

Love in Theology and Secularity

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Abstract

Love is the foundation of creation and the most important attribute which God shares with human beings, who are the most important objects of His creative activities. Theologically, we see God and know Him through His love for all creatures and particularly through His unsurpassed love for man. So we examine and explain love vertically in God-man relationships as expressed in Christianity, Islam, and the oriental religions Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism without leaving out African traditional religion and culture. We also examine and try to seek explanations for the inadequacy of love in horizontal processes and the manifestation of love in human interaction. The failure of love in secularity leads us to advocate strengthening the practice of love in religion and spirituality as a means of developing and enhancing love as fundamentally commanded by God and reinforced by Jews for Christians. This has similarities in other religions for family, community, and global cohesion, wholesomeness, security, stability, and progress. We are taking love in theology into secularity to provide overall human well-being in human relationships and interactions.

Introduction

God is love (1 John 4:8), and love is life. God is the embodiment of love, and love in terms of the God-man relationship is the embodiment of God and characteristic of God. It is the foundation of, and fundamental in, the God-man relationship. In *God's Little Book of Love*, Richard Daly puts it this way: "Know God, know

love.... No God, no love.”¹ The first, greatest act of God in His relationship with man is His creation of man. God voluntarily, graciously, lovingly, and uniquely formed man in His image and likeness, providing for him all he would need, and planted him in a special place in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:7-8). The love of God for the man He had created transcends all other things.

The Bible is replete with manifestations of God’s expression of His love to man, the work of His hand. Even when the world had been corrupted by man, “For all the people on earth had corrupted their ways” (Gen. 6:12), God showed, exercised, and expressed special love to man after He had caused Noah to save the human species and all fauna and flora and the totality of the environment on earth: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all loving creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Gen. 8:21–22). Great love and great acts of grace indeed were showered on humans by God in spite of human inadequacy and corruption.

The Old Testament recorded the persistency of the children of Israel in their stiff-necked disobedience of God and breaches of God’s laws and orders. In love, God continually dealt with them, punishing mildly or severely, depending on the circumstances, but in the end always showing mercy and bestowing grace. The love of God is unending. Love, justice, and mercy inextricably go together in God’s dealing with humans. The love of God without justice would amount to indulgence, condonation, and perpetuation and encouragement of evil, sin, and misconduct; rather, God is the God of love, justice, mercy, and forgiveness, the God of second chances and, in some cases, the God of even more chances.

If God is love and out of love God created man in His image and likeness, embracing him with the quality and characteristics of love that He possesses, making man His viceroy on earth and a little god, why is love so deficient in the world and in every community? Man wilfully disobeys God and goes contrary to the wishes, commandment, and plans of God, becoming in every sense the enemy and hater of God. In spite of what the scriptures of major religions teach, and in spite of the production of much literature and so many songs about love, it is still a very scarce commodity among human beings, so much so that through the ages, man has been his own worst enemy. At every turn, man pulls man down, he betrays, and he devises lethal weapons to destroy his fellow human beings at the global level. Mean while, at the local community level and at the micro nuclear family level, love is lacking to the extent that communities that should live in security, love, wholesomeness, comfort, and the assurance of mutuality of caring, sharing, and common prosperity live in fear, intimidation, frustration, want, poverty, and great inequality.

The God-Man Relationship and Love in Christianity

What can awareness of and emphasis on the God-man relationship, which is forged in the special agape love to which God remains faithful, do to reshape man and return him to God and from there in spirituality to reform and re-engage human relationship based on the fundamentals of God-man love, relationship, and faithfulness? “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). The main focus of this discussion will be the Christian religion, with supporting theology and teaching and precepts from other major religions, to underpin the acute need of the world to

use the love and human relationships that God initially gave humanity to save the globe from inequality in education, food and nutrition, and healthcare, as well as from the depletion of fauna and flora and the destruction of the environment, particularly the destruction of biodiversity, including pollution of the sea and dangerous climate change, and the conflict, violence, and destruction going on almost all over the globe.

God's manifestation of his love is to create, preserve, sustain, build, increase, and multiply his people in peace, security, and serenity. God, of course, acts out of His sovereignty, ruling and working according to His eternal purpose absolutely even through events and acts that may seem to counteract or oppose His rule. There are, of course, the issues of man's freewill and human responsibility, which leave man responsible for any sin or evil he perpetrates. Man is fully and completely responsible for acts of hatred, lack of love, and disobedience to God's plans, instructions, and designs for a wholesome world of love and comfort, as well as an inclusive and shared society.

The characteristics and quality of love as laid down by God in creation in the Garden of Eden and in dealing with His people are quite clear and unassailable. He followed the same pattern and standard in His second-greatest act of great love to man - provision of salvation through Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The coming of Jesus to the world is a result of the love of God for man in spite of man's sinful nature.

Scripture teaches that love is a two-way affair. God expects man to reciprocate His love by loving Him in return and loving his fellow human beings as himself. God loves us first, and we must love Him in return. He seeks us, and we must seek Him in return.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1John 4:10). The love of God saves us as Christians through Jesus Christ and renews us through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Jesus is the epitome of God’s love to humankind. God’s love transits through Jesus to humankind for man’s salvation. And Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (John 15:9). God is the source of knowledge, power and wisdom for man. Man’s confusion, inability, incapacity, and failure are due to separation from God and the love of God. The psalmist advises man to seek God early - early in life, early in the beginning of any project, early as we progress in any undertaking. There is one thing and one result only from being distant from God, and that is failure and disaster. That was the story of King Saul and of Samson in the Old Testament and of Aquila and Priscilla in the New Testament. “Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8). You cannot come near to somebody or to something you neither like nor love. The love of God is the beginning, the centre, and the end of man’s life and aspiration.

As a theologian, Thomas Jay Oord is greatly concerned with love because its implications have a great impact on Christian ethics. Oord defines love as “to act intentionally, in sympathetic and empathetic response to others (including God) to promote overall well-being.”² This is a pragmatic definition to underpin acts of God in both creation and salvation. Love must be seen and practised in its sub-types as a philosophical, theological, and sociological phenomenon.

In the act of salvation, God gave His Son out of unusual love for the redemption of human beings and their well-being—all without any exception. And Jesus Christ, throughout His life on earth, lived love: he lived in and by love, taught love, and preached

love; he treated people out of love; he was despised, chastised, frustrated, humiliated, and killed for His love of humankind. “Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down His life for His friends” (John 15:13). And He went on to say, “You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:14). Obedience to God is proof of love. Jesus simplified all the complicated and complex Judaic laws into two - love of God and love of fellow human beings:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment, in the Law?” Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Laws and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:36-40).

The parable of the Good Samaritan spells out clearly who our neighbour is (Luke 10:25-37).

Jesus loves us totally, committedly, and to finality, and He commands us to love each other in the same way: “A new command I give you. Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Our love to our neighbours must be universal and embrace all. It must be love without guile and without border. It must be love to the rich, to the poor and underprivileged, and to the high and the low without distinction of colour, race, language, religion, social position, or political affiliation. Participating in love of the poor and underprivileged and alleviating their condition is a form of investment in both the individual and the community, “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done” (Proverb 19:17).

Apart from the community being better for love, there is a definite link between our investment today and the life we will live

tomorrow. A man's investments are a reliable indication of and pointer to his future life. By divine command, we should invest in others, particularly those who are in need, by giving love and kindness. Those who plant kindness into the lives of the poor and the deprived are actually investing in their own future. Jesus taught a great lesson on love and investment in the poor and the needy through the parable of the good Samaritan. Kindness to the poor is an investment that God Himself takes responsibility to repay. "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them" (Heb 6:10).

Oppressing the poor and showing no love to needy neighbours have the opposite repercussion. "He who mocks the poor... will not go unpunished" (Pro. 17:5). Job put it another way: "Those who plough evil and those who sow trouble repeat it" (Job 4:8). Within a community, wealth, health, and success are shared in solidarity where love abounds. Love must be made manifest through deeds and acts of love and not just by words: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Love entails being good one towards another and towards all in deeds and actions. There must be an overflow of love and an increase in it towards one another. Love must always be on the increase and not static, let alone on the decrease. Our love must not be limited to those who love us, members of our family, friends, and well-wishers; it must also extend to our adversaries: "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great and you shall be the children of the Highest. For He is kind unto unthankful and the evil" (Luke 6:35). Love also requires discipline. Peck asserts that self-discipline develops from the foundation of love and further suggests that the

absence of love is the major cause of mental illness and that the presence of love is consequently the essential healing element in psychotherapy.³

Love is transitive, and to be effective and satisfying, it must be sacrificing as well. That is, God established His relationship with man by sacrificing His Son, Jesus, for man's salvation and redemption, and He did so out of love. If love has no sacrificing element in it, it is inadequate and cannot be genuine and effective. God is our exemplar for loving relationships with Him and with fellow human beings: "I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life" (Psalm 119:93). God places value on the quality of the heart rather than on the quantity of words in love and in human relations, as deeds are the litmus test of love in human interaction. The love of God brings us close to Him to call on Him, reciprocating His seeking and calling us: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer 33:3). God is swayed by the love of the heart and not by the word of the mouth: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 7:21). "In all things, God works for the good of those who love Him" (Rom 8:28). "Be holy as I am holy" (Lev 11:44). Living a holy life entails love and fellowship with others. Put another way, it means relational holiness with God and man. It is worth mentioning here that self-love is not a third law by Christ, as the second law encapsulates self.

Postulations and Theories of Love

It is necessary to underpin our discourse on love, theologically and secularly, on postulations and theories that have been established by writers and scholars. From time immemorial, scholars, philosophers, poets, and writers - and even scientists - have speculated and made considered statements on love.

In the Bible, the first five books of the Old Testament play emphasis on God's love for and relationship with man and vice versa. "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments" (Deut 7:9). The judges, the kings, and particularly the prophets wrote on love theologically and secularly. "And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt" (Deut 10:19a). "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2 Sam 1:26). "I love you, LORD, my strength" (Ps 18:1). "Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you" (Pro. 4:6). "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me" (Pro. 8:17). The writer of both the Proverbs and the Song of Solomon, who was King Solomon himself, postulated on some aspects of love. Jesus simplified the nature, practice, and understanding of love, both of God and of the neighbour, and the Apostle Paul also postulated on love. Jesus and Paul were somewhat revolutionary: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:43-44). "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39).

Secular writers have also expostulated about love. The German physician and pioneering sexologist Richard von Kraft-Ebling identifies five types of love: true love, sentimental love, platonic love, friendship and sensual love.⁴ Albert Ellis proposes additional love varieties, including such different types and degrees of affection as conjugal love, parental love, familial love, religious love, love of humanity, love of animals, love of things, self-love, sexual love, and obsessive-compulsive love.⁵

The religious theoretician C. S. Lewis, a contemporary of Ellis, in his book *The Four Loves*, discusses types of love, proposing four main varieties: *Affection*, which is based on familiarity and repeated contact found in families; *Friendship*, which is more than companionship; *Eros*, or “that state which we call being in love”; and *Charity*, or selfless and “Divine-Gift Love,” which expects no reward and desires only what is “simply best for the beloved.”⁶

In *The Triangular Theory of Love*, Robert J. Sternberg of Yale University presents love as having three components and claims that love can best be understood by viewing those three components as forming the vertices of a triangle, as shown in Figure 1.⁷

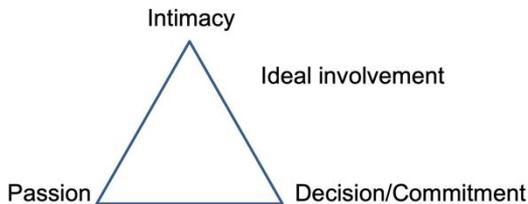


Figure 1. The Triangle of Love

Sternberg asserts that the assignment of components to vertices is arbitrary and that each of the three terms can be used in many different ways, so it is therefore important to clarify their meanings in the context of the theory. However, in general, the intimacy component may be viewed as the “warm” one, passion as the “hot” one, and decision/commitment as the “cold” one.

The intimacy component refers to feeling of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships and includes within its purview feelings that give rise to the experience of warmth found in them. Intimacy derives largely, though not exclusively, from emotional investment in the relationship. The passion component refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and other related phenomena in loving relationships. It includes in its purview sources of motivational and other forms of arousal.

The decision/commitment component is in the short term the decision to love someone and in the long term the commitment to maintain that love. It includes within its purview the cognitive elements that are involved in decision-making about the existence of and potential long-term commitment to a loving relationship. Sternberg admits that the experience of love can be partitioned in a number of ways, that his three-components partition is not the only one possible, and even that it is not valid for all possible purposes. He submits, however, that his proposed partitioning is particularly useful for understanding the elements of love and how they function in close relationships.

The similarities and differences among Sternberg’s three components of love may be better understood by examining their properties, shown in Table 1.⁸

Table 1. Properties of Triangle Vertices

Property	Component		
	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/Commitment
Stability	Moderately High	Low	Moderately High
Conscious controllability	Moderate	Low	High
Experiential salience	Variable	High	Variable
Typical Importance in Short-Term relationships	Moderate	High	Low
Typical importance in Long-Term Relationships	High	Moderate	High
Commonality Across Loving Relationships	High	Low	Moderate
Psychophysiological Involvement	Moderate	High	Low
Susceptibility to Conscious Awareness	Moderately low	High	Moderately High

The importance of each of the three components of love differs, on the average, as a function of the length of the loving relationship. In the short term, especially in a romantic relationship, the passion component tends to play a large part, intimacy only a moderate part, and decision/commitment hardly any part. In a long-term close relationship, however, intimacy and decision/commitment play large parts, as it is hardly possible to sustain such a relationship without some degree of involvement and commitment, while passion typically plays only a moderate part and tends to decline overtime.

The three components differ in their commonality across loving relationships. The intimacy component seems to be at the core of loving relationships with parents, siblings, lovers, and close friends. Passion tends to be limited primarily to romantic relationships. Decision/commitment varies highly, normally high toward one's children and lower toward friends who come and go

throughout life. Because the three basic components of love only occur in varying degrees within a relationship, most love relationships will not fit clearly and squarely into one particular category but will reflect some combination of categories.

Sternberg and Grajek state that certain desirable feelings can accompany intimacy. These include desire to promote the loved one's welfare and to experience happiness and share self and possessions with the loved one; high regard and appreciation for the loved one; trust in the loved one, especially in time of need; mutual understanding and intimate communication with the loved one; and receipt of emotional support from the loved one.⁹ Other theories examined by Sternberg and Grajek which are closely akin to the intimacy component are Spearman's theory of general intelligence, Thomson's theory of the "bonds" of intelligence, and Thurston's theory of primary factors.¹⁰

Sternberg concludes that the decision/commitment component interacts with both the intimacy and the passion components. The three components are all important parts of loving relationships, although their levels of importance differ between relationships and over time within relationships. Sternberg also distinguishes eight kinds of love, varying from non-love, where the three components are absent, through liking, infatuated love, empty love, romantic love, compassionate love, fatuous love and consummate love which has all the three components in abundance, as shown in Table 2.¹¹

Table 2. Taxonomy of Kinds of Love

Kind of love	Component		
	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/Commitment
Non-Love	--	--	--
Liking	+	--	--
Infatuated Love	--	+	--
Empty Love	--	--	+
Romantic Love	+	+	+
Compassionate Love	+	--	+
Fatuous Love	--	+	+
Consummate Love	+	+	+

Note: + = component present; -- = component absent. These kinds of love represent limiting cases based on the triangular theory. Most loving relationships will fit between categories, because the various components of love are expressed along continua, not discretely.

Sternberg has critiqued other theories of love and placed them along his triangular model of love, indicating their degrees of compatibility with his own triangular model. For example, he finds the Berscheid-Welster (1978) theory incomplete, claiming that it does not distinguish between infatuated and romantic love.¹² He admits that while his triangular theory of love can account for a number of the main empirical phenomena in the literature of love and close relations, it does not provide answers to all possible questions.

A contemporary of Sternberg is Lee, who from 1973 to 1988 came up with a contemporary theory of love and produced a widely used measurement instrument. He states that there are three primary colours or styles of loving: *eros*, similar to passionate love; *ludus*, which views love as a game and avoids seeing partners

too often; and *storge*, “loved without fever or folly.”¹³ Lee’s *storge* resembles C. S. Lewis’s concept of Affection.

Love in the Muslim Context and Worldview

The ideas and teaching of the Prophet Muhammad about love, vertically between God and man and horizontally between man and man, was shaped and forged not only by the revelations given him, but also in the crucible of his childhood experience as an orphan and the hardship and persecutions of his adult life. The Quran sums it up: “By the morning light and the dark of the night, your Lord has not forsaken you, Muhammad, nor does he abhor you. The end shall be better than the beginning and you will be satisfied. Did he not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did he not find you in error and guide you? Did he not find you poor and enrich you? Do not wrong the orphan then, nor chide the beggar, but proclaim the goodness of your Lord” (Quran 93:11-18). Not only did the Prophet Muhammad believe in one God, he loved him, and served him.

In the Sahih Muslim Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, “You will not enter paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another”. The path to paradise is full of love, compassion, and good relational engagement. Muslims are directed by God in the ways to become close to Him and to gain His love.¹⁴

The Prophet Muhammad believed, preached, taught, and practised the love of neighbours, the brotherhood of believers, and protection for all out of love and humanity. As contained in the Quran, vertical and horizontal love relationships are expanded to man-nature and man-environment relationships, all the way to the heavenly bodies: “By the sun and its morning brightness and by the moon which rises after, by the day which displays the glory of

the sun and by the night that reveals it, by the heavens and he who built it and by the earth and he who laid it out, by the soul and he who moulded it and inspired it with knowledge of good and evil - blessed shall be the one who keeps it pure and ruined he who corrupts it” (Quran 91:1-10). Love is not only universally deployed; it also embraces all and encompasses all. The revelation from which love and relationship took this human form in words left him in equal parts humbled and determined, exhausted and energised, dazed and clearheaded.¹⁵

Discourse, argument, teaching, preaching, or practice by a Muslim that does not encapsulate universal and all-embracing love for all things created by God is antithetical to the revelation of the Prophet Muhammad as chronicled and laid out in the Quran. In other words, God being the one and only God of the Christian faith and the Islamic faith, as well as vertical and horizontal love, is similarly treated in their two holy books. “Only righteous deeds, not wealth or sons will bring you closer to God” (Quran 34:37). You cannot do righteous deeds in hatred; you can only do righteous deeds out of love and in love. Love is regarded as the most important precondition attitude and attribute for doing good, what is right, righteous, and upright. And doing what is right brings us closer to God. The Quran, like the Bible, calls for justice and love and compassion to the disenfranchised, those who do not matter in the grand scheme of things, like slaves and freedmen, widows and orphans, and all those cut out of the elite class by birth or circumstance. It was love to empower those without power and to ensure equity and fairness.

Summary of Views from Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism

Buddhism

Buddhism places a great premium on enlightenment, and enlightenment embraces love and perfect relational engagement with other creatures, animate and inanimate, and particularly human beings, because all these natural phenomena have been composed of the same divine substance. From the Buddhist point of view, there is no ontological gulf between humanity and gods or between nature and man - hence the understanding of vertical love and horizontal love as the communality of divine substance. The Buddha always insisted that his disciples test everything he taught them against their own experience and take nothing on hearsay. As human beings change with experience, they improve and become better in relational engagements and deployment of love horizontally. The Buddha was moved by compassion to embrace the anguish of others.¹⁶ Compassion goes with love. Without love, you cannot show or exhibit compassion. The resolve to awaken requires the determination not to hurt anyone in the process. Whatever you do, love everyone so that you harm no one.

A Buddha is simply someone who is awake. He is not a god, but a person who is awake to how things are, to how life is. We too can be awake to see and know that life is made of a series of ups and downs and that love is one of the most important factors of what life is. Mindfulness entails in part the non-demonising of self and ceasing to demonise that very behaviour or trait in others.¹⁷ Mindfulness is a path to liberation, compassion, love, and happiness. It is a path of honour, discipline, and relational bliss.¹⁸

The Buddha teaches that love is the foundation for all spiritual practice, and he says that love should radiate out and embrace all living things first. He advocates an unconditional love that knows no boundaries or borders. Embracing love is also a source of happiness. Doing good out of love for all beings grows with patience and takes root in a heart that cherishes all with the same self-sacrifice that a mother feels for her child. The warm and compassionate heart that develops through the practice of cultivating love extends first to our circle of friends and finally reaches outwards to those who would do us harm.¹⁹ Love is not limited to or by relationship, and it extends to friends and foes. Right speech and right action mean that nothing is done or said to deliberately hurt the innocent.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world, beginning long before humans had developed any writing system. It was claimed to be based on what was revealed to the ancient sages.²⁰ Unlike Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, Hinduism has no founder, it has no single religious book, and it is not an organised religion like the religions of book referred to earlier. There is no founding date.

More than 95 per cent of Hindus believe in the existence of God and a love relationship between them and that God. A vertical God-man love relationship is not debateable in Hindu belief and forms the basis of other key beliefs. Most of these key beliefs contain a component of love. Let us state a few of them. They believe in the Supreme Soul, identified as Brahman, the universal spirit. They believe that truth is the goal of life, which means reaching back to the one Reality, Brahman, by realising our true nature. They believe that time is circular and not linear, that there

is no beginning or end of time. They believe in karma and karmic consequences. Karma is action that relates to service, especially service to the community and society; what we are today is the result of our actions in the past. You reap what you sow. They believe in tolerance as a core value. Hinduism preaches that one gives up selfishness in love, not expecting anything in return. Love must be self-sacrificing. In Hinduism, “love is karma” really means “God is love.”²¹ Hinduism preaches that a balanced life is lived by cultivating self-control or discipline, charity, and compassion - these all entail love and loving.

Confucius

Confucius puts heavy emphasis on love, especially teaching the high-ups to aid and support people less fortunate to secure their welfare. “The common people should be treated with the same loving care given to babies who cannot fend for themselves.”²² Here, love is seen as the duty and responsibility of all, but particularly of leaders and the elite within society. Of all things acquired, man must acquire conduct befitting the gentleman, and love is key in such conduct, which entails perfect beauty and perfect goodness. Confucius demands chastising and sanctioning when necessary, but out of love and with love and in love.

Secularity: What to Expect from Love

From what we have gleaned from the religions we have cursorily looked at, there are certain commonality in teachings and beliefs on both vertical and horizontal love relationships. Love draws us out into the world and not away from it. The seed of love implanted in each human being must be cultivated to become effective in the family, the locality, the community, and indeed in the world.

Love, in essence, holds the world together, beginning from the nuclear family to the extended family, the community, the society, the nation-state, the continent, and the world. The bane of the world is inadequate love in God-human relationships and in all human relationships at all levels, in all institutions and circumstances. If we closely examine the power of love and what it can achieve as a cement of human actions and relationships, we will see why we need more love for better, more cordial, and more wholesome relationships, as well as for a better world.

In the recent history of man, World War II was essentially the outcome of Nazis' hatred of Jews, which led to the Holocaust and engulfed the world in a war that destroyed much of Europe and led to the loss of 70–85 million lives, and in the last twenty-five years or so here on the continent of Africa, the genocide in Rwanda due to the hatred of Tutsis by Hutus led to the loss of close to a million lives. If love had been promoted and exhibited, these two monumental human disasters could have been avoided. There are many minor human disasters all over the world going on now that could have been avoided by the practice of love.

In dealing with what to expect from love, I present here some quotations from Richard Daly's *God's Little Book of Love*, which bring together most of the points we have come across in the religions. Love is patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly ever notice when others do it wrong. True love will never ask of a person anything that will devalue them or dissociate them from God's will. If "God is love," the reverse must also be true: "love is godly." True love is not a feeling by which we are overwhelmed. It is a thought-out decision by which we are committed. And we know that in all things, God works for the

good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. The greatest sacrifice we make is choosing to love those who are not easy to love. The fact that love never fails means it never gives up nor permits itself to be hindered or defeated by evil. It is constant, immovable. It is not how much you do, but how much love you put into the doing that matters. There is no difficulty that enough love cannot conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal, no door that enough love will not open, no gulf that enough love will not bridge, no wall that enough love cannot bring down.²³

If so much and even more can be expected from love, how do we cultivate, nurture and nourish love? In short, how do we love? If hate and all the negativity that goes along with it emanates from the heart of human beings, it is in the heart of human beings that love, the opposite of hate, should be developed. For everybody is born with elements of goodness in his or her heart. But when our hearts are small, our understanding, compassion, and love are limited and constrained. Building the capacity for love must start from enlarging our hearts to understand, tolerate, accept, and embrace others with their differences, idiosyncrasies, peculiarities, and unaccustomed behaviour, culture, language, religion, and habits. How do we help our hearts to grow?

Each of us can learn the art of nourishing happiness and love. Like other living things, the heart needs to be nourished to grow in its capacity for love and loving. When our hearts are expanded, we accept others as they are and we show love. To love is to nourish our own happiness. True love gives us beauty, freshness, solidarity, hope, freedom, and peace. The way to begin the inculcation of love is to learn to understand; if you don't understand, you cannot accommodate and accept, and you can't love. Love to a large extent is synonymous with understanding.

Love, like other attributes and attitudes, can be taught and learned. And again, like any other subject, idea, or skill to be learned, it is better learned or absorbed when the heart is still very tender and receptive, unclogged by environmental or community prejudices and biases. Learning to love or inculcating love must begin early in life with teaching from parents, the extended family, and the community. A culture of love and loving must be developed. From the home, it must be extended to the school.

There is also the religious aspect. Throughout human existence and in all civilisations, religion or worship has played a significant role in human relationships, which has meant caring, sharing, and loving. Religion must teach, preach, and inculcate love in its adherents or practitioners. So inculcating love and learning to love have political, social, religious, and spiritual aspects. True love cannot exist without respect for oneself and for the other person you claim to love. Love must also be without pretention. It must be natural and spontaneous.

There are simple gestures that enhance feeling of love and which when reciprocated go a long way. Such gestures are a warm handshake, a smile, a warm hug, commendation and appreciation, simple help, and words of thanks. Love must be dynamic and not static, and it must also be incremental and massaged. Even the refusal of an offer or the rejection of an invitation or some other occasion of saying no must be done with admirable and infectious love and understanding. In any human institution or organisation where there is no love, there will be strife and no harmonious life.

Endnotes

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