



**Hello everyone**

**Bonjour tout le monde**

Since the beginning of 2020, human beings all around the world have had to face events that were as unexpected as they were unforeseeable, and learn to live with a climate of uncertainty where it is becoming very difficult to make the slightest plan. Some have experienced the loss of family members, their job, their freedom or other things. In most of these difficult situations, a form of non-attachment or detachment has proved to be necessary in order to maintain a certain stability. In the yoga world, we have had to adapt the way we teach, whether that be online or in-presence classes. The wisdom and practice of yoga as well as the way of life it supposes have provided essential support at this difficult time.

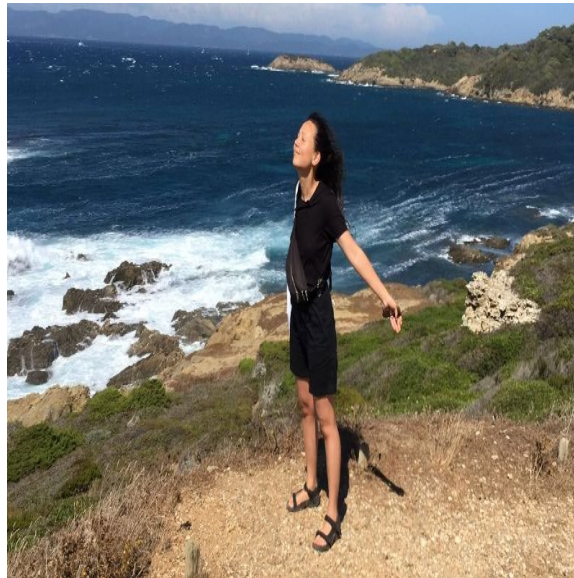
The EUY has also had to be adaptable in recent months, giving up the idea of organising a congress in Zinal in August and having a smaller one online instead, just as it held the August and Spring GAs online. These events will all be covered in the next newsletter, which should appear in late October.

In this context, the articles in this newsletter on aparigraha (often translated as non-attachment) seem particularly appropriate. Denis Perret from the French Viniyoga Federation (FVI) and member of the Education Team, gives us his definition of aparigraha, while Ruth Huber from the Portuguese Yoga Federation (FPY) applies the practice of detachment more specifically to our experiences of

lockdown in recent months, referring to the teachings of Pema Chödrön and the beneficial practice of tonglen.

We hope you enjoy reading this latest newsletter and wish you joy, serenity and good health as we move into the autumn. As ever, should you have any feedback or wish to contribute to a future newsletter, please get in touch.

***Isabelle and Joy on behalf of the Meeting Team***



**Watch lectures by EUY teachers from the virtual  
Congress, held from 21-23 August.**

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## **Regarding Detachment**

Let's start with the basics, in the words of Pema Chödrön.

'Relaxing with the present moment, relaxing with hopelessness, relaxing with death, not resisting the fact that things end, that things pass, that things have no lasting substance, that everything is changing all the time – that is the basic message.'

In the days that are passing, many of us are going through moments of anxiety, restlessness and worry about an uncertain future, and the resulting mental agitation is making matters even worse. That is what Pema Chödrön is talking about. In fact, the pandemic situation, unprecedented in its size, unpredictability and violence, is forcing us to open our eyes to an obvious reality that we prefer to ignore: the fragility of the human being, the structural vulnerability of society and the impermanence of everything that exists. We have suddenly been forced to become aware of this reality that collides directly with our implicit conviction that everything that is part of our life, the

small comforts coming from habits, routines and pleasures, were there to last. And what about the situation of the planet, the massive destruction of ecosystems that endangers the very survival of humanity? We also know about this, but we prefer not to take any notice of it. It is this capacity for self-deception, for living with double standards, opting for the most pleasant and deliberately ignoring the most frightening, that makes us human beings such terrible pretenders. As sleepwalkers, we like to believe in the dominant discourse that states 'changes yes, but gradually' - because the economy needs to grow and tourism needs to thrive – let's create some more bicycle paths and plant a few more trees, so that we can proudly proclaim ourselves to be a green and environmentally friendly city.

And so it was, until the sudden and brutal irruption of a tiny, deadly microbe that ended this sleepy comfort. From then on, nothing has been as it was before: we humans are suffering, dying; and the planet, thanks to the stoppage of a large part of the economy, the drastic reduction of automobile circulation and air traffic, seems to be breathing a sigh of relief. Cities appear to us as in a dream: deserted, silent, in a bath of pure fresh air that caresses the green leaves of Spring and the nostrils of the few humans capable of savouring that air, breathing deeply.

So, has it really been possible to stop the mad race on its way to global destruction? Have we finally become aware of human fragility and the impermanence of everything that exists? Have we become aware of our responsibility to all beings that inhabit this planet with us, to everything that feeds and sustains us? Will we be able to seize the opportunity to make urgent change, based on an individual and collective awareness, making us agents of that profound transformation of mentalities, habits and policies? Through the practice of yoga, we know that change begins in the heart of the

individual, in the innermost and infinitesimal part of each person. In the cells, in the neurons. This is what Pema Chödrön is talking about: despite my deep uneasiness in relation to the present situation, in view of the uncertain future, despite impatience and irritability in the difficult moments of social confinement, I can in each moment breathe, relax and become fully conscious of what is, of this unique and unmistakable 'NOW' of the present moment. I am embodied in this present moment, inhaling, letting it flow and pass, and I abandon myself to another present moment when exhaling, remaining in that ever-present *flow* that silences the mind and connects me to Life, to the deep consciousness of Being.

Painful and distressing emotions can be alleviated, mitigated, 'washed' in the bath of *here* and *now*, in the flow of the ever-present breath. I breathe in my anxiety, giving it all the space it needs, and I breathe it out giving a hug, caressing my anguished heart. Like a mother holding a crying child. I breathe in, permitting the grip of anguish to loosen with the expansion of the breathing space, allowing the emotion to fill this whole space and expand into it, and once again, I hold the crying child, soothing it in my arms and comforting it when I breathe out. So, by rocking the emotion, it gently settles down, as if diluting little by little. We can continue until we reach a state of serenity in which the emotional storm subsides. We go through the same process every time an emotion arises that calls on us and needs our attentive presence. Buddhists call this practice *tonglen*: sending and receiving. We find an outline of what *tonglen* could be in the *Yoga Sutras* II. 33 and 34.

Buddhist master Dilgo Kyentse Rinpoche said:

'We live under the threat from painful emotions: anger, fear, desire, pride, jealousy and so on. Therefore, we should always be ready to counter these

with the appropriate antidote. True practitioners may be recognized by their unflinching mindfulness.' (*Buddhist Offerings 365 days*, 3 April)

In times of anxiety like this, we are still beginners in 'relaxing with the present moment' - but nothing stops us from starting now and continuing forever. Even if we are not yet 'comfortable with uncertainty' (Pema Chödrön), we are on our way. 'L'essentiel, c'est de continuer' [the most important thing is to continue], Master Stobbaerts used to say tirelessly.

And I finish with some words from a Sufi master:

'Bienheureux ceux qui n'ont pas fini leur travail, car ils n'ont pas fini de s'amuser.' [blessed are those who haven't finished their work, for they have much enjoyment ahead of them].

***Ruth Huber***

***April 17, 2020***



Aparigraha is the fifth and final yama, the spiritual attitudes adopted by our 'being' in the world. Practising aparigraha spiritually means constantly

remaining in the state of mind which consists in no longer needing to be reassured by possessions or social status. It is akin to vairagya (detachment). Aparigraha literally means not (a-) holding (-graha) what is around us (-pari-). It means having understood how superficial everything we can see and feel is (belongings, social position, even the physical body). The material dimension is honoured for what it is (the setting for a precious extension of life), but it is only an ephemeral outward projection of our being's subtle, intense and eternal life.

Casting off what is tangible means we can become more open to the essence of what is, the **essence which is**. Aparigraha involves not accumulating the forms taken by our past present moments (not clinging to the past), not craving a specific form that we will obtain tomorrow (projection into the future).

Practitioners are thus called upon to constantly be with the breathing sensation of the living world. Aparigraha is lightness, confidence and the awareness that life (our being, awareness, the world soul, the life force which creates our life at every moment) is within us and causes our life to unfold moment by moment. The spiritual practice of aparigraha consists in reinventing at every moment the psychological standpoint that enables us to see and accept that the creative flow of our lives comes solely from the **life essence** that is within us, around us and ultimately that we ourselves are.

Actively practising aparigraha means:

- realising that I am getting attached to forms and to the past or projecting expectations on to the future
- reactivating the experience of the present moment (yoga teaches us this)

Patanjali, author of the *Yoga-sutra*, says that by becoming established in this practice practitioners clearly see that they are incarnated spiritual beings, and that the form of their lives is just yet another cycle, the cycles being a succession of endings and rebirths which increase their wisdom. The ultimate wisdom will make it possible, when next in the womb, to completely get away from identifying being with form. An enlightened child will come into the manifested world and will contribute to creating a new world.

***Denis Perret***

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