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THE DAY THE WORLD CHANGED

This is the most challenging newsletter article I've ever attempted to write. It's late September 11, 2001, and I am still reeling under the impact of today's startling events.

The article I'd previously written goes on the back burner. At the personal level the horror and devastation, the loss of life are almost more than one can feel. It's an overload of grief. And how can we comprehend how quickly the world has changed. This is not the world of yesterday. Feelings of vulnerability and fear and confusion, not to mention outrage and disbelief abound. How are we to cope with this and to understand it? First, we feel the feelings. Then we sort out the pieces and see how they all fit together.

There are several levels of response to this question that I would like to offer. Some of these responses are difficult, and take us deeper into the deep psyche, into depth psychological/spiritual points of view. I offer them that you might take them inside, ponder them, and see how they stimulate your own struggle to comprehend these events. We must expand our consciousness if we are to engage the transformational process required by these events and respond to change as it shows up.

First, we each must center ourselves, go inside, connect with the Higher Power, However we experience this Divine Force and by whatever name we address it, whether God, Goddess, Yahweh, Allah, The Mother, Shiva, Buddha or any other of the other names of God. Then we humble ourselves and pray. Pray that we can stay connected to this Source, the Source of Unconditional Love, Compassion, and Wisdom. Pray that we will not collapse into hatred And anger and react with violence because we feel angry, scared, and powerless. No, this would only add more violence into to the world. We must come to the inner place and pray the prayer that Christ taught us, 'Thy will not mine.' ' Thy will be done'. This is a prayer of surrender to the Greater process which is unfolding. Then, we pray that we be given the inner resources to meet the task.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones, for those who have perished, for those rescue workers, government officials around the world, for medical professionals who work to aid the wounded, for the wounded, for those who were traumatized. We pray for those who plan and carry out such actions. We pray that their plans might be thwarted and they stopped from such behaviors directed toward this global village in which we live. We pray that our hearts may be opened to love and compassion and that we each be directed to contribute and serve in the way that is ours to serve. Our personal work is to keep ourselves in tune with the Divine during this time. As our vessel is pure, we can assist others. Our presence of peace and connection to Spirit is essential.

The danger is that fear and hasty reactivity will grip us. We are being brought to a cooperative table with a religious group we do not understand. Many become fearful and tend to generalize to all Middle-Easterners, especially to all Muslims, that 'they' are the enemy...strictly because a small group of fundamentalist Muslims acted this way. Muslims are not the enemy, any more than all of the Japanese Americans detained during World War II were the enemy or any more than can call all Americans be grouped with the Ku Klux Klan. The real enemy is not the 'Them', but is hatred, intolerance, fanaticism, and

disrespectful treatment of others. It's been said that the absence of pity is the root of all evil.

When faced with such horrendous actions in the world, it's difficult to believe that any good could possibly come of this. When we explore these events from depth psychology, exploring the mythic and spiritual levels, we are confronted with perspectives to help us put the jigsaw puzzle together. The following thoughts, and they are only the first cut, are meant to offer perspectives to help us enlarge the container of our psyche and see world process, as well as our own developmental process, from an expanded point of view. A warning: some of these perspectives may jolt our carefully constructed belief systems and create confusion; however, if we preserve and do our own inner work, we'll create a more comprehensive perspective for exploring our psyche and the world.

We ask why would God allow this to happen? It is always difficult to understand why God would allow bad things to happen to good innocent people. We need to expand our view of God, take God out of the small box in which we've tried to contain God. This box is an assumption that life is to be easy and protected and without suffering and loss and pain. Life is far more complex than this box. Divine Powers cannot be contained in a box. They are too vast. Life, death, pain, suffering are a part of life and always have been. We might consider the possibility that there's a purpose in God's allowing Life/the World to unfold as it is, as well as a purpose to our experiencing loss and outrage and suffering. Our surface mind rebels at the thought that any good could come from death and suffering. However, when we can step back, shift our point of view to a depth perspective, we are confronted with the reality that through suffering and loss, we are brought to the experience of compassion and we are challenged to grow up. We also see that in the midst of these horrific events, we can find some kind of greater meaning and begin to get a sense of this process of change we're undergoing.

Struggle, suffering, loss, death, birth, love, growth, wonder, fear are all apart of the emotional responses that we have to life events, We learn, grow, mature, and increase our ability to handle Life as we meet these challenging events and our emotional responses to them. God uses all the events of life to bring us to consciousness, and in becoming conscious, we begin to find our own Divine Center and explore how the Divine is manifesting in us. The Mother who was connected to Sri Aurobindo said that 'The adverse forces are permitted to work in such a way as to hasten the wakening of consciousness through the sense of horror.' Events such as these can bring us to an experience of the Divine nature of God and ourselves, as well as bring about necessary changes in ourselves and in the world. This is our spiritual work.

God has not rejected us when these things happen. The Divine power is always present in Life. We remember from our spiritual teaching that 'God even knows when the sparrow falls.' Life is about life and death. There is something very profound about the mystery.

In this regard, I am reminded of the experience of Arjuna, the great general in the Bhagavad Gita, a powerful spiritual text from India. Arjuna is called to lead the great battle and has as his chariot driver the incarnation of the Divine in the form of Krishna. When Arjuna realizes what a blood bath this war is going to be, he begs Krishna not to force him to engage the battle. Part of Krishna's instruction to him is as follows. Krishna asks Arjuna whether any one will die that Krishna (as God) does not already know is going to die? And then he asks that haunting and powerful question: 'And do you think that you can kill the immortal soul?'

The soul on its unpredictable, deepening path takes us into areas that are a great battle fields where we stand to lose what we've known, what is comfortable and familiar. It makes us into uncharted territory, subjecting us to powerful initiations, challenging us to grow and expand, to transform out of the littleness of our lives. The soul often uses such calamities as this to get our attention and create new possibilities for us.

The truth is that we are living in times of great change. Times of great change bring unexpected challenges and collapse of old systems to make way for new systems. Everywhere Change is afoot and it takes directions that we prefer it didn't take. We all prefer peace, harmony and goodwill. However, it seems that when total system rejuvenation is afoot, we see the mechanisms of radical change: war, destruction, plagues and disease. The old, outmoded systems of domination, patriarchy, and 'my way is the only way' are collapsing, and these collapses are not easy. The controlling power never wants to share the power or make changes in the power structure. Therefore in order for change to occur, old systems/structures must collapse. And there will be pain and suffering in this process.

When difficult events occur in our lives, we're more likely to make radical changes, changes we needed to make, but just never got around to. These challenging events become wake-up calls. We can pay attention to wake-up calls on the early rings, or we can ignore them, and wait for the consequences of the wake-up calls to become more severe. Change requires these wake up calls, and the collapse of outmoded beliefs and organizing structures of our lives. Then in this new space, new awareness/new life can come in. This is our challenge now, to believe that something good can come from this, that it can have meaning and value, also, even though it may be years before we fully understand the effects of change on our lives and on the planet as a whole.

It occurs to me that while no one has liked terrorism, we have perhaps not taken certain action against it. We've ignored the terrorist activities in other countries. This horrible act may have the possibility of bringing a new kind of cooperation in the world. It may be indeed be that more than 6,000 people will end up being what might be called a collective sacrifice. A collective sacrifice in that their death may be the stimuli needed to create this joint action by the Global Village. It could be said that the Jews in the Holocaust were a collective sacrifice and that their sacrifice brought about awareness and horrors of genocide, among many changes. Nicole Simpson's death enhanced awareness of and resources for victims of domestic violence. In Magic Johnson's contracting AIDS, the public had a greater awareness of the necessity of dealing with AIDS differently. Certainly in the Christian tradition, Jesus was a collective sacrifice bringing in the experience of the love of God for its creation. Only as time passes will we see the full impact of these sacrifices.

And so, we ask ourselves what might be the end result of this collective sacrifice? What if Christian, Jews and Muslims could come together in a different kind or religious venue? I'm even envisioning a World Council of Religions to mediate between warring religious factions in a similar way the United Nations does in political and humanitarian efforts, and to create co-operative ventures as well as world wide religious freedom. A council that is an overarching and connecting force between all traditions. A council in which we, as a planet, can begin to accept that there is One Unifying Principle, One God, One Creative Spirit that in the Ground of All Being.

These next thoughts constitute a difficult piece of the puzzle. This has to do with the old saying 'what goes around, comes around', or 'you reap what you sow'. I believe that God not mankind, is the force responsible for when things come back around. We, the United States, must look at our own bloody hands: look at our role in supporting rather than questionable dictators, our abandonment of other friends, the loss of life and property of

others around the globe that we've been a part of, our cruel treatment of the Native Americans when we took their lives and their lands, our often ruthless military power, our lack of appreciation for people who are too different from us, our lack of compassion in general, and our apparent lack of real concern for the well-being of the planet.

We are not always the all good power we'd live to believe we are. The World Trade Center and the Pentagon are symbols of the materialism and military power that we need to examine. To be brutally honest, we have some soul searching to do. Not that any of these activities justifies the events of September 11. Nonetheless, we must also take a look at our own shadow material else we falsely believe that we are innocent and 'They' are the guilty ones. The danger is that we then would try to kill off the enemy out there and fail to see our own wrongdoing. Jesus warned us in the Sermon of the Mount to take the beam out of our own eyes before we point out the mote in our brother's eye. Our country is indeed a great country, and I am proud to be an American, and we must be aware of changes that might need to be made if we are to be a true great power in the world. This greatness must include aspects of a different order than military might and materialism.

Jean Houston quotes Christopher Fry "Thank God, our time is now, when wrong comes up to meet us everywhere, never to leave us till we take the longest stride of soul men ever took. It takes so many thousand years to wake, but will you wake for pity's sake?"

Will you wake for pity's sake? Yes, YOU, will YOU wake up and take the stride of soul that is placed in front of you? This is an inner journey that each must take.

What can you do to increase the possibility that good things will come out of these tragic events? To insure that these sacrifices would not be in vain?

You could pray that your heart be filled with compassion, strength, wisdom, and love.

-You could see opportunities to engage in random acts of kindness, especially toward people who have different skin, language, and religion from yours.

-You could go pray in a place of worship different from yours.

-You could let go of motives of hatred and revenge. Actions taken out of hatred and revenge will most certainly come back on you.

-You could see the world from a perspective other than your own and consider how others might perceive us, looking not only at our greatness, but also at our dark side.

-You could let go of your fear, and choose the path of love. We remember that true spiritual love, that unconditional divine love that we too can access in our hearts is the only antidote to fear. Fear is the killer. Love is letting go of fear.

-You could go out of your way to smile, to be friendly, helpful to everyone you meet, especially people of another skin color or religious background.

-You could treat everyone as a beloved brother or sister.

May you look inside with loving honesty, see what in yourself does not support our highest level of becoming and let it go, open to the experience of compassion and unconditional love within, and then take this state of consciousness into you life in the outer world.

May you be happy
May everyone be happy
Namaste
Judith