

It is Spring!

It has brought the first crocuses, and the first daffodils. It has uncovered gardens, and made visible snow preserved objects from last year: balls, shoes and even a plate. It has turned dirty snow covered edges of the roads into one long plastic litter filled elongated step. It has unsheathed heads and hands, and reduced the weight of outer coverings a body has to wrap itself in day in and day out.

But mostly, it has brought life: People out on the street on the sidewalk in front of my house; Children out in the fields. Flowers. Yes, this twenty three and a half degree tipping of the earth towards the sun has made all the difference: Between hibernation and emergence; between living in a museum of houses with opening and shutting garages and a museum of walking breathing life.

And how we celebrate it! Burying winter with Good Friday and resurrecting spring with Easter, burning evil and darkness in a large bonfire on the eve of celebrating Holi, the festival of colors that ushers in spring in Northern India, to the deliverance of Jews from Genocide on Purim, to Buddha presenting his teachings to his disciples at this time, to the Islamic commemoration of the birthday of Prophet Mohammad, to the Sikhs and the Bahai's starting their new year.

If we were to take a look around the world, all cultures in one way or another mark this time of the warming of the earth. The Hindus in fact mark both the times of what is referred to as climatic and solar influence, that is, the beginning of summer and of winter, because it is thought that mind and body both undergo changes at such times and as such the occasion is marked by invoking the energy aspect of God in the form of the universal or divine mother.

It is a nine night celebration with the first three days devoted to Durga or Shakti, the purger of evil and source of strength and courage and energy, it is believed, that allows for the creation, preservation and destruction of the world. The next three days are devoted to Lakshmi, the harbinger of wealth and good fortune and the last three to Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom.

The event is called Navaratri, which literally means nine nights, but interestingly, it is the Navaratri that brings in winter that is celebrated much more widely and with a lot more fanfare than the one in the spring, except for the ninth day that celebrates the birth of Rama. According to Hindu ancient texts, praying to Rama on that day results in fulfillment of wishes of the devotee, but an absence of prayer may result in hell.

Perhaps we have all forgotten to pray. Else why at such a moment of pleasure and life are we inundated with images from self-created hells and purgatories that beam in through our televisions, stream in over the internet and arrive at our doorsteps in the morning?

Why are there child soldiers in Congo and Uganda in spring? Orphans in Iraq and Sudan and so many other places in spring? Why do we talk of thirty and hundred years of continuing war in spring? Why do we talk of the melting Arctic in spring?

Why don't we instead talk about printing money not for war, but for peace. Not for ammunition but for books. Not for planes but for transportation. Not for hunting and decimating resources but creating earth friendly resources. Why do we not talk about rehabilitation, instead of incarceration in spring?

Spring brings in New Year in many cultures. Perhaps we may use it to renew our faith in ourselves. Bring in a new year of thought, dialog and exchange of ideas for positive long term goals. Bring in people who have vision and courage to be long sighted and patience to stay the course. Let's bring in spring. Let's pray and devote ourselves to the earth which sustains us. Perhaps then, the crocuses will keep springing from it.