

DO YOU READ?
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Most of my friends read books. I mean they 'really' read books a lot, all kinds of things, especially fiction. I am almost jealous.

I am often asked what books I am reading. For some reason this always takes me by surprise because I never read books anymore. It is not that I have not read books. I have read far too many, for sure. It is just that it never occurs to me to read a book. Just so you know I am normal, I watch movies or parts of them instead.

Of course, I read technical manuals when I have to, but I have not read a novel or fiction for I don't even know how long. I can't remember when I last read fiction or what the book was.

And, yes I do research a lot of things on the Internet, but that usually involves reading short pieces or reviews of a non-fictional nature, like evaluating products and such.

There is one thing I do read and that is dharma texts, but for the most part these are not published books, but transcriptions of teachings in spiral-notebook form or in e-book format. But even these I tend to read only in cycles, like when the books make sense to me. I can't always read them. In fact, it almost seems like the words on the page change so that I can no longer understand them. Suddenly a book is all Greek to me, but a few months later when I pick the same texts up again, I can read them as if for the very first time. Amazing!

It seems I can absorb only so much 'conceptual' writing before it goes void for me and I have to leave it and re-immense myself in just living-life experience. I have to experience life for a time before I can return to the text and have it make fresh sense again. So I read these same pith dharma texts over and over and over. They are evergreen for me because each time I pick them up I have changed enough so that it is like reading them for the first time. They will never grow old. I will be reading these texts forever.

And I don't just blandly read them. I am fixated on every word, at least in the beginning. Suddenly I can totally get the meaning and it etches itself in my mind. I couldn't be more fascinated. And then, after some time, it all goes blank again and although the words are still on the page, I might as well be reading nonsense. The wave has peaked and it is time for me to stop making sense of sentences in a book and plunge back into life and sense some of that for myself. And so it goes.

So I don't read that much, but I write a lot, as most of my Facebook friends know all too well. And I can't just write a few words as I would like. I tend to write a lot and go on and on. It takes me a long while to say what I mean. For this I apologize and I know that if I would just write less,

more people would have time to read what I write. I can't help it.

I know that the result of what I write is what you see, but the process of writing is why I write, not the result. Oh yes, I hope the resulting prose gradually improves, but that is not my main reason for writing. As mentioned, the process of actually writing has become a form of meditation for me, and I don't mean just musing.

I write for sheer clarity of mind. The process of writing, for me, is clarifying, exhilarating. Some time ago I mixed my dharma meditation with writing and now I can rest my mind in the process and let it go crystal clear while turning out blogs like this. I am not bragging, but just explaining what it is with me and writing. And here is the kicker:

My current dharma teacher has taught for a great many years (he is 89), and accumulated hundreds and hundreds of teachings. Years ago I could have told you exactly where the really most profound and pith teachings of his were, the name and date they were given. However, it has gotten much more difficult to do this today, because these days every teaching of his I pick up is profound, every sentence liberating. I didn't see that one coming.

As I see it now, it was not that Rinpoche gave the most pithy, profound, and best teaching in this or that year, under one title or another. Rather it is that in this or that year I had ripened my mind enough to actually understand something, and so that particular teaching became a key teaching in my mind, one I would point out to others, etc. In the last analysis, I am not rating Rinpoche's teachings, but my ability to absorb them. I never would have guessed this to be true. As to what in Rinpoche's writing I find so fascinating, it is statements like this:

"If you attempt to imprison your awareness, to force your awareness to stay put, it will start to move. It will go out to an object. As long as you do not try to make your awareness stay put, in fact it cannot move. The only cause of awareness moving is attempting to make it not move. That is why it is so important to learn to relax the mind. "

Hmmm, I like that. Years ago, my very first (Rosicrucian) teacher would say to me when he saw me carrying a book. "Michael, someday you will have to be the book." Like all of us, I am working on it.