

TRUST

The Master would frequently assert that holiness was less a matter of what one did than of what one allowed to happen.

To a group of students who couldn't understand this he told the following story:

"There was once a one-legged dragon who said to the centipede,

'How do you manage all those legs? It is all I can do to manage one.'

'To tell you the truth,' said the centipede, 'I don't manage them at all.' "

In life we may trust in our ability to become what we want to become. For instance, we may want to become a doctor, so we train and hopefully we qualify and become a doctor. Or we may want to paint, so we learn to paint and become a painter, or whatever it is we want to do. In life we have an agenda and we try to follow it through to the best of our ability, and this is absolutely fine.

When we enter into spiritual practice we tend to do a similar thing. We bring an agenda to our practice as to how we want to be in the future, but if we practice well this agenda is doomed to failure. It's OK to have an agenda for a while as it can motivate us to practice, but it will never be fulfilled, because agendas are of the ego, the little me. The ego always wants to become somebody, but practice is not about becoming somebody, it is the end of all becoming.

Practice is about getting to know our self and becoming free from suffering by doing so. This freedom however, cannot be achieved or attained through our usual type of effort or striving. It can be discovered to be our true nature when we give up the struggle to be better, to be someone different.

In my view most of us in the west have complicated and clever minds, and due to this we tend to complicate practice. Most of us trust not in the simple act of being aware, but in the power of the analytical mind. We believe that if we understand something well enough intellectually then that is what practice is about.

It's a good thing to understand something intellectually, but we must move beyond the intellect and trust in something else, and that something else is wisdom, intuitive awareness, our deepest knowing, god, call it what you will. It's trusting in that deep indefinable knowing that lies deep in our being. This I believe is what the Buddha and other great teachers were telling us. They wanted us to trust in our own wisdom, to be a light unto ourselves and not to depend on hearsay or to rely on tradition.

We can give up the idea of trying to change ourselves. We can let go of trying to get rid of aspects of our selves that we don't like, and let go of trying to add anything onto our selves. This is just more attachment and aversion in more subtle forms. This doesn't mean that we don't change through practice, we do change radically through practice. But we can let change happen naturally as a result of our practice of awareness. For instance, if we have a tendency to unkindness (of course we do our best not to be unkind) instead of getting into a war with it "I shouldn't be like this, I need to get rid of this," we can trust in the awareness of it. If we can let it be, it arises and passes away and eventually runs out of fuel if we allow it to. It's crucial here of course not to get caught up in the unkind thoughts, if we do we tend to act it out and cause ourselves and others pain.

Trying to change is another way of saying I'm not good enough, and I need to change myself in order to be good enough. We can give up the idea that we need to change and rest in who we are right now, rest in the awareness of experience. Give up the idea of trying to be different and come into relationship with who you are. Instead of endlessly trying to change what is we can become intimate with what is. We can rest in the awareness that "sees" life happening. In other words we can leave the contents of our awareness alone and rest in the knowing of the contents, rest in the awareness of our experience.

Whatever is going on with us we can simply know that. This knowing includes everything and excludes nothing. If we have a nasty thought we can know that, if we have a nice thought we can know that too. Practice isn't about being in a particular state, but simply knowing the state we are in. This is so simple and direct and takes no thinking about that I believe a lot of us simply don't believe that practice is this simple. "But surely I need to think about my practice, I need to read loads of books, I need to purify myself of all my bad karma, but surely..." All these thoughts and questions we may have can simply be witnessed and left alone. If thoughts arise about our life that seem important to act on then of course we do that.

How many thoughts do we have each day. I want this I want that. I should be like this or I should be like that. Life is a burden, life is exciting. None of these thoughts ever stay around for more than a bleep of a second, but we attach to them constantly and want to make an identity out of them. So we can simply know that a thought is or has been present. Simply know experience and trust in that simple and direct knowing of each moment.

There is nothing to be gained from practice. What happens through intelligent practice is that attachment weakens and we begin to get a sense of what we really are. We are the awareness that's doing the watching. We can come home and just rest in that warm centre of being that is our real home. This awareness is nothing to do with us, we did not create it, but has been there from day one and will be there right at the very end.

What I'm talking about here is TRUST. It's trusting in the awareness that is ever present. It's trusting in awareness that accepts everything about us. All those judgments, nasty thoughts, fantasies, criticisms, wanting to be right and to prove others wrong, can simply be watched and seen for what they are. We don't have to take them personally, it's the taking of them personally that keeps generating more of them. They are conditioned and will arise when the conditions are right for them to do so, so we can leave them alone and rest in awareness of them. When we watch them and stop interfering with them that's when they begin to weaken, each time we watch the thoughts and emotions instead of trying to do something with them we disidentify with them.

Normally we are identified with our experience, and if our experience isn't pleasant we tend to want to change it. Trust means being able to leave it be and having the wisdom to know that it will pass.

Without trust we continue to fiddle with our experience by trying to change it into what we think it should be, or into how we want it to be.

What I'm saying is to leave ourselves alone and to trust in being aware. Know the thoughts and bodily sensations. Soon as we realise we are unaware we are again aware, and then to come back to our bodily experience.

In my experience as we continue with this process a shift slowly takes place. A shift from identification with thoughts, feelings/emotions, which we can call the contents of awareness, to awareness itself. This is the beginning of freedom.