

SHOBOGENZO ZAZENSHIN

(The Acupuncture Needle of Zazen)

The Buddhas' essential functioning,
the Patriarchs' functioning essence,
Manifests without deliberation
and accomplishes without hindrance.

Manifesting without deliberation,
its manifestation is intimate of itself.
Accomplishing without hindrance,
its accomplishment is realized of itself.

Its manifestation, intimate of itself,
has never been defiled.
Its accomplishment, realized of itself,
is neither Absolute nor relative.

The intimacy that is never defiled
drops away without dependence.
The realization neither Absolute nor relative
penetrates without intent.

Clear water soaks into the earth;
the fish swims like a fish.
The sky is vast and penetrates the heavens;
the bird flies like a bird.

—Dogen Zenji
1200

The Buddhas' essential functioning,
the Patriarchs' functioning essence,
Knows without relating to things and
illuminates without reflecting upon objects.

Knowing without relating to things
its Knowing is subtle of itself.
Illuminating without reflecting upon objects,
its illumination is without idea of itself.

Its Knowing, subtle of itself,
is thought with no discrimination.
Its illumination, without idea of itself,
is the sign without the slightest mark.

The thought with no discrimination,
its Knowing is completed without other.
The sign without the slightest mark,
its illumination is revealed without choice.

The water is pure and clean to the bottom;
a fish swims slowly.
The sky is vast and finds no boundary;
a bird flies far away.

—*Tendo Wanshi Zenji*
c. 1140