



Pure Land Now or Never

Dr. Dina Glouberman

When Robin asked me if I wanted to write something on longing, I said 'I could do it, but it's not my specialty.' He looked at me. Of course. Longing is my middle name.

I long for love, for community, for connectedness, for a partner, for someone to share my bed or my neighborhood or my mind, for anything that will heal the elemental feelings of loneliness and separation, anything that will bring me into myself, into my wholeness, into my being a part of something larger.

Out of that longing has come not only lifelong pain, but also my spiritual life, and indeed so much of my creativity. What was Skyros Holidays but an impulse to create the world of intimacy, authenticity, beauty and warmth that I so longed for? Yet paradoxically, when you create community for others, you are the only one who doesn't really get that. You are alone, behind the scenes, making sure everyone else is okay.

So what am I longing for—the thing I want, or the state that I will be in if I get it? Obviously it is that state that I am really yearning for. But at the time, I am sure it is the thing. And that thing is the only thing that could heal it, could give me what I want and hope I deserve and have always dreamed of.

And my picture of that thing is that it will come in positives—all good and loving and easy and high and happy making. Difficulties, compromises, pain, struggle, none of them come into it. Not if it is that right thing, that perfect thing.

No matter how many times I get what I think I want and it turns out not to be like that, I still don't believe that my ideal is not possible. I've just been unfortunate, or stupid, or

undeserving or lazy. The real thing is still there to be had and other people have it and they are okay and I am not.

As a baby, I did need this nourishment from the outside. There was no substitute for the milk, the breast, the holding, the caring. I used to rock back and forth, attempting to comfort myself, but it could never give me what I needed. So now, although in almost all areas I am self supporting, and indeed able to support others, that in me which longs is so young that it just knows that mother's milk is out there and not in here and I need it or I will die.

Perhaps too, as a baby, my soul knew of wholeness, took wholeness for granted. Looking around at the

world, unable to find the love I knew was meant to be there, I just couldn't believe that it was not there to be had. It didn't make sense. I must be doing something wrong. If I am really good, then it will be okay.

The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh makes beautiful calligraphies that say "Pure Land Now or Never". The Pure Land, or Heaven, or Nirvana, or Perfect Love, or whatever it is we long for, cannot ever be in the future. It is up to me to walk three mindful steps and breathe, and the Pure Land will be right there. If it is not here and now, then it doesn't exist.

I too know full well that the Pure Land must be now. The longer I stay in the world of separation, longing for the thing I don't have, the more I suffer. And the minute I step back into the consciousness of love and wholeness, the better I feel. It's magic and it works and it's foolproof and it's easy.

Yet, I still somehow believe that this feeling should come from something out there, and that I am cheating by finding it within. On another level, I believe that it is the other way round, that it is the way of separation and illusion, of looking for wholeness and love out there, that is cheating.

It must be that both are cheating, these mirror images of each other. The love is not somewhere and separation somewhere else. It must be that there is love stretching there

right below the separation. We wouldn't feel the longing if it wasn't for the fact that we love. All we need to do is sense the love beneath the longing, that love that drives the longing, and to really own our own loving, to honour our own loving. We will immediately be free.

I once got a clear message that my life would be a "hechal", which is Hebrew for a temple and a palace, for the Spirits if I accept one principle: that there's nothing I need to be happy that I don't already have.

I have accepted that principle again and again and again and again and again. Every time I go through the longing, and the feelings of loss and self-attack and vulnerability and pain that go with it, I do come back to this truth. As people say about smoking 'I'm good at giving it up. I've done it so many times.'

Here and now, I acknowledge publicly that the love and wholeness and connectedness that I long for must already be there for me to imagine and know it. And I can create it in an instant.

Have you ever felt that an instant feels just a little bit too long? It is too much of a leap of faith. Sometimes I can't go there.

Much though I hate to admit it, I am not done with my longing. It is such an old friend. Let me long just a little bit longer ...

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