

THE JOY OF TRUE RECIPROCITY

I love mangoes! I just ate one for lunch. This sumptuous fruit just gave the whole of her intoxicatingly sweet and spicy self to me! She gave to me all of the life essence within her, as well as a balanced blood sugar boost that I recognize to be specifically mango. As for her, she began our encounter as a mango. But within an hour, she had become one with me and was experiencing life as I do. I trust this was an increase for the fruit. This magnificent and ever-expanding upward spiral of reciprocity exists at every level of life.

About twenty years ago, I had the privilege of becoming friends with an elderly couple who lived down the road. Whenever I was with them, I was lifted up by the quiet power of the consistent love that they embodied. They shared that love freely with anyone who was genuinely interested in coming to know them. I never once had the sense that they were seeking or demanding anything in return. Yet there came a point at which I had received so much from them, that I was overflowing, and I had to give something back. I begged them to let me help clean their home, do some grocery shopping, rake leaves – any little thing I could give that might help make their way easier. Thank God that they were willing to receive, because I'm certain that if I had had no avenue through which to return the love, I would have fermented and popped!

I recall working in their garden one summer in the early mornings before they and the rest of the world were awake. And even though I was there to provide something for them, as I raked, weeded and cleaned, it was I who found myself lofted up into a state that I can only describe as diaphanous fire. It was vivid and powerful and illumined in me, for all time, the sublime nature of true reciprocity. When giving and re-giving are allowed to be natural and free, everyone is lifted up!

Unfortunately, we seem to have forgotten this simple ecstasy. Each month I receive bills from various service providers. They take it upon themselves to dictate, from pre-established parameters, what my response must be to their offerings. I sign the checks and continue to have heat, light, and phone service in my home – for which I'm truly grateful! But I have to say, in all the years that I've had relationships with these companies, I have never once experienced that evanescent shimmer that I know is possible when the circuitry of giving and re-giving is real. And from what I can tell, neither have the service providers.

It is fulfilling to me to give what I feel drawn to give in any moment. And it has always been repugnant to me to look at people as potential dollar signs. Early on, I discovered a little way that I could give my vision legs. It never felt right to me that people had to buy tickets for a concert in advance, before they had even received the gift of the performance. So I turned it around. I sang, played and shared to my heart's content. Then, at the end, I invited my audiences, that if they felt they had received anything of value, and were moved to return something, they could do so on their way out. I loved operating this way, because all of us had the chance to generate and experience that unfettered shimmer.

A prayer lies deep in my heart - that one day we will remember again, together. I want to build toward that day!