



11. Presence, Patience and Wholeness

So long as you regard yourself as a part only, a small, infinite something like three cubits and a half long and 150 pounds heavy, so long as you consider yourself to be flesh and blood, so long as you are limited; you are impaired, you are cut, you are divided, you are not whole, you are simply a finite fraction and are not whole, not healthy, not strong...If you separate a small particle of water from the sea, it will become putrid, it will become stagnant and filthy. Similarly the man, the sage or saint, or anybody who feels himself as a finite being limited by time or space, confined within a short area is not healthy, is not whole and is not happy; he can lay no claim to happiness. The very moment your vision is not limited, the very moment you dispel your finite consciousness and feel that you are the all, that you are the whole world, that you are an Infinity; when you replace that, then you become whole and the bodily disease, trouble and anxiety is dispersed, dispelled and evaporated.

- Swami Rama Tirtha in a talk delivered on March 5, 1903 in San Francisco.

Wholeness is not just a state of grace, it is our birthright. We yearn for something without a name, something that will complete us and make us whole once again. A vague memory of wholeness plagues and agitates, niggling at our insides and sending us to look for relief but we look in all the wrong places. The place to look is within. I keep repeating this because it needs to be repeated. Within is inside you, inside your mind, your body, and your heart. Going within creates presence and presence penetrates the veils of inner mystery. Presence is the key to wholeness and the fulfillment of your life.

As you read this feel your feet, ground and align with your inner axis of light. Feel the grace spiraling downward and love spiraling upward in a cosmic dance of joy and ecstasy within your being. You may be able to experience the transmission that comes with the words or you might decide not to read because being present is more satisfying than reading!

One of my greatest impediments to presence is impatience. I know this because I was very impatient as a beginning mystic. My teacher, Sufi Amin, told me I was one of his most impatient students. He said, One day you will have a student that is as impatient as you and you will understand the pain and difficulty caused by this quality. I didn't need to wait until I had an impatient student in front of me to realize the pain of impatience. My inability to experience wholeness was enough of a reminder. The constant pressing of my mind to be someone or someplace



other than where I was and the feeling of being “out of synch” tortured me most of the time.

He gave me mantras to help develop the quality of patience and also concentration and mastery exercises to do. I learned from him that impatience may exist due to a lack of concentration. Concentration is a state of being; it is not the crinkled forehead grunting effort we put into studying for exams. Concentration is a state of mind that can maintain a relaxed and peaceful single pointed focus for a long period of time. In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras concentration is noted as the first stage of preparation for meditation. When the mind is concentrated it deflects the disquieting influences of illusion and confusion. The silky smooth stillness has no texture for attachments to cling to. Freedom from the ripples of mind leads to great clarity and penetrating insight.

Impatience is still my tendency but every time I hit a wall and feel the tightening grip of impatience closing in on me, (the shoulders rising to my ears, the pain in my neck, the shallow breathing and the internal pressure building....) I recognize my persistent friend and invite her to relax. Impatience creates tension and anxiety. It is a clever if ineffective attempt to distract us from the pain of fragmentation. Somehow we hope that if we keep moving and thinking fast enough we’ll out run the pain and numb out from exhaustion. Actually the opposite is true.

In spiritual terms patience is the ability to tune into the Divine timing. It is similar to the idea of Thy will, not my will. Patience becomes Thy time, not my time. God’s time is present time. Not the future nor the past, but the present. All exists in one moment of presence. Impatience is the pushing and tugging on God’s time with the inevitable result of limitation and frustration.

Remember the Chinese finger torture toy you had as a child? It’s a 5 inch long bamboo tube that you put a finger in each end and then try to get your fingers out? If you pull the fingers away from each other, the grip gets tighter. But if you relax and allow the fingers to release inward the grip eases and your fingers are free. The same is true for wholeness; it is a result of relaxing and releasing inward towards self rather than pulling and tugging away from self.