

## When Sun Sets...

I have often wondered if our preference for sun rise or sun set resonates through our bodies like the sound of the OM and the tone and register of it is known only to our individual bodies.

Time--what might be accomplished in any fifteen minute period--is a concept invented by humans. In the fourth century BC Androstenes wrote about night time leaf movements of trees during the marches of Alexander the Great. Humans, animals and plants have been observed to react to the cues of the 24 hour period of the rising and setting of the sun. These circadian rhythms occur as a result of the circular nature of a reaction pathway.

Our rhythms can be reset by exposure to external stimulus such as traveling across time zones and experiencing jet lag. Scientists have uncovered genetic components of the biological clock and gene product fluctuations. Different cells may communicate with each other synchronizing electrical signaling and periodic release of hormones. We might imagine that the eyes relay time-of-day information and send it to the clock in the brain and in turn alerting clocks in the rest of the body to align. So, the symphony of sleep/wake, body temperature, thirst, and appetite rotate and syncopate together. The larger circadian system also plays a role in interpretation of day length, species survival, migration, hibernation and even reproduction.

Our biological cycles normally follow the 24-hour cycle of the earth's rotation, rather than our innate cycle which averages 24 hours and 11 minutes for adults. Circadian rhythms can be minimally affected by almost any kind of external time cue, such as the beeping of an alarm clock, the clatter of a garbage truck, the timing of meals--the gradual setting of the sun.

Like plants whose leaves fold upward in dark and outward in daylight, my body responds to the winding down of the day. For me there is an inner awareness that the sun no longer tops the trees, rather it shifts down and filters between branches and leaves. The golden, yellow wattage of the shinny ball ratchets down. The color glow seems more white than yellow and shadows expand across the ground, producing shades of grey. Even though there is no watch on my wrist I am physically aware of the change in the heavens and I can feel that only two hours remain in the work day, or four more hours until the colors of the sky magnify and exaggerate from pale blue to breath-taking magenta.

In a still place within me the rhythm of my body announces that the sun will soon set.

The slow exhale of a deep breath sends a comforting message through my body--all is well. And, I feel the blazing sun exiting my geography. As a child I thought that the sun went into hiding, maybe in a cave or a large pocket sleeping while I slept, awakened by an alarm clock for the next day's work.

At the end of the day I like to sit outside and embrace the changing colors of the sky, almost spellbound by variations in the intensity of the light. With a tall-backed Adirondack chair as my ship, my senses and imagination transport me to tall mountains and cooling waters. My hand wrapped around a cool glass of lemon aid or glass of wine, I sink into the chair, elevate my feet, close my eyes and travel far beyond the vertical, wooden rails of the deck. Releasing the hurry of the day I imagine the soft lapping of ocean waves kissing the sand at low tide. Or, I experience the sound of rustling trees and screeching hawks in the rolling hills of the mountains.

Presiding over my sun set dreams is a massive oak tree, a goddess of green blessing me with the symmetry of her branches, blanketing, yet not touching me, sheltering, yet not confining.

When sun sets I let go and cease to push against self-imposed deadlines, or ticking clocks. Inspiration floods me--brilliant bands of purple, red, fuchsia, gold, azure, silver, and bronze--a masterpiece. When sun sets there is still light, differently toned and tuned, soothing, calming light of night.