

Crisis – A Turning Point

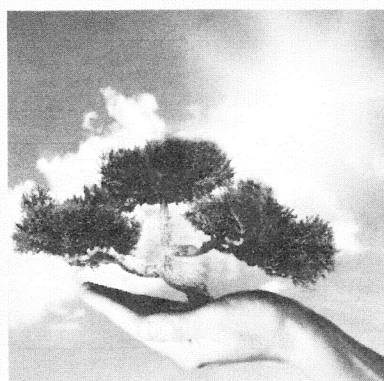
by Rosemary Wilkie

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I shall never forget seeing a middle-aged woman rejoicing as she danced round a fountain in North Carolina, thanking God and all the angels for the dolly bird who had taken her husband away and freed her to be herself and live a new life.

She probably wasn't rejoicing when it happened. Only with hindsight could she see how she had endured a stultifying marriage for years because that was what family and friends in her society expected a woman to do. Only after the event could she see how her life had been transformed. Released from social conditioning, free to travel, attend courses and make new friends, she had been able to open her heart to God again.

Were there signs that a personal crisis was looming? Probably. When a relationship is unravelling, job security is threatened, or we are spending more than we can afford, we know that the situation cannot last, but suppress the thought and carry on as before. Rationalising: *'That's the way things are,'* or *'Mustn't rock the boat.'* Trying to convince ourselves that *'one of these days'* we will do what we always dreamed of doing. Others cry: *'Why me?'* or *'It's your fault!'* Under pressure we tend to revert to what was once familiar and trusted, though it may not be what is required now. These people need our compassion and help, so that they can analyse what went wrong and dismantle the psychological or practical barriers to their growth. But faced with a crisis, many will make brave decisions and take previously unthinkable action to avert looming personal or company catastrophes, such as redundancy, divorce or bankruptcy. They learn from what happened, and rebuild their lives with fresh understanding and gratitude. We could say that these people meet life's tests and pass.



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Ours not to reason why

But why do we have to face these tests at all? When we have worked hard, done what was expected of us, and helped others to the best of our ability. Surely we deserve some peace and security now? Look at the people you have known a long time. Some have been doing the same job, wearing the same clothes with the same hairstyle, and generally living in the same way since you first knew them. Others are vibrant and busy, coping with all the tests presented by life and continuously developing, awake to new ideas and what is happening in the world.

We tend to think that a crisis is a bad thing, yet the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives that as a secondary definition: *'A turning point, a vitally important or decisive stage. A time of trouble, danger or suspense in eg politics, commerce or personal life.'*

I believe we are here on earth to develop and grow, and that without the tests represented by crises the human race would not evolve. We might not like what is happening in the world today, but the love and care from all round the world that manifest when external and unexpected crises occur – such as tsunamis and earthquakes – show that brotherly love and conscious interdependence are growing ever stronger. And that the visible crumbling and questionable behaviour of our old institutions must surely be clearing the way for the building of new and better ones.

Logic seldom has all the answers. Sometimes it feels as though it is our Soul that has engineered the crisis, to propel us from an old way of life that we have mastered, to a new one on a higher level. It is a struggle between worn-out ideas and new ones, refining our sensitivity and expanding our understanding as we analyze what has been going on within and around us. New energy flows through us and doorways of opportunity appear where we least expect them, and we see that unconsciously we have been preparing for them for years.

The lives of many great spiritual seekers and teachers are surprisingly full of life tests, each of which enhances their ability to serve and teach. We should, if we can, welcome such tests, and ask in our meditations for understanding and acceptance. ☸