

DHARMA -- RECIPE FOR REALIZATION

The results of any realization (as described in the dharma teachings) are not necessarily themselves a recipe (or roadmap) for attaining that realization. This is complicated, so let me try to explain. What this means IMO is that any advance in realization on our part brings about certain signs and changes within us. Many dharma teachings describe in great detail a litany of signs to look for that we have achieved whatever degree of realization is in consideration. Buddhists love lists.

My point here is that we can't reverse-engineer a realization based on the results of that realization. In other words, it is easy to fall into the habit of assuming from what dharma we read or hear that the classic or traditional signs of progress (or realization) are themselves a guide to that realization. I can't say that it never works, but in what little experience I have had with such things, the telltale signs of realization as described in the pith teachings are not a grocery list or even a rough guide to having the realization for ourselves.

Another way of saying this is that we can't put the toothpaste back in the tube or, more exact: from a nondual result like a realization, we can't revert to a relative (dualistic) view of that realization with any sincerity. Another way (perhaps) to describe this is that the fruit of the tree of dharma-realization does not produce a seed that can be planted. Why? Because that is a definition of result.

Using a classical analogy, the rope that at first appears to us as a snake cannot be re-believed to be

a snake once we realize that it is just a piece of rope. The two (duality) can be seen as one, at which point the one cannot be re-seen as two. The process of dharma realization is a one-way street. That's the idea.

Here I am discussing the problem of mistaking the results of dharma realization as a map or path to achieving that realization. Perhaps an example will help.

It is common in dharma teachings to describe how realization changes us. After a realization, we become less fixated or attached, and so on and etcetera. And in response to this, there are endless teachings that go on to say (or assume) that because these are the result of realization, we MUST therefore remove our attachments in order for realization to occur.

This is, IMO, at best a half-truth. The danger is that we fall into the belief that we must forcibly remove our fixations, etc. and this laundry list of "have-to-do" items become a series of austerities on our part that we believe are required for any dharma progress. In other words, dharma practice becomes an ordeal by effort which it was never intended to be. And this comes about by mistaking the signs of the result of a realization for a recipe to achieve that result. That dog will never hunt.

And this is why almost every textbook of dharma makes such a huge point or deal of Bodhicitta and the necessity of attaining it. More correct perhaps, at least in my own experience, is that sustained Bodhicitta or enthusiasm for the dharma safeguards many tendencies for attachment and fixation and they

naturally subside. There is a difference and it is an important one.

Mistaking the result and byproducts of realization as a recipe to achieve that realization is what I am pointing out here. Just because with realization we naturally lose interest in attachment and fixation, it is easy to just say or assume that to gain realization we simply have to remove all this fixation we have. It's true that fixation on appearances is the problem, but it's not true like in Shakespeare's Macbeth's "Out, damned spot, I say," that simply scrubbing will remove those deep-down stains. IMO, that approach is too often just another fixation, another thing we "have" to do.

This is why, IMO, the enthusiasm of an enlightened heart, what is called Bodhicitta is more important than anything else I can think of as a natural guide to dharma practice. Yet, if we say that Bodhicitta is something we HAVE-TO-DO, even that won't work if we make a point of it. Sheer effort is not a recipe for realization as far as I know.

We could say that this is just a Catch-22 (and that may be true), but what does that tell us? It's just a sign that we are still in the vestibule, which is not news. We have been waiting to become realized for innumerable lifetimes if I am to believe the teachings.

This is perhaps an odd analogy, but it comes to mind. I am reminded of my watching the huge salmon in Oregon (years ago) drive upstream to spawn. They finally reach a deep pool where they can go no farther and there they sit, almost motionless, layer on layer of then deep down in the pool. And they then spawn and die.

As in the New Testament according to John, it says “Verily, verily I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” In a similar way, unless we die to the effort of duality, there will be no realization.

So where is the trigger? The trigger, IMO, is to receive the blessings (the grace) of an authentic guru and the guidance they can provide us.

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish”

For those of you who would like to have access to other free books, articles, and videos on these topics, here are my links:

http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf