



Trust in the simplicity of Awakening...

Letter 18

Trust in the simplicity of Awakening

Dear friend,

In my last letter I reflected a little on trust, following a traditional outline where we are encouraged to trust in the four truths which the Buddha asserted were essential facts of life. The first two we have already had a short look at. The third one is “the truth of Awakening” – which basically means that Awakening is possible, and not only for a few gifted or predestined ones but for everyone. The Buddha’s message is clear: Awakening is possible for everyone who has a mind. Difficult to believe, isn’t it? The Awakening of a Buddha is said to be within reach of everyone, even if it sounds almost unbelievable. This is the spirit in which the Buddha talked: “It is possible for you in the same way as it was for me!”

Awakening is defined as being free from all veils that obscure our heart-mind and to have at our disposal the full potential of awakened qualities that lie within us. That’s it, nothing more and nothing less. It means to be free of all afflictive emotions that tighten or obscure our heart-mind – to be completely open without the slightest trace of narrowness in all situations. And to be aware of reality with discerning awareness, free from all preconceived ideas, deeply understanding the very laws of life: how suffering and bondage originate, as well as knowing the path to true happiness and Awakening.

For many of us Awakening seems to be far away because the descriptions make it into something sounding very high and almost inaccessible. Yes, it is indeed something very special, but actually it is utter simplicity – the absence of all complications. And it is to be found within this very moment. Every moment of experience bears Awakening within itself. A momentary Awakening to reality as such in all its simplicity can happen any time when for some reason our subject-object clinging suddenly stops. However, Awakening will only be lived as a continuous experience when the tendency to fixate on whatever makes our heart or

mind narrow has completely vanished through continued presence in the simplicity of “just that”.

The path leading there, into this Awakening of our heart-mind, is one of continuous practice of awareness: looking at what is and deeply seeing the nature of all experience just as it is. This is it. You think it should be more? Can Awakening be so simple? Yes, it is that simple. It is so extraordinarily simple that it seems to be so complicated. But this is only because our minds are used to complicated, dual ways of functioning and this is also how we use our language which makes it difficult to point out the experience of Awakening.

Awakening is experienced in seeing the very nature of every moment of experience. We will however not see it as long as we are focused on ourselves or on what we perceive. At this point you might think “But there is nothing else than ourselves and the objects of our perception!” It is here that we need to take a more careful look: Who am I – the perceiver? What is an object of perception – the perceived? What after all, is an experience actually? This is where the key to Awakening lies. And the key to it all, in my understanding, is to see that everything is process.

There is actually no perceiver as a subject somewhere inside; nor is there a perceived object somewhere apart from the perceiver. What we find is that in any moment of life there is only perceiving, the very process of experiencing. There is no perceiving subject separate from a perceived object – there is just the act of perceiving, the flow of feeling, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and knowing. The simplicity of Awakening lies in being the flow of pristine clear awareness. It is possible for everyone to enter that flow or rather “to simply be” flowing awareness. To feel that basic trust arise in us that it really is possible to awaken is essential. And the second step is to trust that there is actually a way which we can follow that leads into that flow. This trust is crucial for a meaningful Path to Awakening. It gives us the direction for our spiritual path and the strength for our practice.

Exercise: *Let us try to identify and remember moments in our life characterized by great simplicity and natural flow. Bring them to mind one after the other: moments of spontaneous generosity, moments of love where we forgot ourselves, moments of utter surprise when we were not functioning in our usual patterns, moments of complete inner freedom, moments of deep relaxation and letting go beyond all hopes and fears, moments of trust and inspiration that carried us beyond our limited vision of ourselves and the world, moments of wonder that gave us a glimpse of another way to see and be... I am not saying that these moments are already that nondual Awakening which is final liberation, but they are definitely indicators of those freely flowing qualities of mind that are characteristic of the awakened heart. Let us cherish those moments as an important encouragement to live the flow – it is due to them that we are convinced that Awakening is possible.*

With warm wishes for all of us to truly enter that simple, flowing awareness,

Tilmann Lhundrup