

It Takes Courage to Bloom in the Mud

By Janet Bennett

I was standing at my window recently, soaking up the sunshine even though it was bitterly cold outside—even colder than normal for a Cleveland area winter day.

I realized that I was drawn to the window and sunshine to get a “hit” of positive energy—that I was feeling depleted and allowing some “poor me living in this cold climate—why aren’t I in Florida or somewhere warm” thoughts to invade my mind—and depress my spirit.

But as I stood looking out the window I was struck by the beauty before me—the light snow was crystallized by the sunshine and the ice on the lacy stems of the evergreen in front of the window were creating little prisms of beautiful color and light.

I just started smiling and then laughing at myself—“good one God” I thought to myself—“this is spectacular and I wouldn’t be seeing it in Florida now would I.”

And that reminded me of a realization that had been playing in my mind this whole winter season—there is a lot to appreciate right here, and why am I so eager to “get away from it all?” I live here in northeast Ohio and winter is a beautiful part of the experience.

When I’m out walking with my dog Max—a big yellow Lab—and I see the beauty and feel the peace of the season all around me, and share in his joy as he makes a snow angel in the fluffy stuff, I can’t help but feel closer to spirit, and at a very deep level.

I’ve come to realize that it takes a lot of courage to try and find the light in a dark place—and I consider northeast Ohio a dark place spiritually speaking.

The prevailing values here are—for the most part—the old ones of competition, judging people by what they do and how much money they make, and you won’t find people exchanging spiritual insights at very many cocktail parties.

But underneath the surface there seems to be a growing spiritual awareness—and probably at a very deep level. It would have to be deep to survive and grow in this darkness.

It reminds me of the lotus flower needing to grow in the mud. That beautiful flower needs the mud to feed its roots, and bring forth its awesome blossom.

And I am beginning to realize just how brave the people are who chose to live here and grow in the mud. Who choose to keep reading empowering books, who choose to go to yoga, ecstatic dance or other movement classes to free their spirits, or who choose to try and find their true purpose in life while those around them think they are slightly crazy.

So we may be a “deep bed of courage” and not even realize it.

Courage to me means “feeling the fear and doing it anyway.” I have certainly had to face a lot of fear on my own path—not the least of which was making choices that family and friends didn’t understand or agree with, and some even using rejection to try and make me do things their way.

But my roots were too firmly planted in the mud and I couldn’t go back—back into a cage of someone else’s making about who and what I should be.

While it is winter as I write this, you will be reading it in the spring—and how fitting. Spring is a time of flowers popping up through the ground after sleeping all winter, and bringing their wonder and joy along with them.

And maybe it will be a time for us to emerge from the mud as well—with a stronger appreciation for ourselves and the courage that we are showing as we walk this path of spiritual growth in a relatively dark corner of the world.

With that thought in mind, I hope you will pat yourself on the back or give yourself a big hug of appreciation for the courage you are showing as you move along on your own journey.

And perhaps the springtime is also a good time for us to make more of an effort to find each other and support each other. Maybe we’ve lived under the mud long enough—maybe it’s time to blossom and have the courage to greet each other with a hearty Namaste as we meet—and not be embarrassed about what other people might think if they overhear it.

While much of the country is seeing 2009 through the lens of financial gloom and doom, perhaps we can bring a little more light to our corner of the world. Let’s come together and find ways to support the “blooming of the lotus blossoms that we all are” right here in northeast Ohio.

Let’s start by supporting the organizations and businesses (like the ones listed in this magazine) that have persevered here in the dark, often struggling to survive. Why not consciously use our resources—including our volunteer time—to contribute to building a stronger and more visible spiritual community in our own area?

And because I try and “walk my talk,” I will do the same. I will volunteer some time to try and build a stronger connection among the lotus blossoms—send me an email at equinoxgrp@aol.com if you’d like to be a part of the process, and I will do what I can to make the appropriate connections. Hopefully, a more organized community will emerge from the mud and new leaders as well.

One thing I know we need are more free and accessible gathering places for people to meet and talk with each—and support each other on our respective journeys. Please let me know if you know of such places or can offer them yourself.

That is how a more visible and robust spiritual community will be created—by joining together out of courage to make it happen.

And since we were hearty and courageous enough to survive the winter, we can certainly bloom in the spring and look forward to dancing together in the summer!

Namaste until we meet again.

*Janet Bennett lives in Mentor, Ohio, and is the author of the recently published book, **Travels with Max: How My Dog Unleashed My Life**, which is available at Borders in Mentor, Joseph-Beth Booksellers at Legacy Village or through Amazon.com. She also has an interactive website at www.travelswithmax.com. Please share your thoughts or suggestions with Janet at equinoxgrp@aol.com or 440-974-7330.*

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