

***Come out of the circle of time into the circle of love.***

(Rumi)

My goodness, time certainly seems to speed up exponentially as we age doesn't it? One minute, I was thinking that January 2023 was going quite slowly and a few minutes later, here I am writing a New Year message for January 2024!

So this New Year, I am going to follow Rumi's enlightened advice and do my very best to move out of the circle of time into the circle of love. Maybe you would like to join me? But first, I will try to explain what I think Rumi means by this amazing suggestion.

When we incarnate into a physical body dwelling on Planet Earth, we inevitably see ourselves as fragile, limited and threatened by a billion and one external threats. We also feel as though we never have enough in a world of scarce resources. So deep down, we never feel fully secure or satisfied.

We lack all the time in the world to do everything on our lengthy bucket list. We lack all the resources that we believe we would need in order to live our dream life. Above all, we believe that we are lacking in love. This is why most of us desperately keep searching for love from other human beings, or possibly pets, because we just sense that something really important is lacking in our lives.

However, all the great spiritual sages throughout human history have tried to tell us that there is an infinite well of love at the core of our being and that once we learn how to connect to this amazing love energy, we will no longer need to keep seeking – and not finding – lasting love or approval from other temperamentally unstable human beings.

So the key question for 2024 becomes: 'How can we spend more time dwelling in love energy and less time being besieged by feelings of anxiety, irritation, grief, shame, loneliness or lack?

Well first and foremost, we need to find just a few minutes every day to simply sit, breathe and support ourselves unconditionally with pure loving, awareness whatever the year ahead may throw at us.

I suspect that a lot of people are really put off meditating regularly by the wrong idea that in order to be a good meditator, someone has to learn not to think so that they can sit completely still for a while with a totally silent or empty mind. This is simply not true. Even long-term, skilled meditators usually notice uninvited thoughts appearing in their mind as they meditate. This really is not a problem. As William Bloom brilliantly pointed out in his December 2023 message:

*Mind chatter when you meditate is not a problem as long as you are able to observe your mind-chatter with friendly kindness or **compassionate equanimity**. If you can step back and witness your chatter, then your consciousness has expanded and expansion of consciousness is one of the wonderful outcomes of meditation.*

Now compassion is just one strand of love energy and for me cultivating love energy is the key to everything. For example, I believe that the key purpose of meditation is to gently but steadily return home to infinite love or wholeness after a long, long journey spent in the wilderness of separation, fear and darkness.

After having meditated pretty regularly for over 30 years, can I now dwell in love energy all of the time? No!! But that is my long, long term goal, not because I want to be a 'good' person, but because I want to be a happy person, and I know that when we are 'in love' we always feel blissfully happy for a while.

Most people probably think that we can only be 'in love' when we first meet that special someone whom we might call our soulmate. However, in my experience, whilst romantic love is really, really exciting, it in no way compares to the quiet bliss of merging our whole being into an infinite field of love energy in which all living things are united in peace and harmony.

Now I am not claiming that I have experienced this blissful state of mind and heart very often or for long, but I definitely have experienced it. So I now know this infinite field of pure love to be more real than all my usual fear and angst. I also know that when I am blissed out in an infinite field of love energy, I am incredibly kind and forgiving to all my fellow human beings, even those who may seriously annoy my personality-self from time to time.

So these days, I really have only one major goal left in life: to dwell in love energy more and more of the time. Moreover, I have absolutely no doubt that if a majority of human beings finally learnt how to open their hearts and minds to dwell in pure loving awareness for say 20 minutes each day, wars and violent conflicts of all kinds would be far less prevalent on Planet Earth.

So many well-meaning souls are currently praying regularly for world peace without ever experiencing for themselves the deep, unshakeable peace of mind that comes when we expand our awareness into an infinite circle of love.

Some people even go out onto the streets and scream angrily for the end to a particular lethal conflict – how ironic! Fighting against wars is never going to work. Loving our enemies on the other hand is almost impossible to do when we are in a normal state of human consciousness. However, when we expand our consciousness into an infinite field of love, hating our enemies becomes impossible.

So maybe as 2023 morphs into 2024, you would like to join me in setting our intention to spend just a little more time each day sitting still for a while and simply breathing in love energy and breathing out love energy? This may not sound like an earth-shattering New Year resolution, but I promise you that every second that we manage to spend opening our own hearts to the healing, soothing, life-supporting energy of love makes a huge - and I will dare to say miraculous - difference to our own lives and the lives of others.

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