

Dharma Talk at Buddha Center, Second Life
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“Being Together”
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In past Dharma Talks I have explained the simple “formula” for enlightenment that I have developed, that “Enlightenment is as simple as A-B-C”.

A is Attention to the present moment “nowness”, your immediate sensory experiences, sight, sound, touch, smell and taste, experiencing these sensations purely, in their “isness”, without the filter of thinking, labeling or judgment.

B is breathing, the central tenet of every major spiritual tradition. Breathing is the bridge between matter and spirit, between phenomenon and noumenon, between form and emptiness.

C is corporal, or body awareness, awareness of your inner body or what is called the energy body.

When you can shift your attention away from being dominated by emotionally reactive thoughts, becoming present is as simple as A-B-C, and this A-B-C then leads to D which then leads to E.

Consistently entering this A-B-C state allows one then to experience the “D”, which stands for dissolving the boundaries between inside and outside. And when you can feel this dissolution of the artificially created boundaries, once you do this consistently you have “E”, Enlightenment.

But this is an experience, not a concept. When you talk about it you are still immersed in the world of thought. Are we still aware of outward phenomena? Are we still aware of our inner body?

(A participant comments that E can stand for experience, which would be another “E”).

Every spiritual teacher is in some sense a charlatan because they purport to give people what they already have, but those people just can’t see it or know it in their present circumstances. It’s kind of like selling ice to Eskimos.

Today’s topic has to do with consulting certain spiritual counselors who use divination systems or oracles, like psychics, astrologers, tarot readers, etc.

I have a dear friend whom I have known since high school days, Dom is his name, and he is a licensed physician practicing in New York City. He has doctorates in osteopathy and in homeopathy, and is one of the most wonderful healers I know or know of. He is also a

very spiritually focused and aware man. About 10 years ago, I was going through a serious emotional crisis, the breakup of a long-term relationship. He was treating me with both osteopathy and homeopathy, but he had also for many years been involved with Vedic Astrology, and he suggested that I get a reading from Vedic astrologer that he had been consulting and whom he highly recommended.

I got the reading and I have to say that of all consultations I have had through the years, readings by psychics, tarot readers, western-style astrologers, and other spiritual prognosticators, it was by far the most accurate and enlightening reading I have ever had. I had what was called my “natal chart” done (the chart of the positions of planets, constellations, etc at the exact moment and place of my birth), and found that it probably encapsulated most completely and comprehensively who I thought I was, my identity, my characteristics, the reasons why I developed the way I did, my destiny. I was truly amazed.

Every so often during the years since then, going through the inevitable ups and downs of daily life, Dom would suggest that I get another reading, a prognostication of what the following year would hold based on my chart and the current positions of the planets and constellations. Although during the first few years, after having the natal chart done, I followed his recommendation, eventually I drifted away from doing so, even over Dom’s exhortations about how helpful they would be and his offering to pay for part of or the entire fee charged by the astrologer. I started to come to understand that if an astrology reading is like a map of your karma (which is how the astrologer himself described it), and if enlightenment or awakening or being present dissolves your karma, then continuing to consult somebody outside your self as to your identity, your future (finances, family, relationship, career, etc.), your destiny, the current tasks you should be involving yourself in, etc., that seeking outside of yourself for these “answers” is essentially disempowering yourself.

I believe that somewhere in the New Testament, Jesus warns his listeners to avoid fortune tellers. Fundamentalists take this warning as a call to arms to rail against such people as being servants and worshippers of the devil, and even to seek to destroy them in some cases. Witness the Spanish Inquisition, the Salem Witch trials and other similar “witch hunts” down through the ages.

Dom continues to consult his Vedic astrologer friend on a regular basis, and still encourages me that I should do the same, but I don’t feel that it is something that I am interested in doing anymore. As enlightening and entertaining as that first reading was, as accurately as it was aligned and resonated with what I already know and feel about myself, the only thing now that I want to do is not to continue or perpetuate a dependency on someone else’s “reading” of me. I want to understand and fully accept and experience that I am that very power that I was projecting onto this other person, the astrologer.

There is nothing wrong with consulting a psychic, or astrologer, etc. But as Alan Watts said, “Once you get the message, you hang up the phone.” You are that power you are projecting onto this person other person. You have to let go of the raft even before you

get to the shore. You are not going to sink, you can swim yourself; the raft is like a crutch. You need it when you have a broken leg. In this case, the leg was never broken to begin with, it was all an illusion. Suffering is illusion said the Buddha, based in a sense of separation and attachment to thoughts of what we think is going to heal that separation. But the healing is all within you.

You can let go of all your karma when you become present to the present. Karma is simply how you allow the past to affect your future, both of which dissolve when you become present. So the power is within you. You can bring that power out, restore that power, or at least the feeling of connectedness, simply by becoming present. Do not allow the separative ego, that distorted psychic knot that screams you are separate, that tries to convince you that you have to act on a separate world in order to get what it thinks it needs to be whole, to dominate you. Let it go, let it all go.

So that is why Jesus warned his listeners about foregoing or avoiding fortune tellers, psychics and astrologers. It is not that they are bad, negative people, but only that consulting them and relying on their pronouncements is an abdication of the power that you already have within you, your connectedness to all that is. Since Jesus was self-realized being, he knew that in order to help his listeners realize their own Christ consciousness, he didn't want to give them the idea that there was any power outside of themselves to look to for guidance, but rather to rely on oneself.

Are you still breathing? Are you still aware that you are breathing? Are you seeing, listening, touching, etc. without judgment or label? Are you feeling the bliss of your inner energy? If you are, then you don't need to listen to the likes of me anymore, and truthfully you never did. That is why I am here. I need reminding, and I feel a responsibility to help to remind other people, and in turn you remind me. We are all in this together, there are no leaders or followers, just be-ing-ness together.

Re-member your Self! To remain awake in the present moment and re-member our inter-connectedness is our game, the reminding game. I am not trying to cast aspersions on any other teachers, psychics, astrologers, etc. They provide loving and helpful guidance on whatever level the person coming to them needs. We are all at different levels in our understanding, even though we are simultaneously all at the same level. That's why you are here listening to me.

The Buddha said "Look within, you are the Buddha", perfect and whole, but we are all at different levels of realization of that fact. Enlightenment is not an accomplishment.

(A participant comments that: I just want to assert that I feel like it [astrology] provides a sophisticated map for navigating our difficulties).

Yes, and for me my reading was the most sophisticated map I had at the time for myself.

(A participant comments that: Within the illusion, sometimes 'magic' thoughts are necessary).

Ultimately, all teachings are empty; they are just fingers pointing to the experience of reality. Yes, teachings are empty because we are empty, we are one, interconnected, and our vision is to realize emptiness in right in the midst of everyday existence.

(A participant comments that: Form is emptiness, emptiness is no other than form.)

We are the relative and absolute truth; all together we are the ultimate reality. Allow ideas of separateness, of concepts and belief systems that keep us from experiencing emptiness, oneness, interconnectedness to drop away. Peel back the layers of the onion. What is at the center? Emptiness, the emptiness that is the fullness of all-that-is.

Pay attention to your heart, breathe in through and out from your heart, and more and more rest in the emptiness that is at the center of the heart, experience true “be-ing” where being is not a noun, not this thing, but rather this, a verb, moment to moment to moment. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” is what Jesus said. “Look within thou art the Buddha” is what the Buddha said.

Enter the narrow gate. The narrow gate is space between the thoughts. This is the gate which is the gateless gate, the gate to enlightenment. But it only seems like gate from ego's point of view. Once you dissolve the ego, by shifting attention to the A-B-C, you realize that there was never a gate there to begin with.

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