



"Master?"

"Yes."

"Awake, Awake."

"From now on, don't be
deceived by others."

Zen Master Zuigan (b. 1879, d. 1965) asks a very important question every day. "Is the Master in? Am I awake?"

by Beata Chapman

This is an important question. The master is always present, whether we notice it or not. The master is our true nature--unblemished, unharmed, and the Host to all our experiences and states of mind. The master is not always in charge, but when we are awake, aware, knowing our lives, being in our actual lives, we know how it feels when the master is in. We can return to it, return to the master. So we might say to ourselves, "Beata, is the master in?" And if a "yes" comes in, that's a good thing to know. And if you get a "no," that's helpful too.

If you get a "yes," you are able to readily access compassion and connection with others. You may feel open and curious. Nurture this "yes." Follow any small urges it encourages and any small changes that occur with curiosity.

If a "no" is what you hear, "unheap" the no. Take apart all the pieces of the thread that hold the pile of "no" together. What is this no? Just learn about no. This is not such an easy practice; it requires stability and deep willingness to be in the minutia of your everyday life. It means maybe spending a couple of hours untangling the pieces of a reaction that happened in ten seconds. Mostly it involves staying with the 'suffering self' as it is--without adding a single thing, and taking nothing away. But unheap it you must, or this "no" will prevent you from seeing the master and receiving its comfort.

Once when I was in a great deal of anxiety and panic, shortly after my teacher died, I felt lost and alone. I was cold all the time because it seemed like all the warmth

and affection had been stripped from me. The master had died, and it felt like there was no other who would ever see me the way she did. The master was not visible within me. I wandered around crying and pounding my fists--"why did this have to happen? Why did the world have to lose this incredible person?" I pined for her, longing for her presence. I decided to unheap this situation by having tea with Darlene every morning. For six months I sat with her photo, serving tea for two, and having an out-loud internal dialogue with her about what she meant to me, how she taught me, and expressing my raw fears about never being up to the task of carrying on her legacy. I unheaped slowly all the elements of my longing one by one in our teas, looking at each and every obstacle, holding of resistance in my body and mind, and tendencies to prolong or turn away from my pain. Slowly the master within me began to awaken. I saw that the love I longed for had only one source--myself, or, to put it another way, the master inside. This was not an entirely joyous realization, as it required me to step up to decisions and responsibilities I had previously happily deferred to her.

I had to learn to comfort myself, to rely on myself, but without ever losing my body-to-body connection with others. I had to be willing to be in the mess of my tears and to be awake as an army of sensations and terrifying feelings marched through me. And while this was all going on inside, I had to show up for others who had relied on my teacher in just the way I had. I felt my inadequacy, yet had to keep going. So I began to ask, "Master, are you in?" Slowly, it became easier to have a sense of the master within me and not have to try to be the one who had to leave. For the sake of others, I had to muster myself, and give up any ideas about how much people loved and missed her and whether I could fill those shoes. I could not. Evidence of failure was all around me. The best I can do is offer what I have, from the master inside me, and from my own life. This is true of everyone. "Just yourself, this is enough."

Who/what is the master? Examine this question within yourself. Wisdom is not separate from you.