

Sermons

About *Doji* (Being one with all things) by Rev. Dosho Saikawa

To understand *doji* (being one with all things), which is explained in "Four Ways a Bodhisattva Acts to Benefit Human Beings" (*Bodaisatta Shishobo* in Zen Master Dogen's *Shobogenzo*), we must first talk about the foundation of the Buddha Way. An important part of the framework of aims and basic attitudes of the Buddha Way is the idea of buddhas and bodhisattvas working to accomplish the aims and realization of the Buddha Way.

The aim of the Buddha Way is the salvation of all sentient beings on the basis of the spirit of compassion. Its actual activity is expressed as *bakku yoraku* - removing human beings' suffering and offering tranquility, joy and serenity. This activity leads to peace in the world by offering tranquility and ease to each person's heart. And it is buddhas and bodhisattvas who are working for that purpose. Taking note of bodhisattvas' activity, "Four Ways a Bodhisattva Acts to Benefit Human Beings" presents the point of view of this activity.

Those who aspire to the Buddha Way, using the actions and aims of buddhas and bodhisattvas as a model and a goal, should make a wholehearted effort to accomplish The Four Vows (*Shiguseiganmon*):

1. to save all sentient beings, however innumerable they are
2. to extinguish delusions, however inexhaustible they are
3. to master the dharma teachings, however immeasurable they are
4. to follow the Buddha Way, however endless it is

Like the Four Vows, the *shishobo* should be seen as a way of practice, an act of bodhisattvas, including ourselves.

Those who work to accomplish such a big aim are buddhas and bodhisattvas, and they are also we ourselves who try to follow their example. If we consider this aim from another point of view, it means to share Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment with all beings. This point of view is described in the first chapter of *Denkoroku*, written by Zen Master Keizan. It is to encourage each person to actually attain enlightenment as his/her own experience, and to live daily life with awakening and with gratitude for having attained it. Because this actually happens, the Buddha Way is a way of practice and the treasure of humankind.

Let's look at the first chapter of *Denkoroku* to understand this in detail. This chapter clearly describes the Buddha's first words after his enlightenment ("The Lion's Roar of Buddha"): "Shakyamuni Buddha saw the morning star, was enlightened and said 'I and all sentient beings simultaneously realized the way.'" In that moment, the main essence of Buddha's enlightenment expressed in those words was established as Buddha's wish that every person could experience "I and all sentient beings simultaneously realized the way." And, to our gratitude, Buddha's missionary activity thus began, and thus we also have the opportunity to receive this grace. In short, saving all beings by experiencing becoming a buddha as Shakyamuni Buddha did is the great vow of buddhas and bodhisattvas as is stated in the first of The Four Vows, "However innumerable they are, I vow to save all beings."

To wish that every person taste this simultaneous realization means to wish that everyone will embody "all sentient beings are innately realized Buddha." In our school, Soto Zen, we strongly encourage people to attain this through *shikantaza* (just sitting). Zen Master Dogen explains it as follows in *Shobogenzo Bendowa*, "Attain the casting off of your body and mind by just sitting." So, as I said before, *Shishobo* (Four Ways to Guide Sentient Beings), especially *doji*, is a way to practice the bodhisattva's vow to have people taste "all beings are innately realized Buddha" and to create a peaceful world.

Expressing its meaning from still another point of view, *doji* is to save people through awakening them to the *Sanbo-in* (Three Seals of Dharma) as a basis of the Buddha Way. These three are *shogyo mujo* (all conditioned things change), *shoho muga* (there is no permanent self) and *nehan jakujo* (nirvana is tranquility).

Needless to say, this world consists of duality and as such, there are good and bad, superior and inferior, gain and loss, life and death, delusion and enlightenment. Consequently, in this world there clearly exists an ideal and a path towards it. However, when we really grasp *doji*, we realize that there is no duality. For this reason, Buddha vowed to help sentient beings experience "I and

all sentient beings simultaneously realized the way," and he dedicated the rest of his life solely to their salvation. Also, with this purpose in mind, Buddha transmitted the way of practice called zazen (although there are differences in the content of zazen among various traditions like the Theravadin and the Tibetan).

In addition, many scriptures along with other ways of practice were transmitted through the generations. The scriptures are divided into *kyo* (經 - sutras), *ritsu* (律 - precepts) and *ron* (論 - philosophy), but they are all methods, skillful means, with the primary aim of saving people.

For this reason, the four ways of *Shishobo* - giving (布施- *fuse*), kind words (愛語- *aigo*), benevolence (利行- *rigyo*) and oneness (同事- *doji*) - are not to be investigated just logically or philosophically. Above all, they should be seen as a way to save people by transmitting the great tranquility that Buddha attained through awakening to the self.

As I wrote earlier, Buddha's teaching, the Buddha Way, is said to be the treasure of humankind because its major aim is the salvation of people. It is also because the teaching and practice of the Buddha Way have the power to save them.

Well, these preparatory remarks lay the foundation so that I can write about *doji*, the subject of this text. But as one who is involved in propagating the Buddha Way, I cannot limit myself to just explaining it. An explanation of the word or its academic interpretation would be more appropriate for a Buddhist scholar. The task of missionaries such as myself is to lead people to tranquility through their teaching, so I want to show the meaning of *doji* from this viewpoint.

Let's begin with the four ways of the *Shishobo*. The first way is giving. If people enjoy treasure, give it to them; if they enjoy dharma, give them dharma. Through this giving, affinity arises and the receiver may begin to understand and receive the Buddha Way. The second way is kind words. Through offering good words, healing words, an affinity arises and the recipients may be willing to receive the Way. The third way is benevolence. If we benefit people with good actions of body, speech and intention, an affinity will arise and they may be willing to receive the Way. The fourth way is *doji*. We vary our appearance and actions according to the people we are with. This attitude will cause affinity and it may make them receive the Buddha Way.

These are the basic ways of saving others, but let's consider Zen Master Dogen's words. There is a sutra called *Shushogi* which is composed of phrases taken from Zen Master Dogen's writing. In its fourth chapter, entitled "Making the Vow to Benefit Beings" (*Hotsugan Risho*) there are words from the *Bodaisatta Shishobo*, listing giving, kind words, benevolence and *doji* as its contents and saying "all these are the vows of a bodhisattva to accomplish." This shows clearly that this is the actual way of bodhisattvas working towards the salvation of people.

As we read and think deeply about *Shishobo*, we will notice that the Buddha Way is summarized in *doji*. This means that the first way, giving, the second way, kind words and the third way, benevolence, all depend upon *doji* as their foundation.

The fourth chapter of *Shushogi* says that Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva in his vows and actions first becomes one with those he wants to save, and then pulls them towards him and saves them. This means that, only when a bodhisattva who vows to save people and the people to be saved become one, can salvation through giving, kind words, benevolence or *doji* really happen. So, there are four divisions but they stand for one thing.

The fact that all become one thing comes from the basic fact that Buddha and beings are one, as Shakyamuni Buddha experienced in his enlightenment. Buddha is not only one with all beings, but is one with the earth as well. Also, Buddha is one with the universe, heaven and earth – this is the content of enlightenment. Everything altogether is one life. For us also, through experiencing this oneness as did Shakyamuni Buddha, the problems of life-death, gain-loss, good-bad, superior-inferior that disturbed us just disappear. Thus the Buddha Way demonstrates that we are liberated from all these sufferings.

As you can see, *doji*, oneness, basically exists from the beginning. For this reason, it is not a matter of trying to become one, but it is the nature of all sentient beings and the earth that from the very beginning cannot separate from *doji*. It is very clear that the chief aim of the Buddha Way is to provoke the awakening that we always have been one with Buddha, one with heaven and earth.

Now, in order for us to understand better, let's look at the expression *shobutsu ichinyo* (living beings and the Buddha are one) which is a Zen term very close to the spirit of *doji*. This means that all beings and the Buddha are inseparably one body. They are

simply one and not different from each other. But, first of all, we need to grasp concretely, through practice, that there is no opposition among things.

Generally, it is difficult for most people to free themselves from the feeling that life is the opposite of death, delusion is the opposite of enlightenment. One receives life, but to lose this life means death, and it is difficult to get free from attachment to this life. We also need to grasp clearly that there are no gain and loss. Human consciousness creates these oppositions in trying to solve problems and understand the world with thought. To do this task, it needs concepts of opposites - dualism. So it is very important to understand that it is the brain that is using the dual concepts as its tools. There is no opposition from the very beginning, and delusion creates duality through the action of the brain. That being so, Zen Master Dogen encourages us, through practice, to experience with our body that we were really always one, thus overcoming delusion.

"To learn the Buddha Way is to learn oneself. To learn oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to be realized by all things. To be realized by all things is to cast off the body and mind of self and others." Thus Zen Master Dogen wrote in *Shobogenzo Genjokoan*. This is the basis of the Buddha Way. This means that teaching that there is no self and that we are one with all beings is our first duty as Buddhists.

One of the sutras we use frequently is the "Heart Sutra", and therein is written "...clearly saw that all five aggregates are empty and thus relieved all suffering." In these lines, it appears that by perceiving completely that there is no such entity as that called "self" - neither in body nor in mind - Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva was released and reached real tranquility.

Even if we think in our usual dualistic way, we can know we live connected to the whole world. Alas, we cannot avoid the fact that to be alive means to be constantly related to the whole. For this reason, caring for ourselves and wishing for our own happiness are not things we can do without caring for everything outside ourselves. It is said that one of Buddha's teachings is the practice of compassion, but this compassion should be based on our experience that everything is connected – ourselves and the things that we see as not ourselves - shown concretely through practice.

So, *doji* is a teaching that instructs us to care about others, including the natural world, as if they were ourselves. In the practice of the teaching that we are one (*doji*) we Buddhists should embody sentiment and action that demonstrate that people as well as the environment are also ourselves.

Furthermore, in order to leave a better future for coming generations, we should want to practice and make efforts day after day. I tell myself to do so every day.

Since *doji* is profoundly related to the basic teaching of the Buddha Way, I appreciate your patience with such a long explanation. As I finish, I would like to ask this of you. Please investigate the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism expressed as "together with all beings," quoted in the Three Refuges Prayer (*Sankiraimon*) and *doji*.