

SIGHT SEEING

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For me, writing prose about spiritual experience is like carrying water in your hands. In the end you have a waterfall of words and very little sense. Some experience is beyond words, but not necessarily beyond poetry, which sometimes can freeze-frame a moment in clarity.

My real interest in poetry started back in the mid-1960s when I was going through internal changes so fast that no amount of writing could capture them. That is why poetry exists. You might think that prose with its more words would ultimately be able to describe anything, but I have not found that to be true. Poetry for me is an attempt to cut through the molasses of prose.

I never thought of my poetry as "lovely" words to whisper in the ear, but way more didactic than that. It usually has a purpose, which is to transform a spiritual insight into a form that I can remember, one that clarifies the experience.

Way back then I called some of my poems, "mantra poems", not because I would recite them over and over, but rather because that if recited aloud (and exactly), they would more-or-less recreate the spiritual experience back into memory, and hold it long enough for the mind to see and remember. They are more like incantations or spells, mini word-dams to bring back and hold the insight from vanishing.

I also found that the few friends with whom I would share the poems (or recite them to) did not consider it actual poetry because it was too hard to grasp and the sound of it sometimes seemed to verge on nonsense. I like the "nonsense" part of my poetry, the pushing words beyond their limits until the consonants crackle and pop in the ear. To my mind, the outer edges of sense point to what is beyond the sense world, i.e. non-sense, which is not the same as nothing.

Be that as it may, here is a little (imperfect of course) poem I wrote yesterday in the mantra style (it came out that way) while trying to put into words the fact that insight meditation (Vipassana), at least the kind I practice, does not concern itself with the content of a thought, but only with seeing its true nature. This poem is all about the "Seeing" in Vipassana meditation.

SIGHT SEEING

Is the,
"Seeing,"
And not,
What is seen.

When sight,
Sees itself,
Nothing,
Can be seen,
Except,
"Seeing"

Seeing itself.

When sight,
Itself,
Is seen,
"Seeing,"
There is:

Rest in,
Sight.

March 31, 2013

[Photo by Mihai Tamasila. Thanks.]

