
Don't forget to be joyful!

Kusen by Master Roland Yuno Rech - Sesshin of Moissac (France) - November 2018

When you breathe in, be totally this "body-mind" breathing in. When you breathe out, be totally this "body-mind" breathing out. When we practice like that, the mind calms down, the mental agitation decreases and we can experience a feeling of peace and plenitude which fills us at that moment. A little bit as if we had roamed in the desert and finally found an oasis where to refresh ourselves and quench our thirst. And this meeting, this discovery, fills us with joy.

I noticed that a lot of people who have been practising zazen, sometimes for a long time, seems devoid of joy, and even sometimes behave as if they were filled with tiredness. Tiredness is a main obstacle to the Awakening and especially to the transmission of the Awakening. This means that it is very important to awake oneself, so that this Awakening - which surpasses us completely - eventually shines around us, in particular through the joy which radiates from it.

Joy is one of the seven great factors of Awakening taught by the Buddha. Often, we recall from the Buddha's teachings only suffering and the remedies to suffering. But precisely, the fact that suffering has remedies and that we can use them is a source of joy. But we do not speak enough about this ... It is important to develop this capacity.

I think that people who enter a dojo for the first time, if they meet people joyful to be able to practice together, they will want to stay. If they find tired, sullen people, lacking of enthusiasm, they will not come back. And this is also the case for the chant of the sutra. Our way of singing expresses the quality of our being and it is necessary therefore to take care of the way we chant. It is important to have some adequacy between what we realize in zazen and what we express through our attitude, our behaviour and our feelings. And if this adequacy does not occur, there is a problem which it is necessary to solve, and it becomes a koan. Something is certainly lacking in the way we practice and we have to find a remedy, not only for ourselves, but for the good of the others. Because we are fundamentally interdependent from each other: it is the deep sense of the Awakening of the Buddha.

This interdependence, it is not enough to understand it mentally. Everybody can understand it, in particular the scientists. All sciences, human sciences and physical sciences, work with the laws of the interdependence and causality. The Buddha was the first one in human history to express the laws of causality.

But to understand it is not enough, or the problem is that we do not understand interdependence well enough. Because normally, it brings a great liberation with regard to what hinders our life, to what prevents us from blooming and from living cheerfully. The Buddhist monks are usually known to be joyful, even if they live in the biggest poverty, in destitution. It is because they are freed from all attachments and from all concerns about their daily life. They realize that the important thing in life is not what we have, what we possess, but our way of being. And our way of being depends on our state of mind.

Our state of mind changes all the time. As soon as we become aware of an illusion, an error, it is important of letting this illusion, this error go, to fill the gap between our understanding and our realization.

This is normally the meaning of the practice in sesshin. During this sesshin, everybody has a strong practice. There is even a particular enthusiasm to raise the hand for samu, which happens seldom and I appreciate it. Therefore, I wish that you to keep deepening your practice in this direction. This direction allows a real opening of the heart, because joy results in the opening of the heart, joy radiates, joy is communicative. Joy stimulates us to help the others. When we are sad, we withdraw into our shell. When we are joyful, we are more extrovert, more open to the others. We want to share. It is the message which I would like to give at the end of this sesshin.

Master Deshimaru said: "Be happy! It's good for others, it's not selfish at all."

I would also say: "Be happy, but also be joyful!" Happiness is something intimate, joy is more expansive. Both are important.

And if you're having trouble experiencing joy, ask yourself why. Surely there's a mistake somewhere. But do not say: "it is because you are aware of the suffering of the world!" Because Buddha was totally aware of the suffering of the world, this was even the starting point of his quest for Awakening, of *Bodaishin*. But it did not prevent him from being always cheerful, smiling. For he understood that the sufferings of the world have causes that can be put right and that the meaning of our life is - in particular - to solve these sufferings, ours and those of others, and above all to transmit the Way, the practice that enables us to awaken and to solve the causes of this suffering.

It is important to have confidence in this, to trust the Buddha Nature in each one of us, which makes it possible to realize it, and therefore to transmit it.

There is also a great quality of silence during this sesshin. It is rare, in a dojo! So, you have realized the very important points of practice: concentration, zazen, silence, samu ... Just keep it that way, not just in sesshin, but in your daily life.

And don't forget to be joyful!