

# *Basic Study Course*

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## *Class 8*

### Hoshi—Selfless Service

Please write your name: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Meishusama's Teachings

It seems clear to me that the ultimate aim of spiritual practice is the creation of complete and perfect men and women. Perfection may seem a distant hope in this imperfect world of ours, but the cultivation of one's mind and spirit so that they can gradually, step by step, approach perfection is the right action and reveals the aspirations of true faith. As a consequence of this, and as their spirituality deepens, those who are truly committed steadily become more and more "ordinary," less and less separated from the central norms of humankind. This increasing "normality" shows that they are digesting and assimilating the essentials of faith. They must become so practical and sensible in behavior and speech, so warm and friendly in their relationships with others, that the question of what faith they follow never need arise. The impression they should give others is that of a gentle spring breeze. They must deal with people with modesty and kindness, working towards the greater good of society and the happiness of other people. The blessing that God bestows upon us, if we sincerely try to help others, is true happiness. Our true happiness is found in helping others to be happy. It should be clear to everyone that to act in complete contrast to the selfish and egotistical behavior mentioned above will invite not suffering, but the complete opposite: heavenly and eternal bliss. — Common Sense. *Essential Teachings of Meishusama*

From my earliest days, I have always liked pleasing others, to the extent that it could be called my favorite pastime. I am constantly thinking of how others can be made happy and fortunate. My first consideration each morning is about how my family is feeling, and if even one of them feels irritable, I, too, feel bad. . . . To hear people arguing or abusing each other or to hear them grumbling or crying is the hardest thing in the world for me. I want everything and everybody to be at peace, happy, and fortunate. This is my nature.

This way of thinking constitutes one underlying reason that I am a man of happiness and good fortune. It is because of this that I say, "If you do not make others happy, you can never be happy yourself."

— *About Myself. Essential Teachings of Meishusama*

## 2. Hoshi (Selfless Service)

- What is Hoshi?

Being of service to others is one of the most effective ways for us to discover genuine happiness. In Shumei, this service is called **hoshi**. Volunteering to help with simple tasks for our family, friends, coworkers, or neighbors is a good way to practice hoshi.

Hoshi is a selfless form of service in which we dedicate our efforts to a purpose larger than ourselves. Within Shumei, people also perform hoshi in order to support the organization in its greater mission of serving humanity. Usually, hoshi consists of such ordinary tasks as sweeping, mopping, wiping, or scrubbing. It is kept simple, basic, and physical, and therefore vital. When, as a form of hoshi, we physically clean something, we are simultaneously cleaning the interior of our soul, following the principle that the inner reflects the outer, and the outer reflects the inner.

Hoshi serves both God and humanity. This natural balance between idealism and practicality bring both inspiration and effectiveness to the act of hoshi.

When we reach out to assist others with sincere intent, we become happier ourselves. If we perform hoshi with gratitude for the opportunity and privilege to serve God, then our souls will shine with joy and our work will shine with excellence. Just be happy to serve. All hoshi, whether big or small, has value because it contributes to the greater good. It often comes as a surprise to people when they discover how much joy and camaraderie exists within volunteer groups. The volunteers are paid in self-satisfaction and happiness, not money. Selfless action purifies our spirit and opens us to the beneficial influences exerted by our guardian spirit. It also tends to liberate us from self-absorbed moods and preoccupations because the self is forgotten in the act of giving. Generosity reinforces a sense of abundance, whereas selfishness, by its very nature, is a miserable condition, whether we get what we want or not, because it arises from a belief in lack. — *Living a Spiritual Life. An Offering of Light*

Hoshi should not be done for the sake of recognition or reward. That would make it self-serving rather than selfless. Usually it is more appropriate to give anonymously, without seeking credit for it. As Meishusama writes,

**“Displayed virtue is false virtue. Concealed virtue communicates with God.”** — *Faith. Miakarishu*

However, this does not require us to be secretive, because oftentimes in order to be effective, others need to know what we’re doing.

**“My advice is that you do good without craving recognition. Perform good deeds even when people are not paying attention. God will return blessings to you many times greater than the value of your deeds”.**

— *On Being Humble and Flexible. Kannon’s Way*

- **Jyorei as One of the Highest Forms of Hoshi**

There are various forms of hoshi, and among them sharing Jyorei is one of the most spiritually significant ones that Shumei members are privileged to perform. Jyorei brings spiritual, emotional, and physical benefits (health) to both the giver and recipient. As a general rule, those who give Jyorei tend to receive more Light than those who receive it. Also, practicing Jyorei intensively and continuously promotes mental clarity and spiritual growth. (For more details, please refer to the text material for the Basic Study Class 1: Understanding Jyorei)

- **Hoshi and Toku Energy**

When we give freely of our time and energy, we generate Toku Energy, which is the spiritual Light we receive from helping others. Toku Energy is the merit we earn from performing good deeds with an open heart. This energy brightens the aura, elevates the soul, and produces inner happiness. Actions performed with selfless intentions create an inner glow that attracts others and exerts a positive influence upon them. Toku Energy is also the basis for good luck (or good karma) because it acts like a magnet to draw positive things to us. Thus, the more Toku Energy we accumulate, the better will be our future success and good fortune. However, the best rewards come when we do not seek personal gain, but instead concern ourselves with how we can be of service to others. — *Living a Spiritual Life. An Offering of Light*

- **Monetary Hoshi (Donation)**

We can practice hoshi by doing physical or mental labor or by donating money. Any form of voluntary service that is practical and helpful, no matter how prestigious or menial, can be considered hoshi when performed with the right attitude. — *Living a Spiritual Life. An Offering of Light*

**The below are two main donations within Shumei:**

- 1) **Gratitude Donation**

Gratitude donations to Shumei are also a very important way to give. When we receive special blessings or miracles from God and Meishusama, we can express our appreciation by giving a gratitude donation. People who have regained their health, survived a serious traffic accident, or learned that their loved ones were unharmed in a disaster may choose to give such a donation. They make this donation before they forget to express their gratitude to God. Gratitude donations can be made on a daily basis. Some people put coins into a gratitude box at their home every day or at every meal. Then once a month, they change the coins into bills and make a donation at their Center. Whether we notice or not, we receive many blessings. Verbally expressing our

gratitude, doing some hoshi, or making a donation are powerful ways to connect with God. When we have positive thoughts, words, and actions, their frequency attracts positive conditions in our life.

## 2) Construction Donation

Construction donations are made for special construction or fundraising projects. We can make construction donations without any particular projects. Normally, these donations are a large amount and are an intense means of purifying the soul and spirit. Typically, most people have an attachment to money and are inclined to use it for themselves. After all, they have invested their time and energy into earning it. However, when people donate large sums of money to God, they reduce their spiritual clouds greatly, and they reduce their attachment to money as well. Some people give 10% of their total monthly income for the construction donation. The amount of the donation is important, and when it is given with gratitude, it becomes even more valuable.

## 3) Otamagushi as Offering

**Otamagushi** is a financial offering given before attending a Sampai. The word means “pure human heart (or intentions) aligned with the heart of God.” An alternate meaning is “a pure human soul and God’s Spirit joined as one.” Offering Otamagushi is an essential part of the Sampai, as is washing one’s hands and rinsing one’s mouth, and it helps prepare one’s mind for contemplation and prayer. Whether small or large, what is put in an envelope to offer is important only if it comes with gratitude for all of God’s blessings. If one does not have the financial means to give Otamagushi, then an act of hoshi at the Center, such as washing the sink, sweeping the grounds, or mopping the floor, is an appropriate substitute. Both are good ways to demonstrate the sincerity of one’s gratitude. The intent behind Otamagushi is to give back to God a portion of what has been given to us. One whose heart is full of gratitude comes to realize that all things are gifts from God. (*An Offering of Light, Shumei’s Rituals*) Although Otamagushi is a monetary hoshi, the intent and spiritual meaning are different. The process of preparing and presenting Otamagushi is an important part of sampai and is a significant spiritual practice.

## 3. Shumei Philosophy: The Essential Pillars (Love and Gratitude)

**“If you do not make others happy, you can never be happy yourself.”**

**“Gratitude breeds gratitude, discontent spawns discontent. . . . a grateful heart rises straight to God. . . .**

**Because of this, people whose hearts are ever grateful are naturally fortunate and happy.”**

— *About Myself. Essential Teachings of Meishusama*

The two essential qualities within Meishusama's philosophy are **love for others** and **gratitude**. If people ask you what kind of organization Shumei is, you could say that, "Shumei is a spiritual organization which emphasizes sharing love and expressing gratitude as a means to spiritual growth. As you know, Jyorei is a way to express love and our Ohikaris were created by Meishusama out of his unending love and compassion for humanity. Also, gratitude is the key to transmitting powerful healing energy. If Jyorei reduces a person's suffering, you might receive their gratitude. We call this gratitude energy "Toku Energy." It can make our aura thicker and brighter.

**If a person thinks good thoughts and performs good deeds, he feels good inside because his conscience is satisfied and the pleasant thoughts originating from this become radiant Light. This Light increases and strengthens the radiance emitted from the spiritual body. This Light is also increased from the outside, for when someone performs a good deed, the gratitude and appreciation of the person he has helped become radiant Light that is transmitted to him through the spiritual cords, thus brightening his aura.**

— *Spiritual Radiations and the Aura. Essential Teachings of Meishusama*

The more you understand **the Law of Purification** and **the Law of Spiritual Precedence**, the more likely you will be grateful for everything, even suffering and pain. If you try to always be grateful and constantly make efforts to increase the happiness of others, your spiritual level will continue to rise and your spiritual clouds will continue to disappear. This is the Law of Karma at work.

**It is for this reason that I am urging the human race towards a great awakening through the flowering of a spiritual culture. Once you perceive spiritual phenomena and understand spiritual matters, you will see how clear are the sources of true unalloyed happiness and how easy they are to grasp. A faith that is not accompanied by a deep knowledge of spiritual matters cannot on its own bring perfect peace of mind. If you acquire a deep knowledge of the spiritual world, then life is joyful and even death itself is pleasant. You will have found eternal bliss.** — *Preface. Essential Teachings of Meishusama*

#### **4. Meishusama's Love and Compassion (a few episodes among great many)**

- In 1932, one of Meishusama's staff personnel pleaded with him to travel to the Noto area and share Jyorei with his young nephew who had a severe case of pneumonia. Meishusama traveled by train and upon meeting the child, could see that the illness was too serious to cure. However, he didn't have the heart to tell the family, and after sharing Jyorei three times, the child did get better. Later, the condition worsened and

once again Meishusama traveled the distance and shared Jyorei, but on the following day, the child passed away. Although Meishusama understood the eventual fate of the child, he continued to try out of concern for the child's family.

- Meishusama has written a great number of Ohikari. "When I create Ohikaris, I receive the Divine Spirit and feel that this Light can help a great many people who are suffering." Meishusama could render about five or six hundred Ohikari per hour.
- One day, following his haircut, the barber touched Meishusama's hands, and was shocked at how rough and hardened they were because he expected the hands to be very soft. Meishusama explained, "Calluses have formed on my fingers from making Ohikari." The barber was so touched by Meishusama's efforts to help others that he began crying.

After adopting a spiritual life, Meishusama was divinely guided to create the Ohikari as a way to help people. He had a tremendous compassion and love for others.

## **5. Discussion**

- Explain hoshi in your own words.
- What are the different forms of hoshi?
- How do love for others and gratitude relate to hoshi?
- What is the most important aspect of hoshi?
- What have you learned from performing hoshi? Please provide some examples.

## **6. Assignment (Essay writing) for Online Course participants**

Please write a short (one page-length) essay on the following questions:

Q1: How do love for others and gratitude relate to hoshi?

Q2: What is the most important aspect of hoshi?

### **(Optional Homework)**

Besides the homework above, as Eugene Sensei encourages in the video, please find a type of hoshi that you can do in your daily life, and practice it continuously or regularly. And if you would like to share what you have learned from it, please write about it.