

March 2020

Greetings,

I hope everyone is doing well with all this rough winter weather. Here in Seattle we have had one of our streaks - a couple of months of it being damp and wet, with no sun. Like others here I have a bit of a difficult time with this because I really like sunny, warm weather. This is another time where my training and meditation really helps me. Instead of being consumed by despair and anger I can be mindful of my attitudes and not be consumed by them. I can just do what needs to be done and keep trying to look up.

I would like to reprint the article on Love that was published recently in the Serene Reflection Dharma Association newsletter. I have been told it has been very helpful. I hope it is helpful to you.

With all my heart,

Rev Basil

Love
Rev. Master Basil Singer
Seattle Dharma Refuge

The all-encompassing Love of the Eternal is always being freely and unconditionally offered to us. And, as our Guardian Ceremony promises, “whenever we pray, we receive, without fail, a sympathetic response.”

I proved this for myself many years ago. At that time I was living and working in Miami Beach, and going through a very difficult time. Late one night, as I walked the beach alone with my despair, I found myself on my knees literally howling to the universe for help. The “sympathetic response” came shortly thereafter when the cover of Rev. Master Jiyu’s book, *Selling Water by the River* (later titled *Zen is Eternal Life*), caught my eye on a bookstore shelf. Its teaching called to me, and it was so compelling that I could not deny it and had to follow where it led. And that was to Serene Reflection Meditation and practice (Soto Zen) as transmitted by Rev. Master Jiyu.

The aspect of Rev. Master’s teaching that particularly resonated with me was that which emerged from an extended and very deep meditation retreat she experienced in 1976 (chronicled in her diary, *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*). Rev. Master emphasized the magnificent flow of the Eternal with its unconditional love and nonjudgmental compassion. This teaching has also been emphasized by my master, Rev. Master Koshin Schomberg. With the help of their teaching and example, I learned to take refuge in this flow myself. I am eternally grateful to them for their guidance. This refuge in the Eternal has helped me to live a life that is much more

full of love and compassion, and in turn more peaceful and with less suffering, for myself and others.

This flow of the Eternal that flows through everything is there in all human relationships. Sometimes it is easier to see than at other times. People “fall in love” for many different reasons, but the flow of the Eternal with its unconditional love is always there. I have known couples who have been together for nearly 40 years, and I have met many other folks in recent years, in whose relationships this flow was easy to see. I myself have had this kind of love with my sister and a handful of friends. I am very grateful for these relationships.

Many folks over the years have told me about big problems they have had in relationships and with individuals they are close to. Almost always, and for various reasons, the problem is that the flow of pure Love gets blocked.

The most common problem I see is when people harden their heart towards another, becoming mean-spirited and lashing out. Greed, hate (anger), and delusion predominate, blocking the flow of the Eternal. This sometimes goes so far that people who love one another deeply—parents and children; husbands and wives; siblings; close friends—turn against one another and do and say things that seem to deny the very existence of that love.

Sometimes the pain between people who are very close can become so great that one or both people attempt to cut the other person entirely out of their life. The roots of all this pain lie in expectations and actions that happened in the past—often in previous lives.

The essential question is how to stop perpetuating the expectations and misunderstandings of the past and, instead, walk a path of compassion and sympathy.

An answer to this question can be found in Buddhist training: meditation, Preceptual training, and taking refuge in the Eternal is the medicine that really helps in all these types of situations. When disappointed love and all of its attendant strain and pain manifests, it is possible to keep our hearts open so that compassion, sympathy and empathy continue to flow unimpeded.

Any time we leave our place of living from the deeper flow we enter into a state of hardness and suffering. Yet even when we avoid this pitfall, we will sometimes find that we cannot avoid disappointing another person’s expectations and becoming the object of resentment. When this happens, we can turn in meditation to the Pure Love of the Eternal, and in so doing help both self and other. For the Love of the Eternal is ultimately That which makes possible the conversion of greed, hate, and delusion into compassion, love, and wisdom.

Where there is great love between people there is the potential for great pain. When we find ourselves in the midst of such pain, it is very tempting to fall again into

doing and saying things that we will one day deeply regret. Our daily meditation and training in the Precepts prepare us for such difficulties. Above all, they help us take refuge in that Love that is ALWAYS THERE.