

## Zoom Zazen - Saturday 16 September 2023

Master Wanshi now asks the question:

*"How to observe Buddha?"*

Of course it's not a question of observing the historical Buddha or one of his representations. *Buddha* is our original nature, the very essence of what we are.

Master Wanshi answers his own question:

*"To observe your own authentic form is the way to observe Buddha."*

To observe Buddha is therefore to see and realise our body-mind in its original truth.

In our lives and in our zazen practice, we must not blindly attribute the status of observer to our fictitious "me" [self]. That which observes and sees the impermanent form of things has no form, no characteristics. It is not an entity, a person. In the heart of zazen there is only observation, awareness and vision.

It is in our own mind that observation or contemplation occurs. The mind observes and contemplates the things that appear to it in the limitless space that is both its nature and its home. The difficulty we have to overcome is to understand that our "me" [the mental-self] assumes ownership of the vision by putting a name to things, and grasping them. The mental-self [the "me"] makes us falsely believe that *it* is the one that observes the appearance and the disappearance of things, phenomena.

Our own authentic form is *this body itself*, this 'bag of skin', to use Master Hakuin's expression. And this 'bag of skin', in the teaching of the Buddha and the Patriarchs, cannot be distinguished from its essence. When our own authentic form is observed, the "me" - and the idea of being separate - disappear. This comes about naturally when there is non-duality between the observer and the thing observed. *Right vision* is born of this non-duality, and everything is spontaneously liberated.

So we observe the authentic form of ourselves, without distinguishing ourselves from it. We see forms unfold, transform, and then disappear; we feel and know sensations, at the heart of sensations themselves; we welcome perceptions, resonating with them, becoming one with them; we study the nature of thoughts at the heart of thought, using thought itself.

*"Wherever it comes from and wherever it goes, the whistling wind of impermanence can fully penetrate everywhere in this authentic form, without meeting any resistance."*

On the subject of the aggregates that make up the authentic form, the Buddha teaches:

*"When a meditator sees forms, sensations, perceptions, thoughts, as he sees winds, rising or ceasing, clear or dust-laden, gentle or violent, he can understand them clearly and no longer depend on them. When he understands them perfectly, he will see beyond this conditioned world."*

We are open, seated on the zafu, aware of being, in the wind of impermanence. There is no entity other than our authentic form. Not for a moment does it stay the same, constantly transforming itself. Without exterior or interior. Without substance and without limit. And this is why we speak of emptiness. If we see something, it cannot be other than Buddha.

The Buddha is Presence itself and is also the *Real*. It is the true home that we have never left.

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