

## TANGO, LOVE AND THE SOUL

When I am at a social gathering I never like to tell anyone what I do. Why? Because I am a psychotherapist, and as soon as you utter these words in a social setting, people change. You can almost feel them shifting gear, into the 'Oh my God, she's analysing me mode'! Well, believe it or not, my first introduction to real live tango was through psychotherapy. Late last August I was in Buenos Aires at a world psychotherapy congress presenting work relating to my latest books. Needless to say, weather apart (it was winter there), my daughter and I both fell in love with Buenos Aires and I resolved that on my return I would do two things. Take up Spanish again and start the tango.

Dance has always been part of my life. As a child and young woman I danced whenever I had the opportunity. First on the beach in front of our home in rural Connemara, then later in Ballet, Jazz, Contemporary, Salsa and Latin classes. I love to dance. For me, dancing is life. It is how I express myself when I cannot find the words. Somehow too, at a far from conscious level, dancing for me is about celebrating my passion and loving God. No, I am not a religious fanatic! Far from it. But I am a deeply spiritual being that has realised through my journey that we are souls clothed in a human body rather than humans with a soul. My training and work in Jungian psychology and my life experiences have led me to understand that everything we do has a purpose. That our experiences and the people we draw into our lives are dictated by a higher destiny and the lessons our soul has still to learn.

What has this to do with tango? For me, a lot. Tango is at once extremely sensual and deeply spiritual. As a dance of love, it is both melancholic and ecstatic. As an exercise in 'presence' and being in the moment, it is superb. Tango is also about the perfect balance/union between a man and a woman. Moved by the music and the woman in his arms, he leads and she follows; she tunes in to him and he to her and they dance. This aspect, where the woman tunes into and feels her partner and surrenders to him, letting him lead her (without words) is possibly quite unique and for many Western woman used to having control- not easy. It certainly takes some getting used to. Most of all, it takes TRUST. "You don't trust me" repeats Hernan as he feels that

ever so subtly, I have moved ahead, shifted my weight or left him. "Lean on me'. It can be hard to be this trusting in life anyway never mind at tango!

Within each of us is a masculine and feminine energy and component. Men have an inner feminine (based on their experience of their mothers) and women have an inner masculine (based on father). And what all human beings seek is inner wholeness. This is bought about by the balancing in us of the inner masculine and feminine; in Jungian psychology this balance is termed the 'Inner Marriage'. This union is essential to the spiritual wellbeing of all individuals. It is the union of two parts of us, masculine and feminine, hearts and minds, human and Divine. This drive to wholeness is implicit to our lives, and marriage and love relationships are an outer expression of this drive. When you are in union with your partner, you feel whole. Dancing tango offers us this in such a way that the strongest overly dominant woman becomes not submissive, but open and trusting, and the weakest disempowered or wounded man becomes strong and assertive. In romantic and psychological terms, 'the masculine takes the feminine out into the world because he loves her'. She follows, always knowing that he has understood her needs and can lead her safely. When we are totally in balance we feel good, we feel whole. We love ourselves and imagine we can do anything. It's rather like the feeling we have when we fall in love. To dance the tango means to venture out into this world; to taste this union, and if we are willing, to trust and let ourselves go with it, to live the dance of life. Tango captures the pathos and beauty of the passion and vulnerability of love. Dancing the tango is also about engaging with life and allowing yourself to play.

To me, a relative novice (I started tango six months ago), it offers healing and joy in a deep powerful way. It is also great fun. I come away from a good night of dancing tango having spent a few hours not just with friends but in complete and safe intimacy with a stranger(s), feeling moved, energised, beautiful and very feminine. Yes, I am most definitively hooked!

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