

cause its part of her duty towards her family, to ensure they have a good well-being. That duty is ceaseless - it has no end - there is never any thought of not doing that duty. Therefore, **true love is where you only look at the well-being of your Beloved.**

With the example of God, this means that we all have the ability to serve God ceaselessly because as devotees of God it is our duty to do so - the thought of not serving God should not even come into our minds for a moment if our love for God is true and pure.

BECAUSE OF VS. IN SPITE OF

Sometimes people have been married for a very long time and yet seemingly have nothing in common. So which way of thinking is it that makes their relationship work? **True love is not where you love someone because of something, it's where you love someone in spite of everything.** True love can cross every boundary and give two people a deep sense of identification with each other that continues to exist and grow beyond the changing of circumstances, physical appearances or attitudes.

BLIND LOVE VS. SEEING LOVE

There is a common cliché that 'love is blind'. However, it is only in the lower form of love, Sneha, that love is blind. In Prema, it is not that a person does not see the flaws in the character of their beloved, it is instead that they fully accept their beloved for who they are and for who they are not. Therefore, true love is not blind, it is all seeing and all accepting.

EXPECTATIONS VS. DEMANDS

There are expectations in relationships because there are duties. For example, a wife expects her husband to come home from work everyday at a reasonable time, to help her with some of the housework and to be faithful to her. A husband expects his wife to feed him when he comes home, to give him his own space when he needs it and to be faithful to him. Expectations, so long as they are rooted in practicality are perfectly normal and necessary in a relationship.

However, often expectations can become demands where a wife begins to demand her husband comes home exactly on time everyday, or should always call her from work, or should always buy her gifts. Similarly, the husband begins to demand his wife should stay at home always, or should not talk to any other male, or should cook his favourite meal everyday. Expectations are a part of duty, but demands are a part of control.

EXERCISES TO PRACTICE PREMA

In order to experience the higher love of Prema, we must learn to love actively and fearlessly. The following exercises are designed to help us to do this:

- Call up your parents and tell them that you love them, in spite of all arguments that may have taken place. Let the arguments and judgements go, just give your love
- Smile lovingly at a stranger and say nothing, just look with eyes full of love
- Close your eyes and let your heart just flood with love to the whole world and all its people

SUMMARY OF THE POWER OF LOVE

All the following statements provide pointers to the higher love of Prema:

- The giving of love is our privilege as a human being. Giving love is not a need or a hunger, it is a fulfilment
- Love for the beloved creates love for the many
- Love for the beloved creates a sense of deep response
- True love is where you only look at the well-being of your Beloved
- True love is not where you love someone because of something, it's where you love someone in spite of everything

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace" - Jimi Hendrix

The Power of Love

INTRODUCTION

Love is the most fundamental and powerful of all human emotions and yet perhaps the most misunderstood. According to the ancient scriptures, there are two types of love—the lower love of attachment and the higher love of selflessness, called 'Sneha' and 'Prema' in Sanskrit respectively. When love is directed to a lower object-of-love it becomes Sneha, but when it is directed towards a higher object-of-love it becomes Prema. The lower love of Sneha is selfish and keeps us bound, whereas the higher love of Prema is selfless and sets us free.

In order to attain total fulfilment in our lives it is important to understand and master the art of the higher love of Prema which transcends all boundaries of language, geography, culture, colour, religion and race.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE BELOVED

Everyone seeks to have an identity and also have an identification with someone or something, because without this feeling of union through identification we are left with a sense of loneliness and separateness. Love is therefore in identification with the beloved.

It is this urge to escape loneliness that is the cause of all universes, worlds, families, friendships, relationships, groups, gangs, fashions, governments, societies, cultures, festivals, parties and religious gatherings. However, all these activities only give a temporary escape and soon our own inner loneliness begins to manifest itself again.

FALLING IN LOVE VS. RISING IN LOVE

The distinction between the lower love of Sneha and the higher love of Prema is very clear, but usually it is blurred by our existing notions about love and so as humans we think that loving always brings pain because our relationships do not seem to work.

Falling in Love

Usually when we think of true love, we think of falling in love with another person. This falling in love happens when two people meet and find some connection that feels overwhelming and creates surges of excitement throughout the body and mind. How-

ever, soon this excitement disappears and the feeling of love and connection disappears with it. This is therefore the temporary lower form of love called Sneha.

This falling in love is concerned with getting something out of a relationship, for example, to receive love, acceptance, comforts, material goods, money or to escape our own sense of loneliness. With this form of love there is always dissatisfaction because love is just a selfish bargaining game and everyone is hoping to receive love, but not willing to give any love. This love can be summarised as 'I will only give love when I receive it'.

Let us take our relationship with God as an example. With God we also play a bargaining game, 'God if you give me this, I'll do this for you' or 'Please grant me XYZ'. This is love, but it is a love which makes you dependant on God since there is a desire to get something out of the relationship, but we are not willing to sacrifice our own likes and dislikes so that we may serve God unconditionally.

This may seem a strange approach at first, because surely God does not need our love? This may be true, but if we love God truly, we will stop our bargaining game with God and ask that may we continue to be at the feet of God and serve God in whatever way God wants. And what is the best way to serve God? Serve the creation of God, the people. This is true love.

Rising in Love

In the higher form of love, Prema, we do not fall in love but instead rise in love by giving love actively, without any expectations of reward or failure. **The giving of love is our privilege as a human being**, and we all have the ability to choose to give love in all situations. When we give love, the giving of love is in itself the fulfilment. **Giving love is not a need or a hunger, it is a fulfilment.** Therefore, we all have the power of fulfilment at our fingertips, whenever we chose to give love without expectations of success or failure. If this statement is true, then who can hurt us or stop us or bring us down? The giving of love becomes an immortal love. If you have understood the above paragraph, your heart should start to beat with love because you have just discovered that the source of love is you! This love

can be summarised as 'I shall give love irrespective of whether it comes back'.

LOVE UNITES, EGO SEPARATES

Love always unites whereas the ego separates. These forces of union and separation are the most fundamental forces of the Universe. In the lower form of love, Sneha, the ego is at play and wants the love for the beloved to be an exclusive one-to-one relationship. An example is of overly possessive girlfriends, boyfriends, husbands and wives who do not want any other person to even look at their partner. The result is that as human beings we shrink.

In the higher form of love, Prema, **love for the beloved creates love for the many**—which is a one-to-many relationship—creating a sense of oneness with the Universe. Therefore from being very individualistic and selfish, a human being becomes very people and community orientated so that they may share this love. In this love, there is no jealousy or animosity towards any human being, and as love for everyone increases, the result is that we expand as human beings.

A SENSE OF DEEP RESPONSE

When this pure higher love of Prema has welled up within us, there comes with it a sense of deep response to want to serve and share such teachings which can give everyone else an experience of the same love and eliminate all the suffering in the world.

Love makes the impossible possible and makes the unbearable bearable. Therefore, those who have filled themselves up with love, will go out into the world and serve people ceaselessly and tirelessly, even at the cost of their own health, wealth and status. Therefore, **love for the beloved creates a sense of deep response.**

The Love of a Mother

When should we stop loving? Does a mother ever stop loving her child? No, never. Does a mother ever say 'I'm not going to make food for any of you today'? No, otherwise the family would go hungry. A mother does not even have to think about making food, she just makes it as a matter of-course be-