

The Power of Silence

Living our spirituality in Reiki: a workshop with Paul Mitchell, hosted by John and Annette Cass at their Snowdonia Retreat Centre.

A few years ago, I landed on Bali the same day as the gods. This wasn't consciously deliberate. I was there to meet up with family. The gods were there to battle it out between Good and Evil. The most important Balinese festival of the year was in full swing, and we were caught up in it. Then came Nyepi. Nyepi is a day of silence. The airports close. The roads close. Nobody goes to work. Instead, everyone stays at home quietly. A note in our hotel room asked us to respect the silence of Nyepi, because its purpose was to rebalance the universe.

We complied with local traditions although we didn't understand them. Even the children remained, by and large, quiet, and the result was a blessing of a day where we all re-engaged with ourselves and with each other.

Paul Mitchell's workshop gave me the same space, but on a different scale. I arrived totally unprepared and found myself leaving messages on answer phones up and down the country, explaining that I would be out of touch for five days. And then the silence descended. It was wonderful. Suddenly the clamour of everyday life evaporated. I didn't even have to think about food – John and Annette were cherishing us. All that was left was Welsh mountainside, sheep and birds, some beautiful gardens, and the company of quiet people. Oh and Reiki. Lots and lots of Reiki. A talk from Paul each day gave us something to think about during long walks on the hillsides. I realised immediately that the silence was a blessing because it gave me space. I found there was space and time for myself. Bliss!

There were some curious side effects of silence. The usual cultural restraints fell away. I didn't have to eat cold toast just to be polite. Someone, who will remain nameless, snaffled an entire cake. Ordinarily she would surely have felt constrained to pass it round but, without the requisite words, clearly felt she didn't have to. Free of cultural bonds imposed by spoken formulae we can work out what we want, and that's an interesting experiment.

Amongst other wonderful teachings, Paul introduced us to texts that underline the importance of Reiki in 'cultivating the heart-mind'. Underpinning it all was the idea of the deeper purpose of Reiki, which is "not only for curing illness. Its true purpose is to correct the heart-mind, keep the body fit, and lead a happy life using the spiritual capabilities humans are endowed with since birth."¹ Fundamental to this 'correction' or 'cultivation of the 'heart-mind' are the Principles, which Dr Usui described as "the secret method that summons happiness, the miraculous medicine that is effective against all kinds of illness."

Cultivation isn't something that happens by accident. You have to clear the weeds, balance the soil, and plant what you want. Silence gave me a chance to look at what I want in my life. There is so much connection to the outside world that sometimes I lose the connection to myself. Sometimes I am so busy that I forget to root myself in Source.

Everyday life is clamorous. Phone calls, texts, emails, radio, tv, Facebook, internet, all of it demanding immediate attention, immediate action. And yes, some of that is important.

The outside world rushed in just as soon as the silence lifted. Some family members were ill, others were in serious difficulty, and there were enormous holes in the walls of my house. How well I tackle those incessant demands I guess depends on how well I have been cultivating my heart-mind. I can go off into a spin or a panic, or I can connect to Source. I have the technology. I have Reiki. And thanks to my original Reiki Master, Martin Cockitt, I have known for years how to sit quietly reciting the Principles to myself as 'the secret method that summons happiness'. I just have to remember to do it.

Paul said, "Humans have an infinite creative ability to go out of balance." We all go out of balance sometimes. A few days of silence coupled with lots of Reiki gave me the chance to re-balance myself. Bali is the only place I know where the whole country goes into silence for a whole day to rebalance the universe. Imposing silence on the entire nation is perhaps more than we can manage at the moment, but we can inflict moments of silence on ourselves. Being balanced is good. If silence doesn't come easily then going on retreat with Usui Shiki Ryoho's Head of Discipline is a great way to start. Or we can just snatch moments. We can sit in silence reciting the Principles in our hearts, morning and evening. That doesn't take long. We can practice remembrance, quietly calling on Source, or the Creator, or God (the name we use really doesn't matter) for five minutes at a time. We can practice Reiki. The achievable universe is within ourselves. That's the one we have some power over. It's up to us to rebalance it. □

By Louisa Booth

¹ Paul was quoting from the Eulogy about Dr Usui created by Okada Masayuki, Doctor of Literature, and Rear Admiral Ushida Jusaburo, before WW2.