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# Zen and women

**By Txus Laita**

Maybe we could think, reading the title, that this article is out of subject, because Zen is beyond genders, beyond the notions of feminine or masculine, beyond man and beyond woman, beyond any separation. But we know also that our life takes place on two plans: the ultimate and the relative.

If we look at things from a relative point of view, in the best case the women are hidden. This is the reason why - more and more - movements are appearing everywhere to give the woman the place which should be hers, in all the circles of our life: family, couple, work ...

Zen is spreading in the very same society which discriminates between man and woman; and our Sangha is not an exception to this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, in the Raihai Toku Zui of the Shōbōgenzō, Master Dogen said: "Which is the fault of the women? What are the virtues of the men? There are bad men and there are virtuous women. The aspiration towards the Dharma and the entry into the monastic life do not depend on the condition of being a man or a woman. If they do not release themselves from illusion, women and men are equally prisoners of this illusion. When the illusions are dissolved and the experience of the Reality happens, there is no difference between man and woman".

In the teachings of our Tradition, there are great masters: Buddha Shakyamuni, Bodhidharma, Eno, Dogen, Kodo Sawaki ... Did not any woman dedicate her life to share and develop the Dharma? Did these great Masters never have great feminine disciples that we could mention as models in our teachings? During my twenty years of practice, I have never heard a kusen saying, for example: "The famous mondo of a woman Master and her disciple ..." and nevertheless I am certain that it exists.

This text aims at getting back a space for these hidden teachings, these small roots, these flowers, these fruits ... which, as spices in a delicious sweet, will perfume and enrich the fertile earth of our Zen teaching.

To achieve this, the purpose of this article is to stimulate you to look for these women who, throughout the life of the Buddhism, left invaluable teachings in our tradition, and to be able to publish them.

And as example, I will mention here Dhammadina. Dhammadina was a follower of Buddha Shakyamuni. Buddha considered her as a woman Master, one of the most notorious among the nuns. We do not know much of her bibliographic data, but her teaching, and in particular her teaching about the spiral and the cyclic nature of the conditioned existence, had a great influence on the development of the thought of Sangharákshita.

"When her heart is not attached to pleasure, we say: "This woman has entered the Stream".

Susan Murcott – "The First Buddhist Women"