

SHOCK AND CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE:

Thanks to my old friend and fellow dharma practitioner Robert Walker, who pointed out to me a teaching by the Ven. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche where he talks about his serious automobile accident, what he went through in recovery, and how it changed his life. I will post some excerpts here. It is from a December 1974 Seminar by Trungpa on his guru Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche (Sechen Kongtrül). I found it very revealing and with some similarities to my own recent stroke account.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:

“The interesting message to me personally from Jamgön Kongtrül was a sense of maturity and a sense of growth: you have to take care of yourself and everything is left up to you personally -- one has to develop one's own dignity, one's own sanity and one's own resourcefulness. . . . I think my journey up to here . . . became one big journey of that nature.

“I was driving ... a little car, which was recently purchased at the time ... a sudden blackout overwhelmed me, and I ran into a joke shop. I broke in the door of the joke shop, which is a shop that sells tricks.

“Having been unconscious for several hours, I woke up in a hospital bed. A fluorescent light above me was my first experience. Subconsciously, I had heard sirens and people talking about: “Is he alive or is he dead. . . .”

“And that was a very interesting, extraordinarily powerful message to me personally. It was a question of there still having been a faint hesitation whether I should work on myself or simply to take refuge in my reputation, in my robes, in my monastic vow alone.

Relying on my credentials -- that's what it boiled down to.

“This was an expression of a certain fear in me, myself personally: suppose I give up my paraphernalia, so to speak, my outfit -- I'm going to be a fish out of water.

“There was still some doubt as to whether the transplanted sanity from my guru was going to work or not. In other words, I still wasn't convinced, still not committed to the teaching properly. And obviously, the only help for this that existed was this sudden message, this shock, this accident.

"If you're not going to behave as you should, like the good boys and good girls of the lineage, then this is the message--and make the best of it: WHOMP!

“And it took some time to recover from that message obviously. . . . Having realized this message, the instant reaction was: unclothe yourself, be naked. . . .

“A certain time after my accident, my marriage to Diana took place. This was a very important part of my life, extraordinarily important . It was a further commitment to my life, to trusting basic sanity, working with the world, and further unclothing myself . . . not particularly looking for an ideal wife and home and washing machine and TV set and motor car, which is going to provide you with hospitality and comfort. It was an act in the unclothing process.

“You go out, you go and open to the greatest extent you can in your life, in terms of being naked, reducing yourself to a fetus, completely opening. Doing that

creates and created a tremendous uproar obviously. Because people love for that naked person to be clothed, masked, encased in a suit of armor.

“For the first time in my life I experienced that sense of nakedness extraordinarily powerfully. I was not only stripped of my monk's robes and my celibacy, but also stripped of my skin and my flesh. You become a walking skeleton. You are still alive and your heart has not been stripped away and your brain hasn't been stripped away. But apart from that, everything has been stripped away. Which is a fantastic experience.

“Not only are you stripped of your own culture but you are stripped within the alien culture, full of pollution, motor cars, airplanes, jets hovering above your head--and people gossiping about you, murmuring. It was an extraordinary stripping process.

“The basic question is after that if there's any sanity left in you. Does your sanity remain or was it nested in your clothes? Was it in your skin or your flesh, or was it in your heart and brain, in your bones properly and completely.

‘That's the test of whether you've been completely indoctrinated (in the positive sense) and completely blessed, so to speak, in the basic core of your marrow and in your heart thoroughly and completely.

“If so, then the messages become extraordinarily stronger and stronger, constantly. Then your bone begins to create flesh, which begins to grow out and develop; and your flesh creates skin, and your skin begins to create clothes. And you begin to develop a new human being. The basic point is: how much can

you give in. And having given in, how much can you grow out. . . “

End of quote.

Trungpa Rinpoche's words speak for themselves, but they underline my own teachers continued emphasis to be aware of any shock, any sudden surprise, in terms of a loss of Self and possibly recognizing the true nature of our own mind. We may or may not be a Buddhist practitioner, but in the lives of any of us there can be shocks outbreaking that may break us down, temporarily shattering the cohesion and stability of what we call the Self, yet at the same time opening new doors of awareness.

In my case, I have never sought out shocks or events of that import, but nevertheless at least several have occurred to me in my life anyway. And each of these three shock events shattered my self-security and the glaring gaps or vacancies left by each of these shocks brought profound clarity of a dharmic nature to me in response.

When the Self is eclipsed by reality, even temporarily, the response is like that of sunlight on soil. The seeds of dharma sprout and grow, at least this has been true in my experience. I am somewhat ashamed to say that without the prodding of fate (and destiny) by way of adversity, aside from meeting Margaret (and the kid's births), no other of my experiences has been as fruitful for me dharmic-ally. LOL.

And while, I never sought for or welcomed any of these sudden onslaughts to my Self, after I got over whining and being disappointed at my fate and difficult karma...

after the smoke cleared, so to speak, my internal dharmic growth blossomed like a flower. That I can't deny.

I can see the same pivotal nature of these type of shocks in Trungpa Rinpoche's above account.

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