

A Drop Is An Ocean

Separation occurs every time we think Me first or Mine first. Simple as that.



Separation occurs every time we think that we are cuter, sexier, smarter, richer, gentler, more understanding more ... more ... more than the person in the queue in front of us.



Separation occurs whenever we think we are more deserving than someone else.



Separation occurs when we think that as long as we act for the benefit of our children, our family, our friends, we can push someone, anyone, out of the way to obtain whatever it is we are after.



At its ugliest, it is often made most graphic on the big screen:
separation brings us images of looters in the aftermath of disaster.
Separation is images of otherwise *nice* people pushing and shoving each other out of the way, trampling each other to get, to horde what they think they need to survive – they want it for themselves and for their family – they want it at the expense of someone else's family.

Separation is favoring one child over another, in the home as in the classroom.

Separation is taking one look at someone and, on face value, deciding we can't possibly "connect", so we actively, if unwittingly, pursue the separation.

Separation is thinking we are good and righteous because we care for our loved ones whilst – maybe – donating to a cause that tugs at our heart's strings, but shutting down our heart energy as we pass the grungy homeless tucked away in a bus shelter.



As an adjunct to Proverbs 15:17 which states: *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it*, is a parable given to me by Moriya, an adaptation of Erel Segal's interpretation, which offers a great shortcut to understanding universal love and the concept of non-separation.

Once upon a time, there was a rich merchant who wanted to amend his karma by preparing a feast for the local poor. He had a couple of his best ox slaughtered. He despatched some servants to the market and others to find flowers with which to adorn the great hall where he would entertain the wretches. He also brought in a group of fine musicians.

As evening drew near, he surveyed all that he had brought forth and felt puffed up with pride. Only a truly rich man could produce such a feast. Only a truly good man would bother going through so much trouble for the town's wretches.

During the dinner, however, as he looked about the splendour he had bestowed on the wretches, he began to resent the dirty, uncouth folk who had invaded his great hall like an army of rats. His mind began a tally of the money they had cost him.

Why, he thought, I could have gone through the same trouble but invite my dearest friends instead. Or I could have entertained my equals, or even the creditors, whom I need to maintain in high esteem, instead of wasting it all on such hapless creatures who are so cursed by God that they are unable to help even themselves.

And these thoughts created such a disturbance in his mind that, by the end of the dinner, he could no longer stand the sight of these paupers drinking his wine, licking their lips and finding merriment in the sounds of his music. All of a sudden, he stood up. With sonorous claps of his hands, he muted the musicians. His guards returned the paupers to the streets.



At its simplest interpretation, the moral of this tale is simply that it is preferable to give someone a simple meal, even a dinner of *herbs*, but treat them with LOVE, therefore respect, than to go beyond our comfort zones and resent them for what they stand for which, in the short and long term, can have no other outcome than duplicate resentment on their part.



An added layer of interpretation could focus on those who receive for they, too, obey their own motives. Given the choice between a banquet of sweet meats at the table of a host who will treat them, at best, with polite indifference but from which they will walk away dispirited but full in the stomach or sitting in front of a simple plate of pasta at a table where they will be treated with compassionate respect, which would they choose?

The latter would be the wiser choice, but not every one is able to choose wisely.

Not everyone's intentions are pure.



And so, there is still more to squeeze out of this parable: On face value, alone, we do not know for sure which of the characters in the parable is the better person.



The banquet-giver seeks love, respect and acceptance by "giving to charity." The receiver accepts the offerings, but gives nothing in return – nothing tangible, that is.

Although it might be unintentional, what the receiver does for the one who truly wants to give and assist, be that in a financial, artistic, emotional or spiritual area, is give us the opportunity to practice universal love.

In exchange, if such a person were able to accept and replenish their own heart-energy while, themselves, practicing flowing and letting go of the past resentments, to just be in the present-moment, they, too, might find themselves in the position of feeling love and compassion and respect.



It is the search for love through overt acts that are disconnected from pure heart energy that create a type of resentment that can easily turn into hatred.



Political squabbling aside, the international arena is one where we can observe that, generally speaking, financial but mostly impersonal AID to third world nations has not, over the past fifty years, generated much pro-west gratitude and respect although billions and billions of dollar-equivalent, from many countries, have been *donated* to relieve plight-stricken countries.



Karl Marx may have been right when he said that, “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers.” But, in the spirit of the topic at hand, he totally missed the point when he thought that its fall and the victory of the proletariat *alone* would yield a society fair to all.

Karl Marx, it is safe to assume, did not factor in the destructive drag of separation and conditional love.



One main step to editing some of our karma in this lifetime is to not separate ourselves from anyone. Though we might see ourselves as individuals, the difference between us is only skin-deep and truly minimal. When we think of it, there are only so many ways anyone can react to any stimulus and I suspect that at various moments in our many lives – past and present - our

reactions have been tainted by most of the colors on the palette: from petty and nasty to generous and heroic.

The bottom line, as I see it, is that we are neither better nor worse nor any more *unique* than any one pixel is from all other pixels that make up one huge panoramic billboard.

We are neither more nor less unique than all the other drops that make up the oceans.

It is therefore most unfortunate that so many children are brought up in the notion that they are *individual* and *unique* and *special*.

It is wonderful that each child is indeed so dear to each of their parents, however, as tiny little pixels amongst 6.6 billion others, they are not unique and neither are we.



As an aside, it would be a very useful thing for parents who teach moral values to their children to also teach them the link between good thoughts and the genuinely good intentions behind *good* actions. The sooner a child learns his or her direct input to their own karma, the better because simply being *nice* and well-behaved and a good student and doing the parents proud is really not what this is about.



When it comes to non-separation, what seems to happen is that we forget that we are *only* souls in disguise. By that I mean that we are only the vehicle, the host, for our souls, right?

Truth is, this is another concept that I have not yet integrated. I understand it with my mind, but it is not one I can readily apply to my perception of people around me. The idiot in the car in front is still an idiot in the car in front.



Remember that we interpret things differently, you, me and everyone else in between. And we, mere actors, are taking our roles way too seriously. We forget that we are only play acting on a world stage defined, therefore limited, by our *perception* of it.



So ... our brain is full of ideas, most of them trivial and well beyond their use-by-date: some by a moment or two; some by a week or two; some by a decade or two; some by a hell of a lot longer.

If food, they would be too toxic to keep on our pantry shelves, yet we do not regard them as too toxic to guide the face behind the mask as we surf, sink, swim - and dunk or drown the other - through the peaks and troughs of our daily life.



Understanding all of this is easy enough for me, but I still have massive problems implementing the concept of universal love and of non-separation, as discussed so far. The hard edge that is tattooed in my energy field, the one that slides in the minute I lose my focus on the moment, the one that blinds me to the awareness that the *other* is not separate from me, is linked to the obscure insecurity that keeps me from basking contentedly in the pleasant life that I do have. It keeps me from *just being*. It keeps me from being at peace with myself and it keeps me from hearing my soul's whispers. Hence the need to practice, practice, practice.



A graphic way to remember that separation is not a logical par-for-the-course is to remember that our human body is made of a myriad of things like high glam ones such as atoms and synapses, arteries and blood, organs and muscles. It is also made up of less glam components such as bone, cartilage, water, bowels, fat and skin.

Though clearly our society certainly favors muscles over fatty tissues, we cannot separate, we cannot pick and choose, the bits of karma we like and the bits we'd like to spit out.



Understanding non-separation is to understand that, just as we cannot be whole and healthy while missing even a fraction of our components, let alone

separating muscle from fat, neither can we separate ourselves from anyone else, not even people we would normally not choose to be near. There is no healthy way to separate fat from sinew or atoms from bowels. Not while we are alive.



The good news is that when it comes to universal love, we don't actually have to go out of our way to *act* good or physically touch anyone.



The concept of equality is well entrenched in the constitution of most countries, but at best that equality only takes into account our physical and intellectual potentials.



Non-separation understands that rich or poor, dumb or bright, honest or criminal, karmically, we have all been there and done that, not only in greater or smaller ways in this life time but in spectacular ways, time and time again, in our previous lives.



To understand the concept of non-separation, it helps to see this lifetime as just another patch on the huge tapestry that each of our previous incarnations has woven for itself, with our soul onboard.

It is essential to admit that over the millennia our soul has not always inhabited such a reasonably well-balanced, harmless body, as she does in this lifetime.



When I am serious about my practice of non-separation, I try to imagine myself and my students as so many pixels all interlocked with each other. Indeed, we are all inter-dependent on each other in the classroom and in the playground. We know how inter-dependent we truly are the minute a school tragedy flares up.

The same inter-dependence becomes very graphic the moment a bomb goes off somewhere or a train derails. As a victim, if only of a fainting spell, we are on the whole ever so grateful when a passer-by gives us a helping hand and sees us to safety.



It is an unusual person who, in a weakened state, refuses the help of that stranger who peevied her a few moments earlier.



A more mundane awareness of non-separation is helpful in the classroom, my learning ground, my testing ground.

I need to remind myself that my interaction with my students is symbiotic. Should all my students decide en masse to become self-disciplined and active learners – a wish in my less enlightened moments – how would I test my own developmental processes and hone my skills? Where would my challenge lie?



Our differences are only skin-deep, most of us already know that, but since we ALL have a soul at the helm and since we ALL have an energy field, we impact on each other in ways we cannot imagine.



I have come to believe that we are as unique and different as cookies on a slab once the cookie-cutter has done its thing.



What universal love requires mostly is for us to alter our personal *energy*, not necessarily our behavior.

Similarly, when we *go out of our way* to do a good deed but resent the hell out of it – we do not score points – bad energy.

When it is an ulterior motive that prompts us to do whatever for someone else, again no point scored – bad energy.

Where does that leave the *selfless* person who cares for a dependant, perhaps an elderly parent or a disabled child, but does so perfunctorily because only out of duty?



Whether it is in regards to our crap boss or dude who gave us the finger or the bitch who did ... whatever, non-separation is about practicing feeling *energetically neutral*. No spikes of adrenaline. No repressed anger. If we respond in kind, a finger for a finger ... tsk, tsk - more points in the red. Besides, we all know how arguments can escalate out of nowhere.



Road rage is a great example of energies sparking off each other, but there are smaller rages happening in our households all of the time. What is an argument if it is not a swapping of comments triggered by action/reaction, button pushing/reacting to each other's energies?



Energies attract each other like magnetic poles.



I have come to accept that *the other* is my mirror. No matter how calm I may appear to me, no matter how my lips may smile, my energy field bounces off yours. For example, when you annoy me, it is because something in you triggers something in me that is *about* me. And, so, unless I can stay energetically neutral and in the present-moment, I spike - I react, usually negatively – and you and me are locked in a tango that is all too familiar.



Many a time, I have found myself in the aftermath of a present-moment that should have been inconsequential but did not end well at all. Why not? My voice was calm. I was calm. My words were not inflammatory and yet there was a blow up. One minute we were just talking and the next there are doors slamming.



Our energy field betrays us time and time again. There is nothing our energy field can do about it.



Although we can influence other people up to a point, but only IF the person is open to the idea in the first place, as anyone's daughter, as anyone's girl friend or partner, we already know that we cannot, not truly, alter anyone else's take on life. We can only try to adjust our own and remember that *likes attract likes*.



The only way to attempt a permanent shift is by checking that we are *in the moment* particularly when interacting with a *difficult* person or in a stressful moment.



We need to aim for being *in the moment* ALL OF THE TIME and flow through the other's negativity like the bow of a galleon ploughs through the water [or let it flow over us like water off a duck's back] but the shift will only happen when we are aware that our heart energy is present even at the loggerheads moment, not by feeling victimised, not by shrugging the other off, thereby setting up the next round.



Ironically, being in the moment means not reacting to an unpleasant moment of which the present moment reminds us. Let's not drink Today out of yesterday's cup.



We are back to the need of being in the present-moment, of not allowing our energy field to spike, of not being confronting. All we need is to practice being in the present-moment. We need to flow through it, in neutral, instead of opposing it - instead of hunkering down.



We only need to practice observing our reactions. Not letting spikes of energy, excitement, apprehension, adrenaline, resentment or whatever *taint* the moment.



The moment we spike, we *touch* energetically. Whatever we touch sticks to us, just like the invisible germs that stick to our hands when we do not wash them carefully.

Whatever sticks to us is what we have to deal with sooner or later, again and again.

Sometimes we end up with a bad case of gastroenteritis.

Sometimes we end up with yet another argument and having to deal with its aftermath.

Sometimes we end up with one argument too many.

Sometimes we end up with a nervous breakdown, a cancer or a heart attack.



Our connection to all others is palpable when we catch a cold from *someone* at the office. It is so easy to accept that strangers sue strangers over passive smoking and that we depend on everyone washing their hands before they prepare our food.



And when a killer disease like tuberculosis or a flu pandemic make the headlines, even if countries far away, we pay attention. The HIV virus has taught us that we are all connected, even if worlds apart, but we drop the connection the minute we delude ourselves into thinking that the skin that keep us all wrapped up and *pleasant * to look at also makes us a truly individual being, an island of self-realization.



According to Paul Brunton in his book **What Is Karma**, *“The esoteric interpretation of karma recognizes that a wholly isolated individual is only a*

figment of our imagination, that each individual's life is intertwined with all of humanity's life through ever expanding circles of local, national, continental and finally planetary extent; that each thought is influenced by the world's predominant mental atmosphere; and that each action is unconsciously accomplished with the cooperation of the predominant and powerful suggestion given by humanity's general activity." He adds, "the consequences of what each of us thinks and does flows like a tributary into the larger river of society and there mingles with waters from innumerable other sources [...] That is to say *I*, an individual, share in the karma generated by all others, whilst they share in mine." [7]

Not unlike a storm water out of a pipe, really. Sure, we are all connected.



One afternoon, as we watched a rainstorm drown the coastline from inside the shelter of a beach cafe, my partner pointed at the sea right in front of us. "Look at that!" she exclaimed. "One minute that sea is blue, dark blue even, and the next ... look! It's like all polluted."

She was right. The waves coming in had actually become brown. Their sparkling white crests had become dingy.

"Storm water from the drains on the other side," interrupted the waitress, as she pointed to a rocky outcrop off to the right.

My partner and I looked at each over our glass of perfect dry white wine. "Look how it's spreading out seawards from waves closest to the shore."

Sure enough over a matter of minutes brown water had bled into an ever-expanding area of the sea.

"Ugly. Very nasty," is all I could reply, mesmerized by the graphic illustration of what karmic *pollution* might look like in our energy field.

7. P. Brunton (1998), *What Is Karma?* Larson Publications, Burdett, NY, p.25.

The following day, I went looking for the storm water pipes near the outcrop and, sure enough, though the rain had long stopped, tannin-colored water was still meandering through runnels it had cut into the sand on its way to the sea. By then, though, the ocean had processed it all and was back to its normal colors- varied hues of blue and green.



Like the ocean, our ego-persona appears to be managing well on the surface. It absorbs. It hides. It deals - up to a certain point. But our ego-personas have great limitations. They only rely on past memories. The past is static and memory is fallible.



Should you now feel ready for a charming, cute and quaint DVD through which to pit your understanding of soul vs ego, spiking vs being in the moment and separation vs non-separation, I encourage you to view *Ratatouille*, directed by Brad Bird, Jan Pinkava.

It has all the right ingredients - great verbal and visual wit, a vibrant 3D animation and an unlikely but adorable main character, Remy, the rat. All films can be deconstructed from a spiritual perspective by those of us who enjoy that extra layer but most, like *Brave One*, starring Jodie Foster, considered *good* in spite of their violence, showcase the dark, mechanical side of the universal ego-persona, whilst *Ratatouille* is simply delightful.

