

## Zoom Zazen Saturday 2 July 2022

*"If your mind is scattered," Master Keizan continues, "place your attention on the tip of your nose, or on the kikai tanden and count your inhalations and exhalations."*

After addressing *Kontin*, Master Keizan comes to the question of *Sanran*, the state of mental agitation in which thoughts, not just during meditation, invade the mind in a continuous stream, without [our] being able to stop them. Even being aware of them doesn't last. We have the impression of wasting the time of zazen, of not being able to do it, and even feeling guilty. In this meditation, we are there, without knowing that we're there. We live out memories, situations and dreams, believing in them, until we feel incapable or demoralised about not being able to meditate.

We can't get out of *Sanran* by using "mental" will. Thought can't stop thought; it has no such power. To want to be vigilant at all costs, while also not wanting to forget it, is still to mobilise thought! Meditation then becomes a battle against oneself, which is the opposite of the peace and clarity that it should bring.

Don't struggle. *"Stop fighting and lay down your arms,"* advises Master Kodo Sawaki. Understand clearly what this recommendation is.

Master Keizan's advice is to try to focus the attention on a part of the body or on the breath. It's a case of *feeling - experiencing* the sensations in the body. This appeals to our perceptual awareness and immediately turns us away from the stream, the appropriator of thoughts. You can even do a sensory scan of the whole body, quietly, without haste. And look, feel!

Forget that you are even meditating!

Wait for what emerges - sensation or thought.

Hold yourself just **before!**

Be aware of the place, the space, where the next thought is going to emerge. This advice from Master Doshin, the 4th Patriarch, has informed my zazen for many years:

*"In the interval where your mind, having left one thought, is not yet caught by another, you are a pure being."*

This space, before all thought, is our true nature, like a blue sky before the clouds appear. This space before all thought is free from the thinker, because the idea of the 'thinking self' that thinks is not there any more; there *are* no thoughts. There is, in fact, no one left. What is important is not the absence or non-absence of thoughts, but that which is behind, forever still and unborn.

Whether it is thoughts, meditation, birth or death, suffering or illusions, there is nothing that is outside us. Nothing outside. We can therefore accept everything, receive everything and let go of everything, because we *are* the unlimited Presence in which the world appears as a dream. In this dream, we ourselves and our thoughts are always welcomed and accepted totally.

*Sanran* is, in the final analysis, only a problem for the meditator who takes himself to be the thinker.

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