

**THE FOUR GREAT VOWS  
(SHI-KU SEI-GAN MON)**

SHU JO MU HEN SEI GAN DO  
BON NO MU JIN SEI GAN DAN  
HO MON MU RYO SEI GAN GAKU  
BUTSU DO MU JO SEI GAN JO

Shujoo muhen seigan do  
Bonnoo mujin seigan dan  
Hoomon muryoo seigan gaku  
Butsudoo mujoo seigan joo

SHU-JO MU-HEN SEI-GAN DO  
BON-NO MU-JIN SEI-GAN DAN  
HO-MON MU-RYO SEI-GAN GAKU  
BUTSU-DO MU-JO SEI-GAN JO

SHI  
SHI

KU  
KU

SEI  
SEI

GAN  
GAN

MON  
MON

四

弘

誓

願

four

broad  
wide  
for all

prayer/pledge/vow

text  
composition

The Four Great Vows  
Four Great Vows for All  
The Four Great Bodhisattva Vows

SHU

JO

MU

HEN

SEI

GAN

DO

衆

生

無

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度

all  
the many

birth  
that which  
has been born

[neg. prefix: without, no,  
free from] boundary  
side

pledge/vow [verb]

to take over to  
the other shore  
(paramita)

ZCLA: Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them  
DS: Though the many beings are numberless, I vow to save them.  
ZCNY: Creations are numberless, I vow to free them.  
RZC: All beings, One Body, we vow to liberate.

ZSS:           However innumerable all beings are, I vow to enlighten them all.  
DTS:           However innumerable all beings are, I vow to save them.  
SA:             However innumerable beings may be, I vow to save them all.  
SFZC:          Beings without end, I vow to save them.  
RBZ:           Beings are numberless, I vow to enlighten them.

BON

NO

MU

JIN

SEI

GAN

DAN

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断

Affliction & distress  
Klesha  
“greed, anger, ignorance”

[neg. prefix: to exhaust  
without, no, to use up  
free from] to run out of

prayer/pledge/vow [verb]

to cut off

ZCLA: Desires are inexhaustible, I vow to put an end to them.  
DS: Though greed, hatred, and ignorance rise endlessly, I vow to cut them off.  
ZCNY: Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.  
RZC: Endless blind passions we vow to uproot.  
ZSS: However inexhaustible my delusions are, I vow to extinguish them all.  
DTS: However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them all.  
SA: However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to transform them all.  
RBZ: Obstacles are countless, I vow to cut them down.  
SFZC: Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.

HO

MON

MU

RYO

SEI

GAN

GAKU

法

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学

Dharma gates

[neg. prefix: countless (?)  
Without, no, boundless  
Free from]

prayer/pledge/vow [verb]

to apprehend  
to perceive  
to realize

ZCLA: The Dharmas are boundless, I vow to master them.  
DS: Though the Dharma is vast and fathomless, I vow to understand it.  
ZCNY: Realities are boundless, I vow to master them.  
RZC: Dharma gates without number, I vow to penetrate.

ZSS: However immeasurable the Dharma Teachings are, I vow to master them all.  
 DTS: However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them.  
 SA: However limitless the Dharma is, I vow to understand it completely.  
 RBZ: Dharma gates are limitless, I vow to master them.  
 SFZC: The Dharma gate is endless, I vow to enter it.

**BUTSU**

**DO**

**MU**

**JO**

**SEI**

**GAN**

**JO**

仏

道

無

上

誓

願

成

Buddha

the Way

[neg. prefix: Without, no,]  
 Free from

top; higher  
 anuttara: unsurpassed,  
 supreme, unexcelled

prayer/pledge/vow [verb]

to become  
 to reach, attain  
 to turn into

ZCLA: The Buddha Way is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it.  
 DS: Though Buddha's Way is beyond attainment, I vow to embody it fully.  
 ZCNY: The Enlightened Way is unsurpassable, I vow to embody it.  
 RZC: The Great Way of Buddha we vow to attain.  
 ZSS: However endless the Buddha's Way is, I vow to follow it.  
 DTS: However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.  
 SA: However infinite the Buddha's Truth is, I vow to attain it.  
 RBZ: The Buddha Way is endless, I vow to follow through.  
 SFZC: Buddha's Way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

**KEY:**

ZCLA Zen Center of Los Angeles  
 DS Diamond Sangha (Aitken Roshi)  
 ZCNY Zen Community of New York (Glassman Roshi)  
 RZC Rochester Zen Center (Kapleau Roshi)  
 ZSS Zen Studies Society (Eido Roshi)  
 DTS Daisetzu T. Suzuki  
 SA Shasta Abbey (Kennett Roshi)  
 RBZ Ring of Bone Zendo  
 SFZC San Francisco Zen Center

### **ZCLA**

Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them  
Desires are inexhaustible, I vow to put an end to them.  
The Dharmas are boundless, I vow to master them.  
The Buddha Way is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it.

### **Diamond Sangha**

Though the many beings are numberless, I vow to save them.  
Though greed, hatred, and ignorance rise endlessly, I vow to cut them off.  
Though the Dharma is vast and fathomless, I vow to understand it.  
Though Buddha's Way is beyond attainment, I vow to embody it fully.

### **Zen Peacemakers**

Creations are numberless, I vow to free them.  
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to put an end to them.  
Realities are boundless, I vow to perceive them.  
The Enlightened Way is unsurpassable, I vow to embody it.

### **Rochester Zen Center**

All beings, One Body, we vow to liberate.  
Endless blind passions we vow to uproot.  
Dharma gates without number we vow to penetrate.  
The Great Way of Buddha we vow to attain.

### **Zen Studies Society**

However innumerable all beings are, I vow to enlighten them all.  
However inexhaustible my delusions are, I vow to extinguish them all.  
However immeasurable the Dharma Teachings are, I vow to master them all.  
However endless the Buddha's Way is, I vow to follow it.

### **D. T. Suzuki, Manual of Zen Buddhism**

However innumerable beings are, I vow to save them.  
However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them.  
However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them.  
However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.

### **Shasta Abbey**

However innumerable beings may be, I vow to save them all.  
However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to transform them all.  
However limitless the Dharma is, I vow to understand it completely.  
However infinite the Buddha's Truth is, I vow to attain it.

### **Ring of Bone Zendo**

Beings are numberless, I vow to enlighten them.  
Obstacles are countless, I vow to cut them down.  
Dharma gates are limitless, I vow to master them.  
The Buddha Way is endless, I vow to follow through.

### **San Francisco Zen Center**

Beings are without end, I vow to save them.  
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.  
The Dharma gate is endless, I vow to enter it.  
Buddha's Way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

### **Kwan Um School of Zen**

Sentient beings are numberless. We vow to save them all.  
Delusions are endless. We vow to cut through them all.  
The teachings are infinite. We vow to learn them all.  
The Buddha Way is inconceivable. We vow to attain it.

### **Great Vow Zen Center**

Beings are numberless; I vow to free them.  
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.  
Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them.  
The Buddha way is unsurpassable; I vow to embody it.

### **Portland Zen Center**

Ordinary-beings are innumerable, I vow to liberate them all.  
Defilements are endless, I vow to eliminate them all.  
Buddha's teachings are unlimited, I vow to learn them all.  
The ways of enlightenment are supreme, I vow to achieve them all.

I vow to liberate all ordinary-beings from my mind.  
I vow to eliminate all defilements from my mind.  
I vow to embrace very teaching of my self-nature.  
I vow to achieve the way of enlightenment from my self-nature.

**Sutra of Hui-Neng (Cleary translation)**

The beings in my own mind are infinite, I vow to liberate them.

The afflictions in my own mind are infinite, I vow to end them.

The teachings in my own nature are inexhaustible, I vow to study them.

The buddhahood in my own nature is supreme, I vow to attain it.

**WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION.**