

## **The Fundamentals of the Journey**

(A fairly complete set of notes taken during a talk by John Travis at the Harmony Ridge Retreat. This was his first real talk, given Saturday night, January 7, 2012.)

The journey has 4 parts:

- 1) We collect ourselves through concentration/Samadhi.
- 2) Insight
- 3) A Single Taste – the result of items 1 and 2 above, the result of seeing into our functions and processes, and then liberating ourselves from them.
- 4) Non Disturbing Awareness – we become adaptable enough to live in a chaotic world and not get thrown.

## **COLLECTING OURSELVES**

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Century a Zen Master said it is just

- 1) Stopping
- 2) Seeing

Stopping is concentration. Seeing is Wisdom. These are the the two wheels of the chariot, the two wings of the bird. They are the essential prerequisites for ending confusion. If we learn to concentrate without seeing we get dullness. If we learn to see without any concentration we become crazed.

Day one of a retreat is the frog swamp. If you do nothing but follow the schedule, that alone will calm you down. We are waves of movement, sticky stories. So we give the mind an object, the breath, which is always under the surface of everything. We use the breath to focus the mind. A mantra might be easier, and might calm the mind more quickly. Ajahn Chah used a mantra for that reason. The art is to hold the breath very lightly.

Our environment here helps us, but the actual stopping is a disaster for the body. Not moving the body helps us to collect ourselves. The breath is a true object, it is not special. A true object works in any culture. All beings breathe, thus it is universal. That is a true object.

As the mind settles and the body stills, discomfort passes, and we gain a lightness of body. We become more aware.

On days 1 and 2 we may be drifty and sleepy. The body begins to relax, it stretches out, we ease into relaxation, and then the mind can stay on an object.

We need a certain amount of concentration, access concentration, to see how things work: Insight. It happens in a moment and the moment informs you.

The Buddha taught the Jhanas. One reason is that renunciates have few sensual options. The Jhanas are an antidote to discomfort. The monks could have this heavenly pleasure at its most refined.

## **INSIGHT (VIPASSANA)**

After you are collected you are intuitive, non-analytical, you are into your operating system. The insight comes out of nowhere, through a deep connection to the root of human experience.

Western psychology is different from Buddhist psychology. It is powerful and personal. Insights are into universal principals. They are not personal. They touch many questions you may have about your life.

This is non-ordinary seeing, clear seeing. Not the obvious. We train the mind to get out of the way. This covers all Buddhist traditions. There is Tibetan Vipassana, used to analyze, to deconstruct, to look at emptiness. It is a thinking process.

## **A SINGLE TASTE**

Non confusion and non suffering, a different mind, a different relationship to the body, a degree of awakening. The Big Bang Theory, the singularity. We teach ourselves how not to suffer, how to let go. We move from confusion to freedom.

A single moment, that is non-dual. Only that moment, a world unto itself. We see the consequences of not letting go.

But we're so tricky. It is so much easier to live with freedom than with confusion. You open your hand to be easy. You know from the heart.

Freedom is always singular, there is this and that, but then suddenly there is only this. The power of presence. Defined from an internal place, a training that allows the moment to arise. Blackbird singing in the dead of night. Mindfulness in one moment.

Animals have this. We have clear comprehension, momentary freedom, many times over and over, we become intelligent, phenomenally intelligent.

There is no need for hope or fear. We just TRUST THE NOW. The moment is enough. Things will take care of themselves. Trust yourself, no need to fight, the boat has a rudder, you only need steer just a little bit. No struggle. No suffering.

## **NON DISTURBING AWARENESS**

Freedom. We stay in the present, even in the most difficult circumstances, even in rough seas, we trust. There is no panic, no strike back. There is something bigger going on. We don't trust in some "thing," there is no object, nothing is given to us. But our self organizing principal allows us to stop. To see.

We all want a savoir. This is a wide savior, not narrow. If we surrender to the now.