


Songs  
for the  
True Dharma Eye

*Verse Comments  
on Dogen's Shobogenzo*

Taigen Dan Leighton

Foreword by Jane Hirshfield





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# Songs for the True Dharma Eye



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Verse Comments  
on Dogen's Shoboggenzo

Taigen Shizan Dan Leighton  
Foreword by Jane Hirshfield

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## FOREWORD

The poems in this volume began with an assignment: Enter Eihei Dogen's *Shobogenzo*, in part, by writing poems responding to each of its fascicles. The result, both commentary and reply, is a dialogue in which two worlds, two minds, and all minds, seamlessly meet.

To write a poem is to seek a comprehension unobtainable in any other way. Poetry's way of knowing is not seated in any assignable quadrant of mind, but in the whole of awareness. A good poem is intelligent, yes, but not confinable to logic or reason. It is musical, but its music is not purely a matter of sounds' effects on the sense-swayed self. Its words, while informed by observation, experience, reading, knowable fact, cannot rest in retrospective discovery. It lives by emotion, yet is not caught in the feelings' initial, instinctual grip. Rather, a poem uses each of these powers to transcend its own first knowledge, in order to see a way toward something new.

Poetry alchemizes whatever it looks at, by passing it through the full, 360 degree array of our human capacities. Without such capacious permeability, there can be no poem, only a shell resembling poetry's living shape. Within it, we can not only grasp, but also say, what would other-

wise be beyond imagination, beyond expressive reach. Poetry increases our human embrace of reality.

Taigen Shizan, Dan Leighton—whom I knew and practiced with at San Francisco Zen Center many years ago—is a Soto priest, a teacher of Dharma, and a true scholar. His profound understanding of Dogen's teachings is everywhere present in these verse-comments on a work that is itself one of the world's great literary achievements, as well as a central record of actualized wisdom. Present equally in these poems is a wonderful buoyancy--humor, mind-suppleness, cultural sampling, at least one atrocious pun, a continual refreshing of vision.

Zen, however austere it may at times appear from the outside, is not a practice of purity, rigidity, or strictness. Like poetry, Zen asks us only one thing: to become permeable and awake to the full range of our lives. Zen feeds on the actual, or it withers. It is pungent with more than incense. To read these brief poems (and they are, genuinely, *poems*: many can be read independently, without further reference to Dogen's work) is to feel the energies and muscularity of genuine practice. "Responses," yes; but they are also the thing itself, speaking, as always, with its original voice, which is always, also, local. The mind of Taigen's dharma songs scampers along here in the shape of a lively, small mouse attached by long, black tail--to a computer.

Connected to Dogen as well; to Shakyamuni; to all the sentient beings of the earth's large sangha, including, of course, you, its readers and path-companions, who hold this book now in your hands.

—Jane Hirshfield



## INTRODUCTION

The verses in *Songs for the True Dharma Eye* are responses to the essays in Zen Master Dogen's celebrated *Shobogenzo* [True Dharma Eye Treasury], one of his two major works. These verse comments were written from 1993 to 1997 as part of an exercise done by myself and other priest disciples of Tenshin Reb Anderson Roshi, Senior Dharma Teacher and former abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center. We all wrote poems on succeeding essays in *Shobogenzo*, and read the poems aloud at meetings held weekly (when schedules permitted) at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center.

Eihei Dogen (1200-1253) is considered the founder of the Japanese Soto branch of Zen Buddhism. Dogen's writings are profound and subtle masterpieces of spiritual literature, sometimes deeply philosophical and linguistically intricate, sometimes poetic, paradoxical, and intensely evocative. They have been rendered in a number of translations and received commentaries in English during the past

few decades, as Western practice centers and interest in Zen have spread. Historically, the *Shobogenzo*, with its essays on various Zen themes and sayings, was published by Dogen's later successors in various editions with varying numbers of essays. These poems are based on the largest inclusive edition, which features ninety-five essays arranged roughly chronologically, although about seventy-five percent of these were written in the short period between 1240 and 1245.

It is a venerable Zen tradition to write verse comments on old Zen stories or koans, a tradition sometimes carried on by Soto commentators on Dogen's essays. Dogen himself wrote prose and verse comments about old koans and about other masters' verse comments. Much of the voluminous literature of Zen consists of layers of commentaries upon commentaries. Dogen's writings are unique, however, in their range, diversity, and the thoroughness with which he expresses his teaching and carefully elaborates not only its meaning but also attempts to dispel many possible misunderstandings.

One traditional form of Zen verse comment consists of four lines. I attempted to confine these verses to such a four-line form, although at times I have increased the lines. In a couple of cases in later verses I abandoned the four line limitation altogether. I have in some cases added titles for my own poems, which appear in the text italicized after the titles of Dogen's essays, given in Japanese and English. Notes clarifying points in some of the verses appear at the end of all the poems.

My intention in all the verses was to respond to the essence of what Dogen was saying in his essays. Sometimes this meant trying to distill the main point, sometimes responding to what seemed most provocative or impactful in each essay, always with the aspiration to somehow join in conversation with the ancestral master, relating to the themes engaged by Dogen. These poems all relate to specific material in Dogen's *Shobogenzo* essays, so reading of those essays will clarify the meaning and context of my verses. Although these are occasional verses, occasioned by each of Dogen's essays, it is hoped that these poems may stand on their own to express

something of the heart of Dogen's teachings from a modern perspective, even for readers who have not yet read Dogen. Of course, it would be edifying if these modest verses were in some small way to encourage readers to face the challenge and joys of Dogen's own writings.

---

My expansion from the four-line form is especially apparent for my response to Dogen's essay, "The Thirty-seven Elements of Enlightenment." This essay is one of a small group of striking pieces by Dogen that were delivered as talks to his monk disciples in the period soon after he established the monastery Eiheiiji in the remote northern mountains, after he left the cultural center of Kyoto in 1243. A few are highly critical, sometimes with startlingly harsh language, of earlier figures in Buddhist or Zen historical lore. These were probably Dogen's attempts to respond to and dispel particular attachments and misconceptions of his disciples as they settled into the austere monastic life in the deep mountains around Eiheiiji.



This essay, as with a few others of these works during his first teachings at Eihei-ji, also stresses the importance of monk ordination to the full transmission of Buddha awakening, in this case sharply criticizing the great fabled enlightened layman Vimalakirti for not receiving ordination. Probably Dogen never intended these few talks to be disseminated to a general audience, and the practical issues that arise are complex. Attempts in our own culture to mimic practices disseminated by Dogen must inevitably be transformed with the differences in our modern situation, and the changing role of a Buddhist priesthood is a primary example. Among the American versions of Soto Zen at many current centers small and large, led by American successors to a range of Soto lineages, certainly a great deal of experimentation is now occurring. How a truly American version of Dogen's practice will emerge may not be clear for generations.

---

In many sacred traditions, songs arise organically out of the experience of communion with deep spirit. Such shamanic singing may arise in

original melody and lyrics, or may appear as familiar echoes of traditional or popular songs. Such often emanated in my own zazen (seated meditation), when I had been considering some response to one of Dogen's essays. In the lines and titles from popular songs that emerged and are scattered within these verses, it will be apparent that I often was inspired by the brilliant modern American Dharma bard, Bob Dylan. But lines from many other popular lyricists, Gershwin for example, also arose as appropriate. My ordination and Dharma transmission teacher, Reb Anderson, often ends his public Dharma talks with group singing of spiritually meaningful popular songs. Some of his favorites found their places in these verses as well.

I am deeply grateful to my heart teacher Reb Anderson for a great many things, including offering and guiding this exercise of writing verses on *Shobogenzo*. I also very much appreciate and bow to my dear Dharma brothers and sisters who participated in this practice together and who offered their own verse comments, which were very often splendid and inspiring.

---

I have been studying Dogen for more than thirty years, and have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to contribute to the developing body of English translations and commentaries on his work. Together with my friend and collaborator, Rev. Shohaku Okumura, I have translated Dogen's other major work, *Eihei Koroku* (*Dogen's Extensive Record*) and his *Eihei Shingi* (*Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community*), as well as translating one of the *Shobogenzo* essays, "Bendowa" in *The Wholehearted Way*. With another friend, the Zen artist Kaz Tanahashi, I have also had the great pleasure to collaborate on a few *Shobogenzo* essays in Kaz's fine books of Dogen translations. I have had the privilege to comment in a more scholarly way on Dogen's work in various articles and in my book *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra*. But in this present volume of humble verses I have the enjoyable opportunity to engage with Dogen in a more playful mode, akin to what he himself exhibits in his lively writings.



# Songs for the True Dharma Eye



# Contents

Foreword v

Introduction ix

Great Perfection of Wisdom  
*Makahannya Haramitsu* 3

Actualizing the Fundamental Point  
*Genjo Koan* 4

Talk on Wholehearted Engaging of the Way  
*Bendowa* 5

One Bright Pearl  
*Ikka No Myoju* 6

Forms for the Stratified Cloud Hall  
*Ju-Undo Shiki* 7

That Which is Mind, Just This is Buddha  
*Sokushin Se Butsu* 8

Cleansing  
*Senjo* 9

Homage to Those Who've Gotten the Marrow

*Raihai Tokuzui* 10

Sounds of Valley Streams, Colors of the Mountain

*Keisei Sanshoku* 11

Do Not Commit Evil

*Shoaku* 12

Being Time

*Uji* 13

The Merit and Virtue of the Okesa

*Kesa Kudoku* 14

Transmission of the Okesa

*Denne* 15

Mountains and River Sutra

*Sansuikyo* 16

Buddha Ancestors

*Busso* 17

Document of Heritage

*Shisho* 18

The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower

*Hokke Ten Hokke* 19



Mind Cannot be Grasped

*Shin Fukatoku* 20

Mind Cannot be Grasped II

*Go Shin Fukatoku* 21

The Ancient Mirror

*Kokyo* 22

Reading Sutras

*Kankin* 23

Buddha Nature

*Bussho* 24

The Active Buddhas' Awesome Presence

*Gyo Butsu Igi* 25

Buddha Teaching

*Bukkyo* 26

Supernatural Powers

*Jinzu* 27

Great Enlightenment

*Daigo* 28

The Acupuncture Needle of Zazen

*Zazenshin* 29

Going Beyond Buddha

*Butsu Kojo-Ji* 30

Suchness

*Immo* 31

Continuous Practice

*Gyoji* 32

Ocean Seal Samadhi

*Kai-In Zammai* 33

Confirmation

*Juki* 34

Avalokiteshvara

*Kanzeon* 35

Arhat

*Arakan* 36

The Cypress Tree

*Hakujushi* 37

Wondrous Radiance

*Komyo* 38

Mind and Body Study of the Way

*Shinjim Gakudo* 39

Within a Dream Expressing the Dream

*Muchu Setsumu* 40

Voicing of the Way

*Dotoku* 41

A Painting of a Rice Cake

*Gabyo* 42

The Whole Works

*Zenki* 43

The Moon/Pervading Function

*Tsuki* 44

Flowers in the Sky

*Kuge* 45

The Ancient Buddha Mind

*Ko Butsu Shin* 46

The Bodhisattvas' Four Method of Guidance

*Bodaisatta Shisho Ho* 47

Twining Vines

*Katto* 48

Three Worlds-Mind Only

*Sangai Yuishin* 49

Expressing Mind and Nature

*Sesshin Sessho* 50

Buddha's Way

*Butsudo* 51

The Genuine Qualities of All Dharmas

*Sho Jisso* 52

Intimate Language

*Mitsu Go* 53

Buddhist Sutras

*Bukkyo* 54

Inanimate Beings Expound the Dharma

*Mujo Seppo* 55

Dharma Nature

*Hossho* 56

Dharani

*Darani* 57

Washing the Face

*Senmen* 58

Imparting the Face

*Menju* 59

Guideline for Zazen

*Zazengi* 60

Plum Blossoms

*Baika* 61

Ten Directions

*Jippo* 62

Seeing Buddha

*Kenbutsu* 63

All-Inclusive Study

*Henzan* 64

Eye Pupil

*Ganzei* 65

Everyday Activity

*Kajo* 66

Dragon Song

*Ryugin* 67

Spring and Autumn

*Shunju* 68

Udumbara Flower

*Udonge* 70

Arousing Unsurpassed Mind

*Hotsu Mujo Shin* 71

Arousing Awakened Mind

*Hotsu Bodai Shin* 72

The Whole Body of the Tathagata

*Nyorai Zenshin* 73

The Samadhi of the King of Samadhis

*Zammai O Zammai* 74

Thirty-seven Elements of Enlightenment

*Sanjushichi Hon Bodai Bumpo* 75

Turning the Dharma Wheel

*Temborin* 77

The Self-Authenticating Samadhi

*Jisho Zammai* 78

Great Practice

*Dai Shugyo* 79

Space

*Koku* 80

Buddha's Begging Bowl

*Hatsu-u* 81

Peaceful Abiding/Practice Period

*Ango* 82

Penetrating Others' Minds

*Tashintsu* 83

A King Requests Saindhava

*Osaku Sendaba* 84

Home Leaving

*Shukke* 85

Karmic Retribution in the Three Stages of Time

*Sanjigo* 86

Four Horses

*Shime* 87

The Merit of Becoming a Monk

*Shukke Kudoku* 88

Making Offerings to Buddhas

*Kuyo Shobutsu* 89

Taking Refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha Treasures

*Kie Sambo* 90

Deep Faith in Cause and Effect

*Jinshin Inga* 91

A Monk in the Fourth Dhyana Trance

*Shizen Bikku* 92

Only a Buddha Together with a Buddha

*Yuibutsu Yobutsu* 93

Birth and Death

*Shoji* 94

Mind of the Way

*Doshin* 95

Receiving Precepts

*Jukai* 96

The Eight Awakenings of Great People

*Hachi Dainin Kaku* 97

One Hundred and Eight Gates to Dharma Radiance

*Ippyaku Hachi Homyo-Mon* 98

Notes 99







摩訶般若波羅密

*Makahannya Haramitsu*

Great Perfection of Wisdom

Myriad teachings, innumerable insights, are all empty  
as space.

Bowing deep in homage to each allows their full function.

Protecting and maintaining these flowering nothings,

The body of Buddha swings by a thread from the vast  
spideryweb.

現成公案

*Genjokoan*

Actualizing the Fundamental Point

Each of us has our own special gift;  
This here skin bag amidst the falling petals.  
Following through and leaping beyond many and one,  
self and other,  
Are birds free from the chains of the sky?

## 弁道話

*Bendowa*

### Talk on Wholehearted Engaging of the Way

Pebbles and walls, blank tapes and computer mice,  
All inconceivably help get that Mojo working.  
Opened throats wordlessly bellow in jubilation.  
This upright playfulness is the great mutual practice  
of all good friends.

一顆明珠

*Ikka No Myoju*

One Bright Pearl

Used to be the world was our oyster  
Before this celebrated grain of sand.  
Round and round, rolling in the bowl,  
It brilliantly smoothes out notions of understanding.

重雲堂式

*Ju-Undo Shiki*

Forms for the Stratified Cloud Hall

*Pass the Sugar*

Buddhas and Ancestors, crack-pots and guest students,

Blend in the Cloud Hall like milk and water.

Following guidelines, getting to the zendo by the second  
rolldown,

Who cares if cream is rich or thin when we take our  
coffee black?

即心是仏

*Sokushin Ze Butsu*

That Which is Mind, Just This is Buddha

Only a Buddha together with a Buddha can hear this  
ancient, calling card.

Minding this closely, they mine its depths, and don't  
mind entering

Exploding mine fields of mine and others'.

So slippery, can't be caught, where is it right now?



洗淨

*Senjo*

Cleansing

*Dignified Manner is Itself the Buddha Dharma*

Japanese squat toilets are more difficult in trousers  
than in robes.

How can uncouth, pink-skinned barbarians learn  
decorous practice?

In the Buddha's way, just washing, just shaving,  
Just peeing, just shitting cannot be defiled.

礼拝得髓

*Raihai Tokuzui*

Homage to Those Who've Gotten the Marrow

Buddha's womb is not a restricted territory.

Whoever penetrates can taste the marrow — kiss  
the skin, flesh, and bones.

How lewdicrous — the centuries of sexist monks  
Holed up on sacred Koya Mountain.

谿声山色

*Keisei Sanshoku*

Sounds of Valley Streams, Colors of the Mountain

*Flowing with Mountains in the Immovable Stream*

Buddha's body is the shifty shadows of "other" people.  
Awakening's sweet song is their muttering and gasping.  
Confessing the power of hurt feelings and karmic grasping,  
I fully avow true faith in this very life.

諸惡莫作

*Shoaku Makusa*

Do Not Commit Evil

Plum blossoms fall from a cloudless sky,  
Dewdrops glisten on the naked branch.  
Coming and going appropriately through the Dharma  
downpour,  
The homeward wind never fails not to commit evil.

有時

*Uji*

Being Time

Ten thousand images reclaiming past, staking out future,  
Totally exert every incompleteness.  
All one in the splendor of Being;  
This Magic Moment.

袈裟功德

*Kesa Kudoku*

## The Merit and Virtue of the Okesa

Plunging into Buddha's formless field of blessing  
Every wandering monk is wrapped in rice-paddy patches.  
May all the weary beings be raised up  
In these wondrous, backstitched sleeves.

伝衣

*Denne*

Transmission of the Okesa

*Seven or Nine Jo, Two Hundred Fifty or Eighty-Four  
Thousand Jo*

In this end of the second millennium lifetime,  
I gratefully wear an ancient hand-me-down;  
And remember tiny Joshin-San  
Sniffing at the buffaloes near the Ocean Beach.

山水經

*Sansuikyo*

Mountains and River Sutra

*Mountains Forever Walk on Water*

Once holding mountains in the palm of my hand  
With rivers running through every day,  
Who'd want to transform mind and environment?  
Appropriate expression is not without practice and  
realization.



仏祖

*Busso*

## Buddha Ancestors

Calling forth the ancestors, they're fully realized.  
The eyeball sees itself and goes beyond.  
For many ages past and more to come  
Together, Buddhas bow right now, and sing this simple song.

嗣書

*Shisho*

Document of Heritage

Only acorn gives rise to oak, and only from oak comes  
acorn.

Only a Buddha together with a Buddha

Give birth to vast cycles of ancient Ancestors.

This bloodline's confirmed in sky and in mud, by stars  
and plum blossoms.

法華轉法華

*Hokke Ten Hokke*

The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower

*Turning the Dharma Flower, Turned by the Dharma  
Flower*

In realization or delusion, the raw heart cannot escape  
the world of Dharma flowers.

The one great cause discloses and enters this marvelous  
blossoming.

In the green dragon's garden, the colorful iris opens  
And discerns the wondrous Lotus realm.

心不可得

*Shin Fukatoku*

Mind Cannot be Grasped

The ungraspable already left town  
Long before the cake was served.  
For the great satisfaction, the pause that refreshes,  
Sometimes, you've just got to relax your mind.

心不可得

*Go Shin Fukatoku*

## Mind Cannot be Grasped II

There's no mind for the gypsy to read  
Save limitless fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.  
Even great Zen Ancestors fall,  
Imagining aspects of Buddha's Mind.

古鏡

*Kokyo*

The Ancient Mirror

*Smash the Mirror and Come*

Gazing into the crusted mirror

The original face springs forth.

Face to face reflections of monkey buddha ancestors

Extend out to past and future forever.

看經

*Kankin*

Reading Sutras

*Ring Around the Rosy*

Settle down to the root tips and sail around the zafu clouds  
To completely eat all the sutras.  
Suture self with all being,  
The whole assembly is in stitches.

仏性

*Bussho*

## Buddha Nature

Even God does not have a Buddha Nature.

There's nothing, really nothing, to turn off.

Whole-being-openness: that's What it is.

Such flickering impermanence; shine radiant forever.



## 行仏威儀

*Gyo Butsu Igi*

### The Active Buddhas' Awesome Presence

Fully experiencing their vital path,  
The active Buddhas with awesome, dignified presence  
Let go of hundreds of years and relax completely.  
Eternally vigilant, the Lotus blossoms amid raging flames.

仏教

*Bukkyo*

Buddha Teaching

*Unnecessary*

Late at night, early before zazen,  
I'm soothed by sutras and stories of Zen Ancestors.  
Hiking along the mountain path, breathing in and out,  
The sky is so blue.

神通

*Jinzu*

## Supernatural Powers

Thanks to supernatural powers of bodhisattva ancestors

I just sit upright and wear the robe every day.

Eating breakfast and washing bowls is the supreme  
miracle.

An old friend arrives from the East.

大悟

*Daigo*

Great Enlightenment

In the entire lower forty-eight

Not a single person of today

Doesn't need their mirror shattered, bubble burst,  
blossoms fallen.

All return to delusion with open heart.

坐禪箴

*Zazenshin*

The Acupuncture Needle of Zazen

*The Essential Instrument*

Unthinking the thunken, beyond objects and identification,  
This intimate presence exhausts all estrangements.  
Mudra lifts an inch or two,  
Each sesshin a brand new zazen.

仏向上事

*Butsu Kojo-Ji*

## Going Beyond Buddha

Going beyond is not limited by the vast sky.

The nameless body is not concealed by floating clouds.

A hundred generations of constantly surpassing—

Just a single finger of fog running up the dragon's back.

怎麼

*Immo*

Suchness

*The Ungraspable Nonesuch*

The earth does not belong to people.

A person of suchness belongs to the whole world.

Falling down the ground, rising from the ground,

is such a deal—

One continuous mistake on the living road.

行持 (上)

*Gyoji*

Continuous Practice

Sitting in ancient moss, dew-glistening temple,  
Striding down Broadway or up Green Gulch Trail,  
Just doing the next thing—  
One golden day of never leaving the monastery.



# 海印三昧

*Kai-In Zammai*

Ocean Seal Samadhi

Sealed within the crystal ocean—

A perfect mirror.

Waves rise and fall in play,

Each frothy spray alive with total image.

授記

*Juki*

Confirmation

*Gratitude to my Teacher*

Many lifetimes continuously manifesting,  
Are confirmed in upright silence, smiling eyes.  
The delight of such intimate relationship—  
How to share it with others?

觀音

*Kannon*

Avalokiteshvara

Reaching back at midnight,  
A thousand flowing hands and eyes  
Calmly hear all cries,  
And share their pillow with myriad beings.

阿羅漢

*Arakan*

Arhat

Using a cracked dipper with no handle,  
Bail out and save the sinking ship.  
Jiashan kindly repaid the ancient boatman,  
And spent his life just remembering us.

栢樹子

*Hakujushi*

## The Cypress Tree

When the vast night comes falling from the sky,  
The upright cypress springs shining from the ground.  
Old man Zhaozhou just sits tall  
With no objects to fix at all.

光明

*Komyo*

Wondrous Radiance

*Seen Through Tiger's-Eye Stone*

Belly, lungs; inhale, exhale; wood or plaster;

Bird-chirping, tire-rolling sounds

Of wondrous radiance roaring;

The whole world glows softly in the eye of a monk.

## 身心学道

*Shinjin Gakudo*

## Mind and Body Study of the Way

The whole bloody world is bits and pieces of straight  
forward mind.

Entering the mountains, walking under trees,  
is the true human body.

Although thought of enlightenment cannot be defiled,  
Every day I take the seat, settle into upright, and enjoy  
my breath.

## 夢中說夢

*Muchu Setsumu*

Within a Dream Expressing the Dream

*It's the Real Thing*

Winking with the morning star, silence twirls the  
smiling flower,  
A valley full of fog gently flowing down the stream.  
This whole dream of life just a metaphor of practice,  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily.



道得

*Dotoku*

Voicing of the Way

*Seldom is Heard a Wayfaring Word*

The realized Way is always expressed,  
Like the talking of wind in the pines.  
Unbudded by myriad buddhas,  
Raised eyebrows keep yakking in silence.

画餅

*Gabyo*

A Painting of a Rice Cake

*The Pigments of Satisfaction*

A painted lady sings the blues;  
The snow-white full moon glows all night.  
The blood-red hunger misses few;  
A golden yogi shines the light.

全機

*Zenki*

The Whole Works

*Fully Engaged Dharma Positions (Like Huangbo  
Landing on Linji)*

Soaring high around the hills, a hawk with piercing eye  
Swoops down on shifting shadow, and gobbles up her  
prey.

This total working is the raptor's life;

The rabbit's death dynamic function complete.

都機

*Tsuki*

The Moon / Pervading Function

Splattering moonbeams become all the myriad forms.

Slivers of pervading moonglow fill my belly.

And yet, in cool autumn, two nights shy of full,

How can I not point my finger?

空華

*Kuge*

Flowers in the Sky

*Visions of the Bouquet of Emptiness*

The whole vast sky is a single blue forget-me-not,  
Grown out of ground of spinning, green-earth lotus.  
White cloud carnations drift by and vanish,  
Leaving imprints cataracting through open iris and rose lens.

古仏心

*Ko Butsu Shin*

The Ancient Buddha Mind

*This Old Mind Comes Rolling Home*

The whole world is falling to pieces;

The old gray matter ain't what it used to be.

Detritus of the unknown ancient mind

Sits brightly upright on our morning cushions.

## 菩提薩摩埵四攝法

*Bodaisatta Shisho Ho*

### The Bodhisattvas' Four Methods of Guidance

Giving Buddha to all being is giving to oneself.

Speaking kindly feels good and helps improve the health.

Doing deeds that benefit make everyone to see

That in cooperation there's no gap twixt you and me.

葛藤

*Katto*

## Twining Vines

*Let's Twist Again*

Forearm, eyeballs, liver, and intestines,  
Piercing shallow or deep, equally twining vines.  
Seared with ancient twisted karma,  
Still ancestors join and pass along entangled Dharma.



## 三界唯心

*Sangai Yuishin*

### Three Worlds-Mind Only

No one gets the whole story.

What's the use of calling this today?

The baby Buddha crawls down the path

Giving birth to hobbling ancient sages.

説心説性

*Sesshin Sessho*

Expressing Mind and Nature

*How High is the Sky?*

Winking at vast mind, indescribable as blue of sky,  
Tasting essential nature, uncanny as heart of artichoke,  
Ephemeral barefoot buddhas and ancestors  
Calmly expound all with a twinkle of an eye.

仏道

*Butsudo*

Buddha's Way

*It's Life and Life Only*

Buddha School, Pure Land, Zen, and California schools are all babble.

The Way is just the Way; there's only one Dharma.

The Suzuki Method is for training young fiddlers.

Just enjoying sushi, who needs California rolls?

## 諸法実相

*Shoho Jisso*

### The Genuine Qualities of All Dharmas

Even midst fragments of partial truth,  
The radiant gateway of genuine qualities graces each  
inhale,  
The crossing over of all dharmas settles down in each  
exhale.  
Listen! The wind barks, the dogs sigh.

# 密語

*Mitsu Go*

## Intimate Language

Shakyamuni's secret talk is ever revealed by

Mahakashyapa,

Undeterred by whether or not we comprehend.

Hearing the downpouring showers of blossoms,

We exude sweet fragrance and spread the word.

仏教

*Bukkyo*

**B**uddhist Sutras

*Homage to Lotus, to Flower Ornaments, and to the  
Perfection of All Blossomy Images*

The sutras are written with blood and tears,  
With autumnal leaves and misty rain.  
Studying deeply the Buddha's words,  
Our lives become fully our lives.

無情說法

*Mujo Seppo*

Inanimate Beings Expound the Dharma

*Tree, Wall, and Brown Mud Calls*

Upright rocks encircling English plains

Whisper of ancient wizards and star-flung buddha fields.

Hearing with eyes, thinking with fingernails,

When can there ever be nonsentient beings?

法性

*Hossho*

Dharma Nature

*Dogen Zenji Does Not Pun Lightly, Albeit Brightly*

The true Dharma nature of reality is exactly

The nature of all myriad phenomenal dharmas.

Already Thus, we relentlessly push into "What is this?"

Cracked tea cup, fallen leaves, folded robe,

an old friend's smile.



陀羅尼

*Darani*

Dharani

*You Must Remember This*

Caterpillar sheds its skin

Bowed down to buddha lying within.

Offering incense, flowers, and light, chanting the great  
heart,

There'll be no more sobbing when we start singing  
that old, sweet song.

# 洗面

*Senmen*

## Washing the Face

### *Dogen Zenji's National Legacy*

To meet original face it must be washed clean.  
My first morning awakened in Shinkai Roshi's  
    old-style sodo,  
Instructed in shukin use and face-wash routine.  
Still all Japan greets rising sun with fresh face and  
    brushed teeth.

面授

*Menju*

## Imparting the Face

Those eyes and ears, that nose, those lips and brows,  
Clear facets of emptiness, luminously  
Flow in and out these dusty portals,  
Imparting simply how to face— this life's mystery.

坐禪儀

*Zazengi*

Guideline for Zazen

This upright sitting is simply the natural way,  
With nothing to become or to attain.  
And yet, upon returning to this ancient home,  
My heart's uplifted, fullness beyond joy.

梅華

*Baika*

Plum Blossoms

*Petal Lumination*

Plum petals flake off the snowy branch.

New buds spring up amid white drifts.

Sailing long the tree-lined Way, just this practice,

What does the new year bring?

十方

*Jippo*

Ten Directions

*Like a Strolling Tone*

Shakyamuni's buddha field is this stubborn human world.  
Throughout ten directions, a monk's full heart is unfurled.  
At any troubled crossroads where you may come to roam,  
A complete unknown takes every step, with all directions  
home.

見仏

*Kenbutsu*

## Seeing Buddha

*From Behind a Waterfall*

Like a kid who wants to go out and play, sitting at a  
window on a rainy day,  
Bushy tendril brows hang down over eyeballs, and seeing  
Buddha is long forgotten.  
Until one day the words are heard, "Right in the apparent  
is the real."  
And just beholding eyebrows, Buddha is here.

徧參

*Henzan*

## All-Inclusive Study

### *Buddha's Space Program*

Although this poem is merely a clod of muck,

It cannot defile practice-realization.

Even journeying the wide world, true study is in a single  
particle.

Closely examining the form of each atom, vast solar  
systems and galaxies appear.



眼睛

*Ganzei*

Eye Pupil

*Seen Through Empty Black Hole*

Staring unashamed at the beloved's rounded warmth,  
The ten thousand grass tips are eye-pupils beholding  
wonder.

Like in negative proof-sheets of the image world,  
The teacher is embodied, turned inside-out through  
the pupil.

家常

*Kajo*

Everyday Activity

*The Matter of Everydayness*

Given this day our daily bread,

I sit alone on Mount Tam foothills.

Every day licking clean the bowl of zazen

Goes beyond years of babble of buddhas and ancestors.

龍吟

*Ryugin*

Dragon Song

*Dragon Croon of a Dead Tree*

From the proverbial protruding nail, hammered down  
down,

Faint pre-tremors of a stirring dragon creak.

In the afterglow of a noble Live-Oak, shattered to smithereens,

The dewy path of a tea garden glistens.

春秋

*Shunju*

Spring and Autumn

*When You're Not, You're Not*

Chillin' in the deep freeze, frying on the hot seat,  
When upright dry ice smokes, does it ever also shiver?  
Dancing in the center beyond sensation and  
    perception,  
A black cat purrs curled up among the zafus.

祖師西來意

*Soshi Seirai*

The Meaning of the Ancestor's Coming  
From the West

*The Transplant*

Bodhidharma clings by his teeth to the Bodhi tree

As he silently climbs the cliff called China.

Huike handed over an arm

Simply to help him get a leg up.

優曇華

*Udonge*

Udumbara Flower

*Planting Flowers on the Wall*

Seen but once in a thousand lives,  
Still it constantly blooms.  
Plucking and twirling the blossom of ages,  
Its beauty is readily passed along.

発無上心

*Hotsu Mujo Shin*

## Arousing Unsurpassed Mind

First impulse of openness resounds with singing hills and  
streams.

Treasuring bricks and flowers, fashioning altars and  
buddha images,

Awakened peaks and ranges flourish,

Oak trees and wild grasses fill the yard.

## 発菩提心

*Hotsu Bodai Shin*

## Arousing Awakened Mind

How do we come to truly care,  
For that which is beyond all cares, for beings beyond  
inherent being?  
The all-including, acceptant mind, a treasure and great  
mystery,  
We gently hold with every breath.



如来全身

*Nyorai Zenshin*

The Whole Body of the Tathagata

*All of Us So Close to Buddha*

The whole body of the One Thus Come  
Falls in the raindrops and drips from the eaves.  
Hearing this sutra in the cool morning calm,  
Relics run like rivulets amid the mud and leaves.

三昧王三昧

*Zammai O Zammai*

The Samadhi of the King of Samadhis

*What Is This Sitting?*

All the pain, all the glory, of one life—left leg over right,

Upright back, light rising inhale,

A silent scream settling down exhale,

Open—no hope and no flinching—what is this, sitting?

## 三十七品菩提分法

*Sanjushichi Hon Bodai Bumpo*

### Thirty-seven Elements of Enlightenment

*Where Do They All Belong?*

Could one ever thoroughly catalogue thirty-seven  
thousand countless conditions for enlightenment,  
Each involving concentration, effort, mindfulness,  
determination, resolute renunciation, and incandescent  
wisdom?

Who dare discriminate partial from complete awakening?

Our beloved founder in Japan says only renunciant  
monks can fully penetrate and transmit the awakened  
one's awakening.

Indeed to this day it's passed along

Only by those ordained to give total priority to caring  
for the jewel.

Our great founder in America called us neither  
monks nor laypeople,  
Yet still worthy of training.  
Abandoning homeland to see us through, he confidently  
wished us well.

That wily rascal Vimalakirti says,  
“What good’s your subtle wisdom if not carried into  
empty marketplace?”  
But what do you call the world?  
How do we cull the monastery?

All the suffering beings,  
where do they all come from?  
All the suffering beings, all the suffering beings,  
Right amidst all fifty-seven varieties  
our endless, joyful work.

轉法輪

*Temborin*

Turning the Dharma Wheel

Opening up reality and returning to the source,  
In the jingle jangle morning, a Temborin man plays a song.  
All space flowers, entirely vanishes, or simply awakens,  
And but for the sky there are no fences facing.

## 自証三昧

*Jisho Zammai*

### The Self-Authenticating Samadhi

Only when cooking in this samadhi, one genuinely  
becomes oneself.

Thence can we meet the master, get finely grilled by  
the teaching.

With no designs on becoming a buddha,

Vanilla tastes like vanilla, the sound of the wind is  
sweet.

大修行

*Dai Shugyo*

Great Practice

*A Red Fox's Beard Grows Long with Practice*

The quick brown fox jumping over a lazy dog  
Does not ignore the dog, is not blind to laziness.  
As a fox buddha totally being fox nature,  
Repentant Baizhang clarifies his old response.

虚空

*Koku*

Space

*The Final Frontier*

Each clump of red flesh is just boundless space,  
Space between my shoulders, space between my ears.  
With emptied and opened out body and mind,  
The vast space on the razor's edge between life and death  
glows brilliant.



鉢盂

*Hatsu-u*

## Buddha's Begging Bowl

*The Tastiness of Tathagata Cuisine*

An ancient handed-down container of livelihood  
Sustains myriad generations of straining yogis.  
Not made of wood or lacquer, steel or china, India or  
Japan, even unto not made of tupperware,  
It's simply the whole empty skull of buddhas and ancestors.

安居

*Ango*

Peaceful Abiding/Practice Period

*The Ongoing Ninety-Day Ceremony*

Peacefully abiding throughout one trimester —  
Only from this ango can be born buddha ancestor.  
Thereupon embroiled in ceaseless oscillating  
    between busy marketplace and stark mountain,  
Wayfarers accord ongoingly with the family practice and  
    festivals.

# 佗心通

*Tashintsu*

## Penetrating Others' Minds

As others are not other than the awakening mother  
of all, far beyond self or other,

How could other minds ever be penetrated?

As mind is not words or thoughts, subject or object,  
but the very mind field ground of constant awareness,

How could mind ever be read?

As ever deeper this How keeps settling,  
down towards bottomless center,

How could penetration ever be penetrated?

Buddha mind blithely sails beyond, unconcerned  
with sideshows and special effects.

# 王索仙陀婆

*Osaku Sendaba*

## A King Requests Saindhava

*A Horse is a Horse, Of Course of Course*

The natives are listless, awaiting the ring of the Dharmaphone.  
Fluttering her thousand hands, sleepy-eyed Kannon  
    pounds the beat.

When the need is great the field is great.  
Before a request is even proffered,  
    inquiry and response resound together.

出家

*Shukke*

## Home Leaving

### *Tales of the Homeless*

After trudging fourteen dirt-road miles over the remote  
bridge,

The wayfarer was glad just to sit up, unmoved, for five days.  
Willingness to abandon comfortable abodes is Buddha's  
homecoming.

Stepping into a bottomless shoe, hairy burdens shed,  
a home-leaver's robe just fits true.

三時業

*Sanjigo*

**K**armic Retribution in the Three Stages of Time

*Be Good for Goodness Sake*

Jagged thunderbolts shock the sky; blessings bubble up  
out of the blue.

No matter what you do, sooner or later it all comes back  
on you.

Or at least on someone carrying on the burden of your caring.

No escape, the wheel turns;  
in the halls of awakening, watch your back.

四馬

*Shime*

Four Horses

*Post-Apocalypse Ceremonies of the Horsemen*

Sometimes a shadow in the corner of an eye,  
Sometimes the whip cracks right to the bone.  
Ragged but satisfied, a four-horse-team kindly draws  
the carriage home.  
All the tired horses bathe in moonlight.

## 出家功德

*Shukke Kudoku*

### The Merit of Becoming a Monk

Not following conditions, not falling for the world,  
A shaved-head monk swan dives straight down to Buddha  
Land.

Totally devoted to being totally devoted to all being,  
Nothing could be greater than to put on an okesa in the morning.



# 供養諸仏

*Kuyo Shobutsu*

## Making Offerings to Buddhas

*Gratitude to the Most Excellent Guides*

Bowing deep before ancient pagodas and shrines,  
Trekking along pilgrim trails with nothing, really  
    nothing to be gained,  
Offering every breath to countless blades of grass,  
All buddhas totally venerate the others as buddhas.

歸依三寶

*Kie Sambo*

Taking Refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha  
Treasures

*The Healing of the Great Return*

Putting aside ancient karmic fables of good fortune  
For those who've taken refuge in the precious three,  
In this fickle, troubled, spirit-numbing world,  
I'm grateful to live as a refugee.

# 深信因果

*Jinshin Inga*

Deep Faith in Cause and Effect

*Not Ignoring, Not Subjected*

What wondrous causes have allowed our just sitting  
in this room?

What effects arise unknown from this gasping  
breath, this wordish sound?

Just when deeply trusting these mysterious, vast  
workings,

A marksman drops his angry arms, a carefree dancer  
steps in time.

## 四禪比丘

*Shizen Bikku*

### A Monk in the Fourth Dhyana Trance

*Getting High is Not the Purpose of Practice*

Avowing and learning from mistakes, returning to  
balance,

Sit together with others and align with true  
Dharma and teacher.

Blissful exaltations and comparative investigations of  
paths

Serve merely as expedients on the Awakening Way.

## 唯仏与仏

*Yuibutsu Yobutsu*

Only a Buddha Together with a Buddha

*A Vehicle Built for Two (With Everyone Included)*

Two playful yogis sit and frolic with the jewel.

Not what anyone could have expected,

It's bigger than the both of us, totally beyond  
control.

In accord with the ancient lineage,

wide-eyed we peer through the world's heart.

生死

*Shoji*

Birth and Death

In wholehearted embrace with this present shifting birth  
and death,

One not busy being born is busy dying.

Flow on steady with Dogen's easy way to Buddha—

Go upright, don't worry, may all be happy.

道心

*Doshin*

## Mind of the Way

No end to the Mind of the Way, no way to the endless way,  
Life after life, and in between lives just plunge into refuge  
in Buddha.

Giving offerings to Buddha images, treasuring the wondrous  
Lotus Dharma,  
One of these mornings, you're going to rise up singing.

受戒

*Jukai*

## Receiving Precepts

*Entering the Family with Open Arms*

Buddha's blood flows through the precept vein,  
The link to the lineage of bodhisattva ancestors.  
Mainlined in tight connection to your heart,  
The precept-questions probe the quality  
of every breath you take.



## 八大人覺

*Hachi Dainin Kaku*

### The Eight Awakenings of Great People

Even to their final breaths, Shakyamuni and Dogen Zenji spread awakening practice.

Diligence, mindfulness, samadhi, and prajna are simply family jewels of the old-time religion.

Neediness abandoned, content and satisfied with this present life, just enjoying the quiet at the end of every exhale, people's true greatness can actually matter, And these eight teachings are not mere idle chatter.

# 一百八法明門

*Ippyaku Hachi Homyo-Mon*

One Hundred and Eight Gates to Dharma Radiance

Boundless Dharma gates, a hundred and eight or a hundred  
eight thousand,

The way to awakening unfolds right here.

With remembrance, faith, refuge, and persistence,

knowing and accepting this life, sharing gratefulness,

Right now may we walk this walk.

## NOTES

**Whole Hearted Engaging of the Way:** The Japanese Zen word Myojo used by Dogen in this essay was in mind when I got the “Mojo” working. Myojo (alternately Myoshi), refers to the hidden subtle guidance that we are said to receive from buddhas and bodhisattvas, and from the whole phenomenal world, when we fully enter into meditation practice.

**Forms for the Stratified Cloud Hall:** The Cloud Hall is a traditional designation for the dormitory for novice practitioners or monks (who are designated literally “Clouds and water”). The “roll-downs” are signals hit with mallets on a wooden block to announce the time for arrival at the meditation hall.

**Homage to Those Who’ve Gotten the Marrow:** In this essay, Dogen strongly champions the ability and potential of women practitioners, and decries that Japan’s great sacred monastic mountains, such as Koyasan, home of the Japanese Shingon or Vajrayana school, were then off-limits to women.

**Transmission of the Okesa:** Joshin-San was a Japanese nun who helped revive the traditional practice of sewing Bud-

dha's ordination robes, okesa and rakusu, in the 20th century. She came and helped students at San Francisco Zen Center learn this sewing practice. On her last visit I took her for a ride in San Francisco, and thought to show her the buffaloes in Golden Gate Park. Later I learned that with her failing vision she had barely seen them. So it must have been their scent she enjoyed.

**Arhat:** Jiashan (805-881: Kassan in Japanese) was a master who was considered the successor of "the boatman," a Chan/Zen monk who escaped a persecution in mid-ninth century China by living as a ferryman. Jiashan had one encounter with the boatman, in which his understanding was acknowledged before the boatman disappeared into the river.

**The Cypress Tree:** Zhaozhou (778-897; Joshu in Japanese), one of the all-time great Zen masters, is the hero of many classic koan stories, including his response to the question, "What is Buddha?" of "The cypress tree in the yard."

**Dharani:** Dharani, sometimes translated as "incantations," are traditional Buddhist combinations of sounds developed by ancient yogis, which are said to have specific positive spiritual effects. They usually have no cognitive meaning as words. In the bodhisattva lore these dharanis are memorized and recited as an aid to memory and other mental capacities.

**Washing the Face:** Tanaka Shinkai Roshi is a Soto Zen teacher with whom I sat a number of sesshins when I lived in Japan in the early '90s. At the time he was living at a small temple in the mountains west of Kyoto with a traditional monks' hall (sodo) he had built. Proficient, though relaxed, in the forms of monastic practice, he had one of the monks instruct me my first morning in the proper manner of washing the face. This included use of the shukin, a long cloth used both as a hand-towel and to tie up robe sleeves. Later when I stayed briefly in a hospital in Osaka, I saw the patients all naturally following a similar face-washing routine in the morning. Dogen's most impactful contribution to Japanese culture was to introduce daily brushing of teeth and face washing.

Shinkai Roshi is now (2007) abbot of Hokyoji, an important Soto training temple near Eiheiiji.

**Dragon Song:** A magnificent old Live Oak stood on the lawn outside the meditation hall at Green Gulch Farm when this collection was started. After a lightning strike, it splintered into three main portions and eventually needed to be removed. Very near where it stood is now a traditional enclosed garden in front of the tea house where Chado (tea ceremony) is taught.

**The Meaning of the Ancestor's Coming From the West:** According to a Zen fable, Bodhidharma (d. 532), the legendary Indian founder of Chinese Chan/Zen, sat in a cave in

northern China, and only accepted his successor Huike (487-593) after the latter cut off his arm to prove his sincerity.

**Thirty-seven Elements of Enlightenment:** "Our beloved founder in Japan" is a dedicatory phrase referring to Dogen himself. In this essay he extols the virtue of monk ordination. "Our great founder in America" refers to Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, founder of San Francisco Zen Center, who noted that modern American practitioners are something between the traditional models of monks and laypeople. Vimalakirti, star of his own highly entertaining sutra, was a lay disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, described as more enlightened and eloquent than all the great bodhisattvas and disciples. In this essay, however, Dogen criticizes Vimalakirti for not taking full ordination. (See also Introduction.)

**Great Practice:** Baizhang Huaihai (749-814; Hyakujo Ekai in Japanese) is noted as the establisher of ethical codes in Chan/Zen. He also is famed for performing a monk's funeral for a fox, supposedly a former teacher who ignored cause and effect.

**A King Requests Saindhava:** Saindhava meant horse, water, or salt, depending on context. The awakened student is said to be able to understand the appropriate context immediately.

**Taigen Dan Leighton** is a Soto Zen priest and Dharma heir in the lineage of Dogen and Suzuki Roshi. He was ordained in 1986 and received Dharma Transmission in 2000 from Reb Anderson Roshi.

Taigen is author of *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression* and *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra*. He is co-translator and editor of several Zen texts including: *Dogen's Extensive Record*; *The Wholehearted Way*; *Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community*, and *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi*. He has contributed articles to many other books and journals.

Taigen teaches at Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union, where he received his Ph.D. in religious studies. Since 1994 Taigen has been founding Dharma Teacher for the Mountain Source Sangha groups in the S.F. Bay Area. As of 2007, Taigen has relocated to Chicago, where he now leads the Ancient Dragon Zen Gate meditation group and teaches at Loyola University.







### Praise for Taigen Leighton's work:

On *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra*:  
 "A premier translator of two of Dogen's major works, *Eihei Shingi*  
 and *Eihei Koroku*, has now turned his sights to an analysis of  
 Dogen in East Asian theoretical contexts with illuminating  
 results. This very thoughtful, informative, and highly original  
 study makes a significant contribution to both Dogen and Lotus  
 Sutra studies."

— Steven Heine, author of *Dogen and the Koan Tradition*

On *Dogen's Extensive Record: A Translation of Eihei Koroku*:  
 "Thank you so much for the translation of Dogen's weighty tome.  
 The many hours of dedicated work will be much appreciated by all  
 of us now and in the future who value Dogen's inspired writing  
 and talks."

— Mel Weitsman, abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center

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