

Chants while Seated in the Zendo

These are all chanted while seated in the zendo with our hands in gassho. In the morning during sesshin or Friday morning sitting, almost as soon as we enter the zendo, we chant the Gatha of Atonement three times followed by the Tisarana (Taking refuge in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha)). The Tisarana has a simple tune for the first two repetitions, which are in Pali. The third time through, we chant the translation in English.

Gatha of Atonement

All karma ever caused by me since of old,
On account of my beginningless greed, hatred and delusion,
Born of my actions, speech and thought,
Now I atone for it all. (3X)

Tisarana (Three fold refuge)

(2nd time only: Dutiyampi) Buddhāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(2nd time only: Dutiyampi) Dhammāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(2nd time only: Dutiyampi) Saṅghāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi (2X)
For the third time, I take refuge in the Buddha, the oneness of life,
For the third time, I take refuge in the Dharma, the diversity of life,
For the third time, I take refuge in the Sangha, the interdependence of Buddha and Dharma.
(1X)

At the end of the final sitting period in the morning (sesshin or Friday morning), we chant the Verse of the Kesa. Those who have taken the Buddhist Precepts formally (jukai), place their rakusu (the rectangular patchwork with a strap) on their head during the chant. Those who are ordained place the o-kesa on their head (the large robe worn over one shoulder.) Everyone should chant this with their hands in gassho.

Verse of the Kesa

Vast is the robe of liberation,
A formless field of benefaction.
I wear the Tathagata's Teaching,
Serving all sentient beings. (3X)

Gatha on Opening the Sutra is chanted before a Teisho or Dharma Talk (formal talk) when given during sesshin.

Gatha on Opening the Sutra

The Dharma incomparably profound and infinitely subtle
Is rarely encountered even in millions of ages.
Now we see it, hear it, receive and maintain it.
May we completely realize the Tathagatha's true meaning. (1X)

The four Bodhisattva Vows are chanted after the Teisho and also after the last sitting in the evening. This translation was created by the Great Plains Zen Center Liturgy Circle in a collaborative process.

All-Encompassing Four Bodhisattva Vows

Infinite being without boundaries, I vow to awaken.
Endless delusion, I vow to transform.
The Dharma Teachings, without limit, I vow to practice.
The Buddha Way, inconceivable, I vow to embody. (3x)