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# Zen and Nature Workshop

**By Thierry Hoyois, Summercamp in Godinne, 2019**

In 2018, at the “Zen and Nature” workshop, a link was made between the principles of permaculture and Zen Buddhism. This year, the proposal was to take as a starting point one of the founding precepts of permaculture to inspire us in our ecological action, whether personal, in the dojo or in the society. This principle is quite simple: “Do not produce waste”.

These workshops were intended to be participative, giving a large place to exchanges between the participants, but also staying in the continuity of the *teisho* given by Roland each morning. So, it is normal that we often strayed away from the original subject.

Even taking as a framework some important elements of the Dharma was rather difficult; thus we contended ourselves by reminding key points of the teaching, like the *Paramita*, and therefore the Precepts, the Eightfold Path, the 7 Awakening Factors, the 8 Satoris of the Great Man, but mainly as an inspiration source which we could refer to.

The first observation that appeared during our exchanges was that we all felt deeply touched by the subject, by the unique situation that humanity is experiencing and that we had first to let go of the burden of our emotions, of our feelings that went through different phases: from optimism to depression, fear, worry, anger, sadness, annoyance at seeing so few actions really taken, and awareness of our own obstacles to action ...

At the end of the first day, one participant asked the following question: “How do we make the connection between these inner individual feelings and the ideas exchanged at a global, planetary level of the problem”. The answer is the title of a very inspiring film by Coline Serreau (You Tube link): “Local solutions for a global disorder” or in “The hummingbird principle”, dear to Pierre Rabhi: “The power to transform the world is in our hands ; the individual effort of the hummingbird can contribute to the liberation of all”.

Whether it was a result of Roland’s *teisho* or of our discussions during this workshop, the same question was omnipresent: “But what can we do?” Even if we spontaneously individually found that we could already be happy with what we were already doing, the stakes are huge, and we felt that we could use the good energy of this summer camp to do a little more.

A group also met every morning during the coffee break to try and gather proposals for actions and commitments. The result is of course a new long list of ideas, covering many topics and about different levels of our wishes for action (individual, in the dojo, for the organization of sesshin, global and planetary).

Seeing the multitude of things that should be done, the risk is to feel oneself quickly overwhelmed and very “small” in front of the magnitude of the task. The solution is, of course, to let our practice, zazen, inspire our behaviour, our means of existence, our actions. Every morning we make the Vow “to help all beings to free themselves from suffering”: this may seem naive, unattainable, but it is our daily practice and every little step we take - here and now - is important.

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To help us structure ourselves, the proposal made during our workshop to use the “Transition Initiatives model” (link: Transition Network). It is a citizen movement born from permaculture in England at the initiative of Rob Hopkins. It answers the question: “How can we, at our level and without waiting for changes from above, transform our society, making it resilient, enjoyable to live in, sustainable”. To start a project in a city, a village, a street, it’s enough that a few people gather with the wish to act at the local level: collective garden, «repair-café», exchange of know-how, group of collective purchases, for energy saving, etc.

The initiative is symbolized by a flower whose heart is the initiating group and the petals the different actions, grouped in themes. Since our Sangha extends throughout Europe, each petal is a mini-network of people who, if they do not set up joint actions at a local level, organize themselves into small networks, keep the others informed of the actions they take, individually, in their dojo and during the organization of sesshin.

We present these petals below. They have today - for the most part - no reality, but they represent a summary of what the participants of the camp found interesting to set up.

Thus, now is the moment to come forward and to organize ourselves to take action!

### **Heart:**

This is the starting point of any initiative: some project initiators who after that will make the link between the different petals. This role could be entrusted to the ABZE, to the group «Zen and Nature»: our website is the ideal place to make known what is being done in our dojos and inspire other members.

### **Petals:**

#### Dharma

The goal of this petal is to find and highlight the *kusen/ mondo/ teisho* that are related to ecology. They can serve as source of inspiration, for example when a teacher prepares a *kusen*, a conference.

#### Direct Action and Ecology

From the first day of the camp, the desire was expressed to create a militant group, which could non-violently exercise pressure on decision-makers by participating in demonstrations, strikes, for example as the «Buddhists for Future» movement do, or “Youth for Climate”, or “Extinction Rebellion”.

#### Domestic transition

The proposal is to create group of verbal exchanges in our dojos. The idea is to have a space and some time to share our emotions facing the climate crisis, maintain our energy for action and create links.

#### Commitment Letter

During the camps in Grube Louise and in Godinne, but also at the dojo of Nice, the suggestion was made to everyone to note what he already does and what he plans to do. These are the “Eco-Vows of the Bodhisattva”. The purpose of this petal would be to gather the examples of

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commitments that have been expressed, to publish some of them in the form of articles on our website, as a mean of inspiration for those who were not present at the camps.

#### Zen and Nature

It is the "historical" activity of the ABZE "Zen and Nature" group. This petal proposes and makes known the activities that allow us to become aware of our link with nature, such as silent walks, for example as the walks proposed by the dojo of Trier (Germany) that never failed to inform us about their activities in our Newsletter.

#### Zero Waste

This petal proposes to make known the best practices in order to consume less, reduce our waste, avoid food waste. The Belgian Sangha proposes, for example, to meet regularly to implement actions in the dojos.

#### Exchange of Know-how

It is a group that could share best practices, but also tips or recipes that reduce our environmental impact: preparation of household or hygiene products, sewing and repairing of clothes, etc.

#### Information

A number of people wish to gather to make available information on the subject of the environment, the ecological crisis, because during our discussions we found that many feels that - on one hand - that there are not enough documents and data about it, or - on the other hand - that we are overwhelmed by information (not always relevant) about ecological footprint, CO2 impact of our activities and relevant suggested actions (to give them priority). They also wish to create a directory, a collective address book, where they could find data, etc.

#### Mobility

This last petal wants to propose solutions to limit the CO2 impact related to our trips to go to sesshin or all the activities organized by dojos: carpooling, shuttles.

A call will be made via the Newsletter asking you to let us know what is organized by your dojos in terms of ecological action, in order to publish regularly summaries on our website.

Please do not hesitate to inform the Secretariat ([info@abzen.eu](mailto:info@abzen.eu)) if you wish to participate in any of these petals. Alone, we go faster, but together, we go further!