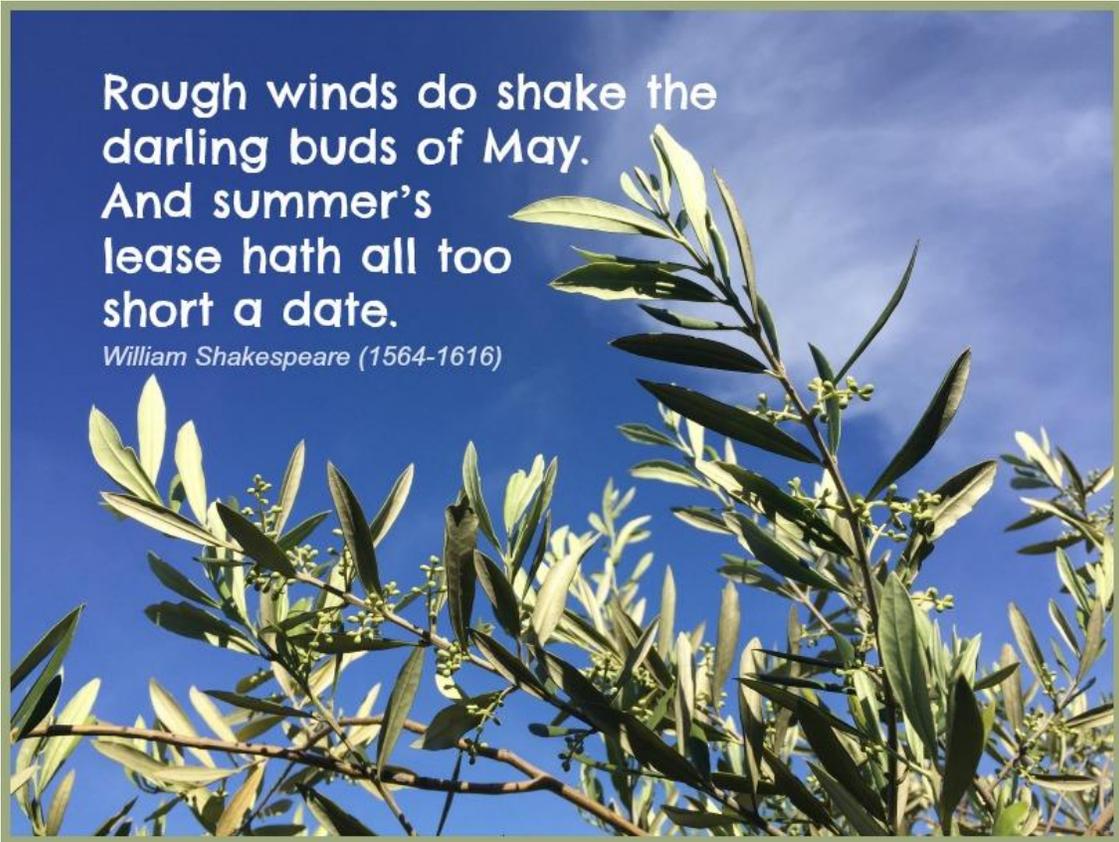


Rough winds do shake the
darling buds of May.
And summer's
lease hath all too
short a date.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)



A TIME OF NEWNESS FOR LAND AND SPIRIT

It feels as if this will be a refreshing day. The sun is barely over the horizon but hearts and souls are rising. I'm sitting at the top of a long row of olive trees. Although I'm fully aware that our country is in a horrible mess, at this moment I feel nothing but hope and joy.

There is just enough breeze to softly move the leaves of the olive trees. The silver underside seems to dance with the green tops of the leaves. And there is a waving among the trees, but they remain silent.

The birds that found a refuge for the night in the branches of the trees are



waking up and clearing their throats for a morning song. It's always been the custom of monasteries to sing Lauds ("praise") in the morning. But many centuries before there was even a thought of the first monastery, the birds were praising life with their morning music. Soon they will come out and begin their search for breakfast.

It seems to me, as I look down this row, that the birds just enjoy stretching their wings. Perhaps this is where the concept of yoga really began!



Now at the base of the trees the quail are gathering their families. Some have already started out. Typically two adults lead half a dozen or more newborns, who are looking around at the new world. Our Sister Marti used to say that with their little feathers waving, they look like a row of commas on the move. I notice one adult moving to the back of her row to get one little fellow marching along in proper discipline, rather than examining with fascination a lizard on a tree branch.

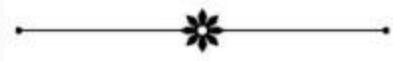
You can almost feel the plants and grasses waking up too and knowing exactly what to do this lovely day.

At a moment like this we can all sing with little Pippa, in Robert Browning's (1812–1889) poem,

*The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;*



*The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!*



There are many festivals at this time of year as spring is turning into early summer. Some are set on certain days in the solar calendar and others are very flexible, following the lunar calendar. Let us begin with one of the wildest ones!

DYNGUS DAY started in Central and Eastern Europe long before the coming of Christianity. This is a day on which boys can throw water on girls and tap them with small Pussy Willow branches. This is also a way that a boy can indicate that he has a special interest in a particular girl! She is able to ransom herself by giving colored eggs to the boys. The next day the girls can do the same thing to the boys! This is very popular (don't ask me why!) in Poland and the Czech Republic. It has also caught on in parts of the United States with cultures that immigrated from these areas.



VESAK – BUDDHA DAY! is an important Buddhist festival commemorating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. There are flowers in abundance and wonderful lantern festivals at night. Candles float on water wherever possible.

LAILATUL BARAT is a festival for Muslims that commemorates the night when God descends from heaven and forgives all sins. There is fasting followed by feasting. Corresponding with the same drama in nature, it is a fresh time to begin over again.

WALPURGIS EVE AND MAY DAY. In Europe especially, this is the spring/summer equivalent to Halloween (October 31) and All Saints Day (November 1.) In the Celtic tradition it is one of the four corners of the year. Walpurgis Eve is a very dark event and it has a pagan background. This is the night on which the Devil walks the earth and all the dead join him. Very bad things happen! At midnight there is a great meeting with the Devil and all the witches on earth on top of Bald Mountain in Bavaria. Then even worse things happen! All of this is featured prominently in some fairy tales and in the legend of Faust. This was a little too much for the early church, so they named that night after the 8th century Saint Walpurgis who was known for compassion — but that didn't change a thing!



Luckily this terrible night is followed by May Day! Here we have baskets of flowers and dancing around a maypole (I never got the hang of it but the kids loved it!) It is also International Workers' Day which used to be a great picnic day for labor unions in many parts of the United States.

HAKITONMUYA is the Hopi festival to alert people that the time of planting is almost here. Ceremonial seeds, as well as the people, and the land itself, are blessed by the spiritual beings who bring their blessings and dances. Most Native American cultures have similar

celebrations. My Pomo neighbors have an event that translates into "*Newness of the Land Time.*" I like that.

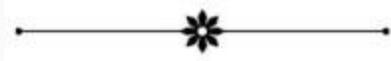
CINCO DE MAYO (5th of May) originally commemorated the Mexican army's surprise victory over the French Empire in 1862. However in the

United States, Cinco de Mayo has become a celebration of Mexican American culture in general. In the county where I live, it's a time of parades, great food, music, fantastic dancing, and much more.



And there are, I'm sure, dozens or hundreds of other celebrations coming at this time of the year because it is a time when our spirits need to be uplifted. The same holds true when we are trying to establish a newness in the land where we live. I think in this effort the young people, that some sociologists are labeling as

Generation Z, are leading the way for all of us in their enthusiastic fight against barbarism.



This is a time for looking at the buds and leaves of the trees, listening to the songs of the birds, imagining what will grow in the blessed soil we are here to protect.

Brother Toby

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