

# 2017-05-31 Dharmette A Boulder In The Middle of The River

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

river, meditation, involved, monks, stillness, boulder, flow, thoughts, holding, zen tradition, stability, feeling, pick, sit, belly button, lesson, spine, roshi, letting, instructions

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

I wanted to continue a little bit on this theme of stillness, stillness and movement. Some years ago, someone told me about how she was introduced to meditation. And she was apparently backpacking and ran into another backpacker. He done a lot of meditation. And so I guess she asked for instructions. And he said, Well, it's like, you sit yourself down on a boulder in the middle of a river. And you let the river just flow by. So when you sit and meditate, just sit down, like you're in a boulder, and let everything just flow by, just go by. And that worked for her. Just let everything go by. And what are the what are the values of this little instructions, is it's instructions not to get involved in anything, not to pick it up, not to resist, not to have to think about it, not to reflect on it, because then you're not letting just go. Just go. And this idea of letting the river just flow is this wonderful little lot, the river story, in the Zen tradition, about these two monks who were traveling on foot in ancient China, and they came to a river that afford the river, so much shallow. And there was a woman who was trying to get across but she couldn't, maybe was deep enough, she couldn't cross or I don't know what the story was, but she couldn't. So one of the monks picked her up and carried her across the other side, and put her down. And then the two monks continued. And at the end of the day, the monk could didn't carry the woman across, finally blurted out upset was a How could you do that? You know, that we, as monks, we have a rule, that very strict rule we have to follow, of not touching women. And here you you picked her up? And how could you have done that? And so the first monk said, Well, you see, I put her down at the river. Why are you still holding her? Why are you still, you know? So you know, the second monk was caught up in holding on to the story of what happened. So this idea of letting it go, you know, not that picking it up. And so in meditation, all kinds of thoughts can arise, emotions can arise, all kinds of things can happen. And what is it like to treat everything as just a river that comes by, so there's no shame, there's no, for or against, there's no feeling of right and wrong. It's just phenomena flowing through, because we found our boulder in the middle of the river to sit on. So this idea of having a place to sit where we're still, so everything else can flow? And what is that stillness, where do you find that stillness. And I, it's hard for me, I don't quite know how to explain that, more than I said this morning. But, you know, it's the stillness of the body. in meditation. We hold that stillness, it's a, kind of like a container that holds the muddy water. And because we're holding, it still has a chance to settle. Or we just or everything can just wash by our perhaps there's a feeling of some people feel it in their spine, or in their belly, and sitting upright and feeling grounded and centered and feeling their way to their body can feel a strength or stillness or a stability somewhere in their body, their spine, their lower spine, in the belly area, just kind of the weight of it. And that becomes a reference point, for not getting involved in anything, like staying there being connected to it. In the Zen tradition, they often talk about keeping the attention, but two inches below the belly button, called the hora. And then you stabilize there your attention. So that's where your attention goes, rather than having your attention getting involved in all things that come and go.

And or Suuki Roshi was asked where to keep your mind in meditation, he had to tell people keep their minds in their what's called the mudra, which is, the hands form this kind of oval shaped like this. One hand holding the other in front of the belly button area, the lower belly, and you have your mind that that becomes a place of stillness or stability and just hold your keep your mind there, the mind will still think the mind will still feel all kinds of emotions and all kinds of things will happen. But there's use can let it go and just flow Which is counterintuitive for some people, because we want to believe our thoughts. We want to be involved with our thoughts. We want to judge their thoughts. We want to evaluate whether they're good or bad thoughts Am I good or bad person because of them. There's a promise of our thoughts that promise that thoughts are going to solve our all our problems. If I just think enough, I'll figure out everything out. The thoughts have authority, stories, the memories, the plantings, all this, you know, we get pulled into that world, as opposed to staying in that place that's, you know, has a stability or stillness where everything is washes through. So planning thoughts might still arise, but just let them come and go. All kinds of things might come and go, just let them flow, don't get involved. It's not an easy. Just do that. And that's not the point is necessarily to do it easily. The point is, to when you do get involved in something and pick something up, is to know that's what's happening. And now, can I let go of it? Or now can I not believe it so much, can I come back to the place of stillness. And some people find that having a reference point of some kind of stillness in their body, or some place of stability. For some people, it's not the stillness, but rather the gentle movements of the breathing, is there a place to keep the mind so that the meditation can become very simple. So we don't have to negotiate so much, we don't have to figure out so much to do so much. We don't have to solve so much, we don't have to kind of have a technique so much, we just lead to stay there stay in this place. Very simple, simpler, the better place they're coming and going of the breathing, some sense of stability within, and then let everything just flow through, flow through. Don't get involved. And it might be the biggest lesson is what we learn by how valuable it is not to get involved. Even if we do get involved sometimes. Don't be too concerned about that don't get over involved, then it's enough just to be involved. Within the times when you don't get involved those times when you let things flow by, that can provide a powerful lesson. So don't worry so much about how well you do. But do be concerned to appreciate when you do do it, when you have a sense that things are just flowing through you're not involved, just letting it be. Let that register. Let that let that kind of be the lesson. As opposed to the lighting, oh, I blew it I got involved. Like don't let that be the lesson. That's not something to take in. And I just kind of let that try to return that to the river. And soda let. So keeping it simple. Reading there is something so simple, that it's maybe close to a sense of stillness within be a reference point in which you do the practice. And then everything else, see what you can just let it wash through. Don't make it a problem. Don't make it an issue. Don't get involved. It's almost as if all the things that come through the river are not you. You don't have to identify with them. You don't have to pick them up or define yourself by them. It your thoughts, feelings, sounds, sensations just coming through coming through. And as you sit on your boulder in the middle of the river.

So thank you for being here today. And maybe a little bit for last couple of hours. Maybe this was the boulder being here in this place. Then we have this huge world around us that's moving quite a bit. And so it can keep moving while we sit here, quietly practice here. And pretty soon you're going to go up and join the river. Or maybe you can bring some of your stillness with you