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THE DARING ADVENTURE

The Mysterious Path continues to unfold its red carpet in front of me and the invisible doorman motions me forward: a cancelled trip to Tibet opens the way for a journey to the home in exile of the Tibetans and Dalai Lama and making friends with many Tibetans in a way I couldn't have done in occupied Tibet. Even still, I do not understand the full purpose of this trip and participation in the first Ten Day Certificate Course in the Basics of Tibetan Medicine in Dharamsala, India, conducted by the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute. Mysterious Indeed is the Path.

Three weeks with no responsibilities for anyone but myself in a foreign country! Perhaps this was something to occupy my conscious mind while other things were going on below the surface.

It was exciting to attend the class, meet the personal physicians of the Dalai Lama, as well as officials and other doctors from the institute, India, the United States, Australia, Spain, England, Switzerland, and France.

Dharamsala, in Northern India at the base of the Himalayas, was given to the Tibetans as home in exile when the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet and began a process of what would be called ethnic cleansing today. Thousands were killed and tortured, and monasteries were destroyed in the attempt to destroy the culture and replace it with a Chinese Communist culture. What's amazing is the Dalai Lama's total commitment to non-violence in accordance with Buddhist teachings. I'll share more on these matters later.

This was an opportunity to formally explore the basics of an ancient medical/health systems which has integrated aspects from the medical arts from India and China along with their own unique contributions, including a sophisticated knowledge of medicinal herbs, plants, and minerals, as well as diagnosis using pulse and urine analysis-- all without modern technology.

They view the body as an energy system, all parts of which must work in concert for healthy living ... Physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual. Most recently, I've been working with a Vedic healer from South India and have experienced the healing effects in my physical, mental, and emotional bodies when my energy system is cleansed and balanced, and the body is allowed to heal and maintain itself as it was designed to. My interest in an holistic approach to life has continued to deepen since the days when I researched stress in Law Enforcement officers and realized that stress is a total system response. My explorations then led me to discover many non-traditional healing methodologies, such as homeopathy, Indian and Chinese medicine doctors, as well as, the practice of yoga.

It's amazing to contemplate our bodies as self-maintaining organisms. The problem is that we ourselves sabotage our abilities to activate this self-maintenance. Just like driving a car, we'll speed if we think we can get by with it. Likewise, we'll destroy our bodies because we *think* we can get by with it ... or can blame someone else for our problems ... or create an illusion that it **won't happen to us.**

The body wants to be healthy and will do everything it can to achieve these ends, and it needs help which only the Mind can give. One organ depends on another, depends on the others. Just like a river that supplies water to several towns along its course, if the river is blocked up stream, the water is not available down stream. So with body, if there are problems in one area, other parts of the body will eventually be affected. We perpetuate the illusion that there are no consequences to our mistreatment of our bodies and minds because it often takes a long time for the body to break down. When you begin to treat your body as a total integrative/interactive system, then you can begin to gain the necessary knowledge to live a healthier, happier life.

A holistic approach teaches us that there's a delicate balance between right living, right thinking, right emotional functioning, and right spiritual alignment. "Right" in this case, is not the opposite of wrong, but it means, "*in accordance with that which is proper, which is genuine, which is real ... that which creates harmonious movement in life*".

This delicate balance is dependent upon the interaction of several forces.

1. A sense of our place in the Universe. When we have a feeling about who we are in the universe, a feeling that somewhere in the midst of uncertainty of life that there's an inner Center with which we can attune and upon which we can rest in the midst of the constant motion and change in life, then, there's an ability to live and move in the world which is appreciably different from what we experience if we're uncertain about who we are. I experience this as the Heart Center, the place of unconditional love. We know inside when we ourselves are in tune with the Heart Center. It's a fulcrum around which the world and our lives move, like a gyrostabilizer that keeps us upright, no matter what.

In this place, we learn to live in the center of a transcendent place of unconditional love; we trust our own unfolding path, even embracing the disappointments, the woundings, and the surprises. We trust that something vaster than our conscious mind is moving through time and space navigating our very being.

2. A sense of our basic essence. As a human, we have a two-fold nature: a spiritual essence, as well as, a personal, human self made up of our own skilled and unskilled behaviors. We appreciate that we possess skilled behaviors that we accept and approve of, as well as, those aspects of ourselves that we judge and do not accept, which are unconscious to us. These unconscious, rejected aspects of us are called our shadow. We're prone to wishful thinking that we can eliminate our shadow and pretend to possess only a so-called light side. Focusing our energies on such a fruitless task is destined to heighten feelings of inadequacy and create a sense of never being able to be good enough. We can, and must, come to terms with our full beingness. We begin to come to full acceptance of ourselves as we learn to access the Heart Center space of unconditional love, through the non-judgmental observer.
2. The ability to access an *inner non-judgmental observer* – We can learn to hold our minds steady and focused and not be buffeted about in reaction to fears, insecurities, and beliefs about being basically inadequate. This inner state of the non-judgmental observer is such that we can observe the activities and content of our minds without becoming personally identified with the "stories we've made up" about ourselves. In this place we'll be able to see reality and separate fact from fiction. And we learn to see whatever we see as just what we see. When we judge ourselves as 'bad and wrong' because of the stories we've made up about ourselves as a result of other's real or perceived criticisms and our own severe judgments about ourselves

because we aren't 'perfect', then we're trapped in a no win situation. We must learn to break the spell we're under, then, we can see ourselves more clearly and learn to be easier on ourselves. Sometimes, we can begin to break our self-critical spell by saying 'Oh, isn't that interesting' every time we catch ourselves judging ourselves. 'Isn't that interesting' creates some space so you can look more closely at yourself from a neutral point of view.

The problem is that we've never learned to see the workings of the mind as "the workings of the mind" and to separate this "mindless activity" from the truth of who we are. This access to the *non-judgmental observer* helps create right thinking.

4. Appropriate emotional response - When the mind can engage in *right* thinking, then our emotional responses will not carry us into emotional over-reactivity, which in itself produces physical and emotional disharmony. Emotional reactivity can come when we are out of attunement mentally, physically, or spiritually. We learn the difference between emotional reactivity as a defensive reaction and the experience of our feelings which make us fully human.

5. Daily Tune Ups – Our bodies are an energy system as delicate as any Jaguar automobile, which I am told requires constant readjustment to keep it in alignment. There is never a doubt when an automobile engine needs tuning. We know that eventually we'll have a break down in the middle of the freeway unless we get necessary maintenance. No less is true of us. With proper care, our bodies will purr as beautifully as a well tuned automobile engine.

Our "engines" are affected by blockages in our energy system. These blockages eventually create disease and disharmony in our bodies and minds. These blockages can be caused by stresses of living, diseases, lack of appropriate food and exercise and physical care, negative, fearful thinking, emotional reactivity, as well as the spiritual upheaval stemming from ignorance about who we are in the Universe, how to access our **center** and live in that place of 'peace beyond understanding'.

A tuning-up is the alignment of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects, as well as the daily tuning to our Center, which provides the mechanism to maintain and deepen the alignment and unfolding. Conscious breathing with deep exhales, energy work, acupuncture, and centering your conscious mind on the heart center can be very helpful in re-alignment.

Basically, we need to take responsibility for ourselves without blame or self-judgments. As we engage in self-understanding, we can observe ourselves and our actions and belief systems and see the cause and effect situations. And we can learn to observe without heaping piles of self-blame and guilt, and hopelessness upon ourselves. We can learn the difference between being taking responsibility and becoming paralyzed with blame and guilt. The reality is that every action has an effect. Sometimes it takes only a few minutes to experience the effect, sometimes weeks, sometimes years, maybe, lifetimes. Nonetheless, what we do, say, think and feel does affect us in many ways.

People have often been disappointed when they were unable to stop the inner chatter of fear, inadequacy and feelings of hopelessness with positive thinking. It is good to have positive thoughts; however, thinking positively is often only a band-aid that tops the bleeding of a deep, old wound. Until we address these deep wounds, positive thinking may only add to the problem by creating more inner conflict.

Conscious Living enables us to take conscious responsibility for our lives.

As we observe and become responsible for ourselves without constant self-critical judgments, we can access unrealized potentials and open to the Mysterious Path of our development into new territories. The inner non-judgmental observer can observe with awareness and provide the opportunity for you to make conscious choices so that you aren't always controlled by old patterns.

At this point we can get on with our lives, doing what shows up in front of us to do, becoming aware of our potentials and possibilities, and waiting for signs of new openings and unfolding. We are rich with potential. Our soul is relentless in its efforts to push us deeper and deeper into all that we can be.

The Path continues to unfold. It's a lifetime of discovery, of adventure. New ways of engaging life appear. Our dreams give us information about our inner process. For instance, I recently dreamed that I arrived at an end of the year conference I attend each year without any change of clothes or toiletries, and momentarily couldn't decide whether to make a 9 hour trip back home to get clothes (i.e., go back and get my old identity), or go shopping, and metaphorically, open to the new identity. The question was one of my willingness to let go of the old identity and take on a new one. I had to think about it in the dream.

I watched a practical side of mine almost convince me to return home. In the dream, however, I made the decision to go shopping. When change is afoot, you frequently experience this confusion about holding on to the old or letting go and stepping forward. I don't know what this new identity is, what these new aspects of myself are. I know they will reveal themselves in due time. I just keep living my life, or *chopping wood and carrying water*, as they say. Two days after the dream, I lost my personal phone directory... another loss of identity, of old connections. After I spent a near-crazed day frantically looking for it, I finally heard myself tell myself to 'get a grip and look and see what the meaning of this was for me'. Just another letting go. With this view, I released my lost phone book, bought a new Day Timer and am surrendered to the process.

“Life”, as Helen Keller said, “is either a daring adventure, or nothing.”

Our choice is either the *nothing* with the 'same old same old' and boredom, or *daring adventure*, never ending adventure, lived in a process of becoming more and more consciously aware.

I hope that you will decide to go for *it* in your life—go buy the new clothes and join the journey with me as we explore our unknown territories and develop the tools and confidence to take on the **adventure of our lives**.

Namaste,

Judith