

## Love begins with me [Essay by K. Kevin Perera, Sri Lanka]

Have you felt tender affection for something? Have you felt desire for somebody? Have you felt something that elicits deep interest and enthusiasm in something or somebody? Yes we all do. It is because we are human.

There has been a shriek for ages where people are disrupted by the concept of unity and harmony. We have met many people struggling to achieve this through their various skills and abilities. But did they make the right approach? It is time to ponder. It is not through the governments or the legislatures that peace and unity can be established among people or nations. What is necessary is a sense of LOVE with a change of mind and heart through greater understanding. It is like magnetism where people are allured to giving so much significance to worldly existence. We have to seek to the deep insight of the people and conditions and acquire required knowledge and experiences to view things in order to attain the notion of the "one humanity on this planet."

Our mutual connection with each other is another important aspect. In this regard we try to organize ourselves to be a part of something and maintain it in order. Consequently we are joinable. Certainly school is a keyboard, where its victories and defeats are felt by all the students. Press one key of the keyboard and the sound is felt throughout. There is a fact that rises above just being connected that is not only we sense each other's existence, but we also need one another. We make a difference in each other's lives. My happiness is impossible without you to nourish and my sadness is unbearable without you to share it. LOVE is the key to being interconnected and interdependent.

Feeling a bond or connection with something or somebody is a relieving guarantee what we share with each other. LOVE is one of the most effective elements of a bond. Different people strengthen their bonds by many ways. A couple may exchange promise rings. Some people may renew their vows to inculcate their bond. Likewise we are capable of keeping our universal bond of LOVE at a firm state to enhance the spirit of fellowship with each other.

As Ayn Rand tells, "To say 'I love you' one must know first how to say the 'I.'" If we are with the capability of understanding with what we are feeling, experiencing and living, LOVE can gradually grow in ourselves. Then this true nature opens us to our authentic self. How do you act upon resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offence, disagreement, or mistake or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution? The Parable of the Prodigal Son is perhaps the best known instance of an answer to the above question. Forgiveness given and received, can lay lasting foundations for Universal LOVE.

There are many people whom I esteem but for whom I feel neither affection nor sympathy. If I respect one's choice, we are not confident it wasn't the best choice. If I respect someone's horn playing we cannot indicate a sheer improvement. And also I notice my own sympathy by asking ourselves if I am approved by the happiness and saddened by the sorrow of another, free of approximation of their passion. It is easy to assume that compassion presupposed LOVE since we appear to be willing to sacrifice for those we feel compassionate toward in return for the happiness we gain by assisting them. Respect and compassion are encircled around diversity. The LOVE I consider here is understanding each other and moving beyond simple clemency to embracing well-off dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

What makes us human is our capacity to LOVE. The quality of LOVE rubs out prejudice and moves us to forgive, gives us peace of mind in a violent world and keeps us sane. LOVE seeks to broken hearts and heals them. LOVE hears to my cry and answers. LOVE perceives my needs and fulfills it. LOVE does not see color or race; love sees people. Yes, I am imperfect. My LOVE is imperfect but the power of it overshadows the imperfections. LOVE does not ask anything in return but given freely as a self-sacrificing gift. When we give LOVE and see the difference it can make, the feeling is incalculable and indescribable. And then we see the power of our LOVE working in union, the power to change the world.