

## On the Spiritual Merits of Leaving Home Life Behind

(*Shukke Kudoku*)

**Translator’s Introduction:** ‘Leaving home life behind’ has a double meaning. In one sense, it refers to someone who becomes a monk upon taking the monastic Precepts. In another sense, it refers to the renouncing of the mundane values of worldly society, and as such, would apply not only to monks but also to those who have accepted the lay Precepts while remaining in lay life. Which meaning Dōgen intends seems to shift back and forth, and context does not always make clear whether he is referring to the literal or figurative meaning, or both simultaneously. And there is a third aspect to leaving home life behind which Dōgen brings up later in relation to a quotation from Rinzai.

While Dōgen insists most emphatically throughout this discourse that leaving home life behind is a prerequisite for realizing full Buddhahood, there is no place where he openly rejects being involved with sincere, practicing lay Buddhists. Indeed, in Dōgen’s Zen Buddhist tradition, when lay persons formally take all ten Great Precepts, there is a symbolic shaving of the head, and they are given a wagesa, which is a token kesa, along with a certificate containing the bloodline of the Buddhas and Ancestors from Shakyamuni Buddha down to the present ordinand.

The bodhisattva\* Nāgārjuna once said the following:

Someone once asked me, “If we are able to be reborn in some celestial world, realize the Way of bodhisattvas, and realize nirvana by just keeping to the lay Precepts, of what use are the Precepts that a monastic takes?”<sup>1</sup>

In reply, I said, “Both lay people and monastics can reach the Other Shore, but even so, each way has its difficult and its easy aspects. Those in lay life have all manner of duties and occupations. If they should wish to concentrate on pursuing wholeheartedly the Path to full awakening, then their family duties will fall by the wayside, and if they should wholeheartedly fulfill the responsibilities of family life, then matters that pertain to pursuit of the Way will be abandoned. They would need to be able to practice the Dharma without selecting

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\* See *Glossary*.

1. The laity in the Theravadin tradition customarily take five Precepts. In the Mahayana tradition, the laity take those five plus five more. Monastics in both traditions take Precepts that number in the hundreds.

one way and abandoning the other. And this is what I would describe as ‘taking on what is difficult’. In leaving lay life behind, we sever ourselves from pursuing worldly profits and from indulging in dislikes and wrangling, as we devote ourselves wholeheartedly to practicing the Way, which is what I would describe as ‘taking on what is easy’. Also, there is the noise and bustle of a home, with its many affairs and many duties, all of which are the roots of entanglements and the storehouse of wrongdoings. This is what is described as ‘taking on what is extremely difficult’. When we leave home, we are, for instance, like someone who has departed to reside somewhere where the lands are empty and there is no one else about. In that way, our heart is as one, being beyond intentions and beyond fear. Our expectations have already been removed. And our wayward ways have also departed. It is like what is being expressed in the following poem:

*I sit at ease within the forest grove.  
Tranquilly, my human failings are overthrown.  
Through being impartial, I attain a singleness of mind,  
The pleasure of which surpasses the pleasures of celestial  
worlds.*

*Others may seek to gain wealth and honor,  
Or fineries of dress or comfortable abodes,  
But such pleasures lack true peace,  
Since for one in pursuit of gains, there is no satiety.*

*Adorned in my patched robe, I go forth begging my food,  
Whether moving or standing still, I am always at one within  
my heart.*

*With my very own Eye of wise discernment,  
I fathom the True Nature of all thoughts and things.*

*Within the sundry gates to the Dharma,  
I enter, only to see that all are just alike,  
So this Heart that understands the Why of things is tranquil,  
For there is nothing that can surpass It within the triple  
world.<sup>2</sup>*

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2. The triple world consists of the worlds of desire, form, and beyond form.

“Thus, by this poem we know that leaving home life behind, living by the Precepts, and doing the practice as a monk is ‘taking on what is extremely easy’.

“Further, leaving home life behind and practicing the Precepts gain for us good moral rules and regulations beyond measure, all of which we possess to the full. For this reason, a white-robed one like you should leave home life behind and accept the full Precepts.<sup>3</sup>

“Further, within the Buddha Dharma the Teaching of leaving home life behind is the most difficult to practice. The young Brahman Jambukadaka once asked Shariputra, ‘Within the Buddha Dharma what is the most difficult thing to do?’

“Shariputra responded, ‘Leaving home life behind is the most difficult to achieve.’

“The Brahman then asked, ‘What are the difficulties in leaving home life behind?’

“Shariputra replied, ‘In leaving home life behind, contentment is the most difficult to achieve.’

“The Brahman then asked, ‘When one has attained contentment, what then is the most difficult to attain?’

“Shariputra responded, ‘Putting good ways into practice is what is difficult. For this reason, by all means you should leave home life behind.’

“Further, when someone leaves home life behind, the Lord of Demons, taken aback, sorrowfully says, ‘This person has scarcely any entanglements or delusions left. Such a one will certainly realize nirvana and enter the ranks of the Sangha Treasure.’

“And also, it says the following in the story concerning the female monastic Utpalavarna:

“If people who have left home life behind to be within the Buddha Dharma break the Precepts and lapse into impure ways, once they have brought their impure ways to an end and obtained liberation from them, they will be like the female monk Utpalavarna.

“While the Buddha was in the world, this female monk attained the six spiritual abilities and realized arhathood.\* She once entered the house of a member of the nobility and, continually extolling the Dharma of leaving home life behind, she admonished the wives and

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3. ‘A white-robed one’ is a common reference to a lay person.

daughters of the noble, saying, ‘My sisters, you should leave home life behind and become monastics.’

“The noblewomen all replied, ‘We are young and our bodies are comely; for us to keep to the Precepts would indeed be hard, and we would surely break them on occasion.’

“The monk replied, ‘If you break the Precepts, then you break them. Just leave lay life behind!’

“They then asked her, ‘If we break the Precepts, then we shall certainly fall into some hellish state, so why would you have us break them?’

“She replied, ‘If you fall into some hell, then you fall into some hell.’

“All the women broke out in laughter and said, ‘In a hell we will receive the consequences of our defiling deeds, so why would you have us fall into such a state?’

“The monk replied, ‘In recalling my own past lives, there was a time when I had become a prostitute. I dressed up in all sorts of clothes and told the age-old licentious stories. One day, I dressed up as a female monk, just as a joke. As a direct result of this, I became a female monk in Kashō Buddha’s time. After a while, I took to depending on my aristocratic demeanor and gave rise to pride and arrogance, thereby breaking monastic prohibitions as well as Precepts. Because of the defilement from breaking monastic prohibitions and Precepts, I fell into a hellish state where I suffered the consequences of my various defiling acts. After I had suffered these consequences, I met Shakyamuni Buddha and left home life behind, ultimately obtaining the six spiritual abilities and realizing arhathood. Due to this, I have come to know that if we leave home life behind and take the monastic Precepts, even though we later break Precepts, we will realize arhathood because of the karmic\* effect of the Precepts. If I had merely done bad things, without having received any effects from the Precepts, I would not have realized the Way. In times long past, I had fallen into hellish states generation after generation, getting out of some hell only to become a wicked person. When that wicked person died, again a hell was entered and nothing whatever had been gained. Now because of this, I have come to realize that if someone leaves home to be a monastic and takes the Precepts, even though that person breaks the Precepts, because of having taken them, that person will obtain the fruits of the Way.’

“Also, once when the Buddha was at Jetavana Park, an intoxicated Brahman came to where the Buddha was and asked to become a monk. The Buddha requested that some of his monks shave the Brahman’s head and clothe him in a kesa.\* After the effects of the liquor wore off, the Brahman was astonished and frightened upon seeing that his bodily form had changed into that of a Buddhist monk, whereupon he forthwith ran away. The monks respectfully asked the Buddha why He had allowed the drunken Brahman to become a monk only to run back home. The Buddha answered, ‘For eons beyond measure, this Brahman did not have the heart to leave home life behind, but now, while under the influence, he gave rise to a bit of courage. Due to this, he will, later on, leave home life behind.’

“In various stories like these, the benefit from leaving home life behind is described as producing spiritual merit beyond measure. Even though one who is garbed in white may have the five Precepts, such a one does not know what leaving home life behind is like.”

Thus the World-honored One let the intoxicated Brahman hear about leaving home life behind and taking the Precepts, thereby planting the first seeds for realizing the Way. Clearly, you need to know that, from ancient times, human beings who still lack the merits of having left home life behind have not been able to realize the fully awakened state of Buddhahood. Because the Brahman was in his cups, he gave rise to a bit of courage, and by having his head shaved and his taking the Precepts, he became a monk. Though it was not long before he sobered up, the principle that he will preserve the merits of this act and will increase his good roots for realizing the Way is to be found in the World-honored One’s golden words of Truth, for this was the Tathagata’s original wish, which led Him to come forth into the world. All sentient beings—be they of past, present, or future—should clearly trust in this principle and put it into practice. Truly, giving rise to the intention to realize the Way is something that one establishes moment by moment. The merits from this Brahman’s momentarily leaving home life behind are just like this. And what is more, how could the merits of your leaving home life behind and taking the Precepts during your present lifetime be inferior to those of an intoxicated Brahman!

The saintly Wheel-turning Lords\* emerged more than eighty-thousand years ago and ruled over the four continents, having been supplied with the seven royal

treasures.<sup>4</sup> At that time, these four continents were all like Pure Lands. The delight of these Wheel-turning Lords goes beyond words to express. It is said that there were some of these Wheel-turning Lords who ruled over three-thousandfold worlds. Distinctions have been made among those whose Wheel was of gold, silver, copper, or iron. Those with these Wheels ruled over the first, second, third, and fourth continents, respectively. And their whole being was positively free from the ten evils.<sup>5</sup> Though these saintly Wheel-turning Lords enjoyed their delights in abundance, as soon as a single white hair appeared on their head, they would turn their office over to the crown prince and forthwith leave home life behind. They would don a kesa and go off into the mountains or forests to do their spiritual training, so that when they came to the end of their life, they would undoubtedly be reborn in Brahma's Heaven.<sup>6</sup> They would place their white hair in a golden coffer to be stored in the royal palace and passed on to the next Wheel-turning Lord. When the hair of the next Wheel-turning Lord turned white, he would do the same as the previous Lord. The length of a saintly Wheel-turning Lord's life after leaving home life behind far surpasses that of people today. It is said that the life of a Wheel-turning Lord is more than eighty thousand years and his body is endowed with the thirty-two physical marks, which surpass those of people today.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, when such Wheel-turning Lords saw their white hair, they awoke to impermanence and invariably left home life behind to train in the Way in order to fully realize the merit of practicing untainted deeds. Rulers today cannot match the saintly Wheel-turning Lords. If today's rulers were to waste precious time just chasing after their greeds and ultimately failed to leave home life behind them, they might well come to regret it in future ages. And what is more, in small nations in remote lands, there are rulers in name only, for they lack the virtues of a Wheel-turning Lord and are unable to bring their greeds to a halt. But if they were to leave home life behind and practice the Way, many celestial beings would be glad to offer them their protection, dragon spirits would respectfully guard them, and the Eye of Buddhas would joyfully confirm their awakened state.

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4. The seven are the Golden Wheel, wise elephants, swift horses, the divine Pearl, able ministers, women as precious as jewels, and loyal generals.
  5. The ten evils are the ways in which one acts contrary to the ten Mahayana Precepts.
  6. The heaven ruled over by Lord Brahma, the lowest of the four meditational heavens in the world of form, one that is free of sexual desires.
  7. According to ancient Indian traditions, both Buddhas and Wheel-turning Lords were born with the thirty-two marks of a great being.

During her past as a prostitute, Utpalavarnā put on the robe of a female monastic, not with a sincere heart but for the sake of making a joke out of it. More than probably, she was committing a wrong deed by making light of the Dharma, but the power of her having put this robe upon her body brought her face-to-face with the Buddha Dharma in a second generation. The female monastic's robe refers to a kesa. As a result of her having previously donned the kesa as a joke, she met Kashō Buddha in a second lifetime. She left home life behind, took the Precepts, and became a female monastic. As the result of her having broken the Precepts, she fell into a hellish state as the consequence of her misdeeds. But, due to the merits of the kesa not having crumbled away, she ultimately met Shakyamuni Buddha, and upon meeting the Buddha and hearing His Teaching, she gave rise to the intention to devote herself to the training, leaving the triple world far behind her and ultimately becoming a great arhat, one possessed of the six spiritual abilities and the three kinds of spiritual insights. Without doubt, she must have realized the supreme Truth.

Therefore, when you straightaway and in all earnestness commit your innately immaculate heart of faith to realizing supreme enlightenment and accept the kesa in trust, the spiritual merit of this will increase faster than the spiritual merit of that prostitute. And what is more, when you give rise to the heart that seeks enlightenment, leave home life behind, and accept the Precepts, all for the sake of supreme enlightenment, the spiritual merit of this will be beyond measure, for without a human body, it is rare indeed for any being to realize this spiritual merit.

In India and China, there have been many monks and lay people who have been bodhisattvas and Ancestral Masters, but none is the equal of our Ancestral Master Nāgārjuna. Only our Ancestral Master Nāgārjuna has offered us stories like those of the intoxicated Brahman and the prostitute in order to encourage us human beings to leave home life behind and accept the Precepts.



This is what our Ancestral Master Nāgārjuna recorded of the golden speech of the World-honored One:

The World-honored One once said, “In the southern continent of Jambudvīpa,\* there are four kinds of preeminent events: first is encountering a Buddha, second is hearing the Dharma, third is leaving home life behind, and fourth is realizing the Truth.”

You need to clearly recognize that these four kinds of preeminent events surpass anything in the northern continent of Uttarakura or in the celestial abodes.<sup>8</sup> Being drawn along through the power of our long-accumulated good roots, we have now acquired the peerless body of a human being. We are people who can joyfully, and with deepest gratitude, leave home life behind and accept the Precepts. Do not treat this preeminently good body lightly and leave our dew-like life to the mercy of the winds of impermanence. By piling up life after life of leaving home life behind, we will be amassing merit and accumulating virtue.



The World-honored One once said, “The karmic recompense that results from having left home life behind in order to be within the Buddha Dharma is mind-boggling. Even if someone were to erect a seven-jeweled stupa\* that was high enough to reach the thirty-third heavenly world, the merit gained from such a deed would not equal that from leaving home life behind. And why is this so? Because a seven-jeweled stupa can be demolished by foolish people acting from their greed and wickedness, but there is nothing that can destroy the merits of leaving home life behind. Thus, if someone instructs both men and women about leaving home life behind, and if they then set their servants free to do so, or if they let the populace at large do so, or if they themselves leave home life behind and enter the Way, the merits of that are immeasurable.”

The World-honored One clearly knew the amount of merit involved, and so He evaluated it in this manner. Shrīvaddhi, whose name means ‘he whose wealth is ever increasing’, on hearing this Teaching of the Buddha, felt compelled to leave home life behind and take the Precepts, even though he had already reached the advanced age of a hundred and twenty years.<sup>9</sup> He sat in the rear of the assembly alongside the young novices, polishing his training. He ultimately became a great arhat.

Keep in mind that having a human body in this lifetime is something temporary, comprised as it is of the four elements\* and the five skandhas.\* It is

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8. Uttarakura is the realm of those who are in a state of continual, blissful ignorance.

9. When Shrīvaddhi asked if he could become a monk, Shariputra told him he was now too old, but the Buddha intervened and ordained him.

always subject to the eight forms of pain.<sup>10</sup> And what is more, its arising and vanishing goes on uninterruptedly moment by moment. It is said that during one click of our fingers, sixty-five of these moments of time arise and disappear, but we are in the dark about this, due to our lack of awareness. Within the period of a single day and night, there are over sixty-four hundred million of these moments during which our five skandhas arise and disappear, but we are unaware of this. How sad that even as we arise and vanish, we ourselves are unaware of it! This measure of the arising and vanishing of a moment has been known only by the World-honored Buddha and Shariputra. Not even the saintly have known it. In accord with this principle of the appearance and disappearance of each moment, human beings fashion their good or wicked deeds, and give rise to their intention to realize both Buddhahood and the Way. Ours is a body that appears and disappears in this manner, so even though we treasure it, it does not remain unchanging. Since time immemorial, there has never been a single person who, through prizing the body, has kept it from changing. In this sense, this human body does not belong to us. But if we make use of it to turn ourselves around so that we may leave home life behind and accept the Precepts, then we may realize the supreme, fully perfected enlightenment of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds, as well as the fruits of Buddhahood, which are as indestructible as a diamond. What sage person would not be delighted to seek for them?

According to the *Lotus Scripture*, the eight disciples of the Buddha Whose Guiding Light Is as Luminous as the Sun and Moon all renounced their previous lordly positions in which they held dominion over the four earthly continents and left home life behind. And the sixteen disciples of the Buddha Whose Universal Wisdom Is Unsurpassed had, all together, left home life behind as well. Then, when the Buddha of Universal Wisdom entered eternal meditation, they gave voice to the *Lotus Scripture* for the sake of His assembly and have now become Tathagatas in the ten quarters. Eighty trillion people under the governance of their paternal lord, who was a saintly Wheel-turning Lord, upon seeing the sixteen princes leave home life behind, also sought to leave home life behind, whereupon the Wheel-turning Lord forthwith granted it. And the two sons of His Majesty the Lord of Wondrous Splendor, along with their father and mother, all left home life behind. Keep in mind that whenever great saintly ones have appeared in the world, they have invariably viewed leaving home life behind to be what the True Teaching is. You must not go around saying that these people left home life behind because

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10. The eight are being born, aging, sickening, dying, being separated from loved ones, having to associate with those one dislikes, chasing after what is unobtainable, and suffering the ills that afflict the five skandhas.

they were confused; if you realize that they left home life behind out of wisdom, you should consider doing the same. During the time of Shakyamuni, our Buddha of the present, His son Rahula and His cousin Ananda, among others, left home life behind, along with a thousand of the Buddha's Shakya clan on one occasion and twenty thousand on another. We should consider them to be excellent examples. From the time when His first five monks left home until the time when Subhadra, at the end of the Buddha's life, also did so, all those who were converted to the Buddha's Teaching left behind their worldly ways. You need to know that this is what we call 'immeasurable merit'.

Thus, if worldly people have compassion for their offspring, they should forthwith let them leave home life behind. If they have compassion for their parents, they should let them leave home life behind as well. For this reason, there is a poem which says the following:

*If there were no past ages,  
There could not have been Buddhas in the past.  
If there were no Buddhas in the past,  
There could be no leaving home to accept the full  
Precepts.*

This poem is one for all Buddhas and Tathagatas. It annihilates the non-Buddhist assertion that there were no past ages. Thus, you should know that leaving home to accept the full Precepts is the Teaching of the Buddhas of the past. Fortunately, we are living in a time when leaving home life behind and accepting the full Precepts is the wondrous Teaching of the Buddhas; were we to vainly fail to leave home and accept the Precepts, it would be difficult indeed to fathom what the obstacle is. By relying upon this most modest physical existence of ours, we may well realize the most exalted merit, for it can be the greatest merit within Jambudvīpa and its three worlds of desire, form, and beyond form. While this human body in Jambudvīpa has not yet disappeared, we should, by all means, leave home life behind and accept the Precepts.



An ancient holy one—Master Bashumitsu—once said:

Even though someone who has left home life behind may act counter to the Precepts, nevertheless, that person surpasses one who has kept to the Precepts while remaining in lay life. Thus, it is difficult to repay the benevolence of one who humbly gives voice to the Scriptures that encourage people to leave home life behind. Further, the one who encourages others to leave home life behind is simply

someone who is encouraging the practicing of the most venerable of deeds. The karmic recompense that results from this surpasses even that of Lord Yama, a Wheel-turning Lord, or the guardian deity Shakrendra. Thus, it is difficult to repay the benevolence of one who humbly gives voice to the Scriptures that encourage people to leave home life behind. There is no case where Scriptures encourage people to accept just the Precepts of a lay follower, hence that practice is not substantiated by the Scriptures.

Keep in mind that once you have left home life behind, even if you then act counter to one of the restrictive Precepts, your practice surpasses remaining in home life and not acting counter to the lay Precepts. By taking refuge in the Buddha, leaving home life behind, and accepting the Precepts, you will invariably excel. The recompense from leaving home life behind surpasses that of a Lord Yama, a Wheel-turning Lord, and a Shakrendra. Even had you been a peasant or an untouchable in India, if you left home life behind, you would surpass those of the warrior caste, as well as surpass a Lord Yama, a Wheel-turning Lord, or a Shakrendra. The Precepts of those who remain in home life are not like this, therefore you should leave home life behind. Keep in mind that what the World-honored One taught cannot be fully measured, even though His teachings were collected from far and wide by the World-honored Master Bashumitsu, along with his five hundred arhats. Truly, you need to keep in mind that when it comes to the Buddha's Dharma, you must be clear about Its fundamental principles. Mundane teachers of recent times have not been able to fathom the wisdom from the three spiritual insights and six spiritual abilities of a single saintly person, much less that of the five hundred saintly arhats!<sup>11</sup> These saintly ones knew what mundane teachers of recent times do not know, they have seen what these teachers have not seen, and they have realized what these others have not realized. There is nothing that mundane teachers know that was unknown to these saintly ones. So, do not compare the ignorant and foolish explanations of mundane teachers with the insightful words of the saintly.



It says in the 120<sup>th</sup> fascicle of the *Vibāshā Commentary*, “Even one who has given rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood and then leaves home life behind is already called a saintly one. How much more so is one who has attained

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11. The three spiritual insights are the recognition of universal impermanence, universal suffering, and the universal absence of any permanent, unchanging self. Dōgen discussed the six spiritual abilities in detail in Discourse 24: On the Marvelous Spiritual Abilities (*Jinzū*).

awareness of the Four Noble Truths!” Keep in mind that one who has given rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood and then leaves home life behind is already called a saintly one.



Among Shakyamuni Buddha’s five hundred great vows, number 137 is as follows:

In the future, after I have fully realized true enlightenment, if there are any who desire to leave home life behind to be within the Dharma, I vow that they will know no obstacles due to physical weakness, loss of memory, emotional distress, pride, lack of reverence, being foolish, lacking wise discernment, being entangled in many defiling passions, or being mentally distracted. Should it be otherwise, then I have not realized true enlightenment.

His vow number 138 is as follows:

In the future, after I have fully realized true enlightenment, if there are any women who desire to leave home life behind to study My Teaching and take the Great Precepts, I vow to help them accomplish the Way. Should it be otherwise, then I have not realized true enlightenment.

His vow number 314 is as follows:

In the future, after I have fully realized true enlightenment, if there are human beings whose good roots are few, but who give rise to feelings of love for their good roots and delight in them, I will help them leave home life behind to study the Way within the Buddha Dharma, and I will help them dwell peacefully within the ten immaculate Precepts. Should it be otherwise, then I have not realized true enlightenment.

Keep in mind that the good sons and daughters who have left home life behind have all received assistance from the strength of His great vows made long ago in the past, and thus have been able, unhindered, to leave home life behind and accept the Precepts. Through His vows, the Tathagata has already been helping us to leave home life behind. Clearly, He is saying that leaving home is the most venerable, unsurpassed great merit.



The Buddha once said:

Moreover, if there are any who follow My example by shaving their head, putting on a kesa, and accepting the Precepts, then anyone who makes alms offerings to them will ultimately succeed in entering the fortress that is free from fear of temptations. Because this is the way things are, I teach in this manner.

Even if someone with a shaven head dons a kesa but does not take the Precepts, anyone who makes an alms offering to that person will enter the fortress that is free from fear of temptations.<sup>12</sup> The Buddha also said the following:

And further, if there is someone who, for My sake, has undertaken leaving home life behind and has donned a kesa, but has not yet taken the Precepts, should someone who is devoid of the Teaching torment or harm this person, even going so far as to undertake to destroy the Dharma Body and the Reward Body of a Buddha of the three temporal worlds,<sup>13</sup> it will be because they are fully committed to the three evil worlds of existence.”<sup>14</sup>

If there are any human beings who, for My sake, have left home life behind, shaved their head, and donned a kesa, even though they have not kept to the Precepts, they are already stamped with the Nirvana seal.<sup>15</sup> Further, if they have left home life behind but do not keep to the Precepts, should anyone who is devoid of the Teaching then speak ill of them, humiliate them, or insult them, or should strike, bind, or cut them by using a hand, a sword, or a stick, or if that person should steal their kesa or their monk's bowl, or steal from them their various monastic necessities, then such a one acts to harm the real

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12. That is, the person making the alms offering may not know whether the monk has taken the Precepts or not and will, therefore, still receive the merit of their offering.
  13. The Reward Body is the *Sambhogakaya*, the second of the three Bodies of the Buddha. The first is the Truth Body (*Dharmakaya*), which represents Absolute Truth or Buddha Mind Itself. The Reward Body represents the blissful reward of Buddhist training. The third is the Transformation Body (*Nirmanakaya*), which is the physical body of the Buddha as it appears in the world.
  14. That is, they are acting like a savage beast, a hungry ghost, or a power-mad asura.
  15. The Nirvana seal is associated with the stillness that derives from the keeping to the Noble Eightfold Path.

Reward Body of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds and offends the eyes of all humans, both the ordinary and the lofty. Because this person wants to hide the seeds of the true Teaching and the Three Treasures which Buddhas possess, and because this person is interfering with the ability of both the lofty and the worldly to receive the benefits of these seeds, it will cause such a one to fall into some hellish state because this person, out of his conceit, is broadening the roads to the three evil worlds of existence.

Keep in mind that when people shave their heads and dye their robes a monkish color, even though they may not keep to the Precepts, they are still stamped with the supremely great Nirvana seal. If someone worries them, that person aims at injuring the Reward Body of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds, which is equivalent to a traitorous wrongdoing. Clearly keep in mind that the merits of leaving home life behind go hand-in-hand with the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds.



The Buddha also once said:

Now then, those who leave home life behind ought not give rise to evil acts. Should they give rise to evil acts, then they have not left behind worldly ways. The body and speech of those who have left home life behind are in accord. When they are not in accord, then there is no leaving home life behind. When I left home life behind in order to explore the Way, I gave up parents, brothers, wife and child, relatives, and acquaintances. It was a time when I was accumulating meritorious insights; it was not a time for accumulating non-meritorious insights. ‘Meritorious insights’ means having compassion for all living beings as if they were one’s own offspring. ‘Non-meritorious insights’ are altogether different from these.

Based on this, what is inherent in leaving home life behind is having compassion for all living beings as if they were one’s own offspring. This means not giving rise to evil acts, and our body and speech being in mutual accord. Since this is what one’s leaving home life behind is like, its merit will be like what the Buddha also said:

Furthermore, Shariputra, if bodhisattvas and mahasattvas\* wish to realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment, then on that very day when they leave home life behind, they should wish to turn the Wheel of the Dharma, because immeasurably great numbers of sentient beings have not been able to accept the whole of the Dharma.

When they turn the Wheel of the Dharma, if they desire to free their own minds from the taint of delusions and enable immeasurably numerous sentient beings to realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment without regressing or turning away from it, then they should learn the *prajñāpāramitā*, which is the wisdom needed to help ferry all sentient beings to the Other Shore.”

The bodhisattvas who have learned the *prajñāpāramitā* are our Ancestors, one after the other. At the same time, supreme, fully perfected enlightenment is invariably brought to maturity on the very day when one leaves home life behind. Even so, as students of the Way, you need to know that when bodhisattvas do the practice that is identical with enlightenment for three eons of indefinite length or for immeasurable eons of indefinite length, they do not taint that practice with notions of its being limited or unlimited.



If a bodhisattva-mahasattva were to think, “At some point in time, I will undoubtedly relinquish my position in our country and leave home life behind. On that day I will realize supreme enlightened wisdom. And on that day I will turn the wondrous Wheel of the Dharma, whereupon I will help immeasurable, countless living beings depart from the spiritual dust and dirt of life, and produce the immaculate Eye of the Dharma. Also, I will help immeasurable, countless living beings completely bring to an end all the taint from their delusions and set free the Wisdom in their heart. Also, I will be able to help immeasurable, countless living beings keep from regressing or turning aside from their supreme enlightenment.” Then, this bodhisattva-mahasattva should, by all means, study the *Wisdom Scriptures*.

This describes the merit of the Buddha’s coming into existence in a royal palace as a bodhisattva embodied for the final time, and of His relinquishing His position in His country in order to realize genuine enlightenment and turn the Wheel of the Dharma to help all sentient being reach the Other Shore.



There is a biography of the Buddha that has the following account:

Prince Siddhārtha took from His charioteer Chandaka’s side a sword whose hilt was encrusted with the seven precious jewels\* and other gems. Grasping the sword with His right hand, He drew it from

its scabbard. With His left hand, He then took hold of His shell-shaped topknot, which was the deep blue color of a water lily, and with His right hand He cut it off. Then with His left hand, He dedicated it before discarding it by throwing it into the sky. At that moment, there arose in the Celestial Lord Indra a great joy, something that he was not accustomed to feeling. He caught hold of the Prince's topknot and, not allowing it to touch the ground, he wrapped it in a wondrous celestial robe for safe keeping. Then all manner of celestial beings made their most excellent offerings to it out of respect.

This is how the Tathagata Shakyamuni, whilst still a prince, came to climb over the walls of the palace in the middle of the night and, with the coming of the morning, went into the mountains and cut off the hair from His own head. At that time, the celestial beings from the Heaven of Pure Abiding came down to shave His head and offer Him the kesa.<sup>16</sup> This is undoubtedly an auspicious sign of a Tathagata emerging in the world and is the usual way with World-honored Buddhas.

Not even one Buddha, at any place or at any time, has ever realized Buddhahood whilst remaining in home life. Because there have been Buddhas in the past, the merit of leaving home life behind and taking the Precepts exists. A sentient being's realizing the Way invariably depends on leaving home life behind and accepting the Precepts. In short, because the merits of leaving home life behind and accepting the Precepts are the customary way of Buddhas, the merits of these acts are beyond measure. Some people are of the opinion that one may realize Buddhahood whilst holding onto lay life, and likewise, some think that one may realize Buddhahood whilst holding onto distinctions based on gender, but these views are not accurate.<sup>17</sup>

During the time of our Fourth Indian Ancestor, the Venerable Ubakikuta, there was a certain rich man's son by the name of Daitaka. He came to the Venerable One and, bowing low, sincerely sought to leave home life behind. The Venerable One said, "Are you leaving home life in body, or are you leaving home life in mind?"

Daitaka responded, "I have come to leave home life behind, but it is not for the sake of my body or my mind."

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16. The Heaven of Pure Abiding is the highest of the celestial abodes that comprise the world of form.

17. Dōgen's views on gender-based distinctions are clearly enunciated in the second half of Discourse 10: On 'Respectful Bowing Will Secure for You the Very Marrow of the Way' (*Raihai Tokuzui*).

The Venerable One then asked him, “If it is not for the sake of your body or your mind, well then, who is it that is leaving home life behind?”

Daitaka responded, “Well, those who leave home life behind do so because there is no ‘I, me, my, or mine’. Because they have no ‘I, me, my, or mine’, their Mind is not subject to arising and passing away. The Mind’s not arising and passing away is the normal procedure. And it is normal for Buddhas, as well; Their mind has no characteristic form, and it is the same with Their body.”

The Venerable One then said, “You will undoubtedly have a great awakening, and your mind will quite naturally fully comprehend the Matter.\* Well and good. Through your devotion to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you will inherit Their saintly seeds and help Them flourish.” He then had Daitaka leave home life behind and receive ordination.

Well, now, to meet the Dharma of the Buddhas and leave home life behind is the foremost form of excellent karmic recompense for good deeds done in the past. That process is not done for the sake of ‘me’, nor for the sake of ‘mine’, nor for the sake of ‘my body and mind’, for it was not Daitaka’s body and mind that left home life behind. It is no different from the underlying principle that what leaves home life behind is not an ‘I’ or a ‘mine’. When it is not a matter of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, it will be the process of Buddhas, for it is simply a Buddha’s customary way. Because it is a Buddha’s customary way, it is not only beyond ‘I’ or ‘mine’, it is also beyond ‘my body and mind’. It is beyond comparison with those in the three worlds of desire, form, and beyond form. Because this is the way things are, leaving home life behind is the supreme method. It is beyond sudden and gradual, beyond certainty and uncertainty, beyond something that comes and something that goes, beyond what has been ever-abiding and what is newly fashioned, beyond what is broad and what is narrow, beyond the large and the small, and beyond what is dependent on circumstances and what is independent of circumstances. There has never been a case of an Ancestral Master of the genuine Transmission of the Buddha Dharma failing to leave home life behind and accept the Precepts. The underlying principle of Daitaka’s present encountering of the Venerable Ubakikuta for the first time and seeking to leave home life behind was no different. He left home life behind, received ordination, trained under the Venerable Ubakikuta, and ultimately became our Fifth Ancestral Master.



Our Seventeenth Indian Ancestor, the Venerable Sōgyanandai, was the son of Ratnavyūha, the King of Koshala, who dwelt in the capital city of Shravasti. No sooner had he been born than he could speak, constantly praising Buddhist matters. By the age of seven he had lost interest in worldly pleasures and, speaking in verse, he announced the following to his parents:

*Prostrating myself before you, my most wise father,  
And bowing to you, mother of my bones and blood,  
I now desire to leave home life behind,  
Praying for your happiness for the compassion you have  
shown me.*

His parents firmly forbade this, whereupon he stopped eating that very day. Because of this, they permitted him to leave home life behind while continuing to stay in their home. They give him the name of Sōgyanandai and appointed a monk named Zenrita to be his teacher.<sup>18</sup> By his nineteenth year, he had still not regressed or lost interest in his training. This Venerable One kept saying to himself, “My body resides in a royal palace, so how can that be ‘leaving home?’” One night, a bright light poured down from the heavens and Sōgyanandai saw that it illumined a broad, level pathway. Without thinking, he slowly walked down it for some ten miles until he arrived before a huge grotto. There was a stone cavern, which he entered, settling down in its quietude. His father had, by that time, discovered the loss of his son. Thereupon, he sent Zenrita from the palace out into the countryside to search for his son, but he did not find the young man’s whereabouts. After ten years had passed, the Venerable One realized the Dharma and received the confirmation. He then traveled to the kingdom of Madai, teaching as he went.

The terms ‘remaining in home life’ and ‘leaving home life behind’ were first heard of at this time. An excellent example of this is Sōgyanandai’s finding the broad road within the celestial light. As a result of the help received from his good deeds in past lives, he was finally able to leave the royal palace and arrive at the stone cavern.

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18. Zenrita is the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters used to spell out the monk’s name in Sanskrit, but it is not certain what the actual Sanskrit equivalent is.

Those who have no interest in worldly amusements and who deplore the dust and dirt of defiling passions are saintly ones. Those who crave the stimulation of their five senses and give no thought to freeing themselves from the tyranny of the senses are truly foolish and confused. The T'ang dynasty emperors T'ai-tsung and Su-tsung often associated with monastics, but they still coveted their royal position and never cast it aside. Daikan Enō, while still a layman, had already left his mother, becoming our Sixth Ancestor due to the merits of his having left home life behind. Layman Hō'on cast aside his worldly treasures, but he did not cast aside his defiling passions, which can be called the height of folly.<sup>19</sup> Daikan Enō's strength in the Way and Hō'on's method of practice are not to be compared. Those who are clear about the Matter invariably leave home life behind, whereas those who are in the dark end up at home, which creates the causes and conditions that produce misfortunate karmic recompense.



One day, Meditation Master Nangaku Ejō spontaneously came out with this laudatory remark:

Well now, leaving home life behind is done for the sake of the Dharma, which goes beyond anything that arises. There is nothing that surpasses It in the heavens above or among humankind.

His phrase, 'the Dharma, which goes beyond anything that arises' refers to the Tathagata's true Teaching, which is why nothing surpasses It in the heavens above or among humankind. 'In the heavens above' refers to the six heavens in the world of desire, the eighteen heavens in the world of form, and the four heavens in the world beyond form, yet none of them can compare with the way of leaving home life behind.



Meditation Master Banzan Hōshaku once said:

O my virtuous meditative monks, the practice of the Way that hits the bull's-eye resembles the earth holding aloft a mountain without realizing that it is a solitary peak, or it is like a stone in which a jewel is embedded without the stone realizing how flawless the jewel is. Whoever is like this is called one who has left home life behind.

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19. A lay person who originally studied under Sekitō Kisen, but who went on to become a lay disciple of Baso Dōitsu.

The true Teaching of the Buddhas and Ancestors is not necessarily concerned with realizing or not realizing something. Because leaving home life behind is the true Teaching of the Buddhas and Ancestors, its spiritual merit is evident.



Meditation Master Rinzai Gigen in Chienchou Province once said:

Well now, those who have left home life behind should be able to correctly discern what a normal, reliable view is. They should be able to distinguish between a Buddha and a demon, between the true and the false, between the worldly and the saintly. If someone is able to discern things in this way, we call that one someone who has left home life behind. If someone cannot distinguish a demon from a Buddha, we invariably call such a person someone who leaves one home only to enter another home and who thereby creates karma. We cannot consider such a person to be one who has genuinely left home life behind.

What he calls ‘a normal, reliable view’ means having such things as a deep conviction in cause and effect, and a deep faith in the Three Treasures. What he calls ‘distinguishing a Buddha’ means being clear in realizing what the merits of a Buddha are, both as to their cause and as to their result. It is being able to clearly distinguish between the genuine and the fake, the mundane and the saintly. When it comes to demons and Buddhas, if you are not clear about the difference, you will sacrifice your practice of the Way, regressing or turning away from it. If you detect the doings of demons and do not pursue those activities, then you will not be regressing from your ability to discern the Way. We consider this to be the method of someone who has truly left home life behind. There are many who vainly consider the doings of demons to be the Buddha Dharma. It is the mistake of modern times. You who are learning should quickly recognize demons, be clear about Buddhas, and practice the Way, which is enlightenment itself.



At the time of the Tathagata’s entering His parinirvana, the bodhisattva Makakashō said to the Buddha, “O World-honored One, since a Tathagata is equipped with the ability to know what someone’s spiritual conditions are, You surely must have known that Sunakshatra

would sever his good spiritual roots. What conditions caused You to allow him to leave home life behind?”<sup>20</sup>

The Buddha responded, “O My good disciple, in the past when I first left home life behind, my younger half-brother Nanda, along with my cousins Ananda and Devadatta, as well as my son Rahula, among others in My clan, all followed Me in leaving home life behind in order to train in the Way. Had I not allowed Sunakshatra to leave home life behind, he would ultimately have inherited the royal position of king. Had he been free to exert that power, he might have destroyed the Buddha Dharma. Because of this condition, I allowed him to leave home life behind and practice the Way. O My good disciple, had Sunakshatra not left home life behind to become a monk, he would still have severed his good roots and, for untold generations, he would have had no spiritual benefits at all. Now, after someone has left home life behind, were that person to cut off his good spiritual roots, he would still be able to keep to the Precepts by donating his services, as well as showing his respect, to those who were long-time monks, greatly experienced monks, and virtuous persons, and by practicing the four stages of meditation. These are called good causes that can give rise to good ways. If people have already given rise to good ways, they will be practicing and learning the Way. If they are already practicing and learning the Way, they can realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. This is why I let Sunakshatra leave home life behind. O My good disciple, if I had not let Sunakshatra leave home life and take the Precepts as a monk, then I could not be called a Tathagata possessing the ten abilities.<sup>21</sup> O My good disciple, a Buddha recognizes whether a human being is possessed of virtuous or

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20. Sunakshatra is said to have been one of Prince Siddhārtha’s close relatives who, as a monk, served as a personal attendant to the Buddha. Though he was well informed in all the Buddha’s Teachings, he later returned to lay life where he reviled the Three Treasures. As a result, he is said to have fallen into a state of hellish suffering during his lifetime.
21. The ten abilities of a Tathagata are (1) recognizing what is right or wrong under any circumstances; (2) recognizing what everyone’s karma is in past, present, and future; (3) comprehending the various forms of meditation; (4) recognizing the superior or inferior qualities of others; (5) recognizing the desires of others; (6) recognizing the spiritual lineage of others; (7) recognizing which of the six worlds of existence someone is headed for; (8) knowing the past lives of others; (9) recognizing everyone’s patterns of birth and death; and (10) knowing how to destroy all delusions within oneself and others.

non-virtuous ways. Even though this man Sunakshatra possessed both these ways, in time he succeeded in severing all his good roots until he possessed only non-virtuous roots. And why? Because such human beings have no close friends who are spiritually good, they do not pay attention to the True Teaching, they do not think of what is spiritually good, and they do not act in accord with the Dharma. This is why they sever all their good roots until they possess only non-virtuous roots.

Keep in mind that the World-honored Tathagata was quite aware that there were human beings who might cut off their good roots; still, out of His great benevolence and great compassion, He let them leave home life behind in order to give them a cause to be virtuous. The causes of cutting off one's good roots are due to failing to associate with virtuous friends, failing to listen to the true Teaching, failing to think about what is good, and failing to act in accord with the Dharma. You who are now learning the Way must keep close to morally good friends and be on intimate terms with them. What we call 'a good friend' is someone who asserts that Buddhas do exist and teaches us that there is wrongdoing, as well as happiness. One who does not deny cause and effect is considered a good friend and a good counselor. What such a one gives expression to is the true Teaching. To think about this principle is to think about what is good. To act in this way will be to act in accord with the Dharma. Thus, regardless of whether people choose to be our intimates or not, you should simply recommend that they leave home life behind and take the Precepts. Do not pay attention to whether or not they later regress, and do not worry about whether they do the practice or not, for this is doubtless the true Teaching of our Venerable Shakyamuni.



The Buddha, in instructing His monks, once said, "By all means, you need to keep in mind that Lord Yama gave the following teaching,<sup>22</sup> 'Some day I shall be free of this suffering of mine. I shall be reborn among those in the world of humans. Obtaining a human body, I will be able to leave home life behind, have my head shaved, receive the kesa of the Three Treasures, and learn the Way as one who has left home life behind.' Even a Lord Yama had these thoughts. And what is even more, you now have received the body of a human being and have had the opportunity to become monks! Because of this, my monks, you should consciously work on the actions of your body,

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22. Lord Yama is the Lord of the Dead.

speech, and mind, and do not allow faults to exist in them. By all means, you need to eliminate the five fetters and put into practice the five good roots.<sup>23</sup> Monks like you should certainly do just such training.”

At this time the monks, having heard what the Buddha expressed through words, were filled with joy and devotedly undertook to act upon them.

It is clear that the desire to be reborn within the human world is something longed for even by a Lord Yama. Once someone has been reborn as a human being, he or she should forthwith have their head shaved, don the kesa of the Three Treasures, and take up the study of the Way of the Buddha. These are the merits of being within the world of humans, which surpasses the other five worlds of existence. But to be born in the human world and then to wantonly seek out the path to political power or some other worldly career, vainly spending one's life as a toady to ministers and kings, wrapping oneself up in fantasies and dreams, only to proceed in later times towards pitch darkness without anything to rely upon, that is folly indeed! Not only have you received the body of a human being, which is hard to come by, but you have also encountered the Buddha Dharma, which is hard to encounter. You should forthwith cast aside all your involvements and quickly leave home life behind in order to study the Way. Rulers and ministers, along with their wives and children, their relatives and households, are encountered everywhere, but the Buddha Dharma, like the rare udumbara blossom, is hard to meet up with. In short, when impermanence suddenly arrives, there is no ruler or minister, friend or relative, spouse or child, or any precious treasure that will save us, for each of us simply returns to death's Yellow Spring alone.<sup>24</sup> What follows along with us is simply our good and bad karma. When we are about to lose our human body, our feelings of regret for our human body may well be deep indeed! So, while we still have our human body, we should quickly leave home life behind. Just this alone will be the true Teaching of the Buddhas of the three temporal worlds.

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23. The five fetters are covetousness, hate, arrogant pride, envy, and mean-spiritedness. The five good roots are faith, diligent effort, mindfulness, meditative contemplation, and wise discernment.

24. The Yellow Spring is the Chinese equivalent of the River Styx, the river in Greek mythology that one crosses at death.



For those who have left home life behind in order to put the Dharma into practice, there are four things called ‘the four necessities’.<sup>25</sup>

*The first is to go so far in one’s fleshly life as to sit beneath a tree.*

*The second is to go so far in one’s fleshly life as to wear robes made of discarded cloth.*

*The third is to go so far in one’s fleshly life as to beg for one’s food.*

*The fourth is to go so far in one’s fleshly life as to take the long-abandoned, old-fashioned remedies, when physically ill.<sup>26</sup>*

If you practice all these methods, you may indeed be called one who has left home life behind and, in being given that name, you have become a member of the Sangha. If you do not practice these, you have not become what we call a member of the Sangha. For that reason, these four are called the practice of the Dharma by those who have left home life behind.

Now, what the Buddhas and Ancestors in India and China have authentically Transmitted is leaving home life behind in order to put the Dharma into practice. Those who spend their life without leaving the monastery even once are supplied with these four necessities so that they may put the Dharma into practice. This is what I call ‘practicing the four necessities’. Should someone alter this by trying to establish a fifth necessity, you need to know that this is a false teaching.<sup>27</sup> Who could accept it in good faith? Who could bear to hear such a thing? What the Buddhas and Ancestors have correctly Transmitted, that is the true Teaching. Accordingly, those human beings who have left home life behind are supremely

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25. That is, the four necessities for sustaining life: shelter, clothing, food, and medicine.

26. The passage that Dōgen is citing comes from a seventh century text describing the ideal for a Mahayana monk. The four examples given represent the extremes to which a monk should be willing to go in order to continue on as someone who has left home life behind. All four represent practices that, in the Buddha’s time, could sustain a monk’s existence without requiring him or her to return to lay life. The long-abandoned, old-fashioned remedies alluded to include the ancient Indian medical practice of using the urine and dung of cattle for sterilization as well as for a variety of internal and external ailments.

27. The so-called ‘fifth necessity’ is sex.

fortunate and most worthy of our veneration. For this reason, Nanda, Ananda, Devadatta, Aniruddha, Mahānāma, and Bhadrīka, all of whom were grandsons of King Simhahanu and were of the most noble in the warrior caste in India, quickly left home life behind, which should be an excellent example for succeeding generations.<sup>28</sup> Those who are not warriors today should not regret who they are. For those who may well not be princes, what can there possibly be to regret? The noblest of families in Jambudvīpa ended up as the noblest in the human realms, that is, they left home life behind. Rulers of lesser nations, like those of the Licchavi multitudes, were wont to prize that which is not worth prizing, to flaunt what is not worth flaunting, to confine themselves to what is not worth abiding with, and not to leave home life behind.<sup>29</sup> Who could fail to see that they were bunglers? Who could fail to see that they were foolish people?

The Venerable Rahula was the son of the Bodhisattva.<sup>30</sup> And he was the great-grandson of King Simhahanu, who would have bequeathed the throne to him were it not for the World-honored One's influencing him to leave home life behind. You need to know that the Dharma of leaving home life behind is the most venerated. As the disciple foremost in keeping to the Precepts, Rahula has yet to enter nirvana. Even to this day, as an arhat he helps human beings to abide in this world as in a cultivated field of happiness.

Among our Indian Ancestral Masters to whom the Buddha's Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching was Transmitted, there has been an abundance of princes who left home life behind. Our first Ancestor in China, Bodhidharma, was the third son of the King of the Indian state of Kōshi. Not taking his royal position as something of importance, he received the Transmission of the true Teaching and held to It. It should be clear to you that he held leaving home life behind in greatest veneration. While he may not have held a station that was the equal of those other princes, he was in a position where he was able to leave home life behind. So why would he not hasten to do so? What kind of tomorrow should he have waited for? Were he to leave home life behind right off, not waiting to inhale and exhale a single breath, that would be wise indeed. Also, keep in mind that our Master, one who has left home life behind and accepted the Precepts, is due the same gratitude and appreciation which we owe to our parents.

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28. Simhahanu was Siddhārtha's grandfather on his father's side.

29. The Licchavis were thought to be among the earliest supporters of the Buddha, but not to the extent that they left home life behind.

30. The Bodhisattva here is Prince Siddhārtha prior to his enlightenment.



It says in the first fascicle of the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple*:

All Buddhas in the three temporal worlds—past, present, and future—affirm that to leave home life behind is to realize the Truth. The twenty-eight Indian Ancestors and the six Chinese Ancestors, all of whom Transmitted the Buddha’s Mind seal,\* were, each and every one of them, monastics. Most likely, it was because they strictly observed the monastic regulations that they were able to become outstanding models for those in the three worlds of desire, form, and beyond form. Thus, in practicing meditation and inquiring of the Way with their Master, they made the Precepts and the monastic regulations foremost. Had they not distanced themselves from their faults and guarded against misdeeds, how could they have realized Buddhahood and become an Ancestor?

Even if one’s monastery has become subject to the winds of decay, it may still be a grove of fragrant trees in full bloom, a grove that has not fallen to the level of ordinary trees or commonplace sproutings. Then again, it may be like milk diluted with water. When we want to make use of milk, we should use this milk that has been diluted with water, but we should not use any other substance.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, what is most revered is the genuine Transmission of what all Buddhas in the three temporal worlds teach as the Dharma of leaving home life behind. Furthermore, there has never been a single Buddha of the three temporal worlds who failed to leave home life behind, for this is the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching, which is the Wondrous Heart of Nirvana and supreme enlightenment, as accurately Transmitted from Buddha to Buddha and from Ancestor to Ancestor.

*A day during the summer retreat in the seventh year of the Kenchō era (1255).*

*Copied here on the sixth day of the eighth lunar month in the third year of the Enkyō era (August 30, 1310).*

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31. That is, even though milk may be diluted with water, it is still milk. This is a metaphor for the Dharma. Undiluted milk refers to the Dharma in its purest form. Diluted milk refers to the Dharma that has been simplified to make it more accessible to people, but it is still the Buddha Dharma.