

Zoom Zazen, 23 November 2024

This is what Master Wanshi tells us about his own *Samadhi* or realisation, what he calls *mokusho*, silent enlightenment:

"I, a simple monk who has entered the stream, have as my possession, only a single beggar's bowl. I look upon the ten thousand forms of the universe as my only inheritance. Subject and object are like images in a mirror. It's like the moon and its reflection in the water, intimately mixed - nothing can separate them. "

Self-effacement makes way for Buddha's light. Bending over a buttercup glistening with dew, the awakened being sees the monk's bowl. The ten thousand forms are apprehended all at once by the Treasure of the Eye. Vision, the Eye and what it sees are but one truth, that of our luminous nature.

"And to see your own light," says Master Dogen, "is to meet Buddha and experience awakening. And your own awakening is none other than this vast universe in its ten directions."

We cannot be outside this vast universe, nor can we be outside of awakening. Both are what we are. We are born at the same time as this vast universe and there is nothing before our birth. We die at the same time as this vast universe, and there is nothing after our death. Seeing the universe as external to ourselves is a false interpretation of what our true perception is. This existence is only an ungraspable reflection in the emptiness of the mirror. This is the teaching of zazen and the revelation of what our heritage is: an unfathomable emptiness, an inconceivable truth that is our nature.

One day Master Unmon mounted the platform and said to the assembly:

"The light dwells in all beings of the three times. But if you try to see it, all you see is darkness. What then is this light that dwells in all of you?"

No one in the assembly knew what to answer, and Unmon answered for them:

"The light that dwells in all of you is the monks' meditation room, the Buddha Hall, the kitchen, the temple door."

To try to see the light of awakening is to set ourselves a goal that sets itself against the very vision of this light and hides it from our gaze.

When a monk passes through the door of the temple, his life begins. He enters into his own light. Zazen becomes the gateway to the Dharma, as Master Dogen says in the *Bendowa*. Walking through the temple door opens up the possibility of consciously living the daily life that is our heritage and that we enjoy in the here and now. The kitchen is the place where what fills the monk's bowl is prepared and makes zazen practice possible. The Buddha Hall is where our ceremonies and the chanting of the sutras express our gratitude for the sublime Way which is our heritage. Everything is light when our heart becomes the temple door, the Buddha Hall, the kitchen.

The meditation hall is light itself. We practise sitting there, abandoning all searching, flowing with the current of thoughts without becoming attached to them, letting them disappear without regret. We detach ourselves from the illusory self to penetrate the treasure of *Shikantaza*, where light comes by itself, without effort.

Master Dogen concludes with these words on the subject of the silent light offered by zazen:

"This light embraces all beings of the past, present and future. From all eternity, this fire consumes the whole of humanity. In every being, there are all beings. The fire renews itself without either beginning or end. Each flame sets all flames ablaze. The blazing up of every Buddha always sets alight the entire universe."
