

DHARMA -- TRYING THE TEST

I'd like to give readers a break from my personal journey, but it turns out that's much of what I write about these days. It's what's happening. LOL. And, as you can imagine, I am learning a lot lately.

I am so much a child of the moment that I can't ignore what I'm going through, even if it is also health related. So, here is an update for those who have time or interest.

I feel a little like the Greek king Sisyphus, rolling the rock uphill only to have it roll back down, and lately you can add to that something of the flavor of both the Tibetan yoga saint Milarepa and even some of the Old Testament, where Abraham is asked to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. I don't mean to sound grandiose, just that there are classic lessons to be learned.

I have spent almost 46 years putting together our center (starting in Ann Arbor) and some 40 years creating our home, dharma center, and compound here in the city of Big Rapids, Michigan, an old logging town on the banks of the mighty Muskegon River.

Through the 1980s (and beyond), a steady stream of very high lamas from the Karma Kagyu Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism flowed through our dharma center here in Big Rapids, Michigan. Such a stream would be unthinkable today, partly to do with impermanence and mostly because of the circumstances (at the time) of these great Rinpoches having no particular place to be as they do now. Today, these great dharma

teachers are seated in their various monasteries and centers in India and elsewhere. Yet, back in the 1980s they were free to travel and did.

As the years passed and the kids have grown up and moved on, Margaret and I each have thought of moving from Big Rapids. We had originally moved here to raise our kids, because my parents lived here and kids could be raised in a small town near nature. Well, the kids are gone and here we still are.

Margaret has wanted to go north to the Traverse City area and I have wanted to go south back to my old home town of Ann Arbor, Michigan and live there. Aside from inertia, because we could not agree on a direction, we have stayed where we are.

But what would take too long a story to relate here, as it turned out, it occurred to me that it did not matter so much where I lived and since we had kids both north and south and Margaret loves the Great Lakes, what do I care? I agreed to move north to Traverse City and the Leelanau peninsula area. Did I have pangs of attachment to our center here? Of course, I did, but I felt that I would be me wherever I went.

And with that thought I agreed that I would move north and, although the snow was much deeper there, I would join into that wonderful upstate community. And to show my willingness to scatter the mandala of our center into the river (so to speak), I proceeded to take apart the dharma center, room by room, something like seven rooms-full before I stopped. And I did it with a glad heart and happy mind. I got into moving 100%.

Anyway, I deconstructed the center, room by room, packing up hundreds of boxes. I bought \$1000 worth of boxes of all sizes. They came, to my surprise, on two entire pallets via a 53-foot tractor trailer and filled the house with collapsed boxes. I had no idea they would be that bulky. LOL.

So, like in the Bible, with Abraham and his son Isaac, I was willing to sacrifice our entire compound created over 40 years and just move, but it turned out I did not end up doing that.

Both Margaret and I independently decided to stay where we are and visit more often both up north and down south. And like taking a small page from the book of the Tibetan saint and yogi Milarepa (who built and rebuilt a tower for his teacher many times), I tore down and then put back every piece of each room and did this room after room after room, so there was some discipline in that. LOL. It has been a lesson.

[Here is a photo of the special room where all the rinpoches have stayed over the room, with bookcases torn down and all books and stuff packed. Then, here is is back to the way it was always was. Also, the unpacked versions of one of many rooms of books and a room with some 7500 (mostly rare) CDs, what remains of my CD collection which is now at Michigan State University as part of their permanent collection, some 720,000 CDs. Is that enough?]

“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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