The Quest for Balance and Wholeness
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Relationships provide a means to externalize our inner striving for balance and wholeness. The process of searching for the perfect mate forces us to evaluate our needs, strengths and weaknesses -- our soul's level of evolution. The stronger our attractions, or the more intensely we fall in love, the more our unresolved issues surface. Although our emotions may be consciously directed towards our mate or desired mate, the truest yearning, the truest quest, is to fulfill an inner ideal. The passion in relationships is the psyche's attempt to find completion as a balanced whole. As human beings, we are here to grow and evolve, becoming balanced and whole, as we gain conscious awareness on this soul's journey called life.

What does it mean to be balanced and whole? The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines balance as: a weight, force or influence counteracting the effect of another; a state of equilibrium. It defines whole as: a coherent system or organization of parts fitting or working together as one. Within the context of the soul's development, I believe it means being conscious of all parts or sub-personalities within us, i.e. the lover, caretaker, tyrant, teacher, mother, father, manipulator, loser. To be whole and balanced is to develop the integrity of every aspect of self.

Addictive relationships, however ineffective, are a good example of the compulsion to find inner balance. Many times these relationships reflect feelings of separation, aloneness, emptiness, alienation and other hurts which stem from painful experiences at birth, in childhood or what appears to be past lives. Most fetuses have a sense of connection and love with their mother and the universe while in the womb. However, that level of security rarely extends throughout one's lifetime. According to Anonymous groups, 97% of families are dysfunctional, where the emotional needs of the child are not met. Consequently, most families have unhealthy patterns of relating. Whichever patterns are familiar from childhood will be the patterns we equate with love since the parents are usually the first love relationships we experience. So, in the quest for wholeness, we look for a mate with whom we can feel the same feelings and meet the same challenges we did in childhood.

As in any addiction (work, drugs, alcohol, cleaning, shopping, etc.), relationships are addictive when we depend on them for our sense of self and cannot terminate them even when we are in great pain. The addictive relationship can take on an infinite number of forms. It may be that one partner needs to be needed (the caretaker) and the other one is looking for someone to take responsibility for him or her (the child); or a pathological liar is with someone who is paranoid. In any case, these relationship patterns do not really heal the psyche's wounds. While the suffering may eventually lead us to take some other recourse; healing, balance, and wholeness of the self can take place only from within. However, the suffering often provides the impetus that pushes people on a path of consciousness and growth and is really a blessing in disguise.

Healing and growth in relationships are enhanced when we realize that the qualities we are looking for in a mate are in fact qualities we need to develop in ourselves. Those characteristics, which we so desperately seek, must be cultivated and nurtured within our own psyche. When we consciously accept that our partner is our mirror, we can gain greater awareness about ourselves through our partner. The positive qualities which we seek become models to which we aspire. The qualities we dislike in our partner reveal aspects of ourselves which are often our shadow and need to be embraced. In this way, we can make the transition from addictive to creative relationships.
The path of inner healing requires balancing the male and female components within the psyche. Feminine qualities such as the capacity for relatedness, love, and surrender must be complimented by masculine traits such as wielding power, control, and territoriality in order for the psyche to be complete. A man completes his maleness as he develops his inner female’s receptivity and learns to soften his power; a woman completes her femaleness as she develops the power of her inner male to protect her vulnerability.

"No aspect of the human psyche can live in a healthy state unless it is balanced by its complementary opposite. If the masculine mind tries to live without its "other half," the feminine soul, then the masculine becomes unbalanced, sick, and finally monstrous. Power without love becomes brutality. Feeling without masculine strength becomes woolly sentimentality."  

We, Robert Johnson

The path of enlightenment is to make conscious these divergent, conflicting aspects of our psyche and to unify them into one Self. As we join these parts, we create the Divine Marriage of polarities within. In our search for romantic love we are searching for this inner ideal, this path to the inner world. We seek wholeness and God through relationship. This is Divine Love.

Many people choose to stay in the place of being adored and worshiped by their partner. However, the enjoyment of being adored and worshiped as a god or goddess includes a price - the price of not being seen. Instead of really being seen, our mate relates to his or her own projection and not to us. But as we gain consciousness of our individuality we relate to our own soul-image, anima in men and animus in women, making it possible to finally see our partner as unique and human. Our capacity for genuine relationship grows as we become a complete individual.

Real human love means to identify with another, affirm their value and sacredness as they are, in their totality with their shadow side and imperfections.

"One of the great paradoxes in romantic love is that it never produces human relationship as long as it stays romantic. It produces drama, daring adventures, wondrous, intense love scenes, jealousies, and betrayals; but people never seem to settle into relationship with each other as flesh-and-blood human beings until they are out of the romantic love stage, until they love each other instead of being "in love.""  

We, Robert Johnson

"Flesh-and-blood" love has to do with commitment beyond the "falling in love" phase. It means being willing to experience the ebb and flow in relationship as when we feel very close to someone, and then need to pull back and reaffirm our separateness. It means learning to balance our needs with those of our mate's without compromising integrity.

Sexuality is another important aspect of human relationships. The French call orgasm "le petit mort", the little death. This phrase recognizes that the most profound orgasm may take one to a total surrender of the ego. It is at this point that total merging can occur. We merge into Oneness, first with our partner in a state of love and then with the entire universe. Our partner becomes the gateway to the Divine, to God, and to the experience of our God-self.
"The object is to become so completely instinctual, so mindless, that we merge with ultimate nature - that the woman disappears and becomes a door for the ultimate, the man disappears and becomes a door for the ultimate.

This is the Tantric definition of our sexuality: the return to absolute innocence, absolute oneness." Sex, Rajneesh

Thus, experiencing love and passion with our god-goddess image can bring about death and rebirth in an ecstatic sexual experience. This is the place where Divine and human love merge - where we can utilize relationship to heal our wounds and know the depths of our soul, the limitlessness of our spirit, and the Oneness of all that is.

Relationships lead to inner balance and wholeness as we go through "ego death", withdrawing one's projections from other people and ceasing to search for the divine world in our mate. Instead we can use our mate and relationship to assist in finding the Divine inside ourselves. Our true inner nature is that of love. Love affirms what each person actually is, rather than our expectations. As we are pushed to balance all aspects of our being: male and female, strengths and weaknesses, ego and shadow, we come closer to reaching true fulfillment and self-realization. We merge with both our internal and external mates, integrating the Sacred and the ordinary, the Divine and human, in our love relationships.

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