
Accompanying people who are ill and nearing the end of life

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In the first four days of the Godinne camp preparation, it was proposed, in one of the afternoon workshops, to talk about the subject of accompanying people who are ill and those nearing the end of life, using the 6 paramitas as a guide. The subject had been chosen in relation to the theme of the morning workshop for teachers led by Roland: Zen and daily life.

8 people participated in this workshop. First each person presented their connection to and personal experience of this subject. The fact that there were many different experiences (in family, professional and associative environments) led to a very broad exchange of views on the questions and situations which came up. Day by day each paramita was presented and then discussed, then the link was made with concrete situations which the participants had been faced with whilst accompanying people in the past or at the present time. We therefore (re)discovered together the value of the paramitas as profound virtues of our practice and how they can be perceived as a practical help in daily life. The link with our practice was stressed and recognized many times as being an important element. A detailed summary of this workshop is being prepared and will be given out to the participants and the members of the network « Accompanying people who are ill and nearing the end of life ».

And finally here is a comment from one of the participants in this workshop:

The discovery of the six paramitas put names to what is important to us, but names are not enough, we need to practise.

In helping people who are ill or nearing the end of life, we have all had the opportunity to put the 6 paramitas into practice.

It was very important to redefine each of them to know where we stand in relation to them.

« What are giving, right behaviour, patience, enthusiastic effort, concentration, wisdom? »

« What degree of consciousness have we arrived at? » What can we do to help these people?

Here we touch directly on the first bodhisattva vow « HELPING ALL SENTIENT BEINGS »

QUESTIONS RAISED.

Is suffering an illusion ?

In what way is a human being affected when he/she is ill ?

Can we talk about a « cut » in the person's energy ?

Can a human being help others by acting on energy ?

Is a kito beyond the energetic system ?

Zazen is a help for all sentient beings, so should we think that improving our practice is more important than other actions ?

These are some of the many questions raised by this workshop, new ones in zazen practice, but isn't it important to live fully without delay?

There is so much suffering around us be it that of humans, animals or plant-life etc.... To surpass our own limits with force and faith – this is my greatest wish.