

GET INSPIRED BY THE MOON

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The Moon has an inspiring and cooling effect. The full moon symbolises completeness of positive qualities that are conducive to enlightenment, or accomplishment of an objective.

When people talk of waxing and waning phases of moon, we get the idea of moon increasing and decreasing in size. In reality, this is not so. It is the reflection of your views, or it is how you take it that makes you see the situation in such ways. In Sanskrit literature, waxing and waning phases are called *shuklapaksh* and *krishnapaksh*, white side and dark side respectively. Therefore, each of the phases is increasing in different period of the lunar month. This means that we should learn to look at both positive and negative aspects of life.

Kalachakra system of Buddhist Tantra tells us that each phase, the white and the black of the lunar month is divided into sixteen parts: the last part, the white phase and the beginning, the dark phase and vice versa makes the sixteenth. That means the last part of each phase is not the end but the beginning of the other phase. Also, in this system, the moon phase can be divided into four periods: the first five days, the second five days and the third five days of a moon phase, and the period joining the two phases, simply called the fourth period. They correspond to the four states of human life, namely, awakened state, dream state, deep sleep state and the state beyond consciousness. There is also a mention of twelve movements of winds in the physical structure of our body, in this conjunction.

The first three stages in the development of the *Bodhichitta* are likened respectively to the earth, gold and the moon. The moon like *Bodhichitta* is so called because it is the stage of gaining strength increasingly. In a specific tradition of practice, there is a technique of giving and taking precepts. You are supposed to give all the good things in life or in spirituality to others in the form of white light and take to yourself all the negativities such as illness, poverty, unhappiness and bad thoughts in black forms or black coloured smoke. It is not an easy practice, at least for a beginner.

When positive and spiritual qualities reach high levels, the strength and energy is no doubt extremely high; but at our level, that is, for average people, individual and collective energies of negative things are very forceful. This we can see clearly from the fact that in communities, countries, and global blocks, the power of hatred, jealousy and anger is an increasing threat. This kind of energy is engendered by the fear of losing material and political power, and the power of influencing others.

I would go as far as to suggest that the practice of giving and taking is also done through breathing. Inhale by imagining all the negative energies entering into you in the form of black substances and transform them into positive energy. Then, exhale by imagining all that moon-like positive energy passing to all beings you can think of, in a form of light cool white substance. Try to breathe intentionally or mindfully instead of breathing mechanically or automatically. Rumi says, "We may be human beings but we're strangers to breath. We have to burn the self inside us to ashes; only then will we know breath". I am convinced that this is a practice doable by anybody who is interested. Breathing deeply is a universal practice; we don't have to associate it with any religion or ritual.