

## DHARMA -- PRESENT TENSE

To me, the present reminds me of those little Scottish Terrier dog-magnets that we played with as kids. If you reversed the magnets, they would not stay together but repelled one another and jumped apart.

For me, the present is just like those magnets. It seems to repel me from it; I can't seem to stay in the present. I know Ram Das wrote the book "Be Here Now," and I remember hanging out with him back in the day. However, I find myself taking refuge in the past, in memories, or whiling away my time planning and anticipating the future. I did it all the time. Anything, but sit-out the stark-nakedness of the present. LOL.

Sometimes I think that the present is like a gusher (or fountain), a raw spring and cornucopia from which everything comes, but also, like a flood tide, it pushes everything into the past.

During my recent stroke-event, when both past and future were just blanked out, gone, all I had (and still have) is this present moment, But, for me, it's not like this present moment is an oasis in a desert, but just the opposite. It's more like a desert in an oasis, if that computes. Absolutely nothing is going on and that makes me nervous. I'm used to being coddled and entertained by my Self, who is apparently on vacation or was deconstructed in the blast of the stroke. LOL.

It's like there are no crickets chirping or roses to smell (my personal Disneyland is gone), but rather just my inability to be entertained by "nothing," to be sit still. LOL.

Both the past and the future are so entertaining, so easy to get lost in. All of this is a great reminder of how much I was used to being entertained and demanded it. Otherwise, like now, unless I am busy doing something in the present, I just sit tapping my fingers and looking around -- not very creative.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche would never have done that. The one time I spent a couple of hours alone with Trungpa Rinpoche. when he first visited Ann Arbor in February of

1974, I was his chauffeur for the time and he was staying at a professor's house. This was when he taught me how to meditate, but before that happened, I watched him peruse the professor's office, examining every last object, nook, and cranny.

There he was, picking up things, holding them up to the light, squeezing them, and so on, totally engrossed in his examination. And there I sat in the same room, on a wooden chair, nervous as hell, and probably with my fingers clinging to the chair seat. I didn't know what to do with myself and so didn't do anything other than observe Rinpoche, which was a life-lesson in itself in how to be in the present.

I have not changed that much since those days back in 1974 with Trungpa Rinpoche. I still don't know what to do when there is "nothing to do," i.e. when nothing is going on. Of course, these days I am making serious forays into nothing-to-do-ness, little by little and bit by bit. I am forced to wait out my own uncomfortableness because there is no alternative. For me, this having no alternative is a blessing!

I have to continually realize (continually, mind you!) that my current state of mind is not a "disease," but just that, a state of mind that is quite natural, but one that has been obscured from me all these years by the convenience of my sliding into the past and future for entertainment. I can't find that entertainment just now, so here I sit with my fingers gripping the seat of the chair on which I sit. Yet, I am getting used to it. LOL.

These days I am happiest just doing things, particularly various household tasks – anything in the present. For some reason, my connections to the past or the future take effort. And that reminds me of the stroke, so I don't make that effort just now. LOL.

It could also be because the past and future don't interest me that much these days. A stroke is a kind of specialized form of amnesia. Instead of the "boy in the bubble," I'm the "boy in the present," the one with no past and no plans. The awareness of my current state is the same awareness that was there before the stroke, just plain old vanilla-awareness, the kind we all have. It is also the kind that the great yogis

point out, the one beyond our ability to alter.

Rather, it is what I am aware OF that is different. And it's not the past or future; instead, I'm aware of the present, but as mentioned, I'm aware of the present with the same awareness that has always been there. You might like this poem I wrote.

## **MEDITATION IS NOTHING**

The books say:  
Seek a place of solitude,  
And meditate,  
But it's just the other way round.

When meditation,  
Naturally occurs,  
There is no place in the world,  
That you feel comfortable,  
Try as you might.

Not here or there,  
Not doing this or doing that.

Only nothing feels right.

You just want to hold real still,  
Let the mind rest,  
And then park yourself,  
Somewhere out of the way,  
Like on a cushion,  
Or  
In a place of solitude,  
Because:

Nothing is going on.

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,  
May those without it now create it,  
May those who have it not destroy it,  
And may it ever grow and flourish”

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The surest way to make something go away is to like it.