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Dear Meditators,

Happy Fall holidays. The colors of Fall nudge us to pause and appreciate the beauty that surrounds us always. It is hard not to notice the presence of brilliant shades of gold, red, and orange - a reminder of the divine in everything. If you are planning to come to the cozy Thanksgiving retreat, please register right away. The retreat in Knoxville was wonderful; there are a few comments below to share the experience with you.

Emma Woods has kindly been putting this newsletter together for 1 and 1/2 years and is about to have her beautiful baby. Sean Stacey is now stepping in for Emma while she journeys into motherhood. Thank you, thank you, both for keeping this newsletter going for all of us

Namaste, Vidya

Thanksgiving Retreat

Date: November 25 - 29th, 2009

Location: Toddhall Retreat & Conference Center, Columbia, IL (*fly into St. Louis airport*)

Cost: Double - \$380 (*\$95/day*), Single - \$472 (*\$118/day*)

Deadline: 11/4/2009

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Contact: Mary Horne-Porter (317) 831-7470
peacebypiece@att.net

This Thanksgiving we will come together to chant, meditate, do meditation walks and experience the silence within ourselves while we study Gururaj's teachings.

Appreciation: "If it's a rainy day or a sunny day, you're the one that has to appreciate the sun or the rain. And when you have that appreciation, the rain will not matter and neither the sun would matter, because you would view it with total equanimity and become acceptable to it."

~ Gururaj Ananda Yogi, US 86-54

Take this opportunity to appreciate this special holiday with your spiritual family.

We are returning to Todd Hall Retreat and Conference Center which is located on 45 acres of beautiful land that offer scenic views and a relaxing and peaceful setting.

It is located in the bluffs overlooking Columbia, Illinois, conveniently close to metropolitan St. Louis and only forty-five minutes from the St Louis airport. Bus and train terminals are twenty-five minutes away. There are wild turkey, deer and a wide variety of backyard birds. You may use the meditative labyrinth, visit the butterfly garden and natural prairie-grass preserve, or walk the wilderness trail. The sleeping rooms may be single or double occupancy. Each room has a private bath and individually controlled thermostat. All linens are provided.

We hope you will join us at Todd Hall on November 25-29, 2009.

Please click [here](#) for the Thanksgiving retreat registration form.



Upcoming Events

One Day Intensive

Date: Saturday, November 21st

Location: Tamaji and Merrill Harmin, White Plains, NY

Time: 10:30 a.m. - ends 9:00 p.m. with group singing

Theme: "From Stuck in the Mind, Compulsively, to Using the Mind, Freely."

No cost other than food contributions for meals. Overnight accommodations provided to out-of-towners in local meditators' homes.

Contact: Tamaji or Merrill to register (914) 946-5334
m@mt44.net

AMS Summer Course 2010

Date: June 25 - July 1st, 2010

Location: Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA

Contact: Vidya for more info

vidya7@aol.com

Comments from the Knoxville Retreat

Prose from meditators who attended the Knoxville retreat this month:

The chance to get together with other meditators is, for me, a beautiful opportunity. The collective energy that fills the meditation room serves not only to deepen my meditations, but also to quickly remind me of something I too often and too easily forget. I forget that I am simple and that we humans are a perfect expression of love. When I go to retreats like the one in Knoxville I somehow recapture the true sense of who I am. It usually happens spontaneously and there are moments when it happens so profoundly that I question how I could ever forget. Spending a weekend renewing my spiritual awareness in the company of loving meditators with a common purpose is sacred to me.

~ *Camille Carter*



Fall air, rain filled, makes for a cozy retreat at Sunnybrook Farm in Townsend, Tennessee. It's impossible to give all the details we store up like squirrels getting ready for winter in one weekend, every year, in October. So, I bear witness to my favorite part: watching community born and reborn every year.

This year a rainbow greeting crossed the skies on Friday afternoon when the gathering of meditators began. Some of us were new, some were experienced, but all were tentative and low-key, getting a feel for the setting and people. Through Saturday, closeness settled over us as we relaxed into fellowship over great meals and conversations. We circled around this year's theme: how to embrace life's inconveniences, small or profound, with equanimity, even appreciation.

By Sunday, we further revealed ourselves, as is our custom, by sharing our favorite quotations, everyone seated in a circle in our meditation room, which is, by the way, circled by light from many windows. We found awareness, if not answers. And uncommon quiet, and the bliss of reverence. And each other. Communion accomplished. Community renewed.

~ Linda Weaver

Just as the leaves were beginning to turn a hundred shades of gold, fire, and red - and Knoxville, TN was beginning to look like the universe's arboretum, meditators from around the country gathered here for a weekend meditation retreat at Sunnybrook Farm. The center--a labyrinth of small rooms with furniture from around the world and the glow of meditator's smiles and yellow light--proved to be the just the place for much-needed days of laughter, reflection, solitude, and meditation.

It has been about three years since I attended one of these retreats (the last one of which still glows in my mind as being an experience which helped bring me peace over my grandfather's death), and I was nervous about what to expect. What I found was a sundry group of bright, caring people who had spent time thinking about life's biggest and most unwieldy questions and had come together to share something of what they had discovered and something of where they were stuck. And in the process of sharing and experiencing meditation, I learned some things that have continued to echo in my head and give me peace weeks after the retreat ended. In a way, to quote a quote



shared by a fellow meditator, the retreat felt as though it were "my aliveness come to get me."

~ *Rahim Manji*

Expansion of the heart (Part 2 of 3)

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The person who can truly love, truly knows God. There are degrees of loving, depending upon how much unfoldment has taken place, how much we have allowed the light of love to shine through. And the more it shines through, the closer are we to the goal. Because all existence is love. Everything in the universe grows because of that love. How much does the sunshine not love the flower to give of itself? How much does the air not love the plant to give of itself? How much do the minerals in the ground not love that seed to give of themselves and support it? Love is always supportive. Love is such a beautiful quality, a law, an eternal law, that even before the baby is born milk is provided in the mother's breast. You could call it love -- love and grace and God, these are labels. It's all just the same thing. If we accept one fact, that love is God and God is love, then labels are not necessary. And if love is God, then God is indefinable. We can only talk about it by inference. We can infer with the mind, but we can experience with the heart. We can experience it so much that we feel uplifted. We feel uplifted.

When a man loves a woman, really loves a woman, if you look at that man, he seems to live in a different world all together. Sometimes we make jokes about it, where the man becomes forgetful of this, that, the other and we say, "Ah, he's met a girlfriend, he's in love." There is a lot of truth in it. Perhaps it's not real love. It might be just the reflection of love. Infatuation is a reflection. But even infatuation has its purpose. Knowing the reflection, one can be led to the genuine article. If you smell the beautiful fragrance of a jasmine flower, then some curiosity can be excited in you, if you love the fragrance, to really want to see what the jasmine looks like, if you have not seen the flower.

There is no one who closes up our hearts because the heart could never be closed within itself. The nature of the heart is forever to expand, and we, with



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our conceptions, our doings, our actions, our thoughts, we build this wall around it. The expansion that is taking place in the heart is knocking on those walls, hammering away like a prisoner, let me out, let me out, let me out. Because the nature of love is forever to expand.

Now, if we can, by our actions, just knock out one little brick from the wall, the force of love that comes through that one little opening plus our actions will make the opening bigger and bigger. So when a little love starts seeping out, it will also be helping you to take out more bricks from the wall until finally the entire wall is broken down and love shines in its fullest glory.

And when love shines in its fullest glory, all obstacles in life are drowned away in that light. There could be a million candles burning, but when the sun comes out all the light of the candles is drowned away, is merged away, in that infinity of the light of the sun. That is what love does. That is what love does, and we have to give it a chance. We have to give this eternal force a chance.

We know the saying that even God only helps those who help themselves. This force of love forever wants to come out if we only give it a chance. And that is very easy. Spiritual practices, right living, right thinking would break down the barriers, would unfold the heart. And then you see how joyful life can become. Because every action of yours, every conception, every perception will be colored with the light of love. When everything we do is colored with the light of love, then everything else around us also seems so totally loving.

If I want to love, if I want someone to love me, I must make myself loveable. If I am loveable, then very automatically people will love me. So we start with ourselves first. We find this is a common thing, and of course in my work there's a lot of counseling to do where the woman says, "My husband doesn't love me." Or the husband says, "My wife doesn't love me." The blame is always on the opposite party. But we never examine ourselves that if my husband has married me there must have been some attraction at least for him to marry me, or the other way around, that my wife has married me and initially there must have been some attraction for him to marry me. It's a free world. We could have chosen someone else. We were drawn together by circumstances. There might be some karmic value why we are drawn together.



One person might live in Australia, another in America, and somehow or other the circumstances just come about where all the pieces in the jigsaw puzzle get together to form the picture. And then the problem starts. Then the man says, "My wife does not love me." Then the wife says, "My husband does not love me." But the emphasis is always on the opposite party. When something goes wrong in my life, I blame my wife. If I can't blame my wife, then I blame my children. If I can't blame my children, I blame my boss. If I can't blame my boss, I blame my friends. And at last, after I blame everyone and I cannot blame anyone any more, then I blame God. That is the human mind, the cunning animal that I'm always speaking about. That is the human mind.

And I tell you one thing, that whatever difficulties there are in the lives of two people, husband and wife, these difficulties can be overcome. There is no such thing as not being able to overcome any difficulty if husband and wife are willing to overcome them; if husband and wife are willing to develop an understanding; if husband and wife are willing to accept each other as they are; if husband and wife are willing to surrender to each other, then every difficulty is overcome. Because within every problem the solution is inherent. There can never be a problem without a solution. The solution to the problem is built in.

Now, to come back to the expansion of the heart. The heart, as I said, and I'll repeat this over and over again, the heart is forever expanded, the core of the human personality has that ineffable luminosity forever shining. It is us, because of our actions and thoughts and preconceived ideas and non-surrender and non-acceptance plus other things, that build a wall around it. So therefore I tell meditators throughout the world, be regular in your practices. Your practices are specially designed for you for a particular purpose. If the wall is very thick, you use a bigger hammer. If the wall is very thin, you use a smaller hammer. And the practices that are given to you are very carefully weighed and evaluated to bring about the maximum result in breaking down this wall.

So regularity, regularity. We could even make a song of it. If we have some composer he could even make a song: Regularity. There's a lot of "ities". Regularity, sincerity, and oneness of purpose.

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There's a lovely little story from one of the books of Ramakrishna. There was a bird sitting on the mast of a boat. Now this bird wanted to reach shore, so it flew to the south and got tired of flying, couldn't find the shore, so it came back and perched on the mast. It flew to the north and got tired of flying and came back. Flew to the west and the east and the same thing happened because the shore was far away. So then it decided that look, this ship must reach shore, so instead of me flying around and wasting energy, let me stick to the mast. And surely the ship reached shore and the bird was at shore.

What it means is one-pointedness. One pointedness -- stick to the boat. Be regular and you will surely reach there. You must reach there. It is our nature to reach Divinity because Divinity is within us, and the full power of love can only be experienced when we dive deep within ourselves and get bathed with the light of love and God, which is the same thing.

~ *Gururaj Ananda Yogi*

This is the second part in a three-part series, "Expansion of the heart", by Gururaj Ananda Yogi. The last section of this satsang will be featured in next month's newsletter.