

LEARNING TO *news*

Occasional Reflections on Living

Spring 2008



My teacher visited this area in January. Reggie Ray spent two weeks in Vancouver, offering a smattering of programs, talks, and interviews. I intended to take part in some of this, of course. In the process of arranging food and travel, shelter and childcare, however, something snapped. "It's too much!" I burst one windy afternoon. "I'm staying home!"

I'm certain many of us are familiar with this. We want something in our lives, something that offers fulfillment and depth. After looking around a bit, we find a class we'd like to take, maybe a workshop catches our eye. When it comes to squeezing these into our lives, though, the cost, distance, time, commitment, and whatever else seem way too much. The whole process gets annoying. We get frustrated, ruffled. The situation becomes a pain and we wonder whether it is actually worth it.

From a conventional perspective, this is reason enough to give up and do something else. That class is just too hard to accommodate given the present shape of our lives. Our schedule is already full that night, our finances pretty tight. Or perhaps daily practice has left us feeling extremely anxious through the last week. Perhaps a teacher's sharp comments have us reeling. Maybe the idea of a half-day session makes us so sweat-on-the-palms nervous that anything we touch shows our hand print.

From an ordinary point of view, these are all easily interpreted as reasons to walk away from our inspiration to find "something". The discomfort they bring into our lives is very quickly assumed to indicate that things are not working out, were not meant to be. So we shrug our shoulders, turn away from what had so enticed us, and move on to something else.

From the vantage point of the spiritual path, however,

such situations are seen very differently. While our usual approach toward life is concerned with maximizing personal comfort and rejecting anything distressing, authentic spirituality is not this way at all. Rather than reinforcing our endless search for pleasure and ease, our yearning for more genuine fulfillment often takes us outside the comfortable bounds of our established lives. It presents all sorts of obstacles to 'business as usual'. It disrupts and unsettles and surprises. In doing this, the journey helps us open into an ever-greater sense of who we truly are.

Understanding this alters the way we engage the challenges that come our way as we take classes, attend workshops, and dig into personal practice. Such 'obstacles' become markers for us, showing when and where we are holding on too tightly. They make us aware of situations in which our set and familiar sense of self is cracking a little. Alerting us that opportunity is at hand, they encourage us not to move on to something else, but to embrace what we feel compelled to push away, open to what we would like to shut out, and turn toward what we desperately want to run from.

So while it remained a hassle getting the three of us over to Vancouver recently, we did it nonetheless. And though those days on the mainland continued to offer occasions in which - writhing with discomfort or irritation or boredom - I wondered, 'Do I really want to do this?' I tried to keep answering 'Yes' to this inquiry to the fullest of my ability.

For this is the essence of the journey, really. We are training in saying 'Yes' *right now*. We are developing our ability to say 'Yes' to *this* experience. 'Yes' to the bothers and inconveniences. 'Yes' to the uncertainties and disruptions. 'Yes' as well to the delight of seeing old friends again, to the wonder of working in a timeless tradition. We are training in saying 'Yes' to every single moment of this human life. 'Yes' to every last bit of it. It is hard work, to be sure. But it is also so very worthwhile.

Continuing Meditation Events

Ongoing practice and instruction is an essential part of the meditative journey. Thus, the continuing classes and workshops being offered are tremendous resources for us. Through the coming months, continuing classes include:

Wed Night at Monterey (Begins May/Register Now)

Mon Afternoon at Monterey (Begins May/Register Now)

Mon Night at Gordon Head (Begins July/Register May 14)

There will also be regular monthly gatherings at Queenswood, and occasional 'Mornings of Meditation' at Monterey. Check 'Coming Events' for more .

Meditation Immersions at Monterey

Two multi-morning immersions will be offered through Monterey Centre this summer. For both new and experienced meditators, these 9 am-Noon sessions allow a unique and invaluable chance to deepen our connection with the practice and with ourselves. Registration - through 370 7300 - starts Thurs May 1.

Immersion 1 - Wed July 2 - Fri July 4

Immersion 2 - Mon Aug 25 - Fri Aug 29

Private Meditation Offerings

Recognizing that personal schedules and inclinations can make it challenging to attend classes and workshops, I have long included *Learning to Meditate at Home* among my offerings. This has been well received and, as a result, I want to begin forming continuing home groups. These will meet monthly and run two hours. I will offer guided instruction and a short talk, with discussion following. I have reworked my schedule so Thursday evenings will be my main night for this. Please be in touch if you - and your friends - are interested.

Introductory Meditation Events

Through both Spring and Summer, introductory offerings will occur in a range of locations and formats. Locations include Monterey, Gordon Head Rec, Queenswood, UVic, VI Fitness (Oak Bay), and Shoreline Community School. Please visit 'Coming Events' on the 'Meditation' page of NeilMcKinlay.com. Then begin planning!

Simplify Your Life at Queenswood

"A great kickstart to really looking at my life!"

As it's subtitle suggests, *Simplify Your Life: Culture, Lifestyle, and the Spiritual Journey* looks at the cultural causes of our harried lives, then considers both lifestyle and spiritual solutions to our seemingly endless 'overwhelm'.

Typically presented over two hours, Queenswood is offering a full day of this event Sat May 31. In addition to allowing time for reflection, this format will let us explore meditation as a way to realize a more spacious life. If you have yet to take *Learning to Meditate*, this is a great opportunity! Call 477 3822 to register.

The Five-Minute Refresh: Meditation At Work

Presented in a short and office-friendly way, *The Five-Minute Refresh* highlights the restorative power of the posture-work used in the *Learning to Meditate* workshops, making meditation something you can do at your desk in as little as five minutes. Check the 'Presenting' page of my site for more information, and be in touch if you are interested in bringing this event to your workplace.

Reggie Ray Update

Reggie Ray will be in our neck of the woods this summer. Find him at Hollyhock Aug 6-10, and in Seattle Aug 22-24. Check dharmaocean.org for more on this, and for links to some recent talks. Also, look for his new book, *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body*.

What Can I Do?

"As a global warming solution, cycling has to be one of the easiest, cheapest, and most effective. Operating a car costs \$7,000 a year. A bike \$120 a year. A US study found that 40% of all trips are within a 10 minute bike ride, and 54% of commuters live with 10 miles of their work."

- From Guy Dauncey's *EcoNews* (www.earthfuture.com)

Thanks

Bruce Cox, Pat Nicol, Gord Butterfield, Ali Thomas, Renee Olsen, Maxine Tobin, Amei Mai, Robin Cantor.