

# Living and Working Together

notes for 8 short talks on the 'Tenzo Kyokun', by Vajradarshini

## Introduction

Right livelihood and me wanting proof!  
Been thinking about it for years, still thinking.

'Work as practice'  
More like life as practice.  
The need for a seamless life, Vajra bell for a Vajra dinner.

## Tenzo Kyokun

Therefore rejoice in your birth in the world, where you are capable of using your body freely to offer food to the Three Treasures: the Buddha the Dharma and the Sangha. Considering the innumerable possibilities in a timeless universe we have been given a marvellous opportunity. The merit of working as tenzo will never decay. My sincerest desire is that you exhaust all the strength and effort of all your lives – past, present, future- and every moment of every day into your practice through the work of the tenzo, so that you form a strong connection with the Buddhadharmā. To view all things with this attitude is called Joyful Mind.

Simpler than most Dogen texts, more practical, will have some others to ponder on.

*"Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it"*

### **Buddha**

*"Buddhas are made not born"*

*"Entering the realm of the Buddhas is easy, entering the realm of the devil is difficult."*

### **Ikkyu**

*"Master yourself, master your own being, teach yourself to work, teach yourself to apply your energy. Then you will be able to apply yourself to the great matter."*

*"Meditation in the midst of activity is a billion times superior to meditation in stillness"*

### **Hakuin**

## On being ordinary

### **Intro to Dogen:**

(Like to read and ponder Dogen rather than having studied his life)

Lived in Japan, 13<sup>th</sup> cen.

Father died aged 2; mother aged 8, grief at the frailty of all earthly things

– Decided to become a monk.

Ran away with help of an uncle aged 14.

Burning question - **"if all beings possess Buddha-nature, why do we have to practice in order to realise it?"**

Key element in his teaching is seeing the ultimate non-duality of all phenomena.  
(Vasubandhu + Joanna Macy)

Particularly interested in this aspect at the moment.  
Making work into an insight practice. **Quote** 'Verses on Faith Mind'.

In answer to his burning question he realises; **Practice is Enlightenment.**  
Also a strong theme in Dogen, yet another way of not setting things apart.

His own 'insight', breakthrough –  
"In zazen mind and body drop away, why are you dozing?"

He went on to become the founder of the Soto Zen School.

Spent two years without lying down to sleep!

Shobogenzo – 'Treasury of the Eye of True Teaching'

Confucius says: "if I pointed out one corner of a matter and the student couldn't come back with the other three, I would not repeat myself."

- Principle of **fuseppa**, of not explaining everything, provokes necessary level of effort.
- Principle of **Gijo**, 'doubt feeling' deliberately produced to frustrate linear thought. Accumulated force of both is required to pierce the veil of inertia. Like Bhante in the first chapter of the survey.

### **Tenzo Kyokun**

Written for immediate disciples, living with him. Easier text, more practical.

Although the work is just that of preparing meals, it is in spirit different from the work of an ordinary cook or kitchen helper

#### **Ordinary-**

#### **Key idea – sacred and secular not two**

What is Zen?

*"Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine"* Shunryu Suzuki

Taking the ordinary and using it as a vehicle for practice.

It is a path of realising non-duality, so you don't divide practice and non practice, you don't split the sacred from the secular.

Traditions of the tea ceremony, the Zen garden, work. Nothing special, totally in keeping with their surroundings, the art of understatement.

The irony of the Zen garden.

How do we make all that we do our practice?

If I say we are now going to meditate, we assume this new posture! Why? Is it our spiritual posture?

Rumi's streamings across the doorsill, Fana, out into mystery, Baqa coming back to the here and now, the ordinary work of this day.

Ultimately you realise that these streamings are one.

There would no longer be a transition; we would just flow, not setting anything apart.

The beauty of working together is that we are 'unguarded', notice it in the kitchen on retreat.

### **On not picking and choosing**

*"You can and you must expect suffering" Mother Teresa*

When the tenzo receives food from the kusa, he must never complain about its quality or quantity, but always handle everything with the greatest care and attention. Nothing could be worse than to complain about too much or too little of something, or of inferior quality.

Heaven and earth set apart. The basic mistake of subject/object.  
Practice of not setting things apart. Of not making two. Hot/cold, easy/hard.  
Craving and aversion comes from our setting things apart. Self and object.

We create our world through this polarisation.  
Choice is the Key word of our generation. Along with a certain kind of freedom.  
We think that choice gives us happiness, but choosing is also dilemma, conflict.

When you prepare food, never view the ingredients from some commonly held perspective, nor think about them only with your emotions. Maintain an attitude that tries to build great temples from ordinary greens, that expounds the Buddhadharma through the most trivial activity. When making soup with ordinary greens, do not be carried away by feelings of dislike towards them nor regard them lightly; neither jump for joy simply because you have been given ingredients of superior quality to make a special dish.

Not being carried away by our feelings. Think in terms of overall desire, immediate desire. One has to be subordinated. It is a real practice to do what you want to do with your life, irrespective of how you feel in the moment.

Hakuin's 'Master yourself...'

Either swayed by the moment, or overriding your feelings in a harmful way.

Doing things while recognising that you really don't want to!!

In cultivating the germ of aspiration to live out the Way, as well as in practising the dharma, delicious and ordinary tastes are the same and not two. There is an old saying, "the mouth of a monk is like an oven." Remember this well.

Delicious and ordinary tastes are the same and not two.  
Fussiness and renunciation, fussy renunciants!

Magnanimous mind is like a mountain, stable and impartial...when carrying something that weighs an ounce, do not think of it as light, and likewise, when you have to carry fifty pounds, do not think of it as heavy, weigh the relativity of light and heavy from a broad perspective.

There is just experience. No self to experience, no object to have experience of!

We can't go that far, but try not to fix our experience.

There are just sensations >>>> becomes I'm really tired, this is really heavy.  
Try to keep a lightness about our experience, a flow.

The practice of not resisting reality, not resisting 'what is'.  
Reality as what is, in an ordinary way. Deceptive to talk of reality with a capital R.

### **The idea of 'work'**

As opposed to leisure, just an idea, a label.  
What do we call work? Having a bath, washing up?  
Me and Vidyaila's different work.

So when we talk about taking our practice into our work, it is all about compartments.  
Work as a compartment.

Dogen calls this magnanimous mind, impartial, not swayed, not wanting, not making two.  
Like Hakuin and the baby.

### **On taking care of others**

*"I feel the capacity to care is the thing that gives life it's deepest significance and meaning"* Pablo Casals.

All day and all night, the tenzo has to make arrangements and prepare meals without wasting a moment. If he throws all his energy into whatever the situation truly calls for, then both the activity and the method by which he carries it out will naturally work to nurture the seeds of the Buddhadharmā. Just taking care of the function of tenzo enables all the residents in the community to carry on their practice in the most stable way.

Again we are looking here at the breaking down of subject and object, we can't help be the centre of our universe, but others are the centre of theirs.  
Iris Murdoch says, "love is the realisation that something other than oneself is real.  
Putting others first. Entering into their lives (finding someone crying)  
(yesterday talking about giving up control, other people are out of control!)

Easier to take care of others than oneself. Look out for each other, don't have to worry about yourself.

VS

Independence, another key word of our age.

Leaving things for the next person.

Small things make a real difference.  
Spiritual friendship is ordinary friendship with spiritual people.  
(giving me socks, money for shoes)

You should think only about how to best serve the community, having no fear of poverty. As long as your mind is not limited you will naturally receive unlimited fortune.

Subhuti and his bowl of muesli – don't take it literally.

How do we work with this area? The final Taboo!

Not gone that far with it yet.

As long as your mind is not limited... doesn't mean you will get money, or even looked after, but that you will be content with very little.

Be prepared to die poor - Internal pension plan.

My granddad "you can't always have what you want but you can always want what you have."

The true bond established between ourselves and the Buddha is born of the smallest offering made with sincerity rather than of some grandiose donation made without it. This is our practice as human beings.

We make connections through giving.

Giving gifts. Time and energy. ie here.

We can always give, doesn't have to be anything big, sharing is another form of giving.

The Story of the Stingy Artist

*'Gessen was an artist monk. Before he would start a drawing or painting he always insisted on being paid in advance and his fees were high. He was known as the 'stingy artist'.*

*A geisha once gave him a commission for a painting. "How much can you pay?" enquired Gessen. "Whatever you charge" replied the girl, "but I want you to do the work in front of me."*

*So on a certain day Gessen was called by the geisha. She was holding a feast for her patron. Gessen with his fine brushwork did the painting. When it was completed he asked the highest sum of his time.*

*He received his pay. Then the geisha turned to her patron, saying, "all this artist wants is money. His paintings are fine but his mind is dirty; money has caused it to become muddy. Drawn by such a filthy mind his work is not fit to exhibit. It is just about good enough for one of my petticoats."*

*Removing her skirt, she then asked Gessen to do another picture on the back of her petticoat.*

*"How much will you pay?" asked Gessen.*

*"Oh, any amount," answered the girl. Gessen named a fancy price, painted the picture in the manner required, and went away.*

*It was learned later that Gessen had these reasons for desiring money:*

*A ravaging famine often visited his province. The rich would not help the poor, so Gessen had a secret warehouse, unknown to anyone, which he kept filled with grain, prepared for these emergencies.*

*From his village to the national shrine the road was in very poor condition and many travellers suffered while travelling it. He desired to build a better road.*

*His teacher had passed away without realising his wish to build a temple and Gessen wished to complete this temple for him.*

*After Gessen had accomplished his three wishes, he threw away his brushes and artist's materials and, retiring to the mountains, never painted again.*

## **On responsibility and status**

*"To know oneself, one should assert oneself"* Albert Camus

Your attitude towards things should not be contingent upon their quality. A person who is influenced by the quality of a thing, or who changes his speech or manner according to the appearance or position of the people he meets, is not a man working in the Way.

So this is a real give away isn't it?

Are we different with different people? Like the things about transitions and integration.

Interesting living with my preceptor, in terms of apatrapya.

**Security** and finding your position. Status in relation to one another.

**Particular issues as women**, different from men. Evolution shops.

Women better at co-operation, men at stepping out taking a lead.

Do we find it hard if someone shines? Comparing ourselves.

Someone does well and we feel a lack, someone does badly and we feel a satisfaction! Yuck! (I notice it in areas where I am not very confident, and haven't put myself forward, taken the risk myself)

## **Status and ordination** \_

We have too much and too little respect!

Because we don't understand for ourselves what it means until we have done it.

Same with being a preceptor, being a mother.

Me and the ordination team here – too much 'respect', too little (warts and all), needing to find real respect for what they have really done.

Like a process of growing up, I feel like a teenager here, full of myself!

I closely observed the monk who was appointed to the office of tenzo. He never helped to prepare the meals, but entrusted all the work to some absent-minded insensitive servant, while he merely gave out orders. Never once did he check to see if the work was being done properly. It was as if he thought that watching carefully to see how the rice and vegetables were being prepared was somehow rude or shameful, like peering into the private room of a woman living next-door...he did not know that taking care of these matters is itself Buddhist practice.

## **Taking responsibility** –

Checking up on people, it is *just* your job, it doesn't make you 'better' than them.

Family dynamics, conditioning. Ie avoiding conflict.

Taking responsibility as a practice. Firstly you have to take it, you can be given the opportunity but not be given responsibility.

It is a way to grow, you put yourself on the line. Say yes to things, take one more than you think you can do.

Along with that you need to have equal amounts of support and challenge.

**“to know yourself, assert yourself.”**

The more you do of this, the more you up the stakes. More of everything.  
Blame, praise, projection, criticism, success, glory,

**Worldly winds X10** because you have made yourself visible and therefore vulnerable. (Except that people won't see you as being in a vulnerable position because they see you in a position of power)

***“The higher the monkey climbs the more exposed his bum becomes”***

It gives you a lot to work with, but it is hard work.  
How to do it while just being yourself, not creating a 'role', stress.

I would really encourage it, It helps to know both sides with responsibility and status.

### **On being wholehearted**

*“The work will teach you how to do it”* Estonian proverb.

All day and all night, the tenzo has to make arrangements and prepare meals without wasting a moment. If he throws all his energy into whatever the situation truly calls for, then both the activity and the method by which he carries it out will naturally work to nurture the seeds of the Buddhadharmā. Just taking care of the function of tenzo enables all the residents in the community to carry on their practice in the most stable way.

**Hold nothing back, throwing all our energy in.**

**Engaging with what is.**

Arguments with Padmasuri! Selfridges buyer at tradeshow.

Working in an Evolution shop is about working in an Evolution shop, that is what you engage with. It isn't about reporting in, isn't about sangha, getting to know each other, it is about retail.

You cannot get round engaging with what it is and still have wholehearted-ness. If you can't be wholehearted, can it really be a practice?

Work offers us a chance to work with our **resistance**. What is resistance?

Hakuin, master yourself, teach yourself to work.

We aren't integrated, we want different things, we are pulling in different directions, whims.

Different resistance for different people, mine is boredom, new things are easy to engage with. When we hit this in work we can just keep going, work with the resistance.

*Layman Pang was sitting casually one day reading a sutra. Along came a monk who said to layman Pang: “why don't you sit up straight and read that sutra?” Layman Pang balanced on the toes of one foot. The monk could say nothing.*

Therefore rejoice in your birth in the world, where you are capable of using your body freely to offer food to the Three Treasures: the Buddha the Dharma and the Sangha. Considering the innumerable possibilities in a timeless universe we have been given a marvellous opportunity. The merit of working as tenzo will never decay. My sincerest desire is that you exhaust all the strength and effort of all your lives – past,

present, future- and every moment of every day into your practice through the work of the tenzo, so that you form a strong connection with the Buddhadharma. To view all things with this attitude is called Joyful Mind.  
(See p3 p9 also)

### **Work is the Tantric Guru**

Work is a teacher, we learn about ourselves. We are working with reality.

How?

It gives you feedback, it is concrete, it is objective (work is a portrait of yourself, what do you look like that day, how are you? Do you cut yourself with the kitchen knife while having an internal rant? You experience yourself in relation to the task)

It says can you put your money where your mouth is? It is one thing to be full of good ideas, but can you mobilise your energies? (Bhante on TBRL)

It is demanding, it demands all of your energies.

It goes wrong, it turns out to be harder than you expected etc.

We meet reality because we attempt to do something 'within' reality.

### **It requires commitment**

Make a commitment, close the back door, turn up the heat.

"Commitment is freedom"

We will break through our limitations if we make commitments, if we don't hold anything back.

### **Intensity**

We need intensity, the spiritual life is like a cooking, you need the heat up!

What creates intensity? Recipe.

1. Other people (pref. not all your own choice)
2. A confined space.
3. An objective goal or aim (pref. over ambitious)
4. An equal balance of support and challenge (pref. a huge quantity of both!)

### **When it is great, it will be bliss, when it gets tough it will be hell.**

*A man travelling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trebling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.*

*Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away at the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted.*

### **On the absolute and the practical**

*"Let everything be allowed to do what it naturally does, so that it's nature will be satisfied." Chuang Tzu*

### **(Slightly into the realm of the abstract here)**

If only we could step back to carefully reflect on the horse and the monkey, our lives would naturally become one with our work. Doing so is the means whereby we turn things even while simultaneously we are being turned by them. It is vital that we

clarify and harmonise our lives with our work, and not lose sight of either the absolute or the practical.

Horse – wild mind.

Monkey – swinging emotions.

A stepping back from mind and emotions and reflecting on them. Being aware.

**Two extremes:**

1. Cut off from them.

2. Get over interested (which is also cut off)

Knowing, knowing knowing, knowing the knowing knowing itself!

Seeing the nature of mind *is* the transformation of mind.

*We turn things even while simultaneously being turned by them?*

Joanna Macy!

Mutual causality, conditionality means that things are mutually conditioning.

Dependent co arising. Arising together.

This being, that becomes...happening both ways, not linear.

*Non duality*

Subject and object are mutually conditioning, co arising, and dependent.

Subject (me) object (world) co-arise. If there were no subject, there would be no object (trust me)

*Environment*

We effect our environment; we are affecting the garden, the kitchen, and the bedrooms. But our environment effects us too. Subject causes object, object causes subject.

We turn things, while simultaneously being turned by them.

It is like a dance, it is a sensitivity to and respect for the world of 'things'.

When you prepare food, never view the ingredients from some commonly held perspective, nor think about them only with your emotions. Maintain an attitude that tries to build great temples from ordinary greens, that expounds the Buddhadharma through the most trivial activity.

So another aspect of not losing sight of the absolute and the practical.

Stepping up and stepping down.

Don't create a conflict i.e. are we here to build sangha or decorate a room?

There is just decorating!

*Fana and Baqa*

Nothing is outside of our practice.

Cleaning the toilet, creating a shrine, don't make two; don't create the sacred and the secular.

Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha. This in turn allows the Buddha to manifest through the leaf. This is a power that you cannot grasp with your rational mind. It operates freely, according to the situation, in a most natural way. At the same time this power functions in our lives to clarify and settle activities and is beneficial to all living beings.

We handle the leaf as if it were the body of the Buddha, this enables the Buddha to manifest through the leaf.  
It is a two way process.

The nature of wind is that it is permanent and reaches everywhere, why do you fan yourself?

Why do we have to handle a leaf as if it were the body of the Buddha?  
If everyone has Buddha nature, why is there a need to practice?

You cannot grasp it with your rational mind.  
Practice is Enlightenment.

*Emptiness here, emptiness there,  
But the infinite universe  
Stands always before your eyes...  
One thing, all things,  
Move among and intermingle without distraction...*

### **The beauty is in the detail**

*“Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every heart.” Rumi.*

You must not leave the washing of rice or preparation of vegetables to others, but must carry out this work with your own hands. Put your whole attention into the work, seeing just what the situation calls for. Do not be absent minded in your activities, nor so absorbed in one aspect of a matter that you fail to see it's other aspects.

### **Effort isn't enough**

**Having the right skills** – seeing just what the situation calls for, being able to be appropriate. Not just about being careful, about being clever. No good doing something very carefully if it is the wrong thing!

Like with the Bodhisattva, it isn't enough to mean well, to have good intentions, we have to be skilful.

To have skills we have to be willing to learn. In order to learn we have to believe that we have something to learn, we have to be willing to not know. If we already know it all we won't learn anything. Apprenticeship. Saddhasuri and the power tools.

**Being in the right states** – don't be absent-minded, means be in a good state.

When are we absent-minded? Tired, stressed, loss of perspective etc.

### **Mindfulness**

Don't be so absorbed in one aspect of a matter that you fail to see it's other aspects. Mindfulness practice on the shop floor, based on stages from the mindfulness of breathing:

1. Aware of what is happening, has happened.
2. Anticipating what is going to happen, what is called for?
3. Broad awareness, of what is happening upstairs, downstairs, time etc.
4. All of the above, yet completely with the person or task I am with.

Put those things that naturally go on a high place onto a high place, those that would be most stable on a low place onto a low place; things that naturally belong on a high place settle best on a high place, while those which belong on a low place find there greatest stability there.

Clean chopsticks, ladles, and all other utensils; handle them with equal care and awareness, putting everything back where it naturally belongs. Keep your mind on your work and do not throw things around carelessly.

### **Aesthetic aspect**

Love to work in this way, all my tools laid out, 'each thing, no hindrance'.  
Order and harmony, I don't think this is how everybody works. Good to come to some agreements. (Agnes clearing up her work area) Work as a ritual.

### **Rhythm**

Aesthetic, sensual, flow, rhythm means it becomes pleasing, then is easier to practice mindfulness. When you get this with a lot of people, complete harmony, the Bodhicitta! Xmas till. Setting down Henderson Hall.

### **Process orientated**

We can be too goal orientated, concerned with the end product rather than the process. Happens in the sp. life too. Bhante's 'Psychology of Goal Setting' the nature of setting a goal is future orientated, we don't stay in the moment. Dogen's practice is enlightenment.

When washing the rice remove any sand you find. In doing so, do not loose even one grain of rice.

Keep you eyes open. Do not allow even one grain of rice to be lost.

**Carefulness** do not loose even a grain of rice

Don't be careless, care. Disposable society.

Get into the kind of state where you wouldn't loose even a grain, be fully aware.

In this same way, the greatest of teachers from earliest times who were settled in the Way have carried out their work with their own hands. How are we inexperienced practitioners of today able to remain so negligent in our practice! Those who have come before us have said "the Way-seeking mind of a tenzo is actualised by rolling up your sleeves."

### **Fractals**

What we are aiming for is actualised through what we do, rolling up our sleeves. We are like fractals, our tendencies is our raw material, goes through our lives. If we think about what would make us better at our jobs, chances are it is the same as what would make us better in our 'sp. lives'.

I have to work with finishing things. I can work with that in small ways and hopefully when it comes to the big things I won't fizzle out.

We can really work on ourselves through the details.

### **Looking for work**

*"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."* TS Elliot.

You must not leave the washing of rice or preparation of vegetables to others, but must carry out this work with your own hands. Put your whole attention into the work, seeing just what the situation calls for.

Pay full attention to your work in preparing the meal; attend to every aspect yourself so that it will naturally turn out well.

### **Be the change you want to see**

We don't control but we do influence. Requires patience. Requires stepping out from the group rather than waiting for everyone to agree to do a certain thing.

(Story of Lu drying mushrooms p9)

### **The work is the practice**

Lu thinks it is funny that someone thinks he should be doing something more 'spiritual' or more 'important', to him it is the most important thing and there isn't much time left to do it!

Don't try to get out of work, to get off work, dig your own well. (Rumi)

Bhante said at one time, work as little as possible, unless your work is your practice, in which case work as much as possible.

Therefore rejoice in your birth in the world, where you are capable of using your body freely to offer food to the Three Treasures: the Buddha the Dharma and the Sangha. Considering the innumerable possibilities in a timeless universe we have been given a marvellous opportunity. The merit of working as tenzo will never decay. My sincerest desire is that you exhaust all the strength and effort of all your lives – past, present, future- and every moment of every day into your practice through the work of the tenzo, so that you form a strong connection with the Buddhadharma. To view all things with this attitude is called Joyful Mind.

### **Intensity**

Certain intensity, feeling of being pushed, on this retreat. Maybe surprising?

We do need to be pushed beyond our comfortable limits.

*"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."*

We have qualities that aren't obvious.

We have capacities that we don't realise.

There is potential in us which needs to be drawn out, we are all capable of so much more that we think we are.

### **7 point mind training.**

You don't become a Bodhisattva without encountering difficulties, in fact you have to go looking for difficulties! As well as making my closest friends through work, I've also had my biggest fallouts! One has taken 7 years to get to the point of speaking again!

### **Over stretching oneself**

I did it once! I'll try not to do it again.

I don't want to under stretch myself either, don't want to get to the end of my life and think why was I so cautious? Don't want to let limiting ideas of myself stop me from doing things, or at least 'having a go'.

### **Over do everything!**

If you are going to work hard you have to play hard, or at least relax wholeheartedly. This is where ordinary work comes in. all those things we think of as work which are

actually really relaxing, gardening, cooking, cleaning, decorating.. people don't get burn out from doing these things!

People get burn out from not doing them!

**Three things I'd do differently**

- I wouldn't believe I could work with everybody, I'd say no.
- I'd hold more lightly to my ideas and ideals, not wanting others to share them.
- I'd be less of a martyr, I'd only do what I wanted to do, not what I thought I should do (using your body freely)

**Work as practice is a mystery**

At the end of the day I don't know how it works! It is a mystery.

Why does it have such a deeply transforming effect? It is the tantric and mysterious Guru!