



I have this completely unscientific notion that each of us were surrounded by a song before we were born. Gradually, because of all the noise in our heads and in our surroundings, the song became harder and harder to hear and at last we more or less forgot it. But it will come drifting back in at the strangest times — moments of love, stabs of sorrow.

As we grow older we experience increasing times of involuntary stillness. The Shakers frequently referred to the willow tree. It simply stands still and the wind moves its branches. Different religious traditions use various words to describe this wind of the Spirit, but it is all the same message: “*Be still and know ...*” says the psalm. Buddhists speak of “*awareness.*” *The TAO* urges us to be still and let the muddy waters clear. That is hard. So much of modern life is designed to stir up the muddy waters. Twitter anyone?

Poets remind us of a homesickness that leads us back. T.S. Eliott writes in *Little Gidding*:

*... And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

In these early days of autumn it seems as if what surrounds us is changing all the time. A simple slow walk through the land on which we live, the farm, or a nearby park, can help us *know the place for the first time.*

There are many approaches to these walking contemplations. I find it helpful to have my breathing and my walking in sync with each other. Little steps and deep breaths. And, I just see things automatically: insects at my feet, leaves in the process of changing color, birds in the air. A happy feeling comes in as I realize and appreciate that this is my home. This is where I live!

As I walk and as I breathe, I can believe that the wind in the trees is creating that little song for which I have always longed. I don't hear it very clearly but it is in the air.

Those of you with disabilities, and I am one of you at the moment, have to be a bit creative. If you're in a park with paved paths just wheel yourself slowly. I don't have paths like that here on the farm so I'm still working on the problem. But when all else fails I can just stay in one place, look down at my feet for a long time and then gradually raise my eyes and my heart to encompass this place which is my home.

Shall we open the door and go out? No time like the present ...

***Brother Toby***

*You might enjoy A GUIDE TO WALKING MEDITATION BY Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen teacher and peace activist.*