

DHARMA: WANTING TO BE GOOD

Something that has always amazed me in myself is my inability to “want” or choose to be good. Now, “good”, can be whatever we think it is, whatever is the opposite of being “bad,” so to speak.

“Good” is not just something we think, but rather something we do, how we act. And the Buddhists, with all their many lists of things to be aware of, are quick to point out that “choosing the good” over the bad is just common sense. There is a naughty part of me that is always murmuring “I’m not so sure.”

Yet, I almost never test the good to see if it is good enough (i.e. not a little bad), but I test the hell of what is bad, do see if it is a little good. My bad habits are tried out almost an infinite number of times to make sure I am not mistaken about them being bad or bad for me.

This is nowhere more apparent than with food and eating. There are foods and foodstuffs that I shouldn’t eat because they are not good for me, not good for my health. The books say. The doctor’s say. My own mind says that some foods are just plain bad for my (or anyone’s) health. And yet, I am not able to just “Drop it!” like I used to tell my dog when we went on walks to drop some dead thing in his mouth.

I keep testing it, eating it one more time, to determine if it really, really, really is that bad for me. Well, there is no question it is bad, at least for me and my health. I’m always protecting the bad and seldom the good. A funny story.

A few years ago I went to New Orleans for an astrology conference for a week. And New Orleans is not only famous for its fried foods (fried everything) that I was shocked to find there was almost no healthy food around. Trying to find an avocado or the clarity of a salad there was very difficult, for example. Everything was fried until it almost suffocated me.

Yet, in that trip I realized that (somewhere inside me) I do value good food, meaning food that is good for me. When there was not healthy food to be found, I was horrified to HAVE to eat fried this and fried that or almost nothing at all. LOL.

So, when the chips are down, I know right from wrong, but when there is the least bit of ambiguity, I seem to play dumb and do this or that against my own best knowledge and judgment. I'm watching myself do it.

My point here, which is made clear in the Buddhist teachings, is that it is up to us to choose the good and that the good is nothing to fool around or play with. In fact, they make a big deal of when a practitioner of the dharma no longer equivocates, "maybe I will and maybe I won't," but naturally and always chooses the good, whatever that may be, in any situation. The purity of action is sustained and this changes our faith in ourselves.

They go on to say that eventually we choose the good in every situation and that the part of us that likes "be bad," delinquent, or naughty just dries up and blows away.

I have yet to reach that point. I am working on it, but

I'm still testing the bad-for-me to see if it is not good,
when I know damn well it's not. Capiche?

[Another photo taken by me of the great Mahasiddha
Tilopa.]

“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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