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## The indispensable spiritual intimacy

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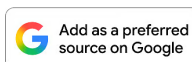


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People often wonder about the effect of spirituality upon married life. Often it happens that one partner in a marriage starts moving deeper into spirituality and this causes anxiety in the other partner. So, how far do a normal marriage and spirituality go together? Spirituality is a movement into the unseen depths of one's own mind. It helps one discover a lot about oneself and the world, and you change for the better. That which used to frighten you, does





An urge to explore new things, and life in its fullness, arises. And there are many other changes. Sometimes even your language changes, sometimes even before you can realise that there is a change, outsiders begin telling you that there is a change. And I have often seen that, upon spiritual advancement, even one's face and eyes do not remain what they used to be. And as you soak in those changes, your appetite to revel in them further increases. That's all very auspicious! But these changes in one partner in the marriage can temporarily create a psychological distance from the other partner.

How to empathetically approach such a situation? First of all, it must be realised that the persons in a marriage are individuals first, and a husband or a wife later. Fundamentally, the two are human beings, both with an innate urge towards the Truth, though that same urge manifests itself differently in the two. So, the husband and the wife as individuals, and the arrangement of their relationship, must be understood.

### Spiritual Togetherness

Without spiritual intimacy, the socio-physical arrangement of marriage can often be a recipe for disaster. But when the social arrangement is purified, consecrated by the spiritual touch, then the poison in it is neutralised. In fact, there is only one antidote to the poison that marriage unfortunately often is, and that is a spiritual association between the man and the woman. If the two persons in this social arrangement of marriage are spiritual friends, then they rise above the social arrangement.

I often say: The two of you live together, and probably also have kids, and there are various physical, social and economic circumstances that are weighing upon you, and there is a level of intimacy over last several years or decades, and you two obviously have to stay together. Then the only and best way of togetherness is spiritual togetherness.

Spiritual togetherness will not only take the negatives out of the marriage, but actually turn the marriage into something immensely beautiful. Marriages are socially not designed to be beautiful. The very way that institution is normally defined, it's a crazy thing. But you can not only correct that mistake but actually turn it into an advantage, which also means that you don't have to run away from your spouse. Avoiding one's spouse or escaping in passive ways is just continuous micro-aggression, and it damages everyone.

Whatever might have been the situation at the time of the marriage, you did hold somebody's hand, and you made certain promises, and you went on to have kids as well. Now do your best to bring the spiritual awareness to this person that you have been with for so long. If the two of you could be together in your tussles, fights, if the two of you together could shout and scratch, and bite and break, if those things could be done together, why not evolve





It is strange to say, "As long as we were in the dark, we were companions. Now that there is light, I shall abandon her". Having been companions in darkness, now it is your responsibility to help, and guide, and accompany the other towards light as well. That is what is meant by spiritual togetherness.

### Help Shows Strength

Every relationship is a mirror. The quality of your relationship holds a mirror to you. It tells you how your inner self is, how your tendencies are, how your ego operates. And relationship remains a mirror, irrespective of who you are related to. Your relationship with the stray cow, with the waiter, with your chauffeur, with your father, or a stranger, and your relationship with the environment, or your clothes—all these tell of who you really are. If you can see why you relate to the other, and in what way, that will disclose to you your inner mechanism.

There is no self-observation or self-development possible without looking into relationships. How else will you observe the self and its progress? Whenever you wish to observe yourself, you will have look at your connection with others. In fact, self-observation is actually about observing one's relationships, and self-development is about having a developed level of relationships.

As you deepen in your spiritual pursuit, as you gain in internal beauty, let that depth and the beauty reflect in all your relationships, including, obviously, your relationship with your spouse. To be spiritual is to learn love. To love the other is to help her grow into the most complete individual she can be. Love is not about exchanging pleasure. Love is an unconditional commitment to rise, and help the other rise, into the Ultimate. There will often be resistance from the other towards your help; your ability to unflinchingly absorb that resistance will indicate your spiritual strength. The extent to which you help your near ones gain clarity and strength tells a lot about your own spiritual development and depth of love. The Upanishads go to the extent of saying that the liberated one helps his entire community gain liberation.

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