

## **Affirming Faith in Mind (20) The Source**

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**Wombat Sangha Meditation Group**

*"To go to this mysterious Source frees us from all entanglements.  
When all is seen with 'equal mind', to our Self-nature we return.  
This single mind goes right beyond all reasons and comparisons.  
Stop movement and there's no movement, stop rest and no-rest comes  
instead.  
When rest and no-rest cease to be, then even oneness disappears.  
This ultimate finality's beyond all laws, can't be described."*

The Third Patriarch is talking about the Source of us, of the Universe, the source of everything. What is the Source? It is a different question than is asked in theistic traditions such as "What is God?"

It is a different question in the sense that it points to an inner awakening rather than believing in some entity that is out there. It is quite a different question and they can't be compared. Someone might ask, "Do you believe in God or not?" That is about a belief in something out there that may or may not exist, that people have not really seen. They feel they have to believe in something. In conventional religions, that is the way that it is talked about.

Lately there have been a number of publications by scientists and others writing about whether God exists. It becomes an interesting topic of philosophical debate. In our mystical tradition here, we are not interested in this debate because it is about "has or has not". Remember the koan "Mu – has a dog Buddha nature or not"? It is about "has or has not". Once again duality is brought into the debate. Some take the idea of has, some take the idea of has not. Even my mind at any one moment thinks has, at another moment thinks has not. It is caught again in duality.

We are not interested in that play of duality. The Third Patriarch talks about duality in the sense of rest and non-rest, movement and non-movement. We turn inwards into ourselves to find the source in our practice. This is our ancient mystical practice. We don't look outwardly to see if we can find if God exists out there somewhere.

Scientists are sending space ships out of our galaxy to find something. It is an attempt to find God. They are trying to find other forms of life, but in a deeper sense it is still looking outwardly, looking for something that explains everything. This quest of science is still moving out and out into other galaxies to find a planet like Earth, to find other life. This quest goes on and on but for us it doesn't mean very much at all. No matter how far away you go the fundamental question remains: "What is the Source of everything?"

In our practice we start immediately moving inward. We start on a question like “*Mu*”, or “Who am I?” – the great question posed by Ramana Maharshi. In Zen tradition, Bassui Zenji takes up this question in the form of, “Who is hearing this sound?” This question goes deeper and deeper. When you think you have come up with an answer – “Peter is hearing this sound”, then you need to ask, “Who is Peter?” It keeps going deeper like that.

We call ourselves the *Wombat Sangha* because the wombat keeps burrowing down and is not looking outward for things. It is going inward, burrowing deeper all the time. The action of the wombat represents our practice in a symbolic way.

As we penetrate deeper everything we eliminate becomes weeds and compost for the garden. We burrow deeper into the question. In the end we realize we can’t see what the Source is. In the end all we know is that we *are* the Source of the Universe in our own deeper sense. Not that I am God, but in the deeper sense we are it. In the Hindu tradition they say, *Tat Tvam Asi* – “I am That”.

This is the great exclamation of realized people, of the mystics who have done the practice. – “I am That”. You are the Source itself but you can’t see the Source in that sense.

There are many hundreds of koans and at *sesshin*, the teachers would give *teishos*, or dharma talks on particular koans. The koan that I worked on where I first was able to understand this was Yunmen Wenyan’s (864-949, China) “Bright light”. Yunmen’s “Bright light” was, “Everyone has their own bright light. If you want to see it you can’t. The darkness is dark, dark. Now what is your light?” He himself answered, “The storeroom. The gate.” And he added, “It would be better to have nothing than to have something good.”

It is a mysterious koan like all the koans. With that sense of going inward and asking yourself, “Who am I?” – you won’t find an answer. You could say at first, “Peter Thompson”. But this is not it. So, darkness gets darker and deeper until you realize, “The storehouse. The gate!” There is no Peter Thompson there. But there is the storehouse, the gate.

To enlighten this koan, I used the words of Dogen Zenji: “To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be confirmed by the ten thousand things. The thought that I confirmed the ten thousand things is delusion. The understanding that I am confirmed by the ten thousand things is enlightenment.”

Buddha was meditating for six years to become enlightened. One morning he woke up under the Bodhi tree and was confirmed by the morning star, confirming his self-nature. Before that he couldn’t see his own self-nature, it was dark, dark. His self-nature was confirmed by the morning star. The storehouse. The gate.

Kyogen Chikan (Hsiang-Yen, China, died 898) was sweeping the grave of his teacher for a number of years, honoring his teacher, doing his practice. A pebble flew up from the rake and hit something. He immediately had a complete awakening. One *tok!* and all his previous knowledge was gone.

No self. The mind awakens it. If we are meditating deeply asking ourselves this question “Who am I?” we open ourselves to this realization. As Yunmen says, everyone has their own light but they can’t see it. You can’t see it but you can be awakened by one of the ten thousand things.

When you are listening to someone, you are listening so fully that you become that person. That person is awakening you. Everything is teaching you, awakening you in the universe if you are open to it.

This is what we call in our practice Mind - Big Mind. Little mind is thinking mind. Our practice would be totally useless if it didn’t solve the great questions of birth, death and all the major questions confronting our life. So we call our path the “Great Matter of Birth and Death”.

Even birth and death is a duality but in Big Mind duality ceases.

*“When rest and no-rest cease to be, then even oneness disappears.”*

We bring everything to that oneness, but when that oneness disappears what is left? I am that. I am that Big Mind.

*“This ultimate finality’s beyond all laws, can’t be described.”*

There are no words to describe it. Only, *I am that.*

So whatever enquiry you are pursuing here, it goes deeper and deeper into the darkness and then suddenly something will enlighten you just like that [*clicks fingers!*]. All the great realizations in our tradition and all other traditions happened like this.

St John of the Cross was awakened by the silhouette of a tree in the sunset. It suddenly awakened him. This has happened right through all the mystical traditions.

Big Mind is already here, now. It is our true nature. We call it self-nature. In Big Mind there is no birth and no death. There is birth and death but they don’t affect Big Mind at all. Our job here, if it is a true job for us, is to awaken to that imperishable mind where the fear of birth and death ceases altogether.

Bankei said: “While living be a dead person, then live.” Krishnamurti used to say death is inevitable. Why spend your time trying to resist it? Bring it on immediately. Die straight away, inwardly. No resistance. Die now because you will die tomorrow or the next day anyway. Die now and live. He also says, in great seriousness, there is great humor but if you are frightened and resistant, there is no humor at all. In very deep seriousness there is deep humor. You can see it in some paintings from great Zen masters.

If there is no birth, no death, what is there to fear? What is there to be anxious about at all? Even in Christianity they say, that by his death, Jesus conquered death. There is this notion in spirituality to go beyond the fear of death. Death is a major constriction; it blocks us in so many ways because of that deep underlying fear of non-existence.

What is non-existent is the superficial ego itself: thinking mind. But beneath that is our Big Mind that has no birth and no death; it moves our body, it conducts our senses. If I click my fingers you don’t have to think to hear that

sound. Big Mind already hears that sound automatically without needing thinking mind. It is already operating all the time. But thinking mind comes in as the centre of attention clouding over Big Mind.

Our job is to see what is behind this imperishable Mind of no birth, no death. That's what gives our practice meaning. Otherwise where's the meaning if it doesn't resolve the major question of birth and death? What's the point?

We conduct an experiment and we believe in something hoping against hope that it is true. It's not like that. Here we don't believe; we experience the truth of something. You don't have to believe in anything. We experience the truth of our true nature that is here inside our experience. This is different from other religions.

It's not a bad start. If you are fearful it is nice to believe in something. It helps you make it through the night. Every religion does that up to a point. But at some point you have to leave that and go inside to find where the true everlasting reality is. We call it "your own treasure house" in Zen. Open your own treasure house and find those treasures in your own consciousness and awareness.

As Subhana Barzaghi said recently, our practice and reality is an interweaving of the relative and the absolute side of things. If someone is deathly sick, it doesn't mean that we don't go through the emotional side of that. At the same time we know nothing comes or goes. Reality is always there. Life is an interplay between the relative and the absolute.

If we experience the absolute, the relative doesn't scare us in the way that it might if we are not in that understanding. It scares the hell out of us before we come to that deeper understanding.