

To my fellow Peacenicks, Interfaithers, and Multiculturalists (PIM)

We are facing the threat of extinction (F.Capra p7) from a multitude of forces. This seems to place us in a multi-dimensional complex crisis.

So we look for meaning, and ways out of the perplexing turmoil. We assume that a desire for peace is a common factor in all people everywhere. Peace, in today's world, becomes crucial for survival. The individual is the essential component of peace and the basis on which a peaceful world is built. The sum total of peaceful people make a peaceful world.

Individuals therefore need to foster breadth of vision, critical awareness of reality, moral integrity and personal transformation for living in a humane world. When peace is understood in its wholeness, it can provide some viable responses to the multilayered crisis.

We can't hold on to old ways of being and paradigms that do not suit reality. War has been viewed as a way to peace, "si vis pacem para bellum" (If you want peace, prepare for war). However peace means more than the absence of conflict: peace is also about yin and yang, harmonizing opposites, like differentiation and unity, form and nothingness, boundaries and freedom. It also includes dimensions such as a commitment to a life- affirming future.

Some more extensive paradigms for Peace highlight oneness and all its power...there are no separate parts in the universe, everything is in dynamic relationship to everything else. This includes the interdependence of us humans, and because all people are equally human, it is through our humanness (love/heart and understanding/mind) that we can experience peace.

This assumption of humanness and sameness seem to underlie the essence of today's multiculturalism and interfaith, where cultures and faiths ostensibly meet in mutual respect. While acknowledging that religions and cultures that have been hostile to one another have

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'become friends', each nevertheless speaks its own language. (Sacks p162)

Even so, dialogue is a seemingly necessary ingredient for peace and is upheld as the antidote for controversy and misunderstanding.

Peace is not only a gift from beyond; it is within, and something we must strive for.

"We live at one of those moments when our consciences are wiser than our culture.” (S p14)

The UNESCO Charter reminds us that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace can be constructed.” (women I hope by now included!). (UNESCO Constitution 1945 p1).

The mind has an important part to play, and it is given due respect in many frameworks and sacred texts. The mind is to engage, elevate and inspire. Some say 'still the mind', while others say 'be constantly mindful'.

Other peace frameworks encourage living purely from the heart and not from the mind at all, as it interferes with the love/heart space (Kiesha, 'Tribe of many Colours'.)

We are told that there will be a shift in the world in 2012 where all that's needed from humanity is a wave of unconditional love and a shift of consciousness. (Mckenna).

Global peace then becomes a state of mind shared by humanity. In attempting peace, we enter into a 'love for all' zone, regardless of truth, clarity or integrity. After all, we tell ourselves, we are all human, each with our own truths, each with our own personal spiritual journey of oneness: together we can save ourselves and the planet. When we come together, we can change the world.

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The consequence of this position is that it requires peaceful people to make a peaceful world.

It is against this backdrop that Islam presents itself today.

Enter Islam and its Trilogy of texts, with vastly different notions of peace to those outlined above. These texts spell out that not all humans are human, not all humans are equal, and Islam certainly doesn't promote love and understanding for all. Actually, Namazie claims 'It is an insult to humanity'.

Jihad, in all its forms, as a means to 'peace' is encouraged. Conflict and violence are inherent in this struggle. Indeed, imposing an ideology on others is itself an act of violence. In non-Islamic countries, outdated Marxists, human rights, social justice and harmony groups, who side and ostensibly connect with Islam, blur the distinction between who is being oppressed and who the oppressors actually are. Moral relativism has become a mind set of the oppressed, used to appease and accommodate the oppressor. If peace is the absence of conflict, then it cannot tolerate oppression or any other form of violence, be it physical, structural or personal.

Islam is devoid of freedom: it is divisive, impersonal, inhumane, oppressive and death-affirming.

We are living through an Islamic inquisition (see Namazie June 2011).

Practices like dawah (proselyzing) and taqiya (deception) preclude honest deep dialogue in any interfaith or multi culti exchange. We cannot possibly arrive at the same peace outcome.

If we are deeply attached to the idea that all religions/ideologies are the same, we will have difficulty in accepting the truth about Islam's teaching and impact. It is crucially important to distinguish between humans and beliefs: it is the human being who is meant to be equal, not his or her beliefs; it is the human being who is sacred, not his or her beliefs. Nor are all tenets or principles of beliefs equal. Moral relativism is not the answer to a complex changing world - 'when the winds blow hardest, it is then that you need strong roots'(Sacks p166).

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"Our moral intuitions have been shot by the machine-gun called relativism."(S p 182)

Moreover, what compounds and confuses the issue are concepts like equality, respect, tolerance and freedom, that were initially raised vis-a-vis the individual, but are now misapplied to include 'culture' and religions.

There have been many over time who have claimed that cultural contact or cultural diffusion can lead to peace. (See Erasmus Desiderius, who promoted Dante's proposal for a world empire.)

Since then, we have learnt that such interchanges tend to be fact related and superficial.

Multiculturalism and interfaith perpetuate the myth of connectivity and foster the illusion of the oneness in other ideologies and traditions. While factual knowledge about the other may be acquired, these facts are separated from values. Without values, people are separated from themselves and others. Deeper human connection is not satiated, just temporarily relieved. (Tracey). Moral judgment - the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong - has become not just controversial, but taboo'(S p119).

Denial of the havoc Islam is wreaking worldwide protects the individual from unwanted feelings, feelings are covered up by daily displacement activities, which tends to leave the individual with a sense of 'life as usual', 'all's good'.

Inverted moral judgments, like calling non-Muslims who know more than they are supposed to know about Islam, Islamophobic or racist, when it's actually Islam that demonizes and separates non-Muslims (See Religion of Peace) are based on confused, dehumanizing values.

Truth is unexplored, integrity and values are compromised, giving way to moral relativism, which becomes a substitute for authentic connectivity.

Despair and disempowerment often ensue, with typical arguments used to undermine any attempt at making moral judgments, like "can't do anything about it".

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Accepting and aligning ourselves with Islam in all its dimensions stunts our growth and sabotages peace.

How can we honestly say that it's OK to have a limited paradigm to a multidimensional crisis?

Any critical analysis of Islam is silenced

These barriers to peace consciousness must be identified, confronted and transformed, if we truly want peace.

Wishful thinking, dialogue - even love – while they can help us on the road, are not enough to bring about peace..

We need new ways of thinking: as J Sacks suggests, we need new ways to deal with difference.

As we grow, we need to differentiate ourselves as we do as individuals within our families, from beliefs and worldviews that oppress, divide and conquer.

Morality is something we inherit, learn and share, yet currently we are experiencing 'moral evasion'. We must fully understand that 1.3 billion Muslims who believe and adhere to the Trilogy of Islamic texts have totally different concepts of peace than most of us. Islam, ironically the only religion that is called a 'religion of peace', stifles and slaughters. We have come to a crisis if we do not see reality as it is: we will be living a reality of peace as Islam sees it. We need a critical consciousness that actively questions basic assumptions and does not accept unreflected the values and myths imposed, nor hold onto frameworks that are incongruous with reality.

'Moses fought the oppressors and at the last moment taught his people to be free. Today the oppressors are much subtler. We need to teach people to be free so they can recognize their oppressors'(F p194)

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Without freedom there can be no peace. Freedom is the force that brings existence out of the void (F p188). The space between what is and what ought or can be, moves us to change the world (S p182).

Outdated peace paradigms, which support interfaith and multiculturalism must be replaced.

For those who want peace, it is incumbent on us to use our humanness, our 'moral intuition' our minds, to learn from reality and evidence on the ground. This requires an open mind, one ready for truths beyond itself. This beyond mind and heart space is liberating (F p133). It even helps create and satisfy our human need for essential oneness. We are free when we take part in this endlessness. As freedom is a source of energy, it is a power we must tap into.

Proponents of peace, interfaith and multiculturalism: Find out for yourselves the truth about Islam. Reality has a human face. "True or untrue, the individual has no rights or dignity in Islam" (Hekmat). Truth can be inconvenient and shocking. For peace, we need to honour and celebrate the individual. This presumes a sense of responsibility for one another.

Truth changes who we are, despite what we want or don't want to do. Coping with these changes requires resilience of character (S p184), courage, hope and faith in life itself. By 'doing' peace, you will experience breadth and depth of vision, moral clarity, integrity and experience a mammoth shift in consciousness.

We are all participants in this worldwide struggle, which 'from the beginning of time until now has been over the freedom and equality of human beings' (Hekmat).

We can all contribute to a humanizing peace process that takes us 'within' our reality where life matters and beyond which is transcendent, far beyond 72 virgins. By seeing peace in its wholeness and tuning into these spaces, we regain our values, becoming more affirmed, enhanced and connected. We thereby co- create an authentic, moral, life-affirming holistic, peace paradigm based on peaceful individuals who can offer viable practical, alternative responses to the current complex crisis.

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