

Heart of Zen : Practice without Gaining-mind

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Introduction

This book includes three important Sōtō Zen texts. The *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* (*Points to Watch in Practicing the Way*) was written by Dōgen Zenji, the founder of the Japanese Sōtō School. The *Jijiyū-Zanmai* (*Samadhi of the Self*) was written by Menzan Zuihō Oshō, one of the greatest figures in the history of Sōtō Zen. And, *Dōgen Zen as Religion* was written by a contemporary Zen master, Uchiyama Kōshō Rōshi. I believe that these texts will enable readers to understand the characteristics of the zazen practice taught by Dōgen Zenji.

1) *The Gakudō-Yōjinshū (Points to Watch in Practicing the Way)*

Dōgen Zenji returned to Japan after five years in China in 1228. During the first couple of years, he stayed at Kenninji monastery where he had practiced with his teacher Myōzen prior to going to China. In 1233, he founded his own monastery, Kōshōji, in Fukakusa near Kyōto. The *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* was written in the following year (1234). Dōgen Zenji's Dharma-successor, Koun Ejō, joined his sangha at this time. So the *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* was probably the first writing for his students as a guide for practice at Kōshōji monastery.

The *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* was not written as one piece, but as ten independent pieces and probably compiled by Dōgen Zenji himself. The *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* was published by Donki, the sixth abbot of Eiheiiji monastery, in 1357. This was the first printing of a Sōtō Zen text and shows how much the *Gakudō-Yōjinshū* was appreciated among Dōgen Zenji's disciples.

In this piece, Dōgen Zenji picked out and discussed various points to be careful about when we practice. Among these, Dōgen Zenji put emphasis on seeing impermanence and arousing bodhi-mind. Seeing impermanence is the foundation of his and also Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings. As Dōgen Zenji repeatedly said in the *Shōbōgenzō-Zuimonki*, : "Impermanence is a very concrete reality we encounter every day right before our eyes. No one can deny it. When we think of our lives, we cannot neglect it. Seeing impermanence is the starting point of our journey in seeking the Way."

Impermanence is, first of all, negation of our individual existence or ego