
During times of confinement

By Patrick Parnien

I hope that you are in the best of health and that you are living this period with a sufficiently distant gaze, to keep a mind as lucid and clear as possible, in order to go through it relatively serenely.

Practice is of great help in this respect, because it allows us to be attuned to the present moment and to inner silence, a true response to the different demands we may be confronted with during this period.

To echo the Dharma workshop on the "Anapanasati sutta", "Attention to breathing", the period we are going through at the moment leads us to particularly practice this attention. As much in the different moments of existence as in the moments of the practice of sitting meditation.

When the attention is focused on the movement, the rhythm of the breathing, the consciousness of the inspiration at the very moment of the inspiration, the consciousness of the expiration at the very moment of the expiration, we can let ourselves be absorbed in this true wave which is the breath.

When we are attentive to the breathing and allow ourselves to be absorbed by it, the consciousness of each sensation and each perception rises, without remaining fixed on one in particular.

When we are attentive to the breathing and allow ourselves to be absorbed by it, the consciousness of the different thoughts that appear and disappear and of the different mental elaborations rises.

When we have established ourselves in this attention, without trying to be for or against, without trying to exclude or maintain these different inner phenomena, contemplation rises, the observation of the transitory, impermanent characteristics of these phenomena.

That is to say, at the heart of this absorption in the breathing, at the heart of this full presence, is the penetrating vision that sees each phenomenon for what it is: a phenomenon empty of substance, and which sees each phenomenon in its ephemeral reality.

This absorption, this attention in the rhythm, the movement of the breathing, allows us to tune into the living experience of each moment, which is an essential "condition" for the dissolution of obsessions, mental ruminations, different attachments, different conditioning.

This allows us to experience the "mind without traces", that is to say, the mind that is not frozen in the imprint of experiences and is not coloured by the projections of our dreams of the future.

At the heart of absorption in the breathing, we find ourselves or (more exactly we become) more and more attuned to this original condition of the mind of being vast, with that deep capacity to include what is there, without being altered by it. And this is an essential quality to be cultivated in the period we are living now, with all the information, the disinformation, the different and sometimes extreme opinions of one and all, so as not to lose our axis.

Hyakujo had a beautiful phrase: "*Spiritual light shines by itself, completely free of objects and senses, manifesting itself in its real and eternal essence*". We can feel it, and this spiritual light can reveal itself within us in the heart of absorption in the breathing.

Many of us do not always realize how much the intimate accord with the breathing can profoundly transform our existence. How much the intimate accord with the breathing reveals us to ourselves, reveals us to this dimension of love that dwells within us. And only the intelligence of the heart can liberate us, can free humanity from the dead end in which we find ourselves.

As individuals, walking the Way of Interiority is our sacred participation, so that the spiritual light may awaken in the heart of each one of us...