

Zoom Zazen Saturday 27 January 2024

Our true nature, That which sees that life is a dream and which Shakyamuni Buddha calls the Eye-Treasure, is the unchanging truth. Doesn't that mean we should celebrate or despise our fleeting life, which in the end is just a dream? Master Dogen tells us:

"If you dig deeper into what it means to move from illusion to illusion, you will surely discern the passage that leads to clarity."

This passage is like the eye of a needle through which the thread of life passes. Let's stand still and watch. We can remain as we are, simply and naturally.

The moment of recognition is now. The only place to look is now.

And that's why Master Wanshi concludes his remarks¹ with these words:

"The empty valley receives the clouds. The still river reflects the moon. Without leaving and without remaining, far beyond all changes, you can teach without any goal or personal expectation. Everything, everywhere, returns to its native land. Not a single hair has ever been moved, twisted or dishevelled. Despite hundreds of thousands of disgraces and stupidities, the cauldron is naturally delicious."

To explain, the cauldron referred to by Master Wanshi is the symbol of righteousness. The cauldron must remain upright so that wisdom can be cooked in it, sages and Buddhas can be simmered in it and all beings can be nourished. We could say that this cauldron is called zazen. Righteousness is also Dharma.

Right now, there's everything we need for a tasty meal in the comfort of our own private space. All we have to do is abandon all expectations and projections outside the present moment and enjoy the meal prepared by the Buddhas.

Master Wanshi continues:

Jinshu's answers: 'Go and wash your bowl', or 'drink your tea' don't need any explanation. They have always been immediately and perfectly clear."

These answers are so simple that we often don't take them seriously and we look elsewhere. Yet they are self-evident before our very eyes. Does thinking about the past or the future have any reality in this now that constantly evades us?

Master Wanshi concludes by addressing his disciples:

"To look at everything with a completely open Eye is the spontaneous practice of monks who wear the kesa."

And even if you don't wear the kesa, that's how you should do it. To wear the kesa is to clothe yourself in humility before the grandiose spectacle of manifested life, abandoning the idea that we are there for a reason. And simply watching.

When truth enters our hearts, it makes everything subject to time and space seem illusory.

"Everything comes from here, everything leaves here" says Master Dogen.

¹ *The Backward Step and the Upright Cauldron*, in Taigen Dan Leighton's *Cultivating the Empty Field*