
The mind of awakening

Kusen by Roland Yuno Rech - Pyrenees Sesshin, November 2013

If we are all gathered here for this sesshin, it means that rather than being busy fulfilling our ordinary desires, our mind of awakening, *bodaishin*, has taken the lead. The mind of awakening arises when we are struck by the impermanence, when we realize that not only all objects of desire are impermanent, but that our body and mind are also impermanent: we are born, we live and we die.

If our life is spent trying to satisfy our common desires, there is, for some of us, a profound sense of lack and absurdity to the existence, hence the search for a meaningful way to be freer. This is exactly the question that Buddha Shakyamuni raised. Those who have that sort of quest are prompted by what is called *bodaishin*: the mind of awakening, the mind that urges to harmonize with a deeper truth.

We want to awaken to this reality, because we sense that there should be another lifestyle than being constantly on the search of material goods and objects of satisfaction. Actually, all those goods often come as compensations to a fundamental lack, like a baby in search of love, whose parents respond to just by giving candies, toys which are far from fulfilling him. These objects can only soothe him for a little while, but his dissatisfaction will come back because all he wants is their love.

Human beings imagine all kinds of desires, which keep them busy. They squander a lot of time and a lot of energy in trying to fulfil them. And if they manage, they are often disappointed. But if they fail to have immediate objects of desire, they feel down, as if the meaning of life was only about chasing endlessly all kinds of objects. This is called *samsara*: going in circles in this world of illusions. When we become aware of that, we head for the Way. It is what we call *bodaishin* and we begin to practice zazen.

In zazen, we must beware not to pursue the same thinking pattern, i.e.: focusing on the objects of desire which arise, chewing thoughts, functioning with our dual and discriminative mind, constantly pondering what it wants and doesn't want, what it likes and dislikes. It is important that another functioning of the mind comes forth. To this end, we are fully absorbed in concentrating on the body and the best possible and strain-free posture we manage.

Just sitting quietly. Just inhaling and exhaling quietly through the nose. Being fully present to what is happening at each moment. In this practice, we are neither expecting anything nor aiming at getting something.

We should certainly not consider this practice as an exercise for a future awakening. Zazen isn't training or a drill. As Master Dogen said, « Zazen is practice- realization of the awakening.» It is an utter revolution of the functioning of the body and mind which takes place once we stop dwelling on any thought or any object. All we want is only sitting. Zazen is contacting a dimension in life, which doesn't need to be complemented by anything as we realize that nothing is missing to that quality of being. Just sitting, here and now. So once we sit like that - no longer pursuing any object nor discriminating between what we want and don't want, we

like and don't like - our mind ceases to create separations and a sense of deep unity with all beings arises from within.

And, even if we are not aware of it, it is realized through the practice itself. This is why, in zazen, we are at peace, at last. We're not geared by « to have », « to accumulate », we have the quality of the being who doesn't depend on anything. It is what we have been given at the very source of our life. Thereafter though, we often behave as if we had to deserve to be here or needed a right to live on this planet, as if something was lacking in our life. Whereas feeling one with all beings, one with the universe, abolishes this craving. We can then rejoice to see others' happiness, we can have compassion for those who suffer. The meaning of our life simply becomes: instilling the confidence to others that they have the ability to find peace of mind and clarity, through this simple practice of sitting that harmonizes us with the Dharma, i.e., with the basis of the existence of all beings.

Sitting is to be beyond before and after, birth and death; it is experiencing eternity in this very moment, no longer like a slave of time but as its master, for time is the being (*Uji, Shobogenzo, Master Dogen*).

In zazen, we find this profound oneness with our Buddha nature, which is beyond birth and death. Experiencing that is called nirvana, the extinction of all causes of sufferings, which are related to our ignorance. Zazen lights up that ignorance and reveals what we are in reality. And this is why we have the feeling we get back home after having extensively wandered on all kinds of roads...

But such return doesn't mean to shut oneself up or to withdraw in oneself, but conversely, to continue progressing on the Way; no longer searching for another place, but sharing the joy to be just here and now with all beings.