

23.03.2020

*"In darkness is light,  
In emptiness, presence,  
And in the desert  
We shall find God."*

Dear Friends,

Strange times are unfolding. Usually we choose to go on retreat, in order to take time out and step outside our regular life. This kind of retreat is a space and time devoted to various inner sports: Diving inside, allowing ourselves to listen to anything that comes up, reflecting about the vital questions of life and death, focusing on subtle sensations, confronting what needs to be confronted, and at moments praying to and being touched by the Beyond.

But at this moment we are being asked to withdraw and retreat from the public sphere, each to our own home, as a safety precaution. We are being forced to be with ourselves, either completely alone, or with close family or friends. Even though this retreat is forced and not chosen, even if for many it is strange and even frightening, it may yield for many, a bounty of sorts.

Being on our own, away from work or our usual preoccupations, may allow us to reflect deeply and ponder about our life: 'What is it all about, what is really important, am I doing what I really want to be doing, am I treating with love and dignity the people I share my life with? Am I living a worthy life?'

We are also confronted with our mortality, our smallness, the fleetingness of life. It is almost as if Mother Nature is sending us a message: 'Humans beware! You are only one of many species on planet Gaya and you are not invincible. If you wish to live well, walk the earth with a wide heart and caring eyes, respect all beings and do not harm yourself or others needlessly.'

The knowledge that many will be ill or die as a result of the corona virus, that we may lose close friends or family, that we ourselves may fall ill, all these thoughts may arouse uneasiness or even anxiety in the minds of many of us.

Yoga is the quieting of the mind. The way to cultivate this quietness is through practice and detachment, says Patanjali. In this bewildering moment, finding the time and space to practice is crucial. Because being calm, having clarity and doing the right thing is crucial for all of us.

For those of us staying home, as well as for the medical teams who are taking care of the sick and risking their very lives and those of their families.

In these challenging times I am thinking of you. I wish for all of us that these long moments of uneasiness will end as quickly and with as little casualties as possible and that our 'forced universal retreat' will bring about a positive change for all beings and for the planet.

May you and your loved ones stay healthy and well,

Orit

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