Yaza 2010: Dark and Hot

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi
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It is dark. It is hot.

Long hours stretch before you. And even with the coming of the dawn, it still won't be over.

Welcome to our annual Yaza, sitting through the night.

It is dark. And so while it is hot, it is not as hot as it would be through the day. Throughout the decades, the centuries, the millennia, Zen practitioners have often sat through the night. For several decades now, rather than practise a two- or a seven-day sesshin during the hottest month of the year, we decided that we would use this as an opportunity to instead join our Lineage Ancestors in the practice of Yaza.

If long hours stretch before you even past the dawn… where are they?

We can speak of hours and minutes, weeks, months, years, seconds. But in our experience, there is always only this moment whether it is dark or light, night or day. Whether we are sitting, standing, walking or lying down, it is always just this moment. Whatever is experienced arises within the open space of Experiencing: hot, cold, sweat, shivering, waking, sleeping and dreaming.

While "hours", "minutes", "weeks", "months", "years", "seconds" are just ways of talking about the presencing of Experience, there are cycles of body-mind just as there are cycles in the sky, cycles in the ground and under the ground, cycles of seeds and flowers and withering. How the body-mind is throughout the day is different from how it is throughout the night. Certainly, the waking state is different from the sleeping state. During the night, various circadian rhythms are taking place. And so Yaza gives us an opportunity to experience how we experience in a context, a situation, an environment, and at a time when we are usually asleep.

And so, Yaza is very different in energy and in flavour from zazen that you have done during the morning, the afternoon, the evening. It is an opportunity to just sit moment by moment experiencing how we experience.

If we are hot, there are still colours, forms, sounds, sensations. If we are cold, there are still colours, forms, sounds, sensations. If our attention narrows and flattens, there is still open seeing, open hearing and open feeling possible all around that narrowing and flattening. If attention funnels further into the generation of discursiveness and imagery, all around it, everything is open all day and all night. Yaza, like each moment of our lives, presents an opportunity to open to that Openness. If attention narrows and flattens and folds into torpor, lethargy, dullness, all around it is open.

And so, I hope that you use each moment, each opportunity, that this Yaza presents to you to open to Openness.

So please, tonight and all through the night and through the morning, enjoy yourselves.