

# THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

by Diane McCann

We are living in turbulent times ~ times of darkness and times of light ~ times of despair and times of joy. How can we better serve ourselves during these incredible times as we move toward the end of the year 2000?

First, let us look at where the feminine consciousness is. For many walking this planet right now it is a time of awakening. We know, somewhere deep in our bellies, that there is more to life than we have been taught. There seems to be a yearning - to connect with ourselves, to connect with others in a place of safety and vulnerability - to be all that we know we can be ~ and yet a part of us has forgotten the path to take. In fact many of us never even knew there was a path and so we have been walking or running up one road, only to find a dead end, or more painfully, we are afraid to move at all and so we remain stagnant, stuck and fractured ~ believing that this is all there is!

For men it is even more difficult. Let us go back to the beginnings of time when we all lived in harmony. Women were revered as being the bearers of life and recognised as being equals. Then along came the Kurgans from the north and they brought with them the destruction of the Goddess energy. In order to protect their women, peaceful men took up arms and to do that meant putting aside all that had previously been held as sacred. It is not possible to kill another human being without having to harden one's heart and so the soft vulnerable truth of who we really are became encased in fear, greed, pain and sadness... all of which we are still reverberating in today.

Through the ages we moved in a slow state of consciousness, forgetting all that we knew to be true and believing instead the lies that have now almost become the truth! The beliefs that money holds the keys to life, that white is better than black, that thin is better than fat, that the west is better than the east, that blame is easier than responsibility and so it goes on.

Now we come to the end of the Piscean age. Pisces represents duality and this time has given us the very best and the very worst of what humanity is capable of up until now. Yet there are stirrings in the mire..... stirrings that are driving some of us to redefine who we are according to our integrity and truth and not that which we have been taught for aeons. It is like the birthing of a child ~ we strain and breathe and struggle with our pain, some of us diving into it fearing that we will never again emerge ~ some of us choosing to anaesthetise ourselves to stop that very pain. Yet, like labour, we cannot stop that which has started ~ we simply have to keep in our hearts the end result ~ a beautiful new consciousness arising on this planet. The question is how can we, the collective consciousness of the world, help birth this new/old way of being.

As children most of us were trained to be good, do as we were told ~ you know the scenario. We have layers of conditioning, from our parents, from our church, from school, from our parents and from society. We were given beliefs that no longer serve us.

Boys ~ be tough, don't cry, be strong, beat your opponent, winning is everything, you have to grow up and provide for your family, the family business will be yours (whether you want it or not), I gave up everything for you to have a good education etc.

Girls ~ be nice, be good, don't be loud, be a pleaser, look after everyone else first, give more than you receive, women are not as good as men (especially true in European cultures), you have to be married, you have to have children.

Some of us rebelled. Girls made decisions based on whether they wanted to be like their mothers who gave up a lot of who they were and what they could be for their families. The result of this was a loss of power. Some chose to be like their fathers who were strong, tough and "made it" in the world which resulted in isolation and loneliness. Unfortunately attempting to be like anyone else is giving up who we really are... the transition we have to make now is toward different choices and to find the core of ourselves.

This core can be likened to a seed that has lain dormant for thousands of years and now the sun and the water have reached it and it is beginning to crack open. However because the core seed has never seen the light of day it is fragile and doesn't trust itself to grow toward the light. We are still afraid of the deep emotions that have been entrapped. Sadness is not okay because everyone else is acting fine and what will I be if I am not fine? The rage is so deep that most people deny it entirely and yet its very essence affects the way we deal with life (look at the rise of violence and the use of drugs which of course simply serve to anaesthetise ourselves even more). Most of us were not allowed to have these core emotions as they didn't fit our family paradigm and yet they are still there, bubbling like the ancient volcanos and unless dealt with, one day they will explode..... perhaps in the rumbling of a nervous stomach or the cough of a voice waiting to be expressed or the creation of a cancer that eats us from the inside out. Perhaps in depression (anger not expressed) or in the perpetuation of withholding love from our loved ones. Because as children often the truth was met with punishment we learned not to tell the truth - if I tell you what I really think, you - might leave me - won't love me etc. We became such good liars that we have forgotten how to tell the truth, even to ourselves. Think of the TV ad where the woman has the flu and the jingle is "soldier on" and take this medication instead of actually taking care of ourselves by resting our bodies. How many times do you speak with people who have lost someone or something (job, money et al) and you ask how they are ~ the normal response is "I'm fine".

How do we change the continuing patterns that keep repeating like a hologram through our lives. Many people read the books, listen to the tapes, go to the workshops and because we live in an instant society, expect the results to be instantaneous and ever lasting. When they are not (which they rarely are) they go back into denial and decide they are doomed to live

this way forever or worse, they make everything wrong and harden their core again. We have to realise that life is a constant dance, sometimes we are moving forward and at others it appears we are moving backward and yet one more turn and we are moving forward again. Plants do not grow without the mixture of both sunshine and rain and so it is in our lives..... we need to embrace our sunshine days and our rainy days with equal acceptance, recognising both as necessary forces toward our growth and healing. Perhaps we should have tattooed on our hands "It is not what happens to you it is how you deal with what happens". The challenge of course is because we spend vast amounts of time in denial (as Sark says in her wonderful book - Denial is *not* a river in Egypt) that we rarely dip into the pit of our pain and investigate the truth about a situation. We deny the dark side of our soul, fearing it beyond all else.

What is the dark night of the soul? It is a place which most of us will at some point descend into ~ some for moments and some for what seems like forever in our quest for wholeness. It is the deep sadness of a broken relationship. It is the shame that holds us tight in our bodies. It is the feeling of abandonment from parents who couldn't give us what we needed even though it was all they had to give. It is the rage inside over the rape of our sisters. It is the abhorrence of child abuse. It is the fear of the movement toward death through disease or the grief that comes from death of a loved one. It is the hopelessness at the avaricious destruction of our planet. What we have failed to understand is that it is a natural place of transition ~ somewhere we can consciously choose to descend into. Like all of the legends and stories of old, all the heroes went there, not necessarily consciously but to the abyss they went: The Fisher King, Odysseus, Snow White when taken to the forest to be killed by the huntsman. Dorothy when she set off on her legendary sojourn to Oz. Surely if we are to see with eyes of truth we would recognise in these stories our need to allow the descent with grace, knowing that we will return to the light of day, wiser and more in touch with our truth. Then the journey will be complete and we will receive the prize - the kingdom of our Self.

To be with oneself in whatever state of being that finds us needs to be acceptable. If it is anger, be with that anger, look to see where it originated from ~ anger is not getting what you want, so what do you really want? If it is sadness go into it with a passion and be there acknowledging it and allowing it. Know that there are acceptable ways of expressing every emotion (preferably not dumping it onto someone else). Scream, yell, rant, rave, sob ~ feel those emotions for they are what keep you alive and in their expression comes more life. Sacred Circles have been used for centuries for exactly those purposes. The tenet of a circle is a safe place where you can be validated for the truth of who you are. As men and women on this planet we need to create for ourselves a space where we can be with others and acknowledge our emotions, knowing that we won't be judged or rejected. In that acceptance comes our safety ~ our willingness to venture a little deeper into the recesses of our being. Like the breath, some days it is gentle and

'normal'; while on exertion it is hard and heavy; at times of fear it is shallow and barely there yet the breath always brings us back to ourselves and to the normal rhythm of life.

One way to find the path to the self is through the truth. The truth is that we are all unique and wondrous beings, each with gifts to share. By loving who we are with gentleness and wisdom, perhaps we can heal some of the past and allow the core to emerge. As Jean Houston said: "It is the entelechy of an acorn to be an oak. It is the entelechy of a baby to be an adult and of you to be the God only who or what. What happens in sacred psychology is the tapping into the entelechy of the self, the level most directly related to the Divine Self."

I ask you to consider this beautiful piece (source unknown). How might your life have been different if when you were a young person, the first time you felt feelings of depression or sadness, an older person had come to sit with you? If they had come to sit with you as someone had come to sit with them the first time they had feelings of depression or sadness. To simply sit, quietly, perhaps wordlessly - to sit with you during your dark times. And how might your life have been different if this person had accepted your feelings. Accepted them so completely and fully that you began to feel safe with them. If there had been no judgments and no questioning... no attempt to make you smile, to betray your feelings, to deny your darkness. If the person had simply sat in silence with you, with your pain and in the darkest moments had been able to reflect it to you.... to reflect to you your pain, to witness, to attend and by their quiet respect for it, to help you learn to respect it.... your pain and depression and to see that just as this person had faith in it, you also might have a glimmer of faith that there was meaning and truth in your darkness. How might your life be different?

For me my life has been different because I have chosen consciously to do what I love, to love who I am and to surround myself with people who honour me just the way I am, warts and all.....my wish for you is to dare to delve deep into the well of your being and to create the life you want to live, consciously recognising the gifts behind the lessons, being willing to tell the truth and to surround yourself with people who love you - just because you're you! A unique, divine being.

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