
This is not something

Kusen by Roland Yuno Rech - Saint Laurent du Verdon, March 2017

During a sesshin, we withdraw ourselves from the daily hustle and bustle and concentrate on the practice of zazen. We also concentrate on all the other activities, in unity with zazen, so that it becomes the continuous practice we call "*gyoji*", the practice that encompasses everything and never stops.

Concentrating in this way allows us to become aware of all that animates us. Instead of acting according to our thoughts, we look at them. Zazen becomes like a vast mirror in which all mental contents are reflected, all the more so as the discriminating mind (which judges, represses, rejects what it does not like, what it considers bad, while attaching itself to what it likes, what it finds good), this mind is suspended. This mode of mental functioning is "put in brackets", so the usual chain of our thoughts is interrupted. As we don't act on them, they no longer condition us; as we look at them, we can see their true nature.

These thoughts, these sensations, these emotions are mine, it is not someone else who is thinking in my head, as mental patients sometimes believe, but although all these mental productions, all these thoughts come from me, I am not these thoughts. The vast mind encompasses them, reflects them, but does not identify with them. This allows you to become truly intimate with yourself, while realizing that you are never the same, always changing. Of course, we have our habits, our character, our personality - what is sometimes called the Self - but it is not something substantial. Understanding this is already an important awakening: I am not something.

A writer once wrote: "Hell is other people", it's other people when they lock us up in their judgements, in their opinions, which is often what happens in groups ... then people are catalogued, and when we see them coming, we don't see the person, but the image we have of them. Fortunately, this image is false: we are not an image, we are not "something", nothing fixed, nothing limited, nothing that can be defined. Zazen makes us discover the infinite nature of our existence, which sometimes makes it a mystery.

When the emperor asked Bodhidharma: "Who are you, there, in front of me?". Bodhidharma replied, "*Fu shiki*", I don't know".

People who claim to know themselves are deluding themselves. Of course, we can identify a certain number of our characteristics, we can see the sequence of our karma, but this is not enough to define us, because we are indefinable, a kind of energy that goes and transforms itself constantly in contact with our environment, with others, with encounters, with life. Zazen makes us aware of this and above all helps us to harmonize with it, that is to say to achieve a mind that doesn't stagnate on anything, that is always new and therefore can become creative again, can stop repeating the same scenarios over and over again, like machines.

Doing a sesshin is to stop living mechanically, as society tends to want us to function, (it's so much simpler!): people are catalogued, put in positions and expected to react and function in the same way. But life is always new, simply because it is totally interdependent with all the

other existences in the universe and because in the universe, everything is movement, especially in the living beings. Therefore, in ourselves, everything is movement and it allows us to evolve, to transform ourselves, and not to stagnate in our delusions.

If our ego was something fixed, permanent, we could never awaken, free ourselves, but fortunately, it is not so. Zazen makes us discover it, it helps us find a creative life which does not create anything, anyhow, but which expresses the awakening to our true nature. Because if we are not something, we are the nature of Buddha, a life in unity with all beings.

The way to actualize this is to feel our solidarity with living beings, sentient beings, and to make it the basis of all the values that animate our lives. To awaken is wisdom, to express awakening with compassion, and this is what a sesshin allows us to realize, to actualize.

This is why Dogen said: "Buddha's Dharma is to learn to know oneself, but to know oneself is to forget oneself and be awakened by all beings, to live in our true unity with all beings".