

Love

By Reverend Jaganath Carrera

What is the most intriguing of all behaviors – human or animal? For a moment, put aside the migration of birds, the songs of whales, or the intelligence of dolphins. Instead, look at these words: *“I’ll love you forever.”* These are words are spoken in all lands and times, regardless of philosophical beliefs. Think of it. Rising above the drone of the daily grind, our cares and challenges, any item on our to-do list, and transcending even death, these simple words launch us into eternity. *“I’ll love you forever.”*

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Yet we know that these words fail to express the elation, freedom, and power of what we are experiencing. That’s why love songs, especially from 1950s rock, would sing to us, “I’ll love you forever...*and a day.*” We seem to know that eternity isn’t long enough to contain love. Love exists not only within time, but transcends it. Faced by the inability of words to express our experience, we are left to declare that when forever comes to an end, our love will continue – at least for a day.

The words are not silly or overly dramatic. They certainly don’t feel that way when we say them. The poetic language does more than ensure that the depth of our feeling is conveyed. Anyone who has ever experienced love knows that something real, abiding, and profoundly true is being expressed. There is a dimension of love that *is* eternal; beyond suffering, disease, and even death. Love, in a genuine, unexaggerated and intimate way, puts you in touch with something eternal – and that something feels very nice and quite natural.

In truth, love is your True Nature; your own Self. The other person acts as a catalyst for uncovering the love that is in you. Someone comes into your life and because of the way they look, their personality, or the interests they share with you, they fulfill many of your needs and wishes. When conscious or subconscious cravings are fulfilled, the mind becomes more calm and clear. The result of that is that you experience a bit of your True Nature. Without a doubt, love is the same as the peace, joy, Truth, or God. That’s why love is not simply an emotion; it is a reflection of the Self on the mind. That incredible, expansive, empowering, and comforting feeling is not just within you, it is who you are.

It is important to understand that love doesn’t come from another person. Much of the suffering in all of our relationships comes from believing that love is given to us *from* someone. However titanic that feeling is, and however much it seems like it’s coming from outside, it isn’t. As great as that would be, love is not a product or commodity that can be given or exchanged. If it could, the whole world would be a heaven. Our planet has seen great beings – such as Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed - who love everyone unconditionally. Even their words and acts of love couldn’t transform everyone, because both expressing and accepting love are based on free will. Love can’t be forced. Some individuals cannot accept that love. Egoism, fear, and their own pain hamper them. It’s a shame, because in the presence of love there would be no more hate, prejudice, suspicion, or anxiety.

We can’t give love, but we can express it. If I love you, I can express that feeling by taking care of your welfare. It’s natural that I do so, because love is never idle. It

naturally overflows from a loving heart in the form of selfless service. In fact, the one infallible sign of love is selfless service. Whatever the needs of the person are, your love will impel you to fulfill them. Selfless service is joyful to you because it releases love from within you – love that nurtures, illumines, and heals your heart. The true gift of loving is love itself. Over time, love gradually reveals its true nature as the Divine wisdom we seek, the supreme remedy for all disease and suffering, that which finally puts out the fire of craving, and the profound rest our minds seek.

So far we've seen that love is eternal and it is who you are. To get a clue to another dimension of love, let's examine an act that is linked with love; the hug. Why do we hug? What are we trying to accomplish?

Recall an instance when you hugged someone, not an obligatory hug, but a hug from the heart. Carefully look for the subtle, powerful impulse that made the hug seem inevitable. You will see that the intent behind the hug was to become one with the other person. Not figuratively, but literally. If you could, you would voluntarily dissolve into the other. Intuitively, you yearned to experience a greater reality than separateness could offer - unity. Isn't that the feeling? Love and separateness, especially emotional separateness, don't mix. Love is something eternal and it's also a force drawing us all together.

On a spiritual level, once you get in touch with that love, you begin to feel the pull of the absolute calling you home, to the unshakable peace and joy of your True Self. Love is the force of creation. You can't resist it; it's too beautiful, too fundamentally right.

The need to love is stronger than the need to be loved. To love is to be nurtured, to fulfill your reason for being. Think of those on 9/11 who knew their lives would end in a matter of minutes. When they could reach a phone, they didn't call for help they called the one they loved. And what message did they feel that *had* to deliver in such a dire, stress-filled situation. "*I love you.*" They didn't ask for revenge, or even justice. They needed to express love – the strongest, most genuine expression of their True Self they had ever known. It is the link to the Infinite.

Love heals, sustains, corrects, and guides us. Love is the light that illumines our thoughts. Love conquers hate. But it takes some effort to cultivate love. If you'd like to experience that Supreme Love, serve one and all unconditionally, with a clear focused mind, with loving-kindness, and without any expectations, not even a thank you. Practice meditation and prayer. Follow the Golden Rule: "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" Keep company with like-minded seekers. Plant good, yogic seeds all around you and never give up on the power of love to transform any bad trait, habit, or situation.

Most faith traditions ask us to love God. Cultivating this devotion is a quick, time-tested way to attain Self-realization. But at the same time, please know that the One who created you, who put you here, loves *you*. It is a love you can neither win nor lose. You are cared for every moment of your existence. No thought, desire, fear, or act is overlooked. Open your heart, allow the unconditional love of God grasp, embrace, and transform you. To love others unconditionally and to know the love God has for us is the essence of the Yoga life.