

THE POINT

A bimonthly e-newsletter produced by the Center for Spiritual Learning, Tagaytay, Philippines

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Time to reclaim love

It's not just something I can give or withhold from people; it's who I am.

While remembering the Supreme, spiritual love is expressed through the eyes



JUDY Johnson remembers a time when she told her daughters, “I love you,” and they merely shrugged, saying, “Oh, Mom, you’re just welling up!”

She now knows why. Although she did feel deep love for them, her actions weren’t convincing. She decided to cut short her work week to three days so she could spend time with them. The children finally saw that mom meant what she said, having created space in her life where they were top priority.

“Love has become something that people merely give lip service to,” says Johnson, a Canadian organizational development consultant. “Not everyone gets to follow through with action. To love means to express it.”

Only for some

She recalls that before she became a student of the Brahma Kumaris, her notion of love was shallow, nothing much more than a

commodity in an attractive box, dispensed among a small circle of people.

“I gave love only to those I chose, never to everyone. It was very much about me and (the recipients)—spouse, children, parents, friends. It didn’t usually go much farther. And I required a return.” She realized that despite her keen intelligence, something substantial was lacking in her life.

This all changed when she established a familial relationship with the seniors of the Brahma Kumaris, which is run by women. “There’s an awful lot of smart people in the world right now,” Johnson notes, “but what the world needs is the love of a mother. Before I took up meditation, busy-ness provided momentary satisfaction for jobs well done, accomplishments and praise. It wasn’t happiness.”

Johnson cites AHA moments from her Brahma Kumaris studies that redefined love and, consequently, happiness. She quotes a chil-

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PROGRAMS

JULY

- **Cooking for Peace: Food for the Soul and Body**, July 9, 9am-4pm Sun
- **Inner Peace Inner Power**, July 28-30, 4pm Fri-3pm Sun

AUGUST

- **Beyond Seeing**, August 13, 9am-4pm Sun
- **Deepening Meditation Experiences**, Aug 12-13, 9m Sat-3pm Sun
- **Inner Peace Inner Power**, Aug 25-27, 4pm Fri-3pm Sun

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dren's book from the Living Values program (a guide for teachers and parents to help children reflect on qualities) that sums it up: "Love means wanting what's best for another."

She gives due credit to British international lecturer Mike George, author of "The Seven Myths of Love" for her present view on how love evolves over time. The initial demonstration is physical but, as the involved parties mature, love is expressed through moral support or and emotional accessibility for the other. The next level is when love becomes a mental connection through which people can create and share ideas. The ultimate stage is spiritual expression.

Johnson explains: "Somebody just feels that you've got them. You understand who they are and appreciate and respect their journey. If that brings you together, great. If it takes you apart, what's most important to you should be a spiritual love for that other soul, so that whatever journey they then embark on, you wish them well."

Circle of love

She recalls the numerous phases that love has gone through in her life. "I always wanted what's best for another but I still had needs, desires, hopes and expectations." Her heart opened up when she learned Raja Yoga meditation. It taught her to lay bare her fears, masks and little egos.

"I discovered that I am love. The very nature of my being is the energy of love. It's not something I give or withhold from people; it's just who I am. A being of love radiates, vibrates, expresses. If someone comes in front—that person in front of me in a queue, waiting for a cup of coffee, that driver who just cut me off on the road, that security guard who took my whole bag apart at the airport—they get love, too. Everybody in the world should be included in that circle of love so that the energy keeps expanding inside of me and extending farther outside."

The challenge is maintaining love in an intensely materialistic world, Johnson says. Love has been widely interpreted as a business that one can invest in. Occasionally, she encounters people who define love as pain—as in "love hurts."

She explains that this is because the innate love in each person has become diluted.

"The 'nutritional value' of our love, so to speak, has been watered down so it no longer nourishes us. We are starving; we've been drinking the weak version of love for so long. We're really hungry, so hungry that we'll grab at anything."

Also, love as we now know it comes with an additive—attachment. "It's the feeling of owning somebody. This is the basis of romantic love—you're mine, I am yours. Attachment is dependence on someone's presence, attention, love. This makes me weak."

Shrunken heart

Sometimes the emptiness is filled with such substitutes as excessive shopping or indulging in social media at the expense of quality face-to-face interaction.

Johnson laments, "We are robbed of love by activities that don't feed the soul; they only temporarily distract us from that emptiness. We live in addictive societies. An addiction simply means you keep using something, but still spiral down and need a little bit more each time."

We've also all encountered the "shrunken heart" syndrome, Johnson points out. "That's a heart that has been hurt so many times, that the walls have become too thick for love to get in."

The remedy for stolen love, she says, is just to re-claim it. "Energy flows where my attention goes. Take back your love from whatever has stolen it. Where you pick one thing, you'll do less of the other next time you feel empty. Instead of hitting the automatic play button and doing what you always do—from shopping to Facebook—take a moment and stop. Meditate and you will be full."

She likens meditation to a nourishing cup: "The antidote for diluted love and its additive of attachment is to concentrate on my experience of pure love, experiencing myself as a being of love. That's the soul. I, the soul, not me, the body, not me, Judy—woman, mother, Canadian... The soul, the being, the beautiful energy that's inside this body. And then it's up to God. Let the purest energy of the universe shower down on you. Soak it up. Become a sponge under the faucet of God's love and drink up! It's easy to let go of attachment when you have pure love in you. The heart is a little bit like a toddler. You can't take anything away from a toddler unless you give something else. It's time to transform. Time to love."

Reflection Exercise

Draw three hearts inside each other—a small, medium and large one. This represents your capacity to love.

Recall three times in your life when your heart grew one size.

Reflect on how your heart felt on those three times. Says Johnson: "The true antidote for a shrunken heart is to extend it in a situation where your instinct says, 'Let me shrink and protect.' Do the opposite of what your instinct says: Give now. That does not mean to become dependent but to give love."

Now reflect on where in your life your heart needs to expand just a little bit. What would it take to do that? "There will be situations when we'd rather be a little hard-hearted. That's actually when I should give a bit of love. I don't need to take sorrow, but I need to give respect, kindness. I need to expand my heart a bit with compassion. How do I love this person? It is all about me actually. How big can my heart grow and can it hold all of humanity? Extend it in situations that are challenging. Be the first to bring love into the situation."



Time for sharing wonderful experiences



ENTHUSIASM and openness left no room for generational differences.

'MINDFUL Journeys': Cool participants, fun workshop in a pine forest setting.

Triple-workshop weekend in the Philippines' Queen City of the South

With clouds rolling by almost non-stop, 'Mindful Journeys' was a lively discussion with intermittent pauses just long enough to appreciate the pine forest setting at appropriate moments.

AT THE HEIGHT of a hot, humid summer day in Cebu, 572 kilometers south of Manila (Philippines), participants in a Brahma Kumaris workshop remained cool in a pine forest setting, the scents and colors of nature heightened by a brief drizzle.

They had driven about an hour from the crowded city up mountain roads to this place called Cantipla in Tabunan district, assigned by provincial zoning to commercial flower farming. The workshop, "Mindful Journeys," was held at the weekend residence of Wilfredo and Joy Sa-a, friends of the BK community. Willy and Joy had planted their two-decades old hillside property to evergreens, fruit-bearing trees and decorative plants.

The flowers were in full bloom on May 13, Saturday. The skies were a clear blue in spite of the drizzle, and both participants and organizers led by BK couple June and Ellen Luna were in good spirits. The workshop was preceded by games and a vegetarian lunch, picnic-style, in the grassy clearing at the end of the trek from the main road. Then the group walked a little further down to the Sa-as' home. and settled in the open-air balcony.

No generation gaps

With clouds rolling by almost non-stop, "Mindful Journeys," facilitated by BK Emmie Velarde from Manila, was a lively discussion with intermittent pauses just long enough to appreciate the scenery at appropriate moments. The 20 participants consisted of high school students, new college graduates, professionals and retirees, ages 11-70. Their impressions, scribbled on tear sheets posted on a white board at the end of the workshop, belied age gaps:

"I must be present at all times—aware, appreciative."

"I am on a journey, and so is everyone else. I should help others along without compromising my own destination."

"I should set realistic goals so as to enjoy the ride."

"I'm just enjoying this afternoon so much, I'm not thinking about much else. I guess I'm being mindful that way."

Dinner in the garden

"Mindful Journeys" was the last of the week's three workshops. The first one, "Flying and Flowing," was held at the BK Center in the city suburbs on Thursday night, May 11. The program was set back by two hours due to a delay in BK Emmie's flight, but she arrived to a cheerful welcome of singing and dancing from participants who had sat in meditation for the most part of the wait.

BK Art Banawa, center in charge, served dinner in the garden afterwards, during which more sharing of the experiences of "flying and flowing" in life took place. The last of the 15 guests left at past 10 p.m.

"Let Life Flow" was held next day at The Inner Space (Suite 310, Medalla Bldg., Osmena Blvd.) downtown. Of the 21 participants, 16 were Prosel Pharmaceuticals staff, who had attended previous BK programs and workshops. They were comfortable using gyani insights in evaluating and relating their spiritual experiences. (For example, "Everything is accurate.")

Reflective insights

But their own words were just as reflective:

"I should trust in the process. Trust makes me gentle."

"I don't have to confront; I can fly above an obstacle or find my way around it."

"I am made up of mostly water. It's more natural for me to flow than to struggle. No need to stress."

Though they still have to become family, it is clear there is a BK community in Cebu, which is known as the Queen City of the South (due to its progress in terms of economy and infrastructure). Members of this community can be counted on to participate in future programs and events. Vice-versa, they should be sustained with regular service initiatives.

This latest triple-workshop weekend is the latest in a series of such initiatives supported by BK Philippines' Boart to Board.

Virtues of the soul

By Feliz Ruiz



DETERMINATION

Determination begins in the mind
Faith and free will to remain bind
Concentration is the strength that set the guide
Perseverance makes it possible through tide.
Highly-spirited one walks through life with confidence
Fearing not the obstacles and consequences
With the wings of Faith and Trust in God's Light
Goals and aims await just at a distance, no fright.
Like the sun that continuously shine in the sky
Be determined to live life aiming goals high
Like the river that constantly flows
Be a plant aim for fruit as you grow
Like to a bird that takes its flight
Be determined to live life until last
Be there turmoils, trials that come
Belief in self and God to overcome.
Life has its twists and turns to face
Learn to be flexible with each new phase
Adjust to the changing seasons as nature do
All dreams be attained with hard work to pursue.



CONTENTMENT

A content soul has a peaceful mind
Mundane accumulations don't bind
He has a stable unshakeable stage
For his happiness is worldly advantage.
The basis of contentment is the attainments of godly blessings
More than material, metaphysical things are overflowing
Life of pleasure and enjoyment is visible in the eyes, face, activity
Expression of soul satisfaction, never reward of monetary.
Foremost is contentment of the self and relations
Service through my mind, words and connections
These three types of service, I must be content
Then others follow as I genuinely connect and relate.
Limited attainments impose limitations in the heart
Rise and fly beyond this to heavenly aim, depart
Discontentment bears fruit from limited desire, temporary
Be satisfied, let heart and mind fly to God's glory.
Keep a clear, elevated aim to achieve contentment of three
Then others I truly serve for free objectively
Be clever not to consider yourself outstandingly great
Just remain humble, head and heart always at rest.

EARNEST ENDEAVOUR

Earnest endeavour is product of clean labor
Pure hard work inspired by true service to mankind
One's life is a silent sail an
image to savor
Content of one's role, generosity easy to find.
God reminds man to live affluently not in sorrow
To eat the fruit of his toil by the sweat of his brow
Work is sacred, we ourselves have to commit
Honest endeavour is garland upin our neck.
Working student I was during my college years
Earning my bread with faith and perseverance
Making night as day, I withstand labor and humiliation
With Gd's grace, I surpassed life's trials with determination.
We have chosen the roles we play
Let us give our best in every day
Don't look at others just focus on our way
Earn imperishable income for our deeds is sure pay.