

FOCUSING AND BLACK MAGIC

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I have always loved fairy tales and have written and published them, myself. When I moved to Indonesia to live in the jungles and catalogue the activities of 2,500 shamans living on one particular island, I felt transported into another world. I was living a fairy tale existence complete with magicians of white magic and magicians of black magic. And the locals sometimes whispered, rather unnervingly, things that mixed both.

My house was a bamboo hut set right in the middle of the fields considered to be the realm of practitioners of the most potent black magic. Perfect.

Over much struggle and time I struck up a friendship, as well as a collegial relationship, with a particular shaman who was respected as a great teacher of meditation, as well as beloved white magician.

Over many congenial, delightful visits he introduced me to his various methods of meditation and I shared Vipassana or Tonglen or other forms that I taught in the West. He was interested in seemingly everything.

One particular morning I was in his hut with only one of his many assistants present. The venerated shaman, whom I felt so fortunate to know personally, and from whom I had learned so much, told me that it was time to share with me a very elevated form of meditation that had been handed down in his family of healers for generations. He called it The Seven Bridges.

In this method, he explained, each bridge spans higher levels of consciousness culminating in a deeply ecstatic state wherein one left one's body to see one's life as it really exists unconnected to the pull of daily life and the body's constant needs. An experience of the invisible power beyond the visible weight of life is what he was offering.

As someone trained in the neurosciences and having long-term spiritual practices, including Focusing, I was deeply intrigued. I was honored that after so much time spent with him exchanging religious, philosophical, and cosmological ideas/practices that he would invite me into his "inner sanctum." Gently, he led me into one, two, then three bridges. Around the fourth, instead of increasing calmness, as I'd always experienced with his teachings before, came great discomfort.

As a Focusing trainer, I knew about paying attention to sudden discomfort. As a meditator and plain ol' average trusting/curious soul, I planned to just keep following him to the next bridges.

About the sixth level, in a deep state of altered awareness, I began to Focus on what was quickly becoming a fear of, rather than a surrendering to, his process. Simultaneously, I began the complicated dance of listening to him, monitoring the effects of what he was

guiding me to do (did I really start to feel myself leave my body and soar freely in the sky around us above our village?)—and continue to stay with my body and Focus.

An impossibly long time seemed to be passing by with paradoxes playing about—fear and doubt, trust and patience, the urge to run while my feet felt glued in place, respect for another while respecting me. I wondered if I was truly having a magician’s style out-of-body experience in a definitely not-Focusing-way, full of extreme exhaustion and anxiety, rather than compassion? Or was it all my rising panic due to the urge to be in control, or perhaps reflecting my lacks (of which there are many), compared to such a master?

Now in an altered state of consciousness and with a powerful shaman seemingly wanting to control me . . . or have power over me and my mind in an aggressive energetic form (he never physically touched me), my conjuring up reliable Focusing capabilities became alarmingly critical. This shaman was leading me in one direction and Focusing was leading me in another.

Focusing into my body I found that neither fear nor control were the handle—*Attack was!* From some deep place I had gotten that handle, “Attack!” This felt sense came even while I was most definitely in some type of trance state. No matter how illogical it may have seemed to some parts of me, these deepening “meditative” states he was taking me into were a threat to me somehow, jeopardizing . . . my ability to live?? . . .

What? My body was sending me strong messages to “Protect”. Then, the felt sense unrolled even more—this venerable shaman/friend was attacking my ability and *basic human right as a person, a me, inside my own body, to live in an inner way, without interference of any kind* even from a master of ancient, powerful, or useful rituals.

In a dazed muddle I began to receive new felt senses of pushing and emptying. He was extracting large masses of energy from me. Some part of me was attempting to find large masses of energy, for myself. Eventually, I succeeded in finding, then pushing the large masses of energy back at him. With the split second, yet eternal window of time that only Focusing could have opened in me, I used all my strength energetically to scream in my head, “I will stop you!” And I began to push visions of precious waves of energy that I sorely needed myself back at him.

Eventually, I somehow forced myself to open my eyes. His face was distorted in a smirk. I still did not understand much of what was happening or what his intentions for the final seventh bridge might have been. I simply honored the felt senses of attack, and definitely betrayal. I trusted that he was *indeed*, attacking me in some way that was not clear to me, but was definitely a reality to my deeper body.

“Dear colleague,” he said, “you are not a polite guest in my home.”

“No,” I answered, “and you are not a polite guest in my mind nor anywhere in my energy field or body.”

Then, when I could move my legs by Focusing first into a tiny spot that had some energy and building from there . . . toes, foot, knee, leg . . . I got up unsteadily, wobbly, confused, yet firm. I told him that I would never again be a guest in his home nor he in mine.

Remembering my curiosity and thrill that this healer would share “trade secrets” with me, another part of me also smirked at me saying, “Pride cometh before a fall.” Well, that, too, I suppose I felt—and I left.

In the here and now, years after this time, when I am low in energy or spirit, ill or needing to understand some life event that seems mysterious or inexplicable, I remember my jungle life, this jungle incident, this dance which I have rarely spoken about—certainly never written about for others. To me, it is a story as much about gratitude for Focusing saving my life in some way that I will never know, as it is a teaching story, an inner guide for the complexities of consciousness.

I knew then and still know, that there is such a phenomenon as white magic or helpful magic, and definitely black magic—both of which I had endless occasions to witness over long years of living among shamans. Both magical polarities can have wondrous results whether for the good of others, or not. My fellow scientists might be skeptical or use other words but to me, *magic is*.

I’d never have thought when I first became a Focusing Trainer, that one day I’d meet a trickster, a black magician/shaman posing as a humble healer, a practitioner of the white light. A trickster, that for whatever reasons, would use his formidable gifts and powers to attempt to harm me. And yet, through the strict attention of a long meditation practice and a Focusing trust in my own body’s wisdom, I was able to not get trapped by my own curiosity and pride and a shaman’s wish to abuse that curiosity—I was able to get out of harm’s way. Who would ever have thought so? Was all this, otherworldly? I don’t believe so. As I said, my fellow scientists might be skeptical or use other words, but to me, *magic is. Focusing is*.

Perhaps, sometime I’ll continue with these shamanic tales, and relate the story of a black magician’s wife who came to me for therapy, convinced that her husband was slowly, imperceptibly killing her. But for now, I leave the reader with this story of Focusing and the Seven Bridges, and how it came to save my life in more than one way, in more than one culture, in more than one paradigm.

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