

With a mushotoku mind

Kusen by Roland Yuno Rech - Moissac, October 2020

During zazen, just be content to concentrate on your body posture and to breathe calmly. Master Keizan used to say: "*The one who does zazen does not concern himself with Buddha or the world, without affirmation or negation, neither good nor evil. What is there to avoid or to stop?*". In other words, one gives up the way the ordinary mind works. One abandons all preoccupation, all spirit of choice or rejection. This is what makes of zazen a great liberation.

Practicing zazen is not a limitation of anything. It is not an attempt to conform to any philosophy or ideology. Don't try to become a Buddha, even though zazen practice is Buddha practice, that is, enlightenment practice. The awakening happens naturally without us looking for it, without us thinking about it, not as an event, but as a way of being, of functioning, of thinking without thinking, that is to say without being attached to our thoughts. We forget everything we have learned. Although there are many Dharma teachings that we can study (and it is even good to study them), all these teachings are only the development of the wisdom realized thanks to zazen.

But during zazen we don't think about it.

Master Dogen never talked about zen. He always talked about the Buddha's way, that is to say the way of awakening. And Master Deshimaru reminded us that zazen is the fresh and new life that arises from our practice at each moment, without trying to imitate anything. If, by practicing the way of zen we try to conform to an ideal, it becomes an obstacle to our true liberation. If we don't think about it, if we simply concentrate on the practice with the body in unity with the breathing, without trying to grasp or reject anything, then the awakening is naturally realized. It is a great liberation.

And to achieve that, you have to be *mushotoku*, that is to say without greed, without object. Of course, to practice zazen regularly, to come to sesshin, we need to be motivated, we need an object, a desire, a goal, the goal of awakening to the true life, to the life in harmony with our true nature, and to put an end to the illusions which become the causes of suffering. This is the motivation that brings us to a sesshin and that leads us to our zafu. But once we sit down, we forget about it, we don't think about it anymore.

This recommendation, to practice with a *mushotoku* mind, if we think about it, we can tell ourselves that it is superhuman, that it is not possible. There is always a motivation, a desire, so to desire to be *mushotoku* is a bit paradoxical. It can even make the practice difficult. And at the end, we can feel guilty at the idea that we are not *mushotoku*. We always have an ulterior motive. So the best is to accept it with modesty. And by accepting it, it allows us to let go. Don't be too idealistic.

Within the great teachings of zazen, this is what we call in Japanese *bonno soku bodai*, the fact that our *bonno*, our attachments, our illusions, are transformed into awakening. And if this is possible, it is because our *bonno*, our attachments are basically emptiness, without substance. They are not part of our true nature. They are rather like clouds which cross the sky regularly,

which disturb our sight. In zazen, we can give up all this, let go, as long as we stay focused on our posture, attentive to our breathing and as long as we open our hands not to grasp anything. And finally, to understand that we are not *mushotoku* is to go in the right direction.

Master Deshimaru often made as calligraphy on the kyosaku *maku mozo* : do not delude yourself. Accepting not to be *mushotoku* is a big step forward in the direction of liberation, which consists in not being attached neither to our ordinary illusions, nor to the spiritual illusion. This is what the mantra of the *Hannya Shingyo* expresses: *gya tei, gya tei, hara gya tei, hara so gya tei, boji sowaka*. Always go beyond the beyond together, on the way to nirvana, that is to say, of the great peace of mind.