

Introduction to Shushōgi and Translation of Text

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In 1888 the Sōtōfushūkai published the Tōjōzaikeshushōgi to set a standard for guiding laymen in the Sōtō Sect. In 1890 Abbot Takiya Takushū of Eihei-ji and Abbot Ajegami Baisen of Sōjiji issued an edict that determined, as Sōtōshū Shushōgi, the standard of faith for laymen and priests. The Shushōgi selected suitable passages from 95 fascicles of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō and arranged them into five chapters and 31 sections. The basic teaching of the Sōtō Sect centers on experiencing the meaning of "To thoroughly understand birth and death" of Chapter 1 (Introduction) and "This Mind itself is the Buddha" of Chapter 5 (Practice and Gratitude). The intervening parts.....Chapter 2 (Release Through Repentance), Chapter 3 (Ordination and Initiation) and Chapter 4 (Awakening of the Altruistic Vow)——amplify this experience.

The essence of religion is to get a thorough understanding of life and death. Man can touch the abode of his self for the first time at the moment of recognizing death. Death is inherent in self; it belongs to oneself alone without links with others. It cannot be jumped across. It is the one unavoidable fact, and it causes anxiety through its unpredictability. This self is the only one, and this life comes but once. The dead do not arise. All living things perish. But animals know nothing about their own death. Those who do not know about their own death cannot possess the true self. Man first knocks at the gate of religion when he confronts the problem of the existence of the self, when he becomes confused about the abode of the self, and when he starts worrying about his own existence.

The essence of religion lies in transcending inescapable death and living eternally. Deep conviction is a truly great decision. It is living by dying. Religion is a force that establishes the true self by denying the self. Those who truly and clearly understand the death of the self gain an insight into the meaning of life. Those who thoroughly know the abode of

the self can truly use the 24 hours of the day. This is what we mean by "To thoroughly understand life and death——this is the crucial problem for all Buddhists." From here our life takes on fullness and freedom. Death does not necessarily come at the end of life. Life and death are the two sides of human existence: each moment is life from one side and death from the other. We live and die moment by moment. Dōgen says, "Though we have not yet forsaken life, we already see death. Though we have not yet forsaken death, we already see life." Life and death are life-moments and death moments, and death is in life and life in death. Though contradictory, life and death move along together. When we meet life, we must live life itself thoroughly; when we meet death, we must absorb death itself fully. This is called manifesting the full function of life and death. Because life and death are inherent in man, to reject them in distaste is to lose the Buddha life.

Instead of setting up a transcendental god as "absolute other" Zen advocates, "The Mind itself is the Buddha." This is expressed in the Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra idea: "All beings have Buddha nature." But Zen differs radically from the other sects, which try to make the Buddha mind appear gradually. Bodhidharma taught in his Entrance by Reason that all beings have the same Buddha mind, and in his Entrance by Conduct, he emphasized the actual experiencing of this mind. The essence of Zen, therefore, is the enlightenment-practice embodying the original Buddha nature.

Zen is the synthesis of wisdom that manifests the original Buddha nature of everyone in enlightenment and the meditation that displays this nature in practice. Zen, while trying to penetrate to Buddha nature itself, does not consider it as an object. Zen combines directly with Buddha nature itself, becomes Buddha nature itself, and brings it forth in this life. Without question this Buddha nature is a real self. From one standpoint it fills the cosmos; from another, it dwells in our body.

Zen does not recognize the existence of a transcendental Buddha; instead it concentrates on the real self. All Buddhas are manifestations of the virtue of this Mind. Outside this Mind there is no Buddha; outside the Buddha there is no Mind. Though we nominally differentiate Buddha and Mind, they are essentially the same. This is what is meant by "The Mind itself

is the Buddha,” The essence of Zen consists in understanding this fact.

But this must not remain just a concept. “This Mind itself is the Buddha” becomes one’s own only after spiritual inquiry, practice, wisdom, and enlightenment. Religion is not a simple concept that momentarily satisfies our hunger. Therefore, Dōgen says in Bendōwa; Though each man has Buddha nature in abundance, he cannot make it appear without practice or live it without enlightenment.” In fact, if we can actually experience “The Mind itself is the Buddha,” our subsequent life will radiate the Buddha’s conduct, the Buddha’s practice, and selfless action.

The Ressurance of the Sōtō Sect.

To study birth and death and to understand “The Mind itself is the Buddha,” we must try to reflect on our past speech and conduct, repent our sins and faults, and purify our body and mind. Receiving the Bodhisattva precept handed down by the Buddha and the patriarchs, we will embody the indestructible diamond-like Buddha effect and gain the great enlightened state of the Buddha. From here we must vow to save all beings and focus our practice and vow on the enlightenment of mankind. We must also turn our daily conduct into the true way of gratitude and really vitalize our life. This accounts for the chapters on Release Through Repentance, Ordination and Initiation, Awakening of the Altruistic Vow, and Practice and Gratitude.

Repentance falls into two categories——repentance by reason and repentance by conduct. Repentance by reason refers to sitting correctly and thinking the truth itself. Through this we can erase our many faults as frost and dew fade before the sun of wisdom. If we penetrate to the fundamental truth of Zen, we can wipe out our past conditioning naturally. Repentance by conduct refers to turning to the image of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and confessing our sins and faults frankly and to throwing away our old sins without creating new ones. Though we inevitably must face retribution for the evil actions of past, present, and future, we can, through repentance, lighten the burden and purify ourselves.

Initiation and ordination mean receiving the Buddha’s precepts and entering the Buddha state. In the Jukai (Receiving the Precepts) fascicle, Dōgen says: “If you do not receive the precepts, you are not the disciple

of the Buddhas or the descendants of the patriarchs." In Zen Buddhism the enlightenment and training of the Buddha mind are themselves the precepts. This is the natural law of earth and heaven; it is nothing else than the special function of the original One Mind. The Sōtō Sect especially teaches the unity of dhyāna and precepts. This is the standard of reassurance. If analyzed, it contains 16 precepts—the three refuges, the three collective pure precepts, and the 10 grave prohibitory precepts.

The three refuges depend on the Triple Treasure of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. The three collective pure precepts are: 1) good behavior—the precept of cutting off all evil, 2) good deeds—the precept of practicing good, and 3) universal benevolence—the precept of embracing all beings and of bestowing benefits on all. The 10 grave prohibitory precepts are: 1) do not kill; 2) do not steal; 3) do not commit adultery; 4) do not lie; 5) do not sell liquor; 6) do not speak of others' shortcomings; 7) do not praise yourself and blame others; 8) do not begrudge charity, material or spiritual; 9) do not be angry; and 10) do not speak ill of the Triple Treasure. The 10 grave prohibitory precepts uphold the five precepts and control nearly all the basic passions—avarice, anger, foolishness, pride, and doubt. They developed from the old laymen precepts. (Originally Mahāyāna Buddhism did not distinguish between priest and layman.) In short, the object is to avoid the four grave sins—killing, stealing, committing adultery, and lying. As human beings we have to uphold the humanistic way to the very last. If we practice in harmony with the Buddha mind, we will uphold it naturally without violating the rules. If all living being receive the Buddha precepts, they rank with the Buddhas, attain to the state of the great Enlightened One, and become truly the children of the Buddha.

What is meant by the awakening of the altruistic vow? It means the emergence of the desire to save all other beings before oneself. To benefit others we have four forms of wisdom—charity, tenderness, benevolence, and sympathy. Charity falls into three categories—material, spiritual, and safety-assuring. In essence it means to give without greed. And tenderness? It means awakening compassion and offering words of comfort to all beings. To speak as to a child is tenderness. Benevolence comes

from subordinating oneself to others. To all people——whether they be haves or have-nots——we must proffer an effective means of benefit. Sympathy means being aware of others' feelings, doing things that harmonize with others, and teaching them naturally. It is characterized by nondifferentiation. This means hiding one's light in dust and becoming one with the activity of the people. These four forms of wisdom are none other than the four embracing means (*catur-samgraha vastu*). The Bodhisattvas, to save all beings, embrace them by these four means. Dōgen used these four embracing means of popular Buddhism and gave them new freedom from his higher vantage point. So the true way of expressing deep gratitude for the supreme law is to practice without wasting a moment in our daily life and without working solely for oneself. The life of this one day is to be respected, it constitutes the precious body. Dōgen says: "To show gratitude for the great favor of the patriarchs is to act with all our effort today."

In conclusion, the essence of Sōto Zen is this: to pay respect to the undivided body of the Buddha (the historical Buddha); to absorb as one's own the life of the Buddha and the patriarchs——a life transmitted by direct contact between master and disciple; to base conduct on the unity of enlightenment and wondrous practice; to gain the reassurance of original enlightenment and wondrous practice; to engage constantly in thorough practice; to synthesize practice and understanding; and to concentrate on selfless, gratitude-expressing conduct.

Shushōgi

(The True Meaning of Training and Enlightenment)

Chapter I. Introduction

1. To arrive at a thorough understanding birth and death……this is the crucial problem for all Buddhists. If the Buddha dwells in birth and death, birth and death disappear. Understand only that birth-death is itself Nirvāṇa; there is nothing to avoid as birth-death and nothing to seek as Nirvāṇa. You then slough off the chains that bind you to birth-death. This——the supreme problem in Buddhism——must be thoroughly penetrated.

2. The human form is hard to gain, and Buddhism, hard to meet. But through the help of our past merits, the rare gifts of being born human and of meeting the Buddhist doctrines have come to us. This has opened up for us the possibility of the fullest life within the sphere of birth and death. We should not waste this chance by leaving our fragile life exposed to the wind of impermanence.

3. Impermanence offers us no foothold. The dew of our life—on what grass of the roadside will it fall? Even now this body does not belong to me. Life, transfigured by time, defies stopping even for an instant. Once gone, the face of youth vanishes irrevocably. We cannot bring back the past. When suddenly confronted with impermanence, we cannot look for salvation to kings, state ministers, relatives, servants, wife and children, or treasures. Alone we enter the kingdom of death, taking along only our karma of good and evil.

4. We should shun the deluded who are ignorant of the truth of retribution, of the three states of existence, and of good and evil. Obviously the law of cause and effect does not answer to my personal will. Without exception the evil fall, the good arise. If this were not so, Buddhas would not have appeared, nor would Bodhidharma have come from the West.

5. The effects of good and evil fall into three phases; 1) retribution in this world, 2) retribution in the next world, and 3) retribution in the world after next. Clear understanding of this principle must precede training in the way of the Buddhas and patriarchs. Otherwise, many will make mistakes and fall into wrong belief. Not only this, they will lead evil lives and suffer prolonged pain.

6. We must remember that in this life none of us have two or three bodies. How tragic then to lead an evil life stemming from wrong belief? We cannot escape retribution for evil done by erroneously asserting that we can do evil without recognizing it as such or reaping its reward.

Chapter II. Release Through Repentance

7. Through their boundless love the Buddhas and patriarchs have flung open the vast gates of compassion for all beings—whether man or deva. Although retribution for evil must come at one of three phases,

repentance lightens the burden and brings release and purity.

8. So let us repent before the Buddhas with all our heart. Repentance before the Buddhas saves us and purifies us; it also helps the growth in us of pure, unimpeded conviction and earnest effort. Pure conviction, once aroused, not only changes us but others, and its benefits extend to all sentient beings and inanimate things.

9. The following petition embodies the essentials of repentance: "We ask the Buddhas and the patriarchs who have gained enlightenment through Buddhism to take compassion on us, to free us from obstructive suffering—the legacy of our past lives—and to help us share in the merit-power that fills the countless worlds. The Buddhas and patriarchs in the past were like us, and we will in the future become Buddhas and patriarchs.

10. "The evil actions of our past lives stemmed from greed, anger, and stupidity. All these—the outcome of our body, mouth, and will—we repent now." If we repent in this way, we will open ourselves to the natural help of the Buddhas and patriarchs. So keeping this in mind and sitting upright before the Buddha, we should repeat this petition. Through this we cut off the roots of our wrong-doings.

Chapter III. Ordination and Initiation

11. Next we should deeply respect the Three Treasures—the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community. They deserve our respect and offerings no matter where we wander from life to life. It was respect for the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community that was truly transmitted from India to China by the Buddhas and patriarchs.

12. If the unfortunate and virtueless cannot even hear of the Three Treasures, how can they take refuge in them. Do not take refuge in the spirits of the mountains or the ghosts of the dead, and worship not at heretical shrines. Such refuge-seeking leads us away from salvation. Let us instead quickly take refuge in the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community, seeking there not only release from pain but complete enlightenment.

13. To take refuge in the Three Treasures we must come with pure heart. No matter when—whether at the time of the Buddha's appearance in

the world or after his disappearance——we repeat with clasped hands and bowed head: “I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the teaching because of its curative effect. We take refuge in the Buddhist community. We take refuge in the Buddha because he is our great teacher. We take refuge in the teaching because of its curative effect. We take refuge in the Buddhist community because here we find wisdom and warmth. To become followers of Buddhism, we must uphold the Three Treasures. We must uphold the Three Treasures. We must lay this foundation before receiving the moral precepts.

14. The merit of the Triple Refuge will always ripen when a responsive communion takes place between the trainee and the Buddha. Those who experience this communion——whether deva, dwellers in hell, or animals——will take this refuge. The embodied merit increases through the various stages of existence and ultimately leads to highest right enlightenment. The Buddha himself confirmed the merit of the Triple Refuge as supremely valuable and inconceivably profound. All living beings should therefore take this refuge.

15. Next we should accept the three collective pure precepts——that embracing good behavior, that embracing good deeds, and that embracing all beings and saving them. We should then accept the 10 grave prohibitions:

- 1) Do not kill.
- 2) Do not steal.
- 3) Do not commit adultery.
- 4) Do not lie.
- 5) Do not sell liquor.
- 6) Do not bring up the faults of others.
- 7) Do not boast and blame others.
- 8) Do not withhold material and spiritual possessions.
- 9) Do not become angry.
- 10) Do not debase the Triple Treasure.

The Buddhas have received and kept the Triple Refuge, the three collective pure precepts, and the 10 grave prohibitions.

16. By accepting these precepts you will attain supreme enlightenment—

—the indestructible Buddhahood realized or to be realized by the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

Would any wise man reject this goal?

To all living beings the Buddha has shown that when they accept the moral precepts, they attain Buddhahood—a rank equal to the Great Enlightened—and that they are truly the children of the Buddha.

17. All the Buddhas dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite wisdom. All beings, when they make this their dwelling place, see no distinction between subject and object. When this happens, all things—whether earth, vegetation, fence post, brick or pebble—function as Buddhas. The resulting wind and fire, fanned by the profound influence of the Buddhas, drive us to intimate enlightenment. This is the merit of non-doing and non-striving—the awakening of the wisdom mind.

Chapter IV. Awakening of the Altruistic Vow

18. Awakening the wisdom mind means vowing to save all beings before we ourselves have crossed to the other shore. Everyone—whether layman, priest, deva or man—whether enjoying pleasure or suffering pain—should quickly awaken this vow.

19. Though humble in appearance, anyone who has awakened this vow is already the teacher of mankind. Even a girl of seven may be the teacher of the four classes of Buddhists and the compassionate mother of all beings. This emphasis on the equality of the sexes represents one of the finest teachings of Buddhism.

20. After the desire for Buddhahood has been aroused, even wandering in the six worlds and the four forms of life becomes an opportunity to realize this desire. Though we may have wasted our time in the past, we still have time to arouse this vow. Our merits toward Buddhahood may have fully ripened, but let us concentrate this merit on enlightening all living beings. Through all ages some have put Buddhahood for themselves secondary to working for the benefit and salvation of all beings.

21. To benefit others we have four types of wisdom: charity, tenderness, benevolence, and sympathy. These represent the desires and efforts of the Bodhisattvas. Charity stands opposed to covetousness. It is the

principle of not preventing offerings though we ourselves give nothing. We need not mind how small the gift so long as the results are true. Offering even a phrase or a verse of the teaching becomes the seed of good in this world and the next.

Similarly goodness arises from the gift of one cent or a single blade of grass. The teaching is the treasure, and the treasure is the teaching. Let us not covet reward but share our power with others. Supplying a ferry and building a bridge are acts of charity—nor is industry in all its form separated from it.

22. Tenderness means viewing all beings with compassion and addressing them with kind words. Tenderness is to speak while bearing in mind the words: "I love all living beings as my children." Praise the virtuous and pity the virtueless. Through tenderness we make friends of our enemies and strengthen intimacy with our friends. Kind words, when spoken directly to anyone, brighten his face and warm his heart. When spoken behind his back, they leave a deep impression. We should learn that tenderness has a revolutionary impact on the human mind.

23. Benevolence means devising wise ways to benefit beings both high and low. Those who rescued the helpless tortoise or the sick sparrow did not look for reward: they acted solely out of benevolence. The foolish believe that their benefits dwindle because they help others, but this is not true. Benevolence, the universal law, benefits oneself as well as others.

24. Sympathy means non-differentiation—the identity of self and not-self. For example, the Tathāgata appeared in the human world in human form. Sympathy refutes the distinction between self and others. Sometimes the self is infinity; sometimes, others. Sympathy, like the sea, repulses no water, and all waters gather to form the sea.

25. Seekers of enlightenment, meditate on these teachings. Do not belittle them. Revere and respect the merits that benefit all living beings and help them cross to the other shore.

Chapter V. Practice and gratitude

26. The Buddha mind should be awakened in all sentient beings on this earth through causal relations. Their desire to be born in this world

is fulfilled. Why shouldn't they be grateful to see the the 'Sakyamuni Buddha?

27. If the Right Law had not permeated the world, we could not have met it even if we wanted to sacrifice our lives for it. We should quietly reflect on this fact. How fortunate to have been born at this moment when we can meet the Right Law. Remember that the Buddha said: When you meet a Zen master who teaches the highest wisdom, don't consider his caste. Don't pay attention to his appearance, consider his shortcomings, or criticize his practices. In deference to his wisdom, just bow before him and do nothing to worry him.

28. We can see the Buddha now and listen to his teachings because of the altruistic Buddhas and patriarchs did not transmit the Law truly, how could it have come down to us today?

We should appreciate even a phrase of portion of the Law. How can we help but be thankful for the great compassion of the highest law—the Eye and Treasury of the Right Law?

The sick sparrow did not forget the kindness received and returned it with the ring of the three great ministers. Nor did the troubled tortoise forget: it showed its gratitude with the seal of Yofu. So if even beasts return thanks, how can man do otherwise?

29. To show this gratitude you need no other teachings. Show it in the only real way—by daily practice. Without wasting time we should spend our daily life in selfless activity.

30. Time flies with more speed than an arrow; life moves on, more transient than dew. By what skilful means can you reinstate a day that has passed. A hundred years lived in vain add up to rueful days and months—a sorry existence. Though living as the slave of his senses for 100 years, anyone who succeeds in upholding the Law for just one day will gain back the 100 years. He will also manage to exert a favorable and lasting influence on his future life. During this one day, we have the noble life and priceless body. They deserve love and respect, for through them we can practice the Law and express the power of the Buddha. So true practice of the Law for one day is the seed of all the Buddha and their activities.

31. All the Buddhas are Buddha 'Sakyamuni himself. Buddhas past,

present, and future become the Buddha 'Sakyamuni on attaining Buddhahood. This mind itself is the Buddha. By awakening to a thorough understanding of this mind, you will truly show your gratitude to the Buddhas.