

# Relationships and Vedanta

Ram (James Swartz)

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## Advantage of a Relationship for Self-Inquiry

**Victoria:** Dear James, I've been intensively listening to your Vedanta teachings for about three years now. I saw you in Westerwald, Cologne, Bad Meinberg, Berlin and Tiruvannamalai. I'm also a student of Vedamurti in Cologne, Germany. He is doing a great job in spreading the knowledge based on your teachings within our study group and nowadays also throughout the whole Yoga Vidya community. It is amazing and inspiring to watch him grow over the years as a Vedanta teacher.

I read your post on Facebook today, where you asked about questions on relationships for Sundari's new book. In fact this topic has been popping up quite often these days. I have the feeling that *Isvara* wants to tell me something.

I'm 38 years old, and my last relationship ended when I was 30. I had a few relationships in my twenties, but they weren't really "serious" or "adult" relationships (with regards to the involvement of my heart and with regards to making true commitments). So I'm definitely not an expert when it comes to relationships.

My intellect is more dominant than my heart. I would say it's because my intellect seems to be more reliable than my heart. My heart is so fickle and vulnerable. I think that's also why I'm totally stunned by Vedanta. The teaching/knowledge made sense to me from the first time I heard it. I never really had any doubts about it. I remember saying to people: "Finally there are words that describe what is going on in me all the time." I always had issues with identifying the person that people thought I was.

I still need to work on some qualifications, I know that, but in terms of *nididhyasana* my practice is to discriminate myself from the *jiva* on a daily basis. I especially do that in situations where I find my *jiva* caught up in feelings.

So coming back to the topic, whenever I find myself being attracted to another person or to the idea of being in a relationship, I tell myself three things: (1) that this is just "*jiva* stuff" and has nothing to do with me, (2) that I should stop fantasizing and concentrate on doing my work with regards to *moksa*, (3) that *Isvara* is providing me with everything I need, and therefore a relationship is obviously not something I need. And all that actually works quite well. And here comes the "but": Does it really work?

**James:** You said it works, so what do you mean does it really work? Correct me if I'm wrong, but you mean that if it really works, then you wouldn't have "heart issues" at all. Maybe you could add few more ideas to your inquiry. (4) Why do I want love from someone? Because I am not satisfied with the way I'm loving myself? If so, why? (5) Does anyone love me now? If so, will the love of someone else be any better? (6) If it is better, will it come with a cost? (7) What am I willing to pay for someone else's love? (8) If no one loves me, why not? Is it because I don't love

myself?

**Victoria:** Sometimes I do feel insecure with the way I handle things. I don't know how important it is, for the *jiva*, to deal with, let's say "heart issues" or "love issues."

**James:** It's only as important as the degree of agitation it causes you. If you aren't sleeping at night and biting your nails down to the quick because nobody loves you the way you want to be loved, then it's pretty important to take it seriously. If it's just an occasional irritation and more or less easily dismissed with a little inquiry, I wouldn't worry about it. Are you otherwise pretty happy? It seems that you are.

**Victoria:** I remember that you, James, said that sometimes when the knowledge is stable and there are no doubts about who you are but you are still not perfectly satisfied, there could be something with the *jiva* that needs to be worked out. And it mostly has to do with love.

**James:** Yes.

**Victoria:** So here are my questions:

How do I know that there are issues the *jiva* needs to work out? (See above.)

Under what circumstances could being in a relationship help with regards to *moksa*?

**James:** A loving relationship can keep the worry about love away. But you need to be very careful to see to it that your significant other understands that your love for the self is non-negotiable and that it does not prevent you from loving him. People will say what you want to hear in the beginning of a relationship when the hormones are active but once things settle down, one's partner may become needy for attention and resent the attention you are giving to your inquiry. If you let your inquiry slide, you will definitely suffer because it has been very beneficial. If you do find someone who understands and accepts your conditions, you should manage the relationship with *karma yoga* and take your partner as *Isvara* or a symbol of *Isvara* and show the kind of devotion to him that you show to your Vedanta.

It's a tricky path, using a relationship as a means to an end, because most people think that a relationship is an end in itself. If the relationship doesn't work, well, you have learned something about yourself and about the nature of dualistic love.

**Victoria:** Am I fooling myself when I think that it's okay to ignore or soft-peddle my feelings in order to keep my mind focused on Vedanta?

**James:** It depends on your goal. Do you want freedom from relationships so you can do relationships freely or do you want a relationship? If you want a relationship, what do you expect to accomplish? There is nothing wrong with relationships if you are willing to take the bitter with the sweet. The bitter is the constant doubt that the person you are depending on for love will one day not love you the way you want to

be loved or that you will grow tired of him and let him down. So in this case you have traded the worry about whether or not you are ignoring your desire for love, for the worry about the continual availability of someone else's love. It's a zero-sum game either way.

**Victoria:** I'm sorry if these questions are too personal or not general enough to be used for your book, Sundari. But when I saw the post on Facebook, I thought this is my chance to come forward with something that has been on my mind for quite some time now. Thanks to *Isvara*! So if you find the time to answer me, you would make me very happy. If you don't find the time, no problem, *Isvara* will give me answers on another way.

**James:** We got some helpful ideas. Thank you.

**Victoria:** Last but not least, thank you!

Thank you for your teachings, thank you for your patience with your students, thank you for your devotion and love, thank you for your bold honesty, thank you for your time, thank you for inspiring me and for showing me the way out!