

Zoom Zazen - 17 September 2022

Continuing Master Wanshi's teaching:

*"The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered to each speck of dust without becoming its partner."*¹

The deep source is not to be found in anything other than the smallest speck of dust, for every form, every speck of dust is emptiness itself, the perfect wisdom *Maka Hannya*.

"Do you want to know where the cloud road is?" asks Han Shan. "It is there, in the middle of the void."

This is the very foundation of the Great Wisdom Sutra, of all the schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The empty nature of things, the buddha-nature, is the fact that they have no existence of their own at the ultimate level. Although things and phenomena appear to be real, when we ask about their true nature, we cannot find anything permanent, lasting, consistent or independent.

The deep source, emptiness, allows every speck of dust to appear within itself without being tarnished or affected, like a mirror and the reflections it reflects. And since emptiness is form, all forms, this truth is found in the truth of the real, humble, ordinary, everyday:

"What is a Buddha?" asks the disciple. "It is a three-pound turnip," replies the master.

This is why our practice of zazen, simply watching the appearance and disappearance of things, is not extraordinary, because it is only a matter of standing in the midst of the most minute, the most banal, the most sensitive manifestations of life. It is always open, luminous and available when the ego, also empty of its own nature, does not come to appropriate the perception and try to grasp things.

¹ From: 'Practise Instructions', *Cultivating the Empty Field*, Taigen Dan Leighton, (Tuttle, 2000)

Master Wanshi continues:

*"The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colours and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces, and mirrors without obscurations. Very naturally, mind and dharmas emerge and harmonise."*²

Shikantaza is only seeing, listening, feeling and contemplating. It is the art of non-action which desires nothing more than to contemplate what is. It transcends all attempts at definition, explanation and appropriation. *Shikantaza* is the path that teaches emptiness, the insight that all appearances are only the unlimited play of our own mind. A realisation beyond words that is transmitted outside of all writing, that transcends colours and sounds without contesting anything.

In the *Prajnâpâramitâ*, the Buddha says:

"He who realises the emptiness of objects and concepts does not depend on words. Perfect wisdom is beyond definition; and without end or method, the path that leads to it.

"The sage follows this path to directly realise impermanence and to directly realise understanding. This, then, is perfect wisdom! Follow your path knowing that attachments and attractions are neither good nor bad. Enlightenment itself is neither good nor bad, for perfect wisdom, like a mirror, is not intended to contribute to the good or evil of beings. Nevertheless, although it has no intention of good or evil, it actually confers infinite bliss."

² *ibid*