

Lost in Translation

By Graeme Docherty

In my Shiatsu I feel as if I have been bobbing about in a small boat for years trying to find words for the depth of the channel below



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Come and join us in Kiental to celebrate Shiatsu! graeme@docherty.dk

Have you ever watched a TV series? Season one fills us in on the main characters and the storyline but by season 4 a lot of the main characters are gone, and the plot has changed dramatically. This is what happened in my Zen Shiatsu practice. The meridians, the Hara diagnoses and theory were the central characters in the first many seasons but by the time I got to season six or seven, the meridians and my touch had changed. They had started to portray another story, through the eyes of the main character: the energy. In the Zen Shiatsu story, there is no sequel, there is only one Zen Shiatsu story. So, what happens to the therapist when the series ends?

Did the great creator not understand the need for a sequel? Just something to give us clues as to where we were going. If only he could have described the journey and what we would experience on the way. Now many of us have arrived in a place with no words to describe the energetic phenomena we are encountering. We have a profound sense of coming home but don't know the address.

The question which arises is should we start to try and define where we have ended up? Oftentimes people use new and descriptive terms such as 'the void', 'the ki field', 'deep space', 'the source', 'the core', 'the energetic field', 'alignment', 'the solid air', 'the mirror of being' and so on, all of which I feel are great descriptions. Alternatively, maybe we should start to borrow words from other related practices, like Acupuncture or Mindfulness to describe this central meeting place with no name? Only Masunaga could have completed his own work, but sadly he didn't manage to write the sequel. In a sense I think he knew where things were heading, hence the name Zen Shiatsu.

Zen Shiatsu has been my best buddy and travel companion for nearly 30 years. I found that its structure and scope of treatment have helped me develop as a practitioner and as a human being. Over time however, reliance on this same structure became a hindrance to my therapeutic development. Without realising it, my treatment strategy began to move on. I stopped treating with the system I had learned, and which I was still teaching. It took me a long while to truly realise and acknowledge this change.

One of my most feared questions as a Zen Shiatsu teacher is 'do you work on the Kyo or the Jitsu meridian first in a treatment?' Students seem obsessed with this question. Until recently I have always been 'politically correct' in my answer. Work on the Jitsu first and then the Kyo... or was it the other way around? I now find myself answering this question as honestly as possible, by giving the 'non-politically correct' answer: It doesn't make any difference. Or at least that isn't how I look at Shiatsu anymore. I often used to wonder if I was alone in this opinion.



It took me many years to build up the courage to really look beyond the meridian teachings when giving a Shiatsu. I think if I hadn't been teaching Shiatsu it would have been an easier transition. In the end it's not a matter of if you are on or off a meridian or whether you work on the Kyo or the Jitsu first; this is not where the dilemma lies. At first leaving protracted guide lines of Zen Shiatsu can feel like leaving the truth but through the eyes of the energy there is no right or wrong. The energy employs oneness, resonance and vibrational frequencies to communicate. We must keep in mind that it is a united energetic field we are working in; a field where everything is connected to everything else. This means when working with energy there is no form, strangely even when working with form such as the meridians.

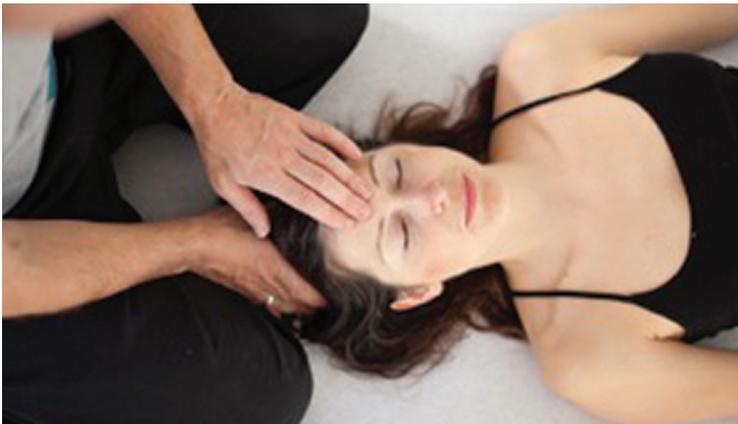
Many of us start learning Shiatsu justifiably looking for a system outside of ourselves to explain our problems and show us how to solve them. This echoes our Western societies and the rules we live under: everything must have a reason and explanation. In Shiatsu, every time we touch someone we are



another touch closer to entering a field of oneness. The deepening of our touch is a reflection of our core being.

As Zen Shiatsu therapists we follow the same structures and pathways in a session. This is our common ground. It is still difficult, however, to get a clear picture of how each therapist works. Our treatment tactics, touch and techniques become personalised over time. The energy, if open and if we permit it, will naturally lead us off to the higher ground of the energetic field during a session. This is where the meridians open out to the field if touched openly with oneness and where all the trouble begins. Welcome home to the house with no name.

It may sound as if I just wandered off, got fed up with all the Kyo and Jitsu jargon and decided to make my own system. It wasn't like that at all. It took a long, long time to let go of the Zen Shiatsu tradition. I didn't at any time feel I had let go of anything. Funnily enough, I still see myself as a Zen Shiatsu therapist, perhaps even more so than before things developed. The core of Zen Shiatsu two handed pressure is still at the heart of my treatments. I admit that nowadays I don't use any of the meridian extensions, I only use a few of the classic meridians and I don't use hara diagnoses. Oddly I don't feel as if I am missing anything when I give a Shiatsu though.



Everything must change and when it does we must get rid of whatever we don't use any more and move on. This is a central rule of energy. If we don't follow this central law in our Shiatsu, then we risk becoming stuck and our treatments will lack energy and scope. I know there are many different types of Shiatsu. Here I am writing about the challenges I have met along the way in the style I practise: Zen Shiatsu. I exchange treatments regularly with a Japanese state-

licensed Shiatsu therapist. Her style of Shiatsu is practically the opposite of mine in almost every way possible. She calls what I do a Western style Shiatsu. I take this as a compliment.

Following a form without form

From the start, my focus in treatment has always been based on following the oneness in my touch. I felt it was my job to be present and try to translate and react to the energetic phenomenon I was experiencing. Only now can I grasp why I changed my view on what was going on in a Shiatsu session. I stopped questioning what I was experiencing. I set the meridians free to lead me to the higher ground of the client's field. Here, I became the passenger rather than the driver. I understand now that in the end, all paths lead down to the field.

In a session, once the meridians open into the field I am looking to meet the part of the client that is part of me. I know from experience what is about to materialise. When I connect with my client in the natural space where we are equal, coming from the same, then we are both instantly connected with the multidimensional force of the universal field. This is a place beyond words, with no visible borders and only a feeling of expansion. The treatment has arrived in the house with no name and I am meeting the client in the communal inner patio. This is a natural space that resides in us all, in every living being. Funnily I feel when this occurs I have moved one step beyond the treatment room. I have entered an altered state, a double dimension that the energetic field contact with my client seems to have created.



The Deepening

Sadly, it's common that many Shiatsu students who have finished their education and have been practising for a few years become impatient and get frustrated with their treatments. They experience that the effect of their Shiatsu treatments varies and at certain times become less effective. What people don't often realise is that this frustration can and will occur from time to time as the oneness in our touch deepens. This often happens when practitioners have reached a comfort zone in their practice, where they have become competent and regularly see good results. The more we treat others, the deeper the

oneness becomes, giving space to our intuition to play a greater role. You see meridians are energy, and as a great man once said, 'everything is energy'. So as we perfect our touch it will widen the information we receive.

Unfortunately for some practitioners this can mean a loss of control over what happens in a session. At the start a loss of control usually means that their treatments will become less effective. A classic response to this for many practitioners is to start to cling to theory, desperately looking for answers. These Shiatsu therapists start to think that, all of a sudden, they are doing something wrong and they must find out what and





correct it. In actuality they have unknowingly started to venture into the multidimensional domain of the meridians. As their touch has improved and the oneness has deepened, the meridians have started to reflect this. In the multidimensional zone there is only transformation, and unfortunately in this zone right and wrong do not really exist. Many practitioners get confused at this point and become frightened. They might rashly decide to learn another treatment form to fix the problem. They usually choose Acupuncture or sometimes also Craniosacral therapy, therapies that they feel are related to Shiatsu and that will be easy to integrate into their treatments.

In the face of such uncertainty about their method, practitioners inadvertently begin to water down their Shiatsu practice with rules and techniques from other types of therapy rather than persisting and learning from the changes they face. Combo-treatments are a common alternative in order to make one's treatments effective again. A classic example is a 40 minute Shiatsu treatment followed by 20 minutes of needles, in an attempt to resolve anything, they may have missed.

What these Shiatsu therapists don't realise is that the transitional periods, when the oneness deepens, are in fact very important periods of growth for a practitioner, if they don't stay on the bus now the next one will be take them on a slightly different route. When the oneness deepens everything can become a little off centre and the techniques and strategies, that they previously relied upon, don't seem to work in the same way anymore. The problem is that what they are sensing through

their touch has expanded and changed slightly. At this point they have unknowingly become more sensitive and because of this their treatments are not as focused or controlled as they normally would be, hence why they are not having their usual powerful effect. They feel alienated from a familiar and reliable practice as their connection with the meridians has evolved.

In some ways we never really learn Shiatsu. Instead, the more we practise the better we become, meaning we are able to start each treatment at a heightened level of contact. The energy field of the client is open to whatever we, the practitioner, bring to the table and will be able to mirror and accommodate it at any depth of work given the right intention.

Giving Shiatsu can often feel like entering a new level of a computer game you have been playing for a while. So far you have developed specific skills to help you succeed, but as you enter a new level, these are tested in different ways. Certain skills you are accustomed to become irrelevant, while other new signals and sensations begin to resonate. There will be

new and intuitive information at hand and this can take time to get used to. While at the beginning this might be difficult to translate, trust me that soon your powerful Shiatsu will return, bigger and better.

Mirror of being

As a Shiatsu therapist I felt a few years back that I had gone full circle. Again, it wasn't anything I ever gave much notice to. Looking back through the years I can see now that at one point I pushed my understanding of energies into uncharted territory, in search of something bigger. At the start, like many who seek out Shiatsu, I was a searcher. I looked for an external force, some kind of universal cosmic power that I could channel to heal myself and my clients. After years of trial and error, magic and loss, I eventually realised that no matter where I looked I only ever found sides of myself. I concluded that there was nothing outside of me that wasn't in some way part of me. When I treated, I was the mirror and what I thought or experienced were reflections of myself. I felt that even my clients were in a way part of me. At the end of the day I was only treating myself.

