

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 4 February 2023

The past is a memory. The future that we imagine is only a projection, constructed from what we want to repeat or deny from what is in this memory. Put another way: When we refer to memory, everything we experience or want to experience is conditioned by our past experiences. This is how we spin the Wheel of Samsara, by repeating the same mistakes. To free ourselves, we then imagine a Nirvana that we must reach by continuous effort, an awakening that is to come.

In Buddhism, Samsara and Nirvana are no different. This unity is based on the observation that everything is an illusion. This is what we can verify during zazen, by taking refuge in our mind and watching things pass by.

Master Wanshi tells us:

"When you reach the ultimate truth which has neither centre nor shape, you cut off past and future and then you realise completeness."

Our own mind is completeness. To *see* our mind as the only reality, and to remain aware of this truth, is to awaken. Reality has no other abode than the present moment, which itself has no beginning and no end, and therefore does not exist.

When we are agitated, scattered or lost in dreams (*sanran* or *kontin*), we are frequently advised to re-centre. It's good advice that we instinctively understand. However, like the present moment, the centre does not exist either. To experience reality, Zen asks us to take refuge in a practice without centre, without relying on either past or future. This is the practice of the middle [the Middle Way], of emptiness. Between past and future, between birth and death. A life in the *now*, without any goal!

This is why Master Wanshi adds:

"All around, sensations and objects are simply there."

Let's not try to shift or change things, feelings, emotions, thoughts. The Buddha taught the same thing:

"Put things in their rightful place; it will be good for you. Your body does not belong to you, consider it for what it is and put it in its place. Your sensations come and go, don't become their owner and put them in their place. Perception and the objects you perceive are not yours, give them up. The functioning of your brain and its way of formulating ideas is not yours, let it be. Consciousness is a general disposition; it's not yours, so don't make it your possession. Letting go of grasping, not latching onto things will contribute to your well-being."

This is advice [for you] to meditate on deeply, to understand how to free yourself from attachments so as to reach the truth that has neither centre nor limit. This is the work!

To keep nothing for ourselves and to share what is given to us. This Way is the Way of all beings and if you understand it and practise it, you must also teach it. This is Master Wanshi's conclusion and here's how he explains what it is to do our Buddha-work:

"People who use their tongues skilfully and profoundly to transmit the lamp that never goes out and to radiate the great Light, these are doing the great work of the Buddhas from the very first word without borrowing from others a single atom that is outside the Dharma."

It is by practising the *now* with our whole body-mind that we do our Buddha work. We teach beings by the posture and behaviour of our whole body, with words that come from our heart, not one of which is outside the truth of the Dharma.

To encourage us and to express the complete lack of separation between us and the truth which has neither centre nor limit, Master Wanshi concludes:

"And clearly, this happens within your own house."
