

Dharmette: Seeking

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In a very famous Mahāyāna Buddhist sūtra text, the text is called the Lotus Sūtra. And it's a story of a young man. He grew up in a small town village someplace. And he decided that he would go out and explore the world, head out and wander the world, as maybe young people sometimes do. And he had a good friend who made him a jacket, nice heavy jacket to manage in the winter and the snows and difficult places he might go. And he wandered off.

And he wandered for many years and was often quite poor, struggling to make ends meet, often sleeping outdoors in difficult circumstances, kind of homeless, wandering around, finding his way. But he was gone for so long that he forgot about where he was from. He forgot even who he was, whose children he was and the village he came from. And then he became kind of, a little bit kind of, disconnected even from himself in his endless wanderings and not being connected deeply to society, to people, because he's always traveling and moving and starving and managing his way. But he always had that coat. That was a little bit of protection for him.

And one day in his wanderings, without any planning in it, he happened to wander back into his home village. At first he didn't recognize where he was, but people recognized him. It was hard to tell. He looked so different than he was before. And his old friend who gave him the jacket was there. And he said, where have you been? And what have you been up to?

Well, I've been all over, but it's been hard. I've been poor. It's hard to find work. I just kept also on the go. I was starving many times. And their friend said, oh, I thought I told you that sewn into the jacket... is this invaluable jewel I gave you for that purpose. You've been traveling around, wandering around, lost, poor, starving, and you have this jewel with you all the time. You could have started a whole new life. That's the story that's told.

It's supposed to be a metaphor for each of us that we have a jewel, that we have phenomenal wealth, tucked away, sewn in some kind of pocket deep inside. But we don't know it. And so we wander around the world searching for something, trying to make something, trying to turn the world into the jewel. But all along we have this jewel tucked away that we don't know. We've gotten... Maybe people have forgotten to tell us, hey, there's a treasure inside of you.

And so in this book, the Lotus Sūtra, the idea is that the Buddha came to tell us that we have this wonderful treasure inside. We have a jewel. And it's not a matter of huffing and puffing and building concentration and constructing yourself into some great superhero kind of Buddhist person. But rather, all you have to do is kind of open up the hem, figure out where it is that you can unravel this thing that's been constructed, built up, made, that hides the treasure that we have. So then the question is, what is that treasure inside of us? And I'm reluctant to say... because maybe each of you, each person will find it for themselves, and it'll be different for every person.

But it's quite something to be told that there is such a thing, as opposed to be told the opposite, which is what some people are told, how some people grow up, how some people, that's the message that their life challenges is directly or indirectly. They explicitly have been told that, you know, you're a... inherently deep down inside you, you're just cow dung or something. I like cow dung. I used to be a cow farmer. I love the smell. So some of you have cow dung in there. You think, great. That's okay with me. But anyway, so we often get the opposite message.

But here the message is different. And if we take this message, the Lotus Sūtra message into heart, what do you find in yourself that is invaluable, that's precious, that's important? Is there something, do you know anything at all that you can take solace in or refuge in or find and rest in that can be a resting point? Part of these inner treasures is not just because it's a secret, dark, deep down hidden treasure. Right? But it might be something that through which you can see the world more clearly.

It may be it's something through which you can now relate to the world, talk to the world. Maybe you see the world with different eyes if you're holding this treasure. Maybe it's clear, something that you missed before. What is the treasure? And there's one answer I will give you, after I said that I wouldn't give you one, because each of you will find your own. That's still true. But there is one that we all share. Maybe we have more than one treasure.

So when we're looking for that treasure, that jewel, maybe you're inspired by the story and now you're ready to go find it. Or maybe the story is enough to remind you of something

you've forgotten. Right? or that it's there waiting for you. That's been all along there. But maybe, you don't quite know what I'm talking about, but you find it interesting, and you say, that's kind of an interesting idea. Yeah, maybe there's something really valuable in me that I'm not a sinner, I'm not an unworthy person. Maybe there is something really good inside. Maybe, maybe... it would be good to touch that, good to feel that, good to be with that, good to make room for that.

What might that be? Where is it? Let me look around. Well, I can't find it easily, but maybe I can read some books in Buddhism. Maybe that'll help me, or maybe I should go on a retreat. Maybe the retreat will help to me, or maybe this or that. At some point, the treasure that you might discover, maybe one that we all share... is not something you find through the seeking, that it's out there, that if you keep looking, you'll find the thing by seeing it. What you're seeking is the seeing. What you're looking for is found in the looking. The treasure is that wonderful orientation, source inside of you, motivation that you have to seek, to discover.

To open up, to be available for the treasures we have. To be interested, it's valuable to spend time doing this and finding who I am can be a good person, a caring person, a loving person. How to live a Dharma life, how to live a liberated life, how to live a life of compassion. It's in the seeking itself. We find what we're seeking. So it's like turning the attention around 180 degrees, and it's not what you're going to find, it's the searching itself.

That in there, there might be a treasure. That you care enough, that you love, that you have this wonderful attitude, maybe, of discovering the truth, of discovering where it's possible to live a good life. And the wonderful thing about this treasure, by turning around and looking at the seeking, the searching. In Buddhism sometimes they call it the way-seeking mind, or the *bodhicitta*, the minds for awakening, is that what's important is not what you find, but that you're always looking, you're always available. That there's something quite profound, having this way-seeking mind that never settles on something, now I found it, this is it. Because life, reality, you, everything's always shifting and changing. And one of the great treasures is that you're here to discover what it's like. What is an honest life? What is a good life today? What is a compassionate, loving life today?

What is a liberated life today? This day, this hour, this minute. Just the fact that you have this orientation, that is a phenomenal treasure. Right? to find something, to find what you seek outside of the seeking. Be a little bit careful by getting attached to that. So there's another story. I don't know where it came from. Maybe it was invented in the United States, for all I know. I have no Buddhist text that talks about it.

That Māra is the person, there's kind of a semi-tanker divine, devilish person in Buddhist

lore. And the thing that Māra's child description, think of it, Māra most wants to do is to prevent anyone from becoming enlightened. Because if you get enlightened, then you no longer will succumb to all the temptations the world offers. And Māra just wants to have everyone under his control by just means that they're tempted by anything that comes along. So one day, Māra's out with his attendant, with his disciple who's going to learn the job of being a Māra. And they see a monk, a Buddhist monastic walking back and forth doing a walking meditation. And the monastic suddenly says, oh, I see it. I see the truth. So happy. And the attendant to Māra says, oh, that's terrible. Shouldn't you do something?

And Māra said, no, it's okay. Okay. Very quickly, the monastic will turn it into a belief, turn the truth into a belief, and then they're back in my clutches. So be careful. The way-seeking mind, the mind that is interested, curious, open, to always be available for the truth, for love, for freedom, for the next moment, for what's needed now in this situation... That is a treasure that maybe is always sewn in to your heart. May you have a way-seeking mind wherever you go, and whatever your circumstances are. Thank you.