



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Weekly Teachings 29/7/2012



Relaxing the Body

As I have written in a previous letter we live in a world that is obsessed with achievement and success. Even meditation can be seen purely as a way of optimizing our brain function, to be more materially successful in this world.

Just go into a bookshop and look for the section on self improvement ? the shelves are groaning under the weight of books telling you how to improve your health, body and mind, and therefore live a more materially successful life.

I don't deny that it is absolutely important to look after your body and your mind to keep it in optimum health. Even Evagrius one of the foremost of the 4th century Desert fathers said: "Our holy and most ascetic master (Macarius the Great) stated that the monk should always live as if he were to die tomorrow but at the same time that he should treat his body as if he were to live on with it for many years to come." Looking after the body with the right kind of food in modest quantities and harmonizing it with a physical practice, such as Yoga, Tai Chi or Chi Kung, is therefore undeniably important.

This result oriented approach is even seen in the field of meditation. Sure, it is possible to use meditation purely for its health benefits as a body and mind altering relaxation technique and stop there. It is wonderful to stop the endlessly chattering mind and release stress and tension. It will feel great to have "time out" from the concerns, anxieties, hopes and fears that generally beset us, to stop the drain of energy of a mind going round and round in circles.

But that would be a missed opportunity; there is much more to meditation than its physiological effects on the body. For a serious practitioner therefore, care for the body and relaxation is seen as an essential preparation, enabling the real purpose of meditation, namely totally transforming our mind, the way we look at reality. In doing so, we discover the spiritual part of our being and our connection to the Source of all Being. To do that, meditation needs to be a spiritual discipline involving solitude and silence, in which we let go of all sense

experiences, images, emotions and thoughts, our ego. Only when we have reconnected with our spiritual essence, our self, can we live a fulfilling and meaningful life, as our action then flows from our awareness of the Divine, our connectedness with and responsibility and concern for others.

Compassion, concern for others, is the true sign that our mind is being transformed. In the words of Evagrius: *?Happy is the monk who views the welfare and progress of all men and women with as much joy as if it were his own.? This transformation we can only prepare for by stilling the body and the mind, by being open to the work of the Spirit. For it is her work: ?The Holy Spirit takes compassion on our weakness, and thought we are impure she often comes to visit us. If she should find our spirit praying to her out of love for the Truth she then descends and dispels the whole army of thoughts that beset it.?*

Kim Nataraja

For further help with setting up and leading groups, please look [HERE](#).

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