



INSTINCT FOR FREEDOM

Alan Clements is changing the world

He's been called one of the most important, compelling voices of our time. And after years spent as a Buddhist monk, human rights activist, freedom fighter, performer and author, Alan Clements has distilled his experiences into clear insights.

He combines the beauty and wisdom he learnt as a monk with the passion and activism of a westerner intent on solutions. He challenges you to do more, to become more, to change the world. Alan calls this vision World Dharma.

'It's a vision rooted in a recognition of our inherent interrelatedness. We need to be engaged with the world, not detached from it,' Alan says. 'It's not about being here now with myself alone, but being here, together, so we all grow.'

His inspiring book *Instinct for Freedom* is part true life adventure, part spiritual teachings, and aims to empower human liberation through the awakening of consciousness.

Alan learnt about himself in a Burmese monastery, the first American to be ordained a monk there. He shaved his head, gave up sex, possessions, friends and family, and meditated 20 hours a day for five years.

He found inner peace. But then he was thrown out of Burma in 1983 when the government refused to renew his visa, and had a hard time reconciling what he'd learnt there with the reality of a suffering world. Restless, he taught meditation, did yoga, travelled, searched.

When he read of the violent oppression by Burma's military dictatorship in 1990 he snuck back in and fought alongside monks to defend the people and ideals of the country he calls his spiritual home. The reality of the killings shocked him.

'No amount of meditation or spiritual training could have prepared me for what I witnessed. I walked into a full-scale ethnic cleansing. My views about life and dharma have never been the same.'

A few years later, in the killing fields of Croatia and Bosnia, his heart and ideals were further shattered. But from the pain of what he was a witness to came a burning desire to make a difference.

'What I learnt from being in war zones was the utter stupidity of it. War is ugly. War – the urge to kill "in the name of" – must be removed from our genetic coding and from the quantum-psychic-existential circuitry of the cosmos. That's my greatest wish in life for Life – the absolute end of violence,' he says.

He is inspired by friends such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's non-violent spiritual revolution, who he interviewed for the book *The Voice of Hope*.

She and her colleagues spent years imprisoned and tortured for their beliefs, and continually risk their lives for the right to freedom.

From them Alan learnt that no matter how dark it gets, there is always freedom if you choose it.

'Your experience of paradise is an inner one. I've met political prisoners who spoke

to me about the bliss they felt when they reflected on their dignity and higher purpose – freedom from fear and dictatorship. And I've had rich people who live in mansions weep in front of me from fear, regret, meaninglessness and loneliness. Paradise is a matter of the heart, not earth alone,' he says.

Alan has become a spiritual teacher, yet he rejects the label, seeking only to encourage others to find their own truth, their own path and their own way to make a difference to the world.

'There is no ultimate teaching to learn. Life experience is our greatest teacher and therefore our greatest source of spiritual awakening,' Alan says.

He believes in the power of meditation, but cautions against thinking it alone is the solution to world problems. It's what you do with your mind in meditation and within life that makes the difference.

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'Imagine sitting on your meditation cushion for eight hours a day, thinking: "May I be generous, may we all be less stingy." And seeing in your mind beggars with their hands out for food.

'But you become less stingy by getting up, going outside and giving something to a real beggar. Being generous in real life develops generosity, not fantasising about it. And in the same way love is an action. You've got to get up off your seat to express it, or else it's just fantasy.

'Meditation is like a simulator for an aeroplane. It helps you understand yourself so you can get out there and fly.'

Alan is in Australia until March 27, facilitating one-day courses, World Dharma forums and a week-long retreat. But in case all this sounds too serious, he is also performing his hilarious live show *Spiritually Incorrect*.

'People are fed up with their pet guru, their pet teachings, their designer spiritual lifestyles. Levity is what's often missing from spiritual seekers,' he grins.

What is the simplest thing we can all do to make the world a better place?

To develop the capacity to care about things larger than oneself. And this takes courage – the courage to challenge pride, fear and anger as well as to empower love, kindness and generosity.

What's your most important message?

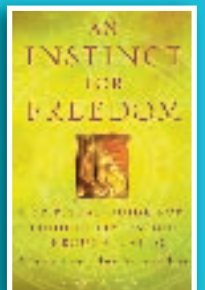
Dream! Dream your sexiest, most beautiful, most daring dream – and spend your days making it a reality.

Any advice for people who want to meditate?

Come to my retreat.

And those who don't?

Come to my retreat!



TO FIND OUT MORE

Contact Chris Hooper on 1800 007 092, e-mail chris@chrishooper.com.au or log on to Alan's website: www.WorldDharma.com.