
My four “meetings” with Master Deshimaru

By Emanuela Losi

I didn't know Master Deshimaru, but, from the beginning of my practice at the Turin Dojo, from often hearing about him, it was as if I had already met him – and that was my first time, my first contact.

At the entrance to the Dojo there was a noticeboard with a photo of the Gendronnière Zen Temple and the leaflet for the summer camp. He became more and more familiar to me just through hearing about him, as if he was alive.

Then the second meeting with him was when I went to the Gendronnière for the first time, to the Spring session of 1992. The place, imbued with the energy of zazen practice, of samu, of the beauty of nature, immediately made me feel at home as never before. After the morning zazen, as we still do today, we went to his grave and did gassho. There had also been the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of his death. The profound respect that his previous disciples showed him, 10 years after his death, led me naturally to feel the same respect, and a great gratitude for the gift I had also received : Zen practice and the Gendronnière Temple. My gratitude also went to all the other people who, after him, had continued practice in order to transmit it to others.

The third meeting was through his books. During the first months of practice, I avoided reading anything about Zen, to maintain an experience which was empty of prejudices. I bought the first examples of « The complete Oral teachings of Master Deshimaru at the Gendronnière : Gakudoyojin-shu, Dogen's Zen, The Kesa Book »I have read some of them several times and I still feel the need to stay in contact with his oral teaching because it speaks to me i shin den shin. His books give me an intuitive understanding : reading the words and understanding beyond words. Reading his books also gives me the impression of being there in the Dojo, listening to his teaching.

The fourth meeting was during my first ango in Japan. I once again felt a great gratitude towards him because there was nothing lacking in his transmission of Soto Zen.

This year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of his arrival in Europe and the 35th anniversary of his death. And his mission continues.