
For the Planet

By Roland Yuno Rech

Which gift, which fuse can we make to the planet?

One of the first aspects of the *fuse* is to master our greed and therefore understand that what triggers greed is frustration, the feeling that we are missing something we could acquire and that would make us more satisfied, happier.

What are we missing? What makes us always search for something that could bring us satisfaction?

The source of greed is the fact that we don't understand that we are basically totally in unity with the nature and our environment. Because, in reality, we lack nothing. If we understand this unity, we don't need to constantly compensate for a lack of satisfaction. And what helps to perceive our non-separation with nature and the environment is the practice of meditation.

Master Dogen had an expression about the *fuse*: "Leave the flowers to the wind". It means: "Leave the flowers to the contemplation of others, do not pick them".

The practice of the *fuse*, of giving, is to experience the gratitude of having received life, to realize that this life is precious and therefore to make it useful to others.

We therefore wish to use the time we have to live to make us useful to life on this earth. Our *fuse* will be to commit ourselves for everything that helps protect nature and make life on earth viable.

The Zen Precepts are recommendations for leading an awakened life. If we practice zazen deeply, we should not need the Precepts, because practice awakes us to our total interdependence with all beings. But the problem is that we are conditioned by our history and our environment. We are not always awake and so we need to remember the Buddha's recommendations:

"Do not kill"

This Precept means not to kill living beings, but not only. It means also to reduce all that makes that - through our consumption, our way of circulating or heating us - we contribute to the death of a large number of living beings. In particular, pollution is the cause of diseases, and global warming makes life impossible in a number of regions ... and it'll get worse and worse.

So, if we want to protect life, we have to think about interdependence, analyse all the consequences of our way of living and especially our consumption. We have to inform ourselves, to really study what must absolutely be avoided. And finally, it means developing our wisdom, our understanding of interdependence.

“Do not to be greedy”

In order not to be greedy, one must be satisfied, that is to say be able to be satisfied with what one has and what one is. In order to do that, we have to awake to what we really are. That is really the fundamental point.

We live in a world dominated by wealth: always getting more money, material goods, power, influence. For example, we collect "likes" on the Internet and so-called "friends" on social networks. We want to have more and more, as if we were afraid of being nothing if we did not possess many things.

As Kodo Sawaki said, practice teaches us not to want to gain, but to let go, to realize that losing something is not necessarily a loss, but an opportunity to realize that we didn't really need it.

Shakyamuni was born into a powerful, rich family, and when he reached awakening he realized that living surrounded by too many possessions was an obstacle to the spiritual Way. And then he made the Vow of poverty, as many religious people.

Generally, we consider as important to increase our standard of living. There is a sort of “religion of growth” and people who make political programs for the future put growth as one of the first goals. Obviously, growth provides jobs, but what kind of growth?

It is also possible to generate many jobs through activities that will not increase the quantity of equipment, but rather the quality of life. Because material growth is a major contributor to pollution.

I am sometimes asked if there is a risk of being greedy for awakening. But wishing to be awakened is a generous wish. When we speak of greed, we speak of something selfish. True awakening is what heals selfishness and therefore greed. The desire to be awakened, *bodaishin*, is a generous desire. It is a matter of waking up to the non-ego. One cannot be awakened and be selfish, it is impossible. If we wish to awake, it is for the good of all beings, it is to allow our life to radiate around us by sharing what we have achieved. Obviously, at first, there is a desire to awake to end our suffering. But from the moment we truly engage in the practice, we cannot awake alone, because awakening is becoming aware of our unity with all beings. The more we are awakened, the more we have compassion and the more we want to help all beings.

Of course, there is a suffering of the Bodhisattva that we feel when we ask ourselves: “How can we help all beings to awaken?” This seems to be an impossible mission and it can become a cause of suffering. But I think we have to take the risk of this suffering, because it is ultimately stimulating.

Some people think: “After all, it is too late; we have already caused so much damage to the planet that no matter what we do, we will never be able to repair the damages that have been done, the climate change is already beyond our control”. But all the feelings of discouragement finally lead to a nihilistic attitude: “It's useless, it's too late, we can't do anything”. The task seems so immense that it seems pointless to want to make efforts to awaken others. But even if it seems extremely difficult, there is nothing better to do than to continue in this direction. And that's the cure for discouragement, because any other attitude would be worse.

This is a really very important question, because many people have doubts about this. It is difficult to be *mushotoku*. In reality, it is not true that we practice without purpose, but we must practice with the most generous goal possible. It is *bodaishin* which implies great compassion. We practice to be able to help beings by being an example that encourages them to enter the Path. And even if it takes a lot of effort, it also gives a lot of joy to share with others what is most valuable in life. Deep down, there is a great deal of sadness in being selfish, stingy and living in fear of losing or not getting what you want.

When I asked Master Deshimaru this question about *bodaishin* and *mushotoku*, his answer was instantaneous: "We practice for others." And this is the reason why at the end of each zazen practice the four Bodhisattva Vows are chanted.

Basically, all religions criticize selfishness and promote compassion, selfless love of others and the protection of life. I think it's almost rooted in the fundamental human mind. In each of us, there is the Nature of Buddha, and that is what is expressed in this kind of almost universal truth. The problem is that, even if everyone agrees with this, it is difficult to put it into practice.

What prevents us from practicing the *paramita*? It should be self-evident, but there are obstacles, and basically our practice is to reduce those obstacles.

"Do not intoxicate yourself "

It is a fundamental Precept in relation to ecology. But it also means that everything that is produced should be healthy for consumption, but we are all poisoned, more or less, by food and the pollution produced by heating, moving.

Our mind also gets intoxicated. One cause is advertising and it is the most toxic. We are constantly bombarded with messages that encourage us to consume absolutely useless things. So, you have to be critical of all these messages you get all the time, and you have to pass that critical mind on to children who are extremely permeable and who tend to function in imitation of what they see.

So, in order not to become intoxicated, we must not produce toxic results in our actions, in our ways of consuming, of housing, of moving. That is what makes everyday life interesting, because we must be constantly vigilant and fully aware of the consequences of our actions.

"Do not get angry"

It is a great Precept, because violence must be avoided. But we also have to be angry about all the mistakes that are being made at the expense of the environment. Here, feeling a "holy wrath" is necessary, but it must not engender violence.

We need to be able to quickly turn anger into positive action. It must give us the energy to examine what is really happening and look for positive solutions.

“Do not lie”

The precept of “not lying” is also “not lying to ourselves”. It means “not create justifications for not doing what we should be doing”. And above all, not to lie is to try to live in an authentic way and try to be really in harmony with our true Buddha nature.

“Do not criticize”

Of course, if certain things are wrong, they need to be criticized. In this Precept, one means that we should not criticize others in order to belittle them.

In conclusion, if it is zazen that guides our lives, we can no longer create suffering, we ca