

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 18 March 2023

To begin this kusen, here is a poem by Master Rinzai Mumon Hui-kai who lived at the same time as Master Dogen, a few decades after Master Wanshi:

*"The Great Way has no gateway;
There are thousands of different paths.
Once you have passed all the obstacles,
You walk alone in the universe."*

We walk alone. The practice is something we decide and do for ourselves. We can't ask someone else to awaken in our place.

We are dedicated to enlightenment, and as Master Wanshi says, "to carrying on the family business," to passing on the Treasure of the True Law. All obstacles must be overcome, crossed, before we realise that we have always been on the Great Way that has no gateway. There is no accomplishment in life other than realising one's own Buddha nature.

"So," Master Wanshi tells us in the next passage of his recommendations, "walk and play in samadhi with total awareness."

To remain silent and be in samadhi is to remain in harmony with pure self-awareness, while performing actions naturally and spontaneously. This is the teaching of zazen, shikantaza: we live the posture, beyond words. It is the practice that merges with Presence, the pure feeling of being, without claiming to be anything else. This samadhi, pure meditation, is to experience this pure consciousness that holds itself in the moment before words appear. Learning to hold on to the awareness of the silent mystery before words. Our practice of zazen is nothing more than entering the knowledge of our own silent beingness.

Master Wanshi asks us to be true:

"Empty and devoid of desires, calm and transparent, simple and genuine, this is how to cut through and finish with the remaining habits of our many lives."

The samadhi of zazen is an immersion in the consciousness of being, the sense of being. We know ourselves to *be*. No more doubt! It's not a consciousness which *is* the body, but [one] that gets lost when it's identified with the body and the other aggregates. Getting into the habit of recollecting ourselves in the consciousness of *being* erases karmic memories, bad habits and frees us.

This consciousness, buddha-nature, which is our identity, has always existed. It does not need to be remembered, because it cannot be forgotten. It is the truth of ourselves, shining in the darkness. It is alone and without any duality.

"When you realise this samadhi," says Master Mumon Hui-kai, "it is like a thunderclap in a clear blue sky. And all beings on earth open their eyes. All things under the heavens together bow down in gassho. Mount Sumeru, the summit of the world, rises with a leap and begins to dance."

Nothing extraordinary, then. *Life*, revealing itself in the silence of our posture.

Of this realisation Master Wanshi tells us:

"The stains from old habits are gone. The original light appears, penetrating your skull, not admitting anything else. Vast and spacious, like sky and water merging during autumn, like snow and moon having the same colour, this samadhi is without boundary. It pervades every direction."
