

Goh Love Someone

by Ravi Chandra, M.D | photos courtesy of Goh Nakamura

Music can capture a mood, soothe the heart, give expression to deep passion, embody truth. And if love is the message, I have discovered her prophet in Goh Nakamura, a young singer/songwriter from San Francisco. *Daylight Savings*, his 2004 debut recording captured my attention, rocked my mental world, and resonated with my soul. I'm sure I'll be humming these tunes for years to come.

Who could resist his infectious lyrics:

*Waiting tables, waiting for the tables
to turn –
Waiting tables, waiting in a city of no left
hand turns
Where is the love?*

The printed page cannot do justice to his soulful guitar licks and gentle musical wisdom. If there's just one idea you take from this article, let it be to buy this album and loop it over and over, until you reach enlightenment. At the very least, it'll be

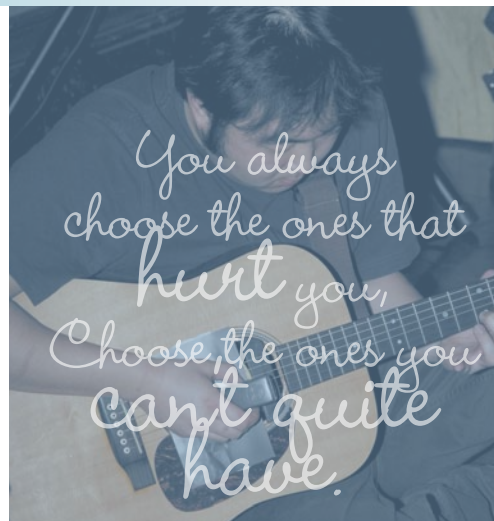
a good companion on the path of understanding what it means to be alive.

Alive and in love.

That's probably the most uncomfortable, joyful, painful, tragic-comic state of mind to befall, befriend, or benight the hapless human. At its worst, love sickness seizes us with wistful longing, with many of the afflicted describing an actual pain or emptiness in the heart—a heartache. Our imaginations run wild with scenarios, fantasies about future meetings, our future lives with our beloved. And falling in love means living happily ever after, being fully satisfied, complete, whole. If the two of you have *duyên*, there's the harmonious blending of selves, a kind of eternal love that supposedly lasts for lifetimes.

But love bites, don't it? I turn to the Book of Goh.

*You always choose the ones that hurt you,
Choose the ones you can't quite have.
Like a pair of shoes that don't quite fit
But they match your eyes and
the tourniquette
That you wrapped around your
broken heart.*



Here we have the perfect encapsulation of tragic love and psycho-spiritual truth in poetry and song. Experiencing the music is an epiphany; hopefully explaining and exploring it will deepen the journey.

Being caught up in the experience of love rarely gives one the opportunity to be curious about it. Yet being curious about love opens doors to the Great Mystery, the timeless dance that moves us throughout life and connects us with what has stirred human hearts for all history. Love is the secret agent, powerful, seductive and silent, licensed to kill the person we were, licensed to transform us into someone new.

So why do "you always choose the ones that hurt you"? The answers are as complex as there are people on the face of the earth. As if there was "choice" or free will, about it. When you fall in love, you're drawn into something that's larger than your conscious mind, something so powerful you may as well call it heart, soul, God or Buddha.

On the face of it, of course, it's precisely the person we love who possesses the power to really hurt us. Our heart is open

to them in a way that makes us vulnerable to them. Our beloved is larger-than-life, impossibly perfect and all-important in our minds, leading to boundless expectations whether we can acknowledge them or not. When the real meets the imaginal, disappointment must result. If we're fortunate, our hopes can metamorphose and blossom around the reality of our beloved, and we can be pleasantly surprised by unexpected beauty. We can give up our unrealistic hopes and allow imaginal love to mature into the love of the real. Or the object of our affection remains distant and aloof from our will, and we get crushed in our crush.

But love is blind, as they say. Something about the other person fits us, matches us in some mysterious way, and we ignore faults and warning signs (often pointed out by parents, siblings or friends, adding fuel to the fire of our rebellious, love-struck hearts). This matching, this stuck-on-you-ness, and what we ignore—these are precisely what we should be curious about. Do you fall in love with the same kind of person repeatedly, like a moth to the flame? Do you “choose” to stay in a physically or verbally abusive relationship? What about your beloved “matches the tourniquette that you wrapped around your broken heart?” Who you love makes you who you are much more than what you eat. Pay attention to the clues of your broken heart.

As Asian Americans, our love is influenced by our status as minorities in Western culture. We either seek each other out as shelter from that storm, or avoid each other to somehow not be

reminded of it. Ideally, we love what's deeper than skin or physicality, but so often what's on the surface is what's matching our broken hearts.

Just as enticing are attractive facets of personality or being. A woman or man might fit your heart like a key in a lock because of the way she or he moves in the world, because of your visions of femininity or masculinity, your deepest needs. Or because they stoke your ideals of the perfect significant other. But there are plenty of women who are attracted to strong, stoic, blunt-edged guys and then get hurt by their lack of emotional connection. Or similarly, men who are drawn to strong, independent women, then find out that those women are so independent that they don't think they really need anyone else, particularly them.

We are shaped by our experiences of love in earliest childhood. These experiences form wordless emotional memories that guide our attractions, desires, lusts and longings. The individual is an embryo in the womb of her family, culture and society. But while acorns turn into oak trees, and kittens to cats purely by genetic blueprint and instinct, humans are shaped by choices and will. Shaping this will, filtering our choices are those guiding, formative emotional memories. Understanding this foundation, bringing it to conscious awareness can broaden and deepen our experience of love and help us make better choices. Even more powerful than conscious awareness is direct experience of a new nurturing relationship that allows us to form new emotional memories and lifts us from love that hurts to love that heals.

This is the basis of the therapeutic relationship and transformative relationships in general. The ideal transformative relationship matches our previous relationships in important ways, and also differs from those relationships. As we experience the power of the new, our brains actually get rewired. We don't get better because we learn what to avoid; rather, what we love actually changes. Who we are actually changes. Being in a relationship can be the most delicate brain surgery imaginable.

*“I should really get a new prescription –
cuz you're the one I couldn't read.”*

Love is blind. But it can also help us see farther and more clearly, both within ourselves and into the heart of another.

Now Goh love someone! 

Goh Nakamura's music is available at www.gohnakamura.com and at iTunes.

The author acknowledges the influence of the writings of psychiatrists Glen Gabbard, Tom Lewis, Rick Lannon and Fari Amini (in *The General Theory of Love*) on his thoughts for this article.

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