

## 2. talk - Introduction to the 4 embracing actions of a Bodhisattvas

Hello and welcome again, also Vienna and all others on zoom.

Today I want to give an introduction about the fascicle Shishobo out of the Shobogenzo - The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Actions.

In Japanese its called "Bodaisatta Shishobo" and the four embracing actions are: offering, loving words, beneficial action and identity action and I think you know them already.

Hojo-san says in his commentary:

"These actions should be done with awakening to the true reality of emptiness and mutual conditionality.

In Dogen's teaching, zazen practice alone is awakening and wisdom, and the four actions are how zazen works in our daily lives and in relationship to other people and living beings."

My first teacher in our lineage, Kaikyo Roby, wrote in her article "The Bodhisattva - Heart" in *Boundless Vows, Endless Practice* that we are all Bodhisattvas. I believe that too, but I believe, as Hojo-san likes to say, that we are all baby bodhisattvas at first.

What is a Bodhisattva? The term is originally Sankrit and it means : "Enlightened Being"

In his previous lives, Buddha was a bodhisattva, a person who was seeking to attain enlightenment. A Buddha is someone who has already attained enlightenment. There are many bodhisattvas who could be called buddhas, but they don't enter nirvana but remain in the real world.

In the Diamond Sutra it says: "And if not the uncountable, immeasurable, infinite number of all beings are liberated, we do not think that even one being is liberated."

The Bodhisattvas are the symbols of a certain virtues of the Buddha and there are three great Bodhisattvas in Mahayana they are transformations of Buddha:

Manshushri (Monju-bosatsu in Japanese)

Avalokiteshvara (in Japanese Kanzeon-bosatsu or Kan-jizai-bosatsu)

Ksitagarba (In Japanese Jizo – bosatsu)

There are a lot of more Bodhisattvas, you can find a lot of lists, and in my lectures I will also talk about another great Bodhisattva, Vimalakirti, who is very important for me.

Like here, but a little different, we don't have in Vienna a sodo or zendo only for sitting zazen and a hatto only for liturgy, we have only one room like a rectangle and so we have an "all in one altar" but with very special statues I found in a Chinese internet store.

Usually there is only Manshujri in a zendo, normally you can see it here, when there is no talk, because the zazen sitting practitioners are representing buddha.

On our altar in Vienna there is Manshujri sitting on a lion and also Samanthabadra, the

bodhisattva of shining practice, who is often represented on an elephant, also on our altar, but both figures look a lot like Avalokiteshvara and so we have all three with us on the altar.

To learn more about Bodhisattvas I want to recommend the book “Faces of compassion, Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression” by Taigen Dan Leighton, and at the beginning he says:

THE HEROIC BENEFACTORS:

“BODHISATTVAS are beings who are dedicated to the universal awakening, or enlightenment, of everyone. They exist as guides and providers of succor to suffering beings, and offer everyone an approach to meaningful spiritual life.”

And later:

“The word bodhisattva comes from the Sanskrit roots bodhi, meaning “awakening” or “enlightenment,” and sattva, meaning “sentient being.” Sattva also has etymological roots that include “intention,” meaning the intention to awaken, and “courage” or “heroism,” referring to the resolution and strength involved in this path.”

Taigen dan Leighton sees the bodhisattva as the heroic ideal of Mahāyāna, as Archetypes and Archetypes are crystallizations of components of the psyche, and catalysts to self-understanding. A term shaped by the Swiss psychiatrist and developer of analytical psychology C.G. Jung. They describe universal primary images or primordial figures that are associated with certain emotions, characteristics, and goals.

My former sangha from Baker Roshi was located at the Black Forrest – and it was an old building former used by the group of Graf Dürckheim, maybe somebody here knows him, he was one of the first well known zen practitioners in Germany.

And the zendo was sodo and hatto together, like in Vienna one rectangle and left side of the Buddha altar was the Avalokithesvara shrine with a real wonderful Avalokithesvara figure, in this posture sitting and one foot tightened and the other going to the ground so that she can always stand up quickly to help somebody.

In one of my first sesshins I sat direct in front of this Avalokithesvara altar. The Sesshin were San Francisco Zen center style, with 12 periods of zazen, 30 or 40 Minutes and always 7 days, so not easy at all – and in these 7 days something happened, something opened to my understanding of Kannon. It was a bodily experience, not easy to explain but this bodily experience opened a gate, or an energetic blockade dissolved, I will talk more about when I come to the ear vijnana in one of my next talks and since then my way of hearing has changed. It is really hard to talk about, but it was a shift in my practice.

And so Avalokithesvara, or Kannon or Kanzeon in Japanese, the first Archetype that becomes very important for me

In the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotussutra at the end is said:

“The one who hears the cries of the world,  
Avalokitesvara, pure and holy

Is able to help those in suffering, distress, death and danger,  
to be an immutable refuge  
Perfect in all merits  
He looks with compassionate eyes at the living beings  
The quantity of his blissful benefits is immeasurable like the sea  
Therefore one must adore him by bowing the top of his head to the ground”

The 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus Sutra is about the Bodhisattva Sadapaributha and its 33 transformations up to the Kannon. The number “thirty-three” is a sacred number that already occurs in the Vedic scriptures in ancient India and there it indicates the possible number of all gods. There are also some Buddhist scriptures in which thirty-three deities appear on Mount Sumeru. The unimaginably high Mount Sumeru is the abode of gods and guardian deities, rising in the center of the universe. Around it revolves the sun and the moon, the stars and the planets, which influence the course of day and night, the coming and going of the seasons and thus ultimately the well-being of mankind. The Mount Sumeru is also called the king of mountains and appears in a lot of sutras, like in the Vimalakirti Sutra too.

The worship of Avalokithesvara becomes very important in Japanese Buddhism, for example in the 12<sup>th</sup> century a Pilgrimage route with 33 temples was build.

This 33 manifestations of Avalokithesvara of the 25th chapter from the Lotus Sutra were reduced in the iconography in the Japanese Buddhism mostly to six representations

In the Tendai School, each of the six has the task of saving the beings in one of the six worlds.

The statue that sat in front of me in the sesshin is not included in this six forms, this form of iconographic Kannon representation is used in China and it is called “water-moon Guanyin”, Guanin is the Chinese Word for Avalokithesvara, and it has its origin in the "Avatamsaka Sutra", the "flower garland sutra" or "the great vast Buddha flower adornment sutra". In one chapter the boy Sudhana visited 53 wise teachers and the 28th is Avalokithesvara, Guanyin in Chinese at his Island home Potalaka. He is accompanied and guided by Bodhisattva Maitreya, the next Buddha. Maitreya said:

"Good son, south of here there is a mountain named Potalaka, there is a Bodhisattva named Guanzizai. Go there and ask the Bodhisattva how to learn the Bodhisattva action, how to practice the bodhisattva way. Now householder, I therefore will point it out for you. Then he says the verse:

Above the sea there is a mountain made of a multitude of perfected treasures,  
Sages dwell there pure and clean,  
Springs flow and wind around like majestic ornaments,  
flowers, woods, fruits and trees are opulent between them.  
The bravest and most courageous, the one benefiting to all living creatures,  
Guanzizai is dwelling there  
Should you ask for the Buddhas merit?  
It is there where he will broadly expound on it for you.

After hearing this, the boy Sudhana respectfully leave from Vesthila and travels to Guanyin's mountain abode:

Then he arrives at the mountain. He prays and looks for the great Bodhisattva everywhere. Within a ravine, beneath the western cliff, he sees flowing springs winding around and glistening, trees and woods growing thickly and bushy, fragrant weeds soft and tender. All this is winding around and spread out in this place: All sorts of honorable adornments and majestic ornaments extending on all sides. The Bodhisattva Guanzizai is sitting atop a pure and clean Diamond-treasure-leaf-stone in a Lotus pose. Numerous Bodhisattvas are sitting on treasure stones, circling him in veneration. He is proclaiming and speaking the perfect wisdom of the bright and shining law of great compassion and pity.”

And from this story comes the name of the statue as it is in front: “the Water-moon Guanyin.”

This comes from the Sanskrit word “udakacandra” and this refers to the “moon reflected in water” a expression that is often used for the emptiness of all dharmas (phenomena’s,) they accompanying the Bodhisattvas, this expression is often used as metaphor for enlightenment.

Mount Potalaka, Avalokiteshvara’s Pure Land was originally thought to be located on an island somewhere south of India. By the Ming dynasty this mystical paradise had been identified with Mount Putuo, an island off the east coast of China (province of Zhejiang), and had become an important pilgrimage site. It is very important in the Pure Land Buddhism.

This statue and the archetype it represents is very important to me, for example our Viennese sangha logo is drawing of it and our sangha is called Dajihi, the old Japanese expression for boundless compassion, for this stands Avalokiteshvara.

For further understanding of Avalokiteshvara I recommend the 6 articles by Hojo-san about “Kannon” ( *the 18th fascicle of the 75-fascicle version of* ) in *Shobogenzo* in the Sotoshu magazine “dharma eye”.

About the second important Bodhisattva Manshujri you will hear a little bit more later and I will talk more in my following lectures.

Now to the third Bodhisattva, he influenced me a lot too, it is Ksitagarbha or in Japanese Jizo, means “Earth womb” or “Treasure of Storehouse”. He took a vow to save all beings who wander in the six realms of Samsara in the time between Shakyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha. He is a protector on many levels, especially for the unborn beings, children, travelers but also for the prison inmates.

In Japan, at the entrance of many cemeteries Jizos stand to save the people who will be reborn in one of the 6 worlds, because he is the guide to our afterlives.

Iconographically he is presented with a “Chintamani”, translated as the wish-fulfilling jewel, in one of his hands.

The “Chintamani” is also often compared to the philosopher's stone. In Chinese representations also often associated with a wind horse, a very mystical being that understands the language of the wind. Chintamanis are seen on many tankhas in Tibet, lined up in front of Buddha. It is said that the Chintamani is the expression of reaching the wisdom of a Buddha, it enables us to understand the truth of the Buddha. It is also often pictured as a shining pearl.

In the other hand he holds the monk's staff, a symbol of the vows.

For me is this guardian also a visualization or manifestation of our universal self, that we are connected to everything and that the world presents itself and functions in a completely different way than we are used to in reality, things are moving in a completely different way than we think in our everyday being.

This has little to do with supernaturalism, but rather with the fact that there is a second truth, there is a perfect world far away from our everyday thinking in our materialistic world.

Bodhisattvas, also exist in Theravada. However, Theravada primarily teaches the attainment of "enlightenment," "awakening," through one's own efforts. This ideal of the Theravada is to become an arhat, the "saint," who attains liberation and thus breaks the cycle of reincarnations, unlike in Mahayana, as I discussed earlier with the quotation from the Diamond Sutra. The only bodhisattvas known in Theravada are the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, before he became a Buddha, and the coming Buddha Maitreya, says Wikipedia. But you know Wikipedia is not the whole truth.

My dharma friend Santacitta, a Theravadin nun from Austria who life's in California now with a very wonderful new project where she tries to bring Dharma, ecology and art together, says: “For most practitioners it is sure that the goal of practice is to get out of samsara, but there is a second way to perfect all paramitas completely on the bodhisattva way up to buddha. “

Now we come to the four embracing actions.

In this fascicle Dogen teaches us these 4 actions are the essence of all Bodhisattva practice to guide us to life in peace and harmony.

Hojo-san in his commentary on the Shishobo, explains in great detail what Dogen might have meant. If anyone hasn't read it yet, we will be happy to provide it, please ask as after the talk.

The four embracing actions are not an invention of the Mahayana, but occur in the very early scriptures. They are described in the fourth and eighth book of the Anguttara Nikaya, , a part of the Palikannon. There they are still seen as the four teachings of grace, which are about bringing the Buddha's teaching closer to sentient beings and winning them over to it.

None of the four embracing actions can exist or be performed separately; all four are interdependent. Giving is probably the most important virtue in this. Dana can show itself in so many actions, such as giving time or attention, or in a simple way to sit zazen.

Giving is also mostly connected with loving words, not in zazen but maybe to yourself to get on the cushion, and both together become a beneficial action, which is impossible to perform without identity action.

As you have heard in my first talk beneficial action is very important for me and today often it goes hand in hand with the term engaged Buddhism and this has taken many different forms today and I will talk about this in my last talk in June.

There are different translation of Shishobo and Hojo – sans translation of the four embracing actions goes back to a commentary of Menzan, a very important reformer of Sotozen.

Nishijima translated it as “The four kinds of social acting as a Bodhisattva” and like Hozan Alan Senauke mentioned there are such translations as, “Foundations for Social Unity,” “Ways of Showing Favor,” “Four Methods of Guidance,” and “Four Integrative Methods.”.

The now former abbot of Antaiji, “Muho” a german guy sees it as everyday love practice. He explains it in great detail using the” four brahmaviharas, the four immeasurable attitudes of mind”, which he says, Dogen also uses this as the basis for the Shishobo fascicles. This four brahmaviharas are: loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity.

In principle, I think the term love is very difficult because it is associated with such a big concept and can lead to many misunderstandings. In my interfaith practice with chaplains of other faiths, especially the Christian religions, I often discuss this because they almost only use the term love. But in today's world, it is so connotated and limited to romantic love that the universal connection of love with all living beings is no longer seen.

Compassion is for me the more appropriate expression here. And to gain compassion is one of the favorite goals in our practice. I like the translation from Hojo-san, because embracing is a very important practice to develop compassion and compassion is necessary to act in the four embracing actions, for giving, loving words, beneficial action and identity action.

Now we go to the first one: giving,

Dogen says: “Offering means not being greedy. Not to be greedy means not to covet. Not to covet commonly means not to flatter. Even if we rule the four continents, in order to offer teachings of the true Way, we must simply and unfailingly not be greedy. It is like offering treasures we are about to discard to those we do not know. We give flowers blooming on the distant mountains to the Tathagata, and offer treasures accumulated in past lives to living beings. Whether our gifts are Dharma or material objects, each gift is truly endowed with the virtue of offering or dana. Even if this gift is not our personal possession, nothing hinders our practice of offering. No gift is too small, but our effort should be genuine.”

In general we talk in Buddhism from three kinds of giving: giving materials, dharma and fearlessness.

This sounds all very easy but.....”No gift is to small, but our effort must be genuine.”

This is the real important issue here, we must be free of greed.

As I told you last time, I had this experience when I served food to the homeless and, despite the cold and hard work, went home completely exhilarated with the other helpers and we had such great light-hearted joy. This was the first experience of how happy it can make you, to help other people, to give, without getting anything obvious in return. But still you get something in return, when you give without expectations. Hojo-san describes this in the opposite way with the Takahatsu, when he begged and actually gave something as well. So giving and receiving doesn't exist independent, they are always together.

I experience something similar again and again when I teach Dharma, give a talk or often just talking about the sitting posture.

With the talks, I always receive insights already in the preparation and then mostly through the questions, I still learn a lot.

In the prison I am currently in charge of a group together with a therapist who also does Tai Chi and we always do an hour of Tai Chi together at the beginning, then we sit for about 30 minutes, I guide this, this is not zazen and then I hold a small talk and answer questions and every time when I come out of the prison I am just inspired and full of joy. In this environment it is so easy and clear to see what giving can give you. Because people like inmates get so little response in their lives in prison. Not to mention the great practice opportunity that walking into a prison gives you.

The learning of patience and the bearing, enduring and penetrating of one's deep fears.

And we are already at the third possibility of giving - fearlessness. Fearlessness does not mean that I do not have fear, it can still be present in the background, but it is in the background and I have tamed it, like Monju - Manshujri who sits on the lion and has tamed the lion.

For example, this week I sat down here in the morning in the zendo and after a few minutes a spider appeared and crawled in front of my eyes along the wall and came closer and closer to me, it was not big, but also not small, I don't know what kind of spiders there are here and how poisonous they are and you must know that I used to have extreme fear of spiders, but now the fear is tamed, and I think in my fifth or sixth talk I'll talk in detail about how this works.

The fearlessness of a Bodhisattva is often associated with security, but this is misleading and can lead you into a trap.

Security here is connected with the faith, in the meaning of the great trust in the dharma and not from a predictability of the future.

Our self wants permanently to make our life predictable, now comes the famous saber-toothed tiger in the savannah with high steppe grass where he could not be seen and so life could be over quickly.

We need predictability, otherwise we could not exist, just for opening a door or going down a staircase it is important.

But of course we push it further and want to make everything predictable and in our digital age this takes on enormous proportions, in our world everything is more and more modeled and predicted by enormous computer models.

But we know that the world is unpredictable and unstable and impermanent. We experience this constantly through our practice, Hoko talks a lot of non reliance.

But in our mind also these models have solidified, and these are getting feedback loops, start like a program is run off by a trigger.

Our practice aims are to break these loops, Monju, Manshujri, who is often shown also with a sword in his hand, has his sword to cut this stream of our consciousness to experience the true reality.

Facing our fears is a great challenge that we can face again and again in zazen, if we allow them to arise, or when a spider appears in front of your eyes.

In doing so, we can always realize that we will not die, we will not lose any limbs or get are deadly bitten for example, but if we sit upright and open our hands of thinking, we will realize that we will remain intact and that our fears are only thought formations, usually accompanied by wild emotions.

I believe that our fears are one of the main driving forces of our lives, for me is this like this, and in my research I came across the "Five Great Fears" that we know in Buddhism:

The fear of losing one's existence

The fear of bad reputation

The fear of death

The fear of changing consciousness

The fear of speaking in front of groups

I know all of them. Just the last one now, speaking in front of groups.

The fear of changing consciousness is also known to all of us, I think, when sitting, for example, when the sense of space changes or when one simply sinks deeper in zazen.

I don't think I need to talk about the fear of death.

In German there is a nice saying that often goes together with the first fear: "Ist der Ruf erst ruiniert, lebt es sich ziemlich ungeniert"

means: - Once your reputation is ruined, you can live quite freely.

With the great economic crisis of 2008, my family business had to declare bankruptcy, I sold mechanical engineering constructions at that time and was deeply affected by the crisis. We then also had to declare private bankruptcy and that was a tough exercise, also a big practice opportunity, I learned a lot. I gained a lot from it and fortunately had friends who advised me and coached me through it.

To penetrate the fears does not mean that they disappear completely, it can happen, but they lose their energy and fade into the background, are no longer scary.

First we have to allow them, then accept that they are there and then give them space and let them be, that's what I call penetrating, and then they dissolve. This practice is also called the four marks of dharma. Just let them be and don't do anything with them, you will see that they disappear by themselves.



And this form of serenity that arises from it inspires confidence and thus gives security, it is not a false security that arises from predictions, which is often not true.

This is what fearlessness means to me.

Now we come to the second embracing action: loving speech and when I read this in Shobogenzo I really must laugh, because Dogen and loving speech is sometimes a paradox.

Dogen says:

“Loving speech means, first of all, to arouse a compassionate mind when meeting beings, and to offer loving, caring words. In general, we should not use any violent or harmful words when we speak.”

Compassion is difficult to understand, but when we talk in Buddhism about compassion we mean this ultimate nature of our existence, when we left all our self-centeredness behind, then this is our true nature. We are compassionate in principal, because we are all interconnected and are depended and need each other.

The sanskrit word Karuna means to be with somebody to help him get free from bodily and mental suffering. Karuṇā is practiced to remove harm toward beings.

We have to be aware how we translate Karuna and there are differences in German and English, I want mention:

Compassion as I understand this is a reaction towards what we have perceived, a connection that is being made. “empathy” is the ability to take the perspective of an “other”, a kind of perception. “Sympathy” means that we can feel the feelings of an “other” and pity is we suffer with somebody.

In German language it is different, because the word “Mitgefühl” we use as translation for Karuna and compassion means to “feel with somebody”, like sympathy, but the roots are different and we distinguish it from the German Word “Mitleid” means “to suffer with somebody”

So in German language we distinguish “Mitleid” pity - “to suffer with somebody” means I also suffer with him, and “Mitgefühl” compassion “to feel with somebody” means I feel his suffering and I don’t suffer myself – This is very important distinction when we talk about compassion,

“I’m now it, but it isn’t me”, says Dongshan in his enlightenment poem, I will talk more often about this quote, because it says a lot about to experience not grasping, not attach or rely on somebody or something.

To be compassionate starts with ourselves, how we tread us in our inner dialogue, are we compassionate with ourselves? It is always an important reminder for me, to tread myself like I

want to tread others.

As I have already told you, I grew up very Catholic, which was very nice on the one hand, because I was able to experience connectedness. But at the same time, in dealing with the moral norms, a sense of guilt was imposed on me that I still struggle with today.

I'm talking about a huge topic here because I'm going to talk about shame and guilt and this could fill many talks on its own.

It's not really covered in Buddhist teachings, nor is there anything about it in Buddhist psychology, the Abhidharma, only the sense of shame "hiri" -in Sanskrit is treated as mind factors at the same time as "ottopa", of conscience, that's it.

Guilt is the processing and further development of shame. Shame is a very natural feeling and arises when we feel not understood, not accepted, I would say not seen by our environment. We experience a kind of separateness. It arises mostly when we are not in accord with the social moral norm and we are told that we have acted wrongly. This happens to us already when we are small children, through gestures, eye contact, neglect and so on, as soon as a form of the ego has been created. So about the tenth -twelfth month of the toddler.

Most of the time we immediately relate this reaction of the other people to ourselves, I am bad and evil and this is the beginning of self-doubt and self-hatred. The inner judges start to work. It seems like this was not always so, and it has developed differently in Eastern and Western cultures. In Western cultures, there is the story I have heard, that this guilt has its origin in the Christian church only in the 12th century. That's when repentance was transferred from a feeling that is directed towards the community to a feeling that is directed only towards the ego in ritual, so from the absolute form to the relative form of repentance. Supposedly, this was done by Scottish monks. The Catholic Church took this to the extreme and invented the sale of indulgences. I can buy my way out of my guilt, my sins. It is an ingenious business model for me as a salesman, the demand never runs out.

The original idea of inner liberation was lost in the process. I'll talk about repentance in detail in my next talk.

In the Eastern yogic culture, the idea that guilt was transferred to the community remained longer.

There is this funny story from the 60s, I think Baker Roshi told it, but I'm not sure. It was at one of the first interfaith meetings in the US with Buddhists and the Dalai Lama had not been in the US very long. At some point the topic of self-doubt came up and the interpreter translated it to the Dalai Lama and a long time went by in which the Dalai Lama talked to the interpreter all the time. At some point the interpreter was asked what it was about: the Dalai Lama didn't know the word and there seemed to be no direct translation for it in Tibetan. I don't know if this is true, but this is how it was told.

But nowadays, with globalization, this self-hatred is now present around the world because we human beings love to judge ourselves, in a way we are addicted to this behavior of inner judges. I think the root of this behavior is that our individual self always needs affirmation, especially

when we don't experience that basic faith in the world, and the lack of that basic faith is the beginning of doubt.

My inner judges are still working today, but thanks to practice I have learned on the one hand to notice them and cut them off with the sword of Manshujri and leave them behind. I will describe the way to get there in the next lectures.

And on the other hand practice also helps to establish this missing basic faith.

To show compassion to oneself is the basis to show compassion to others.

Loving words does not always mean that we just butter people up, but to help them means also to try to give them clarity. This is a difficult undertaking and requires great practice and the use of skillful means, because the truth is usually difficult to bear (ber) (ertragen).

However, it may also contain sharp words, as we see with Dogen again and again and also Kodo Sawaki often helps me as an example of this.

Now we come to beneficial action

Dogen says:

“Beneficial action is simply creating skillful means to benefit living beings, whether they are noble or humble. For example, we care for the near and distant future of others, and use skillful means to benefit them. We should take pity on a cornered tortoise and care for a sick sparrow. When we see this tortoise or sparrow, we try to help them without expecting any reward. We are motivated solely by beneficial action itself.”

There are so many ways to act beneficially, for example as I said zazen is a beneficial action, helping people not sit alone, sitting in person with a group is so important.

Sometimes people feel ashamed when I talk about my social engagement as prison chaplain, because they think they should do it too, but we all have to act out from our own talents, how dharma is arising with us. And these talents have a lot to do with our personal karma that we bring in in our life and for which we can do nothing.

Beneficial action can show itself in many small everyday ways to make the world a better place and we should always examine our motivation why we are doing this. I also started my social engagement in the beginning out of pure bad conscience to show everyone that I am not such a bad person after all, but the experience of giving that I have described before in the giving part, this experience of pure bliss through giving has changed my motivation and led me to continue doing it.

The clearly realized why I started to do this, I started it for myself, but that should not stop us from doing charitable acts, because only then can we experience how helpful they are for ourselves. In helping others there is always this part that we also help ourselves, through the permanent mutual connection, like I talked before.

I have to come to the last and fourth action already, because it is already very late and the fourth one is very important.

Dogen says:

“Identity-action means to be not different--neither different from self nor from others. For example, it is like the way that, in the human world, the Tathagata identifies himself with human beings. Because he identifies himself in the human world, we know that he must be the same in the other worlds. When we realize identity-action, self and others are one suchness. Harps, poems, and wine make friends with people, with heavenly beings, and with spirits. People befriend harps, poems and wine. There is a principle that harps, poems, and wine befriend harps, poems, and wine; that people make friends with people; that heavenly beings befriend heavenly beings, and that spirits befriend spirits. This is how we study identity-action.”

Identity action, is also called collaboration action, but here too we can get caught in a trap, in this trap that we think we are good human beings when we collaborate with others.

I like the word Identity action so much and I will use it in the other way around as the meaning of the Kanji – “same action”

But in order to identify with all as the same action, to really understand and connect with others, we need to break down the walls we have built up through our identity and get to the true ground of our connectedness, the network in which we are all connected to everything and everyone.

Penetrating these walls of our own identity and thus expanding our own boundaries and opening ourselves to unlimited compassion for all beings is what we do as bodhisattvas. For me, this means forgetting the self and dropping body and mind what Dogen Zenji talking about in Genjokoan. Only when we have dropped our own identity can we recognize our opposite, and this applies to all sentient and non-sentient beings, as they really are.

We can pick them up where they are and open a space for them, where they can pour themselves in, because it is not filled with our own being. When we relate to the world in absolute connectedness and recognize the five skandhas as empty, then identity action is really possible, then we can really study identity action as Dogen says.

And Dogen quotes later the daoistic Book Kanshi :

“We should know in ourselves that because the ocean does not refuse to be the ocean, it can be the ocean and achieves greatness. Because mountains do not refuse to be the mountains, they can be mountains and reach great heights.”

No more ideas and conceptions of the world hinder the relationship with the world. We step out of the illusion of our being. We collaborate with others on a level that has nothing to do with our believed identity. This is solidarity in a whole new way, a solidarity that steps out of our habitual thinking.

I want to take you further ON a journey over the next few weeks and show you how I am trying to achieve this with my practice.

Thank you

