

DHARMA -- INNATE INSIGHT

One of the elephants in the room for dharma practitioners is “reification,” our compulsive habit of gilding the lily, piling on or shoring up reality. My first dharma teacher used to say to me (and many times):

“My God is no beggar! He does need me to make the ends meet. The ends already meet.”

In essence, that describes reification, trying to make things more real than then they are. And this perhaps arises from our inability to look the emptiness that we feel in the face for what it is.

However, there is a larger elephant in the room that may be even more present and yet is almost totally invisible. And that is the myth that “Recognition” and Enlightenment is something that we somehow have to create or develop. In other words, we have to “get” enlightened.

This may be totally understandable conceptually, but that does not mean this misperception is easy to unravel. It finds us putting effort in our step which only further confuses our general bewilderment. Everything we artificially conflate has to be deconstructed at some later point in our dharma path. In particular, our efforts to become enlightened, our “trying so hard,” only pushes realization farther beyond our reach.

This is particularly evident when we touch into the realization practices like the special form of Vipassana (Insight) as used in Mahamudra meditation, and so on. If I grasp the teachings

correctly (or even close), just as it is said that Buddha Nature is innate within us, fully there in all sentient beings (only not recognized), so too is what is called Insight or discernment -- Prajna.

In fact, one of the most fascinating teachings I have studied states that Prajna (innate discernment) is not something that we develop over time, but like Buddha Nature, it is inherent within us and only has to be discovered, uncovered so that it can shine through and discern. That way of seeing discernment was a new concept for me, that it is not something we somehow get. It's already there..

In other words, the discernment (prajna) is already inherent in each of us and is always working (and on duty), only obscured by the veils of karma and ignorance on our part. As we work to remove obscurations through the purification practices, our innate prajna (discernment) is revealed and can be seen as already functioning; it becomes available to us. Maybe it has always been what we could call our better judgment, way down in there, only we were never fully aware of it.

And so, in this sense, Vipassana is already always with us, but misdirected outwardly (like we would shine a flashlight) at the world instead of inwardly on itself. In fact, the teachings clearly say that Vipassana in this regard is fully present, only masquerading as ordinary thought like heat lightning in late summer. Once again, it comes down to a lack of realization on our part. We don't (are unable) to recognize our inherent sense of discernment that is flashing before our eyes every moment and day of the week. It's the brilliance in our thought.

I know. This concept takes some real contemplation, at least for me, to begin to grasp it properly; it reminds me of those fossil hunters that very carefully separate the petrified bones of a dinosaur from the matrix in which it is embedded.

And all of this because in reality this is just one big ball of wax, meaning that to call out as anything more than distinct practices (like Shamata, Vipassana or whatever) is to lose the sense of the whole to the parts. This is a living breathing meditation that has been called “No Meditation.” Since everything is present, of course all the parts we can examine are present (or can be called out), but to make a point of that is to allow the parts to conceal the whole.

And so, the Vipassana that we all seek to realize is alive, well, and so close to us that we can't see it. In other words, we can't discern “discernment,” so to speak. It is so much part of the matrix of our own confused mind that it is in constant use in every way, but just not focused on itself.

And just as we can't see our own eye (but we can still see), there is “seeing” without something being seen, seeing without the duality of a see-er and something to be seen. There is seeing “seeing” itself, with nothing to be seen but the seeing itself.

[Photo of a rupa (statue) of the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva in the main shrine room at our center.]

“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