

The 8 Winds of Life

by Piya Tan

The year 2008 has a lot of things to teach us and bring the best out of ourselves—if we choose to do so. There is a real danger, when we follow any religion or system, to gravitate to some teachings or habits that tend to reinforce our pet notions or eccentricities. Our true spiritual life begins when we notice this, accept it and let go of it, and turn to the real self-healing and self-knowing.

Gain and Loss

Many people turn to a religion asking, what can it do for them? They see religion as another business transaction. But this appears to be a one-way deal. This is like someone who gives a small donation in a religious way, expecting bigger returns.

The point is that great gains come from honest hard work and this is our safest bet. Anyone telling us there is an easy way to make more money or more happiness, think twice about this and think again. Why would he be telling us about this if he is really rich and happy?

Loss arises from greed, hate and stupidity. 2008 has shown us this kind of loss can become a worldwide phenomenon. And one by one the dishonest are coming out of the woodwork.

When we do not understand IMPERMANENCE, we measure ourself and others in terms like things and number. Impermanence means change. Whenever a change comes to our life, always look at how this can better ourself. Then we will discover that every night is followed by a bright dawn.

Fame and obscurity

Many people, knowingly or unknowingly, turn to religion because they enjoy the attention they get. This is not really bad in itself, but can be addictive if it stops just there. The need for attention almost always points something seriously missing in our life.

Find out what is it that we are really missing, and we will find we do not need that attention, that fame. That is when we really begin to give the best of our heart and mind.

Obscurity can be advantageous, too, because we can be whatever we desire! Being famous, we often need to live up to expectations, namely, projecting those images that make us famous. We are not our true self: we become what people want us to be!

The point is not to think in terms of fame and obscurity, but be our true self. This begins with learning to think of others in a wholesome way.

When we truly pay good attention to others, we become a part of their lives forever. A simple guideline: “The most important person is the one we are with; the most important moment is now.”

Praise and Blame

Many people turn to religion thinking all their problems are solved by it. This is because there is this powerful being who loves us, who takes care of us, who protects us, and so on.

Isn't this the way we think when we were helpless children. These are the kind of religion that does not really want us to grow, much less to think for ourselves.

It feels good when we are accepted by the group, when we win the praise and approval of others. But where is all this taking us? We have become lemmings going in one direction.

Enjoying the approval of others may mean that we lack self-confidence. We should instead examine WHY we lack self-confidence. A good way to do this is to do lovingkindness meditation with this simple exercise:

Find some quiet time and tell yourself: "I accept myself just as I am. May I be well and happy!" Go on telling this to yourself, and we will be more than surprised with the result in due course.

Happiness and Sorrow

Many people turn to a religion asking what it can do for them. But the true answer lies in asking the right question, such as "What can I do to truly be happy?" If this is the real question we have been wanting to ask, then the Buddha's way would be the best one for us.

Real happiness is not about what we have. To HAVE something simply means a proximity to something: "I have money" basically means the money has not benefitted us. What makes us really rich is what we really ARE.

If we ARE happy, if we ARE wise, if we ARE compassionate, we will look at gain and loss with the same eyes. For, there is no other way to look at the world. That's the way the world is. If we just look at these words, we may find fault with them, but look beyond them, into deep our heart for the true answer.

A double happy new year!

With metta,

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