

Our Everyday Life Is Like a Movie

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Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

I THINK most of you are rather curious about what Zen is. Zen is actually our way of life, and zazen practice is, maybe, like setting the alarm on your clock. Unless you set your alarm, the clock will not serve the purpose. So everyday we must have some starting point. Where to start is the most important thing. The sun rises at a certain time and sets at a certain time and always repeats the same thing. And we do too.

But we do not necessarily feel in that way. Our life may not be so organized, and we may not even know how important it is to know where to start our life. As Zen students, we start our life from zazen practice, we come back to zero and start from zero. We have various activities. How our activity arises from zero is the most important thing to know, to feel, or to realize.

Usually, I think, most people practice zazen to attain something, to achieve something. What is more important is to know where to start our everyday activity and to know how to practice zazen. At the moment you decided to sit, it means that you have already decided to set your alarm. And when you have that kind of confidence or have made that kind of decision and actually start zazen, that is zero.

During zazen, sometimes you will hear a bird singing. It is something that arises in your practice. In the same way, in our everyday life many things will arise. But if you know from where these things arise, you will not be disturbed by them. Because you don't know how they arise, you can lose confidence in your life. If you know how things happen to you, the moment something happens, you will be ready: "Oh, something is arising." Like watching the sunrise. "Oh, the sun is just coming up."

For instance, sometimes you will be angry, but anger usually doesn't come all of a sudden. It comes very slowly, actually. When you feel it come all of a sudden, that is real anger. But when you know how it comes, "Anger is arising in my mind," that is not anger. People may say he is angry, but actually, he is not angry. If you know that you have almost started to cry, "Oh, I am crying." Next two minutes, three minutes, "Oh, I started crying." That is not crying.

If you know what zazen is and what our practice is, you will be able to accept things as you accept the various images that arise when you sit in zazen. So in zazen the most important thing is to have Big Mind and to accept things as your practice and not even try to think about how things happen in your mind.

When you sit every morning, you know what time it is. To know what time it is is the most important thing for us in our everyday life. To know what you are doing is the most important thing. To know what kind of effort you are making and what kind of situation you are in now is the most important thing.



Our everyday life is like a movie which is taking place on a white screen. Most people may be interested in the picture on the screen without realizing there is a screen. Because there is a screen in the movie theater, someone will come and show some more pictures. So the most important thing is to have a screen in your mind and that screen should be white or clear. If the screen is colorful, colorful enough to attract people, it will not serve the purpose. The most important thing is to have a plain, pure white screen. But most people are not interested in the pure white screen. It is, I think, a good thing to be excited by seeing a movie. It is good. But to some extent the reason you can enjoy the movie is because you know that the movie is not actual. What you see is not actually going on.

So even though you have no idea of a screen when you are watching the movie, your interest is based on some understanding of the screen or the machine, and you know the movie is something artificial.

So you can enjoy it. You can enjoy something which you should enjoy; not more than that. That is how we enjoy our life. If you have no idea of the screen or machine, perhaps you cannot see the movie as a movie.

Zazen practice is necessary in order to know what kind of screen you have and to enjoy your life as you enjoy the movie in a theater. How you can do it is because you have your screen, and you're not afraid of the screen and you do not have any particular feeling for the screen. It is just a white screen, that's all. So you are not afraid of your life at all, but you can enjoy something which frightens you. You enjoy something that makes you angry or which makes you cry and you can enjoy the crying and the anger, too. But if you have no idea of the screen, you will even be afraid of enlightenment. "What is it? . . . Oh, my . . ."

If someone attains enlightenment, you may ask him what kind of enlightenment experience he had. He may say, enlightenment is a such and such kind of experience. "Oh no, that is not for me," you may say. But that is just a movie, something which you should enjoy. If you want to enjoy the movie you should know that it is the combination of film and light and white screen, and that the most important thing is to have a plain, white screen.

That is not actually something which you attain, but something which you have always. But why you feel you don't have it is that your mind is too busy; too busy to see, to realize it. So once in a while you should stop all of your activity and make sure that you have a white screen. That is zazen. It is not something to attain, but something you must find through practice.

That is the foundation of our daily life and the foundation of our meditation practice. Without this kind of foundation, your practice will not work. All of the instruction you will receive in our practice is about how to have a clean white screen as much as you can. It is not always pure white because of the various attachments we have and because of some stains made on it previously. We say that when we practice zazen we are like a baby on her mother's bosom. That is our zazen. We have no idea of anything. You are quite relaxed. But it is difficult to have complete relaxation in your usual posture. This kind of instruction is necessary, and is the result of many, many people's effort in the past. They found that this is much better than any other posture; better than standing up or lying down. So if you follow our instruction with this kind of understanding, your zazen practice will work. Whatever practice it may be, it will work. But if you do not trust your own mind, which is like pure, white paper, your practice will not work.

Thank you very much.