



Bishop's Office Newsletter

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Second Quarter, 2020

Issue No. 32

Bishop's Message: Bishop Shugen Komagata

Aloha from the Bishop's Office,

I hope you are doing well. As you already know, the world is currently in a great state of worry and uncertainty regarding COVID19, also known as the Novel Coronavirus.

In many parts of the world where the number of infected people is rising, Soto Zen Buddhism has taken measures to prevent the spread of this virus. I was informed that Rev. Ryoju Tahara of the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office in Brazil is just one of many ministers who decided to temporarily close their temples for the duration of the outbreak. Many Soto Zen temples in Japan will have observed their Ohigan service without their congregation present.

In Hawaii, we are also facing an increasingly difficult situation that seems to change with each passing day. The Soto Mission of Hawaii has cancelled all the services and all activities, including classes, events, and meetings until the end of April 30. Please contact your temple to learn about any schedule changes or cancellations.

While we hope and pray for the best, it is important that each of us does his or her part to keep our families and ourselves safe. I encourage you to do simple things like frequently washing your hands. Around the world, the "fist bump" has replaced the handshake. Perhaps we can also bow to one another with two hands in *gassho* instead of shaking hands!

Since the novel coronavirus may be spread even by individuals who may not be exhibiting symptoms, we have been encouraged to avoid unnecessary exposure by not going out into public, especially if you're older or have a preexisting medical condition. Although this new practice of "social distancing" appears to be the "new normal" until we gain the upper hand over the spread of this illness, we must remember to continue to be compassionate and caring towards others.

I will continue to pray for your health and safety. Please remain vigilant, and take care of yourself and loved ones.

In Gassho,

Bishop Shugen Komagata



Shushogi, Chapter 4: Verses 21-25

By Rev. Shuji Komagata
Soto Mission of Aiea



This article is part of a series of commentaries on the sutra, Shushogi, mainly comprised of extracts taken directly from Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo (The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye).

In this article, I will discuss the meaning of the Bodaisatta Shishobo, which is written in Chapter 4, verses 21-25 of the Shushogi. The Bodaisatta Shishobo, written by Dogen Zenji on May 5, 1243, describes the "four actions of a bodhisattva." Since we are all aspiring bodhisattvas in our Soto Zen tradition, the Shishobo describes what we should be practicing in our daily lives. To gain a better understanding of the Shishobo, let's first discuss in a little more detail what "Shishobo" means. The "shi" part of "Shishobo" means four. "Sho" refers to embracing, unifying, or integrative. "Bo" is another reading for "ho," with means the path, way, or method. Therefore, we can interpret the "Shishobo" as the four skillful ways a bodhisattva embraces all living beings. Most importantly, though, is that we must understand that these four actions of the Shishobo are not only about what we do, but also the mindset we must have when helping others.

The first action is, "Fuse," or "giving." Rev. Hirosato Yoshida discussed fuse in the previous Dharma Lei (Chapter 4, verse 21), so I will not discuss it in detail here. However, in a nutshell, "fuse" refers to being generous without seeking or expecting anything in return. We engage in free giving simply to share our strength with others.

The second action is "Aigo," or "kind speech" (Chapter 4, verse 22). At the very least, Dogen Zenji did say that we should refrain from rude or unkind speech. I'm certain you have heard the phrase, "If you have nothing good to say, then don't say anything at all." It is true that we should refrain from hurting others with our words. However, the basic meaning behind the Shishobo is to focus on action, not non action. While refraining from unkind speech may avoid negative results, there is so much more positive potential in bringing joy to other people through the sharing of kind and loving words. We should endeavor to share caring and loving words with others. However, this can sometimes be very challenging. Although we may not always agree with others, the key is to shift our perspective and position on things that enables us to successfully find ways to engage in kind speech. According to Dogen Zenji, when meeting others, we think kindly of them and offer them affectionate words. Kind speech is fundamental for pacifying one's enemies and fostering harmony among one's friends. We should realize that kind speech has the power to move the heavens.

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The third action is “Rigyo,” or “beneficial deeds” (Chapter 4, verse 23). Although “beneficial deeds” means finding ways to help others, it is much more involved than simply responding compassionately in the moment to someone in need. According to Dogen Zenji, “beneficial deeds” are defined as acting “skillfully to benefit all classes of sentient beings; that is, to care about their distant and near future, and to help them by using skillful means.” It is like a mother picking up a crying baby, who does it without seeking reward or thanks.

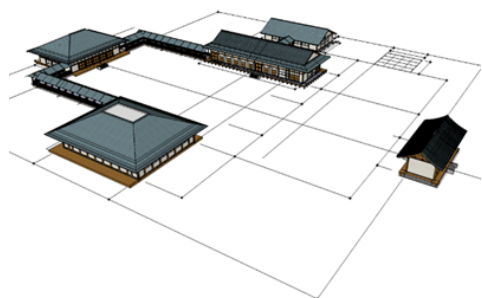
The fourth action is “Doji,” or “cooperation” (Chapter 4, verse 24). “Do” means same, and “ji” means thing or task. Therefore, “doji” is often translated as cooperation or empathy. Another translation can be to have “identity of purpose,” or “sharing the same aim.” I personally like the interpretation, “being in the same boat.” Doji means not to differentiate; to make no distinction between self and others. Cooperation means the association of persons for a common benefit. We must see ourselves in others and others in ourselves.

In the Shushogi, chapter 4, verse 25, a summary of the Shishobo is given. Remember, in the title, “Bodaisatta Shishobo,” bodaisatta (bodhisattva) refers not only to Kannon-sama or Ojizo-sama. It also refers to all ordinary human beings. Your life is precious and you must not waste it. You should give generously, speak kind words, help others, and empathize with others, not for personal gains, whether material or spiritual, but rather solely for the sake of the act itself. These actions should be done with awakening to the true reality of emptiness and interdependent origination. This is the true practice of Buddhism.



Progress of the Tenpyozan Bodaishinji Project

LOCATION: 23700 Morgan Valley Road, Lower Lake, CA 95457, U.S.A



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☆ We Need ☆

(1st Period, site preparation and Monk's Hall)

○Bridge and road work at the site: \$200,000

○Change Water storage tank: \$200,000

○Restroom Attached Zendo (GOKA): \$200,000

Every little help will make the Gigantic Future for ZEN

