



Where We Are Is Our Temple, by Jack Kornfield

Expanding our spiritual practice is actually a process of expanding our heart, of widening our circle of insight and compassion to gradually include the whole of our life. Being on earth here in human bodies, this year, this day, is our spiritual practice.

It used to be that most of Eastern spiritual practice was preserved by monks and nuns in monasteries and temples. For centuries much of Western contemplative practice in Europe took place in cloisters as well. In our modern times, the monastery and temple have expanded to include the world itself. Most of us are not going to live as monks and nuns, and yet as lay people we seek a genuine and profound spiritual life. This is possible when we recognize that where we are is our temple, that just here in the life we are leading we can bring our practice alive.

My old guru in (Mumbai) would teach us in this way. He would let students stay just long enough to come to some genuine understanding of life and love and how to be free in the midst of it all. Then he would send them home, saying, "Marry the boy or girl next door, get a job in your own community, live your life as your practice." On the opposite coast of India, Mother Teresa (would send) home the hundreds of volunteers who come to help in (Kolkata), saying, "Now that you have learned to see Christ in the poor of India, go home and serve him in your family, on your street, in your neighborhood."

[...] We are all one family. This can be felt most directly in the silence of an undivided heart. When the mind is still and the heart open, the world is undivided for us. As Chief Seattle reminded our ancestors when he surrendered his land:

"This earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. [...] We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web weÂ do to ourselves."

When the heart is undivided, whatever we encounter is our practice.