

INTO THE LIGHT

Article by Steve “the Spaz” Kokker

There’s a part of our brain which I like to refer to as the moth-brain. We are all overly-familiar with our monkey brains and how they take us over on a regular basis, but the part of our skull-housed ruler which seems to be a leftover from our ancient moth ancestors also plays its part in determining our behavior: That’s the part that controls our propensity towards getting distracted by that which shines brightly; by that which glitters, twitters, sparkles, sputters; by the dazzling, the beautiful, the unexpected; by that which captures the attention suddenly and stimulates some atavistic sense of longing, desire or wonder.

It’s worth taking a little self-look to check whether or not we are flying on automatic pilot headlong into pretty and cool things only to fall down in shock when they turn out to be illusory or painful... and then get up and fly straight-on to the next one. This theme is relevant to us tea lovers who are on a spiritual path within the tea world as our deepening tea and meditative experiences often lead to some dizzyingly blissful moments which can sometimes blindside us to what’s real and true just as often as they can also lead us towards a deeper truth. Many who undertake a spiritual path of ‘self improvement’ have flashes of deep calm, or glitches of enlightenment or feelings of rootedness, balance or synchronicity—not to mention astral travel, tantric kriyas and weird tingling sensations in forgotten corners of the body. They’re awesome, they’re game-changers, but are they that which we seek?

Wu De’s recent recounting of the tale of the great master who didn’t flinch when his rascally students organized a fake ambush with gun fire and chaos also reminds us of the depths possible when we do not immediately get distracted and attracted by all of what glitters and sputters around us. It’s difficult enough to train ourselves to remain balanced when faced with external temptations, but what about our attitude towards inner states which are just as seductive?

The Fireworks of Enlightenment

This theme is on my overly analytical mind lately because as I’ve been slipping deeper into explorations of heightened sensitivity over the last few years, I have also been experiencing more and more of what I call spiritual pyrotechnics. They’ve come and gone

since adolescence but have never been quite as frequent and intense as they are now that I’m placing more and more focus on them. I feel that part of me wants to make more of them than they warrant. They have for me come in the form of strongly energetic happenings brought on either by deep moments of connection with and through tea, by Vipassana or other forms of meditation, via dabbling in sexual kung fu and tantric massage (but we’ll need to wait for the Uncut version of the GTH Newsletter for more details), and during moments of rare stillness.

These transcendent moments are what keep many practitioners of any kind of technique going; it is not unusual during stillness and calm to have experiences of a deep, sinking peace; or to experience a flood of seemingly meaningful images; or to sense a tingling flow of electrical currents racing under the skin’s surface; or even to have full-body kriyas. At first, they seem to have an almost supernatural, psychic, esoteric or other-worldly aspect to them but that’s only because we have spent so long so disconnected from our true nature. Ultimately, they may be little more than bright flashing lights; pretty, energetic neurons firing in the darkness of consciousness, surface disturbances reflecting deeper re-alignments, etc.

That’s all. And yet, that’s also quite a bit.

Why then do we sometimes get stuck to them, as if they themselves are enlightenment, the spiritual growth we seek? Like with everything, the answers are myriad. We can likely speak of dopamine rushes and the brain’s instant tendency to form habits; or maybe these experiences are just cool. Maybe it’s also just laziness or ignorance (it’s way easier to create pyrotechnics than to plunge through them and live every moment fueled by one’s higher self). And of course, fear likely also plays a role here: fear of not being able to go the distance and be *spiritual enough*. It’s so comfortable to stay within the realm of the senses, albeit heightened ones.

It’s even easier to get carried away in these surface effects as it is to create them. We can fill our ears with perspective-altering words by Terrence McKenna, put on some Carbon Based Lifeforms, take a few whiffs of palo santo or aloeswood and sit in Buddha pose while sipping the nectar of ancient tea leaves in a finely cracked bowl and without too much effort experience brief moments of virtual levitation: head spins, muscles

spasm, images from the past surface, inner tensions dissipate. Pretty darn close to bliss.

Nothing wrong with a bit of bliss, mind you, and this does allow us to connect with deeper aspects of the self than we are normally in touch with. They show us the way; they whisper, "Hey, look what's possible! This is what you have cut yourself off from!" And yet, to borrow an oft-used metaphor, the finger pointing to the moon is not the moon, no matter how much it might tingle, vibrate or generate beams of white, healing Qi.

Although I've been drawn to and attracted by these heady moments since my teens, there is a growing sense that I need to really pay attention to something much more still and subtle residing under their surface. Just as getting overly excited at the taste of tea keeps me on the surface of tea's nature, no matter how gorgeous and delicious it might be, so too does generating these transcendent feelings/sensations keep me from taking a final leap into *being* those things.

Living It

So what am I proposing with these musings? I am much better at pointing things out than offering precise steps on how to remedy them. I can sense that these bright lights and bumping into them are not the same as generating that same light, but I'm afraid I cannot, at least by this newsletter's deadline, come up with an easy answer about how to do so. Without such energetic pyrotechnics we would surely have a less clear understanding of where we want to go and what we're capable of. So let's continue breathing in red light into our heart chakras to the beat of Harold Budd and releasing deeply stored emotional issues from our muscle tissues during holotropic breathing twist and shout sessions. Let's close our eyes drinking ancient Wu Liang Mountain leaves and be visited by wizened old tea sages who step into our minds and impart very relevant words. Let's savor the bliss when rigid mental structures instantly dissolve during a spiritual experience or with a

little help from a friendly substance. That's funky, that's groovy, that's helpful.

Yet let's do so with an added layer of awareness that focusing too much on what are ultimately very normal phenomena might in some cases keep us hooked on achieving them, or distract us from accessing something deeper but less flashy. After all, these bright lights do eventually sputter out (like as soon as you drive home from the rebirthing centre and the first jerk cuts you off, or when you see twelve missed calls as you're still wiping the Moksha Yoga-induced sweat from your brow).

Ideally, I don't want to keep bumping into the bright lights to get stunned, fall back into the dirt and start all over again. That would also be living on automatic, even though it appears to be a more deluxe version of it. Ideally, I want to be that light all the time, radiate it to warm others, incorporating it into everyday big city life with all its challenges; both feet firmly on the ground but wings stretching into eternity.

Of course, Eckhart Tolle among many others would say that there is no need to learn yet another technique on *how* to avoid getting stuck on pyrotechnics. There's not necessarily a *way* to do this. Thinking that we need to get beyond them to another level just creates more distance to travel, more goals to achieve and Things To Do to achieve them. Why not just go for it all right here and now? No need then to seek or reject those cool experiences. I can just observe them when they appear, heed their messages if there are any and try to live the lessons they teach. No time like the present. So instead of eagerly awaiting the next head rush, I'll step out the front door, and with the clarity those dazzling lights have shown me do my best to just... be.

