

On the Summer Retreat

(Ango)

Translator’s Introduction: This discourse, dated at the end of summer, puts forth the purpose and methods of holding a ninety-day summer retreat, as Dōgen had just conducted it at Eihei-ji, his new temple in Echizen Province.

Whereas some who have studied the writings of Dōgen have understood certain of his remarks in Discourse 81: On Leaving Home Life Behind (*Shukke*) as rejecting lay and female discipleship, Dōgen is unequivocal about the issue in the latter part of this discourse, where he says, “Keep in mind that male and female lay trainees can also do the retreat,” a retreat that Dōgen considered fundamental to the practice of a Buddhist monastic.

My late Master, the Old Buddha of Tendō, once recited a poem of his during an informal session at the beginning of a summer retreat:

*Set your bones upright upon level ground,
And to seclude yourself, scoop out a cavern in space.
Pass forthwith beyond the gate of dualities,
Only taking with you a darkness as dark as a black-
lacquered pail.*

Accordingly, since you already have that nose ring of yours in place and have not avoided eating food, stretching out your legs, or taking a snooze, you will remain so for the rest of your life.¹ Since this is the way things are, you have not slackened and wasted your time by putting down your tools. Those tools include the ninety-day summer retreat, which is the very crown and countenance of Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor, all of Whom have continually experienced it intimately in Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow. Taking up the Eye and the head crown of the Buddhas and Ancestors, we make them into the days and months of ninety days of summer. One summer retreat is therefore something equivalent to Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor. The summer retreat, from beginning to end, is what an Ancestor is. Beyond this, there is not a single additional inch of ground, nor is there a great earth.

1. ‘The nose ring in place’ is a reference to having learned how to train oneself, just as one goes about domesticating a water buffalo.

The gatepost for the summer retreat is beyond the new and beyond the old, and it is beyond coming and beyond going. The measure of this retreat is measured by the Fist, and its form has been in the form of a nose ring. Even so, because we began a summer retreat, it came, filling all space, without excluding anything in all the ten quarters. And because we ended the summer retreat, it has gone, having torn asunder the whole universe, until not an inch of ground remains. For this reason, when the summer retreat began, it resembled your giving rise to your spiritual question. And when it came to an end, it resembled your having torn asunder the nets and cages of your delusions. Even though this is how it was, there are some of you who may well have personally experienced it as hindering you from beginning to end. Well, for ten thousand miles there has not been an inch of grass, so come on, pay me back for ninety days' board!



The venerable monk, Ōryū Shishin, once said, “For thirty-some years I have tread the mountain paths as a mendicant monk. With ninety days I make me a summer. I cannot add even a single day to that, nor can I subtract one either.” So, what the Eye of a wanderer of thirty-some years has penetrated is simply that a summer retreat is comprised of ninety days. Were he to add a single day, the other days would vie to be that extra day, and were he to fall one day short, his other days would vie not to be that missing day. Furthermore, he was unable to leap free from his cavernous snare of delusion. This leaping free is simply a springing up from this ninety-day pit by using one's own hands and feet.

Treating a single summer as comprised of ninety days is a tool among us, but because this is not something that was first concocted by some Ancestor of the Buddha all on His own, it has come down to us this very day as a natural endowment from Buddha after Buddha, Ancestor after Ancestor, and Dharma heir after Dharma heir. Hence, to do a summer retreat is to see Buddhas and Ancestors, as well as to meet Them, for a summer retreat has, for ever so long, created Buddhas and Ancestors.

Even though this worldly, temporal measurement of ‘one summer is comprised of ninety days’ is a measurement that the mind thinks up, it is not simply one eon or ten eons, nor is it simply hundreds of thousands of immeasurable eons. Ordinary times are used up by hundreds of thousands of immeasurable eons, whereas these ninety days of a summer retreat use up hundreds of thousands of immeasurable eons. As a result, even though immeasurable eons resemble the ninety days wherein you meet a Buddha, these ninety days do not necessarily depend on there being any eons. Thus, you should explore through your training that the one summer comprised of ninety days is simply a

measurement of one's Eye. This is how one who attends the retreat in both body and mind is.

Both making use of acting freely and leaping beyond making use of acting freely have their origins and their foundations. Even so, our summer retreat has not come from some other place or from some other time, nor has it arisen just in this particular place at this particular time. When we get hold of what the origin of these ninety days is, they immediately come forth, and when we grope for what the foundation of 'ninety days' is, it immediately comes forth. Ordinary folk, as well as the saintly, treat them as a comfortable cave for them to reside in, but these ninety days go far, far beyond the realm of the ordinary and the saintly. These ninety days cannot be reached by thinking about them, nor can they be reached by not thinking about them, nor are they simply something that is unreachable by thinking about or not thinking about them.



When the World-honored One was residing in the country of Magadha, He once gave a Dharma talk for those assembled. At that time, He was intent on performing a pure summer retreat. Accordingly, he spoke to Ananda, saying, "If I am continually giving expression to the Dharma, my senior disciples, as well others in the four classes—male and female monastics and male and female laity—will not give rise to respect for It. So I am now going to enter Shakrendra's Cave and sit for the ninety days of summer.² When people suddenly show up and ask for Teaching, say to them on My behalf, 'All thoughts and things are beyond arising, and all thoughts and things are beyond decay.'" Having spoken thus, He concealed Himself within the cave and sat in meditation.

Since then, two thousand ninety-four years have already passed—it being now the third year of the Japanese era of Kangen. Many of His descendants who did not have entry into the private quarters of their Master would see the Buddha's sequestering Himself as a form of expressing the Dharma without using words. That wrong-minded bunch today merely think:

The Buddha went into the cave and to meditate for the summer because using words to express It is not completely the Truth but is merely a virtuous expedient means. To reach the Truth, one cuts oneself off from using the spoken word and lets the intellective

2. Shakrendra's Cave is a cave on Vulture Peak that was used as a place for meditation.

function die out. This is because going beyond words and going beyond intellect are how one reaches the Truth, since having words and having thoughts is entirely different from the Truth. This is why the Buddha cut Himself off from human beings during the ninety summer days that He sat within the cave.

What these folks are saying runs counter to the World-honored One's intention as a Buddha. If such people are going to say that His intention was to cut off speech and let the mind's functions die out, then all productive human activities and undertakings would involve cutting off speech and letting the mind's functions die out. To speak of 'cutting off speech' means all speech, and to speak of 'letting the mind's functions die out' means all functions of the mind. And what is more, this account about Him was never given for the sake of esteeming the absence of words. In all earnestness, He dragged His whole being through mud and water, and went amidst the weeds that had sprouted up, never shrinking from giving voice to the Dharma in order to help human beings reach the Other Shore, never failing to turn the Wheel of the Dharma to help rescue them. If any of the bunch of you who call yourselves His offspring were to say that His sitting through the ninety days of the summer was advocating silence, then I must say to you, "Give me back the ninety days that you spent sitting here this summer!"

The Buddha enjoined Ananda to say on His behalf, "All thoughts and things are beyond arising, and all thoughts and things are beyond decay." Do not lightly pass over what the Buddha was doing. In short, how could His sequestering Himself in a cave and sitting in meditation for the summer possibly be beyond speaking or beyond expressing the Teaching? Let's suppose for the moment that Ananda had asked the World-honored One, "How am I to express the meaning of 'All thoughts and things are beyond arising, and all thoughts and things are beyond decay'? Even were I to try to express It like this, how am I to go about doing so?" Having spoken thus, he would have listened carefully to the World-honored One's reply. Speaking more generally for the moment, the Buddha's behavior is the foremost expression of turning the Wheel of the Dharma. It is not the paramount evidence of silence. Further, do not take it to be evidence of wordless Teaching. Should you take It to be wordless Teaching, you would be just like Mr. To, who, sad to say, mistook the three-foot Dragon Spring Sword for a weaving shuttle and hung it on the wall of his humble abode.

Accordingly, the ninety-day summer sitting is the ancient turning of the Wheel of the Dharma and it is the ancient practice of Buddhas and Ancestors. In the present account, there is the phrase, "At that time, He was intent on performing a pure summer retreat." Keep in mind that what He practiced was ninety days of sitting in a summer retreat. Those who try to evade this are non-Buddhists.

To speak more generally, when the World-honored One was in the world, He sometimes did a ninety-day summer retreat in the Trayastrimsha Heavens and sometimes He did it in the quiet caves on Vulture Peak along with five hundred monastics. Throughout all five nations of India where the Buddha and His retinue traveled, when the time was ripe, without discussing where, they would do a pure summer retreat, which was their carrying out a ninety-day summer retreat. It is what Buddhas and Ancestors of the present carry out as the One Great Matter,* for it is the unsurpassed Way of unifying training and enlightenment. In the *Scripture of Brahma's Net* there is mention of a winter retreat, but how it was done has not been passed on; only the method for performing the ninety-day summer retreat has been passed on. It has been accurately Transmitted to me personally in the fifty-first generation.



In the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple*, it says the following, “If monks on pilgrimages wish to begin their summer retreat at a particular monastery, they should settle in half a month before the opening day. What is important is that they not be hurried in making their tea offerings and paying their respects.” ‘Half a month before’ means ‘during the last ten days of the third lunar month’. Accordingly, you should arrive and get settled in during the third lunar month. From the first day of the fourth lunar month on, monks are not to go outside the confines of the monastery. The doors of the reception rooms in various quarters, as well as those to the rooms for temporary lodging of itinerant monks are all locked. Accordingly, from the first day of the fourth lunar month on, itinerant monks will be making the retreat within the confines of the temple buildings or they will have settled into a monk’s hut. Some may do the retreat in the residence of a lay Buddhist, for which there is a precedent. All these are rules of the Buddhas and Ancestors, so you need to do the practice and training out of a desire to emulate the ancient ways. Once the Fists and Noses have all taken up residence in the halls of the monastery, they hang up their traveling bag in their place for the duration of the retreat.

Despite this, that band of demons say, “The perspective of Mahayana* is what is important. The summer retreat is a practice of Hinayanists of the Lesser Course,* so by all means, do not engage in the practice of it.” Such folks have never encountered, much less heard of, the Buddha Dharma. Supreme, fully perfected wisdom is synonymous with doing meditation throughout the summer at a ninety-day retreat. Even though the Ultimate is to be found in both the Greater

* See *Glossary*.

and the Lesser Courses, Its branching, leafing out, flowering, and fruiting emerge from the ninety-day retreat.

First off, after breakfast on the third day of the fourth lunar month, the following ceremony is performed. Prior to the first day of the fourth lunar month, the senior monk in charge of the trainees within a Meditation Hall has already prepared the notice boards announcing the ceremony of *kairō*.³ Right after breakfast, he hangs up these boards in front of the halls where the monks are residing. That is, he hangs them outside the latticed window which is to the left of the front entrance. He hangs them after breakfast and removes them after the bell is rung at the end of the day's practice. These are hung from the third day through the fifth day. The times to hang them and to take them down remain the same.

There is a set style and order for signing in on these boards. The order is not according to one's general position in the hierarchy of the retreat temple as 'temple officer' or 'senior monk', but just according to the date when the monk first took the monastic preceptual vows. Those who may be senior monks or temple officers elsewhere should sign in as Chief Junior or Prior or whatever.⁴ Those who have served in various offices should write their highest office. Anyone who has ever served as an Abbot puts down 'So-and-so of the Western Hall'.⁵ Although someone may have served as Abbot of a small temple, this may not be known by other monks, so, as often as not, he may choose not to write this title. When a monk of the Western Hall stays in the training assembly of his Master, there are examples where such a one does not follow the custom of the Western Hall and simply refers to himself as Veteran Monk So-and-so. There are many excellent examples of such a monk taking a nap in the common room of the Abbot's attendants who take care of their Master's robes and monk's bowl. Also, there is an old tradition of such a veteran monk serving as the attendant in charge of the Master's robe and bowl, or as the attendant responsible for handling incense offerings, or what is more, in any other office that is assigned at the discretion of the Master. In a large temple, when someone else's disciples come to the retreat, even if they served the Abbot of a small temple, it is a reliable precedent for them to be given a title for the ninety-day

-
3. *Kairō* is a ceremony in which monks enter their name in a registry along with the number of years since their ordination, that is, since taking the preceptual vows of a monastic.
 4. That is, they should register in accordance with the specific position held in their own temple.
 5. 'So-and so of the Western Hall' refers to the retired head monk of another temple, one who is staying in the guest quarters on the west side of the monastery. The Western Hall is also the place where retired monks in their Master's assembly are sequestered.

retreat, such as Chief Junior, Clerical Officer, Chief Supervisory Officer, or Prior, for instance. Those who use their title from some minor post in a small temple cause laughter among those in the monastery. A sensible person who has been even the Abbot of a small temple will sign himself without using that title.



The board is set up in the following style:

Such-and-such Temple on Such-and-such Mountain in Such-and-such District of Such-and-such Province is holding a summer retreat this summer. For the Sangha attending, the number of years that each has passed since taking the monastic Precepts is as follows:

The Venerable Kaundinya⁶

The Venerable Abbot

Precept recipients in 1st year of the Kempō era:

So-and-so Veteran	So-and-so Librarian
So-and-so Veteran	So-and-so Veteran

Precepts recipients in 2nd year of Kempō era:

So-and-so of Western Hall	So-and-so Trainees' Supervisor
So-and-so Chief Junior	So-and-so Guestmaster
So-and-so Veteran	So-and-so Bathhouse Monk

Precepts recipients in 1st year of Kenryaku era:

So-and-so Grounds Supervisor	So-and-so Abbot's Assistant
So-and-so Chief Junior	So-and-so Chief Junior
So-and-so Chief Cook	So-and-so Meditation Hall Head

Precepts recipients in 2nd year of Kenryaku era:

So-and-so Clerical Officer	So-and-so Veteran
So-and-so of Western Hall	So-and-so Chief Junior
So-and-so Veteran	So-and-so Veteran

The preceding is respectfully offered. If there are any errors, please point them out. Respectfully written.

Respectfully submitted by So-and-so Supervisor of Trainees on the third day of the fourth lunar month in such-and-such an era.

6. Ajnyata Kaundinya was Shakyamuni Buddha's first disciple.

This is how it should be written. We write it on white paper. We write it in the standard, non-cursive style. We do not use the cursive grass style or the seal style. To hang a board, attach a cord about the width of two rice grains to the top of the board from which to hang it, just like we do with a rattan blind or a vertical tablet. It is taken down on the fifth day of the fourth lunar month after the bell is rung at the end of the day's practice.

On the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the community celebrates the birth of the Buddha.

After the midday meal on the thirteenth day of the fourth lunar month, the monks assemble in their own common room where a tea ceremony is performed, followed by a Scripture recitation. The Dormitory Heads perform these tasks. It is their duty to provide hot water and to burn incense. A Dormitory Head sits in the innermost part of the monks' common room, seated to the left of the saintly image of the hall's bodhisattva.*⁷ Monks such as the Chief Juniors and the senior monks do not participate in the Scripture recitation; it is only done by the monks staying in that particular hall.

Towards evening, a senior monk prepares an offering of incense and flowers at the shrine of the Guardian of the Field, placing it before the shrine's tablet.⁸ The monks then assemble before the shrine to perform the ceremonial recitation.



The Method for Doing the Recitation

After all the monks have assembled, the Abbot makes an incense offering, followed by the administrative monks and monastic managers of the monastery, all in the same manner in which incense is offered during the ceremony of bathing the Buddha's image. Next, the Supervisor of Trainees gets up from his place and, going to the front, bows with hands in gasshō,* first to the Abbot and then before the shrine of the Guardian of the Field. Then, while facing north—that is, facing the shrine—he conducts the mindful recitation, saying the following:

Balmy breezes fan over the fields and the emperor of heat rules everywhere. This is a time when, in obedience to the Lord of the Law,

-
7. Such a 'saintly image' (*shōsō*) will most likely be that of the Buddha, Manjushri, Maitreya, or Avalokiteshvara.
 8. The Guardian of the Field Shrine is dedicated to whatever spiritual beings might have already inhabited the grounds upon which the temple was erected. A shrine is built for them and they are respectfully asked to serve as guardians of the temple.

we take not a step from the temple. These are the days for protecting the lives of the Buddha's disciples. We have assembled the whole community in all humility and respectfully visit your sacred shrine. We recite the names of the great Buddhas of myriad virtues and offer the merit therefrom to you, the Guardian Deity of all the monastic halls. We pray for your divine protection that we may be able to accomplish this retreat; out of respect we take refuge in the Holy Sangha. Now let us invoke the names of the Ten Buddhas:

The completely pure Buddha, Vairochana* Buddha,
 Dharma Itself,⁹
 The complete Buddha Who has been rewarded for His
 previous training,
 Shakyamuni Buddha, one of the many Buddhas who
 have appeared in the many worlds,
 Maitreya* Buddha Who will appear in the future,
 All the Buddhas in all directions and in the Three Worlds,
 Holy Manjushri* Bodhisattva;
 The great and wise Samantabhadra* Bodhisattva,
 The great and kind Avalokiteshvara,*
 All the Bodhisattvas and Ancestors,
 The great Prajñāpāramitā.¹⁰

We offer the merits of this recitation to the Guardians of the Field—the dragons and the celestial hosts—and to all who protect and preserve the true Dharma. Bowing, we pray that your spiritual light will aid all of us to manifest the merits of our deeds, and that your pure light will flourish and confer upon us selfless joy. Once again, let us join together to recite:

All the Buddhas in all directions and in the Three Worlds,
 All the Bodhisattvas and Ancestors,
 The great Prajñāpāramitā.

Then the drum sounds and the whole assembly of monks immediately go to their sitting places in the Cloud Hall for a serving of sweetened hot water. The preparation of sweetened water is a responsibility of the officers who oversee the

9. A gong is struck before each name is recited.

10. This is a reference to the Bodhisattva who is the personification of Great Wisdom. She is regarded as the mother who gives birth to all the Buddhas.

Kitchen. The assembly goes to the Cloud Hall and circumambulates the hall in seniority order. Upon arriving at their own place, they each sit facing outwards. One of the senior administrative officers does the prescribed ceremony, that is, he or she makes an incense offering, and so forth. In the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple*, it says, “Originally, the Prior would perform this ceremony, but according to circumstances, the Supervisor of Trainees may act on the Prior’s behalf.”

It is proper that, before the Mindful Recitation, a notice should be copied onto an announcement board and presented to the Chief Junior. The administrative officer, upon seeing the Chief Junior wearing a kesa* and carrying his or her bowing mat, performs the ceremony of twice offering to spread one’s mat and then doing three bows.¹¹ The Chief Junior responds with bows of his or her own, done in the same manner. A novice monk then presents the Chief Junior with a box containing the notice board wrapped in a cloth. The Chief Junior accepts it and then sees the officer off.

The form of the notice is as follows:

This evening, on behalf of the Chief Junior, the Kitchen Hall officers are offering green tea and cakes in the Cloud Hall for the benefit of the community. We humbly inform you of this ceremony to celebrate the opening of the retreat, and respectfully pray that you, the community, will honor us with your illustrious presence.

Respectfully presented on this 14th day of the 4th lunar month in the 3rd year of the Kangen era (May 11, 1244) by So-and-so of the Kitchen Hall.

This is signed with the first name of the presiding officer of the kitchen. After presenting the board to the Chief Junior, the officer asks the novice to post it up in front of the Cloud Hall, to the left of the hall’s front entrance.

On the outside wall to the south of the front entrance there is a lacquered board on which the notice is to be posted. There is a leather envelope to the side of this board. It is aligned with the right edge of the board and fastened with a bamboo peg. This board is made according to a set method. The writing is in small characters about half an inch high; they should not be too big. The message on the front of the envelope is as follows:

11. This ceremony entails a monk’s beginning to spread his or her bowing mat in preparation for doing three bows, but each time they are signaled with a gesture by the monk who is being honored that such formal bowing is unnecessary, whereupon the monk ends up by simply doing three standing bows without spreading his or her mat.

An invitation to the Chief Junior, along with all the other monks of the community, enclosed with respect from the monks of the Kitchen Hall.

After the ceremony of green tea and cakes, the board is taken down.

Before breakfast on the fifteenth day, the temple officers and senior monks, as well as the Abbot's disciples and fellow monks, first enter the Abbot's quarters to pay their respects. But if, on the previous day, the Abbot had excused them from performing this courtesy, they should not visit the Abbot's quarters at all. 'Being excused from performing this courtesy' means that the Abbot has had someone paste up a notice board on which he has written a verse or some words of Teaching. This is posted either on the east side of the entrance to his quarters or in front of the Cloud Hall.

After breakfast on the fifteenth, the Supervisor of Trainees hangs on the east wall that is in front of the Meditation Hall a single *kairō* board that he had prepared in advance. He hangs it above the front hall, that is, between the pillars to the south of the front entrance. In the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple*, it says that the senior monk in charge of the Meditation Hall puts up a *kairō* board and makes an alms offering of incense and flowers. (He puts this board up in front of the Meditation Hall.) After the midday meal on the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, a board announcing a Mindful Recitation ceremony is hung in front of the Meditation Hall.¹² Similar boards are also hung up outside other temple buildings.

Also on the fifteenth day, after the Abbot has given his Dharma talk, he comes down from the Dharma seat and stands before its steps. He then steps onto the north corner of the bowing seat and stands facing south.¹³ A temple officer approaches him and performs the ceremony of twice offering to spread one's mat and then doing three bows. After the first offering, he says the following:

On this occasion of our being sequestered during the summer retreat, we are able to serve you with a towel and water jug. We pray that, due solely to the strength of your Dharma, O Venerable Monk, we shall meet with no impediments.

12. The Mindful Recitation ceremony consists primarily of the recitation of the Names of the Ten Buddhas.

13. The bowing seat (*haiseki*) is a bowing mat that lies in front of the altar. During ceremonies, it is the customary place where a celebrant stands or spreads his bowing mat to do his prostrations.

As his next offering, he expresses the compliments of the season by wishing for the cold weather to warm and then does three informal bows.¹⁴ Once he has finished paying the compliments of the season and has done his three bows, he picks up his mat and continues, saying the following:

How fortunate we are that the early summer is finally warming up. Reflecting upon this period when our Dharma Lord has opened this summer retreat, I am humbled by the thought that our gratitude is not equal to the thousand blessings that you, our Venerable Monk who is the Head of our Hall, bestow upon us lowly trainees.

After this, the temple officer responds by placing his mat on the ground and then doing three more informal bows. Saying nothing, the Abbot and all others respond with three informal bows.

The Abbot then responds, as follows:

It is likewise my great good fortune to be able to carry out a summer retreat here with all of you. And I earnestly desire that you, So-and-so the Chief Junior, and you, So-and-so the Prior, along with all you others, will assist me, through the strength of your Teaching, to go beyond all impediments.

The Chief Junior, along with the whole community, then follows the same procedure of making three informal bows. At this time, the Chief Junior, along with the whole community, including the officers, all face north and bow. Only the Abbot faces south, standing in front of the stairs to his Dharma seat. The Abbot then spreads his bowing mat upon the bowing seat.

Next, the Chief Junior and the rest of the assembly perform the ceremony of twice offering to spread their mat and then doing three bows before the Abbot. At this time, the Master's disciples, his attendants, his Dharma relatives,¹⁵ and the novices remain standing to one side; they should not blindly follow the rest of the assembly in paying their personal respects. 'To remain standing to one side' means 'to stand along the eastern wall of the Dharma Hall'. If the screened-off area for donors is at the east wall, then the aforesaid monks should stand near the Dharma drum or along the western wall.

14. The most common style of doing informal bows is by placing one's folded bowing mat on the ground and doing a prostration with one's forehead touching one's mat.

15. One's Dharma relatives—Dharma brothers and sisters—are monks who share the same Master as oneself.

When the assembly has finished their prostrations, they return to the temple kitchen led by the administrative officers, who stand at the right side.¹⁶ Next, the Chief Junior leads the rest of the assembled monks to the kitchen to pay their respects to the Kitchen Officers, that is, they do three informal bows to them. At this same time in the Dharma Hall, the Abbot's disciples, his assistants, his Dharma relatives, and the novices do their prostrations to him. His Dharma relatives should do the ceremony of twice offering to spread one's mat and then doing three bows, with the Abbot returning these bows. The Abbot's disciples and his assistants each do nine prostrations; the Abbot does not return these bows. The novices do either nine or twelve prostrations, which the Abbot receives whilst just holding his hands in *gasshō*.

Next, the Chief Junior goes in front of the Monks' Hall and, to the right of the entrance, on a level with the southern end of the administrative officers' meditation seats—that is, in front of the Cloud Hall and facing south—stands before the monks. The assembled monks face north and do three informal bows while turned towards the Chief Junior. The Chief Junior then leads the assembled monks into the Monks' Hall. In order of monastic seniority, the monks circumambulate the hall and stand before their own place. The administrative officers enter the hall and do three bows, spreading their mats before the main image in the hall. Next, they do three informal bows to the assembly, to which the assembled monks bow in response. The six administrative officers then do one circumambulation of the hall and, according to rank, stand by their place, their hands in *shashu*.*

The Abbot enters the hall, offers incense before the main image, does three full prostrations, and then rises. During this time, his disciples stand out of the way, behind the main image, whereas his Dharma relatives follow the other monks. Next, the Abbot does three informal bows to the Chief Junior. That is, the Abbot remains standing in his place and does these bows while facing west. The Chief Junior, along with the community, bows in response, as before.

The Abbot then circumambulates the hall and departs. The Chief Junior, leaving by the south side of the front entrance, sees the Abbot off. After the Abbot has departed, all the monks, from the Chief Junior down, spread their bowing mats and perform three full bows, facing outwards from their sitting place, and then recite in unison, as follows:

16. The administrative officers are the Chief Supervisory Officer, the Prior, the Treasurer, the Supervisor of Trainees, the Chief Cook, and the Grounds Maintenance Officer.

How fortunate we are to be doing this retreat together. I fear lest my acts of body, speech, and mind should not prove to be good, and I pray that I will show benevolence and compassion towards all.

The prostrations following this are done thrice with one's bowing mat spread out fully. Having completed this, the Chief Junior, the Clerical Officer, the Chief Librarian, and the other department heads each return to their quarters. Those who are staying in the monks' common quarters,¹⁷ from the Head of the Quarters on down, all do three informal bows to each other, reciting the same verse that was recited in the Main Hall.

After this, the Abbot makes his rounds of the various offices, beginning with the Kitchen Hall. The monks follow after the Abbot in sequence, accompanying him to his quarters and then withdrawing. That is to say, the Abbot goes first to the Kitchen Hall. Once he has paid his respects to the Kitchen Officers and departs, he continues making his rounds, with the Kitchen Officers following behind him. Following after the Kitchen Officers are those who are staying in or around the Eastern Quarters. At this time, the Abbot does not enter the Infirmary, but turns west from the Eastern Quarters, passing by the Temple Gate and continuing on his rounds of the various quarters. Those who are residing near the Temple Gate join the procession. From the south, the Abbot goes around to visit the quarters on the west side. At this time, while he is traversing the west side, he is facing north. By this time, the elderly retired monks, retired officers, retired assistant officers, those over one hundred years old, and veteran monks who live in private quarters as well as the monk in charge of the toilets, among others, will have joined the procession. The Supervisor of Trainees and the Chief Junior, among others, will follow behind them. Following them are the monks from the common quarters. The quarters are circumambulated according to the convenience of their location. This is what we call "the monks' escort".

Thence, the Abbot goes up the western stairs to his quarters and then, positioning himself directly in front of his quarters, he faces south with hands in shashu. The whole assembly, from the administrative officers on down, face north and make monjin* to the Abbot. This monjin should be especially deep. The Abbot makes monjin in response. The assembly then withdraws.

My late Master did not lead the assembly to his quarters; when he reached the Dharma Hall, he stood before the stairs of the hall, facing south with hands in shashu. The assembly made monjin and then retired. This was the traditional ceremony from ancient times. After this, the monks in the assembly would pay

17. As distinct from the resident monks who stay in the Meditation Hall.

their respects to each other, as they pleased. They paid their respects by doing bows to each other. For instance, those from the same home district—even dozens of them—would exchange prostrations, some in the Hall of Illumination and others in some convenient place in the corridors,¹⁸ and they would offer to each other the congratulatory verse on attending the retreat together. At the same time, there are some whose words resemble those spoken formally in the Main Hall, and there are also personal ways some have of expressing their feelings. And there are also Masters who have brought their disciples. In that case, the disciples will invariably offer their bows, doing nine full prostrations. Those who are Dharma relatives of the Abbot do the ceremony of two offerings and three bows or do three full prostrations. The prostrations of any Dharma relative of anyone in the assembly should be the same. And there will be prostrations to the younger and elder brothers of one's Master. Those who sit and sleep next to each other in the Meditation Hall all do prostrations to each other, as well as to those who are mutually acquainted or have done a retreat together in the past. Those who are veteran monks living in private quarters, as well as the Chief Supervisory Officer, the Prior, the Supervisor of Trainees, the Chief Cook, the Grounds Maintenance Officer, the monks of the Western Hall, and the Teacher of the Female Trainees should all visit each other's quarters or visit each other's sitting place in the Meditation Hall and do their bows and greetings. When we go to visit someone and find the entryway to their quarters too crowded to enter, we write out a card and attach it beside their entrance. The card is written on white paper an inch or so high and about two inches wide. The style of writing is as follows:

So'un, Eshō, and others.
 Congratulations, with three bows!
 or
 So-and-so.
 Salutations and congratulations!
 or
 So-and-so of Such-and-such Hall.
 Congratulations, with three bows!
 or
 So-and-so bows.
 Congratulations!
 or

18. The Hall of Illumination is a small room next to the Monks' Hall, which is used by the Chief Junior to give Dharma talks to novice monks when the Abbot is unable to perform that duty.

So-and-so

Humbly offering prostrations.

The styles of writing are many, but these give the general idea. So, a large number of these cards can be seen beside entrances. They are not attached to the left of an entrance, but to the right of it. These cards are taken down after the midday meal by the person in charge of the quarters. On that day the rattan blinds are raised on the entryways of all halls and quarters.

There is a custom that the Head of a Temple, his or her administrative officers, and the Chief Junior, in succession, offer tea and cakes. However, this can be abridged, or dispensed with, for those on a remote island or deep in the mountains, as they simply do what is within their means. Retired senior monks, as well as monks who are serving as temporary Chief Juniors for the duration of the retreat, offer tea and cakes in their quarters, especially for the various temple officers.

Having thus opened the summer retreat, we do our utmost in practicing the Way. You may well have been pursuing the Way and keeping to the Precepts, but if you have not done a summer retreat, you are not an offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors, much less a Buddha or Ancestor. By virtue of a summer retreat, Jetavana Park and the Divine Vulture Peak will fully manifest themselves for you. The training ground of a summer retreat is the realm of the Mind seal* of the Buddhas and Ancestors and is the dwelling place of all Buddhas.



The Closing of the Summer Retreat

As it says in the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple*, “On the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month, the serving of tea and cakes and the reciting of Scriptures in the Common Room is once more the responsibility of the one who is the head of the Common Room for that month.”

The mindful recitation of the names of the Buddhas on the evening of the fourteenth, as well as the attending of a Dharma talk, the paying of one’s respects, the circumambulating of the quarters, and the serving of tea and cakes, are all, one after the other, the same as at the opening of the retreat. Only the wording of notices is different. The notice for the kitchen staff’s offering of tea reads as follows:

The kitchen staff will offer tea and cakes in the Cloud Hall this evening, especially for the benefit of the Chief Junior and the community. We will perform a small closing ceremony. We humbly

pray that you will be so kind as to join in. Spoken in respect, So-and-so, the monks of the Kitchen Hall.

The words for the mindful recitation before the Shrine of the Guardian of the Field are as follows:

Golden breezes fan over the fields and the emperor of frost rules everywhere. The time is as that when the Buddha, Lord of Enlightenment, commenced the monks' retreat. It is the day of our being a whole year older in the Dharma. Three months have passed without disaster and the whole Community is at ease. We recite the names of the great Buddhas of myriad virtues as we humbly report to you, the Guardian Deity of all the monastery halls, out of respect for you. We take refuge in the Holy Sangha as we all recite Their names.

The mindful recitation from here on is the same as at the opening of the summer retreat.

After the formal talk in the Dharma Hall, the administration officers, along with the other officers, recite the following in unison:

Humbly, we rejoice that the Dharma year has been fulfilled without difficulties. This is undoubtedly due to the protective strength of the Master's Dharma. We cannot fully express our deep gratitude.

The Abbot then responds with these words:

Now that the Dharma year has been fulfilled, we all offer our thanks to So-and-so Chief Junior and to So-and-so Prior, among others, for sharing with us the strength of their Dharma. I cannot fully express my deep gratitude.

The Chief Junior and staff of the Hall, as well as the Dormitory Heads of the various quarters and their staff, say the following:

During the ninety days of the summer retreat, we have relied upon each other, but I fear lest my acts of body, speech, and mind have not proved to be good, and I humbly pray that you will show benevolence and compassion towards me.

The administrative officers, along with the other officers of the temple, then make the following announcement:

We ask those brothers and sisters who are planning to travel on to remain with us for tea before departing. This, of course, does not apply to those who have some pressing engagement.



This ceremony of the ninety-day summer retreat is fundamental to us since time immemorial—from before to after the Age of the Lords of Awe-inspiring Voices. The Buddhas and Ancestors have placed great emphasis on just this ceremony alone. And the non-Buddhists and the demon hordes have yet to corrupt this one ceremony. Not a single one who is an offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors within the three nations of India, China, and Japan has ever failed to perform it, but those outside the Way have never studied it. Because of the long-cherished desire of the Buddhas and Ancestors for the One Great Matter, from the morning of Their entering the Way until the evening of Their entering nirvana, what They proclaim is simply the underlying principle of the summer retreat. Even though there are differences among the five monastic families in India, they are alike in observing the ninety-day summer retreat, inexorably practicing the Way of enlightenment. Of the nine monastic families in China, not even one has ever violated the rule of the summer retreat. Those who have never done a ninety-day summer retreat should never be called a monk who is a disciple of the Buddha. This means that we should not only do this practice during the bodhisattva stages for awakening, but we should also continue the practice of a summer retreat after having awakened. The Great Awakened, World-honored One performed the practice of a summer retreat throughout His life, not missing a single summer. Keep in mind that it was what the Buddha realized as the ultimate fruition.

At the same time, although you may laugh at one who has not done a ninety-day summer retreat and yet calls himself an offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors, such a foolish person is not even worth a laugh. Do not listen to the words of that bunch who talk like that. Do not get into discussions with such people. Do not sit with them. Do not even walk the same path with them. For, in the Buddha Dharma, we handle such wicked people by using the method of Brahma's rod of silence.

You should simply understand the ninety-day summer retreat as the Buddhas and Ancestors have done, and rely upon it, and preserve it. It has been genuinely Transmitted from the Seven Buddhas* down to Makakashō. It was genuinely Transmitted by Dharma heir after Dharma heir through the twenty-eight Indian Ancestors. When the Twenty-eighth Ancestor came to China, he genuinely Transmitted It to our Great Ancestor, the Second Chinese Ancestor, Great Master Eka. From the Second Ancestor, It was genuinely Transmitted by Dharma heir after Dharma heir and has been genuinely Transmitted down to this very day. When I went to China, I directly received the genuine Transmission from within the assembly of an Ancestor of the Buddha, and I am doing the genuine Transmission

in Japan. Now that you are within an assembly where the genuine Transmission exists and have done the ninety-day summer retreat within that assembly, you have already had the Way of the summer retreat genuinely Transmitted to you. Because I am of the genuine Transmission and you are doing the summer retreat while residing here together with me, it will be a true summer retreat. Because the summer retreat has been conferred face-to-face to Dharma heir after Dharma heir, starting with the summer retreats held when the Buddha was in the world, the countenance of both a Buddha and an Ancestor has been genuinely Transmitted to you right before your very eyes, and the body and mind of the Buddhas and Ancestors has personally awakened you to the promise of full enlightenment. This is why it is said that to encounter the summer retreat is to encounter Buddha, to experience the summer retreat is to experience Buddha, to practice the retreat is to practice Buddha, to hear the retreat is to hear Buddha, and to model oneself after the retreat is to learn Buddha.

In sum, it is the Teaching that all the Buddhas and Ancestors never went counter to the summer retreat, or beyond it. Thus, lordly humans, lordly Shakras, lordly Brahmas, and so on, should do the summer retreat and become monastics, even if it is only for a single summer, for that would be their encountering Buddha. Ordinary people, persons in lofty positions, and erudite ‘dragons’ should do the summer retreat and become monastics—be they male or female—even if only for a single period of ninety days, for this would be their encountering Buddha. To join the community of an Ancestor of the Buddha and do a ninety-day summer retreat is to encounter Buddha forthwith. It is your good fortune that, before the dewdrop of your life has fallen, you have already done one summer’s retreat, be it as an ordinary lay person or as someone in a lofty position, so that you are now someone who has exchanged your skin and flesh, bones and marrow for the Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Because the Buddhas and Ancestors come and do the retreat through us, each person’s practice of the retreat is the retreat’s practicing each of us. Because this is the way things are, those who have done the retreat are described simply as ‘a thousand Buddhas and myriad Ancestors’. If you were to ask why, the reason is because the retreat is the Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow, conscious mind and physical body of those who are Ancestors of Buddha. It is the Crown of their head and their Eye, it is their Fist and their Nose, it is their Buddha Nature fully perfected, it is their *hossu** and traveling staff,* it is their lacquered, ceremonial bamboo sword and their meditation cushion. A summer retreat is not something brought forth as newly made. At the same time, it is not something that is merely making use of something old.



The World-honored One once addressed the Bodhisattva Whose Enlightenment is Fully Perfected, along with the great assembly and all sentient beings, saying, “When the summer begins and you go into retreat for the three months of the rainy season, you should let the immaculate bodhisattvas stop and abide with you in your sanctuary. In your hearts, you should stay clear of those who merely come to listen but do not train, because the community of disciples is not a sometimes thing. Upon arriving for the opening day of the summer retreat, you should say something like the following before the Buddha or His image, ‘I, the monk or lay person So-and-so, being seated in the vehicle of bodhisattvahood, will cultivate tranquility and freedom from my defiling passions so that I too may enter the Truth of Immaculacy and abide therein. I take the great Fully Perfected Enlightenment to be my true monastery and sanctuary, with my body and mind, equally, both dwelling peacefully within the spiritual knowledge of Buddha Nature. Because the True Nature of nirvana is without ties or attachments to anything, I now pray respectfully that I may not rely solely on listening to the voicing of the Dharma, but may spend this three-month retreat with the Tathagatas of all the ten quarters and with the great bodhisattvas. Also, for the sake of the Great Cause for which we cultivate the supreme and wondrous awakening of a bodhisattva, I will not let myself be distracted from the purpose of the retreat through entanglements with my fellow trainees.’ O My fine disciples, I call this the dwelling at ease which a bodhisattva displays during a summer retreat.”

Thus, whenever the monks and laity arrive for the three months of the retreat, they put into practice the Important Matter of the supreme and wondrous enlightenment of the bodhisattvas. Keep in mind that male and female lay trainees can also do the retreat. The place of this retreat is great, fully perfected enlightenment. This being so, Jetavana Park and the Divine Vulture Peak are both temples of the Tathagata’s great fully perfected enlightenment. You should carefully listen to, and take to heart, the World-honored One’s teaching that the Tathagatas and great bodhisattvas in all ten quarters did the practice and training of the three months’ summer retreat.



Once when the World-honored One was doing the ninety-day summer retreat somewhere, on the final day, when the ceremony of

public repentance was held,¹⁹ Manjushri suddenly appeared in the assembly, whereupon Makakashō asked him, “Where did you do your retreat this summer?” Manjushri replied, “This summer I did the retreat in three other places.” At this, Makakashō assembled the community, intending to have Manjushri expelled by striking the wooden fish.²⁰ But just as he had raised the hammer to strike the wooden fish, he suddenly saw innumerable Buddhist temples appearing. He could see that there was a Buddha with a Manjushri at each place and a Makakashō at each place, his hand raising a hammer to expel Manjushri, whereupon the World-honored One spoke to Makakashō, saying, “Which Manjushri do you wish to expel now?” Makakashō was immediately dumbfounded.²¹

Meditation Master Engo, in commenting on this account, once said the following:

If a bell is not struck, it does not ring; if a drum is not struck, it does not resound. Makakashō had already grasped the essential function of a summer retreat; Manjushri had rid himself of all duality by means of his doing his meditation throughout the ten quarters. This very moment in the story is an excellent one, for it expounds the functioning of the Buddha’s Teaching. How regrettable to have missed such a move! As our dear Master Shakyamuni was about to say, ‘Which of the Manjushris do you wish to expel now?’ just imagine, what if Makakashō, right off, had given the fish a good whack! What mass annihilation would he have then created?

Meditation Master Engo added a verse to this commentary of his:

*A great elephant does not play about in the narrow path
that a rabbit makes,
And what could a little bird know of a great wild swan?*²²

-
19. This is the ceremony where the participants ask their fellow trainees to have compassion on them for their poor training during the retreat.
 20. The wooden fish is a wooden gong in the shape of a fish. It traditionally hangs just outside the Meditation Hall. Regulations for monks stipulate that a monastic must do the summer retreat in only one place. Breaking this regulation is considered a serious enough infraction to entail expulsion from the monastic Sangha.
 21. Quoted from the *Great Far-reaching Scripture That is a Veritable Treasure Chest*.
 22. ‘A great elephant’ is an allusion to Manjushri. ‘A great wild swan’ is a reference to Makakashō.

*It was just as if Makakashō had created a new way of
putting the Matter whilst staying within the rules
and regulations;*

*It was just as if Manjushri had grabbed a flying arrow
within his teeth, having already broken the target.*

The whole universe is one with Manjushri;

The whole universe is one with Makakashō.

Face-to-face, each is solemn in his authority.

*Makakashō raised his hammer, but in which place will he
punish Manjushri?*

Manjushri did It with one fine prick of his needle;

Makakashō's ascetic practices rid him of all hindrances.

So, the World-honored One's doing the summer retreat in one place is equivalent to Manjushri's doing it in three places, and neither is not doing the summer retreat. If someone is not doing the retreat, then such a one is not a Buddha or a bodhisattva. There is no account of any offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors not doing a summer retreat. You should realize that those who do a summer retreat are offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Doing a summer retreat is the body and mind of the Buddhas and Ancestors. It is the Eye of the Buddhas and Ancestors, the very life of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Those who have not done a summer retreat are not the offspring of the Buddhas and Ancestors: they are neither a Buddha nor an Ancestor. We now have Buddhas and bodhisattvas, be They as humble as clay and wood, as precious as silk and gold, or as wondrous as the seven precious jewels.* All of Them have performed the retreat of sitting in meditation through the three months of the summer. This is the ancient custom of abiding within, and maintaining, the Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In short, those who reside within the house of the Buddhas and Ancestors must, by all means, do the practice of sitting in retreat for the three months of a summer.

Delivered to the assembly at Daibutsu-ji Temple in Echizen Province, on the thirteenth day of the sixth month, during the summer retreat in the third year of the Kangen era (July 8, 1245).

Copied by me in the same province at Shinzenkō-ji Temple in Nakahama on the twentieth day of the fifth month, during the summer retreat in the second year of the Kōan era (June 30, 1278).