

## Zoom Zazen Saturday 18 June 2022

Master Keizan continues his recommendations on *kontin*, the state of drowsiness during zazen, primarily for those who practice alone, at home:

*"If you still do not wake up after practicing Kin hin, wash your eyes and head with cold water. Recite the Three Pure Precepts of the Bodhisattvas. Find for yourself a way of not falling asleep. Remember the Great Affair of life and death, and thus how rapidly impermanence flows. What are you doing sleeping with your Eye of the Way lost in the clouds? If heaviness of mind and drowsiness frequently overcome you, you should say to yourself: 'My habits are deeply rooted, and that is why I am overcome by this drowsiness. When will this drowsiness disperse? I pray that the Buddhas and Patriarchs will free me by their compassion from this state of darkness and distress.' "*

In the dojo, with others, we also sometimes suffer *kontin*, without being able to bathe our eyes or get up to do *kin hin*! But we can seriously question ourselves about life and death, and seek help from our own resources!

It's only through ourselves [our own efforts] that we can escape this sad state of drowsiness and absence, by finding skilful ways of keeping the Eye open and the attention alert in order to penetrate the Great Affair.

In the *Shôbôgenzô* chapter entitled *Shôji*, Master Dogen quotes Master Kassan: *"If there is the Buddha in the midst of births and deaths, then there is neither birth nor death."*

It is this *kôan* that we must reflect on!

Birth and death are the impermanence that our Eye of the Way looks at during zazen. It is this contemplation where we are Buddha in the midst of births and deaths that reveals to us our limitless nature, the original emptiness where births and deaths are and are not.

Only in this way can the Great Affair be resolved: at the very heart of Presence, the truth of the present moment. Hence the urgency of not losing the present moment by sleeping on our zafu, or by taking refuge in the clouds of somnolence and fantasy. All the masters exhort us to this continuous vigilance, and yet ... !

If we need help to keep our attention awake, we must know that we can only rely on ourselves. The Buddhas teach, [but] they cannot practice for us. Yet invoking them can help us to keep our attention on the Great Question and on the practice itself. Like an inner reminder.

Always keep in mind that zazen time is paradoxically outside time. Zazen allows us to naturally reach Awakening itself, that is to say the heart of contemplation of the impermanence that is actualised in births and deaths, in the appearance and disappearance of nature, of things and of beings. To deprive oneself of this marvelous spectacle by sleeping, dreaming or by getting lost in the clouds is a tragic denial of what we are in essence and of our good fortune in having obtained this existence.

*"In the state of Awakening," says Master Dogen, "the whole body must resound in the ten-direction universe, as if a bell, suspended in the air, were ringing with every breath of wind."*

During zazen, do not sleep. *Be* the bell and the wind and the Mind where that bell sounds and you will see births and death at the heart of Awakening.

\*\*\*