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# The Path to Enlightenment of Sacred Married Home Life: *Grihasthya Dharma* as a Guiding Ideal for the Transpersonal Marriage Therapist

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This paper attempts to correct the unwitting reliance of much transpersonal psychology upon Indian texts that were indigenously specific to *sannyasins* (non-householder, monastics). This includes teachings from *advaita vedanta*, *yoga*, and many Buddhist schools on releasement from desire, the diminishing role of the ego, guardedness toward “the mellow-drama” of “worldly” life (as Ram Dass famously cast relational involvements). Some forty years of the unwitting over-application of such teachings to modern non-monastic lives has helped create an artificial split in transpersonal and East-West spirituality teachings involving “engaged/embodied” and implied “un-engaged/un-embodied” spiritual paths. This article describes the value system and lifelong spiritual developmental path of the married householder (*grihasthyin*), where healthy ambition and egoic traits such as loyalty and lifelong commitment are emphasized en route to a balanced “ego-dissolution” and “ego-development” within the crucible of lifelong marriage, daily family life, and conscious aging. Thus, “*spiritual* bypass” issues are highly age-specific. Suggestions for a *grihasthya*-based marriage therapy are also described, drawing from forty-four years of clinical practice, as well as from the two-thousand-year-old Greco-Judeo-Christian soteriological (spiritually-healing) psychology based in admiration, gratitude, longing, apology, and forgiveness.

**Keywords:** *embodied spirituality, engaged spirituality, marriage therapy, family therapy, Michel Foucault, fertility, sacred sexuality, nondualism, Positive Psychology, forgiveness, admiration*

*“Where man and woman worship one another is the play of the Divine” — Tantra Shastras*

*It’s not in some clever metaphor that you toss out to help, it’s whether you will swim out to where the drowning people are and haul them back. — Anonymous*

For five thousand years, or two-hundred generations, the vast majority of *Sanatana Dharma* (“The Eternal Way of Salutary Practices,” the indigenous name for “Hinduism” which is a Persian coinage, and the umbrella term inclusive of all the variations of Indian traditions and empirical-experimental knowledge systems, including its

mathematics, physics, physiology and other sciences, ethics, philosophy, aesthetics, technologies, and psychology, thus confounding the academic category of “religion” that “*Sanatana Dharma*” exceeds or, at least, “does not fit into”) followers have believed they would attain their highest spiritual maturity via the love and responsibilities of lifelong *grihasthya dharma* (“sacred married household ideal ways of life”), more so than by specialized spiritual practices—years and years of long meditation sessions and the practice of various yogas.

The latter were always considered to be proper to the second great lifestyle of *Sanatana Dharma*, lifelong celibate monasticism (*sannyasa*, “world-shedders”) of lamas, swamis, arhats, munis, brahma-

charis, yogis and, according to the doctrine of *ashrama*, (stages of life), to retiring elders (also known as *sannyasa*) who have completed their parental and community responsibilities, emerging between the ages of fifty and seventy-five and more so thereafter, unto death, named, *maha-samadhi*, “great knowing of origin-consciousness,” and thus understood as an enlightenment itself.

What is the greatest spiritual maturity of either *grihasthya* or *sannyasa*? It is the cognitive-emotional capacity to grasp life as an all-inclusive whole—everyone and everything included just as it is, with all the conflicts, joys, sufferings, fleeting impermanence, truths and half-truths regarding Reality and “reality”—and to operate in it as an essential part of it all, in humbling awe that it is (and we are) so much greater than one’s unenlightened state surmised. And, especially, to know the subjective-knower Who (“*Ka*”) is common to all, *that* “Who” who *is* subjective-consciousness itself, regardless of moral, ethnic, personality, intellectual, or any other differentiating qualification. Thus, *grihasthya* soars into the grand ideal of an all-embracing, harmonious world family, as seen in the centermost and wistfully emphatic maxim of *Sanatana Dharma*, “*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*” (“The world is, indeed, one family”).

Within numerous spiritual traditions worldwide, these claims regarding family are no mere idealized constructs or social institutions, no more than breast-milk should be seen fundamentally as a mere bio-commodity or “aspect of the ‘role’ of Motherhood”—they are considered accurate perceptions of the organic continuity and challengingly inter-relatedness of life on this planet, as genetic, evolutionary, ecological, and political-historical research corroborates, over and over again. Likewise, “ecologically ethical” ways of life proceed from long-observed (*sanatana*) perceptions of “how to best (*dharmically*) live.”

They are reports from the highest state of consciousness about what life and existence look like, beneath the layers of an overbearing “otherness,” with its millennial history of reverberating wars and wars against wars, whether global, in one’s own family, or within one’s own mind-dialogues.

Indeed, the “scientific vocabulary and its ‘gaze’” may sound and seem unquestionably persuasive regarding the body, breastfeeding, “sexological sciences,” the “institution” of marriage and the “finality” of physical death, but from our Foucauldian perspective, this *Scientia Sexualis* is reductive and arbitrary, and we choose to draw from Foucault’s far more subjective “science of profound pleasures” he called the world’s *Ars Eroticas* of India, Japan, Sufic, and ancient Greco-Roman culture.

In the *Ars Eroticas* of tantra, *neidan* (Taoist yoga) and the ancient fertility cults of the world, it is the incomparable power of life-creating fertility that gives these non-Modern erotic practices their profundity, whether for any gender-identity LGBTQ or even post-menopausal or infertile persons/couples, for tantra deals with respect for the idea of fertility (including adoption and “fertility clinic” fertility) as much as with respect for naturalistic-physically available fertility. Thus, we see that pop, “neo-tantra” (that pays no attention to fertility) lacks the essential ground to be much more than, as the great translating yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein put it, “souped up nookie.”

This profundity is known via a meditative-devotional respect for the holiness of everything about fertility, conception, gestation, parenthood, home-creation, the Divine Mother-Father, the Great Seed Mystery (*urdhvaretas*) and a “perineum to pineal puberty” within kundalini awakening, the secretion of *soma-rasa*, *amrita*, *madhu* that are the “hormones of enlightenment” and not mere “semen-retention” that are at the core of the endlessness of tantric *pariyanga*, *Ars Erotica* sexo-yogic practices.

Unfortunately, Margot Anand, David Deida, and other widely read “sacred sex” authors (and most translating scholars) have missed the essentiality of fertility in their depictions of tantra, specifically. I attribute this blindspot to the immense power of the modern *Scientia Sexualis* that, too, sequestered fertility via contraception and legalized, safe backup abortions in giving the modern world of all gender modalities what it has called for over fifty years, “sexual liberation.”

The awakening from “history-as nightmare” that James Joyce wanted Daedalus to find is the

awakening into the indivisibility of universal familial love and loyalty, based in the universality of *Ka* or subject-ness and in the profound, incarnating powers of life-giving fertility. And, it is the awakening the *grihasthya* sacred marriage therapist is guiding others toward. In this awakened reality, we all personally find a substrate of mind that is capable of resolving conflict in the poignancy of shared existence and collectively live embarrassingly close to a world culture of global cooperation and even love, as if the child of one family is the child of all families, and the Mother/Father of one child is that of all children and, likewise, Grandparents and Great-grandparents, that is, the entire Great Seed Mystery of incarnate, earthly life. It is always right there in the openness of the moment, *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*: The world is, indeed, One Family.

Everything hangs together, we are all in one rocky boat or, rather, there is only one boat and we are all in it.

The great eighteenth-century theologian Freidrich Schleiermacher called our condition “absolute dependence within the Whole,” the contemporary Zen Buddhist poet Gary Snyder called our collective situation “The One Earth Household,” and the visionary thinker Marshall McLuhan called our planetary family “The Global Village.” And even the most dysfunctional family or marriage is in this collective whole, this Great Seed Mystery, struggling against all sorts of counter-forces and ideas, trying to manifest the real *dharma*, their greatest hope—the happy family—as distant as it might appear to some.

The happy family, with erotically and romantically creative spouse-partners, is not some distant possibility. It is always only a few words away but then must be sustained via words, deeds, openness of heart, moment after moment. The purpose of time in the Great Seed Mystery itself is: to perfect the manifestation of this *dharma* within individuals (“enlightenment”), labor-specialized societies, and interconnected culture-state worlds. Thus, the ideal of *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* is the embodied manifestation of an enlightened, whole-culture.

When Christ forgave his crucifiers and Gandhi’s *satyagrahi*’s (followers of Nondual truth-

power) absorbed the blows of British soldiers without fighting back, we all got to see the radical nature of this nondual, one-family state of consciousness.

In his Nobel Prize winning book, *I and Thou*, Martin Buber called this *grihasthya* state, “the terrible point of loving everyone.” There is no other choice but to live as one all-embracing family, because the alternatives are lies, immature half-perceptions, justifications for lesser ways of living, or worse, mere domination or vengeance.

Likewise, this grand embrace is no quiescent, meditative passivity. Indeed, all one’s capacities are challenged to make every conceivable positive difference and improvement in oneself and the world, up to one’s lattermost *sannyasa* (world-shedding) years when we each succumb to physical demise and bodily death. The greater the efficiency of any means of amelioration, that is, the greater the congruence or “oneness” of means and goal (“skillful means”), the more matured one’s enlightened action would seem to be.

This is also the inner meaning of the term *yoga*, where the path (methods) and the goal become the same thing by loving the path and everything about it as an act of devotion, of *bhakti*. That is, one sustains (is devoted to) the poignant mood of truing all variances (*maya*) toward this ideal that is also considered the most real of possibilities. For, all marital and family duress and dysfunction is only made more poignant by an ongoing longing for an ideal that slips away, returns, and slips away, again and again.

Such passion and involvement is what I will mean by embodied *advaita* or, more precisely, *dvaita-advaita*, dualism-nondualism, a historical refinement of the latter to abide obvious differences such as gender, degrees of maturity, and the fluctuations of longing for the ideal, for consummate romantic love (as in *bhakti* and certain *tantric dvaitic-advaitic* traditions), security, well-being, living honorably and evermore effectively in the current situation we are in as the “one situation without a second.” It is to be the therapist’s level of devotion to the couples she is guiding in *grihasthya*, as well.

Indeed, the therapist must often engage with the couple like a surgeon who is working to

save the life of an emergency room patient who, of course, does not know the way to save himself, though it is the life of his own body that is being saved. In even more extreme cases, she is like a fireman cajoling people to jump with their partners out of burning buildings of their own horrified making and into the romantic net of *grihasthya*, a net of the interconnectedness of all life whose human threads are romantic love and the urges to nurture and mature beings throughout their whole lifetime.

In contemporary transpersonal discourse, *grihasthya*, with its focus on homebuilding, worldly security, and child-rearing is more of a “descending,” grounding path, as compared with the minimalism and self-sufficiency of celibate *sannyasa*. It is a path committed to fostering and sustaining relationships, not reducing them to ideas of mere “attachment,” ill-fated searches for false-security or something dismissible, like a “mere institution of marriage,” when times are even extremely difficult, particularly when there are children involved.

For, children are the embodiment of a future that adults must hold as a sacred trust, often whether they “feel like it” or not. Thus, staying married “for the sake of the children” can be an incredibly powerful launching pad into renewed marital passion, creativity, and happiness.

Often, in cases of anguished marriages, it is the last barrier to divorce: such is a sign of the power of *grihasthya*, parenthood taps modes of passion that exceed all manner of personal gratification. Such passion can be deftly fanned by a nondual marriage therapist to solve numerous problems and to re-ignite a happy marriage—it is that deep. It—parenthood—is the source of incarnation itself, grounded in the natural mystery of gender-attraction, nesting or home-building instincts, and the innocent passage of time unto aging and bodily death.

This “descending” path thus broadens into the all-consuming endeavor of family creation and the proliferation of supportive (sustainable) industries and technologies (the dvaita-advaitist, Heidegger’s “care,” the “worlding” of a world), while (lifelong or elder) *sannyasa* is more unfolding of very much of the world of descent. Thus, the preliminary stage of elder *sannyasa* is called *vanaprasthya*, forest-dwelling life.

Hence we look for the way spiritual teachers actually live to see the depth of their awakening, not merely in their lectures or books. The groundedness of their attainment is seen not just in the glow in their eyes, but also in the glow in the eyes of their closest family members. Do they work with the poor and most anguished? Perhaps they are so consumed with loving service, they forgot to tell others that they are “spiritual teachers.”

This is the “profound *Ars Erotica eros*” of *grihasthya*, too—a kind of collective awakening to being together, holding everybody together, those with homes (*grihasthins*) supporting the homeless and the needy with alms, living our years together, and, one by one, eventually dying into the invisible.

All such experiences show us the actual expanse of life that psychotherapies aspire to help us become equal to, and a very broad expanse it is—from helping those imprisoned by anger and self-criticism, or fame and money, to those imprisoned in abusive relationships, or in the loneliness of psychotic delusions, or those behind steel bars as murderers, tragically bonded to their victim’s families—in a deeply emotionally-embodied way.

I have written elsewhere about the profound psychophysical stages of maturation that further ground this awakening in a body that can mature so far beyond Western developmental theories that only the terminology of kundalini yoga (and a scattering of less comprehensive, cross-cultural cognate terms such as Bushman *thxiasi num*, the shamanic “dance,” Buddhist *uju kaya*, Tibetan *tumo*, Quaker and hesychast “quaking,” the charismatic “Holy Ghost” shaking and spontaneous Judaic *davvening*) has described it (see Sovatsky, 1998, 1999, 2005, 2014).

In this essay, I focus on the maturation of certain emotional capacities known in Western advaitic traditions as “soteriological” sentiments (sentiments that “bring us into Ultimate Wholeness”).

These sentiments—guilt-apology, outrage-forgiveness, desperation-longing-missing, fear-reverence-awe, unworthiness-appreciation-gratitude, doubt-faith-hope, fickleness-devotion-attentiveness, infatuation-love-praise—range in potency from the most mundane levels to the most matured and saintly. Thus, their power can become so towering that

the course of world history, or family histories, can swerve radically toward the ideal when we resort to them, instead of allowing unmitigated anger and immaturities to reign, or what the Western dvaita-advaitist Freidrich Nietzsche predicted would be the time-arresting disease of the modern era, unforgiving vengefulness or unapologetic resentment.

In the failure to awaken deep soteriological powers within family members, a quagmire begins to form that we call “clinical histories of ‘dysfunctional families’” (or “world political history”). But, in so doing, we leave real time (*anicca*, the always-new impermanence of Buddhist enlightenment) and its washing-away ephemerality wherein love, forgiveness, compassion, apology, and so forth are the only living emotional realities, forever truing and re-truing our lives from even the most horrid of strayings into shadowy realms, a shadowiness that is a sign of their pseudo-existence, compared to the light of dharma.

For, what makes relational dysfunctions so tragic is not merely the agony involved but how unnecessary such situations can be. Yet, beginning with Freud’s interest in “the repressed” and Jung’s in “the shadow,” generations of therapists of all stripes have been overly-encouraged to measure and work with the shadows thrown onto the interior walls of the proverbial Platonic cave, and devoting far less attention to the equally challenging problematic of leading clients into the light to feel its constantly fleeting beauty and warmth. And, however well intended and helpful, transpersonal admonitions against “flight to the light” have set up other barriers to the soteriological powers within us.

Drawing from forty-four years of therapeutic experience, I wish to convey how most any marital problem or crisis can be resolved from the nondual state using these sentiments—delivering on the soteriological claim regarding their near-omnipotence, the Tantric claim in my epigram regarding the power of sustained romantic adoration, and on the grihasthya dharmic claim that a life-long marriage can deliver enlightenment. I wish to show a way out of the dank cave into the land where love songs and poems are and always will be sung and written, the enlightened realm of *grihasthya*. If you have ever been “in love,” you know exactly what

I mean. Living there, “through thick and thin, till death do us part,” is the primordial challenge.

Indeed, in this land there is only one final shadow—that we will die even though we might wish to stay here with all the others, forever, just the way it is, making our way, one step at a time. Within this existential shadow of human mortality, all the lesser “dark-side” emotions—jealousy, angers, fear, arrogance, and so on—shriveled; we just don’t have enough time to dawdle in those shoals once we grasp the poignancy of our condition. Suddenly, we become inspired and soar upon soteriological powers.

For example, you, reader, are more beautiful than words can convey, and so sincere and passionate about your dreams that I stand amazed. Your accomplishments blow me away, as the integrity of your struggles, however under-acknowledged you might be. Come, let’s put these books down and live the ultimate that is here-now, beyond books and teachings and therapies...come to my home, or invite me into yours, and let us create ten-thousand wonderful days together—such words point in the living direction I now have in mind, a “direction” that exceeds the medium of the printed page and is not afraid to go forth, as the Western dvaitic-advaitic traditions of existentialism exhort.

*For, how would we engage with the daily life of our marital and family relationships if we were inspired by the conviction that our enlightenment was in the balance? How would family members and those in love with one another appear to one another if we were deeply moved by the “fact” that these relationships were our greatest pathways to enlightenment? What quotidian matters of domestic life, preparing dinner, washing clothes, going to sleep—would not suddenly become holy endeavors of grihasthya, evoking moods of gratitude and awe at the beauty of daily life?*

Soon enough we will be as dead as the corpse that provoked Buddha’s enlightenment. What are we waiting for? And, further, what if therapists, so inspired, could mobilize “untapped” powers of apology, forgiveness, renewed love and problem-

solving capable of resolving the strife of daily life and even of the extreme strife of the vast majority of divorce-bound marriages?

What if the claimed unconditional powers of nondual consciousness were to bring alive the freshness of each moment so vividly that new beginnings in a love relationship or marriage seemed always at hand for both parties? Perhaps our “differences” really aren’t that great. Such humility is surely at the core of advaita. Why shouldn’t this so-forgiving mood be capable of resolving problem after problem, together, with very little lost to anyone?

*In stretching ourselves thin for one another, we became vast.* (Sovatsky, 2005, p. 84)

For, in every Now is the opportunity to live the soteriological life and to discover its stream of emotions to be a path into ever-deeper powers that keep us close to the heart of the matter.

When a couple I saw as clients for ten months, who had been married for fourteen years and bitterly divorced for two, remarried each other after some twenty nondual soteriological sessions, they and their children and extended families and friends were all confronted with the power of such regenerative emotions. Based in (overly) dualistic consciousness, no one could believe this remarriage could (or, maybe, “should”) happen. But it did.

When a two-generation, incest-laden family met for a single two-hour session, the overseeing court could not believe that a despairingly apologetic incestuous stepfather and long-victimized stepdaughter and their sexually acting-out young child could all meet and end up planning a family reunification. But this is what happened. Why shouldn’t relentless contrition be able to rectify any horror? Who would really prefer a life of bitter animosity to one of having conquered the “unconquerable?”

When a man’s third marriage was on the brink of failing due to infidelity, and after thirty grueling sessions of apology, trust-building, and incremental forgiveness, the marriage deepened and was saved, on-looking family members feared the worst. It is four years later, and I recently saw their teenaged daughter and her boyfriend for couples counseling to steady their way, “like what happened for my parents...”

And, should this teenaged couple marry and have children who will stumble in their romantic relationships, they might pass on the story of their parents’ (the child’s grandparents) marital healing—instead of some story of divorce and pessimism—that will serve as a model of what “can be done.” Such a strengthened lineage history becomes a conduit of embodied advaita, no longer a mere philosophy or meditative glimpse into the subtleties of consciousness.

Earlier in my career, I often found myself supporting “freeing” individuals from “dysfunctional” relationships. I would help them to “individuate” and “recover” and felt rather helpful, as did my clients, who thanked me, at the time. In the last twenty-five years, however, after thousands of nondual soteriological sessions, I can no longer say, with any certainty, which marriages are “beyond repair.”

The power of people once in love to do the “impossible” has come to amaze me. Such wonderment can break through statistical norms of spiraling divorce rates and into the nondual power, beyond the cynicism bred from such group-mentality norms. Group norms of wholeness could thus come to replace the latter, making the path of *grihasthya* easier for future couples within such a culture of enlightenment.

It is from this power that a broken culture such as ours can rebuild itself, one relationship, one marriage, one family at a time. In this way, the five-thousand-year pathway of *grihasthya* can be made real, just as meditation and yoga (methods belonging more to the *sannyasa* path) have become rather normal endeavors for some twenty-two million Americans, practices that seemed odd to the vast majority, only twenty-five years ago.

The living powers of love, loyalty, and familial coherence can prevail over the deteriorating effects that too often defeat us.

The “ascending powers” modeled by Wilber’s “spiritual heroes” can raise the emotional norms of “descenders” beyond the instinctive “get into your feelings” clinical theories which easily lead to cycles of venting and breakdown, when not complemented with matured, soteriological sentiments. Advaita consciousness can give birth to ideal possibilities no matter how horrific the situation.

For example, few know that the Camp David accord was triggered by an off-hours sharing of baby pictures by fathers and grandfathers, Sadat, Begin, and Carter, who suddenly awoke to the preciousness of life and forged the famous accord that ended a war.

### **Lineage as Embodied Advaitism: The Unbroken Flow of Life**

The theme of this chapter is *Ars Erotically embodied advaita*. In the *grihasthya* dharma, such embodied nondualism lives as the unbroken contemporary lineage of five intact generations of family life. A locale comprised of a vast majority of such lineages could be termed a “culture of enlightenment,” where the deepest powers of the soteriological sentiments sustain and celebrate each family, where divorce is an extreme rarity (even in modern India, the rate is a mere two to five percent while the US rate is ten to over twenty times that), and whole, unbroken families, the overwhelming norm.

One must ponder such a culture without a second. Nearly everyone believes he or she is already attaining his or her highest *swa-dharma* (personal spiritual destiny) within his or her marriage, family, and community. Such mutual commitment, such ubiquitous social support! Only a few persons are otherwise drawn to the lifelong *sannyasa* path, an unlikely possibility in modern Western culture (interestingly, “renouncing the world” is a legally acceptable and honorable basis for divorce in modern India).

In such cultures, the powers of the soteriological sentiments are considered great enough to sustain the vast majority of marriages, through thick and thin, for fifty years. Family members believe themselves to be part of something unbroken and eternal, the lineage of incarnations, and whose sacred duty is to care for each generation.

The idea of breaking a marriage to “start anew” would seem as contradictory as drilling holes into one’s boat to make it go faster. Indeed, the ideal is that each believes him or herself to be married to someone worthy of reverence and believes he or she is receiving the same from his spouse. Thus, creative, maturing marriage in the sacred family household is a life-long dedication to bringing the best out in

one another and getting help, when necessary, from elders who have been successful themselves and inspire such couples in myriad ways that modern marriage therapists, with their past-oriented and desire-centric theories, may know very little about.

For some, a profound sexuality opens involving a pineal orgasm of *soma-madhu-amrita* [correlating with oxytocin, endorphin, serotonin, melatonin, dopamine, “matured” testosterone and estrogen that, altogether become natural and endogenous entheogenic and psychedelic-like hormones that give a somatic basis to “higher states of consciousness,” that is well-described in texts such as Thirumular’s *Pariyanga* stanzas, that awakens deep bodily energies whose maturational powers can deliver on one of the oldest claims of the physical yogas, shamanica *medhra*, “going beyond genital puberty” and into what amount to a series of “post-genital” puberties, each adding new dimensions of bliss, maturity, and bonding to the awakening couple.

Thus, the soteriological powers are further enhanced with erotic ecstasies and the awakening of spontaneous *mudras* (delight gestures) centermost, the *khecari mudra* wherein the pineal gland undergoes a puberty of melanin-endorphin engendered equanimity, inner light, and rejuvenation. As I wrote in poetic form of the nondual kavi tradition,

Like shiny brass, turquoise and garnet  
bejeweled Tibetan icon couples  
in upright thrilled embrace,  
Dvaita-Advaita blossomed in those icons as  
secret truths  
mystico-erotica, original religion,  
fully matured, upward, inward, all glands alive,  
tumescent, engorged  
totally intent the one upon the other  
perfectly in love  
designed by the Cosmos  
each quantum crystal species plant animal  
male and female  
to capture the full attention,  
the one of the other, the other of the one,  
in perfect symmetry.  
(Sovatsky, 2005, p. 30)



Such eroticism brings desire to the level of devotion, based in the fundamental attraction between the genders, and goes on to foster the embodiment of the nondual state felt as constantly “being in love.”

Likewise, Tantric and many goddess-based (*Shakti*) traditions of *Sanatana Dharma* assert that mind or consciousness is absolutely vibratory in its essence. This inward duality, reflected in the advaitic “emptiness/fullness” two-sided concept has an outward form of the *grihasthya* marriage. Meditative states emerge, not via long internally-focused sitting retreats only, but naturalistically in the harmonious, mutually committed relationship between spouses.

The inner energies of mind come into harmony, as in the opening epigram, “Where man and woman worship (adore, love, revere) each other is the play of the divine.”

Likewise, when there is disharmony between spouses, a kind of hellishness emerges. The tautology of the couple’s problem, “since we are not each other’s complement, we are now each other’s antagonist” implies a similarly circular solution, “once we are happy together again, our biggest problem will be over.”

Indeed, at that time, deep synergistic powers of the dual energies of mind begin to generate wonderfully creative solutions to the problems of daily life that will always require our attention. When it seems like a couple cannot agree on “anything,” there is usually one thing they will agree upon, they would enjoy being as happy as they can ever remember or imagine themselves being. I am often embarrassed to charge embittered couples for such a simplistic intervention. But this koan has dislodged too many couples from their hostilities, so I keep using it.

Instead of numerous clinical maps of ways to sustain a “till death do us part” love, models of psychopathology abound, based in the consequences of multi-generational broken families and short-term, serial premarital relationships. Of course, this would be the case in a broken culture. Thus, the language of these models is replete with terms such as abandonment and separation anxiety, abusive, betraying and traumatic relationships, boundary issues, disturbed relational constancy, and so forth.

Indeed, the entire therapeutic regime of “empathy” and “compassion” (for suffering) reveals

this same skewed preparation to listen for client suffering, plainly. From the model I am proposing, the fundamental therapist mood should be one of “clinical admiration” for a suffering set within a noble struggle of longing for ideal states. For, an essential part of all suffering, frustrations, and angers is that we wish things could be going better than they are. It is in this conflict of dvaitistic (dualistic) longing, beyond mere defeatism, that suffering becomes noble and deserves to be named as such. It deserves the poignant admiration of the therapist.

Empathy from a therapist is not enough; it is in fact too narrow to grasp the nobility of a struggle that the struggler has surely also lost touch with. Admiration from the outside, from the therapist, can awaken the struggler to his or her own nobility. Empathy can easily miss that which is noble by focusing on duress with no context such as *grihasthya* to grant it dignity. One is left with “mere” anger, devoid of the disappointed hopefulness that is the meaning of the anger. In the cathartic embrace of “negative feelings,” therapists often lose touch with their, often, ironically hopeful inner-dimension.

The empathic, accepting stance sought to help clients bear with duress, to “be with the pain,” to locate it in the body and observe it, and so on. But “the pain” itself has more meaning in it than this monochromatic term can convey. Suffering does not end merely via “accepting” it. It mitigates via elevating it to something noble. Staying married, holding families together, are noble acts; they are *grihasthya*.

And when the sufferings of infidelity, incest, drug addiction, money woes, bitter arguing, and so forth are resituated in the hopes for health, love, and familial happiness, the soteriological process of rebuilding the family becomes the path to individual maturation and enlightenment. It is often up to the outsiders, elder family members or therapists, to convince those who suffer in these ways that they are admirable, not just woefully suffering...and then to lead them, little by little, into the dharma, the deep cosmic forces of love, maturation, and reconciliation. Clinical admiration re-emphasizes what was “lost” in any separation, abandonment, betrayal, abuse—connection—but more so, the ideal connectedness that can last a lifetime....

...and, beyond mere admiration, this stance sees such connectedness already existing in even the darkest moments of breakdown:

- (a) murderers, as I have seen in corrections rehabilitation, where murders awaken in a shocking moment of confessant enlightenment wherein profound guilt and innocent love commingle strangely,
- (b) in acute psychotic breaks, as I have seen in twenty-five years of spiritual emergence “psychosis or transcendence” work, where sheer longing for personal connection has reversed psychotic symptoms, and
- (c) in conflicted marriages involving multiple affairs, violence, or just the hopelessness of “irreconcilable” differences (Sovatsky, 2001). Perhaps the depth of a nondual therapist’s awakening can be measured by her rates of success with ever-more serious issues.

For, we are not talking mere New Age dogma here. We are talking about the primordial powers of the universe that should always conjure images of greater effectiveness that can be measured in ways that convince even the most skeptical observer.

The vista of the inter-generational *grihasthya* ideal is worth depicting, for, in this regard Western culture is a broken culture, and therapists are the repair-persons whose clients, theories (and, typically, their own lives) are so submerged in this brokenness that such ideals are barely imaginable.

I have constructed the rather long run-on sentence in the next paragraph (the reading of which is a meditation in itself) as an attempt to grasp a one hundred year, unbroken, five generations lineage in one continuous breathless swoop. For a lifetime is a singularity of human duration without a second, as becomes more apparent within the advaitic awakening, whenever it might occur, but certainly to some degree merely through the constant passage of embodied time. And, like the term, “enlightenment,” from the perspective of advaita, the next paragraph stands as an ideal that is always trying to come into evermore complete realization. Why? Because its continuity is the nature of earthly life, an ongoing ecological and largely self-sustaining whole, always seeking to rectify the (adharmic) brokenness that now abounds.

*According to the Sanatana Dharma doctrine of ashramas, each generation is at the peak of dharmic kama (matured desire) to marry and begin bearing children around twenty-five years of age, with the hope of living to one hundred years of age, the dharmic “full allotment” of a human life, thus becoming great-great-grandparents (with their own great-great-grandparents, great-grandparents, grandparents and parents, all still alive or commemorated as ancestors along with countless other preceding ancestors) with children who have been married some fifty years and are by then seventy-five year-old great-grandparents who have children who have been married some twenty-five years who are now fifty-year old grandparents, who will then have children who are just becoming twenty-five year old parents of gestating or toddling babies, thus revealing for the centenarian the grand vista and birth after birth after birth, deeply embodied sense of potentially endless incarnations while she naturally ages evermore toward her own (bodily) death, itself understood via the term, maha-samadhi, moment of “highest-knowledge,” a knowledge that hovers around advaita, “non-duality,” for, at this high point of recognition, all aspects of life: longings, woes, joys, things, ideas, death, past, present, future are all felt to exist in one embraced wholeness without a second against which it could be compared, thus emerges wisdom without any struggle: everything is exactly the way that it is and that is that, but includes the possibility that there could be more enlightenment and wisdom than one now experiences since there is in Sanatana Dharma a continuity for any human, from human being to saint to demi-god and avatar or world savior, and thus the humbling meaning of The Infinite shudders through this apparent “summit” of knowing, suggesting even greater states and requiring the paradoxical term (as the most-renowned advaitist, Adi Shankara came to realize late in his short life) dvaita-advaita, “the longings of dualism for a “Greater-Beyond,” plus the non-longing acceptance of non-dualism’s enlightenment claim: “The ultimate is Here and Now.”*

In a broken culture, this ideal is more than a latent possibility. It is the “eternal” (*sanatana*) possibility that is always trying to make headway and to come into existence. As *Rta*, it is the cosmic order of things, more real and deeper than any dysfunction, historical betrayal, or violation. It is the longed-for order that is the standard by which “dysfunction” and such is measured.

And it lives, not as some harsh and impossible standard, but as the alluringly romantic ideal of love songs and love stories and the wondrous hope within any dashed or even “destroyed” hope. It is so deep, that a near-universal belief in *Sanatana Dharma* is a range of conjectures on reincarnation wherein the force of this ideal carries on after the bodily death of any being, engendering lifetimes upon lifetimes to ever-more mature each being toward this ultimate and full embodiment of the inherent *Rta* and *Dharma* of human existence.

### Soteriological Sentiments

Emotions such as anger, hopelessness, grief, envy, and jealousy reveal an auspicious ambiguity within the context of *dvaita-advaita*. The soteriological, “redemptive” approach owes its therapeutic potency to this ambiguity wherein these “shadow emotions” reveal a flickering “light-side.” This missed light-side offers the clinician and her client couples a pathway from mere empathic, “being with” verbal sharing of such negative affects into the greater hopes for love, partnership, and futuristic optimism.

But, more subtly, *dvaita-advaita* claims that we have been trying to “be with” a set of *falsely monochromatic emotions* when trying to be with “anger” or “grief.” If we were to look more carefully, we would see that all “anger” involves a disappointment that events did not go the way we hoped. Buried in anger is a dashed-hope, waiting to be revived by the skillful soteriological therapist.

And, because there is always a next moment of conscious opportunity (perhaps even after bodily death), “hopelessness” is always an overstatement. We do not know what might happen next and therein lies hopefulness.

Likewise, “grief” contains the love that has been lost through death or some other ending,

and the term, “pain of grieving” misses that this “pain” is a kind of anguished love. It will be in the grieving-one’s ability to project this love into the present-future that lives the redemptive power wherein new life and love grows out of past loss. In so doing, the nondual awakening to the unbrokenness of Love can emerge, such as the legend of Buddha’s awakening conveys: upon seeing a funeral, He awakens to loving everyone.

### Some Clinical Pointers

1. Ask client couples to tell you the greatest possible outcome they can imagine, far beyond merely solving some communication, infidelity, or constant-fighting problem. Inspiration comes from aiming high, the higher the aim, the greater the motivation, for such indicates the greatest congruence with *grihasthya dharma*. Example: “We would like to live together happily, see our children grow up, travel together, and grow old together.”
2. Tell couples we are in a therapeutic process that will affect not only their marriage but their children’s marriages, and even their children’s children’s marriages. “Imagine the difference between sitting together at your children’s weddings, or sitting on opposite sides of the church sending either a message that marriage can endure, or one that, no, we were not able to find a way through our problems, as you take your vows, my children, stepping onto this same path.”
3. I have the couple look at each other as I repeat these highest of goals and add that they are each with a partner who is willing to do all they can to make these goals happen. I ask them to believe in the other taking on this challenge as they believe in themselves taking it on. I say I have 44 years of experience of many hundreds of couples rooting for them who have been successful solving similar problems. I ask them to tell one another they will be whole-hearted and can be counted on to do his or her best.
4. I have couples tell me for at least five to ten minutes, what they have ever admired or loved or received from their spouse, an approach that is central to positive psychology. After

they speak, I ask for the most mundane details, for advaita finds everything to be a pathway. What food did you have at that special dinner? How does she look when asleep? Can you describe how she looks when she is being the great Mom you admire? I go into greater and greater detail, so that the wholeness is brought out of each summarized admiration. It is far easier to solve substantive problems in a loving state of mind, so I typically only proceed to issues of lying, infidelity, abusive language, and so forth, after love and respect have become vivid. I repeatedly ask the couple to look at one another at poignant moments to nourish their visual-emotional experience of one another. I have them compliment each other on the beauties they see.

5. I then say, no wonder you are suffering from not being able to share such appreciation for one another, but instead to be fighting all the time.
6. The circularity of love that traces the nonduality of resonance is that when my expression of love to another makes her happy, that instantly makes me happy and *that* will make her happy and *that* will make me happy....*ad infinitum*. Describing this circularity leads to something we might call "the One Happiness Reverberating," that is, a "resonance of happiness." But, instead of being between client and therapist, it is between love partners or husband and wife. When deftly supported, this resonance of nondual rapport is the crux of *grihasthya*, the sacred center where "marriage" is this resonance brought into a daily life of homebuilding and family creation. When it has reverberated throughout the body for a few decades, and allowed to circulate through the spine, the eroticism I call "post-genital puberty" can emerge and become the basis for *pariyanga*, the little-known *tantra* of lovemaking involving *ajna chakra*, the yogic center of nondual knowing, and *khecari mudra*, the puberty of pineal and tongue, which is perhaps the culmination of all Kundalini yoga, as well (see Sovatsky, 2014).
7. Sometimes, I will immediately ask each spouse to apologize in a general way for any way he or she might have caused the other any pain or loss

of shared creative time together and ask each to begin to let in the apologies, to let in the courage and quavering optimism of hope that is being created. I ask each to begin forgiving each other.

8. I ask them each to notice that their admirations and apologies and forgiveness are causing certain blushes in the recipient, blushes of nourishment and tearing-up of revived hope. I say, now that you see you can help cause the good feelings in one another, you must live knowing that you also deprive one another of such nourishment when you miss opportunities to be so-giving. I ask them to pledge to give more and upon receiving, to express their appreciation and to watch it sink in to the other, as revealed in blushes, smiles, and tearful brimming. Thus, the nondual resonance between them deepens and stabilizes, no matter what upsets may arise.
9. Surprisingly, it might seem to some therapists, couples can easily be invited to give a tiny kiss to one another at such moments of reconciliation, even during the first half-hour of the first session. Perhaps it can only be a kiss delivered from the tip of one's forefinger to the cheek. Indeed, such tiny kisses are, poetically, even more powerful than a lip-to-cheek kiss. Often, the other partner can be successfully asked to reciprocate such a kiss, leaving them both glowing brightly. "Take a look at each other, now!" I will say and, as they do, they [at least momentarily] "fall in love with one another" again. I will then say, "Let's tap the resilience of Unconditional Love, you deserve it, everyone deserves this."
10. Week after week, we celebrate the moments of love as they occur in the mundane life of meals shared, bills paid, sleeping and waking together, and make headway, back and forth, on issues of substance abuse, destructive [even multiple] affairs, money problems, lying and abusive treatment, and so forth.
11. Thus, they awaken the ominous and profound Ars Erotica power of Unconditional Love, with its entheogenic hormones now physically, erotically shareable in what I call the Uroboric Oral Cathedral.
12. No mere "oral sex," this profound uroboric sexual lovemaking matures ever-deeper entheo-

genic chemistries within each other's body that are then imbibed: a holy communion of the *Ars Erotica* Body of Unconditional Love that is at the hidden core of *pariyanga* (erotic Yoga of the "pineal puberty").

13. Its maturational power is so great that endless devotion and *lila* (erotic play) replace the male "point of no return ejaculation-urge"—not with mere "retention"—with an endless erotic sharing and interaction, multiple orgasms for the female and an end to reliance on artificial contraceptives and the near obsolescence of unintended pregnancies and contraceptive-failure "back-up" abortions.
14. All of the 13 points are in numerous tantric texts concerning *khecari mudra*, the "tongue-mindspace puberty" that is the maturational summit of kundalini, all-chakra and fully-embodied enlightenment.

### Notes

1. The original Huffpost article, *Ram Dass Has a Son*, posted November 3, 2010, as quoted in [https://www.academia.edu/4112183/Ram\\_Dass\\_Has\\_a\\_Son](https://www.academia.edu/4112183/Ram_Dass_Has_a_Son) shows the evolution of Ram Dass's teachings on "family love" in contrast with "spiritual love," as seen in the updated version of the Huffpost article, posted November 17, 2011: "When the [positive paternity] DNA results came back, Ram Dass was dismayed. He'd made a point of avoiding family ties . . . believing they might hold him back from attaining spiritual freedom. [He taught that family life was a kind of "melodrama," a testing ground for one's "spiritual growth" of Love Everyone, Serve Everyone] . . . [After meeting his adult son and young grandson in 2010] Ram Dass developed a deeper understanding of the love parents feel for their children and began to see [for the first time in his adult life?] that personal and soul love are not mutually exclusive but can coexist in nourishing ways."
2. The ashrama schema of four stages of life is discussed in great detail later in this article. It has been fundamental to the Indian culture of *Santana Dharma* for thousands of years—though it has broken down in the last century

due to colonialism and modern pressures. Thus, all Indian spiritual teachers for millenniums assumed its audience to be living according to its four 25-year stages, a fact that Westerners—who do not observe celibacy till age 25, then marry and raise a family for 25 years, then retire as married couples for another 25 years, and then take up celibate single lives till death—who draw from Indian traditions such as *advaita*, *tantra*, or *bhakti* teachings must ponder to avoid problems of "piece-meal" cultural borrowing.

In "The Sixties," when Western attention became strongly interested in the psychologies of *Santana Dharma*, a "counter-culture" rebellion against institutions such as marriage and even monogamy prevailed among "baby-boomers" whose nascent East-West psychology was seeking explanations to the apparent entheogenic effects of psychedelic drugs. Very little attention was paid to *grihasthya*, in comparison with the more mystical Indian texts that seemed to pertain to psychedelic experiences.

Unbeknownst to them, the texts they have been consulting were meant for celibate *sannyasin* monastics engaged in full-time meditative practices either for their whole lifetime (the *sannyasin* path or *marga*.) or from age 75, for those who married and created families at age 25. Unwittingly, millions of Westerners have been trying to implement teachings on desire, the place of egoic ambition, meditation and yoga practice into their daily lives that were meant for monastic, full-time practitioners.

Likewise, pseudo-problems regarding "embodied" (and an implied "un-embodied" spirituality that was construed as such via the misapplication of specifically monastic texts) spirituality emerged, which *The Sacred Mirror* series (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003) is trying to rectify. My chapter highlights the path (second ashrama) of *grihasthya*, a term that has been unknown in the East-West psychology field, for the above-stated reasons. The foundation of this non-celibate, non-monastic "lay-community" home, family and career creating lifestyle is procreation of and caring for the continuity of incarnations, as families.

3. Thus, a rocky and teetering chariot-ride is a central metaphor for cosmic existence, as in the *Ratya Yatra* "Chariot Festival of Lord of the Universe, Jagganatha" whereby comes the English term, juggernaut, meaning a wild and unpredictably unfolding event.
4. Of course, we must consider an emotional calculus wherein amiable—or even hostile—divorce is seen as the favored response to an intractably destructive marriage, for the sake of all persons involved. Thus, unfolds the path of restraining orders, police-supervised child custody exchanges, repeated court-hearings, criminal charges, and so forth. For, the absence of *grihasthya* provokes moods of desperation, as if one has been robbed of the most valuable of hopes. Likewise, the unfoldment of wonderful second marriages and blended families can also emerge, for the organic pull *grihasthya* keeps reasserting itself, even in the one-night stand, no doubt.
5. Not belonging to any one family, the *sannyasin* often serves as mediator or village teacher-advisor or healer (*vaidika*), thus he belongs to all families.
6. Soteriology is an ancient Greek term with functional equivalence to the modern term, "psychotherapy." The crux of its etymology is the middle syllable, "te," as in *tumescence* or swelling and refers to two ways to respond to suffering, by gaining in strength, as in muscle development via weightlifting, or the bruised swelling of injury. Via a response of compassionate understanding and forgiveness to the blows of abuse and suffering, one grows ("swells") in character, thus the term was used by the Christian Church to indicate belief in Christ's power to forgive as redemptive. Redemption, the return to ultimate wholeness, I suggest, it a cognate for the *a priori* wholeness of nondual consciousness, and radical forms of instantaneous compassionate understanding and forgiveness are two of its soteriological or therapeutic powers.
7. Please infer the continuity of each set of hyphenated terms as trying to convey the *in vivo* fluctuations toward the more ideal or matured emotions, fluctuations that deepen our character as we patiently cultivate more of the ideals of love, forgiveness, faith, and so forth, from the less-mature moods of infatuation, outrage, doubt, and so forth, over and over, again and again, throughout a lifetime.
8. For more on "the growing cottage industry" of scholarship on Nietzsche and advaita vedanta, see David R. Loy's review of *Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities* by Robert G. Morrison at <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-EPT/loy.htm>.
9. Did we really believe that psychological theories of Freud, Jung, and others, created within the era of two world wars, including a devastating holocaust, were unbiased by such horrors? Of course, these psychologists would be concerned with "repressed shadow issues," given how Nazism arose from its "repressed state" after Versailles.
10. *Grihasthya* thus embodies both the liberal ideals of an expansive love with the conservative ideals of group coherence and "family values," with broad implications for contemporary political debates concerning abortion, gay marriage, gender politics, and the so-called "clash of civilizations," where spiritual and secular societal values have fomented armed conflict.
11. Personal communication with Milton Friedman (Hubert Humphrey's speechwriter) in 1978, at the Association for Humanistic Psychology Annual Meeting, Atlantic City, NJ.
12. My conversations with Indian psychologists reveal a less-than-hidden sizeable group of unhappily married Indian couples who remain married their whole lifetime. After having done marriage counseling sessions in India with some ten couples, I conclude that this unswerving loyalty (along with the other soteriological sentiments discussed in this chapter) is an under-tapped resource for the rejuvenation of troubled but intact Indian marriages.
13. See Sovatsky, 2005, for an account of Meher Baba, an Indian saint who initiated the first spiritual emergence work ever, reaching out to chronically psychotic persons whom he called, *masts*, "God-intoxicated."

14. See Chapter VII, verse 11 of the *Bhagavad-gita* where Krishna deified this *dharmic kama*, "I am the passion [*kama*] that is in harmony with [*Sanatana*] *Dharma*."
15. This force of reincarnation is considered so great that the life-stories of nearly all the saints of all world spiritual traditions involve a poignant departure from family life, as in the case of Buddha and as depicted in Kazantzakis's *Last Temptation of Christ*, or *life-long sannyasa*. Likewise, Indian traditional marriage vows often extend for seven incarnations into the future.
16. Dissociative, defensive fantasy takes place in the imagined "elsewhere" of some "other time/place" where someone undergoing torture or abuse in the present can project themselves and find solace. Thus, soterialogical approaches have always been susceptible to "flights to the light" where a chronic stance of pollyannic hopefulness covers over fearfulness and repressive traumatic affect.

Yet, without this realm of "the next moment," we can lose access to the flickering hopefulness and its power to dissolve and forgive and mature at what we might call a "soul-level" that the saints of all times have modeled. We can know the Christian nondual compassion toward abuse that minimizes one's own suffering, "they [the abusive others] know not what they do," a compassion that is available regarding our own abusive moments.

At this time in the history of psychotherapy, however, we have little guidance for clinicians to help their clients attain saintly levels of functioning. See my discussion of "spiritual surpass" issues in "Clinical Admiration..." in *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 2004(2) that explored the problematic of spiritual attainment itself, in contrast to "spiritual bypass" issues that deal with residual immaturities, per se.

17. For couples in hostile crises where even the slightest request to recall anything positive is greeted with scorn, I might say, "I believe that deeper down, you wish that you were able to at least describe some previous time when things were very good between the two of you....I believe that you wish you could pause from the

utter infuriation you now feel and recall those other memories. Forget about marriage, the ability to recall a positive experience while in extreme duress could someday save your life during some crisis, or the life of your child.... You can go back to the infuriating mood in the next moment, if you wish." I watch for the slightest facial sign that I have stirred interest and will say, "That querulous look on your face, the slight frown of doubt you have now makes me wonder that you do know what I am referring to...you don't need to say anything . . . [turning to the other partner]...see, your partner is grappling with the hope in the rubble...you know how hard that is?? Very, very hard...I would like you to try to admire your partner for letting in some vague memory of love for you...especially now, while you are in the horrible crisis. I would say this is heroic....if your children could see you both struggling right now, they would be inspired and moved . . . Yes, we will work on all the issues in this crisis, but right now is the crucial opening of hearts that will give us that chance."

Other times, I ask the aggrieved partner to describe the anguish he or she is in, but to see the resultant anguish in the face of his or her partner, as he or she listens. Such are the conventional techniques of empathy given and received by one partner, then the other.

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