



Ratnasambhava and Positive Emotion

1: A Wise Approach to Hindrances

Imagination: Ratnasambhava represents, among other things, imagination. His consort Mamaki imagines all beings as herself, transcending separation of self/other. Imagination is our way in to positive emotion. Shelly described this connection:

From this intimate imagination with others, positive emotion opens out to a radiant awareness. The song of the 7th Dalai Lama begins:

Turning Towards: Bringing the sensitivity of positive emotion to our own experience, we can imagine all the ‘somethings’ felt within our experience, that we might have related to as hindrances, rather as living beings - each with an inner wisdom: knowing what is unresolved, returning to our attention, bringing the opportunity to integrate. Rumi’s poem the Guest House expresses this:

Wise Attention: Taking this opportunity to integrate involves bringing wise attention to our guests: an attention that is open and spacious – not caught up in the emotion, but able to be with it, fully allowing it to be there for just as long as it needs to be. An attention that is tender and sensitive, feeling in to the nuance and the texture of the experience with a welcoming attitude. With this wise attention we can feel our way down, for example from

- Thoughts of blame
- Underlying emotion of anger
- Underlying feeling of dukkha
- A sense of hurt
- A rawness
- Sensitivity

The great secret of morals is Love ... A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own.

*An image of a sun, enthroned in the heavens
Radiating one thousand beams of light.
Were we to shower bright rays of love upon all beings
How excellent!*

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

So if we find we are preoccupied with an argument played out in our minds, bringing wise attention to this involves turning towards - not the content of thinking (trying to find the perfect riposte) but to the underlying emotional drive – anger in this case.

To take the alternative example of anxiety, wise attention would not get involved with the thoughts about what to do for the best, but would turn towards the underlying emotion of anxiety. Just as, were a friend of ours to be anxious, we could be with them in their anxiety without having any opinions as to what they should do.

Difficulty: If you're finding it difficult to turn towards, to bring kindly awareness to your experience, recognize this difficulty as an experience: not all of you, but 'something in you' that is finding turning towards difficult.

Bring kindly awareness to this 'something'. For example, on recognizing a state of anxiety, rather than thinking 'I'm really anxious', think 'something in me is feeling really anxious' and turn towards that. If you find the response is 'I can't: it's too much' then recognize that "something in me is saying 'I can't'" and turn towards that.

In this way, finding the place where you can be with your experience with a kindly, sensitive and empathic awareness – which is to say with metta. This is the art of the first stage of the metta bhavana.

Opportunity: Rather than seeing the hindrances as getting in the way of and preventing us from experiencing states of absorption, of integration and positive emotion, we can see them as bringing to us the opportunity to integrate what is still unaddressed. They have an inner wisdom to them in that they know, in at least one instance, what is still an issue for us – where we need to bring awareness and its revolutionary transformative capacity to bear. In this sense they are 'a guide from beyond': from beyond our current sense of identity, from beyond our current degree of integration, from beyond what has been fully felt through. Knocking at the door of the guest house, calling upon our attention, they bring the gift of an opportunity to bring positive emotion to bear, to deepen our understanding of ourselves, to integrate more fully, and to move towards enlightened awareness.

Excercise: if a difficult emotion turns up during the week, try turning towards it and being with it