

Non-Dual and Human Love

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Make Loving Your Spiritual Practice

Melissa: Dear Sundari, your email was right on: all your comments re conditioning, father figure, resentment, etc. I have some doubts.

Sundari: It's good, we are on the right path then.

Melissa: Love is not a feeling and is not in the object. Love is not a transaction, it is not a doing. A person, being a concept and only apparently real, cannot love. A concept cannot love another concept; people (as long as they remain ignorant) can't love. A mother, a father, a husband, a child or even God can't love. I know this to be true. What we usually think is love isn't loving. It doesn't work.

Sundari: Well, you are mostly right. Yes, people can't love, but insofar as you are a person, love – your attention/energy – is expressing through you all the time. It is up to you to see to it that it is offered to the self in the form of all the people with whom you are connected, particularly your *jiva*. The mind, being inert and an object known to awareness, cannot love, true. But the mind has the light of consciousness shining in it, which is why we say that the true nature of the mind is *sattva*, peace, love, clarity, etc. This is the nature of the self, not an attribute or a quality. It is who you are when *rajas* (desire) and *tamas* (denial) do not cloud the mind, making it seem like *sattva* is not present. But it is always present because it is the most subtle manifestation of *sat*, awareness, which is always present and unchanging regardless of how much ignorance clouds the mind. When *rajas* and *tamas* cloud the mind, this is when we think and act unlovingly. This is where all so-called “evil” comes from: the *rajas/tamas* out of balance with *sattva*.

You are not alone in your confusion about what love really is. On the *jiva* level, we say love is paying attention. We do not love what we do not pay attention to. Worldly love is called *kama* and its nature is desire. A worldly lover (*kami*) loves an object with desire and does not worship the object. He or she wants something from the object, which produces limiting feelings caused by the behaviour of the love object. *Kama* is a high-maintenance kind of love and amounts to a sense of ownership. Owning an object makes the lover feel secure. *Kama* is called love, but it is actually the antithesis of love, because real love is free and subject-dependent. The object is loved for its own sake, not for how the object makes the subject feel. Real love wants nothing and fears nothing. It is self-satisfied. Desire feels like love because when its needs and conditions are met the mind is settled and blissful. When its needs and desires are not met, it is a veritable sea of storms. *Kama*, desire, is the coin of the realm of *samsara*.

Melissa: Melissa can't love herself as long as she thinks she's this person with this story and this conditioning. In none of her roles (mother, wife, child, devotee) will

she be able to love. She can only be the love that she is, as this “I am” that I already, always, am.*

Sundari: I partially agree with both of your statements that it is difficult to love when you are hung up on your stuff, but the only way out of your stuff is to love your way out. So you don't worry about whether you are flawed and selfish as a *jiva*; just see what small things you do love and gradually extend that loving feeling to a wider and wider circle of objects. Otherwise, the implied meaning is that you will have to fix all your stuff before you can love properly, which is neither possible nor necessary. So you will get depressed, lose confidence, beat yourself up, believe that you are the problem. But you are not the problem. Ignorance is the problem. Loving objects is the way out of one's hang-ups.

Melissa: *This is what I know is the next logical step, but I don't see it:

What does it mean that awareness is love? I see that I am the only “I am.” This “I am” is all that is. But how is it love? And this awareness that I am is free and uninvolved, precisely because it is all that is. While *Isvara* is (paraphrasing) “the impersonal workings of the apparent reality at all levels (physical, psychological and moral)”... so what is love? How can I love or not love Melissa? Or any other concept? What does it mean to “love yourself”? I understand gratitude, I understand acceptance, I understand compassion... but love?

Sundari: Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* says to Arjuna: “I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*.” Since Krishna is love – the word means “the most attractive thing” – it is a synonym for Melissa. Desire is love, as long as it conforms to *dharma*. This is where the idea of “willing attention” comes in. If you consciously think about what you are putting your energy into (read: desire/attention) and you direct it to solving whatever problem is in front of you at any moment, then you are loving the self and yourself, Melissa. In this way, you come to see everyone in your life as part of your *dharma* field.

You are trying to figure out how you get from lofty non-dual love (which you understand) to “human love” in your everyday situation, where you see many lacks and failings, yours and of “others.” The idea of “pure love” is creating a doubt for you. You want to love purely and perhaps you think that you are not qualified. You need to find the feeling of love that feels good: like when you are with your children in intimate moments. Keep it in mind and extend it gradually to the people and things you don't love properly.

When you know yourself as the self, love is known to be you, meaning consciousness. This love is called *parabhakti*. It is having all you could ever want and knowing that it will never leave you. It is love loving itself. It is limitless satisfaction – *parama sukka* is the phrase used in the texts. The nature of the self, awareness, or consciousness, is *parama prema svarupa*. *Parama* means “limitless,” *svarupa* means “nature” and *prema* is “the love that makes love possible.” It is the nature of awareness. In its presence even spiritual/human love comes alive. Spiritual or human love, no matter how pure, is dualistic, a transaction between a subject and an object, a feeling of love, for example. When I know I am awareness, I am *prema*, limitless love. This love is knowledge because awareness is intelligent. *Prema* is only known when the doer has been completely negated by self-knowledge.

All three *gunas* are always present in the apparent reality or one could not experience anything, but *parabhakti*, *prema*, exists prior to *rajas* and *tamas*, which have yet to sprout from the causal body. It is an experienceless experience. At this “level” experience and knowledge are one because one is experiencing at the very heart of creation, before the *gunas* have differentiated. What is knowledge? “I am awareness/I am love/I am pure bliss.” What is experience? Awareness/love/bliss. Here experience and knowledge are one and the same.

I can understand your confusion because you think that this love is a feeling, which it is– and it is not too. This love is self-confidence, it is the knowledge that no matter what happens in the life of the *jiva* nothing touches you. And it is the knowledge that everything you perceive as the *jiva* is really awareness looking at itself. From this perspective, what is there not to love?

I think maybe you lack confidence because the primary love relationship with your husband has gone stale or even died. You should build up the confidence in the manner suggested above, starting small, gradually expanding the objects of your affection to include everything.

Melissa: I realise I don't understand love at all. I don't understand the “step” from awareness, existence, limitlessness... to love. I don't.

Sundari: This is no step, Melissa. It is not a journey, because you are already there and always have been. It is simply knowledge. I think you do understand more than you give yourself credit for. If you pay attention to your relationships, it will be obvious which ones are not loving, i.e. where there is a feeling of habit, duty, dislike, etc. And when you recognise the improper motivation (love perverted by an aversion) immediately apply the opposite feeling, i.e. bring love into it. You have love. You do love – something or someone, your children, for instance. You obviously love yourself because you are trying to sort out the love issue.

The confidence will come when you start loving what is in front of you right now. Don't think about it or analyse it. Make love your *sadhana*, or spiritual practice; this is called *bhakti*, and it is pure devotion to the self in whatever form it takes.

Melissa: Again, thank you very much.

Sundari: You are most welcome, Melissa, feel free to write anytime.

~ Much love, Sundari