

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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Years ago I fell down the rabbit-hole of close-up camera lenses. In a time of deep personal change I found myself out in the fields at dawn (like each day for six months!) peering through fine lenses at miniature worlds and tiny critters. The daily crush of my life was just too horribly close and I sought relief in the pristine worlds that were still closer yet. Perhaps I was escaping from the turmoil I was experiencing at the time, peering through glass into the still-perfect realms of miniature dioramas and tiny landscapes. You know, I never came back.

It was then that two parts of me merged, the visual artist (photographer) in me and the meditator, and I have not been able to communicate since to either group just what I am doing. As I have tried to explain to my fellow photographers, it was never the resulting photos I took that were important, but rather the process of taking them, that 'time' each day I spent doing it. I bonded with my eye and the lens and most of all with just the "seeing." It was the "seeing" that did it.

And explaining to my dharma friends that part of my dharma practice had become taking macro photographs in nature didn't fly either. I was supposed to be sitting on the cushion where they knew I had sat for over thirty-four years. I should just stay there please. What happened?

And here I was, crawling through wet fields (soaking wet) at dawn with my eye glued to a camera lens and declaring that this was meditation. Of course, at first even I had no idea what was happening to me, and those who knew me did not understand. Talk about feeling shunned, I was really on my own. I had no choice. Yet I never had a single doubt that this was what I wanted to do.

As my Facebook friends know, I try to put my experience into words, while at the same time knowing that this is a logical impossibility. "A picture is worth 1,000 words." I believe that, which is why I work hard to capture in photographs what my mind sees. At least with me, my eye speaks louder than words. Many of my photos convey what I wish I could put into words about this life we all share.

It is interesting that my main dharma practice is what is called Mahamudra meditation. The word Mahamudra means great seal, great symbol or sign. To my eye the physical world itself is its own sign or meaning. It signifies and points to itself, and needs no other explanation. It is recursive. This is what we call beauty, infinite recursion. Since I was a tiny kid, I have always been able to see the beauty in the natural world. I am sure we all do.

I will be spending the next few days with my dharma teacher of the last thirty years, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche. He is 89 years old and does not speak English. I will be privileged, along with

my family, to cook some meals for Rinpoche, take him to the airport, generally help out, and hear one of the most profound dharma teachings I have ever experienced for a second time. I will also see many of my dharma friends at the wonderful KTC Dharma Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I have given the details of the teaching in previous blogs.