

## DHARMA -- THE SCHOLAR THAT I AM NOT

I'm not a scholar and can't even emulate them. It's hard to say what it is I am, but I'm sure that I'm not that. And, in my life, this started early-on, when I was just a kid. In my own defense, it might help that I believe there are different kinds of approaches to the mind. I'm sure that mine is not that of a scholar.

This was evident early in my life. I am very good at studying field guides or finding out everything about the life and times of this or that bug, mammal, or bird, etc. But the moment that a text gets abstract and rockets into the stratosphere, I fall to earth, so to speak.

To give what is probably the archetypal example, I can cite my learning algebra in high school. I never got beyond algebra-101. I just couldn't get it. It was too abstract for me and I would end up counting things out on my fingers or drawing a diagram, which never really helped. In fact, I had to take Algebra-101 three semesters in a row (repeat) and I still never got it. It was torture. They finally pushed me through with a "D," but both they and I knew that I knew little to none. They just wanted me out of there.

On the other hand, I got all "A"s in geometry because it was visual. As you can tell from my photos, I am very visually oriented. And therefore I believe different people have different approaches to the mind and approach things differently. The visual side of my brain, whatever that is, functions. And so, how does this relate to dharma?

Well, for one, it lets you know I'm not a dharma

scholar. God knows, I've tried to follow the threads of various teachings beyond what I can comprehend or understand, but with very little success. Part of it is just language. While I do understand English and have even learned to read a little Tibetan, that's not enough. I not only don't know Tibetan worth a darn, but in many scholarly dharma works, that Tibetan itself references Sanskrit and I really don't know Sanskrit. LOL.

I have a great many very technical dharma-discussions (white papers), treatises, and books that morph into Sanskrit or even Hindi. I have tried to follow these scholars, but I just plow ahead until I fall asleep in them and wake up back on Earth, so to speak, none the wiser. And so, that's my gambit here. Now, let's look at what for me has been a solution to all the lack-of-scholarship on my part.

On the one hand I am genuinely interested in all facets of dharma-understanding, especially when I don't understand it. LOL. How's that for a tautology? And I especially am interested when it comes to the Mahamudra approach to dharma because it comes more naturally to me.

Of course, I have completed all the perfunctory dharma preliminaries, a few of them more than once. And I have done various deity practices as well, some of them quite complex. However, for me, they, like algebra, somehow they just never connected. And the only realization I got from them was that I didn't realize them, which realization was very painful. LOL. Why not?

However, on a positive note, the moment I

encountered the Mahamudra teachings I was all ears. Intuitively, it seems I am naturally in synch with this approach; for some reason it just speaks to me, perhaps because it is not as conceptual as it is hands-on. At heart, I am a hands-on person.

And here is the point of this blog: There is more than one way to approach scholarship. As mentioned above, one way is the path of the scholar, which I am apparently not fit for. The other way to accomplish the same thing is to actually do or practice what all the scholarship is about. This seems to be the only path that actually makes sense for me.

Instead of trying to reason everything out abstractly, as I had tried to do, another approach (and the one that works for me) is to actually do the practices that all these papers are discussing and see for myself what they are about.. Just as a picture is said to be worth a thousand words, so actual practice and seeing for ourselves is worth a lifetime or two (or a hundred) of study... IMO.

“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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