

## Daily Meditation 01-13-25

### Spiritual Warriorhood, Deep Ecumenism & Battles Ahead

Good morning.

Today, we're meditating on Deep Ecumenism and the archetype of the spiritual warrior, because spiritual warriorhood is really a requirement for survival today in our perilous times, perilous to our Mother Earth, with the result of climate change and the climate emergency playing out even now, in the Los Angeles wildfires, as it did in the hurricanes in North Carolina, Florida and Tennessee earlier this past season. And of course, with an inauguration coming up of a new president, which does not hold an awful lot of positive promise.

So I'd like to share with you some teachings today from my book *One River, Many Wells* which I talk about in today's meditation — and in particular the archetype of a spiritual warrior, which, as I pointed out, surprised me. When I was finishing the book, I thought the book was finished, until I realized that you cannot carry out any of the themes, the theme of compassion and justice, the theme of shaking up our images of divinity, including the feminine dimensions to divinity, wisdom and so forth — that any of the 18 common principles or themes that I lay out there — these are part of Deep Ecumenism. But they require courage. They require fortitude. They require therefore, the archetype of the spiritual warrior.

And I want to add, too, that these 18 do not constitute the entire commonality of world spiritualities and world religion. For example, the topic of Work: I wrote my book, *The Reinvention of Work*, a few years after I wrote the book on *One River*. And in it, I invoke spiritual visions of the word, what Hinduism says about work, what Buddhism says about work, what Judaism says about work, and so forth, along with the Christian mystics. They all have a lot to say about work and spirituality, and they agree on so much as well.

Just one example is the dimension of Joy. The Tao Te Ching says “In work, do what you enjoy.” And Aquinas says something very similar. So what I'm saying is, that there many topics beyond these 18, but all of them require spiritual warriorhood.

So let me share with you a teaching from Thomas Berry, a great eco-philosopher and eco-prophet of our time, who is now deceased. But he talks about the Native American teaching about spiritual warriorhood. He says,

*The Indians have never accepted human life as ordinary, as something that can be managed in a controlled, painless manner. They realized that life tests the deepest qualities within the human personality, qualities that emerge in heroic combat, not merely with others, but also with oneself and with the powers of the universe. The sacred function of enemies was to assist one another to the heroic life by challenge, even by the challenge of death. So comfort, and acquisition of comforts, is not the goal of human living.*

According to Thomas Berry, who studied in considerable depth, by the way, the Native American spiritual tradition, and even learned some Native American languages in the process.

*Greed, envy, violence, and lying, and denial — denial is a kind of lying — these are realities, and they are invitations to sell ourselves short, and to settle for something small, even though it may seem large, like a big bank account or a big stock or big power. All these are examples of the enemies that have to be addressed within and without: Enemies in our own psyche, and enemies in institutions and forces and movements, including political parties, that are negative and destructive.*

So I think this teaching from Thomas Berry from the Native American tradition, is tremendously powerful and important. And again, it demonstrates the universality of the archetype of the spiritual warrior. We're not here for trivial reasons, and especially at a time like ours, when Mother Earth is suffering so profoundly, and where a nuclear war is on the horizon, and wars are happening in Sudan and Ukraine and Gaza, and so many places on the planet. And when a new regime in Washington promises a lot of upheaval, a lot of chaos, and we need the energy of the warrior to stand up to this.

Now, the warrior is not the same thing as the soldier. I had a student once who was Canadian, First Peoples Canadian, and he was in the Vietnam War. And when he came home, his elders said to him, "you've been a soldier. Now we will make you a warrior." And he said it was a four-year training to train him to be a warrior, as distinct from a soldier. The soldier is essentially given a gun and told, "Kill or be killed." But the warrior has a bigger vision. That's why it took four years of training to move from being soldier to warrior.

And I asked him, "What was the training like?" "Well, the first thing they told me," he said, "was how to play the flute" — the wooden flute, the American flute, the First People's Canadian flute — and he said, "I mastered the flute after a while, and we held a calling of the whole tribe one night, like a recital or something. Everyone came together, and I played the flute." And he said, "I played the flute very beautifully. And afterwards, each elder came up with a knife in his hand and cut a chunk out of the flute. At the end of the night, I had no flute."

My response was, "That sounds like Meister Eckhart: The soul grows by subtraction and not by addition." And he said, "What Indian said that?" I said, "Well, a 14th-century Dominican preacher and mystic." Well, he said, "I ask that question because that's exactly how the entire four years of training was like: they taught me something and they took it away, they taught me something and they took it away."

So the whole practice of letting go and of letting be, is very, very important to spiritual warriorhood. That is, Eckhart says, "we learn not to cling to anything, even to our spiritual practices," he says. We learn that capacity to be emptied — gnosis — before the new thing that Spirit is trying to do to us, the new creation that we are to co-create with.

So that is a very rich and important teaching in the ancient teachings, the indigenous teachings, about how we become spiritual warriors.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.