

TRANSLATION

The Sayings of Myōe Shōnin of Togano-o

Togano-o Myōe Shōnin Yuikun

TRANSLATED BY REBECCA RASMUS

The present translation is a collection of sayings by Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) of Kōsanji Temple in Togano-o. The collection was compiled by one of his disciples, Kōshin, a few years after the Master's death. In these sayings which touch upon a number of subjects, Myōe often admonishes his fellow priests to practice the Way earnestly in spite of the many obstacles of the Latter Days of the Dharma (*mappō*). Although his remarks were addressed to a clerical audience in a time remote from the present, his wit and insight serve to earn him a place in the hearts of people even to this day.

The first awakening of Myōe's religious aspiration is closely related to the tragic events of his childhood. Born to a samurai family during an age of civil strife, he suffered the loss of both his parents at an early age. Arrangements were made for Myōe, then age nine, to enter a Buddhist monastery near Kyoto. In his biography he relates the following episode:

"I was overcome by grief when I thought of leaving my dear relatives. How I wept as the horse I rode began its ascent of the mountain. As we crossed the Narutaki River, the horse, while plodding along, bent its head to drink. I thought to myself: 'Even this horse knows my mind though it knows not where it goes;

* The texts I have used in preparing this translation are Miyasaki Yushō, ed., *Kana Hōgo-shū*, Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei 83 (Iwanami, 1964), pp. 59–75; and the edition by Satō Seijun in *Hōnen*, Nihon no Meicho 5 (Chūō Kōron, 1971). A biography of Myōe is included in Bandō Shōjun, "Myōe's Criticism of Hōnen's Doctrine," *Eastern Buddhist* VII, 1 (May 1974), pp. 37–54; a more detailed discussion of the same topic may be found in Tsukamoto Zenryū, "Hōnen to Myōe," *Tsukamoto Zenryū Zenshū* 7 (Daitō, 1975), pp. 1–122, to which this introduction is indebted. A selected biography may be found in Okada Isao, *Myōe: Henreki to Yume* (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1978).

it drinks without stopping its progress. To see to the salvation of those dear to me in the next life, I must make myself deserving as a priest. However, knowing full well that this I must do, just how I should proceed is something even this horse knows better than I.' It was then that I first realized that to make myself deserving as a priest, I must look to the guidance of all sentient beings, rather than just my immediate kin."

Even at this early age, two elements of Myōe's Buddhism are clearly evident. The first is his resolution to make himself deserving as a Buddhist; the second is his resolution to raise the bodhisattva vows. Thirty years later when Myōe wrote *Zaijarin* in criticism of Hōnen's *Senjakushū*, these two elements again appear. In this work he criticizes the Pure Land doctrine on two points: 1) It compared the Path of Sages to that of robbers, and 2) it rejected the Mind of Enlightenment (*bodhicitta*). Here we can detect in Myōe a Buddhist of extremely conservative trappings. Unlike other Buddhist figures of his day he did not engage in building temples, raising disciples, or founding new sects. Instead, out of his deep adoration for the Buddha, he sought to practice in the time-honored tradition of the Buddhist Way. In the light of this understanding, it is not surprising that Myōe, at the age of 23, to make himself worthy as a Buddhist and to spur his efforts at meditation, should respectfully seat himself before the statue of the Buddha and deliberately disfigure his own appearance which he felt was a hindrance to his practice.

The ideal Buddhist is summed in Myōe's term, *arubeki-yō ni*, "behaving as we should." To Myōe, a disciplinarian who regulated every minute of his everyday life, much of the decadence of the times was directly attributable to people not behaving as they should. In particular, "for a Buddhist to behave as he should, he first ought to raise the [Four Great] Vows. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas have attained enlightenment through such means. Though we may not perfect these vows in the present life, in time we will become Buddhas" (*Hōgo*). Elsewhere he says: "I have never said that I do not want to be saved in the next life; I say I want to behave as I should in the present one" (*Denki*). It is in its very simplicity that Myōe's term *arubeki-yō ni* is a striking one. Although growing out of Myōe's personal vision, crystalized in it are the efforts of long years of practice which at its depths touch upon universal dimensions.

The Sayings of Myōe Shōnin of Togano-o

Since the late summer of the second year of Bunryaku [1235] I have been collecting these sayings from people who heard them spoken by our Master. I now record them here; there doubtless remain some errors among them.

[KŌSHIN]

1. People should always hold fast to the seven syllables *a ru be ki yo u wa* 阿留辺幾夜字和, "behaving as we should." Thus priests should behave as priests, laymen should behave as laymen, and so on. The same is true of rulers and subjects as well. It is because we ignore this basic rule that nothing is as it should be.

2. I am not one of those who look forward to salvation in the life to come. Rather I want to behave as I should in this present existence.

3. The practice of Buddhism should not be undertaken in a defiled spirit. What would be the point of a warrior surviving if his behavior were cowardly? You must not treat Buddhism slightly and imagine that ordinary exertion is sufficient in your practice, and think and act just like everyone else. You should determine to strive diligently to plumb the depths of existence to a degree equal to the Buddha's wisdom, even if you do not attain it completely. You may not be knowledgeable about many things and people may speak of you as an unscholarly priest, but this need not concern you. What is important is that you do not cheapen the Dharma with a polluted spirit. If you do, you cannot remain a true monk, although you may retain your human form. Even if you shave your head and call yourself a priest, you will be no different from a *dengaku* priest, sometimes called a *susuki* priest.¹

¹ *Dengaku* (literally, "field entertainment") probably refers to the travelling troupes of entertainers who were invited to stage plays at temples and shrines, and whose

4. Buddhists of ancient times put as much energy into their eager pursuit of the Dharma as they now show in their craving for fame and profit. This is something I have been saying for many years, and an identical sentiment may be found in the *Āgama-sūtra*.² Look it up later.

5. I am sometimes accused of following and flattering others. But I am never bothered by this kind of gossip, because I do not cherish any desire for fame or profit in my heart. I have never solicited any donations for the making of Buddhist statues or the copying of scriptures. My relations with the world of sentient beings cannot possibly be conducted in other than a compassionate spirit. I would be ashamed if other people, be they beggars or lepers, were to hold me in contempt.

6. It is truly meaningful to receive donations from believers, if you can consider yourself worthy of them. On the other hand, a priest who violates the precepts, even if karmic retribution does not overtake him in the next life, will in this very existence have his garments turn into a blazing net scorching his body, and have everything he eats transformed into a red-hot ball, piercing his belly. There is no doubt whatever of this.

7. Even if you do not chant sutras and dharanis (religious incantations) for your own benefit, or offer incense or bow down before the Buddha even once, as long as you preserve your mind and body correctly, and behave as you should (*arubeki-yō ni*), all the gods and benevolent spirits will surely watch over you. All your vows will be fulfilled of themselves, and your wishes will be readily granted. You don't have to be worried about minute details in your practice. Just concentrate on preserving your mind and body correctly.

If your mind dwells with deceit and desire upon material things, and if you act in a passionate, uncontrolled, and self-indulgent way, no practice will be of any avail. Even if you request a fully enlightened arhat to recite a million sutra rolls, or erect a billion statues and worship them, your retribution will be the same as that which overtakes a person who chants sutras with a defiled mouth. One who prays with such an unclean soul will

repertoire no doubt included comic interpretations of priests. Myōe admonishes his disciples to take heed not to follow their example. The meaning of *susuki* ("pampas grass") is not clear, but it may simply bear the connotations of the term "straw priest."

² *Samyuktāgama*, Taishō 2.383 ff.

simply become more and more debased. His prayers have no hope of being answered. Nevertheless, a fool may imagine that, even though he may retain all his old egotistical desires and make no attempt to straighten out his spirit, any prayers he offers will somehow be answered without fail. In order to fulfil his selfish aims, he may ask an ignorant and greedy priest, steeped in defilement, to exert himself on his behalf and pray for him with all his might. But all of these efforts are useless and he is only creating karma which will send him to hell. What a miserable situation!

8. Men used to say that knowing things well leads to self-conceit. I cannot accept this. I would say that knowing things well keeps one from being conceited. The rise of conceited feelings itself shows that there is no true knowledge.

9. If you stand at Ichijō (First Avenue) in Kyoto and glimpse the Tōji pagoda, and then walk in that direction, you will eventually arrive at Kujō (Ninth Avenue) where the pagoda is. Likewise a person who glimpses the Buddha-nature within himself and endeavors to realize it will eventually arrive at ultimate enlightenment. It must be admitted, however, that such an accomplishment is very rare.

10. We may call a man a practitioner of the Dharma, first of all, when his heart is free from impurity or attachment. In addition, if he is versed in Buddhist writings, we call him a scholar-monk; or if his supernatural prayers are efficacious, we call him an adept (*genza* 歌者) or mantra master (*shingonshi* 真言師). One who has neither talent nor virtue is a good-for-nothing monk. If there remains even the smallest feeling of attachment, a man is not worthy to be called a practitioner of the Dharma.

11. King Prasenajit said to the Buddha, "My mother is dead. If there is anyone who can restore her to life, I will give up my land, my palace, my wife and my children. I will even give my own life in return."³ People living in this day and age may feel grief, but surely there is no one who grieves as deeply as that king. Thus it is quite clear that a vast distance separates ancient times from these Latter Days, and the great country (India) from this barbarous land. It is very sad to think of.

³ *Samyukāgama*, T2.335 ff.

12. Such is the decadence of these Latter Days that those who have learned the Buddhist Dharma use their knowledge for their own profit and prestige, without grasping its true meaning. They abandon even the idea of the emptiness of man and the objective world (*nikū no dōri* 二空の道理), which is the Dharma seal of Buddhism. If the teachings of present-day scholar-priests accurately reflect the true Dharma, then Buddhism must be the most evil of all religions. All things considered, there is nothing to be gained by making friends with a person who has no insight. This really makes me sad.

13. In my practice of the Way, I have sought only to discipline myself in the manner of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas themselves. The scholar-priests of these days would find little profit in this; still, perhaps the Buddha may look on me with favor. There is no doubt in my mind that this frame of mind is very valuable when performing the Buddhist practice in accordance with the true forms of the Dharma.

14. Ever since I was a child long ago, I have studied the sacred writings, yet my only motive was to apprehend the essence of Buddhism. I never particularly desired to become a scholar-priest or to be admired by others.

15. How I long for a teacher. I have no desire for disciples. Most people are eager to become a teacher on the slightest pretext, but they probably don't want to spend all their lives following someone else as a disciple. Yet, surely, it is better to train yourself until you reach enlightenment than to spend time in training disciples. Remember that it was because the Buddha paid humble respect to all men of virtue that he attained a place above all other beings, and became a teacher of gods and men.

16. Many people visit this hut requesting a discourse on the Dharma. When I tell such a one that although many people these days put on the airs of a scholar, having memorized countless passages of sutras, I have yet to hear of anyone who has penetrated into the Absolute Truth within his mind, my listener is struck dumb. He is unable to restrain his anger at my words. Actually, in the *Nirvana Sutra* there appears this passage: "I say this to you: It is because you do not penetrate the Absolute Truth within your mind that you are endlessly adrift on the afflicting ocean of birth and death."⁴ What is the meaning of "the Absolute Truth within

one's mind"? That is something one must discover for oneself, probing deeply into one's own mind, whatever the findings may be—knowledge or ignorance, insight or blindness. If one had actually penetrated the Absolute Truth within one's mind, one's anger at other men's ignorance might be nothing to wonder at. But in the case of my guest, the anger he shows reveals his ignorance. This reminds me of the old story of the thief who stole a kettle, and then clean forgot that he had put it on his head. When the owner of the kettle came to ask him about it, the thief spread out his hands and protested that he had not stolen it. Even though he showed that he did not have it in his hands, and proclaimed clearly enough that he did not have it, he didn't know that it was plainly visible on his head. In exactly the same way, if a person loses his temper when he hears my words, it is clear that he knows nothing. This is really a pitiable thing.

17. In the old days, when Buddhist practitioners achieved enlightenment concerning reality or suchness (*jissō* 実相), they would transmit their understanding to their disciples. But in these Latter Days, so far removed from the time of the Buddha, nobody has the wisdom to achieve this kind of enlightenment, so the people concentrate on becoming conversant with worldly things and ideas, and make a great show of their mundane accomplishments. Even more, thinking to further the cause of Buddhism in the temples, they waste their time thinking about the costumes for *dengaku* and *sarugaku* performances.⁴ These people are just squandering their lives.

—The above are remarks our master made when he happened to hear that a certain scholar-priest had been recently appointed to the post of *dengaku* supervisor at a temple and was bustling busily about. Starting out on the Buddhist Way is quite a different thing. Those who seem to have arrived at an understanding of the Dharma are actually far removed from it.

18. We should always bear in mind that our actions, day and night, are being reflected in the crystal mirror of Yama, the King of Hell. We must never delude ourselves that since certain transgressions are hidden, they

⁴ T12.693c. Myōe has adapted the original text's *shishintai* 四真諦 (four ultimate truths) to read *shinshintai* 心真諦 (the Absolute Truth within your mind).

⁵ *Sarugaku* 猿樂 (literally, "monkey entertainment") was a popular form of medieval drama, which forms the prototype of the Noh drama. Actors were invited to perform at temples and shrines, for which event a priest was put in charge of arrangements. See note 1.

will always be our own secret, safe from the gaze of others. We should know to our shame that there are no clouds obstructing the clear reflection of that great mirror.

19. People often pray, in sorrow, for the welfare of their deceased relatives. But no merit will be created and all their efforts will be of no avail, if their hearts are driven by attachment to fame, prestige or material wealth, and if charitable deeds are thus performed with an unbelieving heart. Consider, too, the case of priests who are not fully obedient to the precepts, and whose practices in body, mind, and speech are halfhearted. Such priests eat extravagantly, and feel their most important job to be collecting contributions from believers. They may read the sutras and chant dharanis, but what good is it when their hearts are insincere? Not only will the prayers of these priests not improve the welfare of the deceased, but they themselves will fall into the Evil Realms (hells, hungry ghosts, beasts) because of their sins against *dāna* (charity). This kind of behavior on the part of laymen and priests alike is deplorable and useless, but this is only to be expected in the Latter Days. Monks as well as laymen should be conscientious in their actions and guard against spiritual error. We should feel sorrow and then joy that the karma of our previous lives has caused us to be born into our present situation. Sorrow—because of our misfortune in being born so long after the Buddha's entry into Nirvana. Joy—because in spite of this, we have been privileged to know the Dharma.

20. If the Dharma is granted indiscriminately, those to whom it is granted will eventually become disordered in both thought and action. The wisdom of the Buddha will then be no different from poison. If we simply teach that all elements (*dharmas*) around us are formless (*musō* 無相), the result will be that some people will speak freely as follows: "If dharmas are formless, we don't have to make any effort; let's lie down and take a rest!"

21. Supernatural powers as exhibited by priests are certainly wonderful to behold. But let me leave that out of consideration for the present. People with truly strong will are those who, although without supernatural powers of any kind, nevertheless hold their lives at naught and risk everything to journey to India to study and practice the Buddha Dharma in all its forms. I feel a special admiration and envy for such people.

22. In the old days, slow-witted people who lived near a wise person were made wise by their proximity to him. But in these decadent days, slow-witted people who live near a person full of his own importance are deluded by his pedantry and thus end up turning their backs on the true meaning of the Dharma.

23. In today's world, people are neither especially good nor especially evil. Everyone is mediocre; good and evil can no longer be clearly distinguished from each other. This is because we live in the Latter Days. As the days and years pass, even such distinctions as we can make today may gradually become fainter.

24. Such is the despicable nature of these Latter Days that spiritual disciplines as prescribed by the Buddha are relegated to a secondary position [behind academic achievement]. As soon as men finish reading one academic tome, they immediately want to begin another. To read as many books as possible, and to put the knowledge to worldly use, becomes their only goal. They thus lack the spirit to practice according to the Buddha's teachings. Their hearts are drawn to superficial arguments and illusory thinking. In this situation they cannot summon any enthusiasm to seek the truth. These people should know that such a tendency foretells the hopelessness of their ever becoming a Buddha.

25. Take care! Take care! You must give much thought to your choice of a teacher. Do not let your parents' decrees, your friends' arguments, or your own convenience influence your decision. It is written in the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra*, "Take as your teacher one who is free from the four maladies of seeking enlightenment."⁶ This idea is expounded in detail in the fourth scroll of [Tsung-mi's] commentary on this sutra.⁷

26. It may happen that your way of life is not in accordance with the Dharma, and that you violate the Buddha's precepts without shame; nevertheless you enjoy considerable reverence and prestige from others. You should never be conceited about this. The *Ratnakūṣa Sutra* points

⁶ T17.915,920. The four maladies are: to seek enlightenment by performing all kinds of practice; to seek it by stopping all activities of the mind; to seek it by leaving its attainment to chance; to seek it by eradicating all forms of craving and suffering.

⁷ T39.568-71.

out, "In the Latter Days of the Law, Māra (the demon) may lend magical powers to a person and cause conceited feelings in such a case. Yet a person of right views seems to be put aside. . . ."⁸

27. We are not long for this world. How dull and meaningless it is for us, then, to be so attached to fame and prestige as to act in an utterly futile manner! Even if we were to live a thousand or ten thousand years, our only concern should be to be good. As it is, our lives are as fleeting as a flash of lightning or a drop of morning dew. In such a plight, to perform even one evil act is despicable and foolish.

28. When you preach to believers, taking the role of the Buddha, it is disgusting to take their money after giving them a rambling, incoherent talk. If you do, you are regarding the preaching of the Dharma as nothing more than receiving remuneration, and you have already forgotten the essence of Buddhism. The *Ratnakūṣa Sutra* contains warnings against this kind of behavior. On the other hand, monks have maintained in the records of sutras, "If you can be near a master who preaches the true Dharma, it is the same as having lived in the age of Śākyamuni Buddha."

29. Today's people are hopeless! They think that Buddhism is nothing more than a way to escape the cycle of birth and death. They remind me of the followers of the Two Vehicles,⁹ who seek enlightenment for themselves only. Of course, if I say that today's people are mistaken in these views, it makes me appear conceited. But I say these things only because I am grieving over the extinction of the Dharma. By "extinction of the Dharma" I do not mean that the Dharma itself is weakening or disappearing; rather that trends of this kind are beginning to appear. This is dealt with in more detail in the *Record of Appearances*.¹⁰ You should look it up.

30. Ordinary people are not aware of the real meaning of "being" (*ushō*

⁸ This passage does not occur in the *Ratnakūṣa Sutra*.

⁹ The Two Vehicles refers to the śramana (hearer) and pratyekabuddha (self-enlightened buddha). Their attainments are considered inferior to the bodhisattva of the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), because they seek only their own enlightenment and do not seek to help others.

¹⁰ *Shutsugen mongi* 出現問記; nature of text unknown.

有性, Skt. *bhava*) in Buddhism. Yet the gateway to the understanding of Buddhism is one step further—the awareness of non-being (*mushō* 無性). People may seek to enter the Way without letting go of their pet theory of substantialism. But as long as they retain their attachment to the self, there is no place in Buddhism for them.

31. People who are always trying to find fault with others reveal that they have cultivated no virtue in themselves. Virtue (*toku* 徳) is something to be acquired (*toku* 得). It may be found in those who love and seek it. Looking for faults in others, you only accumulate faults yourself. No virtue can find safe lodging here.

32. If we priests were living in the age of the Buddha, we would never dare to regard ourselves as equal to even the lowest novice-monk. We should be ashamed, therefore, to put on the airs of great masters.

33. To those who have a fierce desire to attain the Dharma I always remark, “What good will it do you to become a Buddha? What will happen if you become perfect in the Way? Let go of your grasping attitude; go back to being a ‘useless man’ (*itazuramono* 徒者). Get rid of all those unnecessary things which support your ego. Just eat when you are hungry, and put on more clothes if you are cold. If you live your whole life in this way, then even if you were to aim for the ground and fail to hit it, you will never fail to strike the Way.” Some people who hear my words might think, “All right. To become a useless man sounds pretty good. I’m going to be like that.” Then they will eat and sleep until they are groggy, pass the time in rambling, idle thoughts, and spend their days in futile chatter. They will never do even the most trifling good for anyone, nor will they do any service to temples, spending their days and nights in vain. Such a person may think he has become a useless man, but actually he has only become a useless man in the Realm of Beasts. Acting this way, he will certainly become a sufferer in hell. How can he expect to attain enlightenment?

When I say “useless man,” I mean first of all a man who devotes himself to the Buddhist Way. A useless man doesn’t debauch himself in sleep. He doesn’t allow his thoughts to wander in every direction. He doesn’t indulge in sloppy meditation postures and give free reign to his wilfulness. He keeps himself to these forms day and night. He doesn’t get involved in

Noh plays or other entertainments, or seek overrefined pleasures. He doesn't dwell on becoming a Buddha, or thirst for enlightenment. He abandons all desire for worldly advancement. In short, I admonish you to try to become a useless man, craving for nothing. To live out your life thus should be your only concern.

34. You might say, "It is out of the desire to attain Buddhahood that a man renounces the world and studies the Way. How terrible it is that you should teach us not to think about attaining Buddhahood." If you think in this way, it will be all the more difficult for you to realize the Way. I want to lead people to Buddhahood, not guide them along false paths. If you put your trust in me, you must also believe my method (*hōben* 方便; Skt. *upāya*) for enlightenment, which is to become a useless man. I assure you that there is nothing useless about this.

35. The relationship between master and pupil is very significant in Buddhism. Even if you are a hundred years old, if you do not know the Dharma, you should try to learn from anyone you can, even a ten-year-old novice monk. And you must inform your master concerning your actions in all matters except prayer, sutra reading, and bodily functions.

36. These days, people are likely to consider that all deeds other than those which actually accord with the Buddha Dharma need not be regarded as sinful or otherwise. This is as if wolves, having cut off their tails, were to lead a communal life in the temple.

37. When there is no master available, it is wise to rely for instruction upon the elder in the monastery. Monks in the past sought to maintain a humble attitude toward each other. If you act contrary to this and live together without peace, you are no different from tigers, wolves, or poisonous snakes.

38. Ānanda, the revered disciple of the Buddha, had a younger sister who became a nun. It is related that she once allowed herself to lose her temper at another revered disciple, Mahākāśyapa, and was cast into hell as a result. Applying this story to our own times, we may be sure that we reap as we have sown. Even nowadays, this same retribution awaits those who arouse anger toward a priest. You should be ashamed of yourself if you

while away your time thinking that this kind of behavior is not a sin.

39. Enlightenment begins when we come into accord with the Dharma principle, that is, with the truth of the Two Emptinesses (*nin-bō nikū* 人法二空, the non-substantiality of both the self and the objective world). This may seem to be utterly insignificant. After we realize this, however, we will never again feel superior to another person. A person who maintains an upright spirit will certainly, even in this life, be under the protection of the Buddhas. To gain the Buddhas' protection means to be in accordance with the Way, and to be blessed with strong faith, as well as tenderness of heart.

40. Whenever you enter the practice hall, you should think that the Buddha is sitting there in the flesh, and consider that you are confronting the actual living Tathāgata. If you treat the wooden statues and pictures of the Buddha as if they were alive, they will eventually start to come alive for you.

41. To seek an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, and to dwell alone in a quiet place, seems to be a matter calling for great courage and determination. But this is essential principally for those who practice begging as a spiritual discipline. It would be more commendable for ordinary practitioners to form an order to keep each other from committing transgressions and encourage each other's progress. The Buddha himself forbade monks to congregate in groups of fewer than four at a time.

Always keep in mind that if you simply sit idly in a secluded corner of the temple, you will become a justification to those who think of practice as a nuisance. You are just deluding yourself and others if you think that this kind of behavior is the "heart of the Way." You are merely drifting through life, physically without exertion, as if in sleep. To doze day and night, whether in a special little hut you built, or in a specially demarcated room within the temple grounds, is just like lying in your coffin while you are still alive. How can you ever expect to become a Buddha if you behave like this? Doesn't this thought fill you with chagrin? If you act like this, even though you were born a human being, blessed with the opportunity to wear the robes of a priest, and have entered the Way and undergone religious discipline, none of your actions have any meaning. You will simply return to the Evil Realms when you die, without having accom-

plished anything.

The chief priest of Kenninji [Eisai 栄西], grieving over this state of affairs, once told me personally: "I have an idea of founding a priests' dormitory, and there gathering together people who reject the world of desire and wholeheartedly long for the Way. I would befriend them in the name of the Dharma, and myself vow to practice Buddhism, forsaking all else." This is indeed a most desirable thing. Traditionally, on the last day of the summer retreat [July 15], the monks who have assembled together confess their transgressions to each other, and polish each other in the practice of the Dharma.

When did the Buddha ever tell anyone to sit dozing in a corner? The teachings are many and varied; they are said to number more than 80,000. There may be a record of the Buddha's having preached such a thing, but I have never heard of it.

42. When I was just a young novice I quickly committed to memory the esoteric texts known as the *Dharma of King Rāgarāja* (*Aizen-ōhō* 愛染王法) and the *Dharma of the Five Secrets* (*Gohimitsuhō* 五秘密法). But I never thought of myself as having the makings of a scholar. Instead, I only wanted to hold fast to the Buddha Śākyamuni, even if I could know him only as a figure drawn on a piece of paper. If I had lived in the Buddha's time, I would certainly have been part of his entourage. As it is, I have many disciples in my charge, but it would be lamentable for me to put on the airs of a great priest, since I will never be able to reach the heights attained by my predecessors. No matter what my situation is, I would never behave like that. How could I go on living if I were to stand before the Buddha without one particle of merit?

Having been born into a samurai family, I could easily have become a warrior. But in that case if I suffered shame even temporarily, I would undoubtedly have died immediately. Since I have taken refuge in the Dharma, my heart would never harbor any impure thoughts. I think that I must become a person of great strength within the Buddha's Way.

43. Most monks these days envisage the Buddha Dharma they have chanced to learn not as the key to emancipation (from birth and death) but as a means for attaining high rank, a trivial, contemptible thing. Even so, they lack enthusiasm in their actions, and in the end they are taken ill and die without accomplishing anything. Ah, what has become of Buddhist

practice in this land, so remote from India, in these depraved Latter Days? Our outlook has become so narrow and petty. This is so far from true wisdom.

44. The spirit of conceit may be likened to a rat. This is because a conceited spirit wriggles its way like a rat into the study rooms of many masters of esoteric practice. I usually point out two things about the spirit of conceit. First, if you don't know something, and yet are full of self-importance because of your knowledge of other things, and haughtily refuse to learn from someone who knows, this is a great waste. Second, what is there to be gained by despising and looking down on so-called "inferiors"? Nothing at all! People are always quick to give rise to feelings of pride as soon as their trifling abilities come to the notice of the world.

45. In the time of the Buddha, there was no drunkenness among the monks. Such offenses as murder, stealing, or adultery were not yet manifest. We can't tell how strictly the great precepts were kept, but the scriptures were not yet used as the basis upon which people regulated their lives. [There was doubtless no need for such strict injunctions as there is in these Latter Days.]

As a rule, when priests are promoted in rank, they should set to the tasks indicated for their new rank, while perfecting the practices they have already mastered. They should regard the scriptures as their guide, and apply the teachings within them to their own lives to correct their faults. These things are expounded in detail in the *Mandala Commentary*;¹¹ you should look at it later.

46. In all my observations of people over a number of years, I have never found a person with a spirit of shameless duplicity who was able to become a Buddhist. The Buddha himself pointed this out in the sutras; the same opinion may also be found in the commentaries. This is exactly as it is at present.

Although I do not look at books used by fortune-tellers who divine people's futures through their facial features, yet generally speaking, I can tell anyone's fortune by their use of the least word spoken by the Buddha,

¹¹ *Mandara shaku* 萬茶羅釋; nature of text unknown.

and be right eight or nine times out of ten. In ancient times, as well as nowadays, the most splendid followers of the Dharma have appeared from among people of refined sensibility. Writing poetry and participating in songs and linked verse (*renga* 連歌) may not exactly be part of Buddhist practice; but those who are disposed to such activities do eventually tend to become lovers of the Dharma. They are as a rule possessed of wisdom, tenderhearted and elevated in their spirits. On the other hand, consider the case of a worldly, base person. He may progress speedily in his learning, and be admired by everyone, but sooner or later his mind will begin to dwell on thoughts of profit and loss in all things, and his demeanor will lose its finesse. Thus I conclude that we should try teaching the Dharma to those who, from an early age, exhibit a laudable refinement and sincerity of heart.

47. In these Latter Days, it is only a matter of time before false and perverted things come to be looked on as truth. Sincerity is becoming rare. How hard it is to accomplish anything under these circumstances!

48. When I first came to this temple of Kōsanji, many monks would gather here. I would watch them performing their daily duties, reciting the sutras before the altar, and sometimes I was unable to restrain my tears of grief. These monks wasted their time day and night, and stood before the altar for only a few short minutes each day. Their hearts were faithless; the actions of their eyes, faces and hands, their meditation posture, indeed all aspects of their practice, were extremely coarse. If you act in this way, how can you expect to gain merit from any amount of sutra reading or mantra chanting? You are thinking only of how you stand in another person's opinion, and your practice is nothing but a tiresome duty. It is of no use for the welfare of the country. You are not worthy to receive the protection of the gods or the charity of believers. There is no doubt that you will be reborn as a stupid beast. Those priests who feel any shame at all should make an effort to reduce the time spent in meaningless activity in the twelve hours of the day. I do not expect priests of these days to do as much as that, but I cannot keep silent about this.

Even when such priests by chance come into the presence of other people, they show no feeling of shame. They are not sincere even when they are performing obeisance before the Buddha, and only go through the motions of prostrating themselves. In olden times, this was called "wor-

shipping like a mortar pounding up and down."¹²

When you perform obeisance, put your heart into it. Imagine that you are worshipping in front of the living Buddha at that very moment. You should recite, "Hail to the Great Benefactor, the Teacher, Śākyamuni". Then all the Buddhas and Tathāgatas will become your teachers. The worshipper and the worshipped thus become one, karmic merit is gained, and evil karma from past sins is eradicated.

I think that there is no thief or liar even among the laity as dreadful as a priest who is timewasting and without true faith. Buddhas have appeared on earth one after another. Stealing the teaching with which they sought to enlighten all beings, and turning it into a source of income—this is truly deplorable.

49. All the members of the lay community, from the Emperor down to the masses, inherit their life's calling from their parents, and are under filial obligation to them for their early nurturing. But as for priests, they have left their families and should no longer enjoy such favor from them. Therefore, even if they receive clothing or food from their parents, these things are to be regarded as offerings from believers.

Some priests, however, have turned their backs on this law. Their minds are unawakened; they never keep the precepts or maintain purity in themselves. These lazy and faithless men actually use Buddhism to make a living, not only for themselves, but also for their families. How lamentable it is! Those who ignore the law so blatantly cannot escape karmic retribution for their sins. There is no doubt that they will fall into hell. These thieves of the Dharma assure us that they are praying for the welfare of the whole world, while at the same time they derive a good income from the temple estates. They take offerings from their supporters as remuneration for praying for them. They perform esoteric rituals with their deeds, thoughts and words uncontrolled. They spend their days in shameless behavior, violating all the precepts of their order. In the end, the fees and charity they receive make it possible for them to continue to transgress the Five Precepts and Ten Major Injunctions given to us by the Buddha. This is a sad state of affairs even for these Latter Days. In the same way as a man deeply sunk in ignorance is not even aware of his plight, these priests have strayed so far from the Dharma that they no longer blame themselves

¹² A reference to the frequent bowing performed during Buddhist ceremonies.

for their sinful excesses. There can be no doubt that hell will be the destination of those who ignore the Law to such a terrible extent. Because of this, I caution you: Keep a close watch over your actions, and even if you do not achieve enlightenment in this life, at least be careful not to indulge in behavior that would cause you to fall from the human state hereafter.

50. Priests, you must simply cultivate belief in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) in your heart. A person who thus believes in the Three Treasures will not be able to stop himself from wanting to believe, even though he be told that he is committing a sin by doing so. How should we understand this? For that matter, even if a person hears that evil acts are sinful, he will do them if he so desires. Belief in the Three Treasures originates in the previous existence. If one has had the good karma to hear the Dharma in the previous life, he will come to believe in the Three Treasures and acquire merit as a result. Thus the capacity for belief is not given to just anyone. [A person who has no karmic capacity will not believe.]

51. Small acts of kindness will eventually lead you to highest enlightenment. You may simply lay a tree across a stream in order to help someone across, or extend help to a poor man, or show a little sympathy to someone in trouble. Most people think such little things don't matter; but actually they are referred to in Buddhism as the Four Practices Embracing the Dharma and are performed by bodhisattvas for the sake of all beings. These practices, namely, charity, kind words, altruism, and cooperation in work, are practiced in all stages of the bodhisattva's discipline, from the beginning to the ultimate level.

52. You priests need do nothing more in life except only to concentrate your mind and to perfect your determination, and to be diligent without wasting time in your practice of the Way. If you think these things are too much trouble, it would be better for you to shed the robes of the order and become a layman. If you were to continue in the priestly life with such a lazy attitude, you would be steeped in sin.

You don't need any possessions at all to practice the Buddha's Way. To waken to the sound of the wind in the pines—to make the bright moon your companion—to apply yourself diligently to your practice—what more is needed? Again, if you can cleanse your spirit through meditation

in a quiet place by yourself, why should you desire human companionship? If by chance you should fall into hell for your bad karma in the past, don't despair. You will be in hell as a bodhisattva. There are bodhisattvas who remain in hell voluntarily for the purpose of saving beings. Hell is not so frightening, since you will be one of this noble company. Above all, he who has the will to follow the Dharma must immediately clarify for himself how he can be sinless in his present situation, and make every effort not to commit the slightest fault.

Katei 4 [1238], year earth/dog (tsuchinoe-inu)

Sixth month, second day.

*This was written in the Akaishōbō of Kōsanji,
in answer to a request; it remains incomplete.*

HININ SHAMON KŌSHIN, the disciple left behind