

From: Nishijima & Cross: *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo Book 3 (207-214)*

[Chapter Sixty-two]

Hensan - Thorough Exploration

Translator's Note: Hen means "everywhere" or "widely," and san means "to visit" or "to study through experience." Originally hensan described the custom Buddhist monks used to have of traveling around in order to meet excellent masters with whom they could be satisfied. But according to Master Dōgen, hensan, or "thorough exploration," is accomplished not by traveling around but by a Buddhist monk's thorough exploration of the Buddhist state under one true master. In this chapter, Master Dōgen explains the true meaning of hensan.

The great truth of Buddhist patriarchs is exploration of the ultimate state through and through, is "there being no strings under the feet"¹ and is "the appearance of clouds under the feet."² Still, although it is like this, "the opening of flowers is the occurrence of the world,"³ and "At this concrete place, I am always keen."⁴ For this reason, "A sweet melon, right through to the stem, is sweet. A bitter gourd, right through to the root, is bitter."⁵ The sweetness of sweetness, right through to the stem, is sweet. We have been exploring in practice⁶ the state like this.

Great Master Shūitsu⁷ of Genshazan, the story goes, is summoned by Seppō, who says to the master, "Bi of the dhūta!⁸ Why do you not go widely exploring?" The master says, "Bodhidharma did not come to the Eastern Lands; the Second Patriarch did not go to India in the west."⁹ Seppō profoundly affirms this.¹⁰ The principle of the state of thorough exploration described here is exploration of a somersault; it is the sacred truth, at the same time, not being practiced. "How could it have grades or ranks?"¹¹ When Zen Master Nangaku Daie¹² first visits¹³ the eternal buddha of Sōkei Mountain,¹⁴ the eternal buddha says, "This is something coming like this."¹⁵

[Nangaku's] thorough exploration of this mud ball continues altogether for eight years. At last he expresses the conclusion¹⁶ of his thorough exploration to the eternal buddha, saying "Ejō has understood [why], when I first came here, the master received Ejō with [the teaching] 'This is something coming like this.'"

The eternal buddha Sōkei says, "How do you understand it?"

Then Daie says, "To describe a thing does not hit the target."

This is the realization of thorough exploration, and the realization of eight years.

The eternal buddha Sōkei asks, "Do you rely upon practice and experience or not?"

Daie says, "It is not that there is no practice and experience, but to taint it is impossible."

Thereupon Sōkei says, "I am like that, you are also like that, and the buddhas and patriarchs of India were also like that."¹⁷

After this, [Nangaku] thoroughly explores the state for another eight years. Counting from beginning to end, it is fifteen years of thorough exploration. [His] "coming like this" is thorough exploration. [His] opening the [Buddha] hall and meeting the buddhas and patriarchs, in [the

realization that] “describing a thing does not hit the target” is still exploration of “also being like that.” Since entering the picture and looking, he has thoroughly explored the state in sixty five-hundreds of thousand myriad koṭi s of transformations of the body.¹⁸ We do not esteem idly entering one monastery and leaving another monastery as thorough exploration. We esteem discovery with the whole of the eyes as thorough exploration. We esteem attainment of the ultimate through action as thorough exploration. To see, through to the end, how thick is the skin of the face: this is thorough exploration.

The point of Seppō's expression about thorough exploration is originally neither to encourage [Gensha] to leave the mountain nor to encourage him to travel north and south; it is to promote the thorough exploration that Gensha expresses as “Bodhidharma did not come to the Eastern Lands; the Second Patriarch did not go to India in the west.” It is like saying, for example, “How could [this] not be thorough exploration?” Gensha's saying that Bodhidharma did not come to the Eastern Lands is not a random expression about coming and yet not coming; it is the truth that the earth is without an inch of land. What we call “Bodhidharma” is an acute case of the lifeblood.¹⁹ Even if the whole of the Eastern Lands suddenly sprang up in the extreme and waited upon him, that would not impinge upon his movement of his own body²⁰ —nor indeed upon his turning around in the stream of [others'] words.²¹ Because he does not come to the Eastern Lands, he looks the Eastern Lands in the face. Although the Eastern Lands meet with a buddha's face and a patriarch's face, it is not that he has come to the Eastern Lands; it is that he has grasped the state of a Buddhist patriarch and lost [his own] nostrils. In sum, land is beyond east and west, and east and west are not connected with land. “The Second Patriarch did not go to India in the west”: in thoroughly exploring India, he does not go to India. If the Second Patriarch goes to India, [his state] is [only] having lost an arm.²² Now, why does the Second Patriarch not go to India? He does not go to India because he has sprung inside [Bodhidharma's] blue eyes. If he had not sprung inside those blue eyes, he would go to India without fail. We esteem gouging out Bodhidharma's eyes as thorough exploration. Going to India in the west and coming to the Eastern Lands are not thorough exploration. We do not esteem going to Tendai²³ or to Nangaku,²⁴ or traveling to Godai²⁵ or to the heavens above, as thorough exploration. If we fail to see through and get free from the four oceans and five lakes,²⁶ the state is not thorough exploration. Visiting the four oceans and five lakes does not cause the four oceans and five lakes to experience thorough exploration but only makes it slippery on the road and slippery underfoot, thus causing us to forget thorough exploration. In general, because we see it as thorough exploration to explore to the end that “The whole universe in the ten directions is the real human body,”²⁷ we can investigate the real state in which “Bodhidharma did not come to the Eastern Lands and the Second Patriarch did not go to India in the west.” Thorough exploration is a big stone being big and a small stone being small. It is, without disturbing stones, to let the big experience themselves and the small experience themselves. To experience hundred thousand myriads of things at hundred thousand myriads of places is not yet thorough exploration. Performance of hundred thousand myriads of bodily transformations within the stream of half a word: this is thorough exploration. For example, to work the earth and only to work the earth is thorough exploration. To pass from once working the earth, to once working the sky, to once working the four quarters and eight aspects, is not thorough exploration. Gutei's²⁸ exploration of Tenryū,²⁹ and attainment of the one-finger state,

is thorough exploration. “Gutei’s only raising one finger”³⁰ is thorough exploration. Gensha preaches to the assembly, “I and Old Master Śākyamuni have experienced the same state.”³¹ Then a monk steps forward and asks, “I wonder what person you met.” The master says, “The third son of the Sha family, on a fishing boat.”³² The head-to-tail rightness experienced by “Old Master Śākyamuni” is naturally the same as the experience of Old Master Śākyamuni himself. And because the head-to-tail rightness experienced by Old Man Gensha is naturally the same as the experience of Old Man Gensha himself, Old Master Śākyamuni and Old Man Gensha are experiencing the same state. Old Master Śākyamuni and Old Man Gensha are investigating to the limit the experience of satisfaction and the experience of dissatisfaction: this is the principle of thorough exploration. Because Old Master Śākyamuni experiences the same state as Old Man Gensha, he is the eternal buddha. Because Old Man Gensha is in the same state as Old Master Śākyamuni, he is a descendant. We should thoroughly explore this truth, in detail. [Gensha meets] “The third son of the Sha family, on a fishing boat”: we should clarify this point and learn it in experience. That is, in other words, to strive to thoroughly explore the moment in which Old Master Śākyamuni and Old Man Gensha simultaneously experience the same state. Old Man Gensha, who has met the third son of Sha on a fishing boat, is present, and is experiencing the common state. The third son of Sha, who has met a shaven-headed man on Genshazan, is present, and is experiencing the common state. We should allow ourselves to consider, and should allow others to consider, experience of sameness and experience of difference. Old Man Gensha and Old Master Śākyamuni are experiencing the same state and thoroughly exploring it. We should thoroughly explore, and should commonly experience, the truth that “the third son of Sha” and “I” have met a “What person.”³³ Unless the truth of thorough exploration is actually manifest in the present, experience of the self is impossible, and experience of the self is unsatisfactory; experience of others is impossible and experience of others is unsatisfactory; experience of “a person” is impossible, experience of “I” is impossible, experience of a fist is impossible, and experience of the eye is impossible—lifting the self³⁴ by fishing the self is impossible.³⁵ When thorough exploration is perfectly realized already, it is free of “thorough exploration”: “When the sea is dry its bottom is not seen; when human beings die no trace of their mind is retained.”³⁶ “The sea is dry” describes the whole sea having totally dried up. At the same time, if the sea has dried up, a “sea bed” is not seen. “Retaining no trace,” and “total retention,” are both in the human mind. When human beings die our mind does not remain: it is because we have grasped death that “mind” does not remain.³⁷ Thus, we can conclude that the whole human being is mind, and the whole of mind is a human being. We investigate in experience the front and back of each such partial thought.

My late master Tendō, the eternal buddha, on an occasion when veterans of the truth from many districts have assembled to request his formal preaching in the Dharma hall, gives the following formal preaching:

*The great truth is gateless.
It springs out beyond your brains.
As space, it transcends any path.
[Yet] it has already got inside the*

*nostrils of Seiryō.*³⁸

Meeting with it like this would be inimical to imitators of Gautama, And a womb of trouble for those of Rinzai.

Aye. . . A great master tumbles, dancing in the spring breeze. Falling in amazement, apricot blossoms scatter a riot of crimson.³⁹ For the present formal preaching in the Dharma hall, the veterans of many districts have gathered at the time when my late master, the eternal buddha, is the abbot of Seiryōji in Kenkōfu City.⁴⁰ That they are “veterans of the truth” means that they have been either the master’s disciples or his companions on the zazen platform. While [themselves] the masters of many districts, they are, in this way, his old friends. How could their number not be great? It is an occasion on which they have assembled to petition [the master] for formal preaching in the Dharma hall. Veterans who totally lack something concrete to say are not among his friends, and not in that number of petitioning friends who, despite being great and valuable themselves, wait upon him and request [his preaching]. In general, my late master’s state of thorough exploration is beyond the masters of other districts. In the last two or three hundred years in great Song China, there has been no eternal buddha to equal my late master. “The great truth is gateless” describes four or five thousand willow quarters⁴¹ and twenty or thirty thousand music halls. In “springing out” of such places with the whole body, we employ no methods other than “springing out beyond the brain” and “getting inside the nostrils.” Both are learning in practice. Those who have never experienced springing free beyond the brain and never experienced transformation of the body inside the nostrils, are not people of learning in practice and are not men of thorough exploration. We should learn the meaning of “thorough exploration” only under Gensha. When the Fourth Patriarch learned in practice for nine years under the Third Patriarch,⁴² that was just thorough exploration. Zen Master Nansen [Fu]gan’s⁴³ living only in Chiyō district,⁴⁴ and not leaving the mountains for a small matter of thirty years, was thorough exploration. The efforts to learn in practice of Ungan, Dōgo,⁴⁵ and the others, during forty years on Yakusan Mountain, were thorough exploration itself. The Second Patriarch learned in practice for eight years on Sūzan Mountain, and explored the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow to the limit. Thorough exploration is just sitting and getting free of body and mind. The state at the present moment in which going is going there and coming is coming here, there being no gap between them, is thorough exploration with the whole body, and it is the whole body of “the great truth.” Walking on, over Vairocana’s head⁴⁶ is the state without emotion.⁴⁷ And decisive attainment of the state like this is the conduct of a Vairocana. When we have mastered thorough exploration of “springing out,” the state is that a gourd springs out of a gourd, and we have, for a long time, seen the top of a gourd as a practice place for singling out the state of buddha. Life is like a thread,⁴⁸ and a gourd performs thorough exploration of a gourd. We have only seen that erecting a stalk of grass⁴⁹ is thorough exploration.

Preached to the assembly in a hut at the foot of Mount Yamashibu on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh lunar month in the first year of Kangen.⁵⁰

Notes

1 Keitokudentōroku, chap. 15: Master Tōzan is asked the meaning of action. He replies, "Straightway there should be no strings under the feet." In China captured birds had string tied around their feet to stop them flying away, so having no strings under the feet means being free of hindrances that pull one down. See also Chapter Twentyseven (Vol. II), Zazenshin, paragraph 44.

2 Keitokudentōroku, chap. 3, says, "Haradai, having reverentially received the master's instruction, said, 'Pray lend me your mystical power.' After he had spoken, clouds appeared under his feet." Clouds appearing under the feet suggests the realization of concrete mystical power.

3 The words of the twenty-seventh patriarch, Master Praj.ātara, quoted in the Keitokudentōroku, chap. 2, describe the oneness in reality of phenomena (flowers) and substance (the world).

4 Master Tōzan's words quoted from the Keitokudentōroku, chap. 15. See also Shinjishōbōgenzō, pt. 1, no. 55; Chapter Forty (Vol. II), Gabyō, paragraph 211.

5 The words of Master Engo Kokugon, recorded in the Engozenjigoroku, vol. 2.

6 "Exploring in practice" is sangaku, usually translated as "learn in practice." San, translated in the chapter title as "exploration," literally means "visit" but not in a sightseeing sense; it includes the meaning of participation in, experience of, or devotion to something. The character san appears very frequently in the Shōbōgenzō in the compounds sangaku, "learn in practice" or "learn by experience," sankyū, "investigate," "master in practice," etc. Master Dōgen used it as a prefix to make a verb more suggestive of the real Buddhist process (i.e., not only learning knowledge but learning of a condition of body and mind). See also notes to Chapter Fifty-seven, Menju, paragraph 183.

7 Master Gensha Shibi (835–907), successor of Master Seppō Gison. Great Master Shūitsu is his posthumous title.

8 Bizuda. Bi is from the name Shibi. Zuda is a nickname derived from the Sanskrit word dhūta, which means hard or ascetic practice. The twelve dhūtas are listed in Chapter Thirty (Vol. II), Gyōji. See also LS 2.310.

9 It was inevitable for Master Bodhidharma to come to China, and it was inevitable for the Second Patriarch in China, Master Taishō Eka, to stay in China. They did not follow personal preferences.

10 Keitokudentōroku, chap. 18. See also Chapter Four (Vol. I), Ikka-no-myōju.

11 Nan no kaikyū ka kore aran means, in other words, "How is it possible for any subdivisions to exist?" The phrase suggests the holistic viewpoint. Chinese source not traced.

12 Master Nangaku Ejō (677–744), successor of Master Daikan Enō. Zen Master Daie is his posthumous title.

13 Sanzuru in this case includes the meaning of entering the master's order as a disciple. See note 6.

14 Master Daikan Enō (638–713), successor of Master Daiman Kōnin.

15 Or "What is that comes like this?" See notes to Chapter Twenty-nine (Vol. II), Inmo, paragraph 108.

16 Ichi-jakusu, "conclusion," literally expresses placing a stone in a game of go.

17 Shinji-shōbōgenzō, pt. 2, no. 1. In the Shinji-shōbōgenzō version, Master Daikan Enō says, "Just this untaintedness is that which buddhas guard and desire. You are like that, I am also like that, and the patriarchs of India were also like that."

18 Tenshin means 1) transforming one's physical state, e.g., by putting on the kaṣāya, going for a walk, or listening to words of transformation such as "Profoundly believe in cause and effect!"; 2) moving one's body (from A to B) or changing one's standpoint.

19 Master Bodhidharma is not only an abstract concept.

20 Tenshin, as in note 18. The point here is the independence of Master Bodhidharma's action.

21 Gomyaku no honshin, lit., "turning over his body in the stream of words" or "somer -

saulting in mid-speech," suggests a very flexible or accommodating attitude.

22 The fact that he cut off his arm would not have any meaning.

23 Tendai Mountain in Zhejiang province in east China, where Master Tendai Chigi established the training place which became the headquarters of the Tendai sect.

24 Nangaku Mountain is in Hunan province in southeast central China.

25 Godai Mountain is in Shanxi province in northern China.

26 The four oceans means the oceans of the north, south, east, and west. The definition of the five lakes has changed from age to age.

27 In Chapter Fifty, Shohō-jissō, Master Dōgen attributes this expression to Master Chōsha Keishin.

28 Master Gutei of Mount Kinka (dates unknown), successor of Master Kōshū Tenryū.

He is said to have realized the truth when Master Tenryū showed him one finger.

Thereafter, in answer to all question, Master Gutei just showed one finger.

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29 Master Kōshū Tenryū (dates unknown), successor of Master Daibai Hōjō. He is famous for transmitting "one-finger Zen" to Master Gutei.

30 Gutei-yui-ju-isshi. These characters appear in the Shinji-shōbōgenzō, pt. 3, no. 46.

31 Dōsan. Dō means "the same." San is as in the chapter title. See note 6.

32 That is, Master Gensha himself. The story is recorded in the Rentōeyō, chap. 23.

33 Shimo-nin, a person whose state cannot be expressed with words.

34 Ji-chō-ji-jō. Ji as a noun or pronoun means "self," "myself," "oneself," etc.; and as an adverb means "by oneself" or "by itself"; that is 1) "independently" or 2) "naturally," "spontaneously." Chō means to fish, as in Master Gensha's words chōgyō-sen, "fishing boat." Jō means to go up.

35 Mi-chō-sen-jō.

36 These are common expressions of a complete change. In the following sentences, Master Dōgen considers the Buddhist meaning of each expression.

37 When we realize the state without illusion, the concept "mind" does not remain.

38 Seiryō means Master Tendō himself.

39 Nyojōshōgoroku, vol. 1.

40 To the south of present-day Nanking.

41 Karyūkō, lit., "blossom and willow quarter," means an area of pleasure houses, a redlight district.

42 The Fourth Patriarch in China is Master Dai Dōshin. His master, the Third Patriarch, is Master Kanchi Sōsan.

43 Master Nansen Fugan (748–834), successor of Master Baso Dōitsu.

44 In present-day Anhui province in east China.

45 Master Ungan Donjō (782–841) and Master Dōgo Enchi (769–835) were two of the members of the order of Master Yakusan Igen.

46 Biru-chōjō-gyō alludes to the Shinji-shōbōgenzō, pt. 1, no. 26: The Tang emperor Shukusō asks Master Nan'yō Echū, "What is the state without conflict?" The master says, "Walk on, treading on Vairocana's head!" Vairocana is described in the Avatamsaka-sūtra as ruling a realm of abundant time and space, where all things emit light and everything is contained in everything else.

47 The expression in the story, "the state without conflict," is mujō-zanmai, "samādhi as the state without conflict." "The state without emotion" is mujō-zanmai, "samādhi as the state without emotion."

48 Master Daiman Kōnin said, "The life of a person to whom the robe has been given is as if hanging by a thread." In other words, the life of a Buddhist patriarch is very sincere. See Keitokudentōroku, chap. 3.

49 In Chapter Sixty-nine, Hotsu-mujōshin, Master Dōgen describes picking up a stalk of grass and creating with it the sixteen-foot golden body (image of Buddha). Here "erecting a stalk of grass" represents one concrete action.

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