



# **AN EXTRAORDINARY SIMPLICITY**

by Andrew Marshall

An article on the effects of love as  
an aspect of consciousness.

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# AN EXTRAORDINARY SIMPLICITY

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Love is an extraordinary thing. With love, life becomes so simple, so uncomplicated, because if we love everything, there is nothing to dislike, nothing to avoid, nothing to run away from. Yet our lives seem to be exceedingly complicated and fraught with difficulty. So why have we contrived to live in this complicated way? Why can't we live simply and ideally? In short, why is life so difficult?

The absence of love in life is the cause of so many of our problems. Although it is often associated with sentimentality, love is an attribute of consciousness, which is the basis of who and what we are. When our consciousness is unbounded and pure, there is nothing absent from it but, unfortunately, most of us do not enjoy a state of unbounded consciousness. In fact, almost the opposite is true as we largely identify ourselves with the body – either as being the body or as being a product of it. This “body consciousness” is unsatisfactory because it results in us excluding so much from our awareness. When we are children, this is almost inevitable as the growing stage conditions us in this way. Then gradually, as we grow up, we risk a little of our independent identity as we associate with others in groups of common interest and so we may identify ourselves as belonging to this

group or to that. Whether things have changed, I don't know, but when I was young, on meeting new people one was invariably asked, “What football team do you support?” as though it were necessary to prove one had an allegiance to one club or another in order to be a complete human being (on which count I always failed, sadly). As adults, we may be more mature than that but, even so, most people have a tendency to identify themselves as belonging to one or more social groups (whether organised or not) and, just as significantly, as being excluded from others.

The sense of identity, and often security, which comes from belonging to a social group, is like a double-edged sword. On the plus side, it can cut away at the sense of isolation that comes from viewing oneself as apart from the rest of the world. This can be positive as we learn to share the interests and concerns of others and increase our understanding of their needs. On the minus side is the view that can and often does arise that “our group” is better, more deserving or perhaps more hard done by than all the others. Rather than a sense of inclusivity arising, we can find that a new *exclusive* identity is in place. This happens in so many ways and at so many levels – family, school, neighbourhood, groups of friends, work-team, club, political party and so on. Identifying oneself with a social group and protecting its interests, and at the same time protecting one's own, means that in terms of consciousness there is inevitably division and discrimination. Conflicts of interest are unavoidable and often cause

dissension; taken to extremes, they can lead to fanaticism but even mild cases create unpleasant discord.

It is crucial to understand that all discrimination arises in consciousness; it arises in the mind as a result of perceptions and beliefs. Most of the difficulties in the world come from this, from consciousness that is partial - where there is loyalty to oneself and to those interests or groups one favours, but not to others. Such a mind is divided; it does not view humanity as equal and when the mind is in that state, it is not possible to experience or perceive wholeness. The full enjoyment of an unbounded state of consciousness remains merely a matter of theory (if, indeed, one acknowledges the possibility of it) and not a reality.

Of all the attributes of consciousness, that of love is the most unifying. Knowledge is useful – or can be – but by itself can only unify, if it does so at all, on the level of intellect, unless it prods us to wake up to a truth that deep down we already know. One may come to an intellectual understanding that everything we see is an aspect of wholeness but not live it or experience it. If there is any value in these notes, for instance, it can only be the extent to which they may trigger or refresh a recognition of truth within the one who reads them. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge serves no purpose and is as useful as a dry biscuit is to a thirsty person. Love is like water or moisture that rehydrates and revitalises; it makes us alive – and then knowledge may be useful. The avid reader of books of knowledge is thirsty – not for knowledge

itself but for the self-realisation that might be awakened by it. Once a degree of self-realisation comes about, by whatever means, the thirst for knowledge lessens and is replaced by a desire for the experience of wholeness.

Love is an expression of natural wholeness and arises when our true nature, pure consciousness, is sufficiently awake in us that there is a recognition of something within that which is loved. That something is the living unity we actually share with all others, and indeed with everything, but generally fail to see. This love is so much more than mere affection and certainly has nothing to do with clinging or attachment. Love is the realisation of a sublime and beautiful reality. In the face of love, all boundaries and division dissolve. If we have such love for just one person, that is a wonderful thing; but imagine for a moment the possibility of loving all human beings and all creatures in equal measure. That doesn't require some extraordinary ability to be aware of every individual on the face of the planet but simply the dissolution of the boundaries we have all created in our own consciousness. In essence, we need to know ourselves because if we *truly* know ourselves, love is inevitable.

How can this make life uncomplicated? How can love solve our problems and make life easier? It does so because all difficulties, all problems, are so only if we see them as such. Instead of dealing with life's circumstances as they unfold before us, we label those things we don't like as problems. Seeing something as a problem

magnifies it in our mind and so we perceive it as a difficulty. But as anyone who has acquired a degree of stillness, and therefore a modicum of self-knowledge, can testify, as divisions in the mind dissolve, our perception of life and of others changes. Life becomes easier as we accept it and everything it brings; it only becomes extremely difficult and tiresome when we resist it. Love is about overcoming resistance and accepting others as they are; it is also about accepting ourselves as we are. If we can accept ourselves, we can accept others and then we start to change for the better as we become happier – much happier.

Love, we must clearly understand, is not an emotion reserved for the romanticist but a state of consciousness that is indomitable. It has the potential to heal, not just at a personal level but globally as well. We may not be able to change the whole world but we can change *our* world – how we see it and respond to it. Little by little, we can change our environment – not by telling others what they should be doing but by taking responsibility for what *we* do and, more importantly, *how* we do it. Without judging, we just get on with life and, when we become aware of our prejudices, mistaken beliefs, views and pre-conceptions, as we surely will, we can reflect on their divisive nature and gradually dissolve them. Progressively, we will find our days becoming easier and happier and, sometimes, in spite of everything the media serves up to us, we may think old Satchmo may have been right when he sang about this wonderful world.

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