Daily Meditation 6-29-26

On the Passing of Robert Thurman, Gift-Giver of Buddhism to the West

Good morning.

It's just such a special pleasure today to look back on my experiences with Robert Thurman. Of course, reading his books and so forth, but especially our interactions over the years. And I listened to the first part of our dialogue this morning, that is a video that is part of this daily meditation. And it was fun to be with him again. He had a great sense of humor and play and love of life, as well as being a great scholar who learned Tibetan at a very young age, and did so much to ground Buddhism in America with its intellectual roots as well as its important practices.

I alluded early in my essay today to Jose Hobday, because of her connection to one of the co-founders of the Buddhist Institute in upstate New York, Richard Gere. Richard Gere was in the audience when she did her public dialogue with the Dalai Lama, and he stayed afterwards, and ended up driving her home that night. They became friends. But she told me the story that when Dalai Lama first walked into the room, in the green room where they first met, her first words were, "Well Hello, Dalai!" With that, she and the Dalai Lama became good friends very fast.

Robert, in the letter that I reproduced, talks about regretting that he and I didn't get around to writing a book together. I feel especially bad that we didn't connect again and do another public dialogue together. But there was the confusion of Covid, and of course, the distance between New York and California, where we lived individually, and it just didn't come about. Each of our lives was very full, obviously. That too is a regret I carry, especially after re-listening to us in this video that I just saw this morning.

I alluded to my article in the Lion's Rock magazine, and I'd like to share a few thoughts from that. But I've asked the video team, the daily meditation team to splice in, if you will, a portion of the video that he and I did, so that part of this video this morning will be a piece of that video. So you have me speaking now, but also the two of us interacting as

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well, in today's video meditation. Of course, you can go to the original dialogue and receive more of it.

Now, the article was entitled, "Ultimately the Same," and the subtitle they attached to it, in The Lion's Roar, was "the historical Christ and Buddha lived and taught 1000s of years ago, but their ultimate nature is always present. Renowned theologian Matthew Fox looks at that Buddha nature and the Cosmic Christ, and how we can find them within us." Because that whole archetype of the Cosmic Christ, Robert Thurman caught, and got caught up in, when he heard me speak of it. And he encouraged me to write more about it in this magazine.

In Buddhism, enlightenment, which is a combination of prajna wisdom and compassion, is often called having the Buddha Mind. In Christianity. St. Paul talks about how Christians are to have the mind of Christ. How alike that are we, Buddha Mind and the mind of Christ? Thich Nhat Hanh talks about the ontological Buddha, the Buddha at the center of the universe. This truly echoes the naming of the cosmic Christ, which Père de Chardin says is in the heart of every atom. I see the Cosmic Christ archetype as a parallel concept to that of Buddha nature or Buddha Mind. And this is in fact the oldest understanding of Christ, the Cosmic Christ. The Nicene Creed occurred three full centuries after the time of Jesus. But Paul called the Cosmic Christ "the pattern that connects, that which holds all things together in the heavens and the earth, and the light in all beings." Thus, the Cosmic Christ is in all of us. And Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day, as well as Meister Eckhart and other Christian theologians, have spoken of that reality. Here's Merton writing in his journal: "I am a son of God. My true self is a self that is spoken by God. Thou art my son. Tremendous happiness and clarity in darkness is my response of the Father." And Dr. Suzuki picks up on Meister Eckhart's teachings of the presence of Prajna, wisdom, and the Christ in all of us.

So these are just a few examples, and again I want to leave space for the dialogue between Robert Thurman and myself. But this article is available, and this idea, these ideas of the Cosmic Christ and the Buddha Nature I developed further in that article.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.

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