Nothing Happens By Itself

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 8:35

Thank you to all of you for being here, for participating, for the fullness of your practice and your willingness to explore, to question, to open. It's very beautiful. I really appreciate it. And thank you to our wonderful team of managers and to Mark for everything he's done in the lead-up to this.

Nothing happens by itself. And the same is true of soul-making. It doesn't just happen by itself. It needs our participation, it needs our care, our support. That fire, the holy fire we feel within us and without us, needs tending, needs attention, needs fuel, needs support, needs conditions.

We've used this word temenos—it's a Greek word meaning an enclosed, protected and sacred space, a vessel, an alchemical vessel. We can see that in one's own practice, the conditions need to be right in our solitude in order for sensing with soul to have the right support and conditions and vessel in which something can unfold, and actually the unexpected can unfold as well.

We've touched on many of what those conditions are: the sensitivity, the awareness, the openness, the energy body, the emotional care and responsiveness, the attunement. All this creates, in any moment, in ourselves, so to speak, a temenos in which there is the possibility of unfolding, of blossoming, of flowering, of the fire stimulating the alchemical process. And that comes and goes, and there's a kind of grace in that.

I was talking with someone yesterday about this. As you leave here, if you're interested in exploring this kind of practice, I don't think it necessarily needs a lot of samadhi. You don't need the mind to be really quiet, really still, or to do hours and hours of sitting. My guess is you'll discover that's not actually necessary. I mean, it's fine if that is there. But sometimes an image arises just for a couple of minutes and it has potency, and its fragrance, its perfume and its effects permeate the life. It makes an impact on the being. So it doesn't always equate to deeper meditation, calmer states, longer time, etc. This sensing with soul, when the conditions are there, is accessible. It's there for us in our life, in the way we sense ourselves, the world, each other.

It may well be the case that a lot of soul-making, perhaps for most people, most soul-making happens in relationship with others. There's this magic of a spark here igniting a spark there, and some reciprocal feeding of flame and of poetry and of beauty. But that too needs a temenos.

Some of you will want to share this with others and will want that support, that input, that flow, that meeting. But there too, if you're in twos or a group, a temenos is needed, especially if you're sharing images. Images, sensings with soul, soulfulness needs this care.

What does it mean to create a temenos in relationship? If I just casually mention an image to someone

that's been meaningful for me and it's the wrong moment—it might be the right person but the wrong moment, the person isn't really interested, or you haven't taken care of how to be present with each other—maybe you haven't even created a formal space where that can be held, where that vessel will support. So that in itself is a creative exploration. This question: What actually supports soul-making? What supports soulfulness?

Images can be very vulnerable. Even if one would write the image and wouldn't think there's anything vulnerable about that, there's something about the sensing with soul that touches us so deeply. We don't just put that out willy-nilly anywhere. It's something precious and something—not necessarily to be hoarded, but to be honored.

Sometimes the formality really helps. To honor something as if it were divine will allow it to become divine. But part of what happens in relationships is all the messy complexity of human relationships. If you're sharing images with another person and there's something left over between you from yesterday, last year, that has nothing to do with any of this, that complexity can interfere with the sacred vessel needed for soul-making to flourish.

It's going to be in the field, and unless it's addressed, opened, and explored, it's going to affect that vessel, that *temenos*.

There's much we're not going to explore right now, but there are many skills, arts, and prerequisites that enable this kind of vessel to be created between human beings. Can we see that—I invite you, if you're interested—as an exploration, an experiment?

Why is it that whatever we're doing—whether it's solitary practice, whether it's moving together, whether it's sharing images or something else, or even studying together—becomes soul-making? There's plenty of material now to study and contemplate, to digest and assimilate the ideas. But what makes any of that soul-making? What supports that? And what prevents it? What gets in the way? What doesn't help to provide that vessel?

It's a question—a creative, open-ended question to explore.

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