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*Concern without Panic*  
Week 2: “Turning Pain into the Path”  
October 10, 2020



Greetings. Welcome to the second week of this series. This week's topic is turning pain into the path. This is a very important topic in every spiritual tradition, and particularly in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Personally I believe it is really, really important. During this time, the world is facing so much uncertainty due to this COVID-19 pandemic.

We are all experiencing our pain in so many different ways—either collectively or individually. So many different ways on so many different levels. Politicians are experiencing their pain, religious leaders are experiencing their pain, business people are experiencing their pain, families are experiencing their pain, school children, health care workers—everybody is facing so much pain. But it does not mean this pain has to destroy us, weaken us, make us get lost and depressed. No way. That is the really important point: every single painful experience can become the door to enlightenment, to buddhahood. Every single human pain can become a support to our spiritual and personal development. Every single one, no matter how difficult, challenging, or painful it is, they all can become that. And they all did become the door and support to all the people who have achieved enlightenment and all the people who have risen beyond their conflict and problems, transcended all of them. But they can also become to us to all of ordinary people it can become like that, but sometimes they do not become like that. Sometimes they destroy people, they take life. They make us get a sense of lost, hopelessness, desperation, depressions, anxieties, they produce that so. This topic is very much about how to handle that, how to turn pain into the path.

So, let's look at the questions of what pain is and who we are or who you are. So truly who we are, we say in the Tibetan tradition, and specifically in the Dzogchen tradition—the tradition of Great Perfection—we say, "I am boundless, I am infinite light, I am dynamic energy. I am that boundless space, infinite light, dynamic energy." That is who I am. When I say "self-realized" that means I'm realizing these three qualities of who I am.

But most of the time, we don't experience that way, we identify with pain. We have a pain identity. For example, we identify with our job, what we do; we identify with what we feel. We identify with what we think. We identify with our nation, we identify with our religion, we identify with our race, we identify with—in a way—something that we are not. That is the source of suffering, the source of pain.

So, let's look at it this way. What is your experience of pain this moment in your life? Turning pain into the path. So during this guided meditation, reflecting on our life, journeying inside ourselves, I'm encouraging all of you to be fully aware of your current pain. What is the pain that you are experiencing right now in this moment in your life? Is it your health? Is it your finances? Is it your aging? Is it the uncertainty of COVID-19 and what's going on in the world? It could be



so many different things for so many different people. But what is yours this moment? Please go deep in yourself. As always, I encourage people, first, to bring full awareness to your body. Allow your body to fully rest by being aware of any effort, anxiety, blockages, tensions, being aware of that breathing out and resting in your body, in the stillness of your body.

Be aware of your speech, the voice inside you who always says, "It's not possible. You cannot do it. You're not good enough. Why are you doing that?" All these thoughts of self-judgment, self-criticism, noises. Just be aware of that. There are sources of pain there, they're causing pain. Be aware of that. Let all these noises dissolve into the inner silence. Feel the silence of your speech. Now, be aware of your emotions and thoughts. Whatever anxiety, fear, pain that you're feeling, be aware of them, clear them, release them. Breathe them out by taking a deep breath. Breathe it out. Basically breathe them out and feel the inner sacred space in your heart.

So stillness in the body, silence in this speech, spaciousness in your heart. Feel it. Ground yourself in the stillness, silence, and spaciousness. Then bring your full attention and awareness to your life and to the pain that you are experiencing. What is it? Whatever pain that you're feeling, be like a good mother. The mother will never stop or push away or ignore the child's pain. The mother is curious, interested to know what the pain is. Be like that good mother to your child. Your pain is like your child. Be their good mother and be open and interested. Feel it. Bring your full sense of presence and loving care to that particular pain.

Do the same thing as in week one, give that deep sense of spacious, luminous, warm hug to that pain. Whatever that pain is, give that hug. As you give that warm hug to your pain, the pain will melt and dissolve into that boundless space in your heart, what we call boundless inner sacred space. The pain will dissolve there. As pain will dissolve there, a new sense of space will arise. In that new sense of space a joy will arise. A warmth will arise, like when all the clouds are cleared by the wisdom winds. A clear sky arises. In the clear sky you see a luminous sun. So in that inner cloud or pain when they cleared, then in the inner sky this inner sun will shine. The inner sun is that spontaneous awareness; awareness will arise and that awareness is like thousands of eyes, countless eyes, it is able to see the infinite possibility.

It's able to see every pain is not just pain. It's a door to enlightenment, a door to discovering love, a door to discovering compassion, a door to discovering equanimity, to discovering joy, to discovering peace. Pain is the door to all the enlightened qualities. It could be many different things. So for you, each one of you, after you do this exercise, after you are able to clear your pain, one of you might experience enormous spontaneous joy, for example, but maybe another one instead of joy might experience a deep sense of peace. Another one will feel not joy or peace but a deep sense of lovingkindness. Another person might feel a deep sense of balance and



freedom. So countless inner enlightened qualities will arise depending on what kind of pain you have cleared with your awareness. That's called dynamic energy because the possibility is infinite.

What you have cleared will define what will arise. For example, if your pain has to do with fear then inner peace will arise. If your pain has so much to do with anger, then inner love will arise. If your pain has so much to do with the sadness, inner joy will arise. If your pain has to do with imbalances then equanimity will arise. So all the enlightened qualities will arise. When they arise that that is your part.

That is your realization, that is your achievement, that is your meditation that you exercise to become more familiar and grow more into it. So that's what's happening. We all have this opportunity in our life. I see very much in my own life and around me during this pandemic time, that there are people who have made the best out of this moment.

This is like a global retreat, it's like a personal retreat, it's like a family retreat. It's the opportunity that we have wanted and been seeking for a long time. The universe is saying, "Here we go! You have been asking for time for such a long time we are giving you all these months just for you to whatever you wanted to do, just for your family."

Just connected however you want to connect with each other. If you are an inventor or creator, this can be a very creative moment. Or if you have wanted to take a deep spiritual journey alone, this is an opportunity for you for a retreat. Many people are using this pandemic time in these ways and benefiting because they know how to use these difficult situations and pain as their support. On the other hand, people who are not able to do that are getting very depressed and lonely, not able to be together with family. Because they're not used to spending so much time together. Not able to be alone, not doing anything because they're used to doing so many things. Having a problem with oneself, having problems with the family, having problems with so much time and space, which is something that we always ask in our life. "I want time, I want time with my family, I want a time to be more creative." This is what we asked for, but when it's given we don't know how to handle it.

So this is what I would encourage and invite all of you to do: no matter how difficult or how painful the situation you're facing is, ask these questions: So this is what I would encourage and invite all of you to do: no matter how difficult or how painful the situation you're facing is, ask these questions: what is this pain trying to teach me? What is this pain? How is this pain trying to make me strong? How is this pain trying to show me new ways? How is this pain trying to show

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me my door to my healing journey? If you're a good learner, it will show you. If you're a good student your pain is a great teacher.

If your eyes are open, your pain is the way. It's the light that will show your path. If you want to become very strong and you're feeling weak, your pain is the way to exercise it. I heard that Muhammad Ali said when he does push-ups, "Push-ups doesn't count until it hurts." Which is very good, right? Until it hurts, it doesn't count. So, in our life experiences, we have so many experiences but until it hurts, it will not count to the door to spiritual development or personal development. So be a good student, be a good seeker. Be a good meditator. Use your pain as your path.

So next week, the third week, is about the true source of healing. No matter what experiences we're having, no matter how much pain that we are experiencing, how does that get healed? Where can that healing come from? That is the topic that we are going to talk about, the true source of healing, when you connect with that true source, then healing is going to happen. So I look forward to our next week. Thank you.