



The Gift of Our Wounds

By Kalpana (Rose) M. Kumar, M.D.

A few nights ago, I had a dream that, my children, my ex-husband and I were driving down the road in our car (when I was still married to him). My daughter was 12, my son 9 and I felt IT. You know, that feeling when you are a family, when you feel like you belong, when you are connected organically through blood, heart and SOUL; a feeling like no other on earth. We got out of the car and I said to my daughter, "Did you feel it?" She said, "Mom, it's not going to last." Then I woke up.

This dream was actually my reality. I did feel this organic connection inside when we were a family. Every now and then, when I'd close my eyes I'd feel IT - that magical sense of belonging, of being woven together like a beautiful tapestry. My soul radiated out to my family with a love so deep, it took my breath away. And she was right, it didn't last.

Eight years ago in early September, on a beautiful fall day, I discovered that my family had been shattered by adultery. When I discovered this, I fell into a deep hole that seemed like it had no bottom. My heart imploded like a bomb went off inside and vaporized it. Its million fragments scattered into space. All that I held sacred was desecrated and in shambles. Even Ommani was defiled. This was a dirty wound. I feared I would never heal.

Fall has always been one of my favorite seasons. As we move inward after harvest, we tap into the depths of our inner self. As the days get dark and our journey inward spirals into the all-knowing Yin, we gain wisdom and connection with our roots. We prepare for hibernation, for moving closer to the heart of the Earth Mother, to gain connection and nourishment before renewal in Spring. Fall is a sacred time – a time of transition, when the veil between Heaven and Earth is thin and we can access the Spirit world more freely for guidance.

For me, that fateful day in September marked an initiation into a deeper level of Soul. I fell into an abyss where I crawled around for years, asking questions of myself whose answers I am now living out.

For me, as magical and sacred as Fall is, the transition into it is often difficult. Memories imprint the heart. In the Fall, I am reminded of the cold, sharp shards of betrayal. They were jagged. They pierced my heart and startled my Soul. My heart heaved and then contracted. I tried hard to keep it open for years for fear that it might close down forever due to this pulsing and throbbing wound. It took courage and grief to keep it open, a grief that was sometimes hard to bear. At times, I felt it would never heal. To my amazement, it grew stronger. It grew 'proud flesh' over the portal where betrayal had entered. Sometimes I imagine it heaved deeply, like an exhale, releasing pain and the weight of the wounder's shadow it could no longer carry.

What I discovered is that staying open heals us even when we feel that it won't. The pain of staying open is more intense, but a kind of Medicine flows through an open wound like a salve for the Soul. The heart and Soul engage more deeply through an open wound. The Soul reshapes the heart around it so it can flow through it more freely. The wound marks the Soul and changes it forever. I now feel that my wound is encircled by a ring of light. This was how my Soul chose to shine its brilliance into the world from that day forward.

Our wounds often define us in amazing ways. For example, people with cancer or a significant illness remember the day they were diagnosed. It changes them forever. The wounding itself initiates. The wounded enter the sacred tribe of Warrior and Mentor. They earn their role on Earth through the pain and Medicine of initiation and then transformation.

In a tribe in South America, when a person suffers a deep wound, people in the tribe want to be near them. They say they feel closer to God through the pain of the wounded one. They honor and revere the gifts of wounding. They know they are in the presence of Soul alchemy. They hold sacred space for the one in pain.

People in our culture are afraid to be around pain. If we have an incurable wound, many people avoid us. They deflect any talk of it and remain in superficial dialogue. They want us to 'get over it' and to focus on 'the positive,' to say we are 'fine' or 'better off,' as if this tactic will somehow erase the memory of the sacred wound in our Soul. All that our pain needs is to be witnessed, to be held and honored by another when it is unbearable. This is what helps it change shape and form, and morph into Medicine through sacred alchemy.

There is grave danger in avoiding (denying) pain. There is also danger in medicating or suppressing it. This interrupts the alchemical union between heart and Soul. The energy of pain is here to transform us. When we deny or suppress it, we get sick. We must reframe it so we can learn and grow in wisdom. We must understand its alchemical purpose. Pain ultimately helps us love more deeply. It makes us trustworthy. It gives us strength.

These are the gifts of our wounds.

Fall is a time when I *re-member*. When I remember the pain I also connect with its power that shaped my Soul and healed me in ways that no other wound could. I now feel an even deeper kind of LOVE, a fierce love, from where I can offer myself out into the world. The ring of light around my wound keeps me humble and makes me REAL.

Now I am much stronger. The 'proud flesh' that grew from the broken place within has power and resilience. It has the capacity to love like never before. It can hold the pain of others who ask me to bear witness to what feels unbearable. Proud flesh is good Medicine for the heart and the world.

And yet, the soft, tender center of my wound remains open. It will never heal. It is the mark of my initiation. This is now where my LOVE flows through. Like a river that changed course, empathy, truth and beauty flows through it like never before. Sometimes it still bleeds and hurts, but mostly, it feels gratitude and loves deeply enough to want to heal the pain and sorrows of the world.

And my 12 year old with infinite wisdom is now a beautiful woman who like me and my son carries 'proud flesh, and yes, she was right, it didn't last. But my love for them is a love like no other, woven now with golden thread between the tender places in our hearts. We know the Medicine we carry and have become the family we once lost.

For that I am forever grateful.

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