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# Deep Ecology

**By Thierry Horyu Hoyois**

Sitting before a blank page, I remembered that the main purpose of the newsletter is to maintain the contact between the people of our sangha. I hope you'll accept thus this article to be a short account of a personal project I would like to share with you.

Roland often repeats that when we practise we can start to feel a certain urge for a commitment, be it social or humanitarian. As far as I am concerned facing the risk to be « all over the places » there are so many things to do, I chose to deepen and strengthen my commitment to ecology, already in a latent state, already present in small daily actions

This is a field where it is urgent to act ! Nowadays only very few people will deny that, the equilibrium allowing our presence on earth is at stake. The first question was : but then why is there so much inertia ? Why is it so hard to get things to happen, to change our habits ? It is not a question of information, nor of a method. Solutions do exist, we must find a way to implement them, and then spread the movement. Our *gyoji* can include, or become the source of environment-friendly practices. It is from this reflexion that the idea came up to organize workshops with the sangha, and, if it turns to be successful, spread the initiative...

The first step consisted in gathering information, some reference books on the subject. As researches went by, I realized there were several movements, some appears to be stalled as political ecology, some media have a way of speaking that is tiresome : plenty of information indeed, but a succession of doomsday, disaster scenarios. We wonder when we will get proper guidance for actions that are within our reach.

And yet in all this media coverage, few sources of inspiration stand out.

## **The movement of Transition**

« A revolutionary and inspiring tool, totally dedicated to finding solutions to build ecological societies, resilient, able to adapt to the disasters produced by the petrol (consumption) peak, climate changes, economic crisis.»

It is indeed a method, described in a handbook, to enhance citizen's initiatives, whether it is a street, a district or a city. The first initiative started in Totnes in England, and soon served as a model. The movement spread first throughout English-speaking countries, but the backwardness is being cleared, thanks to translation efforts of the pedagogical material.

I have great hopes for this movement, but yet I feel something is lacking : it is based on the reaction of citizens in emergency stage, but it doesn't include the spiritual dimension of human beings. And to taking that into account, is in my opinion, the only guarantee of an in depth-long-term change.

## **Psycho-ecology**

It is a field of psychology that aims at taking the environment into account (if not using it), and the relationship between man and nature in psychotherapeutic approach.

It is hard to live such degradation of our environment, it is a source of discomfort. The objective

is therefore to consider this relationship with nature in therapy, or better, to include rituals and exercises putting the person in contact with its environment, with the earth.

This approach is very interesting to explain why we have such a hard time making things happen, but it is only a well-being-based perspective. And therefore almost the same observation than the previous one applies : if the action takes into consideration the psychology of a person, the depth of a being is a tool (only), not the source of transformation. Those techniques are great, but I tell myself even if we honor the Earth by feeling closely « connected » to it, we still wonder how and when we will make things happen practically in our daily life through actions that are within the reach of everyone.

### **Deep Ecology**

It is a philosophical movement, a new direction in environmental philosophy, which considers human being as a part of the ecosystem. Rather than placing the man at the center of the system, with nature at his disposal to provide for all his needs, it is a tool of co-development, still struggling to make its way in our self-centered society. Presented as a philosophy, the deep ecology has been criticized by intellectuals, who had yet nothing more constructive to offer. The creation of workshops, thus of a methodology inspired by this movement, has fortunately permitted to shift from a concept, from the brain, down to action, and to design a creative tool for change.

#### *The workshops of eco-spirituality of Joanna Macy*

She is a pioneer of the Deep Ecology, her workshops are in the end the closest to what could be implemented with the sangha. As a Buddhist practitioner, she includes the path of the bodhisattva in her approach, she uses the 12 interdependent causes (12 causes of Dependent Origination) as a source of analysis of the barriers we build against the change. In almost 40 years of practice, all around the world, backed by many of her trainees facilitators, these workshops are tinged with some rituals of different origin according to the countries they are located in.

### **Our approach**

In our case, we have to be vigilant from slipping into a practice that is a simple method of well-being, or a psychotherapy. No need for complicated or paranormal rites in a workshop that will take place during a sesshin, meant to be a natural extension of our practice of zazen, that will allow to experience our interdependency with all beings, and let the room for wisdom and intuition to develop.

It's about finding the answer to this usual question: how can we create, maintain a practice of every moment, in every daily action, and more specifically in respect to environmental actions.

We can easily take the Three Treasures as the main theme :

1. Inspired by the wisdom and compassion of Buddha, thus from our practice of zazen.
2. By studying and practising the Dharma - both the teaching of the sutras as well as the language of nature as a koan - we observe our inertia and go beyond it.
3. Each one sees what he can do, i.e. mostly to do his best, individually or within an action already around him. Each one chooses an action, a commitment, modest or grand, but

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sticks to what is within his reach, here and now. The role of the Sangha is to make an initial appraisal of these commitments, and to work out together the obstacles that may arise. Once the camp is over, the Sangha will act as a social network, giving support to each other, and hopefully, inspiring others to follow the movement.

In the end, the workshop consists in making vows, green vows, eco-vows, to take few more steps further (even if we believe to be at the top of the pole.) Like the vows we present at the ordination, it will be both a commitment and a call for support whenever we will be in trouble, relying on our practice and on the Sangha.

How will the workshop work on a practical base ?

I guess you have understood by now that is not a meditative workshop within nature, but rather an exchange and sharing of experiences that will lead to concrete actions in social life.

The different steps are the following ones :

- Introduction and presentation of the participants ;
- Sharing the feeling of interdependence, vacuity, of our practice as a source for environment actions ;
- Presentation of the sutras, teachings that could support us in our approach ;
- Explanations of the different obstacles, traps usually met in the daily life ;
- For those who wish it, creation of individual or collective action plans. Sharing of information about these actions and the difficulties we will encounter ;
- Establishment of a social network to do the follow up of the planned actions once the workshop is finished.

We can plan to watch together a DVD (in English, subtitled in French) on Transition or on the work of Joanna Macy during the day of rest (the day before the sesshin).

Two first workshops will be organised during the summer camps of Maredsous and the Gendronnière. If the outcome is positive, the experience may be renewed, we could well draw a guideline book for the future groups and use our website for short news on the progress of our actions.