

*The
Mandala of the Buddha Mothers
Refuge of all Beings.*



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This is an edited version of the Dharma talks given by Rev. Master Kōten at the retreat given at Shasta Abbey in May 2004 entitled *Female Buddhas: The Equality of Buddha Nature.*

Introduction

The following is the result of some twenty years of research, thought and meditation. None of it have I made up out of whole cloth. Every reference can be directly linked to the original iconography.

The Mandala is a map of training consisting of circles each of which must be travelled completely before entering the next. We enter the Mandala at the gate of our kōan, walk the circle of the Gate Keepers fully and then enter the circle of the Offering Bodhisattvas, again, by the means of our own kōan. After travelling this circle fully we may enter the circle of the Buddhas and thus to the centre.

Having reached the True Centre we may see that IT embraces the entire path, the entire Mandala, from the very beginning. And that, without abandoning the True Centre, we return by means of the circles to be of benefit to all beings. “Go in and out,” says the Scripture. If studied carefully this is the path of the Bloodline of the Buddhas and Ancestors.

**The Mandala of the Buddha Mothers
Refuge of All Beings!**

*Homage to the Mandala of the Buddha Mothers
Refuge of all beings!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Fierce Ladies:
The Gate Keepers!

*Homage to Thee
Fierce Lady Holding the Bell!
I praise thee!
Thy Bell of the Dharma resounds eternally throughout the triple
world!
I pray that we all will Listen! Listen!
And enter into our True Home!
Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Vajra!
Gate Keeper

*Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Hook!
I praise Thee!
Thy hook of Faith eternally draws beings
Out of the ocean of suffering!
I pray that we all will Hold on! Hold on!
and be drawn up into our True Home!
Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Goad!
Gate Keeper!

*Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Rope!
I praise Thee!
Thy Rope of the Precepts binds all greed,
all hatred and all delusion!
I pray that we all will Take Refuge! Take Refuge!
and find the way to our True Home!
Homage to Thee.
Fierce Lady holding the Noose!
Gate Keeper!

*Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Chain!
I praise Thee!
Thy Chain of the Vows of Training
is eternally unbreakable!
I pray that we all will Go on! Go on!
to dwell in our True Home!
Homage to Thee,
Fierce Lady holding the Lock!
Gate Keeper!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Fierce Ladies:
The Gate Keepers! Homage!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Sisters:
The Bodhisattvas of Offering!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas and all beings-
Pure Water of the Spirit!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas in all beings-
Flowers of Karma purified!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas and all beings-
Burning incense of daily training!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas in all beings-
White Lotus of our True Abode!

*Homage to Thee Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas and all beings-
Light of Faith dispels the darkness!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas in all beings-
Sweet Taste of the Dharma!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas and all beings-
Heartfelt Songs of Praise!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas in all beings-
Rosary Garland of continuous effort!

*Homage to Thee, Divine Sister,
Offering to Buddhas and all beings-
Fragrant Waters of Contrition!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Sisters:
The Bodhisattvas of Offering! Homage!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Mothers:
The supremely Enlightened Buddhas!

*Homage to Thee, Buddha Mother of Courage!
Born from the tear-filled Eye of Compassion;
Ferrying all beings across the sea of suffering
to the Other Shore;
Fearlessness in doing what needs to be done:
Surpassing all obstacles as green grass
pushing up through stony ground;
Avalokiteshvara who never abandons
training or sentient beings!
We will enter Thy Abode, our True Home!
I pray Thee enter into our hearts!

*Homage to Thee, Buddha Mother of Stillness
With the Eye of the Buddha;
The Clean, Clear, ever Still,
ever flowing Water of the Spirit;
The Third Position wherein we can view all things
through the eyes of a Buddha;
Embracing all beings with Compassion
as deep and fathomless as the blue ocean;
Teaching us how to sit and wait!
We will enter Thy Abode, our True Home!
I pray Thee enter into our hearts!

*Homage to Thee, Buddha Mother of Giving!
Of Abundant Dharma Jewel Offerings;
Seeing with the Wisdom Eye of True Equality,
all beings as our own children;
Dissolving the delusions of pride and self-hate
as the warmth of the sun in splendour
dispels the clinging mists and dews:
Thy Thousand hands and eyes are
eternally giving!
We will enter Thy Abode, our True Home!
I pray Thee, enter into our hearts!

*Homage to Thee, Buddha Mother of Meditation
Robed in the pure raiment of the Precepts;
The White Lotus Abode, whose everlasting arms
support the paths of all beings;
Meditation which cools the sharp heat
of the passions as the mountain snows
flowing down relieve the parched desert;
Teaching us where to seek out and
find the Buddhas!
We will enter Thy Abode, our True Home!
I pray Thee enter into our hearts!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Mothers:
The supremely Enlightened Buddhas! Homage!

*Homage to Thee, Mother of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas!
True Ground of all Dharmas;
Womb of the Tathagata!
Source of all training!
MahaPrajnaParamita!
The Silence deeper than any silence
wherein we can find True Rest!
Thy Abode, our True Home
is eternally within our hearts!

*Homage!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Mothers:
The supremely Enlightened Buddhas! Homage!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Divine Sisters:
The Bodhisattvas of Offering! Homage!

*Homage to the Mandala Circle of the Fierce Ladies:
The Gate Keepers! Homage!

*Homage to the Training to return Home
of all sentient beings!

We take Refuge!
We take Refuge!
We take Refuge!

We offer the merits of this recitation of the Mandala of the Buddha
Mothers – Refuge of All Beings – to all so that they all may be
able to realize the Truth!

*Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds,
*Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds,
*Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

Homage to the Buddha
Homage to the Dharma
Homage to the Sangha

Behold!– the contents of our own minds; the very sea of samsara; the very source of suffering; arising and falling and passing away, running after, pushing away, what we want, what we don't want, what we crave, what we despise. It is the same with the entire universe. Even as we sit here, multitudinous beings experience all sorts of suffering. At this very moment many millions of beings experience pain and sorrow. Birth is suffering, disease is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, wanting what we don't have is suffering, having what we don't want is suffering. Indeed, as the Buddha said, the whole mass of existence is unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

When we view it, when we view our own minds initially, before the encounter with the Way of training, we can see no solution, no purpose, no meaning. Why should beings suffer? Particularly, why should beings suffer when we cannot see the cause that set that suffering in motion? All the structures of our life, all the structures of society, of the world, of the nations, are unstable. The vast changes arise and sweep over us and we are unable to stop them. Nations and empires arise, have their time and pass away.

All of the sea of suffering makes no sense, has no purpose and no meaning. As long as that is so, we rise and fall in it. We drown and return again, we drink the waters on which we float and the salt of them causes us to crave more. We are driven on the winds that arise into the storms.

We crave solidity and stability and there is none. We crave a stopping place and there is none. We look to see some ship that will rescue us and there is none. There is only the maddening arising and falling, drowning and reviving, within this ocean.

This is existence as experienced by most beings, and fantasy worlds are created in order to prevent from seeing this. It is like an endless dull ache. To where can we look for refuge? Where can we find refuge? Where can we find stability? Where can we find sense to this? Various boats come and go throughout this ocean, more or less stable, more or less well built; of various philosophies, religions and understandings; of various intoxications, various ideologies. Some of them are simple pieces of board masquerading as a cruise ship. We climb on them for a while; they last for a period of time and, like all things, disintegrate back into the ocean.

There is no refuge to be found in the insubstantial and the impermanent. As we traverse this sea; out of the insubstantial, out of the chaotic, a pattern may arise. The Buddhas have appeared out of infinite compassion for beings; they endlessly plunge into the ocean of suffering to draw beings out, endlessly provide vessels that all beings can climb aboard. When we encounter the Dharma we are drawn towards it through the Four Wisdoms of the Dharma – the giving of the Dharma – the charity of the Dharma, the tenderness, the benevolence, the sympathy of the Dharma, which stream out of the Four Gates of Truth into the ocean and, like hooks, draw beings out.

If we learn to be still, then a pattern emerges; the pattern of basic cause and effect. When the Precepts are given in our tradition, it says, “in order to make them the eyes of all sentient beings.” This is so that we can see truly, we can see samsara as it is, we can see the contents of our own minds as they are. Taking the Refuges and taking the Precepts is to enter into the Mandala and enter into a way of actually realizing the Truth. This is done through actual practice. The Buddha Dharma, the Truth, cannot be understood at all outside of practice. Through practice of meditation and the Precepts we can become aware of a pattern. It is as if our vision clears and a pattern emerges in chaos. As we try to practice, this pattern becomes clearer, fades from time to time and becomes clear again.

The basis of this understanding is the seeing of cause and effect. The grasping, chasing, pushing away, rising and falling in accordance with unreality is inevitably linked to suffering. In the midst of, and out of, the very ocean of samsara – appearing to our eyes as a result of practice, but in fact there from the very beginning as the true structure of samsara: – arise the bridges like great arching rainbows across the sea.

Most beings do not understand the basis of cause and effect, they do not understand opposites. It is important, as the way of training clears, to study opposites very, very carefully. Rev. Master Jiyu used to say, “To really know one’s opposites” – what are in fact opposites and what are in fact the creations of the dualistic mind. It is the same with understanding cause and effect; instead of the deluded notions that hallucinogenics lead to enlightenment or that I try to hang on to something it will somehow solidify it

and prevent it from following the laws of all things: – all these things misunderstand cause and effect: – the views that retaliation will somehow lead to stopping of violence; all these are due to the deluded understanding of cause and effect and, because of that, lead inevitably to suffering.

As we practice and the pattern emerges and the bridges arise, we begin to hear the sound of the Dharma, of the Truth; we begin to hear “the golden bell that rings but once.” In fact It is always, continuously ringing; a deep vibration, continuously. When we hear it for the first time it is like a tinkle of a small distant bell that we hear and which reverberates in our body and mind.

According to which of the poisons are most prolific in our karmic stream, we approach one of the gates to the Mandala. Each being is a unique warp and woof of crossed threads of a moment; a particular combination of karma and merit that comes together at a particular point, a particular instant, a particular opportunity, unique, to do something about ourselves, to do something about suffering. If we let this unique moment pass, then another unique moment arises in the next instant, but not the same moment as before, not the same opportunity as we have right now. Whether our poison that we have drunk be greed, hatred, pride, envy, or delusion which permeates them all, so do we drift or come towards the gate that most is able to benefit us. As we approach the gate, the poison grows in intensity, and this is a great blessing and opportunity and the functioning of training. Because this is so, we talk about the keepers of the gate, sometimes as those who defend the Mandala – although the Mandala needs no defence. It is rather that charity, tenderness, benevolence and sympathy

pouring forth into the ocean have attracted us and drawn us up and that the very poison can be cleansed and become the Water of the Spirit. It is in fact the Water of the Spirit itself, just coloured by our own grasping. We must truly realize that the arising of greed, hate and delusion, pride and envy are the very opportunity to train, and that we should not wait for a calm time, or a time when we feel like it in order to apply the remedies, in order to try to sit still, in order to do what we can; rather now is the time, the very moment of the arising of the contents of our own minds.

It is at this very moment, when we look at the contents of our own minds and attempt to sit still, having taken the Refuges and the Precepts and entered into the Way, that the fullness of the Mandala appears, although we do not necessarily yet see it.

Om to the One Who Leaps Beyond all Fear! Out of their limitless compassion, the Buddhas and Ancestors have flung wide the gates of the Dharma, the doors to the Deathless Realm.

We do not need to walk a long distance in order to encounter these gates; they exist now within our own minds, at this very moment, with the arising of greeds, hates, and delusions. When the gates of the Dharma appear before us what arises within us is “I cannot enter. I am old, I am too old, I am too sick, I am too weak, what will become of me?” Which is precisely the question.

In order to enter into the gates we must leap beyond all fear; look squarely at ourselves, sit still as if looking in a mirror and not look away at whatever arises in front of us. The more we try to look away, the more we try to run away, the fiercer and more disturbing will be what we see each time we look back, until we sit up straight and squarely in the presence of the Buddhas and Ancestors and look at ourselves. Then and only then will that fierceness, that fearfulness, change and we will indeed see charity, tenderness, benevolence and sympathy emanating from the very events of daily life, from the very aspects of our own minds. There is no other way for it except to arise and go into this. We can wait for the rest of our lives rather than do so, and then we will have to come back to the same place the next time around. There is nothing in this life that is of more value than to look at ourselves, to look at the contents of our own mind, to learn about ourselves. All external activity to benefit others must derive from this. The Bodhisattva vows to rescue all beings begin with the contents of our own minds. If we cannot be still and compassionate towards the contents of our own minds, how shall we ever be still and compassionate towards all sentient beings?

The excuses and opposites which arise at the time of trying to take a good look at ourselves are precisely the opposites referred to in the Buddha Dharma that we need to let go of. We must in the end heed the voice of the bhikkuni who said, “What does a woman’s nature have to do with this? If our hearts are set and proceed along the path there is no aspect of it that we cannot accomplish. Am I a man, am I a woman in this matter of training?” Simply enter the Way, simply let go. It does not matter about the criticisms

of others in regards to entering the Way. These are merely the eight worldly conditions that will always arise, of praise and blame, fame and disgrace, elation and sorrow, success and failure. These will always be there. How long are we going to let this prevent us from doing something about ourselves? For it is in looking at ourselves, looking at the contents of our own minds and trying to do something about ourselves, that the whole of the Buddha–Dharma emerges. It is the very place where the whole of the Buddha–Dharma emerges.

This entering of the gates is continuous throughout our daily lives; each time the opportunity to sit still arises in the face of the contents of daily life; each time we do sit still, it is the entry into this gate.

Om to the One Who Leaps Beyond all Fear! Enter this gate now! Now! By simply being still with the contents of your own mind, letting go of blame. While we hold on to the constructions of our own minds they constitute the house of our present reality. If we realize that all we need to do is not continue to build them, they will dissolve; that all we need to do is not run after them, continually adding to them, but rather, stop and look; sit still and let go of our greed and attachment for the fog which settles around us. If we do this then the guardians of the gates – who seem to be holding things that drive us on, that throttle us in their narrowness, that restrict us – become rather the very aids and helps on the Path. The seeming restrictions of the Precepts become the very embodiment of True Liberty, of True Freedom from sorrow and grasping. To take the Refuges and the Precepts, to be given the Refuges and the Precepts, is to be given the keys to these gates. Do not sit

forever with the keys hanging around your necks, but make use of them. That is why you have been given them.

When wandering in samsara out of intense greed, when wandering in samsara out of intense jealousy, when wandering in samsara out of intense pride, when wandering in samsara out of intense anger and hatred, when wandering in samsara because of intense delusion, these gateways into the Treasure House, into your own Treasure House, are always present, never far from us. The True Treasure that we have been given is being taught how to meditate so that whatever the circumstances that arise, however ghastly may be the external conditions, we still have the contents of our own minds to work with.

Enter the gate! For when you do so, you will encounter these obstacles as the Bodhisattvas of Offering who are continually, unstintingly, unselfishly offering to you, to all beings, to the Buddhas, to themselves, the pure Water of the Spirit.

We must realize that our own muddied water is the Pure Water; that karma, when offered up, becomes the flowers which are offered on the altar before the Buddha; that we must offer the burning incense of our daily training every day and truly apply the light of faith which dispels the darkness. This is something we must exercise effort in, as well as apply the treasures and antidotes and healing agents that we have been given; the many, many, many infinite skilful means offered by the Dharma. Not to realize this is to be in the Treasure House with infinite variety of wonderful things while holding on to our limitations. These treasures within the Treasure House, these antidotes, these

healing agents are ours to make use of so that we encounter the sweet taste of the Dharma through continuous effort.

Work on the acceptance of everything, including non-acceptance. Do not worry or be discouraged if you do not seem to be able to make aspects of training work. If you sit still and work on accepting that then you are doing the actual work of training. It is like spinning a thread or tuning the strings of a musical instrument; too tightly held by the grasping of the self, no music can be produced, no thread can be spun; no effort at all and no music can be produced, no thread can be spun.

This is called the co-joining of wisdom and skilful means, training and Enlightenment being one, serene reflection, effortless effort. The fierce and fearful gatekeepers become the Divine Sisters of Offering who uphold the Families.

The gateways stand open wide. It is for us to walk in.

The Bodhisattvas of Offering, the Divine Sisters, are the upholders of the Families, of the Buddhas, because it is through the burning incense of daily training that the light of faith dispels the darkness; and it is the sweet taste of the Dharma, through offerings of the training to self and others, to Buddhas in all beings, to Buddhas and all beings, that allows us to enter the gateway of the Families and to convert the five poisons.

Each being, each person enters through the particular gateway of their kōan and goes around to each of the Divine Sisters or Gatekeepers in the circle, coming back to the gateway of their own kōan and entering through the gateway into the next circle.

We begin with the Buddha Family which is the conversion of jealousy and envy, this conversion being the embodiment of the Precept regarding stealing – taking that which is not given – and the Precept regarding speaking against others. Both of these arise out of the poison of envy, jealousy, inadequacy, linking across to pride on the other side of the Mandala, all of them being interrelated.

The colour of this particular family is green, which is the colour of the brilliance of the sun, of the Buddha Nature, of the direct experience of the Buddha Nature, covered by the deep blue lapis lazuli of the sky at midnight, of the northern direction of the Mandala. So this Buddha Family is the family of the dark night of the soul. Often the Mandala is started off with the east and dawn, and I have decided to start from this particular Buddha Family because this is my particular gate of entry. Also, I think, it very much relates to the kōan of many westerners.

The Buddha Mother is called the Faithful One who Guides all Beings to the Other Shore, – Samayatara, – in other words, the Precepts which guide all beings to the Other Shore. Samaya means vows, Precepts, faithfulness, commitment. This is the family of Action. When all is darkness, when we cannot see, we need to move. This is the realm of all – accomplishing action, of the fulfilment of the Bodhisattva vows, of the benefiting all beings through

activity. Bodhisattvas are of many types and one of the types is activity. Rev. Master Jiyu was an activity Bodhisattva, as she would often say herself. This is why the antidote to despair is activity, to do deeds to benefit others. It is also why the throne of this particular Buddha is called a Garuda, that great mysterious bird that flies through the dark, knowing where it is going. This is also the Buddha Family of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Sitting still; compassionate activity and the practice of the Precepts through the dark night; faith that the sun does in fact exist even though we cannot see it, all this leads to the birth of the Future Buddha within ourselves.

To arrive at the realm of all – accomplishing action, which is the realm of this particular Buddha, we apply the Precepts, two of which can apply to each of the Buddha Families.

First, the Precept regarding stealing, which in its oldest formulation says “to take that which is not given.” As the Precept says, stealing arises from the thought that one does not have something that everyone else does. The same holds true regarding the Precept about speaking against others. Both arise from the separating off of self and other.

This action and activity arises out of faith, arises out of the keeping of the Precepts and the application of them. It is why the Precepts are so vital to training, and why this point is so often misunderstood. When people hear all – accomplishing action or Bodhisattva vows, they think in terms of great and marvellous things and wonder how do they get from here to there. It is the Precepts that are the great actions of the Bodhisattvas, the great actions of the

Buddhas, the all-accomplishing actions. The answer to the question “how do I benefit the world?” is to apply the Precepts as rigorously and thoroughly as possible and make them one’s skin, flesh, bones and marrow. When you do that, then what you need to do to benefit the world will become apparent, and indeed you will not be able to prevent benefiting others.

The Precepts are more than simply a way of stopping bad karma; they are more than simply a way of controlling the mind. They are the Bodhicitta, the very embodiment of the aspiration towards enlightenment, the Buddha Nature, the Way-Seeking Mind.

The truth is that the gate to the Treasure House is in front of us, and that we look for a more exciting gate, a more interesting gate. So we chase after and grasp after even spiritual things, seeking for something to excite the mind in a particular way. If we truly take and apply the Precepts we will be able to enter into the marvellous doings of the Buddhas and Ancestors who are constantly entering the world to benefit beings. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are constantly entering the world to benefit beings; there is nothing anybody can do about this. This is simply what is. If we look carefully with the eyes of the Precepts we can see this happening constantly. All the marvellous spiritual powers of the Tathagata, all the abundant Dharma jewel offerings, all the wondrous Buddha realms, are within this gateway through the Precepts. Do not think lightly of them; do not think that the full realization of the Way is for anybody else but yourself. Do not delay through inadequacy or pride or laziness. Take up the practice of the Way with both hands and fully explore all aspects of it.

You have no time. Birth, old age, disease and death, illness and sorrow and pain and confusion continuously roll along. There is no time to wait, no time to waste time. And this activity is not the same as running around trying to accomplish a hundred different things at once. It is, rather, making use of the Precepts as the eyes of all sentient beings to truly see what is going on, to truly see that we move within this Mandala, that the beings we encounter that we do not like are the very ornaments of this Mandala. We must respect all beings, because it is only by respecting all beings that we can learn from all beings. And then all beings are, and become, Bodhisattvas. Then we can move through the burning madhouse of the world with safety, knowing that nothing whatsoever can touch our ability to practice. No one can take away our capacity to try and do the best we can in the circumstances, to apply the Precepts in the circumstances, to try to sit still.

The wisdom of this Buddha Family teaches us fearlessness, which is the knowledge that if we focus on the Precepts and on training then nothing that happens to us can harm the Essential Nature. And there is no time but now because we do not know when we will find ourselves in circumstances that are very, very difficult to endure. Now is the time to develop the ability to be still, now is the time to develop the discerning wisdom regarding the Precepts.

The obligation of those who enter into and train within the Mandala of the Precepts and the Dharma is to remain still when the world shakes. That is how we benefit beings. All – accomplishing action is often being still enough to know what is the essential thing that needs to be done. This

is the Buddha Family of faithfulness. For me it is to always sit face to face with my master, to be faithful to what I have received. I do not have time to squander it on twaddle. And neither do any of you here.

From the north and the sun at midnight, we move to the Buddha Family of the Vajra Diamond, and the East and the dawn. This is the Buddha Family of anger, aversion and hatred, of spitefulness and harbouring grudges. It is said that this poison is even worse than the poison of greed – attachment, because at least with the poison of attachment one cherishes sentient beings, whereas the poison of anger and hatred is destructive of the very foundation of the Bodhisattva vows, and so must be very carefully avoided and trained with, for it will destroy the very basis of compassion toward sentient beings.

We can see that the state of the world, which “obsesses our private lives” at this very moment, is related to the poison of anger and pride. The Dhammapada says “those who do not realize that in this quarrel we perish will never have their quarrel ended,” and “hatred is never ceased by hatred in this world, hatred is only ceased through the conversion and letting go of hatred. This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.”

This is the Buddha Family of stillness, of the mudra of earth witness, which is when the Buddha touched the earth; stretched forth his hand to touch the earth in the middle of the attacks of Mara. It was the challenge of Mara that the Buddha had no right to any seat on the earth because all the

earth and all its inhabitants were controlled by the poisons of greed, hate, delusion, anger and pride. The Buddha called the only witness that he had, which was the very earth, to the fact he had trained with and let go of these poisons, and therefore was beyond the jurisdiction of Mara. It is why in many countries, in many Buddhist countries, those who renounce the world do not bow to the rulers of the country, but rather the rulers of the country bow to them. This is because by renouncing the world and vowing to cleanse themselves of greed, hate and delusion, pride and envy, they pass beyond the jurisdiction of the world, which has to do with ruling and manipulating of the poisons.

We spoke the other evening of lay and monastic training. From the view point of the Buddha–Dharma there have to be people who renounce the world, just as there have to be people who train within it; there have to be people who renounce the world. Otherwise the bridge across the sea of suffering to the other shore will become invisible and not seen for many ages. Otherwise the delusions of the world, of grasping and retaliation, will permeate everybody and all aspects of everything because there will be no alternative. There must be those who live beyond the world. This is essential for the Buddha–Dharma. And those who are able to accomplish this must on all accounts be supported in their doing so. For it is their doing so which sets an example to the world. The merit of taking the robe and bowl and walking through the streets of this town, of this city, is incalculable in its benefits to sentient beings, simply by the example of living beyond the world and stepping forth into nothing. For the world is fearful of loss if it lets go, tenacious of the distinction between friend and enemy, and there must be examples of stepping beyond

this, of places that welcome all sentient beings without distinction. If such places and such people are not maintained then truly the Buddhas have passed beyond the world and we are left for countless eons unable to see. Until, out of the arising of the intensity of the suffering, arises insight. It is not the Dharma – ending age as long as there are such places and such people. The Buddha of the future continually comes through such aegis.

Those who do not understand this and the necessity for this do not understand the Buddha Dharma at all.

Because of this, all trainees, whether lay or monastic, must work hard on themselves to cleanse the poison of anger and hatred and spitefulness, because clinging to such things hastens the Dharma – ending age, and blocks the Buddhas from turning the unmatched Wheel of the Law.

It is essential not to be neglectful. It is essential to eliminate this poison. The wisdom which arises out of this Buddha Family, in order to convert this poison, is called the Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror, which we chant during morning service; *The Most Excellent Mirror, Samadhi* – the most excellent mirror of meditation – the most excellent mirror meditation of sitting still and allowing things to arise and pass. *The Most Excellent Mirror, Samadhi* should be studied very carefully in this regard, for it is the excellent instruction regarding the converting of this poison. One must also apply the antidote of loving kindness, of charity, tenderness, benevolence, and sympathy, in order to cleanse this poison. For this poison, unattended, will destroy the root of one's Bodhisattva vows, and one's ability to benefit beings.

The Buddha Mother, Lochana, who is the Buddha Mother of this family, is the one who sees with the eyes of the Buddha and who teaches us how to convert this poison by sitting and waiting. To act from the viewpoint of this poison, of anger and spitefulness, distorts as almost nothing else the clarity of our vision. The clean, clear, ever still, ever flowing Water of the Spirit is this mirror, is shining, pouring forth, embracing all beings. This is also the mirror of karma, in which we can see the past without grasping or pushing away – “It is as if within a jewelled mirror seeing both shadow and substance.” You are not what you see, and what you see has conditioned what you have become.

It is essential that we be not lazy or negligent in working on this poison. This is also the poison of grudges, of vindictiveness, spitefulness and the resentment of other sentient beings. This is a major destroyer of the harmony of the Sangha.

When beings in training – in a place of training – are greedy, then it is seen that this can be trained with, given time, and applying compassionate antidotes to help the person let go. The poison of anger and spitefulness must be addressed immediately and with strong measures. For it will destroy the harmony of the community, destroy the harmony of the Sangha, whether it is a Priory, a monastery, a lay community.

If we do not learn to tolerate others, how can we ever expect nations and peoples to tolerate one another? For vast wars arise out of the same cause as in our petty vindictiveness, like a match which when set alight consumes without our being able to stop it. It is why it is

such a great evil to set in motion the wheel of karma deliberately, for others, through this poison. For it will set loose the very demons within the hearts and minds of others and there will be no calling it back.

Those who are in charge of large numbers of people who do this are great fools who cause untold suffering for many, many beings and inevitably this leads to destruction, so we must under all circumstances convert this poison within our hearts, and not be negligent regarding it. This Buddha Family is indicated by the colour of deep lapis blue, which both represents the old saying about being blue in the face with anger, and also the blue of healing, of coolness. Of dawn. Of the ever present, of the Dharmakaya, which are the underpinnings of converting this poison.

It is essential that we come to know what Rev. Master Jiyu called the Third Position, wherein we can view all things through the eyes of a Buddha. If we cherish pettiness within our hearts we will not be able to see this because indeed, such pettiness and spitefulness and anger are the very embodiment of duality and unreality. If we wish to rescue and benefit all beings, if we wish to understand why conflict exists, it is essential that we look into the nature of our own hearts, because this is where it arises. If we can stop and wait, if we can refrain from retaliating when provoked, if we can convert the irritation within our own hearts, then we can actually aspire that this can be done on the level of nations, but we should not expect nations and other people to be able to do this if we cannot within our small little circle of ourselves. If we are able to sit still with this anger and irritation, this precept of anger and killing, then we can indeed experience the dawn, the

luminescent splendour of the Dharmakaya. But if we continue to chop up the Buddha Body into bleeding fragments we will not be able to do so.

Do not count yourself as a serious trainee unless you can let go of a single irritation. Examine yourselves carefully. Where are we and where are we not in terms of this poison which sets on fire the wheel of becoming? Which sets on fire the wheel for our self and others, and threatens to engulf the entire world. We can do something about this now, at this moment, right here, by simply letting go of the irritation with others when it arises. In this we must be in deadly earnest, and in trying to do so we can benefit the world.

Yesterday we spoke about dawn and the East. Today this Buddha Family is about the South, and the full light of the sun, entering into the full light and warmth of the Dharma.

In order to do this we need to address the particular poison related to this family, the poison of pride, and in this particular case, the poison of the pride of inadequacy, the stubborn clinging to our sense of an inadequate self, the stubborn clinging to our inability – seeming inability – in regards to spiritual matters. When we cling to this we are in fact full of pride; of a pride in a type of self; indeed, of selfish pride. And it is worse because we do not see it as selfishness. We see it rather as a type of humility.

In the Buddha Dharma faith means confidence. This is confidence and faith in the ability of the Dharma to help us,

in the ability of the Buddha and compassionate teachers to guide us. When we cling to the idea of an inadequate self we put vast obstacles in the way of the Dharma and of compassionate teachers to benefit us. This poison can become stubbornness, a refusal to let go of past patterns, behaviours and ideas because of stubborn clinging to the ideal of an inadequate self. This is just as much pride and self-grasping as having vast, high sense of oneself, and must be let go of in order for the Dharma to benefit us. We must not think that the Dharma is for anyone else but ourselves. We must not simply admire other practitioners of the Dharma, as if from afar, but practice it ourselves, thoroughly apply its principles to ourselves, and not neglect to apply them because of selfish craving for and clinging to the idea of an inadequate self.

It is sometimes said that those in our society who devote themselves to others in a way that completely exhausts themselves have no sense of self. It is even sometimes said that the Buddha Dharma is not useful to them, particularly women, because there isn't a strongly developed sense of self. But this is a total misunderstanding of the Buddha Dharma. It is just as much of a delusion to put aside the self in order to exhaust oneself for the "benefit of others" as is any other type of self-grasping. Indeed, the proof is in the consequences. People who do these things to the point of exhausting themselves often become spiteful and angry and exhausted and fed up and even annoyed and angry at the very people that they "benefit," which is precisely an indication of how much self there is involved in it.

There is no separate self from the very beginning. All attempts to move it, set it up, exalt it, abase it, shift it from

side to side are delusion – dancing around in a ring around something that is simply not there. The Buddha Nature is not another variety of self but rather something which is universal and not limited to a particular person. No person has more Buddha Nature than any other person, or for that matter, than any other living thing, so we do not start out with more of what is necessary to train than anyone else. Some of us bring into this world, seemingly, a greater load of karma than others, but this can be seen not as an impediment but rather as an opportunity so that at the end of that person's life they can have cleansed so much more karma through being able to sit still. Do not think that because you are besieged by difficulties, pains, aches and sorrows that these are impediments to training. These are the very stuff of training, the very road that we need to walk down, the very companions on the way. The very things that benefit us, and we should not seek for ease before we begin training, but rather we should apply the Precepts and training right now, to what arises in the mind right now.

Similarly, it is a mistake to think that the arising of confusion and the inability to see is an impediment to training. Rather apply training right then, right now. Try to be still, try to allow the confusion to arise and pass. In other words, do the best you can in all situations, and do not long for easier ones. The world of samsara which we are in is the world of suffering. It is not fair, in the usual way that people look upon such things. From the broader perspective, from the perspective of the Dharma, it is all the arising and passing of karma. Someone by accident set the wheel of karma in motion, and we experience the

consequences. What we can do is sit still and apply the antidotes of training.

The one who clings to the idea of a separate inadequate self is very difficult to teach, because any remedy applied serves to cause the person to draw their shell even tighter and thicker around them. “Compassion” poured forth simply pours over it like water off a duck’s back. “Fierce compassion” results in the being, the person, drawing further into their shell. Such a poison, therefore, can only be adequately addressed by the person themselves. And by clinging to the idea of a separate inadequate self they create a self-fulfilling prophesy, because if you think continually and act as if everybody hates you, sooner or later you are going to find people who do precisely that, even if it is out of impatience.

A horrible cruel upbringing is not an impediment to training, and we need not wait until we have gotten all our eccentricities straightened out before we can train. In the depictions of the throne of the Medicine Buddha one sees little beings hiding underneath it, which are called yakshas – sometimes what is called in the West, demons. They hide underneath the Buddha’s throne so that they can begin training. They do not wait for a more fortunate existence. They begin training as they are. We do not need to wait, to be straightened out, to be calm, to be nice people, to be well adjusted, to have a nice relationship, to have enough money, to begin training. We can begin training – applying of the Precepts, and trying to sit still – right now!

We ourselves have to pour the water over ourselves. When we cling to selfishness, to the idea of an inadequate

self, then it is as if the five waters of the five Buddha Families stain us because the water cannot soak through us, so the various colours stain us in our grasping after jealousy and pride and greed and anger. When we let go of this selfish craving for an inadequate separate self then the waters of emerald, of ruby, of sapphire, of crystal can pour over us, transforming our jealousy into the ability to act wisely, transforming our greed into compassion, because that is their essential nature.

To start training is really quite easy. We only have to try to be still when we don't feel very much like being still. We only have to try to apply kindness when we don't feel very much that we like the object of our kindness. We only have to apply faith and confidence when we don't feel like applying it because our dark hole is much more comfortable to us and known.

The wisdom that arises out of the conversion of this poison is the wisdom of seeing all things as equal, the Wisdom of Equality. This is also the Buddha Family of Offering. The True Perfection of giving is to let go, for if you let go of attachment you have already fulfilled the perfection of giving. The Buddha Mother Mamaki is She Who Regards All Beings as Her Own Children, which is the very basis of metta, of loving kindness.

The idea of an inadequate separate self is stuck in the skandha of feeling, and with the idea that feeling is the ruler of our lives – “I don't feel like doing this. I don't feel like talking to that person. I don't feel like getting up today.” Feeling is one of the skandhas that arises and passes. Rather, focus on what is good to do. And, even

while applying confidence; hold the mantra “I could be wrong.” I could be wrong, and I will trust in the Dharma’s ability to benefit me, in the ability of compassionate teachers to benefit me, and I will loosen my grip upon my inadequate self. The clinging to the inadequate self is a whole world, a very mountain of selfishness. It makes one useless to sentient beings, deaf to compassionate teachers and blind to the possibility of change. Clinging to the idea of a separate inadequate self is as sitting with the hands tightly closed. Open the hands. Open the Lotus of the heart. Accept the medicine of the Dharma. Accept the advice of compassionate teachers. The Dharma is able to be practiced. Meditation is something we can do. Training is something for which we have the ability. Because it is arisen for us to seek, we are the type of people to find. An ancient master said, “You are like This, I am like This, all sentient beings are like This.”

When you cling, cling to the idea of a separate inadequate self, you steal from yourself, and steal from others. You kill something of yourself and kill something of others. You speak against yourself and you speak against others. You are proud of yourself and are devaluing the ability of others to help you. You are selling the wine of delusion for yourself and others and defaming the Three Treasures. If you do not move because of the clinging to the idea of an inadequate self you are in fact breaking all of the Precepts.

Do not say that the Way is for other people but not for me. Study the Dharma, listen to the words of wise and compassionate teachers, apply meditation. Study the Precepts. The means are already within your hands. The valuable treasures that have been given to us are already

within your hands. You must take them and apply them to your daily lives, and not cling to the dubious fruits of the idea of the inadequate self. We must forgive ourselves for having bought the deluded ideas of our parents and society, and walk past them, walk out of them as if they were falling-down old houses, in which we can no longer safely dwell. And let them go. Stop trying to prop them up or understand them. Just simply let them go.

The clinging to the idea of a separate inadequate self is due to a severe lack of perspective on the actual level of one's own suffering. There is suffering, which other people have, that we could not bear for an instant without losing our minds, and yet there are people who bear this suffering. Most of our suffering is caused by the clinging to selfish ideals, which, if we let go and put down, an enormous amount of our personal suffering would be dealt with. But we must have faith and confidence in our ability to do this, in the ability of the Dharma to benefit us.

In *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*, it shows a whole lot of people bowing down and worshipping the path instead of treading it, instead of walking it. They wish to admire the path and the symmetry of it. They wish to admire people who go further down the path. As it is said, "The wise do it for themselves, fools wait to ask a Bodhisattva." This way is for nobody else but you. Apply yourselves to it. Let go of this clinging to the idea of a separate inadequate self. Walk the way, make it true for yourself, and benefit innumerable sentient beings thereby.

This is my great compassion to you.

And now we turn towards the western section of the Mandala; the Buddha of meditation, of compassion – Pandaravasini, She robed in the white raiment of the Precepts – the Buddha of the conversion of greed and grasping after, directly across the Mandala from the Buddha connected with pushing away and aversion and hatred.

This is the place of the Wisdom of the all is different; the wisdom of wise discernment; the wisdom of wise comparing and contrasting in order to benefit ourselves and all beings.

This is also the place in the Mandala where we see the sun setting and contemplate that, despite our grasping, all things pass away. Where is yesterday? Where are the snows of yesteryear? Where are the people we knew when we were very young? Where are the famous and great of years ago? Gone beyond our recall, pages in books, words, names in old aphorisms. There is a poem in the medieval French called “In Praise of Famous Women” by Francois Villon which has each verse about a great woman of his time, and just before his time. And he names each of them and asks at the end, “Where are they now?” “Mais ou sont les neiges d’antan?” “But where are the snows of yesteryear?” Where are the great events that occurred, that troubled many generations? Gone, gone and nobody remembers them anymore. Thus it will be with us.

Our lives are like a fair, the booths set up for selling various things. We are attracted and drawn in; little games of chance, little sweet things, little disappointments of a child who does not win the game it gambles on, or discovers the sweet that it longed for doesn’t taste the same, now that it’s gotten it. Then the fair ends,

all the booths are packed away, the people disperse, and after a while there is barely a memory.

All things that come together disperse. All things that arise pass. All solids dissolve. This is the way of things. Old age, pain, disease and death roll upon us, are quickly behind our steps, and they are inevitable. None of us can say that tomorrow we will be alive. None of us can say that tomorrow we will not be so distracted by pain that we will find it very hard to be still. This is the way of things. We have only now, this moment.

When we come to the point of death – whether suddenly or slowly, whether by sudden accident or by old age – nobody can enter the gate with us. We will go alone, as Dōgen said, accompanied only by our good and bad karma.

How do we prepare? If death suddenly finds us, how will we have time to compose ourselves? And we must not think that if we die of old age our minds will be able to be composed and serene. Rather, we must work on our minds now. We must work on the Precepts now, for life is uncertain, unstable, like one of those large bubbles blown on summer afternoons that turns in the warm air and glistens with rainbow colours, and rides high and then bursts, nothing left, nobody remembering them. This is the way things are.

Youth lasts but little time, and yet does not believe it lasts but little time. I was twenty-one when I first came here. Now I am forty-nine. Where are all the years? Gone, gone without trace, without even an instant left behind. Where is that person gone, who was twenty-one years old? No trace at all.

There is no stability anywhere, no safety for grasping; no place we can go where age and disease will not find us. There is an

Unborn, Uncreated, Unformed, Undying. If it were not so there would be no possibility of liberation, or meaning of any sort, in the formed, the born, the created, the dying.

We have no guarantee where the winds of karma will blow us. I have no guarantee that at the moment of death, I shall not be completely distracted, and who knows where the winds of karma may blow me? I have not cleansed all my karma. How easily we are distracted by little things. If we cannot sit still when we have a touch of the cold, what shall we do when the great millstones of death grind us to the point of nothing? At that time, the only thing that will support us is the body of merit. To the extent that we have dissolved the five poisons, to that extent there will be nothing to hold onto, and as the Scripture says, “when the elements dissolve, the child will return unto the mother.” The seeming small light of the individual Buddha Nature will enter into the Complete Light.

But this is not a given. All the power of the Buddhas and Ancestors cannot dissolve our grasping for us. In daily meditation we train at letting go. When we reach the Great Retreat of death – whether it occurs swiftly or slowly we shall still sit the Great Retreat of death – at that time obsessed, by intense greed, shall we be blown by the red wind of karma, to where we know not. Obsessed by intense jealousy shall we be blown by the green wind of karma, dispersed upon the winds of karma, fragments entering into suffering, or shall the purified light of our own Original Nature shine upon us at that time? For like shall pass into like and light into Light.

At that time of death, grasping and pushing away will tear what we consider to be ourselves apart, envying others and praising others will tear us apart, for our self will grasp after these things unless we have learned to let go. The self does not exist in any

centre place but in our grasping after the opposites, the outflows chasing after external things. At the time of death the crude sense of the self will dissolve. Pulled in various directions by the winds of karma – our unconverted greeds will head perhaps towards animal birth, unless we have learned to let go, and have cleansed our karma to the degree that we can.

At that time, the Body of Merit will be what will hold us up. If we have cleansed our greed, then the Buddha of Immaculate Light, which is the transformed greed, will precede us. She Robed in the Immaculacy of the Precepts, which is the transformation of our own karma, will be Protector, and we will not fall into the blazing ambush of the bardo, of the realm between births. If we have learned to let go of our jealousy and our pride, then that jealousy and pride transformed will be our very protectors, the very things that bear us up. If we have converted and let go of our anger, then that transformed will be the Healing Lapis Lazuli Radiance.

But we must work on this now, not after the meditation period even, but right now. Let the greeds, hates and delusions, let the thoughts and conceptions and opinions arise and pass, do not chase after them. Do not chase – push them away. Do not create a poison composed of the Five Poisons which will do you harm.

We contemplate the western direction where the sun sets: – the red colour of the setting sun, of impermanence, of the passing away of ideals, dreams and aspirations, the passing away of youth, the dissolving of passion, and the inevitable onset of the night.

If grasping arises and you do not move from your sitting place, the object of the grasping, which seems so solid, so desirable, so precious, this mind construct, this distorted perception, will pass, for it has no independent life except as our desire creates it. We

think what we desire is the object, the other person. What we desire is the veil that we draw across it, for in our obsession we cannot see the object or person in truth, we see them only as part of us, an extension of our desire. That is why we are so disappointed when they don't do as we want them to do, when they don't love us like we think they should love us. That is because what we see is a creation of our own minds, our grasping to own the universe, "the sense of self that in the universe sees her face shone as in a mirror and crying, I, me, would have the entire universe say I, me and all things perish so if she endure."

We are in essence a lot like the figure of Smeagol, of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*. "We want it now! We must have it now!" The object of desire is "the precious": –the object of desire that actually causes destruction. Or rather our idea of it for if the object itself caused the arising of desire, then all beings would be attracted to the same objects. But they aren't. One person is infatuated with another and lives for nothing but them, and none of their friends can see what the heck they see in that person. Why is this? There are some people or objects that large numbers of people agree are pleasant to look at and attractive but even then their attraction is in different ways. Why is this?

"I couldn't help myself," we say. Well then, who else can help us? Somebody once asked me at a Jōdō, "What is love? What is true love?" And I said, "To let go of the other." If you truly love somebody then you want what is best for them, whether or not they are with you; simply to be glad that someone exists. For we must not kid ourselves by thinking that war and destruction arise out of the evil of other people. War and destruction arise out of the very roots that we can see in our own hearts. And if we can't deal with ours, how can we expect anybody else to deal with theirs?

Many people ask, “do the six worlds really exist, or are they just ideas in the mind?” If they were to look carefully they would see that the world of the Devas, and the Asuras, exist before our very eyes, that there are hungry ghosts on the street corners – the animals, the six worlds interpenetrating one another – continually. I don’t mean one needs any great insight to see this, but one needs merely to stop and look. These things interpenetrate one another. From one perspective we live in the world of the Devas. And there are Asuras trying to chop down our tree – of which we enjoy the fruits and the roots begin in their world. This is the six worlds, this is samsara, this is suffering. From long before memory this has been so. Our choice is whether or not we do something about ourselves. If we can do something about ourselves; if we can let go, just once; if we can sit in zazen, in meditation and let a single greed, hatred, delusion, opinion, fixed idea arise and pass, then we have cleansed the sorrow of some being. For all the fixed ideas, greeds, hates and delusions that arise in our mind are the result of causes from the past. And they continue because we chase after them or push them away. When we cease to chase after them or push them away, then they dissolve.

To stop the course of karma is, on one level, as simple as that. It is right in front of us, not some exotic experience of a past existence. Shakyamuni said that if we wish to know our past existences we should examine carefully our present situation and if we wish to know the future of our karma we should again examine our present situation. Not that we will necessarily see the past or the future, but by having good and deep insight into the present we will know what sets the course of karma in motion. Meditation, when properly done, as it says, lays to rest a thousand lives and preserves a thousand lives of the future. Meditation, which is the embodiment of this particular direction of the Mandala, is the very entrance into the whole of Bodhisattva action, from the cleansing

of karma to the realization of enlightenment. Nothing fancy. Just learning to be still, learning to let the thoughts arise and pass without grasping after them or pushing them away. From this simple thing arise all the virtues of contentment and tolerance, empathy with beings, compassion, skilful means to benefit beings. The Precepts themselves arise out of the still mind. We should be infinitely grateful to the Buddhas and Ancestors who have given us the wonderful means of seeing things as they truly are, the wonderful Precepts which are the eyes of all sentient beings and which enable us to look and see how karma is caused, to look and see how karma is cleansed, to look and see how to benefit beings. People sometimes think that to take the Bodhisattva Vows is to enter into some great deed of derring-do, to some great rescue of infinite beings. To take the Bodhisattva Vows is to take up and practice these Precepts, for they are the very embodiment of benefiting ourselves and others, of cleansing our own karma, and helping to cleanse the karma of others. A Buddha's words are true, not something that is empty and vain, not imaginary, not philosophical, not speculative, not dreams; but rather, pointing out amidst the confusing fogs and darkness an actual Way to go. An actual path that actually exists, so that when we trust and put out our foot we encounter solid ground beneath it, even though we know from personal experience that there is no solid ground on either side. It is of infinite benefit to sentient beings to follow this, infinitely rescuing innumerable sentient beings and putting to rest infinite suffering. Why? It is not something magical. The causes of suffering are grasping, shoving away, fear of others, disparaging others. When once we do something about this we have stopped the causes of infinite amounts of suffering for beings.

The Buddhas and Ancestors view the world as a beautiful playground or a garden, and are constantly entering the world in order to benefit sentient beings. Nobody can do anything about

this, not governments, or scientists or polluters or “evil people.” Nobody can do anything about this. They constantly enter the world to benefit beings, constantly pour forth from the great Treasury of Compassion, Love and Wisdom. If it were not so this world would not still be in existence.

And yet, we must make great efforts to help them. While they are entering the world continuously to benefit beings we must be still, cleanse our karma for in doing so we hold the world still and able to be benefited. Do not despair. Just be still and look carefully in your daily lives. The appearance of the Buddhas and Ancestors is continuous and can be seen. The appearance of this very place is proof of that. Therefore we must work with all our might, with all our strength, upon ourselves; to cleanse our karma, to do the very best we can, in every moment of daily life, towards everybody we encounter, for although the Buddhas and Ancestors are constantly entering the world, most beings do not see this. By working on ourselves we benefit the world. By working on ourselves and being still we can truly see where we ought to be – where we ought to be standing in order to benefit beings; where we ought to be standing in order to be as clear a shining mirror as possible within the net of Indra, so that the light is reflected as clearly as possible in the mirror of our own hearts, and thus clearly reflected in other mirrors so that the net of light and merit can be seen. Do not believe the fog. Continue on along your own path. Do not be put off or distracted by others.

The fundamental delusion underlying all of the poisons is the primary delusion of the separate self, the self separate from all other objects. It is the grasping after and pushing away, the

considering oneself greater or lesser than external things and conditions, that holds together this delusion.

The poisons of jealousy, greed, hatred, delusion and pride are simply the Water of the Spirit grasped after, the Water of the Spirit flowing through all things, benefiting all things, blessing all things. The grasping after and attempting to hold any aspect of anything as one's own exclusively is the fundamental underpinning of the poisons, and what causes ordinary things, when grasped after, to turn into poisonous substances.

If we can sit still and let go of our grasping, our pushing and pulling, then everything, everything, just as it is, is void, unstained and pure. We can only experience this if we step beyond the fundamental grasping. The self, ourselves, is fundamentally void of all actual existence. The warp and woof of karma crossing at this very moment is the arising of the opportunity to let go rather than the opportunity to grasp. This is the primary thing. To let go of selfish craving. Dressing up the selfish craving as something else will just not do it.

The means to do this is to thoroughly study body, mind and the contents of our own mind as they arise and pass. To thoroughly study does not mean to take apart and arrange in categories. When Dōgen says to thoroughly study the Way, he means to sit still, to meditate. To the extent that we cling to fancy words and fancy descriptions and fancy excuses for our greeds, hates and delusions is the extent to which we create a self, as a mirror in which to see the entire universe. If we can truly let go of this and we can see the immaculacy of all things, not from a place outside of all things, not as a separate being seeing all things, then the immaculacy of all things is the same as the compassion of all things.

The crossing of the threads of our greeds, hates and delusions is what creates the idea of a separate grasping self and is the source of all suffering, because it is the grasping after something that has no fundamental substance. It is in and of itself fraught with suffering, for we are trying to create through our grasping something that is in fact not there. Like somebody trying by means of magic to create smoke, there is nothing there from the beginning, so all their efforts result in something that fades away and has no substance.

If we can truly open our hearts and minds then we can experience the great immaculacy and compassion that is beyond anything we can possibly conceive, beyond the structures of our minds. We do not need to leave where we are or construct fancy ideas in order to do this. We need simply to sit still and leave all to Buddha. Just sit still, not adding to the construction of the self; just sit still, allowing the waves to die down, agitating no more.

Do not think that there is some secret or profound teaching, beyond the continually pointing out this one thing. Do not think that anything holds you back. Let go of the delusions of the inadequate self. They are unreal. The ideas that arise in your minds that say “I cannot do this, I am not like this,” are simply that; thoughts that arise and pass, habits of mind produced from past karma. People say “I cannot attain to the Way, I am a lay person. I cannot attain to the Way, I am a new monk. I cannot attain to the Way, I have my family. I cannot attain to the Way, my daily life gets in the way of my training.” All these, from the viewpoint of the fundamental, are simply excuses. Nothing impedes you.

The house you dwell in, and fear the ghosts of, is an illusion. The immaculacy, the great Compassion is what is real. If you wish to truly understand the Way it is necessary to take it up with both

hands and practise it thoroughly, making it your priority. However, it is not a matter of spinning the wheels of one's grasping, of piling up amounts of meditation, of minute squeamishness regarding the meaning of the Precepts. Rather, let go of all expectations. Simply try to be still and do the very, very best you can with a gentle heart. Half the problem is in understanding what is meant by doing the very best you can. The other half is through misunderstanding what is meant by a gentle heart.

Do not think that the culmination of the Way is for anyone but yourselves. Do not think, "Those were the great teachers of ancient times. We cannot possibly understand it now, times have changed. That was ancient China, that was ancient Japan, that was ancient India. Things were simpler then. People had no obstacles." The fundamental selfish grasping has not changed in two thousand five hundred years. Neither has the Dharma grown less in its strength and potency. Anyone practicing it at the present time can understand it as thoroughly as the ancients. This is the meaning of our recitation of the ancestral line in the mornings. Not a list of dead people, but gratitude for something living that is present now.

All the forms of the different Dharma schools, the different Dharma ways are simply the containers for the Living Water which flows. Because they have held the Water and continue to hold the Water, then they are of infinite value and deserve respect.

And you must listen; listen to your wise and compassionate teachers. Listen carefully. Listen skilfully. Listen with a kind and flexible heart. Do not set up barriers to your receiving of the teaching. Wash out the ears of your minds thoroughly and you will hear the Dharma. To open and show the Mandala is to show the enlightened nature of beings, to show the True Nature. In order to

see it one must let go of one's conceptions and ideas and opinions and thoughts, for it cannot be grasped. It is the same as the Seal of the Buddha Mind upon the True Heart. It just is; it cannot be grasped. Simply let it be.

When we sit still in this way, each of us is the Mandala. Our jealousy of others is transformed and becomes the water of fearlessness which pours over us. Once we have seen this we can keep the water going through our endless training so that whenever we make a mistake in this area we can cleanse it more quickly. If we can sit still in this way, our prides and devaluing others become golden water that flows over and through us, the water of equality of all things, the Buddha Nature in all things. If we sit still in this way and let go of our greeds, our grasping, our having to have in order to complete our sense of ourselves, then we are filled with the immaculate water of wise discernment. We can see things as they really are, like the net of Indra, each individual being is the whole of the Mandala; like each mirror that reflects all the other mirrors within it, as well as itself reflected in the other mirrors, without obstacle. This, truly understood, is the basis of the harmony of the Sangha. In true training we actually cannot get in one another's way. If we truly sit still with the arising of anger then we can truly know what it is to see through the eyes of a Buddha and the lapis lazuli water will cool and cleanse our spitefulness.

The fountain of the four waters continually pours forth from the source of all wisdom, cleansing all beings, cleansing all karma, benefiting all beings, pouring forth compassion to all beings. For the law of karma is, at its basis, compassion; it draws all things towards itself so that they may be cleansed. It gently puts us in the same position again and again until we can let go. It shows us, through karmic consequence, the insubstantiality of our greeds, our

hatreds and our delusions. This is truly Great Compassion because it is the only way we are going to learn.

You too, you all, whether monastic or lay, can experience this fountain. You can experience it flowing through you. You can experience it as your True Nature.

The Buddhas and Ancestors knew this place. It was the source of their deep and profound joy. And they have flung wide the gates to this place. The way to it is quite clear, non-complicated. It does not ask for huge amounts of money to get in. It welcomes everybody to take the Refuges and enter into the practice of the Precepts, to undertake the wonderful gateway of meditation, that wonderful, uncomplicated gateway, where we can sit in the middle of the fountain, the water pouring over us until it penetrates our thick skulls.

Then we can see the infinite Sea of lotuses continually blooming, continually coming up, continually being tended by the Buddhas and Ancestors and all those who enter the waveless sea out of their great compassion to bring beings to fulfillment. The lotuses rise up out of the water as buds. They grow and are nourished by the very mud of the world that people so despise, rise up and are nourished, bloom, bloom, bloom, become the seed pods when they are ripe, pouring forth out of gratitude from the seed pods the seeds into the mud to benefit beings.

We are all here in this hall, this place, Shasta Abbey is here, Lions Gate Priory is where it is, because Reverend Master Jiyu did just that, grew the Lotus, knowing that there was no separate self from the beginning; was willing to become that Lotus and, in letting go, to let the seeds scatter into the mud.

It is not necessarily the problem of the lotus what the seeds do. It is just its nature to bloom and, in its time, to become a seed pod, and pour its seeds into the mud again. The more beings do this the more the world is benefited.

Do not doubt, however dark it may appear from time to time, that this is what is actually happening: the Buddhas and Ancestors continually entering the world to benefit beings. No one can stop this. No one can set up any barrier whatsoever, for They continually enter the world; continually benefit beings; continually draw beings out of the ocean of sorrow. This is their nature to do so. This is their cultivation of the Way.

If you truly practise this, then the Spirit rises to greet the Lord. The Lotus blooms, the Water pours forth, benefiting incalculable beings.

Do not think that this is a matter of imagination or symbol. This is Reality. The ocean of suffering, the ocean of sorrow, when seen as it is, is the vast sea of lotuses growing up out of the mud, without despising or rejecting the mud. The mud of daily life is as it is. It is produced by the karma of all sentient beings – the very rich soil for the growing of the lotus, if we do not add more to it or try to muck it about. The Precept says that we cannot prevent others from doing harm but we can do that about ourselves which does not set the wheel of karma in motion for others.

Some of these lotuses are red, the colour of greed purified. Some of these lotuses are blue, the colour of anger and irritation purified. Some of these lotuses are brilliant green, the colour of jealousy and envy when let go and transformed through the growing of the stalk of the lotus.

To benefit sentient beings, to assist the Bodhisattva way, is not difficult. Just try to be still. Just try to let go of greeds, hates and delusions as they arise. Just try to keep the Precepts. Red lotuses are as perfect as blue lotuses, as perfect as white lotuses or green. Different shapes of petals are not an obstacle. In the Lotus Sutra the Bodhisattva Never Despising Ever Weeping says continually to sentient beings, “You are all Buddhas. You will all achieve the Bodhisattva way. I may not dispraise you.” These beings to which he addressed this tended to throw rocks at him, saying “Why are you troubling us?”

And so I say with some trepidation, you are all Buddhas. You will all achieve the Bodhisattva way. You will all dwell in the Sea of the Lotuses. And when we arrive there we will greet each other and wonder why we kicked up so much fuss.

All the beauty of the Mandala is a skilful means coming together for a moment to reveal the Way, and then dissolving.

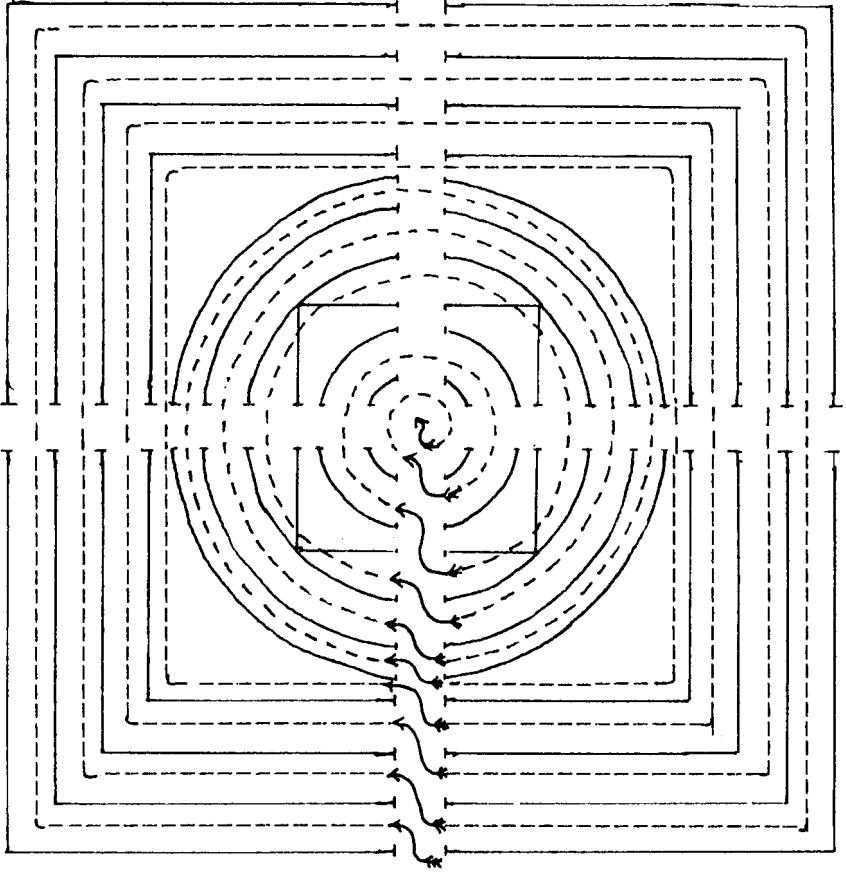
We offer the Merits of this setting up, recitation and dissolving of the Mandala of the Buddha Mothers – Refuge of all beings to all so that they all may be able to realize the Truth!

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds
Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds
Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom

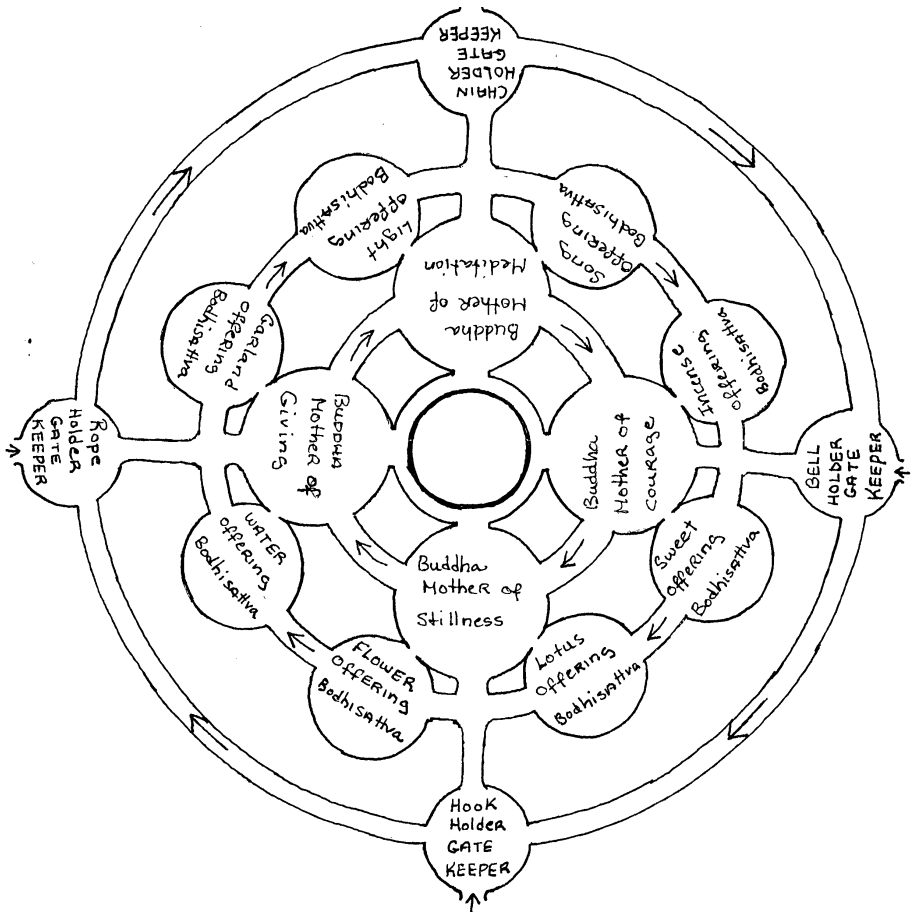
Illustrations

1. Path of the Mandala
2. Diagram of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas within the Mandala
3. Chart of the Buddha Families
4. Mandala in the Sea of Lotuses

1 Path of the Mandala



2. Diagram of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Mandala



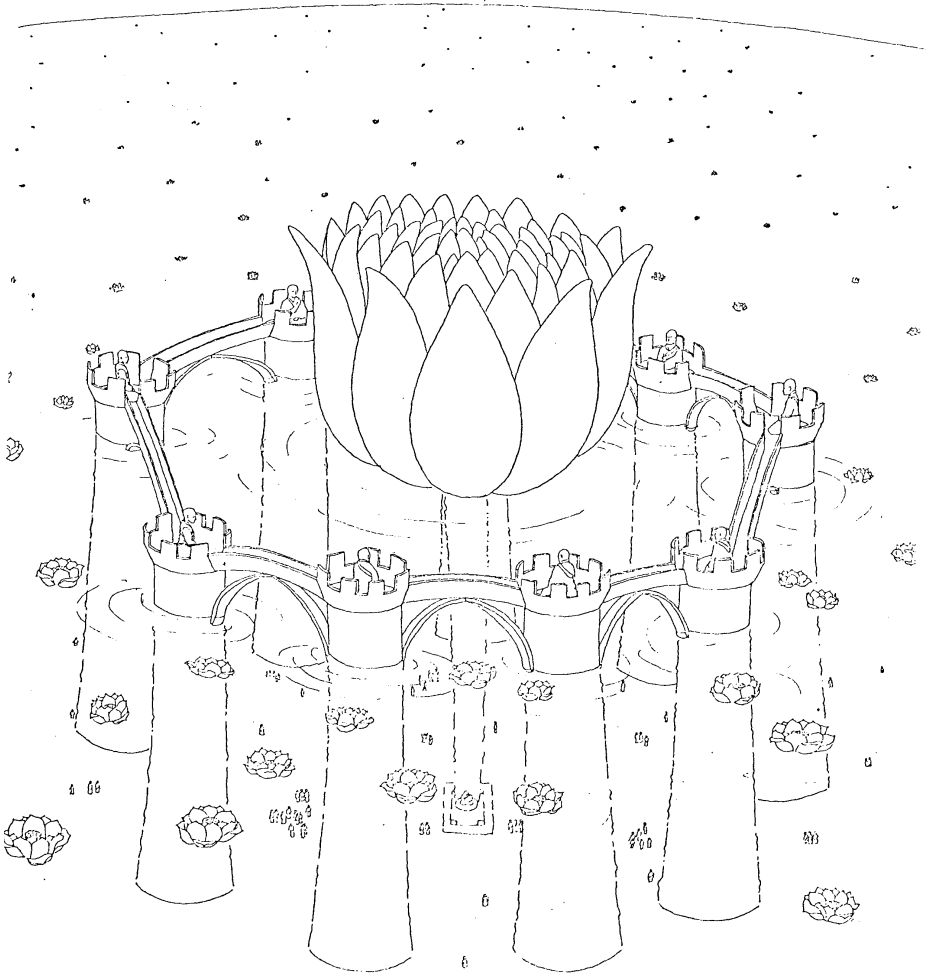
Eastern Gate

3. Chart of the Buddha Families

Mandala of the Buddha Mothers - Refuge of All Beings

Family:	Buddha	Vajra Diamond	Ratna Jewel	Padma Lotus	Karma Action
Order:	Centre	East	South	West	North
Skandha:	Consciousness	Form	Feeling	Perception	Impulse
Element:	Space	Liquid	Solid	Heat	Air
Colour:	White	Blue	Yellow	Red	Green
Poison:	Delusion	Hate	Pride	Greed	Envy
Wisdom:	Universal	Mirror	Equality	Discernment	Action
Buddha Mother:	Akasadhatis <i>Divine Mother Of Infinite Space of Meditation Wisdom</i>	Locana <i>She who sees with the Buddha eyes</i>	Mamaki <i>She who regards all beings as her own children</i>	Pandaravasini <i>She robed in the immaculacy of the Precepts</i>	Samayatara <i>The Faithful One who guides all beings to the other shore</i>
Mudra:	Turning the Dharma Wheel	Earth Witness	Offering	Meditation	Fearlessness
Offering Bodhisattva:		Flowers Lotus	Garland Water	Light Songs	Incense Sweet Taste
Throne:	Lion	Elephant	Horse	Peacock	Garuda
Action Bodhisattva:		Manjushri	Samantabhadra	Avalokiteswara	Maitreya
Buddha Father:	Vairocana	Aksobhya	Ratnasambhava	Amitabha	Amoghasiddhi
Gate Keepers:		Hook	Rope	Chain	Bell

4. Mandala of the Sea of Lotuses



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