

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 28 Oct 2023

In his next teaching, Maître Wanshi, steeped in traditional Chinese culture, uses the symbol of the mythical dragon, very popular in people's imagination during the Middle Ages, to help practitioners on their spiritual path.

The dragon lives - in, or near - large bodies of water, tumultuous rivers, at the bottom of the ocean, or in the sky, in the heart of large, ever-changing clouds. The dragon symbolises elevation to a higher state, whether material or spiritual. In China, and also in Japan, it was the emblem of the supreme power of the emperor, who controlled everything, including religious practice.

For the Chinese Buddhist practitioner of the time, the image of the dragon represents the realisation of perfect, unsurpassed awakening, *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, the enlightenment of a being who has discovered the original truth within himself, realised it and proclaims it to the world.

In China, it's said that when dragons hear thunder, they rise up and move around the sky, joining the clouds to play amongst them.

This is why Master Wanshi tells us:

"In the abode of the wind [of impermanence], clouds and dragons pursue each other harmoniously. They develop very naturally without having to express their intentions. This is how monks who wear the kesa practise correctly together, relying on the interplay of causes and conditions."

By walking among the clouds, the dragons cause to fall the rain that fertilises the earth. The wind and rain for which they are responsible can also be a source of disaster, which is why they have been feared as well as venerated, even though no one has ever seen a dragon anywhere other than in the form of clouds. So the monks who follow the precepts and practise the *paramitas* are examples to follow for beings unwillingly imprisoned in *Samsara*. Monks intimately understand the appearance of things and no longer naively grasp objects or phenomena.

Master Wanshi continues:

"Dragons and clouds appear surreptitiously and enter the scene without disguise, and it is impossible to confuse them. Hanging nonchalantly above the ten thousand phenomena, each of them presents itself in the form of a spectacular appearance."

When we become aware of the multiplicity of forms that are beings, animals, plants, mountains and rivers, we can only marvel at the resplendent majesty of [their] manifestation. The infinitely changing spectacle that clouds and dragons enact in the sky of our mind, very simply reminds us of the grandeur and splendour of our own nature. Only ignorance prevents us from being aware of this representation, which is always incredibly new and alive at every moment. When we look at this world from the Source, from the Eye-Treasury, we can no longer remain insensitive to this grandiose spectacle.

So let us simply remain seated and watch the mystery unfold before our eyes, and listen to the roar of the dragon as it teaches us the words of the Buddha. Master Dogen reminds us with these words:

"On this vast earth, there has never been a single person in existence who is incapable of hearing the roar of the dragon (the teaching of the doctrine). When the dragon's roar is heard, the clouds and rain-water appear. These are simply a thousand or ten thousand melodies that bring joy. Those who can hear them forget everything."
