

Zoom Zazen Saturday 5 Oct 2024

During zazen, even without our [specifically] wanting it to, our mind finds once more the limitless space that is its own [true] nature. "Naturally, unconsciously, automatically," as Master Deshimaru would say. This turning inward is the infinite merit of zazen, which unfolds spontaneously, for ourselves and for others, beyond the world of concepts or fiction. We may feel lost in this limitless, empty, featureless space, and think we have to do something to get back to what we call reality. But to think that reality is this impermanent, floating world in which beings suffer, is to miss the mark and to maintain our blindness to the truth of things and of ourselves.

Through an unjustified fear of emptiness, in the heart of zazen, we ignore it all too frequently - and we're forever filling the silence, time, space with our fanciful scenarios. We don't grasp that it is in this limitless space that we appear and exist so tenuously; that this is our original nature, our native land.

When we recognise this mistake we have to go higher, one metre beyond the top of the pole, to stop seeing the space-emptiness of zazen as an objective. We have to make it truly the abode of our surrender, somewhere we can take refuge whenever life upsets us or illusion dazzles us. The light of zazen illuminates our judgement so that the understanding can come to us of that which is the light of emptiness, the source of consciousness.

Master Wanshi tells us:

"True light is flawless. At the very moment when there is no longer any separation between it and yourself, the entire body of the Dharma appears instantaneously.

The eye cannot see itself, but its function is never diminished. Light flows from the pure and immaculate source, shining everywhere."

The Treasure of our Eye is that which, within us, sees the world as equally the body of the Buddha. It does not see itself, but it sees everything. It is its light that illuminates the world and everything it sees. The Treasure of our Eye is not that which it looks, but it is never separate from it. Every time it turns towards something, it floods it with its light and makes us aware and capable of perception. When the Treasury of the Eye turns towards its source, it thus sees the vast expanse of space, the emptiness, reality, our true nature - emptiness from time without beginning.

Master Dogen sums this up in this sentence:

"The vast universe in the ten directions is One with the light of our awakening. So, to illuminate yourself, turn your own light inward. The light of the Buddhas is none other than your own light."

We must know and recognise this light by meditating deeply on it and on what came before it. It then becomes possible for us to distinguish between the transitory & conditioned, and that which does not depend on time. Knowing what is never born and never dies, we lose our attachment to the dream of existence - and as a result we can see and savour all of its beauty.

Let's listen to Master Ryokan in concluding this kusen:

*"The light fades on the mountains.
In the distance, the birds have stopped flying.
In the silent garden, leaves fall unendingly.
In the solitude of the autumn wind,
Seated alone, a monk in black robes."*
