

**A touch of Christianity, Buddhism, Zen – and Imelda, the lesbian, desiring me**

This was all not very relevant. The Real Work, behind the scene, Continued during the interim I was in. ‘Interim’ was not the right word, in fact. That Truth had not Arrived yet in full Glory did not mean that nothing happened, that ‘I’ was not being Worked upon in the meantime. And I was faithful and dedicated to this ‘Working upon’ by keeping meditating and joining in for vipassana meditation retreats that became gradually longer. In the summer I had done a whole week of retreat in our own meditation centre in Groningen. Now, in a 10 day retreat in a monastery in the East of Holland, close to Doetinchem where Maja had been born and grown up – somehow I was sensitive for these kinds of details. I entered the region that was so familiar to Maja and I would meditate there, go into the depth of life – in a way for her, if you See the whole picture at its widest. When I was with her I was not Able (yet) to Be with her – as Man, I mean. May I Feel and Go through all the Pain now that at the time I couldn’t (Consciously) Feel but that stood secretly in between us, between Man and Woman. May ‘my’ Freeing Consciousness reach her and give her some Insight, for Insight was the Only Freedom.

Ten days of silence... What mercy. This would make it all bearable, whatever form of discomfort and pain would arise. Although I was talented in dealing with pain, still, in daily life, in a sphere of chaos, mess, restlessness, movements, sounds or noise, it was (much) more difficult to focus on ‘Pain’ (whatever seems to be difficult and so-called negative), due to which it kept bothering semi-consciously. In all space putting my focus on it made it easier – even when in the beginning of the ‘activity’ of the magnifying glass it seemed to aggravate. It could, and sooner or later certainly would, even dissolve. Nothing, no single form could stand the persistent Shine of Consciousness on it. Sooner or later, one by one, they would surrender, give up, bow, all of them. Pain, too, was just a form.

We were meditating in a beautiful old catholic monastery, renovated here and there and made suitable to rent out to groups of whatever spiritual direction or tradition, like us would-be buddhists. The catholic monasteries were in trouble in Holland – and not only there – due to the continuously spreading secularization. I wondered about the fact that they still had such huge amounts of money at their disposal. They had been able to renovate the very large building and they had to maintain it, while only six monks lived there still, of whom five were old or very old.

The monks had urged us, the organization of our retreat, to join the catholic services, or at least one. I didn’t like this at all. If it had been part of the deal – we could only hire the part of the monastery if we joined at least one service – if it was obligatory therefore, I had been all right with it, if we the participants had been informed about it in advance. But, precisely what I expected of any Christian organization and what I had always hated, they exerted a considerable slimy pressure underground – under the habit – on us, manipulating the people into their service. For what? Would the Lord be pleased with them, with this trick, that they made the glorious Christianity available for more lost souls? Slime is contagious – if it is not *Seen*, if the painful cramp is not actually Felt. In turn, the organization of the retreat, not whole-bodily meditating on and through the slimy ‘attack’ but merely considering it with

their mind, exerted thus the same pressure, albeit somewhat less slimy and dirty, leaving everyone in confusion if it was obligatory or not, if it would bring the organization in trouble if participants refused. Rather, instead of offering clarity, they handily focussed on how to get there, which doors to take in the myriad of the monastery. To get rid of the ‘moral obligation’ we did our ‘duty’ immediately at the beginning of our retreat so that we could focus on what we came for.

No problem, I was anyway already freed from my family conditioning of the church being ‘wrong’. So here was finally an opportunity to experience, feel first-hand what was going on in fact during a christian service and in general how I actually felt christianity now, now that I had opened up to a much greater reality. So, there I was, there I sat in the pews so hard for the buttocks and for the first time in my life – to be sure almost in the back, in the last row but one. Well, it turned out not much different from how I felt Christianity before and what I somewhere expected to find – only worse, rather worse. To feel it first-hand, directly in my whole body, was certainly more impressive than being able to avoid it more or less, although avoiding it completely was not possible in Holland.

What huge cramp the monks carried in their bodies, what an unfelt pain! This was service to the Lord? To live like this, and die like this? Serving the Lord and hating the Body? What was that for Lord? This was incredible. Only the middle-aged monk was bearable and didn’t look so tortured. Poor guy, regarding what was awaiting him, apparently, not being allowed to include the whole body in his service, truth cut off at the edges of the bible.

When the singing was finally over, one of the brown habited monks, a real fatso who had stored all the dogmatic lies in his belly, started preaching in Latin. At least he was glad he could finally transmit his pain – in the Dark – to the other people, the visitors, new blood. For this was what was actually happening; no one understood a shit of what he kept mumbling – maybe ‘Let me thoroughly die to be with Thee, Holy Lord’ or ‘Forgive these sinners in Thy Holy Church’. There was no translation, not even for deaf people. The four guys at the side supporting him stood there pretending that something holy was happening, which asked for our humble respect. Was this true humbleness or sheer stupidity to stand there every day like this? I couldn’t help tending to the latter. Why didn’t I feel sorry for these guys except for the middle-aged one? Were people who were totally closed not worthy of compassion? Or rather, did their radical closeness and solid attachment to keep suppressing pain shut down and prevent natural feelings of compassion from reaching out to them? Or was ‘my’ Heart simply not evolved enough to be able to Pierce through this level of harness around their Heart and pour out Its compassion anyway?

Without a warning the fatso suddenly made a few big steps towards us lost lambs. He had something in his hands, it seemed, and before we knew what was going on, before we could run away, he threw some liquid on us, sneaky bastard, and again, and again. I could imagine that his mental health increasingly declined in the course of the years, having to suppress so incredibly much in the name of the Lord. He ended up childishly throwing liquid on people.

Not sure of his intentions, I quickly moved aside as a reflex, but his attack was so sudden and fast – as if he had practiced it before, it was premeditated assault – that I could not

prevent one or two drops hitting me. I looked for a first aid kit immediately, but I also had to watch the attacker to see what more he was up to, I didn't trust him in the very least. He put on a face as if he was exorcising us, exorcising the damned devil out of us. He took his task quite seriously. But it was totally ridiculous. The belly monk was full of shit himself. How did he manage to have the guts to project 'the devil', the Dark, on us? First he tried to lull us to sleep – it was the evening of arrival, before the retreat of developing attention really started – and then he attacked us suddenly. What a lousy trick. But it seemed the normal procedure here. Nobody looked surprised or terrified, nobody tried to avoid the liquid as I did, moving fast to the right and then to the left and down. The problem with moving downward was that if I managed to avoid being hit – indeed – my neighbour behind me got the whole load. Yet, there was not much time for such moral considerations. Everyone had to try to be saved. It was a sad situation.

Later I thought that it must have been what they called the 'holy water'.

Well, Pir Vilayat might have given me the name 'holy master', this ceremony was rather an initiation into the dark, especially into the Dark of the church, of religion, especially christianity. Religion meant going into the Dark while preaching the Light of the Lord. I felt it. And I preferred to be initiated by (a) woman, one of blood and bones, into Her Dark. There was Life involved in the Meeting of Man and Woman. Sitting there on the old hard pew, only deadness was being transmitted. What did this for heaven's sake have to do with 'the Lord', or with a Man like Jesus, if he had ever lived for real?

Religion, Christianity, was making people unholy, un-whole. It cut off the whole lower part of the Body, by which life itself was being cut off, banished. That's what fatso was trying to do with his sudden trick, to free us from the sin below, from the Dark monster – while his own belly had only grown from his blind strategy. It had become so very fat that he needed a special mirror to ever still be able to see his dick, hanging somewhere down there. Sitting in the pew, feeling the atmosphere in the church, I felt the knot at – or just above – the third chakra where the division between low and high was situated and established. The lower parts were deadened and the higher parts suffocated. For that was the result of the division.

It's not that if one chooses one side of life at least that one can be lived, consumed in full glory, enjoyed – and pity for the other side. No, it's all or nothing. The Body is a Whole, it's One Conscious Organism, 'System'. Deaden one part and you deaden everything, even if you're not aware of it. In this case with the radicalized monks, to compensate, to try to get back some life in the whole thing, many of such guys assault and abuse children in their unrecognized despair, understandably and repulsively. These were not just individual 'faults', tragedies or crimes, the whole religious system was corrupted with it division between high and low, and it led inevitably to these excesses. You could not condemn the holy rapists and defend christianity at the same time.

The retreat started. There would be time enough to meditate through the unholy water. No problem. The retreat was led by some kind of a Buddhist master, Mettavihari, who had brought vipassana to the Netherlands in the 60so or 70s, as the story goes, and was very advanced in it himself. I listened interested to his talks. He himself, as a human being, felt

Azar Baksh – Autobiography – A touch of Christianity, Buddhism, Zen – and Imelda, the lesbian,  
desiring me (p. 1936-1941)

quite far away – not in the least comparable as open as my beloved Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan. It's true, I didn't know him outside of the retreat, but to me it seemed he had developed himself especially (if not only) in meditation, in consciousness, not in humanness as, again, Pir Vilayat had. Theoretically, he may not have been a bad guy; only, certainly not someone I felt attracted to.

Many years later, I heard he was involved in sexual abuse, of young men. Advanced or not, it appeared that he could not simply meditate the perverse lust feelings towards young men as just a, possibly repeating, form passing by in his consciousness. So, in buddhism – and probably in about all religions and spiritual paths – they had the same problem as in christianity, the artificial division between high and low, between the upper four chakras and the lower three. I, for one, would certainly not join the club of hypocrites, I'd rather kill myself. You come down to the earth... to become a hypocrite, an abuser, a liar? What was this for show? What was the sense of this?

But at the time I was not so well informed yet about all the abuse going on in religious institutions, sects, by teachers, preachers, supposed masters and so on.

In fact, I don't remember so many details of the retreat. Many forms passed by. It's like reading words in a book. You don't remember them afterwards. Only the highlights, some outstanding pictures and insights that made a strong impression, remained. One such image that stayed with me, and that was not related to the meditation itself, had to do with what Imelda told me – afterwards, since during the retreat we could not talk. Yes, Imelda, the female meditation student who had fallen in love with me before, in a previous retreat, was there again. Although people were spread throughout the country, the (hardcore) vipassana scene was a small world.

Imelda had refused to sit on the ground before the Buddhist teacher monk who sat on his bed, higher than her. She didn't mind sitting on the ground, but could not accept Mettavihari sitting higher. So she 'had to' skip the consultations, the meditation support by the teacher, that were held for everyone individually every three days. This scene impressed me. I did not feel a judgement to either of them, both sticking to their own view, not willing to bow, to make a gesture to the other one. Instead, it was just of a beautiful radiant simplicity. It felt like a tea ceremony in the Zen tradition:

Woman entering room.

In room is man.

Woman sees cushion on ground.

Man on bed.

Higher than cushion.

Woman leaves room.

Without having drunk her tea.

Man orders servant to throw away the tea.

The scene was almost a perfect koan, too – also Zen: a simple enigma that seemed insoluble.

How do two people level, come together, when one is higher than the other?

The scene revealed something, something that was always there between people, and certainly between Man and Woman.

Imelda ‘explained’ to me that she just could not sit lower than a man, whether he’s a master or whatever, didn’t matter, it was just impossible for her. I could not suppress a smile from this whole event, when she told me. I found it very amusing. Since ‘I’ had Seen through the Lie, the absurdity, of the Ego in myself, I started laughing about it whenever Ego showed itself in people. But, since for Imelda it was a big and triggering subject, I behaved. I was not attached to having to express the joy of the Heart Seeing the smallness, the futility of Ego trying to make itself so important. It was a pity in a way, it would have been an honest feedback if I had just burst out laughing when she shared the Zen event with the cushion. I’m sure, however, that she would only have felt very hurt instead of being Freed from the Ego folly by the laughter, which could have been possible as well, theoretically.

Funnily, I didn’t know yet that 5 years later I would be in a similar situation, during I think the second satsang I ever gave that was held in my small bedroom. Due to lack of space I had to sit on the bed with people stuffed in the room all around on cushions on the ground, in front of me and partly aside. An advantage with this arrangement was also that everybody could see me well then. Yet, one woman could no longer bear it any more at a certain point, and while emotionally, with red face, legging away, she made a bitchy remark to me sitting higher. Despite the pain I felt in my heart, the smile was there again.

Obviously, Imelda’s drama was a form of resistance of Woman to Man, in this case quite extreme, no matter the fact that in Holland Imelda’s reaction would be considered normal, praiseworthy, courageous, inspiring, an example for other people. I liked, loved extremes – not speaking of torture and stuff like that. The extremes revealed something or even Something that otherwise, closer to the middle, remained vague, unclear. Despite her big pelvis, Imelda was quite boyish. I felt it *was* there, her femininity, but very repressed. I liked her, as a matter of fact, she had something honest. Yet, I didn’t see a – natural – possibility of entering into a relationship with her.

I was reminded of a scene that happened earlier in May of that year. She visited me at my place in Groningen. Coming all the way from Amsterdam, 200 kilometers away, especially for me, should have made me more on my guard perhaps. Despite that she ‘was’ a lesbian, her desire for me must have been strong. For it didn’t take long after she had arrived that, for me unexpectedly, she suddenly pulled my body on hers and she wanted to kiss with me. I preferred vipassana. And I freed myself as fast as I could from the awkward situation and clasping I found myself in all of a sudden.

“No no no”, I exclaimed. Imelda was very disappointed afterwards and looked like a beaten dog.

It was sad. Finally, via meeting me, ‘my’ heart – apparently so unlike the men she was used to and considered ‘man’ – she could touch and open something in herself that had always been closed: attraction to a man – of all people, of all sexes – even allow physical attraction, and now I had to reject ‘her’. But what to do. It was much too far away still, that which wanted to Connect to ‘me’, to Man, in fact. One swallow didn’t make a summer. I

Azar Baksh – Autobiography – A touch of Christianity, Buddhism, Zen – and Imelda, the lesbian,  
desiring me (p. 1936-1941)

could not make love to her resistance to Man, not make love to a ‘boy’ in a way, a boy resisting daddy. It was not my task to try to slowly and heavily open up the Woman in her. For that, to go in that extremely heavy Process requiring a hell of a lot from me ‘and’ my body, my energy, there should have been a deeper gesture from her to ‘me’, from Woman to Man, Deeper than the confession that she was in love with me, deeper than pulling my body on hers – even though in itself I appreciated her attempts, not keeping things in the dark.

Well, her hate to Man was still in the Dark. But all right, first things first. First Woman Wanted to seduce, have, occupy and bind (a) Man before deeper processes could be entered.

Seeing once more their attraction to ‘me’ – to Something in, as or coming through me that I call Man – I could not help but notice that so many ‘lesbians’ were not lesbian, actually. They were looking for the Heart in Man and without That being obviously there, they turned away from man in disgust and often hate. Since their sexuality kept bugging them, naturally, they turned to women, and if they were attached to blindness, even stayed with one of them, not wanting to See that Something Fundamental was missing. In that sense it had been good if we had communicated about this issue. In her drama around what seemed to be ‘me’, I didn’t feel real Openness about this in Imelda, despite that she was rather intelligent. She wanted *me*, not in general be helped in turning from Woman to Man, understandably. Adding a man to her life would in itself be a giant step for her – admitting she wanted this was already quite a kick to the Ego – but it was still far from Allowing Man in her system. I was somewhere else now than what she expected or hoped from me. I had made my bow to Woman(’s world), drastically, in my relation with Tiara – She not able or willing to make the smallest Gesture to Man(’s world) in return – and Something in me was ready for exploring, meditating and being with (a) Woman Who Allowed Man to whatever degree and Depth possible at his point. Imelda was not (suitable to be developed into) this Woman, it couldn’t be helped.