

**‘We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do.’**

**----Mother Teresa**

**18<sup>th</sup> Pearl: Smile**

**Oyster: Bali, Indonesia**

I arrived in Bali two months after September 11, 2001. Bali felt deserted, as there were very few tourists during this troubled time. This was certainly a very good reason for the Balinese not to smile, as their economy is primarily dependent on the tourist trade. Without the trade the people would suffer greatly. However, for the Balinese that is not their nature. They are the epitome of sweet gentle smiles, full of spirit, light and sunshine.

I was asked by many Balinese, ‘why aren’t the tourists coming to our beautiful paradise?’ I told them because in the west, we are told to avoid travelling to any Moslem country. They said, we are Hindu and peace loving. I said, ‘this doesn’t matter as you are part of Indonesia which is a majority Moslem country. They were challenged by this thought.

Even with this huge dilemma facing them, one of the first things that attracted me to the Balinese was being greeted with free flowing smiles wherever I went. The people simply smiled. It seemed as if it was coming directly from their hearts. Wherever I went, to the shops, hotels, restaurants, temples, sightseeing; or looking at my personal driver, or out of the window at children running alongside of the car waving and smiling; or dance and music performances; or festivals or even funerals – people all smiled. Not just little smiles, but full bodied smiles that exuded from all their pores.

At first, I was sceptical about this as I thought there must be an agenda. Regardless, it simply felt great to smile. In that, there was a delightful naivete which transcended into the heart.

I thought to myself, what is the cost of a smile? What does a smile give to you? How do you feel when you smile?

*A smile is what the heart does when it pumps life into you.*

*Be its outward reflection.*

It doesn't cost anything to smile. Just look around you, wherever you are, and reflect upon how many people are actually smiling from their hearts. Sadly, few people truly smile from within.

With all the problems mounting in the world, the Balinese simply smiled. It was a full bodied genuine smile, rich with giving and honouring the person receiving the smile. The smiles start early in the morning when you begin to greet people. You see women and men making offerings of lovely flowers, incense and prayers to the God's for prosperity and well-being in front of stores, hotels, doors of houses and on the streets in front of temples. The fragrance of beautifully scented flowers wafted threw the air everywhere. How could you not smile when you experience this genuine beauty?

In Bali, I experienced the many classes of society and they all smiled. They connected to a deeper meaning in life and a spirit within them. Their deep rooted belief and value systems are founded in their devotion to their Hindu culture, which honours the self, the heart, their many celebrations and Gods.

Their culture and Hindu faith also asks of them to donate parts of their income to the temples, plus pay for parts of the festivals, parades and celebrations which are happening on an ongoing basis. Wherever you travel throughout the island, there are celebrations everyday. This can be extremely stressful for them and especially when tourism is slow. They may complain about their situation like anyone else, but they seem to smile freely through it all. The key here is freely. It costs nothing to smile and also to laugh. They are the two richest gestures that we can give ourselves in life.

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Be its outward reflection.*

I was extremely happy to be in Bali and the calmness it presented to me, while other parts of the world were in a state of crazy-making pre-war build-up. I felt so distant and removed from that being in Bali. The smiles contributed greatly to this feeling of contentment. Smiles and laughter warm you tenderly. They just make you feel so good inside. They are the comfort of a mother's womb. They are friendly, loving and heartfelt.

Smiling starts from the heart and perhaps that is where we are going wrong in the west. I began to wonder, why we seem to be so mind focused and so disconnected not only from our hearts but our bodies as well. Connecting to the heart and leading from the heart gives us personal power, more motivation, energy and much more.

We take ourselves too seriously. For example, we are often so wrapped up in our self importance, sometimes victimization, our poverty or wealth, or even our reliance on others to make our lives free. It doesn't matter what the situation is in life, from the beggar on the street to the factory worker, or CEO, to the richest person in the land, smiling connected to the heart costs nothing.

Maybe the Balinese and other smiling cultures can teach us something about life, real life, the bigger picture of life. They believe in many life times so for them this lifetime is only one of many. Maybe this is one of their keys to smiling, laughter and happiness. This life is just one of many.

I remember telling a new found friend in this magical south pacific paradise island, how sad I was to leave such a place full of the smiling spirits. He wondered why. I told him I was returning back to Canada and other Western nations, where smiling can have many agendas. I explained that, often when you smile at someone on the street, they

will look away or give you an angry look, or lower their head or possibly send back verbal obscenities or even attack you. Very rarely will someone smile with their heart.

He looked perplexed, shocked and naively asked why would anyone do this. For him and most Balinese, to smile, was as natural as the trees and flowers that grace their existence. It is a reflection of their inner spirit.

*It is never too late to smile.*

*Why not begin now?*

*There is no better time as there is no tomorrow until it is here.*

*Do you want to suddenly get caught dying without a smile?*

*That I doubt.*

The Balinese like many other cultures and countries I have visited such as India, Thailand, Mexico, Central America all smile freely, as an ongoing daily occurrence. They don't have to think about it because it just happens. Can we take a lesson from their books? It just happens. I have found it usually happens with the people who do not have much in the way of finances or possessions. So what does this say? Even all the money in the world doesn't bring smiles nor complete happiness.

Give a smile today to someone you love, someone you don't know, someone you work with, and someone you don't particularly like. Start your own smile revolution and see how you feel about life. Ah-- doesn't that feel great!

*Open your heart and*

*Let the smile come forth.*

*Be open and giving,*

*Willing to share*

*Of the spirit, your heart.*

*That is the real you.*

*Just get out of the way,*

*Yes, out of the way now  
And let the sunshine through,  
Smile!  
Ahhh there it is the sunshine,  
Your heart,  
You,  
Your spirit.  
Now don't you feel better?  
Smile and pass it on to everyone  
NOW, not later  
As there is no later,  
Smile Now  
And you will sense the results immediately  
Just get out of the way NOW,  
And  
SMILE.*

I left Bali smiling and probably with a few more smile lines on my face to show for it. What a breath of fresh air that has entered into my heart through these Balinese people. Smile!

## **Discovery**

Let yourself smile and just sense what it feels like in your body, mind and soul. What does it do to your energetic state? What does or can it do for your performance in life? Take a look around you and send a smile to someone. What is the response? Take nothing personally, just smile.