

## *Finding Your Own Way Home*

*(based on a talk given by Rev. angel Kyodo williams at New Dharma*

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New Dharma is essentially a system of choices, of potential ways in which to practice and help create the conditions in which people can cultivate their own inner awareness such that they might come in contact with their basic goodness, and there are lots of ways to do that. Lots of ways. Some of those ways don't at all extend to the outer environment.

There's the tradition of *dharshan*, which means, "to be seen." It's very common in the Hindu *Advaita* tradition. One simply goes and sits in the presence of the Teacher, and that is, in and of itself, an experience. There's a whole cultivation around the power of that experience—sitting in a small audience with the Teacher. You may not even be asking questions—a word may not even be spoken—but there is a field of openness and surrender that is generated in that experience that allows people to move beyond some of their inhibitions (if they're willing), which allows them to speak their heart and have their heart heard, which is to be witnessed. In that witnessing, there is an opening. So that would be a *dharshan* experience.

There are a lot of *guru*-based traditions. *Guru* essentially means, "the light that brings us out of darkness." So, "gu" and "ru" simply mean "light" and "dark"; *guru* expresses the light that opens the darkness. Not the darkness in our messy political construct of darkness, but the darkness that suggests the

ways in which our view is obscured, that notion that we have impediments, that we have blockage, that we have—the word that is commonly used here and heard in the heart sutra is hindrance. That there are hindrances to our view, to our ability to see clearly, and that is fundamentally what every tradition worth its salt is trying to get to, it's trying to encourage individuals to see clearly. We could say, see God clearly. We could say, see our own Buddha nature clearly. We could say, see the world as it is. See what's happening in this very moment, which is all very practical. We could say, see the divine light, which is a little more mystical, a little more, but it's all the same. It's saying the same thing, because if you see the one you see the many. If you see any of it clearly, you see it all clearly.

Let's not get caught up in the words that are expressed in the different traditions and regions and cultures and times, let's not see and create separation in our mind, because there really is no separation; we're all sharing this human experience. We couldn't possibly be having that much of a different experience, really, because we have so many things that we share. All of our eyes see unless there's something that actually impairs our eyes. So eyes see and ears hear and nose smells and tongue tastes and skin feels; the body vehicle is on its own separate journey. So no matter how spiritually inclined we get we are limited in this vehicle, which invites compassion, because without it we could just sail on.

It's a good thing when the body breaks down, because it reminds us no matter where we are in our minds, in our intelligence, in our awakening, in our

enlightenment, in whatever trips we're having about ourselves that day...it reminds us of our fundamental, basic connection with the person that is broken down on the street. Because when we feel broken, we feel broken, and there just ain't no comparing it. Pain be pain. And the thought of "my pain is better than your pain" goes right out the door. You might be thinking your car is better, your awakening is better, your education is better, but when you are in pain, you're just in pain.

Because of our fundamental shared expression, we have a shared realm that we exist in as human beings. We are a different expression than a bumblebee, right? As human beings, we have a particular shared expression. We're a different expression than a rose. We're not better expressions; we are different expressions. And as human beings, the human family is *one* single expression. And so our experience, our ultimate experience of being fully connected with all that is has got to be the same. The only thing that makes a difference is our small minds trying to create specialness out of a situation that is most, most ordinary. And so, we say that practice is just a system of choices, of ways in which to cultivate that very, very ordinary, basic experience of our own goodness for which everyone without fail—without fail, without limitation—has the basic fundamental capacity; we have simply chosen to do it in this way.

So, what are some of those ways?

Rather than creating any kind of energetic charge around the audience, around this individual me as the Teacher, New Dharma has an extended

environment. Here teaching happens in the cultivated experience of the outer environment. A lot of it has to do with taking choices and setting them at the door. That's a very big part of it. It gives us the opportunity to rest our minds from having to make a whole bunch of choices and instead to cultivate an immediacy. That immediacy and intimacy comes from hearing sounds that we simply respond to without choice. As I often say, the bell rings; we sit down. There's no choice. There's nothing to think about. We don't have to argue; we don't have to wonder. We could but we don't have to and that's the beauty of this particular expression. This not special, but very basic, very ordinary expression.

There are lots of ways to practice. We could sit here and chant *Om* and see *Om* in our minds for hours, and that would be its own thing. We could do that and it would have some affect. And it would ultimately do the same thing as other practices. It would go to the same place. There's no sense that we're special, that we do a special thing. We do a really ordinary thing, which is to simply find our way. For no other reason except to reduce the need to make choices on an ongoing basis, we do our ordinary thing in a consistent way so that we don't have to keep making it up as we go along. So that I can say to Amie, "This is the way, left. We'll do walking meditation going left today." That way we don't wonder, Should we go right today? Should we go down the middle? Should we swing around the block a little bit?

We make these decisions so that we can relax. We have this consistency so that we can relax, and we have this consistency because we're often lacking

that consistency in our lives. We're lacking that kind of, this is what you do and you do it because you want to be here for you. You don't do it because you get paid. You don't do it because you get a reward. You don't even do it because your parents approve of it. Some people say you do it to make yourself a better person. I don't even buy that one. Because I think that people get pretty rough around the edges for a while, and it doesn't really look like they're a better person. If we buy into that, we create some limitation around the experience, because we think we're supposed to be here being better people.

**We're just finding our way.**

And if we trust that basic goodness is humanity, is our human nature, then we don't have to do it in order to become **this** or **that**. We don't have to do it to get to **here** or **there**. We simply trust that **home** is **home**.

We don't have to describe home. No one has to tell us what home is like—in fact, no one can tell us what home is like. All I can do is say, You know here's an environment in which you can rest the constant movement of the mind—the speediness, the aggression—that often keeps you from being able to find home.

And the rest is up to you, my friends. That's all that can happen here: We can all help each other find our way home—to our individual and yet collective home. Isn't that beautiful?

Our individual and yet collective home can be found, can be supported by one another if we are each wholly committed to *finding our own way home*. That doesn't mean we're shirking our responsibility or relationship with the

larger community. It means, in this environment our own intention and willingness to truly stay on the path of finding our way home is exactly what is called for and is exactly what is needed so that other people can find their own way home, because you're not pulling them off their path with your chatter; you're not pulling them off their path with your overzealous fluffing of the cushions; you're not pulling them off *their* path to *their* way home because you just need to be noticed.

We do that, we do that all the time, unnecessary noise, unnecessary utterances. I don't mean all the time, but I mean here. In this space. In this practice container. Give it a try. See what it's like to spend your time diligently *finding your way home*. And as unfortunate as it may be, it isn't the best motivation for everyone. Some people are more motivated by the ways in which they can be present and available for others. I say to those people, Okay, we can't force you to have self-orientation if you have other orientation; we can't do that. What we can do is say, The way that you can best support other people is to be finding your way home.

Some of us are oriented around ourselves and we can say, Know what you need to do? Find your way home. And they are *happy!* Ohhh-whooh! That's what I've always wanted to do, find my way home. Thank you, say no more. And for other people we can say, Here is how you can touch your heart's desire, which is to support other people—find your own way home. **Find your own way.** Give that person, all of the other people you're sharing space with, the opportunity, the spaciousness, the practice container, the support, the

energetic love and compassion to let them be on their way. And the only way you can absolutely assure that is to not hand them a map. It's for you to be on *your* way and just get out *their* way.

Why? Because it's *their* way home. Not *your* way home.

You hand them a map and surely your address will be mixed up in there somewhere. So keep your own maps, keep your own advice. It's very, very, very much about your own practice and truly making this your own practice.

One of the facets—I like that word because it's close to fascinating—facets of our community, is the wondrous diversity. I mean, it's just wondrous; we can't get around it. For our time, for our present conditions—maybe this was different some other time, but for where we are right now there's a certain wondrousness to the truth of our breadth and diversity of background, tradition, cultural experiences.... Even if we all shared ethnic backgrounds we'd still have completely different experiences, coastal experiences, gender orientation, sexual orientation, non-orientation, having sex, not having sex, male and female, questioning and not buying-into-any-of- that...age variances—all of it! It's enticing to get up into that because it's delicious.

There are as many individual paths as there are individuals. There is a time for getting into that and we create spaces for people to touch the breadth of this community, but during the times of practice, just find your way home. Don't be interested in anyone else's home or where they came from or what their hair is like or how they got here or why they're here, why they're still here. If you're here, be here until you're not.

At the very, very end of the journey, each and every single one of us is going to have to see clearly what home is for us and make our way, no matter what. No matter what kind of preliminary trainings and practices there are. Whether we have *gurus* or teachers or *rishis*...I can't keep up with all these titles: *roshis*, priests, rabbis, reverends, ministers, *sheikhs*. None of them can take us there at the end of the day. They can point, and they're some good pointers, but we just want to hold space for the truth of that: elders, ancestors, good pointers, but they cannot tell us where our home is. Let us each find our own way home and respectfully allow that opportunity for the sake of all beings.

Enjoy your practice. Enjoy your life.