

SPIRIT, MIND & BODY

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The Balance of Things to Come Due to the Temporary Nature of Everything

Unlike any other year in recent history, the past twelve months have shown us the unpredictability of life in an "in your face" kind of way.

Besides the War in Iraq and political unrest that has carried over from President Bush's "War on Terror", Mother Nature decided to add to the mix with sneak attacks of her own: first a disastrous and unprecedented Tsunami in the waters off South East Asia.

The World watched with sadness and disbelief as the Indian Ocean claimed thousands of lives, destroying towns and villages along the once alluring coastal shores. It was surreal at best as we tried to comprehend the vulnerability of our fellow man. How could such exotic places -- places that we spent countless hours daydreaming of -- suddenly be gone? Was life really so fragile? There must have been something that someone somewhere did to cause this.

After the Tsunami, the outpouring of world support and human compassion was

awesome to see, to feel, and to comprehend. I know Mother Nature has an agenda of her own, and I can't help wonder if her plan might have been to force humanity to care for itself. Was it her plea for us to drop our cultural differences, drop the race card, drop our self-absorption, and embrace each other instead with open arms, understanding and respect? Was it her wish for us to share our talents and resources to the benefit of all mankind, and to care deeply for the gift of life?

The Iraqi War -- though an embarrassment and disgrace to almost half the American public -- is not taking place on our soil. Sadly, that makes it easier for us to turn our heads and go on about our business. Likewise, the Tsunami did not destroy our coastline or our villages. Though many noble relief efforts and heroic individual efforts have been made to rebuild this ravaged territory, much is left to do. Yet, the death and displacement of foreigners has not remained on our minds. Try to remember when you last heard news from the disaster torn region

of South East Asia.

The recent and horrifying destruction by Hurricane Katrina is the latest (but probably not the last) blow to our human psyches. Again, we watch with disbelief the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and the chaos that ensued. This time it is on home turf. This time it will not casually go away.

No need for me to recount the historic fumbles by government and non-governmental agencies at the time of our country's greatest need. Hopefully, we will learn rather than forget. What is more important is the love and compassion that has been shown by the people of this great land for the people of this great land. Isn't that how it's suppose to be?

Somewhere beyond the political circus there are great things being accomplished: a displaced person is finding a new home, another a new job, and yet another is reuniting with a missing relative. All these moments warm the hu-

man heart and remind us that we are not alone -- remind us that we should look toward each other, not "Big Government", to help our neighbors heal and rebuild what can be rebuilt. What did Big Government ever teach us about humanity anyway?

There is an even greater lesson here, though it is hard to believe there is any lesson greater than love that is blind to economic and racial differences. It is the lesson of letting go.

Nothing in this world lasts forever: not our homes, our jobs, our families, our friends, or our lives. This should not be a scary prospect. It is simply the way it is. To everything that exists there is a beginning and an end. Does this mean these things don't matter? No! It means they matter even more. It means they matter now -- not tomorrow or the next day or the next, but now! Your family matters now. Make peace with them. Your job matters now. Do you love or at least respect what you

do? Your friends matter now. Cherish them while they are still your friends and perhaps you will keep them longer. Your home matters now. It is your sacred refuge. Honor it as such. Think of the many people who don't even have a place to call "home".

Your life? Well, it matters most of all! It matters now! Every day should include a word of gratitude for the opportunity to breathe, to see, to hear, to feel, to smell, to taste, to hug, to laugh, to cry, to learn, to grow, to listen, and to love. One day you will have to let it go. And you never know when that day will come.

In a way, it's an exciting way to live.

"Once a man was about to cross the sea. A wise man ties a leaf in a corner of his robe and said to him: "Don't be afraid. Have faith and walk on the water. But look here! The moment you lose faith you will drown."

-- Sri Ramakrishna

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