

There's no place like home

During this Coronavirus pandemic, we have all been spending our time at home. Some might be getting cabin fever, and are getting anxious to get out and go to restaurants, to the movies, to go anywhere. Others might be enjoying the time at home because they have had to travel for work and were getting tired of airplanes and airports. Some might be patiently enduring this stay at home directive, and are doing their part to prevent the spread of the virus. Still, there might be those who are going stir crazy and feel like being stuck at home is like being in prison. We are all experiencing this pandemic in various ways.

Today, I would like to reflect on the movie, "The Wizard of Oz," and its parallels to Buddhism.

In the movie, Dorothy hits her head in the midst of a tornado, and then goes on a long journey to a strange land. She encounters a "good witch" by the name of Glenda, who advises that she go to Emerald City and that the wizard there might help her to get back home to Kansas. How do I get there she asks? Glenda answers, "Follow the yellow brick road."

Dorothy and her little dog Toto begin their journey on the yellow brick road, and along the way, they meet several good friends, fellow travelers who also seek something from the wizard. The scarecrow seeks to find a brain. The lion seeks to find courage. The tin man seeks to find a heart. Dorothy just wants to find a way back to Kansas, to her home.

As the movie goes, when they all meet the Wizard, he is not an all-powerful being, but is just an ordinary man, who shows each of them that what they were seeking, they had all along. The scarecrow really did have a brain. The lion really did have courage. The tin man really did have a heart. And Dorothy already had the way to get back home, the ruby red slippers.

When Dorothy wakes up from her dream and journey, she is so grateful to see her family again. They hadn't changed, but Dorothy had. In the final scene, she says the words that have become ingrained in our hearts and minds, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

There are so many wonderful parallels to Buddhism in this timeless, classic movie. First of all, we unenlightened beings are all like Dorothy, lost, finding our way back home. The yellow brick road for us is the path of Buddhism, the path of the Dharma. We follow that path, because it leads to truth, to awakening.

Along the way we meet good friends in the Dharma that we are able to follow the path together. From them we learn wisdom, courage, and finding our own true heart and mind.

In the end, we reach and discover our real home, our true refuge, the heart of the Buddha-Dharma. Like Dorothy, the world around us hasn't changed, but we have. Our awareness, our perspective on life has changed. At that point we are able to say, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

The path of the Nembutsu is a journey. It's a journey. It is a journey that brings us back to our original home, our true home, our true self.

During this time in which we are confined to our homes, may we reflect and come to realize and appreciate not only the home we live in, but may we discover in our hearts and minds, our true home, the world of Buddha, the world of Namuamidabutsu.

Namuamidabutsu,

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