

## Rest in the Stillness

Alan Zundel at the HeartAwake Center, August 8th 2007

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Anyway, it's good to see you all again. So there's this phrase, 'Rest in the stillness.' That phrase sums up a lot of what I've been talking about over the last, however long it's been—nearly a year? 'Rest in the stillness.'

Rest in the stillness. When you meditate, that's what you're doing, right? You're allowing your thoughts to start to settle. Maybe they seem churned up and every so often they get kicked up again, but gradually, most of the time, or some of the time maybe, they start to settle a little bit and you have that sense that in you is this stillness. There is a place inside yourself, that even when your mind or emotions are moving or in turmoil there's something within you that's always still, at peace. And you're reaching down to be more in touch with that, to find that stillness and rest there.

This shouldn't imply that 'resting' means you can only do this when you're meditating and you're physically sitting and resting. You can rest in the stillness no matter what you're doing—when you're talking, walking, working, cooking, gardening, driving—part of you, the part of you that's still, that's at peace, is still there. And 'resting' in the stillness means having put roots there, so that even though your body's in motion, your mind's in motion, your emotions are in motion—I wonder if there's a linguistic connection between 'emotion' and 'motion'? Seems like there would be, right? Emotions move.

Anyway, [*laughs*] even though all these other aspects of your self are in movement part of you is still, and you want to put roots there so that stillness becomes—what? —is within your field of awareness and perception even as these other things are going on. It's there. You're keeping it within focus; you're keeping it as part of the picture.

In doing that, you're doing it all. That's all I have to offer, [*laughs*] is that idea. Once you're doing that, that's it. You're resting in the stillness, you've put roots there, it's part of the picture no matter what your mind is doing, no matter what your body is doing.

Part of getting to that stillness is the meditation, the repeated experience of letting your mind and emotions start to settle so that you can identify that place in yourself, get a sense of it—at least get some sense of which direction you go to find it, what it means to go deeper. But it also involves a questioning, a questioning primarily of your sense of who you are. Asking this question, 'Who am I really? Who am I really?'

Because to peel back all those layers of your sense of self, you will be getting closer and closer to that stillness; that's the bottom. It's the bottom of the ocean, that stillness. It's the ocean floor. And when you rest in the stillness, another way to put this is you put your anchor on the ocean floor. Instead of having your anchor up on the ship where you can get tossed and

turned with whatever wind kicks up, with whatever storm comes along, with whatever current is pushing the boat—you put your anchor down and it keeps you from being totally drawn away by these storms of emotion, by these currents of thoughts, by these waves of physical desires or instinctual responses. You put your anchor down as deep as you can.

So you explore those depths a little bit while you're meditating and then in your day-to-day life, when you realize your anchor maybe has been drawn up, you try to let it go back down again. So I'm feeling agitated about something: pause, take a breath, let that anchor start to descend again toward the ocean floor, towards the stillness. Bring that part of yourself back into the picture.

Now sometimes you'll find that you get carried off by some current and you've drifted from one place to another and you think, 'I thought I had my anchor on the ocean floor but I've—my ship has been moving pretty far and I don't know where I'm going; maybe it's not on the ocean floor.' You know, maybe it got hung up on something. So you put on your diving suit and your goggles and all, and you jump in the water and you take hold of that chain that the anchor's on, and you follow it down and you find, yes indeed, the anchor's all tangled up in a bunch of seaweed. So what are you going to do? Well, as you have the opportunity, when you have the time, you go down to that seaweed and you start to unravel it. You look at it, you examine it, you take it strand by strand and unravel it from that anchor until the anchor can drop more freely again.

What is that seaweed? The seaweed is a sense of self—always. And you go dropping the anchor, and it gets stuck in a sense of self that's yet deeper than the last one, and you feel like, 'Well, now I'm more deeply resting, my anchor's down there, maybe it's even on the ocean floor.' But then you discover that, no it's not quite there because something is agitating me or something seems unsettled, or some greater depth needs to be plumbed, and you go down and you examine: what is it that that anchor is resting in if it's not the ocean floor? If it's not the stillness, even though it may be very deep, what is it? And when you go down and examine it and try to get a sense of what it is, you'll find some sense of your self.

One example: you find yourself worrying about the future, about aging, about what's going to happen to you. And this worry maybe is preoccupying you and keeps coming up time and again, and you think, 'Well, I thought I had my anchor pretty well down there, but this thing keeps arising to the point where I wonder if I'm tangled up in it in some way.' So you go down and examine: what is this sense of vulnerability, or concern about the future? What is this sense of self composed of? Maybe it's memories of somebody in your life who had a hard time in their aging process—you know, an older relative from earlier in your life and you saw them struggle and get sick, and you're thinking this could happen to you. And so you've incorporated some sense of their story into your self: 'This was a grandparent and I felt close to them, and I've taken that story into myself and I can see myself going through that.'

Or maybe it's a sense of vulnerability from something difficult in your childhood. You know, if you didn't feel safe as a child for some reason and you felt vulnerable, maybe this is what that sense of self is composed of—vulnerability. And you're projecting that sense of vulnerability into the future and aging, or whatever it is. But to find out whatever for you is the

unique strands making up this clump of seaweed that's entangled your anchor and is keeping it from going down yet deeper, you gradually pull at it and pull it apart and it starts to come free, and you can go deeper and closer to the ocean floor.

We have all kinds of sense of self that we've picked up over the years, right? Some that we've created ourselves, deliberately, by trying to determine, 'Who do I want to be in my life?' and then finding models and patterning our life after that—making our imagination, getting our imagination full of the sense of who this person was and how we'd like to be like that, or directing our life in ways that would seem to help make us that kind of a person. But there's a lot of different ways we pick up or create a sense of self, and then we find that those senses of self, that altogether are making up this big picture of who we are, are not the deepest part of us.

We have to go deeper, so we have to untangle them. We have to keep asking, 'Who am I really? And what is this sense of my self composed of? Is it true, is it real—where did it come from? Can I trust it?' This sense of aging again, you ask, 'How true is this? How real is this?' Well, it's true I see my face in the mirror and it seems to be aging. My body feels different; it's slower; it's acheier. But then ask, is that who you really are? Is that *all* you are?

There's a part of yourself that's going through life, even though the body's aging, it feels the same—this awareness, this deep sense of stillness. This consciousness of life stays the same; it doesn't age. It can't be hurt by the body's aging or infirmities. So you ask, 'Is it true that I am vulnerable, that I am aging?' Well, it is and it isn't, so I don't have to hang on to that as the whole truth; I'm something deeper yet. I'm going to go into that, drop my anchor deeper.

So discovering all these senses of self that compose us, untangling them and letting that anchor drop deeper and deeper and deeper, is what the whole journey is about. The circumstances of your life will give you plenty of opportunities to encounter that sense of resistance or drifting when the seaweed's entangling you, if you just look, if you just watch, if you just question. If you just give yourself the opportunity to rest in that stillness, follow the chain down, see where it lies and then try to let it drop deeper.

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