THE PARABLE OF THE LOST TREASURE

(Adapted from a parable told by the Zen Master Hakuin and retold by Osho in the discourse *The Grass Grows by Itself #6*.)

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Susie is about your age. She lives the modern lifestyle. Drives an hour to work; on the way she picks up takeaway breakfast at a fast food franchise. She works in front of a computer half of the day, misses lunch but grabs some more takeaway on the way home. She has the usual stressors that most of us get: telemarketers phone at the most inopportune time; every now and then her computer destroys some of her most important documents; she has to listen to commercial radio at work and she shares her home with others so she is bombarded with commercial TV. Susie has a pretty standard western lifestyle and over time her physical health has begun to show signs of wear and tear. Mentally she is finding herself more and more stressed. And every day she is hearing more about the relationship between stress and physical disease. What concerns her most though is that she does not seem to get enough quality time to herself so that she can plan her life and make some changes.

But recently she has started to take more control of her life. She has been learning about health foods; is getting more exercise; is telling the people around her what is important to her and she is getting interested in stress management and relaxation techniques. She has heard about meditation and been along to some New Age classes. Some of her friends and colleagues thinks she may be acting a little strange but Susie is determined to explore the field of meditation - well up to a point.

You see Susie is like most of us, she wants to feel good but she wants it now. Well why not? The advertisers tell us that we can have instant coffee, fast food, and a constant supply of entertainment and stimulation. The pharmaceutical companies tell us that when we get a headache we should take an aspirin, when we feel depressed take Prozac, when we overeat take another pill, when our libido flags just take Viagra and so on. Not to be left out, the New Age advertisers are ready to sell us brain machines and tapes to wear while we are asleep. Susie has tried all of the above but they don't fill the nagging emptiness within or bring her feelings of authentic peace and happiness. So now her interest turns to meditation.

Susie is very interested in meditation at first, she thinks it sounds like a great idea that offers a glamorous new lifestyle but then problems set in. She finds it difficult to sit comfortably for long periods of time, she feels too hot, too cold, she gets an itch, she feels bored, her internal dialogue continues relentlessly, and she does not find anything like the peace and bliss that she has heard about, so in a way she gives up...

Contrast this with another aspect of Susie. Susie visits a weekend outdoor market where she loses her diamond studded wedding ring. Frantically she retraces her steps scratching in the dirt looking for any sign of the precious jewellery. When she thinks someone may be standing on the ring she violently pushes them out of the way, with no explanation. She weeps and cries as she desperately searches and searches. As the day turns to night she goes home with a feeling of desolation gnawing away at her insides. Thinking she may not have lost the jewels at the market she searches in the car, she searches every draw and cupboard in her home, she searches under the bed, she looks in the S bend under the sink in case it got washed down the sink. She is relentless in her search and she knows she will not rest until she finds her precious jewels.

So what is the real difference between her two behaviours?

Well when it comes to her diamond ring Susie knows what this is. Her husband gave it to her when they were deeply in love and everybody agrees upon its monetary value but when it comes to meditation she only has a vague idea of what is to be gained. And this is the real problem. She does not understand yet that the inner treasure is far more precious and valuable than her diamond ring. To motivate Susie we need to give her a cognitive understanding that she can grasp. So let's try.

To begin with we all have a mind but because we are 99% unconscious and only 1% conscious this mind causes us a lot of trouble. It is ambitious, it is constantly striving for more, it is never happy, it is constantly judging yourself and others, nothing is good enough for this mind and in a nut shell it brings us misery and pain. But every now and then someone attains to the state of ultimate consciousness. Fear and greed disappear and misery is replaced by a state of perpetual bliss and they attain to a state of oneness. We say that their consciousness has flowered and that they have become enlightened so we call this person a Buddha, a Christ, a Krishna, a Mahavira, a Lao Tzu and so on. The transformation of their consciousness is so profound that millions of people worship them. What is not commonly understood though is that it is possible for each and every one of us to attain to the same state in this lifetime -- and that the most effective and reliable technique to attain to this state is the meditative technique known as witnessing.

Enlightenment is not something to be found outside of ourselves. It is not found by searching for money, power and prestige. The mystics are united in stating that this inner treasure is to be found by going within ourselves. Ordinarily we may think that peace, happiness, joy and bliss are a result of something happening in the world. Likewise we think that fear, pain, anger, depression and so on are result of something happening in the world. But this is the delusion of the mind. In fact it is the mind that causes the negative and positive emotions as a reaction to something that occurs outside of yourself. The problem is that we live at the mercy of events in the world.

The process of meditation teaches us to move beyond the mind into a state of inner silence. Out of this inner silence arises authentic feelings of peace, happiness, bliss, joy and ecstasy. Once you have had the slightest taste of this inner world you have had

a glimpse of your lost treasure. So for those of us on the path, our job is to encourage Susie to hang in there until she gets her first glimpse of her inner treasure. Susie has what it takes to meditate. She has already demonstrated that ability in searching relentlessly for her diamond ring.

At first meditation will take a lot of discipline and effort but if she devotes one hour each day every day to her meditation practice then within a few short months she will begin to reap the benefits. As her awareness grows Susie should find that the effort is being replaced by a sense of effortlessness. And after a few years rather than only meditating during a fixed meditation session each day she should find that she is able to maintain her meditative state throughout the day and even in to her sleep.

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