

3 Inner peace

To become a bird of clear light and travel freely between worlds, Otus the little owl must first cultivate his inner peace. Will he manage it despite the dangers lurking around him?

A frightening encounter

In the depths of space, the creature stays motionless. Only its tentacles move, searching for food.

Otus drifts slowly toward this immense, dark, bloated being, with purplish glints.

The creature has sensed his presence and draws closer.

The little owl wants to leave, but cannot, hypnotized by the tentacle swaying ever closer, which finally grabs him.

The suffering is terrible, a colossal force presses on Otus's burning mind to drain him of his life energy and kill him.

Suddenly, a great light bursts into space. Its brightness instantly disperses the creature's dark clouds. Out of it emerges a small, distraught being, immediately taken in by spirits of light.

Otus then wakes up, trembling, but free!

He sees Bubo, a great owl, arriving.

— Otus, how are you?

— Ah Bubo, I thought I was going to die in my dream!

— Yes Otus, we sensed your distress and came at once.

— The great light? asks the little owl.

— Yes, replies Bubo. Can you tell me exactly what happened?

Otus tells him about his dream, his wish to find his deceased parents again in the spirit world, the encounter with that terrible creature.

— You travel easily between worlds, says Bubo, and that carries some risks.

— Thank you so much, replies Otus, for saving me from that creature!

— Ah Otus, one day, later on, perhaps it will be you watching over me!

— Yes Bubo! But how do I become stronger and help in turn? asks Otus.

— Such impatience, little owl! Bubo says, amused. Tycia will teach you how to become a bird of clear light. That way you'll be able to illuminate the darkened spirits chasing you and soothe them. And this works just as well for the spirits of living beings!

The inner peace exercises

The next day, Otus meets up with Tycia, already aware of his misadventure.

He spots Chévia, a young owl friend, with joy.

— Hello Otus, says the teacher. With Chévia, who is my new assistant, we're going to work first on the inner peace exercises. This is necessary to become a bird of clear light capable of traveling freely between worlds. Can you tell me, Otus, how you breathe, please?

— Uh... the little owl hesitates, not knowing what to answer for something so simple.

— Ha ha! Tycia continues, smiling. It's so automatic that you don't pay attention to it!

When your mind is calm or you're sleeping peacefully, your breathing becomes slower, deeper.

But when you're stressed, your breathing becomes faster, shorter. It's preparing you to fight or flee, to react quickly without thinking too much.

— Yes, Otus remembers, in the dark greenhouse, the birds were stressed and violent, I was very afraid and kept hiding, that saved me several times!

— But here, Tycia continues, in our community, we're protected from immediate dangers and want to live in lasting peace.

So every bird trains to master their violence, to stay calm through breath control.

— But Tycia, Otus breaks in, now that I'm calm, do I still need to do the exercise?

— Yes Otus, replies Tycia, amused. By practicing regularly, you'll control your breathing better, and your soothed mind will thank you greatly!

Following Tycia's instructions, Otus begins the exercise.

He breathes in with a smooth, slow, calm movement, without forcing. At the same time he imagines his lungs filling first at the bottom, toward the belly, then in the middle, and finally at the top, toward the collarbones.

On the exhale, he releases the breath slowly, gently.

He absorbs himself in the exercise, and takes pleasure in feeling his gradual calm.

— Well done Otus! says Tycia, you've understood how to do it. Practice regularly, because this is the breathing you'll use later on. Let's meet again in a week.

— Yes Tycia, thank you very much, replies Otus, happy with this fine discovery.

On the following nights, Otus practices with Chévia, even while flying high in the sky! His breathing lengthens and deepens little by little, naturally. His mind feels more serene, stronger, more joyful.

And he loves Chévia's company, that must count too!

One evening, while doing his share of the community work, he crosses paths with Kétou, another little owl.

— So Otus, the latter asks, you're working with Chévia?

— Yes Kétou, she's helping me a lot, replies Otus.

— Ah, I suspected as much! says Kétou. So I'm warning you, Chévia is my girlfriend, don't get near her again if you don't want trouble! he continues, threateningly.

— But I'm not looking for trouble, I assure you, Otus pleads.

— Sure, Kétou sneers, go back where you came from, we don't need you here, and watch your feathers if you go near her again!

Then Kétou shoves him, knocks him down, and leaves, casting him a dark look.

Otus goes home, sad and dejected. He burrows into his tree hole and doesn't want to come out. He no longer has the heart to work.

Later, he hears someone calling him insistently: Otus, Otus!

He struggles out of his hole and sees Bubo the great owl, with Chévia. An immense eagle is with them.

— Yes, he says in a small voice, frightened by the great bird.

— Ah, says Bubo, I'm glad to find you here!

— Me too, Chévia continues, Kétou ordered me not to see you anymore, and I went to find Bubo to report this unacceptable behavior.

— Can you tell me what happened with Kétou, asks Bubo?

Otus tells him about his misadventure in detail.

— Ah that's very regrettable, says Bubo. Kétou's spirit is darkening and his behavior is becoming violent. We must help him.

I'll leave you with Chévia and my friend Aquilus, so you can get to know each other.

And Bubo flies off quickly.

— Hello Otus, says Aquilus, don't worry about Kétou, the birds of the community will help him.

— Thank you, replies Otus. But how can Kétou change? He doesn't like me and doesn't want me to see Chévia!

— You know, Aquilus continues, I used to be a violent eagle-king. One day, Bubo and other birds illuminated my mind, and I changed a great deal. They know how to help Kétou.

— Um ... Otus continues, do you still eat birds?

— Rest assured, replies Aquilus, I'm a member of this community, like you, and I don't eat any bird here.

I live further off in the mountains and eat little, small weakened animals near the end of their life. And I avoid any unnecessary suffering.

— Otus, Chévia breaks in. I can see you're upset. I suggest we continue our exercises, it will help you regain confidence in yourself.

— I'll stay a while to help you too, adds Aquilus.

That same evening, Otus, comforted, joins Tycia. His friend Chévia and the great eagle Aquilus are already there.

— Otus, I'm glad to see you again, says Tycia.

— Hello Tycia, Otus sighs, I don't know if I'm still able to continue my training.

— I'm sure you are, replies Tycia. Aquilus and Chévia will help you during the lesson. Let's take up the deep breathing exercise again.

The birds train together. Otus feels the group's soothing influence on his mind. His breathing lengthens, slows, deepens. He finds again the pleasant sensations of the exercise and feels better.

— Very good, says Tycia. Now that the mind is calm, let's work on relaxing the body.

Picture yourself before the rising sun, and feel its beautiful, warm light.

With each inhale, absorb this light into the different parts of your body, one after another: the face, then the eyes, the brain, and the neck, and the wings, and the back, and the legs, the lungs, and the heart, the stomach, the intestine, and the liver, and the kidneys, and so on... and so on... and so on... As if you could see all this light entering your body, little by little!

You can also move or stretch the part in question, or touch it, to better direct your attention to it. On the exhale, imagine the body's tensions leaving with the breath in a feeling of well-being. If you smile, even slightly, it's a good sign, it means you're on the right track!

Continue for as long as it takes to completely relax your whole body.

Once fully relaxed, finally imagine on the inhale that you're absorbing the light of the rising sun into the entirety of your body. You might even feel it swelling all over, just like your lungs, but without letting it go to your head, eh! Tycia remarks, smiling.

On the exhale, imagine radiating around you a part of this absorbed light, like a clear, warm halo around your body. This is what we call the clear light of life. At first, it's very limited, but with practice, you'll be able to express this clear light more and more broadly.

Otus breathes several times, without producing any effect.

— I can't manage it! he says, discouraged!

— Don't worry, Aquilus breaks in. It took me time too! You can calm your mind and relax your body in different ways. Here, with Tycia's method, you have to try for yourself and pay close attention to what does or doesn't help you relax. It's through this personal work that you'll progress. And if you fall asleep during the exercise, that's fine too! he tells him with a wink.

They practice together, for a long while, in silence.

Otus searches and gradually finds how to combine his slow, deep breathing with the light of the rising sun and the relaxation of each part of his body.

He discovers and enjoys this feeling of inner peace, a calm mind and a fully relaxed body, and smiles.

— Well done Otus! Tycia encourages him. With regular practice, you'll relax and calm yourself easily and quickly!

— For my part, Aquilus breaks in, I get several other benefits from this exercise. It gives me energy when I'm tired, and helps me step back from past or upcoming situations to stay Tranquil and Balanced!

— Ah yes, TB! says Otus, his eyes shining. Tycia, he asks, can all beings create clear light?

— Yes, she answers him, all living beings generate it when they are calm and relaxed. That's why we feel so good in nature, with the plants, the trees and the beings living there in peace, because our mind then literally bathes in an ocean of clear light.

— But why do we have to work to produce it?

— Actually, Tycia adds, we too can produce it spontaneously when we live in peace. But when life in society becomes too stressful, too violent, we lose the light and at the same time we lose the meaning of our life.

— Is that what happened in the dark greenhouse where I was born? he asks.

— Probably, replies Tycia. But few birds can pull through on their own the way you did! When you live in the light, you feel all that suffering, and you want to rush to help all the beings living in darkness.

The meaning of life

At the end of the lesson, Otus asks Aquilus another question.

— What was it like, Aquilus, when you were king?

— Ah Otus, I note with pleasure that my great size no longer frightens you, a sign that we've worked well together, he replies with a wink! Then he adds:

Believing myself superior to others, I was a selfish and violent king.

Suspicious, I watched everyone, all the time.

Drunk on power, I did whatever I pleased, whenever I pleased.

Bubo and his friends illuminated my mind about the meaning of life. Now I'm happy to bring, in turn, help and light to beings who need it.

Grateful, Otus sincerely thanks Tycia, Chévia and Aquilus, and also Bubo in his thoughts.

He promises himself to practice these inner peace exercises his whole life.

He returns to his little tree that smells so good and falls asleep in peace, surrounded by clear light.