

The Right Attitude Toward Love Relationships

Ram (James Swartz)

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Celeste: Dear Ram, well, it's certainly true that being in a relationship doesn't make you any happier than not being in one - but I pretty much knew that anyway. It's good to have it confirmed.

Ram: The spiritual issue is always whether or not you have a realistic view of relationship - what it can do for you and what it can't. So if you are clear about the benefits and limitations, you are free to enjoy.

Celeste: Don't get me wrong... we are getting on very well indeed and I think he's wonderful and all of that... there are no problems (not that there is likely to be right at the start of something!) but it's good to see that I am essentially just the same as before. Happy before, and happy now...

Ram: Good on you, Celeste. It's always nice to know that the relationship idea needn't be fraught with a lot of anxiety. The possibility of getting what you wanted probably manifested because you were already happy. In fact you are happiness itself.

Celeste: ...except with a bit more excitement and at times, a fair bit more *rajas* in general to contend with. And the fact that getting involved with someone has tapped into a couple of my emotional issues from the past (just minor stuff really, and it's been good to be able to confront it with the use of discrimination and begin to see things differently).

Ram: Right. This is why, if you are not expecting a relationship to bring happiness, it can be a kind of *sadhana*. The reason it works this way for you is that you are spiritually awake and know that the primary relationship, the one that really counts, is with your Self/self.

Celeste: Because I'm enjoying this so much, I can feel the tentacles of attachment coming in... but I have a strong desire to keep things in perspective... reminding myself that there is nothing to actually be attached to, and what would I want/hope to get from becoming attached? Certainly not some kind of permanence.

Ram: Whether you get a "permanent" relationship or not isn't really the issue, is it? Because attachment itself is suffering.

Celeste: The attachment presents not so much as a clingy thing, but more the fear side... that it's suddenly going to end (my fear of rejection coming in!). But then I remind myself that if it did, I would simply be able to return 100% of my focus to my

spiritual practice without this “distraction,” which is potentially a happier (more peaceful) situation anyway.

Ram: The way I think about it is that the upside always cancels the downside. There are advantages and disadvantages to both being in one and out of one. You don't get over on yourself by relationship or non-relationship.

Celeste: Having said that, we talk about spiritual things anyway and are learning from each other, so he's not exactly a terrible distraction!

Ram: Those *satsangs* should be cultivated. If along the way you find that there is less and less of it and more and more of “the relationship,” look out.

Celeste: The *satsang* that you had with Mark had quite a powerful effect on me for some reason. I really found it very useful. It was interesting that you started by explaining the meaning of that verse “*Om purnamadah purnamidam...*” – they always recite a prayer with that verse in it at the Sivananda Centre at *satsangs*, so I come across that one a fair bit.

Ram: That was a good one. I've had great feedback on it. I never met the guy, actually. He read *Meditation: Inquiry into the Self* and *Tripura Rahasya*, and he was so affected that he asked if he could come and see me. He lives on a South Pacific island. So he is coming on Tuesday to “see me in the flesh.” Interesting, eh?

Celeste: I hope it's not too boring for you that at the moment my letters to you seem to focus around this relationship... I would like that to not be the case, but obviously the whole thing is occupying my thoughts quite a lot, and all my spiritual work at the moment seems to come down to centring myself in the midst of it all... challenging attachment, reminding myself of what is real/not real, permanent/not permanent... that I am whole and complete, actionless awareness... watching the ego... and just working through the whole thing from a spiritual perspective and trusting that my path somehow leads right through it since I seem to have made the choice to get involved. At least he's aware of the issue of grasping/attachment and not wanting to go there, so it does help. I can see how impossible it would be with a *samsari* who is all too oblivious to the whole issue and effect of attachment.

Ram: That's great, Celeste. I have the utmost admiration for the way you are keeping your mind on what's important and using your spiritual wisdom to run your life. No matter what the outcome of this relationship “on the ground” you will definitely benefit from this approach. No, the letters aren't boring. Keep them coming.

Celeste: Thank you for your help, Ram. I am ever grateful.

Ram: As always, it is my pleasure.

Celeste: Where are you now?

James: I have no location. I pervade and encompass the entire universe. However, that small aging body that, along with infinite others that I enliven with my presence, is in Portland, Oregon.

~ Love, Ram