



## Loving Is a Twofold Movement

**T**HE MOVEMENT in Divine Love must be twofold: internal and external. Internal disciplines, such as meditation and prayer according to your own religion or faith, should be practiced regularly in order to awaken and nourish love for God. But equally important is the attention you give to how you interact with other people around you. If you truly love God, then your love of Him expresses itself through loving-kindness towards His whole creation.

In other words, love of God does not consist of merely closing your door and practicing your own personal spiritual disciplines. It implies an ability to express a Divine feeling within your heart towards others, an ability to assert the power of love over hatred, an ability to wait and watch, and an ability to do little things in day-to-day life that carry a fragrance from Heaven.

And what are those little things? In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sadness, joy...”

It is the little things that one does day by day that are like jasmine flowers. Though they are small and delicate, they carry a rich fragrance that sweetens your life. If your actions promote harmony, peace, and joy, then you are praising God and serving Him through your goodness to others. Even the smallest type of action, such as making another person more comfortable, or less afraid, or more cheerful becomes a form of prayer—prayer that is active and dynamic, prayer that has true depth and meaning.

When you express your love for God in this way you become a great practitioner of nonviolence. In spite of negative situations or external provocations, you continue to assert your goodness. As a result, you see negative people transformed into positive, inimical into friendly, demoniac into Divine. To the extent you are able to contribute to that movement you experience a majestic revelation in your life.

A Saint perceives all living beings as his neighbors and spontaneously performs actions for universal welfare. For you to grow in saintliness, the great ideal of loving your neighbor as your very self must always be kept before your mind.

Imagine the difficulties others must deal with and help them with sympathy and compassion. It is a great spiritual art to place yourself in the shoes of another person. As the heart becomes increasingly purified, your feelings are no longer

cramped by anger, hatred and selfishness. Therefore, you understand people deeply and help them effectively.

When you cannot tolerate discomfort and pain within yourself, you try to remedy it. Similarly, feel the pain in others and remedy it according to your capacity. Qualities such as charity and compassion should not be limited to your family. Those qualities should be extended towards all. If your magnanimous feelings remain limited to your friends and relatives, then those feelings become polluted. Water that does not flow becomes stagnant.

Nothing purifies the personality as effectively as the performance of actions for the benefit of others. The Mahabharata says, “Doing good to others is the essence of righteousness, while doing ill to others is the essence of unrighteousness.”

Never delay in acting on kind thoughts or ideas. Good ideas must be carried out quickly, and the goodness of your heart must be put into practice. On the other hand, when there is a negative idea in your mind, procrastinate. If you have suddenly developed some type of dissension with another person, and your mind has planned to speak critically sharp words, hesitate. Say to yourself, “Tomorrow I may write a harsh letter to that person, but for now I’ll just wait.” In this type of practice, mind gains amazing powers of forbearance and patience.

In normal human relations, if someone does something good to you, you feel very joyous and in turn respond with kindness. That is only normal. However the goal of spiritual movement is not mere normalcy, but a supernormal pursuit of Divine perfection. Thus, if someone has attempted to harm you or cause pain, reciprocate with sincere goodwill, and if the opportunity arises, do something that will inspire the person. That is the ideal aspiration. The moment you begin to follow that ideal, you are on the path to becoming as perfect as God.

## Sow Flowers Instead of Thorns

Saint Kabira sang:

*“Jo tokon kaantaa buvai taahi  
boi too phool,  
Tokon phool ke phool hai,  
vaako hai tirshool.”*

“If you sow flowers for those  
who have sown thorns for you,  
there will be nothing but flowers for you.  
But for them there will be a piercing spear.”

What does this imply? Suppose someone tore out all your wonderful plants during the night, and instead planted thorny bushes around your yard. What should you do? The normal reaction would be to take all those thorny bushes back to his garden, and when he sleeps plant the thorny bushes in place of his lovely ones. This is the philosophy of tit for tat: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If this degraded philosophy was put into practice as often as many would like, surely the world would soon become eyeless and toothless!

But if you aspire for the ideal of Divine perfection, you will smile within yourself at the act of that inimical person, at how much hatred exists within his heart. You will realize that such a person is deprived of his inner peace, and you will try to determine what you can do to make the person a little more comfortable. So while he is sleeping, you will find the best flowers and plant them in his yard. He sowed thorns in your garden, but you sow beautiful flowers in his. Because he will sincerely feel his error, he will get the “punishment” for his action more severely than you could have imagined.

If someone has erred and you give him a big slap, he will not understand his mistake. What he feels is the pain from your slap. But if you respond with good will, he may see the contrast between his behavior and yours and recognize his error. Though it is not intended as such, this is a more effective “punishment.”

## Bless them that Curse You

Bearing insult and injury requires constant vigilance and is a great aspect of *sadhana* or spiritual discipline. Urging His followers to emulate the perfection of Divine Love, Lord Jesus states in the Sermon on the Mount:

“I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward have you? ... Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (KJV-Matthew 5:44—48)

This ideal may seem impossible to most people, but when your goal is to attain Enlightenment, the virtue you practice has to be extraordinary. The normal, ordinary virtue is to love someone who has been good to you and to hate the person who has harmed you. To aspire to be a Godlike personality requires that you practice virtue of a different type: to be as perfect as God.

Lord Jesus reminds us how God allows the sun to rise on the good and evil alike. If God were sentimental, imagine how things would be. If He felt that you were not following His commandments, He might withdraw the sun one day and allow it to rise only for those whom He recognized as good. But it is not so; the sun shines upon all. Those who condemn God find the sun flooding into their homes when they open their windows as sweetly as those who praise Him. The air tenderly enfolds everyone. Oxygen enters your nostrils whether you hate God or not. Therefore, if such is the nature of God, such should be the nature of His devotee. Strive to be as perfect as He is.



To be perfect implies that even if you are placed in an adverse situation, your mind will enjoy the sweetness of Divine Love. Although you may be treated crudely, inwardly you are unaffected and inspired to bless the person who wrongs you.

In the Vedic scriptures, the metaphor of sandalwood is often used. If you strike a sandalwood tree with an axe, you will find that the sandalwood responds by imparting a bit of its fragrance. Such is the nature of a Saint. That ideal must be kept before your mind so that your personality may bloom into perfection. But when you do not hold that ideal, you live in the world of ignorance, where revenge, ill will, and irrational hatred abound. In that world, life becomes shallow, religion a mockery, and prayers hypocritical.

When you act on the basis of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” and long to see your enemy crushed, your mind becomes degraded. Perhaps you quarreled with another person and he spoke harsh and hostile words. Later you hear that he has slipped on a banana peel and broken his leg; so you say, “How wonderful!” That kind of reaction makes you imperfect. If you hold that hostility within yourself, it erodes your vitality and harms you instead of your enemy. Such thoughts lead you to a lesser, degrading state of existence, and eventually to lingering unhappiness.

In movies you see how the “hero” pursues his enemy seeking revenge—and he usually succeeds. If the hero had one tooth broken, he breaks all of his enemy’s teeth in response. But that is not real heroism. If you follow that ideal, you become internally humiliated. It may give you a real sense of justice for the moment, but the truth about your immature attitude eventually reveals itself and sorrow begins to cripple your mind.

If you are a true hero, you build mental and emotional strength by discovering tremendous patience, intense endurance, and unconditional forgiveness under all provocative conditions of life. Your profound spiritual strength allows you to maintain an aura of dignity under all circumstances

by never feeling insulted. You realize at a deeper level that your apparent enemies are only Divine Will testing you through different personalities according to your karma. And although it is not always easy to understand, those tests are a blessing from a loving God whose intention is to lead you on to increasing mental purity and eventually Liberation!

As Saint Kabira expressed so eloquently, those who are hostile to you are not to be shunned. Rather, they are to be loved and cherished:

*“Nindak niyare raakhiye  
angan kutee chhavaay.  
Binu paani sabun binaa  
nirmal karai subhaay.”*

“Keep the fault-finder very close to you.  
Give him a well-furnished room.  
He will help you to purify your nature even  
without the use of soap and water.”



***Love one another,  
as I have loved you.  
By this shall all men know  
that you are my  
disciples.....”***