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# The nature of Buddha is not an object

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

During zazen, continue to concentrate well on your posture and to be attentive to your breathing. Don't let your mind stagnate on your thoughts, let them pass. In zazen, we sit facing the wall and our attention is turned inwards, towards ourselves. A sesshin is to become completely intimate with one's true mind, one's true nature, which is called Buddha's nature. Literally it means "nature of enlightenment".

In the *Sutra of Nirvana*, it is said that: "*All beings have the nature of Buddha*", which means that all beings have the capacity to awaken. But - from this sentence - people started to speculate on the nature of Buddha (as it is often the case). One wanted to make Buddha's nature into something, like a sort of seed that each person would possess deep within himself, and as a result, a duality is created between oneself and this Buddha's nature. And it would be a sort of "object contained within ourselves" that we would have to grasp. If we think in this way, we completely miss the true meaning of Buddha's nature (and therefore of our true nature), because it is not "something".

This is why Master Dogen transformed this sentence by saying: "*All beings are Buddha nature*". It is not a question of possessing something, but of being what we really are, deep down.

When Nangaku came to see the Sixth Patriarch, the latter asked him: "*What comes this way?*"

Here and now ask ourselves: "What makes zazen on this zafu?"

After several years of practice, Nangaku finally answers: "*It's not something*". He had truly realized the nature of Buddha, nothing that could be grasped.

This is the meaning of the first great Zen koan: "*Does the dog have Buddha nature?*" Joshu answers, "*Mu! Nothing!*" This seems to contradict the fact that all beings have Buddha nature, and Buddha nature is nothing, nothing substantial, nothing graspable. It is not an object and if we cannot grasp this Buddha nature, it is because it is unlimited.

"*Nothing*" is not a nothingness, but nothing that can be grasped because it is too vast, infinite, unlimited. This is exactly the true nature of our existence, vast, infinite and unlimited; like the divine nature impossible to enclose in a concept, so all words are vain to express it. But the important thing is to realize it.

This is why Master Eno asked Nangaku: "*But is there practice and realization?*" and Nangaku answered: "*There is practice and realization, but it must not be defiled.* »

The Sixth Patriarch rejoiced, saying: "*This non-defilement is what the Buddhas and Patriarchs have transmitted and protected*", and this was Master Deshimaru's last teaching, the teaching of "*fuzenna*, non-defilement".

The mind without defilement is the mind which does not create division, separation; it is beyond the ordinary mind which wants to grasp, define, have. It is the *hishiryō* consciousness in

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zazen which grasps nothing, which does not stagnate on anything, but which harmonizes naturally and unconsciously with the ultimate reality or nature of Buddha. *Hishiryō* is the functioning of our mind when it ceases to discriminate, to oppose. To oppose, to separate - for example - the practice from the realization of Enlightenment.

For most people, one begins to feel *bodaishin*, the desire of Awakening, then one starts to practice and thanks to the practice, finally, one will obtain the Awakening, at the end of a long journey, a long effort. But, if we practice with this thought, we remain in duality, in separation, we want to use the practice here and now to obtain something later. This mental attitude is exactly what opposes the realization of the Awakening, it is to remain greedy by wanting to possess.

True zazen is what makes us let go of this mentality. By putting all our energy in the body posture and all our attention to the breathing, the functioning of the ordinary mind stops, we stop pursuing anything or opposing anything. We start to function naturally in harmony with Buddha's nature, by realizing a vast mind which encompasses everything without grasping anything. It is precisely because it grasps nothing that it is vast, that it can harmonize with everything.