

Spiritual Soup

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The Power of the Solstices and Misplaced Values

Many ancient cultures are generally regarded as having worshiped the sun. The Egyptians, for instance, certainly did so. As I write this in mid June, we are approaching the solstices, which occur on June 21st. The northern hemisphere will experience the summer solstice; the southern, the winter solstice. The solstices are rich with symbolism, both of our physical and spiritual lives.

At the summer solstice, the sun is at its strongest, the day at its longest. Many ancient cultures are believed to have celebrated the summer solstice, such as the Maya. The ancients were closer to nature than we today and were certainly aware that the sun was a life giver. Summer solstice rituals were almost certainly celebrations of physical life and health- crops, as well as animal and human life. The event also has strong spiritual symbolism, certain aspects of which were probably recognized by various ancient cultures. The sun is the world's primary source of light. The Light within is the spark, the joy, that makes life worth living. The summer solstice is emblematic of the all-important value of the Light within for giving spiritual life. Recognizing the strength of the Light is the greatest value we can possess. The Light also reveals the wonder of the ordinary, the wonder of our own lives. Beauty surrounds us, if we see with our hearts. Celebrating the life giver is a celebration of life and a recognition of the value and wonder of our own lives and consciousness.



At the winter solstice, the sun is at its weakest and the earth is dead. How could this possibly be cause for celebration? Again, the ancients were much closer than we to the natural rhythms. They understood the natural cycle of life- Dawn always follows night; spring always follows winter. They were intimately familiar with the cycle of death and rebirth. Many ancient cultures are believed to have celebrated the winter solstice. Stonehenge is aligned with the rising sun at the summer solstice and the setting sun at the winter solstice, suggesting that it was used to commemorate one or both of these events. Winter solstice rituals were almost certainly celebrations of physical rebirth, the rebirth of the world, the new year. In addition, the winter solstice is as rich in spiritual symbolism as the summer solstice. The winter solstice is symbolic of the idea that death on earth brings life in the heavens, representing a belief in the afterlife, or life again on earth, encompassing a belief in reincarnation.

The winter solstice can also symbolize the idea that the death of earthly desire brings spiritual life. This concept is central to Buddhism. I also believe this and understand it to mean that we must have the right values to achieve spiritual progress. True happiness is the ultimate goal of life. The Buddhists believe this. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, the idea is “self-evident”. Conquering the desire for excessive materialism, power, prestige, etc. frees the heart to fill with love and the joy that accompanies it. We must be very wise about what will truly bring us happiness, especially since our culture teaches us little in this respect. So many think that if they only had a bigger SUV, or granite counter tops, then they will finally be happy. I do recognize that a certain level of material well-being is necessary for life, and health, and to raise a family, which are all very important values. What is unnecessary is excessive materialism. What truly makes us happy is the Light, and we must have the right values to walk the spiritual path. We must work to conquer what I call the Four Horsemen: Close-mindedness and Misplaced Values, Selfishness, Arrogance, and Negativity and Stress. The antidote to these spiritual poisons is what I call the Quartet of Angels: Truth, Love, Humility, and Optimism.

Let us celebrate the solstices and the spiritual values that they represent.