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Continuing Education: the Joy of Learning!

I come from a rural area of Austria, my parents were simple people and I didn't have the opportunity to study. According to the school system of that time this meant that at 14 years of age my schooling was at an end; a fact which I very much regretted. I would have dearly loved to learn so much more! However, life goes on and after learning a trade and forming a family, a new and exciting phase of study opened up for me.

Through my work for peace in the Women's Federation I have had to deal with many different themes in order to understand how things are interconnected and to acquire the knowledge necessary to deal with various challenges. Most particularly we have done research about the nature of womankind, and how we as women, can best use our innate qualities in helping to create peace. This has broadened our horizons enormously as well as considerably strengthening our feelings of self-worth.

Today the call is getting louder for a feminine contribution as essential for the establishment of lasting peace. Maybe we feel overwhelmed by this demand, because we are not sure how to accomplish. Who of us is really qualified in peace-education? For sure, in our life we have learned a lot, with our children or with people close to us. But we feel that some practical knowledge is missing. Maybe not each of us can obtain a university degree or do some re-training. We can gain just as much by keeping our eyes and ears open and staying receptive to all that is meant for us to receive and assimilate.

This I call „playing Ping Pong“ with the universe, or if You want, with God. Instead of setting unreachable goals, I catch everything which comes towards me and then react accordingly. In this way situations occur, which I would never be able to think of or ways are opening, which I would never find by my own effort. One person connects me with another, who helps me further or I can do

something special for her. Circles become wider and wider and I feel myself like being carried on a huge wave. Everything makes sense and I feel that everything is as it should be. There is a higher power, who cares for everything.

As an example: as soon as we have a certain topic in our head which keeps us busy, each time exactly those books were given into our hands, which we just needed, without looking for them. There is a sentiment that it is just right in this moment. Probably this can only come when we admit our own questions and take them serious. Then encounters come about which answer our issues.

Or with the Japanese tea-ceremony. When I became 50, I invited my next neighbours and friends. And because they became so thrilled, I wanted to share this experience with other people too. So it continues for more than 10 years, they brought their friends and people unbeknown called us if they may participate. We were asked to celebrate at birthdays and in private homes and even at the evening-school we could present the tea-ceremony. In this way we delighted several hundred people by introducing the ZEN-path of peace. For my husband and me this means an outstanding peacework and we are very happy about this opportunity.

Another matter was a psychology-book, which reformed our whole family. Like in many other families, we were close to lose communication among each other. But at the right moment one after the other of us read how to learn the art of not being unhappy. Now we are able to deal with each other in a very different way. However, it is not enough to read such a book, it needs much, much exercise, intense examination, to look at ourselves. The best book is no use without practising the lectures. Our erroneous zones are the result of historical mistaken thinking, which was passed down from generation zu generation without questioning them. Therefore it is not easy to change our behaviour over night. But it is possible.

Because in our assignment profession-alism is very important, it is good for us to visit events of other organisations in order to learn how they present them-selves. There is no reason to humble ourselves and when we appear competent, we can spread hope and confidence. We all know the working world – women are only taken seerious, when they can show at least as much as men. But we don't need to copy men, just actualize things in our own manner. Each one of us is unique, has unique gifts and abilities which she can bestow to the world.

There is a tendency nowadays is to view the prospects for our planet as deteriorating rapidly and scientists are often put in the position of modern prophets of Doom. However, if we look more carefully we can see that things are indeed moving forward. In many areas of science and techno-logy there already exist practicable solutions to many problems and it is only rigid, patriarchal structures, mainly concerned with their own profits, which have prevented this overall positive development from gathering momentum.

The current egological disaster in the Gulf of Mexico points with the finger at the industrial nations. Earlier or later there will be no other way than to rethink. Because there are two ways of learning: either through suffering, until one is forced by the circumstances to change something or through honest insight and willingness to adopt something new.

It is especially in spiritual areas that we get a sense of excitement about the future. The growing number of those who are leaving the established churches further underscores the fact that rigid belief structures are no longer capable of satisfying most people.

At the same time there are a growing number of choices for healing and spiritual growth which promote holistic awareness. Internet campaigns are used to bring down destructive legisla-tion or force governments to create laws to protect the environment. All in all this serves to create an optimistic atmosphere, and when combined with the contributions of women, can make possible a real transformation of this planet.

In the Women's Federation for Peace our greatest concern is to give women the tools required to keep pace with developments in world affairs.

If we continue to stand on our present level of knowledge or thought systems, we will not be able to give people what they need. Ethical or moral precepts have been known for thousands of years but have obviously not had the power to overcome selfishness and greed.

Peace begins in our mind. For most of my life I never suspected the enormous influence philosophy could have in the historical process. Plato, Aristotle and many philosophers from other cultures left behind the results of their thinking, which still affect how women until today are culturally treated. Also philosophers from younger times like Marx and others have written world history. And not always a positive one! What I want to say with this, that I hold it necessary for my further education to be engaged with the world of philo-sophy. This will show us, that not every-thing, which is settled since thousands of years, must be regarded as absolute. We are allowed to scrutinize the various backgrounds and follow our own heart, especially when it is to defend Human and Women's Rights.

Once we have found a satisfactory world view, we can begin to experiment on ourselves and test its suitability. Assumed, we want to change ourselves. In this case, psychology, the teaching of the soul, can be a great help, providing it starts with a positive image of mankind. This leads us to aquire new patterns of behaviour. Even the most attractive ideology is of no use to anyone if it can't be put into practice. It's of no use to call on the leading figures in politics, society and the economy to change things if we are unwilling to work on ourselves. This can actually have unimaginable impact at many different levels.

It is imperative to know how we function as human beings, what our needs are and what does an emotionally healthy individual look like. We need practical guidance on how to deal with our daily worries, frustrations and disappointments; how can we eradicate these along with many others in our emotional

problem zones. That will free us and empower us to live completely according to our inner impulses, giving of ourselves joyfully to our families, communities and ultimately the world, rather than just working out of a sense of burdensome duty. This joyful giving of ourselves is, ultimately, the result of “continuing education” for the soul.

And it doesn't hurt to listen to spiritual masters. There are so many wonderful insights between heaven and earth that testify to our universal value as human beings. We really can experience how very much we are supported and loved from the heavenly powers and that lifts our souls to infinite heights. In a paradigm shift we transform ourselves from a woman ensnared in sin, into a creative, perfect daughter of the universe. Not a needy vessel, waiting for fulfillment from others but perceiving our own divinity, which is the source of love and joy. This change of consciousness also enables us to recognise our fellow beings as divine and love them accordingly.

The most important lesson for the sake of peace that we can learn is how to transcend the dualism of Good and Evil. Because this way of thinking creates inevitably breakup and conflict. To upraise upon the other was the cause for all kinds quarrels through-out history from inside the family until the world wars. As soon as we stop thinking in dualistic terms, the separation is over. Then we feel suddenly that there is no division, and in our heart is deep security and bond with all beings.

Once we recognise and experience the oneness between mind and body, oneness with our fellow beings and with the creation; the love, that is our true nature will flow unhindered. However after this moment of realization a long path of training awaits us before we can say that we are free from judging or condemning others. To avoid misunderstandings - “not to judge” means to accept things and people as they are – of course this doesn't mean we approve or support them if they are harmful. But even

destructive actions can be lovingly counteracted.

Of course we can distinguish between destructive and beneficial behaviour, yet without condemning that person. Observe, perceive, yes, even respect. I help myself by saying that this person is just now in her own individual level of development, learning her lectures of life. We have all come into this world with a certain historical burden and the best thing we can do with our life is to work as much as possible for our own healing so that we can leave a better foundation for future generations. And that will be enough for us to do without having to bother about how well the “others” are coping with their lives. Each has his own portion of responsibility and that is more than enough.

I have noticed in myself and in my circle of acquaintances, that learning is a source of joy and I have asked myself, why this is so: perhaps it has something to do with the limitlessness of our spirit, which continually strives for Truth, Beauty and Goodness. This is in my understanding the reason, why our favourite psychologist, Dr. Wayne Dyer, is saying “Learning is the best cure for depression”. Widening our horizons makes us mentally vital, versatile and creative. New impetus helps us to master challenges, and if successful, we can use that to help others and happiness will be multiplied.

The circle of like-minded people continues to grow, inspiration flows, coherencies are recognized, connections are made, through exchanging ideas, understanding and trust grows so that new projects take shape. Harmony amongst one another generates energy and determination to face new challenges together.

This is but a glimpse into that world of which we all dream, where all are of one heart and one soul. Such thoughts generate a vision within me as though the Spirit would melt all parts into one complete Whole and through this gains the power which transforms this world.