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Reflections on Life

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9/11: A Year Later

Times of crisis and change create opportunities for reflection and reconsideration of everything we've held to be true. As the Chinese say Crisis is really Dangerous Opportunity. Crisis also awakens us. I'd like to share some of my reflections.

I'm aware of how much I appreciate Life...the miracle that life is, the mystery that Life is, and the mystery of what it is to live on the planet Earth, our beautiful little garden planet hanging in the vast universe of on-going creative activity. I wonder how we came to be here and how indeed we have Life. I am aware simultaneously of the fragility of Life and of the robustness of Life, for us individually and for the Earth, Gaia.

Being a student of yoga, I observe my breath, the inhaling and the exhaling, the in-breath and the letting-go-breath. Genesis, the book of belongings, says that God breathed into humankind the breath of Life and we became living souls. The breath comes into us at birth and it is mysteriously taken away for us at death. The breath breathes us automatically. We have life as long as we have breath.

We are all living souls, living (you might say) at the pleasure of the Bestower of that breath. And the great mystery is that we all live, not by our own efforts, but by some greater force that I am calling grace. Each human is graced with the breath of Life. All humans share this same breath.

This means so much to me that the diversity represented among human kind is not an accident. As a human we have many languages, life styles, skin-colors, names for the Creative Source of Life, religious/spiritual ideologies, ways of worshipping, philosophies, and everyday challenges. These diversities represent the multitude of aspects and manifestations of that One Creative Spirit who possesses many names. We all share the breath of Life that makes us living souls.

As high school student I remember the book *The Global Village*. I couldn't comprehend this idea because there were parts of the world only barely explored by Western man. And somehow, in a strange way, if we hadn't explored them, they didn't exist!

Fifty years later, this global village and our interconnections are a reality. The world lives in our living rooms and our kitchens. I associate with people who've immigrated from every continent on the Earth and personally know people from Iran, Jakarta, South America, Europe and Bali, Thailand, Viet Nam, Turkey, Tibet, China, Japan. I receive medical care from Chinese, Japanese and Indian doctors. I use household items and wear clothes from around the world. Technical support for my computer comes from India!

We peoples of the earth form an interrelated network of energy and associations creating in reality a global village. The smog we have helped create in Asian countries comes back around the globe to us! The destruction of the rain forests will effect us, in terms of ecological health of the planet and from the effects of the destruction of the largest

natural sources of medicine, as well as home for many species of animals. Globally, we are facing the immense challenge of providing clean water for everyone. If we are drawn into war, or pursue it, in the Middle East, it will affect us, and all our relations in the global village, as no other war has. The danger is that it will set brother against brother in deadly, destructive encounters.

We can no longer pretend we're separate from one another. Our neighbors are not only those who live next door to us, they're all the peoples of the Earth. Underneath our exterior differences, we're more alike than we are different. We seek love, family, safety, well-being, a way of life that suits, appreciation, a sense of control over our own lives, a familiar way to worship, and the opportunity to be *all* we can be.

Globally, we are in a time of great change. Some say this is the end of history, meaning that the way we used to live and experience life is radically changing and something dramatically new is coming in.

We've been in a period of industrial, scientific, technological, communications development for the last two thousand years or more. We've changed from wandering nomads in touch with the land, natural seasons and the process of the earth, worshipping the Great Mother to city dwellers developing the mind, distancing ourselves from the Earth, from our bodies, feelings, from relationship and communion with the natural processes, worshipping the Divine Father. We've developed the mind, the logical, rational qualities of thinking and problem solving, stretching our capabilities to incredible lengths: deciphering the genetic code, traveling in outer space, under the oceans, into the life forces of humankind itself. We have technological and communicational capabilities that formerly would have been thought to belong to the gods alone.

However, in developing the mind, we've ignored The body, Earth. We've forgotten that The Earth is our Mother, supports and nourishes us. We've raped the earth, plundered and wasted its resources. We've fought wars over the control of the land and its resources and to prove that 'our god' is 'the god'. We've ignored the personal, psychological, spiritual needs of the earth's people. We've forgotten that we are one people, all children of the Earth, and that our health and the health of the land and the rivers and the ocean and the skies are all interrelated. It is time to bring the mind and the body together, to unite our own inner masculine and feminine aspects, and to invite the marriage of the Divine Feminine and the Divine Masculine aspects of God into One Wholeness.

We're called to become citizens of the Earth, not just citizens of our own country or city. We must move outside our local boundaries. We must open to Life as it is revealed all around the World. We must open our minds, open our hearts, get bigger and bigger to encompass the whole Creation in ways we've never done before. This is a major task for the 21st Century. Our survival is at stake.

What can we, as members of this global village, do to be better citizens?

1. We must first remember that we are all brothers and sisters. The Earth is our Mother. We all originated from common ancestors. If one of us was created by God, then all of us were created by God. And, you might say that all living creatures are our cousins. If the planet is not safe for any one of us, it is not safe for any of us.
2. All religious systems teach us to "love one another". When we love one another, we will think of the Earth as our Mother and all people as members of our one

- village. As we accept the love from the Divine Creator to us and open our hearts to love in return, we live in the Love that is the source of all Love. Reverence for this Unconditional Love, which gives Life to the Planet, sources all other love. Out of this inner connection to the Unconditional Love, we're told to love our neighbors, as we love ourselves. Loving ourselves is pre-requisite to loving our neighbors. When we love ourselves and our neighbors as One and the Same, from the space of Universal Unconditional Love, then we live in the Love that is the source of all life.
3. Out of the sense of being one village or family, our concern will be for the health and well being of everyone, not just ourselves. We learn to communicate, appreciate our similarities and differences, and to support the diversities among us as we develop ways to share power and bring our unique contributions to the world, and create equal opportunities for everyone. Each nation and its peoples represent a certain uniqueness and bring certain developments to the village. We can learn from each other. There is an old saying "God is not finished with me yet..." "With us yet."
 4. I believe that the Divine energy of Life has revealed different aspects of itself to the different cultures of the World. It seems to me that if God is Infinite, then That Energy (which we call God) must contain IT All. It seems like it takes us a long time and a large, expansive psyche to encompass the whole of an Infinite Creative Energy, whether you call IT by the name God, Jehovah, Brahman, Allah, Buddha, Shiva, the absolute, the great goddess, Great Spirit. I'll never forget an experience I had climbing Mt. Sinai in 1988. As the camel plodded upward, I contemplated the Children of Israel there in the valley and what it must have been for Moses to climb the Mountain. All of sudden an Inner Voice interrupted my meditation saying: 'I The Lord God am One God, and I have many Names.' And I knew that even though the context was masculine, I knew that the one God contains both masculine and feminine energies. I knew that IT was ALL God.
 5. The Golden Rule of doing to other as we would have them do to us is Universal. Islam says "Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he love for himself." The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria says it this way: 'One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.' I always remember the power of a Bible verse from my childhood: 'Be ye kind.'

So what does this mean to you and your life?

What can you do to be a more conscious, loving member of our world village?

1. Be kind.
2. Find the place to let Loving-Kindness pour through you. Receive Loving Kindness when it is given to you.
3. Smile and speak kindly to whom ever you meet
4. Remember that everyone is carrying a big load in life today, just as you are.
5. Cut people some slack when your first reaction is anger or fear.

6. Be helpful. Don't take anyone's 'stuff' personal.
7. Learn about other people's spiritual philosophical, historical experiences and beliefs. Be open to receive and accept, not criticize and put down. Hold everything in its context. See the other points of view without defensive reactions. And see your defensive actions as an indicator of something you've disowned within yourself that your own deep self wants you to see about yourself.
8. Learn to deal with change. Seek and embrace change when it comes to you.
9. Love yourself. Love your family and friends. Listen to them. Hear and accept their feelings. Don't judge them. Accept your own feelings.
10. Do your best. Be gentle with yourself. Pick yourself up when you fall. Kiss your own wounds and the kiss someone else's. We all know that if someone kisses our wounds 'that will make it better.'

These are times of change.

Change can be an adventure if we are prepared for it, and know how to greet it and flow with it. This is a gift to yourself as you do deeper personal work. Many people look to us to hold a loving center place in these difficult times. Prepare yourself and do your share.

May you be happy
May everyone be happy

Namaste,
Judith