tokugawa era. The Meiji reformation was generally a reaction against the abuses and oppression that occurred during the Tokugawa period. In particular, it was especially an expression of the popular resentment that many Japanese had toward the Buddhist clergy for being willing agents of the Tokugawa’s rigid control of the country. By being an administrative branch of the Tokugawa government the clergy had guaranteed incomes with little or no requirement for the observation of the precepts. This situation made it very easy for morally lax monks and Shinshu priests to thrive. The Tokugawa requirement for everyone in Japan to register periodically with a Buddhist Temple (teruke) was almost an open invitation for the clergy to take financial advantage of the populace. Aside from some examples of extortion and required donations, many temples started to be run as businesses, sometimes even running lotteries.35 As a consequence the clergy became wealthy and openly satisfied their material and sexual wishes.36 Jiun described the situation as follows,

To be a Buddhist novice means only to cut one’s hair and put on priestly robes. Some do not take precepts; others who have taken them violate them. They sell the Dharma and are fond only of good food, drink and clothing. They regard
material wealth as a sign of virtue and cleverness in speech as erudition. They are without both guilt and shame; there is no one who keeps the precepts in purity or who can acquire the powers possessed by a Buddha. With their many abuses came popular resentment toward the clergy which expressed itself with the vicious attacks against the temples after the downfall of the Tokugawa government in 1868.

Another development of the Tokugawa era which effected the transition to the priesthood was the increased emphasis and value put on lay Buddhism. Within the Pure Land traditions there was the rich tradition of the myokonin whose example of faith and religious living was more exemplary than many Buddhist monks. They provided the living example that there was no inherent spiritual superiority in monasticism. Also in the Tokugawa period there arose lay Buddhist associations which sought to meet the spiritual needs of their members that were ignored by most of the Buddhist clergy. Though these associations were informal, usually meeting in peoples homes, they provided an example that lay Buddhists did not need the services of professional monastics.

Jiun Sonja and Hakuin are perhaps the best known of the Tokugawa Buddhist monks who tried to reform the monastic order by emphasizing the precepts. While they had some moderate success within their own lifetimes, their monastic reforms did not have any lasting effect on the clerical community. Perhaps more significant, however, were their efforts to spread Buddhist practice and ethics among the common people. These reformers helped increase the respect and status of the lay Buddhist in relation to the monks.

During the Tokugawa era, Confucian and Shinto self-identity and scholarship increased to the point that scholars of both became outspoken in their criticism of Buddhism. In particular they were opposed to the monastic ideal. The Shinto scholars of the National Learning Movement taught that Buddhism’s tendency to be world-negating and efforts at self-cultivation and control of human desires was contrary to the native Shinto mentality of world-acceptance. The Confucian scholars revived their age old criticism that Buddhist monasticism was subversive to the health and strength of both the family and the state. In part because Neo-Confucianism was the official state ideology, these arguments against Buddhism became increasingly vocal during the Tokugawa period and so provided ready platforms for the Meiji attack on Buddhism.

Kathleen Staggs, in her writings on Meiji Buddhism, insists that with the Meiji Reformation in 1868, Buddhism came close to disappearing in Japan. With the downfall of the Tokugawa government the Buddhist institutions lost their state support and protection. On March 17, 1868, the new Meiji government turned to the Shinto tradition as a way of uniting Japan behind the new national government. In elevating the status of Shinto, the government separated Shinto from Buddhism and opened the way for a popular and countrywide attack on Buddhism that is known as haibutsu kishaku or “Throw out the Buddhists.” For four years, from 1868 to 1872, Buddhism came under violent attack with thousands of temples burned, thousands of Buddhist monks forced into lay life, and innumerable Buddhist artwork, books, and religious objects destroyed. It seems that the Meiji government was surprised by the violence of the popular uprising against the Buddhist establishment and on August 22 proclaimed that the separation of Buddhism and Shinto was not haibutsu kishaku.

Even so, the popular resentment against Buddhism that arose from the Tokugawa era continued to fuel violent attacks on the Buddhist institutions. When these attacks abated Buddhism still had difficulty surviving in the non-supportive environment of the early Meiji era. Aside from the state championing Shinto as the official religion, many Japanese rejected Buddhism as representing the old and archaic. In the rush to accept and adopt all things western and modern, many of the Japanese had little interest in Buddhism.

It is perhaps a little surprising that in such a climate the government did not formally abolish the Buddhist clerical institutions. Instead they “reformed” them in such a radical way that the clergy lost most of the characteristics which defined their monastic vocation. In 1872, the government forbid alms-seeking, vegetarianism, celibacy, the use of religious names, and shaved heads. Many of these changes were inspired by the age old Confucian criticism which finally achieved prominence in the Meiji Period. Whereas in other Buddhist countries (except perhaps Tibet) it would be unimaginable for the monastic order to continue with these restrictions, I believe that these changes in Japan were seen as reasonable because enough of the monks had been living the monastic life in name only. The Meiji government only made official what had been going on unofficially for centuries. The fact that there was never any serious attempt by the Japanese monks to overcome these restrictions on their vocation, especially after the Meiji period, just confirms, I believe, my thesis that the Japanese, on the whole, never took monastic ethics seriously. Even in the Meiji period this was at least in part due to the old Japanese Buddhism ethical complacency that came with the belief in mappo.

One of the Japanese schools that took monasticism seriously was the Zen school. However, for the most part the monastic ideal was limited to the training monasteries. Probably because they retained the shingi or monastic regulations of their training temples, the Meiji era Zen priests did little to avoid the transformation that was happening to the overall clerical community. The Zen clergy retained a distinction between the ethics of the monastery and the ethics of the parish temple. In the training monastery they were monks and in the parish temple they were married priests. It is noteworthy that by the Muramachi period, Zen monks of both the Soto and Rinzai sects had become more preoccupied with the study of Neo-Confucianism than with the spirit of their shingi.

Other sects also made the distinction between the ethics of a monk-in-training and a full monk or priest. However, the training period was much shorter then what we find in the Zen sect. At present the Shingon sect has a three month training period for all novices. Even the liberal Jodo Shin Shu, the True Pure Land sect, gives their novice priests a “taste” of the monastic life for one week. Though these relatively short periods are indicative of the weakness of the monastic ideal it does point to the interesting fact that the ideal has not been totally rejected. An almost romantic appreciation of the pure monastic
life existed throughout Japanese history partly because it represented a life that was far removed from the economic, social and political life that many Japanese burdened under. While the monks lived in disregard for the precepts, there are accounts of the laity using the monasteries as retreats where they could live in moral simplicity. The importance of some of the monks who tried to return to a strict observance of the monastic precepts is not that their movements had much success, rather monks like Myoe (1173—1232), became romantic folk heroes who represented a Japanese longing for moral purity. However, almost no one attempted to follow their example.

It was in the Meiji era that Japanese Buddhism was transformed from its pretenses of having a monastic institution of monks into a having a fraternity of priests. This is not to say that there aren't abundant examples of exemplary monks in Japanese history. Rather, my point is that Japanese monks mostly stray far enough from the monastic ideals of Buddhism that they lost their qualifications to be considered Buddhist monks. Oddly, the order of nuns in Japan has retained some of the precepts, although the nuns didn't elevate it above lay life. While the monastic precepts came to an end with the Meiji restoration, it is interesting that the Japanese are not unique in their difficulties with Buddhist monasticism. One has only to read the early books of vinaya to get a sense of the difficulties the early Indian Buddhists had with it.

An immediate consequence of the difficulties Buddhism faced at the beginning of the Meiji period was that many of the uncommitted clergy left the order. This allowed the ones remaining to reform their institutions. Though they met with some success, and certainly the ethical standards of the clergy improved from the Tokugawa era, the overall result of married priests passing on their temples to their sons was to lead once again to spiritual complacency among the clergy. Most young men entering the priesthood today do so because it is their fate in life to continue the family “business,” i.e. run the parish temple. For the most part these men lack the spiritual commitment that originally represented the foundation of Buddhist monasticism.

Discussion
It is difficult to draw any lessons from the Japanese experiment with monasticism. However one of the important aspects of the Japanese contact with Buddhism is the nature of the interaction between different ethical systems and values. Western observers, with their cultural tendency to seek ultimate ethical standards, might conclude that, Japanese monasticism was radically degenerate and a failure. Indian and South-East Asian observers, with their fear of sexual and alcoholic addiction, might feel that it is impossible for the Japanese to practice Buddhism as long as they are involved in sex and drink. While even according to Japanese ethical standards the monastic history of Japan gives lots of examples of untruthful behavior, I believe that the transformation of the monastic order and precepts in Japan represents partly the clash of different ethical systems. It is important to understand that not all of Buddhist ethics was in conflict with the Japanese. During the Nara and Heian periods there was a widespread appreciation and adoption of the Buddhist ethics of charity and service, especially on the popular level. It was the precepts of restraint that never fared well in Japan. In addition to the clash of ethical systems, the monastic transformation in Japan was also the result of the almost inherent human tension between moral ideals and the other forces of our humanity. Though the strength of the different forces and ideals may vary according to culture and individuals, the Japanese are not unique in their difficulties with Buddhist monasticism. One has only to read the early books of vinaya to get a sense of the difficulties the early Indian Buddhists had with it.

The original purpose of Buddhist monasticism seems to have been a pragmatic concern with creating the proper conditions for spiritual training. Early Buddhism never tried to tie ethics to any ultimate standard or transcendental imperative. The canonical Buddha is presented as being reluctant to set down monastic precepts but agreed to do so situationally. Ethical choices were made contextually and in relationship to their soteriological result. When fixed precepts were instituted they were done so because they were considered generally useful for the monastic quest of enlightenment. The Buddha even allowed for the change and abandonment of the minor precepts. However since no one asked him which were the minor precepts, later Buddhists were reluctant to change any of them.

With the historical development of Buddhism, the monastic precepts lost their pragmatic roots and began to take on the status of absolute ethical ideals. This was probably in part because of the elitist position that the Buddhist monks have assumed at various times in Buddhist history. An early example of this elitism is seen in the Milandhapana (Questions of Milinda) where the claim is made that only monks can be arhats. If a lay person becomes an arhat he would die within a week if he wasn’t ordained.

One of the positive consequences of the Japanese transformation of the monkhood is that it helped show, at least for the Japanese, that ordination is not an ideal; rather it is an option. Aside from the early example of the Hijiri, or wandering ascetics, it was starting with Honen and continuing up through Jiun and the Meiji reformation that lay Buddhist practice began to be seen as a valid option; that the monkhood did not have a monopoly on practice. While this understanding has slowly dawned in other Buddhist countries, I believe that Japanese Buddhism has laid the strongest precedent for this development. In particular was Jiun Sonja’s attempt to elevate the Ten Precepts out of their negative aspect of restraint to their positive aspect of being both the aspiration for and the expression of an integrated personality. While Jiun valued the monastic vocation he didn’t elevate it above lay life. While the monastic precepts came to an end with the Meiji restoration, it is interesting that the same period saw the arising of strong lay Buddhist movements based on the precepts. Jiun laid much of the foundation for these movements.

When the Buddhist clergy is seen as a vocation and an option rather than an ideal or a requirement then perhaps Buddhist monastic ethics will be understood for their original purpose. With their adaptation of Buddhism, the Japanese struggled for a long time with a foreign ethical system. It seems that the Buddhist restrictions on sexuality and sensual
pleasures were the hardest for the Japanese to observe. Perhaps these pursuits were understood differently enough from the Indian or Chinese Buddhists that the Japanese could not understand either the “sin” or the spiritual hindrances that these were supposed to contain. Since for centuries the Japanese took on vows that they had little intention to fulfill, I wonder if the deceit and hypocrisy that resulted didn’t sour Japanese ethics even more than it would have if Buddhism had never arrived in Japan. Perhaps the failure of the Japanese to take the Buddhist monastic precepts serious was because they understood them as rules of etiquette that were to be followed contextually rather than rules of ethics that were to be followed throughout one’s life.

1. Demieville, p 378,
2. Ibid, p 378.
5. Demieville, p 381. The Ratnakuta Sutra # 105.
7. Ibid, p 357.
15. Collcutt, p 237.
16. Collcutt, p 237. e.g. Keikai was a married priest living at Yakushi-ji in Nara.
20. Mcinullin, p 43.
22. Groner, p 94.
25. Hakeda, p 94.
32. Dobbins, p 52.
33. Dobbins, p 47.
34. Dobbins, p 48.
36. Watt, P 11.
37. Ibid, p 16.
40. Staggs, p 38.
41. Staggs, p 88.
Chapter 1: Introduction

More than a century after the decriminalization of nikujiki saitai (meat-eating and marriage), marriage by Buddhist clerics is now a familiar part of Japanese life. According to a rough estimate made by Kanaoka Shuyu, today approximately 90 percent of the Buddhist clergy in Japan are married. A comprehensive 1987 survey of the Soto Zen school, which has been among the most statistically self-conscious of all the Buddhist denominations in Japan, similarly found that more than 80 percent of Soto clerics inherited their temples from a family member and that more than 80 percent of them are married. Surveys of other denominations, for example, the Buzan sect (Buzanha) of Shingon, show that as early as the end of the Taisho era there were similarly high proportions of married clerics and patrimonial inheritance of temples. Today the Buddhist clergy universally keep their surnames after ordination, are listed in a household register (koseki), and are subject to the same laws as any other Japanese citizen. As with many small, family-run businesses in Japan, temple succession is largely a domestic affair, frequently with great pressure being brought to bear on the son deemed the most likely successor to the father-abbot. Family ties and issues of inheritance have so thoroughly intermingled with the teacher-disciple relationship that potential successors to the abbacy, even if they are already formal disciples, often additionally become a yoshi (adoptive son) of the abbot before assuming control of the temple.

In contemporary Japan, marriage and the family have permeated life at all but the small minority of temples that are reserved for monastic training. Again using the Soto Zen school as an example, of some 14,000 temples, only 31 remain reserved for strict monastic training. The overwhelming majority of Soto temples are inhabited by a cleric and his family. The same ratio between training monasteries and local temples is true for most other Buddhist denominations today as well. Buddhist clerical marriage has become so entrenched in Japanese life that the majority of the laity prefer having a married cleric serve as abbot of their temple. As a 1993 Soto denomination survey demonstrated, only 5 percent of the Soto laity explicitly preferred an unmarried cleric. An overwhelming 73 percent expressed a preference for a married cleric, with the rest of the survey group not expressing a preference. Although I have not seen similar statistics for other denominations, given the broad similarities between the various denominations when it comes to the distribution of married and unmarried clerics, it is likely that this statistic reflects a general Japanese attitude toward the Buddhist clergy.

The presence of the temple wife is now so taken for granted that today, along with the usual Buddhist doctrinal texts, histories, and popular religious manuals found in Buddhist bookstores, one can also find pan-sectarian works like Jitei fujin hyakka (Encyclopedia for temple wives). Written by a Buddhist priest, the book is an instruction manual for temple wives, providing basic information concerning the role of the temple in the local community, the training of one’s son to be a future abbot, management of the temple cemetery, and basic Buddhist teaching. Similarly, the Sotoshu Shumuchō has issued a guidebook for temple families, Jitei no sho (Handbook for temple families), in which the denominational leadership describes how the temple family should serve as a shining example of Buddhist domestic life, with the abbot performing Buddhist rituals and sermons, the wife caring for the education of the children and helping with the parishioners, and the children helping in general temple maintenance. By following the instructions provided in this Soto-approved manual, those who have “left home” can become the model of Japanese domesticity for their parishioners. Even more recently, the Soto headquarters published a retrospective, containing surveys, discussions, and a brief historical sketch, on the temple family in an ongoing effort to establish legitimacy for a practice toward which the Soto leadership itself has had a long history of animosity.

The departure of Japanese Buddhism from the monastic and ascetic emphasis of most other forms of Buddhism is striking. The Japanese Buddhist clergy are unique among Buddhist clerics in that the vast majority are married, but they continue to undergo clerical ordination and are considered members of the sangha (sogya) by both the Buddhist establishment and parishioners alike. In such other Buddhist nations as Taiwan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma, those who receive the ten novice precepts or the full set of Vinaya regulations are expected to refrain from sexual relations, marriage, and family life. Some married clerics do exist in Korea and Taiwan, and their presence is largely a product of late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japanese missionary and colonial influence. Although indigenous pressure to legalize clerical marriage in Korea came as early as 1910 from such reformist clerics as the Korean Han Yongun (1879-1944), who looked to Japan as an example of successful clerical modernization, his suggestions were largely ignored. It was not until 1926, when the Korean clergy were firmly under Japanese colonial control, that the prohibition against clerical marriage was repealed. In the wake of the Second World War, the procelibacy clerics, with state support, once again asserted themselves in an effort to purge Korean Buddhism of Japanese influence. Having lost control of the majority of temples, today the married clerics are few in number. According
to Robert Buswell, whether the rapidly shrinking T'aego order (T'aego chong) of married Korean clerics will survive for another generation remains to be seen. According to Charles Jones, Japanese colonization had a much less drastic effect on Taiwanese Buddhism than on Korean Buddhism; traditional ordination and precept practices continued during the period of Japanese rule, and the colonial authorities never forced clerical marriage on Taiwanese clerics.

The public emergence of the householder cleric in non-Jodo Shin and non-Shugendo denominations in Japan is a relatively new phenomenon, dating only from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912). Judging from the historical record, it is clear that for much of the premodern period significant numbers of clerics broke the bans on sexual relations and marriage, as Bernard Faure has demonstrated. Nonetheless, such behavior as covert marriage, patrimonial inheritance, fornication, and meat eating was always viewed as transgressive by government authorities and by most of the clerics who set the standards of conduct for the various denominations. Throughout the Edo period (1603-1867), the Tokugawa rulers had attempted, with varying success, to regulate clerical deportment. The array of status regulations backed by the threat of state punishment that the Tokugawa regime adopted had helped to guarantee at least nominal adherence to clerical standards of deportment. Upon ordination, clerics of every denomination abandoned their surname (if they had one; many commoners did not have surnames before Meiji) and received a Buddhist name that they would use for the rest of their life, unless they returned to lay life. Clerics were obliged to observe the precept that prohibited sexual relations for all ordained clerics. In addition, until 1872 by state law marriage was illegal for any Buddhist cleric, apart from those in the Jodo Shin or Shugendo denominations. Nor were the clergy to eat meat. The clergy were also expected to wear robes appropriate to their office. Although punishment of clerics by the Tokugawa government may have been sporadic and observance of rules for monastic deportment may have been honored more in the breach than in fact, state support of clerical regulations throughout the Edo period insured that those rules of conduct remained the unquestioned standard of clerical behavior.

The Meiji Restoration radically changed the relationship between the state and the Buddhist clergy. Meiji authorities quickly brought an official end to the Tokugawa state's efforts to regulate clerical deportment. Over a fifteen-year period, as in many modernizing Western nations, the clergy were stripped of privileges peculiar to their clerical status and came to differ "from other men in degree rather than in kind." In short order the Japanese Buddhist clergy were ordered to take surnames, to register in the universal household registration system, and to submit to national conscription. Most problematically, from the perspective of many clerical leaders, in 1872 Meiji officials promulgated a terse law that stated: "from now on Buddhist clerics shall be free to eat meat, marry, grow their hair, and so on. Furthermore, there will be no penalty if they wear ordinary clothing when not engaged in religious activities." Known informally as the nikujiki saitai law, this decriminalization measure triggered a century-long debate in the Buddhist world, as clerical leaders and rank-and-file clerics strove to interpret and react to their new legal context.

The formation of the new Meiji order reshuffled the relationship between Buddhist institutions and the state. Beginning with an outright hostility to Buddhism and a prioritization of Shinto, the privileged position of the clergy was destroyed and numerous regulations considered inimical to Buddhism were promulgated. The attacks on Buddhist temples, forced laicizations of the clergy, seizure of temple lands, and abolition of clerical perquisites were the culmination of a growing animosity toward Buddhism that can be traced well back into the Edo period. One manifestation of the state's hostility to Buddhism and the new vision of state-clerical relations was the adoption of the infamous law decriminalizing clerical meat eating, marriage, abandonment of tonsure, and wearing nonclerical garb.

Of course, neither clerical fornication nor marriage was new to either the late Edo or the nineteenth century. Examples of violation of the clerical precepts prior to the nineteenth century are plentiful; in particular, the sexual exploits of the Buddhist clergy in the pre-modern and early modern periods are well documented, as Ishida and Faure have recently demonstrated. In chapter 2, I show the pre-Meiji genesis of the clerical marriage problem and discuss the emergence of the term nikujiki saitai as the very symbol of clerical laxity. The early modern problem of clerical marriage emerged against the background of the systematization of the status system by the Tokugawa and domainal authorities and the attempt to assert their control over clerical behavior. As part of that effort the ruling authorities issued and sporadically enforced regulations outlawing sexual relations for clerics from the traditionally celibate denominations. The criminalization of once tolerated activities coupled with precept revival movements among many Edo Buddhist schools triggered a reappraisal of clerical behavior by both the Buddhist clergy and their critics. In particular, growing awareness of the nikujiki saitai problem must be traced to the problematization of distinctive Jodo Shin practices by their opponents, a topic that I examine in chapter 3. The intersectarian debate and the voluminous apologetic literature written by Jodo Shin clerics during the Edo period helped set the parameters for the post-Restoration struggle over nikujiki saitai.

The growing controversies over clerical deportment, coupled with attempts by the Meiji regime to forge a more efficient means for surveilling its subjects, resulted in a break with Tokugawa procedures for dealing with the Buddhist clergy. In chapter 4, I describe the abolition of the Edo status system by Meiji bureaucrats and discuss the implications of that unprecedented social change for the Buddhist clergy. In numerous ways, the institutional and social restructuring of the Meiji period proved as
transformative of Buddhist life as the outright destruction of temples and property suffered by Buddhism during the suppression of the Bakumatsu and early Meiji years. The policies put into place by the Meiji rulers were often neither well-planned nor consistent, which meant that the Buddhist clergy found themselves responding to a variety of contradictory imperatives. During the early Meiji years government officials wrestled with how to differentiate religion—newly defined in Japanese with the term shukyo—from the state. Government leaders withdrew from active intervention in clerical life, leaving it largely up to the clergy themselves to decide whether the individual cleric or the denominational leaders would set the standards for clerical deportment. At the same time, the boundaries separating the Buddhist clergy from ordinary subjects were erased, as clerics took surnames, registered in the koseki system, and became subject to the draft.

Contrary to the picture painted in much of the scholarly literature, the Buddhist clergy were not merely passive spectators to these changes in state policy. By the mid-nineteenth century, the criticisms of Buddhism voiced for decades in Neo-Confucian, Shinto, and nativist anti-Buddhist literature had been internalized by segments of the Buddhist clergy. The forced opening of Japan by the Western powers, the reemergence of Christianity as a significant presence in Japan, and the violent suppression of Buddhism induced some Buddhist leaders to propose reforms, which, by including the Buddhist clergy in efforts to build a modern Japan capable of competing with the West, would enhance Buddhist clerical prestige. In chapter 5, I discuss efforts of Otori Sesso, a Soto cleric, and several other clerics to incorporate the Buddhist clergy in a state moral suasion campaign that aimed to strengthen Japanese national identity and to ward off the spread of Christianity. Using his close connections to such important Meiji leaders as Eto Shinpei and Kido Takayoshi, Otori entered government service as the single Buddhist cleric in the influential Ministry of Doctrine. As part of his plan for the revitalization of the clergy, Otori proposed the decriminalization of clerical meat eating and marriage. In chapter 5, I also detail the largely unexamined role of the Buddhist clergy in creating Meiji religious policy, their vision of clerical reform, and the confluence of their efforts with the creation of the Imperial Way (Kodo) as a civil religion embracing Buddhists, Shintoists, and Nativists.

Despite the rather dismissive attitude of most Meiji leaders toward the Buddhist establishment, the leaders of most Buddhist denominations did not sit idly by while new religious policies were being promulgated. This book is intended to expand our understanding of how Meiji Buddhists contributed to the formation of state policies toward religious institutions and how they tried to control what increasingly were categorized by government officials, intellectuals, and some clerics as private, religious concerns. In chapter 6, I demonstrate how those leading the movement to reinstitute strict precept practice within various Buddhist denominations confronted government leaders and clerics of their own schools in an effort to stop the spread of nikujiki saitai. Faced with the end to state control over clerical behavior and its transfer from the government to the individual denominations, such Buddhist leaders as Fukuda Gyokai, Shaku Unsho, and Nishiari Bokusan, whose lives straddled the Edo and Meiji periods, utilized a two-pronged strategy, defending precept adherence to the Buddhist clergy and petitioning the government to continue its regulation of clerical deportment. When that effort failed, they argued that standards of clerical behavior should be determined by denominational leaders, not each individual cleric. In chapter 7, I continue the story, describing how, following the lead of these proprecept clerics, the leadership of the various denominations enacted a series of measures to ensure that their subordinates continued to abide by the ban against meat eating and clerical marriage. These strategies ranged from appeals to the consciences of the rank-and-file clerics to the formation of two distinct clerical classes, celibate and married.

While some clerical leaders sought to renew Buddhism through the enforcement of pre-Meiji standards of clerical behavior, others tried to harmonize Buddhist doctrine and practice with modernist discourses of science, sexuality, individual rights, and nationalism. Far from slavishly copying Western ideas, such Buddhist intellectuals as Tanaka Chigaku, Kuriyama Taion, Kuruma Takudo, Inoue Enryo, and Nakazato Nissho went altogether together Mahayana hermeneutics, older nativist anticlericalism, and new scientific, biological arguments to argue for the dismantling of the prohibitions against clerical meat eating and marriage. Although many of the ideas incorporated into the arguments for nikujiki saitai, for example, hereditarian and evolutionary concepts, were of Western provenance, they reached Japan so rapidly that often the implications of these ideas were being simultaneously considered in Japan, Europe, and the United States. In a process similar to that which Frank Dikötter (referring to the changing understanding of sexuality in Republican China) aptly described as "not so much a 'shock of encounters' between 'East' and 'West' . . . but rather the emergence of a plurality of intertwined modernities that have diverse origins and many directions," numerous reformist Japanese Buddhists tried to build the theoretical and practical foundations for a modern, domestic Buddhism.

In the final chapters I consider the proliferation of pro-nikujiki saitai literature from the mid-Meiji until the early Showa periods against the backdrop of the intellectual and social upheavals in late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan. In chapter 8, I examine Nichiren cleric Tanaka Chigaku's renunciation of clerical life and his attempt to formulate a new family centered Buddhism. Tanaka's attempt to revitalize a tradition that he argued was almost exclusively associated with funerals led him to found an independent, lay Nichiren organization. In an effort to establish Buddhist foundations for modern family life, he wrote a treatise on the Buddhist couple and argued that monastic Buddhism was no longer appropriate for Japan. He also created a series of ceremonies, including the first Buddhist wedding ritual, in order to bring Buddhism into the everyday lives
of his followers. By the start of the twentieth century some Buddhist clerics from the established denominations followed Tanaka's lead. Although these clerics held radically different positions from Tanaka with regard to clerical marriage, they shared his focus on creating a Buddhist discourse on the family that melded Protestant-style valorization of the conjugal family, Confucian virtues emphasized in such didactic texts as *Onna daigaku* by Kaibara Ekken, and Buddhist ethics. In their heavy emphasis on the conjugal couple, these new Buddhist family teachings departed from older Edo-period tracts on family harmony.

Although many Buddhist leaders contributed to and supported the dissemination of Buddhist family teachings, most did not abandon their opposition to clerical marriage. While explicit denunciation of *nikujiki saitai* was rare after the Meiji era, the literature demonstrates that bureaucratic opposition continued in the monastic denominations well into the twentieth century. In chapter 9, I demonstrate how a new generation of Buddhist clerics advocated the affirmation of *nikujiki saitai*, using arguments based on biologized-medicalized notions of human sexuality and health rather than pre-Meiji moral understandings of the person. I also consider how the rise of social reform movements, statistical analysis, and legions of professional experts fostered growing attention on social problems associated with continued high-level repudiation of clerical marriage by clerical leaders. Ultimately, it was awareness of the social costs of the ongoing resistance to clerical marriage during the late Meiji and Taisho eras that led to a softening of opposition to *nikujiki saitai*. At the start of that period, leaders of most denominations remained doctrinally tied to an anti-*nikujiki saitai* position while begrudgingly making accommodations to the increasing numbers of married clerics. The opposition to clerical marriage by both clerical leaders and some parishioners caused many clerical marriages to remain unofficial. As clerics died, leaving behind widows and children, dispossessed families became a growing social problem for the Buddhist denominations. Embarrassed by reports of destitute widows and children, the leadership of most denominations began to grant de facto recognition to clerical marriage from the mid-Taisho period. Doctrinal affirmation of that practice by the clerical leadership of most denominations never occurred, however. Ultimately, the emergence of a predominantly married Buddhist clergy in Japan was a result of practical problems, rank-and-file clerical choices, and inability to discipline clerics at the local temple level, rather than a deliberate doctrinal shift mandated by Buddhist leaders. As I discuss in the concluding chapter, the contradiction between practice and doctrine that resulted from the partial resolution of the *nikujiki saitai* debate has continued to trouble many clerics until the present day.
A Brief History of Celibacy and Marriage for Buddhist Priests in Japan
compiled from “Neither Monk Nor Layman” by Richard M. Jaffe

590  The first Japanese woman was ordained as a Buddhist priest (monk, nun, Sangha 僧) in Korea with the original Vinaya precepts used by the Buddha to ordain monastics. She returned to Japan, where soon many men and women were ordained as monastics with the Vinaya precepts. These precepts include four parajika (“defeats”), the first of which is engaging in sexual intercourse. The penalty for violating this precept is permanently giving up one’s ordination and returning to lay life.

750  The Japanese government in the capital of Nara enforced Vinaya precepts for priests, as did the government in China. Priests were expelled from the Sangha and sent into exile by the government for sexual intercourse. Meat and alcohol were also prohibited for priests, according to the Bodhisattva precepts of the Brahmajala Sutra which were also received at ordination.

823  The first priest ordination in the world consisting of receiving only the 10 major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts of the Brahmajala Sutra took place on Mt. Hiei in Kyoto. The Tendai School founder Saicho had just passed away, having spent much of his life petitioning for such a purely Mahayana priest ordination. From then on, the Tendai School grew in popularity and became the dominant type of Buddhism in Japan. Therefore most priests were ordained with only the Bodhisattva precepts, though traditional monastic ordinations with both the Vinaya precepts as well as the Bodhisattva precepts continued in Nara. Though Bodhisattva precepts do not include the penalty of expulsion from the Sangha for sexual intercourse, such conduct is not permitted for priests.

1210  Shinran, founder of the Jōdo-shin School, was the first priest to openly marry, teaching that this was the “age of decline” of Buddhism and we can only rely on Amitabha Buddha to save us, not on our own power of practice. He said, “I am now neither priest nor layman, therefore I have the name ‘stubble-haired.’” The Zen School was also founded in Japan at this time by Eisai and Dōgen, who emphasized traditional monastic practice, including celibacy. Also at this time, “secret” sexual conduct, and even marriage, of priests was widespread in Japan, even in some monasteries.

1600  Government outlawed women staying in temples, except for those of the Jōdo-shin School and the Yamabushi (mountain ascetics) who, by this time, had a tradition of priest marriage.

1700  An essay was written in defense of Jōdo-shin School marriage and meat eating: even though these practices go against the teachings in the Mahayana Parinirvana Sutra, Prajnaparamita Sutra, Brahmajala Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, Shurangama Sutra, as well as the early Agama Sutras, there are many good reasons to uphold such practices, such as:

The Jōdo-shin School is very popular and well-supported, so there must not be negative karmic effects of these practices; other schools are faced with poverty and lack of support.

The Jōdo-shin School interpretation of the precepts is a skillful means for this “age of decline.”

There is precedent for great priests involved in sexual conduct, such as Kumarajiva and Shinran.

Priests are already involved in sexual conduct anyway, just not publicly.

Eating meat is permitted for priests in original Vinaya precepts, as long as the animal was not killed for the priest; it is only the later Mahayana Sutras that prohibit meat eating.

To help people struggling in the mud, we must get muddy by living with and more like laypeople.

1740  Government issued new laws including crucifixion or exile for priests engaging in sexual conduct, and decapitation for priests committing adultery.

1843  Government issued even stricter policies and statements against sexual conduct for priests.

1851  Government arrested various priests for sexual conduct.

1871  Government still enforced punishment for sexual conduct of priests.

1872  Japan’s Meiji Government reformation slogan was: “Destroy Buddhism and promote Shintoism (the native Japanese religion).” Many Buddhist temples were destroyed. Government edict #133 was issued: “From now on Buddhist priests shall be free to eat meat, marry, grow their hair, and so on. Furthermore, they are permitted to wear ordinary clothing when not engaged in religious activities.” Priests were also requested to use their birth name instead of Dharma name, and monastic privileges such as tax exemption were withdrawn. This edict was partly intended for “separation of church and state.” Leading priests of all Buddhist schools except Jōdo-shin – Sōtō Zen (especially great teacher Nishiari Bokusan), Rinzai Zen, Shingon, Tendai, Nichiren – strongly opposed the edict. The Sōtō School was the first to respond: a statement was sent to all temple priests, firmly opposing the new edict and asking them to diligently uphold the precepts on their own, since the government had now “entrusted” priests to keep the precepts, with no more legal repercussions. It was emphasized that the edict was not an order to marry; it was just offering the responsibility to priests to follow the precepts.
Fukuda Gyōkai of the Jōdo School wrote a petition to the government, signed by leading priests of other schools as well, arguing against the new edict for many reasons:

- Abandoning precepts will weaken the practice of priests.
- Priest/laity distinction will become unclear and confusing, especially for donors. The laity will lose faith in the Sangha and will therefore not be able to receive the teachings.
- “Pure”/“impure” priest distinction, one proposal to designate celibate and married priests, will also become unclear and confusing, especially for donors.
- Training of young priests who have strong desires will become difficult.
- Meat eating and sex only happen in the desire realm (kama-loka), so they cause attachment to that realm.
- Looking like a priest but living like a layperson confuses people and customs, like cross-dressing does.
- Priests should follow the ten novice precepts (including no sexual conduct, drinking alcohol, wearing jewelry, attending shows, accumulating money) as a minimum standard to be called a priest.
- The problems of meat eating and sex arise from corrupt priests, not the government. The priests themselves have the responsibility to reform or disrobe.
- “Pure donations” to a temple should not be used to support a wife and children, or to buy meat.
- The Lankavatara Sutra, Nagarjuna’s Prajnaparamita Shastra, etc., promote keeping precepts, shaving the head, and wearing robes.

1873 Government edict was issued applying the same statement of permission for female priests.

1874 Many priests began to openly get married. The Tendai School began a two-tiered system for priests: 解脱僧 gedatsusō (vimoksha sangha: liberation priests [celibate]) and 近事僧 gonjisō (upasaka sangha: “staying close and serving” lay priests [married]). The present day Tendai School uses the following terms for the two kinds of priests: 出家僧 shukkesō (leaving-home priests) and 在家僧 zaikesō (staying-home priests).

1878 Due to protests from many Buddhist leaders, the government issued a new edict: “Edict #133, which states that priests are free to eat meat and marry, only serves to abolish the state law that had prohibited such activities. In no way does this law have anything to do with regulations of the Buddhist schools themselves.”

1885 The Sōtō School passed the most strict anti-marriage law of all schools: “The School law, as before, forbids the marriage of priests... women may not live in temples (which have a male priest).”

1887 First Buddhist marriage ceremony was written and performed by a Nichiren School layman. Zen priests soon copied the ceremony.

Supporters of priest marriage said that the Buddha’s teachings on sex were merely provisional skillful means for certain people; since current priests were already living more like laypeople than monks, it should be fine to also marry; priest marriage would end hypocrisy and secrecy since sex was happening anyway; temple wives would be legitimized and temple succession could be passed from father to son; celibacy is unnatural and unhealthy – lay Buddhism is the best way of practice for modern Japan, in accord with Western culture and Protestant Christianity.

1888 The Sōtō School proposed a division of priests into two categories, similar to the Tendai School: 弁道師 bentōshi (“practitioner,” wholehearted practice of the Way teacher [celibate]) and 唱道師 shōdōshi (“evangelist,” explaining the Way teacher [married]); only bentōshi would be abbots of monasteries and head temples, and hold important teaching positions. This proposal was never adopted because of fear that it would cause disunity in the school.

The Nichiren School issued a proclamation: “The basis of Buddhism is achieving enlightenment and liberation from attachment. There is no entry into the unconditioned without shaving the head, wearing the robe, ceasing sexual relations, and not eating meat. That which is most difficult to abandon is abandoned; that which is most difficult to endure is endured.”

1900 The first schools to officially allow priest marriage (besides Jōdo-shin) were Jōdo and Shingon.

1906 The Sōtō School 1185 ban on women living in temples was lifted.

1936 80% of Sōtō School temples had wives and families.

1937 The Sōtō School “family protection law” was enacted.

1944 The Sōtō School allowed temple wives to be ordained as priests after completing a special seminar.

1987 More than 80% of male priests of the Sōtō School were married, and less than 1% of Sōtō School female priests were married. 31 out of 14,000 Sōtō School temples had monastic training.

1990 90% of Buddhist priests in Japan were married.

1993 Sōtō School survey: 5% of laity prefer unmarried priests, 73% prefer married priests.
Regulations Concerning the Ranks of Priests and Ranks of Teachers of the Sotoshu
(Sotoshu Soryo Kyoshi Bungen Kitei) 曹洞宗僧侶教師分限規程
Translation Revised on July 22nd, 2007

CHAPTER 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS （総則）

Article 1: Purpose （趣旨）
These regulations concern necessary components governing the ranking of soryo and the ranking of kyoshi in Sotoshu.

Article 2: Definitions （定義）
1. In these regulations, priest (soryo)（僧侶）means one who has received tokudo and has been entered into the Priest Register.
2. In these regulations, teacher (kyoshi)（教師）means, among the priests mentioned in the preceding, those who have met certain qualifications.

CHAPTER 2 PRIESTS （僧侶）
SECTION 1 RANKING OF PRIESTS （法階）

Article 3: Ranking of Priests （法階）
The ranking of Sotoshu priests/clergy/monks/Sangha (soryo) （僧侶）shall be as follows:
(1) Joza. (上座) “sthavira/elder/superior seat.” One who has received tokudo (attaining salvation/ordination) and has been registered in the Priest Register.
(2) Zagen. (座元) “sitting leader/foundation.” One who has completed risshin (fully-fledged/established-body/shuso, head seat) in a kessei-ango (binding restraint/regulation peaceful dwelling, practice period).
(3) Osho. (和尚) “upadhyaya/preceptor.” One who has completed Zuisé (auspicious debut/visitation) and registered as such in the Priest Register.
(4) Daiosho. (大和尚) “maha-upadhyaya/great-preceptor.” One who has set up the dharma banner by leading a kessei-ango.

SECTION 2 TOKUDO (ORDINATION) （得度）

Article 4: Tokudo （得度）
1. Tokudo may be given to a person who upholds the tenets of the Sotoshu.
2. When tokudo has been given, the recipient shall be registered [as a disciple of] the master-priest. If the master-priest is not the resident priest of a temple, he/she must obtain consent from the resident priest of the temple where the master-priest is registered.

Article 5: Totei (disciple) （徒） “apprentice, serving an elder”
A person who has received tokudo from a master-priest is designated as that master’s disciple (totei).

Article 6: The Qualification of Master-priest （師僧の資格）
A master-priest must be a kyoshi of Sotoshu who has the rank of osho or higher.

Article 7: Age Requirement for Tokudo （得度の年齢制限）
A person who is younger than ten (10) years of age cannot receive tokudo.

Article 8: Tokudo for a Minor （未成年者の得度）
A person who is younger than twenty (20) years of age needs [written] consent from a parent or a guardian to apply for tokudo.

Article 9: Application for the Issuance of a Priest Registration Certificate （僧籍登録証交付申請）
1. After tokudo is given, the master-priest shall submit an Application for the Issuance of Priest Registration (Form Kyogaku No.1) to the Kyogaku Bucho (Director of Soto Zen Studies Division). The application must be accompanied by a residence certificate or the equivalent, and evidence of the tokudo ceremony within three (3) months of the ceremony. If the recipient of the tokudo in question is still a minor, the application mentioned above shall require the signature of the recipient’s parent or guardian.
2. On the application for issuance of the priest registration certificate, the first and last names of the recipient, the dharma name given at the tokudo, and the gender of the recipient must be entered.
3. The dharma name, in principle, should consist of two (2) kanji characters.

Article 10: Application for a Change of Name Letter （改名添書交付申請及び改名（姓）届）
1. If a recipient of tokudo wishes to change name (given name to dharma name), an application for a change-of-name letter (Kyogaku No. 2) may be filed.
2. One who has changed his/her name shall report the matter to the Kyogaku Bucho without delay. The report must be accompanied by a copy of the koseki-shohon (the family register).

SECTION 3 KESSEI-ANGO ([90-DAY] ANGO） （結製安居）

Article 11: Kessei-ango （結製安居）
1. During the kessei-ango, the resident priest of a host temple, the abbot of a sodo (monastery,) or the Kokusai-fukyoshi of a special temple shall assume the role of Hodoshi (presiding priest of kessei-ango) and perform ceremonies having the shuso and others as participants.
2. A *kessei-ango* must consist of ten (10) or more participants.
3. In the case of a *kessei-ango* at a *hochi* (regular level) temple, a *jun-hochi* (lower level) temple, or a special temple (outside Japan), or if the *kessei-ango* is the first one for the abbot of a monastery, a *jokeshi* (an advisor to the *hodoshi* in *kessei-ango*) should be invited. In the case of *kessei-ango* at *jun-hochi* temples, the resident priest must be *Nito-kyoshi* or higher.
4. When a *kessei-ango* at a *sodo* (monastery) takes place, it requires the consent of the representatives of the *sodo*.

**Article 12: Temples where *Kessei-ango* can be conducted**

1. A priest cannot lead a *kessei-ango* in any temple other than that priest’s home temple. However, if a priest serves at a *kakuchi temple* (higher rank temple) concurrently, he/she can conduct [a *kessei-ango*] at that temple.
2. Regardless of the preceding, the abbot of a *sodo* can lead a *kessei-ango* at his/her *sodo* and a *kokusai-fukyoshi* can lead [a *kessei-ango*] at the special temple where he/she serves.

**Article 13: Types of *Kessei-ango***

The types of *kessei-ango*, beginning dates, ending dates, and duration are as follows:

1. **Summer *Ango***
   - Early *Ango* Begins: April 15 Ends: July 15
   - Middle *Ango* Begins: May 15 Ends: August 15
   - Late *Ango* Begins: June 15 Ends: September 15
2. **Winter *Ango***
   - Early *Ango* Begins: October 15 Ends: January 15
   - Middle *Ango* Begins: November 15 Ends: February 15
   - Late *Ango* Begins: December 15 Ends: March 15

**Article 14: Requirements of *Risshin* (Becoming *Shuso* at *Kessei-ango*)**

Those who meet one of the following requirements [may serve as *shuso* at a *kessei-ango*. On the completion of the *kessei-ango*, the *shuso* will] have completed *risshin*.

1. One who is at least twenty (20) years of age and has received a *tokudo*.
2. One who is at least sixteen (16) years of age and has at least three (3) years have passed since his/her *tokudo*.

**Article 15: The Qualifications of *Jokeshi* (Advisor to *Hodoshi* at *Kessei-ango*)**

A priest who serves as the *jokeshi* of a *kessei-ango* shall be in one of the following categories: however, this article does not apply when a resident priest of a *hondji* (a main temple) that is a *kakuchi* ranked temple serves as a *jokeshi* of its *matsuji* (a branch temple).

1. **Shike (Master-teacher)**
2. **Jun-Shike (Associate master-teacher)**
3. A *kyoshi* authorized to wear the *on-é* robe, except for the crimson colored *on-é*

**Article 16: Education during the *Kessei-ango***

During the *kessei-ango*, a period of education of at least three (3) consecutive days for *kakuchi* temples and at least seven (7) consecutive days for other temples must be held for the members and supporters.

**Article 17: The Notification of Conducting a *Kessei-ango* at *Kakuchi* Temples and the Application for Permission to Conduct *Kessei-ango***

1. The Notification of Conducting a *Kessei-ango* at *Kakuchi* temples (Form Kyogaku No. 4) by one who previously conducted a *kessei-ango* and the Application to Conduct a *Kessei-ango* in other situations (Kyogaku No.5) must be submitted to the Kyogaku Bucho at least thirty (30) days before the first day of the *ango*.
2. The notification or application regarding the practice of a *kessei-ango* for *kakuchi* and other temples, as stated in the preceding clause, must be submitted together with the Application for Permission to [appoint] a *Shuso* (Form Kyogaku No.6).
3. If the *hodoshi* and the *shuso* have registered at different District Offices (Shumusho) (for a person who falls under the Article 35 Clause 3, this will be an International Regional Office. This also applies to Chapter 2.), after receiving permission for the *kessei-ango* [from the Shumusho] the *hodoshi* must immediately report the matter to the District Office in which the *shuso’s* temple is located.

**Article 18: Notification for Confinement during *Kessei-ango* and the Ending of *Kessei-ango***

The *hodoshi* and *shuso* during a *kessei-ango* must observe the ninety (90) day confinement. (Confinement means that no one could leave the temple compound). This regulation does not apply to a *hodoshi* who is performing a *kessei-ango* in *kakuchi* temples.

2. If unavoidable circumstances occur, this regulation of confinement may be nullified by Applying for the Release of the Confinement (Form Kyogaku No. 7).
3. A Notification of the End of the *Kessei-ango* (Form Kyogaku No. 8) must be submitted to the Kyogaku Bucho within one (1) month after it is finished with joint signatures and seals by the *hodoshi* and *shuso*.
4. The notification of the completion of a *kessei-ango* shall be accompanied with evidence of the *hossen-shiki* [attaining *shuso*] ceremony.

**Article 19: Application for Interim Permission to Raise the Dharma Banner [at a *Kakuchi* Temple]**

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1. When an *osho* who has become a candidate to be a resident priest of a *kakuchi* temple but has no time to perform a *kessei-ango* or when one has become a candidate to be an assistant resident priest of a *kakuchi* temple yet does not hold the rank of an resident priest, an application for the Issuance for Interim Permission of to Raise the Dharma Banner (Form Kyogaku No.9), together with the application for the appointment to the rank of resident priest or assistant resident priest must be submitted to the Kyogaku Bucho.

2. One who has received interim permission to raise the dharma banner, stated in the preceding clause, must conduct a *kessei-ango* within three (3) years inviting a *jokeshi* based on Article 11, Clause 3.

3. If a *kessei-ango* stated in the preceding clause is not performed, the interim permission to raise the dharma banner will become invalid.

**Article 20: Invalidation of Kessei-ango (結制安居の無効)**

If the *hodoshi* or *shuso* is reprimanded due to bad conduct or given any other such penalty during a *kessei-ango*, the *kessei-ango* shall be invalidated.

**SECTION 4 DEMPO (伝法) (Dharma Transmission)**

**Article 21: Dempo (伝法)**

*Dempo* is defined as comprehending and maintaining the Dharma Lamp through face-to-face transmission between master and disciple, and the disciple receiving the Three Items (*sanmotsu*).

**Article 22: Qualification of the Recipient of Dempo (伝法相続者の資格)**

In order to receive *Dempo*, one must have the rank of *zagen*.


In order to implement *Dempo*, the master-priest and the disciple must co-sign the Application to Receive the Materials needed for *Dempo* (Form Kyogaku No. 10) to the Kyogaku Bucho and receive the Sotoshu’s official procedure for the *Dempo* ceremony (*shiki-bon*), the Manual of Transmission of the Precepts (*denkai-giki-bon*), Comments on Teaching and Conferring the Precepts (*Kyoju-kai-mon*) and the *sanmotsu* cloths (*sanmotsu jihaku*).

**Article 24: The Practice of Dempo (伝法の加行)**

The recipient of the *Dempo* materials must complete a seven (7) day practice of the *Dempo* according to the Manual for the *Dempo* ceremony.

**Article 25: Application for Dempo Registration (伝法登録証交付申請)**

1. When *Dempo* is completed, the master-priest and the disciple must submit the Application to Register the *Dempo* (Form Kyogaku No.11) with joint signatures and seals within thirty (30) days to the Kyogaku Bucho.

2. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application stated in the preceding clause, shall review it and enter the *Dempo* into the Priest Register and issue the certificate.

**Article 26: Invalidation of Dempo (伝法の無効)**

If *Dempo* is not completed within one (1) year after filing the application, the *Dempo* in question shall be invalidated.

**Article 27: Reapplication for Dempo (伝法の再申請)**

1. A person whose *Dempo* is invalidated by the regulation stated in the previous article shall be required to reapply for *Dempo*.

2. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application mentioned in the preceding clause, will instruct the applicant to use the materials that were issued at the previous application, instead of reissuing the materials issued in Article 23.

3. If the materials for the *Dempo* were accidentally damaged or lost, one can state the reasons and request new materials.

4. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the request for the materials stated in the preceding clause, will issue and collect the amount of their actual cost.

**Article 28: Dempo when the Master-priest is Critically Ill (師僧が危篤の場合の伝法)**

1. Only when a master-priest is critically ill, can the *Dempo* be completed by performing the prostration ceremony of *shishi-menju*. Representatives of dharma relations (*horui*) and/or dharma friends (*hoyu*) must be present to witness the occasion.

2. In the case stated in the preceding clause, an Application for the Registration of the *Dempo* through *shishi-menju* (Form Kyogaku No. 12) must be filed without delay by the witnesses with their signatures together with a medical certificate from a physician.

3. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application mentioned in the preceding clause, shall review it and enter the *Dempo* in the Priest Register. He will then issue the materials for the *Dempo* along with the registration certificate.

**SECTION 5 TEN-É (Change of Robe [Color] after Dempo) (転衣)**

**Article 29: Ten-é (転衣)**

1. When a person who has completed *Dempo* wishes to receive permission for ten-é, the master-priest shall apply for it with a Letter of Recommendation to Change the Color of Robe (Form Kyogaku No. 13) to the Kyogaku Bucho. If the master-priest has died, the applicant shall submit the application for the change of robe color (Form Kyogaku No. 14) with the signatures and seals of the applicant and close dharma relations.

2. One who is less than twenty (20) years of age or one who has not yet been released from a period of disciplinary punishment cannot apply or be recommended for the change of robe color.

**Article 30: Issuance of Permission for Ten-é and Recommendation for Zaisé (Special Visit to Pay Reverence at the Two Head Temples) (転衣許状及び霊星拝登添書の交付)**

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The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application mentioned in the preceding article, shall review it and issue permission for ten-é and a recommendation letter for Zuisé to the two Head Temples and will be recorded into the Priest Register.

Article 31: Zuisé Visitation (瑞世拝登)
1. A person who receives permission for Ten-é shall pay the fee as stipulated in the regulations of the Two Head Temples, and must complete Zuisé within two (2) or more years; If an unavoidable occasion occurs, such as an illness, one may request approval for youju (postponement of Zuisé in place of an actual visit), upon Receiving the Approval from the Two Head Temples for youju (Form Kyogaku No.15).
2. One who has performed youju in place of Zuisé as mentioned in the preceding clause shall visit the Two Head Temples within five (5) or more years.

Article 32: Application for the Zuisé Registration Certificate (瑞世登録証交付申請)
1. A person who has completed Zuisé must apply within sixty (60) days to the Kyogaku Bucho for the issuance of a Zuisé registration certificate (Form Kyogaku No.16). The application must be accompanied by the certificates issued by the Two Head Temples.
2. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application for the registration of Zuisé, shall review the matter and issue the Zuisé registration certification and enter it into the Priest Register.
3. Upon completion of the Zuisé registration as stipulated in the preceding clause, one will have achieved the priest ranking of osho.
4. If the procedure of Clause 1 was not carried out, a person will lose the qualification of ten-é.

SECTION 6 POSTHUMOUS CONFERRAL OF PRIEST RANKING (法階追贈)

Article 33: Posthumous Conferral of Priest Ranking (法階追贈の申請)
If a priest, during his/her lifetime, has made outstanding achievements, the head of the Priest Registration or the representatives of his/her dharma relations may apply to the Kyogaku Bucho for a Posthumous Conferral of Ranking of Priest (Form Kyogaku No. 17).

Article 34: Description of the Posthumous Conferral of Priest Ranking (法階追贈の種類)
Posthumous conferral of priest ranking shall be as follows:
1. Zagen To one whose ranking was joza
2. Osho To one who had completed the Dempo
3. Dai-oso To one whose rank was osho

SECTION 7 PRIEST REGISTRATION (僧籍)

Article 35: The Place of Priest Registration and the Head of the Priest Registration (僧籍の所在及び僧籍主)
1. A priest’s domicile registration shall be placed in a temple, as explained below. The present resident priest of a temple shall be the head of the Priest Registration.
   (1) The present resident priest shall be registered at his/her temple.
   (2) If a priest has an additional temple, his/her priest registration shall be at his/her main temple.
   (3) A resident priest who has resigned or who is no longer a resident priest shall be [registered at] the last temple at which he/she resided.

2. A disciple’s registration shall be located at his/her master-priest’s temple.
3. Regardless of the preceding clause, an acting priest’s registration will not change.
4. Regardless of Clause 1, the priest registration of a person with foreign citizenship and who falls under one of the following categories will register with the International Regional Office and the head of that Priest Registry will the Director of that International Regional Office.
   (1) A person who has priest registration in accordance with Clause 1 but has moved their registration to an International Regional Office in accordance with the Article 36 and 39.
   (2) A person who has received tokudo from a teacher who affiliated with an International Regional Office.

Article 36: Application to Change One’s Shiso (Master-priest) (師僧替えの申請)
1. When one who wishes to change his/her master-priest, that person’s new master-priest must submit an Application for the Change of Shiso (Form Kyogaku No. 18) to the Kyogaku Bucho together with the signatures and seals of the applicants, the new and the old master-priests, through the District Office to which the new master-priest’s temple belongs. In the case where the new and old master-priests belong to different District Offices, the new master-priest must obtain permission from the Kyogaku Bucho [for the changes] and at the same time shall report the matter to the Director of the District Office to which the old master-priest’s temple belongs (for a person who falls under the Article 35 Clause 3, this will be the Director of the International Regional Office.)
2. In the case of the preceding clause, if the old master-priest is no longer living, [written] consent from the old master-priest’s dharma relations will be required. If a dharma relation is not available, the approval of the head of the Priest Registration of the old master priest shall be sufficient.

Article 37: In Case the Master-Priest Refuses the Change (師僧替えを拒否された場合の措置)
1. If a master-priest refuses to give permission for the disciple to change his/her master-priest without reasons, the new master-priest may apply to the Kyogaku Bucho for the change of a master-priest together with the signatures and seals of the disciple and the new master-priest accompanied with a statement of reasons.

2. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving an application as stipulated in the preceding clause, will confer with the Cabinet and make a judgment regarding the change of master-priest.

Article 38: Those Who Cannot Change the Master-Priest

One who has completed *Dempo* shall not be allowed to change master-priest.

Article 39: Application for Relocation of Priest Registration

1. One who wishes to change the Priest Registration (of his/her temple) shall be allowed to do so, only if special circumstances exist, by applying the Application for Relocation of Priest Registration to the Kyogaku Bucho (Form Kyogaku No. 19) with the consent of the new and old heads of Priest Registration.

2. For the application stipulated in the preceding clause, one must supply detailed reasons and submit them through the District Office to which the new head of Priest Registration belongs.

3. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon reviewing the application stipulated in Clause 1, will issue the permission to relocate the Priest Registration.

Article 40: Removal from Priest Registration

1. One who has completed *Dempo* after more than twenty (20) years since his/her *risshin*; or

7. One who, as stated in the next article, after restoring his/her Priest Registration, has not completed *risshin* within three (3) years.

2. If a person falls under any of the categories (1) through (3) above, the master-priest, the head of the Priest Registration, and the dharma relations of the person in question must submit the Application for Removal from Priest Registration (Form Kyogaku No. 20) to the Kyogaku Bucho, together with documents to support the facts and other proof of the facts.

3. When the director of the local office (Kyokuchō) or the director of the district office (Shumushocho) confirms the death of a priest in its district together with a death certificate, the President of the Shumucho shall be allowed to remove the name [of the deceased] from the Priest Registration regardless of the regulation stipulated in Article 43.

Article 41: Restoration of Priest Registration

1. One whose Priest Registration was removed pursuant to the preceding article may restore it by applying [to Shumucho].

2. One who wishes to restore his/her Priest Registration may personally apply using the Application for Restoration of Priest Registration (Form Kyogaku No. 21) together with his/her original master-priest’s signature and seal to the Kyogaku Bucho through the district office. If the original master-priest is deceased, the head of the present Priest Registration may sign and seal.

3. In the case of the preceding clause, if the applicant’s original master-priest or the original head of the Priest Registration of the master-priest’s refuses, the applicant may seek a new head of the Priest Registration and apply, explaining the reasons. The application must have the signature and seal of the new head of the Priest Registration.

4. If one’s name has been removed from the Priest Register, by the regulations specified in items (4-6) of Clause 1 of the preceding article, and one wishes to restore it, a person who falls under categories (4 or 5) must apply together with the application for *risshin* and a person who falls under the category (6) must apply together with the application for *Dempo*.

5. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the application for restoration of the Priest Registration, will review the reasons and may decide [whether or] not permission will be granted.

6. One’s Priest Registration must be entered into the original master-priest’s register except for the application under Clause 3, which will be entered into the new master-priest’s register.

Article 42: Restoring Ranks of Priest and Ranks of Kyoshi

In the case of the preceding article, the Kyogaku Bucho shall be allowed to restore one’s rank of priest as well as rank of *kyoshi* depending on the situation.

Article 43: Notification of a Priest’s Death

1. A Notification of a Priest’s Death (Form Kyogaku No. 22) must be submitted to the Kyogaku Bucho without delay by the executive board members of the temple in the case of [the death of] a resident priest and in other cases, by the head of Priest Registration.

2. A death certificate as stated in the previous clause shall be accompanied by a certificate of death issued by a physician or by the head of a local government office.

3. The Kyogaku Bucho, upon receiving the notification stated in Clause 1, will remove the name from the Priest Register.
What Does it Take to Become a Full-Fledged Soto-shu Priest
and is it Really Worth the Whole Deal?

by Abbot Muho of Antaiji, 2010

Ordination and Dharma-Combat

I want to address the question which serves as the title of this article: What does it take to become a full-fledged Soto-shu priest and is it really worth the whole deal? The question of course relates to the topic of meeting a teacher and studying in a sangha, in this case not only eager dharma brothers that share our daily practice, but also a complex organization with a fixed structure and a huge bureaucratic apparatus, called Japanese Soto-shu. So here is my answer to the question (all of the following applies to the procedures in Japan. Outside of Japan, different rules and fees apply). To become a full-fledged Zen priest recognized and authorized by the headquarters of Soto-shu in Tokyo, the first step you need to take is:

a) Monk’s ordination (shukke tokudo)

Requirements differ from teacher to teacher, but on the material side you need the whole outfit (inner and outer robes, belts, okesa, rakusu, kechimyaku (transmission chart) and oryoki (eating bowls)), which can be quite expensive and/or time-consuming to make (at Antaiji, you write your own kechimyaku, while the rakusu and okesa are donated). The rest you have to buy. You also need to be willing to take the precepts, although no one here in Japan expects you to keep to their letter. Actually, at Antaiji most ordination ceremonies are followed by a party that involves drinking, although abstaining from alcohol is part of the precepts. The whole ceremony consists of first receiving the materials and then taking the precepts. It takes about an hour, there is lots of chanting and dozens of prostrations for the ordinee to be made. You need to make a photograph or two as proof during the ordeal, otherwise it will not be recognized by the Soto-shu headquarters.

You send in the photograph with a form with your name on it (both lay name and ordination name consisting of two Chinese characters) and a copy of your passport. The registration fee is 2000 Yen (about 20 dollars). The form also needs to be signed by the teacher, who has to be an authorized temple priest. After a month or so, you receive an official document from the headquarters that recognizes you as a Soto monk in training, together with a small handbook that is supposed to introduce you to your vocation (it is called shuryo-hikkei).

Congratulations! You are now officially ranked as a joza in the Soto hierarchy. Joza is sometimes translated literally but misleadingly as the “top seat”, but more realistically it is simply one who has “climbed a seat”. “Top seat” is the original meaning, and the joza is used to translate the thera (lit. “elder”) in theravada buddhism (Jap. joza-bukkyo), for example. In old India, it referred to monks who had been practicing for at least 10 or 20 years. In old China, the joza used to be what the shuso (see below) is in Japan today - the leader of the training monks. In fact, as you are the last one to be ordained into the community, when you become a joza today in Japan you will sit on the bottom seat. Sorry.

The only rank below that of joza is the shami, which stems from Sanskrit shramanerā and means “novice monk”. Today in Soto-shu, kids below the age of 10 who take the precepts are called shami, everyone else (even an eleven year old who is ordained) is a joza. So, as a matter of fact, the people who are in reality only novices (shami) are called “elders” (joza), while a real elder or head monk is called shuso and has the rank of zagen (see below).

I used to ask people to stay at least 6 months at Antaiji before they ordain. I am thinking of changing that to 3 years now. The reason behind this is: I have ordained twelve people so far. Only one of them lives in Antaiji right now. Some of the others have their own Zen dojos in their home-countries, others have gone to train at other temples, or live secular lives again. From some I have not heard in years. That is okay with me. Whoever ordains at Antaiji should, if possible, stay for a longer stretch of time. But there is no fixed answer, you have to find your own.

The second step you eventually need to take is:

b) Risshin and Dharma combat ceremony (hossenshiki)

Confucius has a famous saying: At fifteen my heart was set on learning; at thirty I stood firm; at forty I had no more doubts; at fifty I knew the mandate of heaven; at sixty my ear was obedient; at seventy I could follow my heart’s desire without transgressing the norm. In Confucius’ life, standing firm at age 30 is the second step. One could see a parallel to risshin here, the second step in the career of a monk (“heart set on learning” being the first step for a monk as well). It took Confucius 15 years. During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) you needed to have at least 20 years of practice as a monk under your belt to be the shuso (head monk) and do risshin. Today, you have to be at least 20 years old or you have to be at least 16 years old and been a monk for a minimum of 3 years. I.e., if you ordain at age 13, you can be shuso at age 16 (at least in theory, although it actually happens that a father who at the same time functions as his son’s “zen master” lets his son be the shuso while he is still in high school).
But, if you ordain after the age of 40 and do not take this step within the next 10 years, Sotoshu will erase your name from its register. If you are under 40 at the time of your ordination, you have a maximum of 20 years to do *risshin* and perform the dharma combat ceremony. That means that if you receive the title of *jōza* but do not live up to it (in the eyes of the headquarters), they will promptly remove it again. If you ordain, Sotoshu expects you to act as the head monk and be the officially registered leader for a practice period during the first one or two decades of your practice.

What is the meaning of *risshin*? The literal meaning is: “To raise one's body into a standing position”. This is what children learn as toddlers. When still babies, they where first crawling on the floor, then walking on all fours. Eventually they learn to pull themselves up and climb on chairs and tables, they can stand and walk by themselves, and finally they get better and better at expressing themselves verbally as well. They share to learn the perspective of the "big ones". They become recognizable as human beings, they are no longer the content of a crib in the corner of the room.

With a monk’s *risshin*, it is quite similar. It means to gain physical stability, confidence in oneself and one’s role as a monk. The ability to express oneself and share a wider perspective, not restricted to one’s own needs only. He starts to function like a pillar that supports the sangha. Maybe the reason why the physical presence, the attitude and the voice of the monk who performs the dharma combat ceremony are so much emphasized, while the actual content of what is said is of secondary importance, has to do with the literal, physical meaning of "standing firm".

What exactly does the dharma combat ceremony consist of, that accompanies *risshin*? As the name says, it is more of a ceremony than an actual "dharma combat". It lasts about an hour and the main part of it is an exchange of questions and answers between the members of the sangha and the head monk. This exchange is usually rehearsed in advance. The ceremony highlights a three month practice period, during which the person in charge serves the community as the head monk. He or she will not necessarily be the oldest or most experienced in the sangha. Still, it will be the person’s job to act as a leader and be able to replace the teacher during his absence, or give dharma talks in the teacher’s place. The first instance of a head monk (*shuso* in Japanese) in Japan is Ejo in Koshoji. It is documented in the fifth chapter of the fourth book of the Shobogenzo Zuimonki.

Soto-shu expects you to receive dharma transmission (*shiho*, see below) from the same teacher you ordained with (the ordination teacher is called *jugoshi* ("receiving karma teacher"), while after dharma transmission he will be your *honshi* ("root teacher"), so you cannot have different *jugoshi* and *honshi*). It is possible to switch teachers though, if both your old and your new teacher give permission. In this case, the new teacher will be your new *jugoshi*. If you cannot get the permission to switch teachers from your old teacher, you will have to re-ordain with your new teacher.

Only in the case of the dharma combat ceremony, it is possible to do it with a teacher different from you ordination master (the teacher you do *risshin* and *hossenshiki* with is called *hodoshi*, because of the *hodo* (dharma-banner) that is usually erected during *shinzanshiki* (see below) as a sign that the teacher is from now on preaching the dharma). In most cases, a monk will perform the dharma combat ceremony at a small parish temple close to his teacher’s temple, when the resident priest of that temple performs the "mountain ascending ceremony" (*shinzanshiki*, see below). Other monks become the *shuso* when they train at a formal training monastery (*sodo*, see below) for a couple of years.

In my case, I performed the ceremony at the temple of a senior dharma brother of mine, when he became the resident priest at his own temple and performed the "mountain ascending ceremony". In a case like this, the *shuso* usually does not spend the whole 3 months of the retreat at the temple, as the temple is not a training temple but a parish temple in the first place, i.e. there is no functioning sangha of training monks. This is the case for 99% of Soto temples in Japan. That means that I lived and trained all the time in Antaiji and only went to my dharma brother’s place for about a week or so with a group of my fellows from Antaiji.

When you are the *shuso* at a regular *sodo* though, you will have the position for the whole practice period and also enjoy certain privileges (entering the bath before everyone else, sitting next to the roshi) and extra duties (running with the wake-up bell every morning, cleaning the toilets, having no days off, etc.). In some *sodos*, like Eiheiji for example, it is extremely difficult to become the head monk. Other places seem to be desperate to find a candidate. I had a Japanese student who ran away from Antaiji because he could not handle the practice, but when I introduced him to a countryside *sodo* not far from Eiheiji, he was given the position of the *shuso* right away.

In Antaiji of course, it is also possible to perform *hossenshiki* as a head monk. Some people think that only at a regular *sodo* an abbot can perform the *hossenshiki* multiple times, while at a parish temple it is possible only once, at the time of the "mountain ascending ceremony". This is false, although it is true that in practice most parish temple priests perform the ceremony only once, while a *sodo* does it twice each year, once during each *ango* (practice period of 3 months, usually held in spring/summer and autumn/winter).

In fact, *any* temple can perform the ceremony as often as twice a year, it is just never done. This is because of the lack of a sangha at most temples. Without a functioning sangha, it is very complicated and costly to organize the ceremony (and the whole practice period, which only takes place on paper of course). How long it takes until you are asked to be the *shuso* at Antaiji depends mostly on your practice, the amount of responsibility you are able to shoulder, the leadership you can show. In most cases so far, people had been monks at Antaiji for at least 30 months (2 and a half years), sometimes even up to six or seven years before they became the *shuso*.

The fees for Soto-shu are about 20,000 Yen, but often the senior priests that attend the ceremony need to be paid as well. Therefore, depending on where the ceremony is performed, it can be quite expensive. I have heard of monks paying up to 1,000,000 Yen (one million Yen, i.e. 10,000 US dollars) for the whole thing. The calculation usually runs like this: You have a
dozen or so big guys sitting in the front row with their fancy kesas on. They need to get 500 dollars pocket money. The resident priest who functions as the hossenshiki master gets another one or two grand. After that, travel expenses and food catering need to be covered. Often, they ask you to appear in a brand new kesa and koromo, which also cost money. In the end, 10,000 dollars might not be enough! At a place like Antaiji though, as everyone participating does so as part of their practice, nothing but the Soto-shu fees need to be covered.

While in the case of ordination, it is usually the student who asks the teacher to be allowed to ordain as a monk, it would be very strange if a monk asked to be made the shuso in a temple and be allowed to perform hossenshiki on his own initiative. It has to be the priest who asks the monk to be his shuso for one practice period. If you are asked to do so, you might want to check how much money you will be charged later (on the other hand, that question might be considered very impolite!).

Hossenshiki is practiced only in Soto, it is unheard of in Rinzai-zen. Several months before the practice period starts, you and your teacher have to apply to the headquarters for permission of the practice period to take place (there are several conditions, one of them being the presence of a shike, a high ranking roshi). After you complete the 3 month practice period, a form signed by you and the teacher will be sent to the headquarters in Tokyo. This time you get no certificate back, but you are now officially promoted to the rank of zagen, which is (really) something like the "top seat", or more literally the "base seat/seat base".

The following steps are:

c) Dharma transmission (shiho, also called denpo)
d) Changing of the robes (ten-e)
e) Paying respect to the main temples Eiheiji and Sojiji and acting as the "abbot for a night" (zuise, promotion to the rank of osho)
f) Mountain ascending ceremony (shinzanshiki)
g) Holding a practice period (kessei, promotion to the rank of dai-ohso)

and the obligatory training period in an official Soto priest seminary (sodo ango) for at least one year (if you graduated from college, otherwise longer).

In the next article, let us invest what the third step, shiho, is all about. Does dharma transmission make you a Zen master? How does it work, and how important is it? Is it really a transmission of dharma, or is it just a piece of paper that passes hands, a formality?

Finally, after covering all of the steps in the career of an aspiring Soto-shu priest, the question will be: What function does all this ceremonial stuff serve? Why should anyone want to do it? Is there any meaning to it, or should we rather do without?

Dharma Transmission

c) Dharma transmission (shiho, also called denpo)

The third step in the career of a Soto-shu monk is dharma transmission. As with becoming the shuso, in the case of shiho it is the teacher who decides when, in his view, it is time for the step. Again, it would be strange if the student suggests: "I think I have been ready for shiho for quite a while now, how come you haven't given me the papers yet?"

So what is the actual procedure, when and where does it take place, and how long does it take? After doing dharma combat (hossenshiki), the student has 20 years of time to receive the dharma (shiho) from his teacher. Usually, it takes less, but there are also monks who lose their status as registered Soto-shu monks because they fail to do shiho. Never mind, this only means that your name disappears out of the registers in Tokyo, it does not mean that your robes and bowls are confiscated. Shiho is, unlike ordination and dharma combat, not done in the main hall before everyone else in the sangha, but one-to-one in the abbot's quarters (hojo). The student prostrates many times, in a special sequence, first nine, then eight, then seven times... in between pieces of text are recited. Finally the teacher gets off his high chair, that the student had been circling around, and the student takes the seat while the teacher pays his respects to the student this time. Usually the procedure takes place at night, and at one point both student and teacher check the documents that the student had been writing in the week (or weeks) before. They use a candle for this, so if the ceremony took place in broad daylight, this part of the ceremony would not make much sense. Probably the fact that it is done one-to-one, and at night time, has to do with the story of the transmission of the dharma from the fifth to the sixth patriarch in the Platform Sutra. Or at least that is my guess. Besides teacher and student, there are no other eyewitnesses and no photographs are taken. So the documentation papers that serve as proof of the transmission are the only material evidence of what took place. Of course, the dharma is not "inside" these papers, but it is not in the head either. The subjective feeling of the student, that he "got it" from the teacher alone is not enough. Therefore the material evidence is of utmost importance. Writing these documents on three (or - in the lineage of Sawaki Roshi - four) sheets of silk paper is what takes most time and concentration.

You receive these three sheets of silk paper from your teacher, together with a sutra book-style manual that explains the procedure in medieval Japanese. The teacher receives the materials from the Soto-shu headquarters in Tokyo, who charge 16,000 Yen for them. The teacher has to apply in advance to the Soto-shu headquarters, and they send the expensive paper with their seals on it to the temple. Necessary requirements are of course that the student has not only ordained but also been the shuso for a practice period during which he performed the hossenshiki. After the empty papers arrive, the student has to write the documents of the transmission in his own hand. Normally you have about a week to write, although that may depend. I have heard of students who get a whole week off to prepare the documents. In the case of Antaiji, you do not get any time off, so you have to cut down your sleeping time while doing all the farm work etc during the day. In my case, it took me
considerably longer than a week to write all the stuff. Of course, you write with a calligraphy brush and you have to take great care not to mess those silk papers up, because the head quarters will not send you any extra papers, unless you pay another 16,000 Yen.

If you do not finish the writing of the documents in the course of one year though, your teacher has to apply anew and pay for three new sheets of silk. It goes without saying that each of the three papers serves a purpose, because there are three different documents to be written. They are called sanmotsu in Japanese, which literally means "the three things". These are

a) Shiho (the scripture of transmission, the names of the ancestors arranged in a circle - the dharma has passed on from Shakyamuni to yourself, and now you give it back to Shakyamuni. There is a small piece of paper, probably originally written by Sawaki Roshi, with some comments. This paper is also copied by the student when doing dharma transmission at Antaiji.)

b) Daiji (the great matter, a cryptic symbolization of the content of the teaching. Again, there is a small extra sheet of paper that explains about the meaning of the symbols.)

c) Kechimyaku (the blood lineage, looks quite similar to the blood line transmission that you already wrote at the time of ordination) Actually, in the lineage of Sawaki Roshi (and maybe other lineages as well) a student is told to write a fourth document on an extra sheet of paper, which is called

d) Hisho (the secret document, which is encoded, but the code for deciphering is on the same paper, so once you hold it in your hands it is not so "secret" anymore.)

Each of the documents comes in a separate envelope. They are signed by both teacher and student and stamped by the teacher in a similar manner like the kechimyaku at the time of ordination.

A few things that are important to know about shiho:

1) **Denpo and shiho: Transmitting and receiving are two sides of one coin**

Dharma transmission is a mutual thing. It can only happen when both teacher and student agree that this is the time and place for it to take place. When the student is not ready to receive (shi-ho), there is no way for the teacher to transmit (den-po). If the teacher is not willing to transmit, there is no point for the student to claim he "got it". Dharma transmission is nothing subjective, it does not happen "in the mind".

2) **Once or never**

Dharma transmission can happen once, and only once, or never at all. Multiple dharma transmission is nonsense. If you receive dharma transmission from one teacher, from then on that is your one and only teacher, your real teacher (jap. honshi). The multiple lineage holders that you hear of in the West are nonsense. Therefore it is important that both sides, but especially the student, make sure that this is the right time for them to make this important step.

When a teacher offers dharma transmission to a student, the student not only has the right to refuse, he actually must refuse if he does not feel that this teacher is his teacher for life. It happens from time to time that a "Zen master" suggests that you leave when a teacher offers dharma transmission to a student, the student not only has the right to refuse, he actually must refuse if he does not feel that this teacher is his teacher for life. It happens from time to time that a "Zen master" suggests that you leave. It has happened to myself a number of times here in Japan. So be careful, because after shiho, you can not change your teacher anymore, as you could still change the jugoshi (ordination teacher) before shiho. The only thing you can do to cut the connection with your teacher (hon-shi) after shiho is to disrobe. After that, you may ordain as a novice monk again.

You can inherit the dharma of one and only one teacher. In the past, monks were allowed to receive transmission from several teachers. The monk who had most dharma transmissions was considered to be the most enlightened and had the best chances to become the abbot of Eiheiji. This was changed by the eminent Soto monk Menzan to the rule that lasts to the present day: Only one transmission from only one teacher. Multiple dharma transmission in present day Soto-shu is considered nonsense. You hear of that a lot in America though, where some people claim to be "both Soto and Rinzai". Are they authorized by both Soto and Rinzai, as they actually exist in Japan today? No, in reality they are neither Soto nor Rinzai, but their own hybrid brand. That is okay, it is just a different thing. They play a different game with different rules. To me, saying that you have transmission from three different teachers in a way is like saying that none of these transmissions is for real. Because if only one of them was for real, why bother to shop around for the other two?

3) **Who are you?**

Dharma transmission defines who you are as a Zen monk. It is like your DNA. The documents of the transmission (that - among other things - list the names of the Buddhist ancestors from Shakyamuni Buddha up to yourself) are unique, there are not two Zen monks with identical documents. When you receive dharma transmission from teacher A, it will never be the same as dharma transmission from teacher B. And the dharma transmission you will eventually give to your students will not be the same either. You can only transmit the dharma YOU received from your honshi, nothing else. In fact, this is a little complicated: It is the dharma you received from your teacher, but it is not HIS dharma anymore, it is YOUR dharma now. It would not be the same if you had received it from another teacher, but it would not be the same if someone else had received it from the same teacher either. The transmission you could have received from teacher B would not have been the same as that from teacher A. And: The transmission that you received from teacher A is not the same as the transmission your dharma brothers and sisters received from the same teacher A. Why? Because the receiving side is also part of the "DNA". The dharma is not only defined by the teacher, but quite as much by the student. Therefore, when you transmit the dharma to your students, not a single one of them will receive the same dharma, each of them will receive their unique dharma. Although it is not just "in the mind", it is neither like a material object being passed on from teacher to student.
To use two examples that Dogen Zenji gives: Dharma transmission can be like pouring milk from one cup to the other. No oil, liquor or lacquer must be added, Dogen says in the "Kesa kudoku" chapter of the Shobogenzo. It would not be milk any more. He allows for the addition of water though. This dilution would make the milk thinner, but it would not change the color, the flavor or taste. If we were Homeopaths, we might even claim that this process is a "potentization" of the original milk. I would like to change Dogen's metaphor a little and say that dharma transmission is like the pouring of clear water into clear water. Old water that dates back from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha is mixed and "potentized" each new generation. Still, it must never be mixed with oil, liquor or lacquer. It must be 100% water, but half of it is your original water, half of it is the water transmitted from your teacher, containing one drop of each generation dating back to the time of the Buddha. And even that is only half-right: In reality, it is 100% YOUR water, and it is at the same time 100% of the Buddha's water. When you transmit it on to your students, it is still YOUR dharma, but at the same time it is 100% your students dharma now.

That leads us to Dogen Zenji's second example from the Gakudoyojinshu. The teacher is like a skilled carpenter, the student is like a piece of wood, he says there. It depends solely on the carpenter what can be made from the piece of wood. Even low quality wood will turn into a piece of art when the right carpenter works on it. This is an important teaching for anyone who is in the position of a teacher: When your students do not develop in the way you wish, do not blame it on them, blame it on yourself. Otherwise you are like a carpenter who says: "Who built this crooked house? There must have been something wrong with the wood!"

For the student, though, there lies a danger here: You might think that the responsibility for your practice does not lie with you, but with your teacher. You might ask: "How come that after three years I am still not enlightened? Why do I still suffer? What makes me miserable? Maybe I should look for a different teacher!"

No, it is not only the teacher who defines the student, it is also the student who defines the teacher. YOU create the teacher just as much as the teacher creates you. Shariputra, Maudgalyāyana, Mahakashyapa, Subhuti and Ananda, even Devadatta all studied with the same Shakyamuni Buddha, but at the same time they all had a different teacher, i.e. the Shakyamuni they created through their teacher-student relationship. None of the twelve disciples of Jesus saw the same messiah. Judas met a different Jesus than Peter met. And Paul, who never met Jesus in person at all, created most of the "messiah" we know of today.

To use a different analogy: If monk's ordination is like asking a girl out on a date for the first time, dharma combat ceremony might be like her letting you have sex for the first time (she is quite conservative and might let you wait for some years). Finally, she might ask you: "Will you marry me?" If you answer in the affirmative, what follows will be shiho. You fill out papers at the town office and are registered as an officially married couple. As with shiho, the reality is not in the registration form. That you love each other as a couple is something you will have to prove to each other in the years to follow. It would be strange to say: "We have not seen each others in years, have not exchanged a word, but we are still a married couple!" In that case, you are only married on paper.

On the other hand, what if you say: "Maybe we are not officially married, but we have been together for quite some time now and really love each other. We can have sex and everything, we can even have kids without being legally married, so why get married in the first place? We can do without!" Maybe you can do without, but most people (maybe including her) will not view it as the same thing. They will ask: "If you really love me (or her) as much as you claim, why not take responsibility and marry me (or her)?" Or, as is usually the case, if she (the master) is the one who is not so enthusiastic about getting married to you, maybe she does not love you as much as you would like to think? Maybe it is only in your head?

On the other hand, you have those who can not get married often enough. But not only do you hear from teachers with "multiple transmission", you also hear of teachers who call themselves students of Zen master A, but if you look at their credentials, they have dharma transmission from Zen master B, who comes from a completely different lineage. There are dozens of others, who call themselves the last or best or only true disciples of Sawaki Kodo Roshi (for example), but never received any documentation for that. They claim to have received some "mind to mind transmission", but that "transmission" exists only in their mind, nothing more. It is like you inherit a Chinese noodle shop, but you advertise yourself saying: "In reality I am offering French cuisine, just it happens to say "Blue dragon" on the door, that is all!"

From my perspective, there is nothing wrong with Chinese food or French food or Japanese food, this or that lineage of Zen, you should just make clear what you were trained to cook. You can even train with different cooks at different times of your life, or be an auto-didactic cook in your own right, but when it comes to opening your own restaurant, it might be a good idea to decide what food you want to offer. Just throwing all the spices together will not make an "ethnic dish". If you offer French cuisine, get qualification for that. If you run a Chinese noodle shop, get trained for that.

It is as if these people were saying: "I am married to this girl here, but the woman I really love was someone else. Unfortunately, she never got around to asking me if I would marry her, but in her heart she loved me more than anyone else!"

Or it is like telling the new girl you are dating that the marriage ring on your finger is just symbolical and really means nothing. On the other hand, if a teacher tries to disown a student whom he has given shiho, going so far as saying that he is not a true Buddhist, is like a wife that tries to divorce her husband saying: "I never loved you in the first place, I just married because you insisted on it."

4) This is the start, not the goal

Dharma transmission is not the last and final step in a student's practice. Quite the opposite, one might call it the real first step on the way of practice. The way has just begun, but now the student has decided which exact way he wants to follow to the end. But all the real hardships still lay ahead of him. To use the example of boy-meets-girl again: At this point of time they have
decided that they are made for each other, so to speak, they want to get married and have kids. Hopefully, that does not mean that the romance is over. It just means that both are prepared for the real struggle to begin.

5) The documents

Proof of the dharma transmission is put in black ink on three (or four) pieces of white silk paper. The paper is not a substitute for the transmission itself, but without the paper, no transmission. The documents are like the signature you put under the marriage papers. You can not say: "Maybe I was married to someone else and had kids with him, but I let him marry me only because he was the richest man in town at the time. My real sweetheart was this cool guy whom I met when I was still in high-school, he whispered "I love you sooo much" in my ear just before he died. In reality, HE is my real love." Unfortunately, that is exactly what many people have to say about their teacher.

I would recommend: "Marry the girl or boy you love! Or do not marry at all!" Some may say: "I never had the intention to marry anyway. The idea is so old-fashioned! I will just enjoy myself and spread my seeds like that." In a way, it is true that the institution that marriage and shiho represent are quite narrow and old-fashioned. "Unnatural" in a way. I would be surprised if Shakyamuni gave dharma transmission to anyone. Probably the idea never occurred to him. It seems to be more of a Chinese concept that you can be the "dharma heir" of one and only one master. But, just as the institution of marriage, which is so unnatural and inconvenient sometimes, it still has survived for some reason to the present day. There must be some reason why proper shiho is still held in high regard. When I look at the cases of some "Zen-masters" and their students, I think I begin to understand why.

Love is not in the paper, but it does make a difference if you are legally married to a woman or not, even if it does not make a difference to you. And it also does make a difference if you get "married" deep in the jungle in Thailand for the x-th time, or in a chapel in Las Vegas, or officially registered at the town hall. The papers can not replace the marriage, they are no guarantee for a happy marriage. But there is a difference between being "married in your mind", or in black and white.

6) Once and forever

Dharma transmission can never be erased. Married persons can get a divorce, but the fact of child birth can never be denied. Once you have transmitted the dharma, you can not claim it back. Once you have received it, you can not return it. But even stupid things like this can sometimes be seen in the "Zen" world.

7) Transmission of what?

What is transmitted when dharma transmission takes place? Just the paper, or some philosophical understanding, or a mystical experience? What is the real content of the transmission? At the transmission ceremony itself, the papers are checked between teacher and student, and many prostrations are done, the student pays respect to the teacher, the teacher pays respect to the student. This is the recognition of the transmission that took place long before the ceremony itself. In fact, it has nothing to do at all with the paper, with philosophy or with mystical experience. The 24 hours of the daily life shared by teacher and student are the content of the transmission, and nothing else.

8) When does it happen?

Dharma transmission does not (or at least should not) happen "on a whim". In Antaiji, when you receive shiho after, say, eight or nine years, you will have sat for 15,000 hours of zazen with your teacher. Not only that, you also shared many thousands of meals with him, worked together in the fields for thousands of hours, spread manure, cut grass and wood together, side by side, you sweat together in the summer and froze together in the winter. You cooked for him and filled the bath tub for him, you know how he likes the temperature both of his soup and the bathing water. You also shared many drinks, probably. In each of these activities, the dharma is transmitted. None should be left out. Of course, things like wearing the okesa, the formal robes, or using oryoki, the eating bowls, and finally the writing of the shiho documents itself are part of this. Each single one of these day to day activities is of the utmost importance. As with marriage and child birth again, if you do not know each other and have not lived together for a long, long time, how can you make a lifetime commitment? Dharma transmission does not happen simply because you sat through a few dozen "Zen retreats", finished all the "recommended reading" by your teacher and maybe spaced out once or twice on your bicycle on the way to work (which you mistook for enlightenment). Having received the dharma should never be confused with just having an attitude.

Using the Confucius quote again: At fifteen my heart was set on learning; at thirty I stood firm; at forty I had no more doubts; at fifty I knew the mandate of heaven; at sixty my ear was obedient; at seventy I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing the norm. Although you do not have to be at the age of forty to receive shiho (most people are usually younger, but also many much older), this is the point where you have no more doubts about the direction of your practice and who your teacher is. Not only that, you are also able to teach others now and point them a direction. But you are certainly still far away from the state where you can just "follow heart's desire without transgressing the norm". This has also sometimes be misunderstood and led to a lot of trouble in the past, especially sex and drug and money related problems. So maybe we should add another point:

9) Authorization as Zen master?

Dharma transmission does not make you a zen master (what is that anyway? We will see soon...). It does not make you an osho (Japanese for "teacher") either. It is the first of three steps (shiho, ten-e and zuise), at the end of which you will officially be promoted to the rank of osho. In Japanese Soto-Zen, there more than 15,000 people with this rank. It is not as special as you might believe. If you have only shiho but not performed zuise yet, you are not regarded as a teacher of Zen. That, of course, does not mean that you can not share your practice with others. Even if you are not a teacher, you can and should share your practice with others.
And what is a Zen master in the first place? A Zen master, in Japanese, is a *zenji*. This title is reserved for the founder Dogen Zenji and all the abbots of the two main temples, Eiheiji and Sojiji. So at each time, there is usually only two *zenjis* alive, unless there is a *zenji* living somewhere in retirement (like Itabashi Zenji, who is the third *zenji* alive right now). So, to become a *zenji* is not impossible, but it is a long way and *shiho* alone is certainly not enough. Calling yourself a Zen master just because you have *shiho* is a joke.

So how about *roshi*? Is someone with *shiho* considered to be a *roshi*? Again, *shiho* alone is worthless without *ten-e* and *zuise*. But even with *ten-e* and *zuise*, you are not a *roshi*. What is a *roshi*? Literally, it is an old master. Someone in America once famously said: "Anyone who calls himself a "roshi" and succeeds in making others call him "roshi" too, is a roshi!"

That is probably true in America. And it is also half-true for Soto-shu in Japan, in so far as there is no official rank of *roshi*. You cannot and will not be authorized as a *roshi* by the headquarters. So indeed, everything depends on whether people (usually your students) are willing to call you "roshi" or not. What makes it more complicated in Japan, though, is: If you call yourself a "roshi" here, people will see it as a clear sign that you are not. They will think you are deluded egomaniac, and probably they are not so wrong. If, on the other hand, you claim: "I am a total fool!" - they will say: "At least he has realized as much as that!"

So in Japan, the rule goes: "Anyone who succeeds in making others call himself a "roshi" without calling himself a "roshi" is a roshi." A little more sophisticated than the Americanized version of the roshi, but the idea is essentially the same: try to make others think of yourself as someone important. Anyway, having *shiho* has nothing to do with whether a *zenji* or a *roshi*. Does this mean that it is not so big of a step to make after all? Is it quite meaningless if and when and where you receive *shiho*? Not at all! First, if you claim to be a teacher without having *shiho*, than you should do so without referring to any lineage. It is pretty bad style to say: "I represent this and this lineage, unfortunately my teacher forgot to give me the papers!"

So although *shiho* alone is not much, no *shiho* at all qualifies you for nothing but being a dharma practitioner in your own right, a follower of the Buddha Way who may practice on his own or along with others. You may even teach the dharma, but you should not pose as an authorized representative of a lineage or school. Believe it or not, that happens all the time. If you teach without *shiho*, you should make clear that you are not part of one of the existing schools, but the founder of your own school (which is okay of course, as long as you state so).

**10) Is dharma transmission a guarantee for spiritual attainment, or anything?**

No, dharma transmission is no guarantee for anything. It only shows that the person who gave the transmission - and only that one person - was convinced that the student was qualified as a teacher. Could he have been wrong? Yes, he could have been wrong. Therefore, if you want to make sure that a teacher is actually a good teacher, you should not only ask if he or she has dharma transmission or not. The question is: Where does this dharma transmission come from? What lineage does it represent? And even more important: What practice did accompany it? What kind of student was the teacher before he or she became a teacher? What is his or her practice now?

On the other hand, is it possible that somebody is a good teacher but has no dharma transmission at all? Yes, that is possible. Shakayamuni Buddha had no dharma transmission. At least from no historical existing person, and that is the kind of transmission we are talking about here. Still, he is a teacher. OUR teacher, because we made him OUR teacher. But such cases are rare. If you meet a person who claims to be a teacher but has no dharma transmission, you should look even closer at who that person is, what he or she is actually teaching and how he or she is actualizing it in their daily life.

d) **Ten-e and some words about Zui-se**

We have now reached steps 4 and 5 in the career of a monk. In a booklet that arrived the other day from the headquarters in Tokyo, I found the picture below that divides the career of a priest into ten steps, starting with birth and ending with death. In this curriculum, the two steps are treated as one. After you complete them, you have the rank of *osho*:
What does ten-e and zuise mean? Ten-e literally means "to turn the robe", i.e. to change dress. Unsui (training monks) are allowed to wear only black robes and black okesa. When you ordain, your teacher has to send a picture taken at the ceremony to the headquarters in Tokyo to have the ordination certified. In the past I gave some of the monks who ordained at Antaiji brown kesas at ordination, and as a result they were not recognized as Soto monks. This is strange, because okesa stems from the Sanskrit word kashaya, which refers to the mixed, rusty-brown color the monks robes are traditionally dyed in. Anyway, I had to take another picture with my students in a different, black robe, and voila! - they were recognized as proper Soto monks.

Now, ten-e is the point in the career of a Soto monk when you are finally allowed to wear a yellow-brown robe. The conditions are that you have finished dharma transmission (shihô) and are at least 20 years old. You had to be at least 16 to become a head monk (shuso), and in theory you could receive dharma transmission as a teenager. But you are not allowed to wear the brown robe before the age of 20.

This is interesting, because at the time of the Buddha - and even now in the Theravada tradition - you have to be at least 20 years old to take full ordination as a bhikshu (monk). Could it be that ten-e in Soto-shu is something like a full monk's ordination? At least in theory, the answer is no. The precepts for novices, in Japanese shami-kai exist also in Soto-shu, but they are only given to kids below the age of 10. If you ordain and are over 10 years old, you are - at least in theory - a full fledged monk. But in practice, I think, the regular tokudo-shiki (monk's ordination, also called priest's ordination sometimes) is something like a novice ordination, while the steps of dharma transmission, ten-e and zuise finally make you a proper monk. But that is only my personal impression, it is not the official Soto-shu point of view.

If you are over 20 years old, you can do ten-e any time after you have finished shihô. Your teacher has to send in a document called ten-e-suikyôjo. If your teacher has already died, you can send in a document by yourself called ten-e-shigangan. After a little waiting, the headquarters will return a document called ten-e-kyôjo, i.e. the permission to change the robes and wear a colored okesa. After receiving this permission, you have two years of time to pay respect to the two main temples, Eiheiji and Sojiji, where you act as the "abbot for one night". This is called zuise and this is the first time you wear the yellow-brown okesa.

If you do not perform zuise within two years after ten-e, you lose the permission to change the robes, i.e. you have apply a second time.

There are regulations for ten-e after your teacher has died. Are there regulations for shihô in the case your teacher dies? Naturally, you can not receive shihô from your teacher after he has passed away. Dharma transmission in a dream is not recognized. How about dharma transmission on the deathbed? In fact, this kind of dharma transmission can be recognized, but only under certain conditions: If the teacher lies on the deathbed, he or she can transmit the dharma without the usual decorum and the one-week preparation of documents, but with a simple prostration of teacher and student (called shi-shi-menju-no-hai, "face-to-face transmission bowing" in Japanese). Still, witnesses are necessary. it is not enough to claim that your teacher whispered the words into your ear, unheard by anyone else. The witness needs to be a Soto-shu priest who is on the board of the temple (i.e. the sekinin-yakukan) and at the same time a doctor needs to issue a medical certificate as proof of the critical condition of the teacher at the time of the shi-shi-menju-no-hai. Even in this case, there are objective criteria for dharma transmission to take place. It never happens just "mind-to-mind".

But let us return to the topic. As a joza (ordained monk before hossenshi) and zagen (ordained monk after hossenshi), but before zuise you can wear only black o-kesa over a black koromo (outer Chinese style robe). On the night that you pay respect to Eiheiji and Sojiji, you can wear a colored o-kesa for the first time. Usually it has the yellow-brown color shown in the picture. Your koromo is still black. After zuise you are promoted to the rank of osho and eventually you might become the resident priest in your own temple. At that point, you are allowed to wear a colored koromo as well, but not the fancy colors like red, yellow or purple which are reserved for the higher special ranks (about those, later). As osho, you can also wear a special hat named after the founder of tea ceremony, Rikyu. I do not own one, but one store sells them for 12,600 Yen a piece. The higher the rank you climbed, the fancier the hats. They get more expensive too!

You are promoted from one rank to the next whenever you finish one of the steps in the career of a monk:

- After ordination, you are a joza.
- After being the shuso for a three-month training period, you become zagen.
- After finishing zuise, you are promoted to osho.
- After you become the head priest at your own temple and hold a practice period there for the first time (with one student acting as the shuso), you will finally reach the highest rank of dai-oshô.

These four ranks are pretty straightforward and depend on nothing but your performance as a monk under your teacher, and then as a head priest. These ranks are called hokai in Japanese, which literally means "dharma ranks". Apart from these "dharma ranks", there exist eight special ranks, sokai in Japanese, which means "priest rank". Promotion from sokai to sokai is a little more complicated and depends on the school education you received and the amount of time you spend in an officially recognized training monastery. The lowest sokai is that of a third rank priest. I do not know anyone who has that rank, it does not entitle you to become a priest. When you ordain, you do not have a sokai at all. You get promoted after you trained in an officially recognized monastery and then complete zuise. Everyone I know gets promoted at least to the 2nd rank priest, which is the second lowest rank. The list below shows how long you have to stay in a training monastery to be promoted to the rank of 2nd rank, 1st rank and sei-kyoshi.

If you graduated from university, you can become a 2nd rank Soto priest in 6 months (or 1st rank in 2 and a half years, sei-kyoshi in 4 and a half years). If dropped out of high-school, you need 3 years to obtain the same rank (or 6 years for 1st rank, 10 years for sei-kyoshi). To be promoted to the higher ranks above sei-kyoshi, you first need to become a sei-kyoshi and then...
wait for someone at the top to recommend you for promotion. For the promotion to the rank of gon-daikyojo, you need to be at least 55 years old. For dai-kyoshi, you need to be 60 and there is a maximum number of 180 people inside Soto-shu who can have this rank. The famous Aoyama Shundo roshi recently became the first woman in the history of Soto-shu to be promoted to this rank. There are only 30 gon-daikyojo, and only the two abbots of Eiheiji and Sojiji possess the rank of dai-kyojo. Sounds complicated? It is! What changes when you get promoted? Nothing much, except the colour of the kesa and koromo you are allowed to wear, and the special hat of course. Also, the annual contribution you have to make to Soto-shu depends on your sokai:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Annual Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st rank kyoshi</td>
<td>10,000 Yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd rank kyoshi</td>
<td>15,000 Yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd rank kyoshi</td>
<td>30,000 Yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th rank kyoshi</td>
<td>150,000 Yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th rank kyoshi</td>
<td>210,000 Yen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No-one knows, if or how much the dai-kyojo pay. You have to make these annual contributions through the temple at which you are registered until you die. After your death, the temple has to produce a death certificate to be exempted from these contributions (this can become important, as Antaiji for example has to pay contributions for a nun (1st rank) that ordained with Sawaki roshi more than half a century ago and hasn’t been heard of for decades. Still we are billed for her contributions every year, and that hurts if you have no parish and therefore no income from funerals).

Okay. So much for whining about the bureaucratic stuff. Some words about the "officially recognized training monasteries". These are called sodo in Japanese, literally a monk’s hall. Antaiji considers itself a sodo, but we are not an officially recognized one. That means that you can train here for as many years as you like, you will not be promoted to any rank (except oshô, if you receive the dharma transmission). If you want to become a full-fledged priest who can take over a Soto temple in Japan, you have to spend at least a couple of months to a couple of years in one of thirty something training monasteries in Japan. The most famous ones are Eiheiji and Sojiji, but from Hokkaido to Kyushu, there are many other alternatives. Eiheiji and Sojiji have more than 100 training monks staying there (usually for not more than a year or two), while most of the others have less than ten monks living in the monastery. All of them except two are for men, the nunneries are in Nagoya and in Niigata prefecture. The time done in these places is called ango, it will be the topic of another article.

e) Zuise - abbot for the night

Now let us get back to the steps in the career of a monk inside Japanese Soto-shu, including the little absurdities and all. Step 5 is called zuise which isn't easy to translate. Zuise means "auspicious", se is "the world". Originally, it seems that it meant the same as shusse, i.e. to get promoted to an office, to make a career step. Maybe it can also be interpreted as "to make an auspicious announcement to the whole world" or something along those lines. To use the boy-meets-girl example once more: If they fall in love with each other at tokudo and get engaged at rishin, then shihô might be something like proposal (which happens only between the two of them, with no-one else involved), ten-e is something like going to town hall and changing one's name (the monk changes his robes, making the dharma transmission official) and zuise is the big wedding to which everyone in the family gets invited.

In Japanese Soto-shu, zuise is done twice, once at each of the main monasteries (Eiheiji and Sôjiji). In Japanese, it is also called ichiya-no-jâshoku, which means "abbot for one night". Only after you have been the abbot of both Eiheiji and Sôjiji for one night each are you considered an oshô, i.e. a teacher. Oshô is the third out of four hokai (dharma ranks), only surpassed by dai-oshô ("great teacher"). There are seven sôkai (priest ranks) among oshô and dai-oshô, which depend, among other things, on the length of your career and how long you practiced ango at a formal training monastery. As we have seen, becoming an oshô entitles you to wear a colored (usually brown) kesa robe and a fancy hat.

If my memory is right, you have about two years to complete this step after shihô, but the interval between doing zuise at Eiheiji and Sôjiji respectively must not exceed one month. Being the "abbot for one night" at Eiheiji and Sôjiji is easier than it sounds. You only have to make an appointment beforehand at both places. They are open all year round, all though zuise might not be possible on certain days. They will send you information about when to come, including a dress code. You will also be informed that you have to pay 50,000 Yen on arrival at each Eiheiji and Sojiji. That is about 1200 US dollars (Nov. 2010) altogether, plus traveling expenses. But then again, it is something like the equivalent to a wedding ceremony.

If you thought that being "abbot for one night" means that Eiheiji's or Sôjiji's chauffeur is waiting for you with a limousine at the train station, you are wrong. You have to get to the temple gate by yourself by the appointed time in the afternoon. I went from Antaiji to Eiheiji in the summer of 2000 with our temple's off-road bike. The monk in charge looked surprised when I told him that I was "tonight's abbot" and looking for a parking lot. I had to change dress in a public toilet in front of the gate, as the "abbot for the night" is supposed turn up in koromo and rakusu, not the filthy samu-e I was wearing. After paying my 50,000 Yen at the front desk, I was shown to my room. Being the "abbot for one night", I expected to be shown to the best quarters in the temple compound. And the room I was led to was quite spacious, but to my surprise three other oshôs-to-be were already in there. Altogether, we were four abbots for the night. The rest of the day was spent rehearsing for the next morning’s ceremony.
Not only were we not given the keys to the monastery, we did not even see the real abbot (who was - at the time - about 100 years old). Of course no-one was waiting for our orders, rather we were expected to follow what we were told. It turned out that being "abbot for one night" meant nothing but filling the space of dôshi at some of the next morning's ceremonial rituals. This turned out to be fairly easy, because as the only foreigner I was placed last and just had to follow the movements of the three Japanese before me.

The biggest treat you get for your 50,000 Yen is the fancy meal following the ceremony in the morning. I hear that the unsui that work in Eiheiji's kitchen get up at one o’clock in the morning to prepare this meal for the "abbots". The whole affair ends with a photo session. Fortunately, my seniors at Antaji had warned me that I would be billed another 50 dollars for the photographs, so I avoided having my pictures taken by the professional Eiheiji camera-man. If you bring your own camera, you can ask one of the unsui to take a snapshot of you. When you leave before lunch time, you will receive a whole bag full of memorial goods depending on the day, ranging from stuff like kotsu sticks, tea bowls and silk handkerchiefs, to books authored by the real abbot of Eiheiji or Sôjiji. My bag even contained a set of postcards! I was reminded of one of those fukubukuro grab bags they sell at Japanese department stores at New Year’s.

A couple of days later, the procedure at Sôjiji was more or less the same, except for minute details. Traditionally, the monks turn anti-clockwise after offering incense at Eiheiji, while they turn clockwise at Sôjiji. Or maybe it was the other way around. Anyway, they will tell you that. Also, they wear their kesa in a different way. Both the Eiheiji and Sôjiji way of putting on the kesa do not make much sense when you wear the nyohô-e in the tradition of Sawaki Rôshi. To my surprise, the monks at both Eiheiji and Sôjiji had never seen a nyohô-e, nor had they any clue of how to put it on. I somehow had to figure out how to adjust the nyohô-e to their idea of how it was supposed to look.

One of the lessons to be learned not only at zuise but throughout practicing in a Japanese setting is this adjusting to different circumstances. Almost never will people ask for your opinion. Almost always will people expect you to listen to what they have to say. And that even goes for the "abbot for one night". I would not be surprised if even the real abbot would spend most of the day just following the instructions of his assistants. Following others makes up for about 99% of practice here in Japan.

At Sôjiji, I was not alone either. Masanori, who had been with me at Eiheiji the previous week, was with me again. His name was written with the same two characters that form the shôbô of shôbôgenzô, but for some reason he preferred the secular Japanese reading (each Sino-Japanese character can be read in at least two ways, a Japanese kun way and a Sino-Japanese on way). We had met and talked at Eiheiji, and at that time he had told me and the two other "abbots" that he was working at a friend’s company in Tokyo. Just as the other two Japanese, he was born as a temple son and his father expected him to take over the family temple as soon as he would retire, but as it was a small temple in the mountainous Nagano Prefecture, he had to work while his father would take care of the temple. Being only the two of us in Yokohama (which is part of the greater Tokyo metropolitan area), he told me that in fact he was not working as an employee, but as a professional pachinko player. "I can make so much more money playing pachinko than performing funerals, I don't even know if I want to return to Nagano at all", he said. At night, he wanted to show me Chinatown in Yokohama. He asked the unsui who was in charge of us: "This foreign monk here is still hungry. Is there a way for us to leave the monastery at night and examine Yokohama’s night life? After all, we are the abbots tonight and maybe you would like to join us?" The unsui asked us to wait for some minutes as he would consult with his seniors. After he came back, he told us politely: "Having been here for less than a year, it would not be considered appropriate for me to accompany you outside. Also, I am obliged to tell you that it is not permissible for the abbots for one night to leave the monastery compounds. But, just for your information, the third door on the left side of this hall way is not locked at night. It connects to the garden and from there, you can get to the subway station. Training monks use it as a kind of emergency exit."

I do not know if we were the only “abbots for one night” who used this "emergency exit", but a friend told me that the following year he found a printed manual for the "abbots for one night" in his room in Sôjiji, that stated that leaving the monastery over night was absolutely forbidden. But then again, the fact that something is forbidden in Japan does not mean that it is not practiced.

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f) Sessa-takuma - ango as life in a rock grinder

Last year I started with this series on the nitty-gritty of studying Zen in the Japanese Soto school. The question I am dealing with has two parts: "What does it take to become a full-fledged Soto-shu priest?" and "Is it really worth the whole deal?" These are two separate questions, and I am still dealing with the first. People have asked me why I am addressing these questions in the first place. One of the reasons is that many people who study Zen in the West have no knowledge of these details, and because of that often have a wrong or romantic idea of the present state of Zen in Japan. There are others who are fooled by teachers in the West who pose as "officially recognized Zen masters", but they never explained what that recognition consists of. Another reason is that there is an on-going debate about what form Zen practice will or should take in the West, and how close or independent it should be to or from Japanese Zen. Again, this discussion is often dominated by opinions from people who do not know Japanese Zen from the inside, and therefore do not know what they are talking about. It will still take me some time before I tackle they second question ("Is it really worth the whole deal?"); but if you are in a hurry to get some input from someone who knows what he is talking about, read the papers by Jiso Forzani, the official Soto-shu so-kan in Europe. The so-kan is the director of the European Soto mission, sometimes also called the "European bishop". Jiso is the first European to hold this job. Although he is representing Soto-shu in Europe, his ideas of Zen in Europe are very critical of the
Japanese form (and the present state of European Zen as well). Have a look at his papers: From Stella del Mattino Community and The Soto Zen Connection.

In past articles, I have spelled out some of the details in the career of a monk, often pointing to the many inconsistencies, contradictions, stupidities and ridiculous aspects that come with walking this path inside a Japanese institution. On the other side, I do not mean to make fun of most of the aspects of this path. After all, it is the path that I have been following until today and that I wish to continue to practice for the rest of my life. The next step on this path, \textit{ango}, is one of those steps which I consider to be essential. The tradition of \textit{ango} goes back to the days of the Buddha himself. In that time in India, monks looked for shelter during the rainy period, which lasted for three months. \textit{Ango} literally means "to stay in peace" or "safe shelter", and today in Japan it is practiced twice a year for 90 or 100 days each, usually once in the spring or early summer, then again in autumn or early winter. Dates vary from monastery to monastery, but one typical example would be April 15th through July 15th, October 15th through January 15th. In the old days, monks would travel in between the \textit{ango} periods, but today in Japan monks usually get less time off (in many places, training monks are not allowed to leave the monastery over night for the whole first year). There is also a chapter in Dogen Zenji's \textit{Shobogenzo} which has the title and deals with "\textit{ango}".

At what point in the career of a monk does \textit{ango} come exactly? The answer is: There is no strict rule. As you can see in the "board game map" I used last July, the \textit{ango} "field" lies somehow outside of the path. That is because a monk can do \textit{ango} any time after the day he ordains as a monk. Some (but not all) monasteries also accept lay people to join in the monk's practice. But this is not officially recognized as \textit{ango}. You need to be an ordained monk to do \textit{ango}. You can even wait until after Dharma transmission with \textit{ango}. The only clear rule is: You need to have done \textit{ango} to be appointed as a Zen teacher. As always, there are exceptions to this rule. You can become an official Soto-shu Zen teacher through an "examination". I do not know first or second hand what this examination consists of, but rumors have that it is both difficult and costly to pass. After all, the first Paramita is "giving", and if you want to be recognized as a teacher without doing time in a monastery, you have to demonstrate that you have mastered this Paramita as well. Where the envelope with your money goes, I do not know... If you, as most Japanese priests to be, decide to do \textit{ango} in one out of thirty something officially recognized training monasteries (\textit{Antaiji} does not belong to them), you have to spend at least 6 months there. Usually it is about 1 or 2 years you need to get your "license". Unfortunately, most people who do this step do it only because of this "license".

If most people only do \textit{ango} because of the license, why do I still consider this step essential for a monk? Why should anyone spend time in an institution that is inhabited by 90% of temple sons with no idea of zazen or Buddhism? It is nonsense, isn't it? Wouldn't it make more sense to take a course on Buddhism at the university, or to simply read some good books?

The answer is that Zen practice is not something you just do on the \textit{zafu} (sitting cushion), alone at your home or on the weekends in a \textit{dojo}. And you certainly do not find it in books. Zen practice happens when you cook, eat, or go to the toilet. For that you do not necessarily need to live in a monastery, but if you do, everything is naturally designed in a way to remind you that the 24 hours of the day are indeed practice. When you live alone at home, you have to tell yourself each time that you are indeed practicing. And more often than not, you might just be fooling yourself. If you live with a family or work with others, that is also practice, but if those that you live and work with do not share the perspective that the whole day is practice, it will be very difficult to uphold your practice during the 24 hours of the day. Sooner or later, you will just follow your idea "that everything is practice", but that idea itself is not practice. It is just an idea.

For example, some people tell you that practice means to practice zazen for 30 minutes each morning, either alone or in a group, and that this helps you to balance your whole life. In a way, that is true. Just as masturbating every morning helps you to keep your mind off irritating fantasies during the day, and thus stay focused during school or at work. Masturbating can help to balance your hormones just as well as real sex can. But is it really the same? I do not think so. And it is certainly a different thing to masturbate each morning on the one hand, and to marry and have a family on the other side. Both things involve sexual activity. But how often you ejaculate isn't really the question. The question is what you do with the whole rest of your life. Masturbating is easier and more convenient than living a family life. But it is just a substitute for real sexual activity, and sexual activity without the sense of responsibility and willingness to start a family - at least for me - is just something that gives kicks to your brain.

In my view, real practice as it is performed in \textit{ango} is just as different from daily sitting of 30 or 60 minutes on the cushion, as family life is different from daily masturbation. Masturbating is fine. But after all, it is just masturbation. Life in a family is not so easy. That is why less and less people who have the option, opt for family life. And less and less people here in Japan opt for \textit{ango}. They say it is a waste of time. And they are right, if you want to become a professional funeral manager, why go to a place like Eiheiji where no funerals are performed? If you want to use zazen as a means to balance your nervous system, why bother to share your life with others that tend to rather get on your nerves?

The point of \textit{ango} is: \textit{Sessa-takuma}. I used this term a number of times in the past. It consists of four Chinese characters: 切磋琢磨 The first means to cut (a bone or elephant tusk), the second to rub, the third to crush (a stone or gem), the fourth to polish. As a whole, it describes how various hard materials grind each others and during this process are all refined. Interestingly, using online translation services yields a variety of results. Babelfish has two different versions. The rather simple Japanese-English translation is "hard work". When I tried the Chinese-English option, I got "learning from each other by an exchange of views" as a result. Google translation has "friendly competition". Webasar has "gradual improvement by slow polishing (idiom); fig. education as a gradual process" for the Chinese term, "apply yourself diligently with everyone" for the Japanese. \textit{Ango} is important exactly because it can be a pain in the ass to live with others who get on our nerves, occupy
our space and demand our time, have different habits and different views, different outlooks on life, etc. They often show us a mirror because life in the monastery forces them to do so, when people in the world would just step out of our way.

What does it take to be a bodhisattva? How does a true bodhisattva practice the first Paramita, i.e. giving? By sharing one's time, by sharing one's space, by sharing one's life with others. And not only with those one gets along with well, but with each and everyone whom one encounters. On the net, I read about a "zen master" who offered to become a teacher for a certain group. But only with certain conditions. First, he needs a place to live and it should not be too expensive. I can understand that. Second, he would offer zazen several times a week, but as he is a busy person, he would not attend all of the zazen himself. As this teacher emphasizes DAILY zazen, the question is: why is the teacher himself not available every day? The answer: among other things, he has to travel to promote his books, approximately 6 months out of each year. Books about Zen, as it turns out. Third, he would also teach "seminars" on Zen, Dogen, Sex and other things he knows about. My question: Aren't those things to be taught in real life, through practice? Why teach them in seminars and then be away for the most part of the year? Fourth, he would take the role of the teacher. But that does not mean that he is your buddy. Rather, he wants to be something like a professor, with fixed office hours and everything. You need an appointment to see him. He is not there for you whenever you need him, because he has a life to take care of, and you are not a part of that life. Fifth, just for those who have not understood: the teacher needs his own space, distance from his students, if he lives at the center he wants his own, private entrance and everything.

Living inside a monastery myself and functioning as the abbot, I think I can understand this person's feelings quite well: I get up at 3:45 to join the community for zazen, have breakfast with them, then join samu (community work) in the morning, eat lunch with the community, work in the afternoon and sit again for two hours zazen in the evening. I have hardly a minute to spend with my family, let alone "time for myself" (but then again, I consider the whole time of the day to be "my time"). Except for the free days once every five days. So I can also get tired of people knocking on my door on a free day, telling me: "Do you have time for a little question?", "I feel a little sick and want to rest tomorrow!", "I need a sponsor for my visa!", "Can you take me to the hospital?", "I do not get along with my room-mate, can I have another room?", "Do you have some vitamin pills!", "The fuse broke and we have no electricity!", "There is a guy on the phone and no-one here speaks Japanese!", "The pressure cooker in the kitchen exploded!" etc. etc. But then again, that is the real meaning of ango. Sharing all of your time and space and energy. Does it help to balance your nerves? In my case: not always so. But it certainly helps to mature, and in my view, practice has something to do with being an adult, developing the kind of "parental mind" that Dogen explains at the end of the Instructions for the Cook (Tenzo kyōkun): "So-called elder's mind is the spirit of fathers and mothers. It is, for example, like a father and mother who dote on an only child: one's thoughts of the three jewels are like their concentration on that one child. Even if they are poor or desperate, they strongly love and nurture that single child. People who are outsiders cannot understand what their state of mind is like; they can only understand it when they themselves become fathers or mothers. Without regard for their own poverty or wealth, [parents] earnestly turn their thoughts toward raising their child. Without regard for whether they themselves are cold or hot, they shade the child or cover the child. We may regard this as affectionate thinking at its most intense." This is the spirit of the cook in a Zen monastery, and it is the spirit that you need for ango.
R ritual and Clergy in Japanese Zen Buddhism

excerpts from an essay by T. Griffith Foulk in “Zen Ritual”

To this day, no ethnographic study has ever been published, in any language, that gives a detailed description of the organization and operation of the full range of contemporary Japanese Zen institutions. The only part of the Zen establishment that has been treated in either scholarly or popular literature has been the institution of the special training monastery (sado). There are several publications that combine drawings or photographs with explanatory text, and some that describe the organization and operation of Zen monasteries in considerable detail. In general, those works place a heavy emphasis on practices that are supposed to be characteristic of “pure” Zen: collective labor, meditation, koan study, and individual interaction with a Zen master. They tend to gloss over the daily and monthly offerings and prayer services and the monthly and annual memorial services for deceased monks and laity, which in actuality occupy more of the monks’ time and effort. And, they fail to explain the primary function of the training monasteries, which is to prepare members of the Zen clergy for their careers as specialists in mortuary rituals. Such works give the false impression that life in a training monastery is the norm for Zen monks. In reality, there are only about sixty Zen training monasteries in Japan and more than twenty-one thousand ordinary Zen temples. Although all Zen monks spend some time (a year or two, on average) in a training monastery early in their careers, less than five percent of the ordained Zen clergy is actively engaged in communal monastic discipline at any given time. The other ninety-five percent are ordinary temple priests who marry, raise families, and make a living by providing their parishioners (danka) with funerals and memorial services.

In The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk, D. T. Suzuki implied that contemporary Japanese Zen monasteries, with their daily periods of manual labor (samu), adhered to the same pattern of practice as their forerunners in the golden age of the Tang. Suzuki wrote that the Tang Chan practice of meditation in the midst of action “saved Buddhism from sinking into a state of lethargy and a life of mere contemplation,” and he asserted that collective labor was still “one of the most essential features of the Zen life” in modern Japan. In part, that argument deflected a criticism, often voiced in the West, that Buddhism was a “quietistic” or “nihilistic” religion. But Suzuki also maintained that collective labor in Tang Chan and Japanese Zen monasteries evinced a “democratic spirit”: “The term puqing, ‘all invited,’ means to have every member of the Brotherhood on the field. No distinctions are made, no exceptions are allowed; for the high as well as the low in the hierarchy are engaged in the same kind of work. There is a division of labor, naturally, but no social class-idea inimical to the general welfare of the community.” Suzuki’s invocation of democracy and social equality as Zen values was obviously an appeal to the sensibilities of his English-speaking audience, but he made similar assertions in his Japanese-language publications as well, and he was not alone in that respect. In 1929, for example, Inaba Meido compared the role of labor in Chan and Christian (Benedictine) monasticism, and he likened the egalitarian ideal expressed in the Chan principle of collective labor to that expressed in Tolstoy’s utopian writings.

The ostensible similarity between Zen and Western-style democracy or socialism, of course, was not an argument that played well with the right-wing nationalists and militarists who drove Japan into the Second World War. The more typical case made by Zen apologists in the prewar years was closer to one made by their predecessors in the Edo period. In 1940, for example, Fukuba Hoshu cited Hakuin’s idea of “introspection in the midst of activity” to make the point that all productive members of society, be they military men, scholars, government officials, or merchants, could practice Zen while exerting themselves fully in the collective work of strengthening the nation.

Over the course of the past century, ideology of this sort has proven quite effective in shielding the Zen establishment against attack, gaining support for it from leaders of business and government within Japan, and creating an interest in both Zen and “traditional Japanese culture” abroad. What the ideology has not done, for all of that, is reduce the emphasis on rituals for dealing with ancestral and tutelary spirits that has always been the cornerstone of Zen monastic training. Nor has it caused Zen priests to cease promoting mortuary rites among the laity or in any other way undermined the centuries-old relationship between ordinary Zen temples and their parishioners. The scholarly and monkish leadership that has produced the elitist view of “pure Zen” has done nothing to reform the training monasteries to bring them into conformity with the putative norm and has never tried to disabuse parishioners of their ostensibly misguided “popular” beliefs in spirits and karma. In effect, the post-Meiji portrayal of Zen as a mode of enlightened consciousness that transcends conventional Buddhist beliefs and practices has served as a kind of intellectual smokescreen behind which the Japanese schools of Zen have carried out their religious business as usual, perpetuating the funerals, memorial services, and feeding of hungry ghosts that have been the ritual staples of the parishioner system from the Edo period down to the present. To understand the various modes of ritual performance found in contemporary Japanese Zen, it is necessary to know something of the institutional settings in which they take place. In the following pages I present an overview of those settings. I then summarize the full range of observances found in Zen training monasteries and detail the most common and widespread ritual practices in Japanese Zen today: those performed on a regular basis at ordinary Zen temples and those that directly involve the laity.

The Zen Institution in Contemporary Japan

At present, there are twenty-two comprehensive religious corporations (hokutsu shukyo hojin) registered with the Japanese government that are recognized as belonging to the Zen tradition (Zenkei). Those include: the Soto school (Sotoshu); fifteen separate corporations that identify themselves as branches (ha) of the Rinzai school (Rinzaishu); the Obaku school (Obakushu); and five small corporations that have splintered off from the Soto and Rinzai organizations. Each of the twenty-two Zen

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denominations has a number of temples affiliated with it, ranging from 14,664 in the Soto school to 3,389 in the Myoshinji branch of the Rinza school (Rinzaishu Myoshinjiha), 455 in the Obaku school, a few hundred in the smaller Rinza denominations, and just a handful in the smallest of the corporations. The individual temples (jiin) that make up the Zen comprehensive religious corporations can be divided into four different types: head temples (honzan), mortuary sub-temples (tatchu), training monasteries (sodo), and ordinary temples (ippan jiin). These distinctions are not made in the statistics published by the Japanese government; they are a product of my own analysis. The nomenclature I employ, however, has long been in use within the Zen tradition.

All but the very smallest of the Zen corporations has a head temple (honzan) that serves as its administrative center and typically gives the corporation its name. Historically, the most famous of the Rinza head temples are Kenninji, Tofuji, Nanzenji, Tenryuji, Shokokuji, Daitokuji, and Myoshinji in Kyoto, and Kenchoji and Engakuji in Kamakura. The Soto school, for historical reasons that are peculiar to it, has two head temples (ryohnzan), Eiheiji in Fukui and Sojiji in Yokohama, and a separate Administrative Headquarters (shumucho) located in a Tokyo high-rise. The Obaku school’s head temple is Manpukuji, situated in the town of Uji, just south of Kyoto.

Mortuary sub-temples (tatchu) are found mainly within the precincts of Rinza head temples, especially in Kyoto. Occupying their own small, walled compounds, they originated in the medieval period as shrines dedicated to maintaining a stupa (to) and performing memorial services for a particular Zen master who was one in the series of former abbots (zenju) of the central monastery. As discussed in Part Two, they were paid for by wealthy lay patrons, who enshrined their own ancestral spirits there as well and had the small contingent of resident monks perform routine merit-dedicating services for them. The two main buildings of mortuary sub-temples, the abbot’s quarters (hojo) and kitchen (kuri), often featured the finest in Japanese-style architecture and were lavishly appointed with beautiful works of art and surrounded by tranquil gardens. A great many sub-temples were destroyed early in the Meiji period. Those that survive at Rinza head temples in Kyoto have largely lost the single-family patronage they once had. Many have taken on additional households as parishioners. Some have opened their gates to tourism as a source of income. In the process, their fine old buildings, works of art, and gardens have become emblematic around the world not only of Zen but of traditional Japanese culture. Visitors, especially those that receive pamphlets in English, are typically fed some Suzuki-esque propaganda about how the Song literati paintings embody Zen spirituality and how the gardens are used for meditation or “represent” meditative states; they are never told that what they are seeing is actually the private mortuary chapel of some wealthy clan of the feudal past.

Monasteries (sodo) are places where groups of trainee monks (unsui), ranging in number from a dozen to more than a hundred, engage in communal monastic discipline under the guidance of one or more senior teachers (roshi). The primary function of these institutions is to expose young monks to traditional forms of Zen Buddhist practice, including zazen, koan introspection, and doctrinal study, and to prepare them as ritual specialists for the careers they will have as ordinary temple priests. The training monasteries that exist today perpetuate an Edo period revival, albeit on a more modest scale, of forms of communal monastic practice that had originally been introduced to Japan from China in the Kamakura period but had died out in the interim. At present, there are thirty-eight Rinzai training monasteries in operation. All but one of the fifteen Rinzai head temples has a training monastery located on its grounds in a mortuary sub-temple converted to that purpose. The remaining twenty-four Rinza training monasteries, eighteen of which belong to the Myoshinji branch, are scattered around the country. The two flagship institutions of the Soto school are the head temple training monasteries (honzan sodo) of Eiheiji and Sojiji, which have gone to great lengths over the past century to replicate the large-scale Song-style institutions that the patriarchs Dogen and Keizan originally established in the Kamakura period. In addition, the Soto school operates twenty-two smaller training monasteries and three nun training monasteries (nisodo). The head temple of the Obaku school, Manpukuji, is a training monastery in its own right.

Head temples, memorial sub-temples, and training monasteries get virtually all of the attention in popular and scholarly literature dealing with the Zen establishment in Japan, but in actuality they are merely the tip of an institutional iceberg that is composed largely of ordinary temples (ippan jiin). The vast majority of Zen clergy reside in ordinary temples, where they hold the traditional title of abbot (jushoku) but are in fact married men who raise families and have no young monks (kozo) serving under them save their own sons. Ordinary temples generally have a number of lay households associated with them as parishioners (danka); the numbers range from two or three dozen households in small towns and rural areas to three or four hundred in cities. The primary function of an ordinary Zen priest is the daily nourishment of the many spirits (ranging from buddhas, patriarchs, and deias to former abbots and the ancestors of patrons) that are enshrined in his temple and the performance of funerals (sogi), annual memorial services (nenki), and prayer services (kito) for his parishioners. Ordinary temples are supported largely by donations (usually fees for priestly services) from parishioners. A percentage of their income is passed on to their respective head temples as dues for membership in the comprehensive corporation. A relatively small number of ordinary Zen temples (about six hundred) have meditation groups (zazenkai) that meet on a biweekly or monthly basis and give lay people a chance to get a taste of a monastic-style Zen practice.

In addition to the four types of temples discussed above, there are a number of educational institutions (kyouiku kikan) that are run by religious corporations belonging to the Zen tradition. The Soto school has by far the most, with five universities, three research centers, two junior colleges, seven high schools, and three middle schools. The Myoshinji branch of the Rinza school operates one university, two research centers, one junior college, and one high school. Many of the faculty members and researchers at the Zen universities are themselves ordained members of the Zen clergy. The universities are coeducational and open to students from all backgrounds, and their curricula are fairly diverse and secular, but they do put an emphasis on
sectarian studies (shugaku) and the education of the sons of Zen priests who will eventually succeed their fathers as the abbots of ordinary temples. Zen universities came into existence during the Meiji period and, like all other religious and state-run institutions of higher learning in modern Japan, were founded on a Western model. Since that time, they have been centers of the modern academic study of the “history of the Zen lineage” (zenshushi)—a field that has done a wonderful job of providing all sorts of research tools and has produced a large amount of fine critical scholarship, but that has also been responsible for inventing and promoting the apologetic and misleading ideal of an iconoclastic “pure” Zen that, in its essence, has nothing to do with ritual. In addition to the institutions described above, the Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism (Sotoshu shumuchu) organizes and supports such groups as a National Soto School Youth Association (Zenkoku Sotoshu shonenkai) and Soto School Women’s Association (Sotoshu fuujinkai). It includes within its offices a Publications Division (shuppanbu) and Education Division (kyokabu) that reach out in various ways to lay followers in Japan and abroad. The Myoshinji branch of the Rinzai school mounts similar efforts, although on a lesser scale.

**Training Monasteries**

The sixty or so Zen training monasteries operating in Japan today preserve many of the traditional forms of Buddhist monastic ritual that were originally imported from Song and Yuan China in the Kamakura period and reimported from Ming China in the Edo period. Daily observances (gyoji) at those monasteries include: (1) three periods of sitting meditation—dawn zazen (kyoten zazen), midmorning zazen (soshin zazen), and evening zazen (kokon zazen); (2) various sutra-chanting services (fugin)—the morning service (choka fugin), midday service (nitchu fugin), kitchen service (soko fugin), meditation hall service (donai fugin), and evening service (banka fugin); (3) three meals—morning gruel (shuku), midday main meal (shoku), and evening “medicine” (yakuseki); (4) early morning cleaning (soji); and (5) depending on the day, either collective labor (fushin samu), such as gardening, weeding, and cutting wood, or lectures on Zen texts (hoyaku or teisho).

The practice of zazen in training monasteries is a highly formal, ritualized affair. Individual places on the meditation platforms (tan) in a Soto sangha hall (sodo) or Rinzai meditation hall (zendo) are arranged by seniority, and there is a set procedure for filing in and out as a group, positioning one’s hands, turning one’s body, bowing to neighboring and opposite places, taking one’s seat, donning one’s formal monks robe (kesa), and so forth. Enshrined in the center of every sangha hall and meditation hall is an image of Monju Bosatsu (the bodhisattva Manjusri) dressed as a monk, sitting in meditation on an altar. Known as the “sacred monk” (shoso), he is regarded as the most senior member of the assembly (followed by the abbot) and as the protecting deity of the hall. He has his own attendant (jisha), who offers tea and incense to him daily. The monks bow to him whenever they enter or leave and engage in daily services in which they make prostrations and chant dharanis to produce merit (kudoku) for dedication (eko) to him. However dismissive D. T. Suzuki may have been about “all those images of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Devas and other beings that one comes across in Zen temples,” even he could not claim that Monju Bosatsu found his way into the training monasteries as an “excrescence added from the outside” or as any kind of concession to “popular” religiosity. The sacred monk was a standard feature of the communal meditation facilities found in all Chinese Buddhist sanghas from the Song through the Ming, facilities that were generally off-limits to anyone but properly ordained monks.

Westerners tend to think of meditation as a self-absorbed, psychologically oriented exercise, but as it is practiced in Japanese Zen monasteries it is the social ritual par excellence, epitomizing the regimentation, extreme concern for etiquette (igi), and sacrifice of individuality that is characteristic of the monastic regime in general. In zazen, maintaining the correct posture, regardless of pain or drowsiness, is stressed above all else. No matter what inner turmoil one feels, one must remain without moving in the cross-legged, eyes-lowered posture of a sitting buddha, looking alert, calm, and collected. Hall monitors patrol with sticks (kyosaku or keisaku), correcting the postures of sitters and hitting their shoulders in a ritualized manner (punctuated by bows before and after) to wake them up and stimulate their efforts.

At Rinzai monasteries, where the monks in training (unsui) engage in the contemplation of koans (kanna) under the guidance of the Zen master (roshi), the periods of zazen are the times when (as signaled by a bell) they may go to the master’s quarters (inryo) for the highly formalized rite of individual consultation (dokusan). The rite of “entering the room” (nishitsu) is also preserved in Soto monasteries, where it takes place at the discretion of the abbot, not during periods of zazen. Based on the Obaku model, it is a semipublic ceremony in which the monks take turns approaching the abbot’s seat and engaging in a “question and answer” (mondo) exchange; they may, but do not have to, “raise” (nentei) a koan as a topic of discussion.

Sutra-chanting services (fugin) take up much of the time of monks in Zen monasteries than any other kind of observance. They are regarded as a vital part of the daily (as well as monthly) routine, for it is through them that all the spirits enshrined on altars in various monastery buildings are nourished and propitiated. The spirits so feted typically include: the Buddha Shakyamuni; his disciples, the arhats; the successive generations of patriarchs in the Zen lineage; the founding and former abbots of each particular monastery; various devas and spirits identified as protectors of the Buddha-dharma and the monastery; the founding patron of the monastery; and the ancestors of current lay patrons. The basic ritual procedure in a sutra-chanting service is to generate merit (kudoku) by chanting sutras or dharanis and then to offer it to a spirit or spirits by means of a formal verse for the dedication of merit (eko-mon). Merit (Skt. punya), as interpreted in the East Asian Buddhist tradition, is literally the “virtue” or “power” (C. de, J. toku) that results from good “works” or “deeds” (C. gong, J. ku). It is the fruit of good karma (actions), conceived as a kind of spiritual energy that can be saved, invested, spent, or given away like cash. In the East Asian context, the Buddhist transfer (C. huixiang, J. eko) of merit is also understood as an “offering of nourishment” (C. gongyang, J. kuyo) to spirits, one that is akin to generic (not uniquely Buddhist) offerings of food and drink on an altar where the mortuary tablets of ancestral spirits are enshrined. In Zen monasteries and temples, the recipients of merit in sutra chanting
services are generally represented on an altar with some kind of icon—a sculpture, painting, or tablet—and the dedication of merit is generally coupled with offerings of incense and (in more elaborate rites) food and drink. The morning service (choka fugin) is the most important daily observance in a training monastery, as indicated by the fact that it is the only one that every single member of the community must attend.

**Ordinary Temples and Rituals Involving the Laity**

The abbots of ordinary Zen temples are mainly concerned with performing services for their lay parishioners (danka), but the one daily rite that they feel most constrained to carry out if at all possible is the morning service (choka fugin), in which all the spirits enshrined on the premises are propitiated with offerings of merit. In most cases, it is the abbot alone who wakes up early (at 5:00 or 6:00 AM) to take care of that sacred duty. In Soto school temples, the solitary abbot will burn some incense before the altar and perform an abbreviated morning service (ryaku choka fugin). Some ordinary temple priests also make an effort to do a little zazen each morning, or to incorporate some of the mealtime verses in their family’s daily routine, but they are in the minority. As I have stressed throughout this essay, funerals and memorial services are the mainstay of the Zen tradition in Japan and its most important contribution to Japanese Buddhism at large.

The focus on the clan (or household) in the operation of ancestral mortuary temples (dannadera or bodaiji) as they developed in Zen and spread throughout Japanese Buddhism has not been very conducive to any kind of congregational spirit. As we saw in the case of the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts, although a large number of parishioners may gather at an ordinary temple for a public rite, they do not necessarily feel any sense of common purpose or group identity. It is true that in some rural areas, the local temple (Zen or otherwise) sometimes plays the role of a community center: a place where various farmers’ groups, women’s and youth clubs, and hobby (e.g., tea ceremony, painting, calligraphy, singing) groups can meet. For the most part, however, people approach Buddhist temples for their own reasons and at times of their own choosing, either as individuals or with family members. Lay people are free to enter the main halls (hondo) of Zen temples and to pray before any of the sacred images enshrined there. Such activities do not require the presence of the priest or the making of a donation, although a box for coin offerings is available.

On New Year’s Eve, it is customary for the parishioners of ordinary Buddhist temples, Zen included, to visit their local temple at midnight for the ringing of the large outdoor bell (joya no kane). The bell is rung 108 times, symbolizing purification of the 108 afflictions (bonno) that are the cause of all suffering. The Buddha’s birthday celebration, also known as the “assembly for bathing the buddha” (kanbutsu-e), is the most popular of the three Buddha assemblies. Commonly called the Flower Festival (hana matsuri), it entails setting up an image of the baby Buddha in a bowl underneath a trellis covered with flowers, representing the Lumbini grove in which Shakyamuni was said to have been born. Lay participants, including many children, pour sweetened tea over the image, thereby reenacting the legendary bathing of the newborn Buddha by the devas. Occasional (special) rituals that many parishioners attend include the ceremony of installing a new abbot (shinsanshiki), the dedication of new sacred images or stupas (zoto kaigen), and the ceremony of giving precepts (jukai-e). The last, which is often a week-long event at Soto temple, was originally modeled after the Ming-style precept ceremonies of the Obaku school. What it involves today, basically, is administering the bodhisattva precepts to lay followers.

In times of personal crisis, parishioners may ask ordinary Zen temple priests to perform special prayer services (kito-e) for them in exchange for donations. Prayer services involve the production of merit by chanting sutras and dharmas and a subsequent dedication of merit to various deities, coupled with prayers (kito). They are different from sutra-chanting services, however, in that they are not construed as acts of veneration or devotion but are explicitly motivated by the desire to bring about specific boons for designated recipients. The offerings involved tend to be reduced in significance to a kind of mechanical procedure meant to ensure the efficacy of the prayers. The desired ends are sought through the direct manipulation of spiritual forces rather than by supplicating deities believed to have the power to help. As noted above, some modern scholars explain the presence of prayer services in Japanese Zen as a kind of “syncretism” or borrowing of elements from the Shingon tradition and thus as something not proper to “pure” Zen. Such prayers, however, just like the recitation of buddha names (nenbutsu) and the feeding of hungry ghosts, are as integral a part of the Zen tradition as taking precepts, sitting in meditation, and chanting sutras. That is to say, they are all elements of the mainstream Chinese Buddhist monasticism that became known as “Zen” in Japan.

Having outlined in broad fashion the religious practices engaged in by parishioners of Zen temples, let me note in closing that there is little in all of this to distinguish them from the parishioners of other schools of traditional Japanese Buddhism. The domestic buddha altars (butsudan) set up by lay followers of other schools have different main objects of veneration (honzon) and admit to minor variations in arrangement, but the fundamental practice of enshrining memorial tablets for deceased family members is exactly the same. Likewise, the sutras and dharmas chanted by the priests of other schools vary somewhat from those used in Zen, but the basic idea of generating merit and dedicating it to ancestral spirits is identical. Architecturally, most ordinary Buddhist temples in Japan have similar layouts of buildings and grounds, which derive from the mortuary sub-temples of the Zen tradition. The annual rituals that attract the greatest participation from parishioners in all schools of Buddhism—the Bon, Other Shore, and Flower Festival assemblies—are also the same. In each school, to be sure, there are a relatively small number of lay followers who get involved in specialized practices that are unique to the particular tradition in question. In the case of Zen, those are the practicing laymen (koji) and practicing laywomen (daishi) who belong to zazen groups (zazenkai) at ordinary temples or train together with monks at a monastery. The basic rituals that most parishioners are exposed to, however, vary little from one ordinary Buddhist temple to another, regardless of denominational affiliation. As explained above, this is due to the widespread influence in Japan of Zen-style mortuary practices.

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Leaving Home in Modern Times
The Value of Renunciation & Monastic Life in the Practice of Buddha-Dharma
by modern Dharma teachers from all traditions

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from ‘Blossoms of the Dharma’:
The advantage of being a monk or nun is that you do not have to be entrapped in too many worldly activities and distractions. You have more time to think about and to develop genuine compassion and concern for all sentient beings, and this accumulates great virtues. On the other hand, with your own family, your concern and compassion are generally directed to your family and friends. Perhaps there are some exceptional cases, but generally speaking, the lay life is a real burden, and that pain is a real pain. It is difficult to accumulate virtue because one’s activities are based on attachment… The main purpose of being a monastic is to reduce attachment: we work on no longer being attached to family, sexual pleasure, and other worldly enjoyments… Generally, living in higher ordination (as a bhikshu rather than a novice) makes all your virtuous activities more effective and powerful… when you look at the purpose – to reduce attachment and other disturbing attitudes – the large number of precepts makes sense… I feel the real preparation for taking (monastic) ordination is not the study of the Vinaya, but strong meditation on the nature of samsara (and) that attaining nirvana is your real purpose in life… It is said that wherever there is a monk or nun observing the vows of full ordination, the Buddha is present in that place.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from ‘Spiritual Sisters’:
When we examine the value of the Buddhist monastic order, it is important to see that celibacy is the foundation. We must understand why celibacy has to be the foundation of a monastic way of life. In one sense, the way of life of a celibate monastic almost resembles going against the biological nature of our body. If you look at the nature of sexuality and sexual desire, it is very much part of our biological impulses. This drive is associated with the evolutionary process of reproduction. In some sense, yes, a monastic way is against the biological nature of the body. What is the goal or purpose of adopting such a way of life? For a Buddhist practitioner and particularly for a Buddhist monk or nun, the ultimate goal is the attainment of nirvana or liberation. This is liberation of the mind. If you understand nirvana or liberation properly, you know that by seeking liberation we are trying to go beyond the bonds of human nature, to transcend the limitations of human existence. Since the goal is beyond the bounds of human existence, then, of course, the method to be adopted will also involve going against biological limitations. The celibate way of life acts as perhaps the most powerful antidote to overcome the impulses and acts of attachment and clinging desire. According to Buddhism, attachment and clinging desire lie at the root of our cyclic existence. Since the goal is to cut the knot of that cycle and go beyond it, the means will also involve going against the currents of the biological nature… Celibacy has to be understood in relation to the fundamental important principle of being modest and contented. This is understood in relation to fulfilling one’s call or destiny, allowing oneself the time and opportunity for spiritual practice, and committing and dedicating oneself completely to one’s calling. It is important to lead a modest way of life so there are no personal involvements and obligations which would divert one’s attention from the pursuit of that calling. A monk or nun’s life reflects the ideal of simplicity and freedom from obligations. Our principle should be this: as far as our own interests and needs in life are concerned, there should be as little obligation and as little involvement as possible, but insofar as others’ interests are concerned, the monks and nuns should have as much involvement as possible and as many commitments as possible.

Lama Yeshe Rinpoche, from ‘The Benefits of Being Ordained’:
It’s true that some laypeople can practice well, but that doesn’t mean that all laypeople can practice well. Most laypeople find it difficult. But just because Buddha and Jesus revealed the method of ordination doesn’t mean that everyone should become monks or nuns either. Everyone can’t become Sangha because everyone doesn’t have the karma to become Sangha. To do so, you need a lot of merit and no inner obstacles. If there are no obstacles in your mind, there will be no outer obstacles to your ordination. The main point here is that until you have developed a stable realization of the three principle aspects of the path (renunciation, bodhichitta, and wisdom) in your mind, to practice Dharma properly you need to spend a lot of time away from the objects that induce your delusions to arise. This is especially true for beginners, but in fact applies to anybody not yet liberated from samsara. Hence the need for monasteries and nunneries, caves and hermitages, and the discipline that goes along with living in such ascetic environments… By renouncing life as a householder and living as Sangha, not only do you create less negative karma, but you also cut down on a lot of external work and other activities. This leaves you with much more time for meditation and study; you have fewer distractions. Thus there are many advantages to being ordained: more time to study and meditate, more time to develop your mind… If you follow attachment, you can’t meditate for even a minute. If your mind is occupied by desire objects, such as boyfriends or girlfriends, you can’t meditate for even a second. So, on the basis of this simple example, you can understand how living in ordination as Sangha makes it much easier to practice… Many of the precepts in the Vinaya that tell you what to do and what not to do were given by the Buddha to protect the minds of others. If you follow the Vinaya rules, you prevent others from criticizing the Sangha, which, karmically speaking, is a very heavy offense… If you follow the Vinaya correctly, others will generate faith in their minds toward the Sangha, planting in their minds the seeds of liberation and enlightenment. It may even inspire them to follow the path by taking ordination themselves, since normally sentient beings follow the Buddha’s example of how to practice Dharma. Being Sangha makes others respect you, and thereby they create much merit. The more purely you live in your ordination, the greater will be your power of
success when you pray for others… Also, since your life is pure, when sentient beings make offerings to you, they create even more merit, and also there is no danger to yourself in accepting their offerings… Also, when you teach, you will have a much greater effect on people’s minds than do laypeople when they teach; there’s a big difference. The people receiving the teaching see that the teacher him or herself is living in renunciation… If there were not a big advantage to being ordained, if it were not extremely important, why would Guru Shakyamuni Buddha have set that example?

Bhikshuni Wu Yin (Chinese Zen), from ‘Choosing Simplicity’:
One of the three poisonous attitudes preventing liberation is clinging attachment. As human beings in the desire realm, the two principal desires we have are sexual desire and desire for food and enjoyments. Sexual desire is in general our strongest attachment… Craving for the physical and emotional pleasure of sexual relations is the most common cause for monastics losing or giving up their vow… To activate the higher trainings in concentration and wisdom leading to liberation and enlightenment, a full-time commitment to the Dharma is necessary, and this requires giving up distractions and attachments. Of course we still need to eat to stay alive, but giving up romantic emotional relationships and sexual desire will not threaten our lives. The precept regarding sexual conduct comes first (on the list of Vinaya precepts) because sexual desire can have a strong impact on our practice. Also, placing it first illustrates our firm determination and willingness to practice the Dharma, as our chief attachment is the first thing we need to give up as monastics.

Thich Nhat Hanh (Vietnamese Zen), from ‘Stepping into Freedom’:
You ordained as a monk or a nun because of a deep calling you could not resist. That force is bodhichitta, the mind of awakening, the mind of love. Throughout your life, this is the energy that will motivate your practice and give you strength to overcome difficulties and maintain happiness. If your bodhichitta is eroded, it will be difficult to continue as a monk or a nun. That is why nourishing your bodhichitta is the most important practice of a monk or a nun… When you live in a Sangha, your practice of solidity and happiness already has a big effect on your family and society. Wearing the robe of a monk or a nun, taking each step in freedom, sitting solidly, you help your family become more stable… You become a monk or a nun not for your sake alone, but for all your ancestors, your family, your descendants, and the whole of society. When the society has one person in it who is happy because of the practice, the quality of life in that society increases… We practice the precepts because we know that if we break the precepts, everything will be destroyed. We keep the precept on chastity because we know that if we break it, our life as a monk or a nun will be destroyed, and we will harm the person we sleep with, our family, and our Sangha… If your practice brings you peace and freedom, “worldly” pleasures will not distract you from the joys of a simple everyday life… Shaving your head means cutting the strings of the net of attachments. Monks and nuns are revolutionaries. They cherish a great aspiration in their hearts, and that is how they have the strength to cut the net of worldly attachments. They go forth from family life to enter the path of the Buddha, and they aspire to love and help everyone, not just one person. Monks and nuns cherish their freedom so they can be a source of happiness for many people.

Seung Sahn Sunim (Korean Zen), from ‘Monks and Laymen’:
In our School we have two kinds of Master Dharma Teachers: monk and family style. The family style Master Dharma Teachers have try-mind and want to do together-action, but they have children, have wife, have husband, so they cannot do as much together-action. But if you are a monk, then all the time together-action is possible. That is how they are different… So becoming a monk or not becoming a monk, doesn’t matter. If you are a lay person, it is also possible to save all beings from suffering. So now all the Master Dharma Teachers are teaching you. The only difference is that if you have a family, not so much together-action with the Sangha is possible. Not so much “100% my life for all beings” is possible. My family, my wife or husband, also taking care of my parents is necessary. But if you have no family, it is possible to be with the Sangha all the time. Whole life. That is the only difference.

Soko Morinaga Roshi (Japanese Zen), from ‘Celibacy: the View of a Zen Monk from Japan’:
In Southeast Asian Buddhism, the monastic community is still central; in contrast, the various forms of Mahayana Buddhism in China and Japan tend towards secularism. In the trend of historical secularization of modern civilization throughout the world, one may in Japan sometimes have trouble speaking to communities of home-leavers. Nevertheless, and in spite of the limited number of such vocations, I can say as one member of the Japanese Buddhist Sangha that in this day and age there are in fact still Zen monks and nuns who consciously choose to remain celibate for life… As a Zen monk who entered a monastic community in order to accomplish both personal religious practice and help for others, I feel that it was easier for me to do this without a family and the ensuing necessity to have personal property; so for me the choice of celibacy and poverty was a natural and joyful one. I certainly am not the only person who feels joy about celibate life; already in the old Theravada Buddhist tradition of Southeast Asia one finds many poems that sing of the joy of celibacy. Although there may be desires such as sexual desires, this joy protects celibate life. It is rather difficult to speak of both the views held in the history of Buddhism and my personal experience in just a few pages, but in conclusion I would like to emphasize that the life of a true religious person does not ban desire by inner will power or by outer pressure. Rather, it is due to a natural manifestation of Buddha-mind that life without possessions becomes a joy accompanying both activities for one’s own benefit and activity for the benefit of others. Since the majority of the monks and nuns that constitute the Sangha have not yet realized this, inner effort of will and vows and outer rules become necessary. Wherever there is coercion to conform to such rules, be it from the inside or the
outside, there is bound to be hypocrisy and transgression. From a historical point of view, too, it is clear how meaningless it is to try to eradicate this contradiction by systematic reform. There is only one way to completely transcend this contradiction, and that is by the joy of the monk’s and nun’s own self-awakened faith. If they ignore this joy of faith and attempt to preserve a Sangha that relies on some system, the Sangha will surely at some point perish. But even if that kind of Sangha perishes, the three treasures will not perish. Just as the green leaves of spring sprout after the autumn leaves have been burnt, the Buddha Dharma will with certainty appear anew in a different form.

**Roshi Jiyo Kennett (American Zen), from ‘Meetings With Remarkable Women’:**
If you want to go the whole way, you must become a monk. You must be willing not to be married, you’ve literally got to give up everything. You cannot go the whole way unless you completely control, and no longer need or want, sex or anger. Those are the two things you really have to give up completely – to go the whole way. It’s very clear if you read the Theravada books on the subject. There are four stages of understanding. A married person can very easily reach the first (stream-enterer), and probably can’t reach the second (once-returner), definitely not the third (non-returner) or fourth (arhat). This does not mean that marriage is wrong, it merely means you have to decide how far you want to go. And anyone can get a first kensho (stream-entry).

**Ajahn Sumedho, from ‘Precepts’:**
Some people say you can do it as a lay person, and this is not to be denied; but if you can’t use the lifestyle which is deliberately established for Dhamma-Vinaya, what makes you think you’ll ever do it in any other form? This is what I want to get you to look at. Look at yourselves; at that wanting something you don’t have or wanting to get away from what you have. Just watch that in yourself, that restlessness, discontentment, and movement of your mind. Sometimes, of course, one doesn’t want to give up yet; one still wants rebirth and happiness and worldly things. Fair enough! But I don’t want you to go round lying to yourselves… Don’t delude yourselves by thinking you are doing something else. If you really understand the teaching of the Buddha, then there’s nowhere to go and nothing to do. This is the way it is. We are living a life that is for that kind of reflection.

**Ajahn Sumedho, from ‘A Time to Love’:**
Devotion is from the heart, it’s not a rational thing. You can’t make yourself feel love or devotion just because you like the idea of it. It’s when you’re not attached, when your heart is open, receptive and free, that you begin to experience what pure love is… One can be an alms-mendicant, live on faith alone, on the trust in the goodness and benevolence of other beings because one feels love or respect for all beings. Love and respect for all beings is what generates the alms that sustain us in this life as alms-mendicants. And the funny thing is that the power of the Buddhist Sangha is so strong that even if you personally hate all other beings, the alms still come in! The power of the robe seems to be so strong that even if you as an individual monk or nun hate everybody, you’re still going to get fed by kind-hearted beings… It’s a reflection on the power of a very skillful convention that was established by the Lord Buddha. When you appreciate that, then you really feel love and trust… The goodness of the lifestyle he established generates generosity. The loving-kindness, the compassion and joy of the holy life reaches out and opens other people to that same experience… And it needn’t be demonstrated, talked about, and emphasized a lot. It speaks for itself… Actually the holy life is a strange one, a strange way to live. Quite how it works is a mystery in terms of what we regard as reality according to our cultural conditioning. But as Dhamma, as truth, as the way things actually are, it actually works. And this increases our faith, and our trust in the Refuges and in the beauty and goodness of our lives as samanas.

**Ajahn Jayasaro, from ‘The Beauty of Sila’:**
It’s only through taking this impeccable standard (of complete celibacy) that we can begin to understand the whole nature of sexuality. We begin to see its conditioned nature, how it arises and passes away. We begin to see the suffering inherent in any attachment to it, how impersonal it is, what feeds it, what gives power to it, whether it be physical conditions, food, lack of sense restraint, or indulgence in imagination. We begin to see it is a conditioned phenomenon. But we can only have a distance from it, be able to reflect on it and see it for what it is, by refraining from its physical and verbal expressions. There is an important point about defilements here: that we have to pin them down on the mental level before we can let go of them. And the way we pin something down on the mental plane is that we refrain consciously, or endure through the intention to express it physically or verbally. This is where the relationship between virtue, concentration, and wisdom becomes very clear. As long as we’re still expressing sexual feelings physically, or indulging in lascivious or careless speech about sexual matters, then we can never isolate it. It’s moving, it’s still receiving energy. We’re still keeping it in motion. We’re still feeding the flames. So we seek to counter the stream of craving. And to do that successfully, we must aspire to transcend sexuality altogether. It is that aspiration, as much as the actual restraint, that distinguishes the samana from the layperson. So as celibate monks we take a whole new stance toward our sexual feelings, towards women – half the human race. We practice looking on women who are older than us as mothers. If they’re just a few years older than us as older sisters, if a few years younger than us as younger sisters. We substitute wholesome perceptions of women for the sensual. This is a beautiful gift we can give women… The Pali word “brahmacharya,” which we translate in English as celibacy, literally means “the way of the gods, sublime conduct, the
holy life.” In other words, within the human realm, a chaste life led voluntarily and with contentment is the most refined, sublime, and happy form of existence.

Ajahn Amaro, from ‘Just Another Thing in the Forest’:
Renunciation has to do with simplicity, so there’s no condition in which your heart is invested. The principle of renunciation is not to encourage a state of lack, but to establish as complete a state of simplicity as possible. In that simplicity you can more clearly see those patterns of wanting, not wanting, fearing, hoping, as they take shape. And the more complex our life is, the harder it is – particularly those emotional involvements with other people that create the most dense and potent conditions or qualities of mind that we deal with. The more charged up our emotional bonds, the more difficult it is to get objectivity on them. It’s not a moral judgment; it’s just physics. Picking up a one-hundred pound bag takes more effort than picking up a twenty-pound bag… The Buddha said that sexual energy is the most powerful force in the universe. It’s extraordinarily powerful, because it has to be. If it wasn’t so compelling as to override all sorts of fear and discernment, then you’d never engage with another person in that way… Looking at a tree, I see it as a beautiful tree. Or a horse. That beauty isn’t having the same confusing effect as when I think about so-and-so. So comparing, and really studying the chemistry of it, (we can start to understand sexual desire). When I look at this tree and this horse, the mind is clear and open. When I look at this person, I can see it in a clear and open way momentarily, but it gets confused. Now, what’s causing that? When you know how it works, it’s much easier not to be fooled by it. When you’re a monastic and you’re functioning in a nonsexual way, you’re consciously laying aside that manner of relating. So you’re better able to function with other beings on the basis of being-to-being rather than, “Am I attractive? Is she attractive?”… People have to understand that renunciation and celibacy are not some kind of weird quirks left over from a spiritual authoritarian. The Buddha was an immensely pragmatic person. And he was totally beyond suffering. If you’re incapable of suffering, why would you choose to live as a barefoot celibate mendicant wandering around Bihar for forty-five years? Why not just go back to the palace and move in with Yasodhara again? And the answer, I feel, is that that simplicity of living is the most delightful way to be. And when the heart is utterly free from delusion and compulsions, you don’t want to have sex, you don’t want to lie, you don’t want to be burdening yourself with a load of unnecessary duties. If people who want to offer you some almsfood aren’t around, then fine – you just help yourself to some water out of the creek and fast for a few days… Renunciation is a state of freedom. That’s what it’s about. But there’s a quality of the American mind that really fears renunciation. You can’t talk about ending suffering, you have to talk about maximizing happiness. People don’t like that negativity. But Buddhist practice only works when its on the edge. And that’s what the renunciate lifestyle is about, what living in the wilderness is about, what meditation is all about – getting to the edge. Because that’s where we’re transformed. What we’re trying to do is create a situation that preserves the sharpness of the edge… The nature of the mind is intrinsically pure, and then the defilements come and obscure it, but there is nothing to perfect, and there’s no one to perfect it. Just stop being confused. Be quiet. Wake up. And there it is.
Buddhadharma Magazine Panel Discussion: Full-Time Practice

Joseph Goldstein, Judith Lief and Robert Thurman discuss the role of full-time practice in the West

**Buddhadharma:** What role have long-term, full-time practitioners—whether monastics, priests, mountain yogis or forest yogis—played in the development of Buddhism? Are their activities essential to the continuation of an authentic Buddhist tradition?

**Robert Thurman:** It is definitely a fact that in the Buddha's time people were inspired to drop out of their ordinary life occupations and become full-time practitioners. The Buddha would say, "Come here, Bhikshu," or "Come here, Bhikshuni," their clothes would change to orange saffron robes, and they would become monks or nuns just like that. So monasticism was an essential element in early Buddhism. However, I don't like to define a full-time practitioner only as someone who is a monastic or on retreat. I would say that the fate of Buddhism has depended historically on full-time practitioners, people who turn their lives toward enlightenment as their constant preoccupation, but that has not always been monastics or retreatants. There have been lay people who have practiced the dharma by not responding in anger to violence when people shouted at them or hit them or did something wrong to them. That is also full-time practice. When you are out on the street and someone is kicking you and you do not freak out, that is very strict mindfulness. Applying antidotes to the kleshas is a forceful practice. Therefore, I don't think we should define full-time practitioners only as those in retreat. But having said that, it is true that historically people have needed to go on retreat to develop the ability to counter the kleshas. You need to withdraw, to be alone with the emotions and the mental functions and factors to gain a handle on them. Having done so, you are able to deal with the world in a full-time way.

**Judith Lief:** Part of the question hinges on the definition of practice. If we understand practice as bending the mind towards awakening and the present moment, then practice can take place in many guises. A certain number of people do need to disrupt their lives and dedicate themselves to realization as their top priority. But people can also dedicate themselves to Buddhist principles of compassion no matter what lifestyle they may have. Like Bob, I would not link practice solely with monasticism. There are many ways of going about it. When I met my teacher, I dropped out and moved to where he needed me to be. Many other people have done similar things when they were inspired, whether they went to live in a practice community or went to receive in-depth teachings from a particular teacher. A powerful component of any sangha are the people who transform their priorities dramatically, the people who turn their minds from the usual career path or materialistic values toward awakening.

**Joseph Goldstein:** There is another key reason why it is important for a certain number of people to dedicate their lives in a full-time way to practice, for at least some period of time: the wisdom that leads to awakening rests on the foundation of concentration. Most people need a secluded environment to develop concentration. That is one of the crucial things missing in the West now, given that our society and culture is so distracted. It may be wishful thinking to imagine that we can actually realize the depth of the teachings in the midst of such a lifestyle.

**Buddhadharma:** Historically, what role have intensive practitioners played in the practice of the much larger body of lay Buddhists?

**Joseph Goldstein:** First of all, teaching is a major function provided by these practitioners. Historically, the lay people have relied on the intensive practitioners both for general life guidance and more specifically for meditation guidance.

**Robert Thurman:** There is no question that without the four-fold sangha—the bhikshus, bhikshunis, ordained lay men and ordained lay women who followed the Buddha's guidelines in the Vinaya—Buddhism would not have had the impact it did in Asia. They were developing a much deeper mental focus, and they were creating a higher lifestyle in those societies: greater self-restraint, greater focus and greater wisdom. Aside from the effect of their formal teaching, they created a vibe that emanated from their institutions that completely changed the quality of the society. Even though we tend to think of Buddhism in terms of Asian societies with great monastic traditions, at the time of the Buddha there was no monastic tradition. In India, there were a few ascetics who would go into the forest, and they were actually frowned upon as being slightly dangerous. In Confucian China, there was no allowance for people to be outside the normal production cycles of society, the family, the farm and the army. So Buddhism was revolutionary, in that it created a space in these societies for people to re-evaluate themselves, to develop concentration, to develop self-restraint, and to develop a greater insight into their nature. That changed the whole society progressively. Lay people absolutely depended on the foundation provided by the ascetics. However, the lay people's way of practicing the religion was through developing generosity, morality and patience, more than developing concentration and wisdom. In fact, there became too great a duality between the monks and nuns developing the concentration and wisdom part and the lay people working more on the moral interaction level, relying on the vibes emanating from the monks and nuns.

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Joseph Goldstein: That ties in very well with the condition in modern times. I don't know about in Tibet, but certainly in Burma in the last fifty or seventy years, there has been a big movement to open intensive practice to lay people. That has been a very significant movement.

Judith Lief: That movement still has a long way to go. Over time, the monastic establishment separated itself from lay society in a very elitist way. Different teachings were given to lay people than were given to monastic people. The special teachings were held out for the special people, and the other people were left with a more superficial, moralistic side of dharma. Also, in terms of the four-fold sangha, the monastic women are at the bottom of the heap. So much religious exclusivity and sexism has been linked with the monastic approach that it has been quite harmful to at least fifty percent of Buddhists, who are looked down upon as taking care of the mundane world, in contrast to males, who are devoted to higher matters.

Buddhadharma: What opportunities exist today for Westerners to devote themselves full-time to practice and study of the dharma?

Robert Thurman: The Insight Meditation Society has done pioneering work and continues to develop even more wonderful places to practice, but just using this one example, I understand there is often a long waiting list to get a retreat space there.

Joseph Goldstein: Overall the opportunities for intensive practice do seem to be limited. There are few places where people can devote themselves full-time to practice. We are just now at a stage of development of Buddhism in the West where the need for more long-term practice places is becoming apparent. Over the last twenty-five or thirty years we have been seeding the ground, developing a sangha mature enough in their practice to truly benefit others. Now the number of people making a more full-time commitment is growing, and they need places to be.

Judith Lief: We are not without opportunities, though. Zen communities offer programs where one can spend a year or two in residence. Some of the Tibetan sanghas offer community residency options, and there are three-year retreat programs in Europe and the U.S. IMS offers longer term practice facilities and the Shambhala community has a regular schedule of dathüns, which are month-long meditation sessions. Opportunities for intensive practice seem to exist in all the traditions—maybe not lifelong situations, but definitely lengthy, intensive practice and study opportunities.

Buddhadharma: But is it sufficient to have places where people can practice for a month or a year or several years, or do we need opportunities for people to practice for a decade or more? Is that what Buddhism really calls for?

Robert Thurman: It is hard to get people to realize that long-term practice is extremely important, not only because it benefits the practitioner but also because it benefits the entire society. It counteracts consumerism and violence. Institutions that foster long-term practice are crucial if we are to make headway in dealing with society. On the other hand, Joseph's point about the gradual seeding that has taken place is very well taken. If we suddenly had hundreds of retreat institutions, it might be difficult, because people might go into retreat who were not properly motivated or genuinely prepared. In Tibet, for example, it is not considered a good thing to go off on a long retreat until you have been well educated and prepared. You can't just drop out with an untutored mind and expect to get a result in solitude. You need to be aiming in the right direction, so that you can use the solitude in a creative way.

Buddhadharma: What about study? Do we need institutions which can create a cadre of Western Buddhists who are deeply knowledgeable about Buddhism, as well as deeply practiced?

Judith Lief: Oddly enough, we have some strong features in our society that were not present in some of the traditional societies. For example, we have many more literate people. We also have many publications and books from all traditions, and we also have many university programs.

Robert Thurman: And we have more women.

Judith Lief: Yes, we have more women, best of all [laughs]. We also have many schools of Buddhist studies that offer in-depth training on the academic and intellectual side. We have institutions like Naropa University and various retreat centers that create alternative value systems. It is now becoming more widely known that there are other ways to obtain education and training besides the "get your credential and get a bunch of money" approach. Buddhist communities are creating the critical mass for supporting practice in all its styles, from retreat to full engagement in the world and everything in between.
Joseph Goldstein: A key element in the development will be when we come to a place where there are a number of quite realized Westerners. At that point, the transmission of the teachings will really begin to take root deeply in our culture. For most of us, our teachers have been Asian, and even though we have many Western teachers, we don't put them in the same category as our original teachers. The deepening of realization among Westerners is going to have a tremendously significant impact. When that occurs, we will realize that we can actually do it as well as our forebears from Asia. My motivation for developing the forest retreat center at IMS has been to create a place where people can come to practice for however long it is fruitful for them to practice. My inner vision is that it would be great if we started to see some Western arhats—or the Mahayana or Vajrayana equivalents—coming out of such a retreat center. I don't see that happening unless there are places for long-term practice. There will be the occasional remarkable individual like Ramana Maharshi for whom it just happens spontaneously. But for most of us, realization is going to be the fruit of a lot of work over a long, long time. We need a place to do it and a place that will support that.

Robert Thurman: Tulku Pema Wangyal told me several years ago that the Nyingma three-year retreat centers in the south of France had produced over six hundred people who had done at least one three-year retreat, and some who had done several. Among them I suspect are some arhats, or the Mahayana or Vajrayana equivalents, but I have been concerned about these people. They are in a funny position in American society. In Tibetan society, they would be lamas. Although a few of them do call themselves lamas, most are just considered to be someone who has been on a long retreat with some weird Tibetan. They often don't know the Tibetan language very well, they have no formal credentials, and they may have to work at whatever occupation they can get. Tulku Pema Wangyal thought it might be a good idea for people who wanted to do these long retreats to have degree programs associated with their intensive practice. Perhaps it could be an M.A. program or a psychology program like they have at Naropa or the California Institute of Integral Studies. They would take a couple of years of preliminary Buddhist education and language studies and then go into the retreat. The retreat would become the equivalent of field work within the Western social setting. Then they come out with a psychology degree, for example, which they could use to become counselors. Usually when someone is ready for a retreat, they just go into it and then they worry about how they will integrate into society when they come out. To overcome that obstacle, I would love to see a Buddhist university—or even a conventional university—create educational programs that would fit around long retreats. It would help retreatants before the retreat to make it more fruitful. It would also help them to integrate into society after the retreat. They would be teachers, or Ph.D.'s or M.A.'s, and they would have a livelihood that would fit with their attainment.

Joseph Goldstein: Of course, all people who do have genuine realization do not necessarily have the teaching parami (Skt., paramita), which is something quite different. Some people have that parami well developed and become teachers, and others have the teaching parami without realization. One element is the actual experience and practice, and the other is the ability to teach. We need to keep in mind that they don't always overlap.

Buddhadharma: If long-term practice is important in achieving deep realization, what does that say about the efficacy of the lay practice which now dominates in the West, in which meditation is fit in among all the demands of life, work and family?

Robert Thurman: We should be cautious about anyone considering themselves great practitioners, whether they are practicing on retreat or in lay life. The bodhisattva does not dwell upon the thought of being a bodhisattva. Lay people can practice and they should do retreats. And the ones who get really good will probably give up that stupid job making that stupid money, which someone else is going to inherit when they die anyway. In the meantime, though, giving gifts and supporting those who do long retreats, and acting in a restrained way, and electing a decent president, or at least a couple of decent senators—that is practice and should be understood to be so.

Judith Lief: I would go further than that. I don't think the lay path is second best. It is a valid path in and of itself. I call it back-and-forth practice: retreat time and engaging in the world time. In my own experience, this is the most powerful form of practice. Retreat time is a time to concentrate, to focus your mind, to study intensively. But until that is brought back into your world, it is not really tested. It is easy to get caught up in your own sense of your own realization—until you go back home and you visit your parents and the whole thing crumbles. Trungpa Rinpoche used to work with students by telling them to take on a variety of activities having nothing to do with what we traditionally call practice, such as taking a job at Naropa or starting a business. By holding the view of twenty-four-hour practice, we can utilize whatever we encounter as fuel for realization. I have learned as much from some of the situations I was thrown into, such as directing Naropa, as I have learned in some of my practice retreats. If your mind flips over so that you actually are open to receiving teachings in the many forms that they exist throughout the world, it enriches the retreat experiences. In the same way, the retreat experiences enrich the interactions in daily life.

Robert Thurman: I do regret that I haven't spent more of my life on retreat. It would have been much better if I had been able to take breaks for several more two- or three-year sessions. If I had gone and developed the kind of concentration Joseph was
talking about and really drilled that more deeply, I'm sure I would have been better at encountering the challenges outside of retreat. So I think it is good for lay people to see that they could be doing something more and better in the way of intensive practice.

**Judith Lief:** But I think it is also important to get beyond the idea that there is a special time for practice, and that what's outside of that is non-practice. It would be helpful to try to soften that boundary.

**Robert Thurman:** I agree with that.

**Judith Lief:** Retreat is unquestionably an incredibly valuable thing, and all of us would like to figure out ways in our lives to do more of it. Nonetheless, the attitude that there are these special times and the rest is wasted time doesn't seem very helpful.

**Joseph Goldstein:** Two key questions arise from what we have been talking about. First, how much retreat time is necessary for lay people to be able to carry its value over into their lives? We don't want to fool ourselves into thinking, "If I do one weekend a year, or one ten-day course a year, someday I am going to end up a buddha in this lifetime." It is possible, but unlikely. I have seen people who have come to several retreats a year over many years and deepened their practice a lot, but how much intensive practice is enough remains an important question. The second question concerns what is needed during non-retreat time to support a level of awareness that will actually bring insight. We don't get a lot of support from our society. What could we do so that in our ordinary life we are actually using our practice to that end? It's easy to think that we should be doing that, and that we are, but it is not that easy to do. What can we do, then, to foster more full-time awareness—in and out of retreat? One obvious answer is dharma community. Another interesting question for me is, what about people who are not living in community? How could they really bring community into their lives and practice in a meaningful way? I think it is a tremendous challenge.

**Robert Thurman:** Clearly, there are different answers for different people depending on their circumstances, but I do think that everyone should seek as much community as they can find, although they may have to endure without it in some circumstances. I remember that when my children were growing up in Amherst, Massachusetts, they would sometimes see little girls in their dresses coming out of church and feel left out. We would have some lamas over from time to time or we would visit IMS, but rarely as a family. You felt a little bit like a stranger in a strange land in the seventies in America. Now you feel more at home in certain places, and we gravitate to those places, and that is normal. There is much more opportunity for people today to be supported by community than there was thirty years ago.

**Buddhadharma:** In order to develop serious, well-trained teachers to lead our communities, should we concentrate on developing monasteries in the West, or are a variety of different forms appropriate?

**Robert Thurman:** We should be developing monasteries.

**Joseph Goldstein:** We need both monasteries and other forms as well. The monastic form offers tremendous benefit and value, and it brings with it a whole support structure. There are also many practitioners who for one reason or another are not drawn to the monastic form. We need to provide opportunities for them to deepen their practice as well. I see the whole range as being needed and valuable, from lay centers to monasteries.

**Judith Lief:** We also need academic centers, translation centers, research centers and libraries. There are so many different—and vitally important—forms of community. Monasticism is certainly one of them, although it is certainly not an easy form to develop, judging by Shambhala's experience with Gampo Abbey. It is also not a tremendously popular form at this point.

**Robert Thurman:** We have to realize that in American culture a big obstacle to monasticism is the Protestant ethic: the idea that there is something wrong with people who are not doing something "productive." There's no free lunch and all that. There is a genuine block in people's minds about the virtue and the potency of monasticism; it is thought of as something wrong and backward.

**Judith Lief:** But that is the self-fulfilling prophecy: because of that view, the monastic structures tend to attract people who fit that view.

**Robert Thurman:** Yes, but I'm just saying that it makes it hard to develop monasticism. After all, in the Buddha's time in India, he himself would have been a general in the army if he had stayed in his home life. There was no precedent for monasticism then either, except for those few forest ascetics.
Joseph Goldstein: The kind of cultural resistance you are talking about seemed to be more of a factor when I was first starting practice. I remember hearing when I was in India, “You're just wasting your time there, why don't you come back and get a job?” My sense is that this kind of resistance has now lessened. The difficulty today has more to do with a lack of appreciation for, and a lack of understanding of, renunciation. This is a huge obstacle for people, because in our society renunciation obviously doesn't have a great reputation. People are afraid of the renunciate lifestyle.

Robert Thurman: One thing Americans don't like to think about is how backward we are as a society, in comparison with the great ancient societies of Asia when they were at the height of their prosperity and wealth. Today, we have some wealth in some sectors of our society, so we are beginning to deal with issues of leisure and refinement but not all that well. It is not the Protestants' fault alone, but it certainly is a fact that we need to develop the idea that there is something else to do in life besides work all day.

Judith Lief: You can't create a genuine monastery outside of the societal context with which it interacts, though. This recalls Bob's story about his children seeing people coming out of church and being envious. This is telling, because we view a monastery more as a retreat center than a church, where there are practices going on but also where there is interaction of all sorts with the lay community around it. In the Buddhist sangha today, at least in the Western convert sangha, there is a missing link between individual practitioners and families. We haven't really developed sangha such that families can go somewhere and have a community gathering where you have an array of people—full-time practitioners, lay people, family people, children, people of many different ages, people of many different levels of realization—all having fruitful and inspiring interactions. I don't know the solution particularly, but to me it is a central concern. Because if there is no support of a Buddhist family life, then what context is there going to be for Buddhist life, other than individuals seeking their own enlightenment, and to hell with everybody else?

Buddhadharma: Traditionally, lay practitioners saw it as their role to support full-time practitioners. They saw that as a great boon to themselves, to the dharma and to the society as a whole. Is there an impulse today among lay practitioners to support the long-term practice of others?

Joseph Goldstein: I don't know how it is at the other centers, but in our organization scholarships are one of the easier things to fundraise for. I find that people are quite generous when they are solicited for funds for scholarship programs. There are great resources available to support people in practice. It is just a question of both educating and asking; the money is there. Whether it is on an ongoing basis or as a one-time gift, I think there is a large enough pool of practitioners with resources to support long-term practitioners. In fact, it is harder to raise money for some other less tangible projects.

Robert Thurman: Another key issue in this regard is the distance that can open up between the monastic and the lay community, which Judy alluded to earlier. In the Vinaya, the Buddha said that a monastic vihara should not be more than seven stone-throws away from the marketplace. He was purposely distinguishing these abodes from distant forest retreat places.

Judith Lief: Exactly. That monastic model is different from the current Western model, which is more of a permanent retreat model, with little interaction with the lay community.

Robert Thurman: Traditionally, the monks had to go to a lay family's house every day to get food. They would often give a talk or hang out at the house. Then the people would ask questions of the venerable monk or nun who had come to visit and have lunch. That free lunch was something that enabled there to be much more interaction between lay families and monks and nuns. There were many elements of social wisdom in the Vinaya that allowed for there to be a lot of interaction between monastics and lay people, without the monks or nuns losing their renunciation, and without the lay people being deprived. Modern versions of all of these methods will slowly develop, but nevertheless at the heart of it is the need for more realized people. Perhaps we need to have production quotas for Joseph's forest retreat center—arhat production quotas.

Joseph Goldstein: All right, Bob, we are saving a room for you. It's a five-year lease.

Robert Thurman: We have to have more arhats and more advanced retreat courses that give degrees to people who have put in the time. Then we will have a lot of enlightened people instead of a bunch of amateurs like me. Then the institutions will naturally be founded as a result of their activity.

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RW: I would like to read to you something from Krishnamurti concerning tradition. He says: ‘To carry the past over to the present, to translate the movement of the present in terms of the past destroys the living beauty of the present. There is nothing sacred about tradition, however ancient or modern. The brain carries the memories of yesterday, which is tradition and is frightened to let go because it cannot face something new. Tradition becomes our security and when the mind is secure it is in decay. One must take the journey unburdened, sweetly, without any effort, never stopping at any shrine, at any monument, or for any hero, social or religious, alone with beauty and love.’ Now, Sucitto’s and your presence here has been an obvious display of the carrying on of a tradition that has been going on for over 2500 years. Concerning this quotation, I wonder if one could get too caught up in form, missing the intended purpose? Or, another way of stating it, how does one avoid getting caught up in form?

AS: Well, it is like driving a car. One could dismiss the convention of a car and say, ‘I am not going to depend on that because it is from the past. So I’ll just walk on my own to New York City.’ Or, ‘I’ll invent my own car, because I don’t want to copy someone else and take something that is from the past and bring it into the present.’ I could do that, and maybe I would succeed. I don’t know. The point is not so much in the vehicle that is used, but in getting to New York City. Whether one goes slow or fast, one should take what is available, whatever vehicle one finds around oneself. If there isn’t any, invent one, or just walk. One must do the best one can. But if there is one already around, why not learn to use it? -- especially if it is still operable. So, tradition is like that. It is not ... clinging. One can also cling to the idea that one does not need tradition, which is just another opinion or view. Quotations like that are tremendously inspiring, but they are not always very practical because one forms another opinion that traditions are wrong or harmful. The problem, you see (I am sure Krishnamurti must realize this) does not lie in the tradition, but in the clinging. This body is a conventional form that came from the past. The language that we use, the world we live in, and the societies we are a part of are all conventional forms that were born in the past. So, one could say that one does not want anything to do with them. In that case one should stop talking completely. Krishnamurti should stop having books published.

RW: He asks his listeners, ‘I don’t know why you buy these books.’

AS: We live in a conventional world. It is not a matter of depending on conventions, but learning how to use them skillfully. We can use language for gossip, lying, and becoming obsessed speakers; we can become perfectionists, fuss-budgets with language. The important thing to understand is that language is communication. When I communicate something to you, I try to speak as directly and clearly as possible. It is a skill. But if my tongue were cut out, I would just learn to live without speaking -- that’s all. That would not be any great sorrow, but a bit of an inconvenience -- for some things; it might be convenient for many other things. Religious traditions are just conventions that can be used or not, according to time and place. If one knows how to use it through the tradition, one is much better off than another who does not know, who thinks that they are all just a waste of time. One can go to a Christian church, a Theravada monastery or a Synagogue, and respect, get a feeling for the convention that one finds oneself with, without feeling that it is bad or wrong. It is not up to us to decide about that. They are all based on doing good, refraining from doing evil. Therefore, if one clings to them, then one is bound to them. If one regards religion as just a convention, then one can learn how to use it properly. It is the raft that takes one across.

RW: You mentioned that traditions can be used according to the time and place. I noticed that you and Sucitto go on ‘alms round’ in Barre in the morning. On the one hand, I find this quite admirable. On the other hand, I wonder what kind of effect this has on a society that is not Buddhist. To the average householder, a person wearing orange or red robes could be anything from a Hare Krishna devotee to -- whatever. Is following the tradition, at this time and in this place, doing more harm than good? Could it be offensive to these people? Would it have been offensive for me to go and listen to Krishnamurti in Saanen wearing my robes (which, in that context, I chose not to do)?

AS: Well, the intention is good, the time is now, and the place is here. Some people will be upset; some will find it very nice. In England it upsets some people, but sometimes people need to be upset. They need to be shaken a bit, because people are very complacent in these countries. Going on alms round also attracts good people, who seem to like it. Since our intention is not to shock or harm, how my appearance affects others is their problem. I am modestly covered and am not out to lure them into any kind of relationship or harm them in any way. On the contrary; it gives them the opportunity to offer dana (charity) if they are so inclined. In England, admittedly, most people do not understand it. Yet it seems to me that making the alms round is one of the religious conventions that is worth maintaining, because the people in countries like this have forgotten how to give. It is like putting juice back in the religious body again. It is getting monks moving within the society. When the Buddha was a prince [before he was enlightened], he left the palace and saw four messengers who changed his life. The first one was an old man, the second was a sick person, the third was a corpse and the fourth was a monk meditating under a tree. I look at this as a message. I do not carry it around as a duty I have to perform, but just part of my life, the way I live my life. If people object and find it very wrong, if it is causing people all kinds of problems, then I will not do it. That has not happened yet. People thought that I should not go on alms round in the village. They thought it was stupid. Some English people, as well as Buddhists, felt that we should adapt to the English customs. However, I decided to take it as it came. Rather than deciding whether or not I should adapt to the English customs, I simply brought the tradition and played it by ear. I felt it would take its own form, accordingly. If one trims the tradition down before even planting the seed, one often severs or slightens its whole...
spirit. The entire tradition is based on charity, kindness, goodness, morality... and I am not doing anything wrong. I may be doing things that people do not understand...

**RW:** In my own mind, and I imagine in the minds of others as well, the alms round might seem to be a type of clinging to form, to tradition.

**AS:** Then one is not being mindful. It would just be clinging to a method. Yet it is still better than what most people cling to, isn't it?

**RW:** I am not sure. Is it possible to place a value judgment on clinging? However how does one keep the mind awake, day and night? While performing certain rituals, chanting or on alms round, how can one avoid the repetitive, mechanical routineness of our daily existence?

**AS:** Daily existence is mechanical and routine. The body is mechanical and routine. Society is that way. All compounded things just keep doing the same thing over and over. But our minds do not have to be deluded by those habits anymore.

**RW:** Krishnamurti says that 'religious people, those who live in a monastery, in isolation, or go off to a mountain or a desert, are forcing their minds to conform to an established pattern.' You said earlier that at Ajahn Chah's monastery, you were conforming to an authority because you felt that previously...

**AS:** One is conforming one's bodily action to a pattern. That is all.

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**RW:** I would like to return for a moment to the role of tradition. Do you feel that adherence to a particular tradition would naturally tend to separate one from another tradition that has a certain set of values?

**AS:** Well, on the level of convention, everything is separate anyway. You are separate from me as a person, as a body. That can only be solved when we merge by developing wisdom. With conventional form there is only separation. There will always be men and women and innumerable religious conventions. These are all on the level of sense perception, which is always discriminative and separative. It cannot be otherwise. Yet if one is mindful, those very conventions take one to the deathless, where we merge. There is no 'you' or 'me' there.

**RW:** 'Deathless' -- how do you use that term?

**AS:** It just means that which is never born and never dies. There is nothing more one can say, really, because words are birth and death.

**RW:** Could one say that the deathless is synonymous with the end of clinging and grasping?

**AS:** Non-attachment to mortal conditions.

**RW:** I find it more the case than the exception that when belonging to a group, there is a tendency to feel secure, and to condemn, belittle or speak condescendingly to those who do not share one's own religious beliefs or philosophical dogma. I was quite concerned about these matters when I left the Centre in Switzerland... How does one overcome this feeling of separation, form versus the essence? How can one be free from getting enmeshed in form, whether it be in a study or meditative environment?

**AS:** Well, just be enlightened. It would solve all your problems.

**RW:** Thanks a lot.

**AS:** One has to make the best of all these things. Even here [at the Insight Meditation Society] the meditation is kind of spoon-fed. It is like sitting in a high chair and having your mommy come and dish it to you on a little plate. It is idealistic. For meditators there is hardly any friction; everything is secure and provided. In places like Tharpa Choeling [the Tibetan Centre in Switzerland] there is more friction, much more to forgive, much more confusion to the mind. Chithurst is a good example of being neither the best nor the worst place. It is adequate. Some people will make use of it, some will not. I do not want it to be too perfect or ideal, because people need friction. Otherwise they become complacent and dull. One has to give people space to work through their biases and hang-ups. In my own life I saw how I became attached to the teacher, the tradition and the rules. If one is serious and watching dukkha, then one begins to see that and let it go. That does not mean one has to throw away the tradition; it just means that one can be at ease with it. I enjoy monasticism. I like being a monk. I think it is a very lovely way to live as a human being. But if it does not work anymore, when the time comes to end it -- it will end. That is it. It does not matter that much. Yet there is no need to throw away the ordination either. I have grown because of it. I have not as yet seen a better way to live one's life. So I stay with this one until it is time to change. When the time for change comes, it will have to come on its own. It is not up to me to decide, 'Well, I'm fed up with this, I'm going to try something else.' One can see the whole tenor of the life of a monk is very good. It is harmless, it is honorable; it is useful in society too. I know how to use it. I can teach through this tradition. I can teach people how to use the tradition, which I think is a good thing to know how to use. One can learn how to use conventions instead of just rejecting them. If I give you a knife, you can use it for good or bad. It is not the knife's problem, is it? If you use it to murder me, would you say, 'The knife is bad'? The knife might be a very good knife, a well-made and useful tool. The same with the Theravada or Tibetan tradition; it is learning how to use them skillfully - - and that is up to you! One has to recognize that Asian teachers come from a society (Tibet, for example) where everything is more or less taken for granted. They have been raised in a society that thinks and lives Buddhism. Whether they are devout or not does not make any difference. Nevertheless, it affects their whole outlook on themselves and the world. Whereas you come from a country which is materialistic, and where the values -- based on greed and competition, and trust and faith in conceptual learning -- have affected your mind. Our faith in America is in books, isn't it? In universities. In science. In conceptual learning. In being reasonable.
**RW:** You would not think, then, that a community of monks would be like a crutch or a bondage, preventing a person from growing?  
**AS:** No. Anything can be a crutch or a bondage. It all depends on whether one uses it or leans on it. People think that having crutches is bad. Crutches themselves are not bad. Sometimes we need them. Imagine saying to a new-born baby, ‘You have two legs. Get up and walk! I’m not going to pick you up, feed you or do anything for you. You’re now in the world. You have to learn to take care of yourself!’ The baby is just not ready yet. Understanding the situation, one feeds it and takes care of it. As soon as the baby starts crawling, one would not say, ‘If you depend on crawling, you are going to crawl the rest of your life and never get anywhere. Get up and walk!’ But the baby cannot. He is not ready. He is not strong enough. By crawling and waging his arms and legs, pulling himself up on the chair, and mommy taking his hand, etc., he is developing strength and growing until it is time to take his first step. When he starts to walk on his own, he does not want to use crutches anymore, naturally. When children learn to walk independently they throw away their crutches. They do not want to hold mother’s hand anymore. In the spiritual path, too, sometimes crutches and refuges are deliberately provided for strengthening. When one is strong enough, one starts walking independently.  
**RW:** You gave the analogy of a baby crawling, developing slowly, gradually. A person who is within the system, just conforming to the pattern of it without really digging in -- how can that system or organization help to shake him out of the rut he is in ... Well, I am just talking about myself; you know ... Sometimes I feel it is necessary to make a break for the sole purpose of shaking up what can be a complacent life-style.  
**AS:** Life itself is ever-changing. It is not that structures and conditions themselves change. Some monks have to disrobe and leave. Some, after years, find nothing in it for themselves and seek something else to do. All that one can ask them to do is to try to be as honest as possible about their intentions. Each individual has to work out his own life... If someone feels one has had enough of monastic life and wants to do it another way, that is quite alright; it is one’s choice. But one should be honest about one’s intentions rather than just using an excuse. That is important. The only thing that is not nice to hear is when someone leaves [the monastic order] but is not honest about why one is leaving. One may justify one’s leaving by putting down the tradition. Yet sometimes people leave for justifiable serious doubts.  
**RW:** As Abbot of Chithurst, how do you advise your monks to view ceremonies and rituals that might seem rather remote to the actual practice?  
**AS:** I personally like rituals. They are quite pleasant to do; they are calming. One does them with a group of people. It is doing something that is pleasant, together and in unison. The intention is always good: to radiate kindness and to chant the teachings of the Buddha in Pali. It tends to uplift and inspire the minds of many people. That is its only function as far as I can tell. I think ceremony makes life much more beautiful. I have seen Dhamma communities which do not have ceremonies. They are a bit gross, actually.  
**RW:** Gross?  
**AS:** People just do not have a sense of etiquette, a kind of refinement, a lovely movement, a sense of time and place that one has when one understands the value of precepts and ceremonies. They have their beauty. The bhikkhu form is a kind of dance one does. One learns to move. It has its own beautiful form, which is a way of training the physical form in beautiful movement, the mental and the physical combined. However, it is not an end in itself. It can become silly if it is an end in itself. And it is not necessary, either. If it does not fit or if people do not want it, then one just does not use it. It is something one can use or not use according to time and place. If one has never used ceremony or does not understand its purpose, then when one is faced with a ceremony, one might reject it, thinking, ‘I don’t like it’, or ‘ceremonies are wrong’. But they aren’t! There is nothing wrong with ceremonies, they are quite alright to have. To feel one should not have ceremonies is just as much an opinion as to feel one should. It is not a matter of having to say one should or should not have them. They are a part of our community and in the world. One can make people, out of fear, obey rules. They would be afraid to break them because they would be caught, chastised and humiliated. But that is not arousing integrity and honor in a man. On the other hand, one does not want to make it lax, either, letting everyone just do what he wants. One wants a kind of strictness, an impeccable standard, from which one can learn. Otherwise, people tend to think, ‘Oh well, the robes don’t make any difference’, ‘Oh well, eating in the afternoon is okay’, ‘Oh well, carrying money is alright’. One can rationalize anything. There are good reasons for breaking all the rules as far as I can see. What if a family next door is starving to death? Why should I not be able to go steal a loaf of bread from a rich man to give it to them? There is always a good reason to justify the action. So it is not the rationalizing that...
we are trying to develop, but the sense of honor and wisdom. That can only be done by conditioning them through fear, binding them to a set of rules that are so inflexible and rigid that they just become rats in a maze.

RW: I used to think that Theravada monks interpreted the vows very literally. Yet when I observe you and Bhikkhu Sucitto, I see that the Vinaya can be used as a lesson in the development of mindfulness. That is all it is.

AS: Right. It is really quite a good vehicle.

RW: But as you mentioned, precepts can become a neurotic discipline.

AS: Right. At first it has to be like an exercise. One trains oneself. When one learns to play the piano, it is not possible to start with the variations of themes. First one must learn the themes. In the beginning one needs to develop skill and become coordinated. One has to do repetitious things, like sitting for hours, until one acquires the skill. One can then play the standard themes simply by following. Eventually, as skill increases, one does not have to follow or imitate anymore. It is natural. Then one can play the variations, and it becomes a joy to listen to. But if one tries to play variations before one knows the theme, it can become very unpleasant -- for everybody. That is why Vinaya discipline is like piano exercises. The first few years are boring. One has to listen to it over and over: everything has to be done in a certain way. Although it all looks a bit fussy and irrelevant to anything grand, once one learns how to do it, one does not have to think about it, wondering, 'Should I press this key or that one?' It is automatic. One already has the skill with that particular instrument. From that point on, one is free from it; one can use it. Some monks, like piano players, just play the standard theme over and over because they are afraid to let go of the standard. They are not confident; they lack wisdom; they have only conditioned themselves. The point of the Vinaya is not to condition one but to give one complete freedom -- not freedom to follow desire but freedom to be spontaneous. One can only do this through wisdom and not through desire. One cannot be spontaneous with desire; one just becomes overwhelmed by it. The Vinaya is a way of training body and speech, of giving them beauty and form, and of establishing relationship with others. For example, many people criticize the rules concerning women: 'Why can't monks touch women?'; 'Why can't monks be alone in a room with a woman?'; 'Why can't I have a woman up here and talk to her alone in a private interview?'; 'What is it about women? -- Was Buddha a male chauvinist pig?' Questions like this often come up. It is a matter of establishing a proper relationship so that the Dhamma can be taught. (Most women here have forgotten how nature works. The female attracts the male. It is a natural condition). Also, if I have a woman up here in the room, even though thinking 'I don't have a problem with lust anymore', how would that look to others? If Bhikkhu Sucitto sees a naked woman walking out of my room ... well, it looks bad. It is a way of protecting women, of keeping their reputation from being gossiped about. Moreover, women often fall in love with teachers and figures of authority. For monks who are still very attracted to women, women have a tremendous power to draw them in, especially if the women are discussing their own personal problems. One can easily get emotionally caught up in that. Buddha did not say that a monk cannot teach women. He said that a monk should establish a relationship in which teaching can be given. This I have found very helpful in training the monks at Chithurst. There are no scandals or problems there. When women come, they know the conditions for instruction and accept them. Therefore, the teaching of the Dhamma can be given without emotional involvement and all kinds of gossipy problems. Many bhikkhus in England, both Thai and Western, have lost their reputation due to their laxity with regard to women. That is a very strong natural force. When I went to England, I also thought it would be a problem. I felt that Western women were going to hate and resent the regulations. But they do not. When they understand them, they respect them very much. Our four nuns at Chithurst are more meticulous than we are. They are very careful about the Vinaya because they really want to do it correctly. In our monastic community there is no jealousy about women. Such as, Venerable Sucitto has a girl friend or favors one of the nuns! Situations like this, where jealousy arises is a traditional world problem, isn't it? Men fighting over women is a natural condition, too. This kind of training avoids those difficulties.

RW: You teach everyone equally, don't you?

AS: Yes. In Chithurst the nuns are very much a part of the monastic community. They come to all the functions and have the same training.
We are often asked, "What does a Buddhist monastic know about real life?" This is a very good question because many people may think that we don't have to deal with real life in the monastery: "Things are easy for you, but outside the monastery wall we have to deal with real life; we have a much more difficult job." Their impression is that once you have given yourself to the holy life, then you float around on little purple clouds, existing in exquisite mutual harmony at all times, exuding undifferentiated love and compassion for each other, and, finally, at the end of a life of ever-increasing blissfulness and profound insights into the nature of ultimate reality, deliquescing softly into nirvana leaving behind a soft chime of ringing bells and a rainbow. Not so. I'll get on to that in a minute. I'm joking a bit, but this is the kind of image that people may have of monasteries. It's another world, something that other people do.

The Buddha was asked a lot of questions in his time, and he once said there are four ways to respond to a question. The first way is to give a straight answer. The second is to ask a counter question. The third is to rephrase the question. The fourth is to remain silent. As I look at the question at hand, what comes to mind are two counter questions: What is a Buddhist monastic? And what is real life?

Most people probably don't know all that much about how the monastic system actually functions in the Buddhist world. To many, Buddhist monks are simply people who magically appear and disappear, like wandering teachers or circuit preachers. There's not really a cognizance of what a monastery is, how it functions, or where a Buddhist monastic comes from. Even the word "monastery," like the word "morality," often has a certain emotional effect. Your blood starts to get cold, and you think, "That's a place for other people, and there's something about it I don't really like." I certainly had the same feeling at one time: You disappear behind a 20-foot-high wall into a life of scrubbing floors, freezing nights, and grim asceticism. That's "the monastery."

In many Buddhist countries - Tibet, Korea, China, and Japan - they did create a remote, enclosed, and self-sufficient model. However, in Southeast Asia, at least where Buddhism was not repressed by the various rulers, they sustained the original mendicant model that was established at the time of the Buddha. The monastery is actually like a cross between a church, commune, and community center. It's not just a place where nuns and monks live; it's everybody's place. In Thailand, for example, there are about 50,000 monasteries. Every village has a monastery; big villages have two or three. It's like a synagogue or church with six rabbis or half a dozen ministers. One or two do most of the talking, and the others live, learn, and help out. It's a commune of spiritual seekers, and it's also a place where community life happens. Many village monasteries host the local town meetings or "county" fairs. The monastery is the heart of the community, not that place out on the hill that nobody ever enters.

Of course, there's a degree of variety. Forest monasteries place an emphasis on meditation and tend to be outside of villages and a little further away. Those that are extremely popular will try to sustain a bit more quiet, with visiting hours at such and such a time. There might not be anyone to receive you. But generally speaking, most monasteries are open; they are everybody's place.

At its heart, a monastery is sustained as a spiritual sanctuary. What creates a monastery is that everyone who comes through the gate undertakes to live by a certain standard, to conduct themselves in a certain way in terms of honesty, nonviolence, modesty, restraint, and sobriety. Within that zone, it's a safe place: no one is going to rob you, to chat you up, to try to sell you anything, to attack you, to lie to you, to be drunk. It's an environment that maximizes the supportive conditions for helping you to cultivate kindness, wisdom, concentration - the whole range of wholesome spiritual qualities.

There are also teachers available. You might think that a great master like our teacher, Ajahn Chah, may have spent his life up in the mountains, meditating under a tree. He did that for a number of years, but once he opened a monastery, he spent much of the next thirty years sitting under his hut receiving visitors from ten o'clock in the morning often until midnight. That's the teacher's job: the doctor is in. Not every monastery functions in that way, but it's generally the job of certain members of monastic communities to be available to anyone who drops in. If you want to talk to the Ajahn, you don't schedule a private interview, you just hang out until there's an opportunity to ask your question.

In this respect, intrinsic to a Buddhist monastic life is the fact that you can be called upon to some degree or another to share with other people the wisdom and understanding you have developed. Whatever good is developed in the lives of the inhabitants of the monastery is made available. Of course, some people are not disposed to be teachers. Yet just aspiring to control your bad habits and get your mind a little bit clearer is in itself a great gift and a blessing to others. It's a beautiful example.

So if this is a Buddhist monastic life, then what is real life? People often think real life means having a credit rating, a retirement plan, a job, a sex life, a house, a car, and a fixed pattern of living. But couldn't you also say a real life means simply having a body and mind? Or a personality, a feeling of identity? For people who ask the question, the implication is that those who don't have financial responsibilities, children, parents to look after, or marriage partners somehow experience a life that is intrinsically different. All the rough and tumble of the lay world is somehow intrinsically different. Seeing Buddhist monks or nuns on show - sitting in robes, statue-like and serene - it is easy to think, "They are not like me: they haven't got sore knees like me; they haven't got profane thoughts going through their minds like me; they haven't got worries and anxieties, thoughts about the past and future all the time like me; they don't have a difficult parent like me." Well believe me, the monastery gate
does not create any radical alteration of human nature as you pass through it. Come live in the monastery for one week, and then ask yourself where real life is.

From the Buddhist point of view, life is happening at the level of the senses, where sense consciousness impacts sights, sounds, smell, taste, touch, body, perceptions, feelings, ideas, and emotions. That's where we experience life. Whether you are inside the monastery gate or outside it, the impact is the same. There's a saying in Japan: "There's many a shaven head surrounding a hairy mind." When you enter the monastery gate, all your struggles with your parents don't suddenly get switched off. All your sexual desires don't suddenly fizzle out. All your feelings of self criticism don't miraculously transform: "Now I am a monk. I like myself."

In fact, the monastery is an optimum environment in which to experience real life. We get the raw experience of feeling sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch because all the normal distractions, mufflings, and mutings are absent. We can't nibble or go to the fridge to help ourselves. Food has to be put into our hands before we can eat it. We don't listen to music, have any radios, listen to the news, watch TV, read novels. We don't play sports, do crossword puzzles, garden. Basically, you ain't got nothin' except your mind and the great outdoors. We live communally; everything is shared. We don't have our own choice about whom we work with or how we work. We have no choice about the menu; the cooks cook what they want to cook with whatever shows up in the larder. We can't just pop into town to do some shopping or take in a movie. We don't have our own space. Sometimes in the winter time we get cold and wet, and there isn't a way to get as warm as we'd like to be.

Maybe I'm painting a bit of a rough picture, since at times it is also very pleasant. But what I'm really trying to say is that when you start to shed the familiar props, you get life in the raw. You experience the whole battery of loves and hates, of self concern, of the amount of things we need to have to make ourselves feel good. It's like a junkie. As long as you have a good supply of clean stuff, everything is fine, but as soon as the supply starts to dry up, things get really hairy. Anyone who has been addicted - to cigarettes, food, affection, heroin, whatever - knows what that is like. When the props aren't there, we realize how dependent our life has become. By seeing this and processing it in a deep and clear way, we can understand it. Then we are more able not to be dragged around.

There was a very sweet incident that happened a number of years ago with the first nun in our community in England. She was a middle aged woman, had been married, had had quite a sophisticated life. A women's magazine came to do a feature on the nuns, and they were interviewing her. They said, "It must be terribly difficult for you: sleeping on the floor, having one meal a day, getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning, being told what to do by all these young whipper-snappers."

"Oh," she replied, "that's easy, a piece of cake. Really. At first, I thought it would be very difficult for a woman of a certain age to adjust to all these hardships, but that's nothing. The really difficult thing is to give up your own opinions. That's the hardship. When you know - not just think, but know - that you are right about the way to cook courgettes but have to watch someone doing otherwise and swallow it, then things get really interesting."

The interviewer was really shocked, but it was very insightful of the nun. She realized that she was far more attached to her ideas of right and wrong, good and bad. "I think things should be this way." "Monks shouldn't talk like that." "This is what Buddhism is, and this is what it isn't." She would get really upset because Ajahn Sumedho wouldn't quote the Buddha's discourses in his Dhamma talks but would use his own language and reflect from his own experience. She'd say, "We are Buddhists. We should be quoting the Buddha!" If we don't meet them and know them, we are dragged around by our preferences, our loves and hates, rights and wrongs. As long as things go smoothly, we can be dragged around quite happily because we think this is just life. But as soon as our plans are frustrated, as soon as we meet with a situation that doesn't go the way we like, then we lose it. We get lost. We die. There's a beautiful passage in the Dhammapada where the Buddha says, "Mindfulness is the path to the Deathless, Needlessness is the path to death. The mindful never die, the heedless are as if dead already."

In the monastery, we learn to deal with the body, with pain. Living communally, we learn a lot about forgiveness, commitment, honesty, patience. We learn how to deal with anger, jealousy, fearfulness, selfishness. We get the whole palate; every color is there. If you can't deal with them, you don't survive. The effort within the monastic life is to know life as you experience it, as you feel it in a complete and deep way. In the monastery, you learn to understand how the feelings of love and hate, success and failure, praise and criticism all function. You learn to find that space that holds it, that knows it, and that can be with it and be still within all that occurs.

Coming to the monastery as a lay person and participating in that life, plugging into that environment, can help you carry that learning back with you, and you can begin to experience the whole firmament of your daily life or your family life even while surrounded by people who are not resolve on a spiritual practice. After all, most people are caught up in the rat race and not intent on the realization of ultimate truth. What the monastery provides in the world is a reminder that everything is okay, that we can live with whatever is happening, that we can ride the wave. For those who live outside the monastic sphere, our effort is to provide an alternative to the driveness of the world. Even though you might be driving the car to work, holding down a job, looking after your aging parents, feeding your kids, or being with a loved one who is dying, it doesn't have to be frantic. It doesn't have to be obsessive. It doesn't have to be burdensome. There is a manner in which we can relate to even the most impactful and potent, emotionally charged issues of life whereby they are held, they are understood, they are fully experienced, and they are not confusing. So real life then has to do with a mind full of life, an acceptance and appreciation of life, and the monastery is endeavoring to give us a sense of this real life.
According to the Buddhist monastic code, monks and nuns are not allowed to accept money or even to engage in barter or trade with lay people. They live entirely in an economy of gifts. Lay supporters provide gifts of material requisites for the monastics, while the monastics provide their supporters with the gift of the teaching. Ideally -- and to a great extent in actual practice -- this is an exchange that comes from the heart, something totally voluntary. There are many stories in the texts that emphasize the point that returns in this economy -- it might also be called an economy of merit -- depend not on the material value of the object given, but on the purity of heart of the donor and recipient. You give what is appropriate to the occasion and to your means, when and wherever your heart feels inspired. For the monastics, this means that you teach, out of compassion, what should be taught, regardless of whether it will sell. For the laity, this means that you give what you have to spare and feel inclined to share. There is no price for the teachings, nor even a "suggested donation." Anyone who regards the act of teaching or the act of giving requisites as a repayment for a particular favor is ridiculed as mercenary. Instead, you give because giving is good for the heart and because the survival of the Dhamma as a living principle depends on daily acts of generosity.

The primary symbol of this economy is the alms bowl. If you are a monastic, it represents your dependence on others, your need to accept generosity no matter what form it takes. You may not get what you want in the bowl, but you realize that you always get what you need, even if it’s a hard-earned lesson in doing without. One of my students in Thailand once went to the mountains in the northern part of the country to practice in solitude. His hillside shack was an ideal place to meditate, but he had to depend on a nearby hilltribe village for alms, and the diet was mostly plain rice with some occasional boiled vegetables. After two months on this diet, his meditation theme became the conflict in his mind over whether he should go or stay. One rainy morning, as he was on his alms round, he came to a shack just as the morning rice was ready. The wife of the house called out, asking him to wait while she got some rice from the pot. As he was waiting there in the pouring rain, he couldn't help grumbling inwardly about the fact that there would be nothing to go with the rice. It so happened that the woman had an infant son who was sitting near the kitchen fire, crying from hunger. So as she scooped some rice out of the pot, she stuck a small lump of rice in his mouth. Immediately, the boy stopped crying and began to grin. My student saw this, and it was like a light bulb turning on in his head. "Here you are, complaining about what people are giving you for free," he told himself. "You're no match for a little kid. If he can be happy with just a lump of rice, why can't you?" As a result, the lesson that came with his scoop of rice that day gave my student the strength he needed to stay on in the mountains for another three years.

For a monastic the bowl also represents the opportunity you give others to practice the Dhamma in accordance with their means. In Thailand, this is reflected in one of the idioms used to describe going for alms: proad sat, doing a favor for living beings. There were times on my alms round in rural Thailand when, as I walked past a tiny grass shack, someone would come running out to put rice in my bowl. Years earlier, as lay person, my reaction on seeing such a bare, tiny shack would have been to want to give monetary help to them. But now I was on the receiving end of their generosity. In my new position I may have been doing less for them in material terms than I could have done as a lay person, but at least I was giving them the opportunity to have the dignity that comes with being a donor.

For the donors, the monk’s alms bowl becomes a symbol of the good they have done. On several occasions in Thailand people would tell me that they had dreamed of a monk standing before them, opening the lid to his bowl. The details would differ as to what the dreamer saw in the bowl, but in each case the interpretation of the dream was the same: the dreamer’s merit was about to bear fruit in an especially positive way.

The alms round itself is also a gift that goes both ways. On the one hand, daily contact with lay donors reminds the monastics that their practice is not just an individual matter, but a concern of the entire community. They are indebted to others for the right and opportunity to practice, and should do their best to practice diligently as a way of repaying that debt. At the same time, the opportunity to walk through a village early in the morning, passing by the houses of the rich and poor, the happy and unhappy, gives plenty of opportunities to reflect on the human condition and the need to find a way out of the grinding cycle of death and rebirth.

For the donors, the alms round is a reminder that the monetary economy is not the only way to happiness. It helps to keep a society sane when there are monastics infiltrating the towns every morning, embodying an ethos very different from the dominant monetary economy. The gently subversive quality of this custom helps people to keep their values straight.

Above all, the economy of gifts symbolized by the alms bowl and the alms round allows for specialization, a division of labor, from which both sides benefit. Those who are willing can give up many of the privileges of home life and in return receive the free time, the basic support, and the communal training needed to devote themselves fully to Dhamma practice. Those who stay at home can benefit from having full-time Dhamma practitioners around on a daily basis. I have always found it ironic that the modern world honors specialization in almost every area -- even in things like running, jumping, and throwing a ball -- but not in the Dhamma, where it is denounced as "dualism," "elitism," or worse. The Buddha began the monastic order on the first day of his teaching career because he saw the benefits that come with specialization. Without it, the practice tends to become limited and diluted, negotiated into the demands of the monetary economy. The Dhamma becomes limited to what will sell and what will fit into a schedule dictated by the demands of family and job. In this sort of situation, everyone ends up poorer in things of the heart.
The fact that tangible goods run only one way in the economy of gifts means that the exchange is open to all sorts of abuses. This is why there are so many rules in the monastic code to keep the monastics from taking unfair advantage of the generosity of lay donors. There are rules against asking for donations in inappropriate circumstances, from making claims as to one's spiritual attainments, and even from covering up the good foods in one's bowl with rice, in hopes that donors will then feel inclined to provide something more substantial. Most of the rules, in fact, were instituted at the request of lay supporters or in response to their complaints. They had made their investment in the merit economy and were interested in protecting their investment. This observation applies not only to ancient India, but also to the modern-day West. On their first contact with the Sangha, most people tend to see little reason for the disciplinary rules, and regard them as quaint holdovers from ancient Indian prejudices. When, however, they come to see the rules in the context of the economy of gifts and begin to participate in that economy themselves, they also tend to become avid advocates of the rules and active protectors of "their" monastics. The arrangement may limit the freedom of the monastics in certain ways, but it means that the lay supporters take an active interest not only in what the monastic teaches, but also in how the monastic lives -- a useful safeguard to make sure that teachers walk their talk. This, again, insures that the practice remains a communal concern. As the Buddha said,

Monks, householders are very helpful to you, as they provide you with the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicine. And you, monks, are very helpful to householders, as you teach them the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, and admirable in the end, as you expound the holy life both in its particulars and in its essence, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. In this way the holy life is lived in mutual dependence, for the purpose of crossing over the flood, for making a right end to suffering and stress.

-- Iti 107

Periodically, throughout the history of Buddhism, the economy of gifts has broken down, usually when one side or the other gets fixated on the tangible side of the exchange and forgets the qualities of the heart that are its reason for being. And periodically it has been revived when people are sensitive to its rewards in terms of the living Dhamma. By its very nature, the economy of gifts is something of a hothouse creation that requires careful nurture and a sensitive discernment of its benefits. I find it amazing that such an economy has lasted for more than 2,600 years. It will never be more than an alternative to the dominant monetary economy, largely because its rewards are so intangible and require so much patience, trust, and discipline in order to be appreciated. Those who demand immediate return for specific services and goods will always require a monetary system. Sincere Buddhist lay people, however, have the chance to play an amphibious role, engaging in the monetary economy in order to maintain their livelihood, and contributing to the economy of gifts whenever they feel so inclined. In this way they can maintain direct contact with teachers, insuring the best possible instruction for their own practice, in an atmosphere where mutual compassion and concern are the medium of exchange; and purity of heart, the bottom line.
The ceremony of ordination as a sramanera or sramanerika (novice) is conducted on the basis of having taken the lay precepts of an upasaka/upasika, and rabjung (renunciation, leaving the householder's life). Then one takes the novice vow of a sramanera/sramanerika. The ceremony consists of preparation, actual practice, and conclusion.

1. Preparation

Being free from obstacles

To take ordination, a person must be free from obstacles preventing ordination. If one is free from the obstacles, he or she may receive the vow. If not, the vow will not be generated in his or her mind, or if generated, it will not abide in the mind. Questions regarding a person's suitability for ordination are asked in the presence of the ordaining bhikshu. One listens and replies with an undistracted mind. The questions regard the following:

1. One is not a heretic or schismatic.
2. One is not under 15 years of age.
3. If one is under 15 years of age, one is able to scare away crows (i.e. one is big enough to scare away a gathering of big birds.).
4. If able to scare away crows, one is not under seven years old.
5. One is not a slave.
6. One is not in financial debt.
7. One has permission from one's parents.
8. If one does not have one's parents' permission, one is in distant country (i.e. it takes more than seven days to contact them.).
9. One is not ill (with a physical or mental disability that would interfere with monastic life, study and meditation).
10. One has not violated a bhikshuni.
11. One is not living as a thief or spy.
12. One is not of different views (doubting whether to follow Dharma or not to follow it).
13. One is not abiding in wrong views (non-Buddhist views).
14. One is not a hermaphrodite.
15. One is not a eunuch.
16. One is not a spirit.
17. One is not an animal.
18. One is not involved with a heretic or schismatic.
19. One has not killed one's mother.
20. One has not killed one's father.
21. One has not killed an arhat.
22. One has not caused a schism in the sangha.
23. One has not maliciously drawn blood from the body of a Buddha.
24. One has not committed one of the four defeats (parajika).
25. One is not someone who does not accept the law of cause and effect.
26. One is not crippled.
27. One is not an albino.
28. One is not missing any limbs.
29. One is not a royal servant or favorite of the king.
30. One has permission of the king.
31. If one does not have the permission of the king, one is in a distant country.
32. One is not renowned as a violent robber.
33. One is not a degraded wrongdoer.
34. One is not of the cobbler caste. [see note 2]
35. One is not of the lowest caste (blacksmith, fisherman).
36. One is not of the lowest caste of worker.
37. One is not a being other than a human being.
38. One is not a person from the Northern Continent.
39. One is not someone who has changed sex three times.
40. One is not a woman posing as a man or a man posing as a woman.
41. One is not a tyrant.
42. One does not resemble a person born from another continent or world.

If a person is able to reply to each of the questions, "'I am not,'" he or she is suitable to be ordained.

**Taking the upasaka/upasika vow**

This is done in conjunction with taking refuge. Having prostrated to a representation of the Buddha, regarding it as the actual Buddha, and then to the preceptor, one kneels with one's hands in prostration mudra at the heart. The preceptor explains the proper mental attitude for taking refuge (i.e. caution regarding the dangers of cyclic existence and faith/confidence in the Triple Gem). One recites the refuge after the preceptor, saying that one takes refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha for as long as one lives. At that time, one also receives the five lay precepts of an upasaka/upasika. Most important is one's mental attitude, thinking with joy, "I have now received the lay precepts, and this is my preceptor."

**Rabjung (leaving the lay life of a householder)**

This is a prerequisite for novice ordination. First one requests the ordination and a bhikshu (who has been ordained at least ten years) to be one's abbot. A bhikshu other than the abbot asks one to prostrate to all the saṅgha present and to remove the white clothing of a lay person. He requests the abbot on one's behalf to be one's abbot and to ordain one. From then on, one refers to that person as one's abbot. (One removes the white clothing of a lay person either by changing from white clothes into monastic robes, or symbolically by wearing and then removing a white kata.). One takes up the name, dress, signs, and way of thinking of an ordained one. One should now have a zen (upper robe; the chogu is not yet needed), shamtab (lower robe), dingwa (seating cloth), bowl (with a few seeds or other food in it so it is not empty), and water filter (The bowl and water filter may be borrowed. The robes must be one's own.). These are all determined by the abbot and oneself. Both hold their left hands below each article and right hands above it, and do a recitation to determine the article as being one's object of use. It is explained that the robes are to distinguish one from lay people and members of other sects and to protect one from insects and the elements. One should consider them as being only for these purposes (not for beautifying oneself). The purpose of the other articles is explained, i.e. the bowl for eating food, the dingwa to distinguish one as a Buddhist monastic and to protect the community's property when sitting, the water filter to prevent killing insects when using water. One is aware that now one is shaving the head and leaving the householder's life. One's hair is cut (prior to coming to the ceremony, one's head is shaved, leaving a small tuft at the crown, which is cut now), after which flowers or rice are thrown to rejoice at one's leaving the householder's life. One prostrates to the Buddha and the abbot, and then kneels. The abbot advises: "It is excellent to be ordained. There is a great difference between lay and ordained people. All the Buddhas of the three times become enlightened only on the basis of ordination. There are none who do so from the basis of a lay person. One accumulates infinitely more positive potential (merit) by taking one step towards the monastery with the thought of ordaining than do the sentient beings of the three worlds by making offerings, even of their spouses and children, for eons. Due to the distractions of lay life, lay people are unable to accomplish very meaningful or helpful things for the future. From this, only future suffering can arise. Through abandoning these activities and having few possessions, ordained people can cultivate hearing, thinking and meditating. From this, both temporary happiness and ultimate nirvana can be reached. One is following in the footsteps of the Buddha himself." While listening to this advice, have a mind of faith and belief in the abbot, seeing him as a wise parent and oneself as the son or daughter. Upon taking rabjung, one abandons the signs (dress, hair, etc.) and name of lay life. One takes the name given by the abbot.

2. Actual
The actual recitation involves first taking refuge. Then, one recites "'Following the matchless lion of the Shakyas, from now until I die, I take up the signs and clothes of an ordained one and abandon those of a lay person.'" Most important is to feel strongly in one's mind that one has received the rabjung ordination. From now on, one should keep the discipline, wear only the monastic robes, abandon lay clothes, respect the abbot, not wear white or black clothes, fringes, sleeves, ornaments, or jewels, and not have long hair. One should eat at correct times and see the abbot as a parent (and the abbot should regard one as if one were his own child, i.e. the abbot helps to raise the disciple to become strong and healthy in the Dharma and as a member of the saṅgha.)

**Taking the shramanera/shramanerika vow.**

**A. Preparation**

Here one requires a chogu (yellow patched robe). One should be free from the four obstacles:

1. Incorrect place, i.e. the Three Jewels should be there.
2. Incorrect lineage, i.e. one should not have wrong views such as not believing in karma, etc.

3. Incorrect marks, i.e. one should wear ordained clothing.

4. Incorrect thought, i.e. abandon thinking:

- I will take the vow only for a few months or years, but not for my life,
- I will keep the precepts only in one place, but not in another,
- I will keep the precepts in conducive circumstances, but not in bad circumstances,
- I will keep some precepts, but not all of them,
- I will keep them when I am with certain people, but not with others.

The abbot explains the proper motivation, which is the determination to become free from cyclic existence: "Cyclic existence is completely unsatisfactory. Any realm one is born into, any companions one has, any possessions one obtains are unsatisfactory and do not bring lasting happiness. Therefore, develop the determination to become free from cyclic existence and to attain liberation. The method to do this is to take refuge in the Triple Gem and to take and keep the precepts." It is very important to have this attitude; otherwise, it is difficult for the vow to arise.

B. Actual

The vow is then taken by repeating verses after the abbot. At the end, one thinks strongly that one has received the vow in one's mind and rejoices.

3. Conclusion

A bhikshu, who acts as the lopon (acharya), checks and announces the exact time of ordination. From this, one will know where to sit in groups of sangha. One should prostrate and show respect to those who are older in ordination. One does not prostrate to those younger or to lay people. There is much benefit from keeping this practice of order and respect. Having received the vow, one should now try to live according to it. As the Buddha said:

For some ethical discipline is joy,
For some ethical discipline is misery.
Possessing the ethical discipline is joy,
Transgressing the ethical discipline is misery.

Then repeat some words after the abbot promising to keep the discipline of the ten precepts (the four root and six secondary precepts) just as the arhats of the past have done. The sangha present then say prayers of auspiciousness and throw flowers or rice. Finish by prostrating to the abbot and all the bhikshus present.

Notes:
1. This is a brief summary of the important points in the ceremony used in the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya as practiced in Tibetan Buddhism. The ordination ceremony may vary according to the text used.

2. 34-36 refers to those who, due to the caste system in ancient India, would find it difficult to live with other sangha or inspire faith in the laity. There are four types of obstacles to the vow, those inhibiting 1) the arising or generation of the vow, 2) the abiding of the vow, 3) the increasing in virtue due to the vow, and 4) the capacity or health of an ordained person. In ancient India, those of lower caste had the fourth obstacle. In ancient times, a person of low caste could ordain, but he or she generally did not live in the sangha community.

Appendix 2:

The Shramanera/Shramanerika Precepts

The Ten Precepts

The shramanera/shramanerika (novice) vow consist of ten precepts, which can be listed in a more expanded way as thirty-six precepts. The ten are to abandon:
1. killing (To break from the root, one must kill a human being with intention);
2. taking what is not given (stealing) (To break from the root, one must steal something that could bring about legal intervention in one's society);
3. sexual intercourse (To break from the root, one must have intention and experience orgasm. This refers to heterosexual or homosexual contact.);
4. lying (To break from the root, one must lie about one's spiritual attainments);
5. taking intoxicants (This includes alcohol and recreational drugs);
6. singing, dancing, playing music;
7. wearing perfume, ornaments or cosmetics to beautify the body;
8. sitting on a high or expensive bed or throne;
9. eating after midday;
10. touching gold, silver or precious objects (including money).

Precepts 1-4 are root precepts and deal with actions that are by nature negative. Precepts 6-10 are branch precepts and deal with actions that are to be avoided because of a precept established by the Buddha.

The Thirty-six Precepts

One should avoid:
1. taking a human life; 2. killing an animal or insect; 3. for selfish reasons, doing an action which may kill an animal or insect and not caring about it; for example, using water that contains insects without straining it; digging a hole in the earth without considering the creatures that might die as a result; cutting grass; overburdening an animal, which causes its death;
4. while doing something for others, doing an action which may kill an animal or insect and not caring about it; for example, splashing water which has insects on a dry place;
5. sexual intercourse;
6. stealing, taking what has not been given. This includes borrowing things and not returning them, not paying fees and taxes one is required to;
7. lying in which one claims to have spiritual realizations or powers that one does not have;
8. accusing a pure bhikshu or bhikshuni of transgressing one of the four root precepts (parajika) when he or she has not;
9. insinuating that a pure bhikshu or bhikshuni has transgressed one of the four root precepts when he or she has not;
10. causing disunity among the sangha community through untrue slander or taking sides in a disagreement;
11. supporting someone who is creating disunity in the sangha community, taking sides in the dispute;
12. doing actions which obliterate lay people's faith in the sangha; for example complaining untruthfully to lay people that action brought by the sangha against oneself was unfair;
13. telling others lies;
14. criticizing the storekeeper in the monastery of giving more to those who are near to him or her instead of sharing them with all, when this is not the case;
15. criticizing directly or by insinuation that the storekeeper in the monastery of not giving oneself a share of the food or other things equal to that given to other monastics, when this is not the case;
16. claiming that a monastic gave a teaching in return for a little food, which is not the case;
17. criticizing a bhikshu or bhikshuni by saying that he or she transgressed a precept in the second group (sanghavasesa) when this is not the case;
18. abandoning the training, for example, rejecting the good advice of a nun or monk; criticizing the Pratimoksha Sutra;
19. covering the vegetables with rice; covering the rice with vegetables;
20. taking intoxicants;
21. singing with self-attachment or for nonsensical reasons; 22. dancing with self-attachment or for nonsensical reasons;
23. playing music with self-attachment or for nonsensical reasons;
24. wearing ornaments; 25. wearing cosmetics; 26. wearing perfumes; 27. wearing the rosary like jewelry, wearing flower garlands;
28. sitting on an expensive throne; 29. sitting on an expensive bed; 30. sitting on a high throne; 31. sitting on a high bed;
32. eating after midday (Exceptions: if one is ill, if one is traveling, or if one cannot meditate properly without food);
33. touching gold, silver or precious jewels (includes money);
34. wearing lay people's clothing and ornaments; letting one's hair grow long;
35. not wearing the robes of a Buddhist monastic;
36. disrespecting or not following the guidance of one's ordination master. (Precepts 34-36 are called the three degenerating actions)
Renunciation and the Ordained Life
By His Holiness the Dalai Lama

From teachings in Pasadena, California, October 1999. Transcribed by Ven Tenzin Tsomo and edited by Thubten Jinpa.

"May I never be reborn again in states where I descend to the lower realms. May I attain the perfect human form with spiritual freedom and opportunity. Right from birth, may I never be attached to the pleasures of mundane joys and inspired by thoughts of renunciation, may I strive without respite for the pure life."

Although right from birth, it is out of the question to cultivate such thoughts and detachment, the prayer nonetheless is made that from early on, may I be able to free myself from attachments to the pleasures of mundane joys so that I'm not tied to mundane existence. Inspired by thoughts of true renunciation, may I strive to engage in the conduct of a pure life.

'Pure life' refers to the life of a monastic order, the life of an ordained monk. This is in keeping with the example of the master, Buddha himself. In Buddha's own life, he grew up initially as a Prince in a kingdom, showered with all the luxuries of princely existence, but he gave up all of these and cultivated detachment and sought the life of an ordained practitioner. As the Tibetan expression goes: "the teacher's example of the past must be followed by the disciples of the future." However, this is not to suggest that in order to attain true liberation or nirvana, it is indispensable for everyone to become a celibate and join the ordained life. However there is an understanding that an ordained life is the best, most suitable circumstances or framework within which one can make spiritual progress and work towards the attainment of liberation from samsara.

"May there be no obstacles to renunciation from family, friends, and possessions. May I achieve without hardship, conditions favorable to an ordained life."

Not only may I be able to develop from within a deeply felt admiration for the ordained life and seek that; may I also not encounter obstacles that hinder my fulfillment of this aspiration. In fact, the aspiration is made that my family, friends, possessions, and other external conditions be favorable towards the fulfillment of this aspiration.

The significance of the lines that say: "May I strive to seek the pure life inspired by thoughts of true renunciation." This is to underline the importance of engaging in the life of a true renunciate. It is important to have that as the basis of your monastic life because it is possible historically, both in India and Tibet, that there were people who took the life of an ordained member, not out of the motivation of attaining true renunciation and attaining liberation from samsara, but rather as an escape from some fear of retribution or punishment. Sometimes it happened that people took refuge in the monastic life to protect themselves against certain threats or fears. It is possible that in some cases, people also join the monastic life as a way to earn a living, or simply as another kind of lifestyle. These two kinds of ordained life are not really the life of a renunciate. Therefore in Gunaprabha's text on monastic ethics, right at the beginning of the opening passages, it states: "Herein I shall present the monastic ethics of a renunciate." He underlined the importance of renunciation as the basis for joining the ordained life.

Earlier, we spoke about the core practice of morality, the three higher trainings, the higher trainings of morality, concentration, and wisdom. When we speak about the higher training of morality in Buddhism, we generally speak about two categories. One is morality related to lay practitioners, such as upasakas (lay vows) and the vows of a monastic. Within the lay practitioner's vows, one can take all five precepts, which includes celibacy or all five precepts, which includes avoidance of sexual misconduct, or one can take just three or two or one precept. One can also take lay vows on the basis of taking refuge in the Three Jewels. It is possible due to lack of the right conditions that sometimes individual practitioners' sense of courage and commitment is so weak that they are only able to commit to a life of ethical discipline on a short term basis. For such practitioner there is the possibility of taking these vows and precepts on a daily basis, that is the gen yen, one-day vows.

For monastics, there are novice and fully ordained vows for both male and female. In Tibet, historically among the practitioners there were two communities, the community of white robes and long hair, and the monastic community of yellow and red robes. The community of white robes refers to lay practitioners, particularly Vajrayana practitioners where they don't assume the external appearance of a monastic order. In some cases, you find that those who engaged in long-term retreat kept their hair, never cut it and kept it plaited and tied up. There is a textual basis for these kinds of conduct. In the tantric and Vajrayana texts, we find the reference that the members of the white robes community need not observe the external forms of monastic life, but so far as key precepts are concerned, must practice them all. So historically these lay practitioners take upasaka vows, and on that basis, they take bodhisattva and tantric vows and follow that line. On the other side, members of the monastic order - the foundation for their life is the monastic discipline and the life of an ordained member - cut their hair, adopt a particular set of robes and appearance, and lead a celibate way of life. So historically there evolved these two distinct lines of practitioners, and each pursue his life with a certain clarity and direction. However these days, it does seem that we sometimes
find practitioners who neither seem to be in one camp nor the other, somehow they seem to fall in the middle. In fact one Tibetan master, Drugpa Kunlay, is said to have remarked that of those who are neither yellow nor white, a lot of them seem to be in the hell realms suffering so much. There is a point to this: it is that whatever line of practice you pursue, whether as a monastic member or a lay member, it is important to follow that with clarity.

It is important to know that when you change your physical appearance, by either adopting a set of robes or a particular kind of costume or whatever it may be - especially in the case of monastic robes - it is very important that such a change in physical appearance, such a change of clothes, should only be adopted as a kind of expression of a particular change in direction that you have taken. That is to say you have taken a specific set of vows and precepts, and it is to demonstrate this fundamental change in your life that you put on that particular appearance. Otherwise there is a danger that people either without any basis of taking vows or out of whatever the motivation may be assume a particular appearance with robes. In this lies a danger of dilution. Also, whether or not there is an intention within the person, there is a danger of a certain kind of charlatanism; at least to the appearance or perception, people can become charlatans. There is that danger. Sometimes I meet people who at one time seem to be wearing white robes and at another they seem to be in yellow robes and yet other times, even in red robes! So even I get confused when I meet these people! In this context, I often make the following remarks:

Some monks get attached to external apparel that is not part of one's robes but which show certain status. There is the story about Atisha going to Tibet. When he arrived in the kingdom of Ngari, the lamas and monks, to welcome him, dressed up in impressive costumes and headdress, riding horses. Atisha was appalled. He covered his head with his robes and said 'Tibetan ghosts are coming.' He didn't want to see lamas and monks who didn't maintain the appearance of the monastic order. When the monks found that out, they got down from their horses, took off their impressive gear, and put on their simple monastic robes and came in a procession to receive Atisha. Atisha was then very pleased.

Sometimes it seems like instead of paying greater respect to robes 'given' by the Buddha, we Tibetan monks are more attached to apparel that is given by high officials, etc. These are very sad signs of potential degeneration of the Dharma. Kunnu Lama Rinpoche said, "If the members of the monastic order do not retain their integrity grounded in humility and stability, and indulge in all sorts of things, those will be the early indications of the degeneration of the Dharma."

"After entering the order, may I never be stained by transgressing the precepts, whether natural or specially prescribed, taken before the ordained masters."

Here it refers to two kinds of precepts. One is a precept which relates to avoidance of activities, which are by nature negative, such as the acts of killing. Killing is a negative activity for anybody who engages in it whether the person committing it has taken specific vows or not, whether the person is a monastic member or not. One can say killing is by nature a negative act. However, there is another category of precepts that relates to specially prescribed actions; e.g. avoidance of eating after lunch is one of the precepts of the members of the monastic order. If you don't have the vow, then eating after lunch is nothing negative. But if you are a member of the monastic order, then there is this specific precept that you do not eat after lunch. So this is what is meant by specially prescribed precepts. So the aspiration here is made that after entering the monastic order may I never be stained from transgressing any of these precepts.

In this verse, the text states that the whole purpose of joining the ordained life is to engage in the practice of Dharma. So the core activity - the task of an ordained member - is to engage in studies and engage in the practices. Such practices as single pointed meditation require grounding and some understanding; otherwise there is nothing to practice. So what we require is to first cultivate deep learning and understanding. Then that understanding needs to be implemented through single pointed practice. In other words, the task of an ordained member is to engage in all the activities such as teaching, studying, writing, composition, and so on, so that you uphold the precious Dharma.

Once you have established such a basis and realize that the primary task is to uphold the Dharma through these activities, then you realize that not only for your learning but also to prepare yourself for that you need to seek the guidance of a spiritual teacher. The basic qualities that are necessary on the part of the teacher are that the person should have a subdued, tamed mind, have great learning in the scriptures, and have compassion towards others, especially towards the disciples. Another important quality is to have a sense of commitment and a certain invulnerability towards feelings of discouragement and becoming demoralized. In other words, the teacher must possess all the essential qualities that are necessary for sustaining the students.
A Monastic's Mind
Ven. Thubten Chodron, from a talk given to a group of newly ordained monks and nuns in Dharamsala, 2001

In a discussion with Amchok Rinpoche several years ago, he said to me, "The most important thing as a monastic is to have a monastic's mind." I've thought about this over the years and have concluded that when we have a "monastic's mind," things will naturally flow. Our whole way of being is as a monastic. We can think about what a "monastic's mind" means for years. Here are some of my reflections.

One of the first qualities of a monastic's mind is humility. Humility has to do with transparency, which is related to self-acceptance. With humility, our mind relaxes. "I don't have to be the best. I don't have to prove myself. I'm open to learning from others. It makes me feel good to see others' good qualities." Humility can be difficult for us Westerners because we were raised in cultures where humility is seen as weakness. People in the West pull out their business cards: "Here I am. This is what I've accomplished. This is what I do. This is how great I am. You should notice me, think I'm wonderful, and respect me." We were raised to make others notice us and praise us. But this is not a monastic's mind.

As monastics, our goal is internal transformation. We're not trying to create a magnificent image that we're going to sell to everyone. We have to let that seep into our mind and not worry so much about what other people think. Instead, we should be concerned with how our behavior influences other people. Do you see the difference between the two? If I'm worried about what you think of me, that's the eight worldly concerns. I want to look good so that you'll say nice things to me and will praise me to others so that I'll have a good reputation. That's the eight worldly concerns.

On the other hand, as monastics, we represent the Dharma. Other people will be inspired or discouraged by the way we act. We're trying to develop bodhicitta, so if we care about others, we don't want to do things that will make them lose faith in the Dharma. We do this not because we're trying to create a good image and have a good reputation but because we genuinely care about others. If I hang out in chai shops all day or if I shout from one end of the courtyard to the other, other people will think poorly of the Dharma and the Sangha. If I jostle people when I go into teachings or get up in the middle and stomp out, they're going to think, "I'm new to the Dharma. But I don't want to become like that!" Thus, in order to prevent this, we become concerned about the way our behavior affects other people because we genuinely care about others, not because we're attached to our reputation. We must be clear about the difference between the two.

A monastic's mind has humility. It also is concerned for the Dharma and others' faith in the Dharma. Generally, when we are first ordained, we don't feel this concern for the Dharma and for others' faith. New monastics generally think, "What can the Dharma give to me? Here I am. I'm so confused. What can Buddhism do for me?" Or, we think, "I'm so sincere in wanting to attain enlightenment. I really want to practice. Therefore others should help me to do this."

As we remain ordained longer and longer, we come to understand how our behavior affects other people, and we begin to feel some responsibility for the continuity of the teachings. These precious teachings, which have helped us so much, began with the Buddha. They were passed down through a lineage of practitioners over the centuries. Because those people practiced well and remained together in communities, we are fortunate enough to sit on the crest of the wave. We feel so much positive energy coming from the past. When we receive ordination, it's like sitting on the crest of the wave, floating along on the virtue that all the Sangha before us have created for over 2,500 years. After some time, we begin to think, "I've got to contribute some virtue so that future generations can meet the Dharma and other people around me can benefit." We begin to feel more responsible for the existence and spread of the teachings.

I'm sharing my experience. I don't expect you to feel this way now. It took me many years to recognize that I was no longer a child in the Dharma, to feel that I am an adult and so need to be responsible and give to others. Often we come into Dharma circles or into the Sangha thinking, "What can I get out of the Sangha? How is being with these monks and nuns going to benefit me?" We think, "We're going to have a monastery? How will it help me?" Hopefully after some time our attitude changes and we begin to say, "What can I give to the community? How can I help the Sangha? What can I give to the individuals in the community? What can I give to the lay people?" Our focus begins to change from "What can I get?" to "What can I give?" We talk so much about bodhicitta and being of benefit to everybody, but actually putting this into practice in our daily life takes time. Slowly, our attitude begins to change. If we look at our ordination as a consumer and think, "What can I get out of this?" we're going to be unhappy because we'll never get enough. People will never treat us well enough or give us enough respect. However, we'll be much more satisfied as monastics if we start to ask ourselves, "What can I give to this 2,500 year-old community? How can I help it and the individuals in it so that they can continue to benefit society in the future? What can I give to the laypeople?" Not only will we feel more content inside ourselves when we change our attitude, but we'll also be able to make a positive contribution to the welfare of sentient beings.

To make a positive contribution we don't need to be important or famous. We don't need to be Mother Theresa or the Dalai Lama. We just do what we do with mindfulness, conscientiousness, and a kind heart. We shouldn't make a big deal, "I'm a bodhisattva. Here I am. I'm going to serve everybody. Look at me, what a great bodhisattva I am." That's trying to create an image. Whereas if we just try to work on our own mind, be kind to other people, support them in their practice, listen to them because we care about them, then slowly a transformation will occur within ourselves. Who we are as a person will change.

These being the distinctions between the layperson and householder, it is important for an ordained people to realize the importance of not engaging in unnecessary activities and to maintain contentment. If there is no such contentment, then the two are similar.
Dear Dharma friend,

I received your letter. You want to be a monastic! You sound both happy and nervous about this. It is very worthwhile to be a monastic, and the more prepared your mind is for ordination, the easier the transition from lay to ordained life will be. Therefore, I will write some questions for you to reflect on in the hopes that they will help you to think deeply and thus eliminate potential obstacles in your mind. When I requested my spiritual master for permission to be ordained, he said, "'Yes, but wait a while.'" He made me wait nearly a year and half. I was impatient to ordain and did not want to wait, but looking back on it now, it was very good that I did. During that time I repeatedly contemplated the topics outlined in these questions. This helped me considerably, so now I would like to share them with you. When you contemplate these questions, it is important to be as honest as you can and use them as a tool to discover your own thoughts and feelings. Sometimes your truthful answer may not be what you would like it to be or what you think your spiritual teacher would want it to be. However, there are no right or wrong answers here. The better you know yourself, with all your strengths and weaknesses, the better you will be able to prepare for ordination.

1. Why do you want to become a monastic? What is your deepest motivation, your deepest reason for wanting to take ordination? What does ordination mean to you? Are there difficult relationships, situations, or emotions that you are trying to be free from? Is ordination a way of avoiding those or a way of facing them?

2. Where does being ordained fit into your Dharma practice? How will it help you? What things about being ordained will be difficult for you?

3. One of our precepts is to follow the Dharma advice of our abbot (abbess) or teacher. Is there a teacher with whom you have a strong connection? It is important to train under the guidance of a qualified and skillful teacher, not just to move around going wherever your fancy takes you. Are you willing to discuss your plans with your teacher and follow his or her Dharma instructions, or do you like to do what you want to do?

4. As sangha members, we are part of a larger spiritual community. We sit in order of our ordination and respect those ordained before us. We also should listen to the advice and suggestions of the senior monks and nuns because they have more experience as monastics. Is there a part of you that has difficulty with respecting and listening to those who are senior? How can you work with that attitude so you can value their guidance and reap the benefit from their experience and concern?

5. Which of the Buddhist traditions will be your principal practice? Theravada? Chinese? Tibetan? It is important to know which direction you will take in your practice; otherwise you could end up doing a mixture of things and not get anywhere.

6. In order to be able to keep our ordination, we need living conditions conducive to spiritual practice. Where will you live after taking ordination?

7. There is no large organization that supports and looks after Western monastics. We are responsible for our own finances, health insurance, and so forth. Worrying about these things can distract us from practice, so it is better to have these firmly in place before ordination. Will you have an income or financial support? Do you have health insurance?

8. Do you have any social obligations to clear up before ordination (debts, divorce, caring for aged parents or children)? Do you have any serious health problems that will influence your ability to practice, to live in community, or to keep the ordination?

9. We have years and lifetimes of conditioning behind us. It is important to look at this closely and resolve it. Thus, the next sets of questions deal with societal values and goals that previously have been inculcated in us. Do you wish to be successful in a career? Imagine meeting your old friends after several years. They have good careers, success, a comfortable life, and reputation. How will you feel? Will you feel like a useful member of society even though you have not produced anything tangible that is valued by society?

10. Ordination entails developing our ability to handle our own emotions without seeking emotional support from a partner. It also involves managing our sexual energy. How do you feel about married and family life? Would you like a life-long companion to share your life with? Is it difficult for you to control your emotional or sexual attraction for others? Even if marriage and family do not seem so interesting now, how will you feel when you are older? Often women in their middle or late thirties and men in their late forties undergo a crisis, thinking, "'If I want to get married and have children, I have to do so
now. Otherwise, my age will make having a family difficult.” Imagine yourself at that age and investigate how you might feel.

11. How will you feel when you are old if you have no children, grandchildren, home, security, and so forth? What could your old age be like as a nun or monk? as a lay person?

12. Two of our precepts are to abandon the signs of a lay person and to take on the signs of a monastic. This entails shaving our head, wearing robes, and keeping our precepts wherever we are and whomever we are with. Are you easily influenced by what other people think of you--be they strangers or family and friends? How will you feel if people on the street stare at you because you wear robes? How will you feel if your family and friends say that you are escaping from reality or wasting your life by being a monastic? How will you feel if your parents are upset because you are not living a 'normal' life?

13. Have you told your family and close friends that you are considering becoming a monastic? Are you comfortable with the way they reacted, or do you feel guilty, hurt or angry? It is very important to work out these emotions. Also, it is important to give your parents love. They often fear that their child is rejecting them, or that they will never see their child again if he or she takes ordination. We have to be sensitive to their needs, to reassure them that we love them, and yet not feel pulled by their emotions or wishes. What meditations can you do to help you overcome the attachment or anger you may have towards your family?

14. Are you prepared to live in a community? This involves giving up doing what you want to do when you want to do it. You have to follow the discipline of the community. You have to live and work with people whom you may not normally choose as your friends. How do you feel about having your ego confronted like this?

15. Which is your strongest disturbing attitude: attachment, anger, ignorance, jealousy, pride, doubt? If it goes unaddressed, it will cause problems in your practice and make you doubt your ordination. Know which one is the strongest and start applying the antidotes in your meditation now.

16. To actually receive the ordination during the ordination ceremony, you must have developed to some extent the determination to be free from cyclic existence and to attain liberation. To be able to keep the ordination after receiving it, you have to constantly cultivate this motivation. Do you regularly meditate on the disadvantages of cyclic existence and its causes, or is there a part of your mind that is resistant to thinking about that? The eight worldly concerns are some of the chief obstacles to developing the determination to be free. We are attached to 1) money and material possessions, 2) praise and approval, 3) reputation and image, and 4) pleasure from the five sensual objects. We have aversion to 5) not receiving or losing our money and possessions, 6) blame or disapproval from others, 7) bad reputation or image, and 8) unpleasant sensations from our five senses. Which of these are the strongest for you? Are you familiar with the antidotes for them? Do you apply those antidotes? Do you feel that giving up those eight mental states would make you unhappy?

17. How do you feel about going through the hardships of ordained life? How can you strengthen your spiritual goals and make them more heartfelt and central to your life? Ordained life, like lay life, is not always easy. There will be problems, ups and downs. When the down times come, people are tempted to blame their ordination, thinking 'My ordination is the problem. If I were not a monastic, I would not have this problem.’ What are the benefits of ordination? Do you have deep conviction in them? It is important to have a clear understanding of these things beforehand, and to be courageous in facing physical, emotional, and spiritual difficulties in your life.

18. Is there a part of your mind that is seeking respect from others because you are ordained? Do you expect others to treat you well? to give you things? to show you respect? Or are you willing to be the servant of others, thus cultivating the altruistic intention?

19. What are your needs and concerns after ordination? What resources do you have--internal and external--to help you meet those? What things do you feel confident about? What things do you feel shaky about?

These are some things to think deeply about. Each point has several questions, and it could be helpful to write down your responses. Put them aside for a few weeks. Then reread them and make adjustments. Reflecting on these questions again and again over time will help remove unclarity in your mind and possible obstacles in your ordination. They will help you go through the emotional high of wanting to be a monastic and to understand your mind better. I wish you all the best on the path to enlightenment and pray that your wisdom, compassion, and skill grow so that you may spread happiness to many beings.

Yours in the Dharma,
Thubten Chodron
The practice of Buddhism is an art. Monks and nuns are artists and the materials which they use as artists are the five aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, mental formations, and consciousness. The art is to bring harmony and peace into your five aggregates so that you can offer happiness to others. Truth, beauty, and goodness are found in art. Good monastics are beautiful, which means that they embody goodness and truthfulness. They are successful in the practice due to their mindfulness. Mindfulness leads to insight, understanding, compassion, and love. We practice mindfulness to increase our concentration, which leads us to look deeply. Then love arises in a natural way, and you are able to understand, accept, and be compassionate. The best thing a monastic can do is offer his or her understanding and love.

The gatha that a monastic recites before receiving the upper robe in the novice ordination is: "How wondrous is the robe of a monastic! It is the field of all merit. I bow my head to receive it today and vow to wear it life after life." You want to wear the robe of a nun or monk life after life because you have been happy as a monastic.

Happiness is the absence of ill-being. Happiness does not consist of obtaining something outside ourselves. By transforming ill-being, happiness arises and blooms. When we practice mindfulness, we allow happiness to spring up like sweet water from the earth. Usually we look for happiness by ignoring the ill-being in us. We are not at ease with our ill-being and cover it up by using our six senses and their objects to satisfy our cravings. Eyes seek form, ears seek sound, nose seeks smells, tongue seeks tastes, and we seek body contact in sexual activity to forget our suffering. We think that sensual pleasures can help us and make us happy. We seek forgetfulness of our suffering. For example, we eat without being hungry and we can't stop. True joy contains peace and harmony, while fake joy is a fever. Indulging in the five sensual desires of money and material possessions, fame, sex, food, and sleep is a fever. Eventually no sensual desire can cover up our suffering. It just waters the seeds of further suffering. Mindfulness practice is a way to transform ill-being and suffering.

Monks and nuns do not seek happiness outside of themselves. They embrace their ill-being and transform it. They want to practice full time and to live in a temple or practice center with the sangha. Their beginner's mind brings harmony and peace to themselves and others, and it must be nourished each day. Bodhicitta is the mind of enlightenment, awakening, understanding, and love. With it you practice for everyone. You want to nourish your mind of understanding, and you want to alleviate suffering. This is the mind of a bodhisattva. You devote your whole life to this practice.

Precepts are a manifestation of a mindful life. You keep the precepts from a mind of understanding and love. You understand that if you break the precepts, you will cause harm and suffering. The vow to keep the precepts is willingly accepted and is not imposed. A monastic with happiness, love, compassion and understanding can do a lot for the world. A happy person can be of great benefit to the world. Therefore, we must practice the precepts conscientiously.

Is it possible to produce a happy Buddhist monastic in the West? How can we practice so that we are harmonious with the culture in the West, and do not suffer from the negative aspects of that culture? How can we place a Buddhist monastic in society so that he or she can radiate peace and happiness? It is possible. There is a 2,500 year history of the Buddhist Order in Asia. Some of the Asian practices can be relevant for us. We must see that we can learn from them as well as from the experiences of Catholic nuns in Western countries.

When you first become a monastic, a time may come when you are embarrassed because lay people show respect to you. When you wear the robe of a monastic, you are a symbol of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. When people show respect to you, you must practice mindful breathing and remember that people are showing respect to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha through your robe, not to you as an individual. If you become arrogant, you will ruin your life as a nun or monk.

It is important to wear your robes, to be reminded that you are a monastic. Many people want to see the monastic robes. The seed of devotion is still alive. When someone shows respect to a monastic, the monastic should do his or her best to help the person by sitting peacefully and breathing in and out. A monastic should know how to breathe in and establish peace and stability in him or herself, and to breathe out and feel joy and stability. Peace, concentration, joy and stability are possible with one in-breath and one out-breath. The layperson receives peace, stability, and faith by touching the Three Jewels through the monastic. You must do your best to practice at that time. Be a mindful monastic at that moment. In the Sutra on Happiness, the Buddha said that to have the opportunity for regular contact with monks and nuns is the greatest happiness.

Laypeople and monastics should help each other to practice. The practice of laypeople has an impact on ordained people. Ordained people are like big brothers and sisters to laypeople and offer great comfort to laypeople. The Buddhist community is composed of monks, nuns, laywomen, and laymen. We need all four sections of the community to be present, including children.
Jiun Sonja was born in Osaka in 1718, the son of a ronin and a devoutly Buddhist mother. As a boy, Jiun received a Confucian education and, for a time, exhibited a disdain for Buddhism and its clergy that reflected his early Confucian sympathies. However, after his father’s death in Jiun’s thirteenth year, his upbringing was entrusted to a monk affiliated with the Shingon vinaya sect (Shingon risshu, founded by Eison [1201-90] and Ninsho [1217-1303]), and within two years Jiun had been won over to Buddhism. In his late teens, he was sent by his teacher to Kyoto for further study of Confucianism at the Kogido, or School of Ancient Meanings, established by Ito Jinsai (1627-1705). Immediately thereafter, Jiun resumed his Buddhist training in Shingon ritsu temples in the Osaka area. Though by his early twenties, he had succeeded his teacher as abbot of Horakuji in Osaka, he soon gave up that post to embark upon a period of uninterrupted meditation under the direction of a Soto Zen monk. It was during this time that he apparently had his first enlightenment experience.

In his late twenties, troubled by what he judged to be a lack of commitment to practice among his contemporaries, as well as by the sectarian character of Tokugawa Buddhism, Jiun commenced a movement to revive what he sometimes called “Buddhism as it was when the Buddha was alive,” or, more frequently, the “True Dharma.” At the heart of his movement—know as the Shoboritsu, or “Vinaya of the True Dharma”—was an emphasis upon the fundamentals of Buddhist practice and a de-emphasis of sectarian concerns. After a long career as a scholar, reformer and apologist, Jiun died in Kyoto in 1804.

Leave Home for the Protection of the True Dharma (Shobo goji no tame ni shukke seyo, 1762)

I have heard that you want to receive the precepts for novices. [Among matters that I must mention to you,] there is first the concept of the thought of enlightenment, about which you already know. Concerning it, in Bodhisattva Ashvaghosa’s [actually Nagarjuna’s] Bodhicitta Shastra, the various conditions that may lead to the arousing of the thought of enlightenment are explained. Some arouse the thought of enlightenment as a result of illness. Some arouse the thought of enlightenment as a result of encountering hardships. Others arouse the thought of enlightenment as a result of receiving instruction from a Buddha, bodhisattva, or good spiritual friend, or as a result of seeing the collection of the sacred teaching and commentaries or the marks of a Buddha or bodhisattva. [Still] others arouse the thought of enlightenment as a result of seeing the signs of the Dharma’s decline. Among these examples, the thought of enlightenment aroused by those who, in the latter age, see the signs of the Dharma’s decline is particularly firm.

The Dharma is fundamentally not something that arises and becomes extinct. Even if all sentient beings, at the same time, were to arouse the thought of enlightenment, fulfill the practice of the bodhisattva and realize unsurpassed enlightenment, as regards the Dharma, there would not be the slightest increase. Even if all sentient beings, at the same time, were to arouse false views and slander the Three Treasures, as regards the Dharma, there would not be the slightest decrease. Corruption in the conduct of monks, however, may accurately be referred to as a sign of the Dharma’s decline. In such sutras as the Hometsu-jinkyo and the Mahamaya Sutra, the signs of the Dharma’s decline in the latter age are explained; all [such texts mention] laxity in the conduct of monks. From this perspective, seeing the corruption today in the appearance and conduct of the five groups [within the Buddhist clergy: monks, nuns, male and female novices, and siksamana, a special category of female novices between the ages of 18 and 20], one must arouse a [high] aspiration.

The sutras say that when Shakyamuni was a prince and went forth from the north gate [of his palace], he saw an ascetic, and for the first time, he aroused the thought of enlightenment. Thereafter, he followed a hunter and exchanged his garments for a robe, and cutting off his hair with a knife, for the first time [himself] took on the appearance of an ascetic. Then, in the guise of one who had left home, he begged for food in the country of Magadha, using a lotus leaf [as a receptacle]. (In general, it is said that a pratyekabuddha who appears in a buddhaless world wears a robe and receives food on a lotus leaf. There are different views [of this matter] in the sutras and commentaries; [for example,] it is also said that a pratyekabuddha may use a bowl for begging, but at this time the Buddha used a lotus leaf.)

Thereafter, when Shakyamuni realized unsurpassed enlightenment and received sugar from Tapussa, he combined into one the four bowls offered him by the four heavenly kings and used it. It is said that, later, when he converted his various disciples by addressing them [with the words], “Well come monks,” their hair fell off spontaneously and they were endowed with robes and bowls. Furthermore, the Buddha said that if, at the time a request is made for permission to receive the precepts, [the candidate] does not possess robes and bowl, he may not receive the precepts. From this [you should know that] the appearance, robes, bowl and conduct of one who has left home is of great importance.

The Buddha, the World-Honored One, was not a person who left home because the position of a Chakravartin king [A universal monarch] or the governance of the empire had become a burden. He was not a person who could not have ruled [simply] by gathering together such sages and worthies as Ch’i, Hsieh, and Kao-yao [famous ministers who served Shun, the legendary virtuous ruler of ancient China] and turning the government over to them, himself doing nothing.

It was not that his officials and subjects had become a burden. For the Buddha, the World-Honored One, even when he was among great numbers of people, it was no different than when he was alone in a quiet place with no one around.

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It was not that the palaces and towers had become a burden. Even when the Buddha, the World-Honored One, was amidst golden palaces and jeweled towers, it was no different then when he was [sitting] beneath a tree or on a rock.

Nor was it that he left home because his three wives, Yasodhara and the others, and his sixty-thousand ladies in waiting had become a burden. Even when he was amidst men and women who were immersed in the five desires, it was no different than when he encountered trees and stones.

Nor was it that he left home because his relatives have become a burden. For the Buddha, the World-Honored One, all sentient beings in the three realms were his children, and he viewed all sentient beings as the same in their self-nature.

Why, then, did he leave home? It is simply that the guise of an ascetic and of one who leaves home is natural to people who follow the great path to liberation from birth and death. Because all of the Buddhas of the three periods of time left home and realized enlightenment, Shakyamuni also, following their [example], left home and realized unsurpassed enlightenment. The great bodhisattvas Manjushri, Maitreya and others also later left home and, through the dignified conduct of monks, saved sentient beings. Mahakashyapa, Ananda, and the following generations of ancestors, without exception, left home and transmitted the true Dharma.

Therefore, when illustrious masters of ancient times discoursed on the Three Treasures and spoke of the element most important for the transformation of people, [they held that] the merit of the Buddha comes first. For the attainment of liberation, [however,] the merit of the Dharma comes first. Even the Buddha realized enlightenment by taking the Dharma as his teacher, and people today also practice relying upon the Dharma. [Yet] for the maintenance of the Three Treasures, the merit of the Sangha comes first. If the conduct of the Sangha is correct, then the Buddha and the Dharma will survive, and, as a consequence of that, the true Dharma will long abide.

Today, some say that one need not worry about appearances, but I do not agree. The conduct of the five groups [within the Buddhist clergy] begins with the novice, and his appearance is the same as that of the saints of the three vehicles [shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas]. It is a manifestation of a field of blessing for human beings and devas. Today, a person who sees the signs of the Dharma's decline and who [still] has a [high] aspiration, cannot pass the days at ease. If, arousing a [high] aspiration and leaves home in accord with the Dharma, for the sake of protecting the true Dharma, whether it be only one person or only two or three, because of these people, the true Dharma will long abide. Since this is explained in detail in the sutras and commentaries, understanding it in this way, you should receive the precepts for novices.

The Merit of Leaving Home (Shukke kudoku, 1764)

The merits of a person who leaves home are innumerable and without limit. Since this is explained in detail in the sutras and commentaries, however, there is no need to take it up here. Rather, I will only indicate what can easily be known about that state. On the one hand, one who leaves home inherits the seeds of Buddhahood and causes them to flourish. His leaving home is like the birth of a prince to a Chakravartin king; though the prince is an infant, later surely he will be fully endowed with the seven [royal] treasures and rule the four continents. A bodhisattva who has left home is also like this. Though he may not yet have every kind of good quality and virtue and his powers may be limited and weak, later surely he will fully possess all virtues and be called a teacher of human beings and devas.

On the other hand, one who leaves home becomes a field of blessing for all sentient beings. This is because one who has left home is the manifest form of compassion. For those human beings and devas who see him, he becomes a cause of virtue. Those who reverence and honor him will surely gain the retribution of being held in high esteem, and those who make offerings to him and sing his praises will surely give rise to all virtue and wisdom. For all those who come into contact with the shadow of his robe, even birds and animals and flying and creeping insects, that contact becomes a distant cause for their attainment of Buddhahood.

When a monk walks under the moon in meditation, his mind is emptied of all conditioning. When he sits in meditation beneath a tree, all gates to the Dharma manifest themselves within his mind, and he roams far beyond the three worlds. He is unaware that he is still on earth; yet, at ease, he moves about in one room. He is unaware that he is a person who has left home, or again, that he is a human being. Gain and loss, right and wrong—of what concern are they to him? A ruler cannot make him his subject; his father cannot again make him his child. He has no ties to wife or children; he does not compete for fame or profit. Rather, becoming the overseer of the three worlds, he causes the woodcutter to collect kindling, and he does this without concern for his own affairs. He causes the weaving maid to spin her thread, and here too for him there is no gain or loss. He causes the sun and moon to shine down on the land below. He causes human beings to be ranked as high or low, noble or humble. He causes fish to frolic in the waters and animals to run in the mountains. In this state, there is great wealth and honor that has nothing to do with status, and there is great ease that is unrelated to the five skandhas of form and mind. He is like the ruler of a country who becomes the overseer of the four classes of people [administrators, cultivators, artisans, merchants], causes each to work at this task, and yet himself simply sits with folded arms, having nothing to do.

[For the monk], all sentient beings are his children. There is only compassion; there are no relative degrees of intimacy. To shave off one's hair is to discard all ornamentation. To dye one's clothes is to transcend all distinctions of noble and humble. To take the begging bowl in hand is to become a field of blessing for all sentient beings.
Monks and Laymen
Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn, 1985

Q: Can you talk about monks and laymen? We have just finished a beautiful Hae Jae Ceremony at the new monastery. Some of us have a yearning to become monks. What is this?

A: If it is only feeling and this feeling controls you, that is desire. Maybe you go to a temple, "Oh, that is wonderful! Maybe I will cut my hair and have beautiful gray robes! I like that!" That is feeling. But if inside you see that there are many, many problems in this world, many suffering people, so that is why you want to become a monk, then this is not just feeling. OK? Intellectual. Strong will mind. "I want to save all beings from suffering so I want to become a monk." That name is try mind. That is vow. So if feeling controls you and action appears, that is not try mind. This means that only your karma controls you. Same action, same becoming a monk, but a different style. In Korea there are many different style monks. Some have very strong feeling and go to the mountain. Many young girls go there. Maybe they have problems with boyfriend or family - "Oh, I will come here to the temple! Oh, that is wonderful!" So they become nuns. But being a nun is very difficult so soon they don't like it and leave. So if feeling is the reason for wanting to become a monk, then if a different feeling appears, again change - no more monk. Sometimes in our School this style appears. Somebody has a strong feeling, becomes a monk, then this feeling changes, then no more monk. Understand? So if feeling controls something and you do it, that is not try mind. Try mind means having strong direction, and behind it, Great Vow. "Human beings are numberless, I want to save them all." That is Great Vow. Then this never changes. Feeling coming, feeling going; condition, situation changing, changing - doesn't matter. Even if my body is sick or dies - not broken monk.

Q: So can a lay person save all beings from suffering, have a Great Vow, or only monks?
A: Of course!

Q: Then how are they different, monks and laymen?
A: For example, in our School we have two kinds of Master Dharma Teachers (they are now called Ji Do Póep Sa Nim): monk and family style. The family style Master Dharma Teachers have try mind and want to do together action, but they have children, have wife, have husband, so they cannot do as much together action. But if you are a monk, then all the time together action is possible. That is how they are different.

Q: So if you have no family, is becoming a monk good?
A: I don't know. What kind of feeling? What kind of direction? Many people have no family but cannot become monks. There is still some hindrance inside. "I want something." So they cannot become monks. Becoming a monk is not easy. In our family, many people who became monks now are not monks. First they had a strong feeling so they became monks, then a strong feeling appears again, so they stop being monks. This is a "feeling monk." So a "feeling monk" doesn't stay a monk very long. If he has a strong Great Vow, then a monk is a strong monk. Also, a "feeling monk" is OK. Then practicing, practicing and feeling comes down, down, and strong center appears. Then no problem. So becoming a monk or not becoming a monk, doesn't matter. If you are a lay person, it is also possible to save all beings from suffering. So now all the Master Dharma Teachers are teaching you. The only difference is that if you have a family, not so much together action with the Sangha is possible. Not so much "100% my life for all beings" is possible. My family, my wife or husband, also taking care of my parents is necessary. But if you have no family, it is possible to be with the Sangha all the time. Whole life. That is the only difference. So moment to moment very important - don't make anything, don't check anything. Just DO IT! Only go straight.

On Being a Monk
by Shodo Harada Roshi, from “The Path to Bodhidharma”

If you need nothing, then you naturally want to give away what you already have to someone else. Your enjoyment comes from giving your mind of the Dharma to everyone. Every time you come in contact with someone you give it away. People who do this are not craving, they are eager to give; that is their pleasure.

The mind of no worry, no anxiety – this is the difference between a truly ordained person and one who is ordained only in form. To worry about your life and what it will bring you is for people of the world. If a monk thinks in that way, even if he is wearing the robes of an ordained Buddhist, then he is still a person of the world and not a true monk. To be able to totally entrust, leaving everything up to the workings of the heavens – only if you do true zazen will you be able to understand this state of mind.

When we can live without great concern for our own welfare, the food we need usually comes. In doing takuhatsu, I have never had a single day of receiving no money or offering of food. If you are truly walking the path, living with only exactly what you really need, and truly practicing, you will be able to stay alive and receive what you need. It is possible to go without eating for a full month, and even if you die sitting, it will be a fine way to go. It is truly foolish, the way everybody rushes around working for the money and the food and the possessions they think they need.
To You, Who has Decided to Become a Monk
by Uchiyama Kosho Roshi

The motto for living in the world is: eat or be eaten! Now, if you have decided to become a monk because you think that life in this world is too hard and bitter for you and you would prefer to rather live off other people's donations while drinking your tea - if you want to become a monk just to make a living, then the following is not for you. If you read the following, be aware that it is addressed to someone who has aroused the mind to practice the Buddha way after questioning his own life, and only therefore wants to become a monk.

For someone who has aroused this mind and aspires to practice the way, what is important is to first of all find a good master and look for a good place for practice. In the old days, the practicing monks would put on their straw hats and straw sandals to travel through the whole country in search of a good master and place of practice. Today it is easier to get information: Collect and check them and decide on a master and community that seems suitable to you.

You should not forget, though, that to practice the Buddha way means to let go off the self and practice egolessness. To let go off the self and practice egolessness again means to let go of the measuring stick that we are always carrying around with us in our brains. For this, you must follow the teaching of the master and the rules of the place of practice that you have decided on loyally, without stating your own preferences or judgments of good and bad. It is important to first sit silently in one place for at least ten years.

If, on the other hand, you start to judge the good and bad sides of your master or the place of practice before the first ten years have passed, and you start to think that maybe there is a better master or place somewhere else and go look for it - then you are just following the measuring stick of your own ego, which has absolutely nothing to do with practicing the Buddha way.

Right from the start you have to know clearly that no master is perfect: Any master is just a human being. What is important is your own practice, which has to consist of following the imperfect master as perfectly as possible. If you follow your master in this way, than this practice is the basis on which you can follow yourself. That is why Dogen Zenji says:

"To follow the Buddha way means to follow yourself." (Shobogenzo Genjokoan)

"Following the master, following the sutras - all this means to follow oneself. The sutras are an expression of yourself. The master is YOUR master. When you travel far and wide to meet with masters, that means that you travel far and wide to meet with yourself. When you pick a hundred weeds, you are picking yourself a hundred times. And when you climb ten thousand trees, you are climbing yourself ten thousand times. Understand that when you practice in this way, you are practicing yourself. Practicing and understanding thus, you will let go of yourself and get a real taste of yourself for the first time." (Shobogenzo Jisho-zanmai)

It is often said that for practicing Zen it is important to find a master - but who decides what a true master is in the first place? Don't you make that decision with the measurement stick of your thoughts (that is: your ego)? As long as you look for the master outside of your own practice, you will only extend your own ego. The master does not exist outside of yourself; the practice of zazen, in which the self becomes the self is the master. That means zazen in which you really let go your thoughts.

Does that mean that it is enough to practice zazen alone without a master at all? No, certainly not. Dogen Zenji himself says in the Jisho-zanmai, just after the quote above:

"When you hear that you get a taste of yourself and awake to yourself through yourself, you might jump to the conclusion that you should practice alone, all for yourself, without having a master point the way out for you. That is a big mistake. To think that you can liberate yourself without a master is a heretic opinion that can be traced back to the naturalistic school of philosophy in India."

When you practice all for yourself without a master, you will end up just doing whatever comes into your mind. But that has nothing to do with practicing Buddhism. After all, it is absolutely necessary to first find a good master and to follow him. Fortunately, there are still masters in Japan that transmit the Buddha-Dharma correctly in the form of zazen. Follow such a master without complaining and sit silently for at least ten years. Then, after ten years, sit for another ten years. And then, after twenty years, sit anew for another ten years. If you sit like this throughout thirty years, you will gain a good view over the landscape of zazen - and that means also a good view of the landscape of your own life. Of course that does not mean that thus your practice comes to an end - practice always has to be the practice of your whole life.
Monks and Householders
Jiyu Kennett-Roshi, from “Roar of the Tigress”

Now, the Sangha consists of four sections: the male monks, the female monks, the male lay Buddhists, and the female lay Buddhists. I use the term “monk” for both men and women not because I am a feminist or anything of that sort, but simply because if you translate the words accurately, osho means “monk and priest” and ni-osho means “female monk and priest”. There is not the difference in Buddhism that there is in Christianity: everybody starts as a monk or a nun (as some would call it) and ends up a priest in Soto Zen, whether they are male or female, unless they specifically decide they don’t wish to go any further. (I have yet to find anyone who did that.) Whereas in the West the term “nun” implies that one is not, and can never become, a priest, So, while in the early stages in the Far East it looks like there is a gender difference, or at least a separation, because women and men are usually segregated during their training in different monasteries, in actual fact once they have become full priests there really is no difference at all. Our school of Buddhism treats men and women equally because the Buddha Himself made it very clear that there was no difference between the meditation of a man and a woman, nor of the end result thereof. He couldn’t do much about the local customs: customs are far harder to change than are religious teachings! So, in early Buddhism you do have some distinctions made between men and women, but we don’t have to follow those customs.

So, you have male priests, female priests, laymen, shall we say, and laywomen. These are the four orders, and they are all equal, and they are all equally good, and they all equally go to the Eternal. The difference is how long it takes: monastic training usually goes more quickly. We have to face the fact that it is much more difficult to train in the everyday world than it is in a monastery, where everything is laid out to make it possible for you. It is much more difficult; I’m not going to pretend it isn’t. As I said before, the end product’s the same, but it’s still much more difficult. It’s like everything else: if you go to a college to study a subject, you are going to get there a lot faster and get your degree a lot faster than if you go to a night school because you are working full-time. But, of course, if you go to college and just sit there, then the person who really works at night school may well pass you, and there are plenty of very famous lay people who did rather better than some monks. If you think of it that way, then you can understand what is the real difference between the two from the laymen’s point of view (in “laymen”, I am including women). So if you keep that in mind, you can understand why it is necessary not to think you are going to lose something if you don’t become a monk. When I first came to be teaching this in this country, everybody I met wanted to be monks: they were convinced the monks got the secrets and the laymen sort of got to provide the money to the monks. That was not true, and not everyone is suited to be a priest. Not everyone wants to be a priest and not everybody should be a priest. I know that there are going to be people in the Buddhist Church who will yell at me for the last one. Everybody, of course, has the potential, but there are people with children, people with family obligations: things that have to be dealt with. This does not mean you can’t find the Eternal, and it does not mean that the Sangha, which is one and undivided, has privileges for some and not for others. It is very important to remember that.

Another difference between the monastics and the laity is in how they are of benefit to others. It must be understood that someone who becomes a monk does so because he or she not only wants to find the Land of the Lord, the lay people, on the other hand, goes for the Land and incidentally may hold out his or her faith to help others as they journey. But they do not have a specific temple with, so to speak, a “shingle” or sign outside saying that they are there full-time, ready and willing to help. Persons who wish to understand how the householder’s training helps others in its highest form should study the writings about Vimalakirti and also those of Layman P’ang. Now, I am not saying that because someone is a layperson they do not wish to help others. They just do it as they journey through the world in which they live. Like the priest, they are in the world but not of the world. Unlike the priest, they do not necessarily stay in one place and “hang out a shingle”. What the lay person understands in training, they show in their everyday life, and in that way they benefit and teach others, although not doing so consciously. They teach by example, simply by going through life practicing the Bodhisattva way, without bugging people and without trying deliberately to teach them. Just by doing that which a Bodhisattva does, you will teach. And this unassuming practice of the Bodhisattva way is the final and great achievement of the lay person, and the purpose for their existence.

Question: “You said once that it is important to fully be lay people and not to imitate monks. And I wanted, am curious about, how to go about doing that and why.”

The best way is being satisfied with training the way you are training, not to constantly think, “Well, maybe they’ve got more than I have.” Envy is the big problem, but people don’t recognize it as envy. It is “Well, I want to be a householder, but I really want what the monk’s got; now how can I wangle it and get that?” And the answer is: you can’t. You either have to be a householder, which is a complete and perfectly wonderful way and part of the Sangha, or you’ve got to be a monastic, which is a complete and perfectly wonderful way and part of the Sangha. It’s contentment: that is the best way, to be contented. Then you become grateful and thankful, and then you are really training; you go just as fast as a monk does then. But if you think you are missing out, then you’re actually holding yourself back and then, in fact, you do miss out. But it’s not because you are training as a lay person; it’s because you are judging yourself again. When you do that, as we’ve seen before, you’ve already missed out; you’ve lost your peace of mind. That’s the very best advice I can give you on that: be fully what you are, and don’t worry about what somebody else has “got”.

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Monk’s comment: “On this problem of ‘has the other way got something better?’ I ran into a quote from Socrates. (This is not a new problem!) He said, ‘Let a man choose the family life or celibacy, as he pleases: he is sure to repent of it.’” (laughter)

It’s a good answer. Yes, go ahead.

Audience comment: “Yet sometimes, for some of us, there is a sort of sense of urgency that is there when you are training that pushes you. Yes, it’s fine to be a layman, and yet there is that push to do a little more, which eventually, if you keep following it, ends you up doing it entirely and becoming a monk.”

Yes, that can happen. That perhaps has happened for you, but that does not necessarily happen for everybody.

Audience comment continues: “No, what I am saying is how do you find the middle way when some part of you keeps pushing?”

Well, you have to decide what you really want to do. If that part of you keeps pushing, and that is what you want to follow, then that is what you follow. And that will become your Middle Way. I don’t know if you understand what I am saying by that. You see, I can’t really answer your question. To find the Middle Way does not mean to avoid making a commitment: it means to find the very best way for you. And if you are constantly being urged to be a monk, or to be a layman, perhaps that’s what you should be, and that will be the Middle Way for you. But don’t try pushing away any part of the decision. Don’t try pushing it one way, and don’t try pushing it the other: just let it grow naturally. The Middle Way grows naturally; it does not come as a result of forcing a decision. And, when it has grown, then it must be acted upon.

Question: “About celibacy: why is it that the monks of your order are celibate? It seems like most Zen monks in the West are married.”

Well, there’s an interesting history behind that. Up until about a hundred years ago, all Zen monks were celibate — both the men and the women — in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, just as most of the rest of the ordained Buddhist Sangha has been since the time of the Buddha. Then the government of Japan, in a move to weaken the power of the Buddhist clergy, passed a number of laws, one of which permitted (and actively encouraged) the monks to give up their vows of celibacy, abstinence from alcohol, and vegetarianism. Over time the male monks mostly married, but the female ones, whom the government didn’t see as any threat anyway, did not. So in Japan at the present time most male monks are married; the Japanese female monks and the Zen monks in most other countries are not. Thus you will find that those Western Zen groups who were founded by a Japanese male monk generally permit their priests to be married; those founded by a Japanese female monk or a Zen monk from another country generally do not.

Now I, of course, was ordained in Chinese Buddhism, which is celibate, and trained in a Japanese male temple with a male master, so I had both ways open to me and had to decide which way to go. Personally, it has always been clear to me that celibacy was the way for me, as it was for Koho Zenji as well. He was one of the male Japanese monks who made the personal choice to remain celibate. When I first came to this country I was undecided on this, but, coming out of both of these traditions, I decided we’d allow monks to marry if they chose and see what happened. And we did have several members of the community who got married. Then we knew why most Buddhist monastic orders in the world didn’t do that. Eventually most of the married couples did have to leave monastic life, not because either we or they wanted it that way, but simply because when the children came they had incredible expenses. They just had to go out and work and earn a living; there was no other way in which it could be done. There was also the fact that monastic training got in the way of looking after the children, and since they had children, it was their duty to look after them. In other words, they had effectively walked back into the household state. But there was something much more subtle than that even, and that was that the Eternal came second, because of the needs of the children and the husband or the wife — the marriage and the children had to come first, which is fitting and proper — and therefore the training of such people became more like that of laymen and laywomen. It seemed that to fully function as a priest, the Eternal had to be first, that moment’s notice to the spiritual needs of the congregation or the disciples. I was very sad that having married monastics did not work out for us, but there was nothing like doing the experiment and finding out what was the best way to go. It also explained to me why (although I should have seen it — I was awfully “thick” not to) most of the male monks in Japan left their monasteries after their initial training and went out to work in banks or in school teaching and the like; the answer was very simple: they had to keep a wife and children. There was no other way they could do it. You couldn’t expect a small temple congregation to keep both the priest and his family. The women monks, as I said, didn’t marry and therefore they were accepted throughout all the Buddhist countries of the world. The men were treated as laymen when they went to other Buddhist countries, which I always felt was rather unfair, but it was the one circumstance which I encountered in Buddhism in which women had higher status than men. So that is why now, in our Order, if you are a monk, you’re celibate.

Question: “I would sort of like to go back to the question that somebody in the back raised, that you just answered, but sort of from a different angle. Okay, there’s something that makes a person start to train and something that, say, makes a person meditate twice a day instead of one, and so on…

It’s known as “being disturbed by the Truth”: there is something that is disturbing you to do more.

Question continues: “…well, the question which arises for me is: is this the voice of envy… or the voice of Truth simply saying, ‘Train more’?”

Yeah. And the answer I have to that is that if something wants me to train more (this is my answer, by the way; don’t take it as your answer; this is my answer), then it must want my good; therefore it has to be the voice of the Cosmic Buddha. My willfulness would say, “Why don’t you stay in bed?” You see, you’ve got to think about it from a very practical angle. What would want me to train more deeply? Obviously, the Cosmic Buddha. Now, I might also want to train more, in which case I
win either way, you see? Whichever way I go with that I win, because willfulness, delusion, would not ask me to do that. And even if it did ask you to do it out of envy, well, there is an old Christian saying, “God writes straight with crooked lines.” All right, so you’re envious of somebody else, and so you’re training: that’s just fine; it’s a place to start. I know of someone who was so annoyed when he discovered his wife had a kensho that he settled down and said, “I am going to make it.” And he did; he was driven into training by envy; there’s nothing wrong with that. The training, if it was started out of envy, will require that you give up envy. So, it really doesn’t matter, does it? You see, the Cosmic Buddha can use anything. But delusion can only use delusion.

Now, I see that our time together is about up. In conclusion let me just say that you, and only you, can do all of this; you do not need a third party. Above all you do not need me. That’s why I named the first book I wrote Selling Water by the River. I was quite honest about it; I’m not a con man. If you want to do this, I can show you how. It’s very easy to do, but you’ve really got to work at it. It’s easy, but it’s hard in that it takes a lot of time and a lot of willingness, and willingness is one of the things that most people aren’t too eager to give, and that’s what makes it difficult. Dogen says later on in another one of his scriptures, “Will is a donkey and words are a horse.” The will is like a donkey that won’t ever go the way that you want it to go, and the words that you tell it are like a horse prancing around in all directions and not giving over much information. In the beginning you have to do something about that donkey-will, and later you have to change the word “will” into simply being willing, and there is a big difference in that. Let me leave you with a final quote from Master Dogen; this one is from “Shoji”, his discourse on life and death.

Scripture: “The Way to Buddhahood is easy. They who do not perpetrate evil, they who do not try to grasp at life and death but work for the good of all living things with utter compassion, giving respect to those older, and loving understanding to those younger, than themselves, they who do not reject, search for, think on or worry about anything have the name of Buddha: you must look for nothing more.”
Zen Master Dogen said, “Those who regard secular life as an obstacle to the sacred know only that there is no sacredness in secular activities; they do not yet know that no secular activities exist in the sacred.” In a way, we can see this as a gesture toward dissolving the differences between monk practice and lay practice. Yet, Dogen, and all of the masters in the history of Zen and of Buddhism, starting with the Buddha and coming down to present day teachers, have obviously favored monk practice since all of them were monks. Even the ones who became enlightened as lay practitioners usually received ordination before they transmitted the Buddhadharma to the next generation.

In creating the training matrix at Zen Mountain Monastery, one of the key things that we have done is to make a very clear separation between lay and monk practice. This is a new phenomenon on the landscape of the American Zen. Most of the lay practice that goes on in America is a slightly watered down version of monk practice, and most of the monk practice is a slightly glorified version of lay practice. In fact, there are controversies at most centers because frequently nobody can tell the difference between a monk and a lay person, except for the way they dress. Monks usually wear black robes and lay practitioners wear robes of another color. Most American monks live in the world, away from monasteries. They are householders who keep full-time jobs and have families. They don’t shave their heads, and don’t take vows that are different from the vows that lay practitioners take. This results in ambiguity and confusion. The hybrid path halfway between monk practice and lay practice reflects our cultural spirit of greediness and consumerism. With all the possibilities, why give up anything? I want it all. Why not do it all? Within the Mountains and Rivers Order, there is a very clear distinction between monk and lay practice. In fact, we accent the differences, because the beauty of the relationship between the two practices depends upon those distinctions. You can’t have co-origination and interdependence without differences. If everything were the same there would be no possibility of a relationship or realization.

The following prologue accompanies a koan dealing with the distinctions between monk and lay practice: When sacred and secular are intermingled, even the great sages cannot distinguish between them. When monk and lay practice are interwoven, the fragrance of thousands of plum blossoms fills the ten directions. Even the Buddha fails to discern one from the other. To be unified with the Way is to be free and unhindered, whether in the mountain or in the marketplace, and in either to leave no trace of having entered.

Monk practice and lay practice are and always have been in a dynamic relationship, one supporting the other. You would have a very short-lived lay practice without monks and a very short-lived monk practice without lay practitioners. That has been the history of the Buddhadharma — 2,500 years of it — with its vitality and lifeblood depending on the contrast, the contact, and the integration of the two streams. This, of course, holds true for all dualities and it is the nature of the universe.

The Mountains and River Order distinguishes between monk and lay practice in several ways, but primarily with specific vows for monks, which are different from the lay practitioner’s vows. Students who wish to enter monk practice first need to be Zen Mountain Monastery students, and then have to complete Jukai, which is the receiving of the Precepts. After a period of one year they can make the decision to enter the clerical track, or they can continue in the lay track. Those who stay in the lay track may become senior lay students, or shusos, when they reach the appropriate stage of training, trading in their beginner’s gray robe for a white robe, symbolic of lay practitioners throughout the history of Buddhism, and Particularly in Zen.

Students who decide at this stage to pursue the monk, or clerical, track, put on black robes instead, and after at least two years of postulancy and novitiate, may take monk’s ordination. There are five monk’s vows in addition to the Precepts: vows of stability, service, simplicity, selflessness and to accomplish the Buddha’s Way. Note that the last vow does not say “accomplishing the Buddha Way,” but “accomplishing the Buddha’s Way,” that is, to live the life that the Buddha lived. The Buddha Way is the teachings of the Buddha. All practitioners make the vow to accomplish the Buddha Way. The monk’s vow is to accomplish the Buddha’s Way, that is, to make real in one’s own life the life of the Buddha, to actualize one’s life the way historical Buddha did. To accomplish the Buddha’s Way is not a place. It is not a goal. It doesn’t have anything to do with time and space. It’s a continuum. It’s a continuum that goes back to the beginningless beginning. It’s a continuum that proceeds into the far-distant future. It’s a continuum that verifies life of all Buddhas and is the realization of all Buddhas. Why would a person choose such a path? This was a koan posed by Nagarjuna:

Nagarjuna said, “When lay trainees can become Bodhisattvas and enter nirvana, why is it necessary to take monk’s ordination?” And then he answered himself, “The difference in the path is not the objective, enlightenment, but the degree of difficulty in attaining this. It is most difficult for the lay person because of other responsibilities, much easier for the monks, who can fully devote themselves to practice.” A brahmin asked Shariputra, “What is the most difficult thing in the world?” Shariputra replied, “To renounce fame, fortune, property, and family and enter the Buddhist monkhood.”

Dogen, although often speaking of lay practice and monk practice as being identical, elsewhere in his writings emphasizes the distinctions, making the same point as Nagarjuna. The enlightenment of a monk or a lay practitioner is not different. Both monk practice and lay practice can result in deep, profound realization; one indistinguishable from the other. What is different is the respective occupations of monks and lay practitioners, the difficulty of attaining realization, and the possibility of completing the training — what people do with realization before, during, and after it happens. From Nagarjuna’s point of view, it’s much easier to do monk’s practice than it is to do lay practice.
In the world, we have many responsibilities and gravitate in many directions: family, job, property, children, neighborhood. As one develops as a lay practitioner, these activities and the thrust of one’s life take place within the matrix of the Dharma, but the main focus of lay life remains either one’s family and career. The focus of a monk’s life is the Dharma matrix itself. A monk is married to the Dharma. The major occupation of a monk is the Dharma. Nothing else. One hundred percent of the time, every day. A monk has essentially one vow, and that vow is the Dharma. It’s a vow of service, it’s a vow of stability, it’s a vow of selflessness, it’s a vow of simplicity. In traditional Zen writings, the term “monk” is not used; rather, there is the word unsui. Unsui literally translates as “clouds and water.” Clouds and water are free. Clouds follow the wind, water the shape of the terrain. Nothing holds them back. If you try to stop a stream it just builds up behind the obstruction and goes over it. The journey to the ocean is unstoppable. The biggest dam in creation can’t hold back the river in its flow. It is persistent, continuous, flexible. Yet, in a practical sense, one can ask: “What good is a monk?” Our society certainly posits that question, not just in relation to Zen monks, or Buddhist monks, but for monks in general. What does a monk produce? In a materialistic culture, where such incredible value is placed on productivity, what does a monk contribute? What good is such a life? What is the relevance of a monk to the world?

Thomas Merton once had something to say about this issue in his Asian Journal. He wrote: Are monks and hippies and poets relevant? No, we’re deliberately irrelevant. We live with an ingrained irrelevance which is proper to every human being. The marginal person accepts the basic irrelevance of the human condition, an irrelevance which is manifested above all by the fact of death. The marginal person, the monk, the displaced person, the prisoner, all these people live in the presence of death, which calls into question the meaning of life. They struggle with the fact of death in themselves, trying to seek something deeper than death, because there is something deeper than death, and the office of the monk or the marginal person, the meditative person, is to go beyond death. Even in this life to go beyond. To go beyond the dichotomy of life and death and to therefore be a witness to life.

Is this, then, a life of total freedom? From one point of view, those who haven’t renounced the world are caught up in the world, are holding on to the world, and are controlled by the world. They are not free to go from one place to another. They have responsibilities and obligations. At the same time, looking at it from the other side, a monk, following a strict monastic schedule and bound by monastic vows is completely in the hands of the teacher in a way that no lay practitioner could possibly be. If I wanted one of the monks to go to New Zealand and stay there, that is where they would go. If someone said, “You can’t practice Zen Buddhism in New York State anymore,” or if we lost the building and the grounds, and I had to move to California, the monks would follow me there. Why? Because there is nothing holding them back. They have no obligations other than to the Dharma.

Shukke-tokado, monk’s ordination, literally means “leaving home,” giving up one’s last name and taking on a monk’s name. The bows that we do in gratitude to our parents during Jukai, are bows of good-bye for the home-leaver. “Thank you for this life.” With monk’s ordination, the relationship between the parent and the child completely changes. The child’s obligation to care for the parents is replaced with a vow to serve all sentient beings, equally, without discrimination.

Leaving home doesn’t mean ignoring one’s family, however. That is one of the tremendous misconceptions about monk practice that persists in this country, one that I personally don’t accept and don’t practice. Yet, Zen literature does present examples that seem to imply that leaving home requires cutting family ties completely. Master Tung-shan, for example, after he left home, disregarded his mother when she got very old and came asking to be admitted to his monastery. She was clawing at the door, crying for help. She died, according to the story, of a broken heart. He wouldn’t let her in. The story then continues, telling how she was reborn in some heaven and thanked her son for not breaking his vows as a monk. Well, I don’t buy it. If one takes a vow to save all sentient beings, surely that includes one’s own mother. Doesn’t she deserve, at least, an equal opportunity with the rest of sentient beings?

At Zen Mountain Monastery monks can either practice celibacy or be in a stable relationship. But they have to make a vow not to procreate. If they do have a child, then they’re a parent, not a monk. They have to take off their robes, raise the child until he or she is independent, and then they automatically, spontaneously, and miraculously become monks again. They put their robes back on and continue their monk practice. But as long as they’ve created another human being, they have a primary responsibility to that human being. Similarly, if someone has unfinished business with their family, they need to take care of that before taking monk’s vows. They need to really leave home. This doesn’t mean that monks ignore their parents or other family members. It just means that they have a relationship with them like with any other sentient being. If a person is in need, and they’re the most appropriate one to give them nourishment and take care of them, it’s fine for them to do it. I like to think of our practice as a very human practice.

Every fifth day the monks shave their heads and chant the Gatha on Shaving the Head. The gatha says, “In the drifting, wandering world, it is very difficult to cut off our human ties. Now, I cast them away and enter true activity. It is in this way that I express my gratitude. As I shave my head, I renew my vows to live a life of simplicity, service, stability, selflessness and to accomplish the Buddha’s Way. May I manifest my life with wisdom and compassion and actualize the Tathagatha’s true teaching.” How do these vows manifest themselves here in the twentieth century on Tremper Mountain? Taking a vow of poverty, the monks receive no salary and are not permitted to own any property. As a result, they become totally dependent upon the lay practitioners. If suddenly the lay practitioners disappeared, the monks would have to go out and work in order to feed themselves. With the Monastery’s main mortgage paid off, we don’t have to worry about the rent anymore, but we still have to pay for the utilities. So, the food and the shelter are provided by the lay sangha practicing here. The monks offer their service to the community in a spirit of selflessness. This mutual dependency between the monks and the lay practitioners
creates an essential part of the dynamic of these buildings and grounds, and of this Dharma. It allows for true giving to be practiced. The vow of stability has to do with having completed the major changes in one’s life. That is, no vows, above the vow to the Dharma, are functioning. There is a stable base, with all of the person’s energy available to the Dharma. There are no other, superseding responsibilities or obligations. The monks with their commitment bring a sense of security for me. They are the continuation of this Dharma. Their vows assure that the Dharma of this mountain would go on, even after the buildings disappear and the mountain itself crumbles. No matter where, no matter how, it would continue. And it is for this reason that it has been so important to me, to my teacher, and to his teacher, who are all monks, to have completely dedicated monks among our successors.

If this sangha consisted solely of lay practitioners, it would be very lopsided. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to operate a monastery. The central continuity that we have had from year to year, over the past twelve years, has been maintained by the monks. The changes, the comings and goings of the lay practitioners are quite dramatic. People come into residency for a year or two and then they leave. Others appear. There are a lot of unpredictability and fluctuations of interest. The stability rests with the monks. As we move into the future, that becomes more and more important. So, it is paramount to understand that the dynamic of monk practice/lay practice, the interpretation of sacred and secular, is a two-way street. You can’t do it with one or the other alone.

It is just like the relationship of the absolute and the relative. As the Sutra of the Identity of Relative and Absolute says, absolute alone is not yet enlightenment. In fact, dwelling solely in the absolute is considered “making a living in a ghost cave,” a dead end. It has no life, no vitality. Dwelling only in the relative, on the other hand, is complete delusion, being caught up in the words and ideas that describe reality, the world of this and that. But when you have both of them, and they interpenetrate freely, you have a dynamic relationship that creates “thousands of plum blossoms with their fragrance filling the ten directions.” The plum blossom is an image for the Buddha. From beneath three feet of snow, a single plum branch extends. That’s the Buddha’s enlightenment. And from that branch, the blossoms, the fragrance, and the seeds of subsequent, endless generations appear. When you have the two components, you have what it takes. The bee and the blossom are both necessary in order for the fruit to appear on the tree. If there’s no cross-fertilization, you don’t get any fruit. If there’s no fruit, there’s no ripening. If there’s no ripening, there are no seeds. If there are no seeds, there are no succeeding generations. The interactive relationship is essential. “When monk and lay practice are interwoven, the fragrance of thousands of plum blossoms fills the ten directions and even the Buddha fails to discern one from other.” To be unified with the Way is to be free and unhindered, whether in the mountain (meaning the monastery) or in the market place (the market place being the world). And in either case, to be unified with the Way is to leave no trace of having entered.

So, we are back to Nagarjuna’s question: “Why take monk’s ordination?” There are hundreds of rationalizations for becoming a monk. There are hundreds of rationalizations for being a lay practitioner. I remember the days I spent debating these issues and justifications with my Dharma brother, Tetsugen, and the other monks at Zen Center of Los Angeles, while I was a lay practitioner, a proud-to-be lay practitioner; white robed, bearded, long-haired, in the image of Layman P’ang and Vimalakirti. I saw monk practice as a useless device, unnecessary in our century. And then, somehow, something changed, and I saw it differently. It wasn’t a matter of one being better than the other. It was a matter of clarifying that difference and seeing the unity of that duality. If you go to the words and ideas to try to understand this process, you’re lost. “If you’re responding to devices and entering into forms, you’re far from your true home.” It’s got nothing to do with the surface characteristics of these things. It’s got nothing to do with hair or no hair; black robe, white robe; in the world, in the monastery. There’s something else going on. What is it?

“A brahmin asked Shariputra, ‘What is the most difficult thing in the world?’ Shariputra replied, ‘To renounce fame, fortune, property, and family and enter the Buddhist monkhood.’” From Shariputra’s perspective, to enter monkhood is the ultimate human endeavor. Yet, monk practice in America, in general, does not currently call for that degree of renunciation. There are Buddhist lineages in Asia that do so to this day, but even in Japan some of the wealthiest people I ever met were temple priests. Priests’ incomes were extraordinary, often in excess of half-a-million dollars a year. The temples are run like a family business. The priests are married and have children. Sons frequently succeed their fathers and become the next owners of the business, which frequently involves little more than doing Buddhist funerals.

At Zen Mountain Monastery, our intent is to return to the tradition of whole-hearted monk practice. Much of what we have been doing here is in accord with the classical Buddhism of the Chinese T’ang Dynasty, with a lot of consideration given to Western monastic models as well. Despite the comments of several Western writers and some Theravadin teachers that the West has no model for monastic practice, we found that the West has a long and distinguished history of monasticism.

We looked at and borrowed from that rich heritage born of Western tradition, and combined it with the classic Chinese forms, to create the foundation for this monastery. The Anglican monastics who live only a few miles from Zen Mountain Monastery have been a particularly valuable resource to us for creating a Western Zen Buddhist form of monasticism. That’s where the models for our postulancy and novitiate program originated. The Asian traditions don’t have that. The closest thing to it is the tradition of ordaining shami (shramanera) monks. Shami monks are traditionally ordained at a very young age, as early as eleven years. The date of their ordination establishes their seniority, which will become important later in their careers.

Our postulancy and novitiate program more closely resemble the ones that operate in Roman Catholicism and Anglican monasticism. They are periods of time when people have an opportunity to experience the monastic life directly, before officially embracing the vows. It is time of deep search while working closely with the teacher and clarifying one’s relationship with the Dharma.
Our form of monasticism borrows significantly and, yet, differs significantly from both the Asian and the Western models. It’s a unique system. A critical underlying attribute of it is its dynamic relationship with lay practice. Each nourishes the other. There have been very deeply enlightened lay practitioners throughout history. But some of their lineages never continued for long. There hasn’t been a lay lineage ever in the history of Zen that has lasted more than two or three generations. I don’t know what the reason is, but that’s been the limit. The only exception to that may be — and we’ll see, only time will tell — the Yamada lineage that is now continuing into its third generation. That’s about the longest that a lay lineage has maintained itself. It’s extraordinary when you think about it. Two thousand five hundred years, all of these incredible lay practitioners that have appeared here and there, and somehow it didn’t continue. Is it because of the lack of institution?

The footnotes to the koan clarify the following points. The koan starts off with Nagarjuna said… and the footnote says, “Since time immemorial, it has been the way of the teachers of our school to create waves where there is no wind. If you want to know where he’s coming from, it’s not hard.”

The next line says When lay trainees can become Bodhisattvas and enter nirvana… and the footnote, “He can’t be called a petty thief. He has no shame, so he asks such a question. The Dharma is gateless; where is there an entry point?” He speaks of Bodhisattvas entering nirvana. What is the point of entry into nirvana?

The next line asks Why is it necessary to take monk’s ordination? The footnote says, “He uses his power to mystify the people. Immeasurably great people inevitably bog down in words and ideas. Still, he wants people to understand.” That’s one of the reasons why teachers from time immemorial have created these complications, playing the role of the fool, asking stupid questions and giving stupid answers, just simply because they want people to understand. That’s why he brings this up.

And so he answered himself. The footnote comments, “Devil’s mask, god mask, seeing a cage he builds a cage.” A cage is where people are stuck. A teacher’s antidote for the cage is another cage. Medicine and sickness heal each other.

And then the next line: The difference in the path is not in the objective, enlightenment… The footnote says, “If you direct yourself toward it, you move away from it” …but in the degree of difficulty in attaining this. “What’s he saying? This old teacher is covered with mud. It can’t be attained.” Why does he speak of the difficulty in attaining it, when from the very beginning, it’s unattainable? It can’t be received, can’t be given. What’s he talking about?

It is most difficult for the lay person because of other responsibilities. Footnote says, “Not difficult, not easy. Like when the wind blows from the east, the leaves gather in the west.” It’s not a matter of difficult or easy.

The next line: It’s much easier for the monks, who can fully devote themselves to the practice. And the footnote, “Not easy, not difficult. Like the endless river finding its way to the great ocean.” In a sense, “difficult,” “easy” is creating those dualities that fracture us at every turn. And it’s no different with monk practice/lay practice, or monastery/world. We inevitably fall to one side or another. We leave the world of this and that and we come into practice in the Monastery, and then repeat the whole process all over again. Absolute and relative, good and evil, heaven and earth, sacred and secular. And it always comes down to: how do you transcend these dualities? I am not asking about your ideas or descriptions — what is the actual practical action?

That’s what koan study is about, and it doesn’t come from the movement of the mind followed by action. It’s totally spontaneous. It arises of itself. People tend to get the idea that koan study is about answering questions, like it’s some kind of an oral examination that takes place in the dokusan room. It has nothing to do with the words and ideas. To see a koan, the answer to a koan, is not a gesture, not a word, not a sentence. It’s a state of consciousness. You can stand there on one leg with your thumb up your nostril — if your state of consciousness is right, you’ve seen the koan. It you’ve seen it, it reveals itself. If you haven’t seen it, that too reveals itself. The only place these koans count is in this very life itself. So understanding is not enough; believing is not enough. Only realization itself transforms our lives. It’s only in realizing that it manifests itself in the world. Words and ideas are wonderful for textbooks, but they aren’t worth a damn when it comes to living our lives moment to moment.

The next line: A brahmin asks Shariputra… The footnote says, “After all, if you don’t ask, how will you ever know?” What’s the most difficult thing in the world? “This seems like an odd quest. What will he do when he finds out?” Seems a little weird, doesn’t it? You go around to a great master and say “What’s the most difficult thing in the world?” Why do you want to know? That’s what I would ask.

Shariputra replied, “To renounce fame, fortune, property, and family, and to enter the Buddhist monkhood.” The footnote states, “As it turns out, he’s too literal. At that moment, the brahmin should have given him a taste of Shariputra’s own provisions.” How would you, in place of the brahmin, give Shariputra a taste of his own provisions? What are his own provisions?

The koan concludes with a capping verse: Householders and homeless living together. Sacred and secular intermingled. What kind of place is this? Can’t you see? The diamonds in the great net reflect each other.

That great net of diamonds is the mythological Net of Indra, where every gem contains every other gem in the universe, past, present, and future. And each of those diamonds is each one of us. Their interpenetration is the fifth rank of Master Tung-shan, and it describes all of our relationships, all of the dualities. There’s an entirely different, powerful, and dynamic way to perceive this universe that needs to be realized and actualized, in the mountain and in the market place.

The interdependence between monk practice and lay practice is the juice, the vital energy that will keep this Dharma alive on this continent for many generations to come. It’s important that we as a sangha recognize it, that we nourish it and support its development. I would not want to see this sangha be all monks; I would not want to see it be all lay practitioners. We need both monk practice and lay practice, and both must be strong, each with an integrity an uniqueness of its own.
Gatha on Shaving the Head

In this drifting, wandering world,
it is very difficult to cut off our human ties.
Now I cast them away, and enter true activity.
It is in this way that I express my gratitude.
As I shave my head, I vow to live a life of
simplicity, service, stability, selflessness,
and to accomplish the Buddha’s Way.
May I manifest my life with wisdom and compassion
and actualize the Tathagata’s true teaching.

Monasticism has been around for thousands of years. Buddhist monasticism dates back 2,500 years to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, who pointed out the pivotal role and power of this form of spiritual practice. Christian monasticism in the West and Buddhist monasticism in the East have played a profound role in the historical and cultural development of our world.

Because of the intrinsic mystery of the monastic calling, the unheralded nature of monastic work, and the dominant trends of our consumerist, goal-oriented society, very few people today have any accurate sense of what monasticism is about—why and how people become monastics, what it means to be a monastic, and how monasticism fits within a society and the world.

The ceremony of tokudo, or full ordination, gives me a rare opportunity to shed some light on the nature and functioning of monasticism. It is a rare occasion because most of the Buddhist community in the West—some ninety-nine percent of it—is made up of lay practitioners, or as we refer to them within the Mountains and Rivers Order, homedwellers. Consequently, most of my teachings are directed to those living in the world and usually don’t take up the issues pertaining to monastic practice.

Yet, it is the monastic institution of Buddhism that has provided the container within which the forms and the teachings that we are enriched by today were cultivated and transmitted. In my view, it is absolutely necessary that we establish deep roots of Western Buddhist monasticism to ensure the continuity of that transmission.

Zen monastic practice first flourished during the Tang dynasty in China. It was shaped by great masters such as Baizhang, who is credited as the author of the first Zen monastic rule. Later, during the Sung dynasty, art became the major thrust of Zen training, and some of the monastic forms were consequently diluted. When Dogen returned to Japan from his stay in China, he created his own rule or shingi, reviving the monastic form. Zen then traveled to Korea, Vietnam, and eventually to the West.

Throughout history and regardless of geography, monastic institutions have routinely served as centers of learning, education, and the arts. More fundamentally, they have been a source and model of spirituality—leaders in the revolution of awakening to what it means to be completely human. Buddhist monasticism is no different.

All the schools of Buddhism agree that buddhas are those who, within their enlightenment experience, have reached the pinnacle of human evolution, have completely satisfied their own personal interests, and are therefore able to effectively help others with their relative and ultimate concerns. Practice, realization, wisdom, and compassion are not just a personal achievement, but must include all beings and the planet we live on. In order to achieve true liberation, wisdom and compassion, we cannot leave even a single being behind. The question is, how are we to do that?

As Buddhist practitioners, we are witnessing an unprecedented growth of involvement in lay practice, and at the same time, we are challenged to establish a distinct, yet relevant monastic tradition. Both forms of training are essential. Both have to be authentic.

Lay practice and monastic practice are two wings of the same bird. Lay practice is of vital importance to the future of Buddhism in America and to the equanimity of our culture. But it cannot exist without monastic practice. Monastic practice is
equally critical. Like everything else in this universe, these two streams are interdependent, mutually arising, and have a mutual causality. They support and sustain each other. Both must be nourished. The question is, how?

There are a few monasteries and hundreds of Zen centers in this country. There are thousands of teachers and a myriad ways of training. Across the vast landscape of American Zen Buddhism, there is very little agreement on what represents authentic practice. And there are many questions and uncertainties. What constitutes kensho, or breakthrough? What is mind-to-mind transmission? How do you train in and receive the precepts? How does the practice of a lay practitioner differ from that of a monastic? What exactly is Zen monastic practice?

These questions are important because we are on the same path that Buddhism followed in all of the Asian countries. After a few hundred years of being part of a society and culture, the vigor and vitality of what was once a very powerful kind of spiritual training became diluted and co-opted. Gradually, the tradition became compromised. The same process seems to be taking place now here in the West.

Many American centers have developed a monastic form that’s essentially indistinguishable from the training of lay practitioners who have actively taken up the moral and ethical teachings and have received jukai, the Buddhist precepts. Most American Zen monastics live and train like homedwellers. They stay with their families in the world, have jobs and responsibilities, and occasionally spend time at the training centers with the teacher and sangha. Their vows are the same as the vows of lay practitioners. Apart from the color of their robes, everything else about their practice is essentially the same. It’s little wonder, then, that there is so much confusion and debate about the role of Zen monasticism in the modern Western world.

For the past twenty-six years, the Mountains and Rivers Order has created a definition of who we are through practice and training. We have delineated the paths for both lay practitioners and monastics, specifying the criteria for each, establishing ways for people to clarify their spiritual calling, and honoring both the distinctions and the interdependence of the two paths. This appreciation arose from and continues to be refined through our experience, and through direct and thorough study of monastic and lay forms and religious training available in the East and West.

The process that leads up to full ordination is called monastic formation, and within the Mountains and Rivers Order, it begins when the aspirant becomes a formal student and passes through the five barrier gates of entry. These barrier gates are not so much intended to keep people out, as they are meant to help them clarify why it is that they are coming here. We try to make the process of entry very clear so that when they begin training they do so with a real sense of clarity and direction.

Prospective monastics in this Order reside at the Monastery for a minimum of five years before taking full ordination. After entering as students and being in residence for at least two years, aspirants can become candidates to the monastic order. At this point they have already received jukai, so they understand the moral and ethical teachings as lay practitioners. They are also involved in various forms of training through work assignments, liturgy, and study. And all the while, with the help of the order’s vocation director, they are exploring whether or not they have the calling for a monastic life.

During this period of candidacy, aspirants take the first step in the process of monastic formation, which is postulancy. Approved by the vocation director, the candidates then make an application to the Monastic Council. Postulancy is a time when prospective monastics are brought into active participation in various aspects of the training. During this time, postulants learn to live the monastic life by doing it, discerning further their calling to the religious life. This is an opportunity for the community to get to know them better, in order to judge whether they have developed harmonious relationships with the larger community and have demonstrated sufficient human and spiritual maturity to enter into the novitiate. It therefore becomes incumbent on postulants to constantly and continually examine and practice the barriers they encounter within the context of their germinating monastic life, using the form, the teachers, and senior monastics to help them appreciate and integrate this new way of living one’s life into their whole being.

This period will continue until postulants have either entered the novitiate or the Monastic Council and abbot have concluded that there is a clear indication that the calling to monastic life has not yet taken place, in which case the candidate can return to lay life.

Once accepted into the novitiate, novices begin studying the monastic life in greater depth. They study Dogen’s and Keizan’s shingi or monastic rules, the sutras, Buddhist philosophy, comparative religion, liturgy, monastic history and spirituality, and the meaning and obligations of the monastic profession.
The novitiate period lasts for as long as it takes for a clear formation to have taken place to satisfy both the abbot and the Monastic Council. At the end of the novitiate, the novice and novice master determine whether or not they feel the time is right to take full religious vows. When the novice is ready, he or she makes a formal application to the Monastic Council and finally is accepted into the profession. Full ordination takes place and the novice becomes a junior monastic, taking the solemn vows of tokudo. The head is shaved, the monastic receives the o-kesa, bowl, precepts, monastic name, and takes the order’s monastic vows. This ceremony marks the beginning of a formal and lifelong commitment to the religious life.

But it is important to note that after full ordination, the formation of the monastic is hardly over. Formation is a lifelong endeavor and each monastic continues his or her conversion and development for life under the guidance of the abbot or abbess of the monastery. It is a practice in and of itself, with no other purpose than to live the monastic vows for the rest of one’s life.

For monastic formation to take place, there needs to exist in the aspirant a strong inner impulse, or calling, to live the religious life. It needs to be more of an imperative than an intellectual justification of an impulse, a strong need to serve and to give, a feeling for the sacredness and mystery of life, a compatibility with the community as well as with solitude. There must be clear bonding with the abbot, the sangha, and the teachings, as well as an inclination to discover the truth of existence. A certain sense of urgency to enter the vocation is also necessary, as is a clear openness to learning and practice.

One should not become a monastic in order to run away from something else, but instead must have a clear sense of entering into something of supreme importance.

Neither is the monastic way a path to dharma transmission. Denkai, daiji, denbo, shiho, inka—these are forms of teacher sanction that take place between a teacher and disciple and have no bearing on monastic formation or on whether a person is a monastic or lay practitioner.

In the Mountains and Rivers Order, the ceremony of full ordination is part of a response to the challenge of each religion to remain vital and true to its spirit, and not to cave in under insidious societal norms and pressures. The pressure to modify and water down what we’re trying to do has been enormous. In our world, we want it all. We want poverty and riches, a simple lifestyle and everything we can get. We want to serve, and we want to be served. We want to be free from desire, and we want to do what we want. We want privacy and we want liberation. Indeed, to cut off our human ties and enter true activity is not easy.

Through the years, a handful of people have stepped forward and declared in front of the community, “I wish to give my life to the dharma, unreservedly and wholeheartedly. I want to take the vows of simplicity, service, stability, selflessness, and to accomplish the Buddha’s Way.”

These monastic vows are unique to the Mountains and Rivers Order. They are rigorous and demanding. But they are also ultimately liberating. Because they ask a lot of the person who is taking them, they need to be studied and clarified carefully by those who are called to them. In greater detail, the five vows are:

Vow of simplicity – A vow of poverty, which means monastics are totally dependent on the sangha for their well-being,
Vow of service – Following the guidance of seniors and teachers, monastics vow to give themselves freely,
Vow of stability – This vow requires that monastics have completed major life changes in order to give themselves wholeheartedly to their vows (this doesn’t exclude a stable binary relationship, but does exclude parenting),
Vow of Selflessness – The realization and actualization of one’s life as the life of all beings, rather than a personal entity,
Vow to live the Buddha’s way – To act as a model of the manifestation of the moral and ethical teachings of the Buddha, manifesting wisdom and compassion in all actions.

Full ordination entails a lifetime commitment to these vows. Monastic candidates need to push into these vows, investigating their motivation and edges within the guidelines that the vows provide.

For twenty-six years, the monastics living these vows have offered their lives to support the practice of the sangha, just as the sangha has supported these monastics.

Monasticism is a revolutionary institution. It is always fundamentally counter-cultural. It is hard for us to turn towards and recognize the power of monasticism because we live in a world that is narcissistic, exploitative and violent. It is virtually impossible for us to imagine a way of life that is based on equanimity, love, and compassion.
As Thomas Merton pointed out in his essay Cistercian Life:

...What matters about the monastery is precisely that it is radically different from the world. The apparent “pointlessness” of the monastery in the eyes of the world is exactly what gives it a real reason for existing. In a world of noise, confusion, and conflict it is necessary for there to be places of silence, inner discipline and peace: not the peace of mere relaxation but the peace of inner clarity and love based on ascetic renunciation. In a world of tension and breakdown it is necessary for there to be men who seek to integrate their inner lives not by avoiding anguish and running away from problems, but by facing them in their naked reality and in their ordinariness! Let no one justify the monastery as a place from which anguish is utterly absent and in which men “have no problems.” This is the myth, closely related to the other myth that religion itself disposes of all men’s anxieties. Faith itself implies a certain anguish, and it is a way of confronting inner suffering, not a magic formula for making all problems vanish. It is not by extraordinary spiritual adventures or by dramatic and heroic exploits that the monk comes to terms with life.

The monastery teaches men to take their own measure and to accept their ordinariness; in a word, it teaches them that truth about themselves which is known as “humility.”

As for functioning in the world, it is certainly true that monastics, in a sense, function in the world in terms of much of their activity. But this particular view, unfortunately, suggests a kind of “inner busyness and spiritual bustle” that is not in keeping with the monastic life.

Monastics do not function in the world inasmuch as they respond to the needs of the spirit in the world. They always respond in accord with the imperative they encounter. Their activities are largely immeasurable, and because of this, monastic life is not something that we can easily measure and quantify. What counts is not the amount of activity and compassionate works that the monastic engages in: not the multitude and variety of their ascetic practices, not the ascent through various stages of spiritual development or degrees of enlightenment. Again, in Merton’s words, “What counts is not to count and not to be counted.” He continues:

The seemingly fruitless existence of the monk is therefore centered on the ultimate meaning and the highest value: it loves the truth for its own sake, and it gives away everything in order to hear the Word of God and do it.

We would say that it gives away everything in order to realize wisdom and compassion, and to actualize them in everything the monastic does.

The monk is valuable to the world precisely in so far as he is not part of it, and hence it is futile to try to make him acceptable by giving him a place of honor in it.

[This is] not written for the sake of argument, nor in order to “sell” the monastic life to anyone. [It is] simply a meditation on what one may frankly call the mystery of the monastic life. That is to say that it attempts to penetrate the inner meaning of something that is essentially hidden—a spiritual reality that eludes clear explanation. Though it is certainly reasonable for men to live as monks, mere reasoning can never account for the monastic life or even fully accept it. Yet for centuries this life has been and continues to be an inescapable religious fact. Certain men find themselves inexplicably drawn to it. Some are able to follow the attractions or the inner urging of conscience, and they become monks. Others attempt to live the life and fail, but when they “return to the world” their lives are henceforth completely changed.

To come face to face with the mystery of the monastic vocation and to grapple with it is a profound experience. To live as a monk is a great gift, not given to many.

As Merton said, to be able to live one’s life as a monastic is a gift. It’s a gift that should be treasured and celebrated. It should be cared for with the totality of our being. It should not be taken lightly. May we, through our practice and training, continue to celebrate this gift as individuals and as a sangha.
When I was young, I wanted to remain celibate. I didn’t want to get married because I knew myself so well, I knew what would happen to me if I got married. I thought it may be easier to remain alone to be a Buddhist. This is the easy way. But some people may think to get married as a Buddhist may be easier because one’s wife will help him. So it may be easier. In some ways it is easier, but it makes it more difficult to be a good priest… At the time when I got married, it was a problem whether I should be a priest or a layman. I thought if I get married I will not be a priest anymore, or a monk anymore. So I had to think a lot… I think if you get married, your life will be more difficult. If you don’t marry, your life will not be so difficult. That is also true for a priest or monk. To have a family is a great difficulty. So I don’t think that is just a problem for a monk or for you, but a problem for everyone. If you get married, your life will be more difficult in one sense, but on the other hand you will have some advantage. That is how our human life goes, always not sweet. I think when Buddha said, “Our life is a life of suffering,” that is very true. Anyway, we have suffering. As long as we seek for something good, we have suffering… It is easier for us to help others when we are single. In the Mahayana school, to help others comes first, and to help ourselves comes next, especially for a Mahayana priest… It is actually easier for a single person to practice our way. It is easier. It’s much harder for a couple to practice our way. That’s all… We are doing pretty well, I think, (with couples practicing at Zen Center) even though we have problems. And still, I think we need some single monks or nuns here. It is not so easy for a single person or a married couple here. But if you understand our life, if you are mature enough, maybe it is possible… When you become very idealistic – some of us are very idealistic – idealistics should stick to a single life, because they feel good. So you shouldn’t compare single life to married life, we shouldn’t say which is better, that is something which we shouldn’t discuss so much. If we have good understanding, then we can live together, married couples and single people together… Many people have been doing pretty well (staying single). There must be some magic. And the magic is zazen practice. If you sit hard enough, you can be single. Zazen practice is a kind of magic. That is true. I am not single, so I cannot prove it, but many teachers have proved how to remain single, how to be an authentic monk, a Buddhist monk. The magic is zazen practice, that’s all. When your foundation of life is based on individualism, that is not possible. When you believe in the oneness of man and woman, and non-duality, then that is possible. And how to actualize non-duality in our physical life is zazen practice.

I was disgusted with those priests (in Japan) who gave up their robes and changed their robes into suits to support themselves, when Dogen said we are protected from within, firmly; why do we expect support from outside? That is our spirit. But nowadays (some priests have) started to lose that kind of spirit. Most priests, I may say, in Japan, do not respect their way, their practice… A priest is not a priest any more if he is involved in dualistic practice—in involved in busy life, busy world, busy mundane world—there is no more priest. Even though priests are there, they are not practicing the priest way. So, we say, "They cover their pan with the toilet lid.” They have mixed up worldly practice and priest practice. That is how we lose our way. So when a priest observes our way like a priest, there is a priest. When we do not observe our way like a priest, we are a "toilet lid.” not a lid of pots and pans. "To help others” does not mean to help others for your own convenience. Priests may be the most troublesome people, may be very difficult to handle. Even if they are offered a million dollars, they may say "oh, thank you." Even if only one penny, they will "thank you.” They will say "thank you,” that’s all. It is very hard, difficult to handle. When people want a real priest, they should handle the priest carefully. They shouldn't mix up the priest with someone else. Though we should not lose this confidence within ourselves, we don't have to say it in words, but within ourselves we must have a strong confidence in Buddha's Way, and we should be supported from within, not from outside. So Buddhists should be Buddhist, completely. When a Buddhist really becomes Buddhist, he or she will be supported as a Buddhist.

The okesa is the symbol of oneness, the expression of this one goal, one spirit. Even though I receive this (new) okesa right now, even though I shaved my head a long, long time ago, I must shave my head again and again. Even though I received ordination a long, long time ago, still it is necessary to receive the okesa. Many many times, this kind of sincere practice; as long as you do not lose the sincerity of Way-seeking mind as the ultimate goal of a human being, then every time you do something, that practice will enrich your experience of Dharma and make your spirit stronger and stronger. And you will be a really a good example of a bodhisattva. It is never too late to receive a proper okesa. It is not too late for anyone to be ordained as a Buddhist. Here I say "Buddhist,” but I don’t mean any special religious group. Only do not neglect, only don’t lose the spirit to attain the oneness of all being, including all monks, all animate and inanimate beings. You say "this religion or that religion," "layman or priest." Actually, all of us should eventually be priests—all of us, without any exception. All of us should be priests. But until you can accept priesthood from the bottom of the heart, you will be laymen. As Dogen Zenji said, right now we are teacher and disciple, but all of us are actually friends of Buddha. Those who have received the okesa already, you should appreciate the meaning of receiving it. And those who haven't, respect the okesa. And you should know that someday you will receive the okesa. And those who joined this family by chance may know some day what we are doing here. So if you practice our way with this kind of spirit, whatever you do, it makes sense. When you lose this spirit, you will be lost. Even though you wear the okesa, you will be lost. So to respect the truth is a very important thing. You shouldn't say "this or that” because each thing has some meaning as it is.
The Zen Priest’s Koan
by Sojun Mel Weitsman Roshi

The occasion of a priest ordination always brings up questions about what it means to be ordained. We can look at this by examining what ordination has meant in Zen tradition, and also by considering our practice in the present day.

When I was about to be ordained in 1969, I asked Suzuki Roshi what it meant to be ordained as a priest and what I should do. He said, “I don't know.”

Then I asked Katagiri Sensei, and he said, "Oh, I don't know."

I hadn't asked to be ordained. Suzuki Roshi asked me to, and I was quite surprised when he did. I thought that since he asked me, he would at least tell me what to do. But he didn't tell me much. At that time there were few American priests at the San Francisco Zen Center; I was only the fifth person to be ordained. The first one had left the center, two were in Japan, and the fourth was out of sight. So I didn't have any role models, except for our Japanese priests: Suzuki Roshi, Katagiri Sensei, Chino Sensei, and Yoshimura Sensei.

I tried to observe everything Suzuki Roshi did; I would follow him around and imitate him. Suzuki Roshi told me later that there is a practice of following the teacher's footsteps: moving as the teacher moves and absorbing the teacher’s way, to the point where sometimes you can't tell the difference between the teacher and the student. Without explicitly saying so, he was drawing me into that as an aspect of my training.

Chino Sensei and Katagiri Sensei (as they were known then) taught me how to wear my robes, as well as other things I needed to know. I also learned that it is necessary to ask questions. So little by little, through observation and by asking questions and following closely, I learned something about how to become a priest. Still, I wasn't told much, and when I did anything wrong, I was scolded. Many times I failed to pick up on things as I should have. There was a good deal of mystery in my relationships with my teachers—this was their style.

In the Sixties, our morning service consisted of bowing nine times and chanting the Heart Sutra three times in Japanese. At the end of morning zazen, we recited the robe chant, also in Japanese. One time, Suzuki Roshi and I were in the anteroom at Sokoji and I asked, "What is the meaning of the [robe] chant that we do in the morning right after zazen?" Suzuki Roshi hesitated and Katagiri Sensei started looking through the drawers to see if he could come up with a translation. Suzuki Roshi stopped him and pointed to his heart and said, "Love." This is how he used to teach. He didn't like to explain things literally, but he didn’t miss an opportunity to go right to the essence.

I began to realize how important not knowing was, even though I felt that I needed some answers. So I practiced with "don't know" in front of me as my priest's koan, and it's still there. From time to time, people want to define a Zen priest, or the role of the priest, or the functions of a priest. There are historical functions and role model functions; we should know what they are, and practice and absorb them. But at the same time, we must be open to what the present situation calls for and be ready to respond to new situations, differences in culture, and the circumstances of a particular place and time. Suzuki Roshi was concerned that in the transition from Japan to America, the true essence not be lost. At the same time, he made a big effort to follow as well as to lead us.

Soon after we had established the Berkeley Zendo, I asked him what I should do to help develop the practice. He said, "You can do what you want." He was giving me permission without telling me what to do, and at the same time observing. When it looked like I was becoming arrogant or assuming too much of a teaching role, he would let me know with a remark, or sometimes just a look or a glance. I told him once that I felt his stick was always on my shoulder. He gave me a lot of trust and freedom, and at the same time I felt I was never out of his sight. I think he wanted to see what it would look like to have an American priest develop an American zendo. I think it was something of an experiment for him.

During Suzuki Roshi’s time, when things were just beginning, we didn't study much. Suzuki Roshi went through the one hundred cases in the Blue Cliff Record, and commented on the Lotus Sutra and the Sandokai, and talked about Dogen a lot. That's what I remember most. He told me he wanted to comment on the Platform Sutra, but he didn't have time. So when we were with Suzuki Roshi our attention was focused on his teaching and understanding of dharma. After his passing in 1971, we began studying and teaching classes, developing a study center, and learning something about Buddhism and Zen. After many years of study, we could finally see how accurate Suzuki Roshi's understanding of Buddhism was.

When the founder is gone, it is natural for the students to study more and to broaden our knowledge, as well as to define our practice and create categories and standards. Although our priests learn the liturgy and the service positions, train in the various monastic positions, and study the appropriate literature, we have never established a formal curriculum for training, even though there have been attempts to do so. But I think we are in a position where such a curriculum would be helpful, and would not sacrifice the fundamental intuitive quality that is the basis of our practice.

Now thirty-four years after the founder’s death, how do we think about priest practice, lay practice, and monk’s practice, aside from not knowing what a priest is. Priest ordination is not as common as it was twenty-five-odd years ago, when it was considered to be the prime aspiration for a student at the San Francisco Zen Center. Since that time we have not been ordaining as many, but allowing some space to harmonize lay and priest practice. I think it is important to remember that although Suzuki Roshi ordained a number of priests, he was equally committed to his lay practitioners.
My rule of thumb for ordaining a Zen priest is that the candidate must already be practicing with the same attitude as a priest. Then, after at least five years, ordination can become a natural step, an acknowledgment and an encouragement to continue.

I think of a priest as someone who doesn't have any other ambition and whose whole life is devoted to practice for the sake of practice. One's practice is wholehearted and selfless, accompanied by a strong desire to understand the dharma. One is ready and willing to help and support others, and that willingness comes before one's own attainment. One's practice is steady and continuous, not contentious, competitive, materialistic, or easily discouraged. Most importantly, one is not doing it for one's own self-aggrandizement, or for gain or position. A priest should remain upright and honest and set an example for others.

Sometimes a student will ask if they can be ordained as a priest and I may say, "Yes" or "No" or "Perhaps sometime." If I say to someone that it might be a good idea sometime in the future, responding in that way allows them to consider what it might feel like as a possibility, and then to sit with that for a while. We may have the desire, but to ask the question and get a response puts it in a new light.

There are many excellent students who practice in a steady and mature way, and yet it wouldn't be right for them to take on the burden of priesthood. This is why lay ordination is so important. As a layperson, one practices in the world and utilizes the forms of the world as forms of practice, which is a very advanced way. This can also be an important part of a priest's experience. A priest puts on the full robes, shaves his or her head, and is a more visible example, inviting feedback. A layperson is less visible and must practice in a sometimes hostile or unsympathetic atmosphere, without getting lost or discouraged. Suzuki Roshi once said that one must be a good lay student in order to be a good priest.

Lay ordination and priest ordination are two tracks, and in the middle is the monk. The terms apply to both men and women. According to my understanding, a monk is a person who is practicing in a monastic situation and can be either lay or priest. The term monk indicates the kind of practice one is doing rather than the type of ordination one has. When we attend practice period at Tassajara, we are all monks participating in the same way.

Eventually, some of the monks should and will become priests, and some lay students will spend an appropriate amount of time in residence at Zen Center and then return to a more worldly life. Hopefully, they will continue practice as laypeople involved with Zen Center, while living in the larger society. This style of lay practice is very important and vital, and lay ordination is an acknowledgment of that connection. To be ordained into the sangha as a layperson or a priest are both equally valid. We take the same sixteen precepts. But a layperson lives and sets an example within society, while the priest takes care of the sangha, makes the practice available, and is responsible for carrying the tradition forward, both in its historical and emerging aspects.

Many laypeople who have practiced a good number of years have actually taken on the same responsibilities as a priest. They are practice leaders, they teach classes, and hold key positions. For some time, we have been thinking about how to acknowledge and give formal recognition to this kind of practitioner. We will continue to work on this. As far as I know, this type of formal recognition will be something new for our school. We have the unusual circumstance of having longtime resident students who are not priests, but who cannot properly be called laypersons either. I have begun giving a certificate of lay recognition to some longtime practitioners—I call it lay entrament. It authorizes that person to teach, but not to ordain others, as I feel that to be the task of a transmitted priest.

In Japan, college-age boys from temple families go to the monastery for a few years of rigorous training before returning to the family temple. They have a different kind of training than we do. They are all ordained as novices, so the atmosphere is quite different. They also come from a cohesive Buddhist culture and have not yet journeyed into their adult life. Here at Zen Center, we have many kinds of people from diverse backgrounds, ages, and levels of experience, which makes our system far more complex. In Japan, the student is ordained as a novice and then begins the practice. Here, we practice for many years before becoming ordained.

In the history of Buddhism, the celibate monk has always been treated in a special way. Having given up all worldly desires and ambitions in order to practice with complete devotion, the monk is supported by the laity. In return, the monk practices virtuously and acts as a teacher and guide for society. As we say in our meal chant upon receiving the food offering, "May our virtue and practice deserve it." Although our priests are not expected to be celibate, they are expected to be faithful in relationship and not promiscuous.

One problem that arises is that because a person is a priest, one might think he or she must be very special. Then, many people may want to be a little bit special. But my feeling is that a priest is a servant of the sangha. In other words, rather than being put on a pedestal, I believe that priests should direct their energy toward serving the sangha. When priests selflessly serve and provide leadership with sincere effort and humility, they are spontaneously honored by the sangha. Respect has to be earned. The function of a priest is to set that kind of example for the sangha and provide the glue that holds it together. It is a rather humble position and at the same time a noble one. The respect must be earned—it is not automatic—and one of the worst things a priest can do is use the position to lord it over people, or as a means to acquire a powerful advantage.

It can also be a problem if a sangha of priests is seen as an elite or privileged group. There are some schools that only recognize the ordained monks as sangha. But for us, the sangha includes all practitioners, and in a wider sense, it includes all beings—not only humans, but trees, rivers, mountains, and the animal kingdom.

Originally, the sangha was made up of monks who were supported solely by the laity. But in our sanghas there is no laity to support priests or monks in the traditional way. We have had to develop innovative ways, such as providing programs for the
public and services like the summer guest season at Tassajara. Sometimes priests must go out to work. I think it’s a good idea at some point for a priest to do this, to test their practice and then come back again and be visible as a priest.

The overlap of priest and lay can sometimes lead to confusion. But I’m not worried about the confusion. The priest has a path within the practice, and the layperson also has a path within the practice. Rather than interfering with each other, they can and should be mutually supportive. We are all in the same dharma boat, but each one is at a different stage of development and understanding. We can all practice together harmoniously if we know where we are moment by moment and treat each other with love and respect, being aware of both our abilities and shortcomings.

In the Asian countries, there is more of a distinction between priest and lay. For instance, in Japan, if you are a carpenter, that is what you do; if you are a potter, that is your identity; if you are a priest, you function as a priest. The crossing over of practices is not so common. The practice that we have here is very unusual in that laypeople practice in a way that might look like a monk’s practice somewhere else. We have a peculiar situation that’s not easily defined; we can’t make the ordinary distinctions. Regardless of the problems, I think that given time, the resolution will come by itself. We must be able to sit with our headache, if that’s what it is. But if we are attentive, without ignoring the situation or forcing it into resolution, we will be able to find some clarity.

When people are ordained, they are not automatically teachers, and someone may already be teaching before being ordained. At a certain stage, a priest or layperson can counsel students. After being a shuso (head student for an ango or practice period), a student may be asked to begin counseling other students, depending on their maturity. There is a certain amount of psychology that goes with counseling, but students with critical psychological problems are referred to therapists. The counseling that is done in dokusan and practice discussions is directed toward helping the students in their understanding of dharma and encouraging them to sustain their practice.

A good counselor should be able to meet every situation and help those with whom they meet to see themselves clearly. Sometimes a layperson can do this very well and a priest may not be able to. Sometimes a priest is completely immersed in practice but is not necessarily a teacher. That person may simply be a monk—a sincere student whose life of practice is itself a wonderful teaching. There are those who teach without teaching, but through their activity they are always transmitting the dharma and inspiring the sangha, whether knowingly or not. There are those who always have a very hard time, but their effort feels genuine and they inspire us because of their sincerity and dedication. This practice reveals many facets.

Now, after many years of taking the backward step, we are testing the waters of socially-engaged Buddhism. I have always left social engagement to each individual to do what seems appropriate, but I think we can do much more in this area. Still, we sometimes forget that opening our doors so that people have the rare opportunity to practice is perhaps our most valuable social service. In the future, though, we can be developing more ways to use our energy for social engagement on various levels.

In most religions, priests have been thought to be mediators between god and the people, or god’s representatives on earth. What about the Buddhist priest? Most koans are about the nondual nature of heaven and earth, the absolute and the relative. A Zen student should realize that there is no gap, that a mediator is not necessary, and embodying this fundamental point helps others to realize it. You could say that the function of the priest or lay student is to express determination for realization and practice, regardless of the obstacles, and to be the seamless place where heaven and earth meet, becoming a lamp for oneself, and others, on the path.
The Eight Stages of Monastic Practice
by Zoketsu Norman Fischer Roshi, published in Wind Bell, the journal of San Francisco Zen Center

Religious texts make monastic life sound like something very deep and very constant. Like some life that has been the same for a thousand years - timeless and seamless. In a way this is really true - underneath who any of us are is another person, the monk, who is living a true and perfect life. I believe that all of us have this monk in us. All of us want to live this life of silence and perfection - and this life does go on in us, underneath our other life. When we’re completely out of touch with it we suffer a lot - we run around looking for something we can’t seem to find, and our lives don’t work. And when we are in touch with it more or less - as we are in a retreat or even in a few moments of practice or at the beach or on a long hike or alone sometimes under the stars - we feel whole. Then we can approach others and the complicated world with a measure of equanimity.

So this is what I mean by the monastic life - the way of wholeness, a sacred way, a sacred place, a clear place, an ideal, in a sense, that lives at the bottom of our hearts and is reflected back to us in religious experience and in religious literature. But, as we all know, ideals can be poison if we take them in large quantities or if we take them incorrectly - in other words, if we take them not as ideals, but as concrete realities. Ideals should inspire us to surpass ourselves, which we need to aspire to do if we are to be truly human, and which we can never actually do - exactly because we are truly human. And that’s what ideals are: tools for inspiration, not realities in and of themselves. The fact that we have so often missed this point, accounts, I think, for the sorry history of religion in human civilization. Ideals become poison when we believe in them too literally, when we berate ourselves and others for not measuring up. No one measures up and no one ever will - that’s the nature of ideals, that’s their beauty. So at their best, and if rightly understood, ideals ought to make us pretty light-hearted: they give a sense of direction, which is comforting, and since they are by nature impossibilities, why worry? Just keep trying.

The monastic life as it appears by implication in the texts of any religious tradition is this kind of an ideal. You know - we stay in delighted obedience with our teacher forty years, living peacefully day by day. Hearing the sounds of the bells, deep in meditation or prayer, in the mountains among the clouds and forests, living in harmony and calmness. Well underneath it may be like this, but up above, in our conscious world where we live what we call our lives, it really never looks like that. What is the monastic life really like? I’ve been living in a Zen community for about twenty years and I’ve developed some thoughts on this subject. Our community isn’t exactly a monastic community of course, but it is a residential religious community where people come to live their lives for many years, and I think what we’ve experienced and come to understand over time turns out to be fairly typical of monastic or long-term residential religious communities.

I want to speak of a series of stages in monastic life as a way of describing what happens in that life and what kinds of problem come up. Of course there aren’t any stages, or the stages happen simultaneously or in no particular order, and one goes through them many times. Further, people - even people who share a taste for a religious life for one reason or another - are very different. No setting forth of stages could possibly do justice to the variety of people’s experiences on the path (and this is another sometimes violent preconception: that there is a definite delineated path, and that things happen in the same way and in the same order for everyone). Still, systematic thinking has its virtues, and there are some general tendencies most of us can notice and recognize, at least to some extent. So let me speak of eight stages of monastic life.

The eight are first, the honeymoon, second the disappointment or betrayal, third the exploration of commitment, fourth commitment and flight, fifth the dry place, sixth appreciation, seventh love, and finally, letting go of monastic life altogether.

The first stage, which is probably typical of the first stage of almost anything, is the honeymoon, a time when we’re really thrilled with the life of the monastery. The contrast with what we’re used to in the world, or what we’re fleeing from in the world, is so great that we’re in a state of ecstasy. We see the people we’re living with as really kind and wonderful. The sounds of the monastery bells, the simple hearty food, the early morning meditation, the landscape, the weather, the peace and quiet, the brilliant teachers and teachings - really nothing could be better. We’re learning about ourselves at a great rate and we’re learning about the Dharma too. So much of what we hear seems absolutely true, seems to be what we sensed inside ourselves all our lives without ever really being aware of it or having words for it. We feel relieved and resolved and renewed. We feel as if suddenly and unexpectedly, perhaps in the midst of a great sorrow, we turned around in the middle of our ordinary life and found to our amazement a brand new life in which all the assumptions and behaviors were different and fresh.

This stage can last for some time but it usually comes to an end in fairly short order. We enter the second stage, the stage of disappointment or betrayal. Of course what happens is we lose the sense of contrast with the world at large and what’s inside us becomes stronger than our perception of the newness of our surroundings. Whatever festering problems we have, known and unknown, that were held in abeyance while we marveled at the greatness of the religious life, now come out full blown, and rather than see them for what they are - our own internal contradictions - we project them outward onto the community. We begin to see the truth - that there are plenty of imperfections. The food gets tiring. The people aren’t as nice as they were a few months ago. The many restrictions on our life style becomes wearing. We begin
to notice a lack of creativity and energy in our fellow practitioners, especially in some of the old timers. We’re a little sleep deprived and weary. And we begin to notice too that there are many baffling and unacceptable aspects to the teachings - in fact, on one hand, the teachings sound purposely confusing and incomprehensible, and on the other hand, they sound suspiciously, in many cases, like the religion we grew up in and fled from. And the teachers turn out to be a lot less fantastic than we first imagined. We’re seeing them stumble and make mistakes - and if we haven’t seen it we’ve heard about it, or if we haven’t heard about it or seen it then the teachers are perhaps a little too perfect - there’s something suspicious and even coercive about their piety. Are they really real? Little by little a sense of disillusionment, of betrayal, comes over us.

All of these perceptions, as disturbing as they are, are in fact quite true, so when we bring them up no one tries to talk us out of them. Old-timers in the community may become defensive, but they can't really disagree. Yet the truth of all this doesn’t really account for what we’re feeling - cheated and disappointed. The only thing that accounts for that is our inner pain - we were feeling, for a moment, better, redeemed, and now, suddenly we feel even worse then when we came - and eventually we realize that imperfect though the community is (and it may even be worse than imperfect, it may be in some ways actually toxic) it’s us, not it, that is the source of our present suffering. It can take awhile to come to this, sometimes a very long time if there are, as there have been in many communities of all religious traditions over the years, flagrant cases of betrayal by leaders or other important community members. But whether it comes soon or only after many years, and whether its causes are spectacular or quiet, it is something we have to come to on our own. Because when we’re deeply disappointed with the community it’s hard for long-term committed community members to point out that it’s our eye, not the visual object, that’s cloudy. They can’t tell us this because they know we won’t hear it; they know that if they tell us this they will only appear to us to be defending the status quo, and we will mistrust them for it; and besides, many of them don’t understand that this is the case anyway; many of them are themselves confused about the community and where it and they begin and end. So for all these reasons the older members of the community tolerate us and our views, and there is very little they can do to help us through this stage. If we feel this sense of betrayal or disappointment acutely enough, and especially if a difficult personal incident happens to us when we are in the midst of it, we may very well leave the community in a huff, which happens, though seldom, and when it does it’s a real tragedy. If this doesn’t happen then it is likely that after enough time goes by we will realize what’s really going on.

Now we begin to get the picture that there’s a lot that has been going on in our lives for a long time that we were simply unaware of. We came to the community to find peace, to live in a kind of utopia expecting that that will make up for the fact that we ourselves aren’t entirely perfect human beings. Perhaps in this utopia we will become enlightened and our problems will end; few of us actually think these thoughts this baldly, but in fact most of us have some fuzzy and unexamined version of them in our minds as well. But instead of this scenario we find that we’re living in an extremely flawed community and that far from being “not entirely perfect,” we’re actually a raging mass of passion, confusion, bitterness, hatred and contradiction, and a state of anything remotely like enlightenment or even a little peace of mind, is very far away. In other words, we’re much worse off now than when we began. So we have to acknowledge that the job we’ve undertaken is much larger than we thought. It’s going to take quite a while. And part of what we need to do is to make up our minds that we’re really going to do it, we’re really going to roll up our sleeves and stay in it for the long haul - one or two or three thousand lifetimes.

So we enter the third stage and we begin to explore honestly and without too much idealism the actual nature of our commitment to the practice and to the community. And this is a very difficult thing to do because now that we are really looking without too much distraction, we find many attitudes in ourselves, and they're not always consistent with one another. We want to practice always, to take vows as a lay or priest practitioner, to devote ourselves completely to the path - there’s absolutely nothing else to do. Many people feel these things sometimes- perhaps rarely or perhaps on a regular basis. But how strongly do we feel them? And how do we know whether or not to act on them? But even if we feel a strong and clear sense of commitment, there may be at the same time many other strong feelings - we want also to get married, have a house, a career, children. We want to travel. To serve others more directly. Or maybe we’re just restless or we know somehow this isn’t the place or time - we need to go to another tradition or another teacher or group.

The fourth stage I call commitment and flight, which sounds like an oxymoron, but is, I think, a good name for it. In this stage we have come to find solid ground under our commitment. We accept our wobbling and human mind and know now that underneath it there is finally something solid and reliable, although we are often out of touch with it. Looking back, we can see how much we’ve changed since we entered the practice; we see how much we are the same too, of course, but the change is apparent. We are more solid. We are calmer. We are quieter in our spirit and less apt to fly off the handle inside or outside. Not as solid or as calm or as quiet as we had hoped or expected to be, but we have by
now given up that hope as unrealistic and we are more able to settle for how it actually is with us, and to find it good, or at least acceptable, with a degree of joy. So we feel ready to make a commitment to the practice and the community. This commitment can only take one form: renunciation of one sort or another, a giving up of self and personal agenda, as we see that self and personal agenda don’t in fact help us to get what we want and really need in our lives. They only cause suffering. As this becomes more and more apparent to us we are more willing to enter into a serious commitment to the practice. In fact after a while we feel that without even choosing to do so we have already done so. There isn’t any other way. We are committed; we have already renounced our life. Here is where we take on a responsible position and make a practical commitment to stay in the community for some time, or take initiation as a priest or lay practitioner. We feel responsible for the community.

But as soon as we feel settled in our commitment, particularly if that commitment is marked by a particular event such as ordination or entering the monastery on a long term basis, the demons of confusion return. Immediately our old interests and desires come back in force. Maybe we fall hopelessly in love the day before we are to go off to the monastery for an indefinite stay, or maybe we find ourselves roaring drunk two days after our ordination as a priest. Such things have actually happened. They catch us quite off guard. We had thought we had the thing figured out, but what we hadn’t counted on was the fact that there were still a fair number of unopened doors in our heart, and the power of the commitment we are now ready to make and have made is such that it violently throws open those doors and we are shocked at what we find inside. We are humbled by the sheer power of our own- and therefore of human- passion. Humbled and shocked and amazed. We are reeling perhaps for some time with this. More ashamed and confused than ever. It is unusual I think for people to enter the monastery for a long stay or to take ordination as a priest without suffering some version of this. It is in many cases a rude awakening. Sometimes our teacher and elders seem very knowing when this happens to us. Sometimes they even have a chuckle over it. This can be either comforting or maddening, depending on our temperament. At this stage sometimes there literally is flight. People take off, disappear overnight, run off with a lover, leave the monastery in the middle of the night. But such things are becoming more rare. More often it’s an internal drama. You see it in people’s faces, a kind of grim determination mixed with a very pure innocence, even if the person is middle aged or older when this happens. The power and surprise of these feelings is enough to send any of us back to square one, with almost no identity left. In fact the work of this stage is the reconstitution of identity. And this is why we feel often like children now, like babies. And this of course feels wonderful and terrible at the same time. Because we thought we were grown up, we thought we were advancing.

This uncomfortable state is cured only with the passage of time, which is the great healer if we will let it be. Time will heal everything; this is its nature. Usually we hold onto the past and so don’t allow time to do its real work in our lives. But those who get this far in the practice usually - but not always- have enough concentration inside and enough support outside to avoid this entrapment and so they can allow time to work its magic and after a while they can settle into their new commitment, go beyond the child-like stage, and begin to mature. They reconstitute their lives around their new commitments. They take on new practices, new studies, deepen their Dharma relationships, let go of all aspirations and fantasies and illusions and are content to just go on day by day with the practice. More time passes.

Here is where we sidle into the fifth stage- the dry place, and we get here bit by bit without knowing it. Because we are not perfect in our letting go to the healing winds of time. In fact in a subtle way we hold onto our life even while we have given it up entirely in renunciation. This time this subtle fact is not necessarily announced to us in a dramatic way, we may not necessarily notice it at all. We go on practicing sincerely, seemingly going deeper and deeper with our renunciation, becoming more and more settled in the life of the Dharma. But this becomes exactly the problem. We are too settled. We seem to be getting a little bit dull, a little bit bored. We’ve lost the edge of our seeking and searching mind and are feeling fairly comfortable. We have a position in the community, we are an experienced person, a respected member. We have a good grasp of the teachings- or at least we have heard them so often that we seem to have a grasp of them. And then, whether we notice it or not, we strike a dry patch, a time of nothingness and dullness and lack. We can’t go back into our old life, it seems, and yet there seems nowhere to go forward to. And we can’t even believe in the notion of going forward or backward- where could we go forward to, and certainly how could we ever go backward? So we are quite stuck. And then fear arises. Fear of never realizing or even glimpsing the path; fear of the world we have left behind; fear of what we ourselves have become. Sometimes none of this surfaces at all. We just go about our business in the monastery, feeling quite self-satisfied, but actually dying a little but more every day. Up until now our path may have been difficult at times but it has always been positive- we have always been growing and learning. But at this point we have stopped growing and learning, this is exactly the problem. And we have mistaken the laziness or dullness that cover our fear for the calmness that comes of renunciation. It’s true that our mind is calm but it is a dark not a bright calm. Our creativity, our passion, our humanness, is beginning to leave us, little by little, and often we have no idea that this is happening to us.

This is the hardest stage to appreciate and work with. Often no one, not even the elders and teachers of the community, can recognize that this is happening to us. Indeed, those very elders and teachers may themselves be in the midst of such a stage and be unaware of it. In this stage what we have seen as the cure for our lives, what everyone in the community has affirmed and has devoted their lives to, now becomes the very poison that is killing us off slowly.

I have tried to discern the signs of this stage in myself and in others, and it is not an easy thing to do. It is not easy in one’s self because it is so subtle, and not easy in others because it is subtle, though less subtle, and they often do not
want to hear it. Because to overcome this stage, to go beyond it, might very well take leaving the community or otherwise doing something very radical to shift the ground. And most of us have a hard time, after going in a particular direction for ten or twenty years, a direction that has involved great effort and sacrifice, changing direction. Our fear, acknowledged or not, holds us back. And we may stay this way for a very long time, perhaps for the rest of our lives. This happens of course to anyone in any walk of life, and it may be no better or worse when it happens within the context of a religious community. But a religious community holds very strongly to a commitment to awareness and truthfulness and so when it happens within such a community- even if only to a few individuals- it is like a disease in that community. And the effect of the disease can be felt in many ways and on many levels. There can be a subtle occlusion in the flow of communication, an almost imperceptible dishonesty, a jarring or not so jarring sense of disjunction. Even though no one may recognize that a failure to discern the effects of this stage is a few community members is the cause of the disjunction, people who come can feel the disjunction, perhaps not at first, but after a while it becomes subtly apparent. So it is very important for each individual to remain open to the possibility that this dry place may be arising in his or her life, and to have the courage to address it when it comes. Because it will come, and it must come. And it will come again and again. If one is willing to address it it becomes an opportunity to go deeper, a chance to let go a little more, and open up to time’s healing power, and the love that comes only in this way.

If one can do it and it is never done alone, it is always done in the company of and with the help of others- then there is a great although a quiet opening into the simple joy of living the religious life everyday. The monastery may have great controversies and problems, as any group of people will have, but these no longer have a stickiness that will catch us. We can enjoy being with the others but don’t need to feel compelled by them. The simple things of the daily round- the quiet meditation periods, the sounds of the bells, the daily work, the sky and air and earth of the place where we live and practice- all of these things take on a great depth of peacefulness and contentment. We come to appreciate very much the tradition to which we now truly belong, we feel a personal relationship to the ancients and see them as people very much like ourselves; texts that formerly seemed arcane or luminous now seem autobiographical. We have a great gratitude for the place where the monastery is located, for the whole planet that supports it. Our life becomes marked by gratitude. We delight in expressing it wherever and in whatever way we can. This is the sixth stage, the stage of appreciation.

Little by little this appreciation, which begins as a religious gratitude and is private and quiet and joyful, becomes more normal and ordinary. We begin to take a greater interest in the practicalities of caring for the monastery and in doing so we begin to notice how marvelous are all the people with whom we are practicing. We see of course their many faults, as we see our own faults, which remains very numerous. But as we forgive, and are even grateful for our own faults, we forgive and are grateful for the faults of others. We see others as they are, but despite this- or because of it- we love them deeply. We are as amazed by our community members as we are by the sky and trees and the wisdom of the tradition itself. In fact, we can hardly, after a time, tell the difference between these. This is a different kind of love from the love we have known before, the love we have always understood as what love is. Because this love doesn’t include very much attachment. We are willing to let people go. In fact this willingness to let them go is part and parcel of what the love we feel is. It doesn’t include jealousy or attachment of any kind. We know that we will eternally be with these people and that wherever we go we will see these same people. So we don’t need to fear or worry. We are willing even to see them grow old or ill and die and to care for them and to bury them and to take joy in doing this, to cover the grave with some dirt and chant a sutra and to walk away full of the joy of knowing that even in the midst of our sadness nothing has in fact been lost, no one has gone anywhere; only a beautiful life, that was beautiful in the beginning and in the middle has become even more beautiful in the end, even to the point of an ineffable perfection. That the brother or sister that we are burying is exactly Buddha, and how privileged we have been for so long to have lived with her, and to be able to continue to live with her in memory and in the tiny acts of our own lives in the monastery. And we know too that we go that way too, and very soon, and that in doing so we can benefit others, and give to others what we have been given in the passing of this brother or sister. This is the seventh stage, the stage of love.

The eighth and final stage- although I must repeat here what I said in the beginning- that there are in fact no neat stages, there is in fact no ending, that the stages are simultaneous, spiraling, overlapping, both continuous and discontinuous- is the stage of letting go of everything, even of the practice. At this stage there isn’t any practice or teaching or monastery or Dharma brothers or sister. There’s only life in all its unexpectancy and color. We can leave the monastery or stay, it doesn’t matter. We can be with these people or any people or no one. We can live or die. We clearly want to benefit others- but how could one not benefit others? We have certainly plenty of problems- a body, a mind, a world- but we know that these problems are the media of our life as we live it. There isn’t much to say or do. We just go on, seeing what will happen next.

These stages on the way of monastic life are perhaps stages for the human heart in its journey to wholeness, whether we live in a monastery or not. Monasteries do help however to bring all of this into focus, to bring it up into consciousness, and I believe that monasteries should be open to all of us for at least some time in our lives, because all of us have a monk inside us. Once you spend some time in a monastery, to the point where you internalize and make completely your own the schedule and the round of monastic life, then you take that deep pattern and rhythm with you wherever you go. The world itself can be your monastery when the monastery is within your heart. But this takes time, and patience, luck, and some help.
Ways to be a Soto Zen Priest in America

by Lewis Richmond (with Michael Wenger and Taigen Leighton), from SFZC Wind Bell, Winter/Spring 2005

At the present time, priest ordination seems to be the way that we in Soto Zen explicitly and formally acknowledge a person’s deep lifelong commitment to the practice of the Way. However, there are a variety of ways that ordained priests actually express their practice. And if an ordained priest gravitates to a profession or role in which he or she rarely wears robes, performs ceremonies, leads zazen, or does any of the things that priests typically do, then how is that different from being a committed layperson?

In this essay, we explore nine different roles that are already being adopted by Soto priests: temple priest, monk, pilgrim, monastery teacher, scholar/author, therapist/healer, social activist, worldly sage/hermit, and lay teacher. It is unclear whether there is a larger category of “deeply committed practitioner” in which priest ordination is one of many possible forms of acknowledgment.

The important issue for now is training. What do priests and other deeply committed practitioners need in the way of training to be able to succeed and persevere in the American society of today? We examine several different areas of priest training – monastery life, dokusan, emotional transformation, textual study, livelihood, internship, and peers. Some of these areas of training are already well established; others are not. The kind and range of the training we need is an ongoing question – perhaps one of the most important for the next generation of our tradition in America.

The “Buddhist Priest”: A Brief History

Soto Zen priests in America mostly follow the model used in Japan since the mid-nineteenth century, when the Buddhist priesthood was secularized by the government. At that time, Buddhist monks were permitted – even encouraged – to marry, have families, and participate in the family structure of Japanese society. This notion of such a “priest” is unusual in the history of Buddhism. In the rest of the Buddhist world, anyone who is not a bhikshu or bhikshuni – a monk or nun following the monastic precepts of celibacy and poverty – is a layperson. Since many of the clergy in the West do have families, the notion of a married “priest” fits in with our cultural norms. Still, a Soto Zen priest in America does not yet have a well-defined social role. There are very few existing temples or groups, and priests who wish to lead a temple must usually first create one. American Zen priests are not all becoming temple priests or monastery teachers, either. This fact influences what kind of training priests should have, as well as the larger issue whether, in performing some of these roles, it is necessary to be ordained at all.

Kinds of Priests

Temple priest. To the extent we are imitating the Japanese model, this is the vocation that American Soto priests are presumably training for. But where are the temples? At this early stage in the development of American Soto, there are already more priests than there are temples (or sitting groups). It seems that we are training people for jobs that do not exist! Also, a person may not have the inclination or wherewithal to start his/her own group, or may be more interested in remaining a monk rather than becoming a temple priest.

In Japan, where staying in the monastery indefinitely is not generally an option for Soto priests, much of a priest’s training takes place in the home temple. Suzuki Roshi himself spent only a relatively brief time in the training monasteries. The rest of the time he lived and practiced with his teachers in a regional temple, where he mostly tended a congregation of laypeople. Of course, temple priests can and frequently do have their own priest disciples. One of Suzuki Roshi’s principal teachers, Kishizawa Roshi, was for a time the temple priest of a small sub-temple nominally under Suzuki Roshi’s larger regional temple.

There are also existing American models for priest/minister training, in the seminaries of Christianity and Judaism, covering what we might call practical priest craft: counseling skills, psychological work, finances, dealing with boards of directors, and temple management. Internship of some kind is fairly common also. There is no better way to train for a job as temple priest than to spend time in a temple under the supervision of a more experienced mentor.

Monk. Not every priest is destined to become a temple priest. Those who practice best in an environment of structured schedules and strict limits are more suited to be lifelong monastics. As we attempt to replicate Buddhist institutions in our own time and place – both with monasteries and local temples – it is important for us to understand the differences between a monk and a priest, both in how they express their spiritual practice, and in how they are trained.

The primary responsibility of a temple priest is to take care of laypeople and encourage others to practice. The primary job of the monk is to take care of the monastery and to cultivate his or her own practice. The temple priest needs to deal directly with issues of money and livelihood – to turn the material as well as the Dharma wheel; the monk, for the most part, abjures these concerns. The temple priest takes care of a congregation’s spiritual and life cycle needs, such as births, marriages, funerals, crises, and counseling; the monk generally does not.

The different training needs of monk and temple priest will undoubtedly clarify and develop as time goes on. What is important now is simply to understand the difference, so that trainees have a sense of what track they are following.
Pilgrim. One mode of spiritual practice that has been common for monks in every Buddhist tradition has been the practice of pilgrimage. The Buddha himself was a home leaver, with no fixed abode. Pilgrimage practice balances residential monastic life. The strength of monastery life can become a weakness when the monastery becomes a kind of surrogate home, a comfortable place one is reluctant to leave.

In America, it is not yet clear what form the practice of Buddhist pilgrimage might take. In pilgrimage practice one finds out how to respond to unexpected and difficult situations that never occur in monastic life. The basic vow of the pilgrim is to visit various teachers – perhaps in Asia or elsewhere in America – thereby testing and deepening one’s practice, and experiencing many different styles of practice.

Monastery Teacher. The monastery is our primary training ground. It is the place where the inner transformation takes place that trains priests to manifest Dharma wherever they go. The role of monastery teacher is exalted in Zen; all of the great masters of the classical period of Zen were monastery teachers.

The Japanese training monasteries often have the best teachers in Soto rotate through the monastic teaching positions – abbot, godo, tanto – without staying permanently. Whatever the merits of this system, we should be aware that this has not been our style in America. The few monasteries we have are led either by life-term founder/abbots, or by a rotating system of teacher/leaders who are themselves permanent residents. To the extent monastery teachers are training their own replacements, this may not be a bad system; but to the extent they are training temple priests it may be important to take a closer look at the Japanese model. The best teachers for temple priest trainees may be other experienced temple priests.

Another aspect of the Japanese model that we might adopt over time is the small, regional training temple. As these develop, it would give more American priests with a bent toward monastic life and training an opportunity to express this teaching.

Monastery teachers need much the same training as temple priests – especially in the area of dokusan. Of course, we would expect monastery teachers to develop special expertise in monastic rules, forms and rituals: oryoki, ceremonies, robes, and so on.

Scholar/author. Some priests develop a special affinity for textual study and scholarship. There are many examples of American Soto priests who have become Buddhist scholars, and who are now making important contributions to the understanding of Dharma in the West. We in American Zen are deeply dependent on Buddhist scholars to help us understand the authentic tradition, since most of us do not read the original languages. From that standpoint, the priest/scholar is probably as important now as at any time in Buddhist history.

Therapist/healer. We already have many examples of therapist priests, nurse and doctor priests, hospice worker priests, pain management priests, and so on. The Buddha himself was often known as the Great Physician or Healer, and there is much basic affinity between the function of Buddhist priest and the role and profession of helper/healer. Over time we may see the priest as therapist/healer become one of the important ways that Buddhism integrates into the mainstream of Western society.

Therapist/priests in particular are distinct from other priests in at least two ways. First, they have a livelihood; and second, they receive thorough training in the interpersonal skills so necessary in both therapy and dokusan.

Social Activist. The Buddhist priest as social activist is a somewhat new phenomenon. Historically, the Buddhist clergy have taken a neutral approach to government, social justice and reform, and have tended instead to cultivate their monasteries as exemplary models for the society at large. But we are now seeing many Buddhist priests working in movements for peace, social justice, and the environment as the primary expression of their Bodhisattva vow.

Some Buddhist priests have taken extensive training in non-violent protest techniques. There may be other, more specifically Buddhist, training methods that will develop over time.

Worldly Sage. The worldly sage essentially means someone who lives immersed in the world, conducting themselves like an ordinary person without any formal role as a priest or teacher, but who maintains an inner affinity to vows and the Dharma and continues to practice zazen. The worldly sage may also represent one stage in the life and training of a conventional priest. There was a tradition in Zen to encourage a monk who had finished his training to “disappear” for a time, living invisibly, before re-emerging to be a teacher. We need to distinguish the worldly sage, who is living according to some firm intention, from a priest who has essentially given up. In some ways the worldly sage mode of priest is the most difficult to sustain, but it may be possible, even preferable, for some whom the conventional archetype of visible religious leader does not suit their character or inclination.

One variant of the worldly sage is the hermit. Not all “hermits” are complete recluses. There is also the hermit who lives in a city apartment, leads a life devoted to practice, and is available as a mentor or teacher to whoever comes to visit – all without leading a group or temple or adapting other characteristics of the temple priest. Ryokan, the Soto priest/poet/hermit of seventeenth century Japan was like this.

The priest as artist or poet is a time-honored mode, especially when the art is directly connected to the religious practice, e.g. thanka painting, statue carving, and temple building.
Lay Teacher. The converse of the worldly sage is the lay teacher, i.e., someone who is willing and able to be a visible teacher of the Dharma, but who has not taken priest ordination, does not wear priest robes, perform ceremonies, ordain others, and so on. Clearly there are already many lay teachers in American Soto Zen, and some Soto Zen lineages are primarily being continued by lay teachers. In the San Francisco Zen Center laypeople can be shusō (head student) during a practice period just as a priest can. We have also created a rank called “Dharma Entrustment” which is essentially mid-way between the stage of shusō and full Dharma Transmission, specifically to acknowledge and empower lay teachers who have the experience and capacity to teach under the general supervision of a fully transmitted priest/teacher.

The existence of the lay teacher model stretches our thinking about priests. If someone can be fully empowered to teach the Dharma, then what is the point of being a priest? Is the priest then simply someone who specializes in ritual and ceremony? I think most would agree that a priest is much more than that. But working our way through the layers of tradition, Japanese culture and history, and determining the authentic meaning of “Dharma Teacher” for America, is a task that may occupy us for generations.

Clearly, there is overlap in this categorization of priest modes. There are a number of priests who fit more than one of these categories, as well as priests who have moved from one category to another over time.

Kinds of Training
There are three areas of near universal agreement about the core requirements for priest training: zazen, dokusan, and monastic or intensive training. Sesshin, living in close daily contact with one’s teacher in a temple setting, and traditional monastery life are all examples of intensive training. Monastery training in particular is itself about the body in the same way that zazen is, and like zazen operates both at the outer level of the physical body (acclimating to cold, discomfort, etc.) and the inner level of energetic transformation. If nothing else, it teaches someone how to stand, sit, and walk!

Monastic Life. Monastery training is most easily accessible in America to those in centers that have a working monastery. We at San Francisco Zen Center should remember that the gift of Tassajara and the ready opportunity for monastic training is a privilege. Other smaller centers may need to develop their own methods of intensive training.

Dokusan. Dokusan is an important area of training in its own right. Some may say that experiencing dokusan with one’s own teacher is training enough. But that is like saying that being in therapy qualifies one to be a therapist. Therapist training requires several years of course work, internship, supervised therapy-in-training, and finally testing and licensing by the state. In contrast, in many centers a temple priest or monastery teacher, once authorized, begins to see people in dokusan, and may receive little supervision or peer feedback thenceforth.

Yet the power and responsibility of the Zen teacher over a student’s entire life is typically greater than that of a therapist over his or her client; we are only now beginning to see a national association developing (The Soto Zen Buddhist Association) to set ethical standards and norms.

Dokusan itself is not one thing. Sometimes it may be deportment advice, sometimes therapy, sometimes life counseling. And while dokusan is not primarily therapy, the interpersonal skills needed by a Zen teacher in dokusan are much the same as those needed by a good therapist. These include the ability to listen closely, to understand the deeper intent behind a person’s words, to know when to intervene and when to keep silent, and most of all, to know how not to harm. Zen teachers, like therapists, need to know about transference and idealization, temptations of power and sexuality, and the difference between true intimacy and exploitation/idealization.

How can we develop a successful form of complete dokusan training that takes into account our American culture and psyche? There is a lot of thoughtful experimentation going on, both inside and outside the Soto Zen tradition. In vipassana, teachers in training graduate from observing their own teachers conducting interviews to being observed conducting interviews by their teacher; this is modeled after the supervision techniques of therapist training. One Soto priest has entered a primarily Christian program for Pastoral Counseling; he records his dokusan interviews on tape (with permission from his students), to be reviewed later by his teacher-mentor.

Some of us might be uneasy with the notion of a third person involved in our dokusan. Perhaps there are other forms of private or semi-private interview in our tradition that could be adapted to serve as training venues. In early Chinese Zen, spontaneous interchanges between teacher and student often took place in front of the assembly, during work, or in a chance encounter with others present. Dogen’s Eihei Koroku mentions occasions in which monks visited the Abbot’s quarters in small groups. Certainly we need to weigh the tradition against the need, in these early days of American Dharma, to attain a basic competence in private instruction. Knowing something well is not the same as being able to teach it well.

Emotional Transformation. When Tibetan teachers are asked about the Zen tradition (to the extent they know about it) their response is usually, “Oh, that is just Dharmakaya practice” – meaning, a practice that emphasizes Absolute reality, or emptiness. In the Tibetan tradition, meditation to realize the Absolute is only one of many practices, and it is not generally taught to beginners. In China, Zen was not a separate school of Buddhism, just a collection of monks in the large monastic establishments of China that wanted to emphasize dhyan, or ch’an, that is, zazen (or meditation) practice.

Although there are passages in which Dogen appeared to criticize other forms of Buddhist practice – specifically in Zuimonki and Bendowa – it would not be an accurate reflection of his views to think that he always advocated an exclusive
emphasis on zazen practice. Soto Zen fundamentally embraces the totality of Mahayana Buddhism; we should be open to practices other than zazen that help us as Americans encompass Mahayana’s full transformational potential. Tibetan Buddhists use the term “relative practice” to describe practices that lead to emotional transformation in the realm of daily activity and interpersonal exchange. Realization of the Absolute is not by itself enough to burn away all one’s “ancient, twisted karma” of habitual emotional responses; additional training to continue transforming the psyche in the light of realization is needed.

Textual Study. Clearly, priests need to become familiar with the core texts of Buddhism and of Zen. In the Shunryu Suzuki lineage, these include the Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra, the Lotus Sutra (on which Suzuki Roshi lectured extensively), the Vimalakirti Sutra, the Parinirvana Sutra, the Avatamsaka Sutra, and Suzuki Roshi’s own recorded teachings. As Soto priests, we also study Dogen both in classes and privately with our teacher. Although Suzuki Roshi’s and Soto’s approach to koans is rather different than in Rinzai, a Soto priest should have good inner and outer familiarity with the koan literature too. During his lifetime, Suzuki Roshi encouraged us to study Abhidharma and other core texts of the Theravada, and this effort continues. Beyond that, there is much in the vastness of Buddhist scripture that can be illuminating and helpful for us in our work as priests.

Not all kinds of priests need the same degree of familiarity with these texts; worldly sages, therapists/healers, and social activists may not refer to these texts on a daily basis in the same way as monastery or temple priests. But along with monastery training, a thorough grounding in the core teachings of Buddhadharmma and the Zen tradition cannot be neglected. Suzuki Roshi’s lectures often seemed spontaneous and free form, but he admitted that he had studied hard before every one. His teacher had told him, “Always study before giving a Dharma talk, not because you will necessarily use what you study in the talk, but for the sake of studying itself.”

Livelihood. In this generation being a Soto Zen priest in America is not always a livelihood. We could take proactive steps to help temple priests develop an ancillary livelihood that suits their skills and inclination – not as a distraction from their primary vocation, but as a way to support it. Even in Japan, many Soto priests supplement their income with other work. Some part of the priest training curriculum could be devoted to working with candidates to assess their job skills and inclinations, and help place them, as part of their internship practice, in paying jobs – perhaps with non-profit organizations who would welcome the presence of an experienced meditator in their midst.

Suzuki Roshi used to say that a priest should have at least two distinct areas of skill or expertise; in the monastery this might be cooking and finances, for example. For American temple priests, this might be priest/teacher and some outside profession or livelihood, like gardening.

Internship. Monastery training is necessary, but the notion that everything we need to be successful priests will come from zazen is maybe a bit unrealistic. That is why temple priests in Japan apprentice to the abbots of their own home temples, assisting in all kinds of ways while developing practical experience.

Peers. When we examine the situations of American Soto priests who have faltered because of ethical misconduct or some other grievous lapse, isolation is a common them. This is true for anyone in a position of authority and power. A peer might be “someone of equal power and authority to yourself who can say something difficult for you in a way that you’re able to hear and trust.” How many of us really have peers like that? And how many of us actively seek them out when we don’t?

Conclusion
Once when Suzuki Roshi was asked what it meant to be a priest in America, he replied, “I don’t know.” We must all concur. At the moment we are, we might say, in the “Wild West” phase of Soto Zen in America. There is some discomfort in this situation, perhaps, but we also ought to find a way to enjoy it. In a hundred years, if Buddhism has survived and prospered here, people will imagine that they do “know” what it means to be a priest, and then they will have a different kind of problem. Until then, let us – in the spirit of Zen’s early Chinese founders – remain flexible, creative, and open-minded. Who knows what might happen?
Guidelines for the Formation of Soto Zen Priests in the West
Prepared by the Priest Training Committee of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA)
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ABSTRACT
The Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA) mission statement reads, in part: the “SZBA exists to preserve and promote the Buddhadharma through the teachings and practice of Soto Zen Buddhism in North America.” To insure that properly trained priests are available to carry forward this effort and to articulate the responsibilities and expectations that a dharma-transmitted priest must be prepared to meet, this report discusses the essential characteristics and skills of a trained priest and presents guidelines for the development of these characteristics and skills.

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This document is based on a draft of Guidelines for Training Soto Zen Priests that was presented to the SZBA membership in early 2006 and discussed by SZBA members attending the Second National SZBA Conference in October, 2006. The revision presented here attempts to reflect the suggestions presented at that Conference. The process of developing training for Soto priests in the U.S. is an ongoing endeavor and this particular document is presented as the result of committee work that may be used and amended by individual Soto teachers as they see fit. Articulation of the training process for novice priests owes much to the members of the original committee and to the efforts of the current working group:

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THE THREE PILLARS OF SOTO ZEN
Many students of Zen are familiar with the ground-breaking book by the late Philip Kapleau, entitled The Three Pillars of Zen. While nominally Sôtô Zen, Kapleau's lineage introduced a number of Rinzai Zen elements which in the minds of many Westerners became identified with Zen practice. However, there is another version of the "three pillars" which draws more closely upon the teachings of Dôgen-zenji as they have been transmitted to the West by Sôtô Zen teachers such as Suzuki Shunryu-roshi and others. The following comments are designed as a brief introduction to this different perspective.

Shikan-taza: This is the heart-practice of the Buddha Way, as Dôgen-zenji understands it. The word shikan means "only", or "nothing but"; ta means "hit" or "strike against"; and za means "sit". Buddha's teaching is that the unity and connectedness of all beings and things is due to the absence of fixed natures. The truth of this teaching is mirrored and celebrated in the practice of sitting upright in stillness, without grasping or rejecting any of the upwelling phenomena of life. Because the ego-centered cramp that masquerades as a "self" is allowed to relax, eventually the nature of things-as-they-are is confirmed and verified in the practitioner's effort. And because this practice is not used as a lever to secure some fantasized state-of-mind, and is not aimed at something beyond itself, it is in complete harmony with the ultimate teachings of emptiness. It is thus immediately the practice of the Buddhas themselves, rather than a stepping-stone to some putatively more advanced "meditation".

Genjô-kôan: The Chinese characters in this expression are connotatively dense. Gen means "actual, present, current, existing now"; kôan means "form, make, create, be completed, come into existence". A kôan, as many will know, was originally a public document in which a legal precedent or other principle of jurisprudence was announced in ancient China; later, the term came to refer to a literary genre in which tales of the sayings and doings of Zen adepts were ostensibly recorded. As the title of one of Dôgen-zenji's most powerful and haunting essays in the Shôbôgenzô collection, however, Genjô Kôan is sometimes rendered in English as "The Actualization of the Fundamental Point". Therein, the principles of practice are expressed with complete clarity: When all things are Buddha-Dharma, the world is full of beings, Buddhas, objects, coming-and-going, as the breathtaking panoply of dependently-co-arisen existence. Yet, from the vantage point of vast emptiness, the universe is still, silent, ungraspsably alive, with no trace of beings which exist from their own side. However, because the Buddha Way is offered as freedom from encumbering dualities such as exists/does-not exist, suddenly there is practice, birth-and-death, other beings, and so on. At the heart of all of this, the great wheel turns, impelled by the inexorable, though vacant, force of karma. This elegant, boundaryless suchness is abundantly evident in each and every instant of life. In this context, then, kôan does not specifically refer to a literary record of Zen antics, but rather to the distilled and concentrated taste of existence, realized and actualized in the here-and-now. This taste is impermanence, unease, and no-abiding-self, and simultaneously it is liberation. Practicing wholeheartedly in this day-to-day no-realm moment after moment is the meaning of genjô-kôan.

Memmitsu-no-kafu: In this expression, the character mitsu means "cotton"; men means "close, intimate, dense, secret"; ka is "family"; and fu is "wind" or "manner". Taken as a whole, the expression means a close, intimate family style, as intimate as the threads in finely-woven fabric. A household animated by this principle is characterized by attention unstintingly paid to the connections among people and things, and it is this that largely animates Sôtô Zen training, both inside and outside of the training halls. Carefully dealing with even the most mundane aspects of daily life, such as cups and saucers, rags, clothing, and trash bins, is the arterial connection between shikan-taza as encountered on the sitting cushion, and the workaday world, where the Bodhisattva vow unfolds. This bears on the place of devotion in Sôtô Zen practice, an aspect that Rev. Kyogen Carlson has characterized thus:

Mindful attention to each moment and each thing attended to cultivates a sense of appreciation and gratitude. This develops into an awareness of the sacred within the mundane and a deep reverence for life as dharma, with no particular need for a deity or "other" to whom this reverence is directed. Mindful attention to the forms of practice, ritual, and daily life itself becomes our form of devotional practice. Although this mind of devotion can arise naturally, it is not an end in itself. Ultimately we move past this to see things as neither sacred nor mundane, but just as they are, in a way that is both "nothing special" and truly wonderful.

The "family style" is, therefore, the enactment of genjô-kôan, things-as-they-are not other than the Dharma-kaya. Thus, this attentive caretaking can demonstrate that the "three pillars" are actually inseparably one, that is, a single, unified training of the body-mind in accord with Buddha's timeless teachings.

(Contributed by Rev. Myo Lahey, Hartford Street Zen Center)

PREFACE: NOT CORRUPTING THE DHARMA
This document has its origins in the concerns of SZBA members about the level of experience, discipline, and dedication that will be exhibited by Soto priests in the U.S. In this, we are merely echoing a concern brilliantly voiced by the Buddha himself in The Discourse on Future Dangers (Anagata-bhayani Sutta). It seems fitting to preface our document with the following warning, as translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu:

"Monks, these five future dangers, unarisen at present, will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them. Which five?

"There will be, in the course of the future, monks undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment. They – being undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment – will give full ordination to others and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind,
Knowing them, will not regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are shirking the duties of solitude. They will not make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment – will become elders living in luxury, lethargic, foremost in falling back, mastering. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma. This, monks, is the second future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment. They – being undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment – will take on others as students and will not be able to discipline them in heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment. These too will then be undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma. This, monks, is the second future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment. They – being undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment – will not listen when discourses that are words of the Tathagata – deep, profound, transcendent, connected with the Void – are being recited. They will not lend ear, will not set their hearts on knowing them, will not regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works – the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of the disciples – are recited. They will lend ear and set their hearts on knowing them. They will regard these teachings as worth grasping and mastering. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma. This, monks, is the fourth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And again, there will be in the course of the future monks undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment. They – being undeveloped in body...virtue...mind...discernment – will become elders living in luxury, lethargic, foremost in falling back, shirking the duties of solitude. They will not make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. Thus from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt discipline; from corrupt discipline, corrupt Dhamma. This, monks, is the fifth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“These, monks, are the five future dangers, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to them, and being alert, work to get rid of them.”

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT
This document offers guidelines for the formation of Soto Zen priests and, as such, draws a profile of the characteristics and skills one could hope to find in the ideal fully realized priest. Four areas are covered: Carrying the Tradition, Personal Conduct, Self Understanding and Knowledge of Source Texts. The degree of emphasis to be placed on each area is to be tailored to individual needs. It is assumed that this document will provide a platform for teachers and students as they continue their examination of the areas of training that it stresses. This might take the form of carefully going through the document together and examining how these elements are reflected in their own practice. Some teachers will undoubtedly develop their own training programs. It also may prove useful in working with individuals contemplating ordination so as to clarify their understanding of what lies ahead. This document is merely a tool and is not set in stone. It is expected that it will be reviewed and perhaps revised every few years. The SZBA intends to assist the training process by offering an increasingly comprehensive series of angos and workshops through the activities of the Soto Zen Buddhist Institute.

INTRODUCTION
What it Means to be a Soto Zen Priest
Vocation as a Soto Zen priest embraces three components that are inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing. These three are vow, faith and function. Vow represents a deeply rooted, never-ending commitment as expressed in the Four Bodhisattva Vows of our Buddhist tradition: “Beings are numberless, I vow to free them. Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them. Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them. The Buddha Way is unsurpassable, I vow to realize it.” Vow is dedication to service to the sangha and to all beings. It is a determination to live one’s entire life, in all its myriad manifestations, as an expression of this vow. Faith is the essential basis for vow, and is best expressed as trust. We trust in Shakyamuni Buddha’s awakening to freedom from dukkha, unsatisfactoriness. We trust that his teachings offer a path to this freedom. We trust that the wisdom of the Buddha must be experienced with the entire body and mind. We trust that the truths of the Buddha-dharma are applicable right here and throughout the universe, and that the Buddha-dharma must be experienced in this very moment. We trust that the tradition of Soto Zen as shaped by Dogen Zenji and Keizan Zenji is a container for the enlightened wisdom of the sages, and that if we practice in accordance with the path of Soto Zen we may know directly the truth of the Buddha’s teaching. We trust
that our very circumstances, just as they are, are the ground of practice and enlightenment and we trust in a boundless heart that vows to free all beings from dukkha.

**Function** expresses the activities through which the Soto Zen priest actualizes her/his vow and faith. These activities may include, but are decidedly not limited to: teaching zazen, transmitting the teachings of Buddhist literature, officiating at ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, precept and repentance ceremonies, baptisms. Function may take the form of representing the ancient tradition through wearing the garments and expressing the gesture of ritual. It may mean counseling individuals, working in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or struggling to alleviate poverty, environmental degradation or carrying the boundless heart into the conventional workplace. It may mean scholarly research to bring forward the Buddhist canon. It may be the creative voice of the artist. The functions of the Soto Zen priest are as myriad as individual talents and choices, but all exhibit the limitless heart that honors the worth of all interdependent being.

**THE FORMATION OF A PRIEST**

In most American Soto Zen lineages, priest training – the development and maturing of skills and attributes over time – begins before Novice Ordination (shukke tokudo). This training begins with lay practice and in many lineages, continues through formal pre-ordination programs. After Novice Ordination, the individual becomes a Soto Zen priest, but not a full priest. One is considered a novice who practices and functions under the guidance of his or her teacher until Dharma Transmission (shiho), after which the individual becomes a full, or transmitted, priest able to function independently.

The period of formation that follows upon novice ordination (shukke tokudo) continues as a lifelong endeavor that will sustain individuals dedicated to exemplifying the dharma with integrity. “With integrity” means remaining committed to exemplifying the Bodhisattva ideal despite hardships, disappointments, and unmet expectations. Priest training encourages the continuing unfolding of the Bodhisattva ideal characterized by the Six Paramitas: giving, ethical conduct, patience, energy, meditation, and wisdom.

Novice priest ordination may result in Dharma Transmission, empowering the fully ordained priest to extend Buddhist teachings and Soto Zen practice in the West. However, priest training does not always conclude with dharma transmission. Novices may transition back to lay life. It is usually best to hold appropriate ceremonies to mark either of these transitions and to honor both the training and the service to the community that the novice has completed.

Formation as a priest rests on the following principles of Zen practice: (1) zazen, (2) mindfulness, (3) deepening understanding through personal effort, (4) self-reflection, (5) working with a teacher, (6) studying Buddhist literature, and (7) sustained effort. The term “in the West” implies a role and training in some ways different from the current priest role and training in Japan. The term also acknowledges that individuals who become Soto Zen Buddhist priests in America and elsewhere outside of Japan do so through personal choice, usually uninfluenced by family or social tradition, and that a Western Zen priest’s life has been largely lived within a Western economic, artistic, political and academic culture. The use of “in the West” also acknowledges the increasing participation of lay people in zazen and the growing interest in assimilating Zen practice into one’s work and family life. Completing formal priest training will mean that an individual has internalized the tradition, is capable of transmitting it, and vows to devote her or himself to a life of continuous practice and service.

**CENTRALITY OF THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP**

If one turns to the section on Resources, one will find that the greatest resource of all for the novice is her or his own teacher. It is the teacher who models the life of a Soto priest to which the novice aspires and it is the teacher who teaches by example, who chooses the particular path of training for an individual novice and who watches over and guides that training. Our tradition rightly emphasizes mind-to-mind transmission and the bond between teacher and student. It is the teacher, and the teacher alone, who will decide when the novice is ready to assume the responsibilities of dharma transmission. This document hopes to give teachers a template that will assist them in fulfilling their important role in developing the priests of the future, but it is not its intention to suggest that the teacher-student relationship need be an exclusive or possessive relationship between one student and one teacher. It is traditional in Japan, for instance, for a novice to have 3 or 4 teachers – for novice ordination, for study of texts, for the shusos period and dharma transmission. Each of them is vital to the student’s development.

**CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS OF THE IDEAL SOTO ZEN PRIEST**

A fully formed Soto Zen priest will exhibit the characteristics and skills necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood. These attributes are developed through working over time within four areas:

1. **Carrying the Tradition.**
2. **Personal Conduct.**
3. **Self-Understanding.**
4. **Knowledge of Source Texts**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING THE TRADITION**

The phrase “carrying the tradition” describes the commitment of a priest to bring into the present the deep tradition of dharma practice that comes to us through the lives of the thousands of Soto priests who have preceded us. The most important commitment of a Soto Zen priest is to embody the Buddha way as expressed within the tradition of Dōgen’s Zen. In the meditation hall and in all other areas in the practice place, this is done through the body – through zazen, devotional practice, work practice, and all other practice place activity. Ritual and ceremony are the deeply rooted symbolic physical manifestations of the teachings and philosophy of any religion. In Soto Zen Buddhism, they play a vital role in embodying the Way and thereby transmitting the Dharma.
The Soto Zen priest must be firmly grounded in his or her tradition in order to adequately transmit to others the essence of the practice and teaching. To carry the Soto tradition means not mere surface behavior. It requires personal investment in traditional gesture that carries deep meaning because one embodies it thoroughly. It is activity deeply rooted in thousands of years of spiritual practice, study, and understanding. Our tradition has been transmitted through the monastic containers of China and Japan. Therefore it is suggested that during a novice’s training he or she spend adequate time in a monastic setting that employs traditional Soto forms.

Components of the Soto Zen Tradition:

Zazen
Shikantaza is to bring wholehearted harmony to the self without attaching to enlightenment or delusion. Thus from the beginning of training to the end, the priest directly faces the self. The mature priest is master of the self in whatever situation he/she may encounter. The authentic form of facing the self is completely wholehearted shikantaza, actualizing spacious awareness in life and death within the space of the entire world, not from the small territory of self clinging. For such a priest, practice and enlightenment are one. The single most important task for a Soto Zen priest is to carry on this shikantaza zazen. Even if there is no one who is interested in such a practice, still the task of a mature priest is to emphasize and teach this.

Dharma Understanding
For the Soto Zen novice, studying the self in zazen is supported and refined through studying with a teacher and studying the words of the ancestors, particularly Dogen-zenji. In order to carry the tradition, thorough understanding of the source texts of the tradition (i.e., Shobogenzo, Eihei shingi and Eihei koroku) is vital. The purpose of such study is not to stuff up the priest’s head with knowledge. Instead, the mature priest employs the study of the Buddhadharma to actualize the following statement of Dogen-zenji from Bendowa: “The endeavor to negotiate the Way, as I teach now, consists in discerning all things in view of enlightenment, and putting such a unitive awareness into practice in the midst of the revaluated world.”

Ceremony and Ritual
Carrying the tradition requires mastery of ceremony and ritual. It also includes the Soto Zen liturgy (see Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice). What is often referred to in English as liturgy or devotional practice is expressed in Japanese by ki-e or ki-myo. “Ki” is “to return.” “e” means “something you can depend on.” “Myo” is “the original ultimate state of life.” It requires loving attention to each moment. Ceremony and ritual as liturgy, then, is to manifest returning to reality and gratefully sharing the benefits with buddhas, ancestors, and all beings.

Service
The mature priest carries the Soto Zen tradition with the Mahayana spirit manifesting generosity, tolerance, and magnanimity by helping others to live in peace and harmony. Because the suffering of living beings is limitless, the opportunities to serve living beings by giving material things, fearlessness, and dharma are also without limit. In the middle of the confused world, without being crushed by despair, the Soto Zen priest stands upright, thus offering fearlessness and dharma to all living beings. Though opportunities for service are as varied as the needs of humanity, for many the sangha will offer a primary opportunity to serve through even-handedly encouraging the efforts of sangha members in all areas of practice and study. Service also includes care for the practice place and handling financial and other administrative affairs that support the practice.

Desired characteristics and skills as outcomes of training in Carrying the Tradition:

Zazen
- has established a steady personal practice
- is able to clearly demonstrate proper procedures
- understands and can articulate the unique nature of shikantaza (wholehearted sitting) as well as various other practices that focus the mind, such as counting the breath, vipassana, gatha or mantra recitation and mindfulness techniques

Dharma understanding
- is able to clearly express the Buddhadharma via dharma talks, dokusan, public speaking, and writing
- pays attention to the immediate context of communication and does not give stock answers
- does not pretend to have answers but makes suggestions for exploration

Ceremony and ritual
- appreciates the spiritual meaning of ritual and ceremony
- is familiar with the proper use of ritual implements, e.g. mokugyo, kaishaku (clappers), bells, incense, zagu, and kotsu (stick)
- experienced in Soto style of chanting sutras
- is able to perform in ceremony roles: doshi, ino, doan, jikido, jisha, fukudo
- is skilled in proper procedures for cooking, serving, eating, and chanting during oryoki meals
- is able to officiate at not only daily services, but also specialized ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and lay precept ceremonies
- when necessary can construct ceremonies for special occasion
- can give clear instruction to others in ceremonial functions

Service
- Nurturing sangha:
  - approachable and available to sangha members
  - listens well
- participates in the work of maintaining the facility and carrying out sangha activities

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-supports sangha members in taking increased responsibility for their own practice
-encourages positive relationships among sangha members
-does not play favorites
-has a sense of humor about one’s own limitations
-makes the practice central, not one’s own ego needs
-maintains confidentiality
-knows where the boundary exists between practice or dharma questions and personal emotional problems and knows how not to cross it.

Caring for the practice place:
-treats every aspect of the practice place with care and respect, encourages others to do likewise
-is willing to undertake necessary tasks for the financial and physical maintenance of the practice place
-keeps an eye on what may be needed or needs to be replenished’
-knows proper set up for the zendo, e.g.: altar, flowers, cushions

The wider community:
-is available on a reasonable basis for public talks, seminars, discussion groups
-may participate in interfaith activities
-is responsive to community’s social needs
-is comfortable teaching in non-traditional settings such as prisons, schools, rehab groups etc.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CONDUCT
A Soto Zen priest aims to manifest the bodhisattva way of life, behaving selflessly not only in personal relationships but also in every aspect of life, moment-to-moment. Personal Conduct is a manifestation of the root of the enlightened mind, empty of personal biases and desires, balanced and ready for whatever comes. The characteristics of Personal Conduct reflect the mind of integrity that creates deep and trusting relationships and puts people at ease. These attributes encourage and inspire others to continue practice and to discover their own wisdom and compassion.

Components of Personal Conduct:
Maturity is the ability to respond positively to criticism, practice forgiveness, learn from others and conduct oneself with dignity, courtesy, patience, humility, tolerance, and good humor. These are the attributes of an individual free of a demanding or fearful ego and are manifestations of a generous and giving mind oriented towards others rather than towards oneself. Such attributes enable a priest to avoid taking things personally and acting defensively, attitudes that are corrosive to the Way-seeking mind. A priest who remains caught in the tangle of delusions is thereby hampered from helping others to disentangle from their own, so these attributes are fundamental requirements of a fully matured priest who aspires to lead people in spiritual practice with dignity, humility, and humor.

Behaving ethically in accordance with the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts is the foundation for honesty in relationships, for reverence for all life, for not harming, and for nurturing and taking care of all beings. Adhering to these ethical guidelines is essential for living in peace and harmony and acknowledging the interdependent nature of all life. Also, a priest is frequently entrusted with confidential information. A priest must be worthy of that trust.

Teaching by example is the most honest and potent way to teach. Because people learn most completely from what they witness and observe, a priest must be able express the precepts visibly in his or her life.

Maintaining constancy is essential not only in Zen Buddhist practice but also in a priest’s life. It means commitments and remaining accountable, not skimming surfaces or professing dedication and then abandoning a project. Maintaining constancy also means to support students through struggles that put a strain on one’s relationship with them. It also means not to make promises lightly.

Desired characteristics and skills as outcomes of training in Personal Conduct:
Maturity
-maintains composure, does not react with anger when treated unfairly or confronted by a negative or threatening attitude
-does not react angrily to others’ mistakes
-is not callous or dismissive of his or her own mistakes
-encourages feedback
-performs tasks with attention and care
-maintains composure
-shows respect for others in personal relationships
-does not attempt to “win” or be in control
-does not insist on others being perfect
-demonstrates humility rather than pride
-does not display annoyance or defensiveness

Behaving ethically
-uses 16 Bodhisattva Precepts as standard for behavior
-is honest in relationships, does not mislead
-creates no harm; does not betray or abuse others

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-does not take advantage of others for personal benefit
-maintains confidences
-is accountable for commitments and actions

**Teaching by example**
- actions are in accordance with words, i.e. “practicing what you preach”
- exhibits care for others, for the practice and for the practice place
- always makes the best effort
- demonstrates leadership, is willing to point the way

**Maintaining constancy**
- is willing to make commitments
- sees a task through to the end despite difficulties
- is accountable and fulfills promises
- does not make up excuses

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING**
Self-understanding is a necessary pre-requisite for fulfilling the role of a Soto Zen Priest. Selflessness derives from recognizing in what ways one is *not* selfless and then cultivating the willingness to work on letting go of such tendencies. Recognizing, accepting, and refining personal qualities – both those that are admirable and those that require attention – will enable the novice to perceive the needs of others and then to conduct personal interviews, perform pastoral counseling and nurture sangha. In contrast, by failing to develop critical thinking or perceive and accept self-centered needs, well-intentioned and motivated people can become driven by ambition and the pursuit of recognition and approval. The result can be manipulation, betrayal, or abuse of others. Seeing into the problems that arise out of concerns of the personal, small self is the ongoing task of the Zen Buddhist practitioner and the Soto Zen priest in particular.

**Components of Self-Understanding:**

**Cultivating awareness of habits, tendencies, biases**, as well as self-oriented motives, is the basis for developing critical thinking, overcoming delusions and seeing reality without distortion. This is the foundation of honesty.

**Willingness to show restraint.** Without this, awareness of personal tendencies will be of little value. Over time, the novice priest will develop the ability to let go of the strong pull of desires, for this is the primary work of a realized priest. If this is accomplished, bodhisattva qualities such as the Six Paramitas can emerge without blemish.

**Cognizance of strengths and weaknesses.** Through training, the novice will learn not to allow habits, prejudices, and emotional responses to reflect him or her from the path, particularly when these responses may injure others or may encourage them to misunderstand such actions as valid expressions of practice. The novice will learn to know what personal characteristics and skills can be put to good use and which ones need to be improved to make them more valuable. This process is essential when walking the path of wisdom and compassion. Learning to stress strengths and be mindful of weaknesses, the novice will expand his or her capacity to understand and express the practice.

**Devotion to the continual unfolding of wisdom and compassion** will require ongoing self-examination as the novice endeavors to stay on the bodhisattva path and to manifest Buddhahood. To embrace the ideal of increasing wisdom and compassion leads to a constant awareness of personal characteristics and behavior. Wisdom and compassion are both necessary to express the inherent buddha nature, just as both palms come together to form gassho.

**Desired characteristics and skills as outcomes of training in Self-Understanding:**

- Cultivating awareness of habits, tendencies, biases:
  - displays a “Letting Go” attitude
  - exhibits lack of ambition for personal gain
  - has a positive approach to problems that minimizes personal biases
  - learns to engage in self-reflection
  - learns to feel empathy and patience with the shortcomings of others
  - is open to new ideas
  - demonstrates humility and asks for patience or aid when working in an area of weakness
  - able to lead, demonstrating confidence without pride
  - gives clear instructions for performing tasks without being solely wedded to one’s approach
  - does not mask insecurity by over-reliance on “perfect form”

- Willingness to show restraint:
  - exhibits composure and equanimity
  - is able to take a wide view, with a sense of connection to the whole
  - is reflective, rather than reactive, in words and actions
  - accepts direction readily, considers suggestions without resistance
  - neither promotes nor deprecates self
  - promotes ideas that benefit others, not merely self
  - can develop ideas that support long term goals, not just immediate concerns
  - lacks stubbornness, does not hold others back
Cognizance of strengths and weaknesses:
is able to lead when leadership is called for, follow when following is called for, can both sit down and shut up and stand up and speak out.
is honest regarding skills and abilities
has realistic expectations of self, does not jeopardize success of activities by overreaching one’s capabilities
learns from others
is willing to train and practice in areas needing improvement

Devotion to the continual unfolding of wisdom and compassion:
is dedicated to spiritual practice, such as daily zazen and sesshin
exhibits selflessness
is sensitive to the suffering of others
listens carefully, does not judge
Take Dōgen’s Hachi-dainingaku (Eight Truths of Great Beings) as a model: to have small desire, to know satisfaction, to enjoy tranquility, to practice diligence, to not lose mindfulness, to practice the balanced state of dhyana, to practice wisdom, to not engage in idle discussion.
is willing to change mind about judgments, opinions or previous responses to others
shows respect for the Sutras and Zen classics

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF SOURCE TEXTS
The novice needs to become informed enough to reliably express understanding of both general Buddhist and Zen Buddhist literature, history, theory and practice. Just as zazen is ongoing lifelong practice, just so study of the literature is an ongoing commitment, so that the direct experience of zazen both informs, and is informed by, a conceptual understanding drawn from the literature. The novice priest’s growing capacity to communicate and explain the principal elements of Buddhism and Zen will expand understanding and encourage study on the part of both committed Zen students and the wider community. Also, a Soto Zen priest must be well grounded in the literature in order to give effective dharma talks and to demonstrate the relevance of practice to everyday life.

Components of the study of source texts:

An understanding of both basic Buddhist and Zen Buddhist literature. Study of the actual texts that have come down to us through thousands of years can serve as an antidote to misunderstandings about the practice based upon personal or cultural bias. Study can also be invaluable in creating a commonality of terminology, metaphor and interpretation of personal experience that deepens communication and a sense of community.
The capacity for communicating well is of primary importance in effectively passing on the teachings, transmitting one’s own understanding and inspiring reflection in others. To have a depth of understanding that will enable one to give dharma talks, make public presentations and communicate effectively within dokusan, one must be well grounded in the necessary history, literature and philosophy.
The ability to transmit the Soto tradition requires a solid grounding in Buddhist thought including early Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Chinese Zen and the Soto Zen lineage refined by Dōgen, Keizan and their successors. Out of respect for our own teachers, it is also appropriate that we learn and carry on the practices particular to our Dharma lineages.

Desired characteristics and skills as outcomes of training in the study of source texts

Exhibiting understanding of general Buddhist and Zen Buddhist literature:
is comfortable expressing understanding of the literature through discussions, lectures, writings, and answering questions
has learned how to relate Buddhist and Zen teachings and principles to those of other religions and belief systems
is invited as guest speaker by institutions other than own sangha, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist
written work is published outside of own sangha
has the respect of Soto Zen teachers
The capacity for communicating well:
is easily understood
engages the listener and reader in presentation of ideas
speaks and writes with clarity; is well-organized
is able to couch ideas in terms that will reach a particular audience, yet without “talking down.”
The ability to transmit the Soto tradition:
is well-grounded in the writings of Soto Zen teachers, including Dōgen and Keizan
is familiar with practices of the Soto school

RESOURCES FOR BOTH TEACHER AND NOVICE
Listed below are suggested tools for practice and sources of training that may be utilized by teacher and student during the period following Novice Ordination. This is by no means an exhaustive list and will in all likelihood be expanded by individual teachers.
The resources and their benefits are:

**ZAZEN**
- understanding of no-self, interdependence and impermanence
- discipline of body and mind
- release of negative (and positive) feelings
- non-thinking, opening the hand of thought
- maintaining the ancient Way
- practice of no-attainment

**ONE’S OWN TEACHER**
- the nature of commitment
- the practice of zazen
- the ritual style of the teacher’s particular tradition within Soto Zen
- care and responsiveness to others
- the role and scope of Dharma Talks
- how to conduct dokusan, the importance of confidentiality
- the importance of being available to others
- care for the practice place
- the ability to respond positively to criticism, practice forgiveness and learn from mistakes
- conducting oneself with dignity, courtesy, patience, humility, tolerance and good humor
- ethical behavior
- learning to display both dedication and equanimity
- awareness of personal habits, tendencies and biases
- ability to show restraint
- to be cognizant of one’s weaknesses and strengths
- devotion to the continual unfolding of wisdom and compassion
- importance of knowledge of Buddhist and Zen literature

**MONASTIC PRACTICE, including sesshin**
- practice of commitment
- letting go of ego-self
- learning to follow a strict schedule and function well in a group
- steady practice of zazen
- ability to perform ceremony and ritual
- reduced reliance on creature comforts
- maturity, responding well to criticism and learning from mistakes
- conducting oneself with dignity, courtesy, patience, humility, tolerance and good humor
- awareness of personal habits, tendencies and biases
- ability to show restraint
- devotion to the continual unfolding of wisdom and compassion
- grounding in the unique approach of Soto Zen

**THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS**
The precepts are a resource for study and reflection. They act as the basis for an ethical life and serve as kōans for our everyday activity.
1. I take refuge in the Buddha
2. I take refuge in the Dharma.
3. I take refuge in the Sangha.
4. With purity of heart, I vow to abstain from what is harmful to myself or others
5. With purity of heart, I vow to do what is beneficial to myself or others
6. With purity of heart, I vow to benefit all beings
7. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from the willful taking of life
8. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from taking what is not given
9. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from misusing sexuality
10. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from speaking falsely
11. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from getting intoxicated
12. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from speaking of the faults of others
13. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from praising the self and maligning others
14. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from being possessive of Dharma teachings
15. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from harboring hatred, malice or ill-will
16. A disciple of the Buddha abstains from disparaging the Triple Treasure.
SUTRA STUDY
The major Mahayana sutras, including, but not limited to:
The Lotus Sutra
The Vimalakirti Sutra
The Avatamsaka Sutra
The Prajna Paramita in 8,000 Lines
The Diamond Sutra
The Platform Sutra of Hui-neng
- these sutras provide the philosophical underpinning of Mahayana Buddhism and all had great impact on Zen. Knowledge of them is a basic requirement for solid footing in the teachings.
Dogen’s writings, especially Bendōwa, Shōbogenzo, Eihei Koroku
- an understanding of Dōgen’s perspective on zazen, Buddha nature, time, being, total engagement, among many other topics.
This is essential to an understanding of Soto Zen and the manner in which it may vary from its cousin Zen traditions.

SEWING RAKUSU AND OKESA
The individual hand sewing of these garments is at the experiential heart of our practice, embodying:
- commitment
- patience
- taking great care
- ability to follow guidance of others
- humility in the face of the challenges posed
- willingness to make public witness to one’s devotion to the Dharma
- identification with the ancient stream of Soto Zen

Note: Excellent written instructions are available from the following sources:
Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, info@mzmn.org. Refer to Tomoe Katagiri’s “Study of the Okesa, Nyoho-e Buddha’s Robe.”
Berkeley Zen Center, bzc@berkeleyzencenter.org. Attention Jean Selkirk, SFZC, ccoffice@sfcz.org Attention Meiya Wender

OUTSIDE RESOURCES
- visits to a variety of Soto Zen centers and temples to build understanding of the variety of challenges posed to those entering the priesthood
- examination of life roles within the priesthood other than leading a sangha, i.e chaplaincy, prison ministry, social activism
- academic study of Buddhism
- on-line Buddhist courses
- contemporary publications on counseling, interpersonal relations, relation of Buddhism to Western psychology, workshops on ethics, financial accounting, fund-raising and communications, leadership and community building
- personal counseling to build greater self-knowledge
- working with a therapist to remove negative energy and find psychological balance

APPENDIX A - Resources for Study
Background and History:
A Concise History of Buddhism, Andrew Skilton
Basic Buddhist Concepts, Kogen Mizuno
Buddhism, Its Essence and Development, Edward Conze
Buddhist Thought in India, Edward Conze
Buddha, Karen Armstrong
What the Buddha Taught, Rahula Walpola
The Beginnings of Buddhism, Kogen Mizuno
Mahayana Buddhism, the doctrinal foundation, Paul Williams
A History of Indian Buddhism, Hirakawa Akira, trans. Paul Groner

Philosophical development, Mahayana sutras:
The Diamond Sutra, various translations and commentaries
The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, trans. Edward Conze
Heart Sutra, various translations and commentaries
The Lotus Sutra, various translations
Vimalakirti Sutra, trans. Burton Watson; also Robert Thurman
Avatamsaka Sutra (The Flower Ornament Sutra), trans. Thomas Cleary
Gandavyuha Sutra (Entry Into the Realm of Reality), trans. Thomas Cleary

Philosophical development, systems:
Madhyamaka:
The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way, trans. and commentary, Jay L. Garfield
The Foundational Standpoint of Madhyamaka Philosophy, Gadjin Nagao
Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree, The Buddha’s Teachings on Voidness, Buddhadasa Bikkhu

Yogacara:
The Lankavatara Sutra, trans. D.T. Suzuki
Samdhinirmocana Sutra, trans. John Powers
The Yogacara Idealism, Ashok Kumar Chatterjee

Tathagatagarbha:
The Awakening of Faith, trans. Y. Hakeda
Pruning the Bodhi Tree, Hubbard & Swanson

Hua-Yen:
The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: the Philosophy of Hua-yen Buddhism, Garma C. C. Chang
Hua-Yen Buddhism, Francis Cook

Early Buddhism:
The Dhammapada, various translations
The Sutta Nipata, trans. H. Saddhatissa
The Nikayas: Anguttara (Short Discourses); Samuyutta Nikaya (Connected Discourses); Majjhima (Middle Length Discourses); Digha (Long Discourses)
In the Buddha’s Words, an Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon, edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Ch’an and Zen:
The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, trans. P. Yampolsky, also by Thomas Cleary
Zen Buddhism, A History, Two Volumes, Heinrich Dumoulin
The Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma, trans. Red Pine
Zen’s Chinese Heritage, Andy Ferguson
The Zen Teachings of Huang Po, trans. John Blofeld
Original Teachings of Ch’an Buddhism, trans. Chang Chung-yuan
The Recorded Sayings of Master Joshu, trans. James Green
Cultivating the Empty Field, the silent illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi, trans. & commentary, Taigen Dan Leighton
The Roaring Stream, ed. Nelson Foster & Jack Shoemaker
Record of Transmitting the Light, Keizan Jokin (translations by Francis Cook and Thomas Cleary)

Koan collections:
Book of Serenity (Shoyoroku), trans. Thomas Cleary
The Blue Cliff Record (Hekiganroku), trans. Thomas and J.C. Cleary
The Gateless Gate (Mumonkan), trans. and commentary, Robert Aitken

Dogen, background and history:
Dogen’s Formative Years in China, Takashi James Kodera
Soto Zen in Medieval Japan, William M. Bodiford

Dogen, Shobogenzo:
Moon In a Dewdrop, selections, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi & collaborators
Enlightenment Unfolds, selections, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi & collaborators
The Heart of Dogen’s Shobogenzo, selections, trans. Norman Waddell & Masao Abe
Sounds of Valley Streams, selections, trans. Francis Cook
Rational Zen, the Mind of Dogen Zenji, selections, trans. Thomas Cleary
Shobogenzo, Four Volumes, trans. and ed. Nishijima and Cross

Dogen, writings and talks:
Shobogenzo Zaimonki, various trans.
Dogen’s Pure Standards for the Zen Community (Eihei Shingi), trans. Taigen Daniel Leighton and Shohaku Okumura
The Whole Hearted Way, trans. Leighton and Okumura, commentary by Kosho Uchiyama
Dogen’s Extensive Record, (Eihei Koroku), trans. Taigen Dan Leighton & Shohaku Okumura
Master Dogen’s Shinji Shobogenzo (Dogen’s 301 Koan Collection), trans. Gudo Nishijima

Dogen, shikantaza:
The Art of Just Sitting, ed. John Daido Loori
Beyond Thinking, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi
Opening the Hand of Thought, Kosho Uchiyama

Dogen, commentaries:
Dogen Kigen: Mystical Realist, Hee-jin Kim
Dogen on meditation and thinking, Hee-jin Kim
A Study of Dogen, Masao Abe
Buddha Nature is Impermanence, Joan Stambaugh
The Formless Self, Joan Stambaugh
Refining Your Life, Kosho Uchiyama

Other Zen and Japanese Buddhism:
APPENDIX B - Individual SZBA members’ responses to what it means to be a Soto Zen priest

1) I could add other elements, but I would say one critical aspect of "What It Means to Be a Soto Zen Priest," is simply a radical life commitment/priority to maintain the Soto Zen practice and Dharma tradition. This includes making it available to others, and also keeping it alive in the sense of presenting it as meaningful, relevant, and lively for our time and place. There may be as many modes for doing this as there are Soto Zen priests, with each using their own particular abilities, interests, and imaginations to express and enact this.

2) I feel I’ve profited considerably as a Zen priest and teacher from my preparation for ministry within Western and particularly North American conventions. I suspect possibly the most important thing I’ve gotten from my seminary education (and of that most importantly from my parish internship and my clinical pastoral education internship) was a clarification for me about the difference between being a Zen priest and a Zen teacher. I do not see them as the same thing, and my experiences in seminary pointed out pretty clearly how they’re different.

I see a Zen teacher, whether a layperson or a priest is primarily concerned with guiding people toward their deepest understanding of who they are. A Zen teacher is concerned exclusively with the project of awakening. And I believe a Zen priest is concerned with ministry, serving the community in all the different ways that might manifest. This includes fostering sangha either by leading a community or directly supporting the leadership of a community. It means taking care of individuals through counseling, visiting, organizing classes and perhaps in giving Dharma talks. It means being concerned with the religious education of children and youth. It means representing the sangha in the larger community. It can easily mean taking on various forms of chaplaincy including but not limited to hospital, prison and military.

And, I believe my ministry has been deeply enriched by my Zen training. The very fact that I have come to see these two separate functions has allowed me to be clearer in that part of my life which is concerned with spiritual direction, to see that ministry and teaching touch, much like teaching and counseling or psychology touch, but are nonetheless ultimately about different areas of focus.

3) I would summarize the essence of being a Soto Zen priest as: Take this practice very seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously.

4) When I was preparing to ordain the first priests from the Chapel Hill Zen Center sangha, I put together the following piece on Shukke Tokudo. I still feel that the fundamental responsibility of a Soto Zen priest is to support practice, particularly zazen practice, by fashioning his/her life around a zazen schedule and by providing zazen instruction. My teacher, Sojun Mel Weitsman, describes a priest as a "servant of the sangha" rather than as someone to be looked up to by the sangha. I find other things such as an upright character, a moral example, etc., more difficult to define in words, but of course, they are of utmost importance for someone being ordained.

Shukke Tokudo: Leaving Home and Accomplishing the Way

Over the years, several members of the sangha have expressed an interest in being ordained as a priest. The ceremony of being ordained and receiving the precepts as a priest is Shukke Tokudo in Japanese, and it has the meaning of leaving home and accomplishing the way. Although we don’t always literally leave home and move to a monastery or practice center, one way to "leave home" is to make supporting formal practice at the zendo one’s highest priority. Helping the temple run smoothly and making zazen practice available to others is the way a priest serves the sangha.

Obviously this entails reducing the activity and commitments in one’s life in order to be available for zendo practice. Someone who is not a priest may have the same intention to practice, but the responsibilities and logistics of one’s life may not
be such that they allow one the freedom to "be a servant to the sangha." The ordination ceremony itself marks the beginning of priest training which takes many years. In the beginning the novice priests will be learning how to wear robes and eat with the priest's bowls, they will lead service when I am out of town, and they may give Dharma Talks, but their responsibilities will not be much different than they are now.

When one "leaves home," one places the needs of the sangha above one’s personal preferences, and the sangha supports the priest. This support or encouragement may take different forms. The new priests will continue working at the jobs they had before their ordination. One way our sangha may support someone taking on the practice of being ordained as a priest is for the sangha to provide their robes (the kimono and koromo worn under the okesa) and bowls (the traditional set of monastic eating bowls). The robes can be a gift from the sangha to the ordainee, and serving the temple and practice is the priest's gift to the sangha. I think this is a good reflection of our interdependence. Another way to offer your encouragement is to help with sewing the okesa or Buddha’s robe – the patched cloth worn on top of the under robes. It is sewn by the ordainee in preparation for being ordained, and then it is received during the ordination ceremony and cared for as Buddha’s robe. The rakusu is a smaller version of the okesa. The rakusu is sewn and received when receiving the precepts as a lay person in the ceremony called Zaike Tokudo, and it is worn by priests for less formal activity.

Being ordained is a big step, not only for the ordainees, it is also a big responsibility for me to learn how to guide this kind of training for others. In this endeavor, we are sharing the training opportunities provided by the San Francisco Zen Center, including Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. The student and teacher are mutually conditioning. That is, a student needs a teacher in order to be a student, and a teacher needs a student in order to be a teacher. It is my hope that together, as a sangha, we will benefit from the practice and training of priests and find out how it will shape the future growth and maturity of our sangha. 5) Here's what is surely an incomplete set of thoughts on being a Soto Priest. Including some questions about how we might see the position. Not in order of importance: -Being a priest means that you are teacher material in the Soto lineage? -Being a priest means you are someone who can carry the archetype of the religious practitioner. -Priests perform rituals and carry on the traditions of the school. This means that a priest is thoroughly trained in the forms, rituals, etc of the school. -Priests maintain the temple schedule. -Tokudo ordination assumes one is potentially a candidate for dharma transmission? -Priests sit zazen. -Soto Zen practice is the primary activity of the person's life. This can take many forms - e.g. chaplain, counselor, teacher, temple priest. -Vow and renunciation form the basis of the priest's life - this means that all important life decisions are made with reference to ones vows. For example choice of livelihood, amount of material support one needs for one's life, amount of time devoted to dharma activities, personal practice etc. -A priest is willing and able to reflect on their actions and listen to others non-defensively, to take responsibility for the whole situation and act for the good of all involved not simply their own self interests. (At the same time a priest should have a good basic awareness of their own needs so that they can be effectively and appropriately met.)

6) Most fundamental is to embody the Buddha-Dharma in our ongoing life practice - realizing/actualizing this in our activities, whatever those be, according to karmic conditions and circumstances. This may mean functioning as an ordained priest/teacher connected to a Zen Center/Temple (and the various functions related to this) or in other forms and life situations. It also includes working with the practices, teachings and texts of our various Buddha ancestors, especially in India, China and Japan, to further clarify and actualize this life we are - to serve all life. Being a Soto lineage means being trained and using the forms of the lineage, and especially the teachings of Dogen Zenji, Keizan Zenji and the various ancestors of our specific lineage which have come down to us - but not to exclude any others; rather it is for us to resonate with the Dharma relations which are most appropriate with our karmic circumstances. To paraphrase Dogen, no ancestors began any school or saw themselves as any sect other than Buddha Dharma.

7) Speaking for myself, I believe the essential quality of being a priest is a dedication to serving others. This is observable in the potential priest's behavior in and out of the sangha and manifests a renunciation of self. 8) Am I allowed to say I don’t know? It is a venerable response, right? Having just returned from Taiwan and from visits to the huge Buddhist institutions there, my own concerns about scale, regimentation, and cultural Buddhism are heightened. I am a Soto Zen priest because that is the path of my teacher, his teacher, and my dharma sisters and brothers. The forms of Soto Zen are now in my body, like a kind of music. I believe in the transformative practice of our style because I see how it works in myself and in others who apply themselves. But even our Soto Zen in America has tendrils linking it to Sotoshu in Japan. While I have great appreciation for all the Japanese friends, priests, and teachers sincerely working on our behalf, and while I wish to work with them (having jumped through the appropriate hoops), I have great reservations about Sotoshu as an organization, and, more widely, Japanese Buddhism, which seems mired in bureaucracy and almost a kind of feudalism. We don't need this, and no one in our sanghas seems to have more than a passing interest. So I am curious what Soto Zen will become here. How will we work with the dynamic tension between tradition and modernity, and shape a practice that benefits all beings.

9) To be a Soto Zen priest means living a deep vow to free all beings from the pains of dukkha, our dissatisfaction with things as they are, a vow to be realized in every circumstance and every moment of one’s life. This effort to serve others is sustained by the teachings of Shakya Buddha, Dogen Zenji and the tradition of Soto Zen practices that are the markers of one’s commitment.

10) I see the role of a Soto priest as to be available to learn and teach and sustain the forms and teachings of any given Soto-associated community. Specifically, since many lay practitioners also take responsibility for such functions, it falls to the priests to establish continuity and the passing on of the heart of the tradition.
Being a Priest at San Francisco Zen Center

After intense and thoughtful work lasting almost a year, the Elder’s Council of Zen Center presents “Being a Priest at Zen Center.” While the document does suggest some changes in our understanding of being a priest, it is mainly an attempt to put into writing, for purposes of clarification and encouragement, Zen Center’s long-standing understanding of what it means to be a priest. Though the document is finished for now, it represents a living process and the Elder’s Council welcomes all comments and discussion.

- Ryushin Paul Haller, Chair of the Elders Council

Sojun Weitsman once asked Suzuki-roshi “What does it mean to be a priest?” Suzuki-roshi said, “I don’t know.” Being a Zen Buddhist priest is a condition about which nothing can truly be said. It is a process in the dark in which we are always feeling our way with others. Respecting this, and understanding it to be the deepest view of what being a priest is, we offer the following words in hopes that they will help us enter more fully into this process.

What is the Commitment of a Priest?

A Priest of Zen Center makes a lifelong commitment through Shukke Tokudo (Soto Zen Leaving Home Ordination) to the following:

- Accepting Shakyamuni Buddha’s way as the primary commitment of one’s life, making this inner sense of renunciation explicit by wearing the okesa, and being held accountable for living in accordance with the Bodhisattva vow and the precepts.
- Dedicating one’s efforts to realizing the formless essence of the Buddha Way through zazen, engaging in the forms of Soto Zen, training and studying with a teacher, and awareness in everyday life.
- Supporting and encouraging everyone to be free from suffering and to awaken their own true nature. Engaging in zazen and the other forms of Soto Zen as the embodiment of Buddha nature, ensuring their continuity from generation to generation, and making available to the sangha the rituals and ceremonies that honor significant life transitions. Proceeding in this endeavor with Suzuki-roshi’s spirit of complete adherence to the essence of Soto Zen practice while adapting its manifestation to the needs of society.

Expressions of Commitment

Within this general commitment there are many expressions. Some priests may follow a traditional path, complete Dharma Transmission, and become Zen teachers in a traditional way. Other priests may make service or craft their practice. Some priests may remain for many years or a lifetime in large Buddhist institutions like Zen Center; others may practice residually only for a short time; some may start large or small centers of their own, practicing as monastics or temple priests; others may fold into the world at large without beginning a group, practicing with others in a less visible way. Some may become monastics in or out of institutions, practicing quietly and without taking much direct responsibility for the practice of others. Choice of a path within being a priest will depend on circumstances, temperament, and dialogue with friends and teachers. Paths may change within the course of a lifetime of practice. The role of the teacher within this relationship can be that of mentor, spiritual friend, or traditional hierarchical teacher.

How to become a priest at Zen Center

To become a priest at Zen Center a person should already have practiced and demonstrated clearly his or her informed commitment to the Dharma as it is practiced at Zen Center. A candidate for priest ordination should have done at least two training periods at Zenshinji, ten 7-day sesshins, evidenced a basic understanding of Dharma, and have worked closely with one or more teachers. He or she should be known well in the sangha. Generally all of this represents about five years of intensive practice (though only the Zenshinji portion of it needs to be as a resident of Zen Center). During this time, the person interested in priest ordination may ask or be invited by his or her teacher (who may be an Abbot of Zen Center or any other qualified priest associated with Zen Center) to consider whether it seems appropriate for priest ordination to take place. When the teacher thinks it is appropriate, he or she will advise the person to speak with members of the Ordination Committee (consisting of the Abbots, Senior Dharma Teachers and other appointed to the committee) to receive feedback and guidance. The teacher will then meet with the Ordination Committee and if there is consensus the sewing of an okesa will begin and when that is completed the ordination ceremony will take place, led by an Abbot of Zen Center and two other senior priests, one of them being the teacher.
Reasons why a person seeking ordination would not be invited to ordain

In reality, no sincere person is incapable of being a Zen Buddhist priest. It is a matter of heart, not skill or talent. But if a person is in a time in his or her life when he or she is emotionally unstable the time is not right. If he or she is in the midst of serious life transitions the time is not right. If the intention to ordain is unclear to the teacher or the Ordination Committee the time is not right.

Training as a priest

Each newly ordained priest will study closely with his or her teacher for a specific period of time (minimum four years). After that time the priest continues with the same or with other teachers. All priests will maintain some contact with one or more teachers throughout their lifetime. Such contact is always essential; no one practices without guidance. Priests and teachers are mutually accountable to each other and the sangha; such accountability is essential to the teaching.

As paths within being a priest will differ so will training differ. There are some things all priests will practice for a significant amount of time (including zazen practice, work practice, doan work, text study, precepts study, work with teachers, training in doing practice instruction, Shusō training) and some things that only some priests will take up (for instance detailed study, expertise in ceremonies, expertise in a skill or craft). Each student’s experience may be different depending on the needs of the priest-in-training and the style of the teacher. Agreements on how to practice together should be as clear and explicit as possible.

Completing training as a priest

Training is a lifetime’s work. After some time has passed a priest and his or her teacher will mutually agree that the priest has entered a stage of maturity in practice in the Dharma. For some priests completion of training is marked by the Dharma Transmission ceremony. Only priests who have completed Dharma Transmission are qualified to do lay and priest ordinations and be abbots of temples. For others a simpler private ceremony of completion occurs. The differences between the several priest paths and how practitioners of those paths will practice and work with others will be made clear through the process of training and reiterated at the completion of training.

Priests as visible practitioners

The style of a priest will depend on his or her activity at any given time in life. All priests will sew, receive and wear the okesa at appropriate times. Some - particularly when living in a temple or leading formal practice - may keep their heads shaved and wear formal robes and even wear Japanese-style informal priest clothing (or an American version of informal priest clothing) outside formal situations or the temple grounds. Others may wear their hair more conventionally and seldom or never wear formal or informal robes. The external form of being a priest is something that Suzuki-roshi valued very much and we continue to value it; it is something our sangha is committed to preserving and any priest must be willing to carry this form when the situation calls for it. But not all priests need to carry it all the time. Before completion of training the style of a priest is a subject of dialogue with a teacher; after completion of training the priest makes personal choices depending on temperament and circumstances.

Priest Training at Green Dragon Temple

Draft, 2007 - San Francisco Zen Center

The priest training program of San Francisco Zen Center, including requirements for ordination (shukke tokudo), is described in the essay Being a Priest at Zen Center. The present document clarifies and elaborates on how that training is carried out and expressed at Green Dragon Temple.

Priest training is grounded in Green Gulch’s semi-monastic on-going program of daily zazen, services, and work practice, along with Dharma talks, classes, dokusan, and training in traditional Zen forms. An additional important aspect of priest training is close contact between priest-trainee, teacher, and other senior priests and practitioners, which allows for intimate attention to our lives together.

Program requirements

Practitioners who are interested in the priest path may begin by discussing it with their teacher. The first step is to be accepted by a San Francisco Zen Center Dharma Teacher (a priest who has received Dharma Transmission) as a “candidate”. The length
of the period of candidacy will vary according to individual circumstances. During this time, candidates will explore their relationship with their teacher as well as with the Green Gulch community, and will fulfill Zen Center requirements for ordination.

Approval for ordination comes from the Zen Center Ordination Committee, comprised of the abbot, abbess and senior Dharma teachers, together with one’s teacher (who may or may not be part of this group). Following this approval, the teacher will give permission to begin sewing robes when he or she feels it is appropriate to do so. Candidates sew their own okesa, zagu, and rakusu as part of their preparation for ordination.

Commitments and Training
Candidates and priest trainees participate fully in Green Gulch life, holding work positions appropriate to their seniority, taking classes in the study center, and following the zendo schedule. They support practice at Green Gulch by fulfilling zendo responsibilities appropriate to their training and to the needs of the community.

Candidates and priest trainees may be either single or have a life partner; they commit to stability in personal relationships. They make a commitment to refrain from beginning new sexual relationships during their initial period of training. If circumstances arise that conflict with the requirements of priest training, formal training may be suspended until the situation stabilizes. Candidacy allows time for both the teacher and student to encounter and explore the consequences of such commitments.

Residency at Green Gulch allows the priest trainee to have face-to-face contact, both formal and informal, structured and improvised, with his or her teacher. During the initial period of training any major issues and changes in life circumstances will be brought to the teacher. This could include vacation plans, deportment and dress, head shaving or hair style, addictive behaviors, practice or training opportunities, family difficulties or emergencies, emotional and erotic attractions, and conflicts with other sangha members. Major decisions shall be made in consultation with the teacher and when appropriate, with other practice leaders as well.

There may be group meetings for candidates and also for priests. These groups provide a place to study Buddhist texts with one’s teacher, as well as a forum for the discussion of sangha relations, priest training, and other practice concerns. They provide a circle of elders and peers who commit to openness, intimacy and wholehearted support of each other’s practice.

Zen Center may also offer other types of training, such as in conflict resolution and group facilitation skills, diversity and multiculturalism, and in dealing with such issues as addictive behavior and transference/counter-transference issues.

Deportment
As relatively senior members of the community, and as practitioners who publicly take vows dedicating themselves to the welfare of others, both candidates and priests provide a practice model for more junior students and for entire the sangha. All Green Gulch residents commit to following the “Temple Practice Guidelines”. Within priest training, however, there is the opportunity for a more thoroughgoing and intimate level of accountability.

Work Practice
Candidates and priest-trainees fully participate in work practice in the community. This offers the opportunity to enter into and learn from a wide range of training positions.

Shuso
The priest training program includes the opportunity to serve as shuso for a practice period, usually toward the end of the first five years of training. Priests who have completed their period of residential practice without having been shuso may be invited to return later to do so.

Paths and Gates
Generally, the initial period of priest training at Green Gulch is five years. There may be variations in this, depending on an individual’s circumstances and the needs of Zen Center.

Like all Green Gulch staff, candidates and priest-trainees are expected to follow the Paths and Gates Guidelines regarding Zen Center residential training. Each person’s path after the first five years will be worked out in discussion between the priest, their teacher, and appropriate Zen Center staff such as the Green Gulch director and tanto. Zen Center does not make a commitment to provide ongoing support, housing, or staff positions to all ordained priests.

Some priests will continue to train in residence at Zen Center, taking roles of greater responsibility. Others will leave Zen Center residency. In both cases, priests may continue to train with their teacher throughout their lifetime.
Priest Ordination Ceremony
Leaving Home and Attaining Liberation
Green Dragon Temple
Abbess Jiko Linda Cutts (Abiding Abbess/Preceptor 1)
Senior Dharma Teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson (Mentor/Preceptor 2)
Abbot Ryushin Paul Haller (Preceptor 3)
August 21, 2005

[Tanto takes ordainees to circumambulate the temple and offer incense at altars, chanting Om Namu Shakyamuni Buddha]

ENTRANCE

Three rounds of the Obonsho bell
By the end of the second round the guests have all entered.
At the end of the third round the preceptors enter with Jisha, Jiko and 2 inkins.

Abiding Abbess/Preceptor 1 offers incense and purifies the Buddha Hall (Zendo) with wisdom water. Everyone bows three times. Doan bells for bows.

When Jisha moves Abbess’s zagu, Jiko brings wisdom water to table.

Ordainees:
Enter zendo, led by Tanto. Each offers incense at altar, then they line up facing altar and do 3 bows together. Go to their places (zabutons in front of preceptors).
3 bows to preceptors, then sit.

INVOCATION

Preceptor 3: Invoking the presence and compassion of our ancestors,
in faith that we are Buddha, we enter Buddha’s way.

Homage to all Buddhas in ten directions
Homage to the complete Dharma in ten directions
Homage to the endless Sangha in ten directions
Homage to our first teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha
Homage to the single-being-succession of Bodhisattvas and Ancestors
Homage to Eihei Dogen Zenji
Homage to Shogaku Shunryu Daisho
May their presence and compassion sustain us now
Let us recite the Names of Buddha

Ordainees and Assembly: (Inkin*)

Vairochana Buddha, pure Dharmakaya*
Lochana Buddha, complete Sambhogakaya*
Shakyamuni Buddha, myriad Nirmanakaya*
Maitreya Buddha, of future birth*
All Buddhas throughout space and time*
Lotus of the Wondrous Dharma, Mahayana Sutra*
Manjushri Bodhisattva, great wisdom*
Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, great activity*
Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, great compassion*
All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas*
Wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha-prajnaparamita

During chant Jiko brings tray with razor.
Mentor:
You have come here to be ordained as disciples of the Buddha. Listen attentively: due to the coming together of auspicious circumstances in your present life, this ceremony has been made possible. As Buddha's disciples, you have the opportunity to receive the teachings, transmitted from Shakyamuni Buddha through the ancestors to us, and to manifest the Buddha's way forever. Even the Buddhas and ancestors cannot but admire you who are earnestly seeking the Buddha's path in this world, with sincere belief in the Dharma, and practicing your way with thoughtful consideration for all sentient beings.

Preceptor 3:
To receive a human body in this world is a rare occurrence. Yet, we cannot avoid the reality of birth and death. We must deeply and gratefully appreciate how meaningful and marvelous is this present existence. Rare also is the opportunity to listen to the Buddha, and the appearance of Buddha in this world is our greatest joy. Embracing the Buddha's teaching, moment after moment we endeavor to live the life of enlightenment, setting aside greed, letting go of anger, and transcending self-delusion. Please reflect on the causes and conditions that have made this ceremony possible. Consider the innumerable blessings of your family and friends. Strive to return at least a small part of these miraculous gifts, and with your life, express your gratitude to all of those who have cared so much for you, now and in the past.

Ordainees:
One full bow to any non-officiating Abbot or Senior Dharma Teacher
One standing bow to parents and family

HEAD SHAVING

Preceptor 1:
Good disciples of Buddha, the source of mind is still, the ocean of Dharma is profound. Those who realize this are liberated on the spot. Traveling the path of Buddha, one must be in the state of renunciation. This is not for renunciation itself, but for the sake of realizing the Way. This form is common to all Buddhist Orders; a criterion for attaining freedom. To make body and mind one with the Way, nothing is better than renunciation.

Mentor:
Cutting off the hair is cutting the root of clinging. As soon as the root of clinging is cut, your original body appears. Changing into monastic robes now, and leaving worldly passions, you are free.

Mentor offers incense for razor and begins head shaving.

Beginning Head Shaving

Ino chants once alone, followed by
Ordainees & Assembly:
Only the mind of a Bodhisattva
Can cut through this drifting, wandering life
And take the path of nirvana.
This virtue cannot be defined. 3X

During Head Shaving a photograph is taken, which should include both the Mentor and the Ordainee.

Ino chants once alone, followed by
Ordainees & Assembly:
O the bonds of attachment are hard to break
In our past, present, and future karma.
Realization beyond the realm of karma
Is the offering of true compassion. 3x

After Head Shaving
Preceptor 3 recites once alone, followed by
Ordainees and Assembly, who also recite once:
In this world of birth and death,
When we realize our imperturbable way-seeking mind,
Bodhi is right at hand.
This very beginner’s mind,
Bodhisattvas know as immeasurably deep and wide;
Not even a Buddha can define it.  

During this chant the Jiko goes to the altar for the tray of koromos and Serene Names.

PRESENTATION OF KOROMO

Receive koromos, return to places, sit in seiza and unwrap. Stand and put on koromos.
One bow to preceptors.

FINAL HEAD SHAVING

Mentor:     This last hair is called the *shura*.
            Only a Buddha can cut it off.
            Now I will cut it off.
            Do you allow me to cut it off?  

Ordainees: Yes

During Head Shaving another photograph is taken which should include the Mentor and the Ordainee.

After Shaving:

Preceptor 1:  Shaving your head and again shaving your head
              Cutting your attachments
              You are now in the path of Buddha
              With the mind and body of complete enlightenment
              You will free all sentient beings from suffering.

Ordainees:    Freed from my ancient karma
              Freed from my worldly attachments
              Freed from form and color
              Everything is changed
              Except my deep desire to live in truth with all beings.

One bow to preceptors.

NAME GIVING

Mentor presents each of the ordainees with their [new] name on serene name card.

PRESENTATION OF SITTING CLOTH, 5 PANEL ROBE, OKESA AND BOWLS

Mentor gives each ordainee a sitting cloth (zagu).
Ordainees return to places, sit in seiza to unwrap zagus, then in choki to chant.

Ordainees:    O, bodhisattva-mahasattvas
              Please concentrate your hearts on me.
              I, _________________, Buddha’s disciple,
              Receive this sitting cloth
              Made according to Buddha’s own.
              I will use it and protect the okesa.
Ordainees: Stand to open zagu, stand in front of it and chant:

Great is the sitting cloth
Used by all buddhas and ancestors
I vow to bow on it with all beings.

One bow to preceptors.

Mentor gives rakusu to each ordainee. (Optional)

Ordainees: O, bodhisattva Mahasattvas!
Please concentrate your hearts on me.
I, ______________________, Buddha’s disciple,
Receive this robe of five panels,
Each panel made from one long piece and one short piece.
I will wear this robe of Buddha
With the mind and body of its sacred meaning.

Ordainees pass rakusus to an assisting priest and do one full bow.

Mentor gives okesa to each ordainee.
Ordainees return to their places, unwrap okesas in seiza, chant in choki.

Ordainees: O, bodhisattva-mahasattvas!
Please concentrate your hearts on me.
I, ______________________, Buddha’s disciple,
Receive this robe of seven panels,
Each panel made from two long pieces and one short piece.
I will wear this robe of Buddha
With the mind and body of its sacred meaning.

In seiza, remove okesa from envelope. Put okesa on head and, in choki, do robe chant: twice in Japanese, and once in English. (Assembly does not chant.) Put on okesa.

One bow to preceptors.

During the bow the Jiko goes to the altar for the bowls and lineage documents.


Ordainees: O, bodhisattva-mahasattvas!
Please concentrate your hearts on me.
I, ______________________, Buddha’s disciple,
Receive Buddha’s bowls, that are just enough for eating and begging.
I will use these bowls made by the ancient way,
and follow their sacred meaning.
The endless merit of the buddhas and ancestors fills these bowls.
I vow to offer it to all beings.

One bow to preceptors.

RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

Preceptor 1:
Now, having shaved your heads, received your (new) names and new clothing, you are ready to receive the Great Precepts of the Buddhas. If you wish to receive the refuges and the precepts, please come and offer incense to make the request.

Move incensor for ordainees.

Ordainees offer incense and bow three times to preceptors.
Mentor:
I see by your sincere incense offering and bows, that you wish to receive Buddha’s precepts, and if so, please know that the first step in receiving these precepts is the practice of repentance, the practice of admitting that you’re a human being. Using the statement formulated by past Buddhas, all obstacles caused by wrong action from ancient times, will melt away. There are many ways of confession. We have one here that has been transmitted from Buddha through our Ancestors, to us. Please recite after me.

Ordainees recites each line after Mentor:
Jisha hits clappers*

All my ancient twisted karma*
From beginningless greed, hate and delusion,*
Born through body, speech and mind,*
I now fully avow.* 3X

Preceptor 3:
Pure as the full moon in the night sky, sentient and insentient beings delight.
O, good disciples, you have gone beyond the karma of body, speech and mind, and have been freed from greed, hate and delusion.
O, good disciples of Buddha, now you may live in the Way of the Three Treasures.

Mentor:
From now on and even after realizing Buddhahood, will you continue this truthful practice? 3X

Ordainees: Yes, I will

Mentor purifies each ordainee with Wisdom Water.
Ordainees sit in seiza with heads bowed and hands in gassho.

Mentor:
We have purified our mind and body. Now you may receive the path of the precepts of the Three Treasures, which are the beauty of human life. You are seated with Buddha and are really Buddha’s child.
Will you receive these precepts?

Ordainee: Yes, I will

Ordainees recites each line after Mentor:
Jisha hits clappers.*

I take refuge in Buddha*
I take refuge in Dharma*
I take refuge in Sangha*
I take refuge in Buddha as the perfect teacher*
I take refuge in Dharma as the perfect teaching*
I take refuge in Sangha as the perfect life*
Now I have completely taken refuge in Buddha*
Now I have completely taken refuge in Dharma*
Now I have completely taken refuge in Sangha*

Mentor:
You have returned to your original nature, free from attachment and limited ways. From now on, Awakening is your teacher, Buddha is your teacher, all being is your teacher. Do not be fooled by other ways. This is the path of mercy, for all existence and things.

O good disciples of Buddha (1X)

From now on and even after realizing Buddhahood
Will you follow this compassionate path of the Three Treasures that I have just passed to you? 3x
Ordainees: Yes, I will

Three Pure Precepts

Mentor: Now will you receive the Three Pure Precepts?

Ordainees: Yes, I will

Ordainee recites each line after Mentor:
Jisha hits clappers.*

I vow to embrace and sustain right conduct.*
I vow to embrace and sustain all good.*
I vow to embrace and sustain all beings.*

Mentor: O good disciples of Buddha, (1x)

Abiding in these Three Pure Precepts,
from now on and even after realizing Buddhahood,
will you continuously observe them? 3x

Ordainees: Yes, I will

Ten Grave Precepts

Mentor: Now will you receive the Ten Grave Precepts?

Ordainees: Yes, I will.

Ordainees recite each line after Mentor:
Jisha hits clappers.*

A disciple of Buddha does not kill*
A disciple of Buddha does not take what is not given*
A disciple of Buddha does not misuse sexuality*
A disciple of Buddha does not lie*
A disciple of Buddha does not intoxicate mind or body of self or others*
A disciple of Buddha does not slander*
A disciple of Buddha does not praise self at the expense of others*
A disciple of Buddha is not possessive of anything, not even the Dharma*
A disciple of Buddha does not harbor ill will*
A disciple of Buddha does not disparage the Three Treasures*
(after last repetition, **)  

Mentor: O good disciples of Buddha (1x)

Abiding according to these Ten Grave Precepts, (3x)
from now on and even after realizing Buddhahood,
Will you continuously observe them?

Ordainees: Yes, I will

Ordainees offer three bows.

PRESENTATION OF THE LINEAGE

Mentor: Now I offer you the lineage document of the precepts.
Ordainees come forward and receive kechimyaku.
Ordainees offer one bow.
Preceptor 1:  
You have received Buddha’s precepts and thus all beings have entered Buddhahood. With your (new) name and clothes, with the lineage of Buddha’s Precepts, you are a child of Buddha, one with all being.
Receiving Buddha’s precepts, you are already seated with all Buddhas and Ancestors. You are really a child of Buddha.

Preceptors 1, 2, and 3 make short, formal statements.

Preceptor 3:
We dedicate the merit of this ceremony to the welfare of all beings. May they attain complete, perfect enlightenment.

Preceptor 3 (alone once):
Like a cloud in an endless sky
Like a lotus in muddy water
We live in the pure mind of Buddha

(With assembly, 3 x)
Like a cloud in an endless sky
Like a lotus in muddy water
We live in the pure mind of Buddha

Preceptor 3: (alone) Thus we bow to the Tathagata.

Ordainees and Assembly:

All Buddhas, ten direction, three times.
All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas,
Wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha Prajna Paramita.

During “All Buddhas” Abbess offers incense.
Preceptors, Ordainees and Assembly do 3 bows.

Preceptors return to seat. Assembly is seated. Ordainees remain standing.

Ordainees bow 3 times to preceptors with open zagus. Then put down folded zagus, say “Thank you very much,” bow once, and sit in seiza.

Preceptors speak briefly and informally to congratulate ordainees.

Preceptors, Jisha, Jiko and inkins leave in procession. Ordainees leave.
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Leaving Home for Women
Chu Ching-Chien, the first ordained Buddhist nun in China

Chu Ching-Chien (Pure Example) ~292-361 AD, Bamboo Grove Convent in Loyang, Chin Dynasty
from “Lives of the Nuns” (Pi-ch’iu-ni chuan, compiled in 516) translated by Kathryn Ann Tsai

Ching-chien’s secular surname was Chung and her given name was Ling-i. Her family was originally from P’eng-ch’eng in northeastern China. Her father, Chung Tan, served as administrator of Wu-wei Commandery [in far northwestern China]. As a small child Ching-chien had been very fond of learning. She was still quite young when the death of her husband left the family impoverished, and to earn a living she often taught lute and calligraphy to the children of noble families.

When Ching-chien first heard about the Buddhist teaching she felt faith and joy, but there was no one from whom to receive detailed instruction. Later she met the Buddhist monk Fa-shih who was thoroughly versed in scripture and practice. In the chien-hsing reign period (313-317) of Western Chin he established a monastery at the West Gate of the imperial city [of Lo-yang]. When Ching-chien visited there, Fa-shih explained the teachings to her. As a result she had a great awakening and grew firm in her resolve to seek the benefits of the religion of the Buddha. Borrowing a scriptural text from Fa-shih to study, she proceeded to master its contents.

On another day she said to Fa-shih, “In the scriptures it says, ‘Bhikshu and bhikshuni aspire to deliverance.’ [What are bhikshus and bhikshunis?]” Fa-shih replied, “In the western regions [India] there are two monastic assemblies, that of bhikshu, or monks, for men and that of bhikshuni, or nuns, for women; but in this country the books of rules for the monastic life are not complete.” Ching-chien asked, “Because the scripture speaks of the two terms, monk and nun, can it be that the rules for each group are different?” Fa-shih said, “Foreign Buddhists say that nuns have five hundred rules to follow as compared to fewer for monks, and that must be the difference. I asked the instructor about this, and he said that the rules for nuns are highly similar and only slightly different from the monks’ regulations, but, if I cannot get the complete texts of these rules, then I certainly cannot bestow on women the obligation to observe them. A woman aspiring eventually to become a nun may, however, receive the ten fundamental [shramaneri, novice] precepts from the Assembly of Monks only, but without a [female] monastic instructor to train her in the practice of all the rules, a woman has no one on whom to rely [for that training which prepares her to accept the obligation to observe all the monastic life].”

Ching-chien, nevertheless, had her head shaved, cast off secular clothing and accepted the ten fundamental precepts from the instructor. [She was in her late twenties.] There were twenty-four other women of like mind, and together they established Bamboo Grove Convent at the West Gate of the imperial city. They had as yet no female teacher, so they all consulted Ching-chien, whose instruction and advice were superior to those already recognized as accomplished [in religious thought and practice].

The instructor [who had bestowed the ten fundamental precepts] was the Buddhist monk Chih-shan from Kashmir [in India]. Gentle in wisdom and elegant in thought, he cultivated both meditation and chanting. He supported himself by begging for alms, and his preaching surely spread the Buddha Way. At that time in China, however, faith was shallow, and no one knew enough to request instruction from him. Therefore, in the first year of chien-wu (317) he returned to Kashmir. Later, when [the Buddhist magician monk from Kucha, Chu] Fo-t’u-teng, returned [to the Loyang region], he recounted Chih-shan’s virtues; everyone felt great remorse [for having lost the opportunity to learn from the monk of Kashmir].

Ching-chien supported and cared for her community of disciples; she observed the monastic rules with purity and distinction. The influence of her preaching of the Buddhist teaching was [in Mencius’ words] like wind moving grass.

In the hsien-k’ang reign period (335-342) of Eastern Chin, the Buddhist monk Seng-chien, when in the land of the Scythians in central Asia, got hold of a nuns’ rites and rules book of the Mahasanghika sect. In the first year of the sheng-p’ing reign period (357), the translation of the text was completed in Lo-yang on the eighth day of the second month [in honor of the Buddha’s entry into parinirvana]. The foreign Buddhist monk T’an-mo-chieh-to set up a ceremonial platform [on which Ching-chien and her disciples were to accept all of the monastic rules for women as found in the newly translated text]. The Chinese monk Shih Tao-ch’ang objected to this action, however, on the basis of scriptures on the origins of monastic rules that said that, because there was no Assembly of Nuns in China to bestow the rules on the women as the scriptures required, the ritual should not be carried out. His objections were not acknowledged and, as a result, [Shih Tao-ch’ang] took a boat down the Ssu River to the south. Ching-chien and the others, four altogether, became bhikshunis by accepting from the Assembly of bhikshus only, the obligation to observe all the monastic rules. Ching-chien is thus the first of the Buddhist nuns in China. [She was in her late sixties.]

On the day of that ritual, remarkable fragrance and perfume [filled the air]. Everyone smelled it, and there was none who did not rejoice and marvel; respect for her increased all the more. Ching-chien well cultivated the monastic rules and resolutely studied without ceasing. Although the gifts of the faithful were many, she distributed everything she received, always putting herself last and others first.

At the end of the sheng-p’ing reign period (357-361) Ching-chien once again smelled the same fragrance [that had graced the ritual of her becoming a nun], and she saw a red, misty cloud. Out of that cloud a woman holding a five-colored flower in her hands descended from the sky. Ching-chien was delighted to see her and said to the nuns, “Manage your affairs well in the future. I am taking leave of you now.” Clasping their hands she bid them farewell and then rose up into the air. The path she traveled looked like a rainbow going straight up to heaven. At that time she was seventy years old.

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Receiving the Marrow by Bowing
Shobogenzo Raihai Tokuzui by Eihei Dogen Zenji, translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Peter Levitt

In the practice of unsurpassable, complete enlightenment, what is most difficult is to find a guiding teacher. The guiding teacher should be a strong person, regardless of being a male or female. The teacher should be a person of thuness, with excellent knowledge and wild fox [transformative] spirit, whether living in the past or present. This is the face [essence] of attaining the marrow, the guiding virtue. This is “not ignoring cause and effect,” and “you and I are just this.”

After you encounter your guiding teacher, practice diligently in the endeavor of the way, casting off myriad conditions, without sparing a moment. Practice with heart, practice with beyond heart, practice even with half a heart. In this way, brush off the fire on your head [practice with urgency], or stand on your toes [practice diligently].

If you practice in this way, you will not be destroyed by jealous demons; the ancestor [Huike] who cut off his arm and attained the [Bodhidharma’s] marrow becomes not other [than you]. The master who drops away body and mind is you yourself.

You attain the marrow and are invariably transmitted dharma through your utmost sincerity and trusting heart. There is no path that comes from anything other than sincere trust; there is no direction that emerges from itself.

Thus, you regard dharma as weighty and your own body as lightly weighted. You retreat from the world and make the way your abode. If you consider your own body weightier than dharma, dharma is not transmitted to you and you will not be able to attain the way.

Although the aspiration for making dharma weighty is not limited to a single path, and does not depend on instructions from others, let me make one or two points:

Regarding dharma as weighty means this: If you encounter someone who maintains the great dharma, having received the acknowledgment—“You have attained my marrow,”—whether the person is a pillar or a lantern, a buddha, wild fox, demon, man or woman, you should put your body and mind on a server’s seat and attend to the person even for immeasurable eons. It is common to attain body and mind, which are just like widely spread rice plants, flax, bamboo, or reed. But it is rare to encounter dharma.

Shakyamuni Buddha said:

In encountering teachers who expound unsurpassable enlightenment, do not consider their caste or facial appearance; do not dislike their shortcomings or judge their activities. Just value their prajna and feed them daily with one hundred or one thousand ounces of gold. Offer them celestial meals. Sprinkle celestial flowers for them. Bow and pay respect to them three times a day and do not arouse the mind of confusion. If you act in this way, the path of enlightenment will certainly have a place. This is how I have practiced since I aroused the aspiration for enlightenment and now I have attained unsurpassable, complete enlightenment.

Thus, look to trees and rocks, fields and villages to expound dharma. Ask pillars about dharma and investigate with walls. In the past Indra bowed to a wild fox to inquire about dharma. This fox was known as a great bodhisattva. This action by Indra was not based on the fox’s high or low status of being.

However, foolish people who have not heard buddha dharma call themselves great monks and would not bow to younger ones who have attained dharma. Those who have matured practice over a long period of time would not bow to latecomers who have attained dharma. Those who have certificates as masters would not bow to others who have not been certified. Those who are in charge of dharma matters would not bow to other monks who have attained dharma. Those who are bishops would not bow to laymen and laywomen who have attained dharma. Bodhisattvas of ten stages and three classes would not bow to nuns who have attained dharma. Those who are imperial descendants would not bow to retainers who have attained dharma. Such foolish people have neither seen nor heard the buddha way, just like the one who groundlessly left parents and wandered in another land.

When Zhaozhou, Great Master Zhenji, of Tang Dynasty, aroused the aspiration for enlightenment and was about to begin a journey, he said to himself, “I will ask about dharma of anyone who surpasses me, even a seven-year-old. I will teach anyone who is behind me, even a one-hundred-year-old.”

When asking a seven-year-old about dharma, an old man like Zhaozhou bows. It is an extraordinary aspiration, the mind art of an old buddha.

It is an excellent custom of study that when a nun has attained the way, attained dharma, and started to teach, monks who seek dharma and study join her assembly, bow to her, and ask about the way. It is just like finding water at the time of thirst.

Zhixian [Guanxi] of China was a revered teacher in the lineage of Linji.

Once Linji saw Zhixian approaching and grabbed him.

Zhixian said, “I understand it.”

Linji let him loose and said, “You are free to have a meal here.”

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Thus, Zhixian became a student of Linji. After leaving Linji, he went to see Moshan [Liaoran]. She said, “Where are you from?” Zhixian said, “From the entrance.” Moshan said, “Why don’t you close it off?” Zhixian was silent. He made a bow and expressed himself as a student of Moshan’s. Then he asked: “How is Moshan [Mt. Mo]?” Moshan said, “It does not show its peak.” Zhixian said, “Who is the person inside the mountain?” Moshan said, “It is beyond man and woman.” Zhixian said, “How come you don’t change?” Moshan said, “I am not a wild fox spirit. Why should I change?” Zhixian bowed. Then he aroused the aspiration for enlightenment and worked as head of the garden for three years.

Later he became the abbot of a monastery and said to the assembly, “I received half a ladle [of gruel] at Old Man Linji’s and another half at Old Woman Moshan’s. So I had a full ladle and have been satisfied up to this moment.”

Now, when we hear this story we long for such an ancient encounter. Moshan was an outstanding student of Gaoan Daigu. Her life vein had the power to become Zhixian’s Old Woman. Linji was an heir of Huangbo, Zen Master Xiyan. His endeavor of the way had the power to become Zhixian’s Old Man. Old Woman means mother, and Old Man means father.

The fact that Zhixian bowed to Nun Liaoran of Moshan and asked for dharma was an excellent example of aspiration, a model for latecomers. It should be called hammering open the gate bar or breaking through a bamboo node.

Nun Miaoxin was a student of Yangshan. When Yangshan was looking for someone to fill the position of the director of the guest house at the foot of Mt. Yangshan, he asked his senior students to make a recommendation. After some discussion, Yangshan said, “Although Miaoxin is a woman, she has heroic aspiration. She should be suited to serve as the director of the guest house.” Everyone agreed and Miaoxin was appointed to the position. None of Yanshang’s other students resented the decision. As it was not a minor position, those who recommended Miaoxin were careful about this selection.

While Miaoxin filled this position, there was a group of seventeen monks from Shu, in the west, who were on the road in search of a master. On their way to climb up to Yangshan’s monastery, they stopped and stayed at the guest house. While they rested in the evening, they discussed the story about the wind and the banner of Huineng, High Ancestor of Caoxi. The seventeen monks’ interpretations were all wrong.

Miaoxin, who overheard the discussion outside the room, said, “How wasteful! How many pairs of straw sandals have these seventeen blind donkeys worn out? They haven’t even dreamed of buddha dharma.” Her assistant worker told them that Miaoxin had not approved their understanding. Instead of being upset with her disapproval, the monks were ashamed of their lack of understanding. They got formally dressed, offered incense, bowed, and ask her to teach.

Miaoxin said, “Come closer.” When the seventeen monks were still getting closer, Miaoxin said, “It is not that wind flaps. It is not that the banner flaps. It is not that your mind flaps.”

Hearing her words, all seventeen monks had realization. They thanked her and formally became her students. Soon after, they went back to Shu without climbing up to Yangshan’s monastery. Indeed, this is nothing the bodhisattvas of ten stages or three classes can come up with. It is work transmitted by buddha ancestors from heir to heir.

Thus, even nowadays when the position of abbot or head monk is not filled, you should request a nun who has attained dharma to assume the position. However aged or senior a monk may be, what’s the use of someone who has not attained the way? The master of an assembly should be a person of a clear eye. Those who are drowned in the body and mind of villagers are often so stubborn that even lay people may ridicule them. It is not worth mentioning in buddha dharma. Some refuse to bow to female teachers who have received dharma transmission. Because these people lack knowledge and study, they are close to animals and far from buddha ancestors.

If such people are deeply determined to throw their body and mind wholeheartedly into buddha dharma, buddha dharma takes pity on them without fail. Foolish humans and devas still have the capacity to feel the truth. How should the authentic dharma of all buddhas not have compassion to respond to sincere hearts? Even mud, rocks, sand, and pebbles have hearts to be affected by sincerity.

Today a nun stays in monasteries of Great Song. When the attainment of dharma by one of them is acknowledged and she is appointed abbess of a nunnery by the government, she ascends the teaching seat in the monastery where she is staying. All monks including the abbot assemble, stand, and listen to her dharma discourse. Some monks ask questions. This has been the custom since ancient times.

One who has attained dharma is a true authentic buddha and should not been regarded as the same as before. When we see the person, someone who is new and extraordinary sees us. When we see the person, today sees today.
When arhats, pratyeka-buddhas, or bodhisattvas of the three stages and ten classes come to a nun who maintains the treasury of the true dharma eye, they should bow and ask about dharma, and she should receive their bow.

Why are men special? Emptiness is emptiness. Four great elements are four great elements. Five skandhas are five skandhas. Women are just like that. Both men and women attain the way. You should honor attainment of the way. Do not discriminate between men and women. This is the most wondrous principle of the buddha way.

Also, those who are called laity in Song China are people who have not left their households. Some of them are married and have their abodes. Others are celibate, but may still have much worldly concern. However, monks with cloud robes and mist sleeves visit lay people who have clarified dharma, bow to them and inquire about the way, just as they do to masters who have left their households. They should also do so to accomplished women and even to animals.

On the other hand, even a one-hundred-year-old monk who has not dreamed of the essentials of buddha dharma cannot be close to men and women who have attained dharma. Such a person should not be respected more than as a host or a guest.

Even seven-year-old girls who practice buddha dharma and express buddha dharma are guiding teachers of the four types of disciples [monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen]; they are compassionate parents of sentient beings. They are like dragon princesses who have attained buddhahood. You should make an offering and respect them just as you do buddha tathagatas. This is an authentic custom of the buddha way. Those who do not know this custom and do not receive it should be pitied.

Written at the Kannondori Kosho Horin Monastery on the clear-bright day [the fifteenth day from spring solstice], the second year of the En’o Era [1239].

Postscript

There have been women on the throne in Japan and China. The entire land is ruled by the monarch and all people become her subjects. This is not done to respect the human form but to respect the position. Since of old, nuns have been respected solely for their attainment of dharma, and not for their human form.

Again, if there is a nun who has become an arhat, all the merits that follow the four fruits come and assemble around her. Who among humans and devas come close to the merits of the four fruits? No devas in the three realms can equal the merits; none of them are worth as much. So, they all revere the merits.

Furthermore, who would not revere someone that has aroused the great heart of the bodhisattva and is transmitted the Tathagata’s authentic dharma? Not to revere such a person is naturally ridiculous. Not to revere your own unsurpassable enlightenment is to foolishly slander dharma.

In Japan, some daughters of the emperor or ministers have similar positions to that of the empress. Some empresses hold Buddhist titles. Some of these women have shaven heads and other don’t. Monks who are greedy for fame and love to receive benefits rush to their houses and keep hitting their foreheads on these women’s footwear. This is even lower than being their retainers. There are many of those who become their servants and simply grow old. What a pity that they were born in this remote small nation and are not aware that this is a corrupted custom! This does not happen in India or China, but only in our country. It is lamentable.

They shave their faces and heads in vain and break the Tathagata’s authentic dharma. It is a serious wrongdoing. It is sad that they forget that the worldly path is made of dreams, phantoms, and empty blossoms, and are bound as servants of these women. They act like this for the sake of a worldly path. Why don’t they revere those who should be revered for the sake of unsurpassable enlightenment? They act like this because they have little aspiration to regard dharma as weighty and they are not filled with the aspiration to seek dharma.

When they greedily receive treasures, they think it is justifiable to receive donations particularly from women. When you seek dharma you should have an aspiration that goes beyond this kind of thinking. If you do so, grass, trees, and walls will give out true dharma; all things in heaven and earth will offer true dharma. This is a principle you should know without fail. Even if you meet a true teacher, if you don’t arouse this aspiration to seek dharma, you won’t receive the benefit of dharma water. Endeavor thoroughly.

Those who are extremely stupid think that women are merely the objects of sexual desire and they treat women in this way. The Buddha’s children should not be like this. If we discriminate against women because we see them merely as objects of sexual desire, do we also discriminate against all men for the same reason?

For the cause of defilement, men can be the object, women can be the object, those who are neither men nor women can be the object, phantoms and flowers of emptiness can be the object. There were those who were trapped by impure conduct while looking at images on water or gazing at the sun. Gods can be the objects, demons can be the objects. We cannot finish counting all the causes of impure conduct. It is said that there are eighty-four thousand objects. Do we not look at them or discard them all?

The Precept Scripture [Four-Part Vinaya] says, “The [sexual] use of one of the two parts of a male body or the three parts of a female body is a grave crime. Those who have committed this crime should be expelled from the sangha.”

Thus if we exclude those who become the objects of sexual desire, we have to exclude all men and women so that they have no chance to be ordained. Thoroughly investigate this.
There are men outside the way who have no wives. Although they don’t have wives, if they do not enter buddha dharma they are those outside the way who hold wrong views.

Among the Buddha’s disciples, there are laymen and laywomen who are married. Although they are married, they are the Buddha’s disciples; no others among humans and devas can stand should to shoulder with them.

There was a foolish monk who made a vow never to look at a woman, birth after birth, world after world. What was this vow based on—the worldly method, buddha dharma, the outsider’s method, or the celestial demon’s method?

What is the fault of women? What is the virtue of men? There are unwholesome men, and there are wholesome women. Hoping to hear dharma and leave the household does not depend on being female or male.

Before becoming free from delusion, men and woman are equally not free from delusion. At the time of becoming free from delusion and realizing the truth, there is no difference between men and women.

If you vow not to look at women for a long time, do you leave out women when you vow to save numberless sentient beings? If you do so, you are not a bodhisattva. How can you call it the Buddha’s compassion? This is merely nonsense spoken by a soaking drunk shravaka. Humans and devas should not believe in such a practice.

If you exclude those who have broken precepts, you may exclude all bodhisattvas. If you exclude those who may break precepts in the future, you may exclude all bodhisattvas who arouse the aspiration for enlightenment. If you exclude them in such a way, you need to exclude everyone. Then, how can buddha dharma be actualized? To make such vows is the mad words of fools who don’t know buddha dharma. It should be lamented.

If you make such a vow [as not looking at women], is it that Shakyamuni Buddha and all bodhisattvas in his lifetime had broken precepts? Was their aspiration for enlightenment shallower than yours? Quietly ponder this.

Was it not possible for the ancestor who was entrusted with dharma [Mahakashyapa] and all bodhisattvas during the Buddha’s lifetime to practice unless they made such a vow? With such a vow, not only are you unable to awaken women, you are also unable to go and hear women who have attained dharma and expound dharma for humans and devas. If you don’t go and hear them teach, you are not bodhisattvas, but those outside the way.

When we look at Great Song China, there are monks who seem to have trained for a long time merely counting the sands of the ocean [studying letters] and wandering around in the ocean of birth and death. On the other hand, there are women who have studied with teachers, endeavored in the way, and become guiding teachers of humans and devas.

There was an old woman who refused to sell a rice cake [to Deshan] and discarded it. What a pity, there are male monks who count the sands in the ocean of teaching and have never dreamed of buddha dharma!

When you see an object, learn to clarify it. Being scared of it and only trying to avoid it is the teaching and practice of shravakas in the Lesser Vehicle. If you give up the east and hide in the west, it is not that there is no object in the west. Even if you keep escaping, there are objects afar and objects nearby. This is not the way of emancipation. The further away you push objects, the deeper you may be attached to them.

There is one ridiculous custom in Japan. This is called a “secluded area” or “a Mahayana practice place,” where nuns and laywomen are not allowed to enter. This crooked custom has been going on for a long time and people do not think about it. Those who study ancient teachings do not try to change it. Those who study extensively do not question it.

This custom is sometimes advocated as the avatar’s establishment or the ancient sage’s style, without being challenged. If we laughed about it, our stomach would be exhausted.

Who is the avatar—a wise person, a sage, a god, or a demon? Is it a bodhisattva of the ten stages or three classes? Is it a bodhisattva of enlightenment equal to a buddha, or one of wondrous enlightenment? Or, do they believe that people cannot be free from the transmigration of birth and death unless they change authentic customs?

In fact, Great Master Shakyamuni attained unsurpassable, complete enlightenment and clarified all that needed to be clarified. He practiced all that needed to be practiced. He was emancipated from all that needed to be emancipated. Who nowadays can even come close to him?

In the assembly of the Buddha since his lifetime, there are four types of disciples—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. There are also eight types of guardian deities, thirty-seven wings of enlightenment, and eighty-four thousand dharma gates. They all form buddha realms, creating buddha assemblies. Which of these assemblies lacks nuns, laywomen, laymen, or the eight types of guardian deities?

Do not look for a secluded area that is purer than the buddha assemblies that existed while the Buddha was alive. Such a secluded area is a place of heavenly demons. The rules for a buddha assembly do not vary between this world and that, or one thousand buddhas in the past, present, and future. Know that to have different rules is not a buddha assembly.

The so-called four fruits are the ultimate ranks. Both in Mahayana and Hinayana the merit of the four fruits are not differentiated. When a number of nuns realize the four fruits, there is no place in the three realms or in the buddha land of the ten directions that they cannot reach. Who can block their practice?

Having wondrous enlightenment is an unsurpassable stage. When women become buddhas of this stage, what in all directions cannot be thoroughly experienced? Who can try to block them and keep them from arriving at this stage? They attain the power of broadly illuminating all the ten directions. What is the point of creating a secluded area?

Or, do you want to block heavenly women and keep them from getting to this secluded area? Do you also want to block goddesses and keep them from getting to this secluded area? Heavenly women and goddesses are those who have not yet become free from delusions. They are still sentient beings who transmigrate. Sometimes they break precepts and sometimes...
they don’t. Human females and animal females also at times break precepts, and at times don’t. Who is going to block the way of heavenly women and goddesses? They join the buddha assemblies of the past, present, and future and practice at the buddha places. If there are places different from the buddha places and buddha assemblies, who can trust them as places of buddha dharma? Such secluded areas are of utmost stupidity and only confuse worldly people. It is more foolish than foxes who try to protect their holes from humans.

The ranks of the Buddha’s disciples, either bodhisattvas or shravakas, are: first, monks; second, nuns; third laymen; and fourth, laywomen. This status has long been known among devas and humans. The second-ranking disciples of the Buddha are higher than a wheel-turning king or Indra. There is no place these disciples cannot go. Their high status cannot be compared with that of kings or ministers of a small country in a remote land.

When I look at practice places that do not allow nuns, I see that men who are country people, farmers, and woodcutters still go in freely. None of the kings, ministers, government officers, and prime ministers are prohibited from entering. Who, including farmers and these others, can compare with nuns in terms of the practice of the way and attainment of ranks of the disciples of the Buddha? Whether it is debated on the basis of worldly law or the buddha dharma, country people should not enter where nuns enter.

The basis for a “secluded area” is an extreme confusion. This custom was initiated in our small country. What a pity that children of the compassionate father of the three realms [the Buddha] are blocked from entering some places in this country!

Some of those who live in the so-called secluded areas do not avoid the ten unwholesome actions and commit the ten grave offenses. Is it that these areas are criminal places and those who do not commit crimes are excluded? Furthermore, the five grave crimes are regarded as the most serious of unwholesome actions. Those who live in the secluded areas may also commit such crimes. Such demon realms should be opened up. If they study the Buddha’s teaching and enter the Buddha’s world, it will certainly be an act to return the kindness of the Buddha.

Were the ancient teachers who built the secluded areas aware of the meaning of creating it? From whom did they receive such a teaching? Whose seal of approval did they have?

Buddhas, sentient beings, the great earth, vast space, who enter the great area established by all buddhas, are liberated from bondage and return to the source that is buddhas’ wondrous dharma. This being so, sentient beings who step in this area even once receive the buddha merit. It is the merit of not veering off and attaining purity.

When one place of practice is established, all the worlds of phenomena are established. When it is once established, all the worlds of phenomena are established. There is an area of practice established with water. There is an area established with mind. There is also an area established with emptiness. This is something to be transmitted from person to person.

To establish an area of practice, after shedding nectar water, taking refuge [in the three treasures], and purifying the ground, we chant a verse: “This area and all worlds of phenomena have been purely established.” Do senior monks who talk about the secluded areas know the meaning of this phrase?

I suppose they don’t understand that in establishing an area of practice, all worlds of phenomena are established. Perhaps they are intoxicated with the wine of shravakas and regard a small area as a great area. I hope they will quickly come out of their everyday intoxication and merge with the worlds of phenomena that are a great area of all buddhas.

All sentient beings should bow to and revere the merit of receiving the [Buddha’s] broad offering of awakening. Who would not call it the marrow of attaining the way?
We deeply honor the formal Soto Zen transmission lineage of Ancestral teachers, who transmitted the Dharma to us through their efforts. We chant their names as our Ancestral lineage. The names on that list, which goes back through Shakayamuni Buddha, Bodhidharma, and Dogen, all happen to be males. Now we also honor the many other teachers in each generation who helped sustain the teaching and practice. This list includes women from India, China, Japan, and America, both ordained and laywomen, who have been inspirational to our practice tradition. Here is a little about the stories of those women who left home.

**Mahaprajapati**
Shakayamuni's aunt and foster mother, Mahaprajapati challenged Shakayamuni's exclusion of women from the monastic order and won women the right of ordination. She became the founder and a leader of the nun's sangha, and was considered chief among women disciples who were nuns of long standing.

**Khema**
She was known as "Khema of Great Wisdom," because she grasped the Buddha's entire teaching on first hearing it as a laywoman. She helped run the women's monastic order and is named as the most exemplary nun in the Pali Canon.

**Uppalavanna**
She willingly took ordination at her father's suggestion, and then was raped by an angry suitor. Due to this incident the Vinaya was changed to forbid women from solitary forest practice for their protection. She became foremost in magical power and performed miracles.

**Patacara**
After her children, parents, and husband died, she went mad from grief and wandered the countryside. Eventually she met the Buddha, who calmly told her to recover her presence of mind, and thus she was cured. She became a highly influential teacher who brought many women to the Dharma and had many disciples.

**Dhammadinna**
She was called the greatest woman preacher, who converted many people and became the master of many disciples and heirs. Shakayamuni declared her words to be buddhavacana, Buddha words.

**Sundarinda**
Shakayamuni's half-sister, she was considered the most beautiful woman in her country; sundari means "beautiful." She joined the nun's order originally because all of her relatives were joining: her mother, Mahaprajapati; her brother, Nanda; and Shakayamuni's son, Rahula. Shakayamuni declared her to be foremost among the nuns in meditative powers.

**Soma**
The daughter of the minister of King Bimbisara, she became a lay disciple upon hearing Shakayamuni preach on a visit he made to Rajagrawa early in his teaching career. She was later ordained as a nun and eventually became an arhat, declared by Shakayamuni to be foremost among the nuns who strive energetically.

**Bhadda Kundalakesa**
Bhadda was a Jain at the time of Shakayamuni. She was highly intelligent and felt dissatisfied by the lack of intellectual stimulation among the Jains, who seemed uninterested in understanding truth. She engaged in dialogue with Shariputra and was praised by the community for her rapid thought and great understanding. She is the only nun to have been ordained by Shakayamuni calling her by name. Bhadda's wisdom poem includes, "Going out from my daytime resting-place on Mt. Grjhakuta, I saw the stainless Buddha, attended by the order of bhikkhus. Having bent the knee, having paid homage to him, I stood with cupped hands face to face with him. 'Come, Bhadda,' he said to me; that was my ordination."

**Bhadda Kapilani**
Ages ago in the time of Padumattara Buddha, Bhadda heard of a female renunciant who could recall her former lives. She determined to obtain that same power, and with her husband Kassapa (the later Mahakashyapa), she decided to live a life of austerity. Bhadda and Kassapa were married several more times in different lifetimes, including the one in which they met Shakayamuni, in which neither one of them wanted to marry, but were forced to by their parents. They agreed not to consummate the marriage, shaved each other's heads, donned saffron robes, and left home. Kassapa quickly met Shakayamuni and became a monk, but it was five years before Bhadda was able to join the newly-established order of nuns. She was declared by Shakayamuni to be foremost among the nuns who are able to remember past births.

**Bhadda Kaccana Yasodhara**
Yasodhara was Shakayamuni's wife. Although she wanted to join the order of nuns from the beginning, Mahaprajapati thought it would make establishing the order more difficult, so Yasodhara stayed behind. Later she was able to join the order and was declared foremost among the nuns who attained great supernormal powers.
Kisagotami
Kisagotami was Shakyamuni’s cousin; however, she grew up in another household in poverty. She married a rich banker’s son, but was mistreated by her husband's relatives until she had a child, whom she loved deeply. But the child died young and she went mad, carrying his corpse from house to house. The Buddha told her he would cure the child if she could find a mustard seed from a home that had never known death. When she realized this was impossible and that all beings suffered together, she became a nun. Shakyamuni declared her foremost among the nuns who wore coarse robes.

Singalaka mata
She was declared to be foremost among nuns who are released by faith.

Samavati
She was declared to be the most skilled in spreading metta among the nuns.

Sinha Vijurmbhita
Sinha Vijurmbhita was a nun who sat on lion thrones under each of the many treasure trees in the splendorous Sunlight Park in Kalingavana. She was 24th teacher visited by the pilgrim Sudhana in the Gandavyuha Sutra. Under each tree she taught various groups, including gods and goddesses, birds, serpents, and bodhisattvas of diverse levels. She gave Mahayana teachings to those who had not heard them, and to those who had she offered specific different samadhi instructions.

Zongchi
Zongchi was the daughter of an Emperor of the Liang dynasty of 6th century China. She became a disciple of Chan founder Bodhidharma. In Dogen's Shobogenzo chapter Katto "Twining Vines", she is named as one of his four Dharma heirs; although Bodhidharma’s lineage continued through another of the four, Dogen emphasizes that each of them had complete understanding.

Shiji (6th cent.)
Her story is in the "Ancestor's Hall Collection" of koans, or awakening stories. She once arrived at a temple and did not remove her hat, as etiquette required. She told the head monk she would only do so if he could "say something." He did not, so she left, stimulating him to find a true teacher.

Wujin Cang
According to lamp transmission sources, she was a nun devoted to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, who recited it to Huineng, the future Sixth Ancestor. Though illiterate he intuitively could elucidate the sutra, thus she helped confirm his awakening. She provided him room and board for a while before he visited the Fifth Ancestor.

Ling Xingo (8th -9th cent.)
She is mentioned only in the lamp anthology story of Mazu's heir Foubei in the Jingde Chuan Denglu Collection of 1004. Her accomplishment and comments form the bulk of his story, as she defeated and taught him. She was also highly praised by the great Zhaozhou, who exchanged poems with her.

Liu Tiemo ("Iron Grinder Liu") (9th cent.)
A nun disciple of Guishan Lingyou, she taught Zen in a style described as "precipitously awesome and dangerous." Her ability to test the true mettle of Zen adepts brought her the name "Iron Grinder." She appears in Case 60 of the Book of Serenity and Case 24 of the Blue Cliff Record, exhibiting steel-like strength in Dharma combat.

Moshan Liaoran (9th cent.)
Moshan was well known in her time and referred to by many later writers. She is one of the women role models cited prominently for their wisdom by Dogen in his essay Raihai Tokuzui "Paying Homage and Acquiring the Essence," and she is also cited in his other writings. Moshan was a disciple of Gao'an Dayu and is the first woman Dharma heir in the official Chan transmission line, with a chapter in the important Chinese transmission of the lamp anthology the Jingde Chuan Denglu. Moshan is the first recorded woman who was the teacher of a man, Guanzhi Zhixian, who had previously studied with the great Linji (Rinzai). Dogen notes that Zhixian's willingness to overcome his cultural resistance and study under a woman was a sign of the maturity of his bodhisattvic intention.

Miaoxin (9th cent.)
She was a nun disciple of Yangshan, in whose monastery she served as Director of external relations. In that capacity, seventeen monk guests accepted her as Master when she clarified for them the meaning of the story about the Sixth Ancestor's saying about the banner and the wind. She is cited as a role model in Raihai Tokuzui.

Daoshen (late 10th-early 11th cent.)
She was a Dharma heir of Furong Daokai (Fuyo Dokai), a master who helped revive the Soto line in China when it had declined. She had two male heirs.

Huiguang (12th cent.)
She was Abbess of Dongjing Miaohui, an important large convent, and was heir of Kumu Facheng, a major heir of Furong Daokai. She wore a purple robe given by the emperor, from whom she received her Dharma name. Her story is recorded in the Pudeng Collection and her sermons were also recorded. Renowned for eloquence and erudition, she taught in public to mixed assemblies of male and female monks and preached to the emperor.

Kongshi Daoren (d. 1124)
Heir of Cixin Waxin, she was a nun, teacher, and poet. She wrote the "Record on Clarifying the Mind," which circulated throughout China. She was well-married but left her husband, asking her parents to allow her to be ordained; but they refused. Thereafter she practiced in solitude. She was awakened after reading the Huayan Patriarch Dushun's "Contemplation of the
Dharmadhatu.” After her parents’ death, she ran a bathhouse and wrote Dharma poetry on the walls to engage her customers. She was praised by eminent masters like Yuanwu and Foyan, and finally became a nun in old age.

**Yu Daopo (12th cent.)**
She was the only Dharma heir of Langye Yongji and apparently remained a laywoman. She was awakened upon hearing Linji’s teaching of the "true man of no rank." After she bested the master Yuanwu, he recognized her accomplishment. She was sought out by many monks for dialogue and teaching, but she referred to every monk as her "son."

**Huiwen (12th cent.)**
She was a Dharma heir of Foyan Qingyuan, a prominent Linji teacher. Her sermons were recorded and story told in both the Liandeng and Wudeng Collections.

**Fadeng**
Huiwen’s Dharma heir; her sermons were recorded and her story is told in the transmission collections.

**Wenzhao (late 12th cent.)**
She became a nun at the age of seventeen and wandered in search of teachers. Eventually she became abbot of five different convents as a reformer of the Vinaya (Precepts) tradition within Chan. She had a male heir. Her story is recorded in the Pudeng Collection where her sermons were recorded. She wore a purple robe given by the emperor.

**Miaocong (1095-1170)**
Younger sister-in-law of Gongshi Daoren, who inspired her, she had married a scholar-official, but gradually devoted herself to spiritual pursuits. She became a student of Dahui Zonggao, under whom she was enlightened. She was known as outspoken and unconventional. She was ordained in 1162 and became abbess of Cishou nunnery, where she had Dharma heirs. She and Miaodao are considered the two most important women teachers in the Song period.

**Miaodao (12th-13th cent.)**
She had many recorded sermons, and was a Dharma heir of Dahui. She lived as a laywoman in a monastery. Her awakening in 1134 had a great impact on Dahui’s teaching. Several stories about her are used to illustrate the fear male monks had of sex and how this held them back, as when she appeared naked in the zendo in order to show them that the disturbance was in their own minds. She received Imperial approval to be a teacher and abbot, and was eventually ordained. She was invited to "ascend the Hall" of the monastery which sponsored her convent and to teach the monks there. Her teaching concerned the limits and necessity of teaching with words.

**Zenshin (late 6th cent.)**
She was ordained in 584, the first Japanese of either gender to be ordained as a Buddhist monastic. In 588, she traveled to Korea for monastic training and eventually established a thriving female order in Japan.

**Zenko (6th -7th cent.) and Ezen**
Both were ordained shortly after Zenshin and traveled to Korea and trained with her, helping to establish Buddhism in Japan. Within four decades of their ordination in 623, the order they established with Zenshin included 569 nuns and 816 monks.

**Komyo (701-760)**
An Empress and the first member of the Imperial family to be ordained in 749, she profoundly shaped the contours of Buddhism in ancient Japan. At her urging, her husband the Emperor Shomu established national temples for both men and women. Her monumental contributions, including supervising copying of many sutras, had a lasting impact.

**Tachibana Kachiko (786-850)**
The Saga empress, she sent a Japanese monk to China to bring back a Chan/ Zen teacher, as she had heard about Chan from the great Japanese Shingon founder Kukai (Kobo Daishi), who had visited China. The monk she sent found the national teacher Yanguan Qian, who sent to Japan his disciple Yikung (n.d.; Jap.: Giku). Yikung first taught at a subtemple of Toji, the great Shingon temple in southern Kyoto. Later, the Saga empress founded Danrinji in the Arashiyama area in western Kyoto, where Yikung was the first abbot. Danrinji (destroyed by fire in 928) could be said to have been the first Zen temple in Japan, although Yikung later returned to China without having established an enduring Zen lineage there. But the first Japanese Zen practitioner was a woman, Tachibana Kachiko, who became a nun.

**Shogaku**
She was an aristocrat and distant relative of Dogen. She became a nun in 1225 after her husband died, was a disciple of Dogen, and donated money and a large lecture hall to Dogen at Kosho-ji.

**Ryonen (early 13th cent.)**
She was one of Dogen's main disciples, though ordained elsewhere, and her high understanding was noted in writings of other masters. Dogen wrote a few Dharma notes especially for her, praising her accomplishments, in the Eihei Koroku. She was an old woman before her ordination and died before Dogen.

**Eshin**
She was a nun disciple of Dogen. He performed a memorial jodo for her father at Eiheiji in 1246.

**Egi (early early 13th cent.)**
She was ordained as a Daruma-shu nun, but became a disciple of Dogen’s at Eiheiji. She spent more then twenty years with him and attended his sickbed. She also helped Koun Ejo in the transition following Dogen's death. There is indication that she helped to record the Shobogenzo Zuiomonki.
Joa (late 13th cent.)
She was a nun disciple and heir of Kangan Giin (1217-1300), who was a disciple of Koun Ejo and established a prominent Soto lineage in Kyushu. Giin had many nun disciples. Joa was given the practice of venerating and copying the Lotus Sutra.

Senshin (late 13th cent.)
Another nun disciple of Kangan Giin, she practiced devotion to relics.

Mugai Nyodai (Chiyono) (1223-1298)
Considered one of the most important women in Rinzai Zen, she was heir to Mugaku Sogen, the founder of Engakuji. After her transmission, she established the temple Keiaiji, the first sodo for women in Japan. She is also known as Chiyono. Her enlightenment story is famous. She was carrying a bucket of water when the bottom broke out; at that moment she awakened.

Ekan (d. ca. 1314)
She was the mother of Keizan and became abbes of the Soto convent Jojuji. She was an ardent devotee of Kannon, which helped promote this bodhisattva throughout Soto Zen. Keizan praised her for unfailingly teaching Dharma to women. Her influence led to his vow to help all women everywhere in her memory.

Shido (early 14th cent.)
Shido was a fully authorized Rinzai priest who in 1285 founded the convent Tokeiji in Kamakura as a refuge for abused or dismissed wives, which it remained. Her dialogues became widely used as teaching stories.

Mokufu Sonin (14th cent.)
She was a disciple of Keizan and the daughter of Shozen. She was ordained in 1319. She and her husband (Myojo, ordained a few years later) gave a great deal of land to Keizan and invited him to found Yoko-ji after dismantling their family home to allow this. She received dharma transmission in 1323, and was the first abbot of Entsuin, an important convent. Keizan called her the reincarnation of his grandmother and said that he and she were inseparable.

Kinto Ekyu
She was Keizan's disciple and the first Japanese woman to receive Soto Dharma transmission.

Myosho Enkan (early 14th cent.)
She was Keizan's cousin and became abbes of Entsuin after Sonin, and later abbes of the convent Ho'oji that had been founded by Ekan.

Soitsu (mid 14th cent.)
She was a Dharma heir of Gasan Joseki (1275-1365), an important disciple of Keizan, and she had female heirs of her own.

Shotaku
Third teacher of Tokeiji, she fended off a rape with spiritual power.

Eshun (ca. 1364-?)
She was the sister of the prominent Soto teacher Ryoan Emyo (1337-1411), abbot of Sojiji and other temples. Her brother refused to ordain her or sponsor her because she was beautiful and would be a sexual temptation to the monks. So she shaved her head and scarred her face with red-hot tongs. After she was ordained she surpassed all the monks in Zen debate. When her death was near she performed her own funeral by lighting a bonfire and sitting upright in its middle. When her alarmed brother arrived and asked if it was hot, she said, "For one living the Way, hot and cold are unknown." There is a memorial statue to her at which people make offerings at Saikoji in Odawara.

Soshin, Onaa Tsubone (1588-1675)
Born into a prominent samurai family, Ona married at fifteen and had three sons before divorcing and residing at a subtemple founded by her father at Myoshinji, an important Rinzai Zen temple complex in Kyoto, until she remarried several years later. Later she was given a position in the Tokugawa shogun's household in Edo (Tokyo). There she instructed the court ladies in Zen, also supported Confucian scholars, and gradually came to have substantial influence in the government. She studied with the noted Rinzai master Takuan Soho (1573-1645), introduced him to the shogun, and by some accounts inherited Takuan's Dharma. She was ordained a nun, Soshin, in 1660 and made abbes by Tokugawa Iemitsu of the new Rinzai temple Saihoji in Edo, even though her husband was still alive. At Saihoji she had many women students, and left two lengthy Zen writings.

Bunchi Jo (1619-1697)
An imperial priestess who became a Zen abbot at a time of significant political change; she was renowned for painting and poetry.

Ryomen Gensho (1646-1711)
She became a nun at 26, leaving behind her husband and children. She entered the Rinzai training monastery Hokyo-ji, but was denied ordination by two masters because her beauty would distract the monks. She burned her face with a poker and was then ordained by Haku-o. He certified her enlightenment and she became abbot of Renjo'in and a respected poet.

Ohashi
She became a prostitute as a teenager in order to support her family after her father lost his work. Despairing this fate, she was advised by Hakuin "to consider who does this work" and to find practice possible in all situations. She awakened after fainting in fright when a bolt of lightning struck nearby. Hakuin certified her awakening and sometime later, after more work as prostitute, she married, and then eventually became a nun with her husband's approval.

Myotei (17th cent.)
A nun who studied at Enkakuji and sometimes used her own nudity as a teaching device, she distinguished herself by passing the most notoriously difficult koans of Rinzai Zen.
Teijitsu (18th cent.)
She was head of Hakuju-an, a women's temple next to Eiheiji where Soto nuns stayed (because they were no longer allowed to stay at Eiheiji). This was a time of increasingly strict prohibitions on women in social and political life, and female monastics were given less and less independence. She and Teishin are some of the last women of the period whose names are known. She was probably a disciple of Menzan Zuiho.

Rengetsu
The illegitimate child of a geisha and a samurai, she was adopted by a temple priest. As a woman she could not inherit the temple, but her training had been very strong, in the sutras but also in calligraphy, pottery, and jujitsu. She entered court life, but left to request admittance to a monastery. Refused because of her beauty, she scarred her face with the grill of a hibachi, renouncing her power as a woman in order to enter the monastery.

Mizuno Jorin (1848-1927), Hori Mitsujo (1868-1927), Ando Dokai (1874-1915), Yamaguchi Kokan (1875-1933)
These four nuns established the Aichi-ken Soto-shu Niso Gakurin (commonly called Nigakurin) on May 8, 1903, nine months after the Soto-shu regulations prohibiting women's education facilities were lifted. They were key figures in re-opening Soto Zen to women after centuries of increasing limitations. All four spent their entire adult lives striving to create monasteries for women at a time of tremendous political and social upheaval.

Nagazawa Sozen (mid 20th cent.)
A disciple of Harada Sogaku in his Soto lineage with considerable Rinzai influence. She was "stern and grandmotherly," and trained many nuns and laywomen under difficult sociopolitical conditions. She was head nun at one of Tokyo's most important nunneries, Kannonji, and was renowned for keeping women's practice alive during the war.

Nogami Senryo (1883-1980)
She practiced in an inconspicuous temple in Nagoya and lived thoroughly and energetically according to Dogen's teachings, and the mantra "Die sitting; Die standing" Zadatsu Ryubo. She did die standing in front of the Buddha image in the Worship Hall at age 97.

Kojima Kendo (1898-1995)
She was a mid-century activist and spent almost her entire long life as a nun. She was the first leader of the Soto-shu Nun's Organization, which was supported in part by Koho Zenji (Keido Chisan) when he was abbot of Sojiji. In that capacity she worked tirelessly to gain equality for female monastics. Some of her demands, such as allowing women to teach independently again, were finally achieved at the end of her life. She was also part of other international Buddhist organizations, and represented the interests of women throughout the Buddhist world. She died at very old age.

Taniguchi Setsudo (1901-1986)
She was a Soto nun who established an orphanage for survivors after World War II. She devoted the rest of her life to the orphanage (assisted by Kojima Kendo), guided by Dogen's four bodhisattva methods: generosity, kind speech, beneficial activity, and cooperation.

Yoshida Eshun (1907-1982)
An heir of Hashimoto Roshi and abbess of Kaizenji Temple in Nagoya, she taught robe, rakusu and okesa sewing and brought this craft to the United States in the early 1970s, particularly transmitting these skills to Tomoe Katagiri and Zenkei Blanche Hartman.

Kasai Joshin (1914-1985)
A disciple of Yoshida Eshun and then of Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, she assisted in the transmission of Nyoho-e sewing to Suzuki Roshi's students, particularly to Zenkei Blanche Hartman.

Aoyama Shundo (1933-)
Since 1970 Aoyama has been abbess of the Aichi Senmon Nisodo in Nagoya, a center for modern monastic Soto Zen nun practice. She was the first woman to receive graduate level study at the Soto sect's Komazawa University, and through her numerous books and travel she has become a popular teacher in Japan and beyond.

Ruth Fuller Sasaki (1893-1967)
One of the first Westerners to train in Japan in the 1930s, she studied with D.T. Suzuki, worked as a translator, and brought some of the first Zen books into English, including Zen Dust and The Recorded Sayings of Layman Pang. She was married to Sokei-an Sasaki, a pioneer Rinzai teacher on America. She later restored Ryosen-an, a subtemple of Daitokuji, as the First Zen Institute of America and served as priest there, the first American priest at Daitokuji.

Maurine Myo-on Stuart (d. 1990)
A student of Yasutani and Soen Nakagawa, ordained by Eido Shimano of Dai-bosatsu, Stuart was leader of the Cambridge Buddhist Association for eleven years, and was named Roshi by Soen Nakagawa. Also a concert pianist, she had many Zen students of her own.

Houn Jiyu Kennett (1924-1996)
Kennett Roshi was the first Western woman (and one of the first Westerners ever) to train at Soji-ji. She was ordained in Malaysia, transmitted in Japan, and given inka by Keido Chisan (Koho Zenji), the Abbot of Soji-ji. She came to the United States in the 1960s and eventually founded Shasta Abbey, a traditional training monastery for both men and women.

Gesshin Myoko Cheney (1931-1999)
She entered Zen training in Los Angeles in 1967 under Joshu Sasaki Roshi. She was ordained a year later and became an Osho in 1972, acting as director and vice abbess of both Mt. Baldy and Cimarron Zen Centers. In April 1985 she received Dharma
Transmission from Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Man Giac in the lineage of Vietnamese Rinzai Zen. She taught in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and Florida.  

**Sandra Jishu Angyo Holmes (1941-1998)**
She was the second Abbot of the Zen Community of New York. Along with her husband, Roshi Bernie Glassman, she co-founded the Zen Peacemaker Order, an international order of social activists engaged in peacemaking. The two also co-founded the Interfaith Peacemaker Community including peacemaker villages around the world.

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This list was developed through research by Jiden Ewing, and was edited by Taigen Leighton.  
________. Women Ancestors list, unpublished.  
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Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages
A Summary Report of the 2007 International Congress on the Women’s Role in the Sangha

by Alexander Berzin, August 2007, University of Hamburg, Germany

Part One: Background

[As an aid to those unfamiliar with the topics presented here, some background information and a few technical terms and dates have been filled in to the summaries of some of the papers. When these supplements have been of significant length, they have been indicated by inclusion within square brackets.]

Introduction to the Bhikshuni Vows

The Importance of Having Bhikshunis

The monastic community, the sangha, plays a central role in Buddhism. According to many of Buddha’s statements, the flourishing of the Dharma depends on the existence of a fourfold assembly of disciples (‘khor rnam-bzhi’i dge-dun), comprising:

- full monks (dge-long, Skt. bhikshu, Pali: bhikkhu),
- full nuns (dge-long-ma, Skt. bhikshuni, Pali: bhikkhuni),
- laymen (dge-bsnyen, Skt. upasaka, Pali: upasaka), keeping five vows,
- laywomen (dge-bsnyen-ma, Skt. upasika, Pali: upasika), keeping five vows.

Thus, in The Chanting Together Sutta (Pali: Sangiti Sutta) within the Long Discourses (Pali: Dighanikaya), one of the nine unfortunate, inopportune times for leading a pure spiritual life (Pali: akkhana asamaya brahmacariya vasaya) is when born in a border region among “foolish barbarians” where there is no access to monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen.

Similarly, in Levels of a Listener’s Mind (Nyan-sa, Skt. Shrvakabhumi), the great third-century CE Indian Mahayana master, Asanga, listed as one of the ten enrichments (sbyor-ba, Skt. sampad) of a precious human life rebirth in a central land. A central land is defined either geographically, as a certain region in India, or from a Dharma point of view, as a region having the fourfold assembly complete.

In many traditionally Buddhist countries, however, the bhikshuni ordination lineage has either never been established or, having been once established, has ended. Therefore, for the flourishing of the Dharma among the Buddhists in these lands and in non-traditionally Buddhist countries as well, it is essential that the bhikshuni ordination line be re-established. To do so, however, in a manner that accords with scriptural authority is not a simple matter.

The Original Establishment of the Bhikshuni Order

Buddha himself ordained the first monks simply by reciting the words, “Ehi bhikkhu (Come here, monk).” When a sufficient number of monks had been ordained in this manner, he instituted ordination (bsnyen-par rdzogs-pa, Skt. upasampada, Pali: upasampada) by the bhikshus themselves.

According to many traditional accounts, Buddha at first refused, however, when his maternal aunt, Mahaprajapati Gautami (Go’u-ta-mi sKye-dgu’i bdag-mo chen-mo, Skye-dgu’i bdag-mo, Pali: Mahapajapati Gotami), requested him to ordain her as a nun. Nevertheless, Mahaprajapati, together with five hundred women followers, shaved their heads, donned yellow robes, and followed him as homeless renunciates (rab-tu ‘byung-ba, Skt. pravrajita, Pali: pabbajita). When she asked for ordination a second and then a third time and was again refused, Buddha’s disciple Ananda (Kun-dga’-bo) interceded on her behalf.

With this fourth request, Buddha agreed on the condition that she and future nuns observe eight weighty restrictions (lci-ba’i chos, Skt. gurudharma, Pali: gurudhama). These include the seniority rank of nuns always being lower than that of the monks, regardless of how long the monk or nun vows were kept. Buddha instituted such restrictions in conformity with the cultural values of India at his time, in order to avoid disrespect by society for his community and, consequently, for his teachings. He also did so to protect the nuns and ensure them respect from the laypeople. In ancient India, women were first under the protection/supervision of their fathers, then their husbands, and finally their sons. Single women were thought to be prostitutes
and there are many cases in the Vinaya of nuns being called prostitutes simply because they were not under the protection of a male relative. Affiliating the bhikshuni sangha with the bhikshu sangha made their single status respectable in the eyes of society.

According to some traditions, accepting the eight garudhammas constituted this first ordination. According to other traditions, Buddha entrusted the initial ordination of Mahaprajapati and her five hundred women followers to ten bhikshus, under the leadership of Ananda. In either case, the earliest standard method for ordaining bhikshunis was by a group of ten bhikshus. This manner of ordination is commonly known as “single bhikshu sangha ordination” (pha’i dge-‘dun rkyang-pa’i bsnyen-par rdzogs-pa). The ordination procedure involves asking the candidates a list of questions concerning impediments (bar-chad-kyi chos, Skt. antarayikadharma, Pali: antarayikadhamma) she may have that might hinder her from keeping the full set of vows. In addition to the questions asked in common with candidates for bhikshu ordination, these include further questions concerning her anatomy as a female.

When some bhikshuni candidates expressed extreme discomfort at answering such personal questions to monks, Buddha instituted the “dual sangha ordination” (gnyis-tshogs-kyi sgo-nas bsnyen-par rdzogs-pa). Here, the bhikshuni sangha first asks the questions regarding the candidate’s suitability to become a bhikshuni. Later that same day, the bhikshuni sangha joins with the bhikshu sangha to form a joint assembly. The bhikshu sangha gives the ordination, while the bhikshuni sangha serves as witnesses.

At first, the vows for the monastic community included avoiding only the “naturally uncommendable actions” (rang-bzhin kha-na-ma-tho-ba) – the physical and verbal actions that are destructive for everyone, whether lay or ordained. For ordained persons, however, these included the vow of celibacy. As time passed, Buddha promulgated an increasing number of additional vows, regarding “prohibited uncommendable actions” (bcas-pa’i kha-na ma-tho-ba) – physical and verbal actions that are not naturally destructive, but are prohibited only for ordained persons in order to avoid disrespect by society for the Buddhist monastic community and Buddha’s teachings. Only Buddha has had the authority to promulgate such prohibitions. The nuns received more additional vows than did the monks, because each additional vow was established after a specific incident involving the improper behavior of a monk or nun. The nuns’ vows include those established based on improper behavior of nuns in their interaction with monks, while the monks’ vows do not include reciprocal stipulations.

Lineages and Differences in Ordination Procedures

Due to geographic and cultural differences, eighteen schools (sde-pa, Skt. nikaya, Pali: nikaya) evolved within what Mahayana texts later called “Hinayana” Buddhism. Each had its own version of the rules of discipline (‘dul-ba, Skt. vinaya, Pali: vinaya), including monk and nun vows for individual liberation (so-so thar-pa’i sdom-pa, Skt. pratimoksha-samvara; Pali: patimokkha-samvara). The differences among the schools concerning these sets of vows and ordination procedures were minor, although some conservative Vinaya masters have considered these differences significant.

Of the eighteen nikaya schools, three bhikshu lineages have survived until today with unbroken continuity:

- Theravada (gNas-brtan smra-ba, Skt. Sthaviravada), followed in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, with bhikshus keeping 227 vows,
- Dharmagupta (Chos-srung sde-pa), followed in Taiwan, Hong Kong and other parts of the People’s Republic of China, Korea, and Vietnam, with bhikshus keeping 250 vows,
- Mulasarvastivada (Zhi thams-cad yod-par smra-ba), followed in Tibet, Nepal, the Himalayan regions of India, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva within Russia, with bhikshus keeping 253 vows.

As the Vinaya customs evolved, three graduated levels of nun vows were delineated:

- Novice nuns (dge-tshul-ma, Skt. shramaneri, Pali: samaneri), keeping the tenfold discipline (tshul-khrims bcu, Skt. dashashila, Pali: dasasila). This entails keeping ten vows, which are sub-divided into 36 in Mulasarvastivada.
- Two-year probationary nuns (dge-slob-ma, Skt. shikshamana, Pali: sikkhamana), keeping six trainings in Theravada and Dharmagupta, and six root and six branch teachings in Mulasarvastivada. The two-year shikshamana period was instituted to ensure that candidates for bhikshuni ordination were not pregnant.
- Full nuns, keeping 311 vows in Theravada, 348 in Dharmagupta, and 364 in Mulasarvastivada.

In Dharmagupta, and probably in the other lineages as well, at minimum two bhikshunis are needed to give the shramaneri vow; while four are necessary for the shiksamana ordination. The officiating bhikshuni preceptor (mkhan-mo, Skt.
upadhyayani) must be ordained at least twelve years in Theravada and Dharmagupta, or ten years in Mulasarvastivada. In Dharmagupta, the assisting bhikshuni procedural master (las-kyi slob-dpon, Skt. karmacarya) for shramanerika ordination must be ordained at least five years. Since there has been no bhikshuni sangha in Tibet, the bhikshus ordain the Mulasarvastivada shramanerikas.

The bhikshuni ordination ceremony has two parts:

- In the first, conducted by the bhikshuni sangha, the candidates are questioned regarding major and minor impediments to receiving the full ordination. For example, in Dharmagupta, the questions concern the thirteen major and sixteen minor impediments for both men and women, plus nine additional impediments specifically for women. In Mulasarvastivada alone, this first part of the ordination ceremony is called “approaching chastity” (tshawgs-spyod nyer-gnas, Skt: brahmacharyopasthana, Pali: brahmachariyopatthana). In Dharmagupta, it is called the “basis dharma.”
- In the second part of the ceremony, conducted later the same day, the candidate receives the bhikshuni vow from the bhikshu sangha. In Mulasarvastivada and Dharmagupta, the bhikshuni sangha are also present during this second part of the ordination, as witnesses. In Theravada, the bhikshunis escort the candidate to the bhikshu sangha, but are not present during the bhikshus’ part of the ceremony.

For full bhikshuni ordination to occur in a “central land,” ten bhikshunis in Theravada and Dharmagupta, or twelve bhikshunis in Mulasarvastivada, as well as ten bhikshus are needed for the dual sangha method. In Theravada and Dharmagupta, the bhikshuni preceptor must have held the bhikshuni vow for at least twelve years, while in Mulasarvastivada, for at least ten years. In all three schools, the bhikshu preceptor must have held the bhikshu vow for at least ten years. In border regions where the required number of bhikshunis is not available, Mulasarvastivada stipulates that five bhikshunis and an additional five bhikshus will suffice for conferring the dual sangha ordination.

**History of the Disrupted Ordination Lineages**

Although Theravada, Dharmagupta, and Mulasarvastivada each has its own set of bhikshuni vows, only the Dharmagupta line of bhikshuni ordination has continued to the present in an unbroken fashion.

**Theravada**

Buddhism first arrived in Sri Lanka in 249 BCE through the mission of the Indian Emperor Ashoka’s son, Mahinda. Although the date from which the name Theravada was used is in dispute, for the sake of simplicity we shall refer to this Buddhist lineage as "Theravada." The Theravada bhikshuni ordination lineage was then transmitted to Sri Lanka in 240 BCE with the arrival of Emperor Ashoka’s daughter, Sanghamitta, to the island. By 1050 CE, this ordination lineage ended as a consequence of the Tamil invasion and subsequent rule of Sri Lanka under the Chola Empire.

According to oral tradition, Emperor Ashoka also sent two emissaries, Sona and Uttara, to the kingdom of Suwannaphum (Skt. Suvarnabhumi), and they established Theravada Buddhism there. Most scholars identify this kingdom with the Mon (Tailaing) people and the port city of Thaton in southern Burma. It is unclear, however, whether the bhikshuni ordination lineage was transmitted at this time.

Although Theravada Buddhism was present in the various Pyu city states of Northern Burma from at least the first century BCE, it became mixed with Mahayana, Hinduism, and the local Ari religion, which involved animal sacrifices to spirits. In the mid-eleventh century CE, King Anawrahta unified northern Burma, conquered the Mon kingdom at Thaton, established his capital at Pagan, and invited the Mon bhikkhu Arahanta to establish Theravada Buddhism throughout his kingdom.

With the defeat of the Cholas in Sri Lanka in 1070 CE and the establishment of the new capital at Polonnaruwa, the Theravada bhikshu ordination lineage was re-established in Sri Lanka by bhikshus invited from Pagan. King Anawrahta, however, questioned the purity of the Mon bhikshu lineage and, consequently, did not send any bhikshunis to re-establish the bhikshuni ordination. Thus, the Theravada ordination lineage of bhikshunis was not revived at that time in Sri Lanka. The last inscriptive evidence of the presence of a bhikshuni nunnery in Burma is in 1287 CE, when Pagan fell to the Mongol invasion.

Sri Lanka was invaded and most of it ruled, from 1215 to 1236 CE, by King Magha of Kalinga (modern-day Orissa, East India). During this period, the Sri Lankan bhikshu sangha was severely weakened. With the defeat of King Magha, Theravada bhikshus from Kanchipuram, a Buddhist center within the weakened Chola Kingdom in present-day Tamilnadu, South India,
were invited to Sri Lanka in 1236 CE to revive the bhikshu ordination lineage. The fact that no Tamil bhikshunis were invited suggests that the Theravada bhikshunis sangha was no longer present in South India by this time. The last inscrptional evidence of a bhikshuni sangha in North India, including Bengal, is from the end of the twelfth century CE. It is unclear which lineage of bhikshuni vow the nuns held.

King Ramkhamhaeng of the Sukhothai Kingdom in Thailand established Theravada Buddhism in Thailand from Sri Lanka at the end of the thirteenth century CE. Since a bhikshuni sangha was no longer available in Sri Lanka at that time, the Theravada bhikshuni ordination lineage never reached Thailand. Since Theravada was established in Cambodia from Thailand in the early fourteenth century CE and, shortly thereafter, in Laos from Cambodia, the Theravada bhikshuni ordination lineage never reached these countries either.

In the Theravada countries, only Sri Lanka has officially re-established the Theravada bhikshuni ordination, and that was in 1998 CE. Up until then, women in Sri Lanka were only allowed to become dasasil matas, “ten-precept practitioners,” but not bhikkhunis. Although such laywomen wear robes and keep celibacy, they are not considered members of the monastic sangha. In Burma and Cambodia, women are allowed only to become “eight-precept practitioners,” known in Burma as silashin and in Cambodia as donchi or yieychi. Some women in Burma also receive the ten precepts. In Thailand, they may become “eight-precept practitioners,” known as maechi (maeji). Since the revival of Theravada Buddhism in the Chittagong District and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh in 1864 CE from Arakan district of coastal Burma, women have become eight-precept practitioners there.

Mulasarvastivada

Although lines of Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination were established in Tibet on three occasions, a Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni sangha never became firmly established. Consequently, women following the Tibetan Buddhist tradition within the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya tradition and who have wished to ordain have become shramanerikas or novice nuns.

The first time the Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination was established in Tibet was with the visit of the Indian master Shantarakshita, together with thirty monks, and the founding of Samyay (bSam-yas) Monastery in Central Tibet in 775 CE. This was under the patronage of the Tibetan Emperor Tri Songdetsen (Khri Srong-lde-btsan). However, because neither twelve Indian Mulasarvastivada bhikshunis came to Tibet at that time, nor did Tibetan women subsequently travel to India to receive higher ordination, the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination lineage was not established in Tibet during this first period.

According to a Chinese source preserved among the Dunhuang documents, however, one of the secondary wives of Emperor Tri Songdetsen, Queen Droza Jangdron (‘Bro-bza’ Bya ng-sgron), and thirty more women did receive bhikshuni ordination at Samyay. Their ordination would have been conferred by the Chinese bhikshus who were invited to the translation bureau in Samyay in 781 CE. Since the Chinese Tang Emperor Zhong-zong had decreed in 709 CE that only the Dharma Gupta ordination lineage be followed in China, the bhikshuni ordination in Tibet must have been from the Dharma Gupta lineage. Presumably, the ordination was given by the single sangha method and its lineage did not continue after the defeat of the Chinese faction at the Samyay debate (792-794 CE) and its expulsion from Tibet.

During the reign of the Tibetan Emperor Tri Relpachan (KhriRal-pa can, 815 – 836 CE), the Emperor decreed that no Hinayana texts other than those within the Sarvastivada fold could be translated into Tibetan. This effectively limited the possibility of ordination lineages other than Mulasarvastivada from being introduced to Tibet.

The Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination lineage from Shantarakhita was almost lost with King Langdarma’s repression of Buddhism at the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century CE. Three surviving Mulasarvastivada bhikshus, with the help of two Chinese Dharmagupta bhikshus, revitalized this bhikshu ordination lineage with the ordination of Gongpa-rabsel (Tib. dGongs-pa rab-gsal) in Eastern Tibet. No similar procedure involving Dharmagupta bhikshunis, however, was followed for establishing the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination at that time through a mixed lineage dual sangha.

Gongpa-rabsel’s line of Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination was brought back to Central Tibet and became known as the “Lower Tibet Vinaya” (sMad-’dul) tradition. In Western Tibet, however, King Yeshey-wo (Ye-shes ’od), at the end of the tenth-century CE, turned to India to establish, or perhaps re-establish, the Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination in his kingdom. Thus, he invited to Guge in Western Tibet the East Indian Pandit Dharmapala and several of his disciples to establish the second Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination line. This line became known as the “Upper Tibet Vinaya” (sTod-’dul) tradition.
According to the Guge Chronicles, a Mulasarvastivada nun’s order was also established in Guge at this time, and King Yeshey-wo’s daughter, Lhai-metog (Lha’i me-tog), received ordination in it. However, it is unclear whether this ordination was as a bhikshuni or a shramanerika novice. In either case, it is also unclear whether Mulasarvastivada bhikshunis were invited to Guge to confer the ordination, and there is no evidence that a Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni sangha became firmly established in Western Tibet at this time.

In 1204 CE, the Tibetan translator Tropu Lotsawa (Khro-phu Lo-tsa-ba Byams-pa dpal) invited the Indian master Shakyashribhadra, the last throne-holder of Nalanda Monastery, to come to Tibet to escape the destruction wrought by the invading Guzz Turks of the Ghurid Dynasty. While in Tibet, Shakyashribhadra and his accompanying Indian monks conferred Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination on candidates within the Sakya tradition, thus starting the third such ordination line in Tibet. It has two sublineages, one deriving Shakyashribhadra’s ordination of Sakya Pandita (Sa-skya Pan-di-ta Kun-dga’ rgyal-mtshan) and the other from his ordination of a community of monks that he later trained and which eventually divided into the four Sakya monastic communities (tshogs-pa bzhi). Although there is evidence that there were still bhikshunis in northern India as late as the twelfth century CE, no Mulasarvastivada bhikshunis accompanied Shakyashribhadra to Tibet. Thus, the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination lineage was never transmitted in conjunction with any of the three Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ordination lines in Tibet.

In the centuries that have followed Shakyashribhadra’s visit, at least one attempt was made to establish the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination in Tibet, but it was unsuccessful. In the early fifteenth-century CE, the Sakya master Shakya-chogden (Sha-kya mchog-ldan) convened a single sangha Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination specifically for his mother. Another contemporary Sakya master, Gorampa (Go-ram-pa bSod-nams seng-ge), however, strongly criticized the validity of this ordination and, subsequently, it was discontinued.

It is within this historical context that The International Congress on Women’s Role in the Sangha: Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages was convened to present the results of research concerning the possible methods for re-establishing the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination in the present day. A further aim was to learn of the experiences of the non-Tibetan Buddhist monastic traditions concerning bhikshuni ordination and to seek the advice of the elders of those traditions.

Summary of the Main Points of the Papers

The 65 delegates to the congress included bhikshu and bhikshuni Vinaya master and elders from nearly all traditional Buddhist countries, as well as senior members of the Western-trained academic community of Buddhologists. All the delegates unanimously agreed that the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination needs to be restarted, can be restarted, and must be restarted. Otherwise, Buddhism will be looked down upon by modern society as discriminating against women and Buddhists will be limiting their own ability to benefit society. After all, Buddha formulated monastic vows primarily in such a way as to gain the acceptance and respect of society and to avoid criticism. Buddha himself showed great flexibility in adjusting the vows for this purpose, and the same can be done today in the spirit of Buddha.

The majority of delegates recommended that, from the point of view of practical considerations and scriptural authority, the most satisfactory method for restarting the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination lineage is with a dual sangha comprising Mulasarvastivada bhikshus and Dharmagupta bhikshuni. The Dharmagupta bhikshuni lineage in China was started in the fifth century CE in a parallel manner by including bhikshunis from the unbroken Theravada tradition of Sri Lanka as part of its dual sangha. Since the bhikshunis function is to question the candidate regarding her suitability to receive the vow, the vow conferred is that of the ordaining bhikshus.

According to Vinaya sources, if the first bhikshuni ordination is conferred like this, even when not preceded by preliminary shikshamana and brahmacharya ordinations, the bhikshuni ordination is still valid. Although the ordaining bhikshus incur a minor infraction, this would be an acceptable price to pay. Geshe Rinchen Ngudrup, however, cited other Vinaya sources that allow bhikshus, under certain circumstances, to confer brahmacharya ordination and without incurring a minor infraction. From that, he inferred that if such a bhikshu sangha then proceeded to confer bhikshuni ordination, which must follow on the same day as the brahmacharya one, doing so would also not bring upon the bhikshus a minor infraction.

Whether or not the ordaining bhikshus incur a minor infraction, after the new bhikshunis have kept their vows purely for ten years, they can participate in a dual sangha and also confer shikshamana and brahmacharya ordinations. In support of this method, several delegates cited a Tibetan precedent of mixed sangha ordination— but, in this case, comprising Mulasarvastivada and Dharmagupta bhikshus—with the ninth- or tenth-century CE bhikshu ordination of Gongpa-rabsel.
Some of the Theravada Vinaya masters suggested a variant of this method of re-establishing the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination, based on a legal procedure followed in the Pali tradition. After dual sangha Dharmagupta ordination, the newly ordained Dharmagupta bhikshunis could receive re-ordination as Mulasarvastivada bhikshunis by a Mulasarvastivada strengthening procedure performed by the bhikshu sangha, dalhikamma (Skt. drdhakarma). This procedure converts their Dharmagupta vow into an equivalent Mulasarvastivada vow. In this way, subsequent dual sangha bhikshuni ordination could be conducted by an assembly of Mulasarvastivada bhikshus and Mulasarvastivada bhikshunis. Another suggestion was that senior bhikshunis ordained in Dharmagupta who practiced in the Tibetan tradition could be given the dalhikamma procedure, making them Mulasarvastivadin bhikshunis. They would then constitute the bhikshuni sangha in a purely Mulasarvastivadin dual ordination.

In support of either the mixed lineage dual sangha or the dalhikamma methods, several delegates underlined the fact that at the time of the Buddha and the founding of the bhikshuni ordination lineage, there were no divisions in the ordination or vow in terms of Theravada, Dharmagupta, or Mulasarvastivada ones. Therefore, we need to focus on conferring the essence of the bhikshuni vow in general and not on the lineage differences that arose over history.

Representatives of the Tibetan nuns community attending the congress, however, expressed their wish to remain totally within the Tibetan Mulasarvastivada family. Thus, those nuns present at the congress preferred bhikshuni ordination by a single sangha comprising only Mulasarvastivada bhikshus.

Within Theravada and Dharmagupta, this method of ordination involving only a single sangha is permissible within the context of the Vinaya for restarting a bhikshuni ordination lineage. Moreover, single sangha bhikshuni ordination in these two lineages may be and has been done in other circumstances too, in which case the ordaining bhikshus receive a minor infraction. The reason that this method of bhikshuni ordination has been followed is because the custom of dual sangha ordination was introduced by Buddha only after the single sangha one. In doing so, Buddha did not specifically disallow single sangha bhikshuni ordination, whereas in other places in the Vinaya he disallowed a preceding measure after instituting a later one. According to Vinaya, if a specific sangha act is not disallowed, but is in accord with Buddha’s intentions, it is permitted. After ten years, when these bhikshunis have gained sufficient seniority, the dual sangha ordination can be restarted by a dual Mulasarvastivada sangha.

Although not formally discussed at the congress, the Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala, India, has offered further possible variants just a few weeks before the congress. According to the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya, Buddha stated that if a bhikshuni is ordained according to the bhikshu ordination ritual, the ordination is valid, although the ordaining bhikshus would receive a minor infraction. In this manner, the candidate receives bhikshuni vows through a bhikshu ordination ritual; she does not receive bhikshu vows. The further options, then, would be to confer either single or dual sangha bhikshuni ordination by means of the Mulasarvastivada bhikshu ritual.

In short, the present issue is how to re-establish the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination in accordance with scriptural authority. Many scriptural passages, however, seem to contradict each other concerning the possible methods. Since the Tibetan Geshes are experts in debate, the arguments for and against each possible method can be and have been presented convincingly. Some way for deciding the debate that is acceptable to both sides, perhaps involving a compromise, is needed. According to scripture, Vinaya issues, such as concerning the re-establishment of this ordination, must be decided by a council of sangha elders and Vinaya-holders. It cannot be decided by one individual alone, even if that individual is a Dalai Lama. Therefore, the main steps at this stage are (1) to establish the method for choosing the delegates to such a council, (2) to determine the decision-making procedure for the council, and then, after inviting the delegates, (3) to convene such a council as soon as possible.

The invited bhikshu and bhikshuni elders of the Theravada and Dharmagupta lineages unanimously voiced their recognition and support of whatever decision this council, under the leadership of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, takes concerning the method of re-establishment of the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination.

Difficult Points Concerning the Suggested Manners of Re-establishing the Mulasarvastivada Bhikshuni Ordination

Vinaya-holders and researchers among the Tibetan scholarly community have outlined several legalistic points, needing to be resolved, that arise concerning the various manners that have been suggested for re-establishing the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination. Although these were not systematically presented at the congress, they emerged at various points in the discussion.
Is it possible for bhikshus and bhikshunis from different Vinaya lineages to participate in an ordination together? That is, could the dual sangha be composed of Mulasarvastivada bhikshus and Dharmagupta bhikshunis? And if such a dual sangha confers bhikshuni ordination, which lineage of the bhikshuni vow does the candidate receive?

Is it possible for the Tibetan bhikshus to confer bhikshuni ordination in a single sangha ordination?

Is it essential that a candidate for bhikshuni ordination has received the shiksamana ordination and completed its two-year training prior to becoming a bhikshuni?

In the bhikshuni ordination procedure, is it essential that the brahmacharya vow be given before the candidate becomes a bhikshuni? If so, could the bhikshu sangha give it? After all, the brahmacharya vow is not an actual vow: it is the part of the ordination ceremony in which the bhikshuni sangha questions the candidate regarding the major and minor obstacles to receiving ordination.

If the bhikshu ordination ritual were used to ordain bhikshunis, could that resolve some of the above points?

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has said that the re-establishment of the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination, although extremely important, must be carried out in strict accordance with the textual tradition of the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya. It is essential to avoid the judgment of history that the Tibetans reinstated this ordination in an invalid manner, and especially that their laxity in following and upholding the Vinaya was due to their practice of tantra.

Nearly all Tibetan monks and nuns attending the congress have stated that the issue of the reinstatement of the Mulasarvastivada bhikshuni ordination has nothing to do with the more general issues of human rights or women’s rights. It is within the context of Vinaya that Buddha gave equal rights to both men and women to renounce household life, take full ordination, and attain liberation and enlightenment. Thus, despite any emotional factors – overt or hidden, pro or con – that may be involved, re-establishment of the bhikshuni ordination lineage is purely a Vinaya legal issue and must be decided on those legal grounds alone. One guideline, however, suggested by Bhikkhu Bodhi, a senior Theravadin monk, is important to remember here: “The bhikshuni ordination procedure was designed to facilitate the ordination of bhikshunis, not to prevent it.”

**The Revival of the Monk Ordination Lineage in Tenth-Century Tibet**

Under King Langdarma (Glang-dar-ma), there was a severe repression of Buddhism in Central Tibet. This occurred, according to some sources, between 836 and 842 C.E. According to other sources, it was from 901 to 907 C.E. All monks were either killed or forced to disrobe, except for three: Mar Shakya (dMar Sha-kya), Yo Gejung (g.Yo dGe-

According to some Mongol sources, they passed through Kyrgyz-ruled Mongolia and eventually hid on the eastern shores of Lake Baikal in Siberia. There, they gave initiations and teachings to Hortsa Mergen, grandson of the Mongol King Borti Chiney, the fifth generation ancestor of Chinggis Khan. According to other sources, they were given asylum in the Tangut Buddhist Kingdom of Mi-nyag (Mi-nyag), which spanned the region from northern Amdo to Inner Mongolia. Yet other sources identify more precisely the area in this region where they initially settled as having been part of the Tsongka (Tsong-kha) Kingdom at this time. The cave monastery Martsang (dMar-gtsang) in northern Amdo was later built at the cave where they supposedly stayed.

After several years, the three Tibetan monks moved to the southeastern Tibetan province of Kham (Khaps, mDo-smad), where they stayed at Dentigshel retreat (Dan-tig-shel-gyi yang-dgon). A local herdsman wished to become a monk. They gave him the novice vows and novice name Gewa-rabsel (dGe-ba rab-gsal), but could not give him full monk’s vows since five monks are required to give full ordination.

At that time, the monk Lhalung Pel-dorjey (Lha-lung dPal rdo-rje), the assassin of King Langdarma, had fled to nearby Longtang (Klong-thang). He was asked to help with ordinations, but explained that he could no longer qualify for this role. He promised, however, to help locate other monks. He found two Chinese monks, Ki-bang and Gyi-ban, and sent them to complete the count. In this way, with Tsang Rabsel as abbot, the former herdsman received the full monk’s vows and the full ordination name Gongpa-rabsel (dGongs-pa rab-gsal) in the presence of these five. In later times, people added the title Lachen (Bla-chen, Great Superior One), before his name.
Some youths from the Central Tibetan provinces of U (dBus) and Tsang (gTsang) heard of the monks in Kham. Lumey Tṣultrim-sherab (Klu-mes Tshul-khrims shes-rab) led a party of ten seeking full ordination. This was either 53 or 70 years after Langdarma’s persecution. They requested Tsang Rabse to be the abbot, but he declined due to old age. They then asked Gongpa-rabsel, but he explained that he had only been a full monk for five years and was not yet qualified. Ten years minimum was the requirement according to the texts. Nevertheless, Tsang Rabse gave special permission for him to serve as abbot and the group of ten took the full monk’s vows.

Lumey stayed on for one year studying the vinaya rules of monastic discipline, while the other nine returned to Central Tibet. Upon Lumey’s return to Central Tibet, he founded several temples there. The later propagation of the Buddhist teachings, and particularly of the monk’s vows, traces from him.

First International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha: Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages
The Buddhist Bhikṣu Tenzin Gyatso, The Dalai Lama, Hamburg University, Germany, July 18 - 20, 2007

- The Buddha taught a path to enlightenment and liberation from suffering for all sentient beings and people of all walks of life, to women as well as men, without discrimination as to class, race, nationality or social background.
- For those who wished to fully dedicate themselves to the practice of his teachings, he established a monastic order that included both a Bhikṣu Sangha, an order of monks, and a Bhikṣuni Sangha, an order of nuns.
- For centuries, the Buddhist monastic order has thrived throughout Asia and has been essential to the development of Buddhism in all its diverse dimension - as a system of philosophy, meditation, ethics, religious ritual, education, culture, and social transformation.
- While the Bhikṣu ordination lineage still exists in almost all Buddhist countries today, the Bhikṣuni ordination lineage exists only in some countries. For this reason, the four-fold Buddhist community (of Bhikṣus, Bhikṣunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas) is incomplete in the Tibetan tradition. If we can introduce the Bhikṣuni ordination within Tibetan tradition, that would be excellent in order to have the four-fold Buddhist community complete.
- In today's world, women are playing major roles in all aspects of secular life, including government, science, medicine, law, arts, humanities, education, and business. Women are also keenly interested in participating fully in religious life, receiving religious education and training, acting as role-models, and contributing fully to the development of human society. In the same way, nuns and followers of Tibetan Buddhism around the world are keenly interested in full ordination for nuns within the Tibetan tradition.
- Given that women are fully capable of achieving the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings, in harmony with the spirit of the modern age, the means and opportunity to achieve this goal should be completely accessible to them.
- The most effective means and opportunity for achieving this goal is full ordination (Upasampada) as a Bhikṣuni and full participation in the life of a community of Bhikṣunis, that is, a Bhikṣuni Sangha in their practice tradition.
- Full ordination for women will enable women to pursue wholeheartedly their own spiritual development through learning, contemplating, and meditating, and also enhance their capacities to benefit society through research, teaching, counseling, and other activities to help extend the life of the Buddhadharma.

On the basis of the above considerations, and after extensive research and consultation with leading Vinaya scholars and Sangha members of the Tibetan tradition and Buddhist traditions internationally, and with the backing of the Tibetan Buddhist community, since 1960s, I express my full support for the establishment of the Bhikṣuni Sangha in the Tibetan tradition.

Within the Tibetan community, we have been striving to raise standards of nuns in terms of education, introduced Buddhist philosophical studies and also worked to introduce the bestowal of a Geshe degree (highest academic degree of monastic studies) for nuns as well. I am pleased that we have been successful in accomplishing these aims to a great extent.

I also believe that, since a Bhikṣuni Sangha has long been established in the East Asian Buddhist traditions (of China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Korea) and is presently being revived in the Theravada tradition of South Asia (especially Sri Lanka), the introduction of the Bhikṣuni Sangha within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition should be considered seriously and favorably.

But in terms of the modality of introducing Bhikṣuni vows within the tradition, we have to remain within the boundaries set by the Vinaya - otherwise, we would have introduced the Bhikṣuni vow in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition long time ago.

There are already nuns within the Tibetan tradition who have received the full Bhikṣuni vow according to the Dharmagupta lineage and whom we recognize as fully ordained. One thing we could do is to translate the three primary monastic activities (Posadha, Varsa, Pravarana) from the Dharmagupta lineage into Tibetan and encourage the Tibetan Bhikṣunis to do these practices as a Bhikṣuni Sangha, immediately. I hope that these combined efforts of all Buddhist traditions bear fruit.
A Tibetan Precedent for Multi-tradition Ordination
Support for Giving Bhikshuni Ordination with a Dual Sangha of Mulasarvastivada Bhikshus and Dharmaguptaka Bhikshunis
by Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron © 2007

Ven. Chodron participated in the First International Conference on Women’s Role in the Sangha in Hamburg, Germany, in July, 2007. This is a paper that will be published in the book of the conference proceedings.

When I received sramanerika ordination in Dharamsala, India, in 1977, I was told the story behind the blue cord on our monastic vest: it was in appreciation of the two Chinese monks who aided the Tibetans in reestablishing the ordination lineage when it was on the verge of extinction in Tibet. “Full ordination is so precious,” my teachers instructed, “that we should feel grateful to all those in the past and present who preserved the lineage, enabling us to receive the vow today.”

A bhikshu sangha of three Tibetan and two Chinese monks ordained Lachen Gongpa Rabsel (bLla chen dGong s pa rab gsal) after wide-scale persecution of the Buddhist sangha in Tibet. Lachen Gongpa Rabel was an exceptional monk, and his disciples were responsible for restoring temples and monasteries in Central Tibet and ordaining many bhikshus, thus spreading the precious Buddhadharma. His ordination lineage is the principal lineage found in the Gelug and Nyingpa schools of Tibetan Buddhism today.

Interestingly, thirty years after learning about Lachen Gongpa Rabsel’s ordination and the kindness of the monks who ordained him, I am returning to this story of the re-establishment of the bhikshu sangha, beginning with Lachen Gongpa Rabsel’s ordination. His ordination is a precedent of multi-tradition ordination that could also be used to establish the bhikshuni ordination in Tibetan Buddhism.

In recent years discussion of the possibility of establishing the bhikshuni sangha in countries where it has previously not spread or has died out has arisen. Everyone agrees that dual ordination by a sangha of bhikshus and a sangha of bhikshunis is the preferable mode of giving the bhikshuni ordination. In the absence of a Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni sangha to participate in such an ordination in the Tibetan community, is it possible for either:

1. The ordaining sangha to consist of Mulasarvastivadin bhikshus and Dharmaguptaka bhikshunis?
2. The Mulasarvastivadin bhikshu sangha alone to give the ordination?

The ordination and activities of Bhikshu Lachen Gongpa Rabsel, who restored the bhikshu lineage in Tibet after the widespread destruction of Buddhism and the persecution of the sangha during the reign of King Langdarma provides precedents for both:

1. Ordination by a sangha consisting of members of different Vinaya lineages
2. Adjustment of Vinaya ordination procedures in reasonable circumstances

Let us examine this in more depth.

A Precedent in Tibetan History for the Ordaining Sangha to Consist of Mulasarvastivadin and Dharmaguptaka Members

Scholars have different opinions regarding the dates of Langdarma, Gongpa Rabsel, and the return of Lumey (kLu mes) and other monks to Central Tibet. Craig Watson places Langdarma’s reign as 838 – 842 and Gongpa Rabsel life as 832 – 945. I will provisionally accept these dates. However, the exact dates do not affect the main point of this paper, which is that there is a precedent for ordination by a sangha composed of Mulasarvastivadin and Dharmaguptaka monastics.

The Tibetan king Langdarma persecuted Buddhism almost to extinction. During his reign, three Tibetan monks—Tsang Rabsal, Yo Gejung, and Mar Sakyamuni—who were meditating at Chubori, took Vinaya texts and after traveling through many areas, arrived in Amdo. Muzu Salbar, the son of a Bon couple, approached them and requested the going-forth ceremony (pravrajya). The three monks gave him novice ordination, whereafter he was called Geba Rabsel or Gongpa Rabsel. The ordination took place in southern Amdo.

Gongpa Rabsel then requested full ordination, upasampada, from these three monks. They responded that since there were not five bhikshus—the minimum number required to hold an upasampada ceremony in an outlying area—the ordination could not be given. Gongpa Rabsel approached Palgyi Dorje, the monk who assassinated Langdarma, but he said he could not participate in the ordination because he had killed a human being. Instead, searched for other monks who could and brought two respected Chinese monks—Ke-ban and Gyi-ban who joined the three Tibetan monks to give bhikshu ordination to Gongpa Rabsel. Were these two Chinese monks ordained in the Dharmagupta or Mulasarvastivadin lineages? Our research indicates that they were Dharmaguptakas.

According to Huijiao's Biographies of Eminent Monks, Dharmakala traveled to China around 250. At that time, no Vinaya texts were available in China. Monks simply shaved their heads to distinguish themselves from the laity. On the request of the Chinese monks, Dharmakala translated the Pratimoksha of the Mahasamghika which they used only to regulate daily life. He also invited Indian monks to establish the ordination karma procedure and give ordination. This was the beginning of bhikshu ordination taking place in the Chinese land. Meanwhile in 254-255, a Parthian monk Tandi, who was also versed in Vinaya, came to China and translated the Karmavacana of Dharmaguptaka.
For quite a while, the model for Chinese monks seemed to be that they were ordained according to the Dharmaguptaka ordination procedure, but their daily life was regulated by the Mahasamghika Pratimoksha. Not until the fifth century, did other Vinaya texts become available to them.

The first Vinaya text introduced to Chinese communities was Sarvastivadin. It, together with its bhikshu pratimoksha, was translated by Kumarajiva between 404-409. It was well received, and according to Sengyou (d. 518), a prominent Vinaya master and historian, the Sarvastivadin Vinaya was the most widely practiced Vinaya in China at that time. Soon after, the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya was also translated into Chinese by Buddhayasas between 410-412. Both the Mahasamghika and Mahisasaka Vinayas were brought back to China by the pilgrim Faxian. The former was translated by Buddhhabhadra between 416-418, while the latter by Buddhajiva between 422-423.

The Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya was brought to China much later by the pilgrim Yijing, who translated it into Chinese between 700-711. According to Yijing’s observation in his traveling record, Nanhai jigui neifa juan (composed 695-713), at that time in eastern China in the area around Guanzhong (i.e. Chang’an), most people followed the Dharmagupta Vinaya. The Mahasamghika Vinaya was also used, while the Sarvastivadin was prominent in the Yangzi River area and further south.

For three hundred years after the four Vinayas—Sarvastivada, Dharmaguptaka, Mahasamghika and Mahisasaka—were introduced to China, from the fifth century until the early-Tang period in the eighth century, different Vinayas were followed in different parts of China. Monks continued to follow the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya for ordination and another Vinaya to regulate their daily life. During 471-499 in the northern Wei period, the Vinaya master Facong advocated that monastics follow the same Vinaya for both ordination and regulating daily life. He asserted the importance of the Dharmagupta Vinaya in this regard because the first ordination in China was from the Dharmagupta tradition and the Dharmagupta was by far the predominant—and maybe even the only—tradition used for ordination after the first ordination.

The renowned Vinaya master Daoxuan, 道宣 (596-667) in Tang period was Facong’s successor. A very important figure in the history of Vinaya in Chinese Buddhism, Daoxuan is regarded as the first patriarch of the Vinaya school in China. He composed several important Vinaya works that have been closely consulted from his time to the present, he laid the solid foundation of Vinaya practice for Chinese monastics. Among his Vinaya works, the most influential ones are Sifenu shanfan buque xingshichao 四分律刪繁補闕行事録 and Sifenu shanbu suiijieimo 四分律刪補隨機羯磨, which no serious monastic in China neglects reading. According to his Xu Gaoseng juan (Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks), Daoxuan observed that even when the Sarvastivada Vinaya reached its peak in southern China, still it was Dharmagupta procedure that was performed for ordination. Thus, in line with Facong’s thought, Daoxuan advocated that all of monastic life—ordination and daily life—for all Chinese monastics should be regulated by only one Vinaya tradition, the Dharmagupta.14

Due to Daoxuan’s scholarship, pure practice, and prestige as a Vinaya master, north China began to follow only the Dharmagupta Vinaya. However, all of China did not become unified in using the Dharmagupta until the Vinaya master Dao’an requested the Tang emperor Zhong Zong to issue an imperial edict declaring that all monastics must follow the Dharmagupta Vinaya. The emperor did this in 709, and since then Dharmagupta has been the sole Vinaya tradition followed throughout China, areas of Chinese cultural influence, as well as in Korea and Vietnam.

Regarding the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya tradition in Chinese Buddhism, the translation of its texts was completed in the first decade of the eighth century, after Facong and Daoxuan recommended that all monastics in China follow only the Dharmagupta and just at the time that the emperor was promulgating an imperial edict to that effect. Thus there was never the opportunity for the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya to become a living tradition in China. Furthermore, there is no Chinese translation of the Mulasarvastivadin posadha ceremony in the Chinese Canon. Since this is one of the chief monastic rites, how could a Mulasarvastivadin sangha have existed without it?

While the other Vinaya traditions are discussed in Chinese records, there is hardly any mention of the Mulasarvastivadin and no evidence has been found that it was practiced in China. For example, the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya was not known to Daoxuan. In the Vinaya section of the Song gaoseng zhu, written by Zanning ca. 983, and in the Vinaya sections of various Biographies of Eminent Monks or historical records, Fozu Tongji, and so forth, there is no reference to Mulasarvastivadin ordination being given. Furthermore, a Japanese monk Ninran (J. Gyonen, 1240-1321) traveled extensively in China and recorded the history of Vinaya in China in his Vinaya text Luzong gangyao. He listed four Vinaya lineages—Mahasamghika, Sarvastivadin, Dharmagupta, and Mahisasaka—and the translation of their respective Vinaya texts and said, “Although these Vinayas have all spread, it is the Dharmagupta alone that flourishes in the later time.” His Vinaya text made no reference to the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya existing in China.22

Let us return to the ordination of Lachen Gongpa Rabzal, which occurred in the second half of ninth century (or possibly the tenth, depending upon which dates one accepts for his life), at least one hundred and fifty years after Zhong Zong’s imperial edict requiring the Sangha to follow the Dharmagupta Vinaya. According to Nel-Pa Pandita’s Me-Tog Phren-Ba, when Ke-ban and Gyi-ban were invited to become part of the ordaining sangha, they replied, “Since the teaching is available in China for us, we can do it.” This statement clearly shows that these two monks were Chinese and practiced Chinese Buddhism. Thus they must have been ordained in the Dharmagupta lineage and practiced according to that Vinaya since all ordinations in China were Dharmagupta at that time.

For Ke-ban and Gyi-ban to have been Mulasarvastivadin, they would have had to have taken the Mulasarvastivadin ordination from Tibetan monks. But there were no Tibetan monks to give it because Langdarma’s persecution had decimated the Mulasarvastivadin ordination lineage. Furthermore, if Ke-ban and Gyi-ban had received Mulasarvastivadin ordination from
Tibetans in Amdo, it would indicate that there were other Tibetan Mulasarvastivadin monks in the area. In that case, why would the Chinese monks have been asked to join the three Tibetan monks to give the ordination? Surely Tsang Rabtsal, Yo Gejun, and Mar Sakyamuni would have asked their fellow Tibetans, not the two Chinese monks, to participate in ordaining Gongpa Rabtsel.

Thus, all evidence points to the two Chinese monks being Dharmaguptaka, not Mulasarvastivadin. That is, the sangha that ordained Gongpa Rabtsel was a mixed sangha of Dharmaguptaka and Mulasarvastivadin bhikshus. Therefore, we have a clear precedent in Tibetan history for giving ordination with a sangha consisting of Dharmaguptaka and Mulasarvastivadin members. This precedent was not unique to Gongpa Rabtsel’s ordination. As recorded by Buton (Bu sTon), subsequent to Lachen Gongpa Rabtsel’s ordination, the two Chinese monks, again participated with Tibetan bhikshus in the ordination of other Tibetans as well.

For example, they were the assistants during the ordination of ten men from Central Tibet, headed by Lumey (klu mes). Furthermore, among Gongpa Rabtsel’s disciples were Grum Yeshe Gyaltshan (Grum Ye Shes rGyal mTshan) and Nubjan Chu Guyltsan (bsNub Byan CHub rGyal mTshan), from Amdo area. They, too, were ordained by the same sangha which included the two Chinese monks.

A Precedent in Tibetan History for Adjustment of Vinaya Ordination Procedures in Reasonable Circumstances

In general, to act as preceptor in a full ordination ceremony, a bhikshu must be ordained ten years or more. As recorded by Buton, Gongpa Rabtsel later acted as the preceptor for the ordination of Lumei and nine other monks although he had not yet been ordained five years. When the ten Tibetan men requested him to be their preceptor (upadhyaya, mkhan po), Gongpa Rabtsel responded, “Five years have not yet passed away since I was ordained myself. I cannot therefore be a preceptor.” Buton continued, “But Tsan said in his turn, ‘Be such an exception!’” Thus, the Great Lama (Gongpa Rabtsel) was made preceptor…with the Hva-cans (i.e. Ke-van and Gyi-van) as assistants. In Lozang Chokyi Nyima’s account, the ten men first requested Tsang Rabtsel for ordination, but he said he was too old and referred them to Gongpa Rabtsel, who said, “I am unable to serve as the upadhyaya as five years have not yet elapsed since my own full ordination.” At this point, Tsang Rabtsel gave him permission to act as preceptor in the bhikshu ordination of the ten men from Central Tibet. Here we see an exception being made to the standard bhikshu ordination procedure.

In the Theravada Vinaya and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, no provision can be found for someone who has been ordained less than ten years to act as the preceptor for a bhikshu ordination. The only mention of “five years” is in the context of saying that a disciple must take dependence with their teacher, stay with him, and train under his guidance for five years. Similarly, in the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya found in the Chinese Canon, no provision for acting as a preceptor if one has been ordained less than ten years can be found. Such an exception is also not found in the Mahasangika, Sarvastivada, and other Vinayas in the Chinese Canon.

However, in the Tibetan Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya, it says that a monk should not do six things until he has been ordained for ten years. One of these is that he should not serve as preceptor. The last of the six is that he should not go outside the monastery until he has been a monk for ten years. Regarding this last one, the Buddha said that if a monk knows the Vinaya well, he can go outside after five years. While there is no direct statement saying that after five years a monk can serve as preceptor, since all six activities that a monk is not supposed to do are in one list, most scholars say that what is said about one can be applied to the other five. This is a case of interpretation, applying what is said about one item in a list to the other five items. That is, if a monk who has been ordained five years is exceptionally gifted, upholds his precepts well, abides properly in the Vinaya code of conduct, has memorized sufficient parts of the Vinaya, and has full knowledge of the Vinaya—i.e. if he is equivalent to a monk who has been ordained ten years—and if the person requesting ordination knows that he has been a monk for only five years, then it is permissible for him to serve as preceptor. However, there is no provision for such a gifted monk to be a preceptor if he has been ordained less than five years.

Therefore, since Gongpa Rabtsel acted as preceptor although he had been ordained less than five years, there is a precedent for adjusting the ordination procedure described in the Vinaya in reasonable conditions. This was done for good reason—the existence of the Mulasarvastivadin ordination lineage was at stake. These wise monks clearly had the benefit of future generations and the existence of the precious Buddha-dharma in mind when they made this adjustment.

Conclusion

The ordination of Lachen Gongpa Rabtsel sets a clear precedent for ordination by sangha from two Vinaya traditions. In other words, it would not be a new innovation for a bhikshuni ordination to be given by a sangha consisting of Tibetan Mulasarvastivadin bhikshus and Dharmaguptaka bhikshunis. The nuns would receive the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow. Why? First, because the bhikshu sangha would be Mulasarvastivadin, and the Extensive Commentary and Autocommentary on Vinayasutra of the Mulasarvastivadin tradition state that the bhikshus are the main ones performing the bhikshuni ordination. Second, because the bhikshu and bhikshuni vow are one nature, it would be suitable and consistent to say that the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow and the Dharmaguptaka bhikshuni vow are one nature. Therefore if the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni ordination rite is used, even though a Dharmaguptaka bhikshuni sangha is present, the candidates could receive the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow.

Applying the exception made for Gongpa Rabtsel to act as a preceptor to the present situation of Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni ordination, it would seem that for the benefit of future generations and for the existence of the precious Buddha-dharma, reasonable adjustments could be made in the ordination procedure. For example, the Tibetan Mulasarvastivadin bhikshu
sangha alone could ordain women as bhikshunis. After ten years, when those bhikshunis are senior enough to become preceptors, the dual ordination procedure could be done.

Tibetan monks often express their gratitude to the two Chinese monks for enabling ordination to be given to Gongpa Rabsel, thereby allowing monastic ordination to continue in Tibet after the persecution of Langdarma. In both Gongpa Rabsel’s ordination and the ordination he gave subsequently to ten other Tibetans, we find historical precedents for:

1. Giving full ordination by a saṅgha composed of members of both the Mulasarvastivadin and the Dhammadgupta Vinaya lineages, with the candidates receiving the Mulasarvastivadin vow. Using this precedent, a saṅgha of Mulasarvastivadin bhikshus and Dhammadgupta bhikshunis could give the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow.

2. Adjusting the ordination procedure in special circumstances. Using this precedent, a saṅgha a Mulasarvastivadin bhikshus could give the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow. After ten years, a dual ordination with the bhikshu and bhikshuni sangha being Mulasarvastivadin could be given.

This research is respectfully submitted for consideration by the Tibetan bhikshu sangha, upon whom rests the decision to establish the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni sangha. Having bhikshunis in the Tibetan tradition would enhance the existence of the Buddha-dharma in the world. The four-fold saṅgha of bhikshus, bhikshunis, and male and female lay followers would exist. It would give many women, in many countries, the opportunity to create great merit by upholding the bhikshuni vows and progress toward enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. In addition, from the viewpoint of the Tibetan community, Tibetan bhikshunis would instruct lay Tibetan women in the Dharma, thus inspiring many of the mothers to send their sons to monasteries. This increase in saṅgha members would benefit Tibetan society and the entire world. Seeing the great benefit that would unfold due to the presence of Tibetan nuns holding the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni vow, I request the Tibetan bhikshu sangha to do their utmost to make this a reality.

On a personal note, I would like to share with you my experience of researching this topic and writing this paper. The kindness of previous generations of monastics, both Tibetan and Chinese, is so apparent. They studied and practiced the Dharma diligently, and due to their kindness we are able to be ordained, so many centuries later. I would like to pay my deep respects to these women and men who kept the ordination lineages and practice lineages alive, and I would like to encourage all of us to do our best to keep these lineages alive, vibrant, and pure so that future generations of practitioners can benefit and share in the tremendous blessing of being fully ordained Buddhist monastics.

Endnotes:

1. This ordination lineage was brought to Tibet by the great sage Santarakshita in the late eighth century. At the time of the second propagation (Phyi Dar) of Buddhism in Tibet, it became known as the Lowland Vinaya (sMad ‘Dul) Lineage. During the second propagation, another lineage, which was called the Upper or Highland Vinaya (sTod ‘Dul) Lineage, was introduced by the Indian scholar Dhamapala into Western Tibet. However, this lineage died out. A third lineage was brought by Panchen Sakyasribhadra. It was initially known as the Middle Vinaya (Bar ‘Dul) Lineage. However, when the Upper Lineage died out, the Middle Lineage became known as the Upper Lineage. This lineage is the chief Vinaya lineage in the Kargyu and Sakya schools.

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2. These dates are according to Craig Watson, “The Second Propagation of Buddhism from Eastern Tibet.” Both W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History,* and David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism,* say Langdarma reigned 836-42. T.G. Dhongthog Rinpoche, *Important Events in Tibetan History,* place Langdarma’s persecution in 901 and his assassination in 902 or 906. The Tibetan-Chinese dictionary, *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo* is in accord with the 901-6 dates. Tibetans “number” years according to animals and elements that form sixty year cycles. The uncertainty of the dates is because no one is sure to which sixty-year cycle the ancient authors were referring. Dan Martin in “The Highland Vinaya Lineage” says “…the date of first entry of the monks of the Lowland Tradition (Gongpa Rabsel’s Vinaya descendants) into Central Tibet is itself far from decided; in fact this was a conundrum for traditional historians, as it remains for us today.”

3. According to the Third Thukvan Lozang Chokyi Nyima (1737-1802) in “Short Biography of Gongpa Rabsel,” Gongpa Rabsel was born in the male water-mouse year. Which male water-mouse year remains uncertain: it could be 832 (George Roerich, *The Blue Annals*) or 892 (Wang Seng, Xizang fojiao fazhan shilue, places Gongpa Rabsel as 892 – 975, his ordination being in 911), or 952 (Tibetan-Chinese dictionary, *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*). I assume Dan Martin would agree with the latter as he provisionally places the date of return of the Lowland monks to Central Tibet as 978, while Dhongthog Rinpoche places the return in 953. The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center says Gongpa Rabsel lived 953-1035, but also notes, “the sources differ on the birthplace of dgongs pa rab gsal…and the year (832, 892, 952).

4. Aka Musug Labar

5. Fazun identifies the area as nearby present-day Xining. Helga Uebach identified the place where the two Chinese monks were from as present-day Pa-yen, southeast of Xining in his footnote 729.

6. Their names are recorded with slight variation in different historical sources: in Buton’s *History* they are Ke-ban and Gyi-ban, which can also be transliterated as Ke-wang and Gyi-wang; in Dam pa’s *History,* they are Ko-ban and Gim-bag; Craig Watson says that these are phonetic transliterations of their Chinese names and spells them Ko-bang and Gyi-ban; in
Nel-Pa Pandita’s Me-Tog Phren-Ba they are Ke-van and Gyim-phag. The Tibetan historians, for example, Buton, referred to them as “rGya nag hwa shan” (Szerb 1990: 59). “rGya nag” refers to China and “hwa shan” is a respectful term originally used in Chinese Buddhism referring to monks whose status are equivalent to upadhyaya. Here it seems simply to refer to monks.

7. Taisho 50, 2059, p. 325a4-5. This record does not specify the lineage of that ordination. However, ordination Karma text of Dharmaguptaka was translated into Chinese by Tandi at about the same time. So it is clear that the Karma procedure for ordination performed by the Chinese began with the Dharmagupta. For that reason, Dharmakala is listed as one of the patriarchs of the Dharmagupta Vinaya lineage.

8. Taisho 50, 2059, p. 324c27-325a5, 8-9

9. Taisho 55, 2145, p 19c26-27, 21a18-19

10. Taisho 54, 2125, p205b27-28

11. Taisho 74, 2348, p.16a19-22). Facong first studied the Mahasamghika Vinaya but then realized that since the Dharmagupta Vinaya was used to give ordination in China, this Vinaya should be seriously studied. He then devoted himself to studying and teaching the Dharmagupta Vinaya. Unfortunately, little is known about his life, perhaps because he focused on giving oral, not written Vinaya teachings. As a result, his eminent successor Daoxuan could not include Facong’s biography when he composed Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks.

12. However, if Dharmagupta in India is counted as the first patriarch, then Daoxuan is the ninth patriarch (Taisho 74, 2348, p.16a23-27). There are several ways of tracing back the Dharmagupta Vinaya masters. Ninran summarized one of them in his Luzong gang’yao: 1) Dharmagupta (in India), 2) Dharmakala (who helped establish the ordination karma in China), 3) Facong, 4) Daofu, 5) Huiguang, 6) Daoyun, 7) Daozhao, 8) Zhishou, 9) Daoxuan.

13. Taisho 50, 2060, ibid., p62ob6

14. Taisho 50, 2060, p. 620c7)

15. Also spelled Chung Tzung

16. The Biographies of Eminent Monks of Sung Dynasty (Taisho 50, p.793)

17. Song gaoseng zhan, Taisho 2061, Ibid., p.793a11-c27

18. A living Vinaya tradition involves an established sangha living according to a set of precepts over a period of time and transmitting those precepts from generation to generation continuously.


20. Taisho 50, 620b19-20

21.Taisho 74, 2348, p16a17-18

22. Dr. Ann Heirman, private correspondence

23. Me-Tog Phren-Ba by Nel-Pa Pandita


25. Buton and Lozang Choky Nyima say that Lumey was a direct disciple of Gongpa Rabsel. Others say that one or two monastic generations separated them.

26. According to Dampa's History, Grum Yeshe Gyaltstan’s ordination was performed by the same five-member sangha as Gongpa Rabsel’s (i.e. it included two Chinese monks).


28. According to Ajahn Sucato, it is a little known fact in the Pali Vinaya that the preceptor is not formally essential for the ordination. “Preceptor” should better be translated as “mentor,” for he plays no role in giving precepts as such, but acts as guide and teacher for the ordinand. According to the Pali, if there is no preceptor, or if the precept or has been ordained less than ten years, the ordination still stands, but it is dukkata offence for the monks taking part.

29. After receiving full ordination, all Vinayas require the new bhikshu to stay with his teacher for at least five years in order to learn the Vinaya, be trained as a monastic, and receive Dharma instruction.

30. Vol 1 (ka), Tibetan numbers pp. 70 and 71. English numbers 139,140,141 of the sde dge bka’ gyur. Choden Rinpoche said passage can be found in the lung gzhi section of the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya.

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