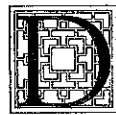


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38. Dipa Ma's Fearless Daughters

INDIA / UNITED STATES, TWENTIETH CENTURY



IPA MA was on an airplane with a woman student. It was very turbulent, and the woman screamed. Dipa Ma was sitting across the aisle and took her hand and held it. Then she whispered, "The daughters of the Buddha are fearless."

AMITA SCHMIDT'S REFLECTION

The first time I heard this story I thought, "Wait a minute, the Buddha never had a daughter." Dipa Ma, however, is pointing to a truth here that is deeper than historical facts. First of all she is teaching her student that as Buddhist practitioners each one of us belongs to the Buddha's family. No one is left out, not by gender, nor by time or history. We all belong to the lineage and the awakening of the Buddha, right here, right now.

Dipa Ma is also emphasizing the fearlessness needed on this path of the Dharma. To know the truth one must be fearless, no matter what is happening. Whether there is airplane turbulence, or physical injury, can you have a heart and mind that are unshakeable? Waking up is not a part-time job for the faint-hearted. It is the intention to meet every moment continually without flinching. As a daughter of the Buddha, are you an example to all beings of the willingness to face what is, right now, without fear or argument?

A few months ago I had a lesson in being a fearless daughter of the Buddha. On a balmy sunny morning I decided to go out for a solo swim in the ocean in Hawaii where I live. There were some colorful

fish where I was swimming and I became preoccupied with following some of them. Unfortunately I didn't notice until it was too late that I had drifted out with an ocean current about one mile from the shore. To make matters worse a strong wind suddenly arose, and as I tried to swim to shore, the whitecaps pushed me back for every stroke I took. When I realized I was a long way out, alone, in shark territory, and unable to make much progress against the wind, I had a moment of panic. It was similar to the scream of Dipa Ma's student on the airplane.

But then my Dharma practice kicked in. It was as if the power of my intention from years of practice came forward, on its own, to help. It labeled the feeling, "This is just panic. Panic is not going to help you. Don't believe panic." Then my daughter-of-the-Buddha mind said, "Just do what you can do, stay focused on right now, one thing at a time. Start with one kick and one arm movement at a time. You can do that. Don't worry about anything else." I put a concentrated focus on the body and stayed out of the mind. I paid attention to the movement of my arms in the swimming motion, one breath at a time, and the kicking of my legs. I noticed that despite the wind I was able to move a tiny bit forward with each stroke. I focused on this small amount of forward motion, rather than the feeling of being pushed back. A spontaneous resolve arose to not give up no matter how long it took. This protective Dharma of the present moment, along with the resolve of the Buddha, eventually brought me back, exhausted, to the shore.

Whether we are experiencing a bumpy flight, a difficult ocean swim, or a turbulent life, our practice is the same. We are given the chance to meet this moment with openness and fearlessness. It doesn't matter how long it takes or how much the wind pushes us back. If there is a willingness not to give up and a resolve to keep taking that one next step, then it is inevitable that each one of us will find lasting freedom. As women, our lives are a message to each other. When we live from the intuitive truth that anything is possible, then this mes-

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sage of fearlessness can be passed on through generations of women.
 This is the true legacy of a daughter of the Buddha.



When you are afraid, where do you find Buddha? How do you find
 fearlessness within fear? How do you find freedom within fear?