

## 147 Mukudoku

An aikido student who also practices the “way of tea” told me this story:

“Each week in my tea ceremony class the instructor selects a scroll to hang from the wall of the alcove. These are often chosen for the occasion. Sometimes they are more general, yet still in the spirit of the ‘way of tea.’ One week, the scroll said, “*mukudoku*.”

“When I asked about the word, my teacher told me of a famous dialog between Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu. Emperor Wu said ‘I’m a faithful Buddhist. I built many temples and made various offerings to monks. What kind of reward can I expect?’ To this, Bodhidharma answered, ‘Mukudoku!’ meaning, ‘No reward whatsoever.’”

When we play and practice, we often do so with the expectation of some kind of reward. We may hope that our musicianship will be recognized by others. Perhaps we’ll be invited to join a group or play a gig. Or we hope to be welcomed by other musicians and audiences. At the very least, we hope to be rewarded by our own progress, by reaching some goal.

*Mukudoku* involves the idea of *letting go of the motivation of reward*. It means trying to live our lives with the understanding that every moment, whether beautiful or painful, is exquisite and perfect.

Would it be useful, even liberating, to practice just for the experience of it, not for some future expectation? To let go, even for a moment, of the idea of improvement, measurement or quid pro quo? Try it and see.<sup>20</sup>

*Today I will try to practice without the expectation of reward.*

Excerpt from the book Best Practice: Inspiration and Ideas for Traditional Musicians by Judy Minot. More info at [www.judyminot.com/bestpractice](http://www.judyminot.com/bestpractice)