

Compassion

We are collectively going through a bit of disruption, which is affecting our everyday lives. The Greeks referred to that time of complete transformation: Kairos, a turning moment and they treat it as sacred. Kairos, to the Greeks, referred to a turning point. We have that now—an opportunity to change some of our habitual patterns—and in fact, our ecosystems and our communities require it. And our Zen practice can serve to ground and center, to provide a place of calm abiding in the middle of the storm. This is something that the Buddha spoke about in the Lotus Sutra.

In the Lotus Sutra, he describes the Kali Yuga, this long phase of complete transformation. In our contemporary Zen vernacular, a time of “hard training”—when people will need to actively and intentionally connect with their inner wisdom and act with alignment and integrity. Without this connection to Source, people may act against the grain of their true nature, adding unnecessary tumult. At this point, a core teaching is brought forth, which is also a charge we are given to meet these changing times: the Lion’s Roar. The Lion’s Roar is a practice of complete openness. By moving toward our experience and seeing everything that arises as workable, we have access to the highest energy, which is complete fearlessness. Through this we can see this experience as an initiation, we can approach it as sacred ceremony. We can breathe deeply so as to bring our full capacities to this situation. In so doing we find ourselves in the middle of a sacred circle. If just one person is able to find the center of their sacred circle, through the power of resonance, the people with whom they are interconnected also find a place of calm abiding.

Joanna Macy, a contemporary Zen teacher, refers to this as the Great Unravelling, and the Great Turning—a time when the systems we are a part of, begin to fray at the edges. But as we bring awareness to this, as we begin to see the opportunities to center ourselves inside the sacred circle and to reach out to others from that place of calm abiding, then the great unraveling becomes the great turning. Together, we remember our vow of great compassion and find our way.

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