

SHISHŌBŌ

(The Four Embracing Laws of the Bodhisattva)

The first is charity ; the second, kindness ; the third, benevolence ; and the fourth, sympathy.

Charity means non-coveting. Non-coveting means not to desire. Not to desire means not to seek the flattery of the world. Even though we may rule the four domains—to guide others in the Right Way—we must always be noncovetous. It is like giving treasures to a stranger. When we offer flowers from the distant mountains to the Tathāgata and give treasures from former lives to the people—whether in doctrine or material—each charitable act is inherently endowed with suitable merits. Although somethings may not belong to us, there is the principle of not impeding charity. It does not matter how trifling the gift ; its merit will be real. When the Way is left to the Way, we gain enlightenment. When we gain enlightenment, the Way is always left to the Way. When property is left naturally as treasures, it always becomes charity. Self is offered to self ; others are offered to others. The related powers of this charity penetrates to heaven and men and spreads even among the wise and holy. By receiving what they give, we become related to them.

The Buddha said that when a charitable person approaches a gathering, the various people there look at him with pleasure. You must know that his mind has quietly permeated the others. Therefore, 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 a small coin or a single blade of grass. Even the Law must be treasures ; even treasures must be the Law. We must rely on the vow to help others. Truly it is like offering whiskers and calming the minds of the multitude. It is like offering sand to the Buddha and gaining the rank of king. Let us not covet rewards but share our strength with others.

Providing a ferry and building a bridge are acts of charity. When we study the spirit of charity thoroughly, receiving the body and abandoning the body are both charitable deeds. Daily work in all its forms need not be separated from charity. Letting the flowers be blown by the wind and leaving the birds to their time to fly are also achievements of charity. Long ago King A'soka offered the mango fruit to several hundred priests. Those who received it should understand well the fact that it is a vast and far-reaching gift. The point is not only to use our bodily strength : we must not miss the opportune time.

Truly this is because we are originally endowed with the merit of charity, and this body and mind have gained it. The Buddha said : "It is well to receive charity for ourselves ; it is better to offer charity to parents, wife, and children." We know, therefore, that it is part of charity to use it one's self ; it is also charity to give to parents, wife, and children. When we let go of even one speck of dust in true charity—even though it is our own act—we must enjoy it calmly. Because one merit of the various Buddhas has been truly transmitted to us, we can practice one law of the Bodhisattvas for the first time.

But it is difficult to turn the minds of all beings. From the outset when the minds of beings are turned by the giving of a bit of wealth until the time of enlightenment, we must always be attentive to the turning of our own mind. At the beginning of training charity is essential. Therefore, at the beginning of the Six pāramitā there is charity.⁽¹⁾ The dimension of mind cannot be measured. The dimension of things cannot be measured. There is charity when mind turns things and when things turn mind.

Kindness means viewing all beings with compassion and addressing them with gentle words. Violent and evil words are eschewed. In the lay world there are words inquiring about someone's health. In Buddhism there are also words of solicitation and filial piety. Kindness is to speak while

(1) Pāramitā here has two meanings : 1) to gain the othershore and 2) to attain absolute perfection. The first refers to this shore (the standpoint of ordinary man) ; the second means that by attaining one paramita, all are attained.

thinking: "I love all beings as my children." Praise the virtuous and pity the unvirtuous. Instead of merely preferring kindness, we should progressively strengthen kindness. If we do, kindness will emerge unknown and unseen. While this body and life exist, we should be joyful. On this we must never compromise. Through kindness we make friends of our enemies and strengthen ties with our friends. Kind words, when spoken to someone, brighten his face and warm his heart. When spoken behind his back, they leave a deep impression. We should realize that kind words arise from an affectionate mind. An affectionate mind is rooted in a compassionate heart. We know that kind words have the power to turn the Emperor's mind.⁽²⁾ They are not limited to praising what a person can do.

Benevolence means devising wise means to benefit beings both poor and rich. Looking into the far future, we must devise means for benevolence. We pity the helpless tortoise and nurse the sick sparrow. Those who saw the helpless tortoise and sick sparrow did not pursue reward; they acted naturally and solely out of good will. Fools believe that benefits dwindle because they help others, but this is not so. Benevolence is the universal law. It benefits one's self as well as others. In olden days men knotted their hair three times when going into the bath, and when they ate once, they regurgitated thrice in consideration of others. It does not mean that the teaching is not offered to other countries. We should, therefore, benefit both enemy and kin. We should benefit self and others equally. If you attain this mind, you will not withhold natural benefit from grass, tree, wind, and water. By such principle, beneficial acts ensue. You must act to save the deluded.

Sympathy means non-differentiation—the identity of self and not-self. The human Tathāgata, for example, resembles human beings. This is known by the Tathāgata's resembling the human world—an other world. When we know sympathy, self and others are identical. Music, poetry, and wine are together with men, devas, and gods. Man is together with music, poetry, and wine. This is because music, poetry, and wine are together with music,

(2) Refers to an Emperor whose mind was changed through the advice of a loyal retainer.

poetry, and wine ; man is together with man ; deve is together with deva ; and god is together with god. This it the studying of sympathy.

For example, the *ji* of *dōji* (sympathy) means manners, dignity, and attitude. There is a truth that unifies others to self and then unifies self to others. Self and others are infinite in terms of time. In Kūan-tsū it is said : “Because the sea does not repel water, it can grow great. Because the mountain does not repel earth, it can grow high. Because the wise ruler does not despise the people, he can control many.” You must realize that the sea’s not repelling water is sympathy. You must also realize that water is endowed with the virtue of not repelling the sea. Therefore, water can gather to form the sea. Earth can pile up to form a mountain. I know intuitively that because the sea does not repel the sea, it can grow. Because the mountain does not repel the mountain, it can grow high. Because the wise ruler does not despise people, he can rule many, and the multitude becomes the country. The wise ruler is the great emperor.

The emperor does not despise the people. Although he does not despise the people, he does not neglect reward and punishment. Although he rewards and punishes, he does not despise the people. In ancient times, when the people had integrity, the country did away with reward and punishment. Also reward and punishment in those days were not similar to those now. Even today there should be people who seek the Way without awaiting a reward. The foolish cannot even think of this. Because the wise ruler is clear-minded, he does not despise the people. People necessarily form a country. They have the mind to seek a wise ruler. But because they rarely know for sure why the wise ruler is what he is, and although they are happy just because the wise ruler does not despise them, they do not know that then do not despise the wise ruler. So there is the principle of sympathy in both the wise ruler and ordinary men. Sympathy is the act and vow of the Bodhisattva. We must just treat all men kindly.

Because these four embracing laws each contain four laws they become the 16 laws.

Written by Dōgen, who entered Sung China

and transmitted the law, on March 3, 1243.