

# When There Is Nothing New - what else is there to do?

Australia, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020

A period of grief, apprehension and sadness are healthy emotions when a crisis strikes at the heart of our lives.

Beyond a certain time, though, these emotions become counter-productive and present a real danger to our wellbeing.

Crying, ranting, raving, feeling unworthy or put upon further disconnect our heart from our mind.

Reactive emotions lead us to discordant, incoherent actions and inaction alike.



Cicero, the Roman statesman, might have been the one who, sometime around 40 B.C., said, *'Dum anima est, spes est'*, meaning that while there was life, there was hope.

But, Cicero, himself, might have agreed that hope on its own is not a tactic. It's not a plan.

It's wishful thinking. Unless of course - and it's probably what Cicero meant - hope, when enlivened, pushes us to show up, ideally as the better version of ourselves.



So, when 'life' - preferably a thriving life - is the plan, what's to gain by going limp or brittle and 'wasting' whichever opportunities and silver linings may be embedded in the current pandemic or in any other crisis?

Be it of a personal, national or global nature, why not make this crisis, any crisis, the pivot for change that we are karmically intended to engineer, for our highest good?



Why not use this crisis, any crisis as the opportunity to revitalise ourselves through an improved heart/mind connection to our inner intelligence, the source of our inner guidance?

Remember, we are so much more than our physical body!



Here's a thought.

On the one hand, the ego-persona that bears our name is like a toddler who, left to her own devices, tends to make even the simplest tasks messier, more complicated than need be.

At times, the toddler's lack of awareness puts it at grave risk.

Sometimes, too, it's thought-less, imprudent actions endanger the lives of others.

But, as in the case of a toddler, there is nothing 'wrong' with her.

On the other, good 'parenting' skills dedicated to retraining our ego-persona by teaching it to slow down, to breathe consciously to give herself time to consider the bigger picture and to think before acting will work wonders for us.

Yes, our ego-persona is the tool by which we are intended to evolve into genuine coming of age.

That's regardless of what we're feeling or what's holding us back.



It's OK to sit in discomfort for a while, as we take stock of our life, of our personal M.O. and of the priorities, actions, reactions or inactions that have taken us up to where we now are, at this particular moment.

It's unlikely that introspection will completely fill us with joy, but we can comfort our ego-persona.

We can reassure her that she need not fret; that she will not be rejected; that she is not unloved – quite the contrary.

In fact, it is accurate to believe that our ego-persona is not alone having to fend for herself by herself in this really unprecedented, at times terrifying, at times inspiring creative situation we are in, now, or at the time of any crisis.



Our true self is not our 3-D physical self but, now as always, if we peer through the fog of our inner turmoil, we will, in the fullness of time, 'feel' the connection to our true self.

We, in our physical body, acting as our ego-persona, will sense our soul's guidance.

We will learn to recognise and trust her whispers, and we'll say we're following our 'gut instinct' or intuition.

We will develop the heart/mind/body coherence that is the essential benchmark to meet for a true 'coming of age' as a mature adult.



Circa 1599, in his play, Hamlet, Shakespeare wrote, "To thine own self be true."  
Today, here and now, to ensure we're doing just that, we need to insert the word 'inner' in that call for action ... and dig deep.

To thine own [inner] self be true – this advice has never been relevant than it is today in 2020.



And so, a very accessible starting point for an emotional reset can begin with a secular appreciation of the values enshrined in the Buddhist Eightfold Path. They ask that, throughout our days, day after day, moment by moment, we make it our responsibility to choose the right thoughts, the right words and the right actions.



Equally, some of the, perhaps, more familiar ten commandments originating from the Jewish Torah [completed in its current state circa 400BC and retained as the Old Testament by the Jewish Christians of the 1st century A.D. and by Christianity thereafter] serve as luminescent flagpoles that are too often bypassed even by fervent followers of these religions.



Why do we find it so difficult at times to honour our father and our mother? To not kill, i.e. anyone.

To not commit adultery or steal?

To not lie and to not bear false witness against our neighbour, i.e. against anyone and to not covet anything that belongs to another?

Where, in sacred texts, does it suggest we should rail against God when tragedy strikes?



**Reality check:** karmically speaking, what we sow wilfully or thoughtlessly, in the fulness of time, we reap. That's even though we might have [conveniently] forgotten what we sowed ... where and when.

Limiting as it is, it is nonetheless the basic premise of the game we might call Human Existence On Planet Earth.



**Serious question:** In all his unquestionable wisdom, in 1943, Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist philosopher, another luminary from another time, wrote that there was no need for fire and brimstones to keep us in check because '*L' enfer, c'est les autres*' – If, indeed, hell is other people then, perhaps, it is because we judge ourselves by what we have internalised.

Our interpretation of the subjective judgement of ourselves made by others is hell.



How we treat others is how we surreptitiously treat ourselves.

It is how one or more persons have treated us in the past.

It is how others will one day treat us.

And that's partly because, as long as we are wading in the energy of our past, not much can shift in the string of moments underfoot such as we have co-created them with the universe.



How we forgive others is how one day, one or more persons will forgive us in our lifetime.

The standards we apply to pronounce on anyone's personal value is how one or more persons will pronounce on our personal worth through the impeccable karmic choreography that starts playing, unpredictably, in some of our moments underfoot.



Cause and effect amount to an unerring, custom-made karmic dance.

It is always at play in our lives even if, due to chronic 'absent mind-edness', we are quick to forget the 'causes' we set in motion perhaps years ago, perhaps only yesterday.

Which is why we usually feel 'inconveniently' unprepared for the implications and consequences that, sooner or later, ripple over to us like wavelets - or strong waves – come high tide ... in the moment underfoot.

The moment we change our beliefs about ourselves and others near and far, our perception of what-is is automatically updated.



Every religion had its beginning as a spiritual practice.

Together and separately, though they do it in their own way and style, the five major world religions overlap in the promotion of a sense of community that can only be fostered by applied compassion, forgiveness, patience and tolerance.

Hinduism, for example, has its own set of commandments.

Satya is about remaining truthful.

Ahimsa is about non-violence.

Brahmacharya is about celibacy or non-adultery.

Asteya is about the lack of desire to possess what we don't have or steal what is not ours.



The last two commandments, Aparighara and Shaucha insist on the freedom from corruption in all its forms and a healthy body and mind.

As an aside, Hinduism at its purest recognised the validity of all other faiths.

It accepts that a healthy belief relies on a transparent attitude.

Not on rituals.

Not on posturing in a bid for power in the physical world.

Not on words blasted through a microphone.

Islam, too, in its pure form attaches great importance to values such as mercy and compassion.

It urges its followers to avert any conflict, be it personal or national in favour of a peaceful settlement.

Though it focusses on its Five Pillars, the substance of the biblical commandments appears in various places in the Koran.

Of course, they do.

And they do, too, in all ancient spiritual traditions.



When it comes to ancient spiritual traditions, a few of the indigenous- American commandments, for example, also urge to show great respect for fellow beings and for the self.

Working together for the benefit of all Mankind, giving assistance and kindness wherever needed and doing what is known to be right without falling into the trap of self-righteousness makes good heart sense, across the spectrum.

For Australian Aboriginal children, the relationships they are taught to develop are not only with people but also the animals, their land and its plants, Earth and her skies, her waters, and her spirits.



Generally speaking, the primary thrust of any religious/spiritual commandments is about moving forward towards one's highest good with clarity and courage.

It's also about dedicating a share of our efforts to the greater good. It's about refraining from lies, self-delusion and deceit.

It's about tuning it to our higher self for our highest good.

Finally, but equally relevant, here and now, for every one of us, 7+ billion humans, one common understanding among the many belief systems is that one must take full responsibility for one's actions.



Of course! Kindness, empathy, compassion and honesty are as essential to life on our planet as clean air, sunshine, sustaining rains and ... thriving bees.

But here's the thing: when kindness, compassion, empathy or other positive values are our second nature, when they are quick to infuse our thoughts and actions, they are not heroic acts.

When that's the case, our challenges lie elsewhere.

The reward here and now for being inherently good is that we spare ourselves many unnecessary complications, which enables us to sleep the sleep of the Deserving.



However, for those of us who struggle daily with resentment, anger, envy and insecurity, doing our best to activate and sustain a peaceful acceptance of What-Is through thoughts and actions, that's the stuff of unsung heroes.

That's because doing so is often painful. It requires courage and unwavering determination, but neither will manifest overnight.

Not even if we wish upon a star.

That said, any small step undertaken in the moment underfoot in the right direction is the best step taken all day.

Of that step, we should be proud.

At the next opportunity, we will step up, possibly stumble but pick ourselves up again. And again. For some time.



June 3rd, 2020 brought to the world's attention a raw, adrenaline-charged graphic illustration of a spontaneous, selfless, peaceful intervention.

It took place in the streets of Louisville, Kentucky.

In the midst of a downtown protest and riot about the now widely known murder of Black American George Floyd and systemic police brutality that led to it, Lee, a black man noticed a burly, white Police officer, solid and steadfast in his full riot gear, baton firmly gripped. He was standing on his own, back to a wall on a sidewalk, looking nervous.

Lee guessed the officer had become separated from his team. He saw that many in the crowd of rioters had also noticed the lone man and were beginning to close in on him.



Some were yelling profanities.

Others, ready for an altercation, had already clenched their fists.

It would have been obvious to Lee that, if the protesters decided to attack the white officer, despite his helmet and body armour, his life would be endangered.

There were too many of them moving as one.

It is then that Lee registered that another black man had already positioned himself in front of the officer in a bid to shield him from the mob.



And, so, Lee, too, jumped up there.

The two black men linked arms and, in the blink of an eye, more black men joined them. Together, as a moving barricade, they ushered the officer to safety.

Now ...if that isn't the stuff good goose bumps are made of, what is?



Modern psychology explains that reflexive, spontaneous biases influence our perceptions of others which in turns explains the persistence of various forms of prejudice.

But, be that as it may, Mitzvah/Commandment 243/613 in the Jewish Torah rightly warns: "What is hateful to you do not do to your fellow".

Really, what's easier to comprehend and accept than that?

Once we choose to internalise the value of this tenet, our mind cannot lose out anymore, not even to implicit biases.



**Reality check:** Whatever the mind has learnt can always be unlearnt.



In truth, a commitment to high moral values develops a degree of coherence, resilience and courage that, in time, aligns our heartfelt intentions with our actions. And, when appropriate, with our choice of purposeful inaction.

It's what sets in place the mental state that helps us rethink the way we think and feel about ourselves, about others, about life and the world in general.



As Maya Angelou once said, "Do the best that you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

Seriously, when we consider all the crises, real or imagined, our 'baby steps' have already taken us through kicking and screaming, it's easy to imagine that a mind reset - now - would only make things simpler and holistically healthier for ourselves. And by proxy for those nearest and furthest from us.



**Bottom line:** all that was relevant to [spiritual] wellness before 2020 will remain equally relevant decades after.



Relevant, it will remain throughout the cycle of several generations to come because, though the stock market may crash overnight but bounce back a day later, we cannot.

Humanity cannot.

It will always be a long and difficult, at times painful haul 'by the bootstraps' for each one of us to scramble out of our personal Ground Zero, such as it might be.

But, emerge, we can.

Millions of us have.

Millions more will.



Yes, dear Warrior for the greater good, our ego-persona is not our enemy.

Quite the contrary, it is the tool, the only tool, by which we are intended to evolve into radical maturity.

That's regardless of what we're feeling or what's holding us back.

Interestingly, though the clock is definitely ticking, separately and together, we have as much time as we need, as much as we have opportunities to unleash our inner warrior – here, now and forever.



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