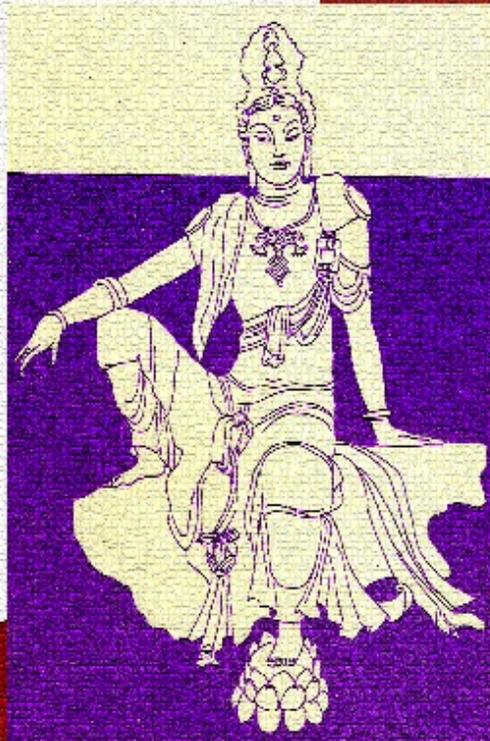


**Taking Refuge
in the
Bodhisattva
Way**



Joan Sutherland

**Taking Refuge
in the Bodhisattva Way**

a handbook on preparing for
the refuge ceremony

Joan Sutherland



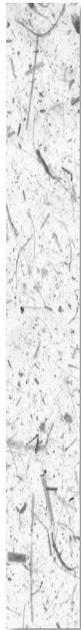
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All bodhisattvas of the past
have studied these precepts;
those of the future will also study them.
Those of the present study them as well.
This is the path walked by the buddhas,
and praised by the buddhas.

Brahma's Net Sutra

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the pilgrimage toward taking refuge in the bodhisattva way. This booklet is meant to provide you with information you'll need for the journey, and it'll be helpful if you read it early on.

People have been taking refuge since Shakyamuni's time; it's one of the oldest Buddhist practices, and it might be the only one that's shared by all the different schools of Buddhism around the world. Most traditions also include taking precepts, which are vows about conduct, though the number and content of the precepts vary; the sixteen vows we've inherited are common to the Mahayana schools of East Asia and now of the West.

In our tradition there are two ceremonies that mark our deepening commitment to this Way. The first formalizes the student-teacher relationship, and the second is this refuge ceremony. We sometimes joke that the first is like marrying a teacher, the second like marrying a tradition.

Participating in this ceremony is a matter of expressing your sense of coming home—to your own awakening, this way of practice, and your companions on the path. It is an aspiration to turn your individual life towards that which heals and encourages all of life.

At the end of *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way* (India, 8th century CE), Shantideva expresses his aspiration like this :

For as long as space endures,
for as long as the world lasts,
may I live,
dispelling the sufferings of the world.

This is the living heart of the Mahayana. This is its promise, too—that we might live in a world full of beings who are also making these vows. Will we ever get there? Perhaps not, but that makes no difference. If peace and freedom are dependent on reaching the goal, we'll never have them. But if peace and freedom are knowing that we're working toward that promise with our whole hearts, they're available right now. And right now, joining with others of like aspiration creates a little more stability and kindness in a world greatly in need of them. May *we* live, together, dispelling the sufferings of the world. May we encourage each other, and may we, like the bodhisattvas of every age, make joyous effort in the service of the liberation of others.

The precepts of
compassion roar
like thunder
The Lotus Sutra



REFUGE *IN* THE STORM

Deciding to participate in a ceremony of taking refuge in the bodhisattva way is a deeply personal matter: It's not required, so it's a request that rises from the heart, usually to acknowledge the sense of coming home one has found in the practice, and the desire to live a life that is more beneficial to oneself and others, a life of greater kindness.

The realm of the vows is not the world of our ordinary culture, with its emphasis on good boundaries and cost/benefit ratios. In taking refuge, we admit our own vulnerability and longing. And taking on the precepts is a beautifully reckless act, in which we make impossible promises and express our willingness to have life act upon us in ways we won't be able to control.

We offer ourselves to the world, asking nothing in return, but trusting that if we make this gesture of intention towards life, life will respond by lifting and carrying us along. To make this gesture is to declare our love of life, or maybe just whisper the possibility of it. Which is to move from the prison of our own small story into the fullness of things. Just this small gesture can make all the difference.

Zen asks us to take seriously what it means to save all beings, or to practice good. In other words, it invites us into a mystery that has no rational answer, but

which we must try to answer anyway for our practice to ripen. As we prepare for the ceremony by writing our own understanding of the vows, we discover, often with a certain panic, that while we have a powerful impulse towards the vows, we don't entirely know what they're about or what it means to take them on. Then we realize that we're embarking on a process of deepening and waiting—of being both curious and patient—learning to love the questions themselves, as Rilke would say. For the rest of our lives, these vows will be questions, and for the rest of our lives we will be living our way into the answers.

And so we invoke the spirit of inquiry, exploring deeply what the vow mean to us and how we will live them, rather than signing on to a predetermined set of rules. In this we follow Gandhi, who remarked that people want a lot of rules so they won't have to be good. We set aside any sense of recipe to go looking for the inherent goodness in ourselves and the world, and then promise to cultivate it.

One thing it's important to remember is that the precepts are for yourself, not a weapon to be wielded against someone else.

Maintaining your own precepts practice without criticizing the shortcomings of others is the bodhisattva's pure land

Vimalakirti Sutra

The precepts aren't about trying to control others or judge them, but to help with our own wondering about how to live. If we allow the precepts to work on us in this way, then should we decide to act in response to something that's happened, we can be more certain that we're not acting out of our own wounds—our desire to “get” somebody or our need to be holier than thou—but with some degree of consciousness and empathy.

Of course, if we don't wield the precepts against others, neither should we wield them against ourselves. Taking the precepts is meant to enrich and enlarge our lives, not to narrow them. They aren't meant to serve a habit of feeling not-good-enough, or to monitor our every thought and intention. This is a practice of generosity, for ourselves and others.

The meaning of our vows arises from an exploration of our own sense of integrity, and of our shadow—and we understand that this is a lifetime practice. It's a process that's paradoxical, frustrating, magical, and sometimes messy. Just like life. We accept that we'll make mistakes along the way, but that doesn't stop us from trying. This is the lotus in the fire, and it's a process full of our sweat, our tears, our doubts, our generousities, and sometimes our remorse.

Luckily we have help, because we also take refuge in our practice and our companions. For some people, this happens the first time they walk into a meditation hall, when they feel they've

come home. For others, the sense of homecoming grows slowly over time, with deepening practice, as they become more and more intimate with their own true nature, and the true nature of the world. For a zen person, this is the ultimate homecoming, the one no circumstance can ever take away.

The refuge ceremony contains a beautiful quote from Dogen: “The teisho of the actual body is the harbor and the weir. This is the most important thing in the world.” *Teisho* refers to a dharma talk and literally means “presentation of the shout”. The shout of eternity, the sound of the place we come home to. Our ancestor Prajnatarā said, “I am always reciting millions and millions of sutras.” We recite with our words, our silences, our eating breakfast and our meditation. Everything is constantly presenting the shout of eternity in its own unique way: this redwood, that squirrel, the traffic in the distance. Listen, listen. The voice of the stars, the voice of the earthworms, right here. These are the actual bodies, and this is the refuge.



When you ask about the precepts you are already observing the precepts, because there are no precepts apart from seeking the precepts.

Yuanguī

THE THREE REFUGE VOWS

I take refuge in awakening
I take refuge in the way
I take refuge in my companions

Our tradition began in the great forests of northern India, where people like ourselves, in search of awakening and teachings and companions on the Way, offered themselves to the shelter of the trees. For 2500 years since, we have sought shelter, found it, and offered it to each other—in forests and cities and internment camps, in grand assemblies and between two people talking late by the fire. This too is the living heart of the Mahayana, and what a blessing it is.

In our sutra service we chant the refuge vows in Pali, the language of the first Buddhists, in their honor :

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami

When we take refuge, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are translated into everyday English, so that they can't remain abstract; they are clearly the intimate substance of our practice : the awakening of each one of us and all of us together, the Way we take up so that we might awaken, and our

companions on this challenging and ennobling journey.

As we contemplate throwing ourselves on the mercy of the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, it can raise feelings of vulnerability and doubt. That's part of making these vows. Let those feelings take refuge with you, invite them to take the time they need, walking in the shade of these great trees, to feel at home.

And remember that ultimately we shelter in each other. That's why we don't stop here, expecting the Three Treasures to do the heavy lifting, and why we move from the grandeur of the refuge vows to the nuts and bolts of the bodhisattva vows. This Way is a living, breathing thing we make

together, in the company of all those who tried before us, and with the thought of those who will try after us. And, always, in the presence of the vastness. Within that vastness there is a road, the old Chan teacher said, and, added the Spanish poet, we make that road by walking.

Maezumi Taizan expressed the refuge vows as "Be one with the Buddha. Be one with the Dharma. Be one with the Sangha." Later he simplified this to "Be Buddha. Be Dharma. Be Sangha." He used to say that all sixteen precepts boil down to the first, "Be Buddha" — the rest are just different ways of talking about the first.

THE THREE ROOT VOWS

- I vow to do no harm
- I vow to do good
- I vow to do good for others

Also called the Three Pure Vows, these precepts are the ones from which all others spring. (The bodhisattva vows can be seen as kindly advice for those of us who need our precepts spelled out a little more explicitly.)

There are a number of versions of the Root Vows. As they were originally formulated in the *Dhammapada*, the third vow is to purify the mind, but this was changed in the Mahayana to doing good for others, shifting the emphasis from individual enlightenment to the liberation of all beings.

With purity of heart, I vow to refrain from ignorance. With purity of heart, I vow to reveal beginner's mind. With purity of heart, I vow to live, and be lived, for the benefit of all beings.

Suzuki Shunryu

A version from the Japanese Rinzai school might serve as a commentary on our own :

- I vow to refrain from action that creates attachment.
- I vow to make every effort to live in awakening.
- I vow to live to benefit all beings.

From the perspective of a koan tradition like ours, the root vows can be seen as three interweaving aspects of our practice. Doing no harm involves discovering how we do harm, to ourselves and others. We then collaborate with the koans to deconstruct the compulsions and delusions behind that doing. This is a first expression of the second vow, to do good, which creates in our own heart-minds a territory of greater peace and freedom. But more ease for ourselves isn't enough; as soon as we can, we open our hands and let that good flow into the world, in what the old texts call the joyous effort of bodhisattva action. This is the actualization of our vow to do good for others.

The responses we get from the world loop back into our practice of the first two vows, refining our dismantling of the engines of harm and our understanding of the meaning of doing good. More and more we feel the unity of 'inside' and 'outside', of our inner lives and our lives in the world. We do less harm and more good in every direction simultaneously, as the three root vows reveal one unified way of being.



THE TEN BODHISATTVA VOWS



- 1 I vow not to kill
- 2 I vow not to steal
- 3 I vow not to misuse sex
- 4 I vow not to lie
- 5 I vow not to misuse drugs
- 6 I vow not to gossip maliciously
- 7 I vow not to praise myself at the expense of others
- 8 I vow not to be stingy
- 9 I vow not to indulge in anger
- 10 I vow not to disparage awakening, the way, or my companions

These vows are rooted in the experience that what's good for our relationships will also be good for us as individuals. Over time, any feeling of sacrifice or onerous effort we have when first taking them up tends to be replaced by the realization that mostly we feel better, and life is less complicated and more open, for paying attention to them.

It's not enough to know what buddha nature is; you must know what buddha nature does.

Peter Hershock

As we continue with practice and our awakening deepens over time, most people feel a sense of gratitude for what they experience. "How can I requite my debt to the Buddha's compassion?" was a way the ancients phrased it. Keeping company with these precepts is one of the most direct and meaningful ways we can express our

gratitude and give something back for what we've received.

Here's an example of how our tradition has evolved in recent times : These ten vows are also called the Grave Precepts, because in the past breaking one of them was irredeemable; you couldn't come back from such a transgression. Nowadays we see nothing as inherently irredeemable, and even the breaking of a precept and its aftermath can be part of living the vow in the deepest sense, if it brings us into a truer relationship with the vow. To transgress and to feel without evasion what that's like, what the consequences are, can be the beginning of genuinely *keeping* a precept, as opposed to just not breaking it.

It's important to consider what, for example, *not stealing* means not only in our relations with the world, but also when turned inward, toward our own heart, mind, and body. How do we rob ourselves and how might that too be seen as a violation of our vow?

It's also important to consider the vows' positive formulations, so that *not stealing* becomes something like *encouraging generosity*. Then we see how each vow is actually a powerful pair : in this case, the Protector of Not Stealing, who helps us put endless heartache to rest, and the Benefactor of Encouraging Generosity, who shows us how to live the great awakened way. Perhaps the Protector is

the one who grabs us by the collar as we're about to go over the cliff, and the Benefactor is the one who then turns our head to show us a more spacious landscape, one that was always there but momentarily out of our line of sight.



*From a statue of Guanyin
with a thousand hands, each
holding an implement with
which to help*

Studying the Vows & Writing your Own

In the months leading up to the refuge ceremony, we'll meet together to talk about these sixteen vows and the bodhisattva way. Most people find this a revelatory exploration, and you're encouraged to participate as often and as much as you possibly can. Each group makes up a kind of tribe whose connections are deep and longstanding. Sometimes people find that there's so much to talk about that they meet amongst themselves in addition to the scheduled times.

Most people also find that a lot happens underground during these months, and it's important to allow time and space for the quieter voices of our heart-mind to be heard. (That might be one of the points of rakusu-sewing.)

During the refuge ceremony you'll read your understandings of each of the sixteen vows. These should be brief, personal, and expressive of the particular rather than the grand and abstract; they don't have to be statements for the ages but should be about how you're exploring each precept in your life right now. Some people formulate these responses to the vows during our group study; others write them during the retreat leading up to the refuge ceremony.

TAKING THE VOWS DURING THE REFUGE CEREMONY

This is the form in which you'll speak your vows during the refuge ceremony, which includes commentaries by Bodhidharma and Dogen.

The Three Refuge Vows

I take refuge in awakening

Participants read individual vows

I take refuge in the way

Participants read individual vows

I take refuge in my companions

Participants read individual vows

The Three Root Vows

I vow not to do harm

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : This is the cave where the teachings of all the buddhas have their source

I vow to do good

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : This is the way of perfect awakening, and the path that everyone walks

I vow to do good for others

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : This is going beyond any distinction between ordinary and awakened people, freeing yourself and others

The Ten Bodhisattva Vows

I vow not to kill

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is eternal, not having thoughts of taking life is called the Vow of Not Killing.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : The buddha's seed grows when you don't take life. Pass on the buddha's life and do not kill.

I vow not to steal

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is unattainable, not having thoughts about gaining is called the Vow of Not Stealing.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : Just as they are, you and the things of the world are one. The gate to freedom is open.

I vow not to misuse sex

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is unadorned, not manufacturing a veneer of attachment is called the Vow of Not Misusing Sex.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : The Three Wheels of yourself, others, and your actions are pure. When

you desire nothing, you follow the buddha way.

I vow not to lie

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is inexplicable, not preaching a single word is called the Vow of Not Lying.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : The Dharma Wheel turns from the beginning. There is never too much or too little. Everything is wet with dew and the truth is ready to harvest.

I vow not to misuse drugs

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is naturally pure, not surrendering to delusions is called the Vow of Not Misusing Drugs.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : Drugs are not brought in yet. Don't bring them in. That is the great light.

I vow not to gossip maliciously

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is flawless, not dissecting mistakes is called the Vow of Not Gossiping Maliciously.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : In the buddha way, the path, the teaching, the realization, and the practice are one. Don't allow fault-finding. Don't allow careless talk.

I vow not to praise myself at the expense of others

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world of the Dharma of equals, not insisting on *I* and *you* is called the vow of not praising yourself at the expense of others.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : Buddhas and ancestors realize the vast sky and the great earth. When they appear in their noble body, their vastness has no inside or outside. When they appear in their true body, there is not even a bit of earth on the ground.

I vow not to be stingy

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is everywhere, not holding back resources is called the vow of not being stingy.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : A phrase, a verse: that is everything — each blade of grass. This way, this realization: that is all the buddhas and ancestors. From the beginning, there has been no stinginess at all.

I vow not to indulge in anger

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is selfless, not contriving reality for yourself is called the vow of not indulging in anger.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : Not attacking, not withdrawing, not real or unreal. There is an ocean of bright clouds. There is an ocean of solemn clouds.

I vow not to disparage awakening, the way, or my companions

Bodhidharma : The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is one, not holding dualistic concepts about ordinary beings and awakened beings is called the vow of not disparaging these Three Treasures.

Participants read individual vows

Dogen : Your expression of the actual body is the harbor and the weir. This is the most important thing in the world. Its power comes from the ocean of essential nature. It is beyond explanation — we just accept it with respect and gratitude.

What would it be like to find refuge
in yr own heart?

first thoughts ... deepest longings ... biggest fears ... the raw, the tender, the honest ...
the un hoped for hope ... the vows that are yrs and no one else's

THE RAKUSU

The rakusu represents the robes that Shakyamuni wore, and we wear it in memory of the Buddha's teachings. We also remember those whose commitment and courage carried our tradition through the centuries so that we can live it now : The rakusu was created during the devastating persecution of Buddhism in China during the ninth century CE. Monastics were forcibly returned to lay life, and some of them made rakusus, which could be easily hidden under ordinary clothes, as a miniature version of the robes they were no longer allowed to wear.

Sewing a rakusu takes some time, and that's what lets our hearts and psyches in. We have to stop; we have to not do all the other things we spend our time doing, and we sit and sew. In sitting and sewing, alone and in the company of our rakusu-making friends, we begin to hear the small voices often drowned out—voices from our

Shenshan was mending his robe with a needle and thread.

Dongshan asked him, "What are you doing?"

"Mending."

"How are you mending?"

"One stitch is like the next."

"We've been traveling together for twenty years now, and you can still say such a thing! How is this possible?"

Shenshan asked, "How do you mend?"

Dongshan said, "As if the whole earth were spewing flames."



heart-mind and from the world around us—and that wisdom and those blessings are stitched into our rakusus as well.

We make the rakusu out of lots of little pieces of fabric stitched together by hand. It's like our lives : We make a life from bits of this and that, and after awhile a pattern begins to emerge. In ancient times monastics would go to the town dump to pick up pieces of different fabric, dye them one color, and sew their robes from them. Out of many, one—and nothing rejected, nothing excluded.

Rakusus are usually made of dark colors—black, brown, grey, and navy blue—because they're colors of the dark earth from which we all come, of which we're made, and to which one day we'll return. There's a quilt-like pattern in the center of the rakusu which represents the rice fields that were the foundation of the Asian cultures in which Buddhism

developed. It connects us to all the careful cultivation of land and the Way that's gone on through the generations.

The rakusu is continuous all the way around except for one place, the ring. Traditionally this was made of bone, but now it's usually made of wood or plastic, though ceramic or other materials would work as well. This is the one place there's a gap, and resting in the gap is a circle that represents the infinite. So it's through the place that's not continuous, through the crack, that the light of the vastness emerges.

You sew a green pine needle on the square of fabric that sits at the nape of your neck. This represents the mountain and forest traditions out of which we come. It also represents all living things, long life, and, like pine needles that come in bundles, the many out of one.

The first time you put on your rakusu each day, place it, still folded, on top of your head, put your palms together, and recite the Verse of the Rakusu. Thereafter, you can just touch the rakusu to your forehead and put it on.



VERSE OF THE RAKUSU

This is the robe of freedom —
the bare field, the blessings.
I receive the Tathagata's
teaching
which wakes all beings.

A rakusu can be worn anywhere except, out of respect, into a bathroom; if you're working you can turn the rakusu around so that the pine twig is at your throat and the rakusu hangs down your back. We tend to wear the rakusu less often than in other Zen traditions, out of a sense of not wanting to make ourselves special in circumstances where there are others who have not yet taken the bodhisattva vows. Times we do wear the rakusu are in our daily, solitary meditation; when coming to work in the room; during meditation retreats; and for ceremonial occasions.

It's customary to put the rakusu on your cushion rather than on the floor, and not to stack anything on top of it. You should be able to spot clean or dry clean your rakusu, but the writing on the underside might not survive laundering. Most people also sew an envelope-style pouch to keep their rakusu in.

When you've finished sewing your rakusu you'll give it to your teacher, who puts it on her or his altar and lives with it for a while before writing on the white silk that will sit next to your heart. Your dharma name is there, in the formula 'Today So-and-so takes up the bodhisattva way', to remind you that this is not something you do once, but every day of your life. In accepting your rakusu back from your teacher, you're committing to this Way and this community. Welcome home.

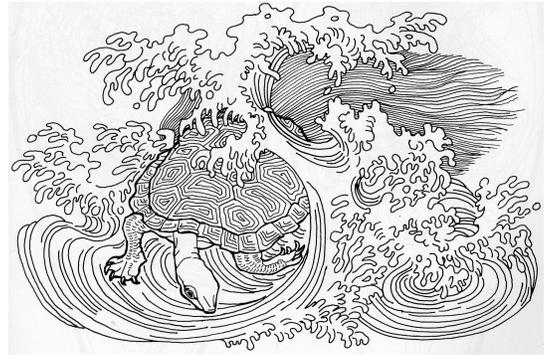
DHARMA NAMES

During the refuge ceremony you'll receive a dharma name, which is written on the back of the rakusu so that it rests next to your heart. You may ask your teacher to give you a name, but usually you and the teacher collaborate on it. It's meant to express your aspirations for your practice—how you'd like to grow with meditation and the Way. The traditional form is two or three words, one of them something from the natural world (for example, Moon Gate). Sometimes a group taking refuge together will choose to have part of their name in common as a kind of clan name (Moon Gate, River Gate, etc.). Everyone who takes refuge with Awakened Life also receives a common surname, which is Wayfarer. One way we describe the relationship between form and the vastness is to say that we each have our own first name, and we all share the same last name.

In the time leading up to the refuge ceremony, look for clues to your name in meditation and dreams, in sudden events or images that surprise and touch you. Especially notice things that spontaneously rise up and you suppress as weird or unacceptable. It might be something concrete like *weasel* or *radiant* that could go straight into a name. There we go : Radiant Weasel! Or a quality like *spaciousness* or *bravery* or *simplicity* for which we'd want to find an image.

In general, fancy and inflated names are thought less of, while the name that seems just right—natural, inevitable—is most appreciated. Speaking of natural, since we are in North America your name will be in the languages of this continent.

Don't strive for a name—let it come to you. Your job is to listen and welcome.



Whatever is newly born needs a name, and now that we are more and more welcomed by the silence, naming becomes our job—we have to notice, to bless with attention the beasts before us, both the rough and the smooth.

John Tarrant

first thoughts ... dream images ...
deepest vows ... visitations

A LITTLE HISTORY

You're taking refuge as part of **The Open Source**, a network of communities and individuals in the western United States engaged in koan zen practice together. Founded by Joan Sutherland, Roshi, the network includes Awakened Life in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Springs Mountain Sangha in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Wet Mountain Sangha in Pueblo, Colorado; Desert Rain Zen Group in Tucson, Arizona; and Crimson Gate Meditation Community in Oakland, California. We emphasize co-creation, the development of authentic American expressions of Zen, and the confluence of koans and creativity.

The Open Source is part of the Pacific Zen School, an innovative Western koan school with roots in East Asian traditions. Though our forms and practices are grounded in that inheritance, over the years we've evolved ways of practice that are more natural for many Americans.

Our liturgy was created by Joan Sutherland, John Tarrant, and the late

I feel emancipated just seeing the teaching conveyed in Roman letters rather than ideograms. Zen, which is fundamentally about the emancipation of all beings, is unfortunately sealed in some square box called Zen. In this enclosure the ancient dog in the koan 'Joshu's No' has been suffocating. In English this dog is so joyfully alive!

Letter from
Nakagawa Soen to
Senzaki Nyogen
(1938)

Rich Domingue, a Sorbonne-educated Cajun musician; it combines original material with traditional chants set to western rhythms and melodies.

Koan meditation developed in China over a thousand years ago, and the first koans were the records of encounters between early Chan teachers like the Great Horse Ancestor Ma and their students. They discovered that when people brought one of these stories into their meditation, they could have the same transforming experience that the koan describes. The koans were collected into books that are still used today, and they continue to stimulate these profound experiences in koan meditators.

In Japan, the Soto school of Zen taught silent, formless meditation and emphasized ceremony; the Rinzai school emphasized the transformation of consciousness through koan practice and the relationship between meditation and creativity. The koan tradition would periodically go dormant and then experience a revival. One great reviver was Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769), and most of the koan lines in Japan and the West today descend from him. Living in the country, he taught Zen to monastics and laypeople from all walks of life, and he and his circle organized the koans into a curriculum with accepted answers.

In mid-19th century Japan, Harada Daiun, who received transmission in both Rinzai and Soto lineages, attempted to bring the two schools together in a practice that emphasized lay rather than monastic life. This led in the next generation to Sanbo Kyodan, a hybrid Soto-Rinzai school that became particularly influential in transmitting koan Zen to the West. In the pioneering generation, Robert Aitken, Philip Kapleau, Maezumi Taizan, and Maurine Stuart all had some connection with Sanbo Kyodan.

The Pacific Zen School is a next-generation evolution of this line. It began with the founding of the Pacific Zen Institute in Northern California by John Tarrant and Joan Sutherland in the late



1990's. The house style honors the original Chinese koan way while emphasizing the integration of koan inquiry with contemporary lives, explores communal as well as individual koan practice and its relationship to creativity, highlights the contributions of women to the tradition, seeks to develop a body of Western koans, and in general is interested in what happens when you trust the koans themselves and the experiences of the

people working with them to reveal the way the tradition should evolve.



Joan Sutherland, Roshi, the founding teacher of Awakened Life and The Open Source, was born in 1954 in Los Angeles, California. She received a Master of Arts degree in East Asian Languages from UCLA, where she studied classical Chinese and Japanese, with a focus on Buddhism, Daoism, and poetry. She practiced in the Soto and Tibetan traditions, eventually finding a home in koan Zen.



She did her koan study with John Tarrant, Roshi, who gave her transmission in 1998, making her the first woman roshi in the Americas in her lineage. Together they founded the Pacific Zen Institute. In 2003 she left PZI to found The Open Source Project, and in 2007 she moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she founded Awakened Life. She is the author of *Acequias & Gates : Miscellaneous Koans and Miscellaneous Writings on Koans*. Her writing has also appeared frequently in *Lion's Roar* (previously *Shambhala Sun*) and *Buddhadharma*. In addition to her teaching in Open Source communities, she has been invited to teach at major institutions around the country.

In 2014 Joan Sutherland retired from teaching, eventually returning to Northern California. A nonprofit organization, Cloud Dragon : The Joan Sutherland Dharma Works, was formed to support the dissemination of her work. Awakened Life continues to meet in Santa Fe, and the other Open Source communities thrive in their various homes.

Sarah Bender, Sensei is the resident teacher for Springs Mountain Sangha in Colorado Springs, CO. She was authorized to teach by Sutherland, Roshi in 2006. From 2007 to 2013 she also served as Cadet Chapel Buddhist Program Leader for the United States Air Force Academy and leads occasional retreats for Wet Mountain Sangha in Pueblo, CO. She is a learning disability specialist in private practice.



Andrew Palmer, Sensei began teaching in February 2011. In addition to working with Springs Mountain Sangha, Andrew is a holding teacher for Wet Mountain Sangha in Pueblo, and in October 2013 began serving as the Buddhist Program Leader for the United States Air Force Academy Cadet



Chapel. Andrew lives in Colorado Springs with his wife and son.

Tenney Nathanson, Sensei is the resident teacher for Desert Rain Zen Group in Tucson, Arizona, authorized to teach in March 2012. He is a poet and a scholar of American poetry, teaching in the University of Arizona English Department and helping to lead the arts collective POG.



Megan Rundel, Sensei leads the Crimson Gate Meditation Community in Oakland, California. She has practiced koan Zen for over twenty years and has been a student of Joan Sutherland since 1996. She was authorized to teach in March 2015. Megan is also a psychologist and psychoanalyst.



BODHISATTVA'S VOW Torei Enji

When I look deeply
into the real form of the universe,
everything reveals the mysterious truth of
the Tathagata.
This truth never fails:
in every moment and every place
things can't help but shine with this light.
Realizing this, our ancestors gave reverent
care
to animals, birds, and all beings.
Realizing this, we ourselves know that our
daily food,
clothing and shelter are the warm body and
beating heart of the Buddha.
How can we be ungrateful to anyone or
anything?
Even though someone may be a fool,
we can be compassionate.
If someone turns against us,
speaking ill of us and treating us bitterly,
it's best to bow down:
this is the Buddha appearing to us,
finding ways to free us from our own
attachments—
the very ones that have made us suffer
again and again and again.
Now on each flash of thought
a lotus flower blooms,
and on each flower, a Buddha.

The light of the Tathagata
appears before us, soaking into our feet.
May we share this mind with all beings
so that we and the world together
may grow in wisdom.



Torei Enji (18th century) was the dharma successor of the great Japanese koan innovator Hakuin. In this poem, Torei expresses the koan Zen view that morality is inextricably linked with realization, ethics with meditation. It's because we see that "things can't help but shine with that light" that we want to "give reverent care" and "share this mind with all beings", so that we might grow in wisdom together. Even when things are really difficult, we're motivated by the poignancy and the radiance of life.



4



6

ASIAN

1

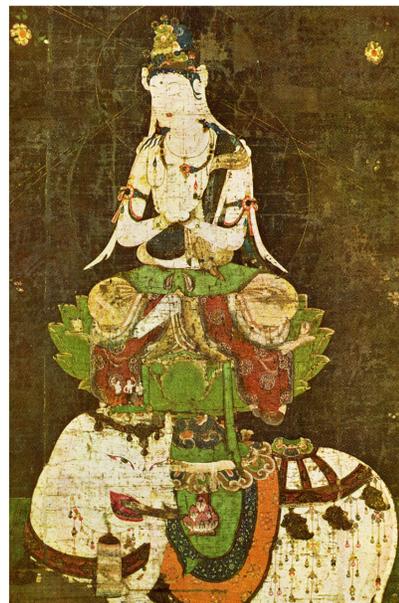
3

BODHISATTVAS



2

5



1 Earth Treasure Bodhisattva (*Skt* Kshitigarbha; *Ch* Dizang; *Jap* Jizo), protector of children, travelers, & the dead 2 & 3 Bodhisattvas of Compassion (2 *Skt* Avalokiteshvara / 3 *Ch* Guanyin; *Jap* Kannon or Kanzeon) 4 Bodhisattva of Wisdom, holding the sword that cuts through delusions (*Skt* Manjushri; *Ch* Wenshu; *Jap* Monju) 5 Bodhisattva of Action who best understands the world, riding an elephant (*Skt* Samantabhadra; *Ch* Puxian; *Jap* Fugen) 6 The Buddha to Come, protecting the Dharma while waiting in heaven (*Skt* Maitreya; *Ch* Budai; *Jap* Hotei)

GOOD READING

Publications by Pacific Zen School Teachers

Joan Sutherland, *Acequias e Gates : Miscellaneous Koans and Miscellaneous Writings on Koans*
Our Miscellaneous Koans collection, with essays on the koan way

Articles archived online at joansutherlanddharmaworks.org

John Tarrant, *Bring Me the Rhinoceros: And Other Zen Koans to Save Your Life* (Shambhala, 2008)
and *The Light Inside the Dark: Zen, Soul, and the Spiritual Life* (HarperCollins, 1998)

Susan Murphy, *Upside-Down Zen: Finding the Marvelous in the Ordinary*

Looking Deeper into the Tradition

Peter Hershock, *Chan Buddhism*
A brilliant survey of Chinese Chan and the origins of the koan tradition

Andy Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and their Teachings*
The old teachers in their own words, a treasure trove of stories and koans

Stephen Addiss, *Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*
A great survey, with beautiful and clear translations and a fine introduction to the tradition by Paula Arai

Isshu Miura & Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan e Koan Study in Rinzai Zen*
The best book on Rinzai Zen ever published—made so by Ruth Fuller's prodigious and amazing footnotes

Steven Heine, *Opening a Mountain: Koans of the Zen Masters*
Sound and imaginative scholarship, providing a good counterpoint to practice engagement with koans

Martine Batchelor, *Principles of Zen*
An excellent introduction to Zen practice you can slip into your back pocket, covering everything from sitting postures to fundamental philosophy, written by a longtime and sophisticated practitioner

Florence Caplow and Susan Moon, *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women*

Grace Schireson, *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*

Paula Arai, *Bringing Zen Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Women's Rituals*
A moving study of contemporary women and the 'domestic zen' they've created – living, healing Dharma

Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to its History and Teachings*
An engaging exploration weaving together history, legend, and doctrine; it gives the reader the feeling of what it's like to be inside these traditions, as well as what it's like to consider them thoughtfully from outside

KOAN COLLECTIONS

Zenkei Shibayama, *The Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*

Koun Yamada, *Gateless Gate*

Robert Aitken, *The Gateless Barrier*

All three of the above are translations of the Chinese collection *Wumenguan* (Japanese *Mumonkan*); they include contemporary commentaries on each koan, which make them a good place to begin exploring the tradition. If you had to pick one, Shibayama would be it.

Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary, trans. *The Blue Cliff Record*

The Chinese *Biyān Lu* (*Hekigan Roku*), associated with the Linji (Rinzai) school. It was compiled in the 11th century by Xuedou, who added his own verses and remarks. In the 12th century, Yuanwu added introductions and commentaries. Dense, poetic, and sometimes perplexing, it's considered by many to be the richest and most challenging koan collection.

Thomas Cleary, *Book of Serenity: One Hundred Zen Dialogues*

The Chinese *Congrong Lu* (*Shoyo Roku*), associated with the Caodong (Soto) school, compiled in the 12th century and including introductions, commentaries, and verses for each koan from that time

Gerry Shishin Wick, *The Book of Equanimity: Illuminating Classic Zen Koans*

Another version of the *Shoyo Roku*, based on Maezumi Taizan's translations, with commentaries by Shishin Wick

Francis H. Cook, trans. *The Record of Transmitting the Light*

A translation of the Japanese *Denko Roku*, written by Keizan Jokin in a moving and lyrical style in the early 14th century; it presents a legendary Zen lineage from Shakyamuni through Dogen, telling the enlightenment story of each ancestor in the form of a koan, with added biographical material and commentary.

Thomas Kirchner, trans. *Entangling Vines: Zen Koans of the Shumon Kattoshu*

Almost 300 koans, beautifully translated, with helpful notes and the original Chinese

Trevor Leggett, *Samurai Zen: The Warrior Koans*

A collection of Japanese koans from the Kamakura era (13th century), including traditional poems and checking questions; one of the best sources for koans involving women

Victor Sogen Hori, *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Koan Practice*

The most extensive collection of capping phrases, brief writings or quotes linked to koans, used in formal study; includes a detailed description of contemporary koan practice in Japan

GLOSSARY

As primarily English speakers, we use English words in our practice whenever possible; we meet for retreats, not sesshin, and we do work in the room rather than dokusan (and trust me, you're glad about that). A friend of mine spoke of growing up in a household where his parents switched to Yiddish whenever they had something really interesting to talk about. When he was young, my friend thought that English was the language of children and the ordinary, while Yiddish was the language of adults and the special ... You get the point. If buddha nature really does pervade the universe, it's gotta be expressed in the languages of this continent, too. Nonetheless, there are some words from Sanskrit, Japanese, etc. that are now loan words in English, and you'll still run into lots of other Asian words in Buddhist literature and conversation, so here's a glossary to help.

Anuttara samyak sambodhi *The truth, reachable by meditation*

Bodhi Awakening ~ The wisdom of a buddha

Bodhichitta Literally, 'awakening heart-mind' ~ The aspiration to attain buddhahood for the sake of all beings

Bodhidharma Brought Dhyana/Chan/Zen from India to China in 6th century CE ~ Why did Bodhidharma come from the West? is a common Zen question

Bodhisattva Literally, 'awakening being', one who makes a conscious vow to wake up in order to work for the liberation of all beings ~ It is the ideal of the Mahayana

Buddha Awakened One, a title of the historical person Shakyamuni Gautama after he was enlightened 2,500 years ago in Northern India

Buddha-dharma Teachings of the Buddha ~ more generally, the manifestation of true nature in all phenomena

Buddha nature Our essential nature ~ The place in each sentient being that connects with the vastness

Chan Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit *dhyana*, meaning meditation, and the umbrella name for a whole range of Chinese schools that emphasized meditation practice ~ The origin of the koan tradition ~ Pronounced *Zen* in Japanese

Dharani A magical spell

Dharma Has three levels of meaning : teachings, particularly Buddhist ones; a principle or law in the sense of the way things are, akin to the Tao; and individual phenomena subject to the law of cause and effect

Dojo Literally, hall of the way, used to refer to both meditation and martial arts training halls

Dokusan Literally 'going alone to the teacher', term for the formal, intimate meeting between teacher and student, associated with the Soto school

Hara Center in the lower abdomen three finger-widths below the navel that is the locus of spiritual power and the focus of breath in Chan/Zen meditation ~ Also called *tanden* or *tantian*

Hinayana Literally, 'small vehicle' ~ A pejorative term referring to the earliest Buddhist teachings that predate the Mahayana, and to contemporary traditions based on those teachings ~ More properly referred to as Theravada, the Way of the Elders ~ The traditions of South Asia are mostly Theravadan, as is Vipassana & Insight Meditation in the West

Gatha A verse or prayer

Heart-mind In Chinese and Japanese, the same character is used to mean both 'heart' and 'mind,' and they are perceived as a unity

Jukai Literally, 'to give or receive the precepts' ~ The Japanese name for the Ceremony of Taking Refuge in the Bodhisattva Way, also known as lay ordination

Kalpa An extremely long time, an aeon of millions of years

Karuna Compassion

Katsu or **Kwatz** A Rinzai shout, which demonstrates the enlightenment of the shouter

Kensho Literally 'seeing into one's true nature' ~ Realization in Rinzai Zen

Kinhin Literally, 'sutra walk' ~ Walking meditation

Koan Chinese *gongan*, literally 'public case' ~ A story, quote, or phrase taken into meditation, to which one responds in an intuitive, nondualistic way

Mahasattva Literally, 'great being' ~ A bodhisattva who could assume buddhahood but defers nirvana in order to remain in the world and liberate others, and more generally a title of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and enlightened beings of all kinds

Mahayana Literally, 'great vehicle' ~ A second wave of Buddhist thought that began about 500 years after Shakyamuni's death, introducing the bodhisattva ideal ~ The traditions of East and Central Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Mongolia, etc.) and their successors in the West are Mahayana

Maitreya The buddha of the next age, the buddha to come ~ A loving presence, s/he waits in Tushita Heaven, promoting and protecting the Dharma

Mantra A sacred sound or phrase that is repeated because of its meaning or as a form of concentration

Metta Lovingkindness

Nirvana Literally, 'extinction' ~ In the Mahayana it refers to extinction of dualistic views,

leading to a direct experience of the identity of relative and absolute

Prajna A particular kind of wisdom, insight into the true nature of things ~ Penetrating clarity

Prajna paramita Usually translated as 'highest perfect wisdom'

Pure Land An afterlife paradise, particularly for devotees of Amitabha (Amida) Buddha

Rinzai Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese teacher Linji, who is credited as the founder of the koan school in Chan ~ The school of Zen he founded, now one of 2 main schools of Zen

Roshi Japanese pronunciation of Chinese Laoshi, 'old teacher' ~ Traditionally a title of respect that in the West has come to mean a Zen teacher who has received transmission

Samadhi States of deep, one-pointed concentration during meditation

Samsara The cycle of birth and death ~ The phenomenal world

Sangha Community, traditionally the monastic community around the Buddha, then the community of both monastics and laypeople, now sometimes community including all sentient beings

Sanzen Literally 'going to meet Zen', a term for the formal, intimate meeting between teacher and student, associated with the Rinzai school

Satori Synonym for *kensho* (see)

Sensei A title of respect for a teacher of any discipline that in the West has come to mean a Zen teacher who has not yet received transmission

Sesshin Japanese term for a traditional Zen meditation retreat, meaning to touch or welcome the heart-mind

Shakyamuni Buddha Literally Sage of the Shakyas ~ The historical buddha of our age, who lived and taught in Northern India about 2,500 years ago

Shunyata Sanskrit for the vastness, often translated as emptiness ~ Also, the empty nature of everything, meaning that things are interdependent and empty of independent nature

Soto The other major Zen school (see Rinzai), it emphasizes *shikan taza* (just sitting) and ceremony

Sutra Scripture purported to have been spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha himself, though many were written after his death and attributed to him

Tathagata 'Thus come' or 'Thus gone,' a title of the Buddha ~ By extension, the thusness or suchness of things

Theravada The Way of the Elders, sometimes called the Hinayana (see)

Transmission When a roshi recognizes someone else as a roshi, indicating the unity of their minds ~ According to Zen mythology, there is a direct

mind-to-mind chain of transmission from Shakyamuni Buddha to the present

Tripitaka The Buddhist canon of philosophical and religious literature

Upaya Skillful means, how you actualize wisdom and compassion in the world

Vajrayana Literally, the adamantite or diamond vehicle ~ Tibetan Buddhism, the third vehicle of Buddhism, which synthesizes aspects of Theravada, Mahayana, and the indigenous Bon religion of Tibet

Zazen Seated meditation

Zen Japanese pronunciation of Chinese *chan*, which was itself a transliteration of the Sanskrit *dhyana*, meaning meditation ~ The two major schools of Zen in Japan and the West are Rinzai and Soto

Zendo Meditation hall

