

THE EMOTION OF LOVE– A WINDOW TO THE SOUL

The love emotion is found universal among the *Homo sapiens spiritulus* species, but the understanding of it depends on the vantage position one adopts. The evolutionists would believe that Man is just an animal and many believe that all that we are is determined by our biological make-up and that emotion resides only in the brain. The biologists would equate emotions with feelings, results of sensory stimulations. 'Emotion', to a biologist, only serves as a survival trait that accounts for our behaviours such as in courtship, mating and procreation. Our so-called 'love' emotion is for the purpose of mating and procreation in the process of natural selection, ending up with the survival of the fittest.

According to some psychologists, especially those belonging to the school of psychoanalysis, sexual attraction is the motivational factor in our love relations and is part of our libido, the source of energy that is found in our biological sex drive, which is known as the 'life instinct'. The latent source of motivation for all covert and overt behaviours in humans, accounting for our personality and character, according to the psychoanalysts, is predominantly found in the sex drive which has as its source our genetic makeup.

If this is the case, how can we account for altruism where many have died for a cause and for the many who love Jesus whom no one is able to know how He looks like, whether He is sexually attractive or not, and what type of personality he was. At the biological and psychological levels there is no good reason why someone would choose to die for a cause and it is impossible for anyone to love this man Jesus whom he or she has not seen and directly communicating with.

In any form of a relationship between people it is the emotion that binds it, an emotional experience generated through biological and psychological means of some sorts. A biological and psychological bond in itself alone can never be established with just a description of anyone without the emotional element, least of all Jesus whose physical presence is so far off in time and space. The fact that many have succeeded in entering a love relationship with Jesus and died for this love throughout the ages, and many have died for a cause, indicate very strongly that the emotion of love is not sexually or indeed biologically or psychologically grounded or determined. The only explanation for this sort of love can only be traced to the spiritual part of our being, the 'image of God' in which we are all created. The emotion of love which is spiritual in nature is therefore a window to the soul! It is precisely this spiritual love that we witness many who is prepared to die for someone that is the object of this love.

To review different authors who write on the subject of love reveal the confusions this term conjures in the minds of many and there is no clear concept as regards to its true nature. The subject of love is an open field for all, because it is a purview of every human being; and everyone claims to be an expert on the subject through their own personal life experiences. Every layman has his or her own point of view on the subject. All human beings, without any exception, share the experience of the powerful love emotion. In more disciplined professions like the biologists and psychologists they would argue that 'love' is nothing but a physiological thing or a conditioned response to our social experiences.

In fact 'morality' and 'ethics' may be explained from the biological and psychosocial perspectives as for the biologists would argue that these facets of human nature are nothing but biological in nature as survival mechanisms, and the psychologists would argue that these are the derivatives from the core of our religious beliefs as part of the 'superego'. If we were to adopt the biological and the psychological perspectives to explain about the love emotion there will be as yet many facets of human behaviours related to the expression of the love emotion that are difficult to explain, and many controversies will

arise. For example, as mentioned above how can we explain altruism and the love of Jesus, and for many who, for the sake of love, have voluntarily died for a cause?

Jesus said in the Gospel: “But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other as well, and from the person who takes your cloak do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from him who takes what is yours do not demand it back” - (Luke 6: 27-30).

These responses mentioned by Jesus refer to reactions that should be taken when there is true ‘love of neighbours’. By this teaching Jesus preached against our ‘fallen nature’. In this, Jesus is actually appealing to our spiritual nature. If our biological and psychosocial conditionings giving rise to our ‘fallen nature’ are the only factors governing our being, then His preaching would never have taken root whatsoever, because it goes against human nature as it is commonly understood in that context, with all the strains of our earthly existence. The negative emotions of self preservation, aggression and self-enhancement, hate and curse, with the negative actions of striking and taking as survival responses caused by our biological and psychological natures, are the causes of our ‘fallen nature’. Animals display these modes of behaviour as survival responses and are not capable of expressing the love emotion.

The question of morality has no place in the animal kingdom but only in humans. If there is no stronger natural propensity to love in us, Jesus’ teaching would never have gained any foothold, yet it continues to touch the hearts of men (and women), which appears to be universal. The manifestation of this kind of love is possible for those we love spiritually, founded upon our spiritual propensity to love which strongly goes against our biological and psychological natures. This spiritual propensity to love is the ‘image of God’ in which we are all created and the expressions of it provide us a window to the soul. This line of deduction presents very strong argument that the love emotion is in us as part of our spiritual makeup; and it remains strong in us when its evocation can be appropriately elucidated against the backdrop of our ‘fallen nature’.

However, if we were to adopt a different perspective, as in taking a more enlightened vantage position, a more comprehensive understanding and explanation of different facets of the expression of love can be revealed. It is proposed here to adopt our vantage position, that all of these aspects of love in its essence emanate from our spiritual state but are subjugated by our conditioned dispositions, brought about by our biological and psychological natures. There are no different types of ‘love’ in the true sense - all our human love emotions emanate from the same unitary source, but it is in the expression of this one true love, interfered with by our ‘fallen nature’, that is different, giving rise to ‘different types of human love’.

The expressions of human ‘love’ are being modified and can come about through three branched sources corresponding to the three dimensions of our nature depending on which one is more dominant at any one moment of time – the biological, psychological and spiritual:

Biological love results from physical attractions and the most powerful source of these stems from the physiological makeup in our sex drive. This can lead to lust. For young people because of the dominant biological stage of growth they often ‘fall in love’ because of good looks and sexual attractions. Such relationship is maintained as long as these attractions remain, which would pass with time and soon contempt sets in when the effects of the psychological forces starts to work. The body is just an instrument used as an expression of love, but it has its limitations in its expression of the spiritual love where the root source is found. It cannot express spiritual love in its fullest glory and this is being universally recognized and experienced by all human beings. This is precisely why human beings are more than just biological entities. It is therefore commonly observed that most

young people often fall in and out of a 'love relationship' because it is based upon the biological and psychological attractions, more on the former than the latter.

Psychological love comes to dominate us when we become adults. As we mature we become wiser and we 'fall in love' more because of personality and charm. Mature people will then tend to 'fall in love' more due to personality attraction. This is caused by our individual psychological makeup. There are the components of personality attraction and compatibility. We have become more sophisticated and romanticism surrounds the relationship, which gives us the deception that we are really 'in love'. However, because this kind of love is based upon the psychological attractions, familiarities soon set in to breed contempt when there is no understanding on the effects of what the components of psychological love can bring. The building up of contempt makes it difficult for anyone to develop spiritual love for one another and this is the predominant reason why there are so many divorces.

Much of our love relationships are influenced by our psychology and dictated by it. Psychological love is more complex and it is a result of personality attraction and compatibility. For those who are bonded by psychology they are less likely to be able to love spiritually, more likely to love only biologically and psychologically. You would find that for those who are bonded by their psychological forces they are handicapped in evoking spiritual love for someone who is virtuous. It is the virtues of a person that attract spiritual love rather than personality. In the midst of a party of people, for example, it is often the good looks of a person with extroverted and 'bubbling' personality that attract, rather than the unassuming and quiet virtues of another person. The person who is virtuous and thus possesses spiritual qualities without the good looks and bubbling personality is often bypassed with hardly any notice. Thus, because of our overwhelming biological and psychological natures it makes the development and engendering of human virtues difficult, especially in a pluralistic materialistic society which caters more for the biological and psychological needs. In a relationship that is built upon biological and psychological reasons the enhancement and development of virtues are handicapped.

Spiritual love arises from our natural propensity to love and the source is from what C.S. Lewis refers to as 'gift love', but it is tarnished as a result of our biological and psychological natures. Spiritual love is attracted by the virtues of the person and is truly expressed even against the biological and psychological conditions, but because of our biological and psychological complexities, familiarities would soon revealed the negative aspects of the lover and the loved, and the unconditional love is then put to the test and can be eroded. The persistence of true love will then be tested with perseverance, tolerance and value-added to the relationship. There will then be enhancement and further development of virtues in such a relationship. If the source of love is spiritual and can persist then the biological and psychological conditions will then be less important; but if the biological and psychological aspects of love concur it is the highest point of love one can experienced at a human level, as long as the biological and psychological factors have no adverse effect on the following relationship. You will notice that for those who love spiritually they are able to recognize and appreciate virtues of the person who is the object of their love; as against those who love biologically and psychologically who are unable to appreciate the virtues of a person. If spiritual love can be truly attained, virtues of the person will automatically be engendered.

These are not three independent sources of love, but only different manifestations from the spiritual source. Theologians, like Letty Russell, take God's image in humanity as manifested by all of our natures, without distinguishing the biological, psychological and spiritual parts of the makeup. Many theologians who see Jesus as 'truly Man' and therefore on 'becoming human' means to be 'like Jesus' in all His aspects, have erroneously committed this line of reasoning. But if we confine ourselves 'the image of God' to only our spiritual propensity to love, that is the living expression of the 'gift love' and recognizing our 'fallen nature' as caused by our biological and psychological makeup, then we

will have a better understanding as regards to Jesus being ‘truly Man’ and ‘truly God’. ‘Truly Man’ means that Jesus is confronted with the biological and psychological forces at work, and ‘truly God’ means that these forces have failed to have any detrimental effect on His spiritual state and all there is left is the pure expression of the ‘agape love’.

When Jesus said on the cross “I thirst”, there is tendency for the theologians to interpret this as a biological utterance, but if we were to adopt the spiritual perspective to interpret this, we will come to realize that He thirst not because He has a need ‘to be loved’ (a psychological interpretation) but that He thirst for our happiness through entering into a love relationship with Him (a spiritual interpretation). In interpreting the Bible we need to take the spiritual perspective instead of our biological and psychological perspectives, the latter two are the causes of anthropomorphism or what C.S. Lewis referred to as ‘transposition from below’.

With humankind it is very different. Because of our ‘fallen nature’ (see previous chapter), we are finding it very difficult to express true love towards one another. We even ascribe to God a need ‘to be loved’ in return and all the other characteristics of our ‘fallen nature’. This anthropomorphic tendency of humans applies not only in our interpretation of the higher Being but also to the behaviours of animals (lower level beings), both of which are outside the boundaries of our direct experiences and ‘collective consciousness’. We often have the tendency to ascribe the ability to love as human love to animals. We should not ascribe to the higher or lower beings any feeling or characteristic beyond what the pointers, arrived at through logical deduction, direct.

One key pointer is derived from our definition of God as Love, a form of perfect or pure love and therefore by a consistent logical deduction there is no possibility of a need ‘to be loved’ with God. We ascribe the need ‘to be loved’ to God based upon our biological and psychological tendencies, but if we were to focus on our spiritual nature it is possible to get away from our anthropomorphic tendency, to that which the acceptance of the fundamental premises guide us. Because of our fallen nature, there is a strong conditioned tendency for us to love with some hidden conditions and we ascribe this to the higher and lower level beings as well. Upon the fundamental premise that we adopt that God is perfect Love (Agape Love) we **must** therefore interpret the nature of God through what C.S. Lewis referred to as ‘transposition from above’ and that is, there is no the ‘need to be loved’ with God.

The natural propensity to love is universal among the human species and observed to be present even among the most primitive of cultures, thus indicating that Homo sapiens *spiritulus* is unique in this one common aspect and it reflects the ‘image of God’ that is in all of us. However, this natural propensity to love can be misdirected due to our biological and psychological natures, which is determined by the derivatives of a culture. There have been many instances of misdirected love, such as in family discourses, violence, rape, paedophilia, abortion, infanticide, murders and all sorts of killings as in wars that are committed in the name of ‘love’.

Our natural propensity seems to know what it is ‘to love’ (in most cases based upon biological and psychological reasons) but under the influences of our biological and psychological natures not many actually know ‘how to love’ in the spiritual sense and what true love is. There is a great tendency for our love to be expressed because of looks and personality; and within the context of a social setting it is expressed only to those who are psychologically close to us, e.g. loved ones, family, own community and ones belonging to the same culture. This is perhaps why the biologists would consider this love emotion as purely a biological mechanism as a ‘group instinct’ that accounts for the ‘survival of the fittest’ and the psychologists would see this as a defence mechanism against the feeling of emotional insecurity.

The acts of ‘how to love’ are normally misdirected and rationalizations of championing ‘love’ and freedom are used to justify these acts. ‘How to love’ should be a natural tendency that has the

underlying source our natural propensity to love, but because of our biological and psychological states it is misdirected with the developed tendency ‘to be loved’ in order ‘to love’. This tendency ‘to be loved’ is part of our biological and psychological makeup. We have therefore to understand this strongest of all emotion that is called love, in order to understand how this can be expressed through its spiritual source.

Theological Foundation

C.S. Lewis (1991) in the Introduction of his book “The Four Loves” made a distinction between what he called ‘gift-love’ and ‘need-love’. ‘Gift love’ is a love given without condition and is the reflection of ‘God loves and God is Love’. God, our Creator, has bestowed upon us this gift of true love, an image of Himself. ‘Need-love’ on the other hand, derived from our socialization process, is a conditional love we developed because of our ‘fallen nature’. This is a very useful distinction that will serve the purpose of my exposition on the love emotion emanating from the three sources, corresponding to the three dimensional parts of our nature – the biological, psychological and spiritual. ‘Need-love’ belongs to the first two (biological and psychological) and ‘gift-love’ is the preserve of the last (spiritual).

C.S. Lewis, putting forward his views on love as a literature writer and a theologian has focused on four all-inclusive loves – **affection, friendship, eros and charity** – **all of these have components of ‘gift-love’ and ‘need-love’**. As defined by Lewis, ‘**affection**’ is the most diffused of love that is also displayed in animals, but especially shown of parents to offspring and offspring to parents; ‘**friendship**’ is an attraction between two people who are dedicated to and confided in each other; ‘**eros**’ is a state in which two individuals are ‘being in love’ caused either by sexual or personality attraction or both; ‘**charity**’ is a form of what he called ‘natural love’, a form of need love bestowed by grace from God but not to equate with the pure love of God, liken to the intuitive ‘need’ to search for Him.

All of these loves have components of what he called ‘gift-love’ and ‘need-love’, with the latter based on our vantage position traceable to our biological and psychological conditions; and the four types of love arisen as a result of interaction with the former. C.S. Lewis’ concept of ‘charity’ as being a ‘need-love’ bestowed by God through grace so that we have a need to relate to Him is a typical mode of thinking conditioned by our psychological makeup as part of our ‘fallen nature’. His exposition is a useful platform to understand the major forms of human loves, a view that is equally acceptable as expounded by other layman’s perspectives.

Celia Haddon (1985), on the other hand, in her book “The Power of Love”, writing as a journalist, described all aspects of love in the human context of every day living, all of which are different types of love in the context of its many manifestations, a position no doubt held by many. The word ‘love’ has been used to mean many things and this is the cause for confusion because there is no unitary concept to understand its source and its many manifestations. In this exposition, I am trying to bring clear concept to the meaning of love. There are **not** many different types of love; the source of all these loves originates from the unitary ‘gift-love’ (spiritual love), which is modified and ‘cathexed’ (using Sigmund Freud’s terminology) onto our biological and psychological makeup as a result of the conditioning and socialization processes.

There is a difference between a ‘need to be loved’ and that of ‘knowing your self’, and therefore to be self-centred. Some author on this subject, like Neale Donald Walsh in his book “Conversations with God”, ascribed ‘loving of self’ as a pre-requisite to loving others, when he ascribed God to have said that “The most loving person is the person who is self-centred”. By deduction, I believe that this is what he believes in and not what God said. **We all fall into the trap of allowing our psychology to**

get the better of us. It is a layman's misunderstanding of human nature often equated with the psychology of Man.

C.S. Lewis, likewise, ascribes to 'charity' as having a component of 'need love' bestowed by grace from God, not acknowledging that this self-centeredness is conditioned by our 'fallen nature'. Self-centeredness, with all its wants and desires, is a hindrance to love in the true sense of its meaning. This type of love can only be ascribed to 'psychological love' where our natural propensity to love has been modified as a result of the psychological forces at work and is not 'gift love'. What both perhaps envisage is that one has to know oneself first before one can understand his or her own propensity to love, which is quite different from being self-centred in order to love in the true sense of its meaning. Perhaps it is through the positive aspects of our biological and psychological natures that we can hope to discover the spiritual source and this is what it means by being self-centred.

The word 'love' has been used very profusely to mean many things, but in its true essence the source of all love emanates from our natural propensity to love and this is 'gift-love'. This is the essence of the 'image of God' in which we are created. The essence of the 'image of God' is neither found in our biological nor our psychological nature; it is not intelligence either and what is left is our propensity to love, our natural love emotion. This natural love emotion has no material substrate and is the reflection of our spiritual nature and a window to our souls. It is only through our 'fallen nature' that this 'gift-love' has been modified and manifested in various forms of deviations, and with the opposite, an underlying reactionary propensity 'to be loved', which is 'need-love'. Lewis would call this 'need to be loved' 'charity' (in his terminology), as a 'natural love bestowed by God through grace', but I simply call this as a reactionary propensity caused by our biological and psychological natures.

The Greeks, on the other hand, distinguished three types of 'love' for humans – 'eros', 'philia' and 'agape'. 'Eros' here is defined as a state of love between a man and a woman, a consummated experiential encounter giving man and woman the feeling of what it is 'to love' and 'be loved', is a love giving rise to the word 'erotic', traditionally depicted as passionate, physical love, stamps from our sex drive and is more biological in nature (could be understood as 'physical lust'); while 'philia' love develops as a result of psychological bonding between two people involving trust, honesty and transparency of one to the other, like friendship and close relationships; and 'agape' love is **unilateral, unconditional** reaching out in love to another, even if it is not returned or even rejected and applied to God's love, especially through Jesus Christ and to Man's innate urge for the love of God.

Here I would like to distinguish between 'agape love' and 'gift love', with the former being the preserve only to God, which is pure or perfect love. At our level we can only express true love as coming from 'gift love'. Thus in the Greeks' terminologies I would like to substitute the idea of 'agape love' with that of 'gift love' at our level of expression. The Greek's distinctions are **not** three different types of love, but the manifestations of the 'gift love' being modified and cathected onto our biological and psychological makeup resulting in the 'eros' and 'philia' forms of love, thus unifying the different concepts of love under the spiritual source. These three differentiations of love appropriately describe the three aspects of love associated with our biological ('eros'), psychological ('philia') and spiritual ('gift love') natures; more appropriately distinguished in this context as 'biological love', 'psychological love' and 'spiritual love' (with 'spiritual love' being the originating source).

True love by definition is what C.S. Lewis (1992) refers to as 'gift-love' (or referred to as 'agape love' in Greeks' terminology). There is a difference between 'gift love' and 'agape love'; the latter could only be referred to as pure or perfect love, a preserve only to God, while the former is only part of the Giver's gift to us and this is because it can be adulterated by our 'fallen nature'. 'Gift love'

represents the ‘image of God’ that is in us. There are some common essences between ‘gift love’ and ‘agape love’. In its ideal state of true expression ‘gift love’, along with ‘agape love’ should be unidirectional and unconditional which involve sacrifices made for good reasons, even at the expense of oneself. There is no condition associated with true love, which is ‘gift love’ – ‘God loves, God is love’, this is ‘agape love’ and it is this partial image in which we are created. There is no ‘be loved’ or what C.S. Lewis referred to as ‘need-love’ with God and it should also apply in its truest sense to the concept of ‘gift love’.

St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians describes the characteristics of true love as follows (1 Corinthians 13: 4-13):

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothings. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes the partial will pass away.

*When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.**”*

St. Paul’s description of the virtues of true love is as close to ‘gift love’ as can be humanly articulated. True love is different from pure love, the latter is ‘agape love’ or perfect love, which is the preserve only to God because it is uncontaminated with our biological and psychology natures.

To put it in a modern context based upon our vantage position:

The expression of true love (‘gift love’), which is a spiritual love, at the psychological level is to give without condition by being kind and good, sympathetic and at the same time emphatic, tolerant, non-judgmental, forgiving, considerate, not envious, not jealous, not boastful, not arrogant, not rude, not self-willed, not self-centred, not irritable, not resentful and believing in the good of others. These are virtues that are spiritual but manifested through our psychological makeup. True love is unconditional and unidirectional and it bestows upon the object of love value-added qualities for the furtherance of true love in the person. You love for the virtues in the person, not just good looks and mere personality. When true love truly resides there is the automatic expression of virtues in the person. It does not rejoice in wrongdoing but in truth, integrity and wholeness. True love has a high level of tolerance and is endlessly ready to trust and to give without receiving. True love will endlessly endure and never break love’s spirit.

When there is this true love nothing else matters – it needs no apology. We can only understand God’s love partially, but one day we will know it when we meet Him ‘face to face’, all partialities will disappear and we will know what perfect love is. As a child we love but when we are adults we see the distortions of love as in a clouded mirror and very often we expect to be loved in return. And all that remain is our hope, faith and love, the greatest of which is love, which will remain strong and forge through. When we meet Him face to face there will be no need for faith or for hope. Faith will give way to total vision and hope will yield to realization, but true love remains and shall prevail. And when God’s agape love meets my true love (‘gift love’) the result is an eternal bonding in perfect

philia. This is the essence of 'agape love', which we hope to express as true love ('gift love') at our level of existence and is a state we hope to aspire in our lives.

Understanding 'Gift Love' from our Vantage Position

'Gift love' which is true love in our context, is a 'one-way street' with no expectation of a return – it is unconditional and unidirectional. If a 'one-way street' love ('gift love') relationship can be established and when two of these meet there is bliss, joy and happiness for as long as it lasts until our 'fallen nature' takes over. All true love will always be tested in an arduous reality where '**familiarity breeds contempt**', where the contempt arises as a result of our 'fallen nature'. This saying has true meaning.

Celia Haddon (1985) in her book entitled "The Powers of Love" took the view that love grows with familiarity. Love may grow with some familiarities psychologically (most likely it is more affiliation or 'philia' rather than love in its true sense) but equally true is that any more familiarities will breed contempt precisely because of our 'fallen nature'. It is in the realization of the increasing expectation of 'be loved' and less of the 'to love' tendency of the both the giver and recipient as a result of familiarity that causes the relationship to falter. This is one factor that she has failed to take into accounts. The endurance of familiarity is a test for love and it is not a test many can pass because we are so bonded by our psychological complexes, with the stronger tendency 'to be loved' than 'to love'. In an ideal world where our 'fallen nature' is reconstituted into situations where all the negatives that are in people have **not** been developed because there is no need 'to fight for a place under the sun' this line of reasoning may have some credibility. Familiarity then involves only the positive emotions of 'to love' and consequently the development of good virtues in people – this kind of existence may be called 'paradise'.

Such an ideal world has been envisaged by some religions and ethical philosophies, where it is believed that societies can be made perfectible as in the Chinese ethos and perhaps in the basic belief of Islam. Some Christian denominations believe that with the resurrection of our bodies we will come back to a renewed Earth at the end of time, which we can call 'paradise' where there will be abundance of foods, all wants satisfied and a kingdom rule by God. How these visions have been envisaged can now be understood from our vantage position in understanding love from the biological, psychological and spiritual perspectives. Such visions of paradise on earth maybe possible, as long as the biological and psychological forces are no longer at work, but it is very unlikely in our present mode of existence because of the contradictions this dimension of our existence brings. If such a world exists it must be from a different dimension of existence, a place that may be known as 'paradise' or 'heaven'.

Positive emotions are reflected in the virtues of a person and these are manifested through actions and behaviours. Spiritual love focuses on the virtues and intrinsic qualities of the person rather than on personality and physical attractiveness, which are only external facades. Virtue has been defined as "conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality". Principles of morality are marked by values systems and these value systems are guided by our spiritual nature. The virtues are thus the practical attitudes and habits adopted in obedience to those principles.

Spiritual love can only be expressed through the virtues of the object of love. This is how we are able to love Jesus spiritually because He personifies all the desirable virtues that can be found in human nature. Jesus, by being human and having lived a life as we know it, enables us at once to relate to Him and identify the highest virtues that our spiritual nature yearns to aspire, thus giving us the opening to understand what it is 'to love' as 'He has loved us'. Because of our 'fallen nature' it is very difficult for us to love any other human being who is not as virtuous as He is. Yet, in spite of our being lacking in virtues, God has shown that He loves us nevertheless and this has been made known to us through Jesus Christ. His love for us as demonstrated by His life, death and resurrection, despite

our unworthiness, is known as ‘agape love’, because this love is expressed even though we find it difficult to become virtuous in every way. That is why to distinguish God’s love with our love propensity it can only be called ‘gift love’ and we can never hope to equate that with ‘agape love’.

Thomas Aquinas discussed about **natural virtues** such as temperance, fortitude, justice, prudence and **theological virtues**, such as faith, hope and love. They have been conventionally enumerated as seven because that number is supposed, when combined with its opposite number of seven deadly sins (the seven deadly sins are: pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth) to cover the whole range of human conduct. To these he adds three **intellectual virtues**: wisdom, knowledge and intuition. Adding to these are the normal virtues such as humility, understanding, patience, honesty, openness, sensitivity, consideration, kindness, compassion, mercy, care, trust, pure in heart, tenderness, receptivity, tolerance and spiritual love. The greatest of these is spiritual love and when this is attained all those virtues should follow, expressed in the context of the derivatives of each culture.

The route of ‘becoming’ is therefore to cultivate these virtues by cultivating our positive emotions in the process of discovering our true ‘self’, minimizing the influences caused by our biological and psychological natures, working towards entering into a ‘one-way street’ love relationship with God through loving our neighbours. Entering a spiritual love relationship with someone will facilitate this process of ‘becoming’.

However, the cultivation of virtues is very difficult because of our biological and psychological makeup. It is often the biological and psychological features of a person that attracts, are noticed and acknowledged and not the spiritual virtues. That is why life is a constant battle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, the battle between our spiritual propensity to love and the negative influences of our biological and psychological natures. How often are the virtues of patience, humility, honesty, openness, compassion, trust and tolerance readily recognized, really accepted and appreciated? It is always the good looks and ‘bubbling’ personality that attract. A person with inhibitive virtues who is less physically attractive and an introvert is often left unnoticed. To inculcate these virtues are therefore made difficult because there is no biological and psychological reinforcement, dependent solely upon the spiritual source. That is why we need the facilitation of someone who has demonstrated these virtues as a path of enlightenment.

A ‘one-way street’ type of love has the tendency to bring about **value-added** in a relationship, that is, through this type of relationship the giving of one party will add value in bringing about improvements to the object of love (like what we do to our children). To love someone is more than just being nice to each other, or to give material goods and comforts of life. These are only tokens of expression of love through the biological and psychological means. A truly loving relationship that is spiritual is one that will make the object of love a better person, in terms of developing the potentials in which one is endowed, in the service of spiritual objectives; and in the monotheistic religious’ teachings leading to a greater love for God. Such efforts are like the ‘wind beneath the wings’, making the realizations of God’s intention in a person develops to the fullest. A true love relationship helps the other person to discover himself/herself and to grow into self-realization towards the ‘image of God’ in which we are created. By so doing, we are on the way to fulfilling ‘gift love’ as humanly as we are able to express it.

Thus Jesus gave us an example by elevating His apostles to the pinnacle of exemplary good men of the highest human conduct. In this respect, God has given every individual who has lived on this earth every opportunity to have value-added to his or her being by challenging each to live a life in accordance to our natural propensity to love. Unfortunately, this is not a normal course of developing relationships. Many relationships are founded upon reciprocal exchanges of ‘give and take’, with the intention of getting something back from each other, rather than enhancing the ‘self-worth’ of the

other. True love is unconditional and requires the utmost of sacrifices when called upon to do so. In order to sustain a true love relationship at a human level, therefore minimum hindrance of our 'fallen nature' be allowed to enter it to the point of bringing about contempt. The effort to returning to the state of true love means that we have to constantly battle to overcome our 'fallen nature'.

Having said that, there are however exceptional people in human history that have demonstrated some extent of such true love, but in all of these cases a prolonged interference by our 'fallen nature' has been successfully overcome or held in abeyance; as in the saints who have given up their lives to tend for the sick and the poor, conscientiously in constant communication through prayers with God in self revelation through Jesus Christ, or ascetic people who lived away from society and concentrated on the love of God or Creation through prayers, meditation and reflection.

Such a living example is the life of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who founded the Missionaries of Charity. She was without doubt a living saint in our contemporary time. Her love for God reflected through her love for the 'poorest of the poor', the 'social outcasts' or 'socially unwanted' by her actions demonstrates to us the meaning of true love. She had indeed successfully entered into a spiritual love relationship with Jesus. She sees the image of Jesus in every person she cared for. Blessed Mother Teresa personifies the whole idea for the true meaning of life by developing her spiritual love to the highest extent against her disparaging biological and psychological conditions and through this, her perseverance in doing God's work. Perhaps Siddharta Gautama, the first Buddha, had similarly entered into a spiritual love relationship with the Creator, personified by the love of the whole of Creation. These exceptional individuals have entered into a sharing of the positive love emotions with God or Creation and a total faith in accepting the knowledge of the truth in the meaning of life.

The fundamental truth is that there is this 'image of God' that is found in every one of us, our spiritual propensity to love. In this respect, so much can be said for the merits of people who take vows of chastity and the renunciation of worldly things for love and services to God or Creation, however the ultimate Being is conceived to be. It is through the minimization of influences from the biological and psychological conditions or to learn to suffer and overcome under these conditions, and/or through a virtuous medium of contact like Jesus and virtuous men of other religions, that help promote the spiritual love. Under those circumstances, that emotion of true love can be greatly nurtured and grow.

Spiritual love can best be understood through our love of Jesus and people who are good in this sense. There is no wonder for those of other religions who do not know Jesus they tend to 'worship' men of good virtues. It is founded upon the sharing of positive emotions between people and the virtues that are in them. Our spiritual love is attracted by good virtues of the person and it is through these virtues that the positive emotions are revealed. True spiritual love can be found in Jesus Christ, where there is totality in giving and sacrificing and is a supreme demonstration of spiritual love, a love that is revealed through His perfect virtues, is so appealing and embraced by all who have attained spirituality, signifying that such love is the image of God in which we were created in the first place. Jesus personifies the exemplary virtues that can ever be found in a human being. Perhaps it is through aspiring to cultivate these virtues that we can say to be 'like Jesus' and not to emanate Him as a whole. This is because we can never be able to sustain spiritual love and not be interfered with by our biological and psychological conditions.

When two of these 'one-way street' loves meet and there is no hindrance from our 'fallen nature' there is bliss and happiness and peace of mind - this is perhaps what the state of heaven is like. Perhaps true spiritual love between people can endure if both parties can transcend beyond the influences of their biological and psychological forces. God expresses His pure love towards mankind without condition, and through us exercising the 'free will' He bestowed upon us He invites us to enter into a love relationship by truly loving God through loving our neighbours and His creation

without condition. In fact it is through such a state of love that the joyous feelings are being experienced, bringing about inner happiness and peace. We need to embrace this as the fundamental truth and not let our biological and psychological conditions deviate from this fundamental premise.

To know oneself one has to know our positive emotions and how these are related to our natural propensity to love – how these are to be expressed in our lives in the process of ‘becoming’ and growth of the ‘self’, a process of what Carl Jung referred to as ‘individuation’. To be self-centred, a result of our ‘fallen nature’ that comes with all the associated negative connotations is **not** our natural propensity to love, but is a modified reactionary form due to our psychological makeup. Self-centeredness reduces our natural propensity to love. To grow in love and discover our ‘self’ in our good emotions in relations to our spiritual state will enable us begin the journey to love more truly.

Perhaps there may be some elements of true love involved, but as long as our ‘fallen nature’ is tested in a marriage or even living together, our ‘fallen nature’ will be put to a test, contempt sets in and true love will be tested and may lead to erosion. In any form of a tested relationship there is always the awareness of the need ‘to be loved’ and ‘to love’ (affection love is a result of this); the giving is always measured in relation to the receiving. The familiarities of the partners that are to each his/her ‘fallen nature’ will give rise to contempt where a relationship is tested. That relationship will remain intact by compatibility, tolerance, acceptance and understanding. It is therefore very difficult for true love to be maintained between two familiar persons that are measured in terms of giving and receiving, because there are limitations in which we can give, which is after awhile, in most cases taken for granted by the other party and our fallen nature always demands something in return.

As mentioned before, loving someone is more than just being nice to each other or just giving gifts and comforts. A truly loving relationship is built upon value-added in assisting each other to discover the positive aspects of their being. This process of ‘becoming’ involves enhancing the positive emotions that can be conditioned and developing good virtues of the person in a relationship. Such a state of true love in a relationship between two persons is a rare thing because of our ‘fallen nature’, which presents great odds of this happening. It requires psychological compatibility and mutually shared understanding. At best, it is a balance where our innate propensity to love succeeds in maintaining an upper hand, thus the building up of more positive emotions and virtues in each other. This requires conscious efforts by both parties. This will determine the level of tolerance between the parties involved. If such a level of love can be attained, the biological and the psychological factors become subordinate to it. Then one can overlook the weaknesses in the psychological makeup of the person and the biological state becomes less important or more natural.

Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical paper ‘Caritas Deus Est’ addressed this problem of reconciling this apparent contradiction between the sanctity of ‘eros’ and ‘agape’ love (the latter should be ‘gift love’ at our level of interaction) by the following deliberation - “‘Eros’ and ‘Agape’ – Difference and Unity”:

“....

3. *That love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings, was called eros by the ancient Greeks. Let us note straight away that the Greek Old Testament uses the word eros only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, eros, philia (the love of friendship) and agape, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term philia, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John’s Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The tendency to avoid the word eros, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word agape, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love. In the critique of Christianity which began with the Enlightenment and grew progressively more radical, this new element was seen as something*

thoroughly negative. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity had poisoned eros, which for its part, while not completely succumbing, gradually degenerated into vice. Here the German philosopher was expressing a widely-held perception: doesn't the Church, with all her commandments and prohibitions, turn to bitterness the most precious thing in life? Doesn't she blow the whistle just when the joy which is the Creator's gift offers us a happiness which is itself a certain foretaste of the Divine?

4. But is this the case? Did Christianity really destroy eros? Let us take a look at the pre-Christian world. The Greeks—not unlike other cultures—considered eros principally as a kind of intoxication, the overpowering of reason by a “divine madness” which tears man away from his finite existence and enables him, in the very process of being overwhelmed by divine power, to experience supreme happiness. All other powers in heaven and on earth thus appear secondary: “*Omnia vincit amor*” says Virgil in the *Bucolics*—love conquers all—and he adds: “*et nos cedamus amori*”—let us, too, yield to love. In the religions, this attitude found expression in fertility cults, part of which was the “sacred” prostitution which flourished in many temples. Eros was thus celebrated as divine power, as fellowship with the Divine.

The Old Testament firmly opposed this form of religion, which represents a powerful temptation against monotheistic faith, combating it as a perversion of religiosity. But it in no way rejected eros as such; rather, it declared war on a warped and destructive form of it, because this counterfeit divinization of eros actually strips it of its dignity and dehumanizes it. Indeed, the prostitutes in the temple, who had to bestow this divine intoxication, were not treated as human beings and persons, but simply used as a means of arousing “divine madness”: far from being goddesses, they were human persons being exploited. An intoxicated and undisciplined eros, then, is not an ascent in “ecstasy” towards the Divine, but a fall, a degradation of man. Evidently, eros needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns.

5. Two things emerge clearly from this rapid overview of the concept of eros past and present. First, there is a certain relationship between love and the Divine: love promises infinity, eternity—a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence. Yet we have also seen that the way to attain this goal is not simply by submitting to instinct. Purification and growth in maturity are called for; and these also pass through the path of renunciation. Far from rejecting or “poisoning” eros, they heal it and restore its true grandeur.

This is due first and foremost to the fact that man is a being made up of body and soul. Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of eros can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved. Should he aspire to be pure spirit and to reject the flesh as pertaining to his animal nature alone, then spirit and body would both lose their dignity. On the other hand, should he deny the spirit and consider matter, the body, as the only reality, he would likewise lose his greatness. The epicure Gassendi used to offer Descartes the humorous greeting: “O Soul!” And Descartes would reply: “O Flesh!”. Yet it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves. Only when both dimensions are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love — eros—able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.

Nowadays Christianity of the past is often criticized as having been opposed to the body; and it is quite true that tendencies of this sort have always existed. Yet the contemporary way of exalting the body is deceptive. Eros, reduced to pure “sex”, has become a commodity; a mere “thing” to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man's great “yes” to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will. Nor does he see it as an arena for the exercise of his

freedom, but as a mere object that he attempts, as he pleases, to make both enjoyable and harmless. Here we are actually dealing with a debasement of the human body: no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere. The apparent exaltation of the body can quickly turn into a hatred of bodiliness. Christian faith, on the other hand, has always considered man a unity in duality, a reality in which spirit and matter compenetrates, and in which each is brought to a new nobility. True, eros tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing.

6. Concretely, what does this path of ascent and purification entail? How might love be experienced so that it can fully realize its human and divine promise? Here we can find a first, important indication in the [Song of Songs](#), an Old Testament book well known to the mystics. According to the interpretation generally held today, the poems contained in this book were originally love-songs, perhaps intended for a Jewish wedding feast and meant to exalt conjugal love. In this context it is highly instructive to note that in the course of the book two different Hebrew words are used to indicate “love”. First there is the word *dodim*, a plural form suggesting a love that is still insecure, indeterminate and searching. This comes to be replaced by the word *ahabà*, which the Greek version of the Old Testament translates with the similar-sounding *agape*, which, as we have seen, becomes the typical expression for the biblical notion of love. By contrast with an indeterminate, “searching” love, this word expresses the experience of a love which involves a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier. Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.

It is part of love's growth towards higher levels and inward purification that it now seeks to become definitive, and it does so in a twofold sense: both in the sense of exclusivity (this particular person alone) and in the sense of being “for ever”. Love embraces the whole of existence in each of its dimensions, including the dimension of time. It could hardly be otherwise, since its promise looks towards its definitive goal: love looks to the eternal. Love is indeed “ecstasy”, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God: “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Lk 17:33), as Jesus says throughout the Gospels (cf. Mt 10:39; 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25). In these words, Jesus portrays his own path, which leads through the Cross to the Resurrection: the path of the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies, and in this way bears much fruit. Starting from the depths of his own sacrifice and of the love that reaches fulfilment therein, he also portrays in these words the essence of love and indeed of human life itself.

7. By their own inner logic, these initial, somewhat philosophical reflections on the essence of love have now brought us to the threshold of biblical faith. We began by asking whether the different, or even opposed, meanings of the word “love” point to some profound underlying unity, or whether on the contrary they must remain unconnected, one alongside the other. More significantly, though, we questioned whether the message of love proclaimed to us by the Bible and the Church's Tradition has some points of contact with the common human experience of love, or whether it is opposed to that experience. This in turn led us to consider two fundamental words: *eros*, as a term to indicate “worldly” love and *agape*, referring to love grounded in and shaped by faith. The two notions are often contrasted as “ascending” love and “descending” love. There are other, similar classifications, such as the distinction between possessive love and oblation love (*amor*

concupiscentiae – amor benevolentiae), to which is sometimes also added love that seeks its own advantage.

In philosophical and theological debate, these distinctions have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them: descending, oblation love—agape—would be typically Christian, while on the other hand ascending, possessive or covetous love —eros—would be typical of non-Christian, and particularly Greek culture. Were this antithesis to be taken to extremes, the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart, admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life. Yet eros and agape—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if eros is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of agape thus enters into this love, for otherwise eros is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. Jn 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. Jn 19:34).

In the account of Jacob's ladder, the Fathers of the Church saw this inseparable connection between ascending and descending love, between eros which seeks God and agape which passes on the gift received, symbolized in various ways. In that biblical passage we read how the Patriarch Jacob saw in a dream, above the stone which was his pillow, a ladder reaching up to heaven, on which the angels of God were ascending and descending (cf. Gen 28:12; Jn 1:51). A particularly striking interpretation of this vision is presented by Pope Gregory the Great in his Pastoral Rule. He tells us that the good pastor must be rooted in contemplation. Only in this way will he be able to take upon himself the needs of others and make them his own: “per pietatis viscera in se infirmitatem caeterorum transferat”.^[4] Saint Gregory speaks in this context of Saint Paul, who was borne aloft to the most exalted mysteries of God, and hence, having descended once more, he was able to become all things to all men (cf. 2 Cor 12:2-4; 1 Cor 9:22). He also points to the example of Moses, who entered the tabernacle time and again, remaining in dialogue with God, so that when he emerged he could be at the service of his people. “Within [the tent] he is borne aloft through contemplation, while without he is completely engaged in helping those who suffer: intus in contemplationem rapitur, foris infirmantium negotiis urgetur.”^[5]

8. *We have thus come to an initial, albeit still somewhat generic response to the two questions raised earlier. Fundamentally, “love” is a single reality, but with different dimensions; at different times, one or other dimension may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love. And we have also seen, synthetically, that biblical faith does not set up a parallel universe, or one opposed to that primordial human phenomenon which is love, but rather accepts the whole man; it intervenes in his search for love in order to purify it and to reveal new dimensions of it. This newness of biblical faith is shown chiefly in two elements which deserve to be highlighted: the image of God and the image of man....”.*

Pope Benedict XVI's attempt at unifying the concepts of 'eros' and 'agape' ('gift') love and makes 'eros' aligned with the sanctity of 'agape' ('gift'), has not explained how these can be delineated and the unity be achieved. Understanding love from our vantage position of differentiating between our

biological, psychological and spiritual conditions has at least reconciled the unity of these two concepts - 'eros' and 'agape' ('gift') - and more, with 'philia' being more psychological in nature emanating from the spiritual source, the 'gift love'. It provides a more practical and understandable platform that is based upon a consistent logical framework which provides a better understanding and delineation of concepts in a more practicable way.

Spiritual love is the highest form of love ('gift love') representing the 'image of God' in which we are created, where the biological and psychological conditions become subservient to it, embracing these two aspects of human nature in combination with the spiritual source, and in its expression under that condition will give us an experiential encounter to catch a glimpse of Divine Love (Agape Love).

However, the biological and psychological aspects are the media through which our spiritual love is being expressed at our earthly level of existence. This means that the expression of spiritual love must take into consideration the biological and psychological wellbeing of the object of love but not at the expense of violating the spiritual state. If such a state of love can be attained, the biological expression of it should not be a moral issue, because the body is an instrument by which love is being expressed. The sexual expression is experiential and it invokes the most positive part of our sensory feelings and when this is founded upon spiritual love it gives the highest point of bliss at the biological level. In fact such love that is founded more on a spiritual level will make the biological union more natural and fulfilling; and if a two 'one-way street' ('gift love') love meets, it is as close to feeling what heavenly bliss is, at a earthly human level. It is then truly a case of two persons being really 'in love' at that point of encounter – **a state of unity between 'eros' and 'gift love', thus bring sanctity to 'eros'.**

Likewise, when this spiritual love is sustained through a psychological relationship for as long as our 'fallen nature' is held in abeyance, it will give rise to the highest point of bliss. And when the biological, psychological and spiritual loves are in concurrence, this is as close to experiencing the highest point of love, as it is humanly experienced between two of the humankind. This is where the **unity of 'eros', 'philia' and 'gift love' is achieved and thus only then brings about the sanctity of 'eros' and 'philia'.**

Such unity of 'eros', 'philia' and 'gift love' can only be achieved at certain moments of encounter unless the biological and psychological factors are taken out of the equation, which is humanly impossible. It is no wonder that the great love stories are the ones where one or the other party has to die, or caught in a forbidden or unfulfilled love situation while in the midst of a euphoric love relationship where the biological, psychological and spiritual loves are in concurrence that heightens the emotional experience of love at a human level. It is in such tragic encounters that we come to understand what it is 'to love' in a spiritual sense. In God's infinite wisdom, He at least has given us a window into understanding the emotional experiences that are associated with entering into a two crossed 'one-way street' ('gift love') love relationship with Him.

Through the process of 'becoming', when spiritual love is expressed through our biological and psychological well-being, God in His infinite wisdom has at least through His creation given us experientially the moment to understand the feeling of what this true love is all about. If there is an element of a spiritual love you will find that the psychological and biological expressions of this love are subservient to it and it will bring about the natural psychological and biological wellbeing. It is in such instance that we can experience the unity of 'eros' and 'gift' love.

There is then a unity in 'eros' and 'agape' love as Pope Benedict XVI explained it in his encyclical paper *Caritas Deus Est* on the subject of love, although it should be a unity only between 'eros', 'philia' and 'gift love' in our now understanding. Hopefully, this unity of love could be better understood using our vantage position. If there is true love, in the sense that this love is for the good

virtues of the person and it involves the sharing and nurturing of positive emotions, then this love can be sustained, but still under constant duress posed by our 'fallen nature' in as long as we allow familiarity of contempt to set in and becomes an impediment in expressing our spiritual love.

Developmental Stages of the Love Emotion

Humans have the natural propensity to love and this seems to be an innate part of being human, perhaps a reflection of the spiritual part of our being. This is the 'image of God' in which we are all created. Love is a natural emotion and this is demonstrably illustrated with children. All children are born with the love emotion and there is no clear definitive evidence that it is learned. By definition, the natural behavioural manifestation of the love emotion is to give and sacrifice for good reasons, with no condition of receiving and doing no harm knowingly to anyone whomsoever. It embodies total trust and faith with the expression of all that are good. Children naturally love without condition and parents naturally love their children without any conscious knowledge of any condition. Children's love is unidirectional and unconditional and in turn we love children unconditionally, made possible by the virtues found in them, unadulterated by the negative biological and psychological influences at that age. Children love and parental love for their children is the nearest experiential involvement we can relate to of what 'gift love' is all about at a human level.

Some psychologists would ascribe a child's affection towards parents to a conditioning process of reinforcements to the innate needs for foods, warmth and comfort, which the parents provide. This type of bonding can be explained from the biological perspective, but a child's love goes beyond that. Child psychologists dispute the mere biological explanation of a child's love. They observe that this natural propensity to love can be manifested beyond the normal providers of these reinforcements. It is a universal trait of children that they exhibit spontaneous expression of the love emotion without inhibitions and this propensity is not linked to any learned response.

Everyone loves a child because of this spontaneous exhibition of uninhibited emotions which are part of their virtues. How do you account for children's spontaneous love of animals, the father figure, love of other children and people in general? The problem is when the children grow up and be part of the socialization process, they have learnt and are taught to restrain, confine and discriminate in the expression of love, all for the cause of self-preservation. The reserved expression of this love is then being learnt. Children are born with 'gift-love' to signify the 'image of God' in which they are created, but the expression of this is modified, impeded by and channelled through our biological and psychological makeup as a result of the socialization process.

The early bonding of the infant to the mother is a passive one; where the child receives only what the biological needs, like foods and comforts, demand. There is the normal conditioning and reinforcement associated with the mother (or surrogate) being the provider that creates the physical and psychological bond. This type of interaction can only explain how biological affinity and psychological reciprocal affection originates. But a child's automatic responses go beyond that. As a child grows beyond the initial needing stage and starts to acquire the awareness of the 'self' (around 15 to 21 months), his or her natural propensity to love is observed to be expressed more naturally and profusely. From the child's perspective, since the child is just beginning to learn to love himself or herself, his or her love for the parents is based predominantly on his/her natural propensity to love.

However, as the child grows and develops the awareness of 'self' as part of the socialization process, there is a distinction between 'me' and 'them'. The propensity to love can still be manifested towards the 'them', with the child's love for the parents or surrogates being the strongest, until the child goes through a process of conditioning and learns about the prohibitions and 'rules of proper behaviours'. Through the development of what Freud referred to as 'defence mechanisms' the expression of this natural propensity has been modified and disguised. This is how the idea of an 'Oedipus complex' of

Freud comes about. 'Need love' has become more apparent as a result of growth and maturation. The bond between the child and his parents will eventually end-up cemented also by biology, psychology and spirit.

Having been constrained, the child's socialization process tends to focus on love of oneself, as being the utmost object of love and next to this is the love of those who are closest, who are directly responsible for providing his/her daily needs. That is why the greatest measure of love, at a human level, is to "...love your neighbours as **yourself**". That is where the 'be loved' tendency originates. Without the knowledge of what this true love is experientially, in the absence of a benchmark which we can relate to, the nearest we understand the highest form of human love is to love ourselves. Perhaps at a human level the love of parents and children is closest we can imagine of what true love is like.

The early bonding of the mother to the infant is a natural part of our biological nature. Indeed all mammals have some kinds of maternal instinct. Innocent and helpless at birth, the young would not survive but for the mothers who cater for their every biological needs, such as feeding them, giving them warmth and comforts, and protecting them from harm. The mother is the primary source of providing all the child's biological needs. In this respect, this type of bonding is no different from that of the animals. This type of maternal instinct can be ascribed to the 'software' that is installed as part of the genetic make-up. However with humans there is the additional psychological bonding on the part of the mother and child. From a psychological perspective this bonding is reinforced because of the labour the mother has to go through in order to give birth to the child – there is an emotional bond developed as being of 'one in flesh'. The mother naturally has the deeper love of the child than the father because of these biological and emotional bonding.

As the child grows and starts exploring his or her environment, the mother and father both start to play a role in the child's psychological development and a psychological bonding starts between the child and his parents, out of the identification of the parents' identities with the child. This bonding is in part stemmed from our natural propensity to love and the child becomes naturally an object of this love. It also has a psychological component in that the child is 'flesh of the parent's flesh' and close identification with each of the parent's biological identity with the child. Parental love is cemented by our biology, psychology and spirit, with the spiritual love being the motivating factor. Through the biological and psychological conditions, the spiritual love has been shaped and focused on the child being the object of love. Thus from the parent's perspective there is an element of our 'fallen nature', where 'to love oneself' (biological identity with self, that is, 'need love') is reflected in our love for the child.

Indeed 'loving our neighbour' by expressing a unidirectional and unconditional love is not easy because our neighbours' behaviours are also reflected through their 'fallen nature' and our ability to love is hampered by our own 'fallen nature'. This is perhaps why it is easier for us to love children, because they do not display their 'fallen nature' at that age and we have given allowance by lowering our own inhibition to express our natural propensity to love. Because of our own 'fallen nature' it is not at all easy for us to love without condition, but with children they are able to express their love truer because their 'fallen nature' has a lesser effect on them at that age. That is why Jesus said that unless you become like little children you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is in this respect of the uninhibited love likened to a child that Jesus was referring to. So it is with knowledge it is possible for us to learn how to love as the children love.

As a result of our socialization process we learn to 'unlove' (away from the original sense of its meaning). We gradually learn to limit our giving and self-sacrificing based on what we get in return. This type of conditional love has become unconscious and is part of our learned automatic response, a part of the defence mechanisms that have been built up to help us maintain our sanity in our efforts to

acquire 'a place under the sun'. It has survival value governed strongly by our biological and psychological natures. This has become our 'fallen nature'. By the very fact that we have to live as a community and having to share competitive resources we cannot but to develop selfishness and self-centeredness as an automatic survival response. The expression of this modified form of our spiritual love is therefore confined only to those who are close to us – our family, our community and our same culture – thus making the edict of 'loving our neighbours' very limiting. It is very difficult to get out of this bind and it requires a lot of effort to learn to love 'as a child loves' again. Much more effort is needed to love 'as Jesus loves'.

It is interesting to understand the developmental process of a love relationship between two adults. In His infinite wisdom, God created Man's natural propensity to love to be tested in a progression of biological, psychological stages with the final test of true love in the spiritual sense. This is a process of 'becoming' and discovery of the 'self', described by Carl Jung as a process of individuation. Most of us are destined to take this route of 'becoming'.

God's creation of the humankind – the natural progression towards a loving relationship starts with physical attraction. God build into the biological makeup the 'software' of attraction between two people, the source of which is in our biological state and physiological sexual makeup. For the purpose of procreation God in His infinite wisdom has made men and women at the fertile stage most physically endowed and attractive, in order to initiate this test of a true love relationship at the earlier stage of our lives. The fruit of procreation, that is having offspring, cements the biological and reinforces the psychological relationship. Through this initial affinity, then there is a chance of establishing a psychological relationship and from thereon hopefully a spiritual relationship.

The first stage of love is initiated by our biological state, after all this is the first point of attraction; and then having passed the test, the psychological state of a love relationship will be tested, whereupon our 'fallen nature' poses the greatest challenge. This is the start of 'becoming' and the discovery of 'self'. The process of 'becoming' will eventually determine the state of our soul at the end of life, measured by the extent of our returning to the state of love in which we are created.

Underlying our 'loving relationship' is something that we expect from each other. It is a game we learn to play where there is a hidden pact, where one is to give in return for something in receiving. Thus we expect 'to be loved' in order 'to love'. We have a need 'to love' (our spiritual propensity) and also a need 'to be loved' (a conditioned response, as part of our 'fallen nature'). This conditioned response is very strong in the midst of realities of our lives; to the extent it has become possessive and exclusive in the face of the biological and psychological forces at play.

That is why many of us want to look good biologically and to become more attractive psychologically in order to gain self-esteem, to be able to love someone else. Perhaps in this, some people exhort the philosophy of learning to love oneself first before knowing how 'to love', but this is only to adopt the biological and psychological perspectives without taking into consideration the spiritual part of our nature. That is perhaps why to 'love oneself' is nearest to understanding what it is 'to love'. Even Jesus recognized this and used this as a psychological mean for His listeners to understand what He meant by 'love of neighbours' for those who were not close to Him, by which He could preach His spiritual message, which was further expanded through His parable about the good Samaritan.

Our need 'to be loved' is said to be 'only being human'; and being human here is predominantly referring to our 'fallen nature'. We tend to withhold our loving tendency because we are afraid that this love is not returned and it will cause us psychological pains. Thus it is a common game we observe in developing relationships and it ends up with claim of possessiveness and exclusiveness. The strong emotion of jealousy is a reactionary response to our conditioned biological and psychological complexities indicating our possessive tendency. This type of love is unconsciously conditional and it is conditioned by our biological and psychological makeup as a learned survival

response. Once these expectations are not realized the relationship breaks down and the love upon which it is founded will be eroded. That is precisely why with humans love relationships between two persons can seldom endure and this is due to our 'fallen nature'.

The 'to be loved' tendency is responsible for the limit in which our 'to love' tendency is expressed. Although all humans have the natural propensity 'to love' it is confined and restrained from expressing it within the boundary of those who could give love in return, thus limits it to only loved ones, within family members, community and those belonging to the same culture. This limitation in the 'to love' tendency causes hatred and animosity between people of different races and cultures and is the root of interracial and international conflict, where wars are fought upon hatred or insensitivity to our natural propensity to love or the limited dictate 'to love our neighbours'.

Difficulties in the Process of Expressing 'Gift Love'

It is easy to preach that we should love our neighbours and even prescribes code of ethics to guide us, but in practice we cannot but to be dishonest to ourselves if we failed to recognize that our 'fallen nature' has made hypocrites of us all. **What Jesus referred to as 'to love our neighbours' is centred on spiritual love and not biological and psychological love**, but in order to achieve this we have to overcome our 'fallen nature'. All of us are affected by our psychology and because of this it makes loving our neighbours very difficult. Each of us has our own idiosyncrasies, which make us egoistic, self-centred, competitive and 'kiasu' ('kiasu' meaning 'not willing to lose out'). Even when we try our best to be virtuous it is very difficult for us psychologically to love someone who has little virtue. How can we love someone spiritually whose character has no virtue, except to love only for biological and psychological reasons?

If this love of neighbours is based upon biological and psychological reasons then this is not what Jesus meant by loving your neighbours. In such instance it is not the person that we hate but the non-virtuous part of his/her character, a reaction caused by our own psychological makeup. That is why He went further to relate the 'love of neighbours' to be like loving yourself. At best we can only avoid doing harm to our neighbours. That is why there is a difference between 'gift love' and 'agape love' because it is impossible for us to express pure love ('agape love') due to our psychological nature. Although this is very difficult Jesus has instructed us to overcome it by His example. He is the only human being that has overcome the negative impacts of the biological and psychological forces that confronted Him.

Examine the different types of human love as we experience it – biological love for someone of the opposite/same sex, love of friends, love of brothers and sisters, love of parents, love of people in general, love of things (like love of country, love of home, love of foods, love of idols and love of money and all it represents) – all these types of love may be explained from a biological and psychological perspective and not necessarily through virtues. Love of the opposite/same sex can be due to our biological and psychological conditions; love of friends can be predominantly come about through personality attraction and provision of psychological needs; love of brothers and sisters can be easily explained as due to our biological state and the psychological conditioning through the socialization process; loves of parents and people in general have a composition of biological and psychological determinants; love of things can be traced to satisfying our biological and psychological needs. These are not different sources of love, but are only manifestations of the one same spiritual source being modified and cathected onto different objects of love. In all of these the underlying source of love comes from our spiritual propensity to love, but are being cathected onto different objects that satisfy our own biological and psychological needs. 'Gift love' will be tested when it can endure and transcend beyond the biological and psychological conditions and is attracted by the virtues of the object of love.

Examine the other aspects of our love emotion, for example, ‘love of nature’, ‘love of music’, ‘love of neighbours’, ‘love of someone with virtues’, ‘Love of God or Jesus’ – where love is expressed for intrinsic reasons and virtues, it cannot be explained from a biological and psychological perspective. All these loves represent the essence of beauty and goodness in the objects of love and it is not the materialistic reason why this is so. It can only come directly from the spiritual part of our being. However, this has to be extended beyond self-centeredness to that of loving other human beings in order to express this spiritual love in its proper nature. Perhaps the key to salvation or enlightenment is to enrich and act upon this discovery of our natural spiritual propensity to love and try extends this to the love of our neighbours even among the extremely unlovable, at least by avoiding doing harm. In the whole of what Christ did, in terms of His teaching, life and resurrection this is what He has demonstrated.

In our normal life we always want to seek out the positive emotions – we want to feel good and be happy, this is our natural pursuit and it is an indication that our natural love emotion is trying to break through amidst our ‘fallen nature’. As a result of our socialization we are reserved in expressing this natural propensity to love and it is being modified and channelled into other forms of permissible activities that are of self-interest. Our empathy for our human beings is held in reserved and is expressed only when it concerns us. This is made more complicated by the fact that we have learned to be self-centred and in order for us to express this propensity we divert it to other forms of activities that serves our own interests. We tend to seek out friends that enhance our positive emotions – this presents a pitfall in our courting relationships because in this type of encounter it is often the positive emotions of both parties that are displayed and not the negative ones. We seek for diversions in sports, entertainment, holidays, composing plays (as a form of projection), having parties, indulgences in drugs, hobbies, etc. so as to bring about the experiences of our positive feelings (but mistakenly treated as emotion), but these are still self-interest directed.

It is due to our expression of our spiritual love misguidedly expressed through our psychological nature that helps popularize the entertainment industry. It is a mean by which we hope to develop our positive emotions, but at the same time it is a channel to displace our psychological woes, like aggression and projection of our biological and psychological demands. All sports have the underlying ground for channelling our aggressive emotion and competitiveness under the guise of pursuing the nurturance of our positive emotions. Our indulgences in the ‘rich and famous’, thus making the industry a highly profitable business, is a form of projection to satisfy our own biological and psychological needs.

Underlying this emotional drive in these deflections of our spirit is our urge to do our utmost with the talents each of us is endowed with by God, but because of our psychological makeup it is being channelled to achieve self-enhancing interests. It is in the expression of the positive emotions that our natural propensity to love is channelled and finds its outlets. However, these positive love emotions may be channelled and cathexed onto our psychological make-up and be preoccupied with all the worldly things at the cost of not relating these to our spiritual nature and therefore leads to ‘misdirected love’. Instead of getting in touch with our spirit where the source of our positive emotion of love originates, we tend to look for biological or psychological outlets for connections to our positive emotions. ‘Misdirected love’ can lead to sin (see above).

All these forms of ‘misdirected love’ have become the derivatives of cultures. That is perhaps why in some social systems or ‘ways of life’ many of these undesirable manifestations of ‘misdirected love’ have been discouraged. This is perhaps why in some cultures, e.g. the traditional Chinese and Muslim cultures, unlike the Western influenced modern-day culture, the biological features of both male and females as reflected in their dress codes have been subdued, so that there is less chance of loving someone merely upon biological reasons; and in fact, their social conduct in terms of extroverted behaviours are discouraged so that the chance of loving for psychological reasons is being redirected.

It is interesting to examine the literatures of these cultures that romances are more focused on the love of the virtues of the persons who are in-love than that which the biological and psychological features emphasize. On the other hand, the more desirable aspects of expressions of these ‘misdirected love’ like the arts, music, literature, paintings and other art forms are being encouraged and thus leave a positive mark reflected on the true level of civilization of that culture. These have become the derivatives of history and culture.

Because of our natural innate propensity to love, the need ‘to love’ will emerge stronger than the need ‘to be loved’ where the effects of our ‘fallen nature’ can be subjected to control. Our ‘to be loved’ propensity is a result of our conditioning and because this demands our immediate attention while we have to survive in this world, it looks as though it has a stronger pull and we have learnt the behaviours to expect love in return. This battle between ‘to love’ and ‘to be loved’ creates conflict in relationships. The four different types of loves mentioned and described by C.S. Lewis reflect this battle where in each of them there is a component of ‘gift love’ and ‘need love’.

However, if the ‘be loved’ (‘need love’) has successfully been taken out of the equation, it is the natural propensity ‘to love’ that persists and it is possible to manifest this love emotion in situations where the interference of our ‘fallen nature’ is being minimized. That is why for some cultures these interferences from our ‘fallen nature’ are being minimized at the societal level of influence by adopting a ‘way of life’ based upon a homogenous set of values and the emphasis on the development of a common set of virtues to apply throughout the hierarchy of a social system.

What about ‘altruism’? The source of altruism can only be found in the emotion of love – the love to do good, even against the interferences of our biological and psychological conditions. This tendency can be broken through when the occasion demands which requires us to do something good that concerns us. How does one accounts for empathy and compassion? Again, the emotions that are associated with these can break through in situations when the occasions call for it, which matters to us. Often these breakthroughs are associated with sufferings when all that are done and could be done for seeking out the displacements of our positive emotions failed. Through these means we are then able to empathize. These manifestations are seen as traces of the true nature of love.

True love is a ‘one-way street’. And then, what about the love of God, and more pertinent is the love of Jesus? For those who love Jesus, it cannot be explained from the biological and psychological perspectives because there is no physical likeness of Him and there is no opportunity of a psychological bonding. Our love for Jesus can only be explained from our spiritual source, made possible through his physical presence on earth as someone whom we can relate to, especially for those who suffer and it is through this that the strongest bond of love can ever be developed at a human level, far transcends that of any human-to-human love, to the extent that there are many who are prepared to die for this love. Thus learning to love Jesus offers us the channel in the process of ‘becoming’ by which we understand God’s image in us.

Although through our conditioning we have learnt to love ourselves first above all else as a benchmark measure of the highest point of human love, there are times when we do not even love ourselves. Then we have a problem of understanding and expressing this love. We must first get rid of loving ourselves in order to love and bring this to the level of Jesus’ new covenant when he said, “**A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have love you**”. This commandment was given to the twelve apostles who knew Jesus intimately. Although Jesus said “...to love your neighbour as yourself” it was said in the context of a public teaching where loving oneself is the greatest measure of human love, but this measure fails in the instance when one does not even love oneself. By His new commandment Jesus at once gave us a new benchmark measure of what true love is, transcending beyond our ‘fallen nature’. At best we can only learn how to express this ‘true love’ through the love of Jesus and all other things should follow.

The great conflict that is generated between our spiritual love and our biological and psychological tendencies is insurmountable. For example, when someone loves someone spiritually (for the virtues) there is always the element of not understanding the strong emotion that is involved to the extent of willing to be a servant of the object of love, but now understanding it from our vantage position we are having difficulties in understanding the strong emotion that is generated as a result of conflict with our biological and psychological natures. However, through the love of Jesus, God offers us a concrete pathway of loving Him through the love of Jesus because we can now manifest this love in a more profound way than to 'love our neighbours'. That kind of love expressed by Jesus can never be expressed in the fullest sense with the humankind. That is why it is rather presumptuous of us to aspire to be 'like Jesus'.

Our love emotion is very difficult to cope with because it is often misunderstood with a popularized and confusing view of what it really is and where it comes from. We have a problem expressing our love emotion because this can be misunderstood and because of our 'fallen nature' we get hurt if this love is not returned. When this is not well understood and it becomes out of control, harm may be caused to oneself as in suicidal tendency and others, even possibly against the loved one. Perhaps we know what it is 'to love', but for many it is very difficult to know 'how to love'. Most of us indulge in "living with a veil so darkly". We are so preoccupied with 'here and now' that we are clouded by events to see the truth. We have only one mind and our attention span can only deal with events that immediately concern us and what concern us most are our biological and psychological needs at every moment of our lives while we battle with these forces in our attempts to 'survive' in this material world of ours.

We are inundated through the media with all the ideals of a make-belief world where the heroes and heroines are the most dashing and good-looking as they come and all ended up with all the wants in the world and they 'live happily ever after'. People wish to fall in love with the most dashing, debonair, charismatic, glamorous and good looking as presented in the movies like characters depicted in the James Bond movies, which are but biological and psychological in nature. We have overlooked the importance of loving someone solely upon his/her own virtues, which is really spiritual love. We have been indoctrinated with a make-belief life-style and expectations and as a result find difficulties in coping with what true love is really all about. We aspire to live in fantasies (fictitious stories, pictures, fairy tales, etc.) – which add to making things difficult. We have been indoctrinated to aspire to become 'rich, beautiful and famous' in that order. All of our relationship problems arise as a result of the conflicts that come with the reality of confronting the real meaning of life with the misleading ideals that are ingrained in us. There are instances when all these earthly material life-styles have been accomplished and yet all these people failed to find happiness from within, which revealed that the 'meaning of life' is more than just earthly accomplishments.

Understanding and accepting our true nature would at least enable us to aspire in the right direction and be able to control our expression of the love emotion – to see the different types of relationships for what they are and not what the fantasies force us to believe. In order to be able to control our love emotion we must recognize its displacements and be realistic to accept them for what they are. Within the framework in which we analyse our human nature and the love emotion, taking the vantage position we have adopted in looking at human nature from our biological, psychological and spiritual perspectives, we can then understand the forces that confront us from within and without, that enable us to control them.

For example, if our love emotion is triggered biologically then we have to accept it for what it is – just a sexual attraction. If we are 'in love' because of personality and charm, we must accept this as due to our psychological makeup and then when we decide to get married or live together, we have to recognize this arrangement as a test of compatibility, companionship and commitment to responsibility, not to expect this as a union predominantly motivated by our spiritual love in that that

it will last forever. If we find difficulty in loving someone because of his or her vices due to some flaws in his or her character, it is because of his or her psychological makeup and hampered by our own psychological makeup. We have to recognize and accept these for what they are in order to be able to control the conflicts they generate. Ultimately it is the spiritual love that represents the highest point of achievement in a relationship; it is a state where we can attempt to develop but it is very difficult to achieve because of our 'fallen nature'.

Spiritual love will be tested in a psychological relationship by the process of 'becoming', where there is value-added in that relationship and assisting each other in developing good virtues and positive emotions. Knowing about these forces we can then be able to consciously work towards enhancing our spiritual love propensity. If we are called into a love relationship with the Creator, then we have to live a life where our 'fallen nature' is kept at bay and concentrate on activities that promote good virtues and positive emotions in self and others. If we take a realistic view of love in the context of these relationships we will then be able to at least ensure that that relationship will endure.

If we need to grow in our love relationship, we have to avoid the pitfall of our 'fallen nature', concentrate on developing only the positive emotions and assist each other to discover himself/herself in the process of what Jung referred to as 'individuation', by adding value to each other towards the fulfilment of the 'self', making efforts to return to the 'image of God' in which we were created. Ultimately, in such a relationship we should help each other to love our Creator to the highest point with all our hearts and all our souls.

The same can be said about controlling our 'fallen nature'. If we know the forces that are at play, we can aspire to limit the interferences of our 'fallen nature' in order that the strength of our love emotion can be maintained. We do this unconsciously when we seek diversions through participation in sports, recreation activities and all sorts of distractions like entertainments, going on holidays, indulgences in parties, foods, plays and music, etc. Not that these indulgences are bad but we should realize that these are only means by which we strive towards developing the awareness of our spiritual self. We must be consciously aware that these displacements are directed at self-interest. Knowing the forces we can even go further to understand and overlook the interferences of our biological and psychological natures and be prepared to forgive and deemphasize their influences. It is a matter of understanding and be consciously aware where these forces are coming from in our daily interaction with life that we can hope to overcome them.

To illustrate how this can be done, I can describe an episode of an encounter, which I am sure many can share and relate to:

“Susan and Tom were travelling in a car and Susan decided to invite a mutual friend who lived nearby for lunch at a certain restaurant in the vicinity. It was the good intention of Susan to suggest that she contacted the mutual friend, Jim; no doubt someone who is pleasant and both Susan and Tom shared a high level of affection for as a friend, to come along. He was contacted on the mobile phone to meet at that restaurant as soon as possible, thinking that it should not take too long a time for both parties to be there. When the Susan and Tom arrived at the restaurant, Jim was not there. Susan and Tom had to wait for another 30 minutes before Jim arrived. No doubt the waiting must have some psychological effect on Susan and Tom, creating some tension and may even have some biological effect because both of them were feeling hungry. As soon as Jim arrived, Susan asked “Why are you late?”, to which Jim retorted, “You think you can expect me to come immediately when you called? I have to dress myself up and finish doing the things I was doing. I am doing both of you a favour by coming because you asked me only at the last minute”. To which Susan said, “You don’t have to shout and maybe you could be a little more considerate”. This started an array of exchanges that could only expressed negative feelings on both sides. Through these exchanges there was a relationship problem due to psychological interaction. The good intention and the fond feelings between friends were

conveniently forgotten. Tom, on the other hand was laughing and was unperturbed by what was going on. Tom, knowing what forces were at work saw this episode as rather amusing, and was able to overlook the biological and psychological interferences in a relationship that has as its foundation a good feeling of love and friendship; whereas the parties that were involved in the exchanges were so caught up with the psychological effects caused by the exchanges that the more important truth was forgotten”.

How often we are mistaken for our good intentions and how often we are misunderstood for our love? This is part of our psychological make-up and it is this that is often the block to our natural expression of our love emotion. It is a matter of attitude and if we can understand the nature of our emotions then we can perhaps hope to overcome the negative effects they can cause. If we adopt a different framework in understanding we can perhaps see things in a better light and be in control.

It is part of our human nature, that knowing the truth about the workings of things or understanding the ‘order of things’ that will set us free – only through knowledge and the truth of how the mechanisms work that we are able to control and avoid interferences of our ‘fallen nature’. To know how our ‘fallen nature’ comes about we can learn to forgive. We can forgive because we understand the forces that are at play. Only when we know the truth of these forces are we confident to go forward, overlook and forgive. Only through our knowledge of the forces that are responsible for our ‘fallen nature’ that we are able to strive towards ‘becoming’ to discover, condition and reinforce our positive emotions. Then we are on the road to enlightenment in the Buddhist faith, the discovery of the ‘mandala’ in Jung’s concept and redemption in the Christian faith.

Jesus must therefore know the truth about the nature of things and the meaning of life for Him to have sacrificed Himself on the cross and died for the love of us, the least of deserving creatures. He must surely know the three forces of human nature that are at play and his divinity is proven when He had succeeded in not allowing the biological and psychological forces to have a detrimental effect on His spiritual state, even though He had to confront these forces as being ‘truly Man’. With Him, His spiritual state reigns supreme throughout the entire course of His life – in this sense it is why He is ‘born without sin’.

Our propensity to love is the image of God that is in us but because of our biological and psychological natures it makes it difficult for us to express it. This natural propensity urges us to love everybody but because of the psychosocial forces at work we are confined to only loving one person in a contractual relationship and this is unreal. The love of one in a contractual relationship is only an issue of fidelity and commitment to responsibilities. When we try to express our love for more than one person outside a contractual relationship it is seen as unnatural. Even if we try to express that love we are always interfered with by our own psychology of wanting to have self-esteem and satisfaction, with our biological urge so strong that there is tendency to commit sin in the process of loving. To be able to love more than one person is a natural part of our being, the source of which is found in our natural propensity to love, but it is in the ‘how to love’ expression of this spiritual love that determine whether a sin has been committed. Often it is the biological and psychological part of us that interfere with the expression of this love.

The expression of the love emotion especially for the good reasons should not be apologetic. If our love is based upon our spiritual intention then there is no apology needed and we should not be afraid to express it. By our true nature it is very normal to love as many people as possible who are virtuous; it is only through our biological and psychological reasons that bind us socially only to love one person in a contractual relationship. In fact this is unnatural and it is only through the derivatives of social prohibitions that help define this as sinful. Being bonded by our biological and psychological forces and predominantly expressing our love dictated by these two natures indeed there is cause for the prohibition, but if this love is expressed spiritually there is no need for apology.

Indeed, the problem in a contractual relationship is to find someone who can respond appropriately based on spiritual love where the love is unconditional and unidirectional. Where both love is unconditional and unidirectional and it crosses then there is the highest point of bliss that can be experienced at the human level until our 'fallen nature' sets in.

Children naturally love and this love is unconditional and unidirectional until the socialization process takes its course. Children love spontaneously without inhibition and because of this all children are natural objects of love. If our 'fallen nature' is conditioned as a result of socialization, realizing the forces that are within us we can 'will' to condition our love emotion. We should return to the stage of love of children and that is why Jesus said that 'the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these' and 'unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven'. In interpreting this saying of Jesus, it is not the biological and psychological sense that one should be 'like children' but the spiritual sense of what children represents in terms of true love. Every means should be undertaken to encourage the expressions of our natural propensity to love, especially the love of God and our fellowmen. Love helps to bring about positive emotions and happiness.

When people who are 'in love' they feel joyful, happy and forgiving. When two persons who are 'in love', they tend to be uninhibited and are honest to one another. The expressions of love can be in different forms influenced by the psychological conditions, social norms and cultures. Different cultures have different ways of expressing love – e.g. Negro spirituals, charismatic services, festivities, etc. – and every form of expressions should be encouraged. Thus some religions may have to make provisions for different cultural expressions of love, whether through music, customs or rituals, like paying reverence to ancestors. We should not allow our 'fallen nature' to react negatively to the different ways of expressing the positive love emotions, even these ways may not be conducive to our own background, upbringing and culture. For example, the conservative view held by orthodox Christians on the charismatic movement, a form of services that encourage the emotional expression of the spirit. It is in avoiding other people exploiting that expression of love that one should be aware of and this requires one to be liberated and in control.

To be in control requires one to know exactly where the sources of our love emotion come from and be able to get on top of it. We must give recognition to our 'fallen nature', accept it, but at the same time make every effort to overcome and get on top of it. We can 'condition' our love emotion and this can be achieved by getting away from our 'fallen nature' and to live in an environment where the expression of love is practised and encouraged. Since the biological and psychological factors that are responsible for modifying our spiritual nature, we likewise need to use the biological and psychological forces to overcome our 'fallen nature'. There is therefore a case for celibacy for those who opt for a life of service to God by taking up a Christian vocation, thus recognizing the deterring factor of our biological and psychological conditions in their attempts to establish a loving relationship with God. The call for celibacy must be for that reason and not that to regard women as evil and temptress as of old. This perhaps represents a higher degree of love for God. Having said that it must be recognized the great challenges the celibates have to undergo in order to remain celibates because of the very strong biological and psychological forces that are at work.

It is easier for one to practice the expression of the love emotion in a community where the love emotion is encouraged, disciplined and shared among its members. Such conducive condition should be generated for celibacy to foster. That is why in Buddhism it recommends the path to enlightenment by getting away from sufferings, renouncing all worldly attachments and pursuits, to live within a community of like-minded individuals and adopt a communal life of poverty, charity, prayer and meditation. Christianity also adopts this practice of asceticism and monasticism, where religious leaders, upon an accepted order of discipline in living, founded these communities. This cultivation of our positive emotions can also explain why some religions (or ethical philosophy like the Chinese)

believe in the perfectibility of life on earth, the aim is to achieve a society that would bring about love and peace in consonance with our spiritual nature.

The body is the instrument of expression of our emotion. If love is at a spiritual level and if this is the medium by which love is being expressed between a man and a woman, except that one should be aware of the responsibilities or consequences that come with it, there should not be a sense of guilt accompanying the physical act of 'making love' in such a mindset. One only should be aware of sin, and this is understood as something that we knowingly do or failed to do that will affect another individual's and our relationship with God, or the identification with the core of goodness that is in every one of us. In all of our life endeavours this should be our guiding principle and out of this, our love emotion should be encouraged to be expressed, even if it were to build a society that can enhance more of our love emotion, if it is at all possible.

The reality in today's societies is that most of our love emotion is institutionalized. Institutionalized love leaves to charitable organizations to express love separate from personal involvement. Compassion is expressed through donations to some charitable organizations, thus taking out the emotional bond that goes with expressing love. While such organizations are performing a good deed and the people voluntarily involved are genuine, it faces the danger of alienating the personal involvement of donors in expressing the emotion of love, whereby donors may think that by so doing they have replaced the responsibility of 'loving our neighbours'.

How often we encounter people who are prepared to donate to charities, but at the same time when it comes to taking responsibilities and to help someone who requires compassion and self sacrifices then decides not to use his/her discretion but just follow the rules to the detriment of that someone. A pluralistic society is encouraged to flourish amidst a life style of deception, contradiction and confusion. Such institutionalized compassion in a society compounds our efforts to discover the true essence of the 'self' and of 'becoming', thus alienating us from each other and from the true path of entering into a personal love relationship with God through our own private personal emotional experiences.

The catastrophic destruction of lives in the tsunami in South-East Asia on Boxing Day of 2004, an act of Nature, had demonstrated the universal response of compassion triggered off by our inner propensity to love our neighbours – it is in such difficult times that bring out the best of our spirit. In the sight of God such calamity of mankind in its history is for a purpose and the injustices of it as perceived by us must be viewed in relations to His Plan and it must transcend beyond this materialistic world of ours. It was reported in the media that even beggars in India lined up in the banks to give money for the relief efforts of tsunami's victims. In the sight of the Almighty surely these people gave much more than those political leaders of nations that supposedly had given billion of dollars in aids through organized bodies. Ultimately, it is not in the dollars and cents that count, but the motive behind it that matters. There are many who responded emotionally out of their love of neighbours through some small measures from the heart and high regards should go to those who volunteered their services to those who were affected by this catastrophe.

On the other hands, it is also in such times that the worst of our psychological makeup is displayed. It is in the worst of our nature to find people who are taking advantage of people who are in a vulnerable position by doing such thing as trafficking the young and vulnerable and the exploitation of aids that were given. Organized charities were having their field days in raising funds and saw this as an opportunity to pile up their coffers, no doubt for other charities. The entertainment and media industry has a field day commercially exploiting the situation. Such a situation provides politicians and the media the opportunity for public spectacle of expression of compassion because this is good for the enhancement of public image, but for many their private actions prove otherwise.

Politically many nations responded to the situation and gave assistance in terms of so-called aids, some are in the forms of loans and assistance in ‘helping to rebuild the economy’, but looking at it economically, as a good opportunity to stimulate the economy of the more developed countries; after all, the aids would eventually be channelled back into the economy of the donor countries. Organized compassion has its heyday in such and other international situations that has as its source the appeal to the spiritual part of human nature but is used for other ulterior motives.

The problem with human love is that we know what it is ‘to love’ but we are not very good at knowing ‘how to love’. Very often we think that by some actions we are expressing our love for someone, but unknowingly by these actions we have created problems for someone else. To know ‘how to love’ involves private actions, efforts and self-sacrifices and it is not something many of us like to do. To express love at the human level we tend to give and do things that make the person biologically and psychologically comfortable but unfortunately our own psychology expects this to be returned and therefore makes it difficult for us to express love in a spiritual sense because of the interference of the psychology of self and others. True ‘how to love’ relations require one to give without expectation of return, and from a human level, involve concerns for the biological, psychological **and more importantly the spiritual** wellbeing of the object of love. If love is founded at the spiritual level, the expression of it is of a selfless nature and perhaps understood in what Jesus said that the greatest expression of love is to be a servant of all.

However, in the midst of our reality of the existing world we have to strive to cultivate our love emotions and this is a process of ‘becoming’, or a discovery of the essence of ‘self’, or to use Jung’s term the ‘mandala’, a path in which we should cultivate our positive emotions leading to the love of our neighbours or the love of God. The soul loves, but our ‘fallen nature’ sins and our derivatives make us hypocrites. This journey towards the discovery of the individual ‘self’ involves consciousness and the awareness of who ‘I am’ in relations to our individual life experiences.

We all began life with our natural ‘gift love’ emotion (our natural propensity to love), which has no individuality. Through our sense perceptions we bring into awareness our individual body and through our socialization process it brings into consciousness our individual personality and character, which we can identify ourselves as individual persons, with our conscious and unconscious dispositions and our value systems, making up the ‘self’. ‘Self consciousness’ is brought about by our sense perceptions (our biological state); intermix with our emotion (spiritual nature) and intelligence (biological and psychological states). In this process, we have distorted our natural propensity to love, the true nature of our ‘self’, with mixtures of good and bad emotions and the resultant virtues or lack of virtues that go with them. Upon ‘becoming’ it involves the growth and discovery of the individual ‘self’ with the positive emotions (and virtues that come with them) and how these are related to our natural propensity to love.

‘Becoming’ involves bringing into consciousness the knowing of the ‘mandala’, the true essence of the ‘self’. Only then, when we find our ‘mandala’, can we be able to love God in the way God wants us to love Him. It is more through the emotional path; with understanding (intellect) and becoming more aware (consciousness) and the confidence brought about by the ‘mandala’, through action by doing God’s work that we can cross into a two ‘one-way street’ love relationship with God. It is through knowing how to love as God loves that is at the heart of salvation and enlightenment.

The process of life being adulterated by our biological and psychological natures is then to return to the state of love in which we were created. As the words of the song ‘Lord, You are Beautiful’ says:

*“O Lord, please **light the fire**
That once burned bright and clear*

*Replace the lamp of **my first love**
That burned with holy fear.”*

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