



Two Kinds Of Resistance, by Rhonda Fabian

The light begins its slow return to places in the North, and today a new year begins.

Some people are saying it is already “too late” climate chaos, species loss, war, disparity “that we have gone too far, the darkness is too profound. We, however, believe no darkness is so profound that a single candle cannot dispel it.

The Buddha’s teaching on light and darkness is simple: they depend on each other for their existence. Like “above and below”, “left and right”, “birth and death” take one away and its partner ceases to be. They do not have a “separate self” and neither do we. Each of us is composed of many elements “our ancestors, DNA, what we consume, our relationships, and our actions. Maybe somewhere in the world, our “opposite” also exists.

Anger, outrage, despair, fear “these are common responses to the injustices we see around us. We want to take action, to rebel, to protest and oppose the people on the “opposite” side of the issue or debate. However we must be skillful at transforming these feelings into compassionate and nonviolent action if we want this kind of resistance to be effective. This resistance requires “satyagraha”, or soul force “the fire of determination in our hearts, and a willingness to see that, like “left and right”, we depend on each other, even those with views very different from our own, for collective awakening to happen.

There is another kind of resistance we should also consider. Just as the body builds up resistance to a virus or a cold, we must build up our inner resistance to despair. Zen monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says, “In this kind of resistance there is no corporation, no politician and no policy to oppose or to rebel against. It all comes down to our own free conscious choices, without judging others or imposing our views.” For example, we can choose to consume less, to support our local economy, to reduce or eliminate meat in our diet, to look after our neighbors and the children in our community, to plant trees and care for our watershed and our soil, to be models of peace.

The new year ahead will require both kinds of resistance if it is to be truly “new”.

