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The Artist Corner

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INDRA’S NET
Reflections on the Web of Life

This moment in time is crucial to alleviating human suffering and global misunderstanding through learning to truly cherish one another, to dispel our misunderstanding that we are separate beings.

It is this misunderstanding that rationalizes global conflicts and oppression of those who seem different from ourselves. This moment is one of great urgency in the face of starvation and suffering of millions in Afghanistan, the continued starvation of children in Yemen and that of undernourished children in the United States. It is a moment witnessing the killing of young African American boys and fathers, and the young Muslim chef, Zahir in his modest Afghan restaurant. The list extends worldwide with more and more people becoming homeless and countryless, refugees teeming at unwelcoming shores.

My message is the same as the sentiment of the Iroquois Peacemaker, Deganawidah, who spoke to intertribal strife hundreds of years ago. The focus of his message was that of a “good or new mind,” leading to peacefulness and wellness. Today, we all desperately need such a “new mind.”

The Peacemaker brought his message to five sparring native peoples in the future northeastern united states. Through his vision was formed the Iroquois Confederacy, which has lasted until today, during an era of European dominance. Ironically, America’s founding fathers had come to pattern our own constitution based on the founding principles of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Our future new mind embodies what it means to be embracing human beings. We have been living under the misunderstanding that we are separate, autonomous beings, mistakenly needing to protect ourselves, our property, our country against the “other.” When in fact, as
our physicists have discovered, we are intimately interconnected with one another, as we are with the mother earth of trees, animals, fish and fowl, water and air. We are intrinsically a vital part of the web of life that not only connects us with all that is on this earth, but also with the very cosmos itself. I lift my finger and a ripple effect moves out into the universe.

We have now experienced this reality during the recent coronavirus pandemic. In order to stop this virus from spreading and ravaging, we all bear a responsibility. We are part of the person sitting next to us, as we are connected to the weeping women of Afghanistan. Global warming is both our making and our fate. The melting glaciers on mountain summits and at the poles affect all life on our planet, and even ourselves in our “climate controlled” homes.

The ancient sages of India knew well the science of the universe. The Atharva Veda preserved this knowledge in the concept of “Indra’s Net,” which is a metaphor describing the interconnected universe. Indian philosophy illustrates the reliance of all phenomena on one another. Accordingly, each jewel, situated at the infinite knots of Indra’s Net, reflects the glow of all its other jewels. It signifies that whether we know it or not, we share each other’s fates and fortunes. So, within each jewel is reflected the entire web of life. In the language of modern physics: each jewel or node is part of the quantum potential of our entire universe, of Indra’s Net.

And this beholding is what our current moment in time is all about. It is realizing who we really are, that we are inseparable from other human and living relatives, and require action from a wholesome place of knowing, from that of a “new, good mind.”

I feel it necessary to tell you of something from my own life, as I sit here with hands on a computer keyboard while speaking to the urgency of mindful change. In the mid 1970’s my own perspective had completely changed. A vision, a shift of consciousness, swept over me as
I realized that the separations of things, which I had always assumed to be true, were in fact entirely false. I beheld a web of light coursing through my body and into the boulder upon which I was sitting, and through the trees around me and into the sky above. This web of light breathed in and out as if a single, living organism. My own sense of bodily limits dissolved and I merged with this ocean of life into that of a borderless world. This vision has continued to this day to inform my life.

I had lived the first part of my life in great isolation and sorrow having been abandoned at the age of two. I would weep every night while holding a photo of my mother, who had been committed for life to a mental institution as a schizophrenic. In searching for the roots of my despair, I found solace in the web of life, which connects all. My longing for family grew into my lifelong work, the World Wheel: Global Peace Through the Arts which, in turn, recognized and reinforced all life as a great global family.

What can we each contribute to the world to make a healing difference? I know we all would appreciate some answers. I know how easy it is to feel overwhelmed, experiencing, as we are, the limitations of our lives during world changing events such as the coronavirus pandemic. But we can leave despair behind. We can realize a “new mind.” We can live harmoniously within the web of life, knowing our intrinsic existence within Indra’s glorious Net, and we can bring peace into our own hearts, as we awaken in a borderless world.
Photographs of Vijali Hamilton Art:

Spiral
Woman Made of Cosmos

Spirit within Matter