

Gabyo: Painted Rice Cakes

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When all the Awakened Ones are realized through Awake Awareness, all things are Awake Awareness. Yet, and thus, there are particular things and minds. Although from the point of view of Awareness itself there are no things or minds, they are each the expression of Awake Awareness. Thus there is nothing that can obstruct Awakening. This is the clear and direct teaching of all the Ancestors.

Still, don't just try to practice by thinking yourself into the idea that everything is Awake Awareness. There is a saying, "If you penetrate one thing, you penetrate all things." By Yunju Daoying (Yun-chu Tao-ying, Ungo Doyo) d. 901. See Denkoroku Chapter 40. Penetrating something is not a matter of opposing or removing how something appears in its unique character. And don't try to cook up some state of non-opposition because this is just another form of grasping. When your experience occurs just as it is, then you can use each thing, as it appears, to reveal what it actually is. This is how to "penetrate one thing" and through this "penetrate all things."

An old Buddha, Xiangyen Zhixian (Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, Kyogen Chikan), d. 840 or 898. See Gateless Gate Case 3. said, "Painted rice cakes do not satisfy hunger." From all directions, monks dressed in clouds and mist, those who are opening to Openness and renunciate disciples, Bodhisattvas and sravakas, come to study this saying and all understand it according to their various capacities and strengths, some with faces like demons, some with heavenly bliss. Some are fat and some are thin. Throughout the past and right now, the Ancestors have taught this but people reduce it to mumbling in their forest hermitages. So, some people say that it means that studying the Discourses and Commentaries has nothing to do with opening to primordial Knowing and that they are "painted cakes that do not satisfy hunger". Others say that the Narrow Path and Vast Path, Literally the Three Vehicles (Sravakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana and Bodhisattvayana) and the One Vehicle (Ekayana) teachings are separate from the path of complete and utter Awakening, that they are "paintings of rice cakes and cannot satisfy hunger."

This is a serious mistake. To think that the teachings of the Discourses are something other than the Way is itself incomplete and those who think in this way cannot transmit the complete Path but are just making a career out of selling the words of the Ancestors. "Painted rice cakes do not satisfy hunger" says the same thing as "Wrong action does not arise," "There is only the arising of benefit," "What is it that comes Thus?" or "At all times, each being expresses its totality." You can really only understand these statements through practising them.

Only a few have heard that "painted rice cakes do not satisfy hunger" and none have really understood what it meant. I've asked several of these skin bags about it and everybody was quite certain about it without even bothering to look into it. They were like someone overhearing a conversation that they were not involved in. You should understand that this "painted rice cake" is the face that you were born with and the Original Face you had before your parents were even born. A rice cake, although made of rice, is neither born nor unborn, neither exists nor does not. As a rice cake, it is the moment displaying itself as impermanence; and

yet what it is as such never moves. It cannot be understood if it is only understood as something that comes and goes.

In painting a rice cake you use the same materials as you would to paint a landscape. You can use blue pigment to paint mountains and rivers and powdered rice to paint a rice cake. The work of composition is the same. This being so, sesame cakes, vegetable cakes, milk cakes and so on are all this “painted rice cake.” There is no difference between paintings, rice cakes, or any thing [fn] Dharmas. [/fn] at all and you should understand that these rice cakes in front of you that you are about to eat are all “painted rice cakes.” If you are looking for these “painted rice cakes” anywhere else you still don’t know how to eat a rice cake. Sometimes they appear as rice cakes, sometimes not. However, they completely transcend any coming or going, old or new and it is in this [fn] Shato. “Sha”, this, “to”, head. [/fn] that the realm of “painted rice cakes” reveals itself.

“Hunger” which is “not satisfied” means that, although we are not bound to the conditions of contingent existence, somehow we do not know that we are encountering “painted rice cakes” and so, even though we eat these “painted cakes” we are still “hungry.” “Hunger” means that we have distanced ourselves from “painted cakes” but there is no need to try to satisfy this “hunger” because there is really nothing lacking. This “hunger” is what presents itself as all of the changing manifestations of confused experience. But “painted rice cakes” display themselves as this whole bodymind; blue, yellow, red, and white; long, short; round, and square.

When you paint a landscape you might use blue paint. The pigment of the blue comes from many ingredients such as ground minerals [fn] Literally, the seven treasures: silver, lapis lazuli, moonstone, agate, coral, and amber. [/fn] and the four treasures of brush, ink, inkstone, and paper. “Painted cakes” are also painted through the interaction of many elements. You paint a human being with the five aggregates and four elements. [fn] Form, basic reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning, and consciousness; earth, air, water, and fire. [/fn] To paint an Awakened One you need not only gold pigments and minerals because to paint the auspicious signs of such a one you need a “blade of grass” [fn] Dogen often uses the phrase “a blade of grass” to express phenomenal experience as something fresh, alive, growing, that stands forth. In Records of Silence Case 4 Indra builds a stupa to mark formlessness by plucking a blade of grass, showing it to the Awakened One, and then sticking it into the ground. What did he mean by this? [/fn] and eons of dedication and practice. This is how one Awakened One is painted; all Awakened Ones are such paintings and all paintings of Awakened Ones are Awake. You must see these painted Awakened Ones and “painted cakes” with the whole body. Which is the black stone tortoise [fn] Sekiuki, A monk asked, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming from the West?”

Longya Judun said, “Wait until the black stone tortoise can understand words and then I will tell you.” [fn] (Jingde Chuandenglu 17) [/fn] and which is this iron staff? Which is form and which is mind? Follow through and look into this closely. Practice like this and you will know how to paint birth and death, coming and going, and how to paint Primordial Awareness. All worlds and spaces are just such paintings.

An old Buddha wrote this verse on a painting of Shakyamuni Awakening in the midst of a landscape:

*In this Awakening, layers of snow over green hills.
On scroll after scroll, the world is revealed.*

This verse speaks of Great Awakening and of how to exert the practice of the Way. In painting a single scroll of green mountains and white snow, Great Awakening is revealed. All movements and conditions are painted like this, and all our present activities are nothing other than such paintings. The ten energies and three powers of an Awakened One, her five strengths[fn]Ten energies: knowing what is true and what is not, knowing the consequences of events, knowing the inclinations of beings, knowing the various styles of beings, knowing the capacities of beings, knowing the destinations of all paths of practice, knowing what can obscure practice and how to clarify these, knowing one's own past existences, knowing future evolvments, knowing the end of all outflows; three powers: the power of her own practice, the power of Reality as a continual presencing, the power of the realization of inherent Awareness; five strengths: confidence, thoroughness, mindfulness, harmony, perfect knowing.[/fn] and all of practice are such paintings. If a painting is not real, nothing is real.[fn]A painting is a painting. A painting of an apple is not an apple, but it is a painting. The painted apple is not really an apple but it really is a painted apple. There are different kinds of realities and all are paintings on the canvas or expressions of the Open Expanse of Reality.[/fn] If the numberless experiences which present themselves as the world are not real then the Way of Reality is not real. If the Way of Reality is real then a "painted rice cake" is real as well.

Once a monk asked Great Master Yunmen[fn]Yunmen Wenyen (Yunmen Wen-yen, Ummon Bun'en), 864-949. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 6, 8, 14, 15, 22, 27, 34, 39, 47, 50, 54, 60, 62, 77, 83, 86, 87, 88 and in Gateless Gate 15, 16, 21, 39, 48.[/fn] "What is it that transcends the Awakened Ones and Ancestors?" Yunmen said, "A sesame cake."[fn]See Blue Cliff Records Case 77.[/fn] You should just shut up and take a clear look into this. That something like a sesame cake should appear in this kind of discussion shows that this Ancestor was able to express something which goes beyond the Awakened Ones and Ancestors. People of iron who have not heard this yet, already understand it. This question and answer[fn]Tenji and toku.[/fn] manifests not just one sesame cake; it must be worth at least two or three. This saying transcends the Awakened Ones and Ancestors and cuts right through the realms of clarity and confusion.

My late master Rujing said, "Tall bamboos and banana plants can both be painted on a single piece of paper." This expression is not about tall or short but points to both as paintings. A tall bamboo is tall. It grows through the interactions between stasis and expansion[fn]Onyo. Yin and yang. All organic systems must maintain the integrity of their organization but must be open to their environment to grow.[/fn] and the bamboo's seasons of growth also influence the movements of stasis and expansion. It is difficult to understand the permutations of stasis and expansion even with Awakened eyes because they cannot be measured apart from things and even things are just measurements of the interaction between stasis and growth at particular points within the process. It is not a matter of taking up a view from outside the Path, one according to the Narrow Path or the Vast Path. Stasis and expansiveness grow as tall as bamboo and all bamboo throughout all directions are all Awake Awareness as bamboo.

Do you understand the sky and ground[fn]The interpenetration of the ultimate nature of ungraspable Awareness (sky) radiant as the display of apparent forms (ground).[/fn] as the root, trunk, branches and leaves of "tall bamboo?" All worlds and oceans grow and live through bamboo. The master's staff is bamboo as is the waking stick[fn]Shippei: a split piece of bamboo that preceded use of the kyosaku (waking stick) in the Zendo.[/fn] that cuts through time.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, knowing, and knowledge are the roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit of banana trees. The blowing of the autumn wind through its leaves cuts through "autumn wind"

and brings it to life. Not a speck of dust marks this stainlessness. The eye is not a muscle or a bone that needs to be flexed to see and paint and glue do not stick to apparent forms in their liberation. Don't even bother to think of liberation as taking a short or a long time. Earth, air, water, fire, and wind can all be used through this energy. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter become the dynamic activity of your own life and mind, will, consciousness, and wisdom are all the "great death" which is liberation. All these tall bamboo and short banana plants are paintings and he who Awakens through the sound of bamboo[fn]Xiangyen Zhixian (Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, Kyogen Chikan), d. 840 or 898. See Gateless Gate Case 3. Xiangyen woke up through hearing a stone strike the trunk of a bamboo when he was sweeping.[/fn] is also a painting as are those who drag themselves around in practice like snakes and those who realize like dragons.[fn]The explanations in the similes of snakes and dragons have been added.[/fn]

Still, there is definitely a difference between those who Wake Up and those who do not.

*That stalk is long like that,
this stalk is short like this.*

*This stalk is long like this,
that stalk is short like that.[fn]A verse of Cuiwei Wuxue (Ts'ui-wei Wu-hsueh, Suibi Mugaku), 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Danxia Tianran, gave Transmission to Touzi Datong. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 20 which is also Records of Silence 80.[/fn]*

But all are paintings and long and short scrolls are all in the picture. Just because one painting is long does not mean that another cannot be short. You should really get the point of this.

The entire universe with all of its events is only a painted picture. People and all beings arise there and Awakened Ones and Ancestors Wake Up and become what they are through it. So, if there is no "painted rice cake" there is no way to "satisfy hunger." Without this painting of "hunger" how can you meet the True Person? If there is no painting of "satisfaction" how can there be the energy of Awakening? Without "painted rice cakes" how could you ever "satisfy hunger," "satisfy non-hunger," "not satisfy hunger," and "not satisfy non-hunger?" You should practice this whole world as a "painted rice cake."

Practice the meaning of this through the bodymind and you will intimately understand[fn]Gujin: "practice thoroughly", "penetrate completely".[/fn] the energy of that which moves and that which is moved. If this energy is not manifested, your practice of the Way is still unmanifested. Manifesting this energy is itself how to paint Awakening.

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