

## Zoom Zazen Saturday 20 January 2024

*"Everything, everywhere, returns to its native land,"* said Master Wanshi.

The journey of life may seem long when we are filled with suffering, but it seems altogether too brief when happiness overwhelms us or love floods us.

This journey ends one day, either quietly or abruptly. We all know this, without really understanding who lives and who dies. When form disappears, we return to our native land, where we took form. Nihilists call it nothingness; Buddhists call it emptiness; Christians call it hell or heaven; Muslims call it an intermediate place before resurrection. These are all beliefs that can often be used to avoid real spiritual work.

Before birth, and in early childhood, the thought "I am a body, with a name and a form" did not exist. With the development of the body and knowledge, the idea of a "me" took shape. But can this body, which is temporary, and this "me" who takes itself to be the body, be described as real? Reality is necessarily immutable and permanent. And nothing in this body or in this 'me' corresponds to this definition of reality, because this body is constantly changing. What a paradox that what is permanent and unchanging should be identified with this perishable body that is always changing! It is this mistaken identification that produces fear and suffering. And which gives us the feeling of being far from our native land.

What is it that does not change? Let's look at it in our meditation. It is That which is before the appearance and disappearance of things, which is the very centre of still and silent presence.

So let's simply look at this timeless now, where births and deaths take place, and let's dwell in it. It is never outside us! This is how we can reach the place where contradictions are overcome and there is no longer the slightest doubt.

*"Where is that?"* you may ask.

*"Nowhere,"* says Zen, *"you are already there!"*

There is only one native land and we have never left it.

In our meditation, in our lives, fear disappears when we see and understand that our true nature is That which is watching, and that That cannot be the changing body. Impermanence is recognised from that which is still. The knower of this understanding is beyond time. It is our true nature, Buddha, the Eye-Treasure, which has no face, form or attribute. This revelation is the return to the land of our birth.

Who then is born and dies if I am not the body!

Zen does not say that something is born. It teaches that since nothing is born, nothing can die. Neither existence nor non-existence. There are only transformations conditioned by other transformations. A dream!

It is in the *Samadhi* of zazen that the dreamer awakens and the evidence of our nature is revealed. Dogen exhorts us:

*"To those who have not yet established this evidence that they are the Buddha of sixteen feet or eight feet: open your eyes, open your eyes!!"*

Sixteen feet represents the height of the statue of the Buddha standing, and eight feet when he is sitting in meditation. Open your Eye-Treasure to the eternal posture of the Buddhas. It is *Shikantaza*, simply Presence.

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