

## "The Valley Mind and the Wind Master"

This is the title of the following section of Master Wanshi's discourse. A very beautiful title, alluding directly to what our *buddha-nature* is. It is also an encouragement to contemplate and listen to impermanence without letting it swallow us up

The Patriarch Nagarjuna wrote:

*"The mind that meditates on appearance and disappearance, that considers the impermanence of the world, is called the mind of Awakening."*

**The Valley Mind** is the mind of Buddha, of the *Tathagata* who teaches impermanence. It is our own mind when we take refuge in it during zazen. *Tathagata* is one of the ten names of the Buddha. It means, *"He who comes from nowhere and goes nowhere."*

Phenomena appear and their voice resounds in the valley mind. The echo of this voice resounds in the vast, timeless space of the mind and then spontaneously returns to silence. This is how our sensations, our perceptions, our thoughts, reverberate like the echo between the slopes in the valley of our mind. Coming from nowhere, they leave again without a trace. To gaze on, and listen to, impermanence without wanting to grab hold of or control it, is to hear the voice of the *Tathagata* and to give birth to the mind of Awakening. Simply look and listen!

**The Wind Master** is the very breath of the *Tathagata*. It is the wind of impermanence itself, about which we can't say where it comes from or where it goes. It is free of any point of attachment. It goes by, meandering in gusts, or as a gentle breeze caressing the mountains, delicately brushing the tree-tops. It blows, free and unpredictable, without favouring any path, carrying along the scent of nature and phenomena without feeling burdened with any of them, without choosing where to deposit pollen, cooling or warming beings without distinction.

When we are One with the Wind Master, we can forget ourselves in a listening without intention, enter the current of impermanence and let it carry us along like a piece of chaff.

Master Wanshi says about the Valley Mind and the Wind Master:

*"These are the monks and enlightened ones who wear the robe made of old pieces of cloth, the kesa, and whose pure practice is free of the weight of the smallest thread. The real kesa does not even have the weight of time!"*

*"The minds of these monks and enlightened ones are pure, open and radiant. They are like a mirror reflecting another mirror, with nothing outside them, with no dust that can accumulate. They illuminate the whole, no longer perceiving anything as an object."*

In the world of the Buddha, there are neither beings nor objects. Everything is just the eternally empty play of impermanence. It is at the heart of this play that the *buddha-nature* reveals itself, the precious mirror reflected in the precious mirror. To look at the mirror's reflections, without taking them for real, is the practice of monks and enlightened ones in which the unity of *Ku* and *shiki* is revealed. There is nothing inside or outside our own mind. It is itself the mirror in which the impermanence of things endlessly reflects.

To actualise the *samadhi* of the precious mirror, the *Hokyo Zanmai*, is to learn to remain in this mirror where the vision of impermanence is totally free from the attachments of the self, of affirmation or negation. It is the *Shikantaza* of the Buddhas clothed in the *kesa* made of those old pieces of cloth nobody any longer wants. It is the ten thousand things that are illuminated without any of them being separate from us. The clear vision of impermanence once and for all puts an end to doubt and suffering.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha says to Subhuti:

*"How can we explain impermanence, Subhuti, since there is nothing to explain? The bodhisattva will explain it with this poem:*

*"Like stars, a floater in the eye or the flame of a lamp,  
Like a magical illusion, a dewdrop or a bubble,  
Like a dream, a flash of lightning or a cloud:  
So should all conditioned phenomena be seen."*