

Spring
Pablo Neruda

The bird has come
to give the light:
from each trill of his,
water is born.

Water and light unroll the air and between them
the spring is now inaugurated,
now the seed knows that it has grown,
the root is portrayed in the corolla,
at last the eyelids of the pollen unclose.

All this was done by a simple bird
from a green branch.

translated by Stephen Mitchell

The Open Source
Spirings Mountain Sangha

SPRING NECTAR

RETREAT



Joan Sutherland
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THE KOAN

When he was young, the Chan monk Wuzho, which means No Attachment, made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai,¹ where Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, is said to live. (Actually, Wuzho had met Manjushri once before when Manjushri appeared in the marketplace as a beggar, but Wuzho didn't recognize him then.)

Wuzho came to a wild and dangerous area, and Manjushri imagined a temple into existence to take Wuzho in for the night.

Manjushri took the form of the head of the temple and welcomed Wuzho, asking, "Where are you from?"

"From the South," replied Wuzho.

"How is Buddhism being maintained in the South?"

"In this Corrupt Age of the Dharma, monks are honoring the precepts a little."²

"How many are there?"

"Three hundred here, five hundred there. How is Buddhism being maintained here?"

¹ Wutai is one of the five holy mountains of China and a frequent though controversial pilgrimage destination because of its association with esoteric and tantric practices

² There are said to be three ages after Shakyamuni Buddha began teaching. The first is called The Age of the True Dharma, the next The Age of the Imitation Dharma, and the last The Age of the Corrupt Dharma. The precepts are the rules of conduct by which monastics and some laypeople live.

"Ordinary people and saints live together. Dragons and snakes mix."

"How many are there?"

Manjushri said, "In front three by three, in back three by three."

Later, as they were drinking tea, Manjushri held up a perfect crystal bowl and asked, "Do you have this in the South?"

Wuzho replied, "No."

"Then what do you use to drink tea?"

Wuzho didn't have an answer, and he decided to leave. A young attendant accompanied him to the gate, and Wuzho asked him, "What temple is this?" The boy pointed to the mountain behind Wuzho, who turned to look. The mountain was a beautiful, deep indigo in the twilight. When Wuzho turned back, the temple and the boy had vanished, and he was standing alone in an empty valley.

(The Chan teacher Fengxue commented that Manjushri hadn't settled Wuzho's question for him, and so Wuzho remained a monk who slept out in the open.)

Wuzho stayed on Mount Wutai and worked as a cook in one of the monasteries. Manjushri would appear over the rice pot, and Wuzho would hit him with his spoon. Still, this was drawing his bow after the thief had left.

