

LOVE

THE SEVEN FACES OF LOVE



ERIC LE RESTE

Love is not always what it seems. We do not love everyone in the same way and not everyone wants to be loved in the same way. There are many nuances of love and many different ways of describing it. It is worth taking time to understand the different types of love, or what may appear to us as being love. All of us want to love and be loved. Not all of us aspire to the highest form of love, but

it is attainable, for everyone - we just have to know how to find it. There are seven ways of looking at love... and looking for love.

The first is, love for the flesh, the skin, the body. It is totally based on physical attraction. This is carnal love. The temporary nature of physical attributes means that once the beauty fades, then a relationship based on this kind of love, will also fade.

The second kind of love is love for the personality. Attraction to another's way of being, of speaking and acting. This creates a desire to be with them and share in the aspects of personality. Then we become influenced by the personality and this creates a dependence and a strong attachment. We are no longer free.

The third kind of love is the love for how the other



Love of God is the highest form of love. It brings peace and the sense of belonging to the wider human family.

makes us feel. This is emotional love. It is difficult to

pinpoint exactly what the feeling is. But it is a feeling

of being secure, loved, and respected. Sometimes, we

just love being the person we are around the person they are. It feels like something special.

The fourth kind of love is based on relationships, mostly familial. My nephew, my niece - I love them more than the nephew or the niece of the neighbour because I have that special relationship and sense of belonging. Very often there is an ever-present undercurrent of love for the members of our family.

The fifth kind of love is that born of admiration. The admiration we feel for sports stars, high achievers, artists of one kind or another. Those who do what we wish we could do.

The five kinds of love above are all based on body consciousness. They are all based on the physical appearance, talents, attributes, and emotions that

we perceive when we see the roles that they play. And they all have the power to make us feel very high, but also very low.

However, the last two are the kinds of love that are unbreakable, deeply fulfilling, and worth exploring and investing in.

So, the sixth kind of love is spiritual love. This requires me to go beyond the other five types of love, to see the soul that inhabits the physical body, and is eternal. It is a pure love, a love that recognises that we are all the same, we are beings of spiritual energy, and we play different roles at different times. No matter what the exterior packaging, no matter how the role plays out, the soul is worthy of our love.

To love in this way, I must become aware of who I really am. That I too am a spir-

itual being and my qualities are of peace, joy and love. In this way, I can emanate love to all, and it matters not if others return the love.

In this awareness, I am able to connect to the final love. This is the most powerful and beautiful love of all, that of the Divine, the love of God. It is not a love that I can produce, but I can be a conduit for this love. It is this love that brings peace and love and the sense of belonging, to others.

This is the love that can be experienced in meditation. It is a love that once tasted can never be forgotten. It is the highest form of love in the universe.

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SELF-IMPROVEMENT

THE SUBTLE FOUNDATION OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT



B.K. ATAM PRAKASH

If we think of one quality that is a prerequisite for self-improvement and the foundation of an elevated life, it is purity, in all its aspects. The definition of purity is deep - it includes honesty, a clean mind, a clean heart, good wishes and pure feelings for all.

But it often happens that we pay attention to one or more aspects of purity but do not take the others seriously. We give ourselves some leeway in that regard either out of ignorance of the significance of those aspects or due to carelessness, which fosters a casual attitude towards certain things. The significance of complete purity is not clear

to us. To think unnecessarily about someone or something, to enable waste thoughts to be created, or to cause others to have waste thoughts - all these are subtle forms of impurity that sully the mind and dilute the quality of the soul.

If we truly wish to improve the quality of our consciousness to a level above the ordinary and live an elevated life, the first step is to practice purity in our thoughts. Whenever we are affected by any weakness - such as anger, greed, ego, or lust - it first enters our thoughts. All vices cause waste thoughts, but we may fail to recognise them as such. "Why is it like this?", "It should be like this", and similar futile commentary in the mind sets off a chain of thoughts that consume our time and energy. Further damage is done when such thoughts spill over into talk. Another form of impurity that can creep in even when we are working hard on the self, is arrogance of our virtues and talents. If we are blind to this fault, it gets accentuated as we progress, and others can see



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that clearly. This weakness is born from a desire for recognition and fame, to be consulted, given a prominent position in a team, or a key role in a proj-

ect. We compare ourselves with others, take umbrage at perceived slights, and demand respect and equal treatment.

Giving up arrogance saves

us from a lot of unnecessary thinking that can occur even after we have freed ourselves from other vices. Being celibate and having a disciplined

lifestyle is good, but that is just the beginning of a life of purity, which needs to be taken to a higher level with purity in our vision and attitude. The foundation of that is purity in thoughts, which should be based on spiritual principles and also carry power. If we are complacent or weak in dealing with our defects, and think, "What can I do... it happens all the time, even though I do not want it to happen...", would these be called the thoughts of a pure soul?

We may consider ourselves strong, but if we make a mistake, it is a sign that we have been influenced by a weakness. The key to avoiding such mistakes is to introspect honestly, regularly check the quality of our thoughts and feelings to make sure that there is nothing there of second-best quality, and focus on solutions, not problems. Then we will keep moving forward smoothly and accurately.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

You cannot control the speed of a river but you can control the speed of your boat. In white-water canoeing, the only time you are in control of the boat is when you go slower or faster than the river. To go the same speed as the river is to let the river control you. It is not sustainable to go faster than the river for more than a few moments, although a sudden surge of energy can get me past a rock or over a trough. Going slower is possible to sustain for a long time, back-paddling and hovering peacefully while the river rushes beneath the boat. Time can be compared to the river, it rushes by. I have no control over time, but I can control the speed of my movement.

AVOIDING WASTE

Saving our time and energy



B.K. USHA

Everyone wants their time to be used in a worthwhile way, but often, sometimes half an hour, sometimes more, are wasted. There are some key reasons for this which we may not recognise.

One is, we love listening to things that do not really concern us. It may be real news - not all of it is gossip or rumour. But, is it useful or beneficial in any way?

No. If it is something we have no connection with, and we cannot do anything with the information, listening to it is a waste of time. When we listen to something like this, do we have the courage to put a stop to the wasteful talk and point out to the other person the futility of sharing such information? If we do that, we help ourselves and others by stopping the spread of waste.

However, most of us hear such talk, and then think about it and discuss it. It is like collecting rubbish in the mind. As we continue doing this, little by little it affects our way of thinking and behaviour. Listening to and sharing such talk is a waste of time and energy. Wherever resources are expended fruitlessly, there



If we avoid listening to and sharing wasteful talk, it can save a lot of our time and energy.

is loss. This makes us feel empty inside.

The second aspect is,

thinking about others. When we hear something about someone, we can

avoid relaying that to others. If we cannot stop ourselves from doing so, we

must remember that we are actually spoiling the feelings of others for that per-

son. The greater the number of people who think and talk about that person, the sooner a negative environment is created.

Moreover, someone who is thinking about others is obviously not introspective. When they are engrossed in the faults of others, how can they spot their own weaknesses and remove them?

Sometimes we see and hear of things that should not happen. It may be right to say that they should not happen, but how does it help to think and talk about it if we are not responsible for addressing the issue or in a position to do something about it? Such situations are a test of our rectitude. When we hear of something that is wrong, or about someone making

a mistake, we can check the quality of our feelings. Are they benevolent, and are we thinking only of what is wrong, or finding a way to set it right? If we are merely creating a storm in our mind, does it help us or others?

This is where the ability to apply the brakes to unnecessary thoughts comes in. If we have the wisdom and determination to stop wasteful thinking, it can save a lot of our time and energy. If we lack this power, the best course of action would be to ignore that which does not concern us, and focus on self-improvement.

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