

# Many satori, many awakenings

## Kusen by Roland Yuno Rech

When we practise *zazen* through concentration on the body posture and on the breathing, we can swiftly achieve a peaceful mind. We let the thoughts pass by, we don't longer discriminate between what is pleasant and unpleasant, and we don't become attached to the thoughts that arise, we don't try to eliminate them either. In this way the mind becomes peaceful and clear. But one shouldn't mistake such peace of mind providing a certain well-being with the attainment of the awakening. For such peace of mind is conditioned by how we focus on the body and the breathing.

When Master *Dogen* teaches that « *The practice of zazen is not a meditation practice in itself but the realization of the supreme awakening* », he means that in *zazen* not only do we achieve a peaceful mind but that through the clarity of consciousness in *zazen*, we have an intimate and thorough understanding of vacuity. And such understanding is the long-lasting awakening not just a moment of rest or peace in the busy daily life. Even Shakyamuni Buddha himself warned his disciples from stopping upon realization of the *samadhi*, i.e the great concentration. It is a conditioned state. But he encouraged them to go beyond towards the realization of the *Prajna Paramita*, the Great Wisdom, that comes from a clear vision of the vacuity of all that consists not only our ego but the whole universe we are interdependent with.

Then in the chapter *Maka Hannya Haramitsu* Master *Dogen* said : « *Prajna Paramita is Buddha and Buddha is Prajna Paramita.* » Then addressing Subhuti, he added : « *Isn't it true that the awakening of the Tathagata, that's to say Buddha, comes from the Prajna Paramita ?* » Furthermore the *bodhisattvas*, the great beings, *mahasattvas*, the *pratyeka buddhas*, the *arhats* and those who have reached the different degrees, *angamine*, *sakrdagamine* or *srota apanna*, all of them come from the *Prajna Paramita*. And even the Ten Good Deeds - i.e. respect of the precepts - the four types of meditation, the five supernatural powers, the four kinds of meditation on vacuity, all of that also comes from the *Prajna Paramita*. And the *Prajna Paramita* is nothing other than the entire Buddha-Dharma.

But, since sometimes the teachings of Buddha are skipped through few lines, we should go back into particulars. Shakyamuni says that all the *bodhisattvas*, the *mahasattvas*, the *pratyeka buddhas*, the *arhats* and the those who have reached different degrees of liberation, come from the *Prajna Paramita*. In other words, even if there are differences in the realization of Buddha's disciples, they all come from the same source, their realisation comes from the same source.

It is simply more or less deep rooted in their life. This realization results from *zazen* practice, not only with the great concentration but also the clear vision, the true vision of vacuity and thus the ensuing letting go of all our bonnos, our delusions, our attachments. But this letting go is not instantaneous and total. It is the reason why there are some degrees. And particularly between the stages of *anagamine*, *sakrdagamine*, *srota apanna* which are the realization stages of the disciples up to the state of *arhat* according to the *Hinayana*. Each stage is characterized by a certain degree of liberation from the bonnos up to the perfect purity of the

*arhat* state. Therefore each of the three stages up to the *arhat* state are steps that entitle the one who has overcome them, to be born again either for a certain number of times, or once, or won't have anymore to be born again to this life in order to realize liberation, the *nirvana*.

Obviously in the practice of zen we don't think in such a way. We teach *shin jin datsu raku*, the letting go, the dropping of all the attachments of the body and mind.

On this subject Master *Nyajo* taught *Dogen* that each time a practitioner of *zazen* drops as much as one delusion, a single attachment, he meets Buddha face-to-face, that's to say that he becomes like Buddha in that very moment of letting go, of giving up a *bonno*.

It means that there are many *satori*, many awakenings. And this should be constantly renewed, pursued in the daily *gyoji*. It is here and now that it is happening, with no concern about future rebirths, the *nirvana* after death. Only our state of mind here and now. What ties me here and now and how can I free myself? How can I go through this world of delusions and be free without waiting for the realization of a future state? Here and now.

On the other hand, in this description *bodhisattvas*, *mahasattva*, *pratyeka* buddhas, *arhats* are mentioned.

- The *mahasattva* are the ones who practise the Six *Paramitas*, and from life to life they are dedicated to helping all beings to free themselves. Some say that they sacrifice their awakening, their *nirvana* or postpone it in order to help the others now, but actually in their great compassion they are already awakened, free. It is not a sacrifice at all.
- The *pratyeka buddha* is the solitary awakened, meaning that it is possible to awaken without a master. But in such case there is no transmission received, nor transmission to others, one remains a loner. Therefore the *Mahayana* Buddhism is not too fond of such kind of realization.
- The *arhat* are the great awakened monks. It is wrong to say that they have no compassion. In the Zen monasteries in Japan there is always a place for the statues of the great *arhats*. For instance *Ananda*, *Mahakashyapa* were *arhats*. And in reality such *arhats* were also driven by compassion otherwise they wouldn't have awakened. But in the old vision of Buddhism, their awakened action, their compassion were confined to this life since they wouldn't be born again after death unlike the *bodhisattva*.

As far as Buddha is concerned, for instance Shakyamuni, it is wrong to say that he is completely extinguished, that he totally vanished from this world after his death. In the Lotus Sutra, he declares that he has always been awakened and that he will always continue to awaken beings in this world. He just comes back under different forms through the *bodhisattvas* and masters who are dedicated to transmit the *Dharma* and help others.

All this to say that in the practice of *zazen* concentration is not sufficient. One must practise observation as reminded Master *Deshimaru*. Such right observation enables to awaken to the vacuity of all our causes of attachment and suffering. It is what makes the true liberation possible here and now, and what makes *zazen* awakening. Surely you must have heard that many times, the important point is: Practise at every moment and remember it.