

On Everyday Life

(*Kajō*)

Translator’s Introduction: *Kajō* literally means ‘what is habitual (*jō*) in one’s home life (*ka*)’. Throughout the discourse Dōgen speaks of *sahan*, literally ‘tea and cooked rice’, as the staples of everyday living. While at one level this term simply points out that the Buddhas and Ancestors, in Their humanity, are no different from any other person, it also, more significantly, carries a deeper spiritual connotation, referring to the everyday ceaseless practice that has spiritually sustained and nourished Them and which has the capacity to do the same for us.

Generally speaking, in the dwelling places of Buddhas and Ancestors, taking tea and eating rice is what constitutes Their everyday life.¹ This custom of taking tea and eating rice has been passed on to us and fully manifests itself in the here and now. This is why the taking of tea and the eating of rice by Buddhas and Ancestors has come down to us as a way of living.



The monk Fuyō Dōkai, whilst on Mount Daiyō, once asked Tōsu, “The thoughts and sayings of the Buddha’s Ancestors are like the tea and rice of everyday life. Putting these thoughts and sayings aside for the moment, is there any word or phrase you might have for the sake of others?”

Tōsu answered, “You, right now, say! The Emperor inside the capital rules it, so does he have to look back to previous emperors of legendary times, like Yū, T’ang, Yao, and Shun?”

Just when Daiyō was intent on opening his mouth, Tōsu picked up his ceremonial *hossu** and covered Daiyō’s mouth with it, saying, “At the very moment when you gave rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, you immediately deserved thirty blows.”

1. Taking tea and eating rice is a metaphor for partaking of the Dharma which spiritually nourishes us.

* See *Glossary*.

Thereupon, Daiyō opened up to his enlightenment and, after having bowed in deepest respect to Tōsu, immediately took his leave.

Tōsu called out to him, “Come back a minute, acharya!”*

When Daiyō did not turn his head around, Tōsu said, “Have you, my disciple, arrived at the place where there is no doubt?”

Daiyō covered his ears with his hands and left.

So, clearly, we should preserve and take care of the teaching that the thoughts and sayings of the Buddha’s Ancestors are the tea and rice of everyday life. The homely fare of everyday life is the thoughts of Buddhas and the sayings of Ancestors.² The Buddhas and Ancestors prepare the tea and rice, and the tea and rice help sustain and take care of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Since this is so, we, for our part, do not need to rely on anything apart from the potency of this tea and rice of Theirs. Simply, we do not squander the strength of the Buddhas and Ancestors that resides within the partaking of this tea and rice.

You would do well to explore with great diligence the remark about not looking back to previous emperors of legendary times such as Yü, T’ang, Yao, and Shun. You would also do well to explore how to let the question as to whether there is any word or phrase that you may have for the benefit of others spring forth from the crown of your head. You should experiment through your training with your Master to see if you can get it to spring forth.



When Great Master Sekitō Kisen was at his hermitage on Mount Nangaku, he once said:

*I’ve thatched me a grass hut, without a coin to my name.
Having finished eating rice, I feel content, and look to
taking me a nap.*

His ‘having finished eating rice’, which he said time after time, over and over again, is the thought and saying of an Ancestor of the Buddha who has explored what rice is. Someone who has not yet eaten rice is someone who has not yet experienced satiety. At the same time, this principle of ‘feeling content, having finished eating rice,’ manifests before one eats rice, while one is eating rice, and after one has eaten rice. In a house where people finish eating up their rice, to fail

2. ‘Homely fare’ (C. *t’su-cha tan-fan*), literally, ‘coarse tea and thin gruel’, is a conventional Chinese phrase used by a host as an apology for what is being offered to a guest.

to see that there is always the eating of rice is to explore through one's training only four or five measures out of ten.



My late Master, an Old Buddha, when expounding the Teaching to his assembly, once said:

I can recall an incident in which a monk asked Hyakujō, “Just what sort of thing is the Wondrous Matter?”*

Hyakujō replied, “He sits alone atop Daiyū Peak.³ O my great assembly, this Fellow cannot be disturbed by anything, so let Him sit for a while in meditation, eliminating dualistic thought.”

If there was someone today, a novice, say, who suddenly asked, “Just what sort of thing is the Miraculous Matter?” I would simply turn to the person and say, “What Miraculous Matter is there?” In short, it is the ‘What!’ in the alms bowl of pure compassion which was passed on to me to use for eating my rice.⁴

In the everyday life of the Buddhas and Ancestors, without fail, there is the Miraculous Matter, which is Their so-called ‘sitting alone atop Daiyū Peak’. Even though we now encounter that Fellow when we let Him sit in meditation and eliminate dualistic thinking, It is still what the Miraculous Matter is. And there is that which is even more miraculous: the alms bowl of great compassion being passed on to Tendō, from which he ate his rice. The Miraculous Matter is each and every thing everywhere ‘eating rice’. Thus, sitting alone atop Daiyū Peak is precisely what eating rice is. The alms bowl is what we use for eating rice, and whatever we use for eating our rice is our alms bowl. That is why it is the alms bowl of great compassion and why Tendō ate his rice from it. There was his knowing what rice is after he had fully satisfied himself. And there was his being satisfied from having completely eaten the rice. And there was his full awareness of the rice satisfying him. And there was his having been fully satisfied and yet continuing to eat his rice.

3. Daiyū Peak is an alternative name for Mount Hyakujō, where Hyakujō had his monastery.

4. There is a play on words in this last sentence. ‘The alms bowl of great compassion’ can also be understood as an allusion to Tendō’s alms bowl, which he had brought with him when he left Great Compassion Monastery in order to become Abbot of Tendō Monastery. The whole quotation was part of his inaugural Dharma talk to his new assembly.

Now then, just what could this alms bowl of his possibly be? From my perspective, it is not merely a wooden object, nor is it something black like lacquerware. Might it be the One of unyielding stone? Might it be the Iron Man? It is bottomless: it is beyond our own Nose. In its swallowing up empty space, empty space receives it, in *gasshō*.*



My late Master, an Old Buddha, once addressed an assembly whilst in the Abbot's quarters at the Zuigan Pure Land Meditation Temple in the Taishū District, saying, "When hunger comes, I eat rice, and when tiredness comes, I take a sleep. Forges and bellows fill the universe."⁵ His phrase, 'when hunger comes' refers to the life of one who habitually 'eats rice'. The person who has never yet eaten rice is someone incapable of hungering for it. Hence, you need to realize that we for whom hunger may well be an event in our everyday life are persons who must have decided to eat rice to the full.

'When tiredness comes' refers to being tired within tiredness, which habitually fully springs from a tired head.⁶ Nevertheless, it is the here and now, wherein the whole of our being is swept clean, turned around, and put in order within our daily life.

'I take a sleep' refers to letting the ego 'nap', having borrowed the Buddha Eye, the Dharma Eye, the Eye of Wise Discernment, the Eye of the Ancestors, the Eye of those who act as the temple's pillars* and stone lanterns.*



After my late Master, an Old Buddha, had gone by invitation from Zuigan-ji Temple in Taishū to Jinzu-ji Temple in Rin'an City, he once gave a talk in the Dharma Hall there, in which he said:

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5. 'Forges and bellows' is a traditional Zen Buddhist metaphor for the conditions and expedient means that intensify the heat of training, whereby a trainee is forged into a True Monk. As Tendō Nyojō points out, these conditions and expedient means are available everywhere. In other words, all things have the capability of teaching us the Dharma.
 6. That is, tiredness is a mental thing.

*For half a year I ate rice as I sat atop a cloud-covered peak,
Sitting there to break through the smoke and mist which
arose a thousand myriad times over,
When suddenly a resounding clap issued forth, as thunder
rumbled o'er,
And the heavens, with springtime glow, shone like apricot
blooms all crimson red.*

All the methods of the Buddhas and Ancestors, as taught from the time of the Buddha, were Their 'eating rice whilst sitting atop a cloud-covered peak'. Thoroughly exploring how to carry on the Buddha's life of wise discernment was Their manifesting a life of eating rice. 'Sitting atop a cloud-covered peak for half a year' is called 'eating rice'. They do not know how much the smoke and mist, in which They are sitting in order to break through, has piled up. And, however sudden the clap of thunder may be, the springtime glow is simply the crimson of apricot blossoms.

The term 'the heavens' refers to being open at every moment of now. And those moments are what 'eating rice' is.

The Cloud-covered Peak is the name for a peak at Zuigan-ji Temple.



My late Master, the Old Buddha, while in the Buddha Hall at Zuigan-ji Temple in Keigen City in the Minshū District, once expounded the Teaching to the assembly, saying:

Right at this moment, put down the load you are carrying. 'The wondrous golden form' is putting on one's robe and eating one's rice: 'putting on one's robe and eating one's rice' is the wondrous golden form. Further, refrain from poking around, asking who is or isn't putting on their robe and eating rice. Do not talk about so-and-so being the Wondrous Golden Form. Should you so restrain yourself, it will be an expression of what Master Tendō meant when he said, "That is why I bow to you." As I am already eating my rice, so do your bow, with your hands in gasshō, and then eat your rice. We act like this because we earnestly shun going about while holding flowers aloft.⁷

7. That is, going around acting holy.



The monk Chōkei Daian once addressed his assembly in the Dharma Hall, saying:

I, Daian, stayed with Isan for thirty years. I supped on Isan rice. I urinated Isan urine. But I did not explore Isan's Zen. I simply raised one unsexed water buffalo. When it wandered off into the weeds, I'd haul it out. When it trespassed on someone's garden patch, I'd chastise it. As I had already bawled it out over a long time, people would treat it to such remarks as, "Oh, you poor creature." Now it has changed and become a white ox right out in the open. It is constantly right before my face. All day long, it clearly shines forth, manifesting the Dharma. Even if one were to try to drive it off, it would not go away.

Clearly, we should accept, and keep to, this address to his assembly. His thirty years of endeavor within the assembly of an Ancestor of the Buddha was his eating his rice, unmixed with cares and worries. When you manifest a life of eating rice, there are, quite naturally, the signs of your rearing a single castrated water buffalo.



Great Master Jōshū Shinsai once asked a newly arrived monk, "Have you ever come here before?"

The monk replied, "Yes, I have."

The Master said, "Have some tea before you leave."

He also asked another monk, "Have you ever come here before?"

The monk replied, "No, I never have."

The Master said, "Have some tea before you leave."

The Prior of the monastery asked the Master, "Why did you say to the monk who had been here before, 'Have some tea before you leave,' and also say to the monk who had not been here before, 'Have some tea before you leave?'"

The Master gestured for the Prior to come to him. When the Prior complied, the Master said, "Have some tea before you leave."⁸

8. Jōshū's questions are double-edged. While it appears as if he were asking a commonplace question as to whether someone had come to Jōshū's monastery before, he is actually asking a spiritual question (one which Dōgen will explore), namely, "Have you ever arrived at the

His ‘here’ is not something off the top of his head, nor does it refer to his Nose, nor does it refer to Jōshū.⁹ Because he had leapt free of ‘here’, he had already arrived at the Here and Now and had not yet arrived at the Here.¹⁰ Right here is where the What is, but those others merely talked about it in terms of ‘having come before’ or ‘not having come before’. This is why my late Master said, “What person who takes residence either in a gilded tower or in a wine shop could come to call on Jōshū and drink his tea?”

And so it is that the everyday life of Buddhas and Ancestors is simply Their taking of Tea and Their eating of Rice.

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Copied by me in the quarters of the Abbot’s assistant below the peak on the first day of the first month in the second year of the same era (February 10, 1244).

Ejō

Here and Now?” Since both the two monks and the Prior all take Jōshū’s question on a superficial level, Jōshū offers them tea (that is, the Teaching) before they go off to find That which is the Here and Now.

9. That is, the Here and Now is not an intellectual concept, nor is it a reference to Jōshū’s own Original Nature, nor is it a personal reference to Jōshū himself.
10. That is, Jōshū had fully realized the Truth (his having arrived at the Here and Now) and at the same time, his training and practice continued with his ‘always going on, always becoming Buddha’ (his not yet having arrived at the Here).