

## Daily Meditation 03/01/22

### Ash Wednesday, 2022: Why Not Give Up Patriarchy for Lent?

Good morning.

Today is Mardi Gras and the Feast of Carnival in Brazil and New Orleans and elsewhere; it's the eve of Ash Wednesday. And of course, Carnival comes from two words. One is "meat," the Latin word for meat, "carne," and then the "-val" is "vale," or "farewell." Farewell to meat, because it's practice to abstain from meat for 40 days before Easter.

In other words, the 40 days of Lent. And of course this comes from religious traditions really, the world over, that deal with fasting. In the Old Testament, Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and fasted 40 days and 40 nights. Prophet Elijah fasted 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Horeb. And Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, after his baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.

And in many cultures, we fast in order to experience dreams, to go deeper into ourselves. Certainly the shamanistic traditions and indigenous traditions tap into this very reality.

So I allude in my essay today to this very fine and important book by Rupert Sheldrake, the British biologist called *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*, and subtitled *Spiritual Practices in a Scientific Age*, spiritual practices in a scientific age.

So Rupert brings his brilliance, and it is that, as a scientist, to ancient spiritual practices, ranging from meditation, to chanting, to fasting, and pilgrimages, and so forth, and so shedding a scientific light, on why these practices which you find in so many religions -- think of Ramadan, a whole month of fasting in the Muslim tradition.

So, the reason these practices are with us is because they work. And he points out the physiological dimension to how they work, and so forth. So it's really an important book and a big contribution. It's really two books that he wrote on this subject. This is called *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*, and the chapter on fasting is chapter three.

But previously, he wrote the book *Science and Spiritual Practices*, which is of the same ilk, where he goes through many practices, and why they work physiologically.

But because Rupert is a spiritual practitioner, he's a practicing Anglican, he brings in the spiritual dimension, and why he does these things, and when, and the results, as well as the scientific data that you can understand why fasting works, whether you're a believer, whether it's within religious context, or for some other reason.

And one of the points he makes is that in clinical studies, some of the effects of fasting included improved memory, a sense of being energized and revitalized; a feeling of well-being and euphoria. And the processes go on in our bodies when we fast.

So, I highly recommend this book. But again, I'm talking about fasting or abstaining from something other than food, or if you will, a different kind of food, from physiological food, from the food of patriarchy, that food that feeds, I think, the reptilian brain, and ignores the mammal brain, which is our compassionate brain, our kinship brain.

And I do think that as a species, we clearly have to go beyond this exaggerated masculinity, such as we're seeing displayed these very hours on our television screens, in this horrible invasion of a big country into a small country. And that's just one example of the patriarchy, killing people and others.

Of course, another example is that of the matricide toward Mother Earth, the climate change going unchecked, practically, or even being denied by those whose god is money and whose money is in fossil fuels.

I think these two big areas, war and the killing of Mother Earth, are the very, very shadow sides of patriarchy. So why not propose what I am proposing: that we give up patriarchy for Lent? And after Lent as well, but taking one step at a time, let's think of 40 days as one step. After that, 40 days, it'll be easier, the next steps.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.