

Wesak Full Moon, April 2024

“Open Eyed”

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Dear friends, welcome to this most special of full moon meditations at the time of Wesak. As I am sure we all know, this festival pre-eminently focusses on the life and work of Gautama the Buddha. To a devout Buddhist the event celebrates the birth, life, enlightenment and death of this extraordinary man. Today we recognise with gratitude the enormous impact that his teachings have made upon human unfoldment. Their relevance to modern humanity, in particular that material desire is the cause of all suffering, is indisputable. The actual time of the Full Moon is early tomorrow morning at 49 minutes past midnight BST. This means that this evening we are working together in the intensive lead up to the moment of greatest inflow of spiritual energy into the consciousness of humanity as a whole.

These monthly full moon festivals of the spirit are cycles of supreme effort as the world esoteric group, together with the new group of world servers and indeed all people of good will, seeks to offset the apparently growing presence of deliberate misunderstanding, of untruth, of fostered intolerances and even of the venomous hatreds which today are erupting into political, economic, cultural antagonisms and already into open warfare in several parts of the world. It is not rocket science to see that all these are currently jeopardising in a serious way the future of humanity and the planet.

Having said that, a very wise piece of advice and one which we should all take to heart is this: that we should diminish by a factor of ten all the bad that we know, and magnify by a factor of ten all the good we know; then we will gain a much more realistic picture of how things really are.

It is also wise to try and put things into a larger and more spiritual perspective. We know that there are moments in the life of every aspirant and disciple when they are touched by the soul. If this hadn't happened to each of us at some time, I doubt that we would be here this evening. These are moments or epiphanies which we never forget. Even if they happened to us years ago the memory is so strong that it's as though they only happened yesterday. The experience is so fresh and full of truth and its wonder never diminishes. In these moments we know beyond all doubt the beauty and strength of the Soul's loving and timeless presence. We know beyond all doubt that there is a purpose to life in the world – indeed in the universe as a whole however infinite its dimensions. We also and supremely know beyond any shadow of doubt that this purpose is the revelation of Love.

But then there will always and inevitably come times of great testing, when the vision appears to fade and when one seems bereft of spiritual succour. These really test our ability to keep on keeping on, to persist in our belief in human goodness, to know that behind all outer seeming the heart of love still beats and is summoning us to the supreme endeavour. Surely, when we look out at the world today, never have we seen a greater need for the re-infusion of human consciousness with light, love and the will-to-good of the soul than in our present time.

Humanity is now the world aspirant – maybe even the world disciple. And over a century ago humanity as a whole was touched by the soul on a planetary scale in a great spiritual awakening. Such luminaries as Helena Blavatsky and later Alice Bailey and Helena Roerich emerged and delivered their messages of unity and truth, of love and service which spanned a period of about 75 years. There were many others too, of course, for example in the fields of

science and psychology, who have touched humanity with eternal truths that have had such beneficent results. The combined outreach of these gifted and inspired servers of humanity conveyed inspiration from the Spiritual Hierarchy to a humanity thirsty for new truths. The lives and work of these great servers have had an enormous impact on human thinking and creativity and continues to do so today.

But it seems to me that since the latter part of the 20th century we have been spiritually left on our own, as it were, and humanity is currently going through that well known spiritual experience of the dark night of the soul. The certainty of human goodness is being questioned. The idea of human progress is being challenged. Truth is being assaulted on all sides, and with the feared misuse of artificial intelligence we often don't know who or what to believe any more. Incidentally, one of the real plusses of this situation is that it is forcing people to develop a sound sense of discrimination.

We are told – and it is obvious when we think about it and observe the unfolding events in the world – that one of humanity's great conditioning resonances is with the Fourth Ray of Harmony through Conflict. When we recognise that the Fourth Ray is one of energies that the astrological sign of Taurus transmits into our system then we can see that at this time we have an opportunity to examine and try and comprehend a bit more this transmitted energy.

In Volume 2 of *Esoteric Psychology* the Tibetan formulates a series of descriptions of the crises that are incidental to the integration of the personality with the Soul according to the different Ray energies. When we read and study these, it is amazing how apposite is the description of the Fourth Ray Crisis to our world situation today. Of course, this formula refers to the inner conflict between Soul and personality and recognised as such by the disciple. But it has obvious and great relevance to the outer world situation too. Here it is.

The disciple recognises the following truth: “ ‘Midway I stand between the forces which oppose each other. Longing am I for harmony and peace, and for the beauty which results from unity.

I see the two. I see naught else but forces ranged opposing, and I, the one, who stands within the circle at the centre. Peace I demand. My mind is bent upon it. Oneness with all I seek, yet form divides. War upon every side I find, and separation. Alone I stand and am. I know too much.’ ”

And here comes the advice: “ ‘The love of unity must dominate, and love of peace and harmony. Yet let it not be that love which is based on a longing for relief, for peace to self, for unity because it carries with it that which is pleasantness.

“The word goes forth from soul to form. ‘Both sides are one. There is no war, no difference and no isolation. The warring forces seem to war from the point at which you stand. Move on a pace. See truly with the opened eye of inner vision and you will find, not two but one; not war but peace; not isolation but a heart which rests upon the centre. Thus shall the beauty of the Lord shine forth. The hour is now.’ ”

“This fourth ray crisis, evoked by a right understanding and a right use of the fourth ray formula, produces the following sequential results:

1. A sense of isolation.... One is overwhelmed with a sense of a real clarity of vision in relation to the problem with which one is faced, of one's unique response to it, and also with a sense of aloneness which is devastating.
2. A sense of despairing futility. The forces arraigned against the disciple (humanity) seem so great and our equipment so inadequate and feeble!

3. A determination to stand in the midst and, if not victorious, at least to refuse to admit defeat, taking with determination the position which St. Paul expressed in the words: “Having done all, to stand.”

4. A sudden recognition of the Warrior within, Who is invisible and omnipotent but Who can only now begin His real work when the personality is aligned, the crisis recognised, and the will-to-victory is present. We would do well to ponder on this.”

So let us now take a few moments to do just this and ponder on these words of the Tibetan and see what insight and enlightenment we can get from them. Then we will say together the keynote for the disciple in Taurus which we will be using as the seed thought in our meditation later on, and which will come up on your screens now.

I see, and when the Eye is opened, all is light

Surely, these descriptions indicate the magnitude of the problems facing humanity today, but they also indicate the direction in which we can together find the solution, that a solution is indeed not only possible but in the long run inevitable. The first thing to note about this is that it is only when the disciple is at the extremity of the experience of a crisis that he finds himself forced to take the right course of action and evoke the inner warrior, the soul.

Prior to that he will take all sorts of byways and cul de sacs to find a solution that is acceptable to his personality desires and preferences but which in fact does not really amount to a spiritually correct profiting from the crisis. When these false courses of action are followed, there might be a temporary relief of the symptoms, but they will inevitably re-emerge – perhaps in a slightly different form – and they will confront him again and again and more and more insistently until he takes those steps which will be a correct spiritual response and which will result in a truly radical change. This will be a change in which the form obeys the lighted and loving impulses coming from the Soul.

So, the way people tend to react to a crisis to begin with is a tweaking of the ‘business as usual’ mode of operation. And humanity in the past decades has exhibited much of this type of response. The initiatives of the powerful elites have been focussed on preserving their status as individuals, political parties, governmental cabals and financial and industrial corporations. The result has been a widening gap between the governing and the governed, between the rich and the poor. There is a growing sense of separation, of societal dysfunction, of internal conflict on a national scale, and of course of international conflict.

So, in the midst of this sense of “despairing futility”, to use the Tibetan’s words, what is our best course of action? At this time of Wesak an obvious place to look for light and wisdom is in the teaching of the Buddha – specifically, I think, in his formulated way of spiritual ascent which he called the noble eightfold path. These have been variously translated, but I think the following will serve our purposes. These eight steps are: Right Values; Right Aspiration; Right Speech; Right Conduct; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; Right Rapture or Happiness.

We could spend a profitable time thinking about each one of these and their relevance now for each of us individually as well as for humanity as a whole. But for our purposes this evening, let us consider just two of them. Right values and Right Livelihood.

Right Values first; What are these? If you search through the internet you will find that there have been many and useful attempts at defining these. Perhaps we can say that the values of greatest importance to us now are the spiritual imperatives that lift us out of our self-centred pre-occupations into the light and love of the Soul. We come to recognise that self-interest benefits no one, including oneself.

In contrast, spiritual values relate to the enlightenment, the freedom and the creative growth of the whole human race of which we are all a significant and creative part. They promote the innate human tendency toward synthesis and wholeness. They expand rather than limit the horizons of human vision and capacity. They can be visualised as generating an upward spiral of infinite creative potential.

Such values could be formulated as a love of truth, a natural desire to co-operate, a drive to work for and ensure justice and equity for all, a sense of personal and group responsibility, a recognition of the duty of humanity towards nurturing and sustaining the integrity of the entire planetary biosphere, a firm belief in the intrinsic unity of humanity as the creative kingdom in nature whose dharma is to manifest the divine Plan on earth.

These are spiritual values. They can inspire the conscience and the cooperation of all of us. They can motivate everyone to want to help create a better way of life. No longer will it be the case that for some to win there must be others who have to lose, as it is at the moment. No, we are looking for win-win solutions to all the many problems of humanity for us all.

The underlying need behind all outer problems is the sacrifice of selfishness. This provides for the sharing and contribution of all parts of society to the growth and prosperity of the whole. It provides for responsibility, concern and commitment, for wholeness in attitudes and actions. It provides for a new perspective on life. In such a framework, we learn to develop a real sense of responsibility and, importantly, to act upon it. A sense of responsibility is ever the first sign that one has been truly touched by the soul. This will work out in the promotion and upholding of the rights and freedoms to which we are all entitled. But these rights and freedoms can be guaranteed only to the extent that we collectively apply them to everyone in the world.

Going down this path will help generate a focused, determined, educated and enlightened public opinion. And let us remember that an enlightened and powerful public opinion based on love and truth is the most potent force in the world. It is this that can produce the needed visionary leaders, selflessly serving the greater good. It will light the way into a better future for us all. Enlightened world public opinion has been called the world's next superpower.

When these spiritual values are held in the forefront of the minds and hearts of enough people, they will lead automatically to the desire to achieve the second of our steps on the eightfold path – Right Livelihood. This means that we conduct our lives in ways that are truly harmless and constructively life affirming. These are not so much concerned with the exchange of money, but an exchange of goodness.

I believe it was this that President Roosevelt was hinting at in his famous speech on the Four Freedoms, particularly in his “Third Freedom” – freedom from want.

He said, “Translated into world terms, this means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world.”

Roosevelt's espousal of the need to manifest “Freedom from Want” became married to the Buddha's idea of Right Livelihood in a wonderful 1980 initiative by Jakob von Uexkull, the Swedish philanthropist, activist and politician.

In 1979, he had suggested to the Nobel Foundation the idea of creating two new Nobel Prizes. One would be an environmental award and the other would be to promote the knowledge and perspectives of people from all over the world. He offered to donate about 1 million US Dollars to the Nobel Foundation to fund his proposal. For some reason the Nobel Committee rejected this idea, so von Uexkull decided to do something on his own and he founded the Right Livelihood Award.

The first Right Livelihood Award was presented in 1980 – one day before the Nobel Prize, with much attention from the media. These awards have been made annually since then. “Today”, as the Right Livelihood website says, “it is one of the most prestigious prizes in sustainability, social justice and peace.” Because of the story of how the Right Livelihood Award was founded, it is sometimes referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize.

The list of laureates is an impressive one. It includes Wangari Maathai the Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist who founded the Green Belt Movement that focused on the planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women’s rights. Incidentally, she will feature in a lovely “Forerunner” paper in our magazine, ‘the Beacon’, in the October edition later this year. The list also features the great Indian physicist and environmentalist Vandana Shiva, Daniel Elsberg, the American economist and activist “For putting peace and truth first, at considerable personal risk, and dedicating his life to inspiring others to follow his example.” David Suzuki “For his lifetime advocacy of the socially responsible use of science.” Nasrin Sotoudeh “For her fearless activism, at great personal risk, to promote political freedoms and human rights in Iran.” Bianca Jagger, “For her dedicated commitment and campaigning for human rights, social justice and environmental protection.”

So, if we get disheartened by the gloom inducing news, know that these examples of vision and dedication are but the tiny tip of the iceberg. They are witness to the fact that there are many millions of good people in the world who are leading sacrificial lives, who are fulfilling the spiritual urge to build right relationships, which is really what the Buddha’s noble eightfold path is all about.

They are motivated by spiritual values, dedicated to the truth, committed to right effort and right mindfulness. They realise that at the heart of every human being there is the soul waiting to be discovered in an infinite variety of epiphanies.

Can we not see that it is the apparent darkness of our time, a specific dark night of the soul, that must be used by us all to strive for a new vision of human goodness and possibility? We must surely work to open our eyes to the life of the Soul and the presence of the Will-to-good that is bubbling just beneath the surface. It is this that is driving all that is unacceptable into the light of day where we can deal with it properly. And then, our eyes will open and we will surely see that truly “all is light”.