

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 10 Dec 2022

"Don't be limited by anything and don't stop anywhere," Master Wanshi exhorts us. "In this way the plough will open the land in the field of the empty kalpa."

This morning is the last zazen of Rohatsu. There are about thirty of us in the small Lanau dojo. All is peaceful!

Master Wanshi's words are wishes intended for our practice and for the coming year. He invites us to unfold our true bodhisattva nature without delay: *"Don't be limited by anything at all and don't stop anywhere."*

What limits us are the opinions, beliefs, fears and illusions which we've created about ourselves, about others and about things. We firmly believe that what the mind produces is true, like everything that's said in the newspapers or on television. We limit the qualities of our own heart in its loving nature when we refuse to tame the ox of the self, or stop ourselves from moving forward whenever something disturbs us or a phenomenon calls out to us. When we stop contemplating impermanence and forget the practice of mindfulness, we leave behind the living and get lost in the byways. We give to the illusion of self and to the thirst for possession a reality they do not have.

Without practice, it is not possible to plough the field of emptiness or to enter into the Real, the Awakening without trace.

To plough the field of emptiness is like ploughing the field of clouds - an expression of Master Dogen's. For him, the *Sōdō* where the monk practises zazen is also called *Jūundo*, the cloud hall. It is indeed the ideal place to plough the field of emptiness with the ploughshare of our attention.

During zazen, to dissolve into the Presence that has neither beginning nor end is to instantly overcome all limitations and to free oneself from the self. When the self is forgotten, we open the field of the empty kalpa. The kalpa is a symbolic period of time which, depending on need, ranges from a few billion years to several hundred billion. Inconceivable - and yet it is the Real, the buddha-nature that is not limited by anything whatsoever and that has no end.

More humbly, let us think of what comes to us in the present moment, and experience this presence - always new in every moment. Our practice has to light the way for beings and bring silent light into their hearts.

Here for you all, a little early, are some wishes for the year 2023, a mixture of Ch'an, Sekito Kissen, Dogen and of [me], Mokuhō:

"At the top of the original mountain, forget every trace of the Way.

Let go of the centuries and be at ease.

Open your hands and walk carefree.

In the clear mind of morning, the white clouds scatter, caressing the green pines of the mountain, clothing the sky in a veil of impermanence,

The thousands of words and the myriad comments, floating clouds, cannot change the blue of the sky. Realise this with the whole body.

Become the mountain, till the clouds and cultivate the vision of the invisible."
