

[The tombstone for Andrew Gunn McIver is in the Forest Hill Cemetery also
ATTACHMENT TO DHARMA IS JUST THAT

[Let's take a break and I'll tell a bit of a fun story that came out of my recent stroke-time. It scared the bejesus out of me. It will take a little while to tell, so you may not have time. You dharma friends, let me know what are your thoughts about this concept.]

What does it mean that in the aftermath of my stroke, when the smoke cleared and the changes stopped changing, I found that my Self had been cleaned out like a chimney? I had experienced something like this shattering of the Self before in my life through various untoward life events, including a TIA (small stroke). So I knew what it was to have the Self to destabilize and go void on me.

Yet, what was total news to me this time (and most worrying) was that the part of my Self that had done dharma practice for 40 or more years had also been cleaned out too. That cupboard was bare or seemed so. And that realization was more terrifying than the stroke. LOL.

My investments and attachments to this or that in my Self had been voided by the stroke. Yet, I had no idea (and was not ready) to find out how irrevocably and totally attached I was to the dharma. In other words, my personal investment in dharma was huge and I had never realized it until it too was shattered. LOL.

To repeat, I didn't care that much about my attachment to all the things that my Self was fixated on or attached to. Seeing them vacated was nothing but basically good news, because even I could recognize how much BS or unessential most of it was.

However, I had never (and could not even dream) that anything connected to the dharma on my part that also was pure attachment was just as much BS. I had always thought that being attached to good things like the dharma was OK. After all, that was "good" attachment, right? I couldn't have been more wrong!

The proof is always in the pudding, as they say, and as it

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How upsetting that fact was for me is hard to convey; there I was, sitting down on my cushion for my daily dharma practice and nothing happened. It was as if the wheels of my dharma practice were no longer greased with familiarity and my long history of practice. It was like it was suddenly all gone. I had to go to the back of the line and start over. And that's a lot of years in time. LOL.

I never even imagined that when it came to dharma practice, I would not somehow be grandfathered in. But I was not. It was the dharma's way of telling me that no matter what I think, there is nothing special about my attachment to the dharma. Attachment is attachment. If anything, perhaps I had more bogus attachment to dharma (and my practice of it) than anywhere else in my life. As they say, "Who woulda' thunk it?" Certainly not me.

It's like I was stripped of all rank from 40 years of sincere practice and told to start over. All of that built-up attachment to the dharma was just gone. That's about as bad as it got and eventually that was only for a time.

In the "good news" department, I found I had actually accrued some benefit from all those years of dharma practice and perhaps even some tiny bit of realization. And these qualities stood me in good stead. How do I tell? Because they are still there; I already had them and that part of my practice was untouched.

And, as truth would have it, being humbled by my obvious attachment to dharma was ultimately a tonic for me. After all, it's spring! It cleaned out my dharma house, so to speak, ready or not, and I came out better for my self-humiliation than I was before, stripped of a lot of excess attachment and perhaps even better streamlined for practice.

Yet, it was at first a bitter realization to find that attachment to dharma was still attachment and had to go. It had to go because it went, just like that! It was permitted. We know that

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attachment to bad habits have no place, but I had to experience first-hand that attachment to good things were no different. They too have no place. I had always thought that good attachments were harmless. I don't know about that, but they are useless when they are not existent.

It's a valuable realization that when death comes and the bardo beckons, my attachment to dharma will be no more help me than any other attachment. I have to think on that and what to do about it. A start would be to stop unreasonably attaching myself to anything.

One of the characteristics of "realization" is that it is irreversible and stays with us. And although I probably have only the tiniest bit of real realization, nothing, neither stroke nor bad weather could take that away from me. So, in a nutshell, the kernel of my dharma practice was still there. All I had to do, which took some time, some doing, and reorientation on my part, was to rework the more formal and outward form of my practice that were more like rote recitation.

And what this boiled down to was to stop parroting or blindly reciting prayers and practices and do my practices from scratch and with heart. Nothing but good could come from that and it did. Sure, I'm not as arrogant as I was about my practice after the stroke, and the dharma has seen me through the hurricane of the stroke and I have come out more or less in one piece.

"If it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger." That's some truth! The stroke has done nothing but make me stronger, although perhaps a little more physically frail.

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http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf

"As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,

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May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish.]