

## **Finding Presence in the Midst of a Difficult World**

Our true nature is already complete. As the Buddha once said: “If you can’t find the truth where you are, where will you ever find it?” It is the one true constant that never ever leaves us. It is who we are. When we sit in meditation, walk in nature or just hang loose and take it easy, we naturally fall into this simple appreciation for the moment now, curious and alive, this one taste of what always just is.

But when we get involved in the so-called world, fighting against our problems and frustrations with this world, we lose this contented aliveness, we lose the most precious part of ourselves. How do we bring this taste into the world? How do we know it is here in the midst of our most difficult problems? How do we know in a very visceral way that it is here all the time, regardless of circumstances? How do we bring it to our life completely until we know with great certainty that we are the Life or Presence of the so-called life?

These are all very good questions. The first piece of it, which is very important, is that if you really look, there is only the present moment now. So if you are at rest, being the truth of what you always are, the idea that there is a world out there that you are going to go into later is just a familiar thought pattern that is playing in the moment now. When you are not thinking about it, the world doesn’t exist— just watch. If you really look, if you are not entertaining the thought of a world out there that you are going to deal with later, the naked experience says it only exists when the thought is there. The minute the thought leaves, there is no world out there, there is only the moment now. Which kind of partially answers the question, “what will I do out there, when out in the world?” It’s to come back to the present right now.

The “world out there” provides many opportunities for stress and agitation to arise, generating repetitive disturbing thoughts. Rather than getting hoodwinked into the story, “how am I going to do this, I’m going to be disappointed, I’m not going to do it right,” it is to use the stress and agitation as an anchor to come back to now. In the moment the agitation and the stress the body is feeling is more present than getting lost in an imaginary future, playing off an imaginary past with thoughts speculating what to do, when to do it,

Both the future and the past, when they are playing in “thought land,” are playing in the moment. Thought land says they are out there someplace, but if you look, they are really inside your awareness and your awareness is always now. Your awareness cannot get outside of now.

And so there begins to build this radical trust in collapsing in the moment now, the awareness now, the only thing that really exists in any moment, the fundamental substrata of all the thinking, of all the body sensations. It is a very big leap and so the only difference, if you could even call it a difference, is that in this

now, the focus is less on me and my problem and what I'm going to do to fix it and more on what am I constantly resting in. What am I always sitting in, what am I always resting in—the real is right now, the real knows how to deal with the moment in a better way than the conditional structure of thought land does.

Thought land gets its lead from the moment now, from the real, and it is a very different way to operate. It takes time for the rewiring to occur; sometimes you just have to gut it out. The key to it all is to be with whatever is, rather than fighting with it. Even if fighting occurs, it is to be with the fighting until it subsides and you feel what it is fighting against. The whole thing ultimately leads to a profound sense of vulnerability and helplessness. This fixated hard-wired belief, that I am this body mind that is separate, that needs to figure it out, that needs to do it—that's a lot of pressure. And yet, if you really look, it is a thought construct. If it were not a thought construct, it would be present all the time. But all the stuff, all the thinking, all the disappointments, all the beliefs, all the problems, they come and they go, just like a car passing on the road. You listen to it . . . all gone.

For instance, maybe you're reading this right now and out of nowhere an owl hoots. One moment the owl hoot is here, gone the next, very simple, no big deal. Thought land works in exactly the same way. The only difference is the mind is so sophisticated, so prominent and so conditioned that it works with tremendous speed. It's like listening to the owl hoot almost continuously, and you get caught up in the mind's trance. But the minute you sit back and let it churn, the thinking slows down because the conflict in it begins to recede. And the minute you turn to the intensity in the body, you get a little space from the mind as it tries to run from the intensity and discomfort. You sink into the raw sensation of the body and you start to see that raw sensation without the mind's reaction is the same as a bunch of hoots of an owl, coming and going, energy moving, coming and going. Just like a dog barking—no difference really. What's the difference between that and a thought?

All equal, all passing experience. And you can feel the gaps. In the silence between each bark, each hoot, that's the now. When the dog barks, the crisp immediacy of the now feels itself as a bark and then maybe it feels itself as a sense of me. Maybe the sense of me says, I don't want to feel this, although there is no difference. Even when a thought arises that says, "no it's different, I know it's different, I can feel it in my belly that it's different." But if you look, the feeling in the belly arises just like the bark which is followed by a thought about the belly and a feeling of me, uncomfortable, which arises like a bark, and in the midst of it there is just now, there is just Presence.

Can you trust that? Can you trust that if you fall into that in your helplessness, it's going to inform the next thought, that it's going to inform the next action? Even if you trip up and then come back to it and you trust again, you start

to see that every single thing is perfect, that it's calling you back home. Every single thing is your Presence revealing itself like a game of hide and seek. One minute it appears to be missing and the next minute it's back. I see myself as a dog one minute, then an owl, then a person. I see myself as someone with a great big problem that needs to be resolved and the next minute I'm nothing. One minute I think I know and I do know, the next minute I don't know again, waiting for the next knowing.

On and on this show of appearance goes, one moment restless and painful, the next moment joyful and expansive. What is one to do? Nothing really, just to be the very existence for this amazing display as it goes through its motions, flowing within itself but never ever really going anywhere but inside itself. The world, this life, is one continuous meditation, complete and always resting in itself, a contentment beyond our idea of contentment, a peace that surpasses all understanding, a love that does not reject anything no matter what is going on. And this love includes you. You are this love. You are the very existence for the whole world. Without you there's no world. The supposed two arise as One.