

ESSAYS ON REIKI - 1

Being a “Reiki Master” holds you back!!

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24th December 2010

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As a Jikiden Reiki teacher, I believe that not calling oneself a Master upon reaching the teacher level grades of Reiki enhances Reiki practice, and makes the path more fruitful. In Jikiden Reiki, which is a lineage of Usui Reiki with no Western influences, the title of Reiki Master is not used. This is quite a different point of view to the norm, reflected in the prevalence of people who adopt the title of Master all around the world. So of course, an explanation is in order....

Over the last four years, I have met and taught many Western Reiki Masters, many of them very skilled and experienced using Reiki. Yet there are more occasions when I have met Reiki Masters that are not confident in what they have learnt, confused by what they have learnt, or have not practiced much (if any) Reiki since their training, and it would not be unfair to call them 'inexperienced Masters'; but of course, Masters should be experienced. If I were to look for a Reiki Master and pay them for some Reiki sessions, I would expect to receive what it says on the tin, someone highly skilled and experienced. In fact, if someone says they are a Master, I am almost expecting them to be extraordinary. Perhaps it is the same reason why, when I am introduced as a Reiki Master, I can't help but cringe, and immediately explain that in my lineage of Reiki, there are no Masters.

A short tour of the internet would demonstrate that it is not unusual to see Master training on offer with little or no prior experience or preparation required. Reiki training is now available through mediums not employed previously such as online training and distance attunement too. Sometimes these are offered as Usui Reiki, even though in the Japanese tradition, teaching was always done by direct transmission, and there are very good reasons why, not to mention the strong cultural streak of respect that pervades Japan.

I have also received dozens of emails from Reiki Masters that want to learn more. During writing this essay, I received an email from a Reiki Grandmaster, wanting me to tell them more about Reiki symbols. It is an odd state of affairs, and it has interested me for some time, because use of the word appears to have become cultural, not relating to gaining a thorough understanding of all aspects of the art, but of a certain level of accreditation, attainable in a relatively short space of time.

In the Japanese Reiki tradition and other traditional healing and martial arts throughout Asia, only the head of the school would pass on the higher levels. In the Western lineage of Reiki that emerged through Hawayo Takata, the rules shortly changed after her death. From that moment forward, all Reiki Masters could make other Masters.

This greatly accelerated the metamorphosis of Western Reiki further away from its traditional roots in the years to come. The Japanese mind and culture, being important for understanding Reiki from the traditional perspective Usui's system, are largely missing from most systems available in the West today, even if the original techniques are available.

Some Reiki styles which claim Usui in their lineage have changed so much it is questionable if one can call some of them Usui Reiki. Again, a quick tour of the internet would show the majority of websites offering traditional Japanese Reiki in a way that a Japanese person

would not recognise as traditional. I can say this confidently, because my Japanese wife has on so many occasions pointed out examples of this. These typically range from small things that Westerners tend not think of as important, such as using modern Kanji (the Japanese alphabet of Chinese characters) instead of traditional Kanji, to talking about Reiki in a way that is interpreted and presented into a way that is completely different to how, in general, the Japanese would. It's easy to understand why the Japanese mind is so completely different to that of the average Westerner. What is more difficult to understand though, is the scale of the number of people, who have not yet picked up on this through recent Reiki publications, or do know about this, but have not altered their practices accordingly. Surely a large part of the people offering traditional Japanese Reiki, but in a Western context must know or suspect that the Japanese do it differently?

I decided to write this in the hope it will help others realise and share in the benefits of a more traditional and humble approach to Reiki practice that I have enjoyed. I would also like to encourage a return to traditional Reiki values in the West. To begin, here are all the reasons I could think of for the title of Reiki Master:

- 1) A reward for achieving the teacher level grades of any given Reiki system
- 2) It boosts status and reputation
- 3) It aids marketing and money making
- 4) It's a good feeling being a Master
- 5) The word Master commands respect
- 6) It sounds cool
- 7) It gives confidence to students and clients
- 8) There is no law or rule against it
- 9) It seems to be the norm
- 10) Not doing so will work against me

Now here are all the reasons that I can think of against being a Reiki Master:

- 1) It feeds the ego
- 2) It is not something that was done in traditional Japanese Reiki, so not to call oneself a Master shows respect to the founder of Usui Reiki Ryoho, Mikao Usui, who did not consider himself a Master. He had achieved enlightenment, unlike anybody in Reiki that I know of today.
- 3) There is always something to aspire to, which encourages continuous self-development. Having Masters in a lineage implies that there is an end to Reiki training, but as in martial arts, there is not.
- 4) In Japan, in Zen Buddhism, for example, it is considered rude to loudly pronounce the level one is at
- 5) There are no criteria for becoming a Master beyond completing a teacher course, so the title has no real value. Most courses available in the West allow fast track progression to Master level. Fast track could even include 2-3 years if you consider the meaning of the word. Personally, I would consider that if the level of Reiki Master existed in Japan, it would take at least 30 years of regular daily practice.

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- 6) It can give false impression of the skill and experience possessed by those giving Reiki, and is unfair on people that are prepared to pay for Reiki treatment or training.
- 7) The existence of fast-track Reiki Mastery can give the impression that some people are using the promise of Mastery as a way of selling to human nature to make lots of money, and leaving the core values of Reiki to one side.
- 8) The idea of Reiki Masters, in consideration of the above, is damaging Reiki in general.
- 9) In traditional Reiki, only the head of the lineage would pass on the higher levels. These days even Reiki Masters teaching Teachers lack the appropriate experience and training that one would expect from someone calling themselves a Master.

Comparing the two sides, the more respectable and spiritual path is clear. The benefits of not being a Reiki Master speak for themselves. So I am sure most people can agree that most of the reasons for being a Master seem shallow, meaningless or morally questionable by comparison, especially these days. In fact, I think that nowadays, being a Master works more against you because there are so many Masters that just cannot deliver. This means the seventh reason for being a Master (being one of the better ones) no longer applies.

I am only 6 years along my Reiki path, and I have achieved a lot without bearing the title of Master, which tells me that the tenth reason for being a Master does not apply either. I think anyone else can too.

If personal growth is something you want out of Reiki, I believe that dropping the title of Reiki Master would certainly help you on your way. Not being a Reiki Master also allows us to develop at our own pace, in a manner that would honour and please the founder of Reiki, his students, and their students.

I would like to see the Western Reiki community really get to grips with Japanese culture, language and thinking, and return to traditional Reiki values. I think this would be great for the Reiki community, and its customers, allowing everyone to benefit. After all, Sensei Usui was an enlightened man and I know of no others since him in Reiki that can make a legitimate claim to enlightenment, so I think that all changes to the traditional system and values are questionable. With perhaps over 200 different styles emanating from Hawayo Takata's original Western Reiki, Reiki has become overcomplicated, and watered down with other ideas and concepts that in truth are just an unnecessary distraction from the phenomenon that occurs when we practice. From the Japanese perspective, less is more, and simplicity is rewarding.

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