

## Zoom Zazen - 20 March 2021

It can happen to us during zazen that we are not attentive - neither to what we feel inside us, sensations or breathing; nor to what happens around us, the changes in the light, the sounds, the smells. In a way, we are absent, absent from ourselves, absent from reality. There is nothing to feel guilty about. This absence is produced within Presence itself.

What does this absence mean? Let's study what's really happening:

Absence means that the Mind is immersed in a virtual world of mental creations or even obsessions, absorbed in images or stories. It's as though the Mind identifies with a film of which it is itself both the producer and the director. Absence means that we're no longer aware of what is alive in us. In the Mind, an imaginary world is created in which, generally, each of us plays the leading role, whether that of the hero or that of the victim. The character we think we are and call "me" experiences pleasure, suffers, loves or hates, goes off or goes round in circles. Sometimes the body interacts with the imaginary fictions, perspires, tenses, responds emotionally to the adventures of the 'me' and expresses itself in various sensations. Just as in the cinema, it's possible to experience fear or joy or sadness, to have bodily reactions when looking at images that are not real.

Absence means that the awareness, which is the gaze of the Mind, the Treasury of the Eye, has turned away from the real, from Presence, to fix itself on illusion and attach itself to it by a movement of grasping.

For most beings, this apparent absence causes a feeling of separation and even guilt. This is the result of ignorance and it is also the origin of suffering. It's as though we're lost in the

play of illusions, far from home, from conscious Presence, far from pure awareness of self, as if an infinite distance separated us from our homeland.

In zazen, the illusions we love so much are only the appearance of Reality, not Reality itself. Illusion makes us believe that the automaton is alive or that the magician has really cut his assistant in half. We love to play and believe that our illusions are true or will come true, become real. We love to believe that we will find happiness and love, that we will become rich or have power over others and that is why we become attached to our illusions. Through the love of illusions, because we don't see that they are misperceptions of reality, false beliefs, we agree to endure suffering. In seeking the truth of ourselves, we identify with the illusions which take us away from it.

"Illusions", says the Buddha, "are magical hallucinations, phantasms" - reflections that appear in a mirror which do not share the reality of what they reflect. "Having a mistaken perception of the Mind, beings turn their backs on the highest truth and cannot fulfil it."

The highest truth is to recognise the buddha-nature -. vast, without limits, without characteristics. At the heart of phenomena the mind tries to know itself. The Mind studies itself. The Mind plays hide & seek with itself. Mind, buddha-nature, is like space, boundless, featureless. It seeks to see and to know itself. It ends up losing itself in appearances, to the point that it identifies itself totally with them, without even realising it.

This is one of the aspects of the mind: to create an image within itself which it ends up believing in, as if the actor were playing himself! Our practise is to see this incessant play in our own mind and to understand it in order to free ourselves from it.

This is the teaching of zazen transmitted by the Buddhas and Ancestors: to awaken is to see the unreal nature of illusion and consciously, without effort, to cease to be attached to it.

Master Keizan explains in the *Zazen Yojinki*:

*"When illusory attachments cease, illusion disappears. When illusion disappears, the unchanging truth is revealed and you can become clearly aware of it. It is not absolute stillness nor is it incessant activity."*

So there's no secret to discover. We are no longer waiting for a miracle to happen. We simply observe ourselves in our own light.

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