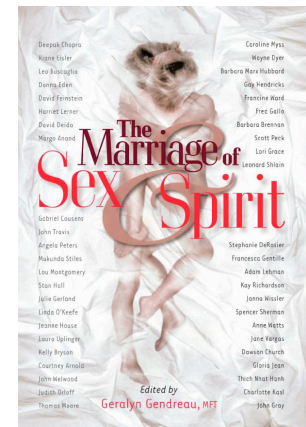


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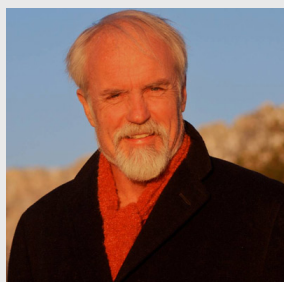
The Kite and the String: Freedom and Intimacy

by Kelly Bryson

“We are not here to earn God’s love, we are here to spend it” according to comic Swami Beyondananda. And what is this God’s love that we are here to spend? It is the ecstasy of creative expression - and loving both ourselves and each other - whether through experiencing the profound and rare realms of sacred sexual pleasure, the birthing of a book, the cultivation of a garden, or the raising of a child. It is the bliss, the rapture of surrendering to our urge to merge with creative love. It is enjoying what I think is Goddess’s greatest gift to humanity - each other.

How do we enjoy each other? Oh, let me count the ways: seeing each other’s spiritual beauty; laughing insanely at a silly joke; spontaneously finding opportunities to play; creating projects together; nurturing friends; the pleasures of touch; sweet sex; seeing our physical beauty; connecting emotionally, intellectually; hearing our spirits through our voices; being present with each other, giving, appreciating, supporting each other - and on and on.

However, to enjoy each other, we need recognize and surrender our current coercive, codependent patterns of relating - as well as our current fear-based institutions and traditions - and develop a consciousness of natural giving and receiving. This requires that we develop a new form of spiritual consciousness and *micro-cultures* to support that consciousness. As dying sociologist Morrie Schwartz told ABC newsman Ted Koppel, “Our culture does not work anymore. We need to create a new one!” But I do not mean to imply that we have to change the world; I have been there, done that, and got the T-shirt for indulging in what I call the dark side of compassion. I have felt compelled to help others in order to feel a sense of personal value, playing a role I call the *martyor* – a martyr/savior/warrior.



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“We are not here to earn God’s love, we are here to spend it.”
- Swami Beyondananda

These new, sophisticated micro-communities have the spiritual consciousness to love us right where we are on the path, without the crazy notion that we should be more evolved, healed, healthy,

trim, kind, stable, or motivated than we currently are. By sophisticated, I mean they have the ability to “hold space” for us - to be a clear mirror, providing wisdom, guidance and supportive honesty - as we learn to do the “Freedom and Closeness” dance with each other. Relationships offer our primary opportunities for growth and evolution, and because we are each at least as uniquely individual as snowflakes, we need support for discovering and meeting our particularly personal needs within relationships.

This is, of course, countercultural to the cookie-cutter, codependent, one-size-fits-all template of traditional love or marriage relationships. To the degree any relationship is tainted by the consciousness of obedience, duty, obligation, buying love, or being good for the sake of external approval, it is doomed to at least gradually dam the river of love and erotic sexual energy down to a trickle. Traditional marriage vows often say that women will “obey” men and that the couple will stay together no matter what, for better or worse, no matter how sick or bankrupt or miserable they become, until death does them part. This wording is still used by the vast majority people in the western world. Stephen Langton, a Medieval Archbishop of Canterbury, even suggested that a wife should allow herself to be killed before she allows her husband to go sexually unsatisfied, for that might lead him to the great sin of adultery. If a wife is to save her husband from the weeping and wailing of eternal hellfire, she must subjugate her own will to his, and violate her own sacred sexuality. I sometimes joke that in such marriages, I hope that death comes quickly to both parties - for the marriage itself sounds like hell.

Many of the couples I work with, as a licensed marriage therapist, have the following kind of pain going on: The woman is hurt, discouraged, hopeless and lonely while the man is angry, frustrated, exhausted and scared. The woman’s unmet need is for empathy, closeness, and a higher quality of intimate conversation. The man’s need is for respect, rest, validation of his worth as he is, and to unhook himself from his inner sense of inadequacy and guilt about his partner’s pain.

These new, sophisticated micro-communities support the spiritual consciousness to love us right where we are on the path, without the crazy notion that we should be more evolved, healed, healthy, trim, kind, stable, or motivated.

The freedom vs. closeness dance underlies many painful relationships. How sad that so many couples spend their whole lives in conflict about this. And it does not even need to be seen as a conflict. For as Einstein observed, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” We can look at this freedom vs. closeness dynamic not as a conflict, but as an important, beautiful, playful co-creation. Just as the kite loves its freedom to sail the skies, it still needs the grounding securing quality of the string. The kite stretches the string to new heights, and the string protects the kite from getting lost and crashing. It is the dynamic tension between the kite and

the string that allows the fulfillment of their different purposes. It is not a conflict to be resolved, but a daring, delightful dance - not a tangle, but a passionate tango to be continually mastered.

Your community cannot be made up of one single other human being. Your partner cannot meet *all* your needs for freedom and closeness. Without the structure of conscious community, couples inevitably experience great pressure to rely on an A-frame of codependency. As either party tries to take space or follow his or her freedom, the other collapses in an attack of abandonment feelings, and then clings. Of course this clinging then threatens their partner's freedom. That is why we need community. Community is like the dance floor. It holds individual autonomy as a primary value. It also value transparency, nonviolence, love, trust, the joy of sacred sexuality, partnership, spirituality and reverence for nature.

Many summers, I teach at the Zegg intentional community in Germany. This group has found, though long experience, that you cannot resolve the freedom-closeness, man/woman (or any couple) appearance of conflict in a dyad of just two people. The dyad is too prone to the paralyzing dynamic of polarization, which then creates control battles. Only in a powerful morphogenetic field of community energy can sexpeace between couples be achieved. Many in the Zegg community believe this is also a key to world peace. Sometimes one member of the couple may need a certain quality of empathy that their partner just cannot provide. Sometimes there is a certain honesty that is needed, one that cannot be received from a partner, but *must* come from an outside community member. It took six weeks for the Zegg Community to get me to hear a particular fact - that my relationship partner could not give me back my freedom. The reason that she cannot give me my freedom is because she does not possess it in the first place. I do. In my book, *Don't Be Nice, Be Real*, I give other examples of how it "takes a village to raise a relationship" - or an individual's consciousness.

The freedom vs. closeness dance underlies many painful relationships.

These integrated micro-communities support the development of holistic spirituality, which begins with a heavenly consciousness of our free will and an earthly awareness of our interconnectedness. It is very easy for this interconnectedness to get lost in the push-pull polarization of the basic relational unit of society, the couple. It may be that the human being is a tribal or pack animal, like wolves and giraffes, and not like swans that travel and live in pairs. The strength and security that a tribe supplies is essential to preventing the usual codependency in couple relationships. Without this emotional and spiritual security, clinging is inevitable.

Clinging poisons love. Paul Ferrini describes this dynamic in his book, *Love Without Conditions*.

Compassion and detachment go hand in hand. You cannot love someone and seek to control him. Only by wanting what is best for him do you offer your brother freedom. And if you do not offer him freedom, you do not offer him love. Every situation in your life provides you with an opportunity to gain greater intimacy and greater freedom. As you love

more and more people more and more deeply, you become less attached to them individually. You become attached not to the specific person, but to the love that each one extends to you. This is a movement toward the experience of Divine Love which is beyond the body, indeed beyond form of any kind.

These new communities do not necessarily have physical locations or complex organizational structures, but they do celebrate the divine diversity of bodies, personalities, gender manifestations, spiritual and sexual preferences, varieties of relationship design, and creativity of conscious sexual expression. Often these spontaneous self organizing groups are spawned by the spiritual infusion of a particular body of wisdom/creative expression from organizations like Burning Man, Human Awareness Institute (HAI), Nonviolent Communication, Celebrations of Love, etc. These sub cultural tribes are necessary to support individual souls in finding and embracing their own unique spiritual, love and sexual expression in the world. So much of our sexual and relationship behavior is completely conditioned by mores, taboos, traditions and rules created by elite males in cultural and religious leadership roles whose primary motivator was economic security for themselves. I have read that another driving force, for some of these men was their fear of experiencing impotence in the presence of powerful sexy women.

Ester Hicks, coauthor of *Ask and It Is Given*, jokes about governments creating of laws to control people's sexual behavior. In a tape of one of her classes she asks: "What if our government decided that it was now changing the law so that we were all required to have at least ten marriage partners and that each week we had to report to a government office to prove we were abiding by the law?" We could then see how ridiculous it is to have a law telling human beings how they are must love. Any law that tells us how we have to love - whether it is one or many, homosexually or heterosexually - violates the most sovereign spiritual principle, that of human autonomy. Every individual has his or her own unique needs for growth as they relate to friendship, love, sexuality, and life partners. During some cycles of development, people may need to be celibate. During others, they may need to have many intense sexual experiences. During yet others, they may require less-intense friendships or love relationships. Other times, they may need a series of partners as they grown and learn. The evolution of each soul has its own patterns and needs for experience. These are not governed by the laws of humankind.

Only in a powerful morphogenetic field of community energy can sexpeace between couples be achieved.

Because of the utter uniqueness of each soul's needs for evolutionary energy through loving relationships, tolerance becomes more than a nice value but a necessary fertilizer for our spiritual growth. Neale Donald Walsch, author of *Conversations with God*, wrote, "The decision to stop making each other wrong for what we're doing is going to be a huge turning point in our social evolution. And that's going to happen in the next ten to fifteen years-I'm very clear about that. We're going to stop making each

other wrong for our sexual lifestyle choices.” He goes on to include our spiritual, political, and other choices, as well.

Freedom is the
center
- and love the
circumference -
of a healthy
relationship.

Unless we exercise true conscious choice we are not aligned with the healthy flow of *chi* (life energy) in our bodies, *chit* (or joyful consciousness) in our minds, or love in our hearts. My mentor Virginia Satir would say “We need to take the risk to say our *real* yesses and nos.” The symptoms of this lack of alignment with healthy flow are low sex drive, depression, loss of passion for life, low physical energy, illness, dullness, confusion, addictions, and explosiveness.

One of the most powerful catalysts for this awakening is nonsexual touch. It is healing and nurturing; it can improve self-esteem and ameliorate depression. If every human being belonged to a “Touching Tribe” we would all be healthier and happier. As a therapist, it is a joy for me to watch friends and clients come back into the passionate, ecstatic, sweet flow of life. The radiance returns to their face, the spring in their step, and the joy in the hearts. I have been witness to many miraculous resurrections as people receive the power of compassion through empathy needed to release their rage, hurt and fear and to reopen their hearts. I have been graced to be a part of workshops where the channel got opened to that most powerful healing energy of the creative life force itself, call it sexual healing energy, prana, or the *élan vital*.

One reason we lose connection to our inner voice/choice is because we are all influenced to adapt to our families and communities wishes, in order to receive their conditional love. Even our more evolved spiritual communities invite us to listen to parts of ourselves at the expense of our whole selves. Riane Eisler, in her book *Sacred Pleasure*, makes the point this way:

“I think one of the great tragedies of Western religion [and contemporary spirituality] as most of us have known it has been its compartmentalized view of human experience and particularly its elevation of disembodied or, ‘spiritual’ love over embodied or carnal love.”

Many of our more traditional religions tell us not to trust our own selfish hearts and to resist the weakness of the flesh. In fact it demonizes women, nature, sexuality, recreation, our own emotions and pleasure. There are of course good reasons to ask people not to trust their own inner perceptions. People who are in touch with their own feelings, needs, hearts and intuition to not make good slaves, soldiers or religious followers. It is harder to keep such people in line so fear and guilt tactics are the mainstay of many religions, with threats of eternal hellish pain inflicted by a scary devil with pitchfork and horns.

There is, by the way, no horned devil ever mentioned in the Bible. The early Roman Christian church invented it. It came from the image of the bull, with its horns, which was a symbol the Pagans and Nature Worshipers held sacred as a symbol of

abundance, potency, sexuality, and life. The church took their sacred symbol and used it to demonize the competing religion and justify the slaughter of around one million women herbalist-physician-priestesses who still worshiped the feminine aspect of the Goddess, Gaia and nature in the third century. This literal demonization of their sacred symbol of sexuality, the bull, takes another interesting form. It appears in the slang expression “horny” as in “horny devil.” Horny does not just mean sexually excited, lustful and aroused. In our sexually repressed culture it also means lascivious and lecherous. This association of sexual energy with the Christian symbol of the incarnation of all that is carnal and evil, the devil, is no accident. If Christian leaders would acknowledge this mistake their religion has been making these last 1,700 years, it might begin to interrupt the dangerous dynamic of denial of this sacred part of ourselves.

I am not going to hold my breath waiting for the apology. No I am going to breathe deep the fresh air of freedom to create a new church/community that honors both God and Goddess, heavenly and earthly love, that not only worships toward God but worshacrosses towards each other, that values both the group and the individual, freedom and closeness.

I wonder what it would be like to go to church and make love, not in the pews but on the altar. I used to feel shame and guilt while making love imagining that angry frowning voyeur God was watching. Now I often experience a sacred holy presence, holding space, as I enter the holy of holies, the womb of life, the pulsating heart of the creative life force. I think we are all yearning for that experience of wholeness, well being of feeling ourselves being love/loved.

Delores Richter of the Zegg community says that “Women are searching for, in a man what they have lost in the Universe.” I believe this is also true of men, but they are conditioned not to reveal this vulnerable need, which then contributes to the creation of the feared abandonment. This possibility of experiencing the presence of the power of the universe, the Source of Life is actually available to us, as we learn to allow our egos to be erased through surrendering to our deep love and lust for our lovers. This experience of the transcendent is transformative, lifting our soul’s kite into the numinous knowledge of eternal spiritual well being, and simultaneously plunging our soul’s string into the depths of knowing the pleasurable purpose of our physical existence.

To know our spirit while feeling our body, to experience freedom with closeness, togetherness and separateness, to know heaven and earth simultaneously is to die, while still being alive. This is the spiritual resurrection, the homecoming, the return of the Goddess to the side of God, the reunion and marriage of sex and spirit.