

GIVE IT A REST!

Everything has the seal or stamp of the mind upon it. That's the idea of Mahamudra (The Great Seal). The sound of silence can still be heard above the loudest noise. And as Shakespeare said, "Much Ado about Nothing." The even-handedness of emptiness, from the tiniest microbe to the largest whale, is astonishing. Nothing in existence exists all THAT much. Reality can get mighty thin at times, almost as if there is no one there. LOL. It's like our entire life is a hologram or as the Tibetans say, a magical illusion.

My dharma teacher Of 36 years, Khenpo Rinpoche, says that we might try resting the mind in Mahamudra meditation for the time it takes to pick up a teacup and take a sip. And then do this frequently, again and again as the opportunity arises. Continuity can result -- contiguousness. There are endless micro-opportunities each day to rest in the nature of the mind. He says to take them. IMO, by that, Rinpoche is telling us that even the longest journey has a single first step. Unless we take that first step, there cannot be another.

For each one of us, there must be a time that is short enough that we are able to rest for that moment in the nature of our own mind, like taking that first sip of tea. And then another and another, until with a succession of these moments we can rest for longer stretches of time. However, just sitting on the cushion and "trying" to rest is an oxymoron. Trying doesn't do it, resting does it.

Perhaps the immense initial effort we have to make to learn to meditate, like the scaffolding on a unfinished building, has to be removed before the building is complete. It's no different with meditation. We must unlearn the effort and the trying before we can rest the mind. That is just common physics. Yet, it can only be done successfully at the propitious time.

This even marks the difference between the purification practices and the realization practices. It IS the difference or threshold from one to the other. One of the most important realizations I have ever had was the day I realized that when Rinpoche said "Let the mind rest," by "rest" he did not mean some special kind of dharmic rest, but just the plain old rest that I already knew how to do. Let go and allow your mind to relax and come to rest -- settle. You know the saying: "Give it a rest."

There is a way they communicate this in Tibet that is very convincing. As you drive through the almost non-existent roads in the high plateaus of Tibet, there are countless small plots of ground used to raise barley. Every family seems to have one or two. And when they harvest the ripe grain, they bind the remaining straw into little bundles, each tied in the middle by a light cord, These bundles are then set upright here and there across the fields.

And the concept of "rest" is taught by taking one of the bundles of barley-straw, leaning it against a wall or fence, and very gently cutting the cord that binds it. As the cord is severed, the straw does not just fly all about. Instead, as the cord is cut, the bundle of straw just ever-so-gently slumps, like a sigh. That's how we should allow ourselves to come to rest. Ever so gently.

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"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."