

Finding the Buddhist Path

Dear Friend,

Still not sleepy - damn crappy sleeping pills. They can put rovers on Mars, but they can't make a sleeping pill that puts me down within an hour and lets me really sleep? And where is my damn jet pack and underwater home?

I am touched by your email. I am glad you are flattered. To me it's just the truth that I experienced. I am even happier to hear that you feel great about yourself. I can relate to the outcast thing. I lived in eight different places before I was ten years old (my Dad was in the Air Force and then the federal Civil Service). Learn a lot of self-reliance that way. Do you know about the book: Part Asian, 100% Hapa / portraits by Kip Fulbeck ; foreword by Sean Lennon ? It's in your public library.

It's a very good thing to hear that you have "accepted and relish that weirdness!". Yes, smartness can set you apart. I am ok with that - it sure beat's the alternative. Yes it is a journey. The journey is our life, the reason for it - to understand what we are. And what a wonderous adventure that is. Because we are Buddhas at the core. I am so happy to hear you say "And coming to the place where I am on my road to peace, and better able to understand what I want to be when I grow up" just makes me smile. I am still that little boy searching for the answers to those big questions that my Mother in our backyard in Aiea said "some things are just beyond our comprehension". I couldn't accept that then, I still don't accept it now.

Seattle's Best works for me. I should be done shrine cleaning by 3pm. I can be in Lihue by 4pm (or later if that works for you).

Again, I am so happy you had a good time at the AHS reunion, and even happier for the "other stuff". One step at a time adds up to creating a whole new life's journey. Take care, be very well. Aloha

Hi Friend,

As for crawling my way out of depression. In high school I had started learning about Asian religions and took a meditation course from a Transcendental Meditation group in Manoa. Got a taste of inner reality and wanted to learn more. I studied Buddhism while at UH, but it was after college that I had a chance to learn from some great Tibetan Buddhist teachers who happened to be teaching on Oahu when I was open enough to let their light in. Just the example of the high lama who I took Buddhist vows with has been so inspiring. He was this tiny, old Tibetan monk. Yet when he walked into the room where he was to teach a retreat I had signed up for , a warm wave of benevolence just poured forth from him. His teaching imparted such a vivid sense of compassion and how central it is to a spiritual life that it inspires me to this day. It's one thing to hear wise words and listen deeply. It's a whole other level to experience loving kindness and compassion incarnate. I was fortunate to be able to attend other teachings by this high lama Kalu Rinpoche. Those experiences solidified some deep insights I had touched in meditation. The result is that oneness isn't just a word to me. It's how I experience this life we are in. At the center of my spirit is a knowing that truly we are all one with all reality. That knowing is an indestructible jewel that protects me. I've gone to some dark, unhappy places in my time. But the light of that jewel has always kept shining. No matter how much pain I was in, or how alone I felt, the reality of oneness kept me centered. Got

close to driving off a cliff one night, but feeling that light in my spirit just wouldn't let me give up.

Everyone struggles with psychological balance. Someone trying to deal with it openly can make others uncomfortable because it reminds them of the demons they have struggled with. It's hard, but there is no substitute for unconditional self-acceptance and self-love. If it helps you the Buddhist perspective is that all sentient beings have innate Buddha-nature. Meaning we are all Buddhas at our core, perfect exactly as is. But the clarity of our vision of this reality gets distorted by fear, ego self-defense and many other obscurations. Buddhism at its heart is about cutting through the mist of those obscurations in order to see yourself and all life as it really is.

I can relate about what you say about teenage angst (though I think mine started in elementary school). Hard to just accept our imperfect selves and let it be ok to be exactly how we are right here and now. But with acceptance comes transformation, and the freeing up of all kind of positive energies.

Embracing the path

Art,

I remember driving along the Saddle Road on the Big Island after the Rajneesh encounter group we attended at the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. I started singing a Sufi song "Shining bright shining. swift horse sun". You remarked that my singing was good - the first and last time anyone ever said that to me (have been told not to sing). I use that song at the Shrines now on when I have private tours to pray that the rains hold off while the visitors walk the path. Cleaning the shrines and the statues for 2 1/2 years now has been very good for me on my path as a Buddhist. Things that were mental concepts have taken on a living, breathing reality for me: the inherent emptiness of all phenomena, including the notion of an "I" as a separate existence; being in the moment; being truly alive. I am deeply grateful for the blessings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

So from a cellular level onto the cosmic one, I am optimistic - for our planet, for all species, for your new path. If I can be of any help I am there. This photo haiku is for you as you start a new journey. Aloha

Beyond all words, truth,

Beyond appearances, what is

Embrace - miracle

Friend,

Not many words. A woman and her husband came to the shrines today for a private tour. Her pain and fear were palpable. She had a grievous medical diagnosis. She walked the path and said she felt better. I prayed that she did.

Life is impermanence, and yet at the center of reality there is no birth and no death. The Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says "It is because of impermanence that everything is possible". Transformation is reality.

Cherish your parents, be present with them whenever you can. Embrace the bittersweet reality of impermanence and you can find peace when they pass on.