

Self & Soul Koan III  
05/06/2010  
Cerro Gordo Temple

Good evening, bodhisattvas.

We're going to spend just this last night on the koan I brought in a while ago, so anybody who hasn't as yet memorized the koan or brought a copy of it, you are welcome to take a card.

I'll just read it, again. "A Young Woman Comes Out of Deep Meditation" :

Once Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, set out for a place where many enlightened ones had assembled with the Buddha. When he arrived, he found that all the enlightened ones were returning to their original dwelling place. Only a young woman remained, seated in deep meditation near the Buddha.

Manjushri asked the Buddha, "Why can the young woman get near your seat when I cannot?"

The Buddha replied, "Awaken this young woman from her meditation and ask her yourself."

Manjushri walked around the young woman three times, snapped his fingers once, took her up to the heavens, and exerted all his supernatural powers, but he couldn't bring her out.

The Buddha said, "Even a hundred thousand Manjushris couldn't wake her up. Down below, past lands as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges, lives the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom. He will be able to bring her out of her meditation."

Instantly the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom emerged from the earth and bowed to the Buddha, who made his request. Delusive Wisdom stepped before the young woman and snapped his fingers once. At this she came out of her meditation.

I mentioned that the person who turned this story from an old sutra into a koan by changing the Pure White Bodhisattva, the bodhisattva of pure white wisdom, into the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom, that woman / person also wrote a verse comment on the koan, and the verse goes :

One can bring her out, the other can't.  
Both of them are free.  
A god mask, a devil mask. Even in failure  
An elegant performance.

So, I want to speak a little bit more about this relationship between Manjushri, the bodhisattva of insightful wisdom, clear insight, and the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom, and how that relates to the soul and self as we have been talking about it, and how that relates to the

redemption of the self, the mistaken consciousness. And then I'd love to hear any comments or questions or insights you've had yourself about the koan over this time.

So I'll begin with the comment Shideyama Zenkei made about this koan, which I think is so crucial. He said that the nature of delusive wisdom is the wisdom of differentiation. And the nature of Manjushri's wisdom is the wisdom based on equality. So what that means is the kind of wisdom that Manjushri represents which we tend to idealize as being the ultimate wisdom, the wisdom for which we seek, the nature of that wisdom is based on seeing everything as absolutely equal to everything else. Each thing is the same in the most important terms as everything else. Everything is already perfect, radiant, and complete. That's Manjushri's wisdom. That's sort of the view from the crystal palace of Manjushri.

In contrast to that, the wisdom of differentiation sees the differences between. So Manjushri says *Oil spill in the Gulf. Dog licking my hand. Absolutely equal. No difference. The Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom, of differentiating wisdom, says Oil spill in the Gulf. Dog licking my hand. Big difference, really important difference.* Both those things are true; neither of them is everything that's true. Each is necessary, but neither is sufficient. So let me try to make that case.

When we have this young woman who's sitting deep in meditation, and when we have this circumstance of this koan, one of the things some koans will do — not all koans are the same, koans do different things — but there is a group of koans, a caldron of koans, a tribe of koans, a flock of koans that do something in particular, which is they raise an apparent tension or duality. And here we've got Delusive Wisdom and Manjushri's wisdom. They raise this apparent duality, and we can, if we take the bait, as we say, think that our task is to decide which is the right wisdom, which is the one I should go for, but the intent of the koans of this flock is to notice how we respond to duality by trying to choose, by thinking we have to pick, and then doing something else, which is to look for the ways in which the duality is actually false.

It is an artifact of our way of perceiving things, rather than of the way things actually are. And that our practice, or way, the thing we hope to do that is so essential is, first, to pull the two dualities together and hold them simultaneously, but next, to mix them up. To absolutely mush them together, let them wrestle with each other, and permeate each other so that a new thing, a third thing is created. And that third thing is the resolution of the koan.

So from the perspective of the koan this is so essential and important : the way to resolve an apparent duality is not to pick one whole or another, but to bring the two things together to make one that is a third thing that has not yet existed in terms of the duality, a third thing that is different than either of the two wholes.

To ground that down in the story and in human life, when this woman is sitting here the way the story is told, you might be forgiven for thinking Manjushri doesn't do anything. He's ineffective. He comes and he does his thing and nothing happens. But in fact, I want to suggest that maybe something really does happen with Manjushri. It's just that it's not happening on the visible level in the world of form, as it does with delusive wisdom. She's deep in samadhi. She's dropped down into that place where her buddha nature is potential, where her buddha nature is gestating and has been gestating her whole life. And so it seems to me quite possible that his circling her and his snapping his fingers once — and someone had pointed out the difference between the one snap and three snaps. And there you have the difference between equality [snaps one time] — oneness, everything is one — and differentiation [snaps 3 times], which is delusive wisdom.

He circles her. He snaps his fingers, and he takes her up to heaven, and it seems quite possible to me that in that deep samadhi in her being dropped down into her potential buddha nature, she sees the view from the Crystal Palace that floats in the heavens. She sees the wisdom of equality. She receives everything as shining, perfect, complete, and absolutely equal to everything else. But all of that is going to happen as an interior event, as something not visible in the world, or on the surface of her.

So, let's say that actually Manjushri doesn't fail. Manjushri does what Manjushri can do which is show her the wisdom of equality. And that is the spark, the thing that lights up her buddha nature so that it begins to manifest, to come out of that womb of the *tathagatha garbha*. And what happens when that wisdom of equality which is such a deep and powerful thing to experience, what happens when it begins to move, when it begins to rush up and out into the world, which it does? The first thing it hits is the 7<sup>th</sup> consciousness, the mistaken consciousness, which we've identified with the self, and with the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom. So the first thing that that wisdom of equality runs into is the wisdom of differentiation. *Bang*. That's got to be the first and most important mixing. It does not come out pure into the world as an understanding of the equality and perfection of everything. Immediately it hits. *No, things are*

*different*. And, something has to happen there, where those two things mix, permeate each other, and then the whole thing together comes out into the world. It's the product of that mixing that is the wisdom and the compassion that we bring out into the world.

There's something quite beautiful about being in a state of the wisdom of equality. And there's something quite extraordinary about feeling this absolute love for everything. It's also true that if you are another, if you are a person near somebody in that state, there's something quite disconcerting about it. We don't like to be loved because you loved everything equally. Right? We want to be loved for ourselves. Right? We want someone to gaze at us and say: "I love you because you're you." Not because I love everything, all the same. So, I'm trying to give you a feel for the importance of the wisdom of differentiation. The Wisdom of Differentiation that says, "I love you because you're you. I love this tree because it's this tree. I love this dog licking my hand because it's *this dog* who licks *this* way this hand." And, in fact, I meet even go so far as to say that it's that Wisdom of Differentiation that brings in the possibility at all. Love as we understand it, because love is based on the particular; love is based on the appreciation of something or someone for itself. There is this kind of other, undifferentiated love, but I'm not sure that's...that might be something else. We might need another word for that.

When you bring in the wisdom of differentiation, when you bring in that particularity, you bring in this whole realm, this whole world of risk. Love is risky. Seeing things in their particularities and appreciating them is really risky, much more risky than loving everything absolutely and without question. You're also bringing in the possibility of noticing that there's a difference between an oil spill and a dog's lick, and therefore being able to respond in a way that is helpful in the world, in the way that carries compassion with it. We might say that there is a compassion in Manjushri's wisdom, but it is a pretty cool compassion. It's a pretty sharp, diamond-like compassion that will just cut us away from our delusions. And it's also true that the love that comes out of discrimination can get into all kinds of troubles itself, in the other direction, in the direction of too much feeling, too much investment, and an inability to separate from the other make the clear distinctions and all of that. The point being that they need each other. To have a full-bodied wisdom you need both equality and differentiation in equal measure, and you need the thing that is born from the mixing of those two things.

Differentiation, when it is carried on a fundamental understanding of equality, is so powerful and committed to loving the world. Differentiation without that foundation, that wave

underneath of equality, can fall back into the mistaken consciousness and can make its decisions about differentiation based on the criteria of what's good for me, what's bad for me, what I like, what I don't like, what I think is good, what I think is bad. That's differentiation without equality underneath it, or mixing with it. Does that make sense?

So it falls back on all of those 'bad self' things, you know the things that really create difficulty for us. But with equality, with that understanding of equality, those criteria for dividing things up fall away, and we come to see things as they are and love them for exactly what they are, not for what they mean to us. So that's the tremendous importance of having those two things mixed together, and I believe that that's somehow part of the way that the problematic self gets redeemed. When buddha nature begins to rise up and carry the self, when the soul begins to rise up and carry the self with it, something happens where the small, narrow concerns of the self are replaced with this bigger vision, Manjushri's vision. But, the understanding of the importance of differentiation, the understanding of the importance of seeing things for what they are does not disappear, does not go away, and that grounds Manjushri's wisdom and makes it useful in the world, helpful in the world, kind in the world, effective in the world. It's not otherwise. It is not 'it doesn't do anything,' but that allows it to do something, and that's very, very powerful.

Manjushri gives the young woman the gift of the wisdom of equality. Delusive Wisdom gives her the gift of the wisdom of differentiation. *Snap! Snap! Snap!* Everything's different, and up she wakes....because those things had mixed in her. Not because Manjushri failed and Delusive Wisdom succeeded, but because both things happened, they mixed in her, and the result of that is awake in the world, out into the world. And awake not having abandoned the self, dismantled the self, or cut the self off; but redeemed the self, and bringing the gifts of the self, the power of the self into the world in a way that it can be genuinely useful.

You have this absolute, deep appreciation for the mysterious truth that everything is radiant and perfect just as it is, and equally, you have this deep, deep commitment to seeing everything for itself, appreciating everything for its particularity and loving it for itself, and coming into relationship with it with both of those viewpoints present. And then, I think, in some very important way, the practice is about : you spend then the rest of your life seeing what is the third thing that happens when those two things mix together. And that third thing that happens when those two things mix together might be called 'a human life lived completely'.

So maybe that's enough for this bite, but I would welcome anything you have to say, any questions or comments.

Q1 : Is then our self in some way trying to redeem itself if you're trying to kind of achieve enlightenment in some way because it's trying to keep up all its notions in some way, and so I think self, Manjushri, and buddhahood are all in the young woman, they're all like stages of wisdom or paths of wisdom as I can see it. It's not all different, because they're all in some stage and, again, it comes back again to self.

JIS : Yes, and I think as we seek, the site of our longing is the Self. It's the self that longs, and that's so important. That's such a motivating factor, and that longing become *bodhicitta*, becomes a desire for one's awakening for the benefit of all. So we need that longing in the self, because it's not in our buddha nature. Buddha nature is fine. It doesn't need anything, you know? It propels us.

Q2 : So what gets in the way of proper mixing?

JIS : Well, one of the things I've suggested tonight is something that often gets in the way. First off is the mistaken notion that we have to choose one thing and give up another, that the self is something to be abandoned, that the Buddha and the woman should be split apart, which can't be done, and that's so important. So that's it seems like the first kind of shift in understanding, to say *These things have to happen together. These things are inseparable.*

And then, and that's a huge question and a description of an entire practice — but I think it is to attend to both at the same time, to attend to the deep movements of buddha nature in our storehouse consciousness or our soul or whatever we want to call it. How do we support that? What are the activities or the absence of activities that give that the space, and do whatever it is it feeds on to do, and then it will do, you know, that we don't have to make that happen. We just to have create the good circumstances in which it might happen, and then simultaneously, to be working with the mistakes that the mistaken consciousness makes, which are those mistakes of dividing up the world into what's good for me and what's bad for me, what I like and don't like, and all that kind of stuff...substituting a manufactured reality for the actual reality. So that manufactured reality is probably the biggest and most immediate obstacle to what we're talking about, and so that why we keep, first of all, noticing that we've got this manufactured reality,

and then continually keep deconstructing it, so that we can glimpse actual reality. My experience is if we recognize that kind of fundamental challenge and stay with sincerity and commitment, it will take care of itself. It's not a lonely project in that you begin to feel the energies of your companions of the world gathering to help that happen.

So I'm not sure that was a direct answer to your question....

Q2 : It was a good answer.

JIS : But if I can say something about the premise of the question. There must be a reason we have to do this. There must be a reason we have a consciousness that acts like this and creates these challenges to work through. The working through of that must be essential. There must be a wisdom, shall we say 'delusive wisdom' that we get from meeting those challenges and working with that. We're not born in Eden and stay in Eden. We feel in some way that we're exiled, and that's absolutely essential to work with. And to recognize that we're working with it not just to overcome it, but to learn the wisdom inherent in that, which we're calling delusive wisdom. If you're wondering about delusive wisdom, delusive is, among other things, the wisdom of working what is challenging and difficult and painful in human life, and seeing that as necessary and right that we should not, it's nothing to 'get through', not something to get done so we can get to the 'real' life.

Anything else?

Q3 : I was just kind of shocked, I just have come into this because I've been gone for a couple of months, that the delusive wisdom would be called a bodhisattva, you know? And I've been thinking about that a lot lately, because just trying to make friends with my mind instead of thinking it's my enemy that's always in my way. But it's Bodhisattva! Delusive Wisdom.

JIS : Yeah, yeah. That's the gorgeous thing about this koan, that's the conversation we've been having so maybe you want to pick up some of the past conversation if that's something that's caught you, because, yeah, we've been struggling some with exactly that question, because it's a natural thing to struggle with.