

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 11 November 2023

Once it has passed through the Dragon Gate, the carp becomes a dragon itself. It returns to its home, where it was born, where it passes on life to its descendants, and where its phenomenal existence comes to an end. There is no mistaking the fact that, in the Chinese spiritual imagination, this allegory signifies the total understanding and spiritual realisation of Buddha-nature, the return to the original Awakening.

And yet, even when this realisation occurs, when we have found our way back to our birthplace, it does not mean that we have nothing more to do. At no time should we stop studying the Way. Until there is nothing left hidden, until our hearts come alive, until we reach that place where light and clarity dispel all confusion.

Master Wanshi expressed this in these words:

*"You must seek again, until you are fed to your fill. For the clouds disperse and the winds vanish; the autumn sky clears and the moon rises. The waters of heaven are boundless. When attachment to what is earthly is abandoned, realisation is nothing but silent light."*

When dark thoughts invade our minds, when we feel tired and doubtful, let's remember the carp that has no other intention than to pass through the Dragon Gate and transform itself into a dragon. Let's remember the salmon that crosses the seas, overcoming so many obstacles to return courageously to its native home, where it brings forth life and dies. This was also the teaching of the Buddha who, in each of his previous lives, made a gift of his body or his energy and self to fulfil the vow to serve all beings until he realised his own light.

To conclude Master Wanshi's talk on clouds and dragons, I offer you this teaching from the Buddha himself, who never spared himself in his journey towards supreme enlightenment:

*"The long-distance traveller who makes haste necessarily arrives at his destination. It is not due to the gods, nor to chance or luck that these advantages are acquired, but to personal action that does not even try to spare one's own life."*

*"By digging in the soil with dogged effort, we reach the source. The same applies to energy: if you don't search, you won't find."*

*"What's more, energy brings us the joys of this present existence, in the same way that the rain that wets the seeds determines their birth."*

*"There is nothing that cannot be obtained by those who know how to love and practise with perseverance."*

When we cross the beam at the entrance to the dojo, it's like going through the Dragon Gate. We rediscover our buddha-nature, becoming Buddhas once again, sitting quietly, facing the wall, returning at last to their native land. There, *"the silence is the inaudible teaching, and the light is the universal response."*

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