

Being Caught is Being Free
“Inquiring Minds Want to Know”
Beach Talk - April 3, 2016

Lightly edited.
Contemplate lineage, intention and motivation

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We've talked about KISS, keep it simple silly, in presenting a simple overview of the journey. The basic issues are how do you enjoy your relative life, meaning how to truly enjoy this life. Secondly, I think we want to know freedom, you want to know the big 'why'. This is known as a question of knowing your true nature, what are you built from? I framed this as Einstein's singular question, 'is the universe a friendly place?'

The next first Sunday, we talked about interconnectedness and we broached not just ordinary or relative interconnectedness, like the production of food or global warming, but also the absolute interconnectedness. How it is that we are never separate from anything? We all come from the same goodness and same purity. I attempted to give a brief explanation of how our concepts of separateness is a construct called self and that self is a convincing illusion of heaps of mental processes called skandas.

In February, we talked about allowing the certainty of deaths and the passing of love ones to be our greatest teacher and our greatest inspiration. Last time, in March, we talked about fear and fearless and the process of learning how not to be afraid of ourselves, how to make friends with ourselves, make friends with our fears and our worlds altogether.

Today I'd like to talk about a favorite subject. A singular joy, a gift in some sense, or meaningful endeavor in life called path; the path of Buddhism, the path to freedom and joy. Trungpa Rinpoche once said about the path that 'being caught is being free'. I suppose that sounds like an oxymoron and yet it is true. I love being caught by the dharma. As a matter of fact I would say of all the blessings in my life of which there are countless, the one I wouldn't trade for, even being a husband or a father, is the path. The blessing that I have a journey, a path, a proven methodology, that gives guidelines and sign posts on the way, is the most important thing in my life. I ask a fellow practitioner about this and she said, 'no doubt, I'd be dead or in prison or a drug addict without the path'. The path gives you purpose in a life that can seem at times without meaning and purpose. The path saves you.

One metaphor for the path is a map. It is like being given a map for a huge treasure chest. Here's a map for having a meaningful life, for wealth beyond monetary comfort, You say 'nah can't be'. Some friend says, well I got the first clue and followed it and the experience was as the map said. What they said was there, it happened. Curiosity maybe is tweaked. It really is a gift. The good news about the map is that it really takes you to the treasure, the bad news is it's up to you to put in the effort. I'm sad to say, that the map hasn't changed in 2500 years but our focus and and prioritizing seems to be weaker, even in my lifetime I've seen this. Here's a map to save your life in a sense but our minds are stolen by the laziness of speed.

I'm teaching now at the Marines base mindfulness and I've included maitri, loving kindness to self, it's

hard to believe the military culture is changing this fast. But I'm wondering how many will keep up the search when it's so difficult in our age to not be distracted. I have a friend who is waking up to some profound question in her life. If the map is presented to her she smugly says, 'yah, I tried meditation'. It's like saying you tired lifting weights once but you didn't see Pop Eye muscles grow in one session. That's the danger of the pop culture version of the path. Did it for 20 minutes, been there done that, got the t-shirt. In the Shambhala community, the starting point was a 30 day, 12 hour a day commitment. I will say if all of us here on the beach did a dathun, we would have a far different community and impact in Kailua.

Path means in simple terms is a way to wake up. This of course implies we're asleep which is perhaps the most interesting part of the path. How do we know we're asleep when we're asleep? Well, the sleep isn't comfortable or dreamy quite enough, we can't stupefy ourselves totally. There's a question or yearning that is an itch or a pain or a suspicion. Sleep is a temporary, unsatisfactory state. Although pleasant and a bit euphoric or numbing, our nature is awake, so we question or don't feel fulfilled. It really is as that great journalistic periodical, The National Inquirer, says, "Inquiring minds want to know". Curiosity is the beginning place of the path. The following of the path takes discipline and exertion. There's a saying the path is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end. It's good in the beginning because immediately there's a sense of peace of from working with mediation, in the middle there's an opening to empathy, compassion and love. In the end there's a journey into the wisdom of space. One joins the creative process of the universe.

One of the aspects of the Buddhist Path I love is you don't have to believe in much of anything. There are certain axioms that one needs too get their head around. There called the Four Seals because all experience is sealed with these truths. If there's a belief doctrine in Buddhism this is it: One, All things are impermanent. Two, things which we label as real, a building, a tree, a car, a self, are composite and not real or solid, they have no objective reality. As Gertrude Steiner said, 'there's no there, there.' Three, grasping is painful and holding on to conceptual views of any kind, even pleasure is painful. Fourth, there is a freedom that is knowable, we can experience a profound state of peace. There it is the gospel according to Buddha.

There's many kinds of Buddhist flavors and I'm so happy I got introduced to an hearty, bawdy, outrageous one. I would have been a bad fit for tip toeing and a quiet form of Buddhism. I feel so lucky that I met a teacher who was playful, full hearted and outrageous. It was hard and scary, sometimes uncomfortable, but it fit me so well. I'm kind of a pirate, non joiner type and Trungpa's community had room, was even based on this honest rock and roll. I mean he started, with Allan Ginsburg, "the school of disembodied Poets".

The spiritual journey wasn't a separate or other worldly endeavor. It was this life, these foibles and a great deal of humor. And to this day we entered practice like our hair was on fire and death was real. The basic training, entry level commitment was a 30 day 12 hour a day retreat. I have probably 10 friends who have done 3 year 3month, 3 day retreats. We we're trained and we practiced. I was lucky enough to do 2, 3 months retreats with Trungpa Rinpoche. After the first in 1979, I lost my wife, my home, my profession, my town, my dog and my beloved volkswagen van. During the second 3 month retreat in 1983, I got a wife, a home, a profession, a son, a new dog and a RV camper, an upgrade on all levels.

So, the ground of the path of being caught is curiosity as and the extension of that is some surrender that you don't know. You have to be smart enough to surrender just a tiny little bit. By surrender I mean willing to really jump into the discipline of meditation practice, of taming our minds. There's so

many distraction now and I'm afraid we think we know more than we do. The path is someone saying there's a way to happiness but you have to run a marathon to get there. The smart modern person says, I know all about running I've run a whole block once without stopping.

If there's any cost of the path, of being given this map it is we have to surrender our concepts. It's not easy giving up our ideas of separation. It's not like surrender of your intelligence, it's the surrender of being willing to try something difficult, of having no belief about certainty. But what happens is, the teaching say, hey you'll experience your senses in a fresh way, you won't be as reactive. The path gives you guidelines to experiences and when you have those experiences, you must be curious about what else is being said. You believe in experience not ideas, I love that.

And you must be continually open to more descriptions and experiences on the path,. The path involves exertion, discipline and curiosity and the surrender to acknowledge we had realizations/experiences. One gets really curious about this map, that what has been said, is likely true.

From the very first time you sit, there's a sense that you could be a tamer happier person. In the middle one gets to actualize compassion and love. Life becomes so worthwhile. The end is endless because freedom is endless. The fruition of path is wherever you are on it it feels great and you have some certainty that it leads to Rome, to joy to liberation, to having a great life. The fruition is said to be the joining of space and the creative process of life altogether.

I remember so well Trunpa's signature sign off , 'Just do it!! and it's a jolly good show.