

Great Faith Great Wisdom

I wrote this last September while on the Order Retreat at Guhyaloka in Spain. It was inspired by a section from the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa - near the beginning of chapter 7 *The Goddess* - in which Vimalakirti tells the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī about the “Great Love” of the bodhisattva. The following is an imagined conversation between the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the buddha Amitaḥa.

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Avalokiteśvara asked Amitaḥa “What is needed above all in the quest to awaken for the sake of all beings?”

Amitaḥa replied “The Great Faith”.

Avalokiteśvara asked “What is the Great Faith?”

Amitaḥa replied:

“The faith that is like gold, pure and brilliant in the sunlight; the faith that is like the sun, shining in the cave of the heart; the faith that is like the sky, unbounded and limitless; the faith that is like fire, burning the impurities of the self; the faith that is the heart placed upon the Three Jewels; the faith that imagines the world anew, seeing with innocent eyes, bright, lucid, and pure; the faith that is joy, rapture, calm, bliss, absorption, knowing and seeing things as they really are, serene withdrawal, dispassion, freedom, and awakening; the faith that is natural, because it allows each stage of the path to arise naturally from the previous one, with no willed effort; the faith that is like a cup being filled to the brim, and then brimming over; the faith that is like springtime, unstoppable, bursting forth everywhere; the faith that is like a child playing, full of joy; the faith that never engages in unskillful acts, because they tarnish its brilliance; the faith that only performs skillful acts, because they allow it to shine out, brightening and warming the whole world; the faith that is like a water-purifying jewel, purifying the mind of the five hindrances, and thus allowing meditative absorption to arise; the faith that is like a strong man who leaps across to the other shore; the faith that is like a young child, innocent and unselfconscious of its own beauty; the faith that is like an excellent student, always willing to learn; the faith that is like a benevolent teacher, always encouraging his students to go further; the faith that is like riding on a boat, easy and pleasant; the faith that is like a good-natured comedian who

makes us laugh at our absurdities; the faith that is always present, even though sometimes obscured by selfish acts; the faith that is luminous, only defiled by adventitious defilements; the faith that is pure, like a drop of Vajrasattva's nectar, placed in the heart; the faith that has no second arrow, because it doesn't resist suffering; the faith that is Pingiya's, who was always with the Buddha; the faith that is like a wise elder who, when the young feel discouraged, tells them that their efforts will bear fruit, "all in good time"; the faith that refreshes the mind, as cold water refreshes the body on a hot day; the faith that is reasonable, but doesn't engage in conceptual proliferation; the faith that safeguards the truth by refraining from saying "only this is true, all else is false"; the faith that doesn't argue with scientists, because it keeps to its own domain; the faith that is too happy to argue; the faith that is like meeting with an old friend and being gladdened at heart; the faith that meets obstacles with love; the faith that is like a traveller, going to a country he has never previously been to, and not knowing what he will find; the faith that longs for its consummation in wisdom, as a man who has been many years away longs for home; the faith that is purified and bright, malleable, wieldy and radiant, ready to receive wisdom; the faith that bows to everything, because everything bears the mark of reality; the faith that is not the self, but arisen spontaneously, free of self-willing; the faith that is not one's own, because it connects us with everyone; the faith that has nothing, needs nothing, knows nothing, and *is* nothing, because there is no thing to have, grasp for, know, or be; the faith that, at the right time, bursts open the heart, leaving only unbounded happiness, free of the misery of self-hood.

"That, Avalokiteshvara, is the Great Faith".