

# **That Which Is**

Zen Weekend

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at

Bristol Zen Dojo

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## **Saturday - First kusen**

When we come to meditate together in a dojo, it's to find once again this intimacy with oneself which is not disturbed by things, circumstances, stories. We look within ourselves. We become aware of that which within us perceives, observes. Which is consciousness. To turn one's gaze on oneself, to be conscious of one's own mind does not require making effort. Simply to stay still and silent. To understand that the activities of thoughts is simply an energetic process. And stories which pass in front of this field of awareness, watched by this consciousness. We must understand the difference between the mental processes and consciousness: the mental process or the discriminating mind in which we bring into being a fictional entity which we call 'me', which lives out stories, meets people. A 'me' which invents a future in which it can find happiness. And this search for happiness is so powerful that it can fill our mind from morning to night.

The discriminating mind is like some kind of cloud, a basis of what is given, what is remembered, which is always acting. Information comes into it, which are analysed, processed, compared, judged. The 'me' finds meaning and is constructed unceasingly in thoughts and it is this entity 'me' has no substance. So it identifies with the body. And the identification of this 'me' with the body brings about a great suffering in separating ourselves from that which we are truly - a vast, luminous awareness which perceives the world, things, impermanence; which is awareness, consciousness.

So in our meditation we can see and understand this continual mental activity is only very rarely concentrated on the present moment. It pushes us to imagine and create an imaginary future, and is nothing but a lengthening of our memories and our experiences, our fears, our beliefs, our past frustrations.

To turn one's gaze inwards, is to re-occupy the present moment. No need to make great effort, but to simply remain open to that which arises and disappears in front of our eyes. That which sees, senses, hears, is consciousness. It is our true nature. So in meditation we gaze in the direction of that which gazes, we look in the direction of that which looks. It's like a changed perspective. Instead of focusing on thoughts - those things which pass - we turn our awareness to the space which contains them. In a sutra it's written: "See that which allows you to see." If you can see that, you see everything.

## **Saturday - Second kusen**

See that which within us sees. This is the secret of meditation. It's not about trying to get a result. But simply to see the source of our own mind. Our inner gaze is light. And when it turns to its inner source then the light illuminates itself, through itself, by itself. This is the real. Everything else which produces the discriminating mind is nothing but arising and disappearing.

How to see one's own source - you simply need to dwell in your own presence, without leaving it for our fleeting thoughts. In other words, remain conscious. Consciousness can only see in the present moment. It does not think. It witnesses. As a witness it is pure, it does not grasp, it does not judge, it makes no dualism between good and bad. It witnesses.

This is what consciousness is. It does not have any intention with regard to this or that. It doesn't even have the intention to be aware. Because it is awareness itself. This is what we find again at the heart of meditation. A consciousness which is immense, which has no limits; which has no face, no eye, no ear, no nose. This is what the Hannya Shingyo sutra expresses. This consciousness is emptiness. So the recommendation in zazen is to turn towards this emptiness. Take refuge in it because it is the *real*.

The Buddha uses the expression, 'Pure consciousness of the presence of self'. Live this. Now. Pure consciousness of the presence of self. To recognise & to be conscious of the simple fact of being. Before a few thoughts arise. This consciousness towards which we turn our gaze is not different from presence itself. It welcomes all that which arises in the field of its perception. It refuses nothing. It welcomes everything with the same equanimity. This is why we can say it is love.

This consciousness at the heart of ourselves is not personal; it does not, above all, belong to the 'me' which lives in our thoughts. It is the same consciousness for all beings: their dwelling place. Silent presence. Peace. Benevolence. The loving light.

And the awakening of Buddha which was celebrated a week ago on 8th December is absorption into this luminous presence. The gaze loses itself in its own source. Conscious presence.

To see that which within us sees.

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## Mondo

**Q1:** In Zen, what does the word 'contemplation' mean? How do you do it, and why do you do it?

**A:** Contemplation is something that I think happens without personal will. That's to say that, it's a bit mysterious. At a certain moment in meditation thoughts can go, like coming out of the cloud. At this moment there is consciousness of being without words. Just simply, knowing being. And that moment always comes in meditation for each of us - and this is what I would call contemplation. The awareness of being, the presence, to be in this moment, perfectly living, without any need to define it with words, without past stories and without future projections.

For me contemplation can't be separated from presence. We can also say contemplation is presence, or consciousness of being present. How does this happen? I think the passage to this contemplation comes through placing one's awareness on what is living in this happening body. For example, a sensation of something changing or a breath which changes, and there is this consciousness which sees the changing. And when we see in this way, there's no need for words. Simply sensing, it's simply being with the living, the living in this body itself - which we can't grasp, of course. And to see this means to be in presence. Contemplation is this.

This morning I said, "See that which sees." But when we watch impermanence, then we become aware that that which watches is one with that which is being watched. And so, naturally, we understand *that which watches*. It's simply

to watch without any intention to get somewhere, or to find something. No more need to search, simply that which is happening now, which we observe. Who watches that? Who sees this? It's not the eye, the inner eye. In Zen, we sometimes speak of the 'treasure of the eye'. This phrase doesn't originally come from Dogen but from Buddha himself who characterised the heart of vision, and *that which watches*. Contemplation is to take refuge in this, to see from this.

**Q1:** So, contemplation is being one with the observing of the breath & the non-separation; but it also arises from the observation of the rising of the breath. Contemplation comes *from* the observation of the arising of the breath, but it also *is* the observation of the arising of the breath.

**A:** True. You do not have an object or subject. There is no subject or object. It's simply *this* without 'me', without the individual 'me'. Without the individual 'me', it's truly peace.

**Q1:** What I don't get is that I think what you said this morning was to contemplate the arising of the breath, or the sensations.

**A:** Impermanence

**Q1:** But you can't direct what you contemplate. Is it not that you observe your senses and at some point you let go of yourself and you *are* contemplation rather than you *do* contemplation?

**A:** Of course, nobody *does* any contemplation.

Contemplation arises and the 'someone' disappears. It's not 'me' contemplating. The 'me' cannot contemplate because the 'me' is a mental construction. A thought can't contemplate, but a thought can be contemplated.

**Q1:** By who? The oneness?

**A:** *That which watches.* The story is *ku* and *shiki*. Phenomena arise in vacuity. Sensation passes in consciousness. The thought arises and passes in consciousness. It's always seen there. It passes from the past to the future. It is always past, in fact. The thought is seen here and now. That which contemplates a thought is not a thought. But it's consciousness. Consciousness knows there is a thought. But consciousness cannot be defined by thoughts or words. It's *that which watches*. This is a mystery. This is emptiness. It's buddha-nature. It's the great *Consciousness*, with a big 'C'.

So we can't say anything about this consciousness or this emptiness with words. But we can allow ourselves to be absorbed by it. And at that moment contemplation, because if we're not asleep we see the passing of things. It's this simple. It's simple, but at the same time it's difficult to explain. I think you've got it. Words are very limiting. If I could give my vision directly ... OK. But I have to talk!

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**Q2:** The Sufi's of Islam say that God is the breath within the breath. Also, Meister Eckhart in the 14th century said, 'Everything is the is-ness of everything. Everyone has this is-ness.' Is that the same as the breath and the gaze?



**A:** When awareness is placed on the breath, this is *IT*; this is how it is.

**Q2:** The idea of is-ness is the same as the turn of the breath, the turn of the gaze?

**A:** Yes, as it is. The real can be nothing but the present moment. The present moment is the real. But the present moment cannot be grasped. The breath cannot be grasped. But the heart if it is *that which we are*. Because we can contemplate the present moment. We don't contemplate the past nor the future. The only thing that we can contemplate and that is real is *now*. And the '*now*' is ungraspable. This is why we speak of emptiness. Emptiness contemplates...

**Q1:** It's not *in* the present moment, though; it *is* the present moment.

**A:** Yes, it *is* the present moment. But in it and itself. IN the breath, the heart of the breath. if you are conscious of it, it is in the heart of the breath. You cannot be OUT of the heart of the breath. if you are not conscious of the present moment of the breath. Is it clear? I'll repeat. We cannot be aware, conscious of the heart of the breath if we are not in the present moment of the breath. It is dangerous to play on words. It's difficult.

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**Q3:** My question is about ritual, because I find lots of Buddhism really helpful, I really connect to that. But when it comes to the rituals... they sort of get in the way of the theory. Because I'm not Tibetan, I'm not Japanese, I'm not Indian, I'm English. I'm trying to understand these concepts through those cultures. So I'm wondering what the importance of ritual is. Is it from another culture?

**A:** Ritual or the liturgy is created to harmonise a group of people together. To do a ritual to harmonise with others, there's no need to understand the meaning of the ritual. For example, in chanting you don't need to understand the meaning. But if you do understand the meaning it's far better. Behind each thing that the Japanese tradition has put in place, after the Chinese tradition, after the Indian tradition, there is a meaning, there's an explanation. The problem is that we Westerners don't really understand. And generally we don't bother trying to understand. We throw it away because we say, 'It's not my culture.' When we say that we can think that our culture is the best and the culture of 'over there' is not ours.

In our practice of Zen, we go beyond that. We go to the essential prime purpose of ritual. Why do we do things? Why do we chant? Why do we do prostrations? Why do we make *gassho*? Why do we come into the *dojo* on the left foot and leave on the right foot? All that is to harmonise. In a way it is to lose the sense of a 'me' separate from others. If everyone comes into the *dojo* in their own way, it can cause confusion - like a parliament where everybody talks at the same time. We follow a ritual to keep our awareness, our attention in the form - to stay attentive. Ritual helps us to stay attentive.

In that moment, in a way it doesn't really matter what you're doing, but do it with complete attention and with heart. That is far, far more important than the ritual itself.

The ritual can change, of course. Maybe we'll change the clothes, or the manner we do it, but as an individual I can't change this. It's the movement of the tradition which has been transmitted from centuries and centuries ago. And personally I can't change it. Why would I have the right to change this? For what purpose? My own personal idea? So maybe things will change, because the Japanese ritual has some things that are very beautiful, very pure. It's necessary to understand them. There's also a cultural aspect which is not our Western culture. But for the moment, it's just the beginning of Zen [in the West] with centuries and centuries of possibility; the future, the future. Personally I can't change the ritual.

**Q3:** Can I just clarify? The importance is to harmonise, so it's not just us individually. And what's the importance of harmony in terms of Buddhism?

**A:** It's not in terms of Buddhism, it's in terms of human beings: harmony. See this world, this world. There's a lot of work to be done for people to be in harmony. And not only with regard to social, professional, legal, but at the level of awareness. The level of love and respect for each other. And this is what happens through ritual in a place such as a *dojo*. This is what we learn: how to harmonise with others - to forget one's personal choices, which are always conditioned by preferences and aversions. 'I don't like that particularly, I prefer that. If we did nothing, just zazen.' But the incense,

the ceremony, the chanting, is the practice itself.

Like you, I felt a lot of reticence about ritual. Do you? And it changes; it has changed because I know now that each moment I live, *is* practice. It's an awakening of awareness - I'm either with it, or I'm 'out'. So it's important for me that each moment I live I'm as conscious as possible. So when I do a ceremony, I try to be completely conscious of the ceremony. It's not religion. It's a moment of my life - my life is in the present moment. And if I'm not conscious, if I resist, if I battle with myself - I am cut in two.

My personal realisation comes through a complete investment in each moment that I live. If not, it's a wasted life, a life lived 'alongside'. Do you understand? It's really important. So, I sit. I try to be fully seated. When I offer incense, I try to truly offer the incense. Sometimes I eat too quickly, I try to eat, sensing it. When I speak with someone I try to be attentive to them, but sometimes I see myself drifting off in my head, I think... I'm not always attentive. And when I'm not attentive, it means I've lost something - I've lost awareness of the present moment. *This* is what I am - this consciousness in the present moment.

Thank you for allowing me to express this in a *mondo* because - you don't go to the pub to talk about that, you know, but this is what's most important in our life.

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**Q4:** It's a question about the term 'normal condition', returning to normal condition. You talk about that quite a lot. Is 'normal condition' always peaceful and tranquil?

**A:** What do you think about that? What is your personal answer? I think that there is in the human being an incredible beauty, which has been denatured. The true nature of human beings is love, a consciousness which is always open, which accepts everything because what comes from it is the manifestation of phenomena which arise and disappear. Non-normal condition is to choose only one side and to chase after it, to make efforts to grasp it: happiness, love, money, peace etc., a nice car. But in existence there are always two sides.

It's not from a moral perspective, but there is good and there is bad; there is agreeable and disagreeable - and we can't avoid these. The true normal condition is to accept those as being two aspects of the manifestation of existence. And to stay equanimous. 'Today is terrible; tomorrow will be better.' Master Deshimaru would say those words all the time, all the time. 'Bad becomes good; good becomes bad'. And me, I watch. If I grasp the bad, I suffer. If I grasp the good, I will suffer later. So wisdom is simply to watch - and the normal condition is to grasp nothing.

You should read the *Shin Jin Mei* - the poem of 'Faith in the Heart' written by Master Sosan, the third Chinese patriarch. Sosan said, 'In truth, because we want to seize and reject we lose our freedom.' Because to want to seize or reject takes a lot of energy and at the same time distances us from the present moment. Because we're always in projections or in

regrets. So in this grasping or rejection we're never in the present moment, we project ourselves elsewhere. And the fact that we can't be elsewhere than *now* is suffering.

This doesn't mean to say that in ordinary existence we mustn't have projects - holidays, work, family, daily life. A normal life is to receive and accept that which comes to us - to have gratitude, whether [what comes is] bad or good - which is really difficult, very difficult. When one is old it's easier because it's like old people talking together with their sticks, looking at people in the street. Consciousness is letting go, letting come & letting go. That's what I would say about 'normal condition.'

**Q4:** So it's not about being peaceful necessarily.

**A:** No, because sometimes you can be ... not violent, but you can be angry. Sometimes anger is necessary, because sometimes you also have to defend your own integrity if someone tries to come into your world. You have to say, 'Stop - you [only] until here, me until there. If you pass, I'll become angry.'

So anger is part of 'normal condition', but anger can be violent. At this time you lose your self-control and it's not so good - you create karma, you create bad karma with consequences which will come sooner or later. And sometimes very quickly like a boomerang ... "Ah, I should have been better!"

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**Q5:** This is about fully embracing the practice. I grew up and I believed the Earth is solid. Now I'm learning everything changes, impermanence. That's a big one to embrace, because we can talk about it, you know, but actually ... it's quite a big thing: the shift from solid reality to impermanence that changes. And then, what I was thinking is, "This 'me', it's a mental construct with a fake attachment to the body." So, it's easy to talk about, but actually to 'get' it! I personally find it scary. For me it's almost like 'death'. I have a fear of dying this way. So my question is how to move through this fear that we disappear?

**A:** We're always afraid of the unknown, that which we don't know. We must be careful not to be attached to the continual changing of things. Another way of saying this is: to be attached to that which changes all the time creates fear.

But people don't want to be attached to what doesn't move and they try not to see it. What is this consciousness, which is our true identity? People prefer to play this, or this or this, or you know to be attached to appearance or create stories, scenarios... 'I will do this. I will do this great...' or 'This woman; I want to catch her so how should I do it?' or 'This work, I want this work' or 'I want this money' or 'I want this latest iPhone, but how can I manage £300?'

So this is complicated, and people are attached to this. People look at it. People run after the latest thing that they can see on their mobile phone or in the street. They run after that, and this is always running after frustration in a way. So of course believing all that is something which can

create fear...

**Q5:** But I'm talking about believing the perception of 'myself' completely in all, like a solid entity, who walks etc. And actually this is a mental construct. So in a way I'm [inviting] the dying down of this perception.

**A:** This is a mental conception to believe that the body is unchanging. Because since you came into this world you have been changing *all the time*. So you can't be what changes all the time. This is not your identity; it cannot be your identity because it's changing all the time. So, what is *not* changing? What, in your way of perceiving the world, is not changing? Can you answer?

**Q5:** You see, this is something I'm scared to know. Because if I *know*, I will just disappear, you know.

**A:** No... the form is the form and is changing, but that which *watches* the form, the way in which things are observed - that has not changed since you have been able to understand things. We see things. Things change, but I see things in the same way. That which is always changing is the discriminating mind, judgements, the things that the discriminating mind places on all phenomena. But *that which watches* does not change in its essence.

In meditation, I am seated, you're seated. I concentrate on my breathing, on my posture. Things change, but *that which watches* does not change. OK, this is a *koan* you have to investigate. When we change the paradigm from 'solid' to 'changing' it's like changing the world. But it's completely



necessary for us to change our gaze, our watch to understand that which we really are. We are not things which pass. Form passes. The body passes. But *that which we are*, which observes these changes, is not affected by these changes. When we understand this, it's contemplation. Contemplation of the real. The world of form is unreal, it changes all the time like a mirage. Presence, consciousness which observes all that does not change.

It's very difficult to talk about that because if I say to people, 'You are not what you are' ... [pfft] No, I mean, you are not a body, you are not thoughts - the thoughts pass, so what is permanent? What is *real*? That which looks at things which I call this weekend: consciousness, presence, buddha-nature or vacuity. What is vacuity? I am vacuity? Yes, I am but ... it's difficult to accept. So don't accept it if you don't want to - it doesn't matter for me.

**Q5:** It matters for me.

**A:** Thank you - good question anyway

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**Q6:** There was a show delivered by some astrophysicists who were talking about the fate of the universe. They talked about life, which we know is a very short time taken in the whole age of the universe. And they said that eventually all that will die off. That the suns will die and all the matter will be consumed by black holes ... [Eventually] there is absolute no-thing-ness. What I found interesting was, because there's no energy, time becomes irrelevant - time exists, but it

doesn't exist. Within the Zen practice we give time [a] past and future, so there is a sense of timelessness and no-thing-ness, the *ku* amongst what we're living now - the *shiki*. I wonder if you have more to say along those lines: the no-thing-ness everything would eventually move into when there is time and no time because of irrelevance.

**A:** Hard subject, eh? No, I said the only real thing is the present moment which itself is ungraspable. As regards the beginning and end of the world and black holes, etc. I'll give the same response as the Buddha, 'Let go of it, and all the explanations about it. The important thing for you is to understand the root of your own suffering.'

The Buddha came back to this time and time again. The image is in the story of the arrow someone received in their body. [They asked,] 'What kind of wood is it? What sort of feathers?' It isn't necessary to know what kind of wood and feathers. You must take it out!

So this is what's most important: what is the cause of suffering,? False beliefs of human beings, the idea that they are the body, that they have a 'self', that they're separate from the universe. These are the false beliefs. They (human beings) must understand what they are, and let these false ideas go. This is our work.

I cannot answer why there is this world. It's impossible to reply. But always, I am here, you are there. Because there is suffering, we suffer. There is life, what is this life? What is the source of this existence? And what the Buddha promised is that if we reply to these questions, if we understand what

illusion is, if we understand what is real - we realise what is awakening, we realise what is our true nature. And this realisation is peace and happiness.

Things don't change, they continue as they are: good or bad - but I'm no longer touched by these things, I remain in tranquility. This is our practice. And from this tranquility then this vision of emptiness is an awakening to the truth of things. This is the first phrase of the *Hannya Shingyo*: the bodhisattva sees the emptiness of things and it's in this way that they become awakened and so they can help other beings in this way. So, OK, I have a total respect for astrophysics but to want to explain the source of things is impossible.

But we can live it within ourselves. We can see thoughts arising, we can hear sounds. The body is a bubble of perception. The body receives the vibrations of the entire universe. The problem is that humans, with their ideas, create a shell and they separate from the universe.

**Q6:** It's like you were saying earlier, it's not *doing* the contemplation, it's *being* the contemplation...

**A:** Contemplation is seeing that: the movement, things passing. Sometimes it causes us to speak too much, eh? - but things become complicated.

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**Q7:** I have a very practical question. So we practise how we're connected to other humans. I find that perhaps the more that I learn about my habits of, you know, grasping and maybe releasing them a little bit - I find myself getting *dis-connected* from other people, from friends who are very trapped in like wanting a new iPhone, or wanting a better job, wanting a better car. So the more that I practise, I find that I'm not getting *more* attached I'm getting maybe *less* attached to other people.

**A:** Attachment isn't interesting, isn't helpful. On the contrary, when we discover our own nature and when we see the way in which we manipulate ourselves with our own ideas, then compassion is born when we see that. When we see the extent to which we're a bit mediocre, we can have compassion for others. It's not attachment to others, or detachment. What should arise is compassion, love. Because I understand that I myself am a prisoner of my beliefs and fears, and it's the same for all beings. But I begin to see this and it's painful.

But others don't see even this. And that, too, is painful. This is why I must put an end to my own suffering by understanding why and from what I suffer. And to see this we must sit quietly and see the way the thoughts move. Because in the movement of thoughts lie the roots of suffering. There are all my addictions, habits, beliefs, fears. All of this lives in my discriminating mind. It's essential that I see this, and this is what we do in meditation.

If in meditation I repeat the same behaviour - 'I want to be a Buddha', or 'I want to grasp awakening' - then I'm not in meditation; I'm in the current of thoughts. I'm in the desire

for me to get something for myself. So, meditation is to leave this behind, and to see it for what it is. And the more I see the movements of thoughts, and what they carry with them - my fears, my beliefs, my anguish. my desire, my illusions, my dreams... the better I see this, the more I anchor myself in that which sees. The more I see impermanence, the more I *become* that which watches, the longer I can remain in contemplation.

And in the end I can be in contemplation all the time: among my friends, at the bar, at the pub, in the Metro, on the train, at work. Just step back a little from the game of things. At the start of practice, it's normal to have some difficulties with one's friends. We don't quite know what's going on. They continue to be attached to lots of things, and I'm a bit less attached. Fair enough. But it's necessary to detach oneself from the attraction of things - it's necessary. And sometimes it's painful.

The most beautiful attitude is the acceptance of things as they are.

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## **Saturday - Third kusen**

When we look with attention at what is a sensation in the body, then we deepen our understanding of what a sensation is. And because of that we sense it deeply. The more we deeply sense it, the more we are in the consciousness of that which observes. It's as if the sensation becomes consciousness. We can realise that sensation changes, transforms; and that the gaze that we place upon it remains still.

This is in a way to see emptiness in sensations. Nothing can be grasped - it's only the perception of sensations happening in the present moment. This is what you must see in your meditation. In this way, it is this sensation. It's like this, like that. Consciousness witnesses. It's not linked to time; it's always in the present.

Sensation in the body is a space perhaps of heat, perhaps of pain, perhaps of energy, perhaps also of pleasure, perhaps of a neutral sensation like the moving of the lungs. But we can see that if the discriminating mind places a judgement upon it, or an interpretation, then this sensation becomes transformed into an object which is lifeless.

The thought which grasps the sensation dehumanises it, makes it mechanical. We lose contact with the living when thought grasps the living. To see this process allows us to keep in contact with that which is living within us, with this consciousness which observes.

And so, the more we watch a sensation, the more our gaze can make it marvellous. In front of this life which appears in the form of sensation.

This naturally develops within us benevolence, love, compassion. It allows our true qualities to emerge: bodhisattva qualities which all of us already have.

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## **Sunday - First kusen**

Yesterday, I brought to mind the recommendations of Master Dogen regarding the practice of zazen. You must learn to turn the gaze towards that which within you looks. I spoke of consciousness. To realise this advice of Dogen doesn't come from a mental understanding; it doesn't happen through words. To see the source of one's own nature, of one's own gaze, of our own consciousness it's necessary to allow oneself to be absorbed by it; to abandon words, concepts, hopes.

The greatest obstacle in the way of finding the place of peace and liberty within us is to always want to mentally interpret according to our conceptions, our beliefs, our fears. In meditation it's necessary to wipe out within ourselves the sense of a separate self. A self within us that's always looking for happiness, or an awakening. In meditation it's necessary for us to wipe out within us the idea that we lack something and simply be open to that which comes to us: sensations, perceptions, thoughts - without closing the hand on anything at all.

Simply contemplate the passage of impermanence in this mind which perceives things, which sees things.

When we sit on the zafu we've already arrived. It's like being at the summit of a mountain and discovering that there is no other mountain. There is no other awakening than that which is realised right now, in the present, in consciousness of that which observes, which hears, which



senses. To contemplate is to observe the miracle of the ceaseless arising and disappearing of things. Allow oneself to marvel in this continuous movement which contemplates our immobile consciousness.

Sometimes we wish to be pure and empty of thoughts, but have you ever seen a cloud escaping the sky? Or a wave escaping the ocean? We allow thoughts to be as they are. They cannot define this immobile presence, this continuous awakening which arises in the moment.

Allow oneself to be absorbed by presence. This moment, I know I am.

## **Sunday - Second kusen**

We have been conditioned to think and to think as well that our opinions, our judgements, our criticisms are legitimate. But this is nothing more than wind.

We've been conditioned to create an image of ourselves, of a 'me', which is nothing but a character. We think that we play this role and we forget what we truly are. 0950 The inner chatter cuts us off from reality. It stops us seeing, feeling. During zazen we can observe this condition's mechanism. The more we see it, the more we can enter into the sensation itself: hearing, catching impressions - without doing anything, without closing anything off.

We become poor if we allow the discriminating mind to do what it wants. Grasping, greed, possession - these are the

causes of this impoverishment. And this deprives us of our humanity. So Master Dogen advises, allow calm within you and see what happens in you at that very moment. This is what meditation is: to see and to return to the source of thus seeing - accepting not to touch anything of that which arises and disappears in the mind. So it's important to understand that meditation is to allow the space of our minds to open. Whatever comes to it.

To reconnect with that which is living within us, that which is revealed in great simplicity, in the truth of the present moment.

Master Dogen also said, "Entirely absorbed by the present moment, the thought that there were other 'present moments' in the past, no longer comes." So we cut with the memories, with regrets, with frustration. "It's in this way," he continues, "that each moment is always the first." In other words, to dwell in presence.

To dwell in the gaze which sees the arising and disappearing of things. It also means to dwell in the heart of impermanence itself, without moving; without identifying oneself with things; and forgetting all one's stories, all the construction of the 'me'.

And in that moment, everything - the sky, the ground, ourselves - is a single instant.

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## **Appendix - Initial guidance on kinhin**

Our own heart vibrates in each moment which is also consciousness... consciousness which sees the movement of things without ever identifying itself with these things. So in kinhin as one walks, be truly aware of the way in which you walk: sense it, feel it. Feel what happens in the feet as you move forward.

The weight of the body first of all is placed on the heel and then the weight of the body is placed steadily along the length of the foot as it rolls down onto the floor. Feel how the foot arranges itself to receive the weight of the body. The forward leg straightens, the rear leg relaxing. When the weight of the body arrives at the front of the forward foot, then the rear foot is ready for the next step.

It's as the foot rolls down onto the floor from the heel to the front of the foot, that we breathe out. We breathe in as the rear foot passes forward. So we harmonise the walking and the breath in a movement and an awareness which is delicate, attentive, perceiving the sensations in the feet, in the legs, in the whole of the body.

The thumb of the left hand is in the left fist and this is placed on the solar plexus and the right hand covers the left hand. During exhalation, the left fist pushes against the right hand.

Thus, the whole body breathes and you are aware of it.