

Questions for Reflection/Journaling

Series 5, Talk 6: *Concentration: The Dharma Gate of Repose and Bliss*

Here are some ideas for practice and reflection during the week:

- 1) First: Have you ever had an experience like Sawaki Roshi describes from his growing up in a red-light district, not in the details, but in its life-changing impact? How were *you* changed by it?
- 2) Second: What desires are *you* attached to? Can you work on turning your "grasping" into "non-grasping?" Desires themselves are normal for humans, but grasping them is what creates suffering and keeps us in samsara.
- 3) Third: Is there a theme in your discursive thoughts when you sit zazen?
- 4) Fourth: Dedicate one of your periods of zazen to intentionally focusing on Akiko's words: *Clouds come and go with no mind. With me thoughts flow accordingly. At some point they disappear without my being aware.* Notice what happens to your state of mind. How is this different from your usual zazen state of mind?
- 5) Fifth: In practicing zazen it is good to check regularly to see whether we are practicing it together with its whole cohort of practices, e.g., the first four Paramitas--generosity, ethical behavior, patience and joyful effort. Dedicate another period of zazen to check consciously how you are practicing these transcendent perfections. Thereafter, you might try to do this intentionally once a week.