

ON LOVE

Notes from a lecture given by Namgyal Rinpoche on board ship en route to Peru, April 1974.

The one force which can draw all things together is love. In Eric Fromm's book The Art of Loving he raises the idea that love is something you must work on. Love at first sight, on the other hand, is really a strong electrical attraction based on neurons activating the system. It is caused largely by your previous associations, and there is no guarantee that your previous associations are good in any way. The feeling of pleasure that arises may well be deceptive. You really have to decide what love is, whether it is something you fall into or build up. You have to decide between the sort of passive view and the active view. What's it going to be; active or passive, or an amalgamation of the two? Is it to be an exclusive love or an all-inclusive love? It's better to have an exclusive love than no love at all, but it is axiomatic that love by its nature is non-exclusive. It tends to establish a point of contact with all beings.

The early Christian church distinguished between Eros and brotherly love, love of one's family and all beings. Agape was the term used for love of everyone in the church community. They communed and they greeted each other with a brotherly kiss, a bit like the French on ceremonial occasions. Arab communities have different ways of greeting. If someone is very close to you, someone you revere, the warmest way to welcome him would be to kiss him on the cheek. To some extent the kiss of peace of those early Christians has been restored; members of the churches are experimenting with various touch therapies. But to really do this work you need beings who are in a state of love and non-exploitation of others.

One day while attending a Pentecostal service I was overcome by waves of joy. Caught up in this, I began to sing in other tongues. In the midst of this state of exaltation I became aware of someone pawing at my body. There I was, being lifted up, exalted by the spirit, and this being took the opportunity to abuse that state of openness. It is very distasteful to be exploited in this way. To be free to experience joy openly you should be able to trust the motivations of those around you. Beings must really be clear, seven days a week, for Agape to work. I have a feeling that the Christians of early days really were dwelling Agape, the love of all. Either they had transcended Eros, or they had diffused it to all beings like the soft fluffiness of a cloud moving through you to all beings.

How do we not fall in love, but build up into love? I have spoken previously about the need for consistent work, the formal application which serves to raise the question and then the eclectic realization of it. The form first, and then the formless work. I'd like to tell you how the meditators of old did it. This is how they formally developed metta; an all-embracing loving-kindness. This is also the prototype for practices of compassion, sympathetic joy and detachment or serenity. There were three major ways they would work to develop the love feeling; this is the classical practice. First they would chant as follows:

*"Aham avero homi ! abyapajjho homi ! anigo homi ! sukhi attanam pariharami !
Aham viya sabbe satta avera hontu, abyapajja hontu, anigha hontu, sukhi attanam
pariharantu! "*

This meditation is divided into two basic sections "May I be well and happy" and "May everyone be well and happy". The 'well' refers basically to physical ease and the 'happy' to mental ease. They distinguished between these two aspects and how they are

dependant on each other. If you are having a good sunshine day in your body, your state of mind will be good. If you are not mentally well through bad early childhood conditioning then you will have somatic un-wells. The distinction is basically physical and mental.

Secondly, we pick up the order: myself first, then others. Superficial people will criticize that because you are putting yourself first, but they really don't see that you can't do anything for others unless you are in a state of love. If you are not well and happy and you see somebody who is, it burns you up. Before you can do anything to help anyone else, you have to be in a state of love. "Charity begins at home." Whoever is worried that it is just going to become self-love is on the wrong track: the nature of love is to spread itself out. Love throws off its clothing and runs naked in spring fields. Un-love is defensive, love is not defensive. Un-love is narcissism.

For those who are willing to listen, those who are not completely in a state of un-love, there are three possible approaches to the meditation. The first is personal, the second is by categories, and the third is directional. I will outline these three practices and consider whether they are workable for the West.

In the first case you work from yourself, and only when a feeling of well-being and union with yourself has arisen (when you have gone to your secret closet to practice) do you proceed to direct the meditation to your teacher. Most decidedly you have to have both body and mind in a state of good feeling – most decidedly good! The teacher is supposed to be the person with whom, next to you, it is most easy to establish a rapport. Then you move on to parents, and immediate relatives, then to friends, then strangers (people you have no particular contact with) and finally, enemies.