Viriya: Courageous Energy

Joseph Goldstein · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Three-Month Retreat (IMS 2012) · 55:01

Meditation practice is a science of the mind. We can see this in the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths, in this very clear understanding of what liberates us, and in the understanding that mindfulness is the basic methodology for this investigation. He taught with such amazing clarity and precision what the causes of suffering are and the possibilities of freedom.

But meditation is an art as well as a science. Tonight I'd like to speak about one particular quality of mind that more than any other requires this artistic sensibility. It's a quality of mind that appears more often than any other in the various lists of the factors of awakening. The Buddha spoke of it as the one factor that brings the fulfillment of all our aspirations. It's a powerful force that needs a very delicate touch.

The word in Pali for this quality of mind is *viriya*. We can get a sense of its many nuances and meanings from the various ways this Pali word has been translated into English. *Viriya* has been translated as strength, as courage, as vigor, as vitality, as perseverance, as effort. Put all of these together—courage and strength and vigor and vitality and perseverance and effort—and they give some sense of what this quality of mind that's in all of us is like.

In its most basic meaning, *viriya* is energy. And energy is the capacity for activity. It's the power to act, to do, to accomplish something. The art of practice is learning to cultivate and modulate the use of this energy in an appropriate way.

We experience *viriya*, this energetic capacity of mind, in different ways. We can feel it as a strength of mind that holds up or supports something. The example they use in the texts for this supporting quality of *viriya* is a beam or a post that would support a building that's falling down—we prop it up, we support it with a beam. In meditation, when we combine this quality of *viriya*, of energy, this supporting quality, with mindfulness and wisdom, it's the supporting function that strengthens and holds up, doesn't let fall down, all the beautiful qualities within our hearts, so that these qualities are not weakened or lost. *Viriya* supports them.

The Buddha emphasized the ongoing importance of *viriya*, particularly in this function of supporting the wholesome qualities, when he said that when we practice, wisdom grows, and when we don't practice, wisdom weakens. I think we really need to take note of this. Wisdom is not something we get and then put away for safekeeping. Until there is an assurance of awakening, if wisdom is not nurtured, it simply becomes a memory. We may have had some deep insights, but unless we're continually feeding and nurturing them, the insight itself becomes a memory and not something alive within us. I think we've all seen how easy it is for old habit patterns of mind to begin to reassert themselves.

There was a great eleventh or twelfth century Korean Zen master named Chinul. He was one of the founders of Korean Zen, and he had a wonderful framework for his teaching. He called it sudden awakening, gradual cultivation. He really pointed to the nature of mind, the nature of freedom that's possible right now as we understand the mind, and also the need for the gradual cultivation of that state. It's not enough to have these moments of insight—we have to cultivate that wisdom.

This is what he said: "Beginningless habit energies are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Hindrances are formidable and habits are deeply ingrained." You may have noticed this. Hindrances are formidable and habits are deeply ingrained. So we need this quality of *viriya* to nurture, to support the wisdom in our minds. It's precisely *viriya* which keeps this wisdom growing, that keeps strong what is already wholesome within us, and develops those wholesome qualities that are not yet well developed. Support and strengthening—that's one aspect.

Another aspect of *viriya* that powerfully engages us on this journey of awakening is its manifestation as courage. The word courage in English comes from the Latin root for heart. So we might understand courage as strength of heart. We need this strength of heart in our practice.

We see it very obviously when we're dealing with the hindrance, the formidable hindrance, of sloth and torpor. We're all familiar with times of sleepiness and dullness arising in our meditation. But actually, sloth and torpor has a deeper meaning than sleepiness or dullness. On a deeper level, sloth and torpor is the deep-seated tendency in the mind to retreat from difficulties. That's what sloth and torpor does. When those factors are present, we pull back. We retreat from what is difficult.

And what makes it so tricky for us in working with this very deeply rooted habit pattern is that sloth and torpor often comes masquerading as compassion. We might be feeling tired or bored or restless, and instead of engaging with and investigating these states, we hear this very kindly voice in our minds: "Let me take care of myself. Let me be good to myself. A little nap will be just the thing." How often have we heard that voice? And of course, there are times when we do need rest, so it's important to acknowledge that this is sometimes the case. But very often, it's not.

I'll give you one example from my own practice which was so instructive for me. This goes back to my early years in India. I was practicing at the time with the Vipassana teacher S. N. Goenka. In his retreats, we would get up at four in the morning and sit for two hours before breakfast, then follow the daily schedule. So I would get up at four and make a beeline for the meditation hall so I could get a seat in the back against a wall. Wall slots were very desirable. I got up every morning at four, went to the meditation hall, started sitting, and then after a little while I just leaned back against the wall and would soon be asleep. This happened the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth—it went on for a long time.

I remember thinking to myself, "This is stupid. I'm just getting up and coming in and sleeping. Why not just sleep? Get up at breakfast, and then at least I'll be awake for the day." But I didn't listen to that voice—it was peer pressure, really. I kept going to the hall. And then it was amazing. One morning, I went

in and I didn't fall asleep. From that morning on, I was completely wakeful. There was nothing magic about that morning. It was just the effort to keep doing it, even when the sleepiness was continuing. I kept making the effort, applying that virya. And it was building, even when I couldn't see that it was building, until the point where the mind was really awake.

So we have to appreciate just how the process happens. Virya means not retreating from the difficulty, but staying there and meeting it.

Another way we retreat from difficulties is during those times when we're annoyed or irritated by something. Instead of exploring and investigating the nature of these mind states within ourselves, we immediately try to fix the situation rather than looking at our own minds.

The nature of virya, of courage, is just the opposite of retreating from difficulties. The quality of courage is actually inspired by challenges. It's energized by the challenge. It's the feeling—instead of "let me take a nap" in the face of difficulty—it's the feeling, "Yes, I can do this. I can be with this." The quality of courage is actually inspired by difficult tasks, and it even at times seeks them out.

I had one example of this in my regular life. Quite a few years ago, I started doing some mountain biking. It was my first time, so I was quite a beginner at it. I would often be riding with friends who were much better than I was. It might not seem so until you're on a bike, but it's actually quite hilly around here. The people I was riding with were more experienced, and they would go up pretty steep hills in the woods. For a long time, I was just halfway up when I would have to get off my bike and walk it up, and they'd be waiting for me at the top. I used to tell them that they should bring *War and Peace* along to read as they were waiting for me. But I kept doing it. I just kept doing it. The more I did it, the stronger I got.

One day I could actually make it to the top of the hill. It was a great feeling of accomplishment. After some time, something really interesting happened, because until then I had been dreading the hills. But at a certain point, just by doing it and gradually getting stronger, I found myself actually looking for hills to ride up. The challenge of it inspired the virya, inspired the energy.

I see this as an aspect of this quality of courage—not retreating from difficulties, but actually engaging with them and meeting them and being inspired by them. With this courageous aspect of virya, we meet the different challenges for the sake of accomplishing what we most value, whether it's in meditation or something in our daily lives in the world.

When virya is developed—and here it's important to remember that this quality, like all the other factors of mind, grows stronger through practice—so wherever we are, whether we're at the beginning of our mountain bike career, our meditative career, our virya career, whether at the beginning or somewhere along the way, the more we practice, the stronger it gets. When this quality of virya is developed, it really becomes undaunted by the thought of hardships or by the length of the task or the endeavor.

In all of the texts, perhaps the most striking statement of virya, of courageous determination, was the

Bodhisattva's declaration as he was working for Buddhahood. He said, "Let only my skin and bones remain. Let my blood dry up. I will not give up until I have accomplished what can be done by human effort and endeavor." That's quite a statement. Let my blood dry up. I won't give up until I have accomplished what can be done by human effort and endeavor.

It's worth noting here that this powerful resolve refers back to what can be done by human effort and endeavor. It's not relying on some supernormal divine being or power. The Bodhisattva is saying, and the Buddha after his awakening said frequently, this is something we can do as humans. And just as I've done it, we can also do it.

But even so, when we hear this kind of resolve, we might think, yes, that kind of courageous determination may be fine for the Bodhisattva, the Buddha-to-be, but it seems very far away, really, from anything we may be able to do. And it's true—we may not yet have the level of the Bodhisattva's resolve and determination, so it's worth acknowledging that. Still, there are many people and many examples of people expressing tremendous valor and courage in pursuit of their goals.

Sometimes it's in very individual ways. There's one story which really inspired me, told to me by someone who's on staff here at IMS. He told me this story some years ago. Before he came on staff, quite a number of years before, he had been in the Army. While he was in the Army and in training, at one point he volunteered to run a marathon—twenty-six miles. But in the Army, the marathons are a little different. They were run with full gear and a thirty-five-pound pack on his back.

I couldn't even imagine it. I asked him, why did you volunteer? This was voluntary. Why did you volunteer to do this? And he said there was a mixture of motives, but primarily he wanted to face his mind in extreme circumstances. He just wanted to see what his mind would do. And it was for him more about exploring how to live his life rather than finishing the race.

He said that at mile thirteen out of twenty-six, he had many seductive thoughts about wanting to give up and wanting to stop. At mile thirteen, there were vans there that would take people back to a rest stop. Some of the runners gave up at that point. But he said that from mile thirteen on—and this was interesting—the runners who continued, sort of like sangha on a retreat, were really supporting each other. Just by that community of runners, they were helping each other continue. And then, in the last few miles of the race, the course was run over sand. Somehow he finished.

Just as he was telling me this story, I thought, this is an amazing example of virya. It was virya, that quality of mind, that energized the original intention. It was virya that strengthened the determination to keep going. And it was virya that faced the challenges, the difficulties, with courage.

And so it was just a really beautiful example for me of how this quality of mind manifests. And perhaps most remarkable of all, he volunteered to run the race the next year as well.

Now this person wasn't a world-class athlete. He wasn't an Olympic gold medalist. He was just a guy—but

with this very powerful development of virya within him. He had this particular quality of mind very well developed.

I'm not suggesting that we should all go out and run a marathon with thirty-five pounds on our backs. But we can bring our own wisdom to bear in considering for ourselves what is important in our lives, what is of value in our lives that is worth, that inspires, the cultivation of this kind of energy, this kind of courageous energy—and realizing that it's virya that will help us accomplish whatever that might be.

In these situations, courage doesn't mean that we're free of doubts or fear. We don't have to wait until we're free of all doubt and fear to apply this courageous aspect of virya. Rather, it is strength of heart to act in the face of fear.

The great artist Georgia O'Keeffe, who lived in the Southwest and created those beautiful paintings, particularly of the desert, once wrote: "I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life. And I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do."

I love that because it acknowledges, yes, we all will have fears and doubts when we come to our edges. But with this quality of virya, we don't have to let those fears and doubts stop us. We can act in the face of them.

We can also see the power of courageous energy in the lives of many people on the front lines of social action—just the amazing stories of people like Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela, maintaining an open heart in the face of tremendous hatred and violence. Or Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest in Burma for over seventeen years. And in all that time, she was holding the aspirations for freedom for millions of Burmese people—and she could have left at any time. The government actually wanted her to leave the country because then they wouldn't let her back. And she chose to stay under house arrest.

Upon her release, as most of you know, she was released this year and things in Burma seemed to be opening a bit. There was an interview with an Australian newspaper, and the interviewer was asking her, now that you're out and you can actually engage in the political system, don't you want to bring these generals down—the generals who really created such a vast amount of suffering in Burma? And she replied, "No, I want to bring them up."

That's an amazing quality and an amazing response. It just speaks to that courageous heart.

All of these stories inspire me and inspire my practice to some extent, because we don't often challenge ourselves to extend our limits, to play at the very edge of our comfort zone, to really see what is possible for us even if it may be uncomfortable or even when it's difficult.

As we arouse virya within ourselves to accomplish our own particular aims, it's important to remember that this factor of mind can be associated with either wholesome or unwholesome motivations. Energy

itself is a neutral factor, and we know that people sometimes use energy for good, and sometimes people use their energy for harm. And even when there's a wholesome motivation, a wholesome purpose, we need to investigate whether we're applying the energy in a skillful or unskillful way. This is the art of the practice: How are we using our energy? Even when it's a wholesome motivation, are we using it skillfully?

Sayadaw U Tejaniya speaks a lot in his teachings about the proper use of energy. He says: "Avoiding difficult situations or running away from them does not usually take much skill or effort, but doing so prevents you from testing your own limits and from growing. The ability to face difficulties can be crucial for your growth. However, if you are faced with a situation in which the difficulties are simply overwhelming, you should step back for the time being and wait until you have built up enough strength to deal with them skillfully."

This is important. We want to experiment and explore playing at the edge, but also knowing when it's too much, when it's overwhelming, and then we have to pull back a bit. This is the art of the practice.

In addition to energy and strength and courage, virya also manifests as persistence, as perseverance. It's the quality that keeps us going. There are many examples of this. I read one story of the great cellist Pablo Casals, who at ninety-three was still practicing three hours a day. Here's this great master cellist at ninety-three still practicing three hours a day. And when he was asked why he still practiced at that age, he said, "I'm beginning to see some improvement."

I think that can be a lesson for us. Meditation is not so different from mastering a musical instrument. It's not overnight. One year we got a letter here addressed to the "Instant Meditation Society," and I think it was kind of wishful thinking.

It's not an instant process, as you know. It takes perseverance and that courageous energy just to keep going. And slowly, the qualities of mind, the wholesome qualities, are strengthened and developed.

There's a great story from the Tibetan tradition. It's well known, so you may have heard it before. The great Tibetan yogi Milarepa was a great ascetic who lived in a cave and survived on nettles for many, many years. He finally became this great enlightened being, and he had many disciples. Before he died, he wanted to give a special transmission to his chief disciple. In Tibetan Buddhism, there are many rituals and ceremonies and different kinds of transmissions. So Milarepa says to his disciple, "We need to go into the mountains for this and create a special place." They hike up into the mountains and do all the ceremonies. The disciple is very anxious to receive the transmission of these higher teachings. They do some chanting and some prayers. And at the end, Milarepa bends over, lifts his robe, and shows all the calluses on his backside. That was the transmission. That's what it takes—sitting on the cushion and persevering with it.

The Dalai Lama expressed it in another way. He said, "Never give up, no matter what is going on. Never give up. Develop the heart. Be compassionate, not just to your friends, but to everyone. Be compassionate.

Work for peace in your own heart and in the world. Work for peace. And I say again, never give up. No matter what is happening, no matter what is going on around you, never give up."

That's what it takes. That's the quality of viriya—that perseverance. You'll experience this so vividly on this retreat because, as I'm sure you've already experienced, there are so many ups and downs. There are times when it's really easy and going smoothly, and times when there are big struggles—struggles with the body, struggles with difficult mind states. But if we can keep referring back to the importance of this quality, viriya, perseverance, never give up, then the practice really unfolds and all of these wholesome qualities become stronger.

So viriya as energy, as strength, as courage, as perseverance. This brings us to one of the most difficult aspects of viriya to understand and to negotiate skillfully, and that's the relationship of viriya, of energy, to right effort. Effort is the use of energy to accomplish some goal, some objective. The art of practice is learning how to use the energy skillfully. When is it balanced? When is effort too much and counterproductive?

In English, the word effort has so many connotations and shades of meaning that we need to understand the subtleties of how effort is applied in practice. Effort becomes unskillful when there's a forcing of the mind—it's what I call "efforting," rather than a relaxation of mind. Effort is unskillful when the mind is full of expectation, that wanting mind, rather than openness and receptivity. So we need to be very mindful of how we're making effort, how we're using the energy of viriya.

If we have a strong agenda, if we come into a sitting or a walking or even moving throughout the day with a strong agenda, or we're focusing too intently, or we find we're holding onto the object too tightly, afraid that we'll lose it, or we're trying to push through something—push through some block or push through some emotional complexity—then we need to open, we need to soften the mind. We need to soften the quality of effort.

But if the mind is continually getting lost, just drifting off again and again in daydreams or reactivity, or we don't have a caring, wise attention to what's happening, we don't have an interest in what's going on, when we're being casual rather than relaxed, then we need to arouse more effort. We need to call up this quality of viriya, of energy, of courage. We need to come closer to the object.

It's so interesting because sometimes it's just a matter of a slight shift which makes all the difference. One example of this happened to me quite a few years ago. I was practicing in Nepal with Sayadaw U Pandita, and we were in this monastery where the conditions were terrible. There were four or five of us in a room on a bare cement floor, right next to the latrine, with bad smells, and the food wasn't good. My mind was really grumpy.

And just a lot of judgment about the whole scene. So I went into Sayadaw and I was reporting on my state of mind. And all he said to me was, "Be more mindful." And my thought was, "Thanks a lot." You know, all

these problems—and they were real problems—"Be more mindful."

So I bowed and left the room, started walking. But I thought, okay, here's this great teacher. He said, "Be more mindful." Maybe I should try it.

So I actually became more mindful. In the walking, I just started feeling the movement, the sensations of the movement more carefully. And I realized that up until that point, I had been in that condition which I've described as more or less mindful. I was walking, kind of there, but really continually ruminating about all the bad conditions. As soon as I became more mindful and I just felt closely what was going on, all of that agitation in the mind fell away because I was fully engaged. It wasn't difficult. It was just that slight little shift and remembering—and in this case having it suggested to me—to do it, just to drop into the moment with more care.

There's an interesting principle regarding energy that we often overlook, and that is the principle that effort creates energy. Because mostly we think that we need energy in order to make effort. "Oh, I'm feeling tired. I have low energy. I can't really make an effort now." And it's actually just the opposite. It's by making the effort that energy is aroused.

And we know this just from our ordinary lives. If you're feeling tired and sluggish and dull and then you go out and do some vigorous exercise—you make the effort to do it—how do you feel afterwards? Almost always we feel energized. The effort has created the energy.

So just as one little example of this in meditation, which is very counterintuitive. This was also during a course with Sayadaw U Pandita. It was pretty rigorous. He's a demanding teacher and we were just sleeping four hours a night. Maybe we could cheat a little and sleep five. But it was demanding. We were just sitting and walking, sitting and walking all day. I was often pretty tired. I was doing walking meditation in the dining room, feeling tired, feeling sluggish.

Walking next to me was my fellow yogi and colleague, Sharon Salzberg. And on this retreat, she was the queen of slow movement. I mean, it was amazing to me. It could take her forty-five minutes to walk one length of the dining room. So she was walking next to me, and I was feeling really tired. But I kind of glanced over and I saw Sharon. I didn't know there was a little bit of competitive meditating that arose in me, but I thought, "Okay, I can walk just as slowly."

So I just brought it to the extreme. I said to myself, "How slowly can you walk and still move?" So it just came down to microscopic movements. What was amazing to me was that within two steps, I was totally awake.

Now, if somebody had told me, "Yeah, if you're feeling tired, walk slower," that seems counterintuitive. You'd think, "Oh, walk quicker and arouse the energy," which also might be helpful. But why did it work? Because it took some effort to walk that slowly. And in making the effort, the energy was aroused.

So we want to play. This retreat and this place—it's really like this great laboratory of the mind and the body. You have nothing else to do except to explore how it's all working.

What an amazing gift.

So the cultivation of virya in all its different aspects—strength and courage and perseverance and effort—and its use in a wise and balanced way is a very refined art. It's not something that we find and then have for the retreat. It's a continual adjustment where we're watching, we're noticing what the quality of our effort is in this moment. We need to see the present circumstance, the present experience, with wisdom. Is the mind too tight? Then we need to loosen it. Is it too casual, too loose? Then we need to tighten it a little bit. It's like tuning the strings of a musical instrument.

I think I read this in the opening days of the retreat—I can't quite remember—but it's very appropriate here in terms of understanding how to modulate and understand the balance of right effort. It says: "The teachings describe two shortcomings of practice called lack of attention and being over-attentive. In the former, one does not pay attention to the training and we become lost in daydreaming. Being over-attentive means to be preoccupied with keeping hold of the meditation to such an extent that it actually disturbs the quality of concentration. The hectic attempt to be so present, so mindful, turns into a distraction all by itself. Of course, one should have presence of mind, but it should be allowed to progress in a spacious way, not in a constrictive or rigid manner. The more open the sense of being mindful is, the more at ease it is, the more relaxed we are. And this relaxed quality is very important."

So you're getting some sense of how we need to modulate the virya, modulate the effort, but be paying attention so that we're actually doing it. We're not simply being carried along on our habit patterns of practice. We're really looking to see: where do we need to be more mindful? Where do we need to relax?

One of the things which I'm sure you've noticed here on retreat is that in the course of a day—both on retreat and in our lives—we experience many different energy cycles. There may be times of day when we're really alert and awake and present, and times of day when there seems to be low energy and the mind is dull. In paying attention to these cycles of energy, we can then employ the appropriate aspect of virya.

At times, we might want to emphasize the heroic, courageous quality, seeing where we limit ourselves and becoming inspired to play at the edges of our comfort zone, not to pull back. This might mean—just as a few examples—sitting longer than we usually do, or walking longer. Maybe it's eating less. Maybe it's sleeping less. Maybe it would mean using more mental noting if that's a tool that's been helpful for you. This takes effort. Or it might even be simply doing something a little different than what you usually do.

It's like breaking a habit. Every morning after the 8:15 sitting, you sit for however long you do, then you go have a cup of tea, then you do the walking. Not because there's anything wrong with that, but just to break that—what would it be like to go to the walking without having the cup of tea? Is it even possible? I'm just

using that as an example. We all get established in habit patterns of practice and we get comfortable with them. Just to look at: what would it be like to break the habit, to do something a little differently, to play the edge a bit?

Here's something that helped me a lot in the walking practice, and we haven't really taught it formally: there's a way of doing the slow walking not only in three parts of lift, move, and place, but to divide the step into six parts. Lifting, then moving—which is the first part of moving forward—then swinging, then lowering, placing when we first touch, and stepping when the weight comes down. We're just noticing these six parts of the step: lifting, moving, swinging, lowering, placing, stepping.

When Sayadaw first suggested that I do that, I was amazed at the difference it made. Because even when I had been doing the very slow walking of lift, move, and place, I hadn't really noticed it, but there was a slight energetic leaning into the next part. I was lifting in order to move forward. I was moving forward waiting to take a step. It was very subtle, but there was a slight forward lean.

When I did the six-part walking, that disappeared and the mind settled into the moment in a different way, in a more connected way. I'm just saying this not as something each of you should do all the time, but simply as a possibility to experiment with—one way of exploring.

When we're discovering ways to play the edge, to play at our boundaries—whether it's sleeping less or sitting longer or six-part walking or not having the cup of tea, whatever it may be—it's important that it be done with the quality of interest and willingness. It's the sense of exploring, not that it's something we should be doing or that it's the right way to do it. That's not a helpful attitude. It's just that sense of, "Okay, here we're in this situation. Can I explore? Can I explore what's possible?" This is the development, the cultivation of virya.

On the other side, if the mind feels too tight, too much efforting, and we find the mind is just filled with self-judgment—or on the other side, ambitious striving—then the softer side of virya might be more appropriate. Not this kind of courageous, heroic effort, but maybe it's the aspect of perseverance, of continuity.

Again, Sayadaw U Tejaniya expresses this so well: "Right effort means to keep reminding yourself to be aware. Right effort is persistent effort. It is not energy used to focus hard on something. It is effort which is simply directed at remaining aware." This next line is really important: "It is not difficult to be aware or mindful. It is difficult to maintain it continuously. For this you need right effort, which is simply perseverance. You do not need strong effort to be mindful. When we are present, we naturally become aware of what is happening. Simply reminding yourself to be in the present moment is all the effort we need."

This is the softer side. It's realizing it doesn't take a heavy focusing. It doesn't take much to be mindful. It's just remembering to come back to the present, to connect with it.

Do you get some sense of the subtlety and the nuances of this quality of virya? It has so many different sides and aspects, and we can use and employ the different aspects of it as we begin to understand from our own experience the complexity of it. We see that sometimes we're really playing at the edge and sometimes we're softening and surrendering, and we each have to be paying attention to see what's appropriate.

This is helpful not only for deepening our practice here on retreat, but this quality of virya and learning how to apply it wisely is so important for integrating our practice in our lives in the world. Whatever we're doing—whether it's here on retreat, whether it's in our daily lives—our minds are always with us. So the power of virya is the training, the energy to stay aware, to stay mindful. What is actually happening? Paying attention, being aware of the quality of our minds as we go through the day.

In this way, as the 16th Karmapa, one of the great Tibetan masters, said, if we're paying attention to our minds throughout the day, we can be living the practice instead of just doing it. I love that slight distinction. So often we're doing the practice at particular times, but we want to be living the practice. When virya is developed, really our whole life becomes our practice.

I want to close with a teaching from another wonderful Tibetan teacher, Dzigar Kongtrul. He said: "The potential for realization is universal and present in us all. True benefit will come from your own efforts and realization. For your efforts to bring benefit, you must take your life into your own hands and examine your mind and experience. From this point of view, nobody could be kinder to you than yourself. Nobody could have a greater effect on you or actually do more for you than yourself. The Buddha said, 'I have shown you the path of liberation. Now liberation depends on you.' This is really true. If you don't take your life into your own hands, not even the Buddhas can make a difference. It's up to you."

This is the rallying cry.

Thank you for listening.

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