

Instructions on the Precepts (Kyojukaimon) by Eihei Dōgen Zenji

‘The Great Precepts of the Buddha are maintained carefully by the Buddhas. Buddhas give them to Buddhas; teachers transmit them to teachers. Receiving the precepts goes beyond the three times; realization continues unceasingly from ancient times to the present. Our Great Master Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted the precepts to Mahakashyapa, and Mahakashyapa transmitted them to Ananda. Thus they have been transmitted generation after generation.’

Before continuing on to hear Dōgen Zenji’s instructions on the Bodhisattva Precepts, let us recite the Gatha of Atonement:

*All evil karma ever committed by me since of old,
On account of my beginningless greed, anger and ignorance,
Born of my body, mouth, and thought,
Now I atone for it all.*

The Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha)

‘The Three Treasures have three merits and virtues called the One Body Three Treasures, the Realized Three Treasures, and the Maintained Three Treasures.

Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi is called the Buddha Treasure. Being pure and genuine apart from dust is the Dharma Treasure. The virtues and merits of harmony are the Sangha Treasure. These are the One Body Three Treasures.

To realize and actualize the Bodhi is called the Buddha Treasure of the Realized Three Treasures. The realization of the Buddha is the Dharma Treasure. To penetrate into the Buddha-Dharma is the Sangha Treasure. These are the Realized Three Treasures.

Guiding the heavens and guiding the people; sometimes appearing in the vast emptiness and sometimes appearing in the dust is the Buddha Treasure of the Maintained Three Treasures. Sometimes revolving in the leaves and sometimes revolving in the oceanic storage; guiding inanimate things and guiding animate beings is the Dharma Treasure. Freed from all suffering and liberated from the House of the Three Worlds is the Sangha Treasure.

When one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the Great Precepts of all Buddhas are obtained. Make Enlightenment and Compassion your teachers, and do not follow misleading ways.

The Three Pure Precepts

First, Ceasing from Evil

This is the abiding place of laws and rules of all Buddhas; this is the very source of laws and rules of all Buddhas.

Second, Doing Good

This is the Dharma of Samyak Sambodhi; this is the Way of all beings.

Third, Doing Good for Others

This is to transcend the profane and to be beyond the holy; this is to liberate oneself and others.

These are called the Three Pure Precepts.

The Ten Grave Precepts

First, Non-Killing

Life is non-killing. The seed of the Buddha grows continuously. Maintain the wisdom-life of the Buddha and do not kill life.

Second, Non-Stealing

The mind and the externals are just as thus. The gate of liberation has opened.

Third, Not Being Greedy

The Three Wheels – body, mouth, and consciousness (or body, speech, and mind) – are pure and clean. Nothing is desired; go the same way with the Buddhas.

Fourth, Not Telling Lies

The Dharma Wheel unceasingly turns, and there is neither excess nor lack. Sweet dews permeate; gain the essence and gain the truth.

Fifth, Not Being Ignorant

It has never been; don't be defiled. It is indeed the Great Clarity.

Sixth, Not Talking about Others' Errors and Faults

In the midst of the Buddha-dharma, we are the same Way, the same Dharma, the same realization, the same practice. Do not talk about others' errors and faults. Do not destroy the Way.

Seventh, Not Elevating Oneself by Blaming Others

Buddhas and teachers realized absolute emptiness and realized the great earth. When the great body is manifested, there is neither outside nor inside in emptiness. When the Dharma-body is manifested, there is not even a single square inch of soil on the earth.

Eighth, Not Being Stingy

One phrase, one verse, ten thousand forms, one hundred grasses; one Dharma, one realization, all Buddhas, all teachers. Since the beginning, there has never been being stingy.

Ninth, Not Being Angry

It is not regress, it is not advance; it is not real, it is not unreal. There is illumined cloud ocean; there is ornamented cloud ocean.

Tenth, Not Speaking Ill of the Three Treasures

Expounding the Dharma with the body is a harbor and a fish pool. The virtues return to the ocean of reality. You should not comment on them. Just hold them and serve them.

These are called the Ten Grave Precepts'.