

Dharma Talk on Second Life, 24 March, 2010
By DoKwang Augenblick
“Hello Dalai”

Namaste

(DK leads group through the A-B-C of Mindfulness exercise. Afterward a participant comments that it feels as if she is in “paradise”)

You *are* paradise, as we all are. This is enlightenment; this is what waking up from ego dream is all about. It is as simple as A-B-C. Moving attention away from the thinking mind, the thoughts that keep us dense and separate. I’ve prepared a written guide to this mindfulness exercise which is available on the Buddha center website. Also there is an instructional sheet about the Emotional Freedom Technique, EFT, which is an emotional releasing procedure that I find to be an essential and integral part of spiritual practice. Some day we will have a talk with the group here about emotional blocks and the issues that keep them feeling separate from their true nature. Our true nature, who we really are, can only be experienced when we stop listening to all those thoughts that try to convince us that we are separate and alone. Some day we will devote a whole talk to a group EFT practice. The instructions will be posted on the BC website and so you can read up on the technique beforehand so you know how to follow along.

Today the topic of our talk is “Hello Dalai” (DK sings to tune of “Hello, Dolly). My inspiration for this comes from Delani, who this past Christmas gave me a Dalai Lama daily calendar with a quote a day, you rip off a page each day and there is a new quote for the new day-words of wisdom from the Dalai Lama. I saved some of the pages that had quotes which I thought would be helpful and instructive, to me and others. Some I agree with, and with some I disagree, but I want to throw them out here, comment on them and open the floor to discussion.

Quote: “The highest yoga tantric teachings recognize that even within this short human lifetime, the possibility of full enlightenment exists.” (His Holiness, the Dalai Lama).

Well, if you recall that the Buddha said, “Look within, you *are* the Buddha”, then the only thing that stands between us and full enlightenment (which is what HHDL is speaking of here) is how we are looking within, and if we look within the right way, “here we are”, at full enlightenment. This is it. I don’t think anybody here listening to this discussion is here with the idea that the possibility of full enlightenment does NOT exist within this lifetime, indeed, just the fact that you are here means that you are aware of that possibility and want to do something about it. I would add that not enlightenment is possible not only within this short human lifetime, but within this moment. You can experience enlightenment only within this moment. Now is the only time you can experience enlightenment. “A human lifetime” is just an idea; it’s a phrase, a concept.

None of us have experienced a human lifetime because all of us can only experience right now, the past and future are just concepts. So we are always at that point of choice, to wake up in this moment, or not.

I believe I talked about hope last time, in my last dharma talk, someone asked a question about hope, if you remember? I said something to the effect that “hope is the enemy”, not in a hostile sense, but that hope prevents you from experiencing your true nature at this moment, it creates time and space between you and where you want to be. It also posits some object you want to attain or some condition that you want to attain that you feel you're not experiencing now. That is the very delusion that prevents us from self-realizing, from waking up to our true nature, who we really are this moment.

Quote: “Under no circumstances should you lose hope; hopelessness is a real cause of failure. Remember you can overcome any problem. (HHDL)

So, given what I just said about hope, am I at odds with the HHDL? In my last talk, Ruby, who is a therapist, asked, should you try to tell suicidal patient that there is no hope? And I replied, no, absolutely not. Most people here have pretty high level of spiritual understanding, but there are people, people who are mired at a much lower level of consciousness, people who can't understand or even imagine that we are timeless spaceless beings. We can't tell them to give up hope because to them, the only option to that is despair and suicide. We don't want to reject hope; we need to transcend thinking hopeful thoughts, understanding that everything we are hoping for is available to us right where we are here and now. This quote is addressing those people who have not attained that higher level of spiritual development, who can only understand that without hope there is only resignation. You need to address these people at their level of understanding. You can't ask a baby to run a marathon, you give baby steps for little kids and bigger step when they grow older and then when they are adults they can take larger and faster steps and eventually run a marathon. There is a progression here, understand that the Buddha's concept of right understanding, and that it is all right here right now.

(A participant questions, can we hope for a transition to another, better life, making us conscious of who and what we are today?)

If you indulge in hope, understand that hope is a thought, a mental process, and if you remain mired in this, you maintain a separation between the reality within and without you. Better than hoping is dropping out of the immersion in thoughts, and opening up like in our mindfulness exercise, A-B-C. That doesn't mean we should try to push away thoughts, we simply shift attention so that they resume their rightful place and we do not react to them or allow them to dominate our moods or responses. If you tell someone steeped in materiality and negativity that there is no hope, you are doing them a disservice, they can't understand timelessness and spacelessness, they can't understand surrender does not mean resignation. There's a big difference between the two, they might appear the same. Surrender is an inner knowing, an opening, an acceptance. Resignation is giving up, closing off, feeling that there's nothing left. It is the basis for

suicide. Surrender is understanding that when you are giving up it is in the sense that you are giving up resistance to your higher self, and that kind of surrender is what brings about awakening. You are surrendering the need for the ego to be in control.

(A participant questions, am I procrastinating my enlightenment in Buddhahood because of hope?)

Well, yes, that is the bad news. But the good news is that you can stop procrastinating now. Now is the only time when you can stop, and that is what we do every time we do this A-B-C exercise. You are already a Buddha, you are already enlightened, you just need to drop the thoughts, judgments, concepts and negative behavior patterns.

(A participant questions, how do you know Jesus and prophets didn't meditate? Jesus said thou shalt love the lord thy God with thy whole mind and heart and soul and strength, and love thy neighbor as thyself. That's from the New Testament, so meditation takes strength.)

The strength referred to in that passage is not necessarily physical or mental strength, but we need to come back to that topic later.

Quote: "In the presence of anger peace is impossible."

That's a truism, if we want peace in this world, we need to start with a peaceful heart within ourselves, as Jesus said "turning other cheek", not reacting with anger. If you want to be peaceful, don't be angry, if you don't want to be peaceful, then be as angry as you want, that is what free will is all about. We either get with the program or we resist it, like that old proverb about the 2 wolves inside, which wolf do you feed? When we get with the program we feel good, if we don't we feel bad. What is anger? Anger is an emotion; it's an energy reaction that occurs as a result of your interpretation of a situation. Dwelling in world of thoughts, of emotions and separating yourself from the oneness that we are, from our true nature.

(A participant questions, could there be rightful anger?)

Well, I suppose there could be rightful anger from the ego point of view, which sees things as good and bad, and so if somebody does something bad, from the ego's point of view, that's rightful anger, but from the point of view of the Self there is no anger because there is no offense. But you really have to be at that level.

(A participant comments that Jesus got angry and drove the moneychangers out from the temple)

Yes Jesus was angry at the moneychangers. My interpretation of that passage is that he was not so much angry as much as frustrated with people who were just not "getting it", who were mired in materialism and resistance to grace. I don't think he was angry with

them in the same way we get angry with someone who does something we don't like or offends us in some way.

The most important is that we don't talk about it, conceptualize or debate it, just become present, then these answers become clear to you.

(A participant questions, can you consciously become angry, using anger as an energy to achieve a goal, as in a controlled anger?)

Yes all these points are valid but you still need to ask yourself, what is your goal? Is your goal to achieve physical or material or situational outcome, or to become completely awake? You can act angrily to send a message to someone else but if you feel that anger inside, you are contracting; you are pulling away from your true nature. So you're winning the battle but losing the war, so to speak. That's a poor analogy, though; you're losing the peace...LOL.

(A participant asks, can you use anger constructively? For example, using anger energy to clean house?)

Yes, of course, if you are angry anyway and can't release it immediately, it's better to express it constructively than destructively. It's a step along the path. The next step would be to become aware of your full presence, waking up and not needing to be angry about anything. The amount of anger you feel is directly proportional to the distance you are from fully waking up, when you're awake, you feel no need for anger or hatred. It's surrendering the ego's need for control, which it enforces many ways, hate and anger being some of them. You can have anger with or without hatred, Jesus may have been angry at the moneychangers but he did not hate them, he came from place of presence awakenedness, enlightenment.

(A participant questions, who of the Buddha's disciples reached an awakened state?)

Well, according to scripture, Mahakashyapa did, Ananda did, but the more important question is, are you? Let's move away from thinking about other people, past teachers and go to the real teacher within you. YOU can wake up as soon as you drop your attachment to your thoughts and your ego-processing controlling mind.

(A participant comments, you are a very knowledgeable person.)

If that is true, it's because I have been around a long time and studied and practiced a lot.

Quote: "In order to practice meditation, first clean your room." (HHDL)

True, because everything that we do, even cleaning your physical room, is a meditation. What is meditation but to experience each moment and act in each moment with full mindfulness? Does anybody remember the story of Joshu and the young monk? Joshu was a Zen master of 8th century China. A young monk recently entered the temple for

training, he approached Joshu and says, I have just come here, Master, can you please teach me? The monks had just had breakfast. Joshu asks, did you finish your rice porridge for breakfast? Yes, Master, answers the monk. Joshu says, than you had better wash your bowl. Cleaning your room, bathing, cooking, etc. are all meditation when done in full mindfulness.

Quote: “You can meditate while driving and walking, on a bus or train, or even while taking a shower.” (HHDL)

And I would add, or even while sitting on the toilet, because meditation is not about sitting on your ass and chanting some mantra. Meditation is simply learning how to control your attention. That's it. And if you can learn to bring your full attention to whatever it is you're doing, no matter what it is, on a bus or train, shopping, eating, cooking, it's focusing your mind, that is meditation. It is simply shifting attention away from the mind noise to become fully present and to be able to do that moment to moment to moment and to live in that awakened state we call enlightenment.

(A participant comments that sitting on one's ass chanting a mantra is good too.)

Oh, yes, if that is all you want to do, that's fine, but you might as well go to monastery for that. In the so-called “real world”, we have a much more difficult task than monks in temple, we need to address the real life issues of work, clothing, shelter, food, kids, sex, dealing with the world.

(A participant asks, what about the heart center, up and down energy paths?)

The mindfulness meditation that we do really centers on your heart. You've heard people say of other people that they talk and listen with their heart, if you want to do that too, just focus on your heart, breathe in and out through the heart, focus away from thoughts, focus on whatever you are doing while you are doing it, moment to moment.

(Some participants are engaging in a sideline discussion about the six-pointed star.)

The 6 pointed star is the union of upward facing and downward facing triangles and those two triangles symbolize heaven and earth, the union of male and female, yin and yang.

(A participant questions, why do monks find it so easy to separate themselves from society?)

Because they are men and women on a mission, they have devoted their lives to the pursuit of enlightenment. The problem is, you can not “pursue” enlightenment any more than you can pursue happiness. The more you pursue it the further away it gets. You simply have to stop pursuing and just be happy. Remember Meher Baba, the great Sufi teacher, his famous saying was “Don't worry, be happy.” To worry is to attach to negative thinking. If you break the attachment to negative thinking, you become the happiness you already are and that that negativity is masking from your awareness.

(A participant comments, Ajahn Brahm said in superb sentence, every place that you are and don't want to be is a prison.)

(A participant comments, negative thinking is believing in failure?)

If you believe you are not going to succeed at something, that puts you in a state of negativity. If you dwell on that, if you indulge those thoughts then have already failed. But the good news is that you can reverse that at any time, just stop listening to those thoughts and realize that everything that you want, everything that you need, everything that you are, you are already, is right here right now.

(A participant questions "To appreciate the positive we need to see the negative with another eye?")

The path is open, we don't want to control the negative, we want to transcend it. The only thing we want to control is our attention, to use it in the right way, we see who and what we really are. Enlightenment is simply appropriate attention; let it go as in surrender, not resignation. We need to let go of ego's need to control, a need that is based in materialism, separation, the idea that we are in here in just a skin bag of bones and organs, separate from all the rest of the universe, and that we have to act on these separate objects to get what we need for survival and for happiness. That's the lie that the Buddha and Jesus and every great being and guru has been saying. Every great master has said, all that love, joy, power, that indescribable essence, is who you really are.

(A participant questions, shouldn't you stay in control of your possibilities?)

There are no possibilities. There is only the certainty of who and what you really are, and you either realize it, or you don't, in this moment. The idea of possibilities admits to past and future. The vast majority of world population is at a level of awareness where you do have to talk about hope and possibilities, about working and practicing and all that. But the closer and closer you get to your own realization the more you understand that there is nothing you need to do except to open up your eyes and ears and heart to what you are without any effort, without trying, without anything. There is nothing to control

The strength that you need for self realization is not an effort or a struggle to achieve anything, the strength that you need is the courage and perseverance to work at quieting the ego, which is the only thing that is standing between you and your realization of your true nature. Just be here now, just be fully present, and everything is going on perfectly within and without and everything that happens will be a reflection of the peacefulness and expansiveness and the joy and the love of your inner state, just by letting go.

(A participant asks the question, how many times is it necessary to arrive at this state?)

Only once. Now. and now. and now. and now.

We are at that point of choice in every moment. Enlightenment is being able to make the right choice in every moment, moment by moment by moment.