

The Magic of Faith

a teacher practice with Niguma



Unfettered Mind

Pragmatic Buddhism

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In the sky in front of me is my teacher, arising in the form of Niguma.
Every part of me prays to her to be free from disturbance — physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual:

*I and all beings, infinite in number,
take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
I and all beings, infinite in number,
take refuge in the teacher, in practice, and in what arises in experience.
I and all beings, infinite in number,
take refuge in experience, empty, vivid, arising without restriction.*
Repeat three times.

*Beings are numberless: I vow to free them all.
Reactions are endless: I vow to release them all.
Doors to experience are infinite: I vow to enter them all.
Ways of awakening are limitless: I vow to know them all.*
Repeat three times.

Here in this forest, in the middle of my life,
Trees close in: a darkening path awaits my feet.
Much have I learned, yet more I seek to know.
What sense does it make for me to turn back now?

*Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Wherever you may be,
Please help me to find a way.*
Repeat many times.

Though teachers assure me time and again
About what they feel I know and understand,
My heart still longs for what no words will serve.
What is there to do but trust this yearning and go on?

*Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Wherever you may be,
Please help me to find a way.*
Repeat many times.

“Find Niguma,” I’m told. With the magic of that name
I find a strength that gently leads me on.
Dark the way, yet clear my heart and mind.
How does this mystery show me where to go?

*Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Wherever you may be,
Please help me to find a way.
Repeat many times.*

The skeletons of my life are scattered all about.
So is the rotting flesh of love and hate and fear,
And hair, the wild wild hair of thought, wafts everywhere:
Oh, Sosa Grove, what have you brought me to?

*Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Wherever you may be,
Please help me to find a way.
Repeat many times.*

“What are you doing here?” a voice shouts from the sky,
“This place isn’t safe, especially for the likes of you.
Begone, before my companions soon arrive,
And feast on you, your flesh, and, yes, your bones.”

Niguma!
Dark tan your skin, black your hair, and
Three eyes blazing like fire.
The rattle of a drum in your right hand
Summons your companions, intent and fierce.
Your left holds a skull cup, and encircles Shiva’s staff.
At ease you sit as you turn your gaze on me.

“Here, take this gold” I plead, “the last of all the wealth I’ve known.”
“Is that all you have?” you sneer, and toss it far away.
Grinning, your cannibal companions lick their lips with glee.
For me what’s left now? What more can I do?

Use either of these two prayers to pray with the deep devotion that comes when all hope is gone and you have nothing left to lose:

*Treasured teacher,
In whose presence I awaken free from time,
I pray to you.
For the sake of all beings,
Give me energy to let belief in self fall away.
Give me energy to see through life's illusions.
Give me energy to master enchantment and dream.
Give me energy to know the sheer clarity of being itself.*

Or

*Treasured teacher, I pray to you.
Give me energy to let belief in self fall away.
Give me energy to see through life's illusions.
Give me energy to end reactive thinking.
Give me energy to know mind has no beginning.
Give me energy to let confusion subside on its own.
Give me energy to know whatever arises is beyond words.*

She smiles and, as I feel her light touch,
I slowly rise into the sky.
When I look into her deep black eyes,
I meet space — open, vast, beyond all measure.

“Like and dislike are the mind’s disease,
Certain to drown you in samsara’s sea.
Know that there is nothing here at all,
And then, my child, everything is gold.

Experience arises like magic.
If you practice like magic
You will awaken like magic
Through the power of faith.

Don’t think about your teacher or your practice.
Don’t think about what is real or not real.
Don’t think about anything at all.
Don’t control what you experience.
Just rest in how things are.”

With these words, she dissolves into light,
And, like water pouring into water,
She and I become one.

Rest without reference and then conclude with this dedication.

I let go of all the good that comes from this practice:
May it touch everyone and everything I know.
May it ease the pain of struggle everywhere.
And awaken new possibilities for all.

At the request of Lawrence Ladden of Pennsylvania, who wanted a way to connect with Niguma and her teaching, I, Ken McLeod, composed this short practice in the month of November, 2008 in Los Angeles, California. In March, 2017, in response to my old friend, Dan Jorgensen, I made some revisions.

Notes

1. *The practice is loosely based on Khyungpo's first meeting with Niguma.*
2. *Sosa Grove is the name of the charnel ground where Khyungpo Naljor was told to look for Niguma.*