Closing Comments From Rob - Soulmaking and Saṅgha

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 18:53

I'm not quite sure exactly what I want to say or what feels called forth. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your practice and all the beauty of your being that you've brought forth, brought into this space and shared together—shared with us, shared with everyone. We really deeply appreciate it. It's quite profound.

Just a practical thing about transitioning out of the retreat. These kinds of retreats have less silence and perhaps less of certain kinds of meditative intensity for most people, so that it's less the case that one needs to guard the senses and take care with sense contact and the overwhelm that you can get from certain forms of retreat practice.

But there may be other kinds of sensitivity. Some of you who have been on these soulmaking retreats before may have noticed that the heart and the being are opened in ways and available to be touched in ways that the world isn't so carefully set up to take care of or to acknowledge. So you may find emotions moving through, things might move you.

Just be aware of these kinds of sensitivities which are more particular to these kinds of retreats. If we'd done a different style of meditation, the sensitivity might be more sensory in terms of the intensity of contact. So really take care of the heart and the soul in the rest of today and tomorrow and in the coming days. What does it need? What kinds of contact does it need? What kinds of care? What kind of space? Maybe it needs solitude, maybe it needs certain kinds of sharing.

These retreats and their consequences in the being are a little different from other retreats you may be familiar with. So there's real encouragement to take care with that. There's nothing to be apprehensive about, but just care for the soul and the heart.

As I mentioned last night, there can be a great flush of enthusiasm for the whole soulmaking endeavor and your practice, and you may wish to share that with partner, family, spouse, friends at home. Again, just the encouragement to be sensitive there. What's right? What's needed? What does it mean to care for the other person and for myself?

We haven't done much sharing of images on this retreat together in the temenos space. Many of you will know that when something has touched the soul deeply, it needs care. You can't just spout it out to someone just because you have a history of a certain kind of intimacy with that person. The moment may

not be right. Their state of being in that moment may not be right. They may not be that interested in that moment. You may be super interested and on fire, and they may not be. They may be polite and nodding their head with a modicum of interest. Take care.

When something is precious to the soul, it needs looking after. Even with someone you love, someone who has a history with you, or someone who's a fellow soulmaker—if we don't set it up right, the sharing, then it's like we're spilling our soul and it hurts. It hurts when that preciousness is not held in a temenos, is not met. There's no ill will, nothing like that, but when something feels sacred, it needs care.

So if you want to share, check the moment, check the conditions, including the other person. You can tell—just like a regular retreat—you can bounce in with your enthusiasm about wanting to share certain experiences or insights that you've had. Get a feel, sense whether this person is really interested. I mean, really interested. How is it being held and how am I holding it in this sharing? You can feel it in the eyes of the other, in just how interested they are. People who are interested tend to ask questions, they want to know. You get a sense that they're interested. Really, just the encouragement to care for that with each other, with people who are not here that you love, with whomever.

Catherine and I were really touched hearing from just one or two people—of course it may not have been everyone's experience—how beautiful and moving your dāna ceremony and talk was. Of course we weren't here, but it was really lovely to hear that and to get an indirect sense of it.

When I started speaking about imaginal and soulmaking in Dharma talks here and other places, it was difficult. For me, it was difficult. I felt like there was a lot of opposition. Some of you were in certain places where I came and there were eruptions and fracas and protestations—placards.

What's that? Placards, yeah. Picket lines. Really nasty notes, all kinds of things. And no, seriously, it was quite difficult, I found. I felt it my calling or duty to push through that.

I haven't shared this with many people, but I started to get the sense—okay, this is going to be difficult, this talk I'm going to give. I can sense that some people are going to love it, and some people really not, and some people will get upset. So in the moments before going to give a talk, I would open myself, tune myself, make myself available to the angels, the demons, past, present and future that wanted it to be given, that wanted it to be said. And that was sort of an imaginal practice, a way of ensouling the whole thing and giving me a sense of being on track and having the support that I needed—or in a way, handing it over to them and to that lineage of soul-making beings, whatever dimensions we're talking about historically and whatever else, and feel in a way that they were helping to give the talks.

Similarly, when I became ill over the last three and a half years—almost four years now—sometimes so tired and I had to do something, a podcast or this thing or that thing, and felt so depleted, again I would call on or align myself with that lineage, a timeless lineage, imaginal lineage, and entrust the whole process to that when I felt very depleted.

One of the reasons, I think, hearing about last night and the dana ceremony, and then I know that some of you went to the church—I don't know what happened there, but whatever. Yeah, you were praying. That's right. There's a sense, indirect and maybe more tangible, that you are those angels now.

Some of you, or those of you who will enter this more fully and take it on and explore it more fully—there's a sense, for me, that you're supporting the whole thing now. Does that make sense? So that's very beautiful and I feel very grateful for that. I'm very touched. There's a lot of delight in that and a lot of beauty in that and a lot of gratitude. You are that imaginal community now. Some of you—no pressure. If you feel that in the calling of your soul, in your being, in your togetherness. So that's something very heartening for me, soulful for me. For us, I think, if I should say, if I can.

And so, a couple of things about that. We've, on and off on this retreat, kind of wanted to put the onus back to you, to pass the buck back to you. For those of you that think you'll be really into this, some of you will just take little bits of this and maybe use a little bit in your therapy practice or some other thing, and that's completely fine. And some of you will be much more holy and wholeheartedly engaged and committed and in love and on fire and hungry to fill out these teachings and let them fill out in these practices and explore, and in the fullness of time, having digested what is really quite complicated, quite sophisticated, profound and wide, will bring your own creativity and your own beauty and add to it or make connections—I hope, and I hope that happens. I hope if it does happen that it's rooted in a kind of really full assimilation and digestion of what we've been talking about, before just sort of tinkering with adding it to other things or mixing it.

But again, there's this encouragement from us to, if you feel the calling, be a little proactive with that—alone and together. What do I need to develop? What is it that I don't quite understand? What needs filling out? What needs to become a more firm base for me and come alive that way? Where are my blind spots? What are the things that I just need to develop in order for this whole vessel in my personal practice to really be shipshape and able to sail on rough seas and meet whatever?

So there's this encouragement to really think that way about one's practice. And we can do that together. So we can certainly do it in solitude, in one's own reflection, in one's own practice, but also together—sharing together, studying together, learning together, supporting each other. It may be that certain aspects are clearer to one person and less so to another and vice versa. So to have that sense, the sangha sense of really being really good friends to each other.

If you feel that calling, if there's that opportunity, then what does that need? What does it need? How do we take care of these relationships? I've said this before—soul doesn't just happen by itself. Soul making won't just happen. There's a lot of care and a lot of conditions need to come together for that to happen.

Similarly, for Sangha to flourish—for the sense of community and deep soul friendships to deepen—conscious effort is required. Of course, we are thrown together fortuitously and gratefully and miraculously with people whom something blossoms with, but still it takes considerable work, sometimes

very hard work.

So what does it mean to care for each other, to be good friends to each other—deep, supportive friends who explore together and open things together? This is the question before us if this feels like your calling and what you would like to cultivate.

Thank you for your practice. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your beautiful souls.

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