

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 29 April 2023

In last week's *kusen*, Master Wanshi mentioned the ten tables of the training of the ox, or the way to train the self in order not to suffer from it anymore and to make a friend of it. It is, in fact, the way of "mastering" one's own mind so that we no longer suffer from the greed of our five senses unceasingly agitated by desires.

Having explained to his disciples the metaphor of the training of the ox, the Buddha recommended that they see how the organs of the senses function, so as to stop being caught up in desires:

"O monks, if you give your five senses their head, not only will your desires be boundless, but you will no longer be able to control them. It is like a fierce horse: if it is not controlled, it leads man into the abyss. The heart is the master of the five senses, so you should master your heart. Be like the herdsman who, with a stick and a rope in his hand, watches over his ox and stops it trampling on other people's rice fields."

The heart (mind) is the master of the five senses means that only we can tame the urges and demands of desires. Unless we see how we allow ourselves to be led by the wild and mystifying self, we cannot end [our] suffering. We must therefore study minutely how we respond to the stimulation and the demands of the ego; and above all come to terms with the intimate experience of surrender by letting go our grip. This is, in fact, only painful for the self, but [it's] perfectly possible and bearable. This surrender can only be achieved within our own mind.

"Simply learn to dwell within yourself," says Master Wanshi, "in the simple fact of being (Presence), and [learn to] let go of all conditions. With an open, bright mind - without distorting anything - just go into yourself and let go of everything."

Simply remain within yourself. Don't move! Don't expect anything! A practice without object has no other purpose than to abandon the grasping of objects. This is an apparent paradox. We have the answer by going back into the very heart of our own mind, without changing anything, without disturbing anything. Just seeing what is neither born, nor dies.

Here is a *mondo* between Master Hyakujo (720-814) and a disciple. Master Hyakujo teaches us about the state of the mind during zazen. By understanding this, we can discover the way to train the ox of the self, and master the sense organs in everyday life. Always return to the mind that dwells on nothing:

The disciple asks:

"On what should the mind (heart) settle and abide?"

"It should establish itself in the non-abiding and then remain there."

"What is this non-abiding?" the disciple asked.

"It means not letting the mind settle anywhere."

"What does that mean?" insisted the disciple.

"Dwelling on nothing means that the mind is not attached to good or evil, existence or non-existence, inside or outside or somewhere in between, emptiness or non-emptiness, concentration or distraction. Dwelling on nothing is where the mind should remain. Those who dwell in this mind are said to have a mind that dwells on nothing, that is, they have the mind of Buddha."

This is a very important *mondo* for us. To penetrate with all our acuity. Not to be attached to either of the two extremes of duality. To realise the mind that dwells on nothing. Not to leave the middle way.

To master the world of desires is to train the ox of the self and make a friend of it.

"Riding the ox, I go home. The sound of my flute blends with the glow of the sunset. I can finally rest. Beneath my straw hut, the whip and the rope are set aside."

Simply learn to dwell within yourself, in the mind with no dwelling place.
