

## Zoom Zazen - 25th March 2023

*"When you turn within," says Master Wanshi, "and drop off everything completely, [then] realisation appears."*

This statement is difficult to accept for someone who is new to the practice, because if he<sup>1</sup> has come to the dojo, it is because he already has an idea of what realisation or awakening is, based on his readings, his imagination and also his desires [which are] conditioned by his own existential frustration. The beginner also doesn't know what it means to turn inward. He still believes that *thought* will generate this turning toward the interior. The very idea of realisation, which is born in the imagination, prevents one from seeing reality and the true nature of things.

What Master Wanshi says is also difficult to accept for an older practitioner who, after having meditated for many years, still sees himself as dependent on his emotions and negative thoughts, thinks that he cannot control his thoughts and therefore believes he has not achieved anything at all.

One must stop deluding oneself about realisation or enlightenment.

The Buddha makes this surprising statement to Subhuti in a *mondo* related in the *Prajnaparamita*:

*"The highest, most enlightened awareness you've attained: is it the unattainable?"* asked Subhuti.

*"Yes, Subhuti,"* replied the Buddha.

*"Concerning this highest, most enlightened awareness, I have attained nothing at all. This awareness is equally everywhere. It cannot be attained or grasped, but it can be realised. It is realised by accomplished practice, the mind free from a self and the object of a self."*

For realisation to appear, one need only turn within. The inner self is the consciousness that looks without being captured by the opinions, judgments and expectations of the self, and does not grasp any of the objects that the self desires. Without the self, the gaze and attention we give to posture, body, sensations, perceptions, thoughts, is the very awareness that sees impermanence.

Zazen is a contemplation without self, without involvement in what is being contemplated, without grasping, without judgement, and which paradoxically rejects nothing that the self constructs in the mind as intentions, objectives and feelings. When the mind is at rest in the pure awareness of self-presence, there is only the still gaze that contemplates the world in its elusive movement, the Treasure of the Eye!

*"It is from our practice alone that realisation is born,"* writes Master Dogen. *"Our true treasure doesn't come from outside. Realisation depends on<sup>2</sup> practice. Come back to yourself and leap with a single bound into the land of Buddha."*

Realisation cannot be [either] a goal, or the result of practice. It *is* the practice itself when our inner gaze turns to its source and merges with it. Then there is only the Treasure of the Eye, inaccessible, not seeing itself, since it *is* That which looks. When we reach the unattainable, there is nothing left to achieve.

So never believe that you are not there or that you will not be able to merge with the unattainable. The heart of **your** practice is the unattainable.

*"As soon as you engage in the practice, realisation appears,"* says Master Dogen. *"I have never heard of anyone getting any benefit without studying, or any realisation without practising."*

Realisation requires our complete trust in the practice. As it is, as we are, with our light and darkness. It is a "letting go" that is the total acceptance of what is, as it is. And it doesn't require any effort!

So we come to the dojo and sit with our good friends, let go of our imaginary expectations and all desire to obtain, and become totally absorbed in the zazen that looks at impermanence. This is what internalising is all about. This is what allows us to return to the abode of the Treasury of the Eye, the Source from which we have always watched things appear and disappear.

Master Wanshi continues:

*"Right at the moment when you let go of everything, deliberation and discussion are a thousand or ten thousand miles away. But still, absolutely no principle is discernible. So what could there be to find or explain? Those who have fallen into this limitless space immediately find total trust."*

We must restore this total confidence in ourselves, which means finding our own face, our own identity. It is only by going within ourselves that we will realise this.

Here, to conclude, is a saying of the Buddha:

*"Trust is the best thing that human beings can possess and it brings them the truest happiness. The practice of profound insight is the most pleasant life to live, and to find the truth in one's own heart is the sweetest of sweetnesses."*

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. 'his/her' throughout this & the next paragraph

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<sup>2</sup> literally 'uses', 'makes use of'