

## DISAPPOINTMENT

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I have been disappointed. Like many of us, I have had some disappointments in my life, and they are, obviously, well, disappointing. A couple of the big ones I have experienced threw me into a loop that was not that easy to get out of, so I want to talk here about the little letdowns of life. But before I do that let's look at one big disappointment that happened to me so that we are all on the same page as to what can happen.

In May of 2008 I was (without warning) laid off (let go) from the job that I had as a senior consultant. It was not exactly personal. Many others were laid off too, but I personally also was let go, so it was personal enough. Suddenly I had no way of making a living. I was 66 years old.

Anyway, there I was, suddenly financially exposed, and old enough to be somebody's grandfather. In fact, I was somebody's grandfather.

I know, I know... time to retire. That would have been good with me if I had had enough money to retire on. Certainly I had done plenty of work in my life, but as it turned out, I could not afford to retire, thanks to another huge (financial) disappointment, but I will spare you that story for now. Someday I will tell it though.

Anyway, when this happened I flashed on something my first dharma teacher had told me many times. He would say, "Michael, it is not the \$64,000 Question [a popular quiz show back then], but the \$63,000 question" that is important. When my teacher was 63 years old he was caught in a boiler explosion and spent many, many weeks in the hospital. When he got out, he had used up all his life savings and had to start over again at that age. It was a turning point in his life. We all have them. It also is what he called a climactic year in life, and the start of the third Saturn return.

So perhaps I was in the same lineage because there I stood at age 66 without any means of supporting my family. What money I had managed to save was locked up and would not be available for years, so there I was staring into the abyss. What a surprise!

My response was to go off the reservation. I began to spend a lot of time alone and, oddly enough, not time feeling sorry for myself, but time just out in nature, and with eyes open. I was in a kind of shock. For example, from late May of that year until the frost took over in the fall (and I was forced to come in) I was in the fields and meadows watching the sun rise each morning, just taking it all in. I did this every day unless it rained or something.

I was glued to nature like there was no tomorrow. And I was taking photographs. In the early dawn light I could be found (often soaking wet) crawling around in the grass with my camera taking photos of small critters.

It was the shock of the disappointment that cast me over the edge of society and literally into the wilderness of my own mind. All at once I was a free radical, lost for a time from all comfort, and just out there on my own.

My family did not know what to do with me. I could see by their looks and the looks of neighbors

and town people who would drive by where I was busy photographing nature. What is he doing? As if I knew.

I spent those predawn days (and entire summer) peering through perfect camera lenses at perfect miniature worlds, like the one shown here. My own world was in chaos and falling down around me, but through the rabbit hole of the camera lens there were still pristine worlds, and I was immersing myself in them. I didn't want to see anything else at the moment. I was outside of time as I knew it.

The story goes on, and I wrote a whole book about it called "Experiences with Mahamudra," because it took a shock like losing my job to jolt me out of my comfortable life-groove and into awareness stark enough to drop some of my attachments and to actually wake up a bit. And I did.

Anyway, that story came to a happy ending as gradually I stabilized after having been hurled through space and time for a spell. I won't relate it here. The free e-book can be found here for those of you interested. It is a story of dharma discovery:

<http://dharmagrooves.com/e-Books.aspx#Dharma>

What I would like to do here and perhaps in a blog or two to come is discuss this whole disappointment thing, how it affects us, and what we can do with it.

I mean, it happens to everyone sooner or later.



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[Photo taken yesterday on one of these small worlds.]