



*“Those who are so concerned with their lives make life unbearable for themselves. Even when they have what they want, they are not happy. They want to accumulate even more.”*

**Chuang Tzu**

## **Samsara Karma: Too Comfortable**

**Through our comfort we bestow upon ourselves – INDIFFERENCE**

*“The circumstances that set up the conditions for re-birth are those which have to do with cravings for sensual pleasures.”*

**Buddha**

One of my lethargic students came for his weekly session recently and said something deeply revealing and insightful. He waltzed in with a sarcastic smile on his face and said: “Ya, know what? I found out something about myself this week that really got me.” A concern then moved like a cloud across his face mixed with a transfixed horror of embarrassment. He looked at me with a demoralized sense of utter dejection, then said, “...the smallest amount of discomfort that I have while doing my practice (meditations), or anything for that matter, causes me to just quit.” He went on with a litany of examples that confirmed that he was just a “failure” when it comes to doing anything that is outside his “comfort zone.”

This could be said of many people I have met through my teaching years. Most of the people that came to me were way overindulged and, hence, have created psyches that were apathetic toward any effort made to do things in this world that were not “easy.” Of course clinically one could say that my student suffers from depression, which he does, and that he lives with an obsessive-compulsive disorder, which he does.

But what good is all of this diagnosis without real help, and I mean real help! His doctor just puts him on drugs that keep him living with the OCD and depression in order for him to maintain his job and the pursuit of his indulgences. So the medical “cure” is another form of indulgence (ease) in order to live a “normal” life that is filled with indulgences. Many people are content with this kind of treatment because it is “easy” and they do not have to “suffer” the effort to move into humility and, hence, the humiliation of finding out their own state of being, which was created out of exacerbating the DNA through gratification.

We are deeply reluctant, or shall I say fearful, to move our attentions to the “within” and find out what is occurring in the hidden recesses of our unconscious. We just do not want to “know” what is happening in there because we fear that we will not be able to “deal” with it all. In the case of my student, much of what he suffers from has to do with DNA and how he was treated as a child. But nonetheless, there comes a moment when a person has to look at what they are doing to themselves through endless gratifications and how it has set into motion a fear that is totally unchecked...hence, unconscious.

We know that something within us is going astray, but we do not really connect the dots and so we go into life trying to gratify ourselves through it all in the endless pursuit of something we call “happiness.” This never works, but we keep trying to make it work because the fear of going “within” and seeking something that is greater than gratification seems so distant and difficult.

It is all about the psyche and how we have turned away from it through gratification and, of course, living with our soul, mind and spirit through indifference. Our psyche is the culmination of spirit, soul and mind so we may live apart from the human fears and encumbrances of emotional gratification. But we turn away from all of this for the sake of making our point of reference in life that of just “enjoying” ourselves. My question is: HOW MUCH SHOULD WE ENJOY OURSELVES in this world before it turns into obsession and we lose our sense of the Way?

Both Buddha and Jesus talked about living in the world, but not allowing the world to live in us. Wise advice I would say. For each of us, living takes on a different tone and rhythm. I find that there are signs that point to the way we are living and only we as individuals can know what that means to us. But in all of this there are definite signs that any of us can recognize that teach us, reveal to us, what we are doing to our psyche.

When we are living for the goal of ease and comfort it is a sure sign that we have fallen into our gratifications. This applies even if “ease and comfort” to us are about being abusive toward ourselves as a form of gratifying punishment. This is why religion is so popular. People get to feel bad about themselves, as sinners, in order to feel “right” about their life and world. Around and around it all goes as a dog chases its tail. We keep looking for the pony in the midst of the shit we have created for ourselves as a race of human beings.

This is why a Lao-tzu, a Buddha, a Jesus...are so very unusual. Typically, we kill these people because they have a psyche that reflects consciousness and we have only a mind that is filled with fear. Our fear is simple to “understand.” It is all about our dislike for impermanence. We like everything the same and predictable. We want no changes unless they upgrade our gratifications. Most people never question any of this and, in truth, many people would say after reading this... “so what?” The “so what” reveals itself through our day-to-day and lifetime-to-lifetime state of Karma.

My first story for you this week is about a man who thought himself helpful to an old sage who was working extra hard in order to draw water from a well. The well-intentioned young man was seeking to help make the effort of getting water easier for the sage. But the old sage was wise and knew his own “mind” ...hence, was disciplined about how he lived with his mind. Please read this and I will explain.

*A brash young man watched a sage drawing water from the village well. Slowly, hand over hand, the old man pulled up the wooden bucket of water. After some time the young man left and returned with a pulley, and excitedly explained how to use it, and how easy it would be to draw water by cranking the handle.*

*The old man refused: “Were I to use a device like this, my mind would congratulate itself on being so clever, and then I would quit putting my heart into what I was doing...If I don’t put my heart and whole body into my work, my work will become joyless. And how then do you think the water would taste?”*

Now, to many people it would seem foolish not to take the young man up on his offer to reduce the struggle it takes in order to draw water from the well. But this sage was a Master because he was aware of the mind that he had. He knew the state of his human mind and knew he would find that his mind and body would be gratified by the clever use of the ingenious device. I would say that most of us would take the young man up on his offer.

But the wisdom of the sage was that he was not going to be fooled by his emotional need for gratification. He put his psyche to work in his life. He put his whole heart and body into the work of getting the water. He was using the well and the water as a device for his own spiritual awakening. His “joy” was in the effort and not the accomplishment of gratification, which he described as “congratulatory.” This man knew his elements and did not try to alter them for the sake of emotional ease. Rather, he just used his inner disposition in a way that brought about living in a totality that would reveal to him the state of consciousness rather than the gratification of ease and emotional comfort.

All of this goes against the very grain of our society, country and Madison Avenue. We seek

to live more comfortably and to do it with as little effort as is possible. The 'ol "...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" thing we find in the Declaration of Independence has become the slogan that rationalizes our self-indulgence. Our forefathers had no idea how this would play out in future generations of people who are simply overindulged and selfish.

The road far less traveled is the exact opposite of the "pursuit of happiness" that has become the Western standard of living throughout the world. There are those of us in this world that are like the old Sage in the story offered to you in this Commentary. We work as we work in order to develop our psyche in order to produce consciousness - not emotional reward. This I learned from every Master and teacher I have ever had who was authentic. "Work is Love made visible," as Kahlil Gibran stated, and this is the essence of Joy and the only real pursuit worth living for it stops the pattern of living lifetime after lifetime in the Karma of selfishness.

One of the reasons people are so deeply unhappy is that they are emotionally based - it is their only point of reference in this world. We, as a country, have used alcohol, food, entertainment and shopping malls as our way to "de-stress." I was doing some research recently and found the following on the BBC health news, "...a poll of 2,000 adults aged 20-45 found that 44% drank all or most evenings and one third think about having a swift drink before they even get home. Stress and bad days at work were the most common reasons for drinking. "

Almost two-thirds of people who live in an industrial nation rely on alcohol to calm their "emotions" in the evenings. This is a big number and the sad aspect of it is that this kind of emotional gratification has been absorbed into our culture as completely "normal." Beer and wine are considered mere beverages that people drink in order to be social and not to quench thirst. A whopping 68% of people polled said they made sure that they had alcohol at home at all times and 71% said they bought alcohol as a part of their weekly grocery shopping.

Then there is **retail therapy**. This from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University: "*Retail therapy* is a common coping mechanism similar to emotional eating, the researchers said. After a stressful experience that challenges their self-image, consumers tend to increase their overall consumption in order to distract themselves and *forget all about it.*"

Present research shows that consumers use products to reactively cope with challenges to their self-image. In a new study, the researchers determined that "shoppers also spend money on new purchases to proactively protect themselves against potential challenges."

Then there is **emotional eating**. Researchers at the Mayo clinic have found that many people do not think they eat emotionally because they do not recognize an emotion. They

may think stress eating is done when they know they are stressed and they choose to go eat because of that. The sneaky thing is, they don't usually know they are emotional. The purpose of the food is to avoid the feelings.

Here is a scenario: you are watching TV (or on the computer, or at work or on the phone with mom)...when suddenly, and without hunger pangs, you want to eat something. You are not aware of any emotion. But if you look closely, you are not hungry...so why do you want to eat?

People say, 'I just love food,' or 'It was there calling to me.' When people understand the food and feelings connection, this doesn't usually happen. You become clear on the fact that food does not have any kind of hold over you. It is, in fact, an inanimate object. There is something going on underneath the urge to eat when you are not hungry.

People are typically unskilled at determining their feelings. We are taught from an early age to escape any uncomfortable feelings through any means necessary. So we stuff...often with food.

So what does all of this say about us? That we are only looking for a way to appease ourselves and not deliberately deal with the emotions that we call "feelings" that weaken our ability to mature and truly live a more conscious life. You see, to have the discipline to deal with our pain, sorrows, fears and worries is the very essence of learning how to live. Just live. Most people, you can see, will NOT do a thing about this problem because there are so many different alternatives that one can use to whitewash the situation and, hence, come up with a myriad of excuses and rationales that keep us from facing the facts, much less the truth of ourselves.

As Jack said, "You can't handle the truth." He was right. Why? What is it in a person that needs so much insulation from the Truth that they will harm the body and destroy an entire lifetime? Why is it that we are so deeply sensitive to avoiding the pain that would, in essence, liberate us to know Love? It all comes down to our point of reference in this lifetime. This point of reference has to do with Samsara Karma and why we incarnate over and over again in the same ways.

The answer is: FEAR. The fear of what? Fear does NOT need a "WHAT" in order to sustain it. We are born in FEAR due to past life experiences that we just cannot (typically, will not) connect the "dots" to. We fear our survival, we fear living without fear. We just fear. It is FEAR that makes us live as we do because we do not care to acknowledge our emotional state in the body.

Until we realize what EMOTIONS are, we will live in a constant fear of them and through them. Our FEAR is born out of not knowing what our emotions are and what they are doing

to us. This is it! It is not rocket science. But for most people it might as well be. When my student came to session and shared with me his inner discovery...he was shocked. He, like so many in this world, is afraid to see what he has done to himself through unbridled gratification that has NO limits.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WEEK

There is so much to say here that I just cannot write it all. It requires hours and hours of session work. But one thing is for sure...we all need to curb our gratifications. We must learn what an emotion is and how it works within us. If a person is unwilling to do this... there is no path to Love in this life and that person will fall to their Karma in this world and the many to come.



## Emotions

*"Happiness in comfort is not real happiness; when you can be happy in the midst of hardship, then you see the true potential of the mind."*

**Huanchu Daoren**

The dictionary defines emotion as "instinctive or intuitive." Well the truth of the matter is that my emotions are instinctive until I stop indulging them. When this occurs they can become the conduit for intuition. But emotions are NEVER the intuition itself. Intuition occurs when we are humble enough to hear the tone and tenor of the "other shore" that lives within us. Until then we live with our emotions as "instinctive." Allow me to help you here, as this could be something that actually allows you to turn your life over to the Love that you truly are.

INSTINCTIVE EMOTION: These emotions are, by nature, primitive and inborn in the body that we have come to live in through Karma. These emotions are based in survival. This survival is about worldly living and social stature in our society. There is an essence of ruthlessness in this emotional state, which makes it harmful and deeply dangerous as a state of Karma whereby we live an “eye for an eye” as the Bible states.

Instinctive emotions are unconscious and are derived from what Darwin called: “Natural Selection” and “Sexual Selection.” This means that our instinctive urges come from the need to survive, which includes the proliferation of the human species. This deep primitive urge affects our many social behaviors that make reproduction a serious issue to the person who believes they are here only to create a “family” and fulfill their genetics.

Some people, who are emotionally determined due to strong past life instincts, move into the world with deep states of hate and anger that do not really apply to their current lifetime as of yet. So they go out and simply reenact behaviors that they lived in another place at other times. Some people have this instinct so strongly that they can call to themselves those souls who were actually with them in these past lives and, hence, reenact the whole scenario again and again.

When I sat in front of my Master for the first time in India, he explained my whole process of being with him and how it all came to be. The Cliffs Notes on all of this was that I had been with him in a past life that was not long ago. I was there to fulfill my part in his life and he in mine. This was taken away from us due to his death, as a former student killed him before our work could be done. Sound like a familiar story? It is...and I was “called” to him to continue my inner quest in this lifetime. When he told me all of this, I knew he was spot on as I could recall so much happening within me that confirmed it all. This went right down to childhood fears of violence that I had had, along with the dreams that pounded me night after night.

I was with my Master to remove myself from the instinctive emotions that influenced me over and over again. I have many students that are driven by these emotions and they go nowhere in this lifetime due to the fact that they are just being pushed and pulled by their own inner desires for emotional fulfillment. To allow our emotions to move into their most “rightful” place is to no longer indulge them as we do. It is to learn how to live with whatever could be emotionally indulgent and not allow this to become the makeup of our lives. To allow emotions to “call” out our intuition is the essence of it all.

So when we feel emotional and do not meditatively observe what our emotions are pointing to, but act and react from them and then back to them - we have caused ourselves tremendous pain and sorrow that is useless. This is what the pedestrian student does. They fight “fire with fire” and come out of it all “toasted” through Karma by their own willfulness.

The more insightful person realizes that the emotions are warning us of something or showing us the potential of something in our lives and now it is up to us to not interpret it through instinct. It is time to realize the “bigger picture” of the given situation and “fast” from emotional reactions, therefore bringing up the intuition. Ah, sweet intuition.

INTUITION: Intuition is defined as: “The ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning.” I would say that this definition needs some help as there is so much more to our intuition. Intuition is the essence of communion with the All that is and bypasses the conditioned state of my mind, which is everything I think must appeal to the thoughts that I can think. We all have intuition but due to our insecurities and fears...we do not allow for it.

Oftentimes I have heard people talk about how women have a greater sense of intuition than men. Typically I find this is true. But it is very important that men develop intuition as a part of their process of maturing out of the male bondage of pride.

Learning how to become intuitive is very simple. It is learning how to “fast” or remove my attentions from the interpretation of emotions and place my awareness on where they are leading me. If I am willing to be alerted by emotions, without becoming emotional, then I can be “intuited” to the place where I can realize that which is Love...then I have found the Light. But if I listen to my emotions and just succumb to being emotional...then I have missed my opportunity for clarity.

My closing story might be of help. It is about a Zen master and how his emotions got in the way of his effort to paint. I hope you are able to “get” this story as it has helped me over the many years of my work with students. Listen to this as you read it.

*A story is told about a Zen master, a painter, who was designing a new temple, a pagoda. And it was his habit to have his chief disciple by his side.*

*He used to draw the design, look at the disciple and ask: “What do you think?” And the disciple would say: “Not worthy of you.” So he would discard it. This happened ninety-nine times. Three months passed and the king kept asking when the design would be completed so the building could start.*

*And then one day it happened that while the master was drawing the design, the ink ran dry. So he told the disciple to go out and prepare more ink. The disciple went out and when he returned, he looked and said: What? You have done it! But why couldn't you do it for these three months?*

*The master said: “It is because of you. You were sitting by my side and I was divided.*

*You were looking at me and I was target-oriented, it was not fun. When you were not there, I relaxed. I felt that nobody was looking and I became whole. This design I have not done, it has come by itself. For three months it would not come because I was the doer."*

Let there be no "doer" and you will find that your emotions just fall into their rightful place and then you can, as the Master did, let it "come by itself." This is so true. I know it well. The effort is to not add any energy to the situation...emotionally speaking. Just wait and allow for everything to work as it needs to.

Seeking comfort over Love is a very common thing to do in this world. Sad to say, it is the way most people measure success in this lifetime. Actually emotional comfort (gratification) sustains the quality of our Karma by keeping it in play throughout our many lifetimes. So when my beloved student came in to tell me that he was amazed at the fact that the slightest amount of discomfort enabled him to just quit practicing his meditations...he was telling me nothing new. I have seen this so many times in my career.

Learning how to "fast" from our emotions and their gratifications...is the essence of deep inner work in the beginning. Learning how to just "sit" with all the noise in the mind and body and not be attentive to it all...is the very core of our practice. You can do it. All it takes is the willingness to be uncomfortable for a while. You will live!

What did Lao-tzu say: "Do the difficult before it becomes impossible."

Enough of me for today...please forgive me.  
Metta to you,  
Swami Chaitanya Siraj  
(Gregory Penn)

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