

Alone With Them and With Ourselves

Australia, June 2020

From the Alagaddupama Sutta comes yet another of Buddha's most-shared parables, Arittha's Wrong View:

"Sense desires, so have I said," said the Blessed One, "bring little enjoyment, and much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater.

Sense desires are like bare bones, have I said; they are like a lump of flesh, like a torch of straw, like a pit of burning coals, like a dream, like borrowed goods, like a fruit-bearing tree, like a slaughter-house, like a stake of swords; like a snake's head are sense desires, have I said.

They bring much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater."



Social media, talk show hosts and celebrities near and far are still chatting about inclusivity, oneness and interconnectedness.

'Let's look after each other,' they urge.

'Let's keep each other safe. Take it easy yourself. Everyone matters. Reach out to your loved ones.

Let's be there for our neighbours and those who need support.'

And finally, 'We're in it together!' and 'Together we can change the world!'

Much easier to shout such rallying cries through megaphones than actualising them face-to-face.



The first step to creating a better culture is not to rant and rave and point the finger at politicians and others.

It begins with an examination of our own day-to-day behaviour and the intentions behind the behaviour that might be so normalised we don't even think twice about them.



At a time when so many millions of people are struggling with health issues, financial upheaval, loneliness, and tragic circumstances beyond their control, it seems naïve to even attempt any reference to positivism, yet healthily positive we must become. Healthily positive we must remain because positive emotions bring on calm and

coherence to our nervous system.

Positive emotions empower us.

In time, they define us. Just as anger, judgement and resentment can define us.



Reality check: Our neural network is such that it will always trigger emotions.

Up to each one of us to decide which emotions serve us best.



We are all faced with the prospect of months-long, perhaps even of year-long, voluntary, conscious and consistent social distancing.

We all have to accept the numerous applications of Covid-prevention conditions that have changed the way we socialise in cafés, bars and restaurants.

The hospitality/entertainment industries are only permitted to operate at reduced capacity.

The time we are allowed to spend in situ is limited.

The buzz factor of full venues and the sense of being a part of a great herd are proportionally reduced, as well.

Attending half-filled concert halls and stadiums in a way feels like trying to enjoy bowls of popcorn without either butter or salt.



Reality check #1: unsure whether our ancestors ever had a sound connection to themselves, but all the noise about being 'isolated' in our homes for one reason or another would suggest we've lost that connection quite some time ago.



Reality check #2: We don't like our own company. So, we crave the distraction offered by others and by action outside of the home.

When we are disconnected from our inner selves, we fritter time away and, of course, our ego-persona is bored.

It wants an escape route.



Solitude and loneliness stand at opposites.

Solitude shows up as a strength of character.

We enjoy our own company.

We are secure in ourselves.

We are grounded and resilient.

Loneliness is a fear-driven emotion.

We internalise it as a being unworthy of friendship and purposeful connections.



So, we adapt. Our impetus can now be to bond better with our loved ones.

It's time to reconnect with the best clan-like behaviour of ancient times which, free of tribalism, is foremost about watching each other's back for the greater good of the collective - from a genuine heart space.



In some instances, it would imply that we have become each other's support.

In others, it would imply that we have become each other's 'go-to' loved ones.

The social restrictions give us the opportunity to realise just how pivotal our home and our immediate family is.

Or should be.



Because of the ethical adherence to physical distancing and limiting contacts to known ones who, ideally, are as committed to keeping others as safe as we are, these unusually challenging times are the call to overcome family fragmentations and to heal old hurts.



It's a timely call as many families near and far have never been so close to falling apart. It's a pivotal moment that, whether we seize it or not, will have ongoing consequences for ourselves, for others and for an individualistic culture that has compromised its original merits.



Here's the sting: before wholesome intentions of reunification can take root, we need to make time to actually 'know' those estranged or distant 'loved ones' better, much better.

Emotionally separate, they might be, even we 'touch base' by phone regularly.

Even if physically, we see them every day.

Even if we share a kitchen and a living room.

Even if we share a bed.



Whether face to face communication or whether via an app or an email, now is our karmically engineered opportunity to refresh our heart/mind connection with those who, decades ago, were designated as 'our loved ones'.

With them, we were intended to hook pinkies through thick and thin - for fun and solace.

We were to cry and worry with them and for them.

We were to celebrate life and each other from the heart.



From this angle, the pandemic presents us with yet another defining moment, but no different from any other critical moment past, present or future.

Every moment is an opportune moment to fix what needs fixing, to heal what needs healing.



What might be the karmic reason for suddenly being forced to stay at home, day upon day with our children, our dependants and that other person we have chosen to love 'till death do us part' or its tacit equivalent?

Is it to stagnate?

Is it to double up on our screen time and toxic 'comfort' food?

Is it to have cracks widen up so we can fall through them faster than otherwise?

There is a reason: it is an opportunity for personal growth.



Sure! Being encouraged to spend less time out and about doing our own thing may feel weird. Spending more time at home with our partner, our children or on our own may feel weird.

Having to return to our parents' home from lack of income perhaps feels as weird to them as it does to us.



Doing things, mostly with family, brings us back to a childhood many of us wanted to escape. It brings us back to a time when we might have felt invisible.

Possibly friendless.

Maybe already we felt separate from our family.

Perhaps already bored with life.

Already lonely in a busy household.



When we were children, there were times when we weren't allowed to go out.

Perhaps we were grounded for behaviour deemed inappropriate.

Perhaps our parents had reasons to limit the time we could spend with friends, the choice of venues we could go to and the activities in which we could participate.

Perhaps, already then, we had karmic 'home-work' to do for and with each other but weren't able to manage it.



We, of all ages, often work against our own well-being.

It became a cultural habit, aeons ago.

A much more radical mindset is one where, visibly and invisibly, we exert control over the ego-persona that answers to our name.

So, at the moment, millions of us are regressing to moments of childlike tantrums.



No wonder social distancing rules make us jittery, anxious even.

It stirs the memories. It awakens the little one we once were.

The one who had to obey and follow rules, even those that didn't seem relevant or made sense.

The one who yearned to be seen, heard and appreciated to get a sense of self ... even if only in a superficial way.



Serious question: what's changed?

Hopefully, our awareness has changed; we realise that it's time to step up, time to be warriors.



As energy beings that are nature, not separate from it, doing life confined within a physical body moved by the low end of its unconscious ego-persona, at times, it feels impossible to remain light, bright and buoyant when flooded by toxic emotions.

It is often impossible to tap into our personal power and lift ourselves up to the high end of our ego-persona, let alone lift up those around us who probably need it as much as we do.

Which is why alcohol is ubiquitous in many a social gathering, including those that are slated as 'heart-warming', family gatherings – and in billions of homes come sundown.



Reality check #1: regardless of our age and status, many present-day friendships involve little more than chatting in an often-judgemental way, 'sharing' and having fun – usually flanked by rounds of lattes, alcoholic beverages and deafening music.

The practice of drinking more to get maximum fun out of a gathering or a night out speaks for itself.

The failed great escape, on a repeat loop.



Serious question: more often than not, because of the transient nature of many friendships, there are unspoken rules we need to obey and thresholds not to cross or we risk having our pass revoked and our presence dismissed.

Every day that we fall back into rumination and old habits, the possibility of making a real change becomes more and more remote.

So, when do we ever 'come of age'?

When do we ever find, not just our voice but our inner voice, as well – our moral compass?



The anti-Covid restrictions are not unlike those that 'good parenting' imposes on children, even teenagers.

Children get grounded. They lose privileges. They are told to not hang out with certain people or in certain places.

They resent every moment of this discipline done, presumably, for all the right reasons. They sulk or shout.

They push back. They test the boundaries. They only think of their own needs and cravings.

They are not visibly concerned by the concerns of others.



Be that as it may, the time is ripe to reach across the aisle, as the expression goes.

Or across the Great Divide, if a chasm has been allowed to deepen.

Or simply across the sofa – or our bed.



Bottom line: the time is ripe to initiate necessary conversations with our circle of loved ones, even if they may be unpopular.

The time is ripe to perform the actions we may have been delaying.

The time is ripe to re-examine what we think is true about ourselves and dig deep to rethink the relevance of these thoughts to our day-to-day.

It's time to see ourselves as we are.

It's time to see our loved ones or those who should be our loved ones as they are – doing their best to deflect, compensate or over-compensate from beneath the protective layers of ego-personas.

It's time for us to reach for the courage it takes to do that.



For that dream to, one day, become a sustainable reality, even simply one of genuine family-togetherness, it needs to first be given heartfelt energy. When we unclog that energy, we feel it.



Whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius and power and magic in it - Goethe



So, first, we dream.

Next, we plan.

Then, begins the heart-in-mouth control of self, the hard work.

That could be the letter we should have written long ago, but haven't; the phone call we have been wanting to make but haven't; the invitation to meet-up we been meaning to send for a long time, but haven't.

And then, comes the time to say sorry.



It is not our business to anticipate how our heartfelt attempt at reconnecting might be received.

No one can predict accurately what 'the other' might say, think or do, at any meaningful moment. Let alone what they will genuinely 'feel' in their own heart – but choose not to express for reasons of their own ego-persona's needs.



As at the time of any other personal crisis intended to jolt us out of our groove, our business now is to be brave and show up, as we have planned to do.

To be honest and caring with emotions, intentions and delivery in alignment with our purpose to reconnect in peace and to keep the channel open.

Pausing even briefly to consider a 'What-If' scenario is enough to allow our skittish ego-persona to shy, rear and bolt like a spooked horse.



So, just as if our internet connection had become sluggish, any seed of repair, any seed of wisdom, any seed of connectivity, any seed of hope that come our way, we grab them, one at a time.

We try them out.

We find ways to make them work.

We tap into our resourcefulness.

We tap into our creativity.

We tap into our resilience to make a coherent difference to our 'What-Is'.



Once we feel the dream, we refine it. We add the little touches, here and there.

When we see its details, we see ourselves beaming.

We hear ourselves say, 'I'm sorry for the way this complication has evolved. I'm sorry it happened, and I miss you. I miss what we used to have.'

We hear that other thanking us for having reached out and, yes, they, too are sorry and they, too, would love an opportunity to reconnect.

We are there. Behind our closed eyes, it is real.



On our vision board, on our canvas, in our collage, in our mind, it's all real.

We energise the reality we desire through a daily meditation practice.

We see it thrive as we fall asleep.

It is still there first thing in the morning as we energise our appreciation for all that is ours to enjoy.

We feel gratitude.

We relax.

We smile.

We begin to feel in charge of ourselves, heart-strong and empowered.

We're good to go! 😊



Copyright © 2020 CaroleClaude T. All rights reserved.