

## On Teachers

Dear Friend,

Thank you for sharing about your teacher. I have been blessed to know a few wise ones. When I lived in Volcano Village (a rustic village near Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island of Hawaii – where the Earth builds itself anew at this very moment) I met an artist named Bea Wright Jones. I visited her one day with a pressing question. She lived in a glass house in the middle of a tropical forest. She talked of communing with the mo'ō in the trees (Hawaiian dragon spirits). I asked her about smoking marijuana. She said the problem was that this path created a false Samadhi. The euphoria generated faded as the chemicals wore off. She said the wise path was to build a bridge to Samadhi with meditation – that way you could travel there whenever you wanted. This lesson sunk deep into me and changed my direction.

And thus here I am, a solitary man on the Bodhisattva path who does not feel alone in the least. My only quandary is - how does one live as a fountain of loving kindness and compassion? I have met only one human who lived in this state and he was a high Tibetan lama. When the nut cracks, and the fountain of bodhichitta (awakened mind) flow forth into the world, how does one proceed? I pray this fountain spreads seeds of loving kindness and compassion all over this planet – that all beings may attain liberation from suffering. Call me crazy – this is my heart's wish.

Dear Friend,

I have been a practicing Buddhist for 33 years now. I met my Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Kalu Rinpoche in 1984 in Honolulu. I signed up for a 2 day teaching held at an art lecture hall at the University of Hawaii (where I graduated from). I remember sitting in the hall and as the teacher, a small, old Tibetan man in red robes walked in I felt waves of loving kindness wash over me and warm my whole being. This little old man was the first enlightened being I had ever been in the presence of. And he did not have to say a single word. Just the example and benevolent energy of his presence was enough to change my life. I attend other teaching that Kalu Rinpoche gave while he was in Honolulu. I took Buddhist vows from him and the Tibetan Buddhist temple his lineage had there and was given empowerment in Mahamudra mediation (the fusing of wisdom and compassion, also referred to as the union of bliss and emptiness). Things bloomed from there.

Hope you had a good walk with your friend. I am sure you will find the teacher you need when the time is ripe. The Buddha was pretty clear in where truth lies - in one's own inner nature - their Buddha nature. Once you touch that realization and breath that insight, you are on the path. I think teachers get critical at the advanced stages, guiding the practitioner into subtle realms and overcoming remaining obstacles and obscurations. Ultimately, the teaching is clear "nothing to do, nowhere to go". Our true nature is right here and now and it is wondrous. We just need to clear away the mists that veil our direct experience of this reality and we are home again in the oneness. I keep a quote from Pema Chodron (from Taking the Leap) by my computer at work to help me keep returning to being present in the moment. It says

"Openness is Like the Wind

Basic wakefulness, natural openness, is always available. This openness is not something

that needs to be manufactured. When we pause, when we touch the energy of the moment, when we slow down and allow a gap, self-existing openness comes to us. It does not require a particular effort. It is available anytime".

That natural openness has many other names for Buddhists : pure consciousness, primordial consciousness, dharmata, tathata, Buddha mind, suchness. Whatever you call it, it is always right here and now. We just need to remember to open to it and the rest unfolds by itself.

So, embrace you eclecticism. Be happy, be way more than happy.