

REJIGGERING SAMSARA IS STILL SAMARA

We forget to remember, if we ever even knew, that this world we live in is Samsara. You can't put lipstick on a pig, as they say, and expect much. And there is limited value in making ourselves comfortable in this life; it's like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, especially if all we get is more comfort that insulates us from reality so that we can better ignore the truth. With that approach, things will never change, and haven't in our rebirths all the way up to now.

As a counseling astrologer, I spent many years using astrology to help folks become more comfortable in Samsara. And while being better off in Samsara has value, it is a limited value. It's of no help if our increased comfort insulates us from reality so that we are no longer able or interested in realizing the nature of our own mind – enlightenment. IMO, that's a Catch-22 and a half.

Don't get me wrong. There is a place and value in counseling and therapy. I counseled fulltime for many years, so I know it from the inside out. As my dharma teacher explained to me long ago, astrology is one of the limbs of the yoga, but not it's root. The dharma is the root. Astrology (counseling) It can help us get from here (where we may be suffering) to there (where we are not suffering as much) in this world of Samsara, but as astrology is intrinsically a "relative" truth, it cannot take us beyond duality, i.e. beyond Samsara. That is a thought that all counselors should ponder, that counseling, however useful, still remains an artifact of Samsara. When I say this, some folks feel I am putting down counseling. Not a all, but I am pointing out its very real limitations.

The way I put it to those who ask is this: imagine the world as a sphere covered with water and the winds of change. And on the surface of the sphere is a sailboat, tossed about in the water and wind. Astrology (or any counseling technique), is a relative technique, since it involves a subject and an object, and is dualistic by definition.

In other words, astrology can help someone on the surface of the sphere to set the sails on their boat to catch the winds of change and get from here to there -- reorientation. This can be a great help, but no matter where we get to, we are still on the sphere's surface -- samsara. Counseling is samsaric, a relative truth, and no matter how you phrase it, we are still rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic (Samsara).

The surface and winds of the sphere represent Samsara. Counseling (or any relative technique) can reorient us within Samsara, but it cannot take us from the surface of the sphere to the center of that sphere where we can realize the entire periphery. Only the dharma can do that because the dharma is non-dual by nature. That, IMO, describes the problem.

And so, as mentioned, the only danger I see in dualistic (relative) techniques (like counseling) is if we so improve our comfort level in life that preserving and protecting and increasing that comfort becomes more important than waking-up and freeing ourselves from Samsara itself. And this happens a lot. After all, that is what the Self of

most of us is all about, building a cocoon of comfort to ignore and withstand the sufferings of Samsara, “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” as Shakespeare puts it.

If our comfort level becomes of greater importance than actually realizing the nature of Samsara (and how the mind works), then our chances of becoming enlightened pretty much vanish. To the best of my knowledge that, my friends, is what has gotten us where we are today – still among the unenlightened. LOL.

And so, comfort? Yes, we need some, at least enough freedom to be able to study and practice the dharma. More comfort than that and we run the risk of forgetting or never realizing that Samsara, by definition, is just another form of suffering (all-pervasive suffering). And without that realization, enlightenment can remain forever just off our radar screen and out of reach.

Too much comfort is as counterproductive as too little.

[Photo by me.]

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“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.”