

BALANCE

I used to wrestle when I was young and the first thing they taught us was how to stand, how to be balanced. If we are not balanced it is easy to push us over. The first exercise was rocking back and forth on our feet, finding our center, finding a solid standing position so that when we received some impact we did not fall down, we were capable of sustaining our effort. Even though we think we are balanced as we walk around, we do not have the necessary balance to withstand a heavy encounter or assault. There is a difference between the balance for walking and the balance ready for some encounter.

Similarly, the first thing we need on this path is balance, a balance including the capacity for encounter. Our path lies in the world, we have not chosen to become monks, we have not chosen a path away from the world; this path entails encounters which are not easy, not just walking down the street. Some encounters are like wrestling, some are actually war. To survive these encounters we need great balance or we fall down.

How do we center ourselves, what keeps us off center? Why do we lose our balance, our center, what creates our center, what is a correct center, what is an incorrect center? To be at peace is to be centered. What takes us away from our peace, what destroys our peace? Emotional reactions can shatter our peace; it is difficult to be balanced if our face is turning red and we are shouting. This is not balance. Now the question is, how did this emotion creep in, how did it take control of us, how did we lose our ability to comprehend and deal with the situation confronting us, how did this happen?

When the trigger is pulled the gun goes off, a loaded gun can create an explosion with the capacity to kill. What are our individual triggers, what sets us off, do we see the finger going for the trigger, can we do something about it? Is there a way to put on a safety catch, something to give us time before the trigger is released?

One of the sharpest instruments we have is the tongue which can cut in an instant, our words can be devastating. There is a teaching story about a man who used to keep a pebble in his mouth—he had to take it out before he spoke. This meant he stopped any immediate reaction, he put a brake on his words until he could trust his center, his balance. Are we ready to trust our center, do we have a balanced reaction or are we unprepared? We need to know the answer and be completely honest about it. Do we want to be the kind of person who can taste eternity or not? If we do, we have to be radically honest in a way we never have before, we have to face those aspects of ourselves which are less than exemplary, we cannot be afraid, we cannot be afraid to look.

If we think we are important we have to break through this wall of self-esteem to see what is there. If this self-esteem is so critical that we are upset when our sense of honor or pride is hurt, how can we ever look at ourselves? We are not talking about what other people say, we are talking now about what we say to ourselves, what we think about ourselves, know about ourselves; if we refuse to look we will never see. In one sense there is a certain point at which we create ourselves. This means we have to know who we are, we have to remove some things and encourage other things to come into existence.

All this occurs with God's help, it occurs with humility, it occurs in a state of prayer, a state of grace, a state of supplication. We must initiate the process and remain committed to it. The great teachers tell us they can show us the way, give us a mirror, but

we have to do the actual work, they cannot drag us along without our own active effort, a profound effort. Compare this effort with the surrender of Abraham's son when the sacrifice of his life seemed to be demanded. He was ready, he was ready to be cut open, that kind of surrender. When we go to a master, a teacher who can help, we have to permit the surgery, we have to sit still, be in a state of balance without reaction. This is not easy, sometimes because of the idea of ourself in the past which we hold sacred.

In much of the world pride and honor are held in such reverence they cannot be violated. There are some who kill if their pride is violated, some who kill if their honor is violated. Why do we insist upon respect, why can we not handle disrespect, what does disrespect do, what do certain words do to us?

There are teaching stories about gossip, about the effect of certain words on us, many stories. One story is told about a man who came to his final judgment with good deeds listed on his behalf that he was not responsible for, things he did not do. When he asked about this he was told people had slandered him, had lied about him. Their good deeds were taken from them and given to him. There is another story about a teaching master who sent someone a cake to thank him for good deeds which would be attributed to him because that person had slandered him.

We should understand the subtle nature of justice when we talk of God and the truth, learn how to understand these things. One great master, slandered repeatedly by a certain individual, met him on the street one day and gave him fifty rupees, a lot of money at the time. He explained that he gave it to him because people who slander us take on our karma, they remove it by saying these things about us.

We should try to understand those we think have hurt us. If we keep our distance they can help us, they can actually be positive for our growth in another realm as long as we understand it this way. When we are not balanced we cannot even hear this explanation, the words make us angry, the explanation does not resonate for us; it makes sense when we are calm but not when we are agitated. We need to be in a place of peace, a place calm enough to understand its grace and benefit no matter what happens all around us.

From this place of peace we can pray, we can have the whole world healed. God willing, we can have that resonance in tune with truth, the resonance of His reality which means our vibration is in tune with His, it comes with us. This is a way to bring peace to our friends and companions, to bring grace to our neighborhood and peace to the world.

A truly great saint can bring peace to a large area because of the resonance which accompanies him or her, a resonance aligned with truth. If we develop this we can bring peace to those we know, those we spend time with, we can change lives without words just by being who we are.

With that true stillness we change, our body reacts. We experience the silent transforming prayer as it travels through different parts of our body, with that true stillness we feel it travel through our body, it is real, this resonance exists. Not only does our own body respond, but also those who are close to us respond. This resonance can change our world. We need to let this happen by staying in that state of balance, refusing to react when the world invites us to react.

To be still is hard work, to do nothing in certain circumstances is particularly hard work. We need to understand when action is necessary and when it is not, every situation

requires this understanding. Unnecessary action can cause chaos, something to avoid outwardly as well as inwardly in our thoughts, in our relationships. We should be totally correct, there should be a recognition of reality flowing through us in everything we do, keeping still enough for truth to resonate.

Balance is critical, emotions play havoc with that balance. This does not mean we are emotionless, it means we recognize what is happening inwardly, we learn when we can act and when we need to withdraw. Psychology today tells us to let our anger out, but when we do we become a barking dog inspiring all the other dogs to howl with us.

We need to remove ourselves from conflict, not with cowardice but bravery, the ability to be restrained, to understand a situation which is out of control and back away from conflict, unnecessary confrontation. Road rage is a perfect example of meaningless rage, of confrontation without meaning. Those who treat incidents on the road as a personal affront have a disease of the heart, of ignorance, of control, there is no reason to confront such people.

An enlightened teacher lets us bring our emotion, our rage, our problems and pain to him. We bring it to him and he absorbs it, showing us how to deal with it, he accepts us as we are without reaction. Some disciples are so overwhelmed by the world, so out of control emotionally they have to be held like babies. This is the extent of sickness in today's world, people cannot cope with their situation and self-medicate, becoming alcoholics or drug addicts because they cannot endure their pain. This is one type of reaction, another is believing the pain has an outer origin, someone out there has hurt them, justifying the injuries they, in turn, cause. Such reactions put our soul in danger;

harming others hurts our soul, drugging ourself hurts our soul. We need to be balanced, avoid reaction until we know how to react, until we can love in the face of adversity.

Most people do not want to be saints, do not comprehend the reason for saints, but we are meant to be perfected, we are supposed to be saints. When we move collectively away from this possibility we enter the created unreality we have made normal in our culture and many others. We need to return to the loving, kind, understanding beings we are supposed to be. We should look at those who have taken this path and become examples like them, understanding the depths we need to penetrate. We have to help ourself and then help others, it works this way, a natural progression. As we become better we can help others, we are an example for those who will become examples themselves, and this is what keeps the world going, nothing else. Those who have the intention to be like our enlightened teachers keep the world going, this is what God looks at, why He sustains the world.

We need to understand the importance of our role in creation. Scriptures tell us if we bring one life to God it is the same as saving the whole world. We should start with our own life, save ourself, then if we bring one other person with us we have saved the world twice. Know who that one person is, it is all of us, on a good day we are all one. Work towards this, be content with it, satisfied, be happy and joyful because we can only do the work in this joy. Negative emotions pull us away, positive emotions keep us working as we develop the qualities of God, slowly learning not to pay attention to anything else. The rest of it is all there, it stays there, but we learn not to pay attention to it.

May God help us all long for this path and keep us firmly there, may He make us strong enough to help others.