

Are You Turning into a Pillar of Salt?

By Carolyn Reynolds

Upon leaving the city of Sodom, Lot's wife was warned not to look back. She was told that if she did look back, she would be turned into a pillar of salt. But she did, and then she was. As a child that seemed to me to be an extreme punishment for a little nostalgic peek back to one's home when forced to leave. We really need to share with our children that these stories are metaphors because if we don't, the higher teachings may go unheard for many years. If you have ever been to a children's sporting event, you may have heard the coach tell a youngster to "shake it off" when that player is overcome with remorse over a botched play. The coach might as well have added, "Or you'll turn to salt." Just like salt sucks the juice out of a living thing and dries it so that there is no life left, having our attention in the past renders us "juiceless" and useless to the present. Sometimes that botched play of life is so remembered that it becomes a theme in our lives, living under the surface of the obvious, coloring all of our interactions. The effect is never a joyful one. Indeed, that is a dead give away: if your life lacks joy and spontaneity, you are probably sprinkling the salt of the dead past over all your human interactions, sucking the joy out of life's present moment experiences.

Many aspects of Yoga foster the skill of living in the present moment. A Hatha Yoga teacher continuously urges her students to be aware of the feelings and sensations that arise during asana practice and pranayama practice. Students are encouraged to be aware of the "edge" when in a posture. The edge is the sensation you experience when you are at the edge of your flexibility or strength while still relaxing and breathing deeply into that space. It is your growing edge and never painful. It is in this place that we expand our experience, become more flexible and notice what comes up in our minds. Constant vigilance as to what dimension our minds are in and returning attention back to the body and its sensation is wonderful practice for disciplining the mind for meditation. The present moment is your only point of power. When the mind is in the past or in the future, you are powerless to be effective in the present. And you can't meditate.

Yoga teaches us to discipline our minds. We learn that we have minds but that we are not our minds. We can watch our minds do what they do best, form thoughts. Then we can decide which of these thoughts we want to give our attention to and which are not useful. A thought can leave as quickly as it arrives in awareness if it is not given any energy. You decide. So who is the "you" that decides?

There is a metaphor in Yoga that uses the chariot. Imagine a chariot on a grand ride. The roads ahead are the many experiences we choose to explore. The chariot is the body; the vessel of the charioteer and a passenger. The charioteer is our intelligence, called *Buddhi* in Yoga, the instrument of decision, knowledge and discernment. The horses are the 10 *indryas*, or senses. There are the five incoming senses of smell, taste, sight, hearing and touch. There are the five outgoing senses of elimination, procreation, movement, grasping and speaking. The mind is the reins. The mind controls the senses through our intelligence. If there is no one guiding reins, the horses will be crashing about, running

wild. We all know of someone who is crashing through life being directed only by the allure of the senses. Usually rehab of some sort is the next stop.

But who is that passenger in the chariot?

A few of many wonderful resources include: [The Art of Joyful Living](#) by Swami Rama, [The Golden Present](#) by Swami Satchidananda, and www.SwamiJ.com, (an interactive site).