

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 16 Dec 2023

One day, Tenno Dōgo asked Master Sekito Kisen, the author of the *Sandokai*:

"What is the fundamental principle of Buddhism?"

Master Sekito replied: "It cannot be obtained, it is unknowable!"

Dōgo asked again, "Don't you have a more concrete explanation?"

Master Sekito replied, "The vast sky does not prevent the clouds from flying."

The sky has never stopped any clouds from flying, that's for sure! Nor the rain from falling, nor the winds from blowing, nor any thunderstorm or tempest from crashing loudly!

The sky is always open and welcoming to everything that appears in it. That's easy to understand. The sky leaves the clouds to transform themselves into a thousand fleeting forms. Transformations - always unusual and ghostly - that our imagination watches, often seeing strange characters, strange animals, even dragons.

All kinds of thoughts pass through us ceaselessly whether we want it or not. Our Mind is the sky of Presence, and everything that appears there has its purpose, its immediate certification. And all of this is ungraspable.

Whatever the shape and colour of the clouds, whatever form our thoughts take - we can't grasp any of them, and yet we try ceaselessly.

Thoughts, dreams, sad or funny stories, emotions or anger, it's on the stage of the theatre of our Mind that their show is played out, that the clouds pass by.

It's when we don't grasp anything in our meditation, when we have given up the idea of any benefit, of result ... then, there comes to us the obviousness and the understanding that our own Mind is the limitless sky, the very place where the world appears. And each moment is this way.

Master Wanshi also speaks of these transformations of impermanence. They express, wordlessly, the fundamental principle of Buddhism:

*"The empty valley welcomes the clouds.
The river's current reflects the moon."
Without leaving and without remaining,
far beyond all transformations,
without any personal goal or expectation,
you can realise your oneness with all beings and
it's in this way that you teach them.
Everything, everywhere returns to its native land"*

Our illusions, our dreams, our perceptions, all that we perceive through the sense organs - these are clouds.

And at the same time we are ultimate reality, emptiness: the sky of the Mind. *Ku sokuze shiki, Shiki sokuze Ku*. Emptiness and phenomena. Total identity, on this zafu, the sky and the clouds.

And this unity of which I speak, between *ku* and *shiki*, is realised in our very posture, in every moment. And it's beyond all verbal explanation.

Understand clearly that essence and form are never separated. In this very moment, each of us is a human being *and* a Buddha. We can't separate the two.

This is the fundamental principle of Buddhism.

How can this unity be explained in words?

It must be lived in every moment, in this very body.
