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Celebrating ordinariness

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Just as it's all right to feel happy, so it is to feel miserable. It's the ordinariness of living that makes life extraordinary

I ask myself often why I should experience pain, if that is what I am actually experiencing. I curse life; I blame my misfortune and weep for having been singled out to suffer. Little do I realise that I am not alone. In judging a situation as unfair, I am actually saying I have been let down. But being let down, sometimes being cheated, more often than being happy, are transitory.

A farmer who owned several horses one day found they were stolen. The neighbours said, "How unlucky!" The farmer replied, "Who knows". Shortly after this incident, the thief who had stolen the horses returned all of them, including a few more, apologising to the farmer for the inadvertent theft. The neighbours remarked, "How lucky!" The farmer replied, "Who knows". A few months later, the farmer's son fractured his leg and the neighbours remarked, "How unlucky!" The farmer said, "Who knows". A few weeks later, war was declared and all the able-bodied young men were being recruited. When the authorities came to the farmer's house they let his son remain with the father as he had a fractured leg. The neighbours remarked, "How lucky!" The farmer replied, "Who knows".

My acceptance of my state, my willingness to bear pain comes when I acknowledge that, for me, to be feeling all that I am is okay and normal. Just as it is okay to feel happy, so is it okay to cry and feel miserable. It is the ordinariness of my living that makes my life extraordinary.

'For whoever seeks God in some special way' says Meister Eckhart, 'will gain the way and lose God...', whoever seeks God without any special way, finds him as he lives among ordinary things.'

As the Buddhists put it, we are all unaware Buddhas whose efforts to lift ourselves out of the ordinary such as crying and feeling pain are actually our attempt to hide our true nature from ourselves. The highest achievement of spiritual life is within the embrace of the ordinary.

All experiences are significant. No one experience is superior to the other. Crying, feeling sorry, sad or upset are as important as feeling joy. By trying to order the garden of our lives according to some believed extraordinary design causes us to be at war with our inner exuberance. Thus I deny ordinary experiences for, I believe, they are mundane and pedestrian, while I look only for such emotions that I believe will bring about a

transformation. This is like searching for the Holy Grail. The real cause for concern is not falling down, but staying down and refusing to get up.

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