

Desire for Relationships versus Desire for Freedom

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Juliet: I read your *satsangs* on the website, and they are really informative and interesting. It is crazy how familiar all the questions and doubts sound to me.

It's almost as though all questions are coming from one eternal being channelled through various instruments, aka minds. It feels like in a mirror theatre where one person sees itself modified and duplicated through different mirrors.

The person is one – but the appearances many.

Rory: I love the way you put this. It's so very true. We tend to think that our problems are somehow personal and unique to us, but really there are no new problems under the sun, and certainly nothing original! It's as though *Isvara*, as the causal body, has a storehouse of various issues and problems according to category, and we each get assigned our share. It all belongs to *Isvara* and He's just "generously" sharing it amongst the *jivas* like a farmer scattering seed.

Vedanta is wonderful in that it depersonalises the *jiva's* suffering. We see that we're all one being, apparently distorted by the mirror of *maya* (another good analogy) and dealing with the same difficulties, in different combinations. There's really nothing personal about it other than the thought that it's personal.

Juliet: The relationship struggle is especially familiar to me. I feel torn between the desire for a relationship and the fact that life/*Isvara* has other plans for me.

I know *Isvara* wants to make me an independent, free being, who doesn't need a relationship in any form to survive.

Rory: This is one of the biggest issues for many people. The desire for "connection" with another human being is hardwired into us. We are social beings after all. Of course there's nothing wrong with relationships per se – the issue is really one's motivation for pursuing relationships.

Until the knowledge is firm, we tend to use relationships as a means of attaining happiness, fulfilment and love. This never works, for two reasons. Firstly, "the joy is not in the object" and all objects are limited, finite and subject to constant change. We all come to realise this as soon as the honeymoon period ends! Cue *samsara*...! Secondly, a romantic relationship tends to take so much of our time, energy and attention that we have little left over for our *sadhana*, inquiry and Vedantic study.

That's not to say we necessarily have to be cave-dwelling hermits, but we do need to be very clear about our priorities and values, and you certainly seem to be.

When the knowledge starts to work its magic, our relationship with the world changes immensely. Instead of seeking objects, including relationships, as a means

for happiness, our every interaction and relationship becomes an expression of happiness. That way, instead of seeking happiness from others, we're just sharing the happiness that's already within us and which remains unaffected whether the object is present or not.

Juliet: I am at that stage where I really want connection and would really never ever sacrifice my path of truth/Vedanta for a relationship.

Rory: The connection you want is actually already there, even if it isn't always experienced at the *mithya* level. We can never be unconnected except in our minds.

It's wonderful you have that commitment. I really think that one of the most important of all the qualifications is the burning desire for freedom. If that isn't there, the rest of it just doesn't work, because one lacks the motivation and drive to stick with the teaching and keep applying the knowledge.

I always liked that quote from William Murray because it's so true:

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.”

Juliet: These two thoughts are fighting in my mind. I witness the fight and hope for the best.

Rory: This inner conflict is quite natural. Because of the culture we live in, the mind is conditioned to wanting certain worldly things and to seeing that as the benchmark of “success” and “happiness.”

That's why constant discrimination is necessary to keep the mind on the right track – i.e. analysing the limitations of object-happiness and being clear that only *moksa* brings lasting happiness and security.

You have your head screwed on right and a determination to be free, so just dismiss any *vasanas* that make you doubt yourself and keep on fighting the good fight! When you have that fire in your heart, victory is assured. 😊