

鐵樹花開劫外春

Tetsuju hana hiraku gōgai no haru

The iron tree blossoms, and the whole wide world is spring

Dōgen wrote in the *Shōbōgenzō* about the most basic koan of all:

To study the way is to study the self;

To study the self is to forget the self;

To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things;

To be enlightened by all things is to remove the barrier between self and other.

Learning the Buddha's way doesn't require grasping grand concepts or mastering exotic philosophies. It is not about contemplating the beginning of the universe or learning how to earn more money. Nor is it about being respected by others for following some noble truth. When you encounter your own Self, you will discover the true Buddha.

That's why the Buddha said to look inside ourselves and take refuge there, rather than looking for refuge elsewhere. This self is not something that can be known conceptually but is that which perceives through all of our senses and apertures. *Awareness-experiencing-awareness* is another way to describe it. We must let go of all ideas of form, of being male or female, old or young, rich or poor, good or bad. Right there, a huge, wide-open state of mind is born; right there, the flower blooms on the iron tree.

Anyone who is alive will eventually die, and anyone who laughs will eventually cry, but all of it is Mu. Born as a human in this world, we can know this awakening of our True Mind. When all day long we experience the Truth directly, whether we are coming or going, then the iron tree gives forth a flower. We will see how wonderful it is to be human and know that this is the greatest good fortune. To realize this directly is the most important thing we can do.