

# Basically, everyone is a monk

**Kusen de Roland Yuno Rech – Godinne, July 2013**

During the summer session in Godinne in July 2013, there were some workshops on the monastic life and also on the life of the bodhisattvas. By studying the rules of the monastic life and the vows of the bodhisattvas, one can have the feeling that it concerns special people. And indeed, there are often also specific categories within the sangha: there are differences between the monks, bodhisattvas and the non-ordained practitioners.

Only the monks may have certain responsibilities, especially the spiritual ones, likewise, the functions in the dojo are reserved for the bodhisattvas and monks. Of course, these differences do exist, but they are not fundamental ones, since, basically, everyone is a monk, everyone is born with nothing, with no belongings. Even if we acquire possessions, at the end of our lives, we will abandon everything, so in reality we are *shukke*: without anything to rest on. If it makes us feel sorry and if we have fears, we nurture the poison of greed by trying to accumulate as many possessions as possible, get to top positions, power, etc., in a word: we strive to become “somebody”. It is time consuming and we will spend a good deal of our life trying to achieve that. In return, it comes together with the fear of losing what we have just acquired.

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“When you practice zazen, practice as if you were entering your coffin.” It was the constant recommendation of Master Deshimaru. It means that from the moment you sit in the zazen posture, all objects of attachment are abandoned, we drop all of our concerns, to be just what we are: a being with no belongings but without separation from the whole universe either. For, being a *shukke*: to be without a dwelling place, is to be one with the whole universe.

Then, the question of owning or not owning no longer arises, winning or losing is equal. We no longer operate in a to-have-basis because we have discovered that we can just be; just sitting when we sit, just breathing in when we breathe in, breathing out when we breathe out. When we start zazen, we often make this essential discovery that it feels like being back home and we don't need anything else than just sitting. Unfortunately, we forget this experience. All the vows, precepts and rules of life of the bodhisattvas and monks, are just meant to make us live in harmony with this experience, this awakening.

To do a sesshin, as I have already mentioned several times, is the opportunity to live this experience of zazen and extend it throughout life. Therefore, we should remember this experience. The rules of life in the temple help us remember it.