3rd Zen objective: Put an end to routine

Work, looking after the children, doing the shopping - where do you find time for your relationship in all of that?

How to: become the tenzo of your couple

The practice of Zen is a celebration of everyday life - no banal action should be neglected! This is why, in the eighteenth century, the great master Dōgen made the tenzo (cook) the deputy of the monastery, just second to the Abbot. For it is through the repetition of humble gestures that the vigilant mind frees itself of the pipe dreams of the past and the future and that the conscience becomes sharp as a knife. Becoming the tenzo of the couple requires you to apply the same outlook to everything that you come up against.

"Do not view ordinary things with an ordinary eye, with ordinary emotions and ordinary thoughts […] When you have to deal with something ordinary, do not treat it without consideration; show as much diligence and attention towards it as you would if it were a precious object (in "Instructions for the Zen cook" – Le Promeneur, 1994")

Dōgen remained conscious, however, that without making an effort to try to obtain harmony around oneself, advice on what to do is simply not enough - he reminded the tenzo, 'If you do not want disorder to reign around you, do not infringe on other people's rights.'

How to: The six flavours and three virtues

In the monasteries established by Dōgen, there was a rule that stated that if the six flavours are not in harmony and if the three virtues are absent, the dish is not fit to be prepared. What are the ingredients that make up your relationship? It is up to you to determine:

- The six flavours: (bitter, acid, sweet, spicy, salty, bland). Which flavour is your relationship missing? Which should you use liberally? Which should you be anxious about using? Which repulses you? Why? All of these flavours should co-exist in harmony; a pinch of each stands you in good stead for a rich and creative relationship.

The three virtues:

- Flexibility – lightness: refers to the capacity to adapt to and play down a situation. You are lacking this it if you tend to exaggerate things, stick relentlessly to your positions and cannot be persuaded.
- Clarity – freshness: evokes the absence of prejudices, integrity, transparency and the beginner's mind. You are lacking this if you have a tendency to keep little

secrets and give your point of view before you have all the information to be able to forge your opinion.

- Care – precision: refers to vigilance, steadfastness and the desire to “do good”. You are lacking this virtue if you give up easily when faced with a challenge, often saying: “Nobody is perfect!” to justify your own downfalls.

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