

## Class 2: “If Not Now, When?”

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We will continue from where we left off in the “Tenzo kyokun”.

*When the meal is ready and set out on trays, at noon and morning put on the wrap robe, spread your bowing mat, offer incense and do nine great bows in the direction of the Monks’ Hall. When this is done, send out the food.*

These nine-fold bows are done by the tenzo because his work, as tenzo, is an offering to the Sangha of monks and nuns and priests, an offering to practice. The practice of his work is offered to the practice of sitting.

*Day and night, the work for preparing the meals must be done without wasting a moment. If you do this and everything that you do whole-heartedly, this nourishes the seeds of Awakening and brings ease and joy to the practice of the community.*

*Although the Buddha’s Teachings have been heard for a long time in Japan, I have never heard of any one speaking or writing about how food should be prepared within the monastic community as an expression of the Teachings, let alone such details as offering nine bows before sending forth the food. As a consequence, we Japanese have taken no more consideration of how food should be prepared in a monastic context than have birds or animals. This is cause for regret, especially since there is no reason for this to be so.*

*When I was staying at Tiantong-jingde-si, a monk named Lu from Qingyuan fu held the post of tenzo. Once, following the noon meal I was walking along the eastern covered walkway towards a sub-temple called Chaoran Hut when I came upon him in front of the Buddha Hall drying mushrooms in the sun. He had a bamboo stick in his hand and no hat covering his head. The heat of the sun was blazing on the paving stones. It looked very painful; his back was bent like a bow and his eyebrows were as white as the feathers of a crane. I went up to the tenzo and asked, “How long have you been a monk?” “Sixty-eight years,” he said.*

*“Why don’t you have an assistant do this for you?”*

*“Other people are not me.”*

You are you, I am I. He is recognizing there is no separation between us until our work is done completely for others, all of the beings which arise within our bodyminds, all of the thoughts that we have, all of the colours that we see, all of the sounds that we hear - offering realization to these beings, offering the work of tenzo to the beings in the Zendo. Although there is no separateness, each thing is distinct: red is red and blue is blue; rice is rice and soup is soup. We don’t mix them up but we don’t split them apart.

*“Venerable sir, I can see how you follow the Way through your work. But still, why do this now when the sun is so hot?”*

*"If not now, when?"*

Don't try to leave your practice to some other time or to someone else. Don't try to leave it to the Teacher; don't try to leave it to fate. Don't absorb yourself in the breath; don't abstract yourself in the breath. When feeling the breath, feel the breath completely. When a thought comes up, penetrate completely. When a sound comes up, penetrate completely. Don't delegate your authority within practice, practice completely.

*There was nothing else to say. As I continued on my way along the eastern corridor I was moved by how important the work of the tenzo is.*

*In May of 1223 I was staying aboard the ship at Qingyuan. Once I was speaking with the captain when a monk about sixty years of age came aboard to buy mushrooms from the ship's Japanese merchants. I asked him to have tea with me and asked where he was from. He was the tenzo from Ayuwang shan.*

*He said, "I come from Xishu but it is now forty years since I've left there and I am now sixty-one. I have practiced in several monasteries. When the Venerable Daoquan became abbot at Guyun temple of Ayuwang I went there but just idled the time away, not knowing what I was doing. Fortunately, I was appointed tenzo last year when the summer Training Period ended. Tomorrow is May 5th..."*

The day on which Bodhidharma died.

*but I don't have anything special offerings for the monks so I thought I'd make a nice noodle soup for them. We didn't have any mushrooms so I came here to give the monks something from the ten directions."*

*"When did you leave Ayuwang shan?" I asked.*

*"After the noon meal." "How far is it from here?" "Around twelve miles." "When are you going back to the monastery?"*

*"As soon as I've bought the mushrooms."*

*I said, "As we have had the unexpected opportunity to meet and talk like this today, I would like you to stay a while longer and allow me to offer Zen master tenzo a meal."*

*"Oh, I'm sorry, but I just can't. If I am not there to prepare tomorrow's meal it won't go well."*

*"But surely someone else in the monastery knows how to cook? If you're not there it can't make that much difference to everyone."*

*"I have been given this responsibility in my old age and it is this old man's practice. How can I leave to others what I should do myself? As well, when I left I didn't ask for permission to be gone overnight."*

*"Venerable sir, why put yourself to the difficulty of working as a cook in your old age? Why not just do zazen and study the koan of the ancient masters?"*

*The tenzo laughed for a long time and then he said, "My foreign friend, it seems you don't really*

*understand practice or the words of the ancients.”*

*Hearing this elder monk’s words I felt ashamed and surprised. I asked, “What is practice? What are words?”*

*The tenzo said, “Keep asking and penetrate this question and then you will be someone who understands.”*

Here Dogen zenji missed the meaning of his own words, the speaking of his own words, to penetrate the mind which speaks at that moment. This is the meaning of practice. This is the meaning of the words of the ancient masters of koan, the complete display. Penetrate one mind moment and you will find it is as vast as the world itself. It is Sagara Mudra Samadhi. It is Ocean Seal. One mind moment contains the three times and ten directions.

*But I didn’t know what he was talking about and so the tenzo said, “If you don’t understand then come and see me at Ayuwang shan some time. We’ll talk about the meaning of words.” Having said this, he stood up and said, “It’ll be getting dark soon. I’d best hurry.” And he left.*

*In July of the same year I was staying at Tiantong shan when the tenzo of Ayuwang shan came to see me and said, “After the summer Training Period is over I’m going to retire as tenzo and go back to my native region. I heard from a fellow monk that you were here and so I came to see how you were making out.”*

*I was overjoyed. I served him tea as we sat down to talk. When I brought up our discussion on the ship about words and practice, the tenzo said, “If you want to understand words you must look into what words are. If you want to practice, you must understand what practice is.”*

*I asked, “What are words?”*

*The tenzo said, “One, two, three, four, five.”*

*I asked again, “What is practice?”*

*“Everywhere, nothing is hidden.”*

Right here: this is the origin of practice. This is root of practice.

*We talked about many other things but I won’t go into that now. Suffice it to say that without this tenzo’s kind help I would not have had any understanding of words or of practice. When I told my late teacher Myozen about this he was very pleased.*

*Later I found a verse that Xuedou wrote for a disciple:*

*“One, seven, three, five.*

*What you search for cannot be grasped.*

*As the night deepens, the moon brightens over the ocean.*

*The black dragon’s jewel is found in every wave.*

*Looking for the moon, it is here in this wave and the next.”*

*What the tenzo said is expressed here in Xuedou’s verse as well. Then it was even clearer to me that the tenzo was truly a person of the Way.*

*Before I knew one, two three, four, five; now I know six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Monks, you and those to follow must understand practice and words through this and from that. Exert yourself in this way and you will practice the single true taste of Zen beyond words, undivided into the poisonous five flavours. Then you will be able to prepare food for the monastic community properly.*

These numbers are all dharmas; all dharmas are these numbers. At first it is one, two, three, four five and then these are completely gone. And then it's five, six, seven, eight.

*There are many old stories we can hear and present examples of monks training as tenzo. A great many teachings concern this because it is the heart of the Way.*

What is this "one taste" that we are cooking up within our practice, that we are cooking up within our body and mind? What does this moment taste like? What does this sound taste like? What does the feeling of the tongue against the roof of your mouth taste like? Chew this taste to penetrate.

*Even if you become the Abbot of a monastery, you should have this same understanding. The Zen Monastic Standards states, "Prepare each meal with each detail kept clear so that there will be enough. Make sure that the four offerings of food, clothing, bedding, and medicine are adequate just as the Generous One offered to his disciples the merit of twenty years of his lifetime.*

This, of course, is from the Mahayana myth that the Buddha had an allotted life span of 100 years but he sacrificed the last 20 years of his life in order to offer it to all beings so that they would have a bit more time to practice and perhaps Wake Up. But in any case, it is an example of generosity.

*We ourselves live today within the light of that gift because the energy of even a white hair between his brows is inexhaustible.*

As well, the Buddha had a hair that curled clockwise between his brows. If you had a certain kind of mind you would see it as a hair. If you had another kind of mind you would see it as light.

It also says, "Just think about how to best serve the assembly without being hindered by thoughts of poverty. If your mind is limitless, you enjoy limitlessness." This is how the abbot serves the assembly.

And I too, would add, do not be limited by happiness.

*In preparing food, it is essential to be sincere and to respect each ingredient irregardless of how coarse or fine it is. There is the example of the old woman who gained great merit through offering water in which she had rinsed rice to the Thus Come. And of King Ashoka creating roots of wholesomeness through offering half a mango to a monastery as he lay dying. As a result of this he realized the deathless in his next life. Even the grandest offering to the Buddha, if insincere, is worth less than the smallest sincere offering in bringing about a connection with awakening. This is how human beings should conduct themselves.*

So, give what you can and receive what you can. Offer completely. Do not pretend that you cannot be Buddha. Buddha is born from the womb of the three klesas and so we give what we can and practice as we can. We exert ourselves as we are and without images of what our practice should be like. The practice is exertion in the midst of hope and fear, although complete exertion is free of hope and fear. But by facing hope and fear completely, we discover complete exertion. We do not have to get rid of the three klesas to realize that we are Buddha. We have to understand and penetrate the three klesas of passion, aggression and ignorance to realize that we are Buddha. If you wait until the three klesas are completely gone in order to be Buddha, when will this happen? What is the mind that gives rise to the three klesas? To say that we can't be Buddha because we just don't feel like Buddha? But what does Buddha feel like? What does Buddha think like? Who are you?

*A rich buttery soup is not better as such than a broth of wild herbs. In handling and preparing wild herbs, do so as you would the ingredients for a rich feast, wholeheartedly, sincerely, clearly. When you serve the monastic assembly, they and you should taste only the flavour of the Ocean of Reality, the Ocean of unobscured Awake Awareness, not whether or not the soup is creamy or made only of wild herbs.*

Within Ocean Seal, all dharmas penetrate all dharmas and yet no dharma is eliminated by all of these other dharmas. In the Jewel Net of Indra, each jewel reflects every other jewel and yet it is still a single jewel. Each mind moment reflects the three times and the ten directions. This bodymind is itself the entire Jewel Net of Indra. This Jewel Net of Indra is the entire bodymind.

*In nourishing the seeds of living in the Way rich food and wild grass are not separate. There is the old saying, "The mouth of a monk is like a furnace." Bear this in mind. Wild grasses can nourish the seeds of Buddha and bring forth the buds of the Way. Do not regard them lightly. A teacher must be able to use a blade of wild grass to benefit humans and shining beings.*

This means that food fuels the bodymind. We eat in order to fuel our practice. Nothing gets as hungry as Zen monks or hungry ghosts. And since food is fuel we do not search for fine tastes or reject that which is not a fine taste. We eat penetrating the taste. We eat, exerting practice of the moment when we eat without completely localizing on the food. Usually when people are served food and they like it they completely blank out everything else that is going on and they become absorbed in some sort of trance state and absorb themselves into the food, reinforce themselves with the food, become blinded by the food. If they don't like the food, they ignore it and just shovel it in. To find strength in food does not mean to ignore the taste but simply to realize what it tastes like.

*Do not discriminate between the faults or virtues of the monks or whether they are senior or junior. You do not even know where you stand, so how can you put others into categories. Judging others from within the boundaries of your own opinions, how could you be anything other than wrong?*

If you cannot even know what categories you fall into, how can you know about others? So let us not judge other people's practice. We see someone whose back is bent, we don't have to think that they are not sitting correctly. We see someone get angry, someone being scoffed at, we cannot criticize them for that. They are as they are and if they realize what they are doing and truly are trying to be wholehearted, then this is

practice. We can only practice as we are. When we manifest through practice, we do so as we are, not according to images that we have about what we should be like when we practice so we should not have images about how other people should practice. We should not judge other people's practice because we cannot do practice for other people. We can only do our own practice. This is actually the essence of Sangha, this "harmonious community" of people gathered together in the Zendo and practicing together, but each person feels their own breath, works with their own koan, faces the wall with their own eyes. And so while we are mutually together in this Zendo we are all completely and utterly alone.

*Although there are differences between seniors and juniors, all are equally members of the assembly. Those who had many faults yesterday may be correct and clear today. Who can judge "sacred" from "common." The Zen Monastic Standards states, "Whether foolish or wise, the fact that one trains as a monk provides for others a gift that penetrates everywhere." If you stand beyond opinions of right and wrong, you bring forth the practice of actualizing unsurpassable Awakening.*

*If you do not, you take a wrong step and miss what's there. The bones and marrow of the ancients was just the exertion of such practice and those monks who train as tenzo in the future realize the bones and marrow of the Way only through just such exertion. The monastic rules set forth by great master Baizhang must always be maintained.*

Baizhang was a Zen Master in the Tang Dynasty after the Sixth Ancestor, who composed the Regulations for Zen Monasteries. This was a time when the Patimokkha of Indian forms of Buddhism were found to be not completely functional in China and so new modes of behaviour and practice had to be formed. So Baizhang was apparently the first to compose a set of rules for the conduct of monks within the Zen monastery. Actually, his text has been lost. There have been a lot of texts called the rule of Baizhang but the actual texts itself has been lost.

*After I returned to Japan I stayed at Kennin-ji for around two years. They had the office of tenzo there but it was only nominal because no one actually carried out the real activity of this training post. They did not understand it as the activity of Awake Awareness so how could they have been able to use it to express the Way? Truly, it was very sad. The tenzo there had never encountered a living one who could use the office of tenzo as the functioning of Awake Awareness and so he carelessly idled away, breaking the standards of practice.*

*I watched the tenzo there quite closely. He never actually worked at preparing the morning and evening meals but just ordered about some rough servants, lacking in intelligence and heart, leaving to them all the tasks whether important or not. He never checked on whether they were working well or not, as if it would be shameful to do so like peeping into the private quarters of a neighbouring woman. He just hung about in his own rooms, reading sutras or chanting when he wasn't lying down or chatting. Months would go by before he would even come close to a pot, let alone buy utensils or make out a menu. He did not understand that these activities are the exertion of Awareness.*

How can you know without doing them?

*The practice of donning the wrap robe and offering nine bows before sending out the food was something he would never have even dreamed of; it just wouldn't have occurred to him. As he himself did not*

*understand the office of tenzo, when it came time for him to teach a novice how to carry out the office what understanding could be passed on? It was very regrettable. Although one might have the fortune to hold this post, if one is without the mind which uncovers the Way and fails to meet with one who has the virtue of the Way, it is like returning empty-handed after climbing a mountain of treasure or entering an ocean of jewels.*

We all have these opportunities, moment to moment with every task that we face, every breath that we take, to completely realize Ocean Seal and to completely penetrate the three times; to completely realize ourselves as Buddha. But moment after moment we seem to come away empty handed. Dogen zenji's Transmission is empty hands, holding onto nothing, but holding surely, completely, and letting go completely. With each breath, with each moment, with each task, with each thought we can see this coming and going clearly, realize this coming and going to be the nature of the Buddha's Awoken self.

*Although you might not have the mind which uncovers the Way, if you meet one manifesting the True Person you can then practice and unfold the Way. Or, even if you cannot meet with one who is the display of the True Person, by yourself deeply arousing the seeking for the Way, you can begin the Way. If you lack both of these, what is the point?*

*In the many monasteries of the mountains of Song China that I have seen, the monks holding the various offices train in these posts for a year at a time, each of them in each moment practicing by three standards. Firstly, to benefit others benefits yourself. Second, make every effort to maintain and renew the monastic environment. Third, follow the standards set forth by the examples of excellent practitioners of past and present and come to stand with them.*

*You should understand that foolish people hold their practice as if it belonged to someone else, wise people practice with everyone as themselves.*

*An ancient teacher*

This is actually Xuedou here.

*said, "Two-thirds of your life has passed without clarifying who you are. Eating your life, muddling about in this and that, you don't even turn when called on. Pathetic."*

*From this verse we can see that if you have not met a true teacher, you will just follow the lead of your tendencies. And this is pathetic. It's like the story of the foolish son who leaves his parent's home with the family treasure and then throws it away on a dung heap. Do not waste your opportunity as that man did. Considering those who in the past made good use of their training as tenzo, we can see that their virtues were equal to those of their office. The great Daigu woke up while training as tenzo and Dongshan Shouchou's "Three pounds of flax," occurred while he was tenzo.*

When he was tenzo, in answer to the question, "What is Buddha?" "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?"

*The only thing of value is the realization of the Way, the only time that is precious is each moment of*

*realizing the Way.*

*Examples of those who long for the Way are many. There is the story of a child offering the Buddha a handful of sand as a great treasure. Another is of someone who made images of the Buddha and had reverence for them and thus had great benefit follow them. How much more benefit must there be in fulfilling the office of tenzo through actualizing its possibilities as have those excellent ones who have practiced before us?*

I think we will leave the text now.

Is there anything anyone would like to talk about? Any questions?

Well until we look at this text again, we will just cook ourselves thoroughly.