

Zoom Zazen Saturday 13 July 2024

Master Wanshi again invites us to consider the Field of Emptiness:

"Buddhas and demons cannot invade the Field of Emptiness. Nor can polluting filth contaminate it. Whether square or round, Buddhas and demons simply like to remain at its centre. Their behaviour and practice are then consistent with the precepts. As numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, they evolve harmoniously with each other in an admirable balance."

We human beings are the great sangha of demons and Buddhas. However, the vast majority of us are blind or have blinkers on, seeing things only through illusion. We can no longer find the direction of our inner centre. We are everywhere, except in ourselves. Because our behaviour and our practice are no longer based on respect for the precepts, we live in disharmony with one another. We suffer deeply and needlessly.

We are well aware that we do not always behave correctly. Very few people in Samsara respect the precepts, cultivate righteousness and protect the Dharma. And yet, even the polluted karmas we constantly create do not defile the immaculate purity of the field of emptiness.

We often fall without knowing how to get up, mend or change. We try to do this by relying on our habitual way of thinking, our personal beliefs and our unconscious conditioning. But it doesn't work!

"If you fall on the solid earth and try to get up by pushing against solid earth," says Master Dogen, "you won't succeed, even after billions of years of effort."

To get up, you have to find a means of escaping.

Here's how it is:

If you fall on the solid earth, you must get up by supporting yourself on the empty sky.

And if you fall in the empty sky, you must get up by supporting yourself on the solid earth.

If it weren't so, it would be impossible to get up. This is how it has always been for all the Buddhas and Patriarchs."

To follow the Way of the Buddhas, we must enter and remain in the field of emptiness. We are incredibly lucky to have been called by zazen and to be able to lean on the empty sky. There is now something within us that knows where we need to go and what we can rely on to balance our lives.

Master Dogen also points out the danger of seeing only one side of things:

"And if we fall into the void, we must get up by supporting ourselves on the earth. To try to get up the support of the earth doesn't work. Those who do not practise in this way can neither know, nor have the slightest idea about, what the words 'earth' and 'emptiness' mean in the teachings of the Buddhas."

The force of the Dharma has penetrated and brought forth our lives. Seated, without any expectation, in the centre of the field of emptiness, we are in harmony with the precepts, in the light of Buddha. By remaining at the centre of this field, we can evolve harmoniously with one another and take refuge in the sangha, in a dynamic and perfect balance.
