

The Upside and the Downside of Relationships

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Ram: Dear Tanya, very nice to hear from you. I'm glad you enjoyed your vacation and that you have finally processed your relationship with Michael. When you get rid of problems you return to your natural state of radiant joy. I'm happy for you that you are through this period and that you have grown so much spiritually from it. Men and sex are fine, but the man/woman thing doesn't really work until you have the right understanding about it.

In *maya*, *karma* is always a problem because one never knows what the results of one's actions will bring. Relationships are the ultimate problem because they are so fraught with anxiety about results. When a worldly person invests so much of himself or herself in something over which there is no control, he or she is naturally filled with anxiety. A spiritual person in relationship has an additional anxiety. On one hand he or she wants to give and receive love – which is very natural – and on the other hand there is always the worry about how the relationship is going to affect one's spiritual path, the purity of one's intention to know the self.

In *maya* there is always an upside and a downside to everything. So, for example, you lose intimacy when you are out of a relationship, but you gain freedom. When you are in one you gain intimacy, but lose freedom. If you take the self's position you won't value intimacy more than freedom or freedom more than intimacy, so you will be happy when you are in one and happy when you are out of one.

Perhaps this is not exactly addressing your question, which is whether relationships are an obstacle to enlightenment or not. My *guru* used to say, "Sin intelligently," which was his clever formulation of the Buddha's "Middle Way" teaching. According to this idea you need to respect your *vasanas* to some degree or you become repressed, frustrated, dry and loveless. On the other hand, you don't want to become a relationship pig and get yourself completely attached to sensations and pleasures. So you pick and choose the person carefully, making sure that she is not too *tamasic* or *rajasic*. And you do the relationship as *sadhana*. You watch your mind/emotions and use your knowledge of yourself as non-dual to manage the mind. It can work.

One doesn't tend to want relationships when one is whole and complete, so you have to ask yourself why you think you need love from outside when you are an ocean of love yourself. This is the argument against them. You don't give up looking for love, you just look to yourself for it.

Tanya: Very wise words on the relationship issue, Ram. I get your general idea as there are no dos and don'ts about this, with the exception of staying focused on what's most important, whether one is in relationship or not. I'm in agreement with you that treating relationship as *sadhana* is the key and that when you are in one you gain certain things and lose certain other things.

It seems that there are cycles in the relationship game. Now that I've been involved in the intimacy side, the desire for freedom has captured my mind. I won't say I won't have other relationships, just that your words bring to consciousness

something that I have known but not been able to accept. Now it is much easier to accept that relationship is not a spiritual solution. It is something that should fit into my spiritual life, but not something other than my *sadhana*. Thank you very much for these words; they are so liberating.

~ Love, Tanya