

LOVE IS A mysterious reality that dominates human life—a reality one must try to understand from various angles. Certainly, the term “love” has been used in general parlance in so many different ways that its actual meaning has become confused.

Firstly, you must understand that no matter how you define love, it is the most compelling force in human existence. Without it there would be no culture, no civilization, and no movement. It is love that has inspired artists to create expressions of beauty in art. It is love that has given inspiration to poets. It is love again that has given inspiration to philosophers.

Love envelops creation at every level. Animals, worms and insects are dominated by a process termed as love. Even when you see people involved in a very mechanical form of profession, working in an office in a boring manner from morning to evening, it is love that keeps them going. They expect material sustenance, and money is the means to the fulfillment of that expectation. Keeping that fulfillment in view, they continue to work, even though the work may be boring.

When the understanding of love is not clear, however, life moves on through a process of error, entanglement, and repeated suffering. Because of this, it is important to understand at the very outset, that the urge to love can be fundamentally fulfilled only with relation to God or the Absolute. That Absolute is the Divine Self, present in every human heart.

All forms of love are expressions of love of God, the Divine Self.

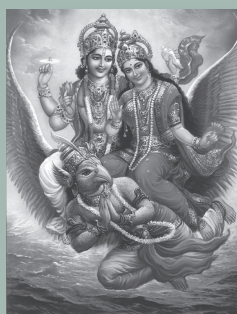
Since God, as He is, cannot be realized unless the mind is highly purified, the human mind creates a center of God within its confines. That center is the ego. The mind, unable to understand Reality, creates the ego center. The mind then develops the understanding that the ego center is the Self. Whatever pleases the ego, therefore, is experienced as love.

FORMS OF LOVE

Fundamental Love

If you analyze and reflect within yourself, you will realize that all forms of love can be categorized in three ways. First, there is love that is fundamental. That love is the concern of philosophers, mystics, Yogis, and men of religion and devotion. It is fundamental love that brings into your mind the question, “Who am I? What am I really? How am I related to God? What is my mission in this life? What do I exist for?”

That form of love awakens in you aspiration for realizing the eternal stream of love that flows within. It is the ultimate and highest summit of love. It is the goal of all loving movements of the mind.



WHAT IS LOVE?

Illusory Love

The next type of love that people are aware of is known as illusory love, love for the illusory self. The fundamental Self cannot be seen by the mind easily unless the mind is highly integrated and led to purification through Yoga or a devout movement in religion. Unless that purity arises, love of God cannot dawn.

This being so, the mind develops a concept of God on a limited level. That concept is the ego center. The creation of the ego center within is an unconscious movement of the mind to identify the Self inside its limited confines. As a result, you do not find yourself as the Absolute Self; you do not discover your real identity. Unable to discover it, you cling to an ego concept within.

On the basis of the ego concept you begin to love the type of mind that you possess, along with the ideas that arise in it. You begin to love your personality: your physical body, your appearance, your habits and mannerisms. All these become the immediate objects of your love when the mind is unable to understand the Divine Reality. They are all expressions of an illusory self.

Your ego is not your Self. At times, due to illusion, your ego seems quite lovable. At times, when your ego has frustrated you to a terrible extent, you want to destroy or punish it. You do not, however, really want to punish your Self. You want to hurt your ego, because you do not really love it. If you really loved it, you would never bring your ego to a state of despair and grief.

So you realize and understand as you reflect on these patterns that the idea, "I am this ego," is not fundamental. It is an illusion.

In addition, your ego is constantly changing. The perspective of happiness that you had years ago you could not have today. Human life is a process of evolution; the things that you loved once cannot always delight you.

Not only your ego, which is a very profound center within, but your external personality, your physical body, and all that you think about yourself as a body and mind complex, are changing. This is the illusory self.

Love of the Figurative Self

Now we come to the third aspect of Self, known as the figurative self. When you work with a client in business, and the client becomes very regular, and your business begins to depend on him, then you love that person. You love that person as if he were yourself. That is the figurative self. It is a love that stays only as long as there is a certain expectation involved.

Similarly, when you love near and dear relatives, it is the figurative self again that is being loved. You consider those relatives as self in a figurative manner. You love them as long as your expectations are fulfilled; as long as you are able to see your concepts of self reflected in them. You maintain such relationships only to the extent that you are able to see yourself in them.

The moment that the possibility of seeing yourself in those relationships is not there, frustration arises. Frustration arises no matter how sweet the relationship might have been, and no matter how long it might have existed. It is not the quantity of time that matters in the course of love, since love is qualitative, not quantitative. A married couple may live together for thirty or forty years, but that does not mean that they have a real perception of love between them. It is never a matter of time.

Two people may have lived together for a long time, and yet they separate. Having separated, the previous relations are as much ignored as rocks and pebbles by the seashore. Where is the intense love that they once felt?

INSIGHT INTO WORLDLY LOVE

Love that is biological, sexual, is generally considered by young people and the masses to be the most real form of love that there is. In the present culture, many people think that sex is the only fulfilling movement in life. From this point of view you must remain youthful as long as you can, deriving enjoyment from the objects of the world as long as possible. Otherwise, there is nothing left for you.

It is this concept that urges people to try to continue to appear youthful, even though internally they may lack health and vitality. So many people are dieting in abrupt ways in order to appear better. They are crazed with the idea that they must appear better in order to be recognized by others and, therefore, loved.

The reasoning behind this obsession is clear: for the masses, love is based upon the appearance of the physical body. However, if that is the type of love that you secure, it remains a complete insecurity, because one day you will not appear the same as you are appearing now.

Love that depends on youthfulness and appearance fulfills only the biological demand of the personality, not the spiritual and deeper demand. It remains worldly and fraught with insecurity. The human approach to love, however, cannot be entirely biological, as it is for animals. Human beings have a reasoning faculty that they can use either to degrade the biological urge of sex, or sublimate it. Therefore, the human personality cannot stay content by simply being a product of biological evolution. It must discover a deeper understanding, urged on by certain glimpses of Love in worldly experiences of love.

FALLING OR RISING IN LOVE

When two people are strongly attracted to each other, they experience an awakening of “love” within. This process is what is normally termed “falling in love,” and as its name very clearly indicates, it is usually falling, not rising. Yet that fall is so sweet that it has been the cause of great works of art and

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great expressions of beauty and glory in society from time immemorial.

When you first fall in love, the feeling is very tender and divine. You cannot see any defect in the person whom you love. The person becomes absolutely perfect because love is blind. The mind obscures all limitations.

Why? Because the mind is carrying a glimpse of universal Love. So the mind ignores and overrules the limitations that exist in the person towards whom you have directed your love. That person, due to your lack of understanding, becomes the very center and basis of your love. So you “fall,” because the person is not really the center and basis. It is not the person that arouses your tender feeling; the feeling arises out of your concept of Self. Your concept of Self is projected over the external personality or object, and it is because of this projection that you develop the intense feeling of love.

Ordinarily, however, that love does not stay the same. Gradually it brings about various entanglements. You begin to realize that, in order to secure the abstract sweetness, you must secure various external relationships. You must bring gifts to the person whom you love. The gifts must please them in a particular way. They must say things that are appealing, even though internally they may not mean them. They must go on promising, day by day, how much they love you. Gradually, your mind becomes bored with this shallow expression. Deep within, therefore, there is no fulfillment.

At this point in many relationships, the partners do one of two things. Either they entwine each other so much by entanglements that neither would dare separate from the other, or they end the relationship in order to find another.

This perspective is comfortable at the mass level. People who think, however, must go deeply into the matter. For those who do not think, love is conditional. They fall in love with a particular person and get married, and then, if they are not fulfilled completely, they work out a divorce. They do not realize that the same story will repeat itself over and over again if they continue to look for an external pretext of love, instead of real Love.

In real love the partners accept the challenge to continue to seek a deeper level of understanding in

their relationship. They learn to sacrifice their comforts and reshape their concepts to a certain extent by adapting and adjusting to each other. Whenever there is a physical or psychological problem in their relationship, they do not run from each other in search of new objects of affection. By dealing with the problems they face wisely, they lead each other to ever-increasing sensitivity to higher truths of Love.

QUEST FOR TRUE LOVE

How can human sentiments be directed towards a deeper and profounder recognition and realization of love? The answer is provided by an understanding of Yoga in life.

Your personality must be directed towards a process of activity that fulfills you through the practice of Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action. Your actions must arise from the deeper plane of your existence and serve to integrate your personality in daily life. Your need for creativity must be fulfilled, not biologically, but spiritually.

If the mind is not given a proper process of activity, it becomes dull. It begins to harbor inertia and procrastination. Such a mind becomes filled with unfulfilled desires. In life, therefore, one must promote activity that is dynamic, orderly, and systematic—activity that consistently demands one-pointedness of mind and promotes a deeper attentiveness. Such activity enhances your ability to practice reflection and leads you to discover a deeper awareness of who you really are.

Through such activity you must again and again readjust your relationships with others. As your mind develops a more profound level of harmony and integration, you will begin to understand that in human relationships you do not have to depend upon a response from others. It is your duty to seek the love of Self in all. You discover, therefore, the need of sacrificing and sharing in the name of love.

You do not allow your love to be thwarted or obstructed, simply because people do not act the way you want. You begin to understand that your love is something that arises from the purity and grandeur of your own inner Self. As the sun radiates light, so you radiate love. And as you advance, that love will reach out more and more to the Self in others.

As this vision grows, you do not consider human beings as simply physical bodies. Your understanding of love, therefore, is not limited by their appearance. Rather you begin to discover that every human being is a vast universe, much profounder than the ocean and more sublime than the Himalayan heights. All the picturesque glories of the world are little compared to the glory and majesty that exists in a human personality—a personality that is backed up by the Spirit, which is endless in its glory. It is that endless glory of the Spirit that makes a human being great.

This being so, in advanced movement you discover the need of endurance, of forgiving others with understanding, of adapting and adjusting, of patience. As these qualities are discovered, you realize that your experience of love becomes sweeter when it is not dependent on externals.

Further, you recognize that human personalities are in different levels of evolution. Therefore, if there is a defect in a person, you do not have to stop loving them. A doctor cannot hate a patient because he is a patient; he hates the disease, not the patient. In the same way, the higher process of love recognizes the soul, the spirit, the potentiality in other human beings and continues to promote Divine qualities in them through endurance, understanding, and sacrifice.

There is nothing that love cannot cure or heal. If you come to believe that there is a person you will never be able to transform, that is a defect in your understanding of love. In the process of love, even if the whole world were to become your enemy, you would be able to destroy that animosity and bring the world back to the perspective of friendliness and

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love. The whole world of opposing forces, in other words, can be destroyed and overcome by spiritual movement in love.

At this level love is not confined to one person; it is cosmic. This does not mean that when cosmic love is awakened you walk away from your family saying, “Now I am a cosmic lover. Therefore, I no longer belong to you.” Rather, the new dimension of love you have discovered will uphold your relationships. From the point of view of those people to whom you were previously related, your love becomes more intense, more enduring, and more secure.

When love is mature, people do not live in constant insecurity, so that they must ask every day, “Is your perception of me the same as it was yesterday, or are you getting bored?” Once a higher process of love is experienced, there arises security. You do not have to go on asking for or professing love. Where such asking and professing exist, love is very superficial. In the deeper realms of love, no time is wasted on such actions.

BHAKTI YOGA

As was pointed out earlier, love exists fundamentally for the Self. The great Brihadaranyaka Upanishad declares, “For the sake of Self all becomes dear.”

That Self is love. That Self is God. That Self is *Brahman* the Absolute. That Self is the Kingdom of Heaven within you. It is the object of the quest that is human life. It is the love for which all of creation moves. The whole of creation breathes, throbs, moves and exists in the ocean of love of God. It is that love that must be realized. How can that be done?

In the Yoga movement, the path that leads to the unfoldment of this love is known as Bhakti Yoga. In this Yoga, human sentiments are studied, and a plan is provided for sublimating those sentiments.

According to Bhakti Yoga, human sentiments of love are of five types. The first is a serene and secretive sentiment of love that exists when you adore a person, but there is no overt relationship with the person. It is called *shanta bhava*—a feeling of love that has no external expression.

The second type of sentiment described in Bhakti Yoga is *dasya bhava*. This is the love that a benevo-

lent master develops towards his servant, or a devoted servant feels towards his master.

The third type of love is *vatsalya bhava*, a mother or father’s love towards their child, or parental love. In that love there is an intense form of sacrifice. The parents, while loving their child, do not concern themselves with what the child is going to give back to them in return. They do not start calculating all the money that they are spending so that later, when the child is grown, they can bill him! In this type of love, one does not expect any response in a quantitative, material manner.

The fourth form of love described by Bhakti Yoga is known as *sakhya bhava*, or the love experienced by those who develop deep friendships. The fifth is *madhurya bhava*, or the passionate love between a lover and beloved.

All five of these sentiments are to be directed towards God through a process of sublimation. Whatever sentiment predominates in your personality, that sentiment is to be directed towards God. For example, if you are more parental in your personality, feel as if God is your father or God is your child. In the Hindu perspective of Yoga, such a sentiment is not strange and is considered by mystics to be very profound. Certain Saints developed devotion towards God by constantly feeling as if He were a child. As such, all that He needs is love, and we live to love Him, just as a mother with her tender feelings lives to love her child.

SPIRIT OF BRAHMACHARYA

When people experience intense sweetness in passionate love, their love is being reflected from the Divine plane—but in a negative way. Since passionate love reflects Divine Love, it becomes enchanting to the human personality. It is for this reason that the personality becomes dominated by it. As Divine Love reflects in a negative manner, the reflection lures a person into entanglement that leads to evolution. Nature’s plan keeps people from becoming lazy and inert by bringing about constant challenges from the world of passionate attachments.

However, if your mind is already mature enough, you begin to visualize and understand the limitation

in passionate love. As a result, your mind directs itself towards the understanding of Divine Love. This process is promoted through various levels.

The first level is *satsanga*, good association, which implies coming into contact with sages and saints who expound the glory of the Self. Good association continuously feeds your mind with higher ideals of life. It also includes studying sacred literature, being in good company, and being in contact with anything that gives positive suggestion and positive influence to your mind.

If you continue to promote good association, you develop faith. You begin to realize the possibility of discovering endless sweetness within yourself through the unfoldment of your personality. You develop faith in the Divine existence and Divine potentiality within yourself.

As faith develops, your mind turns itself towards introspection, reflection and meditation. When your mind internalizes and breaks down the illusion of external charm and glitter, you develop *brahmacharya*. *Brahmacharya* is a vast topic that deals with the sublimation of sex energy into mental and spiritual energy. It is a process that endows your mind with such clarity of understanding that you begin to see limitations that exist in the externality of things. Therefore, your mind moves towards a deeper understanding of love—a love that is Divine.

This reflective movement of the mind promotes what is known in Bhakti Yoga as *ruchi*, or delight. It is the delight you feel in developing profound Divine feeling within. Divine feeling, when it arises, is so wonderful and intoxicating that many Eastern writers have compared it to wine and other intoxicating drinks. It has nothing to do with these, yet it intoxicates.

A Sufi saint once humorously approached a bar and asked for a penny's worth of wine. The bartender said, "This much wine will not bring intoxication." The saint replied, "I want it only for my moustache, so that people can smell it and see that I am drunk. But I am drunk on my own wine, which is Divine. Nevertheless, people want to know that I am drunk. So it is only for that purpose that I want it."

True Divine sentiment is so intoxicating that anyone would readily give up a whole world of riches for just one little experience of it. Yet the human mind,

although craving to find that intoxicating fulfillment of Divine Love, does not know how to move towards it.

DIVINE ATTACHMENT

As this Divine delight continues, you will discover that you are becoming attached to God. You will see, to your great surprise, that this attachment grows more and more, along with your love. Love, in turn, begins to grow more and more as you begin to develop more and more attachment. In human relationships, the contrary process occurs. As you develop more attachment, your love begins to dwindle and you become afraid. Insecurity arises, and you ask yourself, "How long will this continue?"

In this process of increasing attachment and love, your feeling matures into *bhava*. *Bhava* is a Sanskrit term for Divine Love. And *bhava* unfolds itself into *prem*, which is the ultimate climax of the movement of love in the human personality. There your soul discovers: "I am That." It merges into the Divine Self. Love leads to supreme unity, unity with God. That unity is its ultimate goal.

L-O-V-E

To understand the process of love summarily, in a humorous manner, just remember the letters L-O-V-E. In worldly love, 'L' lures; 'O' leads you to the ocean of misery; 'V' leads you to vanity; and 'E' leads you to endless grief. In Divine Love, 'L' lifts; 'O' leads you to oneness of existence; 'V' leads you to victory; and 'E' leads you to the eternal realization of the Self.

Yogic movement takes your worldly sentiments and directs them, gradually, towards God. You detach yourself from the world, and attach yourself to God. That is the secret of all religious philosophy. Detach and attach. Detach yourself from that which is illusory, which is shadow; and attach yourself to the real substance, God. In God lies the endless fulfillment of love.