

Tales From Thailand,

2019, #2

Hello again, dear readers. This is probably not the image you expected to see in my second Tales this year.



But I must credit Winnie-the-Pooh as a major inspiration behind my current mindscape . Or rather, Pooh was best able to sum up the advice given to me by my teacher Anna Cox, right before I left on this adventure. Anna told me:

Effortlessly let go of any work....and see what stirs, into the light.

Pooh told Christopher Robin:

Doing nothing often leads to the very best of something.

I usually do not watch movies on airplanes anymore, because I am so vulnerable that they make a very deep unshakable impression. But in the final two hours of my days-long journey, on the flight between Seoul and Bangkok, I decided to watch Disney's new movie, "Christopher Robin." And I was well-rewarded.

"Doing nothing" includes releasing anxiety, not over-scripting, and gently demoting this harsh, comparing mind.... At least I'm well aware when this silly old bear is

seized with the desire for more “honey,” be it attention, immortal youth or sugar.

The experience arising out of “only this” has been so rich, almost four-dimensional, in color, depth and beauty.

Not that I’ve given up my aversions and cravings...those monkeys are always chittering and rolling around in the barrels of my mind... But it’s not so important, and often humorous now. For instance, I watch how I DO want the sharper knife in the kitchen, I DON’T want to be next to the cook who is sneezing and coughing. I DO want to get it right and keep up with the others (which I can’t). I DON’T want to cut my thumb with the knife again, while peeling rock-hard squash for hours...cutting cucumbers was more fun!



I chopped next to a woman all morning who seemed quite grim, and I began to assume that she didn’t like me. When I got over that and asked her name, I saw that she only had one tooth in her mouth, and didn’t want to smile.

Isn’t life fascinating? How often are we wrong about someone?

And despite the Pa Joy myth of being so strong, there’s no way that I have the stamina or focus to keep doing prep work like my friends, who go from before dawn to dusk on weekends, stopping only for a



quick bite to eat. I'm so relieved that I have to go help Nawng Joy or prepare a dance or flute piece, after a few hours.

The world is resting on the shoulders of kitchen mothers all over the planet. They are indefatigable and rarely get a nod.

I did stumble into one actual kitchen dilemma, starting on the very first morning:

We have two huge trash barrels. One is supposed to be veggie scraps, and the other is

meant for plastic garbage of various types. The kitchen crew and even the maichees sometimes dump plastic crap into the veggie scrap barrel. (You discerning readers might notice that I have an opinion about this..) Some of the renegade trashers giggle a bit, as if to acknowledge their willful naughtiness.

As the newest kid in the neighborhood and a *falang*., I haven't earned "complaining rights." I've always admired the Quaker doctrine of waiting and observing, before offering suggestions to ameliorate a situation. Perhaps my soul more resembles the radical street activist than the soft quiet soul of a Quaker.

After a couple hours of witnessing the marriage of compost and garbage, I took a deep breath and reached into the roiled messy garbage can, separating out the yucky plastic from the twenty gallons of compost, in silence.

My behavior was met with: "the Blink".

I've described "the Blink" in former years: It's the automatic facial response of someone who is very polite, but thinking,

I can't believe she's doing that!

The compost bin thenceforth remained pristine for hours. But only as long as I stayed in the room. One of the worst "offenders" is/was a wonderful young man in charge of hauling the giant and heavy sacks of garbage and/or compost out of the kitchen area. I began to imagine that he wasn't separating them anyway, and that the sacks were all headed for the landfill. I cut myself while chopping veggies and pondering that.

Jateh/(peekaboo!)

This Garbage Dilemma is the first installment in a series, dear readers. Stand by for future chapters.

Meanwhile, every day is another adventure in watching what arises out of nothing....the very best of something, as Pooh noticed!

I still go out on alms walk on week days with the nuns, and have been assigned to various routes. There are about eight different groups...two of them take taxis across town to other markets. Often the taxi driver donates the fare to the nuns.



To the left the nuns are offering a blessing sutra to the taxi driver, for his donation.



I don't have to set my alarm clock any more to arise in the pre-dawn darkness, cause the nuns have moved to the hall right next door to my wonderful little house, and their chanting begins about 4:45. This is truly a heavenly way to awaken.

The echoes reverberate across the water to my home, 40' away.

After alms-walk, about 7:30 a.m., I generally go see what needs to be chopped in the kitchen.

Around 9, I start teaching Maichee English class, which is a blast for me, and I think they love it too. With the use of our translator devices and the more proficient English students, we do a lot of fun role-playing. Being a clown comes naturally to me, and these beautiful people seem to love that. We usually end up with a Sufi song by Hafiz or Rumi (13th century Persian poets)

This morning's was Hafiz':

*No one knows his name.
The man who lives on the street,
And walks around in rags (2x)*

*Once, I saw that man in a dream.
He and God were building an extraordinary temple.*

No one knows his name.

*The man who lives on the street,
And walks around in rags (3x).*

Maichee Git shed some tears when she understood the part about the dream. Everyone learns these songs well enough to sing it several times.

Below is Maichee Git, asking me how to say,

I love to water the trees.

And she seems to be doing it in the very early morning and late at night, every day I've been here.



Another of my assignments over the years is being the International Hostess who greets visitors and shows them around the center, helping them to feel at home. Very few visitors do find their way here, since not a lot of English is spoken, but it's always been a delight.

Some of you may remember my description of Zilong, the Chinese young man who spent a year riding his bike across India and who

has devoted his life to embodied Dharma practice... living his ideals.



He sent his friends Kai and Cynthia to S.D.S., so I knew I was in for a treat.

On their way from Plum Village in Thailand, they stopped in for

several days before returning to the eco-village they've founded in Tokyo to explore the "gift economy:" the art of giving without expectation. Kai just finished a magnificent children's book on permaculture, in Japanese.

I am so happy to leave the future in the hands of these, and so, so many more bright lights coming down the road now.

I'm also going into Khun Mae's kindergarten classes on Monday mornings, where we do a combination of English, dance and yoga. They are teaching me how to keep interest high, but not hyper-excited. It's a fascinating challenge with dozens of kiddos. I play VERY soothing and slow flute music when the excitement goes into over-drive



Time for me to go to bed, dear readers.

Tomorrow is Children's Day here at the Center, and that demands all hands on deck. It's a very big deal all over Thailand. Thanks for your lovely comments.