

On Taking Refuge in the Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha

(*Kie Buppōsō Hō*)

Translator’s Introduction: This discourse is also known as “On Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures” (*Kie Sambō*). As the postscript indicates, this discourse is an early draft which Dōgen did not finish before his death, though he apparently was planning to include it in his projected one-hundred-discourse *Shōbōgenzō*. It contains several quite long quotations, but Dōgen had not yet cited the sources of some of them in the text.

It says in the *Procedures for Cleanliness in a Zen Temple* (First fascicle, question 120), “Do you show respect for Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha?” It is quite clear that in India and China, the Buddhas and Ancestors authentically Transmitted the practice of making venerative offerings to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha out of respect for Them. If you do not take refuge in Them, you will not revere Them, and if you do not revere Them, you will not be able to take refuge in Them. We invariably receive the spiritual merit of taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha whenever there is a spiritual connection between Them and us sentient beings, as well as between Master and disciple. Whether we are in some exalted celestial state, or among ordinary human beings, or in some hell, or acting like some demon or beast, if a spiritual connection takes place, we do not fail to humbly take refuge in Them. Once we have taken refuge, we promote merit in life after life, in generation after generation, in existence after existence, and in place after place as we strive to accumulate merit and achieve supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. Even if we happen to be misled by bad companions or to meet up with some devilish hindrance so that our good roots are severed for the time being, or even if we act like an *icchantika*,* ultimately our good roots will continue on and we will promote their spiritual merit. The meritorious virtue of taking refuge in the Three Treasures is, ultimately, not subject to extensive decay.

Taking refuge in the Three Treasures means wholeheartedly acting from pure trust—be it while a Tathagata is in the world or be it after a Tathagata has become extinct—and, with hands in *gasshō** and bowed head, reciting the following aloud:

* See *Glossary*.

*I humbly take refuge in the Buddha,
I humbly take refuge in the Dharma,
I humbly take refuge in the Sangha.*

*I humbly take refuge in the Buddha, the most venerated
among humans,
I humbly take refuge in the Dharma, the most venerated
among those who have forsaken their passions,
I humbly take refuge in the Sangha, the most venerated
among those in our assemblies.*

*I have taken refuge in the Buddha,
I have taken refuge in the Dharma,
I have taken refuge in the Sangha.*

In our aspiring to the far-off wisdom that is the fruition of Buddhahood, we begin by bringing into existence just such a protective garb.¹ Thus, even though our body and our mind right now, instant by instant, are arising and vanishing, our aspiration for Buddhahood will surely long continue to thrive until we fully realize our enlightenment.

The term *kie*, ‘to take refuge’, is made up of two characters. The first, *ki*, means ‘to keep returning to’ and the second, *e*, means ‘to submit ourselves devotedly to’. Thus, *kie*, ‘to take refuge’, more literally means ‘to devote oneself to returning to’. The form of this returning is like that of a child returning again and again to its parent. ‘To submit ourselves devotedly to’ is like people depending on their leader. In other words, this term is synonymous with ‘to be rescued by’, ‘to be freed by’. Because ‘the Buddha’ refers to our Great Master, we therefore take refuge in Him. Because ‘the Dharma’ refers to good spiritual medicine, we take refuge in It. Because ‘the Sangha’ refers to excellent spiritual friends, we take refuge in them.



A Chinese commentary on Mahayana* Buddhism has the following dialogue:

Someone once asked a Master, “Why do we take refuge in these Three Treasures?”

The Master answered, “Because in the long run, by making

1. That is, taking the Three Refuges acts like a suit of armor to protect us from whatever attacks us spiritually.

these Three Treasures what we return to, They can help us sentient beings free ourselves from the delusion of ‘life and death’ and realize the Great Awakening. This is why we take refuge in Them.”

These Three Refuges are ultimately of astounding spiritual merit. In India, the word ‘Buddha’ was pronounced like *buddhaya*, and in China, the term ‘supreme, fully perfected enlightenment’ was translated simply as ‘awakening’. In India, the term for ‘the Teaching’ was pronounced as *Dharma* in Sanskrit or as *Dhamma* in Pali. In China, it was translated by the character that we read as *hō*. All meanings of *hō*—good, bad, or neutral—are called ‘dharma’, but the Dharma that we now take refuge in is the Dharma that is the Wheel of the Law. What we call *sōgya* is pronounced as *Sangha* in India, and is translated as ‘the harmonious community’ in China. The following is how we habitually speak when praising Them.²

The Three Treasures as things that physically exist and which we preserve:

The Buddha Treasure as religious statues and pictures, along with shrines and reliquaries.

The Dharma Treasure as the Scriptural scrolls, which are made of yellow paper wound around a red rod, and which have been handed down to us.

The Sangha Treasure as those who shave their heads, dye their robes, and observe the Precepts which are the True Teaching.

The Three Treasures as the means for teaching sentient beings:

The Buddha Treasure as the World-honored Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Dharma Treasure as His turning of the Wheel of the Law, along with the saintly Teaching that He propagated.

The Sangha Treasure as the five companions, namely, Ajnyata Kaundinya and the others.³

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2. The source of the quotation that follows has not been located. It may be of Dōgen’s composition.
 3. An allusion to the five ascetics who accompanied Prince Siddhārtha while he was training as a forest hermit. They were the first of the Buddha’s followers to realize the Truth and become arhats.

The Three Treasures as Embodiments of Truth:

The Buddha Treasure as what is provisionally called ‘the five merits of the Dharma Body’.⁴

The Dharma Treasure as what is provisionally called ‘the principle of the cessation of suffering through non-attachment’.

The Sangha Treasure as what is provisionally called ‘the merit of pursuing through one’s training what is beyond conventional forms of training’.

The Three Treasures as being essentially one and the same:

The Buddha Treasure as what is provisionally called ‘That which realizes the Truth as ultimate enlightenment’.

The Dharma Treasure as that which is provisionally called ‘That which is immaculate and free of any taint’.

The Sangha Treasure as that which is provisionally called ‘those who have realized the Truth and, in harmony with It, are neither bound nor limited by It’.⁵

This is the way that one humbly takes refuge in the Three Treasures. If people are scant of good fortune or slight in merit, they do not hear even the name of the Three Treasures, so how could they possibly take refuge in Them!



In the *Lotus Scripture*, there is the following poem:

*All these besmirched creatures,
Pass through countless eons
Hearing not the name of the Triple Treasure
Due to their wretched karma.**

The *Lotus Scripture* is the karmic connection to the One Great Matter* of all Buddhas and Tathagatas. Within all the Teachings that were expressed by our Great Master, the Venerable Shakyamuni, the *Lotus Scripture* is the most sovereign and

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4. That is, the five kinds of merit embodied in one who has realized enlightenment, namely, being free from any offences against the Precepts, being free from all delusory thoughts while remaining tranquil in heart, being possessed of wise discernment, being rid of all entanglements, and being aware of having become free of all entanglements.
 5. That is, there is no tinge of fatalism in what such a one does.

our greatest teacher. All the other Scriptures and Teachings are as the *Lotus Scripture's* loyal subjects or as Its familial relatives. What is voiced within the *Lotus Scripture* is the Truth. All that is expressed within our other Scriptures is tinged with expedient means, which is not the fundamental intent of the Buddha. Were you to bring forth what is expressed in the other Scriptures in order to evaluate what is in the *Lotus Scripture*, you would be getting things backwards. If they were not cloaked in the meritorious powers of the *Lotus Scripture*, these other Scriptures could not exist. All these other Scriptures are waiting to return to, and be in accord with, the *Lotus Scripture*. The *Lotus Scripture* contains what is being expressed here and now. Be aware that the merits of the Three Treasures are said to be the most esteemed and most sublime.



The World-honored One once said the following:

When ordinary people become apprehensive over something that seems foreboding, they often seek refuge in such places as mountains or parklands, as well as in some monastery, up some tree, or in some mausoleum. These refuges are not particularly of the highest quality, nor are they the most valuable. People cannot free themselves from human suffering by relying on such refuges. When people take refuge in the Buddha, as well as in the Dharma and the Sangha, then, by means of their wise discernment, they continually observe everything from within the Four Noble Truths, namely, being aware of suffering, being aware of how suffering accumulates, being aware of how suffering is transcended forever, and being aware of the Noble Eightfold Path. Taking this refuge is to take the most excellent refuge; it is the one to be most valued. Without fail, it is by means of taking refuge in this way that we can rid ourselves of suffering.

The World-honored One has stated this clearly for the sake of all human beings. Human beings, vainly acting out of fear of what is foreboding, should not seek refuge in such beings as mountain spirits or demonic spirits, or in such places as the mausoleums of non-Buddhists, for there is no escape from human suffering by relying on such places for refuge.

To put it more broadly, following the false teachings of non-Buddhists, people engage in ascetic practices which take the form of precepts for oxen, precepts for deer, precepts for rakshasas, precepts for demons, precepts for dumb beasts, precepts for deaf beings, precepts for dogs, precepts for chickens, or precepts for pheasants, and they may adorn their bodies with ashes and let their

hair grow long. Or they may sacrifice a sheep, killing it after they have first chanted mantras. Or they may perform fire rituals for four months, or feast on air for seven days, or offer up hundreds of thousands of myriad blossoms to celestial beings. And they claim that, by such means, they will succeed in getting their wishes fulfilled. There is no truth in the belief that methods such as these can bring about liberation from suffering. Such methods are not praised by those of wise discernment, for people who do such practices continue to suffer in vain, devoid of any good outcome.

Because this is so, you should clearly examine whether you are vainly seeking to take refuge in some false path. Even if some method is different from the practice of the non-Buddhist precepts, if its underlying principle conforms to the principle of seeking refuge in a tree or a mausoleum, do not take such a refuge. A human body is hard to come by and the Buddhist Treasures are rarely met with. How sad it would be if you rashly spent your life as kith and kin of some demonic spirit or vainly let many lifetimes flow by while holding onto false views. By quickly taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you will not only be liberated from suffering but you will also fully realize enlightenment.



In the *Scripture on Rare Occurrences* it says, “Teaching others about the four earthly continents or the six heavenly worlds of desire so that all may realize the four stages* of arhathood does not equal the merit of one single person taking the Three Refuges.” The four earthly continents are the eastern, western, southern, and northern continents.⁶ Among them, those in the northern continent cannot be reached by the teaching of the Three Vehicles;* to successfully teach those in that continent how to become arhats would be rare indeed.⁷ Even if such a benefit could be obtained, it would not be equal to the spiritual merit of teaching one single person how to take the Three Refuges. It is also rare for those in the six celestial worlds of desire to realize the Way. Even if we were able to help such beings attain the fourth stage of arhathood, it would not be equal to the merit of one single person taking the Three Refuges, so great and profound They are.

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6. These are the four ‘continents’ that surround Mount Sumeru. Mount Sumeru is considered to be the center of the universe, the pivotal point of the wheel of the six worlds of existence, as well as one’s sitting place in meditation.
 7. That is, the vehicles used by shravakas, pratekyabuddhas, and bodhisattvas are not effective enough to bestir the inhabitants of the northern continent from their customarily blissful state; only a Buddha—the One of the One Vehicle—has the capacity to do that.



In the fourth of the *Āgama Scriptures* it says:

There was once a celestial being in the Trayastrimsha Heaven who, upon seeing the five signs of his decay manifesting, knew he would be reborn as a wild boar. His bemoaning over this reached the ears of Lord Indra, who ruled over that heaven. Upon hearing the reason for his lamenting, Lord Indra called the celestial being forth and instructed him, saying, “You should take refuge in the Three Treasures.” By immediately doing as he had been instructed, the being escaped being reborn as a boar.

The Buddha, creating a poem for the occasion, spoke thus:

*If beings take refuge in the Buddha,
They fall not into the three evil paths,⁸
Their passions spent, they dwell within some human
or celestial realm
And sure as sure will reach nirvana's holy shore.*

Once this celestial being had taken the Three Refuges, he was reborn into a rich man's family and was also able to leave home life behind, ultimately reaching the state of one who has gone beyond being a novice.

In short, there is no scale upon which the merit of taking refuge in the Three Treasures can be weighed, for it is immeasurable and boundless.



When the World-honored One was in the world, twenty-six million hungry dragons, as a group, paid a visit to where the Buddha was staying. To a one, they were all shedding a veritable flood of tears as they addressed Him, saying, “All we desire is that You, out of Your pity, will rescue us from our suffering. O greatly compassionate World-honored One, we recall a time in a past age when we dwelt within the Buddha Dharma and had been able to leave home life behind, but we then went to great lengths to cultivate all manner of evil deeds. Because of these evil deeds, we have spent immeasurable eons in these bodies of ours, dwelling in the three evil

8. The three evil paths are the worlds of beasts, hungry ghosts, and those in hellish states.

paths. Also, because of residual retribution, we have been reborn as dragons and experience exceedingly great suffering.”

The Buddha instructed the dragons, saying, “Without exception, you should forthwith take the Three Refuges and wholeheartedly practice what is good. Due to these conditions, you will encounter the last Buddha in the Eon of the Wise Ones, the one named He Who Has Arrived at the Tower.⁹ During the generation of that Buddha, you will be able to rid yourselves of your wrongdoings.”

When the dragons heard these words, they all spent the rest of their lives in wholehearted devotion, each having taken the Three Refuges.

Aside from imparting the Three Refuges to them, the Buddha Himself had no other method or technique for helping rescue the dragons. When they left home life behind in a previous age, they had received the Three Refuges, but as retribution for their evil acts, they had become hungering dragons, and by that time there was no other means for rescuing them. This is why He had imparted the Three Refuges to them. You need to keep in mind that the merit from the Three Refuges is the most esteemed and the most sublime, mind-boggling in its profundity. The World-honored One had already clearly attested to the truth of this, and human beings should by all means accept it in faith. He did not have them recite the names of the Buddhas in the ten quarters, but simply had them take the Three Refuges. The Buddha’s intention is profound, so who is there that would not sound its depths? Human beings today should quickly accept the Three Refuges rather than vainly reciting the name of every single Buddha, so that they do not foolishly remain in the dark and treat such great merit lightly.



At that time, there was a blind female dragon among those assembled.¹⁰ Her mouth was filled with festering tumors that were crawling with all manner of worms, a condition that resembled excrement. It was wickedly foul, like the uncleanness within a female organ at the time of menstruation, with a fetid stench that was difficult

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9. The Eon of the Wise Ones is a reference to our present eon, so-called because there will be many who realize Buddhahood during that time.
 10. In addition to its literal meaning, a dragon woman can be understood as someone who is intellectually brilliant. Also, her being blind may be understood literally or, possibly more to the point, figuratively, as being spiritually blind.

to bear. All kinds of things were feeding off her. Pus and blood were oozing out of her, and her whole body was constantly being bitten by mosquitoes and stung by wasps, while other poisonous insects were gnawing at her. The foul condition of her body was hard to look upon.

The World-honored One, seeing the dragon woman's blindness and the depth of her suffering, asked her from His great compassionate heart, "My little sister, what conditions have caused you to have such a wretched body? What deeds in a former life have brought you to such a state?"

The dragon woman replied, "World-honored One, this body of mine is now struck with such forms of suffering that I have not a moment's respite. Even should I try to put it in words, there is no way I have of expressing it. In thinking about my past over the previous thirty-six million years, for hundreds of thousands of years I have experienced suffering like this in the form of an evil dragon up to the point that it has not ceased even for a moment, day or night. The reason for this is that in the distant past, during the ninety-first eon, I became a female monastic within the Teaching of Bibashi Buddha, but I thought about lustful things, thoughts surpassing even those of some drunken person. Further, even though I had left home life behind, I was unable to live in accord with the Dharma, so I spread out my bedding in a temple and committed impure acts in order to satisfy my greedy heart and produce great pleasure. Sometimes I would seek out what belonged to others, often taking the alms that they had been given by the faithful. For just such reasons as these, I have been continually unable to receive the body of one in the human or celestial worlds, constantly being reborn in one of the three evil paths."

The Buddha then asked her, "If that is the case, when the eon that we are now in comes to an end, where, my little sister, will you be reborn?"

The dragon woman responded, "Due to the strength of the causal conditions of my past behavior, even if I were born in some other world when this eon has exhausted itself, driven by the winds of my evil deeds, I shall still be reborn in this state." The dragon woman then made the following plea, "O World-honored One of Great Compassion, pray, rescue me! I pray, rescue me!"

At that moment, the World-honored One scooped up some water in His hand and gave her instruction, saying "We call this water 'the medicine that brings the joy of one's true wishes being fulfilled'.

Now, in all sincerity, I say to you that, in the distant past, I once cast my life aside in order to rescue a dove and, to that end, I did not waver in my resolve or feel regret in my heart. If these words of yours are true, you will be completely cured of your afflictions.” The World-honored Buddha then took the water into His mouth and sprayed it forth over the blind dragon woman’s body, whereupon she was cured of all her sores and stench.

Now that she had been cured, she made the following plea, “I beg the Awakened One to permit me to receive the Three Refuges.” Thereupon, the World-honored One gave the Three Refuges to the dragon woman.

This dragon woman had become a female monastic within the Teaching of Bibashi Buddha. Although she admitted that she had broken Precepts, once she had penetrated that Buddha’s Teaching, she must have been aware of where she had become obstructed. Having now encountered Shakyamuni Buddha, she begged to receive the Three Refuges from Him. Receiving the Three Refuges from the Buddha must be said to be due to good, strong spiritual roots. The merit of meeting the Buddha must certainly have derived from the Three Refuges.¹¹ Although we are not blind dragons and we do not have the bodies of beasts, yet, unlike her, we did not personally encounter the Tathagata or receive the Three Refuges from the Buddha. The ability to actually encounter the Buddha is something far in the past, I am afraid to say. The World-honored One Himself bestowed upon her the Three Refuges. You should keep in mind that the merit from the Three Refuges is something that is extremely profound and immeasurable. For instance, when Shakrendra bowed to the wild fox and received the Three Refuges from it, everything depended on the depth of the merit of the Three Refuges.¹²



Once when the Buddha was staying in a banyan grove outside the city of Kapilavastu, His lay disciple Mahānāma of the Shakya clan came to where the Buddha was and asked him, “Just what is a lay Buddhist?”

Thereupon, the Buddha explained the matter to him, saying, “If

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11. That is, it derived from her having taken the Three Refuges when she became a monastic within the assembly of Bibashi Buddha.
 12. Dōgen will tell the story of Shakrendra and the wild fox later in this discourse. Shakrendra is another name for Indra.

there are good disciples, male or female, who are in possession of their faculties and have accepted the Three Refuges, they are called lay Buddhists.”

Mahānāma then asked, “World-honored One, what is meant by calling someone a ten-percent lay Buddhist?”

The Buddha replied, “My dear disciple Mahānāma, if one accepts the Three Refuges along with one of the Ten Great Precepts, that person is called a ten-percent lay Buddhist.”

Becoming a disciple of the Buddha invariably depends on the Three Refuges. Whichever Precepts we may accept, we invariably take the Three Refuges, and only then do we take Precepts. Therefore, it is in accord with the Three Refuges that one obtains the Precepts.



The following story is related in the *Dhammapada*:

Long ago, there was a guardian deity named Shakrendra, who intuitively knew that when his present life ended, he would be reborn as a donkey. Without ceasing to bemoan his fate, he said, “The only person who can save me from the suffering of such misfortune is the World-honored Buddha.”

Thereupon, he went to where the Buddha was staying and, performing a full prostration, took refuge in the Buddha. He had not yet arisen from his prostration when his life came to an end and he arose within the womb of a donkey. The mother donkey broke free from her reins and smashed some bowls in a nearby pottery shop. The potter struck her, which ultimately caused her to abort, whereby Shakrendra reemerged in his guardian deity body.

The Buddha said, “Just as you were dying, you were taking refuge in the Three Treasures, so the retribution for your wrongdoings had already come to an end.” Upon hearing this, Shakrendra obtained the first fruits of arhathood.

In sum, the World-honored Buddha was unsurpassed in rescuing sentient beings from the sufferings and misfortunes of the world. This is why Shakrendra hastened to call on the World-honored One. While he was prostrate on the ground, his present life came to an end and he was reborn within a donkey’s womb. Through the merit of his taking refuge in the Buddha, the mother donkey broke her reins and smashed dishes in the potter’s shop. The potter struck her and her body was so injured that she aborted the donkey colt in her womb. Thereupon, the guardian

deity returned to enter his former body. His attaining the first fruits of arhathood upon hearing what the Buddha said was due to the strength of the merit from his taking refuge in the Three Treasures.

In other words, the strength of the Three Refuges not only freed Shakrendra from the three evil paths, it also permitted him to reenter his guardian deity body. And not only did he gain the fruits and rewards from being in a celestial place, but he also became a saintly being who had realized the first stage of arhathood. Truly, the ocean of merit of the Three Treasures is immeasurable, unbounded. While the World-honored One was in the world, ordinary people and those in lofty positions enjoyed the blessings and good fortune from this. Now, in the final, degenerate five hundred years following the disappearance of the Tathagata, what can we humans do? Well, such things as statues and pictures of the Tathagata, as well as His relics, are still housed in the world. If we take refuge in these, we will also receive the merits as described above.¹³



The following is recounted in the *Scripture of Unparalleled Events*:

The Buddha once said, “I recall a time innumerable eons ago when there was a wild fox on a mountain in the great kingdom of Vima.¹⁴ It so happened that it was being pursued by a lion who was bent on making a meal of it. As it fled, it fell into a well and was unable to get out. After three days had passed, it realized that it was going to die there, and so composed the following poem:

*Oh, woe is me! To be thus on suffering's brink,
Losing my life, drowned deep in some hillside well.
How transient all myriad things prove to be!
Alas that I cannot leave my body for the lion's feast.
In homage, I take refuge in the Buddhas of the ten
quarters.
May They know that my heart is pure and free of all self.*

“At that moment, Shakrendra overheard someone taking refuge in the Buddha. Awestruck, his hair stood on end. Being mindful of the

13. However, not because there is some magical power inherent in these objects, but because they are reminders to trust in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and to keep to the Precepts.

14. The kingdom of Vima is a place within Jambudvīpa, the legendary continent south of Mount Sumeru.

Buddha of old, he thought to himself, ‘I, a solitary drop of dew, lack a Master to guide me as I drown myself in my addictions to sensory greeds.’

“Thereupon, along with a celestial host of eighty thousand, he flew down, desiring to explore more closely what was going on in the well. He saw the wild fox at the bottom of the well, attempting to claw its way up and out, but without success. Once more thinking only of himself, Shakrendra then said, ‘Saintly person, you may well be thinking that you are lacking in some way. Though I now see the form and figure of a wild fox, clearly you are a bodhisattva* and not someone who is limited only to mundane abilities, for it was not a mundane verse that you recited, O benevolent being. I pray that you will give voice to the essentials of the Dharma for the sake of this host of celestial beings.’

“At this point, the wild fox looked up and replied, ‘Even though you are a guardian deity of the Dharma, you have obviously not had instruction in It. While a Dharma Master is down below you, you have placed yourself above him. You ask for the essentials of the Dharma, but completely fail to show proper respect!¹⁵ Because the Waters of Dharma are untainted and pure, they can save people, so how come you crave to have them by prideful means?’

“When the guardian deity heard this, he was filled with shame. The celestial beings who attended upon him were startled and laughed nervously. Then one said, ‘Although our celestial lord has come down to this place, that does not greatly benefit us.’

“Thereupon, the guardian deity Shakrendra addressed the celestial beings, saying, ‘I pray, do not, in this regard, hold onto your astonishment and fears. What he said is undoubtedly due to my self-deception and greed, along with my lack of virtue. By all means, we must listen to the essentials of the Dharma from this person.’

“He then lowered his celestial robe to help the fox, who grabbed hold of it and climbed out from the well. The celestial beings

15. In Buddhism, the traditional courtesy is to offer a meal to the Dharma Master as alms and then, after the meal, to ask the Master to give a Dharma talk whilst seated in a higher seat than those for whom the talk is intended. To ignore such a courtesy and put oneself above the Dharma Master is therefore seen as the height of disrespect. Shakrendra, so eager to hear the Teaching for His own sake, had failed to extract the wild fox from the well, much less offer him a meal, before asking for spiritual Teaching.

prepared a meal of nectar for the creature. After the wild fox had finished its meal, its vitality was restored. In the midst of calamity, it had met with such unanticipated good fortune that its heart leapt for joy, and its delight was immeasurable. The wild fox then gave extensive explanation of the essentials of the Dharma for the sake of Shakrendra and his host of celestial beings.”

This story is called ‘Shakrendra’s bowing to an animal and taking it for his teacher’. Clearly, you need to realize that the guardian deity’s taking a wild fox for his teacher is evidence of how difficult it is to hear the words Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Now, in accord with the help from our good deeds in past lives, we have encountered the Dharma bequeathed us by the Tathagata so that, day and night, we may hear the precious name of the Three Treasures, without regressing over time. This is surely the essence of the Dharma. Even Mara, the Lord of Bedevilment, along with his demons of desire, all escape tribulation by taking refuge in the Three Treasures. How much more can others strive to pile up merit and accumulate virtue by means of the meritorious nature of the Three Treasures! So, why, pray, would you neglect to fathom them?

To summarize, in practicing the Way as disciples of the Buddha, we first reverently bow to the Three Treasures in all ten quarters, then we call on the Three Treasures in all ten quarters to come to us as we offer incense and scatter flowers to Them, and only then do we perform our spiritual disciplines. This is an excellent example of practice from ancient times, an age-old ritual of the Buddhas and Ancestors. If there are any who have never yet done this ritual of taking refuge in the Three Treasures, you need to know that theirs is a non-Buddhist teaching and that it may well be the teaching of the Lord of Bedevilment. The Dharma of Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor invariably begins with the ceremony of taking refuge in the Three Treasures.

On a day during the summer retreat in the seventh year of the Kenchō era (1255), I finished making this proofed copy from my late Master’s draft. It had not yet reached the stage of a clean copy, much less a middling draft. Undoubtedly, he would have made additions and deletions. Since such a process is now impossible, I am leaving the Master’s draft just as it is.¹⁶

I made this copy on the twenty-first day of the fifth lunar month in the second year of the Kōan era (July 1, 1278), whilst staying at Shinzenkō-ji Temple in Nakahama, Echizen Province.

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16. This first portion of the postscript is clearly by Ejō.