

***Toward a Companionate
Male-Female Relationship***
by Dane Rudhyar

The word "liberation" has always been invested with a quasi-hypnotic intensity and a magical meaning. It is nevertheless a negative term used by people who have become aware of being in a state of bondage and who, as a result, crave either inner freedom or outer sociocultural and political liberty. Unless one is vividly aware of being **bound** – whether by biological instincts, emotional yearnings, social tradition, cultural rules, or political laws – one does not demand and fight for liberation. The struggle for liberation at any level is often arduous and violent, because what binds a person or a class of persons almost inevitably resists change, the more so if it is institutionalized and supported by a dogmatic ideology or by what appears to be self-evident facts. In the fight, many essential issues are easily forgotten or brushed aside for later consideration. This is unfortunate because, as a result, a clear perception of what essentially is at stake is clouded by emotionalism and partisanship. As the battle rages, these basic principles and their embodiment in concrete personal and interpersonal behavior are ignored; either violence-prone passion, an Arjuna-type of despondency, or perhaps a dulling resignation prevails. When there is a fight, there must be at least two sides. Relationship is involved. It may be the positive relationship of love, or the negative relationship of war and hatred. In either case, the central issue is **the character and the intensity of the relationship.** Nevertheless, it is evident that the nature and temperament of the two or more individuals being related, and the level at which the relationship operates, are determining factors. What might usually be considered a highly spiritual relationship cannot exist between two personalities operating at a primitive level of development. The meaning of the term "spiritual" has an ambiguous character, which can only be clarified when one considers the level at which the relationship actually exist. There are indeed many levels of interhuman relationship. At each level a sense of bondage and yearning for liberation can develop. At each level what we may broadly call the creative process takes different forms because the purpose and quality of the process change as the relationship moves from one level to the next.

The process of interpersonal relationship between man and woman operates at different levels of activity and consciousness within different sociocultural environments. The role woman plays in the process and the challenge men and women living in this process of basic human transformation face, as they relate intimately to each other, indicates the possibility of developing a new quality of relatedness, productive of inner peace, harmony, and illumination, rather than to the attainment of an ambiguous and ill-defined condition of "freedom" and "equality" by one side, which in some instances and from some special points of view may mean either woman or man.

The Man-Woman Relationship at the Biological and Social Levels

In the past, the character of the basic man-woman relationship has reflected the belief that human beings are not only able, but **meant** to operate primarily – if not exclusively – at two levels, the biological and the social levels. This is so even today for the majority of human beings in the world. Such a belief has been formulated in the statement that human beings are especially social animals. Animals may live in groups and often in large societies, but the socializing process in the human kingdom has produced results of extraordinary magnitude and with a revolutionary character. This has been caused by the fact that human beings have been able to transfer from generation to generation knowledge born of repeated personal experience and group experiences.

The essential means used for communication and the transfer of knowledge has been an increasingly complex type of language, and symbolic representations of what eluded verbalization. Language and symbols have become the foundations for cultural, religious, and social institutions. On such foundations the development of personalized thinking led to the crystallization of the results of increasingly individualized experiences and biopsychological responses into a psychic structure we call the ego.

All over the world tribal groups – originally constituting social organism with powerful social cohesion and differentiated group activities (clans) – developed their own language and their cultural-religious and social patterns on the basis of exclusivism and a sense of superiority. Tribal cultures operated within a limited geographical environment to which they were attached in a powerful, instinctual manner, somewhat as a growing embryo is attached to the mother's womb. The earth was regarded and worshipped as the great Mother; each tribal whole receiving nourishment from Her, and drawing from its contacts with planets, animals, soil, and sky the basic elements needed to build complex systems of symbols and cultural patterns of acting, feeling, and thinking.

In such a situation existing on all continents, the fundamental factor is, in the strict sense of the term, **life**. Biological needs and their satisfaction dominate everything, including the forms of social organization. The term "social" is at first hardly befitting when referring to tribal ways and tribal thinking-feeling, yet we must use it to stress that even then human beings already operated at two levels, biological and sociocultural. They could therefore relate to each in two essentially different ways, though at first the difference was not too clearly defined. Gradually, a process of differentiation increased under a more and more dominant patriarchal system. Woman's characteristic type of work and consciousness was seen to most specifically and naturally refer to the biological level of productivity while the levels of social and mental activity gradually became a field more or less exclusively reserved to men.

As long as the two levels were closely interrelated, and human beings operating at both were bound by a common sense of rootedness in common purpose and will, the man's role was not crucial in its basic implications. Women bore children and men usually fought against enemies and predators, but they worked together in the fields. They were both producers of concrete entities needed for the preservation and growth of the community as a whole. Everyday activities were determined by the elemental **needs** of life, whether at the strictly biological level or at a more physical level of perpetuating a strong and unchallengeable feeling of communal identity and purpose.

The cities developed, and with them the demands for more complex and extensive forms of social organization. The social and the biological realms became increasingly distinct and separate, and likewise the roles of women and men. Social and political organizations, commerce and distant travel, and an ever greater and more specialized development of the military became man's business; the home and the children became woman's business. Man became the provider of that mysteriously abstract and ubiquitous social power, **money**. With money and special capacities for dealing with the competition and pressures of society and politics, came prestige and social authority – and the power to make laws and to impose social and religious restrictive patterns upon biological process. Male personages had assumed the role of founders and preservers of religious institutions. While in some ways these religions related the social to the biological level, they also increasingly sought to separate spirituality from biological fulfillment. Then woman and her biological role were made subservient to the organizing power of men, representing the absolute, all-encompassing power of God in the form of supreme Creator – a Creator imagining or fashioning matter as He pleased – and womanhood became equated with cosmic matter. What we see developing today is, on the one hand, an attempt to do away with what the **city** – the type of society based on a strictly social mode of organization and money-power – brought to mankind and, on the other hand, a persisting endeavor to reduce to a minimum the **biological** processes (artificial insemination, test-tube babies, the private home-life and feeding of a single family, children's education) and to give to woman a role in the **social** processes on a basis of sexual equality with men. We shall return to these developments, but we must first discuss other types of man-woman relationship derived from human needs and inner experiences transcending the biological and the social fields of activity and consciousness.

The PsychoSpiritual Approach to the Man-Woman Relationship

What for many centuries and in most parts of the world has been defined and sanctioned as "marriage" refers almost exclusively – in principle even if not always in actual fact – to a relationship operating strictly at both the biological and the social levels. The purpose of marriage was to perpetuate not only the human race, but as well a particular culture, religion, and social order. Marriage between a man and a woman of different races, religions, and/or social classes was scandalous, and in most cases unthinkable. It was organized by the parents, and in many places the boy and girl either never or only briefly met before their marriage. It was then consummated as a religious sacrament, a social feast, and an impersonal biological act in the symbolical (and actual) darkness of the "generic Unconscious" – the world of animal instincts. Except in the rarest cases, a man and woman did not marry of their own free will for the deliberate purpose of fulfilling each other as **individuals** in a equality of sharing and free enjoyment of **all** their potentialities of self-development. The marriage partners were meant to perform archetypal roles – as husband and wife, father and mother, son-in-law and daughter-in-law, etc.

In some societies, however, different kinds of roles were considered possible which referred to spiritual or psychological values. In old India, for instance, the husband was considered, at least potentially, as his wife's **guru**. To her, he embodied the idea of divine power and wisdom. He was to perform the role of spirit mobilizing and fecundating matter, not merely at the biological level, but in a deeper, more cosmic and **consciously** impersonal manner. It was only through the man that woman could reach inner spiritual illumination; he was her inner light. And in a society revering such a light, it became almost logical – or at least acceptable – that the wife should commune with that departing light at her husband's death, and throw herself into the burning funeral pyre.

A somewhat reversed situation has occurred in our Western world – with fewer clearcut variations than in some other cultures. – when at certain periods woman was idealized. In some instances, she was idolized as the source of spiritual values, the symbol of a higher life, the mediator between man and God, the "redeeming woman," or the Muse inspiring the creative artist or poet. It was in the remarkable culture developing in Southern France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that this idealized and even adoration of women most definitely occurred. Other cultures, especially in India, had known of a worship of the Mother as a potent manifestation of the devotional spirit, but as far as I know, the Western world and its Hebraic-Greek tradition had not featured such forms of worship of the embodied aspect of Deity. The use of women as oracles in Greece did not have the same character. The sibyls were mediums rather than mediators or channels for divine creative power.

In medieval Southern France, after the great collective fear of the year 1000 when the end of the world had been expected, a male and muscle-dominated feudal society emerging from centuries of violence and crude living sought self-transcendence and cultural refinement through the idealization and worship of the Feminine. Sex and war had to be purified and transmuted into pure love, poetry, and festivities by a spiritualizing alchemy of the feeling-nature of men. "Courtly love" developed, not so much as a spiritual-religious ideal – though it had its parallel in the growing worship of Mary as the Virgin-Mother of the incarnate God – but as an answer to a collective psychological and deeply psychic **need**. This culture of love and beauty was soon to be drowned in the blood of the crusade against the Albigenses, in that infamous "crusade" conducted by the rulers of Northern France with the full participation of the Pope, the culture of Southern France – which extended also into Catalonia and part of Northern Italy – was savagely destroyed. The Church's official motive was to stem the spread of a gnostic movement challenging papal authority and Catholic doctrine, but the French Kings' purpose was merely to gain more power and wealth, and to expand their territory. The karmic results was the nearly-disastrous Hundred Years War with England, and deep psychic scars in the body of the French nation which were gradually

formed in the crucible of war, violence, and deceit.

We see a typical expression of this Mediterranean and also Celtic woman-idealizing culture in Dante's **Divine Comedy** with the quasi-sanctification of Beatrice, the beloved, as inspirer and guide in the spiritual quest. Later on we find the ideal reborn in the Romantic culture in Goethe's celebration of "the Eternal Feminine that draws man heavenward," and in many poets' references to the inspiring Muse. Romanticism developed as a reaction against the proud classical rationalism, the scientific intellectualism of "the Enlightenment" in the eighteenth century, and the rise to power of a dull and crudely individualistic bourgeoisie – thanks to the Industrial Revolution. Man instinctively saw himself caught in the merciless wheels of a society in which male greed for power and the worship of money were beginning to dominate all social processes and the lives of human beings helplessly drawn to cities and factories.

In the psychology of Carl Jung the concept of the **anima**, and of the archetype of the Redeeming Woman, occupies a basic function. The **anima** is the ideal woman-image mediating between the ego (often the slave of a society set **persona**) and the deep unconscious filled with potency for rebirth. For the ego-dominated, college-educated, and money-obsessed man, a woman can (and usually must) serve as the embodiment or "psychological projection" of all that subconsciously longs for spirituality and ideal love within him. She becomes for the extroverted man the inward way to the spirit. If the woman is not able to accept this psychological projection of the man's **anima**, the man's inner life may remain empty. Then the relationship between them cannot be truly fulfilling. The anima-embodying woman – mystical beloved, Muse, or Redeeming Mother – is the polar opposite of the guru-husband regarded as a lord, teacher, or hierophant leading to the higher level of consciousness. In either case, one cannot speak of "equality" except at a superficial social level. There may be companionship, sharing of personal and social responsibilities, and productive love uniting two biopsychic polarities, yet these relationships have an essentially transpersonal and transformative character. They may have today a psychotherapeutic value as a means of overcoming crisis-situations, and in most cases some kind of crisis-situation is implied in the creative process, especially – but not exclusively – in the arts. A crisis-situation develops whenever an individual comes to experience an irrepressible urge to break through ego-bondage or subservience from a way of life that is felt to be meaningless. Such an urge may lead to another person with whom a deeply transforming alchemical relationship may be formed. In such a relationship, a transpersonal flow of power or spiritual light is likely to operate, freely or spasmodically. The flow may occur through either the man or the woman, depending on who needs it most. And both may need it.

What I have called elsewhere the companionate order of relationship has, theoretically at least, a rather different character. It refers far more accurately to the coming together and commingling of two persons operating **at the same level** of activity and consciousness. The companions may be very different in terms of background and past endeavors, but essentially they come together as "equals." As companions, they "eat of the same bread" (*cum-panis*) and, as comrades, they are active in the same space or room (*camera* meaning "room"). Their consciousnesses operate in terms of nearly identical premises, and are moved by a similar vision of what they have to accomplish together.

Such a fundamental equality and cooperation existed at the strictly biological level in the ancient tribal community. But they gradually vanish, or at least lose their pure and wholesome character, when social forces and the development of the mind on a social (which means both religious and intellectual) level introduced patterns of differentiation separating the social from the biological, and the intellect from the feelings. The important point, however, is that equality and cooperation in the archaic state of tribal unity are instinctual and compulsive. "Life" rules every act. The human species, not the individual person, makes the basic decisions. There are indeed no true **individuals** at such a stage of human evolution.

The companionate type of relationship **requires** conscious, self-determined, and relatively independent individuals deliberately accepting responsibilities of their own choosing. Such individuals may form communities, but these communities would be basically different in spirit and psychism from the ancient tribes. The use by many young people of the word "tribe" when referring to their countercultural communes show that they do not understand either what they are seeking or how different these loosely organized associations are from tribal communities – even from American Indian tribal communities. In many instances, these young people, male and female, are trying to effectively return to nature. But one cannot actually "return" to the past; one can only try to revitalize faculties and attitudes to life that have become partially paralyzed while another type of consciousness and other faculties were developing according to the planetary process of human evolution. If such a revitalization were to produce a paralysis of these recently developed mental and rational faculties, it would only mean that one kind of paralysis now succeeds another. The only valid goal is a total actualization of the human potential. It is the development of the whole person, in whom individual selfhood and the relatedness of consciousness and unpossessive love are constantly **interpenetrating**.

"Interpenetration" is the keyword. The true companionate relationship implies an interpenetration of minds and feelings, and there can be conscious and free interpenetration only where the centers of consciousness are oriented toward a commonly accepted and intuitively envisioned goal. Because of this common orientation the companions are sustained by the same ray of spiritual light and power. The light is their shared sustenance, the "living bread" (*panis*) in partaking of which they are truly companions. Out of their togetherness a "commonsoul" is being formed. Very different from the commonwealth represented by the traditional type of marriage operating in societies where money, position, security, and self-perpetuation in progeny are the basic ideals.

The companionate interpretation of minds and souls that are self-consecrated in their common dedication to a transpersonal purpose, though individualized and matured by a life openly and courageously lived, is not a utopia; neither is it an easy achievement. It can only be actualized through the overcoming of crises of growth and particularly of ego-surrender. In many instances, one of the partners is likely to be more active or further along than the other. It may be either the man or the woman in a bipolar union. The woman may need, at least for a time, the stimulation, inspiration, and leadership of a guru-type of man; the man may require the "redeeming" love and mediation of a woman accepting to be an **anima** figure for him in helping him to interiorize his consciousness and to realize both his own center and the presence of the "star" illumining their togetherness.

Creation always means transformation. And there can hardly be any transformation without relationship. The creative process is not to be separated from life itself. We speak of procreation and of artistic or social creation; we can also speak of the creation of the "immortal body" (Diamond Body or Christ-body) of which mystics and occultists have spoken in symbolic words. In all instances and at all levels, relationship provides the substance of the process of transformation, and the quality of the relationship determines the level at which the process operates.

At the biological level, the relationship is instinctual and compulsive. At the social level, it is energized by the many-sided crises of personal relationship between ego-conscious individual and society. At the psychological level, the transformation reaches beyond the personal state and takes on an alchemical character. Yet it is always based on relationship, even if powered by the will or the conscious determination and biology-transcending love of the related individuals.

If one recognizes this to be the fact, the struggle for "liberation" acquires a new meaning. What has to be liberated is the ability to enter consciously, freely, and significantly into purposeful relationship at the highest (because the most inclusive) level at which an individual human being can operate in terms of his biological, social, and personal conditioning – his karma. Of itself, and sought for itself, liberation is an illusion – perhaps

the greatest illusion. Most of the early Buddhists were lured by that glamour, seeking nirvana by destroying in them their capacity for relationship. They reached only a state of spiritual selfishness. They did not realize that, Gautama renounced nirvana in compassion of humanity, compassion was for him greater than liberation.

Yet compassion requires inner freedom. The will to sacrifice oneself requires a self to be sacrificed. The pure love of the mystics requires the potency to love other human beings, for there can be transmutation only where there is vibrant energy to be transmuted. Of what use is it for a man to fight for a free society if he remains in his heart a slave to his ego and to the traditions of the past? Or what use is it for a woman to strive for social and biological liberation from a male-dominated way of life if she is not able to love and give total sustenance to the man with whom she may long to live in a companionate relationship?