

THE BELOVED
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Earth, Air, Fire, Water

As you can see in the Order of Service, today's talk is titled The Beloved. Since it is part of a series, allow me to take a moment to put this presentation into perspective. The first talk was titled Earth, Air, Fire and Water. We talked about a perspective that is shared by the East and West, the sacred and secular, the past and present. It describes the essential energy forces that sustain the world. The Indians use it to describe the four primary yogas. The early Babylonians used it to describe four primary astrological categories. The Ancient Greeks used it to describe the four elements. And it shows up as the four suits in the Tarot, the four mental functions in Jungian psychology as well as in Christianity and the Wizard of Oz. It is a perspective that helps us understand our relationships and us. This perspective helps us develop our intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual powers.

The Master Weaver

The second talk was titled The Master Weaver and looked at the intellectual domain. It concluded that our mind is the Master Weaver. We talked about how our intentions put us into situations and determine what is likely to happen in our life. Our interpretations give meaning to these situations. Our experience of life is the meaning we give to what happens. With our thoughts we make the world.

Sufis, Saints and Sex

Today we address the emotional component of the model using the metaphor of The Beloved. It's all about emotion, what we desire; what moves us into action. We will look at the meaning of the Beloved by Sufis, Saints and the devotees of Shiva.

Wholeness and Oneness

We will also look at what is underneath the emotional waves we feel. We will look at the undercurrent below emotions, values, and needs.

Lastly, we will discuss how all this impacts why and how we create intimate relationships.

Sufis, Saints and Shiva

In the Power of Myth, Joseph Campbell says that we want to experience the rapture of being alive.

For the Muslim Sufis, God is an intimate “Beloved” with whom they share a passionate, sacred love affair. Their rapture is captured in their poetry. For example:

“During the day I was singing with you. At night we slept in the same bed. I wasn’t conscious day or night. I thought I knew who I was, but I was you.”—Jalal Al-Din Rumi

“I drank You down in one, collapsing intoxicated by purity. Ever since, I can’t tell if I exist or not. Sometimes I know the bliss of the “I” that looks through my eyes. Other times my habits dump me back in the shit. But then there it is—that aroma once again. I’m returned to the Rose Garden.” – Rumi

Christian Saints also talked of God as The Beloved.

In “Interior Castle”, St. Teresa of Avila writes of the Spouse, Love and the Beloved, of being “consumed with desire”, “consummating the spiritual marriage” and the rapture of being “united with Him”. She says, “Union is as if the ends of two wax candles were joined so that the light they give is one.”

St. John of the Cross writes, “my beloved is the high mountains, and the lonely valley forests; unexplored islands, rising rivers, and the love songs of the wind; the hushed night-time and the waking dawn; the soundless music of silent solitude; the supper that nourishes and swells me with love.”

The Jewish version of this love affair is expressed in the Song of Songs, which says, “My beloved is mine, and I am his”. Many rabbis and church fathers see it as an allegory for the relationship between Israel and God. Here is an example of how that relationship is expressed.

“The gold of your thigh was shaped by a master craftsman. Your navel is the moon’s bright drinking cup. May it brim with wine! Your belly is a mound of wheat edged with lilies. Your breasts are two fawns, twins of a gazelle.”

In India, Hindus believe as Eastern Christians do that “you will find God in your Self” – Monoimos. They say Atman is Brahman—the Self is God. We are an expression of the one Consciousness of the Universe.

That union, however, is too complete, too abstract, to be satisfying for those with a more emotional orientation. Vivekananda writes: “Who cares to become sugar [meaning God]? Says the Bhakta, “I want to taste sugar.” Who will then desire to become free and one with God? “I may know that I am He, yet will I take myself away from Him and become different, so that I may enjoy the Beloved.”

The Bhakti surrenders to God, lose themselves in ecstatic devotion, transcend their separate identity, and become one with their Beloved.

Yoga means union. Hatha means sun and moon. Hath Yoga which many of you are familiar with is not just about stretching. It is about achieving transcendental oneness. It is about creating harmony with the universe.

“The balance of male and female is at the heart of Indian myths. All deities have their female aspects, such as...Krishna and Radha, Shiva and Parvati. The female aspect of the deity embodies mercy and the spirit of devotion to that deity; while the male aspect represents the outward flow of power and protection. The union of male and female as the creative source of the energy of life is symbolized in the image of the Shiva lingam surrounded by the yoni of the Goddess. This image is revered in Shiva temples throughout India.”

The Lingam is a physical form of the masculine genitals, meaning “wand of light”. The Yoni is a physical form of the female genitals, meaning “sacred place”. Very simply, the entire spiritual path is the harmonious union of the male and female principles in us all. The Tantric path to spiritual enlightenment says yes to love and sex. They believe that “orgasm is the meeting of the infinite with the finite”. To a Tantrica, “the realization of God is known through discovering God in the other”.

So, it would seem that, for many throughout the world, the “rapture of being alive” that Campbell says we all want can be achieved through union with The Beloved. And The Beloved or the Divine can be experienced in your Self or in the other. Which is why, even though devotees of Shiva believe that Atman is Brahman, they greet the Divine in others with “Namaste”. It seems that both the Spiritual path and the Sexual path lead to rapture. Perhaps this is the reason we can hear people in church and the bedroom calling, “Oh, my God!”

Drive toward Wholeness and Oneness

So, what’s the purpose of telling all these stories about the exotic and the erotic? All this demonstrates is that there are people who are obviously on the lunatic fringe. Right? Let’s explore that. What they all have in common is the flow of energy when we unite with what we most desire. So, what do we most desire?

We all experience emotions. We’re either sad, glad or someplace in between. We sometimes feel joy, love, desire, anger, fear, and anxiety. We can feel isolated, rejected, overwhelmed, unlovable, alone, loved, nurtured.

We’re glad when our values are honored and sad when they are not honored. We may value independence, competence, competition, recognition, cooperation, friendship, family, affection and taking responsibility.

Our values grow out of our experience with trying to get our needs met. And, so if we go a little deeper, we discover that we all have psychological needs. In addition to our basic needs for three hots and a cot, most of us have differing needs for acceptance, power and intimacy.

For example, if we have a high need for acceptance by others we probably value recognition and cooperation and feel anxious or isolated if our need is not met.

If we have a high need for power, we probably value competition, competence and perhaps independence and will feel anger or fear when we can't meet this need.

If we have a high need for intimacy we probably value friendship, family and affection and will probably feel alone, rejected or unlovable if the need is not met.

But below all these surface waves, below the emotions, the values and needs, there is a strong undercurrent. In my opinion, there is a drive for wholeness and oneness. What do these terms mean and why do they exist?

There is a time in each of our personal histories when all of our needs are met without asking. It's a serene world where we are completely accepted and nurtured. Our creator is in us and we are in our creator. We float through life without a care, and then we are thrown out of paradise and are born. And I believe at some cellular level we remember that unity and long to return to the joy of oneness.

We are all born into an environment that values some things and not others. We are born whole but some of our qualities are recognized, accepted, and rewarded and others not. As children, we learn very quickly how to get the love and attention of our caregivers. It's a matter of survival. We learn what to express and what to suppress to get love. What we suppress becomes like a child buried alive. That part of us wants to be dug up and allowed to play. We want to integrate what we have with what we left behind and become whole again.

So, underneath all of our emotions, values and needs there is a powerful, vague, deep movement toward the source of our existence. In this sense, we are very much like salmon swimming upstream.

This force is as subtle and as powerful as the changing tide. And as the tide it comes in and goes out. The drive for oneness pushes us to lose our self in togetherness. The drive for wholeness pulls us to find our self in separateness. It's like a dance. We step forward; we step back. It's a cycle, like the earth rotating on its axis causing sunlight to yield to moonlight and then moonlight yielding to sunlight and on and on. Throughout the ages and the world, the people who most find themselves, are the people who lose themselves in a higher calling. They create a harmonious union between the male and female principle, between asserting and yielding, between power and sensitivity.

Why and How We Create Intimate Relationships

So what? What does this have to do with me, you might ask. The drive for wholeness and oneness explains why and how we create intimate relationships.

We marry people who have developed qualities that we suppressed to get love.

We have all heard the expression “opposites attract”. And they do. We are often drawn to people who have developed the very qualities we lack. The attraction is the same as between the positive and negative ends of magnets. It’s like my car battery. The energy flows only when the positive and negative terminals are connected. As children, we suppress qualities that were unacceptable to our parents or at least we did not develop those qualities that were not reinforced. And as so many marriage counselors have observed, we marry people who have the very qualities that we disowned to get the love of our primary caregivers. My observation is that the most successful marriages are between people who have enough in common so that they can communicate and enough that are different so that they are interested and energized.

If we can tolerate the tension that accompanies difference, our lovers can become our most important teachers. They can create a safe place for us to reclaim the qualities we gave up to get love, and in the process, become whole again. In many respects, they model these very qualities.

It’s a strange phenomenon. It’s almost as if we are drawn to our own hidden, lost, and suppressed selves that are reflected in our partners.

If this coupling process is successful, we start off as two dependent halves becoming a whole and evolve into two interdependent wholes.

We also marry people who in some significant but not necessarily obvious way resemble our original caregivers. In one sense, we are uniting with our creator. Interestingly enough, more often than not it is the negative qualities of our caregivers that seem very important in a marriage. Many therapists believe we are drawn to people who provide the opportunity to resolve past hurts. In a strange way the relationship is an opportunity to go back in time and heal our self or address unresolved issues.

So, there is a strong tendency to marry people who are different from us. And we do this so that we can reclaim the lost parts of ourselves and become whole again. And, we also marry people who are similar to our caregivers so that we can once again experience the rapture of oneness and/or resolve past hurts.

On the one hand, when we look at our lover, we are looking at our creator. We are looking at someone who, in some strange and somewhat unconscious way, resembles our parents. On the other hand, when we look at our lover we are looking at our self, the hidden part of us, and the part that still needs to develop.

That part of our partner that reminds us of our creator is pulling us toward oneness. This creates the desire for togetherness. The part of our partner that represents the suppressed parts of our self is pulling us toward wholeness. This creates the desire initially for togetherness, so that I can complete myself with my better half. Eventually, as I become

a more integrated person there develops the desire for separateness. It's a dance. We're trying to lose our selves and find our selves at the same time.

Robert Johnson, a Jungian analyst writes, "The passion of romance is always directed at our own projections, our own expectations, our own fantasies." "It is a love not of another person, but of ourselves."

Love, on the other hand, is transcending the ego to connect with another.

So, these are some of the reasons we marry our partners. This is why we create intimate relationships. But, how can we maintain them? The advice to love our partner as our self is very important. In fact, for many people, the problem is that they do love their partner as themselves. They don't love themselves.

If we have the courage to know who we are, accept who we are, and be who we are, we will become whole and more powerful than we have ever imagined.

Of course, this requires quiet attention so that we can hear that small child in us that we buried alive. We need to make contact, establish a relationship, and risk the embarrassment of letting him or her out in public. This child may represent our greatest potential or our worst possible qualities. In either case, it is frightening because it contains all this built up power which we have no experience managing. If we look, we will find God and the Devil within ourselves.

If we have the compassion to recognize, accept, and support our partner as s/he is, s/he will also become whole and powerful.

If we pay attention to ourselves and our partners, without judgment, just noticing what is, we will see—eventually--The Beloved. Love is all about awareness, acceptance and appreciation. When we do accept and appreciate ourselves and others, we create a space to become all of who we already are.

According to Tantra, "If you are attracted to a (man or) woman, it is to discover the (man or) woman in you. If you see faults in your lover, it is to recognize your own faults. If you see a god or goddess in your partner it is simply to awaken your awareness of your own god or goddess."

If you and your lover bring acceptance and consciousness to what you experience, you will be transformed into soul mates. Some people say I will believe it when I see it. In fact, if we believe it, we will always see it. If we believe s/he is The Beloved, s/he will become The Beloved. There will be ample evidence everywhere you look.

If you honor the divine in yourself and your partner, you, your partner, your relationship, and your life will be transformed. Nothing has to be added. Nothing subtracted. You need only see what is right in front of you. I don't mean seeing your reaction to your partner. I mean really seeing your partner. As soon as we stop pretending to be God and judging

our partners, we see more clearly, we accept what is can't help but love. When we truly love ourselves we can't help but love the other.

Relationships are like rivers. They are flowing or stalling, rising or falling. Our bodies tell us what is working and what is not. Love results in us feeling light, energized, and the sensation of expansion. The absence of love results in feeling heavy, lethargic and the sensation of contraction.

So, what we have been talking about is:

1. We want to experience the rapture of being fully alive.
2. Throughout the world and throughout the ages, rapture has been achieved through union with The Beloved.
3. The primary force behind union is a drive toward oneness and wholeness.
4. As a result, we marry people who are familiar to us in that in some significant way they resemble our caregivers, and different from us in that they represent qualities we lack and need to become whole.
5. To experience the rapture of being fully alive we must love our partner as our self, which requires awareness, acceptance and appreciation. When we are devoted to the other, we experience submission and the feeling of oneness. When we are devoted to our self, we experience assertion and the feeling of wholeness.

It is through union with The Beloved that we experience the joy, rapture and ecstasy of fully expressing ourselves and thereby feeling fully alive. When we are one with The Beloved we are home again and whole. We are in paradise.

Leo Buscaglia wrote, "Love and the self are one and the discovery of either is the realization of both." "When man has love he is no longer at the mercy of forces greater than himself, for he, himself, becomes the powerful force."

So, love is our quest. It is the problem and the solution. It is the beginning and the end, the journey and the destination. It is the miracle and the mystery.

As every mystic knows, through devotion we discover The Beloved, which is in thee and me.