

Mind out of Time: Enlightenment Intensive:

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither
flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point there
the dance is,
But neither arrest or movement.
I can only say, there we have been: but I
cannot say where. And I cannot say, how long, for that is to
place it in time. The inner freedom from the practical desire
The release from action and suffering, release from
the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving.
(from Four Quartets, T.S. Eliot)*

'Four Quartets' tells you more about Enlightenment Intensives than I can - I have been to three, and they have been the most stimulating, awareness producing, even mystical, events of my life. Whether or not this 'should' or 'should not' be so is indifferent; it just is.

The format of the Enlightenment Intensive is a strict one, consisting of communication exercises in which you sit opposite a partner and talk about whatever comes up in your mind as you contemplate your 'question'. Your partner has only to attend and listen with as much concentration as he can muster. At the end of five minutes a gong rings, and you change over: you listen as your partner talks. The session usually lasts for forty minutes, when there is a five minute break, and you then begin all over again with a new partner. Interspersed with these communication exercises are walking meditations, working meditations and meals (vegetarian). There is no talking outside the formal communication exercise. It's hard work, running from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. over three days. The three basic questions are 'tell me who you are', 'tell me what is life', and 'tell me what is another'. During Enlightenment Intensives I have had times of aching boredom, of tense frustration, of deadness and exhaustion. I have had moments of surging energy and great elation. I have experienced universal laughter and unique pain and grief. I have felt loneliness and isolation; truthful eloquence alternates with inarticulate dumbness and verbal diarrhoea. Inner chaos and tension gives way to equilibrium and meditative stillness.

The E.I. format does more to help one towards wholeness than anything else I know. The structure forces you deep into yourself, destroys stereotypes and rigidity of thinking and leaves one empty and exhausted; in this state a newness of being and knowing can occur.

There is a continual cycling of psychic energy which becomes stronger and stronger throughout the three days; The existential struggle is in trying to present oneself to

another, whatever question one is working on; this tension can build into an extraordinary bond between two people, where the energy generated becomes almost tangible; in between these periods of intense communication is the meditative peace and quiet isolation of walking, preparing meals and eating, when a good deal of integration seems to go on; the learning one is experiencing seeps in and becomes a permanent part of one's being.

*Stillness effaces time,
infinite space surrounds me.
I question the bonds that strap me down.
Strapped to the back of time or floating free
Moment to mement binds me.*

Enlightenment Intensives do not suit everyone; some people find them completely unacceptable- their way of working just doesn't suit the structure, and for them, other experiences have more meaning. You should also remember that like anything else, it's partly a learned technique - I gained much more from my second and third than I did from my first, when I spent a lot of time just wishing to be anywhere - other than where I was! However glimmers of light began to dawn, and as I got used to the method, I was able to use it more effectively. The only 'rules' are to 'go with the flow'. Stretch, yawn, feel tense, cry, scream, be silent, be verbose, humorous, intellectual, scornful or whatever - only keep contact with that which comes up within you as you face your question. For 'there's nothing really nothing to turn off'.

After my second E.I. I wrote the following poem, which contains the essence of that experience, for me:

*I have trodden in the vacant interstella spaces
I have frozen in the hub of the universe
The sound of stillness is in my soul.*

*I have heard the silence of a hawthorn tree
I have felt the trembling cracking of its branches
I know its strength and its fragility.*

*I have seen hope and strength shine from another's face
I have been transfixed by love, and felt another's
doubting agony,
I have met another across infinite space'.*

Footnote: The enlightenment intensive process was discovered by Charles Berner, in California, and brought to this country by Jeff Love, who has recently published 'The Quantum Gods', an account, not only of the E.I. method but also of what he calls psychometaphysics, a radical look at both the inside and the outside of our universe. (Published by Compton Russell and available from Quaesitor). John Crook, from Bristol Encounter Centre, also trained with Jeff Love to lead Enlightenment Intensives.

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