



"We now live in a nation where doctors destroy health, lawyers destroy justice, universities destroy knowledge, governments destroy freedom, the press destroys information, religion destroys morals, and our banks destroy the economy."

Christ Hedges

Karmaphala Karma: Extremes

How far is too far?

"The middle way is a view of life that avoids the extreme of misguided grasping born of believing there is something we can find, or buy, or cling to that will not change. And it avoids the despair and nihilism born from the mistaken belief that nothing matters, that all is meaningless."

Sharon Salzberg

First this:

A hermit was meditating by a river when a young man interrupted him. "Master, I wish to become your disciple," said the man. "Why?" replied the hermit. The young man thought for a moment. "Because I want to find God."

The master jumped up, grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, dragged him into the river, and plunged his head under water. After holding him there for a minute, with him kicking and struggling to free himself, the master finally pulled him up out of the river. The young man coughed up water and gasped to get his breath.

When he eventually quieted down, the master spoke. "Tell me, what did you want most of all when you were under water?"

"Air!" answered the man.

"Very well," said the master. "Go home and come back to me when you want God as much as you just wanted air."

I am a Mac guy! I always have been since the first Mac, which came out way back in the 80's. The Mac did not make me feel stupid. It was intuitive and allowed me to be creative and find hidden elements of expression that were obscurities deep within the recesses of my unconscious mind. It was fun and liberating to use one.

For many thousands of people who like myself were not interested in how a computer worked, but more fascinated by what it could do, Mac broke the glass ceiling of the “impossible” barrier that lived within my limited scope of self-awareness. I became an Apple devotee because the Mac was a machine that could, like a biofeedback machine, reveal the hidden treasures that the conventions of my mind at that time could never show me.

Apple in those heady days was a movement away from the status quo, which was at that time IBM. Apple became a cult following where even someone as clumsy as myself could play with a mechanism that allowed me to create books, Newsletters and whatever I could imagine in order to communicate with my students—this meant so much to me personally. This little box allowed me to express the depth of the unknown that I did not realize existed within me.

I became very loyal to Apple for the innovation that allowed me to become a better teacher.

The computer era of the 80's was a time of revelation through innovation. The Mac cult, as we were called back then, was a group of artists and innovators who freed people such as myself to become productive nerds.

Apple, the Mac and all of the amenities of this machine were extremes in their day and I was, and am, deeply grateful to Apple for the innovation that helped me serve humankind.

BUT...sad to say, much of the innovation that Apple had in its day has caved into the emotional poverty of the pedestrian mentality and now serves as the backwash of the status quo of our society. While the iPhone was a real innovation and helps us all communicate with each other, it too has recently succumbed to what society has become through the **extreme** of hate.

Hate has become “cool” in our culture.

If you have upgraded to the recent IOS system, you will notice in the emojis a new symbol. Apple, while avoiding pornography for years on its devices, has now allowed the emoji symbol of the age old “fuck you” by putting the “finger” in its galleries. When I saw this, my human heart sank to an all time low. It is now official that Apple has gone the way of the society by becoming **“Extreme.”**

Now I am no prude or saint. I once did a Discourse on the very word “fuck.” My point was how we use the word so unconsciously in human frustration as well as being a strange compliment to those we liked and a derogatory expletive to those we do not like. There is no better word than “fuck” to display the inward frustration, disdain and hate that the human carries. The word itself has more uses than any other word in our language. My point was to help people realize how cavalier we are with the emotion of hate. The discourse was a satire on human beings and how disconnected we are from kindness.

The audience at that time was not mature enough to see the whole point of it all. But I did it, because it had to be done with the work I was seeking to offer to the congregation at the time. It was the thinning of the herd that was so necessary.

But to use the emoji to tell someone to “fuck off” or “get fucked” via a text really saddened me and from a company that stood for creative change in this world. The emoji symbol of the “finger” is one that I cannot think of ever using in order to express Gregory’s emotional dissatisfaction for anyone or anything. The hate behind this emoji is just spreading the emotional junk to others and does not offer the inward peace that we all need in order to live with ourselves as well as with each other.

I sound like my mother here writing this to you and I don’t mean to. It is just that there are too many of us on this planet and we need to learn how to at least tolerate each other, if not forgive us all, for ***we know not what we do***. Spreading the hate through the contempt of flipping each other off via the iPhone is certainly not helping the world.

This small nuance of going ballistic via long distance is a huge extreme to me. I could argue the other side of all of this and make it all seem so harmless. But it is not harmless as it breeds more hate. We all know what Buddha said:

“Hate never yet dispelled hate, only Love dispels hate.”

But of course who cares about what the Buddha taught when we are angry? Do you? Maybe so, maybe not, but one thing for sure we all are responsible for the state of the world and it begins with small things that may seem inconsequential to our ego. But my dear one, as the populace grows so grows our Karma. Nothing we do is without consequence. Nothing, no matter what a person may believe is true.

Our extremes have a way of showing up in our efforts to awaken as well as in our outer lives. But as long as hate is sexy we will never see the light or feel the vibe of Love.

We, as a society, have become so extreme that our jadedness has become fashionable. Case in point. After finding this “finger” in my emoji library on the iPhone I asked a twenty-five year old, who I do not know, how he felt about it. I was at Whole Foods checking out and asked the young man about how he would use it. Here is what he said.

“Oh, man I don’t care. It does not bother me to have someone flip me off. I would just retaliate by flipping them off and go on my way.” Then I asked him whom he would send this to? I mean saying, “fuck you” or “fuck off” to someone via text is extreme and harsh. His response was, “I don’t really know and I don’t really care! It just does not matter to me. But it is good to know that it (the emoji) is there in case I need it.”

Ah, the “I don’t care” mentality! Of course he was a millennial. Now we all know that being told to “fuck off” or “fuck you” is not a sign of compassion, nor does it promote understanding between people. I realize that in trying to work out human difficulties there will be cul-de-sacs that we all face. But to merely cast it all off and just say... “Fuck you” seems to be what the world does not need now.

I am sure that you see where I am going with all of this. Our extremes promote hate, fear and unkindness. Another example of how our society and culture is turning into a breeding ground for hate is the state of our entertainment. I recently went to see a movie. The trailers for the upcoming movies were horrendous. There were vivid displays of

violence and ugly dramas about killing people. Some of these upcoming movies were based in “true stories,” so we are told. So this graphic violence is sanctified by the dubious fact that these movies are based in “reality” and, hence, validates this extreme.

Violence is sexy to the people of extreme.

Extreme is built into our society and culture now as normality. We can't turn back. This extreme has been in our culture since the very beginning of our country. Our forefathers created the Constitution that was to give humankind the freedom of expression. But in doing so with people who have no sense of the Soul, which includes about 99 percent of us humans, we have created nothing but a breeding ground for hate and its violence.

We revolt against the wrong things and sustain our lack of intelligence by fighting for the futility of a “freedom” that is certainly not sustained through governments. But on we go with extreme weapons, extreme entertainment, extreme religions, extreme politics, extreme hate and extreme fear as our guides. We will never mature into what lives within us as Love if we insist upon all of this as being the norm of our own lives.

Please remember that even if you do not subscribe to all of the extremes that I have just shared with you...that INDIFFERENCE to all of this is an extreme as well. We cannot just turn our heads and believe that none of this exists, because it does.

I am not asking you to go out and protest. I am presenting to you that we can all do something about these extremes by conquering the core of these drastic expressions of fear and hate from within ourselves. If we wish to see a change in this world, it must come from an inner transformation, a revolution of consciousness. This is the only way any of us can mature and make a real contribution to this world.

Buddha gave it all to us, the sum and substance of it all when he taught us to:

“See how you love and what keeps you from the journey.”

Until I realize for myself just how foolish I have been for the way I have “loved” and for what I have “loved” which means emotionality, I will be a part of the extremes of this society and its sick culture. We all need an inner revolution that extends past our own hate and fears. Until I overcome my own fascination with my genetic “heart” I will be a willing participant in everything that I have just presented to you.

My Karma will draw to me the “accidents” and the circumstances that the society promotes through spiritual indifference and ignorance. Just being here on earth brings difficulties. These hardships occur due to having a body. Our bodies carry with them the genetic disposition for many acts of personal violence. Lao-tzu said in his precious Tao:

“Accept disgrace willingly. Disgrace comes with having a body.”

He is correct. If the body is used for the expression of our DNA, which is comprised of pure fear for survival, we will naturally use our genetics of emotionality to deal with our fears. This means that I will use my genetics (family lineage) to fight off my DNA, which is full of fear, and uses hate to overcome other people's hate. Nothing is achieved here and if I follow this path, I will have little or no interest in meditation which is about more refined energies that sustain...Love.

But most people do not think this way and don't seek to live this way, even if they know the possibilities of an authentic spiritual practice. We live as a people, as a society of individuals, who writhe in the complexities of the subjective emotionality that is allowed to evaluate and confirm a person's competency. We call this self-esteem. We place more value in this need to be subjected to our genetic emotionality than we do in finding personal freedom.

We seek emotional fulfillment as a way of living with a "self" that simply does not exist. Our whole life is devoted to the struggle of being "worthy." We succumb to all of this through pride and shame. We do not see that with pride comes shame. Anything that has to do with our psychology is a catch 22. But we do not recognize this until we get some distance from the "self," which is pure emotionality, through meditation.

The "self" is the state of emotions that we live from.

Allow me an example of this "self." If a company wants to sell us a product, they will do it through presenting to us the extremes that depict the state of our self-esteem. First they will show you through intimidation that if you do not buy this *thing*, you will be on the "outside looking in." They will hit the "insecure" button (self-concept) that most people live to protect and hide in order to make it appear smart or in the know.

So with enough intimidation and promise of social acceptance I will choose to buy the thing or stuff without consciously knowing why. I will believe that I know why, but in fact that is simply a choice made by my emotionality through the unconscious mind. For all it wants to do is fulfill the psychological construct of being accepted, admired and even worshiped.

We believe that if we were to choose to buy their *stuff* that we in turn will overcome our own imperfections without any real inner work and life will be good.

Another example, the Weather Channel (who'da thought?) has been using extremes in order to awaken the morbid curiosity of human nature that is the intrigue of fear to get me to open up their app to see what the weather is going to be. They will announce that there is a great tragedy about to happen through weather and try to get me to watch the video that they have prepared in order to pacify my curiosity about human tragedy. It is like rubbernecking to see a car accident on the freeway.

We seem to find great intrigue and emotional satisfaction in watching other people suffer.

When I go to read about the news or sports, I am badgered by extreme ads that are always vying for my attentions to go somewhere else and buy another "thing." This passive aggressive strategy placates and feeds the attention deficit people who just can't concentrate on anything other than video games and graphic movies that show useless violence.

Our extremes are all about money! How to get it and who will be willing to pay for stuff!

Young adults, now called Gen X, and of course the Millennials, who are the target of all advertising, are a different kind of animal than the baby boomers were. They are statistically enamored with themselves. They want all of the social amenities of technological convenience as well as having the traditional family due to inheriting low

self-esteem. But in both generations there is this blind spot that they have little or no concern about.

They could care less about spiritual maturity or about helping the planet via not having more children. They believe that if they can afford a child, they should have one, or two or three. Many are Catholics, I have found, which helps them rationalize the need for babies through “god’s will.” They have no sense of the bigger picture or interest in anything that would limit getting what they believe they emotionally need and want when it comes to bringing children into this world. Conservation is important only when it affects them through overpopulation, which they hugely participate in.

In general (but not all, I am sure) Gen X and Millennials live life as if they are the sole proprietors of this world seeking to soothe the savage heart (genetic) through sports, entertainment and videogames. I talk with them weekly as I have a Gen X stepson who freely admits all of this to me, along with his friends who frequent my home and regale me with their philosophies of the ol’ “...just have fun until this thing breaks.” They have not a clue about life, nor are they open to anything other than their own beliefs. They are stuck on just living to drain as much of the juice of life as they can and then just throwing away the fruit.

They see people like me as weak and foolish because we seek a deeper path that just does not make sense to their “prove it first” mentality. The pushing and shoving mentality of their world, ours now as well, is just the way it is in this life and one either ignores it or goes along with it! There is no sense of consciousness at all to them.

To Gen X and Millennials it is all about science. What can be proved through science is reality to them. I understand this, and frankly to me it is another extreme. The religious person is to the left and the person of science is to the right. Both are extremes, and living in such a way, they do not realize the full potentiality of the other.

Life is the science of the incalculable and mysticism is the admission of the inexplicable. They seem like oil and water, but they are not. Science and mysticism can, and do, reveal each other as vital elements of the Oneness that exists in this part of the Universe.

I found out through Pew Research that both Gen X and the Millennials have inherited more money (trust fund babies) than previous generations ever have. In addition to this, they are content with the “...eat, drink and be merry...” mentality. They do not sense that there is anything else but science and/or what is occurring here on the planet. When asked about death they come from the place that death is the end of life and that be, that! So their motto is “get all you can” before you can’t!

Statistically these two generations carry within them through genetics the seed of their parents, who were deeply disappointed with the world that they themselves created and, hence, taught their children, now adults, that going extreme is the way to express themselves and survive. It is all about obsession and compulsion in order to remain... alive. Gen X (my stepson being one of them) only believes in what serves them, entitles them and entertains them. For the most part, there is nothing else in this life but what you can see, hear and touch.

I talk to both generations from time to time and find that they are highly skeptical about anything that might limit their abilities to do what they want. Like my generation, they

are intrigued with money, sex and technology. But there is a difference...these two generations (Gen X and Millennials) are without any inner sense of interest in the mystical aspect of living. After talking to them, it is obvious that they simply believe that unless something quickly translates into their world as a positive or as a way of amusing them that the element (in this case meditation and transcendence) is useless and unnecessary.

Here is a story that absolutely illustrates what I am talking about.

Four frogs sat upon a log that lay floating on the edge of a river. Suddenly the log was caught by the current and swept slowly down the stream. The frogs were delighted and absorbed, for never before had they sailed.

At length the first frog spoke, and said, "This is indeed a most marvelous log. It moves as if alive. No such log was ever known before."

Then the second frog spoke, and said, "Nay, my friend, the log is like other logs, and does not move. It is the river, that is walking to the sea, and carries us and the log with it." And the third frog spoke, and said, "It is neither the log nor the river that moves. The moving is in our thinking. For without thought nothing moves."

And the three frogs began to wrangle about what was really moving. The quarrel grew hotter and louder, but they could not agree.

Then they turned to the fourth frog, who up to this time had been listening attentively but holding his peace, and they asked his opinion.

And the fourth frog said, "Each of you is right and none of you is wrong. The moving is in the log and the water and our thinking also, but if you look still deeper then nothing has moved, because nothing can move and there is no where to move."

And the three frogs became very angry, for none of them was willing to admit that his was not the whole truth and that the other two were not wholly wrong; and they were not ready to think that they didn't know, and this fourth foolish frog-he knows? It was against their egos.

Then the strange thing happened-this has always been happening; the three frogs got together and pushed the fourth frog off the log into the river.

I am the fourth frog and it happens to me all of the time in a social way. Allow me an example. My stepson had a girlfriend earlier this year. They have since departed each other's company. She was a science (biology) teacher in the Salinas School district, which requires her total diligence. She seemed very dedicated and is very good at her job, I am sure. She comes from a family where science ruled, as her father is a Doctor.

When my stepson first introduced me to her and we went out to dinner we talked about her and what she did for a living. I asked many questions and was interested in her dedication. All during our conversation the subjects were about her and her work and Jake and his work. Not once did she ask me about my work or my life. Not once!

Jake (my stepson) clued her in on what I do, as if he really knows after years of living with me, and of course this must of struck the OMG button in her when he told her that I was a Minister. You see science and "religion," in my case meditation, do not mix well. I am sure

she thought that I was going to try to debate with her or even worse, try to convert her. So she always kept me at arm's length. It was so interesting to watch how she and Jake pushed me off the metaphoric log all during dinner.

When they were together I would see her each week, not a word about my work or what I do ever came up. Nothing. We would talk about her week and her work...but never mine. She never asked me about my life, my efforts or anything that her knowledge couldn't have explained. It was the elephant in the room. Why? She is a Gen X child and lives in the extreme of her generation, with little tolerance for the work that I do, because it cannot be proved via her empirical beliefs.

The empirical state of knowledge over the inexplicable is the only reality there is to her. She did not acknowledge what I do each day to help people. There was absolutely no interest at all in service to humankind through transcendence. For her it was all about science and how she was raised in a home where only science prevailed. Whatever she believes in must be evidence-based or it simply has no relevance to her or her generation.

Jake and his ex-girlfriend have absolutely no interest in anything regarding meditation, the mystical or the work that I do. Their lives are based in the extreme of pure knowledge. The experiential that is out of the box of known and proved is simply ignored or rationalized as unproven. Hence, what is unproven is unreal. What is unreal is neither useful nor necessary so, out it goes. Gen X and Millennials are only interested in what advances them monetarily, socially and of course allows them the easy and fun life that they are so emotionally ensconced in.

By the way, all of Jake's friends are like this with me. I helped all of them in High School with problems ranging from the death of their parents to the problems of growing up in homes where the parents were just too busy to listen to their kids. Now these Gen X kids are in their mid-thirties and still come to me for advice from time to time, but they NEVER LISTEN. Hence, they keep coming back with problem after problem. Nothing ever changes with them.

They are Askholes. They ask for advice and then merely ignore my coaching. They are so very self-absorbed and, hence, cannot hear or see what is before them, as it all lives within them.

I am considered the ol' Uncle Greg that is fun to listen to and be with, but worthless when it comes to advice that is gratifying. LOLLOLOL! I totally understand. Such is the life of an old fool.

This is what happens when we go to the extreme of making our emotionality more important than the meaning of life itself.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WEEK

Watch the extremes that you go to in order to comfort yourself. Ask yourself: what is a "good life?" Observe: is a "good life" a meaningful life? There are no "right" answers here...only your answers. There is one thing for sure that I have found out. It is that whatever is your answer, that is how life will seem to be, and how life seems to be is the basic premise for fear and hate.



Over The Line

"Great deeds must begin on a small scale."

Lao-Tzu

One of my female students came to me in a session and asked me the question that no female student ever has! She looked into my eyes and asked:

"Greg, am I over the line?"

I so admired and respected her in that moment. She was truly seeking the Way in that exquisite question. I told her...that she was way over the "line." So we talked about her "extremes" and how difficult it was for her to hear the Way when she could only listen to her emotionality that was telling her that she should have a "normal" life. A life where she would find her "man" (a co-dependent fool who would impregnate her mindlessly and pay for it all of his life) and have children (that neither she nor her "husband" could parent with any kind of loving heart) and live in the suburbs and be happy **never** after.

She agreed this was all true. The ugly message of her *womanly failure* pounds away in the background of her unconscious mind at all times—it is an extreme, an obsession. People really want to appear "normal" so they can fit into this very sick society, another extreme. For the woman it is all about the phenomena of "nature calling" her to populate the planet with her eggs so there is some proof that she lived here, and that she will never be alone and always be cared for after she wears out her sperm donor.

For the man it is about the *manliness* of controlling his kingdom and fulfilling his wife's fantasies about children, grandchildren, home, shopping and travel—the extreme of having a carefree life. When he makes her a queen (through endless extremes) he has then become a "good husband" and can feel good about his life and retire and eventually die with honors!

We do not recognize all of this as extreme...because we do not realize our origins of Love.

Our whole society and its endless desires and demands offers the only means to no real end in our lives. We live from one compulsion to another obsession and back again. Most of us do not have enough of what we really need and way too much of what we don't need. All of this is due to living in the extreme of the psychology that constantly needs emotional support to supplement its own deterioration and demise through the process of wanting more and more. We actually live to undermine our own lives by living compulsively in order to obsess on the futile, which causes us to create a mechanism within ourselves that is extreme.

So the question is: are you...**OVER THE LINE**? And what is the **line** anyway?

When obsession exceeds the insight to the path of well being, we fall to the passion that succumbs to emotionality - we are **OVER THE LINE**. It is in this fanaticism that we find ourselves fixated upon the emotionality that knows no end...hence, **we create our own extremes**. It is through what is called “passion” that we side path ourselves into emotional addictions and compulsions.

The question is how far will we go with our compulsions, which separate us from our own outward and inward destruction through obsession. Many go way too far with compulsions and, hence, the definition of the **line** becomes the justification of just how far we will go to create obsession from compulsion.

The objective of most people, I have found, is to live on the edge of self-destruction and enjoy the ride for as long as they can through self-gratification. This gratification can take the form of living and enjoying the morbid and macabre as well as various forms of lasciviousness. The object of the game for the pedestrian mentality is to overcome the mundane emotionality that is believed to be caused by the sheer boredom of everyday life. It is believed that monotony turns into a full-on depression and that the only way to avoid this is through passionate extremes. But at the same time the game is not to fall into total personal ruination. This is a very dangerous game that we arrogantly play and always lose.

Last year at my November Retreat I introduced the insight that we reduce ourselves to living as an **entity**. An entity is an organism, a life form, a person, body or object. If we all really look at how we view ourselves, you will see that basically we live as if life were an existence for the life support of living as an **entity**.

We lack a Soul. We do not understand what a Soul is, nor do we really care as a collective whole. What we seek to become is an entity that is full of emotionality that merely sustains spiritual mischief. We live for a supposed “now” instead of for the quintessence of the Soul. If someone were to ask you why are you here on earth and doing everything you’re doing to be here...what would you say, what would be your answer?

Most people would say that they do not know. Many would come up with the ideals of being someone’s romantic love or mate. Others would say that they are here to be a parent or just here to survive.

All of these are merely distractions that constitute philosophies and religions that are appealing to the pedestrian mentality. You see until we realize that we have come to be so extreme in our life that we actually have become the **enmity** of our own **entity** - we will not be able to recognize the authentic path to the Way. Yes, we are at odds with our own self made creation—the entity. Ah, the catch 22 of self-hatred from which many of us suffer in this world.

None of this is popular among us “Over the Line” humans. We live in extremes because we are so full of our pride, which is the “heart and soul” of being an **entity**.

In the Book of Lieh Tzu, who was a major Daoist in the 5th Century, we find this teaching. It is so interesting to me that no matter what and when in human history...we still remain the same...living as an entity and hoping for the miracle of Love. Please read this...ancient insight that pertains to everything we experience in our world today.

"If you do not know how to keep still in this crazy world, you will be drawn into all kinds of unnecessary trouble. You will lose your view of the Way, and, when you realize it, it will be too late, for in losing the Way, you have also lost yourself."

How does one show this to people who have merely lived so carelessly in the body that they have quite literally manifested separate personalities from the many congregants of emotionality that have reduced our life and lifetime to mere entities? People, in general, have lost themselves as a living Soul due to living in extremes. It is very difficult for most people to hear this because many of us want to believe or prove that our entity is better than others.

I was watching Bryant Gumbel the other day. He was doing an expose on Cage Fighting and the women who participate in this brutal and ugly exhibition. There is nothing so extreme as this spectacle of two women (or men) just beating the crap out of each other unmercifully. Just watching this for me was an extreme. But people go and pay big money to watch people quite literally demolish each other.

No wonder I have a hard time getting donations! I have nothing extreme to offer I guess, but the chance for authentic Love to enter into our lives—and who needs that? When I was a kid “pro wrestling” was too vicious for me and that was all theatrics. But now it is all for real. The idea of “getting real” has taken on a new meaning for all of us.

How about the notorious video games that both young and middle-aged people play which are placating pain and sorrow in their lives through vicious imagery of wars and crimes that are to say the least heinous. This “harmless” play is devastating to the unconscious mind and I feel creates an unconscious cruelty that sustains itself in the emotionality of people their whole lives. We spend our “free time” in ways that do not allow for anything more than what reduces us to an entity through violence that makes us callous and mean.

Just watching a commercial for these games is over the line! We do not take our inner being very seriously or with any kind of respect.

Here is a story from the annals of the great Zen Master Fu Tze. One of his students is irritated with him because the Master is always urging them to realize that every moment is a chance to accumulate the energies for awakening. How annoying to the entity that manifests itself in the pedestrian mentality.

"Why do you always urge us so insistently?" I Chu, in a cross temper, asked Fu Tze. "We have many practical responsibilities and, after all, we have all the rest of our lives in which to achieve wisdom and immortality."

"Very well," said Fu Tze. "For today, I will ask of you a practical task. Please go and plant that garden."

"I shall begin that task willingly," answered I Chu. "But I cannot complete it today. It is too late, and will soon be night."

"But if you had worked at it earlier, you could have finished it before darkness falls," said the Sage.

There are no “hall passes” in this lifetime. Every moment of our life matters as we move towards another birth through living in emotional futility. Our life is all about the energy that we imbibe either from the spiritual Heart or our genetic incarnations that simply lead us back to the cycle of birth and death—endlessly.

Lieh Tzu offers us this as a great teaching of compassionate insight towards our bodies and what they are all about.

My body is in accord with my mind, my mind with my energies, my energies with my spirit, my spirit with No-thing. Whenever the minutest existing thing or the faintest sound affects me, whether it is far away beyond the eight borderlands, or close at hand between my eyebrows and eyelashes, I am bound to know it.

Yes, we are in accord with our body and it is in accord with our minds. What we influence our mind with that ingratiates our emotionality harms us deeply. This is why it is important to find that “Middle Way” that both Jesus and Buddha talked about.

The Middle Way

The art of life is to come to the place where we are neither this, nor that! We all know the Neti neti of non-choosing in the practice of awareness. You see the most profound balance we will ever know in this world is the one between all opposites. It is the balance of all polarities that live in this world as the north and south poles exist (barely for now due to human extreme) to sustain life here on earth. How we treat the earth is a good barometer as to how we live in extremes within our personal lives.

This place of neither this, nor that lives within the delicate confines of personal discipline, which many of us know little or nothing about due to being susceptible to the extremes of our society and culture. Most people just do not care about the middle way where enough is enough.

Jesus taught his disciples to live in the world but not let the world live in them. This is the extreme of living beyond the neurosis of delusions that most of us humans enjoy. To live in the world is to render unto Caesar those things that are his in this world, and to live from the Love that sustains compassion and insights that are *otherworldly*.

Few if any of us truly understand this, much less would consider this a viable lifestyle. We want the extreme of wealth, comfort and convenience, which socially is signified as living successfully. This is everything to us as humans. The state of our spirituality is somehow supposed to fit into our obsessions in a way that increases our selfish need to live the way we want. Our attentions constantly need to attend to the meandering of our emotionalities, which dictate our moods and our state of psychology.

If our emotions are not appeased, then we are unhappy. If they are gratified, then we are fulfilled, so we think, and then we believe that we are happy. Of course none of this is the way of the authentic. Here is a little story to end this Commentary on. It comes from my Master who offered this way back in the day. It is about living in the Way.

Mokusen Hiki was living in a temple in the province of Tamba.

One of his adherents complained of the stinginess of his wife.

Mokusen visited the adherent's wife and held his clenched fist before her face.

'What do you mean by that?' asked the surprised woman.

'Suppose my hand were always like that, what would you call it?'

'Deformed,' replied the woman.

Then he opened his hand flat in her face and asked: suppose it was always like that – what then?

'Another kind of deformity,' said the wife.

'If you understand that much,' finished Mokusen, 'you are a good wife.' Then he left.

After his visit this wife helped her husband to give as well as to save.

Ah, the middle way! Removing the extreme of hoarding and allowing for the giving made the middle way for this couple. Typically this story would not work in the “real world” that most of us live in today. But it is an example of what would be in the best interests of the world we live in as well as for this couple.

People, in general, do not think in terms of what is good for the world.

I will end on this note. I was in a session long ago with a couple. Neither of them had a clue as to what they were doing in seeking an authentic spiritual practice. Both were addicted to alcohol and marijuana. Using substances for the sake of emotional relief is a sure sign of mental and emotional issues such as shame, guilt and mood swings. This couple had a secret that was obvious to me. They were very cautious about letting the “cat out of the bag” as it were when it came to admitting how they used alcohol and marijuana. But it was all so clear when it came spilling out of the mouth of the wife to me in a session so many years ago.

She looked at me and said, “We spend more money on beer and pot than we do on our giving to Aspire, because we get more relief from the drugs than we do meditation.” This was the source of their extreme and, come to find out, they leaked this while coming to see me in a session after they had smoked a joint in the car prior to our meeting.

The sad thing about all of this is that these two people could not only not recognize how they were hurting themselves, but could also not see how they were contributing to the pain of the world. What we do in the closets of our minds we shout out on the rooftops of our egos, just as this couple did in a session back in the day. Now all of this is rampant and considered the norm when it comes to our society and its quasi-sense of personal freedom.

I do not know what your extreme is within the life that you are living. I do not know how you might deal with stress and confusion. I have no idea how you live in the confines of the emotionality that you have created. But one thing I do understand is that we do affect one another in all ways. It might be a good thing to consider others as ourselves and do unto others as we would do unto ourselves.

But then again, that might not be such a great idea any more considering our incessant compulsions to live our life in the emotional extremes that once again cause us to make Karma the hand of discipline rather than the liberator of our genetic hearts.

We hurt the world through the extremes of living to comfort ourselves.

Enough of me for today...please forgive me.

Metta to you,

Swami Chaitanya Siraj

(Gregory Penn)

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