

## Letting Go and Letting God

Discerning and navigating the tides of change take more than just paying lip-service to the concept of letting go. The words alone can be defined as a "release from somewhere or something". In our own lives "letting go" can mean releasing ourselves from relationships, obsessions, compulsions, materialism, greed, envy, attitudes, notions, biases, judgments, fear, guilt, and inertia. All of these attachments keep us distracted from recognizing our true being, the true being of others, and our relationship to the cosmic consciousness, or higher self. But letting go also means allowing movement or change.

On a visit to the Bay area a few weeks ago, the Dalai Lama presented three intensive days of Heart of Wisdom teachings. The teachings, written as a sutra, define how we can rise above human suffering. There are many good interpretations of the sutra that attempt to translate the very complex teachings into a practical methodology. In a nutshell, suffering is the result of anything that ties us down to a belief system or practice that is based on extrinsic perceptions, rewards and punishments. In our own knowledge base, this is known as the human experience.

But the fact that we are spiritual beings having a human experience says a lot in favor of breaking the chains that bind you. If you view yourself and others as spiritual beings, then you can return to the source as a spiritual being. But if you view yourself and others as human beings having a spiritual experience, you can never return to your spiritual source because it doesn't exist for you. No matter the effort, you will always be attached to your mundane, earthly existence, with its material and physical pleasures and pains. You will never see the godliness in others and you will only have momentary and fleeting experiences of god consciousness, brought about by external stimuli (stimulants).

The Heart of Wisdom teachings acknowledge our attachments as perceptions and affectations. Our perceptions are based on what we sense (see, hear, smell, feel, and taste), which is based on our everyday physical experiences. Our affectations are the emotional reactions we have in response to these sensory perceptions or outside "noise". If we are deprived of pleasurable sensory stimuli, either through withdrawal or lack of resources, as humans we suffer. If we are afflicted with painful sensory stimuli, either as punishment or as the result of misguided action, as humans we suffer. If we have perceptions about others based on what we see or hear externally, we will lack the compassion to "rise above" human suffering.

But if we at least understand that our perceptions and affectations are not who we are but, instead, a result of what we sense and read from the outside--which enslaves us into believing a false set of perceptions--we can take our first step toward releasing the chains that bind us to our life in human form. Sensory deprivation and simplicity--practiced by Buddhists, shamans, and masters as a means to attain nirvana or "enlightenment"--is at first painful, particularly so if it comes in the physical form of fasting, a bland diet, or starvation. But once you move beyond the pain of deprivation, acknowledging it as a teacher in regard to the nature of self and your perception of physical suffering and desire, a change occurs in one's consciousness and body.

This change triggers a release from the experience of pain and opens the heart to joy and compassion. It is no mistake that masters from all spiritual backgrounds practice sensory-deprivation as a means of attaining contact with the god consciousness. Without the distractions of the sensory and material world, they can reconnect with spirit and see the sacredness of all beings. They learn to recognize the voice of the higher self and later discern it from the noise of the outer world or lower self. They then teach others using tolerance and compassion.

The true test of the master, however, will be to find one's kindling spirit in one's hour of darkness, and release the distractions of human desires within a moment's notice. Understanding the way of the masters is a good start. But being mentally and spiritually prepared for a major upheaval and a sudden withdrawal, from all that you have perceived in this world, will be the true test of "mastery". Those with nothing to lose, who have lived simply with no preconceived notions, will have it easy; those with much to lose in terms of their perceived wealth and prosperity will either suffer severe hardships, or for those with a truly compassionate heart, they'll let go and "let God".