

Impermanence and Illusion

Dharma roadside dialogue series

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During the break Wendelin and I were discussing the talk from earlier, and she encouraged me to emphasize that these examples of illusion are really here to snap you out of your usual illusion. That means that if you remember this as you watch a movie or show, like I said we watched *Dune* and you realize that what you see doesn't exist, it's a CGI, an optical illusion, so this starts a little step to the side, away from the usual fascination, so you can look and see that it's an illusion, or when you are dreaming becoming aware that you are dreaming, you can notice, "Oh, that this is probably how I operate in the awake state." These are little moments, little reminders. Of course there are more than twelve, but just to begin with these can help you to snap out of it, out of sticking to the usual story. If you look in the chat section I have put a link to my google drive with a book, a complete book, *Twelve Examples of Illusion* as a pdf, which you can download. As I wrote, if you consider this an interesting book and you are going to read it and use it, please consider buying it because we want authors and writers to benefit and make some money for their efforts...it's a hard business, and this would be an ethical exchange. Anyway, I think it's an interesting text.

Q: Am I right in understanding that these twelve illusion examples act in a similar way to our visualizations in Chenrezig, for example when we visualize Dewachen, by taking us out of our habitual views and perspectives in a way? Did I understand this correctly?

A: Yes, absolutely. When you practice meditation based on a yidam like Chenrezig, Avalokiteshvara, there are two phases of the practice, one is called the development stage and one is called the perfection stage.

One of the functions of the development stage is to modify your outlook, that is the way you see things. You cultivate, regarding the world, a sacred outlook, so as you said, you see the world as the pure land of Dewachen, all sentient beings are bodhisattvas and Buddhas and so on, and you cultivate the same outlook, but really it's an "inlook," looking at yourself not in the usual way you perceive yourself but as being Chenrezig in person. And most important, the third point in the development stage, is that you cultivate the awareness that all these aspects of visualization and so

on are skillful methods that should not be reified into some sort of substantial deity. These are the three main functions of the development stage.

So it works in the same way as what I explained, progressively it doesn't snap you out, but it eases you out of your perception of the world and yourself that is based on habitual tendencies and perception. There is also a sutra where Ananda asked the Buddha to speak about the pure lands and then the Buddha said, "Look around you, why do you ask me to tell you about this?" Ananda replied, "Well, I only see dirt and dry trees and worried farmers." And Buddha said, "Yeah, that is what YOU see." Like, the glasses you wear will influence the perception.

I think the skillful methods of the tantras, not just the Chenrezig practice, are working simultaneously on several levels. The basic level is to modify our outlook and the way we perceive ourselves and also to understand that everything can be a pointing out instruction about the nature of reality, but it's symbolic and shouldn't be reified into something like we are worshipping a deity of some sort, like a divine god or whatever. So that's one aspect. But on the other hand you can simultaneously accumulate merit, by for example reciting the Seven Branch prayer, by cultivating love and compassion, so you purify your mindstream, because cultivating merit is actually liberating the mind from old habits. Let's say for instance, the Seven Branch prayer. The first thing is you pay homage. That's transforming existential arrogance, "I am the best." You acknowledge that there is some higher level of achievement, namely here the Buddhas. Then you make offerings, so you purify your attachment, your stinginess, your greed and so on by giving up, in the sense of offering. Etc.

Cultivating merit and at the same time decreasing old habits. It's kind of simultaneous, like a more luminosity, less darkness type of process. And then as you work through the development stage you come to a point where your mind is ready to abide in itself in a self awareness of its own essence of emptiness and its nature of luminosity, or awareness, and that would be the perfection stage. It brings you to a natural state that you were unable to see because of the four types of veils. So that's the benefit, and there are many levels. And I'm not even going into details about the symbolism of each gesture, like each finger presents this and that, each knuckle represents this and that, there are so many ways of diving into this and seeing for instance how, by visualizing, the way the hands are holding the mani, the wish-fulfilling gem, just this

visualizing transforms your perception of mind and reality. So these are very skillful methods.

Q: I realized when you were speaking about the mesmerizing effects of social media that somehow there have always been dazzling distractions...like palaces or jewels or clothes. I wonder how to countermand the effects of this distraction, especially for the youngsters who are less developed yet so affected with the internet and phones; what kind of practice can reduce this bedazzlement?

A: Yeah, I'm still struggling with it so I'll give you an answer when I work it out. It's kind of a two edged sword, you see? For example, we are using a social media platform right now, and I use Facebook, and I've been trying to find ways to get off of Facebook, though it looks like they are changing their name, but it's still the same thing. So I was trying to find another way, but the only way I found was actually even more complicated. There are other platforms to communicate, but people have to join you in the group, and suddenly it becomes extremely complicated. I'm always thinking in terms of communication and what the easiest way is. These days young people don't use Facebook, it's for people my age...because it's easy. So I use it because I want to pass a message. I've got almost 4000 people following me on FB, so when I post something hopefully a fraction of this will get it, because of the algorithm I'm not sure everybody gets it, but anyway I can really reach people like this. This is the incentive for me to stay on Facebook, when, though, I totally agree with what this whistleblower was saying that they have a very toxic policy just based on greed. Ha ha, what news! (I thought it was a philanthropic enterprise:~)]... It's for money!!! If you can make a buck and somebody's kid dies, well, it's still a dollar. So we were exposed to the rude nature of this kind of enterprise.

So I agree with you that there must be reflection on how to protect young minds, and actually older minds also, that are not able to use the social platforms, but are used by these social platforms. Because basically, if the product is free, you are the product; but this is really difficult to understand. Even if you are old, and you want to install Candy Crush on your phone, you have to push agree, agree, agree because you just want to crush some candy...and you could be seventy years old. In a way kids are more savvy, because they know the tricks, but still, it gets back to what I was saying. We want to be mesmerized. We want to be entertained. And I totally agree with you that there was always something that was entertaining, and that we wanted to be part

of, that we wanted for ourselves, and we were ready to pay. It's kind of like as old as the Faustian deal.

The only way we can cut through this is individually to become aware of this, and decide to use it as a skillful method of communicating, if that works and if that's possible. For kids it's very different because their life, and especially with this Covid time, social media is very much in the fabric of their life. Social media is not something they adopted, they were born with it. I was not born with the computer, I can vaguely remember what the world was like before computers. I have a reference, a before and after. Kids don't have it. And if you don't appear on this social media, it's like you don't exist. It's basically a problem of what your identity is. Questioning what's your identity, who are you if you are not on social media?

As I watch things on Youtube, and when I watch things on Youtube on my phone, it somewhat drives me into Tik Tok which I would never go to see by just opening the Tik Tok App, it's a kids App really. And it's fascinating. I can spend hours watching these things. There are big genres of, like, shuffle dance, or this or that, and suddenly you become an "influencer" because you've got 55,000, 100,000 or for some of them millions of people following them. They want to have this fame, I think that's a product of the society now, people want to be famous. Deeply it means they want to be noticed. Want to be, almost like, worshiped. All this communication is based on that because the more you look at these things, the more clicks, the more money for whoever the platform is, so they'll give you more of something.

It's really fascinating, I see it when I research on Google for something I "think" I need. An object. You can be sure the next day Amazon is going to bombard me with these things. One day I was shocked because I received an email from Amazon that reminded me that I really want this object; and I had totally forgotten that I researched this object. They were telling me, "Remember your desire of the past. And, "We can offer it to you for \$19.99, free shipping. Just click here." This is a Faustian deal. You can have the thing, you can have the fame, if you give me all the info about who you are. So I don't really have any practical answer on how to help a kid out, but the general sense is more communication in real life, and I would say, more awareness. They're not stupid, kids get it. But the temptation is very strong. The desire to be accepted, to be visible.

Q: This is more of a comment, but I realize that in my earlier life, when I would read Buddhist-ish materials and self-help books, I didn't really retain the suggestions, it didn't stick. Now I think that was because I didn't practice what I was learning. Then I met the Buddhist teachers on Martha's Vineyard, and looked more deeply into the teachings, and was able to practice on a more experiential level and have more discernment on what .

A: Yes. In translating this into Buddhism terms, I think we would look at if you are going through the process of study, reflection, and meditation. Or are you on a loop of reading, or listening, and not making the effort of trying to bring it into your life and make sense of it and make it yours? Owning it. I think that's one thing we can share or explain in our communication, that you only own one thing when you have the experience of it, otherwise you're just a parrot, when you are just repeating somebody famous' words. I mean, kids are not so much on Twitter, it's more for grownups, but that's Twitter. Somebody says something, and 2 million people say exactly the same thing, or exactly the opposite of what was said. You can spread a rumor and it just goes through...they've done studies on that. That the rumors are more difficult to stop than the transmission of real facts. You can stop the transmission of real facts, information, but the rumors spread...because it's exciting. "Oh guess what I heard?" It's sensational. It brings a sense of having something juicy.

Like the pleasure you have to be the first one to know something, so that you can tell everybody else. There is great enjoyment in that. This was prophesied 20 years ago, that in 20 years knowledge would be power. Not the knowledge in terms of realization and so forth, but information will be the source of power.

Q: I have a question in terms of renunciation, renunciation to the illusion, or renunciation to the attachment being real, or the aversion, and in terms of taking the appearance of things with a grain of salt. Here in Martinique we're still under curfew and Covid's been pretty horrible for a lot of people, so in terms of suffering and then my own privilege...where is the balance in this renunciation? What's a helpful way to think about that?

A: Thank you for that, it's an important point that I may not have addressed without this question. It's really, really important. That's why I try to use different words, for instance with those of us more privileged people, I was using the word discomfort, a

feeling of entrapment, a feeling of not being fully free, which is kind of like crying on a high standard, like, “Oh, my god, Whole Foods doesn't have my favorite brand, I suffer, this is samsara.” So, discomfort and real suffering. The real suffering is the suffering of sickness, of poverty, from being abused, being neglected and so on.

I think there are 2 ways to look at things. There's a way to look at your own discomfort of suffering, and a way to look at other peoples discomfort and suffering. In particular other people's suffering. You can't be sort of waving your illusory argument when people are starving, being abused, being exploited...you have to have another language. You have to have the language mostly of compassion. Which is how we can find a way to alleviate this burning situation, this burning suffering. In the awareness that all of this is an illusion, this is not the time to mention this; you can't teach people who are barely surviving about the illusory nature of all phenomena.

First you need to secure some sort of comfort; a minimum basic human comfort, and that will be the first thing to do. So, there's a lot you can take when it comes to suffering, you can take your own suffering with a grain of salt. You can look at it as, “I suffer because I'm still clinging to the substantial existence of a self.” You can ask yourself to look at this. You can't ask somebody else to do it. Because again, it's a personal, intimate, process that you are willing to take. You can't put that on other people, and sort of rub their nose in their misery by saying, like, “Be like me.”

I remember a conversation with a friend when I said, “I've decided really early on to just lead the life I have and it works for me. Good conditions come to me, I have what I need to live, and so on.” And my friend said, “Yes, because you are Lama Tsony. You paid your dues. And you can't say that's the system for everybody.” Of course others could do like me, but my point is that I cannot weigh and rub your nose in it, that it's because you are not like me that you suffer, that would be extremely inappropriate and pretentious.

So, first, you need to help. Then maybe, if requested, if possible, comes a talk about how come we are here. Yes, outwardly we can say the fire, the water, all of this is probably manmade, and there is something to do to save this environment and so forth. Yes. Social equality, social justice, no doubt about it, this has to be addressed. It's very compassionate to bring this up. You know, this morning in the French edition of this dialogue, somebody asked me my opinion on cryptocurrency and is

bitcoin ethical and so on. I can't just shy away and say, "I'm just a spiritual dude, I don't know anything about crypto, crypto is cryptic for me, and I'm not interested. The fact is, I am interested, the fact is it's very fascinating and I have my opinion on that and I have things to say about this, and so that shows me that my path of meditation is happening in the world, and this world is interdependently connected, and of course the greed of some will affect some others. And social injustice and financial inequality is a major problem. On the relative level, this needs to be addressed. But on a deeper level, how come we're even in this nightmare, who is in this nightmare? All of this needs to be explored, but it needs to be explored individually.

You can't just throw it out in the world like this; I'm talking to you guys because you ask, by being here to have a conversation about what the Buddhist path to awakening is, and so I'm telling you this...okay, let's work with the essence of the problem, or we could have had another conversation, or maybe we will have it in the future, about how to help the world who is suffering. One doesn't exclude the other. You can be really serving humanity through education, social activity, to some extent politics, politics in the sense that it concerns common life, not the politician politics. All of this needs to be embraced as part of the path. And so on our own scale, what can we do? How can I contribute? Like the hummingbird, how many drops can I bring to stop the fire? Identify your talent, identify your sphere of action, give your best, and at the same time cultivate insight and discernment about the deep reasons, karma and ignorance. Otherwise you get stuck in the relative manifestation. It's crucial. *The Path to Awakening* is divided into two main chapters. One is to cultivate insight, and the other one is how to help the world's pain. And how to merge the two is implicit throughout the book. Your inner path and your outer path. Your inner exploration and your outer application. And the more compassion, the more insight you will need, the more insight you have, the more efficient your compassion will be. So that's crucial, it's vital.

Q: What happens when you try to remove the suffering of others and yourself, without being greedy, but also have traumatic events that your body doesn't want to forget, so you're holding on to them, like a physical attachment, which makes it hard to continue on with your story and help others. For me, at least, I get stuck in my own story and it's harder for me to integrate myself and at the same time help others. I haven't learned how to do it yet.

A: I think it's a looong process of healing and discovery. As we look inside we see maybe we have a more clear view of traumatic experiences, maybe we realize that we need some help, and maybe we even realize that meditation cannot help everything. That we need to first address these traumatic issues. But it doesn't mean that now and then you cannot help a little bit. You know? I think that what I hear, tell me if I'm wrong, but what I hear is that it's all or nothing. To help I have to be clear.

Q: It's kind of like being in a whirlpool, a downward spiral, a loop I can't easily extricate myself from.

A: What you just said is so important. You are aware you are in a loop. Think about all of the people that are in the loop that aren't aware they're in the loop. There's no way out for them. The first step out is to be aware that you are in the loop, that's the first teaching of the Buddha, acknowledge discontentment, acknowledge suffering. Own it. Then comes the motivation to find where it comes from. Then discover that it's possible to find liberation. Then comes the "therapy," the process of recovery. That's everything that the Buddha taught in the Four Truths of the Noble One, the first teachings he gave. And I think this is so important. In terms of meditation, I see people meditate and they realize that the more they meditate the more they realize that, "I'm so greedy and cranky and horny and I see that I hate myself..." I said, "Cool! This is the first realization!"

You become aware of what is making you tick. Before that, you were ignorant of this and you were just pretending. And when you had some uneasiness you would attribute it to some external factors. "Somebody did that to me. Somebody laid a trip on me." You would outsource your uneasiness. And of course the first discovery of what is really happening in our mind is not very glorious, because it is exactly what we didn't want to see and that's the reason why we sedate ourselves with a lot of agitation, noise and things, so that we don't see that. And now as we stop the noise we can hear this, and that's when we need courage. That's where we need true renunciation, which is the renunciation of the temptation to succumb to unawareness. Go back to the slumber I was in before, and just let me wash this away with a drink. Or whatever, let's go online and buy stuff.

You are at a crucial point, so when you just say that, for me it is a great achievement, it may not feel like it, but it's such a great achievement. Because you've seen that you are in the loop, the next question is, "Where did this loop come from, and how come this vicious circle keeps spinning." And you're the only one who can find an answer to this. You can look at it, look at it, look at it...and maybe you need help at some point when it's too strong and overwhelms you, maybe you need to have a listening external reference, like it could be a therapist, somebody who can listen; a listener with a highlighter, who can say, hey, you've said that. Just highlight what you said and suddenly there is an awareness of what you just said, with a domino effect of reaction and so on. That's what a therapist can help you to do sometimes, but if you do your own observation, you can probably do it by yourself, though sometimes it's not possible, then there is no shame in asking for help. If you break your leg, then you use crutches, that's fine, but you are not going to spend your entire life, once your leg is fixed, to use the crutches, that would be ridiculous. So there's no shame in asking for help.

And I just wanted to say that if you are aware of this, it is a tremendous achievement. So don't be afraid of feeling that you are not doing it, and never find the way out, because you have seen, you have felt, you have acknowledged, that you're trapped. And I think that's where impermanence is such a great ally, because if you remember "this too shall pass," there is no entrapment that lasts forever. It can reproduce itself into something else, but there is always a moment where one thing stops and another one comes, and if you keep observing, then you can see how it stops, and how the next one is pushed into the foreground, and then you make a step and say, "I'm not going to follow that, I'm not going to respond as I used to in the past." It's a very, very long process somehow. Sometimes it seems to last forever when it was just like 10 minutes, and then sometimes things just fall into place repeatedly so that your life is upside down in the good sense. You find yourself in a completely new environment and direction and things have been moving super fast. Well, I don't know about time, it's relative. But I really want you to remember that what you have discovered is the first step on the path to realization, and feel good about that.

Try something new. Try something else. The habit and spiral is just so boring and lethal, what can you lose, just try something different. Otherwise that's really the basis of depression. You see how much your mind stinks, and and you see what you should

do in your life to feel better, and you say, “F*&k it, I’m not gonna do it...and don’t even try to push me to do it.” There is something in you that gives up, and I think it’s a desire, the desire not to be thrown into something that “I don’t know.” Rather to stay in my stinky depression than step out in what is now unknown. I don’t know, I have a feeling it’s like this, at least it is for me sometimes like that.

Think about something else, think about somebody else for a change, instead of staying in this quicksand. It’s a swamp. And maybe you have, for the wrong reasons, but, you know, it’s only a problem for you, because if you have a person that is helped they don’t care if it was for your good or bad reason. This person has been helped and in the meantime it gave you a different perspective, maybe you’ll snap out of this loop. I watched Jim Carrey on YouTube. He’s an interesting character this guy, he’s in sort of a mystical phase of his life, he’s quite interesting, and he said, “I went through some very deep depressions, I was depressed, and then I thought about the word depressed. Depressed. Depressed. Deep Rest. I need a deep rest. My body is telling me there is a need for a deep rest.” And that is just like opening space and changing the perspective totally, from confinement in a stinkball into a deep rest. It’s like you dive into a depression and you come out on the other side, which is deep rest. And then of course there is a need to change your life, habits, and do something else, but it comes after. You can’t bring the, “I need to change my life,” while you are depressed because all your creativity will be used to tell you how you can’t do that. Because you’ve thought about it all, and you’ve thought about all the reasons why it wouldn’t work.

So think about somebody else for a while. This can be a good way to snap you out of this toxic loop and help you to see things differently. Some people have real problems; I’m not saying that depression is not a real problem but some people have problems that need to be taken care of, and it doesn’t matter if you do it for the wrong reasons, at least to begin with, because it initiates a new spiral.

Q: Instead of thinking of all or nothing, in terms of impermanence, I instead think of all and nothing existing simultaneously.

A: I think I agree with the idea of not excluding anything, because excluding is based on duality, a dichotomy, something is pure and something is impure, something is and something is not. All of these extreme positions do not reflect reality but our own

mental fabrications to try to encase the reality in a little box that's easy to manipulate and work with. To be more into, like in the Zen tradition there is to be comfortable in the not knowing experience. Like you don't know emptiness, and it doesn't become an obsession. Like, "I need to know." You are comfortable with not knowing, because maybe you know that it's not something to be known, and then in due time, if you just keep raking the gravel in the yard and doing zazen, then things will clear up. So there is something very humble in your task everyday, and don't worry about the outcome. And so this not knowing is a very interesting place. Like the future.

This morning in the French session a young woman asked about her life, what she should study, what she should do with her life, what would be good and so on...basically she was saying she doesn't know what the future will be, asking me to tell her what to do now for the future to be...something? In a very practical fashion, what kind of study, what kind of job, all of that. I said, "Well first you have to be comfortable with the fact that you don't know, and then relax there. Then if you have thought over cause and effect, and the 8-fold Noble Path of the Buddha, then you know that if you are in the present moment, abiding by the right actions, right speech, right livelihood, the appropriate concentration meditation, discernment, and so on, then you are planting the seed for insight and well-being. So you don't have to worry, you just have to tend. Just give a little TLC to your garden every day. In terms of study, maybe the best is to not be too specialized."

I told her that when I was 14 I went to see a counselor at school and he said, "Well, if I look at the results of these tests, I think a good job for you is 'information card puncher,' you have to punch cards," and he said, "there will be lots of jobs for you in the future. It's a 3 year training course, then in 3 years you will be sure to get a job, because it's informatics, it's computers, that's the future." Except that, after 3 years, nobody was using these punch cards anymore...because Steve Jobs and Bill Gates took these jobs away. So don't be too specialized. Common education; know history, know languages, know how to communicate, meet other people, learn to express yourself through other media than intellectual media, explore artistic mediums of communication and so on. So basically be well equipped and ready to meet your future when it will come to you. And then in the meantime, use what in Buddhism we call aspiration, the word in Tibetan is monlam, lam means a path, and mon means aspiration. It's a path you open with your aspiration. Very, very vast. "May I find a

way to have a life that is purposeful. May I find a way to have a life that helps other people. May I be at the right place at the right time and meet the right people so that the connection can be made and at a certain crossroad I can take the right path.” These kinds of general wishes, and that’s enough. And in the meantime, be familiar with not knowing, let your mind rest in itself, because this is a young woman who has meditated since a very tender age so that was my advice to her, just do more of that, just be there, and cultivate kindness for yourself and other people and the environment. And be interested, be open to learn, what else do you want to do? And it’s still valid for me, at this time of my life I’m pretty much in the same spot, like I don’t know what’s gonna be next. You don’t know if the next will be death or breath. I don’t know. If it’s going to be a new breath or the last breath, I don’t know. Nobody knows. So always ready to go on whatever new adventure comes my way, but be prepared by being well equipped.

Q: You said to try to focus on fluidity when observing impermanence, you said because we try to freeze things in order to gain control over the situation, or whatever. Could you cite some daily life examples of how to focus on fluidity? What do you mean by focusing on fluidity?

A: By the time we name the situation it is gone. Do you remember how irritating it was for you when at times I would change my mind in 10 seconds, like sometimes you say, “Let’s go to town,” and as a good Frenchman I always say no first. “I don’t want to go to town.” It took me some time to realize why we French say “no” first. It’s because we are polite. If you say no first you can always say “yes, and that’s positive. If you say yes because you don’t want to say no and embarrass or inconvenience anybody but then change your mind, you have to be negative; you have to say no. It’s very violent;~} But this really reflects how my mind works. It’s that in this given moment this configuration is yes, in the next moment the configuration has changed and it can be no. Those of you who met Shamar Rinpoche and got to interact with him, he was the epitome of change. People couldn’t handle his changing...all the time. Changing all the time.

One example: Delphine, I think they were in California, and Rinpoche said, “Okay, I have to go to New York.” Maybe the Sunday of a busy holiday, like July 4th. She had to call the airline and change the tickets, it took maybe an hour, and in the meantime, when she came back, Rinpoche said, “Oh, I got a phone call, I don’t need to go to

New York anymore, but I need to go to Boston.” Calls back the woman, the 4th of July, Sunday afternoon, to change the ticket to go to Boston. All afternoon was just that....changing, changing, hanging the ticket. And in the end, Rinpoche said, “Never mind, I’ll go to New York. So she had to call the airlines again to try to get the original ticket back.

So, if you don’t go with the flow, you’re dead. It’s like in Dune, you have to surf the worms. Maybe you haven’t seen the movie or read the book, but you have to be able to surf over the sand worms, and if you can’t do that, you’re gonna die. The idea is to be with the flow. So it’s not so much about tasks you do daily, because a task you do everyday is everything but in the flow. It’s the routine. Routine can be helpful at some points, like when you’re totally scattered and your mind is going in every direction, so you need to think, “I’ll wake up at 7am, then I have breakfast, brush my teeth, etc, etc;” it gives you a sense of efficiency and having it together.

Q: But what about like when you weed the garden, and then the next day there they are again? Or doing the dishes, day after day, it’s relentless. Is that the flow?

A: Why am I upset about the dishes? Like when I just finish the dishes, and I go back and there’s something in the sink, and on top of that, I like order in the kitchen. Then I’m aggravated. But then I’ve got a wonderful opportunity to look at it. Sometimes I’m lazy and I don’t and sometimes I do, and it is very, very rewarding. And basically I can see that the pet peeve is not so much about the dirty dishes, it’s about, “We could have done that with less dishes.” Because I’m a kind of one skillet, one wooden spoon guy. Like everything in one skillet, and I eat from the skillet with one spoon. And there’s no dishes. But now there are a ton of dishes that could have been otherwise. And I’m not saying that this is true and it’s not that doing the dishes is a problem, it’s that I realize that I have an obsession with efficiency. That’s my thing. I’m so attached to efficiency, and why am I so attached to efficiency? Because I’m lazy. I’m very deeply lazy. Why should I do more things when it could be done with less energy? But then what I have to observe is, why do I want to be efficient so that I spend less energy doing one thing? What do I do with the extra time? Nothing. So what’s the point? So all of this happens when I am doing the dishes...and what I want to notice is the fluidity.

Sometimes you are going through an emotional state. It's actually very impermanent, it just goes like a breeze. For a while you're super angry or super lustful or super jealous, and if you just notice it, then it goes away. If you try to fix it and say, "Oh my god, I've got a problem," I need to practice the remedy of this and the remedy of that, then you somewhat solidify it, instead of letting it slide. So that's another idea about minding the fluidity, because some things don't stick. And if you think they are a problem then you make them stick, when you could just let them slide. Pass by. And they don't leave a trace.

In mind training there is one slogan that says, "Let all the remedies dissolve, once they have fulfilled their purpose," or something to this effect. That is, once you have noticed that your mind is like this at this moment, don't fix it; don't solidify it into a state. And then be ashamed of it, or have a problem with it, or...it just came and went. Maybe you could look at it and see, "Hey, this is just a wave of luminosity in an ocean of emptiness," period. And let the remedy dissolve. Or you're aware that there is a moment of emotional response that could be the basis for starting an argument or starting a fight or whatever, breaking plates;~}

Q: As someone who has followed your teachings from when you were an ordained monk, and then since you married Wendelin, I've noticed that your examples of Dharma in daily life have changed a lot since you got married, and it is very helpful to those of us who are part of a couple, so thank you both, Wendelin and you.

A: Yes, partnership. You are right, the examples I used when a monk were really only relevant to life in the monastery. We used to joke in the kitchen, it's like Las Vegas, the jokes we told should "stay in the monastery." Changing lifestyle, changing environment, changes also perspective.

...A discussion followed a participant talking about the connection she felt to the poetry introduced by Lara Braitstein's workshop. The participant was especially struck by learning about Patachara, a Buddhist nun poet ordained by the Buddha. The text of *Therigatha, The Sons and Daughters of the Buddha* is highly recommended by Tsony because of its simplicity, especially the version that was edited by Anne Waldman. She was a student of Trungpa Rinpoche, but also a poetess and playwright. These poems can go straight to the heart. These were amazing realized masters, starting with the

aunt of the Buddha who had thousands of women following her. All these women have written amazing songs by their simplicity, their depth, and how they connect with their life as women in early India in a very patriarchal environment, it's full of suffering and liberation at the same time, very, very beautiful.