How to be Alone in Society

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.
— Friedrich Nietzsche

Our students often complain about not being understood by their families or by others with whom they used to be close. When they try to explain their reasons for devoting themselves to meditation and spending lengthy times in retreat, they often receive negative feedback or outright rejection. And even if those around us are tolerant of our choices, it is still almost always impossible to share with them our spiritual reality. Others will often look with suspicion, and even animosity, at anyone who is on the inner path, because they find it strange or threatening to their own views of reality. This may even include friends and family who think of themselves as spiritual seekers in their own right.

In situations like this, when we try to explain the importance of the path, or even the value of simple meditation, we are naturally frustrated by the inability to really communicate with other people, especially when we really care about them. What can be done about this? Very little can be done as far as the others are concerned, but quite a lot can be done as far as we ourselves are concerned.

Being Alone in the Dimension of Forgetfulness

Walking the path while also living in the dimension of forgetfulness means being alone. This aloneness tests each soul’s strength, integrity, and commitment to the preservation of her light. The development of our individuality is an essential aspect of the inner path, and this takes place on two levels: firstly, in the awakening of our higher being, and secondly, in the reflection of the truth of our higher being through our human character. This latter type of development has to
match the soul’s evolution so that the human can serve the purpose of the soul in this dimension. If the human is weak psychologically, he is bound to be distracted or seduced by the collective mind. To walk the path, we have to know how to stand alone, and this means honoring our inner truth above and beyond social conformism.

Who are our real parents? Who are our real friends? Are they those who want us to fit into the social template of focusing on getting married, having a family, and securing a well-paid career and comfortable retirement? Or are they those who truly care about our real wellbeing and the reaching of peace, freedom, and fulfillment during this ephemeral life? It is not family, blood relations, or social bonds that define those who are close to us, but the true love which can only come from one soul to another soul. Society is based on a collective, unconscious, and conformist perception of reality, and all who choose to identify with it will not support a person on the path. In fact, because of society’s belief systems and inherent insecurities, it will actually disapprove of, or even condemn, spiritual evolution. Society’s concept of spirituality is usually limited to primitive religious beliefs at best, because through several millennia, religions have cleverly managed to infiltrate the collective mind.

**Aloneness and Imagined Rebellion**

Individual aloneness should not be confused with adolescent rebellion or the ego trying to be unique, original, or clever on a superficial and mental level. It is positive for young people to want to find their own way, but what they are usually actually seeking are really just alternative subcultures (conformism with a different face) as a way of making a statement.

A true rebellion against the herd mentality must be rooted in wisdom and higher intelligence. This is not rebellion for the sake of rebelling or making a statement, but for the sake of serving our spiritual truth and integrity. It is as much, if not more, a movement towards our truth as it is a movement against conformism. If our society were spiritually mature and supported the evolution of individuality, we would not have to rebel against anything. But this is not the case. Our rebellion is about the liberation from collective ignorance, and it is a natural and unavoidable byproduct of following the call of the soul.

**Aloneness and Inner Integrity**

A seeker of the path is not someone who tries to convert others or needs to convince them about the urgency of awakening. It is fine for one to share when one cares about the other person and sees their potential, but it should be done gently and without personal investment. The truth is that no one will understand, or can be convinced anyway, unless their inner longing is already present. Only then can they be gently guided into the intricacies of the inner path.

It is important that one does not let oneself be adversely affected or discouraged by others’ negative responses or criticisms. One must be absolutely steadfast in one’s convictions, which are obviously not just beliefs but based on clear knowledge and living experience. Even when we don’t yet have access to the inner reality, our conviction is based on clear intuition and uncompromising longing for our pure nature, which are the signposts by which we can identify the truth of the path.
Merely 'believing' in the need for meditation and inner evolution is not really different than following a religion or having other personal beliefs. A person on the path is not a zealot of any particular way or belief system, but one who seeks his truth from his deepest and purest intuition and longing, which comes from a direct connection to the realm of pure subjectivity. There are many pseudo-seekers who believe in and pray to all kinds of gods and gurus. They live in imagination and spiritual projections. Rather than being individuals in true aloneness, they have chosen yet another subculture of conformism. There are many such seekers, both Western and Eastern, in places of pilgrimage or in ashrams. These people live in their particular brand of dreaming. They are not even close to being in touch with their true individuality, but remain puppets of collective pseudo-spiritual consciousness, or rather unconsciousness. Walking the inner path is not the same as being part of a spiritual subculture; it is the growth into embodying the light of me.

It is common that when a seeker is not strong psychologically, is timid and lacking in confidence, that he can be easily influenced by others and have doubts about the truth of his path. It often happens that when a student returns to his home environment after having been with other like-minded seekers or in retreat, he is persuaded by others to become more 'normal'. Then, as time goes by, more and more doubts gradually creep in about what is right and which lifestyle is best to pursue. This kind of spiritual regression is especially evident when a seeker becomes very busy in the outer world. When the link to one's pure nature is more tenuous, such doubts can be magnified. So a weak character combined with an insufficient connection to one's spiritual light is a recipe for succumbing to a life of social compliance and conformism.

Walking the inner path cannot be disconnected from growing into the aloneness of our individuality. In the inner realm, we awaken our unique identity on the level of the soul, and in the outer realm, we evolve, improve, and refine the qualities of our character on a personal level. The human has to serve the soul, and if his character is deficient, he will fail in this task.

**Aloneness beyond Loneliness**

Being an individual in society means standing alone. This is the inevitable price one pays to honor one's truth, because in the aspects of one's life which are one's absolute priority, one is isolated. Initially, this aloneness can feel like loneliness, because sharing our life is one of the ways in which personality is connecting emotionally with others. However, this need to share is not rooted in reality, but rather is a mechanism by which our personality uses our inner truth to obtain emotional gratification. Personality always wants to be listened to, understood, and accepted, but our soul has no need for these things; she is autonomous. As one matures as a seeker, all the old habitual cravings to share gradually fall away, as they are no longer relevant. Of course, it can still be beautiful to share at times, but this should not be based on superficial egoic need, but rather this type of sharing happens when there is a true meeting between two souls.

Once our true aloneness has grown in power, it no longer triggers loneliness. We are then in a position of inner strength when relating to society. When you return home after a retreat or time away meditating and your family or friends are critical of you, it should not make you feel insecure, rejected, or shake your conviction in your path. In some respects, being among others in the dimension of forgetfulness is quite similar to being an adult surrounded by small children; the idea of sharing with them or convincing them about your inner path and truth does not even cross your mind; you know without question that they would not begin to understand.
However, your truth will still be evident through your convictions and confidence – which show through your being and presence – to anyone who can ‘see’. When others sense this presence that is rooted in pure subjectivity, they will leave you alone, or even come to respect you for your inner truth and path. After all, when you have become an adult, it is your right to make your own choices, and others must honor this. You may, at times, also be able to share with others verbally, finding gentle means to do so without in any way imposing on the other.

There is never any need to convince anyone else of your truth. The truth of the aloneness of pure subjectivity never attempts to convert others. Religious zealots behave as they do to compensate for their own uncertainty and emptiness, rather than to share a deeper truth; they are people who have not attained consciousness and live only in dreams.

**Aloneness and Compassion for Others**

When your family or friends do not understand you or cannot accept the fact that you have changed, you should not judge them or become upset. You must treat them with compassion; they are in a different place in life and evolution. Most people are simply not ready to enter the path, because their spiritual longing has not been activated and their me is still relatively undeveloped. One does not expect a cat to play the piano or to write poetry. You can still connect to these people, many of whom you may care for deeply on other levels, and enjoy the time you spend together. But there will also be times to move on and let go of some friends, as well as to create more internal distance between yourself and your family.

Life is constant change, and we tend to resist this change by creating imaginary islands of stability, like relationships, marriage, family, and careers. A regular check on our relationships and lifestyle in general is important to ensure that they continue to be consistent with our current reality, rather than having become a part of the past that keeps repeating itself. One has to be clear about when it is time to let go of relationships and external matters, especially in an inner sense, and have the strength to do so and move on when necessary.

**Aloneness and Romantic Relationships**

A common question is whether it is right for a person on the path to awakening to be in a romantic relationship with someone who has no interest in evolving spiritually. Obviously, it is helpful and supportive if your partner shares your view of reality and understands your need for daily meditation and the occasional need to be more introverted. But sometimes the circumstances require more compromise.

People in normal society generally think that something is wrong with someone who is silent, introverted, or withdrawn. They think a person who is like this must be sad, depressed, or even autistic. Such people in society are incapable of understanding someone on the path, because they have no connection to (or awareness of) their inner self, the power of silence, or the intimacy of their me.

If your partner has the same lack of understanding as society in general, this can be a source of considerable disharmony in the relationship. However, if your partner respects your path, even
though he or she is not on the journey to their own inner self, it is still possible to be in a loving relationship. In such a situation, you share your life with your partner in a mutually supportive emotional sense, but remain on your own spiritually. This is quite alright, since we are always alone spiritually anyway.

However, for someone who is on the path but not yet established in their pure nature, it is better to form a romantic relationship with a partner who is spiritually conscious, sensitive, and also connected with the energy of aloneness. Because true love is shared between souls, rather than between personalities or observers, it is difficult to have a deep connection in any meaningful sense with a partner who is unconscious. A harmonious relationship based on true love and mutual respect can only be sustained between two people who are each self-contained and at peace with their own aloneness. In this way, they can share intimacy and work together towards the fulfillment of their relative human emotional selves without becoming victims of the bondage of emotional dependence, which is the usual state of relationships and marriages.

Integrating Aloneness with Society

When one receives negative feedback from family or others in one’s immediate surroundings, one must be energetically steadfast in one’s strength and integrity. There is never any need to apologize to people who are not conscious about devoting one’s life to truth. Anyone who tries to persuade you to leave the path in favor of conformism and social normality is an enemy of your soul and should not be trusted. Since most people really do not know any better, there is no need for any animosity or negativity, but it should be made clear to such people, energetically if not verbally, that you could never consider compromising your spiritual convictions.

To be alone in society is the inescapable destiny of each soul who walks the path to self-actualization. However, it is also important to master the arts of living in society and of understanding how to blend in and be discrete about one’s truth. In Taoism, such discretion, or camouflage, is called ‘concealing one’s illumination’. When one lives in society, one must know how to play society’s game, and one speaks one’s truth only when it is clear that it has a chance of reaching the heart of the other soul. Otherwise, one needs to live in harmony with the world as it is from the place of one’s inner light and samadhi in the supreme reality. To live from the state of aloneness does not necessarily mean that one is isolated from physical reality and daily duties. Contrived, false aloneness would result in one becoming dysfunctional. True aloneness is unconditional, and it can be experienced fully in the midst of the human world. Living in society then becomes a natural extension of being alone, and everything and everyone is experienced as being part of that fundamental aloneness.

Aloneness in the Spiritual Community

While aloneness is our foundation, the seeker is not alone on another level, for there are other souls who are also conscious to varying degrees and who share the same purpose. So we are alone, but we are also not alone. We are not alone in the sense that we share our aloneness with others who are in touch with their own aloneness. It is only natural that seekers wish to share their inner lives and give and receive mutual support with others who are also on the path to self-realization.
One of the most beautiful expressions of such support is meditating together in group meetings and on retreats. Only rare individuals have the discipline to do a long retreat alone, and the shared determination of the group stimulates the inspiration and incentive for all involved. Group meditations provide natural energetic support and spiritual motivation, as well as reinforce one’s inner conviction, which is especially important at the beginning of the path. As was previously noted, the time when a beginner struggles with gaining access to his inner self is when insecurities and doubts are more likely to cloud his intuitive wisdom and the call of the soul.

The support from a mature spiritual group should not be confused with what happens in various spiritual communities, where personalities meet in ‘spiritual circles’ to enjoy time together. Most spiritual groups are no different than alternative subcultures that are created for the sake of pleasing the human psychological self and giving it an illusion of walking the path to ‘light’ with others. Such seekers may wear fancy ‘spiritual’ garments, grow dreadlocks to look like sadhus (renouncers), chant mantras or other mumbo jumbo, and pretend to be spiritual. These people are fully identified with their personalities and egos. They are not in touch with aloneness.

A spiritual community can be of great support when it exists in the proper context and is composed of mature seekers. Such a community is not in conflict with the principle of aloneness, and can give support to those who still struggle with their path and inner progress. It is important to see the fine line between a mature group of seekers who work together from their aloneness and those who avoid aloneness by joining spiritual sects.

It is also important to see when one’s ego, emotional insecurity, or neediness is what is beginning to motivate one’s connection to a spiritual group. As a counterbalance to such tendencies, those who are more mature in the community must be available to help other members with personality and emotional issues to transcend them.

There is always someone who connects to the group with a mistaken motive, looking for friends to escape his loneliness or to puff himself up through sharing his ‘great achievements’ or spiritual experiences. Group members with these motives can easily disturb and spoil the sacred energy of a spiritual community, and unless they change and surrender their egos, they will drop out sooner or later.

Aloneness in Relationship with a Spiritual Guide

The important support of a spiritual guide is another way in which a seeker is not completely alone. Such a guide is the true friend of the seeker’s soul. However, even this connection with the spiritual teacher must be rooted in the seeker’s own aloneness, or else it will result in over-dependence. Immature seekers look for a savior in a teacher, and they often end up worshipping their guru as if he were a god. This is not aloneness, but ego distorting the meaning of the spiritual path with its immature tendencies and ignorance.

That each one walks the path alone is both beautiful and empowering. Each one is responsible for his own destiny, and sculpts the shape of his future through his inner work and devotion to pure subjectivity. A spiritual guide is not a savior, even though he represents the source of spiritual inspiration. He can have a crucial role for the seeker in activating the light of me and energetically opening the doorway to I am.
Above all, a spiritual guide is someone who shows the seeker the truth of aloneness and helps him master the ultimate art of being alone. Only when we embody our individual aloneness can we realize universal aloneness – the natural state of transcendental light without object, the unity of all there is.

**Aloneness as the Foundation of Oneness**

Knowing what love is, is to know the true meaning of aloneness. Unless we have established an awakened relationship with our pure nature, we cannot meet the soul in anyone else. We are bound to perceive the other as outside of us. Aloneness is the gateway to love because it is the gateway to unity with existence. All that is experienced in both the inner and outer realities is contained within the space of pure subjectivity, and pure subjectivity is alone.

By becoming one with pure subjectivity, we begin to realize that everything is illuminated by the light of our original aloneness. Even people who do not understand us are contained as relative expressions of our pure nature in that aloneness. Because we have chosen to honor our aloneness, we see that aloneness in the heart of every person, even if they may be ignorant of it. To be alone is to be one with the whole world, a world which includes those who are not conscious.

Blessings,

Anadi

*For a full glossary of terminology please visit our website* [www.anaditeaching.com/glossary](http://www.anaditeaching.com/glossary)