



PERSPECTIVES



by **Rinaldo S. Brutoco**

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Passover & Easter – Rebirth, Renewal, Release *A Multireligious Time for Transformation*

Deepak Chopra, my dear friend for more than 25 years, and a Fellow of the World Business Academy for all that time, is a very wise man with an eclectic view of religions. While a Hindu himself, like Aldous Huxley in his watershed book “The Perennial Wisdom,” Deepak has spent his adult life looking at the common denominators amongst the great world religions, rather than looking for where they diverge. He once shared this salient world religions metaphor:

If you were standing on the side of a lake and wanted to reach the island in the middle with three friends, you could step into a canoe labeled “Christian” on it, and another canoe labeled “Hindu,” still another labeled “Jewish,” and yet another labeled “Buddhist.” Each of you paddle your canoe out to the island and climb out of your canoe to re-join your companions. Once you do that, you observe that the name of the side of the canoe you came in is irrelevant. What matters is that you got to the island even if you took canoes with different names. Once on the island, he gently observed, it didn’t matter which canoe you came in. What mattered is that you all arrived at the same place.

Let’s call that place Divine Consciousness.

Many very conscious people choose to believe that their historical spiritual tradition doesn’t matter. Many people, if not overtly connected with a religion, see themselves as agnostics. That makes sense as Albert Einstein once observed “No one knows enough to be an atheist.” Even for those avowed atheists reading this column, I can only assure you that however you perceive the “Perennial Wisdom” and apply it to your own moral compass, won’t matter in the end if your canoe reads “atheist” on the side. What matters is that you have a moral compass, shaped, by transformative values capable of endless renewal. In this way, we are all able to perceive the spiritual re-birth that can occur for all of us each springtime.

During spring each year, we celebrate Passover as described in the Old Testament. Whether it be an allegory or a restatement of historical facts makes no difference. The power in the story is that it is the greatest example of an entire population being suddenly freed. After nine plagues failed to move Pharaoh, the tenth one involved an angel of death who “passed over” all the Hebrew first-born. Immediately thereafter, the Hebrew nation was released from Egyptian bondage. It was, and remains, the “great release.” It was a release from bondage, the past, and an entire way of life for generations of ancestors so that the Hebrew people could birth themselves into a new Jewish nation. Clearly, a pristine example of renewal celebrated around the world at Eastertime.

The Hindu Vedas, and particularly the Bhagavad Gita paint a picture of titanic spiritual forces fought out by humans, demigods, and gods to re-create a more perfect world out of the destruction (read this as “winter”). It is the springtime triumphant renewal, represented by Krishna’s victory.

Those tales, allegorical in nature, greatly influenced Henry David Thoreau in his solace-seeking journey of the soul at Walden Pond. They also heavily influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson’s nineteenth century Transcendentalists, which gave rise to Unitarianism and other pan-spiritual traditions like Unity Church. A core belief of theirs was that the “Over-Soul” (their expression of Divine Consciousness) is one and that it unites all beings such that each person is empowered to behold within him or herself a piece of the Over-Soul. They were saying, in effect, the piece of the Over-Soul we share is Divine Consciousness, it is the island we can all arrive at regardless of which canoe we came in.

Historically brought up as a Christian, I now see myself as a Christian-Buddhist-Jewish-Hindu-Taoist-Pantheist still inspired by the renewal message of Easter featuring

stories of Christ's re-birth from the tomb. Whether factual or allegorical matters not. What matters is that these tales lead one to annually embrace the notion of re-birth, renewal, and transformation. Easter allows us to view the darkness of our prior entombment as behind us, as if we are exiting a mini Kali Yuga, as we transform ourselves into beings of new and unlimited potential.

This Easter, leaving the darkness behind is a metaphor for what many in our nation are attempting to accomplish since January 6th – the capstone of the tumultuous and challenging Trump Years. Emerging from the “winter” of those times, punctuated as they were with the deaths of over 550,000 Americans, feels much like leaving the tomb on Easter Sunday.

Yes, Easter is a time of release from bondage, a renewal of our fundamental values to consciously choose to take care of one another through this Covid crisis, and to co-create the new economy we must build on the broken back of 2020. We are acutely aware that rebirth this Easter must be a rebirth of a more just and caring society. It is a rebirth of the time of the great civil rights laws of 1964, 1965, and 1968 that ended Jim Crow, even as Mr. Crow is attempting a comeback in many states.

This Easter marks a time of rebirth into a more equitable distribution of wealth that has grown from mildly disruptive in the 1970s to wildly out of control by 2020.

This Easter, all of the spiritual traditions and all the Perennial Wisdom rolled into one is asking us to become reborn into a new spirit of caring for each other, especially those of Asian descent and people of color. This Easter is about having a new compact with our individual expression of Divine Consciousness to do better for ourselves and each other because, at the core level, we are a nation that cares for its own.

We can all celebrate this caring for each other that is stirring in our body politic even as we continue to be gripped by a past of residual economic, religious, societal, and racial distortions. We can celebrate our rebirth into a more just time. We can celebrate a renewal of our core values that do hold that we are all created equally. We can celebrate the release of our collective bondage from the violence we are attempting to leave behind. Yes, we can all celebrate no matter which canoe we came in.

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