

Everyday mind: this is the Way
Heijyōshin kore dō

by Ueda Sōkei

The annual Autumn Workshop of the Shōin-kai Group (Direct Disciples of Wafūdō) was held on the 14th of October last year. The guest lecturer was Harada Shōdō Rōshi of Sōgen-ji in Bizen. One of the topics covered was the zen phrase ‘Everyday mind: this is the Way’ (*Heijyōshin kore dō*).

Harada Rōshi told of a dialogue between Nansen Oshō (748-834) and Jōshū (778–897). In T'ang Dynasty China (618-907) Nansen Oshō was asked by then monk in training Jōshū: ‘What is the Way?’ to which Nansen replied: ‘Everyday mind: this is the Way.’ Jōshū asked: ‘How do I direct my mind towards this Way?’ Nansen answered: ‘As soon as you try and pursue this Way with words, you at once go against it.’ Jōshū asked again: ‘But if I don’t pursue the Way, how can I ever know the true Way?’ Nansen answered: ‘The Way does not belong to knowing or not-knowing. Knowing is delusion; and not-knowing is blank consciousness. When you have really reached the true Way beyond all doubt, you will find it as vast and boundless as the great empty firmament. How can one ever know how to express this in words?’ With these words, Jōshū was enlightened and became Nansen Oshō’s disciple. Harada Rōshi added: “People often say things like ‘Keep an everyday mind.’ and ‘Act according to nature.’ yet it’s only through dedicated training that one attains a view of their ‘everyday mind’ and really acts according to nature.”

Every year in March a tea gathering is held for the regular players of the Hiroshima Carp baseball team by middle school and high school students of Hiroshima Prefecture learning the Ueda Way of Tea. The tea gathering aims to facilitate exchange between the two. It is held at Shukkei-en Gardens, the gardens built by Ueda Sōko and designated National Place of Scenic Beauty. This year’s gathering was held on the 8th of March and was again a great success. I like to contribute in whatever small way I can, and I give a short talk on the Way of Tea to the players. After the tea gathering the students have a chance to ask the players questions. A few years ago Kuroda Hiroki was one of the league’s elite, and now he’s one of New York Yankees’ elite players. I think it was a student from Yasuda Girl’s High School that asked Kuroda: ‘Do you ever get nervous?’ Kuroda answered: ‘I always get nervous during a game. The only thing you can do is quell your nerves through daily practice.’ This sincere answer from Kuroda made a deep impression on me.

At a tea gathering, it’s natural for both host and guest to be nervous. Actually, having tension in the air makes for a better occasion. For both host and guest to fully savour the pure and tranquil mind that emerges during a tea gathering, repeated practice is a must. I urge you to use dedicated practice as a way of drawing closer to the mind that lies beyond nerves and tension: the everyday mind (*heijyōshin*).