



# Dharma Lei

## Bishop's Office Newsletter

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First Quarter, 2020

Issue No. 31

### Bishop's Message: Bishop Shugen Komagata

Aloha from the Bishop's Office,

Happy New Year from the Hawaii Soto Mission Bishop's Office. I wish you and your family a bright and happy 2020. As time goes by quickly we are experiencing many changes. When we reflect upon the past year of 2019, we have so much to be thankful for... all the blessings we received from the Buddha and loving thoughts and kindness from family, friends and people we associated with. I pray that the New Year of the Rat will be a happy, healthy and safe one for everyone.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you and your family for prayers of compassion and peace throughout the past year. I ask for your continued prayers for a New Year that brings you a fresh start filled with hope, aspirations, and happiness.

2020 is the Year of the Rat. The Rat is the first symbol in the Japanese zodiac. It is said that when the zodiac symbols were summoned to gather for the first time, the rat arrived first after secretly riding in on the back of the punctual ox. Rodents are known to breed quickly, so 2020 will hopefully be a year of growth, prosperity, and social success. People who are born in the Year of the Rat as said to be charming, smart, ambitious, and hard working.

Rat people are said to be most compatible with dragons and monkeys. Together, these three zodiac symbols generate great positive energy. Rats are also get along well with ox people. Looking ahead in 2020, let's all work hard to find peace and happiness in our lives. It will be equally important to share that happiness with others. It can be through kindness we share, a smile, or even supportive shoulder to lean on.

The Bishop's Office and staff, Rev. Shuji Komagata (Office Coordinator), Rev. Masataka Hoshino and Rev. Tatsunori Hata are committed to working together with all the Hawaii ministers, members, families, and supporters of the Hawaii Soto Mission for making 2019 a happy and memorable year. I look forward to another exciting year in 2020! Please call or visit us any time. We appreciate your continued support during the coming year.

In Gassho,

Bishop Shugen Komagata



# Shushogi, Chapter 4: Verses 18-21

By Rev. Hirosato Yoshida  
Soto Mission of Hawaii



As we enter the fourth chapter of Shushogi, things get much more interesting because we start discussing about the ways and methods that one should act and live in their daily life. In the section that I will be introducing, it begins with what it means to be a Buddha (Bodhisattva) and what are the actions that a Buddha would take. So, let's begin.

## Verse 18

To arouse the thought of enlightenment is to vow to save all beings before saving ourselves. Whether lay person or monk, whether a deva or a human, whether suffering or at ease, we should quickly form the intention of first saving others before saving ourselves.

This verse simply expresses the fundamental idea of what an enlightened person would do; which is the act of compassion and thinking about others before oneself. In general terms, the action you take should be done for the best of others not for the best of oneself. Doing things without thinking about yourself first, is the action of compassion just like what a Buddha would do.

## Verse 19

Though of humble appearance, one who has formed this intention is already the teacher of all living beings. Even a girl of seven is a teacher to the fourfold assembly, a compassionate father to living beings. Do not make an issue of male and female. This is a most wondrous principle of the way of Buddha.

But in life, it is can be very difficult to act "others first" at all time. Our egos constantly prevent us from genuinely helping others before thinking about "what is it for me" type of thoughts. This is something that is beyond age and beyond gender. Dogen Zenji said, even a girl of seven years old can be a teacher to anyone. Seeing the pure act of compassion can be seeing regardless of age and gender. My son, who is three, would share his snacks with me without me asking. This act of sharing that he is doing, is out of his compassion to share joy with others. As we get older, I am sure that he will eventually stop sharing just because and become smart about the reason why he would share...like maybe sharing so that he can nag me to buy him toys. Like so, when we are younger, we can be very compassionate to others without any selfish feelings and this is the heart that we adults may need to re-learn from children.

## Verse 20

After arousing the thought of enlightenment, even though we cycle through the six destinies and four modes of birth, the circumstances of this cycling themselves are all the practice of the vow of enlightenment. Therefore, although until now we may have vainly idled away our time, we should quickly make the vow before the present life has passed. Even if we have acquired a full measure of merit, sufficient to become a buddha, we turn it over, dedicating it to living beings that they may become buddhas and attain the way. There are some who practice for countless kalpas, saving living beings first without themselves becoming buddhas; they only save beings and benefit beings.



In this verse, we begin with the notion of six destinies or realm and four modes of birth. Let me explain them briefly about them first. In Buddhism, we believe that there are six realms of world, Heavenly Realm, Human Realm, Hell Realm, Animal Realm, Hungry Ghost Realm, and Fighting Realm. Then the four modes of birth that were believed in ancient India, which are birth through womb (like mammals), birth through egg (like birds and reptiles), birth in a humid area (like moss and plants), and a sudden appearance of birth (like demons and other mystical things). We are currently born into the Human Realm through the womb. It is natural for us to want to escape this cycle of reincarnation and at least be born into the Heavenly Realm but the chant is saying that do not be attached to the notion of realm or birth but to concentrate on the action or the karma. If we follow the buddha's path and concentrate on the Right action, which realm or which method we are born would not matter. Think of Kannon Bodhisattva as an example, they are beings that have become enlightened and can at any time escape this cycle. However, they decided to stay behind to save those in need of help. The choice they made to stay here doesn't make them not enlightened because they didn't escape the cycle of reincarnation. This is an example saying that what is more important is the action that one takes during their lifetime, not the place where they are born.

#### Verse 21

There are four kinds of wisdom that benefit living beings: giving, kind speech, beneficial deeds, and cooperation. These are the practices of the vow of the bodhisattva. "Giving" means not to covet. In principle, although nothing is truly one's own, this does not prevent us from giving. Do not disdain even a small offering; its giving will surely bear fruit. Therefore, we should give even a line or a verse of the dharma, sowing good seeds for this life and other lives. We should give even a penny or a single blade of grass of resources, establishing good roots for this world and other worlds. The dharma is a resource, and resources are the dharma. Without coveting reward or thanks from others, we simply share our strength with them. Providing ferries and building bridges are also the perfection of giving. Earning a living and producing goods are fundamentally nothing other than giving.

Now that we understand how important actions are for Buddhist, the chant explains what we need to do in order to become a Bodhisattva and they are the four kinds of wisdom that can navigate one to perform the right action. The four wisdoms are giving, kind speech, beneficial deeds, and cooperation or empathy and they are the practices of a Bodhisattva. "Giving" seems simple to understand but in our common understanding, we correlate giving as physical and material things. For example, you give money, you give a flower, you give toys. When we don't have money or things to share, we sometimes feel very discouraged to give or share to others and we often can act in greedy ways when we are desperate to maintain our own life. But what is also important to understand from the Buddhist perspective and I also believe that we humans feel this way deep down is that we all know that what truly impacts people's life is not giving of materials but the giving of compassion, giving of love, giving your time and attention, giving non-materialist things to another person. We all have a moment that we feel empty handed and there is nothing we can give, but we can always give our love and attention to another person. Buying a boat or building a bridge to help someone cross a river is an act of compassion but also sharing of wisdom and dharma to another is also an act of compassion.

This concludes this portion of the verses. The takeaway in these four verses that I explained is that it doesn't matter where you are born and the wealth you possess but the important thing is how you practice and act every moment of our life. Following the teachings of "Giving" should help you understand that giving is not only about things but also about love and compassion. If you have young children around you, observe their action as sometimes, their actions are very pure and compassionate that we can all learn from. Don't let our mind trick us in thinking what we can do and what we can't do to be a Bodhisattva because of our possession or status in life.



## Rev. Daitso Wright: New Minister at Alaneo Zendo



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the newest kid on the block. My full name is Shōyū 正融 Daitso 大通 Tom Wright. I was born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1944, and raised in a small, rural town called Watertown, half-way between Madison and Milwaukee. I lived there until I went to college, Valparaiso University, in Indiana. After two years, not really knowing why I went to college, I decided to drop out. Fortunately, a mentor there suggested I work for a year as a youth counselor at a Lutheran church on the side-side of Chicago. Little did I know that the community of Englewood, where I lived for a year was 99.99% people of color. In fact, the minister of the church and I were the only two Caucasians in the neighborhood. There, I became active in the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. So, I worked in the Movement both in Chicago, as well as in Selma, Alabama, in 1965.

After that year, I returned to school, but not in Indiana. I entered American University in Washington D.C. During my two years in Washington, while being a student, I was also very much involved in the anti-Vietnam War Movement. Then, in 1967, being bitterly disappointed in the way people in my country were treating people of color and the way my Government was at war in Vietnam, I had an opportunity to become a lay missionary in Japan, and immediately left the country.

Although I occasionally returned to the U.S., and finally finished my studies at the University of Wisconsin, graduating with a B.A. in Oriental Languages and Literature, and an M.A. in the Humanities and English Literature, from California State Dominguez Hills, California. I have spent most of my adult life in Japan.

After two years in Sapporo, Hokkaido, where I was first introduced to Zen at Chuo-ji Temple in Sapporo, I had an opportunity to go to Kyoto, where I first met Uchiyama Kōshō Rōshi, abbot of Antaiji Monastery. That was in December, 1968. That was also my first *sesshin*. When I left Antaiji five days later, I swore to myself that I would never return to that “refrigerator.” The zendo was cold, my back ached, my legs ached—I was miserable.

But, the following summer, upon finishing my contract as a missionary, I decided to return to Antaiji and stay there as long as I felt Uchiyama Rōshi had something to teach me. Well, though I didn’t spend all those years in Antaiji itself, in 1974, I ordained as a priest under Uchiyama Rōshi and studied under him for 24 years. Rōshi passed away in 1998.



As I mentioned earlier, I didn't stay all those years at Antaiji. I married my former Japanese Language teacher, Yuko, and our son, Joe, was born soon after our marriage. In those first years of our marriage, we lived by my teaching English privately, part-time, and by going out on *takuhatsu* 托鉢 mendicant begging. As our son grew older, however, I realized that I would never be able to have enough money to put him through school, so I decided to take a part-time position at Ryukoku University in Kyoto. During those years, I also began translating the books of Uchiyama Rōshi. The first book Steve Yenik, another American and I translated was Rōshi's 生命の実物—坐禅の実際 *Seimei no Jitsubutsu—Zazen no Jissai*. The English title became *Approach to Zen*, but was subsequently reedited and titled *Opening the Hand of Thought*. Finally, in 1989, I took a tenured position at Ryukoku, and became full-professor in 1994.

The second book I published was 永平大清規：典座教訓 *Eihei Daishingi: Tenzo Kyōkun*, along with Uchiyama Rōshi's commentary. This was first published as *Refining Your Life*, and later revised and retitled *How to Cook Your Life*.

I retired from Ryukoku in 2010 and moved to Hawaii a few months after retiring and am currently Emeritus Professor of Ryukoku University. In 2018, I published my third book, a translation of 正法眼藏：有時, which I translated as *Living Time* and 諸悪莫作 *Refraining from Evil*, along with Uchiyama Rōshi's commentaries on those fascicles. This book also includes one more fascicle from the *Shōbōgenzō*, Okumura Shōhaku Rōshi's translation of 摩訶般若波羅蜜 *Maka Hannya Haramitsu*, along with Uchiyama Rōshi's commentary. This book is titled *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom*.

I would just like to say in closing that practicing zazen and translating Dōgen Zenji, along with Uchiyama Kōshō Rōshi's commentaries is my lifework. Zazen is important for me because I consider it to be the highest form of culture. Zazen is the practice of giving up trying to get ahead, or trying to make money or gain power. It is the purest practice of becoming our true self, prior to all the nonsense that goes on in our heads or in our society. I pray for the day when zazen reaches a tipping point and becomes the purest and clearest way for humankind to live out our life.

## Lay temple assistant training completion ceremony for Jigaku Takenouchi

On November 10, 2019 Hilo Taishoji had a lay temple assistant training completion ceremony for one of the members, Jigaku Takenouchi officiated by Bishop Shugen Komagata. During the ceremony, Jigaku received the certificate and a rakusu (a small Buddha robe that is hung around the neck by a strap and worn on the chest like a bib) and became a Taishoji deacon. He will assist Rev. Hata as the Taishoji deacon and be active as one of the precious Hawaii Sotoshu members from now on.



Rev. Shinsho Hata/ Brent Takenouchi  
Jigaku Takenouchi/ Bishop Shugen Komagata

