

March 2021

Greetings!

I hope everyone is doing well. Spring must be just around the corner, because I am thinking about gardening again. It is about time to prune and fertilize the berries on the roof garden. I am really looking forward to getting back to work "up on the roof", which is, by the way, one of my favorite songs. But I digress. For me, it is a sign of moving towards a more normal time.

I have been in touch lately with many people who have been doing the daily practice for a while and also some who are new to it. The predominant theme that I most often hear is how it has helped them during these trying times. You have all heard me say many times, how helpful the practice and meditation can be. Yet this is not a panacea in and of itself. If you just do the meditation, and the rest of the day don't bring forth the attitude of stillness and mindfulness to your activities, you are missing a major part of the training and not dealing directly with your dis-ease. When you infuse your daily life with the "mind of meditation", you open yourself to the magnificent flow of the Eternal. What I mean here is that you need to maintain a stillness while engaged in the activities of the day, paying attention to them and not letting your mind wander as it has a tendency to do. Just do the best you can with everything, and keep your heart open. When you are in a state of mindfulness, you can work on being compassionate, sympathetic, and empathetic. If you find you are moving away from this state, let your training make you aware of this, and return you to a state of mindfulness. This really applies to any activity we may be involved in.

One thing that I would like to bring up, that is a real detriment to our spiritual practice, is something I refer to as "soap opera." As we know, soap operas operate by being overly dramatic. This can happen to us when we get involved in other people's business, and it is usually characterized by an overemphasis on emotions and judgments. For me, it often revolves around idle gossip and talking about others' faults and shortcomings, a favorite topic in the building where I live. When I am mindful of this, I can go back to a more meditative state. In family or work life it is very easy to get caught up in "soap opera". Being mindful is of great importance here, because the egocentric self really feeds on the drama and judgmentalism that is present. When we feel ourselves being drawn into this drama, it helps greatly to take a step back, and to pull ourselves out of the vortex. This "soap opera" is really just another pain killer, like drugs or alcohol, covering up what we really need to work on -- our own dis-ease and suffering. I can say from my own experience, "soap opera" is an easy trap to fall into, and it really works against our spiritual life.

To end with, I would like to keep up my reputation as the cheerleader monk. I speak for myself and many others when I say how important your daily practice and meditation is. Be mindful and keep your heart and mind open. This spiritual life works. It is so very helpful. So keep going and going and going.

With all my heart,

Rev Basil