

衆生無邊誓願度
煩惱無盡誓願斷
法門無量誓願學
佛道無上誓願成

全機



BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS
INITIATION CEREMONY

with commentary by Tenshin Reb Anderson

The bodhisattva precepts initiation is a ceremony of sudden awakening. In Chinese folklore, there's a story of a fish swimming through a magical gate and becoming a dragon. Just as a fish swimming in water may take the water for granted, we, moving through life, may take life for granted. When we place a ritual gate into our life and walk mindfully through it we may suddenly realize, "Oh, I am alive." In this way we awaken to the simple truth that we are alive and that we are life.

In this ceremony we are welcomed into our new home and family. Here, our home is Buddha; our family is the great earth and all beings, bodhisattvas and buddhas. These family members have become close through our practice. It is both an initiation and a re-initiation. Like a friend of mine has said more than once, upon falling in love, "It's never been like this before, again." Sometimes the ceremony is called *Jukai*, which means "giving the precepts." It may also be called *Zaike tokudo*, which literally means "staying at home and accomplishing the way." The priest bodhisattva initiation is called *Shukke tokudo* – that is, "leaving home and accomplishing the way." Through these ceremonies we formally enter the bodhisattva path.

Our bodhisattva precepts initiation ceremony is composed of ten basic elements:

1. Invocation
2. Renunciation
3. Receiving new name and robe

4. Confession and resolution of action
5. Water purification
6. Taking refuge
7. Receiving the Three Pure Precepts
8. Receiving the Ten Grave Precepts
9. Receiving the bodhisattva precept lineage document
10. Dedication

1. Invocation

Preceptor:

*Invoking the presence and compassion of our ancestors
In faith that we are Buddha, we enter Buddha's way
Homage to all Buddhas in the ten directions
Homage to the complete Dharma in ten directions
Homage to every Sangha in ten directions
Homage to our first teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha
Homage to our succession of bodhisattvas and ancestors
Homage to Eihei Dōgen Zenji
Homage to Shogaku Shunryū Daiocho
Now may their presence and compassion sustain us
Let us chant the names of Buddha:*

Everyone:

*Vairochana Buddha, pure Dharmakaya
Lochana Buddha, complete Sambhogakāya
Shakyamuni Buddha, myriad Nirmanakaya
Maitreya Buddha, of future birth
All Buddhas throughout space and time
Lotus of the Wondrous Dharma, Mahayana Sutra
Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, great wisdom
Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, great activity
Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, great compassion
All honored ones, bodhisattva mahāsattvas
Wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha Prajñā Paramita*

In this invocation, we call buddhas and bodhisattvas to come and witness the ceremony. We call within to their wisdom

and compassion. In this way the beginning of this ceremony is buddhahood.

2. Renunciation

Preceptor:

Walking the path of the bodhisattva is accomplished through the spirit and actuality of renunciation. All the buddha ancestors of the bodhisattva precept lineage have practiced and are still practicing renunciation of all attachments. Renunciation is an unsurpassable way of harmonizing body and mind with the Buddha way. If one gives up attachments, she is free. She is a Buddha.

What is the spirit of renunciation? It is the wish to drop off all attachment to body and mind. This spirit of renunciation arises from patiently and compassionately listening to the suffering of the world. What else is renunciation? It is to let go of ideas of personal gain. It is to abandon self-clinging and selfish practice. It is to stop meddling with our experience. This is to relinquish all activities of thought. Renunciation is to sit upright and clearly observe whatever is appearing as our life. In order to skillfully care for and not abandon all sentient beings, it is imperative that we abandon all attachments and self-clinging.

The Preceptor snips or shaves lock of hair from each initiate.

3. Receiving new name and robe

Preceptor:

To sustain and confirm the practice of the bodhisattva precepts, for their meaning is in living them, I will now give you your buddha name and robe to clothe you throughout this life and times to come. This will be your name, true family and dress.

Preceptor calls each person by old name and new name, and each initiate receives name and robe and returns to seat.

Initiates chant together:

O, bodhisattvas, mahāsattvas, please concentrate your hearts on me. I, (new name), Buddha’s disciple, receive this robe of five panels, each panel made from one long and one short piece. I will wear this robe of Buddha with the mind and body of its sacred meaning. (three times)

Initiates remove robe from wrapper and envelope, place robe on head, and chant:

*Dai sai gedap puku
Mu so fu ku den ne
Hi bu nyorai kyo
Ko do sho shu jo (two times)*

*Great robe of liberation
Field far beyond form and emptiness
Wearing the Tathāgata’s teaching
Saving all beings*

Initiates put on robes.

(three bows)

Now that we are about to enter a new life, we receive a new name and new clothing. I say a “new name,” but it is also a traditional name and receiving it is an ancient tradition. The new name and new clothes mean that we can change. Our new name may be composed of elements taken from the names of our ancestors in the bodhisattva precept lineage. It may be that there has never been a name like yours before, and yet it is connected to all the others.

We are fortunate to be living at a time when the authentic method of sewing and transmitting Buddha’s robe is known and practiced. I am deeply grateful to Zen teachers Eko Hashimoto and Kodo Sawaki for researching and revitalizing the tradition of sewing, wearing and caring for Buddha’s robe. Sewing teachers Eshun Yoshida, Joshin Kasai, and Tomoe Katagiri trained the first generation of North Americans, notably

Zenki Blanche Hartman and Meiya Wender. These teachers have conveyed the spirit and practice of sewing Buddha's robe to hundreds of Zen students and trained succeeding generations of sewing teachers, creating a durable legacy stitch after stitch. If we wear the properly transmitted robe even once for only a short time, it will serve to protect our practice of awakening. Our vow to respect and care for this sacred garment brings the great mind of awakening into our daily life. Though we may not fully apprehend what difference it makes, to care for our robes in accord with Buddha's instructions helps all beings realize the essence of the way.

4. Confession and resolution of action

Preceptor:

In order to be fully awakened in the practice of Buddha's precepts we start with the pure practice of confession.

Preceptor and initiates chant together, three times:

*All my ancient twisted karma
From beginningless greed, hate, and delusion
Born through body, speech and mind
I now fully avow*

Preceptor: *You have gone beyond the karma of body, speech and mind, and have been freed from greed, hate and delusion.*

O good disciples of Buddha, now you may live in the way of the Three Treasures. Even after acquiring Buddhahood, will you continue this truthful practice?

Initiates together: *Yes, I will.*

(three bows)

This is a formal confession of our past actions. To clear away any reservations, any resistance, any hesitation to accepting the truth, to accepting the way, we confess. We avow all the things

we have done, from beginningless time, with our body, our voice and our thought, through all kinds of confusion, aversion, and attachments. We avow all these actions and they are burned up by this complete avowal, setting ourselves free of our ancient karma and ready to receive the precepts of the Buddha way. And we really feel free from our past karma. As though we can actually change and start fresh on the path.

5. Water purification (*abhiseka*)

The preceptor, using a leaf, sprinkles water on the initiates and the assembly.

The basis of this wisdom water purification is the buddha nature that we all share. We have this way of creating wisdom water that has been passed down to us for thousands of years. We take some of this water and sprinkle it on all the initiates, to purify each person – just to make sure they are free of any dust of past action. Then everybody is fresh and pure.

6. Taking refuge

Preceptor: *We have purified our mind and body. Now you may receive the path of the precepts of the Three Treasures. You are seated with Buddha and are really Buddha's child. Will you receive these precepts?*

Initiates: *Yes, I will.*

Preceptor chants and initiates repeat, line by line:

I take refuge in Buddha

I take refuge in Dharma

I take refuge in Sangha

I take refuge in Buddha as the perfect teacher

I take refuge in Dharma as the perfect teaching

I take refuge in Sangha as the perfect life

Now I have completely taken refuge in Buddha

*Now I have completely taken refuge in Dharma
Now I have completely taken in Sangha*

Preceptor: *You have returned to your original nature, free from attachments and limited ways. From now on awakening is your teacher, all beings are your teacher. Do not be fooled by other ways. This is the path of mercy for all existence and things. Do you agree to follow this compassionate path of the Three Treasures that I am now passing to you?*

Initiates together: *Yes, I do.* (three bows)

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is the beginning and end of the Buddha way. It is the heart. For Dōgen-zenji the first step in practice was to take refuge in the Triple Treasure. Before we practice ethical conduct, concentration, and insight, we take refuge, and after we have accomplished these practices we continue to take refuge. This pattern is demonstrated in Dōgen-zenji's life. Towards the end of his life he wrote the Shōbōgenzō fascicle "Taking Refuge in the Triple Treasure." He hoped to revise it but due to ill health, he was unable to do so. And as he was preparing to die, the practice of this great and learned Zen master, this ancient Buddha, was to write 'Buddha, Dharma, Sangha' on a pillar in his death-room, and then walk around the pillar taking refuge. He said, "I take refuge in awakening. I take refuge in the teaching. I take refuge in the community." This is what the old Buddha did as he was dying. A Buddha is constantly taking refuge in Buddha; a Buddha is constantly taking refuge in him or herself. Doesn't that make sense? At the beginning of our practice, we also take refuge in Buddha's mind, in Buddha as our own mind, and in our mind as Buddha.

When you are beginning practice or entering the way through initiation ceremonies, you rely on and return to 'this mind as Buddha.' When you have become accomplished in the way, you take refuge in 'no-Buddha, no-mind.' The Japanese expression for taking refuge is *ki-e*. According to Dōgen-zenji, *ki* means to

unhesitatingly throw yourself into something and it also means to return, to come again. Therefore, to take refuge in the Triple Gem is to throw your awakened mind into the awakened mind, into the perfect teaching, and into the oneness of all being. It is to jump, unhesitatingly, into awakening, into the true teaching, into the interconnectedness of all being. This is *ki*. And *e* means to 'rely' or 'depend' on, to find true safety and asylum in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Ultimately there is only one Treasure: Awakening. But for the sake of helping people, Buddha is seen through three aspects. One is awakening as a teacher for us. Another is awakening as doctrine or teaching and then there is awakening as revealed through discipline and thus through those who practice it.

In the Sixth Ancestor's *Platform Sutra* there is a bodhisattva initiation ceremony. Therein Hui-neng, the sixth Zen ancestor, asks people to take refuge in the body of Buddha as their own physical body. So basically it comes back to deeply trusting yourself. It all comes to that. Deeply trusting your own goodness. Deeply trusting your own imperturbable Buddha mind. 'Deeply trusting' means to stand, sit or walk steadfastly in your imperturbable awakened mind. To do all the activities of daily life with imperturbable Buddha mind is to take refuge in Buddha.

7. Receiving the Three Pure Precepts

Preceptor: *Now will you receive the Three Pure Precepts?*

Initiates: *Yes, I will.*

Preceptor recites each precept and initiates repeat:

I vow to embrace and sustain right conduct

I vow to embrace and sustain all good

I vow to embrace and sustain all beings

Preceptor: *Abiding in the Three Pure Precepts even after acquiring Buddhahood, will you continuously observe them?*

Initiates: *Yes, I will.*

The practice of these precepts is the body and mind of Buddha. Avoiding all wrong actions is Buddha's law body (Dharmakaya), doing all right actions is Buddha's bliss body (Sambogakaya), and living for the benefit of all beings is Buddha's transformation body (Nirmanakaya).

Once there was a Zen master who meditated in a tree. He was known as "Bird's Nest." A great governor-poet, Bai Juyi, came to see him and said, "What a dangerous seat you have up there in the tree." "Yours is more dangerous than mine," the teacher replied. "I am the governor of this province, and I don't see what danger there is here." "Then sir, you don't know yourself very well. When passions burn and mind is unsteady, this is the greatest danger." Then Bai Juyi asked, "What is the teaching of Buddhism?" The teacher recited a stanza from the *Dhammapada*:

Not to commit wrong actions
But to do all good ones
And keep the heart pure
This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.

"But any child of three years knows that," said Bai Juyi. "Any three-year-old child may know it, but even a person of eighty years finds it difficult to practice," said the teacher in the tree.

8. Receiving the Ten Grave Precepts

Preceptor: *Now will you receive the Ten Grave Precepts?*

Initiates together: *Yes, I will.*

Preceptor recites each precept and initiates repeat:

A disciple of Buddha does not kill

A disciple of Buddha does not take what is not given

A disciple of Buddha does not misuse sexuality

A disciple of Buddha does not lie

*A disciple of Buddha does not intoxicate mind or body
of self or others*

A disciple of Buddha does not slander

A disciple of Buddha does not praise self at the expense of others

A disciple of Buddha is not possessive of anything

A disciple of Buddha does not harbor ill will

A disciple of Buddha does not abuse the Three Treasures

Preceptor: *Abiding according to the Ten Grave Precepts,
even after acquiring Buddhahood, will you continuously to
observe them?*

Initiates: *Yes, I will.*

Preceptor: *You have received Buddha's precepts and are a
child of Buddha. Now you can really work for all beings and
realize Buddha nature as yourself. You, yourself, and all
beings are the Tathāgata.*

(three bows)

Taking refuge in the Triple Treasure is the heart of Buddhism. The precepts are the blood, and the lineage of Bodhisattva precepts is the vein. This precept vein is a vital link between all the buddhas and ancestors and us. To truly receive these precepts is to be awakened. While receiving these precepts one should be aware that they are our own true body and mind. They are the way of complete freedom.

A disciple of buddha does not kill. If I deeply understand and accept how living beings feel when threatened by violence and the specter of being killed, I will not kill or allow others to kill. If I have reverence for all life and remember that all living beings hold their own life dear, I will not kill or let others kill.

A disciple of buddha does not take what is not given. Material accomplishment may occur; we all have some belongings. But we must be sure that they come by right livelihood.

A disciple of buddha does not misuse sexuality. Studying and becoming intimate with our sexuality we may understand its nature. Understanding its nature we realize the beneficial potential of sexual energy. This is using our life energy only for the benefit of beings and not to produce attachments.

A disciple of buddha does not lie. Since this precept is concerned with refraining from false speech, one way to practice might be to simply not say a word. But lying may also be done with silence. There are lies of omission. Sometimes we must speak in order not to lie. But this, of course, may not be so easy. Many of us do not know how to tell the truth and need to enter a difficult process of learning. What is the truth? An ancestor says, "Turning away and touching are both wrong, for it is like a massive fire." The truth is vast, inconceivable, and it cannot be known as an object. It remains elusive. So we may be tempted to simplify it in order to grasp it. However, this is slandering the truth and is a kind of lying. Developing a tolerance for complexity and being willing to admit confusion may help us in our practice of telling the truth.

A disciple of buddha does not intoxicate mind or body of self or others. If we look for the advantage of one thing over another, anything may be an opportunity for intoxication. If taken in the right way, alcohol may be helpful. It all depends on our basic attitude. Suzuki Roshi emphasized that this precept warns against intoxicating people with spiritual teachings. It encourages us to acknowledge all dependencies and selfish manipulations, even of Buddha's teachings.

A disciple of buddha does not slander. The first thing that comes to mind here is to be strict with ourselves, but gentle and forgiving of others. Being strict with ourselves in this case means to acknowledge our own shortcomings and to be sure that our speech is motivated by compassion. If we practice this way, we no longer need to speak in a demeaning way of others.

A disciple of buddha does not praise self at the expense of others.

Being focused on our own virtuous conduct, we may not see how our action is supported by the virtue and kindness of others.

Instead, if we can remember how limited our awareness is, we may be able to observe this precept. As Dōgen-zenji says, “When dharma does not fill your whole body and mind, you think it is already sufficient. When dharma fills your body and mind, you realize that something is missing.”

A disciple of buddha is not possessive of anything. First of all, this precept points to the disharmony and injustice of amassing material possessions while others are lacking them. People who possess lots of precious things are often feared and hated and may live in fear that these possessions will be taken from them. On another level, this precept is an encouragement to Buddhist teachers not to be possessive of the teaching. The challenge of a bodhisattva’s life is to share the teaching with everyone.

A disciple of buddha does not harbor ill will. Deep in our hearts, we know how destructive it is for our own health and happiness to hold on to anger. It may also be harmful for those towards whom we express inappropriate angry words or gestures. Therefore, we must sincerely practice patience to protect ourselves from the arising of inappropriate anger.

A disciple of buddha does not abuse the three treasures.

Although this precept is given last, it is also, in a sense, first and most important because it refers back to the beginning, the refuges, which are the foundation of precept practice and all bodhisattva vows. In the Shōbōgenzō, Dōgen-zenji tells a story about taking refuge. Once a blind female dragon presented herself to Buddha. She had been suffering for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. She is described as being in terrible condition. She was covered with hideous foul-smelling sores, and decomposing in all possible dimensions of rot and putrescence. She cried out to the Buddha for help. Buddha

asked compassionately, “How did you get into this condition?” She explained that in a previous life, she had been a nun and she had done a series of terrible things. She said she conned people in the monastery out of possessions; she used her position in the temple to set up her drunken sexual activities. She really violated the precepts. Therefore, this was the terrible result. Buddha said, “If you did take refuge in the Triple Treasure in a past life, then I can help you.” He reached out and scooped up some water, and said, “This water is known as the water of bliss. If what you have said is true, your afflictions can all be cured.” Saying this, the Buddha put some of the water in his mouth and sprayed it on her, completely healing all of her ill-smelling and rotting parts. Upon being cured in this way, the female dragon asked to be allowed to take refuge in the Three Treasures again. The Buddha immediately gave her his permission, and she did so. Dōgen-zenji says, “This is all that could be done for her. And it is because she took the refuges in the past that Buddha could do this for her.” Through all her compassionate deeds a bodhisattva is always venerating and protecting the unsurpassable Triple Treasure.

9 Receiving the bodhisattva precept lineage document

Preceptor: Now, by these acts of invocation, renunciation, confession, purification, taking refuge, and receiving the precepts, we become the working basis of the Buddha way. We have become, by those actions, the ground for the arising of the mind of awakening. Thus we are ready to receive the precept lineage of all bodhisattvas.

Each initiate receives blood vein lineage papers and returns to place.

(three bows)

The blood vein chart shows how we are connected with all buddhas and ancestors through the bodhisattva precepts. It also

shows that we are the latest edition of the lineage and a source of its continuing life. Studying the diagram of the blood vein, we realize that we are Buddha's disciples. We are ancestors' children and at the same time, we are buddhas, and the life of the lineage comes from our practice of the precepts. The lineage chart has Shakyamuni Buddha at the top. From him a red line goes down through ninety ancestors – 2,500 years – to the people in this ceremony. This red blood line goes from Shakyamuni down through India, through China, both Rinzai Zen and Soto Zen, through Dōgen-zenji, and down through Soto Zen in Japan to North America and to us. After going through the person ordained, the red line returns to Shakyamuni Buddha.

We are actually taking refuge in the wise and compassionate nature of our own mind. We're disciples, and at the same time, we are Buddha. This is the blood vein—it is pumped all the way around, back through all the ancestors, into you, and back to the ancestors, through them, and into you—round and round the Buddha blood goes.

10 Dedication

Preceptor:

We offer this ceremony to the enlightenment of all beings.

Preceptor recites once, and everyone repeats three times:

Like a cloud in an endless sky

Like a lotus in muddy water

We live in the pure mind of Buddha

Preceptor: *Thus we bow to the Tathāgata.*

Everyone: three bows

Initiates: *Thank you very much.*

(final bow)

Green Dragon Zen Temple
Green Gulch Farm

revised January 2018