

## THE PERFECT STORM (conclusion)

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Little did I know at the time that I had stumbled on the missing ingredients to my meditation practice, and was totally mixing my mind with my practice for the first time. Better yet, I was meditating, and no longer just practicing meditation. Somehow my personal disappointments were being purified through this whole process. This, mixed with true joy in deep concentration on nature, created the perfect storm for my meditation. I had no idea this would take place. It was an adventitious byproduct.

Out of that mix was forged a clarity and insight I had somehow ignored up until then. Like a kid on a bike, whose training wheels have been removed, I soared down the street, finally right there, perhaps a little wobbly, but experiencing something that never went away, but was always there whenever I took the time to look. It is still there today.

Looking back from now, it is so easy to rattle off the poetry of that time. But back then I was in the thick and thin of it, up to me ears in change, and pretty much alone. Even my family could do little to solve my existential crisis. What transpired back then as regards meditation was incredible, but the whole time itself was so amazing that I hardly noticed at first. I only gradually realized that I had realized something. I was too busy realizing it.

And perhaps the main reason for that was because it didn't happen on the cushion like I always imagined it would. It happened out in fields and streams, peering through a lens at nature. It never occurred to me that virtually ANY object of meditation will do, not just a pebble or a candle and a cushion. But you have to love doing it! What had always been missing for me were the exact right conditions, in particularly the joy of practicing, a joy that I found while looking through a lens. I had always loved nature.

And it was my friend Lama Karma, a Tibetan monk, who pointed this out to me. Teachers are those who point things out to us. What I learned from all of this is that to succeed in meditation, like anything else in life, all of the right conditions must be present. I had been practicing meditation for decades, but had not spent enough time creating the right conditions. Of course I couldn't know what they were. I must have assumed dharma practice was like some Jiffy Mix, just stir and bake. But it is not like that.

This kind of alchemy requires just the right ingredients and in just the right proportions, carefully mixed by time and place. I don't know what I was thinking all those years, but

the fact was that I had not thought much about it at all. I had little idea how delicate the whole practice of meditation is. Now I do, which is why I am trotting all of this out for you to read. It is hard to know what you have never even heard of, right? Well, now you have.

And less you think that I am telling you I am enlightened, think again. This is not about enlightenment, of which I know nothing. This is about what is simply called "recognition," which I had a glimpse of in 2005 while attending a teaching on the instructions for pointing out the true nature of the mind by my dharma teacher. That opened the door, and it was followed by almost three years of intense practice on my part, not just on the cushion, but practice all day long in whatever I did, as much as I could manage anyway.

And then this personal crisis shoved me off track and up against my attachments to money and career, but I put myself aside. I just did not care. In that ensuing time, the missing elements of my meditation training came together quite naturally and, like superglue, stayed that way. That is the difference between experiences and simple recognition.

And here is the point of all this: What I had been looking for all those years of dharma practice was some kind of enlightenment. That never happened, but I did realize that I had no idea whatsoever what enlightenment might be. I just thought I did. I assumed.

What did happen is that I realized (and became clear about) the nature of how the mind works and immediately saw that, because it is so simple, even I could work it. This after some thirty years of not knowing, but still practicing.

My advice to anyone listening to this? We must learn the physical process and muscle-memory of sitting meditation. Like any other kind of practice, we have to get it down cold until it becomes automatic. There is no way around this that I know of. But there is more, what we might call the intangibles. I call them intangible because we are not yet in touch with them.

For example, there is more to music than learning chords. You have to love and hear the music in your mind and also be sensitive enough to play it beautifully. Meditation is like that. Yes, there is great benefit to just learning the basic technique and applying it throughout your life. That is true.

We are not all Mozarts, but when it comes to meditation, we have no choice. We must all be Mozarts, just like we must eventually be Buddhas. There is no such thing as a

bargain-basement Buddha, an almost-Buddha, much less a copy or rip-off. The paths may be many, but the final ascent to enlightenment is the same for us all.

Beginning meditation has its mechanical aspects, but beyond that it requires not only all our sensitivity, but an awareness we have never known and have yet to develop. It is all about awareness. We have to rise to the occasion beyond even our imagination and certainly beyond our expectations. It all happens above the clouds of obscurations in our mind.

Our whole environment must be fine-tuned with the proper aspirations and dedications, with love and compassion in everything we do. There is no brute-force final assault to peak of enlightenment. The nearer we get, the more we back up, bow down, and make way for real clarity. Me, myself, and I are left at the doorway because they cloud the mind until we learn to see through them. Obscurations are removed.

So the moral of this story is that while the mechanics of meditation can be a grind, actual meditation requires more than just brute force. And while we hone the mechanics, we should at the same time develop the context in which all of this takes place.

We can wait for the perfect storm to form like I ignorantly did or we can set about preparing the conditions for a perfect storm and help to bring it about.

In my opinion, questions that are natural to sincere students might include:

- How do I make my practice joyful?
- How is compassion developed?
- What are proper meditation objects?
- How do I log enough hours each week?
- When does the good stuff begin?
- What are the natural waypoints of learning this?
- Why can't I just do it on my own?
- What about aspiration, dedication, and intent?

If you want to read the first part, here is the link to the whole article:

<http://dharmagrooves.com/Blog.aspx>

[I have been studying nature since I was six-years old. Mother Nature's laws have always taken precedent over society's law. Photographing nature brings me face-to-face

with reality as it is, unvarnished and to the point. This little jumping spider has caught himself a fly.]



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