

Zoom Zazen Saturday 18 Feb 2023

To understand the Buddha's teaching well is to know and live the truth of the original unity of form and its essence, in this very body we call our own. In our zazen practice, we realise this non-separation without even realising it. But when we experience it consciously, we can speak of liberation, because naturally this anxiety-provoking identification with a perishable body and a volatile and illusory self comes to an end.

Liberation is the forgetting of the goal and the reward that the self blindly pursues. The forgetting of self unfolds in the pure Presence of the inhabited and living self-consciousness.

"To forget merits is realisation," says Master Wanshi.

"So calm down and face up to your responsibilities. When you forget all merit, you are in your [proper] place. Do not seek an honoured position, but enter the stream of the world and embrace illusions."

Who is it who seeks merit except a person who is, knowingly or otherwise, frustrated? The search for merit is a never-ending quest, because the conditioning that drives our likes and dislikes has no beginning. The conditioning that determines what the self *is* has always been inherent in human beings. It's only possible to detach oneself from it by returning to pure Presence, where there is neither memory nor reactivation of past karmas. This is the abode of sublime beings who face up to their responsibility and accept reality as it is.

Presence is our only place, and to return to it requires no effort because we're always already there. Simply to *live* this Presence is what can be called *Mushotoku*.

In the Lankavatara sutra, it is written:

"The worlds of desire, form and non-form (i.e. the three worlds of wandering which constitute samsara) - as well as nirvana, - are within every individual and constitute the field of experience of their mind. Error will continue as long as realities (things that we take to be real) exist. But once you understand what your mind is, you will no longer be mistaken."

We experience the three worlds of desire within our mind, which is their field of experience. But because of our habits and our resistance, when we perceive external objects, whether we like them or not, we take them to be real and no longer perceive the reality of the mind.

When we accept everything that comes to us, we enter into the flow of the world. We live impermanence without taking it as reality; we embrace illusion without becoming attached to it; we observe objects without grasping or rejecting anything. What is real is *That* which in us looks and becomes aware of impermanence. Then we see only our own mind, beyond every appearance. Illusions are then no longer different from awakening. *Bonno soku bodai*. Illusions *are* enlightenment, meaning that the mind in which illusions manifest is recognised as the only reality.
