

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 4th Nov 2023

Let's continue with Master Wanshi's theme of the dragon:

"Fully realised, with not a hair's breadth of difference between them, bounding along in complete spontaneity, clouds and dragons clearly set an example of how to return home."

Dragons and clouds play together in the vast sky. Their companionship, expressed in shifting, evanescent forms, shows the way to awaken to the truth of impermanence and return to the Source. All we have to do is really look at things as they are, flow with the wind of impermanence and harmonise with the ten thousand phenomena.

Among the dragon's characteristics is exceptional longevity, but above all, for us who are sometimes inconstant, there is perseverance and at the end of the effort, success, the return home.

There is a waterfall in China called the Dragon's Gate, *Ryu Mon* in Japanese. The water falls from an impressive height. At breeding time, large numbers of carp gather in the pool at the foot of the waterfall, hoping to leap over it. If they succeed, they will turn into dragons. Their determination to pass this truly difficult test at all costs is a symbol of perseverance.

However, very few carp make it up the cascade. Some are swept away by the force of the current, others fall prey to eagles, hawks, kites and owls, and others are caught in nets or by hand, or even pierced by the arrows of the fishermen who line up on either side of the waterfall, delighted by this lucky chance. That's how hard it is for a carp to become a dragon.

To return home, we must practise, and practise with all our perseverance.

"There is no realisation without practice," says Master Dogen.

By awakening under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha showed us the example. And all the Patriarchs did the same. There's no time to lose, we have to go through the Dragon Gate, jump into Awakening and come back home.

This is what Nan Shan wrote about the journey of salmon to their native waters:

"The salmon returns to the source, without feeding, leaping over waterfalls, going up the torrents, over immeasurable distances, to the snow-capped mountains. What is the basis of its faith?"

In addition to perseverance, we must keep our faith in the Buddha Way and understand deeply, from the deep intuition that comes from zazen, what Master Dogen says in the *Gakudo Yojinshu*:

"To have faith in the Buddha-Way is to have the certainty that we have always been the Way itself, that we are not prey to distraction and false ideas, and that there is neither diminution, nor increase, nor error. To achieve this, we must clear away the screen of the mind and stop orienting ourselves according to discriminating knowledge. To do this, we must abandon body and mind, illusion and Awakening."

By persevering in this way, like carp or salmon, we will leap through the Dragon Gate, without even understanding how we did it. And like dragons, we will become examples for beings trapped in suffering.
