



## Admonition Dai-o Kokushi

Those who enter the gate of Buddhism should first of all cherish a firm faith in the dignity and respectability of monkhood, for it is the path leading them away from poverty and humbleness. Its dignity is that of the sonship of the Dharmaraja of the triple world; no princely dignity which extends only over a limited area of the earth compares with it. Its respectability is that of the fatherhood of all sentient beings; no parental respectability belonging only to the head of a little family group equals it. When the monk finds himself in this position of dignity and respectability, living in the rock-cave of the Dharma where he enjoys the greatest happiness of a spiritual life, under the blissful protection of all the guardian gods of the Triple Treasure, is there any form of happiness that can surpass his?

The shaven head and the dyed garment are the noble symbols of Bodhisattvahood; the temple-buildings with all their ornamental fixtures are the honorific emblems of Buddhist virtue. They have nothing to do with mere decorative effects.

That the monk, now taking on himself these forms of dignity and respectability, is the recipient of all kinds of offerings from his followers; that he is quietly allowed to pursue his study of the Truth, not troubling himself with worldly labours and occupations-this is indeed due to the loving thoughts of Buddhas and Fathers. If the monk fails in this life to cross the stream of birth-and-death, when does he expect to requite all the kindly feelings bestowed upon him by his predecessors? We are ever liable as time goes on to miss opportunities; let the monk, therefore, be always on watch not to pass his days idly.

The one path leading up to the highest peak is the mysterious orthodox line of transmission established by Buddhas and Fathers, and to walk along this road is the essence of appreciating what they have done for us. When the monk fails to discipline himself along this road, he thereby departs from the dignity and respectability of monkhood, laying himself down in the slums of poverty and misery. As I grow older I feel this to be my greatest regret, and, O monks, I have never been tired day and night of giving you strong admonitions on this point. Now, on the eve of my departure, my heart lingers with you, and my sincerest prayer is that you are never found lacking in the virtue of the monkish dignity and respectability, and that you ever be mindful of what properly belongs to monkhood. Pray, pray, be mindful of this, O monks!

This is the motherly advice of Nampo, old monk-mendicant of Kencho Monastery.

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