

RELATIONSHIPS AND KARMIC KNOTS

There is no power in the universe, nor any form of intercession that can separate a cause from its effect, action from reaction, or a man from consequences for his deeds.

If I had been a wiser man, less blinded by my lower nature, I could have found a better way. But I was blind, so I took the only way I could. I will accept the consequences of that now. When I return to earth again, I am convinced I shall be less blind; and at least I shall own no debt.

*from "Om: the Secret of Abhor Valley"
by Talbot Mundy*

Karma's duty is to bring Consciousness into an understanding of what it means to exist in matter. A big part of this has to do with Beings learning how to deal with one another. Given human genetics and the strong animal instinct humans have to procreate, one of karma's most powerful tools in this regard is the interaction that come with the exercising of the sexual prerogatives. This is what this chapter is about--karma and personal relationships. I'm going to animate these ideas with a somewhat unusual story.

Several years ago, Cathy (one of my compatriots) told me about a rather sad situation into which a friend of hers had fallen. In a nutshell, it seems the woman was married and had children when she met another man

and unexpectedly fell in love with him. Not being able to leave the marriage for the sake of her children, she had to tell this new love to go away. There was considerably more to the story, all of which Cathy recounted to me during several conversations.

At the time, I was experimenting more and more with meditation. It was also a time when I was interested in better understanding how karma worked. As a consequence, I decided to try to meditate into this woman's situation to see if I could comprehend what was really taking place underneath the surface.

What came in relatively short order was a series of pictures that painted a surprising and interesting scenario. Of course, I had no idea whether the insights I was having accurately reflected what actually happened or whether I was just suffering from an overactive imagination. Fortunately for us, the distinction is moot. What is important is that the East would maintain that the scenario I'm about to lay out for you is at least possible.

I'm presenting the following in the form of a short, fictional story. It is, in fact, a composite of the actual facts of the woman's situation coupled with the pictures that showed themselves in my meditations.

The time is the late 1400's. The country is Italy.

A Being comes into a body. The body is that of a female. The child grows into a fine woman. When it is appropriate, the woman is betrothed in an arranged marriage, as is suitable for the time. The man is wealthy and powerful. She accepts the marriage in the hope that she will grow into a fondness for the man. Her life proceeds. She has children. She loves her children deeply.

Everything is passably good in her life until she runs into a young man she has loved in a series of earlier lives (though neither the man nor the woman is consciously aware of that fact). When she meets him, it is as though life is breathed into her for the first time.

There is moderate intimacy between the two, though she is painfully aware of her responsibility to her husband and, more importantly, her children.

Finally, the young man, who is not a deep thinker, demands that she go away with him. She tells him she loves him, but that she can't bring herself to upset her children's world even though staying will mean forsaking her own happiness.

The man doesn't understand. They argue. Due to her refusal to come with him, he decides she doesn't really love him and that she has just been toying with him all along. He says so, then exists in anger.

He returns to his abode, packs his belongings, and leaves the city that night without a word to her. She never hears from him again.

When she finds he has left, she is devastated. She really does love the man, she just can't choose her own happiness over the happiness and security of her children. She is left with deep despair and an abiding desire to find him, to explain to him, to make him understand . . . but she can't because she doesn't know where he has gone. Nothing has been resolved.

She goes into a depression. She becomes angry with the very existence of her husband, and in her completely debilitated emotional state she unconsciously begins to neglect her children. The young man's leaving has destroyed her life. She spends her days in a kind of dazed fantasy, thinking about how it might have been if life had given them a break and he had stayed. She pines for him. She pleads with God to send him back.

He is her obsession. He is all she thinks about. And in doing so, she builds huge thoughtforms within herself wrapped around her desire to be with him.

Time passes.

It is now the mid-1960's. The Being who was the woman in the Italian life is again born into a female body, this time in Georgia in the United States. When she reaches her twenties, this intelligent, willful, attractive woman is ready to get married if the right guy appears. He does--a musician who has dropped out of college to do his own thing. He's a seemingly fun guy from a fairly wealthy family. He is attracted to her. She is attracted to him.

For several months, they have a wildly romantic life together. She's completely undone by the experience.

When his job takes him away, their relationship becomes a long distance one. With their separation, she develops all of the symptoms of love sickness. All she can think about is him. There are hours and hours of telephone conversations. There is great pining. There are surprise visits, airplane trips for weekend assignations, and lots of sex when they are together. After a year of this, they get married.

Shortly after the wedding, she begins to realize that the party-hardy attitude that she had found so fun during the courtship is covering over a problem. He is drinking a lot. When she asks him about it, he responds, "It's none of your business." She finally realizes that she has married an alcoholic.

There follow trials and arguments and some very bad times, but her tenacity and desire to make the marriage work finally, after nine years of struggle, comes to fruition. He promises he will never take another drink again--a promise he keeps. She vows she will never leave him as long as he holds to that promise.

In the meantime, they have had two children.

This is a woman who has been psychologically and emotionally battered by the stress of having to deal with her husband and his problems. She has been the glue that has kept the family together; she has been the stalwart one; she has been the one who has fought for him even though his state of relative self-involvement has meant that he has done almost nothing to support and nurture her in the process. Nevertheless, by the end of the tenth year of their marriage, she has a family to be proud of. And if she were to characterize herself at that point, she would say she was happily married.

Along with everything else, she has been the main financial support for the family while her husband has been working toward his college degree. During this time, several professional opportunities have arisen, all of which have required her to expand her knowledge beyond the masters degree she already holds. During one such effort, she comes in contact with a second man she finds unusually interesting.

It all starts out innocently enough. He works in the same field she, albeit several states away. She comes in contact with him through a

professional referral. Their initial interaction is based on telephone calls and email. He is, by the way, single.

For an entire year, all they do is talk about her job challenges with only the occasional sidetrack into their personal lives. Still, since their first telephone conversation, she has noticed that there is something about this guy that is strangely attractive. There is something about his voice . . .

At the end of a year of long distance communications, they meet during a four day conference that the two independently attend. The first three days of interaction are friendly and fun and that's all. She isn't what he is normally attracted to, and besides, she's made it clear that she is happily married. Yet at the end of the last night of the conference, there is a very short period of relative intimacy. They don't have sex. They don't even kiss. Nevertheless, she makes it clear to the man that she is not looking at him as a mere colleague.

In fact, she has fallen completely, irrationally, totally in love with him. Once home, she begins to phone him continuously. She can't seem to control her desire to hear his voice and be in the aura of his presence, even though they are a good thousand miles apart and she knows she may never see him again.

The affair, if affair be the right word, lasts for several months during which there is great inner turmoil within her. Several times they make plans to meet only to have the plans fall through.

During this period, it is not unusual for her mood to swing wildly from feelings of raging desire to feelings of severe guilt, all within a matter of minutes. She doesn't understand why she feels the way she does. Everything about her life to this point has been steeped in the Southern virtues of honor, loyalty and nobility. Yet here she is, uncontrollably wanting to be with this man who is not her husband.

Still, she knows down deep that she can't leave her situation nor can she cheat on her husband. She believes that if she did leave him, he would fall apart and go back to drinking. This is not something she wants for him. She has, in a way, additionally made a compact with him to support and raise their children. The children love their father, and he loves them. She can't bring herself to separate them from him.

In short, her basic decency won't allow her to trade the happiness of her children for her own happiness. She is trapped where she is, and she is too moral a person to allow her love for the other man to degenerate into a mere affair. If she can't freely go to the man she loves, she won't go at all.

She keeps asking him, "Why is this happening? How can a happily married woman who has always prided herself on being in control of her life, be so out of control?" She has thought about doing things that she would have berated others for even thinking about, awful things from a standard, Christian perspective (like leaving her family). She has looked hard, but she can't see how she can possibly bring herself to do the things she'd need to do to get what she wants. It is all so painful.

After all the emotion, all the fantasizing, all the guilt, all the cogitating, she finally comes to the conclusion that what is best for her children must be the guiding light in any decision she makes. She realizes that every step she takes toward the man she loves is a step away from her family. She realizes that where she is is, for the sake of her children, where she must remain.

She explains this to him. He understands, presumably after going through his own emotional ups and downs. With his help, she finally ends it.

It doesn't mean she stops thinking about him. It doesn't mean she stops wanting him. It means she accepts that she can't have him. Of her own accord, she finally accepts stepping away from him.

From the Eastern perspective we are examining, what is, in all likelihood, happening here?

If the pictures that presented themselves in my meditations are an accurate reflection of the woman's real-life situation, the woman's husband *now* was her husband in the previous life . . . and there is a sizable karmic knot between them.

In the Italian life, the lesser side of her child self took over and her response to the situation was typical child-self in nature. She treated her husband badly in her despair over the departure of the man she loved. Now karma has put her back in a similar situation to try it again, to try to make things right between them. She has worked for him tirelessly over a long

period of time, supporting him, nurturing him. In doing so, she has loosened the karmic knot she created in that previous life.¹

Her children *now* were her children *then*. They are demanding now, always wanting her attention, always acting as though they don't believe she will be there for them. Another karmic knot, and again she is in a position to make things right.

The man she has fallen so unexpectedly in love with is the man who left in anger in the Italian life. He has undoubtedly had several lives since in which he has gained better control of his tendency to anger. Seeing what a terrible situation she was in, he devoted himself to making her life as good as it could be. Knowing that she was the one who had everything to lose, he allowed her to decide how things should proceed (versus leaving in a huff after the first sign of conflict). Having relinquished all control over the situation, he kibitzed but accepts all of her decisions without dissent . . . even when she said they must part. There was a karmic knot there for him to understand, also. His response to the situation loosened that knot.

The most intriguing part of this story, though, has to do with the thoughtforms of desire she generated after he left in the Italian life. Those enormously powerful forces came flooding back into her when she came in contact with him again. Their presence was why she couldn't let him go, even though she fully understood the jeopardy into which she was putting her family. In animating those thoughtforms while in Italy, she had built a mental link between herself and the man that was, in a spiritual sense, holding both of them back. This had to be dealt with.

That is why she was in complete control of the situation (complete, that is, with the exception of the impediments that karma placed between their meeting for a second time). She was the one who needed to deconstruct those thoughtforms. Karma helped her to do so by putting her in a situation in which her very finely tuned feelings about *what is right* were juxtaposed

¹ Don't misunderstand, this is not to suggest that every woman who finds herself in a trying marriage is in the process of working out a karmic knot, or that a woman in a bad marriage should stay in it indefinitely. There are as many reasons for an uncomfortable marriage as there are people. Nothing is set in stone. This is a specific case meant to animate a specific point. It should not be used to generalize about all marriages.

against the thoughtforms she had generated in that Italian life. Something had to give. She chose the noble path--putting her family's best interests ahead of her own desires. In doing so, she began to deal with the insanely powerful urges that came streaming through her . . . all self-created in the Italian life.

In short, karma, in its infinite benevolence, had given her the vehicle she needed to take those thoughtforms apart. The situation was agonizing. The situation didn't make sense from where she was sitting (or, for that matter, from where he was sitting). The situation didn't seem fair. But as painful as it was, it gave her her opportunity to loosen the spiritually debilitating karmic knot that resided there, and she did not fail the opportunity.

Karma generally works in one of two modes. When it freewheels, the individual involved is given many possible avenues of experience, none of which outweighs the other. It is a time when an individual can go in whatever direction he or she prefers. There is, in short, no karmic nudging in one particular direction. It is freewheeling.

The second mode is more constrained. It is usually associated with situations in which the individual is forced to face some kind of karmic knot. As such, the individual still has freedom of will, but life dictates the circumstances in which that freedom must be exercised. There are enforced boundaries to the circumstance.

The story outlined above was one in which a series of karmic knots had to be addressed. It was important that the woman meet and fall in love with the man who would become her husband. As such, she was so completely swamped by the emotions, desires, and hormones that come when one becomes attracted to another that she didn't even notice his alcoholism. The whirlwind affair was just that, a whirlwind. Karma was nudging her toward matrimony because she needed to be linked to that man.

After she finally met her long, lost love, every time the woman would contrive a meeting with him, life would step in and make it impossible to execute--karma nudging again. It was as though karma was saying, "You need to continue to experience the attraction, but you can't consummate the desire."

In short, in this part of her life, karma wasn't directing her into what was to be a wonderful, physical, loving experience. It was giving her the opportunity to work through her self-imposed obsession with one Being, and to make peace with others.

You, as an individual, never know whether a personal relationship you have chosen to move into is karma moving in freewheeling mode or karma surreptitiously drawing you into a situation designed to deal with and hopefully dissolve a karmic knot. If it is the latter, you will have little to say about how the situation proceeds, or about the constraints that will keep you within bounds (this is something to think about the next time you look at another couple's situation and judge it harshly--you have no idea what kind of karmic elements might be in play between two individuals). If it is the former, on the other hand, you will have a free hand in deciding what scenario you move into and how you will proceed once there. There will be boundaries, but they will be much wider and looser.

