

Soul Retrieval: An ancient shamanic practice of inner transformation **by Fotoula Adrimi Published in Signs Magazine-March 2013 issue**

I was trained to carry out soul retrievals as part of my shamanic practitioner training. Since then, I have seen hundreds of clients, helping them to bring their soul back into the body.

Soul retrieval is an ancient shamanic practice shared by many indigenous people around the globe. I had soul retrievals performed on me by Peruvian shamans, western shamans trained by native Americans, Nepalese shamans, and I witnessed a soul retrieval by a Tibetan Buddhist Rinpoche Lama. Mongolian shamans talk about people losing their soul, either in its entirety, or partly. When I visited the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, I came across the shamanic culture of the Mayan people. They also acknowledged the concept of soul loss, and lived according to these principles from birth. They told me that should they, at anytime, suspected that a person may have lost part of their soul, they would take the person in question to a medicine man or woman. They believed that the sooner the soul was brought back, the better for the person in question. They believe that prolonged periods of soul loss made people unhappy, depressed, uninterested in life, demotivated, and eventually ill from the inside.

Soul retrieval is practiced in many different ways, depending on the training of the Medicine man or woman and their helping spirits. However, although the methodology changes according to the culture, the basic principles are the same. According to shamanism, when a person experiences trauma or sudden shock, accidents or major falls, part of their soul detaches from their body and leaves. This, in the shamanic view, explains, why people who experience accidents, may not feel pain until much later. Similarly, when people go through a major traumatic experience in their lives, part of their soul leaves the body. They go into an automatic mode, that enables them to continue living their lives, without experiencing the full blow of the event, and without acknowledging their feelings at the time.

An easy way to explain soul loss is by using the following analogy. Imagine that your body is a bottle and that your soul is the essence, the water in the bottle. Life shakes the bottle, and some water spills out. The emptier the bottle, the easier it is for life to shake the bottle until very little is left. According to shamanism, people who are deeply depressed, suffering dissociation, not knowing who they are, have experienced massive soul loss.

Most people suffer mild soul loss, which leaves them unhappy, regretful, and as if something is missing from their lives. Somehow, they know they are not complete, and they feel that they are just living a life with little personal meaning. This is because in the case of western people, soul loss has been experienced since childhood, but it has not been mended. As a result, soul loss has continued to take place until the person finds little contentment in their lives.

In my practice, I have seen various causes of soul loss. In most cases people have lost parts of their soul essence as children. It could be the separation from a favourite toy, separation from a parent, being punished unfairly, bullying from other siblings, feeling

unloved by parents and/or brothers and sisters. Many times I have seen soul loss occurring when people first go to school and try to learn to write or count, as this can be sometimes traumatic for a child. Strict teachers can also be a trigger for soul loss. In such cases the soul leaves, because the person really does not wish to be in that place and experience that event.

Soul loss also occurs in violent situations. The perpetrator unconsciously snatches the soul parts of their victim, so that they are under their control. This is why victims of such situations may feel unable to react; they are emptied of their own essence. However, soul essence is unique to the individual; it can help no other. So if somebody snatches the soul essence of another person, they are carrying a burden that weights them down and that they keep resenting. It is of no use to them in their lives. In cases of violence, anytime a violent crime is committed, the perpetrator's soul may also fragment. When I do soul retrievals in such cases, the soul of the perpetrator usually leaves the body too, and it also loses its shine and brightness. I ask the person in question to reflect on what they had done and ask for forgiveness from their victim. In many cases, the hardest for them is to forgive themselves, which is the only way that they can move on and find happiness.

Soul loss can be experienced when we lose a loved one. The pain of separation is enough to cause soul loss. We may have given our soul voluntarily to them, or they may have held it because of love. I have seen mothers holding the soul of their baby, even after their children have grown up to be adults. When a loved one dies, we sometimes say "he took a part of me with them". This is true in shamanism. As a result of soul loss, we may experience unending grief.

When soul loss occurs, it is important to find a competent practitioner who can bring the soul back. Different cultures use different methods. As I practice classic shamanism, I journey to the alternative realities to go back to the time that the soul loss occurred. I always do a healing on the soul part before bringing it back to the body. Other practitioners carry out soul retrievals in different ways. When I witnessed a soul retrieval by a Tibetan Rinpoche, there was a big team of practitioners chanting powerful mantras, to purify the karmic causes related to the soul loss. Offerings were made to all the spirits who were opposing the soul retrieval and they were left at crossroads. The Lama brought back the soul on a special piece of turquoise stone, that the client had to wear throughout her life. When I received a soul retrieval by three Peruvian shamans, I was taken to the Temple of Water, north of Cusco in the Andes. They swept my body with herbs to purify me, and I was sat inside the water temple. The shamans were praying for my soul to come back, using both their Quechan prayers as well as Christian prayers, as one of them was a practicing Catholic. They kept blowing the soul parts in my crown, and then I had to lie down on the grass for almost an hour to complete the process. We then went up to another part of the site and we carried out a Despacho ceremony, in which I prayed for what I needed in life.

No matter how it is performed, a soul retrieval is a gentle, but at the same time empowering, process. I find that usually people feel tired after it, and they need to rest and recuperate. They normally feel stronger and determined the next few days following the soul retrieval. Sometimes the soul essence takes months to integrate inside the body,

and sometimes it is a lot quicker. The integration process is a subtle one, and it depends on where the person is in their lives. The integration can be almost as important as the soul retrieval itself, and it cannot be rushed. The soul parts will provide guidance on what needs to happen for the integration process to be completed. I once did a soul retrieval, and as part of the integration process, the client was asked to sing for at least half an hour a day. The client told me that was impossible for them to do as they hated their voice, but I encouraged them to give it a try. As it happened, a friend of theirs arranged a party in a Karaoke club. My client would never have dreamt of singing in public, but she reported to me that something made her go up to the stage and take the microphone, before she knew it she was singing in front of other people, and she said that something very profound was happening inside her, making her feel really happy and joyful. She said the experience was life changing.

I find soul retrieval to be one of the most beautiful gifts that I can share with people. As a practitioner, when I carry somebody else's soul, I feel so honoured and grateful to have been placed in that position. A human soul is so beautiful, and shines an incredible light. We forget that we are light, and that we have the ability to shine so brightly.

Experiencing the soul without the body, has helped me understand, that we are all, without exception, pure, incredible light. We forget who we are. Bringing the soul back into our body helps us remember that our essence is none other but light and love.

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