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REFLECTIONS ON THE LIGHT ON MEDITATION RETREAT February 29-March 8, 2012

In this interview-turned-conversation between Grace Sullivan and Anne Meyer, certain themes and ideas emerged from our experiences at the Light on Meditation Retreat.



Grace Sullivan

Walking Meditation

(Focusing on the sensations in the feet while walking, meanwhile maintaining peripheral awareness of the world around you.)

GS: The first time I practiced walking meditation was the September 11th weekend when Master Culadasa came to Rockport and I really liked it. It's so much easier to stay engaged with the object and to observe the mind. I've been doing walking meditation in the park after work. For some reason I'm a little kinder to myself when I do it, I'm not sure why. There's so much going on, and you see clearly that you have to maintain peripheral awareness or you might fall over or run into something. One thing I'm working with is trying to figure out if I'm really having simultaneous peripheral awareness or if I'm flitting from one object to another; in this case between the sensations in the feet and whatever else is going on around me.

AM: I found the walking meditation to be extremely engaging. The labyrinth was a great place for it because I didn't need to think about where I was going and I could concentrate on the sensations in my feet. The periphery can really fade almost into abstraction-the rocks marking the boundaries appeared as characters or objects-something else entirely, or nothing. After a while I could walk along with focus on sensations in my feet or legs, and looking out at the world as secondary, almost like walking around with a secret.



Anne Meyer

Impressions of the teacher

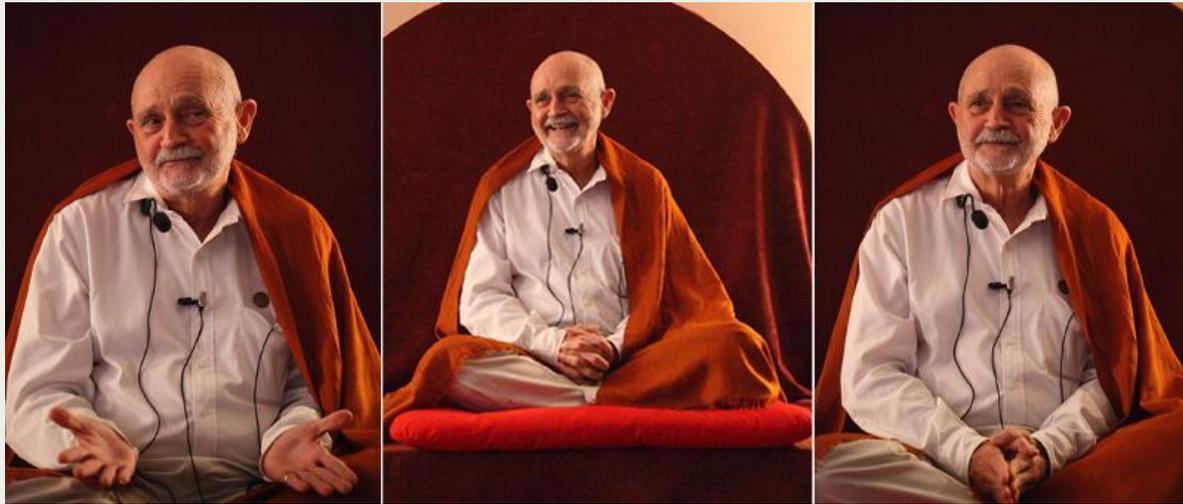
GS: It's powerful hearing someone speak who appears to have experienced the realizations he's describing. That sense of a person's presence is so much a part of how I take what they're saying to heart. Feeling that confidence gives me faith that there is really something here that can be reached. But I can't expect it or force it to happen.

AM: Watching him answer questions seemed to reveal a tremendous amount about him as a being. He was so focused on the person asking, so determined to understand the question and to really answer it, no matter what it was. I felt I learned almost as much from watching how he

was as I did from his answers.

GS: In the meditation hall I was sitting in the front, quite close to Master Culadasa. Especially during meditation when he was there, I felt there was an energetic movement, like a very strong wind, or movement of prana. At times it was almost overwhelming, but I had the sense that it took me into things in my mind that wouldn't have happened on my own.

AM: I too felt that my meditations were very different when Master Culadasa was in the room - more focused. I noticed a distinct difference. Experiencing this kind of interconnection seems to be evidence of the illusory nature of the boundaries between us.



Upasaka Culadasa

Levels of Consciousness

GS: This ties in with the ideas about levels of consciousness, the multiple unconscious minds within each of us, and the idea that each consciousness could be an unconscious for a higher level of consciousness. I sensed that something was going on across people when he was there, on a collective level, and it felt like it was happening on its own and was definitely there. And that everyone was contributing.

AM: The model of multiple unconscious minds, all with your best interest at heart but with different ideas of what you need, was helpful for me for meditation. When my mind wandered I was able to be forgiving toward the "distractor" part of me because I could recognize its value in other contexts and not be so impatient. And I love the idea that when each unconscious projects itself onto the "big screen" of consciousness, the others can perceive it. So tying positive affect with staying on the breath models the benefits of concentration for other parts of our minds. This is a very different approach from what I'm used to-trying harder, taking charge...

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- Grace Sullivan and Anne Meyer