



## The Beginning of the Magi Process

1. A few years ago, I was teaching in Boulder, Colorado and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, my wife Arlene and I had lunch together.
  2. Reb Zalman had an idea: he wanted to create a small community of rishis or adepts who could call upon the higher powers to help our planet.
  3. Zalman has a deep commitment to social issues and like many of us, has been deeply troubled by the betrayal of human values we see all around us. He asked me if I wanted to be involved and I said yes.
  4. Several months went by as I thought about this. I had several problems with the idea.
  5. First, I didn't believe that there were that many accomplished adepts who could really not in fantasy reach levels of consciousness that would be useful.
  6. As valuable as they are, this was not about having a world prayer day, or having everyone visualize a certain outcome for an issue at a certain time.
  7. For another thing, I was confused: there were many issues I simply could not come clearly down on one side of the other. I would ask myself what if in the long run, this might be for the good? Or: what do I "wish" for, or work for if I cannot see the future clearly, or put another way, if I do see my own limitations clearly!
- So two problems already:
8. First, are there really people who can do this? And second, does anyone really know the long-term outcome of present day events even though we like to believe we know the truth?
  9. Some issues seem obvious. But what about the more subtle ones?
  10. Yet, we have to act. Certain things seem clear: the environment is degrading and may in certain

instances be irretrievable in our lifetime; arrogant attitudes of power seem and I underline seem to be causing more and more division in the world; technology without wisdom, as in the case of genetic manipulation, seems certain to cause some future catastrophe; the lack of a flu vaccine; the dependence on limited sources of power....Many things.

11. Then there were other spiritual problems: Most political work is done in the world of Assiyah, this physical world of us and them, right and wrong.
12. The various works of ASOS: Integrated Kabbalistic Healing, the Work of Return, Impersonal Movement, all exist to bring a form of healing to the world and the individual that is nondual.
13. Nondual means that there is a recognition that the typical subject-object split is not the only view, or even the most valid one. It understands that the healer is healed through healing others; that we cannot help people through territory we ourselves have not walked. It understands that there is a great silence in the world when the small ego is not in control of the looking and being, the living and the dying.
14. And how could there be a process of world healing that depended upon such little beings as ourselves? With our limited view and our still-in-process hearts and minds?
15. The answer for me was to look at the obvious nature of the world and try to see it as it was, as it actually is, and not as I wanted it to be. As we all know, this is very hard to do because the world is a painful place in many ways, and we have been accustomed and educated to avoid pain and suffering from the time we were tiny.
16. But the obvious was there for the seeing.
17. The first obvious thing I noticed was that this world is built entirely and completely on conflict.
18. My sense was that if I could work with what was there, actually there, with the trust that this was a workable world, built on my experiences and under-



standing of a unity that included all the separate things of this world, that we might have a way of changing the world not by head-on confrontation, but by working with what the world is, by grabbing the left hand and right hand of the world, by releasing the barriers to seeing that we and the world are one.

19. We must understand that war exists because war is built into us all, in fact we can say that war is built into the fabric of the entire universe. It is going on all of the time.

20. This entire world is built on war, from the smallest microbes to the largest galaxies, everything is in collision and needs this collision of desires and needs and material in order to exist. Everything needs to embrace in some way.

21. While we may fantasize that in the world of spirit there is room for everything with no chance of conflict, its as if, once out of the world of spirit and in the material plane, there isn't enough room for everything.

22. In fact, if we look at anything in this world closely enough, one thing is constantly eating another thing in order to survive. Some people think it better to eat things like vegetables rather than animals, but the fact remains that one thing must die in order for another to live.

23. Yet, through all this, human beings have a thought that there is such a thing as peace. And our notion of peace given the way the world is made is very strange indeed.

24. In this vision, there is no conflict, we are all in Eden or Heaven; the lion has decided to lie down with the lamb. This is not possible of course. As I've said many times before, the only way the lion and the lamb lie down together is if the lamb is going to be lunch.

25. Created things all have their nature and we have to shut our eyes very tightly to not see that conflict is fundamental to life.

26. So how come we have an idea of peace that excludes war? And how can this be possible if

war and I'm using the word war in the largest possible sense, to mean conflict of any type is such a vital part of life? Insects eat each other and birds eat insects. Cats eat birds, foxes eat cats and we hunt foxes. Even in the most idyllic setting, this war of life is going on.

27. This whole question of war and peace is vital for all of us because we are not only talking about war in the outer world, or the war between human civilization and our ecology or the war between political foes or anything else in the outer world.

28. When we talk about war we are also talking about our inner self, and how we deal with the destructive patterns within our own body, mind and spirit; how we meet our neurotic self; how we meet our inner demons and devils.

29. If we know this war in our inner self more deeply and fully and understand more fully where conflict fits into the plan of being human, we will know better what to do when we encounter the destructive patterns in the world itself.

30. Historians often look at conflicts and talk about the series of events that led the parties involved into a final conflict: the misunderstandings; the passions and greed; the mistakes; the righteous causes and revolutionary ideas as well.

31. We might say that much of history, from this point of view, is the story of lost opportunities.

32. The same holds true of our inner selves: When we are at war with ourselves, it is usually because we have missed many opportunities to work with our inner conflicts.

33. In other words and here I'm going to change the definitions a bit when conflict, which is fundamental to our lives, degrades because we are not paying the proper attention to it, it devolves into physical war, which is the mostly useless last resort of a series of missed opportunities.

34. One of the reasons we do this is because we all



have a notion that there should exist some form of peace that does not involve stress, conflict, disagreement, and even suffering and pain, and this idea casts a kind of shadow of unreality over our thinking process. In other words, because of these ideas, most of us are in a trance that actually helps conflict devolve into war.

35. Many of us believe that understanding others, psychological health in general, surrendering to God, enlightenment, awakening and all the other highly developed states of consciousness will somehow excuse us from meeting the devil that resides in every aspect of life. But this is not true. This is really the child in all of us speaking, hoping against hope that the darkness will not hurt us.

36. Not only is it not true, but this devil, this fundamental, universal state of conflict between one thing and another, must be embraced and not discarded.

37. It is not a question of purifying it away, but of embracing it and holding it clearly while it is still young, before it hardens into a full-fledge demon that is externalized in some outer form.

38. When we discard it, it is a lost opportunity. When we lose an opportunity, the small war of life devolves into the great destructive patterns that make this world a hell to live in and our own personal lives a prison in that hell.

39. So how do we heal this broken attitude, this voice within us that denies this truth of the worldæboth inner and outeræand thereby misses the world?

For want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of the shoe the horse was lost for want of the horse the war was lost...

Or we could say, for lack of seeing the fundamental existence of conflict, we lose the ability to be human; losing that ability to be human we see others as less than human; seeing others as less than human leads to estrangement, depersonalization, dehumanization and finally....war.

40. The change in consciousness we need all comes down to a matter of attitude.

41. In Buddhism, we have something called the Bodhisattva Vow. Basically it is a series of impossible statements:

Beings are numberless, I vow to save them  
Desires are inexhaustible, I vow to end them  
Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them  
Buddha's way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

42. Looked at one way, these statements are a method for going crazy: If sentient beings are numberless, how am I going to save them? And what does "saving" them even mean?

43. There are only two types of beings who would think of doing such a piece of work: one is a megalomaniac who feels free to impose their will on others, and the other is a Buddha.

44. Looked at from the perspective of a Buddha, these statements or vows hold within them the secret of living in a world that is built on conflict. Whenever we human beings get involved in a programmatic approach of some sort, we run the risk of idealizing the goal.

45. In spiritual studies, this often takes the form of thinking that enlightenment/awakening/surrendering to God will take us to the end of conflict.

46. But in reality, enlightenment brings us to the beginning of conflict and not its end.

47. When we believe that enlightenment is some sort of cure-all, we have idealized it.

48. When we believe that surrendering to God means that God will take care of everything and that we can sit back and clip the coupons of life, we have put ourselves in a prison.

49. Now, since we are here at a talk about spirituality, I'm using words like "enlightenment," and "awakening," and so on. But this type of thinking goes on all



the time in every being. Its usually called "tomorrow:" Things will be better tomorrow; we will make more progress tomorrow, and so on.

50. Heaven is on the other side of the wall.

51. On one hand, there is truth to this: we need to make more progress. But the progress we need to make is to see that all we need is right here and that the opportunity to be fully free human beings arises when we have let go of some idealized future and in some way or another, taken the bodhisattva vows to heart.

Taking them to heart means giving up the idea that there is some future that will not contain the present; giving up the idea that there is some future that will not contain the Now, that will not contain life-as-it-is.

52. The Bodhisattva Vows are a vehicle for taking us out of some fantasy of peace where life will be without conflict, and putting us into a situation where we need to be conscious of the way life is at every moment. The Vows teach us that there is no fantasy "perfect" state, but only reality-as-it is, both within ourselves and in the outer world.

53. This gives us the freedom to attend to our inner conflicts at every moment. It is a form of disillusionment, whereby we are letting go of the childish thinking and becoming true human citizens of the world, the wonderful, hard, mysterious, horrible and beautiful world.

54. Only by being willing to be disillusioned in this way can we truly embrace this feature of the world we call "conflict." Until that time, we are still hoping against hope that it will disappear, that this fundamental quality of the universe will change.

55. When we allow ourselves to embrace our disillusionment however, we are resurrected as the imperfect beings in an imperfect world that we and the world truly are.

56. That is when God/ enlightenment/awakening/ the Great Motheræwhatever you want to call it, rushes in.

57. This "being" or force or position of consciousness that is imperfectly perfect and perfectly imperfect, the One who blows all our illusions and make life Real.

58. Its also not that we have to do away with our illusions once and for all. I don't know if that is possible. It simply means that we have to become awareæcompletely, unalterably, consistently awareæof our childish illusions.

59. Then we can embrace them, because they are only human things. Then we can embrace the universe, because it is only a human thing as well.

60. Finally, when we do this, we become Buddhas. That is not completely correct to say, since all of us are already enlightened beings. It simply means that instead of being a sleeping Buddha, you become an awakened Buddha. An awakened Buddha can be in relationship with the world. When you are sleeping, you are only in your own world.

61. A passage from the Lotus Sutra explains this:

only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fathom the reality of all existence.

62. The power of two people together who know the truth: What could be better? Will it be easy? Or smoother? Will it always be filled with laughter? Or will there be tears as well. I don't know.

63. But one thing I know will be possible: for such people to walk through life from top to bottom; to be willing to penetrate what life is from birth to death and beyond. Never stopping for long because there is an illusion to see: Only stopping because there is another Buddha to see, another one who has awakened to the truth of life, conflict and all.

64. Conflict is valuable simply because it is the basis of all of our lives, from stars to cells, from atoms to bombs.

65. Seeing conflict at the beginning, we don't have to see war at the end.



66. Seeing how we can push our shoulders into conflict, that is, meet the devil unafraid, we can all do what Buddha did when he invited the devil into his tent for tea: discuss life. Discuss how hard it is being a devil and being a Buddha. This is common ground, the common ground that inhibits the devolution of conflict—a rightful member of the family of life—into war, where we destroy what we are.

67. This is a journey that we are all capable of taking. We don't know exactly what it will be like, or where it will lead, but let's all find out together.

68. --Finally, I'll say this. The Magi Process is a meditative journey that holds within itself what the world is like from a nondual perspective. It describes a series of movements, inner and outer, physical, psychological and spiritual, that go on when you embrace the world mechanism with a desire to change the course of events.

69. It could be thought that the very idea of a person changing the world in this way is grandiose: Don't worry. Engaging the Magi Process will break through all that.

70. It might be thought that ultimately we are too weak and small to make a difference. Don't worry: the Magi Process will show you your true inner strength.

71. Like any spiritual process, going through the thirty-eight steps will be like climbing the rungs of a ladder. But because this is a nondual process, a wonderful process unafraid of differences and conflict, you will find yourself climbing up and down simultaneously—up in your determination to heal the world; down in your willingness to meet the opposition, the very reluctance or intransigence of the material plane, to transform at all. Up toward God, down toward the Devil, in order to exist in that true place beyond, that place, that holy tent of meeting where God and the Devil sit down together for tea.

72. This world is that tent. We are always in it, and God and the Devil are always here. We need not be afraid to engage life as it is, to put our shoulders and our faces and our bellies up against Reality.

That's how things change.

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