

## Lighting up the Darkness

*All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle. (St Francis of Assisi)*

It is that time of year again when the clocks go back and our nights become longer and darker. So this month, I am inspired to write about how helpful it can be for us to aim to become a beacon of light in a pretty dark and depressing world.

My first meditation teacher, Ken Mellor was a pretty famous psychotherapist before he discovered meditation way back in the early 1980s. He once told us that as a therapist, he saw his key task as trying to help his clients to deal with one personal problem or neurosis after another almost *ad infinitum*. He commented that this was like trying to remove the darkness from an unlit room by going into it with a bucket and trying to take out the darkness one bucket-full at a time. Then when he became good at meditating, he finally realised how much more effective it would be to just go into a darkened room and turn on the light.

In other words, rather than fretting about how we can possibly solve all the endless crises in our world with specific solutions to specific problems, would it not be so much better to focus primarily on rising above all the darkness and fear in this world to dwell in pure, unchanging love and light?

I think that when a lot of us began our own spiritual search we were hoping that one day, our lives would become trouble-free. But life on earth is just not like that. Of course, we may enjoy some happy, peaceful times for a short while, but nothing lasts forever on Planet Earth. Good times in our lives are often followed by periods of mental, physical or emotional difficulties or challenges. Certainly the world as a whole never seems to enjoy a peaceful phase for long. No sooner had the Cold War ended than the war against terrorism began. No sooner had we stopped being convinced that we would all be blown to smithereens in a world-wide nuclear war than we became convinced that we were all doomed to die of AIDs, then Covid, then global warming.

I am old enough to be getting rather tired of all this endless hysteria about the lethal state of our world. For example, the other day I was watching a young Insulate Britain protestor screaming at her interviewer, 'Millions of us are going to die!' Well yes, in fact, all 7 billion of us are going to die sooner or later. However, there is no strong evidence that many of us are going to be killed by global warming any time soon. Yet some children are now terrified they are going to die in the near future because climate activists have scared them half to death.

The human brain is pretty big and clever and so I am now confident that humankind can come up with pretty good solutions to almost any problem we may face. But I am not at all convinced that we will ever stop having serious problems in a world in which fearful, self-centred egos scream and shout so aggressively at one another in an endless war of competing ideologies.

So what is the answer? Well for me, it lies mainly within my own heart and mind. Whatever problems I - or indeed the whole world - seem to face, I am now convinced that if I can go within and relax and open into being pure, loving awareness, rather than staying totally caught up in my fearful, aggressive egoic thinking, I can send tiny drops of bright, peaceful energy out into the troubled world around me.

Giving priority to cultivating deep inner peace and a radiant inner light does not mean that we never take any positive actions to make the world a better place. Far from it! But these actions will emerge from our innate, unlimited wisdom and compassion rather than any particular egoic beliefs or virtue signalling. Before taking any kind of action in this world, I now know how helpful it can be to sit still for a while with the intention of tuning into a higher light filled with infinite compassion and wisdom. I deliberately put my own ego and all its self-centred thinking to one side for a while as I surrender as much as possible to the guidance of this higher power or light.

I also do my best as I meditate to spend at least some time bringing my awareness down from my head to my heart so that I can tune into my heart's intuitive intelligence. In my experience, my intuitive heart always seeks for a solution to any problem or conflict in which everyone's highest interests are

promoted to the max. My thinking mind on the other hand is usually busy trying to protect my own personal interests against those of others.

My heart's intelligence always reminds me that we all share the same loving, compassionate core nature, even if in some human beings that innate goodness is incredibly well covered up. Similarly, there is a lamp in all of us that will one day shine out to light up the world around us, even if in some severely wounded individuals that inner lamp is still currently unlit.

So this month, please join with me in focussing for just a short time each day on bringing an out of this world light into our own heart and mind. Then we can step back, relax and allow this inner light to extend out into the world around us to lighten up the darkness that seems to be engulfing so much of our world at the moment.

If this task of lighting up the world seems at all daunting to you, please just remember that quote from St Francis at the beginning of this message: no amount of darkness can extinguish the light of a single candle.

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