

## Morning Meditation

*1st August 2010 6am – Woodlands Aikido Course*

I was up at about 5am after 'the call of nature' so I decided to pack up my sleeping bag, bivi bag, hammock and basha. I thought it is a comforting sight to see the top of my basha covered in rain drops after a warm, dry night. After dismantling my makeshift bedroom, I changed into my wet clothes set (which were, thankfully, dry) and took out the oat and raisin bar from my rations pack, ready to eat once I was set. I packed up my rucksack, making sure the sleeping bag and bivi bag were at the bottom (as I wouldn't need them again) followed by my dry clothes set and my waterproof jacket on top. Matt-sensei came by saying we should meet up on the path in ten minutes ready for morning meditation. So I did some final bag packing, clearing of my sleeping area and a quick drink of water before grabbing my Jo, which was still by the fire, and heading up to the path eating my oat and raisin breakfast bar. Stepping out of the woods onto the path to the north, the state of the day became more obvious, there was a cool gentle wind and the sky was bright from the sun but with some cloud cover, the darker clouds which had visited us in the night were further in the distance and heading away.

After some gentle greetings and 'how did you sleep', and once everyone had joined us, we walked a few metres east along the path and over a fence into an adjacent field. Matt-sensei asked everyone to face east and sit comfortably. Following some rustling of coats and ground mats, once everyone was settled, Matt-sensei spoke about meditation, he briefly explained what meditation is, some of the goals of meditation and about some levels of connection. The first level, he said, is about connecting with ourselves, connecting our mind and body; listening to our body and relaxing. The second level is about connecting with the environment around us and being in-tune with it. He told a story about an ambush drill in the Jungle where a dog was part of his section. Lying and waiting for hours, the dog was entirely focused, like the ambushers. The dog was so in-tune with its surroundings that after a whole 18 hours patiently waiting it sat up and turned its head indicating that the ambushers were coming, when they were still fifteen minutes away. A great example of being in-tune with nature. The next level, Matt-sensei said is about connecting with the entire universe realising it is all one.

Matt-sensei started the meditation by explaining the breathing technique – we should breathe in for five seconds then hold it for five seconds and then breathe out for five seconds. While continuing to breathe, he said, we should relax each part of our body starting from the top of our head down to our feet. Next he told us: after about five minutes [of the relaxing and breathing] focus on connection with our centre...

So during the next five minutes I focused on relaxing my body and my breathing cycle. I heard some cows to our north run closer by to feed, loudly I might add. I also heard a cockerel's crow echo off a hill to our north and two or three different types of birds chirping in the woods we had slept in to our south.

Thereafter, over about the next fifteen minutes of the meditation I had an amazing experience: I could feel my hands becoming heavy like stone; they seemed to grow to the size of a football. At the same time my body was filling up like more and more cement pouring into a mould. My body seemingly continued to grow in size and before long I could feel how solid the earth was around me. After a while I realised I was un-separated from the earth, I was part of it, at will I could feel how big the earth is. I no longer felt the cleanliness of the air and wetness of the grass. I was no longer next

to the cows close by and the cockerel across the field. The only feeling that was, is the solid mass of the earth (which is hard to put into words). There was no sound, no temperature, no time.

The contours of the hills and position of the trees came to mind after a while, I started feeling how the rocks and soil shape the hills, the grass growing out of the soil and the wind blowing on the grass. Slowly I started feeling the heaviness of myself again, still huge with football size hands. But then gradually my hands and body became smaller and I was back counting my breathing, in for five, hold and out for five. Finally I opened my eyes; after which I felt very privileged and realised that I may or may not ever be that connected with the earth again.

There was about another two or three minutes before Matt-sensei said okay and stopped the meditation. In that time I was trying to hold back the urge to cry (I have no idea why I had the urge to cry, it just wanted to come out).

Matt-sensei asked everyone how the meditation went, someone mentioned the cows, which was followed by some laughter (as they were eating very noisily, like pigs ☺) and someone else explained what they had felt during the meditation. I didn't answer at that point, but after the meditation I felt a deep sense of joy and love.

After the closing remarks and discussion Matt-sensei instructed everyone to head back to camp to pack up and have a cup of tea before setting off for the day. When walking back to camp I had to take a few minutes alone to let out the tears that wouldn't take no for an answer.

Since the woodlands course, over the past few days, I have felt closer to the things and the people around me; I have almost felt as if I am best friends with perfect strangers - a really nice feeling. I'm not sure why I had that experience but surely it was easier to feel that connected after spending time as a part of nature, involved in nature, rather than being hidden from nature, behind my double glazing windows and sky television.

*"A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone."*

**Henry David Thoreau**

Carpe Diem