

Love

Abby Hoffman was one of the Chicago Seven arrested for planning a demonstration in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The demonstration turned violent, tempers flared, things got out of control. Chicago police beat many demonstrators rather badly in their attempts to disperse them, for resisting arrest, and for trying to enter the political convention hall. Abby Hoffman was one among the organizers put on trial for civil disobedience and resisting arrest. Although the Chicago Seven were convicted, this conviction was later overturned when appealed. Hoffman wrote a book a few years later about his view of these experiences. One of the stories from this book that got my attention was his account of the day he was driving down the road and saw a great big billboard. On the billboard there was a Shell gasoline station with a car driving into it, and the grill of the car was a big smile with the headlights for eyes. The words underneath read: CARS LOVE SHELL. Andy Hoffman asked, "What am I supposed to think love is when I see that?" Good question. What am I supposed to think love is when someone tells me CARS LOVE SHELL?

Another happening took that took place prior to the above mentioned events, was in the Summer of 1967, referred to as the "Summer of Love" during which thousands of Love Children" convened from all over the country at San Francisco Golden Gate Park and in the Height Ashbury District. Love was the keynote topic given by all sorts of teachers, music groups, and acid-taking hippies (who put flowers in the ends of the policemen's guns). The all-pervasive love generated by all was present and felt by all. The twentieth-century's greatest historian, Arnold Toynbee, witnessing this phenomena compared it to a brief period in the fourteenth century, indicated that it would not last and predicted its large scale return in the future. My teacher, a friend of Toynbee, asked the question, "If love is the answer, what is the question?" Given these thoughts and questions, we will discuss Love from several points of view.

Love – a much overused word. It is used for everything from I love you to I love pizza; Cars love Shell. The word love is used in so many varied contexts. It is so overused that Gandhi — in his endeavor to find Truth, non-violence, and God — said that instead of using the concept love that he was going to use the concept Truth. During

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the 1930s and 1940s, Gandhi was quite aware that the word love was already corrupted, knowing many people thought they understood it, but in fact did not. Instead of saying God is Love, Gandhi said: "God is Truth." He said this because of the deterioration and misuse of the meaning of the word love. It seems to me that this misuse has only become worse.

When most of us think about love, we are thinking of a personal kind of love, as in I love you, I love my family; I love my friends. This kind of love indeed exists, but is circumscribed, temporary. Suffering or death will inevitably intervene. Sometimes such love can transform into dislike or even hatred. The growing prevalence of divorce often serves as an example of this cycle. Often the feelings the couple has for one another may not be a deep love. Yet there was a point in time when they were in love. What happened? What is love? Were they really in love? Was the love so fleeting that it could be so easily lost? What really happened to the tie that binds? Most of us, when thinking of love, use a definition that is somewhat personal and separate: rather than being inclusive it is exclusive, rather like "us against the world."

When we look at love from the standpoint of metaphysics, we see that all the Great Teachers emphasized the supreme importance of inculcating and practicing, as best one can, Love. Without exception, they all said that Love is the one true reality. But they didn't really mean personal love, although that is included. With regard to metaphysics, it is said that on the very highest planes of meditation, it is possible to experience what is called Absolute Darkness. Within that Darkness is a force field, which is the origin of the duality we call Spirit and Matter. This force field can be experienced in very deep states of meditation. But the oldest scripture on the planet, the *Rig Veda*, states: "Desire first arose in IT" -- in that Absolute Darkness in which nothing exists. The first thing that manifested within IT was desire, what the Greeks call Eros, said to be the fundamental reality of the Universe, an ever outgoing of pureness of consciousness. Out of that comes, somehow, mysteriously, Spirit and Matter and all of their manifestations. Eros is said to be omnipresent — it is everywhere. Moreover, Eros or IT has been called different things in different cultures, but all seem to agree that it is

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the fundamental reality of all being. Yet Eros is not in the mind: IT is said to be in the heart, the spiritual heart. Here, IT is often referred to as compassion. Therefore, all human beings, as taught by the Great Teachers, have within themselves an absolute pure mirrored reflection of this ultimately real Eros. Man is said to be the microcosm of the macrocosm, thus the cosmic Eros is reflected in every human heart, and is capable of self-conscious development. However, because we live in a world full of shadows and deceptions, greed, personal selfishness and ambition this immortal spark is not activated even though it is there waiting in its potential to be lighted. To be sure, part of what Love is, involves the thought at least, that this spark exists in every human being. The full realization of this may take lifetimes of walking the Path towards its SOURCE.

According to all the Great Teachers the object is to activate that spark of Love within the heart, albeit this is not done easily. It is not an emotional thing nor is it the kind of love we experience as in falling in love. No, that's not it. Rather, it's a reflection of it, only it is temporary, and subject to change, to reversal. Nonetheless, it's a partial manifestation of it. There is a saying that one who loves only himself lives in hell, the hell of anxiety, despair, and loneliness. One who loves one other individual lives on Earth, but it is a limited love because it is "one other," but at least it is on Earth. The Great Teachers taught, including the early Christians, that even if you just love one other person, it will affect the state you go into after death a more pleasant state. Just loving one other person will affect your next life. If one loves other individuals (not just one person), but includes others— not necessarily humanity as a whole, but others — then love will result in a longer pleasant after-death state, which came to be called Heaven in Christian teachings. There are after-death states, and they are perhaps, most accurately described in Tibetan Buddhism, which talks about the different *bardos* (states between death and rebirth). Therefore, it is taught that if you love a number of people, you get a longer pleasant after-death state. Even this state is, however, illusory — an effect state, like a dream. But at least it is a pleasant dream. It is an effect state due to the causes one has made in the previous life. When these causes have been exhausted, the effect state,

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the dream ends. In most cases the ending of the dream coincides with rebirth into a new form.

The highest form of love is sometimes called loving the *Self Of All*. That is the Love the Great Teachers embody and is, they teach, a love attainable by all. Buddha and Christ are examples of such Great Teachers. They exist in a state of Universal eternal love and compassion for all beings. This has been achieved through countless lives of aspirations. Such beings teach that they are not different from us in kind but only in degree. Anyone can expand his or her circle of sympathy. Anyone can think positively about other human beings on the planet, including ones who we will never meet or see. Gandhi said the opposite of love is not hatred, but fear. We do not have to fear those we know not. In the final analysis, it comes down to some form of practice. And practice can be extremely simple depending on the person. It can be as simple as spending ten minutes a day thinking compassionately about humanity as a whole. An interesting teaching about practicing this, as it is taught, is that if a person perseveres in thinking positive thoughts about humanity, about other human beings, this can affect other human beings in their dreams, in their deep sleep, as well as in their waking state. It is said that many human beings in moments of despair have received flashes of hope. Some mysterious thing occurs and suddenly there is hope. This might be seen as a form of grace. If a person has had such an experience they *know* they are capable of giving hope to others. But they may never know to whom they gave hope. They may never know because reality is very mysterious, most of it invisible. It is also taught that true love, say between two people, can be at times relatively non-expressive; rather it is compatible with *silences*. Some poets have said that the silences of true love are so deep, that if not experienced there remain secrets one does not know. These are silent secrets of the heart. Love is inclusive, rather than exclusive, mirroring a force in the Universe that's all-inclusive. Therefore, the more inclusive one can be the more one can move toward love of the *Self Of All*.

Anybody can make a beginning in practicing love. Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, are beginners in this spiritual enterprise. There are a lot of people who

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will tell you, or teach you, that if you just “do this” or just “think this,” you will become enlightened. This simply is not true unless one is already very advanced in one’s spiritual practices. It has been said there are few True Teachers on the planet, and very few public ones who are announcing themselves as such. To be sure, there *are* many people *selling* themselves as teachers of spirituality. But these may not Real Teachers. They may not be members of the anonymous, perennial “tribe of heroes,” that have always walked the earth — giving hope to those they encounter. These Bodhisattvas are the embodiments of love, hope, wisdom and compassion. We humans cannot give hope until we, our selves, have it. Hope is a major component of true love. Love is not so much about “I love you,” as it is about transmitting love and hope to others, often silently. Real love conveys itself in unconditional giving and compassionate hope. The feeling, the vibration of real love is emanated and felt by those receiving it as the *Self Of All*. Nonetheless no one can love *for* you any more than one can learn how to hammer a nail *for* you, or learn to play a musical instrument *for* you. We have to learn such things ourselves, including how to love unconditionally. In order to love others, we must first learn to love ourselves – not an easy task, though it can be done. This requires continuity of self-study, or *tapas* (self-suffering), one of Gandhi’s often emphasized teachings, faithfully following the example of True Teachers.

The beginning of self-study under the guidance of a true Teacher always involves mirroring the student back on him or herself, not often a pleasant sight. Yes, the Teacher’s existence is like a mirror; however, we may not like what we see in that *mirror*, ergo the difficulties in moving towards love. Instead of realizing that what is seen in the mirror as what needs to be overcome in one’s ego, one may project these qualities out of the lower self onto the Teacher — a serious mistake upon the Path towards love. One may blame what is being mirrored on the Teacher, but in fact, what is being seen is one’s own self, reflected back. In reality, beholding such things constitutes a major boon, should one choose to take advantage of these reflected human weaknesses, using them as a basis for meditation and self-study. It is also taught to be a major spiritual mistake to

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superimpose one's negative aspects onto others rather than using them as mentioned above.

Real Teachers, having transcended likes and dislikes, all worldly categories, all that appears to exist are therefore the embodiments of pure love. Since they have also transcended birth, life, and death, and are therefore consciously immortal, they radiate only pure love and wisdom. They are one with THAT which has no beginning, no end: "That which has been called by so many different names." In Ramanamaharshi's book entitled, *Conscious Immortality*, he teaches asking oneself the question: Who am I? In seeking the answer, one may realize one's immortality and consequently manifest true love.

Since many of us are relative beginners, it is taught that attaining to true love is not the work of a single lifetime. Those who achieve it are said to have had assiduously walked the Path for many lifetimes. This is poignantly portrayed in *The Jataka Tales*: parables told by Buddha teaching how to give love as the sun gives light asking nothing in return.

We need to adopt a spiritual practice that resonates within our minds and hearts and to resolve to develop continuity of consciousness in its daily use. Which practice one adopts is less important in the beginning than continuity of effort in its implementation. Different practices appeal to different temperaments of human character. Our practice needs to lead us away from the world of appearances towards the unchanging world of wisdom and love. Our practice, it has been taught, will be, as said by H.P. Blavatsky: "A series of progressive awakenings, each one broader, more all encompassing than one's previous picture of reality." If we persevere we will come to welcome and learn from our mistakes rather than becoming disillusioned or giving up. It is said that our greatest teachers are our mistakes and our perceived enemies.

In order to adopt a practice, and to persevere in it, it is usually necessary that one see something of the illusory nature of the world as presented to the five senses and as categorized by the mind and felt by the heart. If one should fail to see the incompleteness of the given world view and lives merely as it dictates, one is, from the stand point of the

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incarnated soul, not taking advantage of lessons that could have been learned. You might say that is the tragedy of mankind, in this particular age, which is said to be a dark age in spite of our intellectual and technological advancement. However, the real problem with practice is staying with it. There will be times when one simply does not want to persevere. It must be done in spite of this resistance and obscurity. This will only be possible if one's motivation is deep and one's intention pure. Many teachers have taught that at some point, in order to be able to continue on, a vow is required. This can create an intentional motivation so deep that it can overcome that resistance of obstacles, of not wanting to persevere.

To make such continuity of practice possible, monasteries, religious communities, and communes have been tried. For some periods these seem successful, but (especially in our own time) eventually seen to be increasingly failing. Raghavan Iyer taught that the religious communities of the future would be secular, spread throughout cities and towns having no central locations. Perseverance on the Path will require one's full participation in the midst of society. This was also predicted by Walt Whitman who said that there will be no religions, no churches, or temples, and, most importantly, no intermediaries between ones' self and the realization of Divine Love.

It will be discovered that the early stages of one's practice will primarily reveal what obscures and interferes. There are elements within the cosmos, and therefore, within us that might be called inherent ignorance or darkness. This ignorance must be gradually transmuted into Light. Such gradual transmutation will manifest as an increasing love and understanding of one's self, which will in time be manifested into love for all, since all possess the same qualities of one's self, whether they be imbued with darkness or light. These qualities, if they are to be truly understood, must not be judged as being evil or good. All of us possess these vulnerabilities as well as our golden moments, pertaining to Light. What is often judged to be evil will come to be seen as an aspect of humanity's great suffering, which the Teachers vow to relieve. We are not evil because we find within our selves certain qualities, nor are we good because we find others. Moving towards love is not about overcoming so called evil by becoming

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so called good. True love utterly transcends such dualistic thinking. Nonetheless, along our Path we will discover that we must overcome anything that casts its shadow over the Light we seek. These characteristics do not just somehow magically disappear. This is why many contemporary religious institutions and self-professed spiritual teachers are not telling “it like it is,” even though some of them strongly believe that they are.

In every spiritual tradition, institutionalized or otherwise, there can be found teachings regarding vows, pledges, or commitments made to one's Self on behalf of mankind. For example, in Buddhism, there is the "Bodhisattva Vow," which is the vow to never enter the state of *nirvana* until all human beings are enlightened, which is basically an *unfulfillable* vow. All the world's Great Teachers are the products of fulfilling such vows on *our* earthly behalf as a result of having reached the state of boundless love, wisdom, and compassion, of no longer having to involuntarily incarnate in human form (The Great Sacrifice), nonetheless, they do so because of their eternal vow. The act of taking such a vow to one's higher Self, whether in the physical presence of a Teacher or not, can furnish the willingness to persevere in one's practice. If one is practicing merely on one's own behalf, one is not following the teachings of any of the Great Teachers. One is, instead, following what in Buddhism is called the Path of Liberation, rather than the Path of Renunciation. Success upon the Path of Liberation called by the Teachers “the Path of Exalted selfishness,” leading to nirvana, which is falsely taught to be eternal. In order to avoid this Path we must meditate upon the teaching that the one sin along the Path is a sense of separateness. Paradoxically, it is this illusory separate sense of self that must be overcome. Thus, to seek liberation for one's self is merely elevating the nature of this illusion leading, at best, to a very long period of bliss after which the illusory self will involuntarily be again incarnated in human form and is said to experience extreme anger, without knowing why.

Seeking to tread the Path of Renunciation, one might ask one's self: Where should I start? It is perhaps, wise to become aware of the Great Teachers and their teachings, selecting the Path which most appeals. Over time one may find another Path more appropriate for one's current stage of development. One can start small, for example, if

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you do not much like anybody, you can try liking yourself. Start there. Or, try liking something about yourself. You don't have to like all of yourself, but like something.

We must cultivate the mind, filling it with noble ideas and compassionate thoughts. When educating children, the ideal is to cultivate the heart, the positive feelings, the idea of giving, the idea of sharing, and the idea of being on everyone's side. This often requires courage and fearlessness due to cultural bias and conditioning in the opposite direction. We, alas, cultivate mistrust, fear, intolerance, and hatred for others who are not perceived as lovable, but rather as the “others,” the enemy to be conquered or saved. The Divine Flame is ignored either through ignorance or perversity. In the midst of such darkness great courage is required to cultivate the flame of love deep within the heart. The Teachers equate knowledge, love and compassion with the heart, not the personal mind. *The Voice of the Silence* (based on ancient writings) begins with the teaching: “The mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the disciple slay the slayer.” From the standpoint of enlightenment, the ever-active mind (which we have cultivated to great extents) is, in fact, what we need to slay. This does not mean the mind should be ignored, or remain uneducated, but it needs to be seen as subservient to the heart. This is the progression one is seeking. Instead of having the mind “in charge,” have the mind progressively, gradually and slowly become obedient to the heart. This is different from the so-called love we experience that is limited and ephemeral, because it's not really coming from the heart, rather, it is coming from the mind, dominated by personal desire.

Jesus taught us to love our enemy. If this were an easy task, we would have heaven on earth. The rather odd thing is that all the Great Teachers teach that love is our essential nature. Yet, we do not love our enemies, we do not realize our essential being within. In order, therefore, to practice loving our so-called enemy, we must uncover our essential nature. We need, initially, to believe that love is our essential nature. This will enable us to move in that direction. In moving towards love we will find within ourselves certain tendencies that may move us in the opposite direction. Becoming aware of these tendencies enables us to gradually realize the nature of humility, that we are, in fact, no better or worse than anyone else. Nonetheless, if we are seeking to overcome a certain

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tendency, we must begin to say no when it arises in our minds. If we persevere in this, the tendency will gradually arise less often. It has been taught that such tendencies, in the final analysis, only go where they are made welcome. If the welcome mat is withdrawn, they will, in time, cease to manifest. If a certain tendency arises, only five times a day, when it *used* to arise many more, progress is being made. The process differs not at all from the progression one can make in any area of life.

The world has its allurements. It is easy to become fascinated. Some of us, though we do not cognize it, are fascinated with darkness, with so-called evil. Is this not, for example, what we see and read about, and play computer games daily. Were we not so fascinated with these electronic mind-altering devices our interests would be vastly different. Light and wisdom are not newsworthy nor are they, for the most part, taught. The darkness about which we speak is not a metaphysical something. It is, in Plato's language, ignorance, which can be overcome. An enlightened being sees no evil, merely ignorance, a form of what Plato calls forgetfulness. One sage remarked, "Give me a hundred real men and women, and I can change the world." However, he did not find a hundred such people, although he did find and teach quite a number, and left considerable teaching. Emerson said that if one found one real friend, (one who gives unconditional love); one should consider one's self to be fortunate. What is a friend? Aristotle defined a friend as one soul in two bodies — not a bad place to begin.

Given all that has so far been said, a person thinking about determining to practice moving towards light and love will begin to experience a broader sense of reality, more inclusive, less mutable, transcending the apparent. One may (or may not) consciously encounter what the ancient Greeks called The Mysteries. Although it has become somewhat of a cliché, it is nonetheless true that "When the student is ready, the Teacher will appear." It has been taught that one of Buddha's tasks was to make the Mysteries accessible to a greater number of people. Both Pythagoras and Plato also attempted to make the Mysteries more accessible in the West: but these efforts came to naught due to the power of institutionalized dogmas, done in the name of helping those not ready for such awareness. As a result, few of us encounter the truth that all human beings are

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already immortal, that it is not something to be gained anew. Buddha and Jesus both taught that the heart of things is love and compassion, which are only to be found within. As one moves more deeply into the heart, one will discover pure love, pure compassion, pure wisdom, and pure bliss. The most ancient spiritual teaching about which we know, states: “Compassion is not an attribute. It is The Law of Laws.” If one deeply contemplates this idea, one will begin, at some level, to recognize the Mysteries. Every human being is capable of responding to this Law of Laws. Buddha’s last temptation after his enlightenment, like that of Jesus after him, was being told by Mara (the evil one), not to bother teaching what he had discovered to be the ultimate nature of reality, for people would not listen. He is said to have deeply considered this and then replied, “Some will listen.” This has been the case, although cynics and so-called realists deny mankind’s ability to heed such teachings. Raghavan Iyer (found on the website <http://www.theosophytrust.org>) writes that *at this time of human development one must learn to intelligently “believe, in spite of the evidence.”* This requires a deep faith in the reality of love, of compassion, of Light, as the heart of reality. The Great Teachers (even though in some traditions, it has been lost), spoke of human evolution on the planes of heart and mind in nearly unimaginable numbers of years — sometimes speaking in terms of millions of years into the future. With this in mind, our attempts to practice learning how to love, takes on a greater, deeper meaning. Professor Iyer, in this connection, taught that the seeker must practice “to insert one’s self into the whole,” which is infinite and timeless.

In the final analysis, the highest, most inclusive form of Love is, Love of God, Love of the *Self of All*, Love of the Teachers, and Love of Humanity. These are several ways of saying the same thing. If one wishes, one can even consider the findings of modern physics, which has discovered that the entire universe is reducible to and the product of Light. What the Great Teachers would add would be the fact that this Light is consciousness, love, wisdom, and compassion.

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To use an ancient Buddhist teaching found in the “Narada Bhakti Sutras” the seven highest forms of love are characterized in terms of The Path of Devotion (Bhakti) as follows:

1. Love of the glorification of the Lord's blessed qualities.
2. Love of His enchanting beauty.
3. Love of worship.
4. Love of Him as a son.
5. Love for Him as that of a wife for her husband.
6. Love of separation from Him.
7. If we wish to go beyond love and hate, we must use all our love as a preparation for True Love, the total and endless Love of the Logos in the Cosmos
- God in man.

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