

TIBETAN NEW YEAR: THE KALACHAKRA OR WHEEL OF TIME

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Although the official Tibetan New Year is celebrated tomorrow, it actually begins later today at the New Moon (5:35 PM EST). We end the current year of solunar cycles and start a new series of Moon cycles. In Tibetan Buddhism, these great cycles of time are represented by the Kalachakra symbol:

Kalachakra translates as the “wheel of time” or cycles of time; it is also the main initiation for astrology. The Kalachakra empowerment often lasts for ten days. I was lucky enough to take this initiation from His Eminence Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche many years ago (1990).

The Kalachakra symbol refers to everything under the influence of time and its cycles. In western astrology time is signified by the planet Saturn and its 30-year cycle. I wrote a series of blogs earlier this year on “Never trust anyone over thirty” which refer to time, the Saturn cycle, and the fact that time loses its grip on us after the age of thirty years when we (our spirit) actually starts to rise up and begins to leave the body. That is part of what is called esoteric astrology.

Many of you may know something about the Kalachakra and have probably seen this symbol before. Less is known (I would wager) about the spiritual consort or partner of Kalachakra, Kalichakra or Kalachakri. If Kalachakra represents everything under the influence and bound by time, then Kalichakra represents all that is timeless, beyond the grasp of time, like: eternity.

Tibetan paintings (thangkas) show Kalachakra and Kalichakra conjoined in an eternal embrace. Like so much else in our society, the majority of our attention has been on the male deity (time and its constraints), with not so much awareness of the female deity (eternity.) As I have often pointed out, in these current times awareness of the female principle is arising much more quickly than in the past, for in reality: eternity dwarfs time.

In Tibetan astrology and with the Kalachakra tantra in particular it has been said:

“As it is outside, so it is within the body.”

In western astrology, we frequently hear the phrase “As above, so below,” which refers to the same idea, which is that the cosmic dance of the planets in the heavens is perfectly reflected in our life here on Earth, for in reality we are part of those planets and that heaven. In fact, there is in reality no inside that is not also outside and no outside that is not also an inside. It is all one.

Inside and outside are concepts and labels. I wrote this poem many years ago about the idea that the males principle actually is not the dominant one, and that if we want to be precise, eternity embraces time, and not vice versa :

IN or OUT

‘In’ is not within the ‘out’,
And out without the in.

No,
In is without the out,
And out within the in.

Michael Erlewine, Sept. 29, 1970