

PERSPECTIVE: A NIGHTTIME KALEIDOSCOPE
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Arriving home from a two-week business trip, I found myself jet-lagged and exhausted. My husband was due home the next day, and thus I had the opportunity to “reenter” my environment in any way I chose.

I decided to sleep out in the backyard for two reasons — first I could cuddle with my dog, who is not allowed on the bed, and second I could share the moon and the stars with the people I had just left halfway around the world in South Africa.

I slept soundly for several hours, after which my eyes popped open and I was unable to sleep. I spent the rest of the night watching the vast kaleidoscope of moon, stars and clouds parading across a deep blue sky. I waxed and waned in and out of sleeping and waking consciousness and began to see the night sky as a metaphor for life.

I equated the clouds to my beliefs and perceptions. None of them is the “truth” but simply wisps of vapor representing my scattered and often ego-dominated thinking. I compared the more compact and longer lasting clouds to my biased and deeply entrenched views of life.

And behind both of these ever-changing perceptions was a deeper reality — the continuous blue night sky similar to the unchanging reality of our Buddha nature. I thought about the shifting clouds and likened them to the process of our lives shifting within the Ten Worlds that form the reality of our lives. All the while, our Buddha nature is ever present in each of these worlds.

If I squinted, I could see elephants and raccoons, devils and angels, butterflies, stately princes and warriors, to name a few. I again realized that just as with the “truth,” no one else would see the same things I was seeing in these clouds. That brought to mind how frequently we can experience the same situation with other people and have a totally different perspective than others of the reality we have just shared.

At one point, I was convinced a star was moving rapidly across the sky. Logic told me otherwise, but I was disoriented, and for at least 15 minutes I was convinced that the star was zooming from East to West. When I used the apricot tree and nearby porch roof as reference points, I could clearly see how deceived I was — it was windy, and the fast migrating clouds were creating an illusion. When I saw that I was wrong, I had to ask myself how many of my thoughts and beliefs were also an illusion. How many times do I put my reality out there as the “truth,” when in fact I am mistaken.

Just as these puffs of mist can eclipse the moon and the night sky, my vision can also be clouded by my perceptions. Of course it is always easier to see other people’s mistaken views, but perhaps I must be more suspect of my “truth.” I was also struck with the importance of looking behind our ever-changing perceptions and tapping into the unchanging reality that is our Buddha nature.

From there we can see the Truth from a much deeper perspective.

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