

Zoom Zazen Saturday 4th March 2023

"The root that the wise man cannot pass on."

This is the title of the next passage from Master Wanshi's recommendations. The root of Zen cannot be transmitted because it is not in the domain of words and concepts. Our 'self' [our 'me'] identified with the body and mind is a hindrance to the knowledge of this root. The sage has realised this root but cannot transmit it. He merely validates the understanding or realisation of the disciple, and thus the transmission continues.

To know the truth of Zen, our root nature, there is no other way than to know ourselves. And all we can do to gain this knowledge is on the one hand to see what we are not, a limited and separate self, and on the other hand always to remain aware of our own unlimited nature, the nature of mind itself. And "That" is revealed, during zazen, beyond words and all intellectual grasp.

The root of Zen, the root of true religion as Master Deshimaru would say, is to live as Buddha ourselves. This is the work. And to do this work, there is nothing better than to sit without intention, simply looking at the things that pass with our whole attention and to see that their nature is impermanence itself, that they are empty.

One who recognises his own mind as Buddha, knows the Truth, returns to the root. This recognition requires what the Lankavatara Sutra calls "**removing the support** [props, scaffolding]" - the support that's made up of all our fictitious beliefs, all our patterns and representations built from a dualistic and divisive self. We believe that the prop of the 'self' is firm and enduring, and we make it into something 'real' when it is only an imaginary fiction:

"In the nirvana that is freedom, there are neither aggregates, nor self, nor characteristics. Enter Mind-Only and you will become free by taking away the 'support', beyond the duality of knower and known. The removal of this 'support' is liberation, it leads you to the eternal abode, beyond birth and death."

Master Wanshi tells us:

"Completely free your head (the mind) and your skin (the body) from their mould (the fictitious prop of the self). Do not enter into any distinction between light and darkness."

"When the ten thousand changes (or the ten thousand things) no longer reach you, you are that root which even a thousand sages cannot transmit. Simply, by yourself, illuminate it and experience it deeply in unconditional and totally intimate acceptance. The original light pierces the confusion with its brilliance."

We can gain much knowledge in this life, as much as, or more than, Kyogen did before he burned all his books. But we cannot know That which knows this knowledge, for it is not an object of knowledge. The eye cannot see itself and yet it illuminates the ten thousand things that appear and disappear in its field of experience. We must know what we are not, study the illusory self, abandon the props of our beliefs and attachments so that the buddha-nature breaks through the confusion, awakens and shines within us for the benefit of all beings.

A monk asked Hyakujo, *"What exercise should we practise to achieve deliverance?"*

"Deliverance can only be achieved by awakening to your true nature."

"What is awakening to your true nature?" the monk asked again.

"It is to free yourself in an instant from all your blindness. It is to become aware that it is not something that you can achieve."

"So where do we start?" the monk insisted.

"At the very root," replied Hyakujo.

"Where is the root?"

"Your mind is the root."
