

# Like The Lotus Flower

Australia, July 2020

Interestingly, Ancient Egyptians thought that the heavens were held up by gigantic stalks of lotus plants.

For some, the lotus flower symbolises the sun.

For others, it is the symbol of enlightenment and self-regeneration.

These days, we can choose the lotus as the symbol of our separate and collective emergence from the gloom.



One day, in January 2020, came the news that an unknown virus had affected some 40 people in the Chinese province of Hubei.

Those of us who are not generally concerned by what happens to others in our towns, and even less concerned by what happens to others far and wide, muttered something like, 'Oh! Yeah? Mmmm ... Weird!'

Quickly enough, our thoughts were pulled back by the familiar silent fragments of unresolved issues streaming inside our minds.

In any case, beyond usual personal complications, we were already embroiled in a critical period of heightened political and climactic instability.



As it turns out, on the face of the numerous ramifications of the climate crisis and the novel Coronavirus outbreak, the universe must have concluded that humanity had over-played its hand and that, from the inside-out, we had under-appreciated all that was truly worthy of appreciation and gratitude. Consequently, the universe thrust upon us a 'freaking, crazy nightmare,' which we should now accept as an invisible reset button potentially wired to trigger unimaginable potential.



To front up to that task, separately and together, we need serious inspiration, and we can get it from the sacred flower of the lotus, one of the most ancient symbols of our planet.

This most stylishly beautiful flower, though adaptive to local environments, can only grow *in the deep mud of murky, rank water*.

Balanced by its broad leaves, at night, the flower closes and sinks underwater.



Now, here's what is particularly relevant to our time of murk, fear and doomsday scenarios: not allowing any grit to remain on its surface, come early morning, glorious and joyful, the lotus unfolds its tear drop petals again.

Also, the lotus is the most versatile of all flowers as, powdered, sliced or preserved, it can be eaten, made into beverages and medicines.

Strangely, too, it can even be mushed to become packaging material.

No mud, no lotus.

So, oh like the lotus flower may we be, as we face this or any other crisis, now and whenever!



In these early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, some of us are blessed with uninterrupted paychecks.

Others can tap into a financial safety net intended initially for later benefit or pleasures.

But our hearts go to the millions of others who, made work-redundant or underemployed, are trying to adapt to the clutching fear of the next bill and the next inevitable purchase.

As suddenly as one slips off a cliff face, these millions of newly jobless people are likely to join those already struggling below the poverty line.



Yes, our hearts brim with heartfelt empathy and compassion for those who, mostly women and coloured minorities once employed in casual work, therefore not entitled to any government help, have suddenly and again been pushed into the dark chasm of dependence.

However, it would seem that, for the most part, humanity's collective mind is still whirring around two main options.

The same two that, from aeons back, have pockmarked our humanity.



One option is to sink into pre-traumatic stress disorder, as is often the case, by anticipating the future, but this time as a bleak and terrifying one.

From this rank murk, not many are those who rise.

Another is to become intolerant, not of pain or injustice, but of others, especially others who appear different from us.

Those who, some say, should return to the country of their most ancient ancestors.



Sure enough, there always comes a time when, from a recess of our mind, we question the right of others to exist in our midst.

The current pandemic has only exposed '*what has always lurked within*', as Yudit CS, my mentor, used to say.



There are times when we agitate ourselves thinking, how dare 'these people' – any people - diminish the resources that would otherwise be mine or my family's

As long as our behaviour remains largely driven by implicit biases, conditioned habits and a self-focused ego, in a murky and rank atmosphere we will further wither.



Lionel Blue, a most respected British Rabbi, said, "Loving humanity is easy, but liking its individual specimens is jolly hard work!"



**Reality check:** when we dislike someone, it's often out of an implicit bias that springs from values of our parents, teachers, religious leaders, siblings and friends internalised as children.

Which, more often than not, amounted to a form indoctrination achieved by repetition and control.

Not yet at the age where we could invoke freedom of thought, most of us accepted what we were told.

We did it as we learnt the alphabet, the multiplication times table and attempted writing our first essays.



Positive parenting is far from easy.

In our rush to train our children for 'the real world', we often curtail their natural personality and abilities, even as toddlers.

We also transfer our biases unto them – as so many of our parents have done unto us.



**Bottom line:** so many of us, damaged parents, rule 'the home'.

Positive leadership is far from easy, too, but why are so many damaged leaders ruling our world at all echelons?



**Serious question:** if not as a result of parent/leader combination, why else would we, among other divisive and exclusionary behaviours, distrust the idea of people we do not know personally?

Be they fair-skinned or brown-skinned, speaking with or without an accent.

Be they tall or short, well proportioned, thin or overweight and with or without recognisable status.



Having said that, whether it's about dealing with a personal crisis or in response to pandemic-related restrictions and mayhem, there is always a third option worth considering.

As ridiculous as it would seem to some, we could float instead of thrashing about, exhausting ourselves and aggravating relationships under our own roofs and in our own streets.



Floating, here, is used as the metaphor for trusting that, despite wind and current, the universe has our back, as the sea and its waves do when we let go.

It's the equivalent of training ourselves into a state of relaxed awareness from where we can observe the familiar thoughts and feelings that prompt us to distrust others – at times, even those we love.



A long-long time ago, not knowing any better, we allowed a bias alarm to set up an image in our amygdala, the part of the brain that elicits a visceral form of misanthropy.

And, ever since, we have been wired to consider suspicious or unlikeable anyone who looks, sounds or behaves differently from us or those we envy, be they children, men or women.



We justify our kneejerk responses by fabricating faults about that person.

'Stupid, incompetent', we say.

'Ugly and gross', we hiss.

'Can't be trusted. Scary. Aggressive', we snarl.

'Sinful. Unfaithful, obviously', whispers our closed-minded religiosity.

Yet, as these ego-personas are our mirror, doing our part to maintain a status quo based on systemic disadvantage to other we perceive as different from us, we've torpedoed ourselves, yet again.

Sure! Our mind a.k.a. our ego-persona is the tool by which we are intended to evolve into authentic maturity.

That's regardless of what we're feeling or what's holding us back.



In fact, these people, whoever they might be, are no different from us in the sense that the same universal life force flows through their minds and bodies as through ours.

They, too, are energy beings compressed in a bodysuit similar to ours.

Like them, we are flawed mirrored images of each other.

Together, we are fragments of a broken global culture.

So, acting outside of our best interests, we imagine others as entities separate from the whole - as we perceive ourselves.



When we actively accept that we are neither victims of our genes nor, man-made laws notwithstanding, of any event in our past or present, it becomes much easier to change our mind to change our 'heart' to change our thoughts.



**Bottom line:** none of us can come together as one – especially not when our bias buttons are activated are pushed in.

So, what are 'good' people to do, if not activate our 'heart' energies, instead.

And, like the lotus at dawn, lift our face off the rank murk of active or passive indifference.



Our heart energy is what can lift us from the murky, rank soil of prejudice, separate, helplessness, of judgment, shame and blame – all enacted principles learnt, absorbed from adults during our early years.

It is our heart energy that channels genuinely adult courage, strength and self-reliance to our solar plexus.



When we 'follow our heart' in the right way and for the right reasons, we 'change our mind'.

When we move from intention to action, when we rethink our own thinking, we thrive. It's cutting-edge activation.

We rise again every morning, vibrant and cheerful, like the lotus flower.

There is no other way, beyond a healthy acceptance of What-Is, to connect via our heart energy with who we truly are.

No way to rewire our neural circuitry either.



Circumstances, strangers, loved ones perceived as problems, nasty and debilitating complications, are snags within the fabric of life.

Trite to say so, but true all the same.

There has never been a human life that did not, at one time or another [or even several times in a row] contain a scattering of such snags.



Our soul-based values are the pristine petals of the sacred lotus flower.

They are the not-so-secret ingredients needed to become whole and deal calmly with the inevitable ups and downs of life.

No snags = no life.

No murky waters = no growth.



Once that's understood, fear and resentment become optional and, in the critical moment underfoot, regardless of its perceived nature, there is no other magic remedy than an active acceptance of What-Is.



The seed of a lotus is very hard, they say, and it will remain in a dormant state for a very long time.

That's until nature eventually stirs it from within and prompts it to germinate.



The first thing to do when hoping to grow a lotus from seed, as opposed to allowing nature to do its thing in the wild, is to scour the seed with sandpaper.

The dark pod is so hard that it takes a good 30 minutes of intense scraping to expose a little of its white insides.

Once submerged in natural water, over time, a leaf will emerge from the lotus seed, but it will take a year or two before we are rewarded with a lotus bloom on our plant.

Patience and persistence.



Only that sort of 'scoured' awakening [from a drowsy haze] could unblock our qi, our life force energy, our connection to Soul, our personal GPS.

Only that awakening would alleviate our fear and suffering. It would recast the ills that befall us, our loved ones near and far and our planet, as purposeful wake-up calls.



**Reality check:** the universe never ceases to drop on each one of us a sprinkle of (karmic) opportunities to rethink our connection to ourselves.

And to those who depend on us.

And to our livelihood.

And to our family and relatives.

And to our friends and to others near and far.

Known and unknown.

Human and non-human.



As the best of our lives is yet to come, we ask ourselves: What is my role in this – or any other crisis that impacts my awareness?

What does this 'thing' really mean to me and for me, here and now?

What is it challenging me to do, think or be?



Like the lotus flower, thrive we will, despite our pretend toughness and disconnection from the life force energy that fills and unites all that exists.

Even through the rank muck of our new normal, if rank it is, we will grow.

Even if we don't yet quite know how, we have the means to develop our own ways to do much more than 'stay on top'.



Yes, dear Warrior, like the lotus flower with roots in murky darkness that risks submerging it, at the crucial moment, we rise up.



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