

Dear Amma (and World-Wide Yoga Family),

April is a good time to be in Germany if you like to contemplate the weather, for there is so much of it to contemplate. On a typically moody April day, I wake up in my Black Forest home to find a sodden, emerald-green garden outside my back door that has been thoroughly watered during the night by our heavenly horticulturalist (at no extra charge, I might add). During the morning hours, while I drink my tea in leisure, the sun is valiently striving to burn a hole through the low-hanging, iron-grey sky. When his best efforts are not sufficient, he calls upon his most powerful ally, a stiff westerly wind, to join forces and help scatter the clouds. By late morning, a vaporous fog is rising from the earth. It dissipates quickly, however, under the hot yellow sun. Taking advantage of the circumstances, I go outside to eat my lunch (with wife, dog, and cats, of course) on our terrace, to thaw my bones in the pleasing warmth of mid-day and enjoy the brilliant blue sky. Then, before I can clear the dishes away or say "Jack Robinson," the world has been swallowed up once again by ominous shadows. The temperature plummets 10 degrees. Warmth and comfort flee before a phalanx of towering, anvil-headed clouds advancing from the West. As the front nears, gusts of wind swirl through the courtyard behind our house and conjure up miniature dust devils. The wistaria and honeysuckle that decorate our garden shiver and shake as if they had done something frightfully wrong and were afraid of divine retribution.

When the storm breaks, there is a ferocious display of lightening and thunder. The rain comes down in sheets. Then, as if to reinforce the message--"Beware ye mortals down below"-- we are visited by a shower of hailstones, banging violently against our tin roof and dancing fiendishly on the stone tiles of our patio. After a few minutes (which seem to go by very slowly), the squall passes. An orange sun peaks out from behind the next bank of clouds. If it is low enough in the sky and pointing the right direction, I am privileged to observe a rainbow (or even two!) For the remainder of the afternoon, while I work at my desk, clouds gallop across the sky in crazy formation, like a drunken cavalry. Mild, sunny weather alternates with storm until, finally, evening settles in, the wind drops, and all becomes intensely still.

Although many here in Germany complain about the weather this time of year, I happen to like it. Maybe this is because I am the sort of person whose internal moods mimic the April weather, changing quickly and bequeathing me both sunshine and storm in abundance.

The weather lends itself admirably for use as a metaphor to describe what is happening inside us, all the time, in the realm of our feelings. We have sunny moments when our mood is gentle and generous and loving. We have seasons of cold and discontent, when dark thoughts occupy us and make us dangerous company for growing things. We laugh, until we cry, or cry until we laugh. Fear crowds out our good intentions. Courage scatters obstacles to the four corners of the earth. It's all

there inside us, the emotional weather that comes with being human.

An oft-cited comment about the meteorological weather is that, while everyone complains about it, nobody ever does anything. It is true, in the face of those vast natural forces that animate the atmosphere and create the weather, we humans are all but helpless. The internal weather, however, is somewhat more amenable to tinkering, steering, and modulation, which brings me around to the point of this missive.

I had the privilege, pleasure, and good fortune to spend two days in Berlin this month (April), at a time when Dr. Ananda Balayogi was also there. On the afternoon of my first day, I sat in a room with some 40 other kindred spirits and listened to Dr. Ananda discourse in his inimitable and entertaining fashion about Yoga and the Chakras. My short and inadequate summary of the highlights of his presentation is this: we are all blessed enough to be in possession of all of the chakras (it's part of our original equipment, so to speak), but not quite blessed enough so that all of these chakras are always open and active in all of us. The primordial energy of the Universe enters into and quickens us, and, once inside, manifests itself in a variety of ways, at a variety of locations in our bodies. Yoga describes these energetic manifestations as chakras. Each chakra has its particular flavor and energizes a particular aspect of our being. The more chakras we have functioning, the more

fully human we become and the more fully we can experience the glory of being alive.

I can only speculate how it might feel to have the full range of energies and faculties at my disposal that a completely activated set of chakras would bring. My suspicion, however, is that it would result in an increase in sunny weather--to come back to my metaphor--and a decrease in the frequency and intensity of my dark and stormy moods. This would be a blessing for me and for all those other people with whom I come into regular contact--my wife, most of all!

The first step in our becoming more fully alive than we are at present is to recognize that such a dimension of growth is possible. Here is where spending time in the company of spiritually mature people is indispensable. Although Dr. Ananda is a modest and self-effacing man who doesn't go in much for titles and other typical vanities of our civilization, I venture to assign him to this category of spiritually mature human beings. He is, for me, someone who demonstrates beautifully and unmistakably what our potential truly is, and how Yoga can help us discover this potential. Although his ability as a teacher is indisputable, it is not his Yogic message per se that inspires me whenever I see him, as much as it is the fullness of his humanity and the manifest joy he takes in being alive.

Tomorrow is the first day of May, which is often described around these parts as "the month of blissfulness" (= der

Wonne Monat Mai). This means, officially at least, it will very soon no longer be possible to experience April weather. Until next year, of course. In a few days, Dr. Ananda will be back in India, at home with his family, colleagues, and friends. There will be sunshine in many hearts in India upon his arrival. I would like for you to pass on to him, Amma, the message that he has left some sunshine behind here in Germany as well, and that I, for one, can still feel the warmth of his presence. I am looking forward to a blissful May and wish you and your loved-ones the same--regardless of the weather.

Yours in Yoga,

Billy