

DHARMA -- THE RING-PASS-NOT

Not to put too fine a point on yesterday's blog, but rather to underline it, here is a quote concerning Shamata (tranquility meditation) and Vipassana (insight meditation). In the words of Tibet's greatest yogi, Jetsun Milarepa, as quoted in a teaching called "Lamp of Mahamudra" by Tsele Natsok Rangdröl (as translated by Erik Pema Kunsang):

"Therefore, when you become adept in the flawless Shamata,
You stabilize the foundation for meditation training.

"The original wakefulness of Vipassana belonging to the main part,
Depends exclusively on having or not having,
Received the blessings and pointing-out instruction.

"Apart from that,
Even the thoughts of worldly folk,
Are indeed Vipassana manifest as conceptual thinking.

"Even that which sustains the meditation state of Shamata,
Is nothing other than Vipassana.

"That which sees, notices, or feels
Whether there is stillness or movement,
Distraction or no distraction,
Is also the knowing wakefulness of Vipassana.

"There is no other Vipassana superior to this,
Which needs to be separately accomplished.

“Therefore, from the very outset,
The supreme Shamata and Vipassana,
Co-exist and are spontaneously present.”

Well, that about says it all, IMO. Vipassana (Insight Meditation) is not something we have to acquire, somehow develop, and get from somewhere. We already have it innately with us. Not only is it present, it is working non-stop, 24x7 to power what we call awareness and thought.

It becomes a question of recognizing Insight Meditation as it exists “in the wild,” so to speak. Obviously, this is not a simple task because in all the time (and rebirths) we have had until now, we have never managed it.

And Milarepa tells exactly what must be done to recognize our innate prajna or Insight and that is:

“It depends exclusively on having or not having,
Received the blessings and pointing-out instruction.”

And when Milarepa says “Blessings,” he means the blessings of an authentic guru, someone who has themselves recognized the true nature of the mind. And, of course, the “pointing-out instructions” refers to that authentic guru successfully pointing out to us (so that we get it!) the true nature of the mind.

Of course, reading this is easy and it’s also easy for these words to, as they say, go in one ear and out the other. However, there is nothing else that needs be said or can be said. If we are listening with our heart and take what has been said to heart, then it is up to us to do something about it.

If we mumble something in our head such as that in this modern, busy world it no longer works like that or that it seems impossible for us to find an authentic guru, then that is the end of the story. But we have read the story, nevertheless. What happens next is up to us.

In my own case, I came within a hair's breadth of not meeting my own dharma teacher. Had it not been for a striking dream, it never would have happened. This story has been told before, but I will tell it again here for those who might benefit from it.

It was 1983 and I was busy running my company Matrix Software, having moved from Ann Arbor to Big Rapids in 1980 with my family. A close friend of mine, James Coats (who lived in Ann Arbor) called me up one day and said that he had met a dharma teacher he thought I might like to meet. The teacher was a Tibetan lama named Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche.

James was always looking to check out spiritual teachers who visited the Ann Arbor area. Years before, I guess I also did that too. However, at the moment, I was a businessman, running a business and raising a family.

I thanked James, but told him I had no time to drive down to Ann Arbor to see another "guru." I had been there, done that, and kind of had burnt that bridge, so to speak. And we said goodbye.

It was a couple days later that I had this vivid dream, just before dawn. In the dream I was driving to Ann Arbor to see this radiant oriental gentleman and was

happy beyond words. And with that I woke up and sat bolt upright in bed. And Margaret, my wife, had a similar dream.

I didn't know what to make of it and I told myself that I was businessman and tried to shake off the dream. But something swept through my heart leaving me with sadness that I could not or was no longer open to an event of a dream such as this. And with that, I decided that I was not going to work that day. I felt sick to my heart. I would drive to Ann Arbor to see this teacher.

So, by that time it was about 7 AM in the morning and I called my friend James Coats, getting him out of bed because he was always a late sleeper. I told him I was coming to Ann Arbor. "Ah," said James, "it is too late. Rinpoche is leaving that morning at 10 AM." By that time, I was awash with feelings and said to him. I don't care. I'm not working today. I'm coming to Ann Arbor anyway. If the rinpoche is there, he is there. If not, then not.

It is a 3 hour trip and, as mentioned, it was already 7 AM. So, we jumped out of bed, grabbed our kids, and got in the car (toothbrushes in hand) and headed for Ann Arbor. It was going to be close. In fact, our friend James was down at the end of a long driveway waiting to flag us in. When we arrived, he told us the Rinpoche was still there.

As we drove up the driveway, there was this dark-haired Tibetan man standing outside waiting for us. He was young, handsome, but he was not the man in my dream. My heart fell. Then James said: that's Rinpoche's translator, Ngodup Burkhar. I breathed a

sigh of relief and we went inside.

Well, the long and the short of it was that when Rinpoche came into the room, he was exactly the man in my dream. And the rest is history. It was a short meeting, but one filled with light. In fact, for the next several days, Margaret and I went around in a swoon-dream, very, very happy and being so kind to everyone we met.

Well, that didn't last. LOL. However, it was the beginning of a close relationship with Rinpoche that is still going on. He is 95 years old today and we are still working together; Rinpoche has changed our lives forever.

So, mind the signs around you and if you find a gap in your life that you can leap through, leap! Take a chance, reach out, and make an effort to contact dharma teachers. You might just get lucky as we did.

“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”

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