

Jim Bronson 11-3-2010 Ordinary Nirvana



People who have attained enlightenment do it over and over. Enlightenment is a process, not a noun. Enlightenment is just being who you are. As HH the Dalai Lama says: "I am just an ordinary person."

Just be ordinary.

*O to confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.
- Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass*



Mindful

By Mary Oliver

Every day
I see or hear
something
that more or less

kills me
with delight,
that leaves me
like a needle

in the haystack
of light.

It was what I was born for -
to look, to listen,

to lose myself
inside this soft world -
to instruct myself
over and over

in joy,
and acclamation.
Nor am I talking
about the exceptional,

the fearful, the dreadful,
the very extravagant -
but of the ordinary,
the common, the very drab,

the daily presentations.
Oh, good scholar,
I say to myself,
how can you help

but grow wise
with such teachings
as these -
the untrimmable light

of the world,
the ocean's shine,
the prayers that are made
out of grass?

What would life be like if the ordinary things were gone, and there were no trees or no grass? Everything can link us with life. In the ordinariness of our living, just do the appropriate thing. As Jack Kornfield explains in *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*, "Enlightenment is not an end goal; it is just another moment in time."

Every wise voyager learns that we cannot hold on to the last port of call, no matter how beautiful. To do so would be like holding our breath, creating a prison from our past. As one Zen master puts it:

"Enlightenment is only the beginning, is only a step of the journey. You can't cling to that as a new identity or you're in immediate trouble. You have to get back down into the messy business of life, to engage with life for years afterward. Only then can you integrate what you have learned. Only then can you learn perfect trust". ...spiritual practice is only what you're doing now. Anything else is a fantasy.

Just be present for what's happening, moment by moment. Nirvana is not a noun, it's a process. In Pali, *nirvana* means "cooling, extinguishing the flames."

Our lives are made of little "lettings-go." Our ability to be in a safe place is up to us. Touching the peace in our hearts, we enjoy life as it is.

Saint Francis of Assisi lay on his deathbed. He was singing, and singing so loudly that the whole neighborhood was aware. Brother Elias, a pompous but prominent member of the Franciscan order, came close to Saint Francis and said, "Father, there are people standing in the street outside your window." Many had come. Fearing that the last moment of Francis' life had come, many who loved him had gathered together around the house.

Said this Brother Elias, "I am afraid nothing we might do could prevent them from hearing you

singing. The lack of restraint at so grave an hour might embarrass the order, Father. It might lower the esteem in which you yourself are so justly held. Perhaps in your extremity you have lost sight of your obligation to the many who have come to regard you as a saint. Would it not be more edifying if you would, er, die with more Christian dignity?

"Please excuse me, Brother," Saint Francis said, "but I feel so much joy in my heart that I really can't help myself. I must sing!"

And he died singing.

The Three Refuges

Dedication

Pali

Na-mo tas-sa bhag-a-va-to ar-a-ha-to
sam-maa-sam-bud-dhas-sa

Na-mo tas-sa bhag-a-va-to ar-a-ha-to
sam-maa-sam-bud-dhas-sa

Na-mo tas-sa bhag-a-va-to ar-a-ha-to
sam-maa-sam-bud-dhas-sa

English

Homage to the Blessed, Noble and Perfectly
Enlightened One.

Homage to the Blessed, Noble and Perfectly
Enlightened One.

Homage to the Blessed, Noble and Perfectly
Enlightened One.

Three Refuges

Pali

Bud-dham sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-chā-mi

Dham-maṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-chā-mi

Saṅg-haṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-chā-mi.

Du-ti-yam-pi bud-dham sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

Du-ti-yam-pi dham-maṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

Du-ti-yam-pi saṅg-haṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

Ta-ti-yam-pi bud-dham sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

Ta-ti-yam-pi dham-maṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

Ta-ti-yam-pi Saṅg-haṃ sa-ra-ṇaṃ gac-
chā-mi

English

I go to the Buddha for refuge
I go to the Dhamma for refuge

I go to the Sangha for refuge

A second time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

A second time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

A second time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

A third time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

A third time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

A third time I go to the Sangha for refuge.