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JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Seven: "Choosing Motives that Serve Your Purpose" and helps you with a basic understanding of subtler forms of teaching and learning. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

Finding your path and right livelihood: The previous success stories are full of qualities that define the experts in discovering and pursuing their 'right livelihood'. The following passages in this chapter on motivation balance qualities of the consummate professional with the qualities that have made me the quintessential 'amateur entrepreneur.' If you know the answer to what it is you are after then you know what it is that will provide the drive behind your career choices. Are you after money or fame or power or something simpler like stability and balance? Are you after something tangible like finding your right livelihood or are you chasing intangibles like 'being cool?' It is motivation that guides you to your path and inspires you to endure it. Many kinds of motivation are explored: from anger to pride, from gender bias to culture bias and from ecology to humanitarian.

Instead of seeking improvement, follow your appetites:

Sifu: His skin had the earthen glow and smoothness of a river rock, as refreshing as the refined waters that shaped it. He did not follow a beaten, egocentric path, but one of pure spirit. As if neither honor nor disgrace could disturb his clarity. We met in the mountains of Asheville and became immediate friends. The master's 'chi' was as obvious as a beautiful physical feature. Chi means *vital energy*, and a Taoist's main object involves removing the obstacles that impede the flow of chi. Like the motion of our minds, chi exists between our body and our spirit. Sifu or Master Pao li lo is a good Italian boy from Boston. I searched all over the nation for decades to find an oriental master, only to locate a paisan from twenty minutes up the Pike.

To maximize his chi, Sifu had long practiced Taoist cultivations with matter, movement, and his mind. He consumed herbal elixirs and conserved semen; he mastered tai chi and tai moving meditations. Sifu had a kind of power.

He required little and gathered self-respect, chi and a pleasing nature as his valuables. He sought leadership by example rather than unreasonable ambition. Sifu works within his own capabilities, keeps his mind at leisure, and accepts what he has. He asked me to sit on his comfortable futon overlooking the beautiful mountain that resembled a dragon, to read a passage from one of his favorite authors. To paraphrase Master Ni Hua Ching, 'Our appetites are our trustworthy advisors, when we find and follow them we find our spiritual path. This is called the Integral Way. It's not based on an impending sense of illusion or disconnectedness so needs no reunion or remedy. We needn't believe in the benefits or inclusiveness of our practice, we'll simply find them as

we practice. This is the key to appropriateness. Thus there's no compulsion to fix or save the world.'

About our present economic situation Master Ni says, 'It's not a matter of getting better or development...but simply remaining in a state of vigorous awareness where the fullness of life is celebrated, not improvement.' Every day psychologists come up with the new dysfunction of the month that must be urgently fixed, and we spend our time trying to fix ourselves, striving to evolve into superior beings. We are not broken down machines; we are organic beings with an innate desire for self-expression. In Master Ni's wise words, "We are creatures of nature, neither superior nor extraordinary, an immutable part thereof, and not in need of repair."

Desiderata: Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.... You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here... And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

In the book Siddhartha, dysfunctions that are not suffered to the end recur until they are concluded yet when time is dispelled all difficulties are resolved. If you could see simultaneously the past, the present and the future you would see that everything is necessary and 'in order' and makes sense. 'That the sinner will someday become a saint, this someday is an illusion. Just as the world is not slowly evolving along a path to perfection and is perfect at all times so too is the sinner not on the way to a saint-like state, he is not evolving; the *potential* saint already exists in the sinner.'

As I said goodbye to Sifu, I told him it was my great honor to have met such an accomplished master and thanked him for his rhythm, and the courage of his subtle impact. He replied "Please, thank you. But like the ancients before me I am content to style myself as simple, and have no need to court a good name. To court favor is often to court disaster when disfavor arrives." It is the same when courting a career or the favor of a girl; when your actions are spontaneous and without ulterior motives the fear of rejection will not effect you. In high school the leaders acted spontaneously without worrying what the crowd thought or if any would follow their lead. Doing it 'your way' naturally attracts not only people but a successful path as well.

Teaching with a kind heart and without admonition:

I have had many teachers in my life, none of who did more for me than my mom and dad. I appreciated their style of child rearing, which I can best describe as 'live and let live.' I was born as natural as untouched wood, without a hint of good or bad fortune, a *tabula rasa* (blank slate). Scolding and molding behavior by breaking a child's will--popularized by Calvin--was not my parent's style of parenting. As a matter of fact I don't recall ever hearing the words, "No, don't do that, be careful." They took Rousseau's view: that we as children were intrinsically innocent, not tainted by original sin. Since they did not keep us on a short leash, I could do as I pleased as long as I was good.

Good was defined in my family as a) respecting your elders and b) no punching, kicking or biting siblings (noogies and head-locks permitted). Dad tended to say "maybe" to any new proposal, and in time, that maybe turned into a "yes," because he trusted us

unconditionally. Often the best kind of teaching is no teaching, or teaching by example. As a result the learning happens not in spectacular fashion but in ordinary moments. As they say in the Zen tradition: 'after the ecstasy, the laundry.' The things that matter most in our lives, that turn out to be our most valuable lessons often happen naturally.

Ryokan: American Buddhist monk Jack Kornfield tells the story of how Zen poet Ryokan exemplifies the great power of ordinariness. Ryokan was respected by the Zen community as one of their wisest teachers, although he never preached to or reprimanded anyone. Ryokan's brother once asked him to speak to his delinquent son. When the Zen master arrived at his brother's home, he did not say a word of admonition to the boy. As he prepared to leave after an overnight stay, Ryokan sat down to tie his sandals. When his wayward nephew kneeled at his feet to take over the task of tying Ryokan's straw sandals, the boy felt a drop of warm water. Glancing up, he saw Ryokan looking down at him, his eyes full of tears. From then on the boy turned over a new leaf.