

Entire Sky Zen Sangha

SUTRA BOOK



2022 Edition



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DEDICATED TO ALL OUR MANY GUIDES ALONG THE ANCIENT WAY

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Notation



Hold hands palm-to-palm together in *gassho*,
or hold the sutra book palm-to-palm together in *gassho*



Hold hands in zazen mudra, or hold the sutra book open between two
hands, with thumbs and little fingers in front of book

○ ring *keisu* (bowl gong) ⊙ muffle *keisu* (bowl gong) • ring small
bell

①②③ ring *keisu* or ❶❷❸ small bell on 1st, 2nd, or 3rd repetition

underlined syllables indicate the point at which underlined bells are rung

◆ *mokugyo* (wooden drum) beat once before the title is chanted by the ino,
then after on each syllable of the chant

◇ *taiko* (large drum) beat once before the title is chanted by the ino,
then after on each syllable of the chant, in single or double beats

-_^ notation for tonal chanting (mid-low-high shown in this example)

<bow> indicates a seated bow Δ strike clappers

TITLES IN ALL CAPS are CHANTED by chant-leader only

[Words in brackets & regular case] are *spoken* by chant-leader only,
or CHANTED by chant-leader only, when noted or when mid-chant

{Words in braces} are CHANTED or *spoken* or sung by chant-leader only
1st time, and by everyone subsequently

(*italic words in parenthesis*) are not spoken, chanted, or sung at all

○○○⊙ should be interpreted as follows:

○ (pause) ○ (same pause) ○ (relatively brief pause) ⊙

1 (say: “page __”) 2 3 4

- ▶ The gong does not break timing waiting for the chant-leader to speak or for page-turning among the Sangha.
- ▶ Gong #1 happens **immediately** after previous chant (if any) ends, as the Sangha returns to upright position after a seated bow.
- ▶ Immediately after gong #1, the chant-leader speaks the page number of the next chant if there is a page turn.
- ▶ The time between the ringing of gongs #1–#2 and #2–#3 should always be equal for the entirety of the service, and should **not** be adjusted in response to circumstances arising mid-service.
- ▶ If more time for transition is required, the first two pauses can **both** be expanded, but should remain equal throughout the service.
- ▶ The time between gong #3 and the muffle should always be relatively brief, and should not vary.

At the end of a chant: If the NEXT CHANT TO BE CHANTED begins with <○○○> IMMEDIATELY sound the gong once NOW (i.e., BEFORE TURNING THE PAGE). Then turn the page, and do TWO ADDITIONAL gongs at equal intervals, for a total of three (**NEVER FOUR**).

Some chants end with <○> which means they **always** take an ending gong, regardless of what follows. But please note that if gongs do follow at the beginning of the next chant, **this gong at the end counts as the first of three, and ONLY TWO MORE gongs are required, in all circumstances.**



OOO⊗ GATHA ON OPENING THE SUTRA –_- ○

(GAA-TA—a verse)

(ALL) The Dharma, incomparably profound and infinitely subtle,
is rarely encountered even in hundreds of thousands of millions of ages.

Now we see it, hear it, receive and maintain it.

May we completely realize the Tathagata’s true meaning. ○ <bow>

(TA-TAAAgA-TA’S—one of the titles
for the Buddha; “Thus-come One” or
“One Who Comes Thus”)



OOO⊗ THE DHARMA IS VAST AND SUBTLE. ○

(ALL) The Dharma is vast and subtle.

(LEADER) [We now have a chance to see this;]

(ALL) We now have a chance to see this;

(LEADER) [Study and practice this.]

(ALL) Study and practice this.

(LEADER) [May we realize this true meaning. –_-]

(ALL) May we realize this true meaning. –_- ○ <bow>



OOO⊗ Gatha of Atonement ○ (SPOKEN or CHANTED)

(GAA-TA)

(EVIL KARMA refers to any
harm-causing actions)

All evil karma ever created by me since of old, ③
on account of my beginningless greed, anger, and ignorance
born of my body, mouth, and thought, ③

(THE THREE POISONS:
Also known as GRASPING,
AVERSION, & DELUSIVE
CERTAINTY)

Now I atone for it all. ○ (repeat 3 times, then <bow>)



OOO⊗ VANDANA ○ (VUHN-duh-NAAA) (Homage to the Buddha)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhasa ○ <bow>

_____ ^ ^ _____ ^ ^ _____ ^ ^

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Great Sage, the Truly Enlightened One)

(As long as there is true bowing,
the Buddha Way will not deteriorate.
—Eihei Dogen)



OOO⊙ THE THREE REFUGES ○

(Pali followed by English translation)

Buddham saranam gacchami;
_____-----

(the lines beneath the words show relative pitch of the syllable above)

Dhammam saranam gacchami;
_____-----^

Sangham saranam gacchami. ○
_____-----

I take refuge in Buddha;
_____-----

(in Awakening)

I take refuge in Dharma;
_____-----^

(in the Teachings)

I take refuge in Sangha. ○ <bow>
_____— —

(in Community)



The Five Remembrances

(Shakyamuni Buddha, from the Upajjhatthana Sutta)

{I am of the nature to grow old;} ❶

There is no way to escape growing old.

I am of the nature to have ill health;

There is no way to escape having ill health.

I am of the nature to die;

There is no way to escape death.

All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature of change;

There is no way to escape being separated from them.

My deeds are my closest companions.

❷ I am born of my deeds; and I am their heir.

❸ My deeds are the ground on which I stand.

(repeat 3 times)



OOO⊙◆ ENMEI JUKKU KANNON GYO -_- ○

(Invocation of Kanzeon/Kannon/Guanyin/Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion—whose name means “the one who perceives the cries of the world.”)

Kanzeon!

Namu Butsu ① ③

yo Butsu u in

yo Butsu u en

buppo so en

jo raku ga jo

cho nen Kanzeon ③

bo nen Kanzeon ③

nen nen ju shin ki

nen nen fu ri shin. ① ② ③

*(chant Sino-Japanese 3 times, then,
SPEEDING UP SUBSTANTIALLY,
go to English at right and chant ONCE,
SLOWING DOWN for last THREE
BEATS ONLY.)*

Absorbing world sounds
awakens a Buddha right here! ○

This Buddha,

the source of compassion.

This Buddha

receives only compassion.

Buddha, Dharma, Sangha—

just compassion.

Thus, the pure heart

always rejoices.

In the light, recall this.

In the dark, recall this.

Moment after moment

the true heart arises. ○

Time after time

there is nothing but this. ○



Invocation of Kanzeon

(by Robert Aitken, adapted from The Morning Star)

We call upon Kanzeon to inspire our sutra and our lives.

We call upon ourselves to inspire Kanzeon. We call upon

ourselves as Kanzeon. Enlightening, being enlightened,

calling and responding, the birds and stars, as Kanzeon, save

us—as they, as themselves, save us. Each thought, ever so

brief, is Kanzeon, turning the Dharma Wheel. Acceptance is

Kanzeon; regarding the sounds of the world is Kanzeon.

Kanzeon is realized in regarding the distress and pain

everywhere, and is realized by the sound of geckos and

children. The compassionate action of Kanzeon arises from the

place of grateful receiving. I venerate the great power for the

Way, which is generated by the profound act of opening myself.

• Kanzeon! • Thus we bow to Buddha. <bow>



OOO⊗✧ SHO SAI MYO KICHIJO DHARANI -- O

(The Dharani of Good Fortune that Averts Calamities (in the Mind)—with no categories, this mysterious power saves all beings. In a dharani, the intention and sound of the chant is more important than any literal meaning.)

No mo san man da moto nan ①
oha ra chi koto sha sono nan ③
to ji to en gya gya gya ki gya ki un nun
shifu ra shifu ra hara shifu ra hara shifu ra
chishu ③ sa chishu sa chishu ③ ri chishu ③ ri
soha ja soha ja sen chi gya
shiri ei# somo ko# ① ②

*(double drumbeats begin on this line in 1st rep;
indicates extra drumbeat on 1st and 2nd reps,
but not on 3rd.)*

(repeat 3 times, slowing for last 3 beats ONLY)



The Essence of Atonement

(by Banjin Dotan; tr. Shohaku Okumura)

The essence of atonement is that delusion and enlightenment are one. We think delusive thoughts and true reality are separate and distinct, as an owner and that which is owned. Yet when we are completely liberated, we see that there is no person who possesses delusions nor are there delusions that are possessed. This is the true Path of Buddha Dharma.

Atonement is another name for the three treasures. To atone is to take refuge in the Three Treasures. When the Dharma of atonement is carried out, it completely includes the three refuges and the three pure precepts. Atonement, the three refuges, and the three pure precepts are not apart from falsehood caused by delusions—yet we are able to attain liberation within delusion. Before delusions leave, true reality has arrived.

- Atonement is nothing other than the Dharma,
- the practice of the Buddha's awakening.



OOO⊗ DEDICATION

(1a) (CHANTED) [All living things are one seamless body, and pass quickly from dark to dark. We remember you who cared for us and are gone, you who are ill, who are imprisoned, who are homeless, who are oppressed, who are hungry and who are in pain—may you heal and have peace. We also dedicate our practice to:] •

(Sangha speaks names of personal dedications)

(• at equal intervals as names are said; 3 more at same pace after Sangha is silent)

And we especially dedicate our practice to:

(OPTIONAL: chant-leader CHANTS special dedications,

• at equal intervals after each name, then leader adds the following)

- all those who are afraid, • all those who are persecuted,
- and all those whose spirits feel crushed. •

May we together realize peace; may we together realize harmony;
may we together realize freedom from fear for all—
and may we realize the Buddha Way together -_-] ○

(ALL) All Buddhas throughout space and time, ○

All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas, ○

wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita. ○ <bow>

(HONORED ONES refers to arhats/ realized beings; BODHISATTVA-MAHASATTVAS are "Great Being" bodhisattvas, such as Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara)



OOO⊗ DEDICATION

(1b) (CHANTED) [Buddha nature pervades the whole universe existing right here, now. Whenever these devoted invocations are sent forth they are perceived and subtly answered. We dedicate their merits to all members of our human family, throughout space and time. We especially dedicate their merits to those who suffer as a result of calamity, cruelty, oppression, and war. We also dedicate our service to:] •

(Sangha speaks names of personal dedications)

(• at equal intervals as names are said; 3 more at same pace after Sangha is silent)

And we especially dedicate our practice to:

(OPTIONAL chant-leader CHANTS special dedications,

• at equal intervals after each name, then leader adds the following) ⇨

- all those who are afraid, • all those who are persecuted,
- and all those whose spirits feel crushed. •

May we together realize peace; may we together realize harmony;
 may we together realize freedom from fear for all—
 and may we realize the Buddha Way together -_-] ○

(ALL) All Buddhas throughout space and time, ○
 All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas, ○
 wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita. ○ <bow>



○○○○ DEDICATION

(2) (CHANTED) [Buddha nature pervades the whole universe, existing right here, now. The wind blows, waves fall on the shore, and Guanyin finds us in the dark and broken roads. We give thanks to all the ancestors of meditation in the still halls, centuries of ancestors, known and unknown, celebrated and long-neglected, ants and sticks and grizzly bears.

Let wisdom go to every corner of the house.

Let people have joy in each other's joy. -_-] ○

(ALL) All Buddhas throughout space and time, ○
 All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas, ○
 wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita. ○ <bow>



○○○○ DEDICATION

(3) (CHANTED) [Infinite realms of light and dark convey the Buddha mind. Birds and trees and stars and we ourselves come forth in perfect harmony. We recite our gatha and our sutra for the many beings of the world and dedicate our practice in grateful thanks to all our many guides along the ancient Way. -_-] ○

(ALL) All Buddhas throughout space and time, ○
 All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas, ○
 wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita. ○ <bow>

 ○○○○ ANCESTORS DEDICATION

(*CHANTED*) [The Wheel of the Dharma turns and turns, and reality is revealed in emptiness and form. May all beings be liberated and brought to great joy. We give thanks for the guidance of our teachers, named and unnamed, celebrated and long-neglected. We especially offer the merits of our practice to:] ○

(*ALL*) Great Mother Prajna Paramita ○

(The Mother of All Buddhas)

The Seven Ancient Buddhas ○

(The mythical Buddhas of past eons)

Great Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha ○

(The historical Buddha)

All Buddhas throughout space and time, ○

All honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas, ○

wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita. ○ *<bow>*

 (Wake All The Beings)

○○○○ (SUNG) {I vow to wake} all the beings of the world. ③

I vow to set endless heartache to rest.

I vow to walk through every wisdom gate. ③

I vow to live the great Buddha Way. ① ② *(repeat 3 times, <bow>)*

 Aspiration Prayer

(by Larry Yang, from Awakening Together; adapted)

May I be as loving in this moment as I can.

(We engage with these aspirations with regard to others, and to ourselves as well)

If I cannot be loving in this moment, may I be kind.

If I cannot be kind, may I be nonjudgmental.

If I cannot be nonjudgmental, may I not cause harm.

- And if I cannot not cause harm,
- may I cause the least harm possible. *<bow>*



Guidelines for Studying the Way — “Gakudo Yojin-Shu”

(by Eihei Dogen, from *Shobogenzo*; tr. Tanahashi, Hee-Jin Kim...; adapted, abridged)

1. It is imperative for those who practice the Way to entrust themselves to it. Those who entrust themselves to the Way will know for certain that from the beginning it has been unmarred by confusions, delusions, and mistakes—with nothing added and nothing missing. Entrusting in this manner and penetrating the Way in this manner, practice it accordingly.

This is fundamental to learning the Way.

Its manner and principle are such that they cut off thinking and prevent you heading down the path of mere intellection. This is an excellent means to arouse true beginner's mind. Thereafter, this enables you to cast off your body-and-mind and let go of delusion and enlightenment.

Those who truly trust that they are within the Buddha Way are most rare. If you trust in this manner you will come to naturally understand the passage and blockage of the Great Way, and know the original source of delusion and enlightenment. In zazen, if you cut the root of thinking,

- in eight or nine times out of ten,
- you will find the Way instantly.

2. There are two ways to penetrate body-and-mind: studying with and hearing a true teacher, and devotedly sitting zazen. Listening to the teaching opens up your conscious mind; sitting zazen is concerned with practice-enlightenment. If you neglect either of these when entering the Buddha Way, you cannot hit the mark.

Realizing Buddha immediately with your own body-and-mind is hitting the mark. Without changing body-and-mind, just being thus is called “immediate”; it is called “hitting the mark.”

Following Buddha completely means releasing your old views.

Hitting the mark completely • means having no new nest • in which to settle.



The Compassionate Heart of Wisdom

(a rendering of the Heart Sutra, by James Ishmael Ford)

When the Heart of Compassion walked through the gate of Wisdom,
she looked into the body of the world and each of us,
seeing that each of us and the world itself is boundless.

And with this all suffering vanished.

Dear ones, all things are boundless;
and the boundless is nothing other than all things.
Everything in itself is boundlessness; boundlessness is all things.
This is true of our bodies, feelings, experiences, perceptions,
and of consciousness itself.

Dear ones, the stuff of the universe is boundless.
It is not born and it does not die. It is not pure or impure.
It neither increases nor diminishes.

Within boundlessness there are no sense organs, no objects to sense,
and no field of experience; no ignorance and thus no ending of ignorance;
no old age and death and thus no ending of old age and death.
There is no suffering and thus no causes of suffering;
there is no path to follow and no wisdom to attain.

Understanding this boundlessness, the pure-hearted one is free.
Without entanglements, the true person of the Way is not afraid.

This is the pure and unexcelled Way.
All sages of past, present, and future attain to this truth and find
freedom.

This truth becomes the great mantra, supreme and unexcelled;
and this truth removes all suffering.

Gone, gone, gone beyond!

- Completely gone beyond!
- Blessings and blessings!



OOO⊙◆ GREAT PRAJNA PARAMITA HEART SUTRA -- ○

(tr. Robert Aitken)

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, practicing deep prajna paramita ○ *(the perfection of wisdom)*

clearly saw that all five skandhas are empty, *(aggregates)*

transforming all suffering and distress.

“Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness; emptiness, no other than form;

form is exactly emptiness; emptiness, exactly form;

sensation, perception, mental reaction, consciousness are also like this.

“Shariputra, all things are essentially empty—

not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure; without loss, without gain.

“Therefore in emptiness there is no form;

no sensation, perception, mental reaction, consciousness;

no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind;

no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of thought;

no seeing and so on to no thinking;

no ignorance and also no ending of ignorance;

and so on to no old age and death, and also no ending of old age and death;

no suffering, cause of suffering, cessation, path;

no wisdom and no attainment. ○ *(◆ speeds up slightly)*

“Since there is nothing to attain,

the bodhisattva lives by prajna paramita,

with no hindrance in the mind; no hindrance, and therefore no fear;

far beyond delusive thinking, right here is nirvana. ○

“All Buddhas of past, present and future live by prajna paramita,

attaining anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

*(supreme, unsurpassed,
perfect enlightenment)*

“Therefore know that prajna paramita

is the great sacred mantra, the great vivid mantra,

the unsurpassed mantra, the supreme mantra,

which completely removes all suffering.

“This is truth, not mere formality.

“Therefore set forth the prajna paramita mantra.

“Set forth this mantra and proclaim:

○ *Gaté Gaté Paragaté* ○ *Parasamgaté* ○ *Bodhi Svaha!*

○ *Gaté Gaté Paragaté* ○ *Parasamgaté* ○ *Bodhi Svaha!*

○ *Gaté Gaté Paragaté* ○ *Parasamgaté* ○ *Bodhi Svaha!*” ○

*(Gone, gone, gone beyond,
completely gone beyond.
Enlightenment, hail!)*



An Interpretation of the Heart Sutra

(by Zach Horvitz)

When Buddha Avalokiteshvara was deep in nondual meditation, this is the insight she discovered: all five composite aspects of our being are absent of intrinsic substance, autonomous selfhood. With this wisdom, she overcame all suffering in human reality. She then offered the following discourse to her disciple, Shariputra:

“Whatever has form is not separate from the originally formless reality. Our body itself is not separate from this formlessness. This is also true of things such as feelings, perceptions, and even consciousness. None of it has true substance. Listen, Shariputra, all phenomena are insubstantial. Birth and death are illusory, and being and non-being are only categories of the mind. Nothing is really born and nothing really dies. Original formlessness does not arise or cease. What we take in through the senses does not belong to us, nor is it apart from us. What we think of as ‘our’ eyes are not really ‘our’ eyes, nor our nose, tongue, or ears. All these organs are not separate from the totality of which they are comprised. In truth they are conceptually designated. There is therefore no aging, no dying. Why suffer them? Nonetheless, old age and death go on indefinitely. Bodhisattvas: be unhindered by what you take to be your own mind! All who realize this see they have nothing to attain in this time or any, and they dwell among the Buddhas of past, present, and future. There is no enlightenment outside this. Let this discourse yield great merit.

And let us say the following esoteric mantra:

Gaté, Gaté, Paragaté, Parasamgaté, Bodhi Svaha!

"Gone, gone, gone beyond, • gone completely beyond all things

• — hurray!"



Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage

(by Shitou Xiqian; tr. Taigen Leighton, adapted)

I've built a grass hut where there's nothing of value.
After eating, I relax and enjoy a nap.
When it was completed, fresh weeds appeared.
Now it's been lived in—covered by weeds.

The person in the hut lives here calmly,
Not stuck to inside, outside, or in between.
Places worldly people live, he doesn't live.
Realms worldly people love, she doesn't love.

Though the hut is small, it includes the entire world.
In just this place, an old man illumines forms and their nature.
A Mahayana bodhisattva trusts without doubt.
The middling or lowly can't help wondering:
Will this hut perish or not?

Perishable or not, the original master is present,
Not dwelling south or north, east or west.
Firmly based on steadiness, it can't be surpassed.
A shining window below the green pines—
Jade palaces or vermilion towers can't compare with it.

Just sitting with head covered, all things are at rest.
Thus, this mountain monk doesn't understand at all.
Living here she no longer works to get free.
Who would proudly arrange seats, trying to entice guests?

Turn around the light to shine within, then just return.
The vast inconceivable source can't be faced or turned away from.
Meet the ancestral teachers, be familiar with their instruction,
Bind grasses to build a hut, and don't give up.

Let go of hundreds of years and relax completely.
Open your hands and walk, innocent. ⇨

Thousands of words, myriad interpretations
Are only to free you from obstructions.

- If you want to know the undying person in the hut,
- Don't separate from this skin-bag here and now.



Song of Zazen

(by Hakuin Ekaku; tr. Norman Waddell)

All beings by nature are Buddha, as ice by nature is water;
Apart from water there is no ice, apart from beings, no Buddha.

How sad that people ignore the near, and search for truth afar,
Like someone in the midst of water crying out in thirst,
Like a child of a wealthy home wandering among the poor.

Lost on dark paths of ignorance,
We wander through the six worlds, from dark path to dark path.
When shall we be freed from birth-and-death?

Oh, the zazen of the Mahayana! To this the highest praise!
Devotion, repentance, training, the many paramitas,
All have their source in zazen.
Those who try zazen even once wipe away beginningless crimes;
Where are all the dark paths then? The Pure Land itself is near.

Those who hear this truth even once, and listen with a grateful heart,
Treasuring it, revering it, gain blessings without end.

Much more, those who turn about, and bear witness to self-nature—
Self-nature that is no nature—go far beyond mere doctrine.

Here effect and cause are the same;
The Way is neither two nor three;
With form that is no form, going and coming, we are never astray;
With thought that is no thought,
Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law. ⇨

How boundless and free is the sky of samadhi!
How bright the full moon of wisdom!
Truly is anything missing now?
Nirvana is right here, before our eyes.

- This very place is the Lotus Land;
- This very body, the Buddha.



Great Doubt

(by Hakuin Ekaku, from “Orategama Zokushu”; tr. Philip Yamplosky; adapted, abridged)

When a person faces Great Doubt, before them there is in all directions only a vast and empty land without birth and without death, like a huge plain of ice extending in all directions. Penetrating it is trampling the multi-tiered gate of birth-and-death that has come down through endless kalpas; it is penetrating the inner understanding and basic enlightenment of all the Tathagathas—but you must accept that the realization of so felicitous a thing as the Great Matter will involve a certain amount of suffering.

Realize that this cannot be handed down, and cannot be explained; rather it is like knowing for yourself by drinking it whether water is warm or cold. The ten directions melt before the eyes, and the three periods of time are penetrated in an instant.

- What joy is there in the realms of humans or gods
- that can compare with this?



Observing the One Who Is Dim and Dull

(by Dahui Zonggao, from *Swampland Flowers*; tr. J.C. Cleary;
adapted, abridged)

You may imagine that your root nature is dim and dull; and you may imagine that although you make efforts to cultivate and uphold the Dharma, you've never gotten an instant of transcendent enlightenment. Yet the one who can recognize *dim* and *dull* is definitely not dim and dull. After all, where else would you seek transcendent enlightenment? People who study this Path must depend on their dimness and dullness to enter.

But if you hold to dimness and dullness, considering yourself to be without the qualifications for the Path, then you are being controlled by the demons of dimness and dullness. Those with commonplace understanding often take the intention of seeking transcendent enlightenment and make it into an obstacle set before them—and so their own correct understanding cannot appear.

This “obstacle” does not come from the outside: it's nothing else but the one who is awake, who recognizes the dimness and dullness. Simply see the one who can know dimness and dullness; and see who that one ultimately is. Just look right here.

Don't seek transcendent enlightenment, just observe and observe—

- suddenly you'll laugh aloud.
- Beyond this, there is nothing that can be said.



Realizing the Zen Way

(by Muso Soseki, from *Dialogues in a Dream*; tr. Thomas Kirchner; adapted)

Zen points directly to our original nature. If one realizes original nature, one knows that fundamentally birth and death are without form—this is true longevity. One sees nothing to call “misfortune”—this is true security. One leaves behind the notions of “has” and “has not”—this is true gain. One sees there is no one to despise as an enemy—this is true conquest, true love and respect.

- Once one realizes these principles, • one realizes the Zen Way.



Modern Poems Inspired by Verses from the First Buddhist Nuns

(by Matty Weingast, from the book The First Free Women)

1. Inspired by the nun Vira—"Hero"

Truly strong among those who think themselves strong; truly unafraid among those who hide their fear; a hero among those who talk of heroes. Don't be fooled by outward signs—lifting heavy things or picking fights with weaker opponents or running headfirst into battle.

• A real hero walks the Path to its end— • then shows others the way.



2. Inspired by the nun Mitta—"Friend"

Full of trust you left home, and soon learned to walk the Path—making yourself a friend to everyone and making everyone a friend. When the whole world is your friend, fear will find no place to call home. And when you make the mind your friend, you'll know what trust really means. Listen. I have followed this Path of friendship to its end.

• And I can say with absolute certainty— • it will lead you home.



3. Inspired by the nun Bhadra—"Lucky"

You always considered yourself lucky because things seemed to work out the way you wanted. Now luck has a different meaning.

Lucky to be walking a Path that finds peace—in the arising and passing away of each present moment.

• Regardless of how things work out— • or don't.



4. Inspired by the nun Upasama—"Calm"

How do you cross the flood?

You cross calmly—one step at a time, feeling for stones.

How do you cross the flood, my heart?

You cross calmly— • one step at a time, • or not at all.



5. Inspired by the nun Uttama—"Highest"

The entire Path and all you will ever need to walk it you will find inside.

So the Buddha taught me. Once I took a closer look, all the running around started to seem a little silly. Things changed so quickly.

By the time you got anywhere—you'd be someone else.

You are your mother. You are your daughter.

• One moment • gives birth to the next.



6. Inspired by the nun Vijaya—"Victor"

When everyone else was meditating, I'd be outside circling the hall.

Finally I went to confess. *I'm hopeless*, I said.

The elder nun smiled. *Just keep going. Nothing stays in orbit forever.*

If this circling is all you have, why not make this circling your home?

I did as she told me, and went on circling the hall.

If you find yourself partly in and partly out—

if you find yourself drawn to this Path and also drawing away—

I can assure you, you're in good company.

Just keep going. • Sometimes the most direct path • isn't a straight line.



7. Inspired by the nun Rohini—"Wandering Star"

You don't become the cloth, just because you put on robes.

You don't turn into empty space, just because you carry a bowl.

The sun doesn't bow down. Trees don't throw flowers at your feet.

Birds don't start answering when you call.

The Path will hold even the biggest mistakes.

The Path will make room for even your deepest regrets.

But you don't just become the cloth of the robe overnight.

It can begin very quietly. Something you barely even notice.

Like the touch of water on your skin, like a knife in a drawer,

like the next five minutes—unless they're your last.

The Path isn't a line on a map.

It's a great shining world. Enter wherever you like.

You might get thrown back once or twice.

But if you push through the outer layers—

oh, my sisters, • then you will know the true welcome

• that is the very essence of the Path.



Bodhisattva's Vow

(by Torei Enji)

[I am only a simple disciple, but I offer these respectful words:] •

When I look deeply into the real form of the universe,
Everything reveals the mysterious truth of the Tathagata. (TA-TAAAgA-TA)

This truth never fails: in every moment and every place
things can't help but shine with this light.

Realizing this,

our Ancestors gave reverent care to animals, birds, and all beings.

Realizing this,

we ourselves know that our daily food, clothing, and shelter
are the warm body and beating heart of the Buddha.

How can we be ungrateful to anyone or anything?

Even though someone may be a fool, we can be compassionate.

If someone turns against us, speaking ill of us and treating us bitterly,

it's best to bow down:

This is the Buddha appearing to us,

Finding ways to free us from our own attachments—

the very ones that have made us suffer, again and again and again.

Now on each flash of thought

a lotus flower blooms,

And on each flower: a Buddha.

The light of the Tathagata

Appears before us, soaking into our feet.

- May we share this mind with all beings,
- so that we and the world together may grow in wisdom.

(We BOW DOWN to the fact of aversion arising and our capacity to work inwardly with this truth—not to the external one treating us bitterly.)



The Pith of the Heart Sutra

Form is no other than emptiness;

emptiness, no other than form;

form is exactly emptiness,

emptiness, exactly form;

- sensation, perception, mental reaction,
- and consciousness are also like this.



The Harmony of Relative and Absolute

(“Sandokai” by Shitou Xiqian; tr. Peter Matthiessen, et al)

The mind of the Great Sage of India is intimately conveyed
from West and East.

Among human beings are wise ones and fools;
in the Way there is no Ancestor of North or South.

The subtle source is clear and bright;
the branching streams flow in the dark.

To be attached to things is primordial illusion;
to encounter the absolute is not yet enlightenment.

Each sphere, every sense and field,
intermingle even as they shine alone;
interacting even as they merge,
yet keeping their places in expression of their own.

Forms differ primally in shape and character
and sounds in sharp or soothing tones.

The dark makes all words one;
the brightness distinguishes good and bad phrases.

The four elements return to their true nature as a child to its mother.

Fire is hot, water is wet, wind moves and the earth is dense.

Eye and form, ear and sound, nose and smell,
tongue and taste of sweet and sour.

Each independent of the other like leaves that come from the same
root; and though root and leaves must go back to the Source
both root and leaves have their own uses.

Light is also darkness, but do not think of it as darkness.

Darkness is light; but do not see it as light.

Light and darkness are not one, not two,
like the foot before and the foot behind in walking. ⇒

Each thing has its own being
which is not different from its place and function.

The relative fits the absolute as a box and its lid.

The absolute meets the relative like two arrow points that touch in the air.

Hearing this, simply perceive the Source.

Make no criterion.

If you do not see the Way,
You do not see it even as you walk upon it.

If you walk the Way, you draw no nearer, progress no farther.

Who fails to see this is mountains and rivers away.

- Listen, you who would pierce this subtle matter:
- Do not waste your time by night or day!



Seeking with Empty Hands

*(by Keizan Jokin, from The Record of Transmitting the Light;
tr. Francis Cook)*

Seeking it yourself with empty hands,
you return with empty hands.

- In that place where fundamentally nothing is acquired,
- you really acquire it.



Loving-Kindness Prayer

May all beings be at peace.

May the hearts of all beings remain open.

May all beings awaken to the light of their true nature.

- May all beings be healed.
- May I-and-all-beings be a source of healing. <bow>



Song of the Jeweled-Mirror Samadhi (by *Dongshan Liangjie*; tr. SZTB)

The Dharma of thusness is intimately transmitted by Buddhas and Ancestors.

Now you have it; preserve it well.

A silver bowl filled with snow, a heron hidden in the moon.

Taken as similar, they are not the same; not distinguished,
their places are known.

The meaning does not reside in the words,
but a pivotal moment brings it forth.

Move and you are trapped, miss and you fall into doubt and vacillation.
Turning away and touching are both wrong, for it is like massive fire.
Just to portray it in literary form is to stain it with defilement.

In darkest night it is perfectly clear; in the light of dawn it is hidden.

It is a standard for all things; its use removes all suffering.
Though it is not constructed, it is not beyond words.

Facing a precious mirror; form and reflection behold each other.
You are not it, but in truth it is you.

Like a newborn child, it is fully endowed with five aspects.
No going, no coming, no arising, no abiding; a baby babbles—is anything
said or not? In the end, it says nothing, for the words are not yet right.

In the illumination hexagram, apparent and real interact;
stacked together they become three; the permutations make five,
like the taste of the five-flowered herb, like the five-pronged vajra.

Wondrously embraced within the real, drumming and singing begin
together. Penetrate the source and travel the pathways;
embrace the territory and treasure the roads.

You would do well to respect this; do not neglect it.

Natural and wondrous, it is not a matter of delusion or enlightenment.
Within causes and conditions, time and season,
it is serene and illuminating. ⇨

So minute it enters where there is no gap,
so vast it transcends all dimension.

Just a hair's-breadth deviation, and you are out of tune.

There are sudden and gradual, so teachings and approaches arise.
With these matters distinguished, each has its standard.
Mastered or not, reality constantly flows.

Outside still and inside trembling, like tethered colts or cowering rats,
the ancient sages grieved for them, and offered them the Dharma.

Led by their inverted views, they take black for white.
When inverted thinking stops, the affirming mind naturally accords.

If you want to follow in the ancient tracks,
please observe the sages of the past.

One on the verge of realizing the Buddha Way contemplated a tree
for ten long kalpas,
like a battle-scarred tiger,
like a horse with shanks gone grey.

Because some are vulgar: jeweled tables and ornate robes;
because some are wide-eyed: cats and white oxen.

With a great archer's skill one can hit the mark at a hundred yards,
but arrows meeting head on—how could that be a matter of skill?

Wooden man starts to sing; stone woman gets up dancing.
It is not reached by feelings or consciousness—
how could it involve deliberation?

Ministers serve their lords,
children obey their parents;
not obeying is not filial,
failure to serve is no help.

- With practice hidden, function secretly, like a fool, like an idiot.
- Just to do this continuously is called the host within the host.



Loving-Kindness Sutra

(by Shakyamuni Buddha, from the Metta Sutta; tr. Amaravati Sangha, adapted)

(SPOKEN or SUNG) [This is what should be done:] •

By one
 who is skilled in goodness,
And who knows the path
 of peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward
 and gentle in speech.
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied.
Unburdened with duties
 and frugal in their ways,
Peaceful and calm,
 and wise and skillful,
Not proud
 and demanding in nature.
Let them not
 do the slightest thing
That the wise
 would later reprove.
Wishing:
 In gladness and in safety,
May all beings be at ease.
Whatever living beings
 there may be;
Whether they are weak
 or strong,
 omitting none.
The great or the mighty,
 medium, short or tall,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born:
May all beings be at ease!

Let none
 deceive another,
or despise
 any being in any state.
Let none
 through anger or ill-will
 wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother
 protects with her life
 her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish
 all living beings;
Radiating kindness
 over the entire world:
Spreading upward to the skies,
 and downward to the depths;
Outward and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking,
 seated or lying down,
Free of drowsiness,
One should sustain
 this recollection.
This is said to be
 the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one,
 having clarity of vision,
• being freed
 from all sense desires,
• is also freed
 from birth-and-death.

○○○⊗◇ AFFIRMING FAITH IN MIND -_- ○ ◇

(“Xinxinming” by Jianzhi Sengcan)

(alternate between higher and lower registers with roman and italic text)

The Great Way is not difficult for
those who do not pick and choose.

*When preferences are all seen through,
the Way stands clear and undisguised.*

But even slight distinctions made
set earth and heaven far apart.

*If you would clearly see the truth,
attach to neither pro nor con.*

To founder in dislike and like is
nothing but the mind’s disease.

*And not to see the Way’s deep truth
disturbs the mind’s essential peace.*

The Way is perfect like vast space,
where there’s no lack and no excess.

*Our choice to choose or to reject
prevents our seeing this simple truth.*

Both striving for the outer world
as well as for an inner void
condemn us to entangled lives.

*Just calmly see that all is One
and by themselves false views will go.*

Attempts to stop activity
will fill you with activity.

*Remaining in duality,
you’ll never know true unity.*

And not to know this unity lets
conflict lead you far astray.

*When you assert that things are real
you miss their true reality.*

But to assert that things are void
also misses reality.

*The more you talk and think on this,
the further from the truth you’ll be.*

Cut off all useless thoughts and
words and there’s nowhere you
cannot go.

*Returning to the root itself, you’ll
find the meaning of all things.*

If you pursue appearances,
you overlook the primal source.
*Awak’ning is to go beyond
both emptiness as well as form.*

All changes in this empty world
seem real because of ignorance.

*Do not go searching for the Truth,
just let those fond opinions go.*

Abide not in duality,
refrain from all pursuit of it.

*If there’s a trace of right and wrong,
true-mind is lost, confused, distraught. ⇨*

From One-mind comes duality,
but cling not even to this One.
*When this One-mind rests undisturbed
then nothing in the world offends.*

And when no thing can give offense,
then all obstructions cease to be.
*If all thought-objects disappear
the thinking subject drops away.*

For things are things because of mind,
as mind is mind because of things.
*These two are merely relative and
both at source are emptiness.*

In emptiness these are not-two,
yet in each are contained all forms.
*Once coarse and fine are seen no more,
then how can there be taking sides?*

The Great Way is without limit,
beyond the easy and the hard.
*But those who hold to narrow views
are fearful and irresolute; their
frantic haste just slows them down.*

If you're attached to anything,
you surely will go far astray.
*Just let go now of clinging mind,
and all things are just as they are;
in essence nothing goes or stays.*

See into the true self of things, and
you're in step with the Great Way,
thus walking freely, undisturbed.
*But live in bondage to your thoughts,
and you will be confused, unclear.*

This heavy burden weighs you
down—so why keep judging
“good” and “bad”?

*If you would walk the highest Way
do not reject the sense domain.*

For as it is, whole and complete,
the sense world is enlightenment.
*The wise do not strive after goals, but
fools still bind themselves with thought.*

The One Way knows no differences,
the foolish cling to this and that.
*To seek Great Mind with thinking
mind is certainly a grave mistake.*

From small mind come rest and
unrest, but Mind awakened
transcends both.

*Delusion spawns dualities;
these dreams are merely flow'rs of air—
why work so hard at grasping them?*

⇒

Both gain and loss, and right and wrong—once and for all be done with them.

When you no longer are asleep, all dreams will vanish by themselves.

When mind does not discriminate, all things are as they are, as One.

To go to this mysterious Source frees us from all entanglements.

When all is seen with “equal mind,” to our self-nature we return.

This single Mind goes right beyond all reasons and comparison.

Seek movement and there's no movement; seek rest and no-rest comes instead.

When rest and no-rest cease to be, then even oneness disappears.

This ultimate finality's beyond all laws, can't be described.

With single Mind, one with the Way, all ego-centered strivings cease.

Doubts and confusion disappear, and so true faith pervades our life.

There is no thing that clings to us, and nothing that is left behind.

All's self-revealing, void and clear, without exerting power of mind.

Thoughts cannot reach this state of truth; mere feelings are of no avail.

In this true world of emptiness both self and other are no more.

To enter this true empty world, immediately affirm “not-two.”

In this “not-two” all is the same, with nothing sep'rate or outside.

The wise in each time and place awaken to this primal truth.

The Way's beyond all space, all time—one instant or ten thousand years.

Not only here, not only there, truth's right before your very eyes.

Distinctions such as large and small have relevance for you no more.

The largest is the smallest too—here limitations have no place.

What is is not, what is not is—
if this is not yet clear to you,
you're still far from the inner truth.

*One thing is all, all things are one—
trust this and all's whole and complete.*

When faith and mind are not sep'rate,
then True Entrusting's taken place.

*This is beyond all words, all thought,
for here there is no yesterday,
no tomorrow, no today.*



Song of Realizing the Dao

(by Yongjia Xuanjue; tr. Robert Aitken; adapted, abridged)

There is the leisurely one,
Walking the Dao, beyond philosophy,
Not avoiding fantasy, not seeking truth.
The real nature of ignorance is the Buddha nature itself;
The empty delusory body is the very body of the Dharma.

When the Dharma body awakens completely,
There is nothing at all.
The source of our self-nature
Is the Buddha of innocent truth.

Mental and physical reactions come and go
Like clouds in the empty sky;
Greed, hatred, and ignorance appear and disappear
Like bubbles on the surface of the sea.

When we realize actuality,
There is no distinction between mind and thing
And the path to hell instantly vanishes.
This is not a lie to fool the world.

Once we awaken to Tathagata-Zen, *(TA-TAAAgA-TA)*
The six perfections and the ten thousand good actions
are already complete within us.

In our dream we see the six realms clearly;
After we awaken the whole universe is empty.

No bad fortune, no good fortune, no loss, no gain;
Never seek such things in eternal serenity.

Who has no-thought?
Who is not-born?
If we are truly not-born,
we are not unborn either. ⇨

Can a wooden puppet attain Buddhahood
By its practice of not-thinking?
How can we realize ourselves
By virtuous deeds or by seeking the Buddha?
Release your hold on earth, water, fire, and wind;
Drink and eat as you wish in eternal serenity.
All things are transient and completely empty;
This is the great enlightenment of the Tathagata.
Transience, emptiness, and enlightenment—
These are the ultimate truths of Buddhism;
Keeping and teaching them is true Sangha devotion.
If you don't understand, please inquire about it.
Cut out directly the root of it all—
this is the very point of the Buddha seal.

People do not recognize the wish-fulfilling jewel.

Living intimately within the Tathagata essence,
It operates our sight, hearing, smell, taste, sensation, awareness;

- And all of these are empty,
- yet not empty.



Lose the Greed for Pleasure

(Shakyamuni Buddha, from the Sutta Nipata)

Lose the greed for pleasure.

See how letting go of the world is peacefulness.

- There is nothing that you need to hold on to,
- And there is nothing that you need push away.



○ ◆ (Jizo Mantra)

Om ka ka kabi san
ma e sowa ka (9x)



◆ (Kanzeon Song)

Kwan Seum Bosal
(repeat per chant-leader)



○ ◆ (Mantra for Purifying the Karma of Speech)

Suri suri mahasuri susuri sabaha



○ ◆ (Mantra for Opening the Dharma-Treasury)

Om aranam aranam



○ ◆ (Mantra for Offering to Hungry Ghosts)

Om ma ku ra sai so wa ka



(Mantra for Purifying the Dharmadhatu)

Om nam



(Nembutsu)

(This is an expression of the oneness of our limited, karmic self with Amida Buddha, the ocean of compassionate light. Spoken or written version: NAMU AMIDA BUTSU.)

(LEADER) [Nam An Da Bu]

(ALL) Nam An Da Bu

Nam An Da Bu

Nam An Da Bu

Nam An Da Bu

Nam An Da Bu ○ <bow>

(LEADER, spoken) Namu Amida Butsu] (3x)

(ALL, spoken) Namu Amida Butsu

(ALL, muttering repeatedly) Nam An Da, Nam An Da, Nam An Da...



(Juseige)

(Vowels in ~~strike through~~ are not voiced. Italic syllables are chanted for a duration of 2 beats. EKOKU section has tonal qualities depicted below. At end of lines, keisu <O> is RUNG ON-BEAT WITH preceding syllable rather than after.)

○ BUSSETSU MURYOJUKYO

(ALL) Ga gon cho se gan
His-shi mu jo do
Shi gan fu man zok#
Sei fujo sho gak#

Kai hi chi e gen
Mes-shi kon mo an
Hei soku sho aku do
Tsu datsu zen shu mon.

Shi gan nyak-ko ka
Dai sen o kan do
Ko ku sho ten nin
To u chin myo ke. ○

Ga o mu ryo ko
Fu i dai se shu
Fu sai sho bin gu
Sei fujo sho gak#.

Ko so jo man zok#
I yo ro jip-po
Nichi gatsu shu ju ki
Ten ko on pu gen.

(LEADER) [Nam An Da Bu.]
(ALL) Nam An Da Bu.
Nam An Da Bu.
Nam An Da Bu.
Nam An Da Bu.
Nam An Da Bu. ○

Ga shi jo buts# do
Myo sho cho jip-po
Ku kyo mi sho mon
Sei fujo sho gak#.

I shu kai ho zo
Ko se ku doku ho
Jo o dai shu chu
Sep-po shi shi ku.

(Ekoku) (see notation)
(LEADER CHANTS) [Gan
ni shi ku doku]
(ALL) Byo do se is-sai
Do ho-n bo da-i shin
O jo-o an ra ○ kok# ○

Ri yoku jin sho nen
Jo e shu bon gyo
Shi gu mu jo do
I sho ten nin shi.

Ku yo is-sai buts#
Gu soku shu toku hon
Gan e shitsu jo man
Toku i san gai o.

Jin riki en dai ko
Fu sho mu sai do
Sho jo san ku myo
Ko sai shu yaku nan.

Nyo buts# mu ge chi
Tsu datsu mi fu sho
Gan ga ku e rik#
To shi sai sho son.

(LEADER) Na man da (~3x)
(LDR, spoken) Namu Amida Butsu
(ALL, spoken) Namu Amida Butsu
(ALL, muttering repeatedly) Nam An
Da, Nam An Da, Nam An Da...] (3x)

(tonal notation for EKOKU)

(LEADER)	GAN	NI	SHI	KU	DOKU
(ALL)	BYO	DO	SE	IS	SAI
	DO	HO-N	BO	DAI	SHIN
	O	JO	AN	RA	KOK



OOO⊗◇ **DAIHISHIN DHARANI** -_- O (◇ softly and evenly)
(The Dharani of the Great Compassionate Mind)

Namu kara tan	to ji to en o bo	ku ryo ku ryo	ko shaki ra
no tora ya ya	ryo ki ru gya	ki ri sha ro sha	oshi do ya
namu ori ya	chi kya ra chi i	ro shi ri shi ri	somo ko hodo
boryo ki chi	kiri mo ko fuji	su ryo su ryo	mogya shido
shifu ra ya fuji	sa to sa bo sa	fuji ya fuji ya	ya somo ko
sato bo ya	bo mo ra mo	fudo ya fudo	nora kin ji ha
moko sato bo	ra mo ki mo ki	ya mi chiri ya	gyara ya somo
ya mo ko kya	ri to in ku ryo	③ nora kin ji	ko mo hori
runi kya ya en	ku ryo ke mo	chiri shuni no	shin gyara ya
○ sa hara ha e	to ryo to ryo	hoya mono	somo ko namu
shu tan no ton	ho ja ya chi mo	somo ko shido	kara tan no
sha namu shiki	ko ho ja ya chi	ya somo ko	tora ya ya ③
ri toi mo ori ya	to ra to ra chiri	moko shido ya	namu ori ya
boryo ki chi	ni shifu ra ya	somo ko shido	boryo ki chi
shifu ra rin to	sha ro sha ro	yu ki shifu ra	shifu ra ya
bo na mu no ra	mo mo ha mo	ya somo ko ③	somo ko ③
kin ji ki ri mo	ra ho chi ri yu	nora kin ji	shite do modo
ko ho do sha	ki yu ki shi no	somo ko mo ra	ra hodo ya
mi sa bo o to jo	shi no ora san	no ra somo ko	somo ko
shu ben o shu	fura sha ri ha	shira su omo	<i>(repeat 3x,</i>
in sa bo sa to	za ha za fura	gya ya somo	<i>speeding up with</i>
no mo bo gya	sha ya ku ryo	ko sobo moko	<i>each. slowing for</i>
mo ha te cho	ku ryo mo ra	shido ya somo	<i>last 3 beats of 3rd</i>
			<i>time only)</i>



This World of Dew
(by Kobayashi Issa)

This world of dew
 is indeed a world of dew—

- and yet...
- and yet...



No Umbrella
(by Daito, from The Roaring Stream)

No umbrella;
 getting soaked.

- I'll just use the rain
- as my raincoat.



An Unending Truth

(by Shakyamuni Buddha, from the Dhammapada; tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu; adapted, abridged)

1. Phenomena are preceded by the heart, ruled by the heart, made of the heart. If you speak or act with a darkened heart, then suffering follows you—as the wheel of the cart, the track of the ox that pulls it.

Phenomena are preceded by the heart, ruled by the heart, made of the heart. If you speak or act with a calm, bright heart,
• then happiness follows you, • like a shadow that never leaves.



2. “That person insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me”
— for those who brood on this, hostility isn’t stilled.

“That person insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me”
• — for those who don't brood on this, • hostility is stilled.



3. Hostilities aren't stilled through hostility, regardless. Hostilities are stilled through non-hostility: this is an unending truth.

Unlike those who don't realize we're here on the verge of perishing,
• those who do: • their quarrels are stilled.



Facing Everything

(by Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field; tr. Taigen Leighton)

Accord and respond without laboring and accomplish without hindrance. Everywhere turn around freely—not following conditions, not falling into classifications. Facing everything, let go and attain stability. Stay with that just as that. Stay with this just as this. That and this are mixed together with no discriminations as to their places. So it is said that the earth lifts up the mountain without knowing the mountain’s stark steepness.

• A rock contains jade • without knowing the jade’s flawlessness.



The Misunderstanding of Many Lifetimes

(by Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field; tr. Taigen Leighton)

Emptiness is without characteristics. Illumination has no emotional afflictions. With piercing, quietly profound radiance, it mysteriously eliminates all disgrace. Thus one can know oneself; thus the self is completed. The clear, wondrously bright field is present from the beginning. Many lifetimes of misunderstanding come only from distrust, hindrance, and screens of confusion that we create in a scenario of isolation. With boundless wisdom journey beyond this, forgetting accomplishments. Straightforwardly abandon stratagems and take on responsibility. Having turned yourself around, accepting your situation, if you set foot on the Path, spiritual energy will marvelously transport you. • Contact phenomena with total sincerity, • not a single atom of dust outside yourself.



Self and Other the Same

(by Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field; tr. Taigen Leighton)

All dharmas are innately wondrous beyond description. Perfect vision has no gap. In mountain groves, grasslands, and woods the truth has always been exhibited. Discern and comprehend the broad long tongue of the Buddha's teaching, which cannot be muted anywhere. The spoken is instantly heard; what is heard is instantly spoken. Senses and objects merge; principle and wisdom are united. When self and other are the same, mind and dharmas are one. When you face what you have excluded and see how it appears, you must quickly gather it together and integrate with it.

- Make it work within your house, • then establish stable sitting.



The Field of Boundless Emptiness

(by Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field; tr. Taigen Leighton)

The field of boundless emptiness is what exists from the very beginning. You must purify, cure, grind down, or brush away all the tendencies you have fabricated into apparent habits. Then you can reside in the clear circle of brightness. Utter emptiness has no image, ⇨

upright independence does not rely on anything. Just expand and illuminate the original truth unconcerned by external conditions. Accordingly we are told to realize that not a single thing exists. In this field, birth and death do not appear. The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered to each speck of dust without becoming its partner.

The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces, and mirrors without obscurations. Very naturally mind and dharmas emerge and harmonize. An ancient said that non-mind enacts and fulfills the Way of non-mind. Enacting and fulfilling the Way of non-mind, finally you can rest. Proceeding, you are able to guide the assembly. With thought clear, sitting silently, • wander into the center of the circle of wonder.

- This is how you must penetrate and study.



Guidepost for Silent Illumination

(by Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field; tr. Taigen Leighton)

Silent and serene, forgetting words, bright clarity appears before you.
When you reflect it you become vast,
where you embody it you are spiritually uplifted.

Spiritually solitary and shining, inner illumination restores wonder.

Dew in the moonlight, a river of stars, snow-covered pines,
clouds enveloping the peak.

In darkness it is most bright, while hidden all the more manifest.

The crane dreams in the wintery mists;
the autumn waters flow far in the distance.

Endless kalpas are totally empty,
all things completely the same.

When wonder exists in serenity,
all achievement is forgotten in illumination.

What is this wonder? ⇨

Alertly seeing through confusion,
is the way of silent illumination
and the origin of subtle radiance.

Vision penetrating into subtle radiance
is weaving gold on a jade loom.

Upright and inclined yield to each other; light and dark are
interdependent.

Not depending on sense faculty and object,
at the right time they interact.

Drink the medicine of good views;
beat the poison-smearred drum.
When they interact,
killing and giving life are up to you.

Through the gate the self emerges
and the branches bear fruit.

Only silence is the supreme speech;
only illumination the universal response.

Responding without falling into achievement,
speaking without involving listeners,
the ten thousand forms majestically glisten and expound the Dharma.

All objects certify it, every one in dialogue.
Dialoguing and certifying, they respond appropriately to each other—
but if illumination neglects serenity, aggressiveness appears.

Certifying and dialoguing, they respond to each other appropriately—
but if serenity neglects illumination, murkiness leads to wasted Dharma.

When silent illumination is fulfilled,
the lotus blossoms,
the dreamer awakens,

- A hundred streams flow into the ocean,
- A thousand ranges face the highest peak.



Fulfilling the Buddha Way

(from the Lotus Sutra; tr. Gene Reeves)

If anyone goes to stupas or mausoleums, to jeweled or painted images,
with flowers, incense, flags, or canopies and reverently makes offerings;

Or if they have others perform music, by beating drums or
blowing horns or conch shells, or playing flutes, lutes, harps,
mandolins, cymbals, or gongs, producing fine sounds
and presenting them as offerings;

Or if they joyfully praise the Buddha's virtues in song,
even with just a tiny sound, they have fulfilled the Buddha Way.

If anyone, with even a single flower, even while distracted,
makes an offering to a painted image, they will gradually see
countless Buddhas.

There are those who worship by prostrating themselves,
some merely by putting palms together,
others by raising a single hand, others by a slight nod of the head.

All of these people, honoring images in various ways,
will progressively see countless Buddhas,
and fulfill the unexcelled Way themselves,
save countless beings everywhere,
and enter into nirvana without residue—
as a fire dies out when the firewood is all consumed.

If anyone, even while distracted, enters a stupa or a mausoleum,
and even once exclaims,

- "Hail to the Buddha!" • they have fulfilled the Way.



Blinded by Passions

(by Shinran Shonin)

Although my eyes, blinded by passions,
Do not see the brilliant light that embraces me,

- The Great Compassion never tires,
- Always casting light upon me.



Genjokoan — “Actualizing Fundamental Reality”

(by Eihei Dogen, from *Shobogenzo*; tr. Shohaku Okumura; adapted, abridged)

1. As all things are Buddha Dharma, there is delusion and realization, practice, birth and death, and there are Buddhas and sentient beings. As the myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no Buddhas, no sentient beings, no birth and death.

The Buddha Way leaps clear of the many and the one—thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and Buddhas. Therefore, flowers fall even though we love them; weeds grow even though we dislike them.

To carry the self forward and illuminate myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and illuminate the self is realization. Those who have great realization of delusion are Buddhas; those who are greatly deluded about realization are sentient beings. Further, there are those who continue realizing beyond realization, and those who are in delusion throughout delusion.

When Buddhas are truly Buddhas they do not necessarily notice they are Buddhas. However, they are actualized Buddhas, who go on actualizing Buddhas.

When you see forms or hear sounds fully engaging body-and-mind, you grasp things directly. Unlike things and their reflections in the mirror and unlike the moon and its reflection in the water, when one side is illuminated the other side is dark.

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by the myriad things. When actualized by the myriad things, your body-and-mind as well as the bodies-and-minds of others drop away.

- There is a trace of realization that cannot be grasped.
- We endlessly express this ungraspable trace.



2. When you first seek the Dharma, you stray far from the boundaries of the Dharma. But the Dharma is already correctly transmitted; you are already your original self.

When you ride in a boat and watch the shore, you might assume that the shore is moving. But when you keep your eyes closely on the boat, you can see that the boat moves. Similarly, if you examine myriad things with a confused body and mind you might suppose that your mind and nature are permanent. When you practice intimately and return to where you are, it will be clear that nothing at all has unchanging self.

Firewood becomes ash, and it does not become firewood again. Yet, do not suppose that the firewood is before and the ash after. You should understand that firewood abides in the dharma-position of firewood which fully includes past and future, and is independent of past and future.

Ash abides in the dharma-position of ash which fully includes future and past, and is independent of past and future.

Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it is ash, we do not return to birth after death. This being so, it is an established way in the Buddha Dharma to deny that birth turns into death. Accordingly, birth is understood as no-arising. It is an unshakable teaching in Buddha's discourse that death does not turn into birth. Accordingly, death is understood as no-perishing. Birth is an expression complete this moment. Death is an expression complete this moment.

They are like winter and spring.

- We do not call winter "the beginning of spring"
- nor summer "the end of spring."



3. Enlightenment is like the moon reflected in the water. The moon does not get wet, nor is the water broken. Although its light is wide and great, the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch wide. The whole moon and the entire sky are reflected in dewdrops on the grass, or even in one drop of water. Enlightenment does not divide you, just as the moon does not break the water. You cannot hinder enlightenment, ⇨

just as a drop of water does not hinder the moon in the sky. The depth of the drop is the height of the moon. Each reflection, however long or short its duration, manifests the vastness of the dewdrop, and realizes the limitlessness of the moonlight in the sky.

When the Dharma does not fill your whole body and mind, you think it is already sufficient. When the Dharma fills your body and mind, you understand that something is missing. For example, when you sail out in a boat to the midst of an ocean where no land is in sight, and view the four directions, it simply looks like a circle. No other shape appears. But the ocean is not round, and not square; its features are infinite in variety. It is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It only looks circular as far as you can see at that time. All things are like this. Though there are many features in the dusty world and the world beyond conditions, you see and understand only what your eye of practice can reach. In order to learn the nature of the myriad things, you must know that although they may look round or square, the other features of oceans and mountains are infinite in variety; whole worlds are there.

It is so not only around you, • but also directly beneath your feet,
• or in a drop of water.



4. A fish swims in the ocean, and no matter how far it swims there is no end to the water. A bird flies in the sky, and no matter how far it flies, there is no end to the air. However, the fish and the bird have never left their elements. When their activity is large their field is large. When their need is small their field is small. Thus, each of them totally covers its full range, and each of them totally experiences its realm. If the bird leaves the air it will die at once. If the fish leaves the water it will die at once. Know that water is life and air is life. The bird is life and the fish is life. Life is the bird and life is the fish. Practice-enlightenment and people are like this.

So, if a bird wishes to fly or a fish wishes to swim only after investigating the whole sky or whole sea, this bird or this fish will find neither path nor place. ⇒

When you find your place where you are, practice-enlightenment occurs, actualizing reality. When you find your way at this moment, you become actualized reality; for the place, the Way, is neither large nor small, neither yours nor others'. The place, the Way, has not carried over from the past, and it is not merely arising now.

Accordingly, in the practice-enlightenment of the Buddha Way, meeting one thing is mastering it—doing one practice is actualizing one practice completely. Therefore the reality of all things is *thus*.

Here is the place; here the Path unfolds. The boundary of realization is not distinct, for the realization comes forth simultaneously with the mastery of the Buddha Dharma. Do not suppose that what you realize becomes your knowledge and is grasped by your consciousness. We should not think that what we have attained is conceived by ourselves and known by our discriminating mind.

Although complete enlightenment is immediately actualized,

- its intimacy is such that it does not necessarily form as a view.
- In fact, viewing is not something fixed.



5. Zen Master Bao-che of Mount Mayu was fanning himself. A monk approached and said, "Master, the nature of wind is permanent and there is no place it does not reach. Why, then do you fan yourself?" Bao-che replied, "Although you understand that the nature of the wind is permanent, you do not understand the meaning of its reaching everywhere." "What is the meaning of its reaching everywhere?" asked the monk. The master just kept fanning himself. The monk bowed deeply.

The actualization of the Buddha Dharma, the vital Path of its correct transmission, is like this. If you say that you do not need to fan yourself because the nature of wind is permanent and you can have wind without fanning, you will understand neither permanence nor the nature of wind. The nature of wind is permanent; because of that,

- the wind of the Buddha's house brings forth the gold of the earth
- and makes fragrant the cream of the long river.



Fukanzazengi — “Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen”

(from Dogen’s Extensive Record; tr. Taigen Leighton and Shohaku Okumura; adapted, abridged)

1. The Way is originally perfect and all-pervading. How could it be contingent on practice and realization? The true vehicle is self-sufficient. What need is there for special effort? Indeed, the whole body is free from dust. Who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from this very place; what is the use of traveling around to practice?

And yet, if there is a hair’s-breadth deviation, it is like the gap between heaven and earth. If a trace of disagreement arises, the mind is lost in confusion. Suppose you are confident in your understanding and rich in enlightenment, gaining the wisdom that knows at a glance, attaining the Way and clarifying the mind, arousing an aspiration to reach for the heavens. You are playing in the entranceway, but you still are short of the vital Path of emancipation.

Consider the Buddha: although he was wise at birth, the traces of his six years of upright sitting can yet be seen. As for Bodhidharma, although he had received the mind-seal, his nine years of facing a wall is celebrated still. If even the ancient sages were like this, how can we today dispense with wholehearted practice?



2. Put aside the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing phrases, and learn to take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward. Body and mind of themselves will drop away, and your original face will manifest.

If you want to attain suchness, practice suchness immediately.

Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs. Do not think “good” or “bad.” Do not judge true or false. Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha.

How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?

Think not-thinking. Not-thinking—what kind of thinking is that?

Beyond-thinking. This is the essential art of zazen. ⇔

This zazen is not meditation practice; it is simply the Dharma gate of joyful ease, the practice-realization of totally culminated enlightenment. It is the koan realized; traps and snares can never reach it. If you grasp the point, you are like a dragon gaining the water, like a tiger taking to the mountains. • For you must know that the true Dharma appears of itself, • so that from the start dullness and distraction are struck aside.



Yuibutsu Yobutsu—“Only Buddha and Buddha”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

1. Because the Dharma is realized only by Buddhas, we say that Buddhas alone, together with Buddhas, are directly able to realize it. When you realize the Buddha Dharma, you do not think, “This is realization just as I expected.” Even if you think so, realization invariably differs from your expectation. Realization is not like your conception of it.

Accordingly, realization cannot take place as previously conceived. When you realize Buddha Dharma, you will not need to wonder how it came about. You should reflect on this: What you think one way or another before realization is not a help for realization.

Although realization is not like any of the mental formations preceding it, this is not because such formations could not be realization. Past thoughts in themselves were already realization. But since you were seeking elsewhere, you thought and said that thoughts cannot be realization.

However, it is worth noticing that what you think one way or another is not a help for realization. Then you are cautious not to be small-minded. If realization came forth by the power of your prior mental formations, it would not be trustworthy. Realization does not depend on thoughts, but comes forth far beyond them.

- Realization is helped • by the power of realization itself.



2. When we reflect quietly, it appears that our body-and-mind has practiced together with all Buddhas of the three worlds and has together with them aroused the thought of enlightenment. When we reflect on the past and future of our body-and-mind, we cannot find the boundary of self or others. By what delusion do we believe our body-and-mind is apart from all Buddhas of the three worlds? Such delusion is groundless. How then could delusion hinder the arousing of the thought of enlightenment and the practicing of the way by all Buddhas of the three worlds?

- Thus, understand that the way is not a matter
- of your knowing or not knowing.



3. To be on this Path is to be unstained. To be unstained does not mean that you try forcefully to exclude intention or discrimination, or that you establish a state of non-intention. Being unstained cannot be intended or discriminated at all.

It's like meeting a person and not judging what the person looks like. And it's like not wishing for more color or brightness when viewing flowers or the moon.

Spring has the tone of spring, and autumn has the scene of autumn; there is no escaping it. So when you want spring or autumn to be different from what is, notice that it can only be as it is.

Or when you want to keep spring or autumn as it is, reflect that it has no unchanging nature.

When you understand, a moment of no-understanding does not come and hinder understanding, and understanding does not break no-understanding. Instead,

- understanding and no understanding
- are just like spring and autumn.



4. An ancient Buddha said:

The entire universe is the true human body.

The entire universe is the gate of liberation.

- The entire universe is the eye of Vairochana.
- The entire universe is the dharma body of the self.

(The Cosmic Buddha;
the universe itself as
enlightenment)



Self-Receiving Samadhi (*from Bendowa — “The Wholehearted Way”*;
by Eihei Dogen; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

What can be met with recognition is not realization itself, because realization is not reached by a deluded mind. Although both mind and object appear and disappear within stillness, because this takes place in the realm of self-receiving and self-employing samadhi, without moving a speck of dust or destroying a single form, extensive Buddha work and profound, subtle Buddha influence are carried out.

Grasses and trees, fences and walls demonstrate and exalt this wondrous Dharma for the sake of living beings, both ordinary and sage; in turn, living beings, both ordinary and sage, express and unfold it for the sake of grasses and trees, fences and walls. The realm of self-awakening and awakening others is fundamentally endowed with the quality of enlightenment, with nothing lacking, and allows the standard of enlightenment to be actualized ceaselessly.

Therefore, even if only one person sits for a short time, because this zazen imperceptibly accords with all things and fully resonates through all time, it performs ever-lasting Buddha guidance within the inexhaustible Dharma world in the past, present, and future.

Zazen is equally the same practice and the same enlightenment for both the person sitting and for all dharmas. Not only that, but all things are endowed with original practice within the original face, which is impossible to measure.

You should know that even if all the Buddhas in the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, together engage the full power of their Buddha wisdom, they could never reach the limit,

- or measure the virtue, • of one person’s zazen.



Uji — “Being-Time”

(by Eihei Dogen, from *Shobogenzo*; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

1. The Way the self arrays itself is the form of the entire world. See each thing in this entire world as a moment of time. Things do not hinder one another, just as moments do not hinder one another. The Way-seeking mind arises in this moment. A Way-seeking moment arises in this mind. It is the same with practice and with attaining the Way. Thus, the self setting itself out in array sees itself. This is the understanding that self is time.

Know that in this way there are myriads of forms and hundreds of grasses throughout the entire earth, and yet each grass and each form itself is the entire earth. The study of this is the beginning of practice. When you are at this place, there is just one grass, there is just one form; there is understanding of form, and beyond understanding of form; there is understanding of grass, and beyond understanding of grass. Since there is nothing but just this moment, the time being is all the time there is. Grass being, form being, are both time.

Each moment is all being, each moment is the entire world.

- Reflect now whether any being or any world
- is left out of the present moment.



2. Both mind and words are the time-being. Both arriving and not-arriving are the time-being. When the moment of arriving has not appeared, the moment of not-arriving is here. Mind is a mule; words are a horse. Having-already-arrived is words; not-having-left is mind. Arriving is not “coming”; not arriving is not “not yet.”

The time-being is like this. Arriving is overwhelmed by arriving, but not by not-arriving. Not-arriving is overwhelmed by not-arriving, but not by arriving. Mind overwhelms mind and sees mind, words overwhelm words and see words. Overwhelming overwhelms overwhelming, and sees overwhelming.

- Overwhelming is nothing but overwhelming. • This is time.



Shoji — “Birth-and-Death”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

This birth-and-death is the life of Buddha. If you try to exclude it, you will lose the life of Buddha. If you try to cling to it, trying to remain in it, you will also lose the life of Buddha, and what remains will be the mere form of Buddha. Only when you don't dislike birth and death or long for them do you enter Buddha's mind.

Just set aside your body-and-mind, forget about them, and throw them into the house of Buddha; then all is done by Buddha.

When you follow this,

- you are free from birth-and-death
- and become a Buddha without effort or calculation.



Menju — “Face-to-Face Transmission”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

This is a splendid opportunity for Buddha Dharma to enter into mud and water.

If you do not realize the fruit at this moment, when will you realize it?

If you do not cut off delusion at this moment, when will you cut it off?

If you do not become a Buddha at this moment, when will you do so?

If you do not sit as a Buddha at this moment,

- when will you practice as a Buddha?
- Diligently examine this in detail.



Shinjin Gakudo — “Body-and-Mind Study of the Way”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

“Everyday mind” means to maintain everyday mind in this world or in any world. Yesterday goes forth from this moment, and today comes forth from this place. With going, the boundless sky goes; with coming, the entire earth comes. This is everyday mind.

Everyday mind opens the gate of the inner chamber. Because thousands of gates and myriads of doors open and close all at once, it is everyday mind. Now this boundless sky and entire earth are like unrecognized words, a voice from the deep. Words are all-inclusive, mind is all-inclusive, things are all-inclusive.

Although there is birth and death in each moment of this life of birth-and-death, the body after the final body is never known. Even though you do not know it, if you arouse the thought of enlightenment, you will move forward on the Way of enlightenment.

The movement is already here. Do not doubt it in the least.

- Even if you should doubt it, • this is nothing but everyday mind.



Raihai Tokuzui — “Receiving the Marrow by Bowing”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

1. Practice by brushing off the fire on your head, or practice by standing on your toes. Practice with heart, practice with beyond-heart, practice even with half a heart.

You attain the marrow and are invariably transmitted the Dharma

- through your utmost sincerity and trusting heart.
- There is no path that comes from anything other than sincere trust.



2. If you exclude those who have broken precepts, you exclude all bodhisattvas. If you exclude those who may break precepts in the future, you exclude all bodhisattvas who arouse the aspiration for enlightenment. If you exclude them in such a way, you exclude everyone—then how can the Buddha Dharma be actualized? ⇨

Such a thing is the mad intention of fools, who don't know Buddha Dharma.

- It should be lamented.
- Quietly ponder this.



3. When you see an object, learn to clarify it. Being scared of it and only trying to avoid it is not the teaching and practice of the Great Vehicle. If you give up the east and hide in the west, it is not that there is no object in the west. Even if you keep escaping, there are objects afar and objects nearby. The farther away you push objects, the deeper you become attached to them.

- This is not the way of emancipation.
- Investigate this thoroughly.



Bussho — “Buddha Nature”

(by Eihei Dogen, from *Shobogenzo*; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

1. The Buddha said, “If you want to understand Buddha nature, you should intimately observe cause and effect over time.” When the time is ripe, Buddha nature manifests. The words *understand Buddha nature* do not only mean to know it but also to practice it, to realize it, to expound it, and to let go of it. Expounding it, practicing it, realizing it, letting go of it, missing it, and not missing it are all *cause and effect over time*. You can observe it with a whisk, or with a staff, or with anything.

Intimately observe is not limited to observing, being observed, correct observation, or wrong observation; it is *intimately observe*. As it is intimate observing, it is not self-observation or other's observation. Intimate observation is cause and effect as they are over time, and it is beyond cause and effect. It is Buddha nature as it is. It is becoming free of the body of Buddha nature. It is Buddha and Buddha as they are, nature and nature as they are. • There is no time when the time has not yet arrived; • there is no Buddha nature that is not actualized.

2. “Mountains, rivers, and the great earth all depend on it. Various samadhis and the six miraculous powers emerge from it.” Thus, mountains, rivers, and the great earth are all the ocean of Buddha nature. In the very moment they depend on it, they are mountains, rivers, and the great earth. ⇨

Know that the form of the ocean of Buddha nature is like this. It is not concerned with inside, outside, or in between. This being so, to see mountains and rivers is to see Buddha nature; to see Buddha nature is to see the fins of a donkey and the beak of a horse. Thus, you understand and go beyond understanding.

- Even though you may be limited,
- you are in the vast ocean of Buddha nature.



3. An Ancestor said: “You have no Buddha nature.” Learn and study what kind of moment it is when there is *no Buddha nature*. Is it *no Buddha nature* on the top of the Buddha’s head? Is it *no Buddha nature* that is going beyond? *No Buddha nature* is sometimes understood as the samadhi of this one moment. Ask whether there is *no Buddha nature* when Buddha nature attains Buddhahood. Ask whether there is *no Buddha nature* that arouses the aspiration for enlightenment.

- Have a pillar ask this question, or ask pillars this question.
- Have Buddha nature ask this question.

(*MU* is a Japanese Zen term that can also be translated as “No”)



4. An Ancestor said: “As Buddha nature is empty, you say *I have no Buddha nature*.” This expresses clearly that *empty* is not *no*. As Buddha nature is empty, it is called *Mu*. Bits and pieces of *Mu* are a standard for speaking about emptiness. Emptiness is the measure of speaking *Mu*. Emptiness here is not that of “Form is emptiness.” “Form is emptiness” does not mean to force form to be emptiness or to break up emptiness to establish form. Rather, it is the emptiness of “Emptiness is emptiness.” *Emptiness is emptiness* means there is a piece of rock hanging in emptiness. Thus the Ancestors spoke of

- *no Buddha nature*—Buddha nature that is empty—
- and *Buddha nature* that is existence.



Hokke Ten Hokke — “Dharma Blossoms Turn Dharma Blossoms”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

Realization is reality right now. Even shocks, doubts, fears, and frights are no other than reality right now. However, with Buddha knowledge it is different; seeing a speck of dust is different from sitting within a speck of dust. Even when you sit in the world of phenomena it is not broad. Even when you sit in a speck of dust, it is not narrow. If you are not fully present, you do not fully sit. If you are fully present, you are free from how large or narrow it is where you are. Thus, you have thoroughly experienced the essential unfolding of Dharma blossoms.

Is it that the manifestation and essence of your practice now originates in the world of phenomena or in a speck of dust? Have no shocks and doubts, no fears and frights. Just this turning of Dharma blossoms is the original practice, deep and wide. In seeing the speck of dust and seeing the world of phenomena, there is no attempt to create or measure. Even those who attempt to create or measure do so in accordance with Dharma blossoms.

When the Dharma blossoms fully turn you, you are empowered to turn the Dharma blossoms. While the original turning never stops, you return to turn the Dharma blossoms.

What is usually distrusted is that now is a moment of Dharma blossoming. Nevertheless, trust and turn Dharma blossoms.

- To honor and dedicate yourself to this teaching
- is Dharma blossoms turning Dharma blossoms.



Kaiin Zanmai — “Ocean-Mudra Samadhi”

(by Eihei Dogen, from Shobogenzo; tr. Kaz Tanahashi, et al.; adapted, abridged)

1. Being is past moments and future moments. Being is past elements and future elements. Whether it is just appearing or just disappearing, all elements are as they are. It is not that there is no practice and realization;

- it is just that they are not divided.
- This is called ocean-mudra samadhi.



2. Recognized or not, myriad things are just myriad things.

Encountering the Buddha face and the Ancestor face is nothing other than recognizing myriad things as myriad things. Because myriad things are all-inclusive, you do not merely stand upon the highest peak or travel along the bottom of the deepest ocean.

Being all-inclusive is just like this; letting go is just like that.

What is called the ocean of Buddha nature or Vairochana's Ocean Storehouse is just myriad things.

- Although the ocean surface is invisible,
- there's no doubt about the practice of swimming in it.



Body and Mind, Ocean and Waves

(by Keizan Jokin, from "Zazen Yojinki"; tr. Anzan Hoshin & Yasuda Joshu Dainen; adapted, abridged)

Just mind, just body—difference and sameness miss the point.

Body arises in mind—and, when the body arises, body and mind appear to be distinguished. When one wave arises, a thousand waves follow; the moment a single mental fabrication arises, numberless things appear.

The mind is like the ocean waters, the body like the waves. There are no waves without water and no water without waves; water and waves are not separate, motion and stillness are not different. So it is said, "A person comes and goes, lives and dies, as the imperishable body of the four elements and five aggregates."

Zazen is going right into the Ocean of Awareness, manifesting the body of all Buddhas. The natural luminosity of mind suddenly reveals itself and the original light is everywhere. It is not a matter of extinction or of activity.

- There is no increase or decrease in the ocean
- and the waves never turn back.



At Ease and in Harmony

(by Keizan Jokin, from "Zazen Yojinki"; tr. Anzan Hoshin & Yasuda Joshu Dainen; adapted, abridged)

Sometimes when you are sitting you may feel hot or cold,
discomfort or ease, stiff or loose, heavy or light, and sometimes startled.

The mind may feel as if it were sinking or floating;
it may seem dull or sharp.

Sometimes you can see outside the room, or inside the body,
or the forms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Sometimes you may believe that in this moment
you have attained wisdom and now thoroughly understand
all the sutras and commentaries.

These extraordinary conditions sometimes arise—
just keep body-and-mind at ease and deportment in harmony.

Breathe harmoniously at all times in zazen.

Shed worldly sentiments and do not become attached
to sublime feelings about the Way.

Though you should not spare the Dharma,
do not speak of it unless you are asked.

If someone asks from the heart, then give the teachings.

If you wish to speak ten times, keep quiet nine;
it's as if moss grew over your mouth or like a fan in winter.

A wind-bell hanging in the air, indifferent to the direction of the wind
—this is how people of the Way are.

Do not use the Way to make yourself important.
This is the foremost point to remember.

Remain always in Great Compassion and dedicate the limitless power of
zazen to all beings. Maintain the vow to realize awakening—and just sit.

- Do nothing at all.
- This is the way to study Zen.



This Moment is the Koan

(by Keizan Jokin, from "Zazen Yojinki"; tr. Anzan Hoshin & Yasuda Joshu Dainen; adapted, abridged)

Although we speak of practice, this is not a practice you can do.

Don't try to fabricate Buddha; and don't be concerned with how well or how poorly you think you're doing. Just understand that time is as precious as if you were putting out a fire in your hair.

Shatter obstacles and become intimate with awakening awareness. Arising from stillness, carry out activities without hesitation.

This moment is the koan. When practice and realization are without complexity, the koan is this present moment. That which is before any trace arises and the scenery on the other side of time's destruction, the activity of all Buddhas and awakened Ancestors, is just this one thing.

Just rest and cease; be cooled;

- pass numberless years as this moment.
- This is like coming home and sitting at ease.



The Necessity of Great Doubt

(by Boshan, from Great Doubt; tr. Jeff Shore; abridged, adapted)

If you're unable to rouse Great Doubt when practicing Zen, even if you can dwell in an apparently calm and lucid state sitting long periods in zazen, sunk in quietness; even if, within this mystic darkness, senses fuse, and objects and opposition disappear; and even if you enter absorption without mind-movement—this is not the Great Vehicle. This is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

If you don't recognize this error,

- innumerable Buddhas may appear and preach the Dharma
- but they won't be able to save you.



Secrets on Cultivating the Mind

(by Chinul, from *Tracing Back the Radiance*; tr. Robert Buswell)

1. If people aspire to the Path of Buddhahood while obstinately holding to their feeling that the Buddha is outside the mind or the Dharma is outside nature, then—even though they pass through kalpas as numerous as dust motes, burning their bodies, charring their arms, crushing their bones, and exposing their marrow; even though they write sutras in their own blood, never lying down to sleep, eating only one offering a day in the early morning; or even though they study the entire *Tripitaka* and cultivate all sorts of ascetic practices—this is like trying to make rice by boiling sand: it will only add to their tribulation.

If you would understand your own mind, then without searching, approaches to the Dharma as numerous as the sands of the Ganges would all be understood. As the World-Honored One said, “I see that all sentient beings everywhere are endowed with a Tathagatha’s wisdom and virtue.” He also said, “All the illusory guises in which sentient beings appear take shape in the sublime mind of the Tathagatha’s complete enlightenment.” Consequently, you should know that outside this mind there is no Buddhahood which can be attained.

All the Buddhas of the past were merely persons who understood their minds. All the sages and saints of the present are likewise merely persons who have cultivated their minds. All future meditators should rely on this Dharma as well. I hope you who cultivate the Path will never search outside. The nature of the mind is unstained; it is originally whole and complete in itself. If you will only leave behind false conditioning, • you will be “such” • —like the Buddha.



2. Consider sudden awakening: When people are deluded, they assume that the four great elements are the body, and the false thoughts are the mind. They do not know that their own nature is the true Dharma-body; they do not know that their own self-illuminating awareness is the true Buddha. ⇨

They look for the Buddha outside their mind. While they are thus wandering aimlessly, the entrance to the road might by chance be pointed out by a wise advisor. If, in one thought, they then follow back the light of their mind to its source, and see their own original nature, they will discover that the ground of this nature is innately free of defilement, and that they themselves are originally endowed with the non-outflow wisdom-nature which is not a hair's-breadth different from that of all the Buddhas. Hence it is called sudden awakening.

Consider gradual cultivation: Although people have awakened to the fact that their original nature is no different from that of all the Buddhas, the beginningless habit-energies are extremely difficult to remove suddenly, and so they must continue cultivation while relying on this awakening. Through this gradual permeation, their endeavors reach completion. They constantly nurture the sacred embryo, and after a long time they become a saint. Hence it is called gradual cultivation. This process can be compared to the maturation of a child. From the day of its birth, a baby is endowed with all the sense organs, but its strength is not fully developed. It is only after many months and years that it will finally become an adult.

Hence sudden and gradual cultivation • are like the two wheels of a cart: • neither one can be missing.



3. Some people do not realize that the nature of good and evil is void; they sit rigidly without moving and, like a rock crushing grass, repress both body and mind. To regard this as cultivation of the mind is a great delusion. For this reason it is said, "Hearers-of-the-teaching cut off delusion, thought after thought, but the thought that does the cutting is a thief." If they could see that thoughts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying all arise from the nature of mind, then their arising would be the same as their non-arising. At their source, they are calm; why must they be cut off? As it is said, "Do not fear the arising of thoughts: only be concerned lest your awareness of them be tardy."

It is also said, • "If we are aware of the thought at the moment it arises, then through that awareness, • it will vanish."



The Many and The One

(two verses by Wumen Huikai, from *The Gateless Barrier*;
tr. Robert Aitken)

With realization, all things are one family,
without realization, everything is separate and different.
Without realization, all things are one family,
with realization, everything is separate and different.

The moon and the clouds are the same;
Mountains and valleys are different.

- All are blessed, all are blessed.
- Is this one? Is this two?



Mind Like the Moon

(by Seung Sahn; adapted)

Clear mind
is like the full moon in the sky.
Sometimes clouds come,
yet the moon is always there.
Sometimes clouds go,
and the moon
shines down brightly.
Don't worry about clear mind:
it is always there.
Thinking comes and goes,
comes and goes—
you must not be attached

- to the coming
- or the going.



The Mountain and the Cloud

(Dongshan Liangjie)

The blue mountain is the parent
of the white cloud.
The white cloud is the child
of the blue mountain.

All day long they depend
on each other,
without becoming dependent
on each other.

The white cloud is always
the white cloud.
The blue mountain is always
the blue mountain.

Days Like Lightning

*(by Taego Bou,
from A Buddha from Korea; tr. J.C. Cleary)*

The days and months go by like lightning: we should value the time. We pass from life to death in the time it takes to breathe in and breathe out; it's hard to guarantee even a morning and an evening. Whether walking or standing, sitting or lying down, do not waste even a minute. Become ever braver and bolder. Be like our original teacher, Shakyamuni, keeping on progressing, energetically.

When the mind-ground is equanimous and awake, you will have profound certainty in the intent of the Buddhas and ancestral teachers. You must accomplish this correctly. Mind is the natural Buddha: why bother seeking elsewhere? Put down your myriad concerns and wake up. At the end of the road, it's like an iron wall. False thoughts are all extinguished, and extinguishing is wiped away; body and mind resting on the void. In the stillness, a light reaches everywhere with brilliance.

The original face: who is it? As soon as it is mentioned, the arrow sinks in stone. When the mass of doubt is shattered amid all the particulars, one thing covers the blue sky. Do not seek guidance from those without wisdom. Do not become over-joyed. Visit Zen teachers: show them how your mind works and ask for their teaching. After that, you can be called one who continues the tradition of the ancestral teachers.

Our family style is not remote. When tired, we stretch out our legs and sleep. When hungry, we let our mouths eat.

- In the human realm, what school is this?
- Blows and shouts fall like raindrops.



Shorter Precepts Recitation

(Three Refuges, Three Pure Precepts, and Ten Grave Precepts)

I take refuge in the Buddha, in Oneness, the awakened nature of all beings.

I take refuge in the Dharma, in Diversity, the ocean of wisdom and compassion.

I take refuge in the Sangha, in Harmony, the interdependence of all. (EVIL refers to any harm-causing actions)

Not knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about myself and the universe,
I vow to cease from evil.

Bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world, I vow to practice good.

Honoring wholeness in myself and others, I vow to save all beings.

1. Recognizing that I am not separate from all that is,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Killing.
2. Being satisfied with what I have,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Stealing.
3. Honoring mutuality and respecting commitment,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Misusing Sex.
4. Listening and speaking from the heart,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Speaking Falsely.
5. Cultivating a mind that sees clearly,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Intoxicating Mind and Body.
6. Unconditionally accepting what each moment has to offer,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Finding Fault with Others.
7. Meeting others on equal ground, I vow to take up the Way
of Not Elevating Myself at the Expense of Others.
8. Using all the ingredients of my life,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Sparing the Dharma Assets.
9. Transforming suffering into wisdom,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Harboring Ill Will.
10. Honoring my life as an instrument of the Great Way,
I vow to take up the Way of Not Defaming the Three Treasures. <bow>



Longer Precepts Recitation

(from Shakyamuni, Bodhidharma, and Dogen;
adapted by Zen Peacemakers, Diane Rizzetto, and others)

(LEADER ONLY, SPOKEN) [The Three Refuges:] •

(ALL) I take refuge in the Buddha, in Oneness,
the awakened nature of all beings.
I take refuge in the Dharma, in Diversity,
the ocean of wisdom and compassion.
I take refuge in the Sangha, in Harmony,
the interdependence of all. <bow>

(LEADER ONLY, SPOKEN) [The Three Pure Precepts:] •

(ALL) Not knowing,
thereby giving up fixed ideas about myself and the universe,
I vow to cease from evil.
Bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world,
I vow to practice good.
Honoring wholeness in myself and others,
I vow to save all beings. <bow>

(EVIL refers to any
harm-causing
actions)

(LEADER ONLY, SPOKEN) [The Ten Grave Precepts:] •

(ALL) **1.** Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of everlasting Dharma, not giving rise to the idea of killing is called the Precept of Not Killing. The Buddha's seed grows in accordance with not taking life. Transmit the life of Buddha's wisdom and do not kill.
Recognizing that I am not separate from all that is, I vow to take up the Way of Not Killing.

2. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the unattainable Dharma, not having thoughts of gaining is called the Precept of Not Stealing. The self and the things of the world are just as they are. The gate of emancipation is open. Being satisfied with what I have, I vow to take up the Way of Not Stealing. ⇨

3. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the ungilded Dharma, not creating a veneer of attachment is called the Precept of Not Misusing Sex. The Three Wheels are pure and clear. When you have nothing to desire, you follow the Way of all Buddhas. Honoring mutuality and respecting commitment, I vow to take up the Way of Not Misusing Sex.

4. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the inexplicable Dharma, not preaching a single word is called the Precept of Not Speaking Falsely. The Dharma Wheel turns and turns. There is neither surplus nor lack. The whole universe is moistened with nectar, and the truth is ready to harvest. Listening and speaking from the heart, I vow to take up the Way of Not Speaking Falsely.

5. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the intrinsically pure Dharma, not giving rise to delusions is called the Precept of Not Intoxicating Mind and Body. Intoxicants are not brought in yet—don't let them invade. That is the great light. Cultivating a mind that sees clearly, I vow to take up the Way of Not Intoxicating Mind and Body.

6. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the flawless Dharma, not expounding upon error is called the Precept of Not Finding Fault with Others. In the Buddha Dharma, there is one Path, one Dharma, one realization, one practice. Don't permit fault-finding. Don't permit haphazard talk. Unconditionally accepting what each moment has to offer, I vow to take up the Way of Not Finding Fault with Others.

7. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the equitable Dharma, not dwelling upon "I" and "you" is called the Precept of Not Elevating Yourself While Abusing Others. Buddhas and ancestral teachers realize the empty sky and the great earth. When they manifest the noble body, there is neither inside nor outside in emptiness. When they manifest the Dharma body, there is not even a bit of earth on the ground. Meeting others on equal ground, I vow to take up the Way of Not Elevating Myself while Abusing Others. ⇨

8. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the genuine all-pervading Dharma, not being stingy about a single thing is called the Precept of Not Sparing the Dharma Assets. One phrase, one verse: that is the ten thousand things and one hundred grasses. One Dharma, one realization: that is all Buddhas and ancestral teachers. Therefore, from the beginning, there has been no stinginess at all. Using all the ingredients of my life, I vow to take up the Way of Not Sparing the Dharma Assets.

9. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the selfless Dharma, not contriving reality for the self is called the Precept of Not Harboring Ill Will. Not advancing, not retreating, not real, not empty. There is an ocean of bright clouds. There is an ocean of solemn clouds. Transforming suffering into wisdom, I vow to take up the Way of Not Harboring Ill Will.

10. Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the One, not holding dualistic concepts of ordinary beings and sages is called the Precept of Not Defaming the Three Treasures. The *teisho* of the actual body is the harbor and the weir. This is the most important thing in the world. Its virtue finds its home in the ocean of essential nature. It is beyond explanation. We just accept it with respect and gratitude. Honoring my life as an instrument of the Great Way, I vow to take up the Way of Not Defaming the Three Treasures. *<bow>*

(a master's
Dharma
presentation)

The Four Commitments

*(adapted from the Zen Peacemakers
and the Parliament of the World Religions, adapted)*

I commit myself to a culture of nonviolence and reverence for life;
I commit myself to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order;
I commit myself to a culture of acceptance and a life based on truthfulness;
and I commit myself to a culture of equal rights • and partnership •
among all people. *<bow>*



Fourfold Commitment to Racial and Social Justice

(from Greater Boston Zen Center RSJ working group)

We commit ourselves to actively engaging and fully actualizing our bodhisattva vows in the relative world.

We commit ourselves to doing this fearlessly—opening our hearts to suffering and our eyes to oppression, privilege, marginalization, and injustice.

We commit ourselves to doing this inclusively—embodying the ideals of mutuality, interdependence, and collaborative process.

And we commit ourselves to doing this humbly—acknowledging the reality of not-knowing, • even as we act in urgent service

• to all beings. *<bow>*



The Way of Tenderness

(by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, from The Way of Tenderness; abridged, adapted)

Complete tenderness trusts the fluidity of our life energy and its extension into those around us. It allows even anger to arise and pass away, without our needing to act on it or hold on to it as proof of being human, and without our needing to stockpile it as proof of our suffering.

The Way of Tenderness does not equal quiescence. It does not mean that fiery emotions disappear; and it does not render acceptable that anyone could hurt or abuse life. Tenderness doesn't erase the inequities we face in the relative world—and it doesn't encourage a spiritual bypass of the feelings we experience.

This is a liberated tenderness,

- a way of lessening and finally removing the potency
- of our tragic pasts as sentient beings.



Guidance in Shikantaza—the Absolute Practice of Just Sitting

(by Reb Anderson,

from *Warm Smiles From Cold Mountains*; adapted)

1. Zazen is the source of all the teachings and practices of the Buddha Way. All enlightenment practices emanate from and return to zazen. Zazen is neither concentration practice, nor not concentration practice. If we are practicing concentration, zazen is just being upright and unmoving, in the midst of practicing concentration. If we are not practicing concentration, zazen is just sitting upright and unmoving, in the midst of not practicing concentration. Although one might joyfully practice focusing on the posture and the breath with no gaining idea, zazen is not limited to this form of practice. Zazen is pure presence untouched by all human agency, relying on no contrivance. Zazen cannot be reduced to mindfulness or mindlessness of breath or of the posture. It cannot be captured by any activity of body or mind.

The stillness of the Buddha's sitting is not merely stillness; it is complete presence in stillness. There is not the slightest meddling. It is physical and mental non-interfering. It is thorough intimacy with whatever is happening. This is an infinitely flexible stillness, • that can adjust to the impermanent nature of all things, • harmonizing with all situations.



2. Zazen does not prefer success over failure, or enlightenment over delusion. If enlightenment arises, we sit still in the middle of enlightenment, with no preference for it. If delusion arises, we sit still in the middle of delusion, with no aversion to it. This is the Buddha's zazen.

Zazen practice is selfless. The goal of zazen is the liberation of all living beings from suffering, but the goal is exactly the same as the practice. In realizing this goal, one becomes free of self-concern and personal gain; and becoming free of self-concern and personal gain actualizes the goal. Nevertheless, zazen's an initiatory awareness: it opens the door to a full understanding of how self and other dependently co-produce each other. This is the samadhi of all Buddhas.

The meaning of zazen, the enlightenment and liberation of all living beings, is not brought forth by the power of personal effort, and is not brought forth by the power of some other. Zazen doesn't start when we start making effort, doesn't stop when we stop.

- We can't do it by ourselves, • and nobody else can do it for us.



Those Who Greatly Realize Delusion are Buddhas—Guidance in Zazen

(by Shohaku Okumura,
from *Realizing Genjokoan*; adapted)

1. Delusion is not some fixed thing within our minds that, if eliminated, will be replaced by enlightenment.

The world we live in is the world we create, based on how our mind encounters the myriad dharmas. We cannot prevent our mind from creating the world as it does, but it is possible to realize that the world of our creation does not reflect true reality. Practicing with this realization, and letting go of rigid belief in the narratives and preferences of our minds, is opening the hand of thought.

Within consciousness, reality is always distorted; we don't see things as they are, and that is delusion. We take our distorted ideas and desires, and move toward the world, trying to find reality. We try to see reality with our minds, abilities, willpower, and effort. All of this is delusion.

To practice is to awaken to the self that is part of all things. The subject of practice is not the personal self, but all beings. It is not we who engage in our practice, but rather Buddha who carries out Buddha's practice through us.

Zazen is not a matter of individual actions or experiences emerging from individual willpower or effort. Zazen is not a practice that makes beings into Buddhas; zazen itself is Buddha's practice.

Zazen enables us to see clearly that we are part of the world, part of nature, part of Buddha. There is no separate individual who practices zazen and becomes enlightened. We actualize the self that is connected with all dharmas. We don't personally become a Buddha, but rather we awaken to the reality that, from the beginning, we are living Buddha's life. Enlightenment is not the self awakening to reality, but zazen awakening to zazen, Dharma awakening to Dharma, Buddha awakening to Buddha.

- This is the meaning • of “practice and enlightenment are one.”



2. No matter how hard we practice, our motivation for practice is always based in some amount of self-centeredness. The act of truly seeing this self-centeredness is itself Buddha. To awaken to the reality of our delusion is itself Buddha.

To realize delusion is to be a Buddha. Awakening to the incompleteness of our practice and returning to our Path is the meaning of repentance, of atonement.

In zazen, we let go of our narrow, limited, karmic selves and become one with the total, interpenetrating whole that is absolute reality. We can never see this absolute reality as an object of our discriminating minds, but we are naturally a part of it. We cannot be an observer of absolute reality because we ourselves are part of its total movement.

Even amid delusion, we are still living within absolute, universal reality; and even though we are living within absolute, universal reality, we are still deluded as limited, karmic selves. This is the reality of human life.

In zazen, it is not the “I”—the limited karmic self—that awakens to reality; rather, it is the reality of the universe that is itself practicing and manifesting reality.

• Great realization actualizes great realization • through our practice.



3. Zazen is not a method of correcting the distortion of our fabricated conceptual maps, but rather is the act of letting go of all maps, and sitting down on the ground of reality. Letting go is at once the complete rejection of any formation arising in our limited karmic mind, and the acceptance of all formations as mere secretions of the mind. We let thoughts come up, and we let them go away. We neither negate nor affirm anything in zazen. Zazen goes beyond and yet includes complete rejection and complete acceptance of thought.

When we sit in the upright posture, keeping the eyes open, breathing through the nose, and letting go of mental formations, reality manifests itself. This is *genjokoan*, the actualization of reality.

At this time, only manifesting reality exists, and manifesting reality includes our delusions. ⇨

Practicing in this way helps us understand that our map of the world is biased and incomplete, and this understanding allows us to be flexible. Practicing in this way broadens our view, and this broadened view allows us to be better at working in harmony with others.

In zazen, there is no way we can judge ourselves because we cannot step outside our mental formations. True reality is beyond such judgments. There is no way to conceive of being a Buddha or being enlightened, and yet without trying to be a Buddha, and without trying to become enlightened, in zazen, we keep settling more and more deeply

- into immeasurable reality.
- Zazen is this immeasurable reality.



There is No End

(by Dainin Katagiri, from Returning to Silence; adapted, abridged)

If we walk in the desert and cannot see the end, it's not necessary to become irritated. Usually, if we don't see an end we don't know what to do, or if the end is far away, we may become upset. Or, when we think of how to "master" zazen, or "attain enlightenment," or fully understand every teaching of the Buddha, we may become exhausted.

Sometimes, we should indeed reflect on such things—but when those questions make our heads ache, we should forget thinking. Just practice. In the Buddha's world, there is no end. Forget about the end and take one step, like an elephant or a turtle.

- This is our practice; it is wonderful and beautiful.
- In this way, let us practice for three thousand kalpas.



Hope in the Dark

(by Rebecca Solnit, from Hope in the Dark; adapted)

When we recognize uncertainty about the future, we realize we may be able to influence outcomes—alone or in concert with others. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to certainty. It's the belief that what we do matters—even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand.

- We may not know them afterward either,
- but they matter all the same.



Healing is Situated in Love

(by angel Kyodo Williams, from Radical Dharma by angel Kyodo williams, Rod Owens, Jasmine Syedulla; adapted)

Opening our hearts to woundedness helps us understand everyone around us carries a sense of woundedness.

Let us remember the commitment engendered by our bodhisattva vows, not just to achieve enlightenment and free all beings, but to hold space for the pain of beings in our practice as we hold our own.

When we're able to show up to our own suffering, we're also able to show up to the suffering of others.

This is how we begin the courageous and great work of loving ourselves and extending that same love to as many people as we can.

- Healing is situated in love. • Love and justice are not two.



Compassion Unbound

(by Koun Yamada from Zen: The Authentic Gate; adapted)

Just as sunshine breaks through clouds, the compassionate light of our essential nature shines through the cracks in our delusion.

Compassion unbound naturally flows out, beyond duality.

It is absolute and universal love, the compassion of the One Body.

As we gradually clarify the heart's eye—the eye that sees the absolute—we more and more clearly experience this unbound compassion; we come to love everything with immeasurable depth, and we know that all things completely love us.

- This naturally opens a life • of infinite gratitude and peace.



Leap into Grace

(by Kathleen Dowling Singh, from The Grace in Living; adapted)

We are mortal beings. As such, at some point, we must confront the ending of what we imagine is “I.” At some point, there will be no option other than leaping into the unknown boundlessness, beyond imagined lines of self. We do ourselves a great benefit by opening beyond self long before death comes to call, before the cessation of the causes and conditions that give rise to the fleeting appearance of this body-and-mind.

We do ourselves great benefit by resting now in the larger reality of Being. Let us leap now into unity—a unity whose circumference is nowhere, • and whose center is everywhere.

- This is the grace that has always beckoned.



Awakening to Discouragement

(by Joan Tollifson, from Nothing to Grasp)

Part of waking up is becoming sensitive to how we become discouraged, how we close down, and where we go for false comfort. To wake up is to become aware of the tendency to judge ourselves, to take our failures personally, to fall into despair, self-pity, depression, frustration, anger, or wherever we tend to go when we believe the story that we are a person who can't do it right. Seeing all of this is enough. Awareness is its own action. We don't need to analyze it or impose changes based on our ideas of what should be happening. Just being awake to the present moment, as it is, and seeing clearly what is happening: This is transformative.

- We are simply awake,
- here and now.



Who Owns the Weather?

(by Joan Tollifson, from Painting the Sidewalk with Water; adapted)

Is there anyone inside this body-and-mind who is doing the talking, doing the hearing, doing the thinking, making the choices, performing the actions? Is there anyone in control of what is arising and appearing?

Is there any owner of the so-called internal weather, someone who is responsible for it? Is there a fundamental difference between a thunderstorm and a burst of anger, or between a cloudy day and a wave of depression or a moment of anxiety?

When it's the weather outside, when it's the thunderstorm or the haze or the clouds, it's clear no one owns it. We don't take it personally.

But when it's the internal weather, then there's a very old story that someone owns it, that there's a "me" who has it, who needs to figure out what to do about it and how to fix it. It seems so personal.

Yet: in this moment, is there truly a "problem" that needs to be "solved"—or is there only ever-changing appearance, endlessly solving and dissolving itself? In this moment, is there anything that needs to be different, or is even this idea of a problem

- nothing more than passing thoughts,
- no more substantial than last night's dreams?



Sending-and-Receiving

(by Norman Fischer from Training in Compassion; adapted, abridged)

1. Bodhichitta is the nature of our human body, a body with great wisdom. It breathes, it circulates blood, it heals, and keeps us balanced and alive every day, without our paying attention to it. It has been miraculously born into this world, through no effort on our part, and when it is finished doing its work, without fanfare and without regret, it lets go of life and returns to the earth it is made of. Occupied as we are with other matters, we constantly forget our life is a sacred miracle—but our body never forgets. Our body on its own, as it is, love itself, nature itself • flowing on in profound sanity and appreciation • despite our human confusion.

2. Our body has the capacity to breathe in suffering and transform it. Inhaling we say yes to another moment of life with all its pain, sorrow, and loss; and exhaling we release all of this. This is not poetic; it is simply true. Real compassion need not take major effort; we only have to allow it. The pain and difficulty of our life, • and the pain and difficulty of others, • is a gateway to the path of love.



To Change in Every Moment

(by Daehaeng, from No River to Cross; adapted, abridged)

To change in every moment means to die every moment; and it means to be reborn every moment. Some people cling to moments that have passed by, and in so doing lead suffering lives; wise people, understanding that everything changes in each instant, apply this principle to their daily lives—and live freely.

In meditation, this means sit when it's time to sit; stand when it is time to stand; work when it is time to work; or busily take care of your life. Thus “sitting” is possible in any circumstance.

It is the mind that sits, not the body.

- As long as you let go and entrust with faith,
- your daily life can be meditation.



The Ship of Compassion

(by Miaoshi, from Zen Women)

Night rain washes the mountain cliffs, the dawn greens soaked through.
Sitting I meditate on emptiness, as fresh breezes fill the temple.
Words are inherently empty—and yet still I am fond of brush and ink.
My mind like ashes after the fire—and yet still I am tied to the world.
Window bamboo—empty mind; courtyard pine—innate purity.
The trunk of this lofty green tree, neither inherently form nor no-form.
Between bell and fish-drum, I have yet to grasp the essence of Dharma.

- Yet I get a whiff of its fragrance—
- as if I were aboard the Ship of Compassion.



Spring Everywhere

(by Shundo Aoyama, from Zen Seeds; adapted, abridged)

Happiness that depends on what you acquire or become is only conditional happiness, not true happiness. True happiness means no matter what happens, it's all right. If you become ill, just be ill. When it's time to die, just die. Unless you accept your present circumstances, happiness cannot be attained. To face any situation and accept it with open arms molds the attitude enabling you to see that a wonderful way of living is possible.

This is indeed something of consequence.

As soon as this attitude is achieved, you have reached paradise, anytime, anywhere, and in any circumstances.

- It is the plum blossoms that bring the spring.
- Once this idea is accepted, spring must be everywhere.



Vows for Daily Life

(by Robert Aitken, from *Zen Vows for Daily Life*)

1. Offering incense to Buddha

I vow with all beings
To honor your keen nose for concepts
And vigor in smiting them all.

2. Offering water to Buddha

I vow with all beings
To honor your fathomless wellspring
Sustaining great life and great death.

3. Sounding a bell at the temple

I vow with all beings
to remember I'm ringing the Dharma
for the Sangha of all who can hear.

4. Taking my seat in the zendo

I vow with all beings
To acknowledge that here is the sacred:
This bottom, this body, this breath.

5. When I bow to the floor before Buddha

I vow with all beings
To release my needless fixations
And die to myself at last.

6. When I panic at losing my bearings

I vow with all beings
To acknowledge the error is panic,
Not losing familiar ground.

7. When everything loses its meaning

I vow with all beings
To honor this intimate teaching
That clears my dependence away.

8. When a demon disrupts my zazen

I vow with all beings
To remember who generates demons
And return with a smile to my breath.

9. When someone close to me dies

I vow with all beings
To settle in ultimate closeness
And continue our dialogue there.

10. Falling asleep at last

I vow with all beings
To enjoy the dark and stillness
And rest in the vast unknown.



(Evening Gatha)

<Sangha makes seated bow and remains bowing.>

Let me respectfully remind you:

Life and death are of supreme importance.

Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost.

Each of us should strive to awaken... awaken...

Take heed: Do not squander your life. *<return upright>*

(Oryoki—Meal Chant I)

(tr. SZTP)

🙏 Δ (ALL, CHANTED) Buddha was born in Kapilavastu, enlightened in Magadha, taught in Varanasi, entered nirvana in Kushinagara.

<bow> Now we set out Buddha's bowls; may we, with all living beings, realize the emptiness of the three wheels: giver, receiver, and gift.

🙏 (LEADER, CHANTED) Δ [In the midst of the three treasures which verify our understanding, entrusting ourselves to the Sangha, we recall:]

(ALL) Δ Vairochana Buddha, pure Dharmakaya; Δ Lochana Buddha, complete Sambhogakaya; Δ Shakyamuni Buddha, myriad Nirmanakaya; Δ Maitreya Buddha, of future birth; Δ all Buddhas throughout space and time; Lotus of the Wondrous Dharma, Mahayana sutra. Manjushri Bodhisattva, great wisdom; Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, great activity; Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, great compassion; all honored ones, bodhisattva-mahasattvas; wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita.

🙏 <morning meal> (LEADER, CHANTED) [This morning meal of ten benefits nourishes us in our practice. Its rewards are boundless, filling us with ease and joy.] <bow>

🙏 <midday meal> (LEADER, CHANTED) [The three virtues and six tastes of this meal are offered to Buddha and Sangha. May all sentient beings in the universe be equally nourished.] <bow>

🙏 <morning and midday meals, after food is served> (ALL) Δ We reflect on the effort that brought us this food and consider how it comes to us. We reflect on our virtue and practice, and whether we are worthy of this offering. We regard greed as the obstacle to freedom of mind. We regard this meal as medicine to sustain our life. For the sake of enlightenment we now receive this food.

🙏 <midday meal only, setting aside offering> (ALL) O spirits, we now give you an offering; this food is for all of you in the ten directions. ⇨



<morning and midday meals, immediately after above>

<bow> (ALL) First, this is for the three treasures; next, for the four benefactors; finally, for the beings in the six realms. May all be equally nourished. The first portion is to end all evil; the second is to cultivate every good; the third is to free all beings. May everyone realize the Buddha Way. <bow>



<after eating> (ALL) The water with which we wash our bowls tastes like ambrosia. We offer it to the many spirits; may they be satisfied. *Om ma ku ra sai so wa ka.* <bow>

<after bowls are tied-up, Δ ALL <bow> together, then lift tied-up bowls>
(LEADER after momentary pause, CHANTED) [Abiding in this ephemeral world like a lotus in muddy water, the mind is pure and goes beyond. Thus we bow to Buddha.] <bow>



○ ◆ (Diamond Sutra Gatha)

(quickly)

So you should view this fleeting world:
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream.



○○○⊗ VERSE OF THE KESA ○

Vast is the robe of liberation,
A formless field of benefaction.
I wear the Tathagata's teaching,
Saving all sentient beings.

(TA-TAAAga-TA'S)

(repeat 3 times, <bow> after 2nd and 3rd,
put on kesa/rakusu after 2nd)



(Oryoki—Meal Chant II)

(adapted)

△ (LEADER, SPOKEN) [With all that lives let us honor the Three Treasures. Let us recall the exertions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.]

△ (ALL, SPOKEN) First, let us reflect on the quality of our work and consider how this food comes to us. Second, as we receive this meal, let us be aware of the quality of our deeds. Third, what is most essential is the practice of awareness which helps us transcend greed, anger, and ignorance. Fourth, let us appreciate this food, which sustains the good health of our body and mind. Fifth, in order to continue our practice for all beings, we accept this offering.

<raising bowl or plate> (ALL) Our meal is offered to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. With teachers and family, with nations and all life let us equally share. To beings throughout the six worlds we offer this meal. <bow>

<while making offering> (ALL) All hungry ghosts! All tortured spirits! Now we give you this Dharma-food. May it fill the ten directions and satisfy hunger in realms of darkness. All hungry ghosts! All tortured spirits! May we all abandon greed and rouse the desire for enlightenment! (remain in gassho until all have made offerings, then △ <bow>)



<after morning meal> △ (ALL) Having finished the morning meal, let us pray that all beings may accomplish whatever wholesome tasks they are engaged in and be fulfilled with all the Buddha Dharmas. <bow>



<after midday meal> △ (ALL) Having finished the midday meal, our bodily strength is fully restored. Our bodhisattva power extends over the ten quarters and through the three periods of time and we are strong. As to revolving the wheel of Dharma, let no thought be wasted over it. May all beings attain true wisdom. <bow>



<after evening meal> △ (ALL) Abiding in this ephemeral world, like a lotus in muddy water, the mind is pure and goes beyond. Thus we bow to Buddha. <bow>



Liberation from All Obstructions

(by Hogen Bays; adapted)

In the presence of Sangha, in the light of Dharma,
in oneness with Buddha:

May this path to liberation benefit everyone!

In this passing moment karma ripens and all things come to be.

I vow to affirm what is:

If there's cost, I choose to pay.

If there's need, I choose to give.

If there's pain, I choose to feel.

If there's sorrow, I choose to grieve.

When burning, I choose heat.

When calm, I choose peace.

When starving, I choose hunger.

When happy, I choose joy.

Whom I encounter, I choose to meet.

What I shoulder, I choose to bear.

When it's my birth, I choose to live.

When it's my death, I choose to die.

Where this takes me, I choose to go.

Being with what is, I respond to what is.

This life is as real as a dream;

The one who knows it can not be found; and *Truth* is not a thing,

Therefore I vow to choose this Dharma entrance gate!

- May all Buddhas and Wise Ones • help me live this vow.



The Way I Must Enter

(by Izumi Shikibu; tr. Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Avatami;
from *Women in Praise of the Sacred*)

The Way I must enter

Leads through darkness to darkness—

O moon above the mountains' rim,

- Please shine a little further
- On my path.



A Blessing for The Journey

(by Egyoku Nakao; adapted)

Let us vow to bear witness to the wholeness of life,
realizing the completeness of each and every thing.

Embracing our differences,
I shall know myself as you, and you as myself.

May we serve each other for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

Let us vow to open ourselves
to the abundance of life.

Freely giving and receiving,
I shall care for you,
for the trees and stars,
as treasures of my very own.

May we be grateful for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

Let us vow to forgive all hurt,
caused by ourselves and others,
and to never condone hurtful ways.

Being responsible for my actions,
I shall free myself and you.

Will you free me, too?

May we be kind for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

May we give no fear for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

Let us vow to remember all that appears will disappear.
In the midst of uncertainty, let us sow love.

- Here! Now! I call to you:
- Let us together live the Great Peace we are.



Oneness *(by Thich Nhat Hanh; abridged, adapted)*

The ground we tread today transcends history.
Spring and winter are both present in this moment.
The young leaf and the dead leaf are really one.
Our feet touch deathlessness, and my feet are yours.
Let us walk together now.

- Let us enter the dimension of oneness
- and see the cherry tree blossom in winter.



Bearing the Unbearable

(by Joanne Cacciatore, from Bearing the Unbearable; adapted, abridged)

The only way to eradicate grief would be to relinquish love.
But checking in with the wisdom of our heart, we see that's impossible.
Grief and love occur in tandem. And like love, grief cannot be
constrained by time or space.

Amid grief, we need a place to rest our minds and hearts: a place fertile
with loving-kindness and compassion, a place free from judgment.
Only there, and only when ready, will we be able to blossom (albeit
painfully) into a joy that cohabitates with grief rather than displacing it.

Living into this means accepting whatever we feel, moment by
moment, without trying to change it. In this way, we gradually come to
experience what truly is. Whatever comes, we let be as it is. When we
do this, we come to see, in this moment and the next, that our emotions
always move. They move in us, through us, and between us. And
when we allow them to move freely, they change, perhaps gradually—
but inevitably. This is grief's most piercing message:

- There is no way around;
- the only way is through.



(Memorial Prayer)

*(derived from the Korean Zen Tradition as translated by Seonjoon Young,
and from other sources; adapted by Josh Bartok)*

Newly tranquil spirit of our beloved one
(optionally, insert name of the deceased)!

You have come, but there is no coming.
Coming is like the reflection of a bright moon
appearing in a thousand rivers.

You have gone, but there is no going.
Going is like clear space,
whose form separates into various lands.

For a short time, you possessed form,
and now those four elements have scattered.
Suddenly, you return to boundlessness.

How many years have you played
in the ocean of dreams?

Now, beloved one, you throw off form.
In oneness with karmic forces,
you are borne away
by the Great Ocean of birth-and-death—

- and like blossoms,
- you wondrously become new.



Coming and Going *(by Sengai Gibon)*

That which comes knows only coming.
That which goes knows only going.
To keep from falling,
why hold on to the edge?

Clouds float freely,

- never knowing where the breezes
- will blow them.



Nothing to Do

(by Linji Yixuan, from The Record of Linji; tr. Burton Watson; adapted, abridged)

There is no Buddha, no Dharma, no practice, no realization.

What is it you seek in others? What is it you lack?

It's as though you want to put another head on top of the one you already have.

At this very moment your own wonderful function is no different from the wonderful function of the Buddhas and Ancestors.

It's only because you lack confidence that you seek something outside of you.

Make no mistake: there's no Dharma outside to run after; there's no Dharma within to attain.

Rather than seeking, it would be better to hear these words, rest, and practice having nothing to do.

If something has arisen, don't try to make it continue.

If something has not arisen, don't try to make it arise.

This action is more valuable than ten years' pilgrimage.

There is nothing you need to do.

You just need to live as an ordinary person.

Wear your robe, eat your food.

- As day follows day, • be a person who has nothing to do.



Do Your Best

(by Linji Yixuan from *The Record of Linji*; tr. Burton Watson; adapted, abridged)

Your mind that carries out your activities right here and wherever you go, from first to last, beyond doubting—this is the living Manjushri. (the bodhisattva of nondual wisdom)

Your mind that in each moment shines with the light of nondiscrimination wherever it may be—this is the true Samantabhadra. (the bodhisattva of meditation-in-action)

Your mind that each moment is capable of freeing itself from its shackles, everywhere emancipated— this is the method of meditating on Avalokiteshvara. (the bodhisattva of compassion)

These three act as host and companion to one another, all three appearing at the same time when they appear—one in three, three in one.

Followers of the Way: If you wish to be in accord with the Dharma, never give way to doubt. “Spread it out and it fills the whole Dharma realm; gather it up and it’s tinier than a thread of hair.”
Its lone brightness gleaming forth, it has never lacked anything.

“The eye doesn’t see it, the ear doesn’t hear it.”

What shall we call this thing?

A sage of old said, “Say something about it and already you’re off the mark.”
You’ll just have to see for yourselves.

- What other way is there? • Each of you: Do your best.

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The Ecosattva Vows

(by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, from Active Hope)

I vow to myself and to each of you:

To commit myself daily to the healing of our world
and the welfare of all beings;

To live on earth more lightly and less violently
in the food, products, and energy I consume;

To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth,
the ancestors, the future generations, and my siblings
of all species;

To support others in our work for the world
and to ask for help when I need it.

To pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind,
• strengthens my heart,
• and supports me in observing these vows. <bow>



OOO⊗ (CHANTED) THE FOUR BODHISATTVA VOWS ○

(ALL) Beings are numberless; I vow to free them. ③

Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.

Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them. ③

The Buddha ③ Way is unsurpassable; I vow to embody it. ① ②

(repeat 3 times, <bow> after 3rd)