

## “BLACK SHEEP”

When I was in elementary school, March was the month we watched to see if it came in like a lion or a lamb. The other day, a heading caught my eye... The Black Sheep. Instantly the song “baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool” rolled into my mind, quickly followed by “in like a lion, out like a lamb.”

Lambs are always perceived as gentle creatures. They are soft looking and have sweet faces that make you want to cuddle them. Yet society labels those who are different as “black sheep.” This goes back to the 1800’s as a black sheep’s wool could not be dyed and was worth less. Anyone deemed a black sheep is said to have deviated from accepted standards. Often those deemed black sheep have a record of unlawful conduct, but those are not the black sheep I am referring to.

The very act of living an authentic life means you risk being unusual, different, strange, or the proverbial black sheep in a herd of white sheep. It does not matter what makes you stand out, the way you dress, how you choose to live, what you eat, or that you meander on a path that takes you away from social norms. It takes a lot of courage, tenacity, and self-esteem to be a black sheep. Hold onto that! It means you are daring to live your life the way you want and on your terms. The reward is an honest, real life. Is there really anything better than that?

If you have experience being the lone black sheep, you will understand what I am talking about. You have probably explained your lifestyle and ideas to others more times than you care to admit. People might avoid you. There can be a sense of not belonging, even with your own family and peers. You might feel you were adopted, that is how different you are from your family. You have probably been humored for your different views on life, or worse... been told it is just a phase and you will grow out of it.

There are many people in history who have been considered different, radical, and even crazy. From them we have received many inventions that have made our life easier, we have also been entertained by them and have come to love them. Without most of them we would still think the world was flat, be walking or using animals as our only means of transportation, candles would light our way, which leads me to think of the ones who discovered fire, and computers which we can’t live without, not to mention Disney Land! You get my drift. If it seemed far-fetched to the masses at the time, and those black sheep did not persevere (for some it was life threatening to do so), we would not have many things we take for granted today.

When you stand out, don’t follow the norm, or have different ideas you tend to be labeled. Even when you are comfortable in your own skin and ok with being different, there can be times when you just want to hide away from humanity. A desire to hunker down in your home and only venture out when necessary, or being cautious when you speak in certain circles. It can lead to a revolving circle of trying to fit in, or perpetually searching for a tribe that accepts you for who you are. If you do find a tribe, over all your tribe could be connected by one aspect of your uniqueness (say vegan), there will still be other aspects that make each tribe member unique.

There will always be people who push you to expand and explore new facets of yourself. They push the boundaries of acceptance that you tolerate, much like you push theirs. That is what life is about, not becoming stuck in the rut of what is current forever and ever, but growing beyond the limitations we set upon ourselves, or others set upon us. This thought came to me a while back;

*“When we find those who support us totally, no matter how crazy and intense we seem, we become whole. We are allowed to explore our uniqueness in a safe environment and grow to our full potential.”*

It works the other way as well, when we totally support others, they are allowed to explore their uniqueness, enabling all of us to grow to our full potential.

Much like a lion, we roar when we are not comfortable in our own skin and secure in knowing our beliefs, our values, our desires, or when we are trying to make everyone be like us! Can you see in your life, how others roar? I am sure something instantly came to mind. Notice how it made you feel. When you are living your life because it is truly authentic for you, you do not need to preach or get on a soapbox. You can lead the way beyond comparisons by accepting yourself and accepting it is perfectly acceptable and ok to be different. You do not need to look for validation outside of yourself, if it truly is right for you then it really does not matter if others do the same or not.

Understand that some of your ideas might be a passing phase as you explore the world more and more. Sometimes our ideals are but a stepping stone towards a bigger goal. Ideally being a black sheep means you are living a life that brings inner peace to you. If it does not bring inner peace to you, ask yourself if you are putting on a façade to garner attention.

If you are a black sheep, welcome to the club. This month take the action challenge of coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb. Allow yourself to come in like a lion, roar if you need to, but pause when you roar and check in with the belief you are roaring about. Does it fit you? I mean really fit you on a soul level? If so, why are you roaring? What purpose are you hoping to achieve? If you want inner peace in the outer lane of life, you must be comfortable with who you are. It is not a popularity contest or I'm right and you're wrong. It is about acceptance and accepting. Our world has enough strife right now, strife that is caused by non-acceptance and who can roar the loudest. Be a leader, don't follow the herd. You are the peace you want to see in the world. That is the challenge this month. Be yourself while allowing others to be who they are.

*Namaste*

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