

Presence is Life



Marina
Tsvetaeva

Photo:

<https://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/blog/2014/07/30/marina-tsvetaeva-i-know-the-truth-3/>

Like everyone else, I try to make meaning of the relatively small time I enjoy walking on top of this earth instead of being buried beneath it. The poet Maria Tsvetaeva speaks to this perfectly when she says in her poem, *I Know The Truth*:

I know the truth – give up all other truths!

No need for people anywhere on earth to struggle.

Look – it is evening, look, it is nearly night:

what do you speak of, poets, lovers, generals?

The wind is level now, the earth is wet with dew,
the storm of stars in the sky will turn to quiet.
And soon all of us will sleep under the earth, we
who never let each other sleep above it.



When I read the first line “I know the truth – give up all other truths!” my mind snaps to attention. What monumental truth has she discovered and needs to tell me? To me, she’s asking the human race to stop struggling and look at the beauty of the world, the night, and of course the oncoming dusk of our own lives. She says, take a look at the world around us and see how we are all part of the big picture.

Written in a time in Soviet history when poets were persecuted and killed, Maria Tsvetayeva makes a beautiful inclusion of the generals, the very people who sought to eliminate poets, “what do you speak of, poets, lovers, generals?” and by so doing, speaks to the bigger truth, even beyond the threat of her own death, that we are all people, subject to the same fate, “And soon all of us will sleep under the earth ”

By pointing to the fact that, “all of us will sleep under the earth, we/ who never let each other sleep above it”, she uses her poetic voice, that of an oracle, to illuminate the futility of struggling with each other when we will all eventually experience the same fate.



Her’s is not a message of doom and gloom. Rather, it’s a wake-up call to practice being in the here and now and to look

beyond dogma and idealism and search for the divine humanity everyone including “lovers, poets, generals.” I’m sure all of us fit into one if not all three of those categories. What does it mean to be human and how do we truly appreciate another day in the sun?



Like the enduring message in Marina Tsvetaeva’s poem, yoga helps us practice the full vicissitudes of being human. Most importantly, whether through poetry or poses, we practice paying attention before the sun has set and it is too late to truly live.

And by practicing, my hope is that we find something within us, something deep down that we can call real, something that we find to be fundamentally beautiful and good. Finding this within, even to a small degree, may we look around and find the same quality in everything else, particularly those people around us, family, loved ones, strangers.

May we, through practicing yoga and therefore better understanding ourselves, see the beauty, majesty and miracle of everything. Perhaps this is what it means to truly see.

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