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Harbouring love

T. T. SRINATH

ISSUE Love is a blend of openness and warmth that allows us to make real contact, be one with ourselves, others, and life itself

Every time Priya's mother baked a cake for her children, she would sprinkle the top of the cake with ingredients from a dispenser; and each time the cake tasted delicious. Priya would often ask her mother what she was sprinkling and her mother would laugh it off saying, "My special something for all of you". This went on for several years till Priya's mother passed on. One day Priya was baking a cake for her daughters and she was reminded of the ingredients her mother would sprinkle. She, therefore, went to the kitchen, retrieved the dispenser and was about to sprinkle what it contained on the cake she was baking. Curiosity got the better of her and she decided to open the container before dispensing. She was surprised by what she saw inside the container. It contained nothing but a small strip of paper. She pulled out the paper and read the words written on it 'I love you'. Her mother had been sprinkling love on the cakes she was baking for her children.

The words 'I love you', spoken in moments of genuine appreciation, wonder, or caring, arise from something pure within us — the capacity to open our hearts. Such moments of pure open heartedness bring us as close to natural perfection as we come in this life.

All the most intractable problems in human relationships can be traced back to what is called *absence of love* — a deep-seated suspicion most of us harbour within ourselves that we cannot be loved or that we are not truly lovable, just for who we are. This basic insecurity makes it hard to trust in ourselves, in other people, or in life itself.

Love is a potent blend of openness and warmth, which allows us to make real contact, to take delight in and appreciate and to be one with ourselves, others and life itself.

We are all entitled to genuine love. It is our birthright. Yet the problem, as author John Welwood says, is that 'We are looking for it in the wrong places — outside ourselves, in our imperfect relationships with imperfect people who are wounded like we are'. This inevitably leaves us frustrated and disappointed. Even though genuine love can shine through relationships at moments, we cannot count on other people as a consistent source of it.

John Welwood goes on to explain genuine love. He says genuine love 'is like the sun; our woundedness is like a cloud cover temporarily blocking its rays. Fortunately just as the sun cannot be damaged by clouds, so our native capacity for warmth and openness cannot be destroyed. Thus healing the wound of the heart does not require fixing something that is broken. Having a wounded heart is more like being lost — lost in the clouds that temporarily block access to the sun that is always shining. Though we can spend a whole time lost in these clouds, this does not mean that the sun itself is lost or damaged. Healing the love — wound, then, involves making ourselves available to the sun, that it may do what it naturally wants to do: shine upon us'.

Just as the earth is abundant because of its ability to receive and absorb, so we can only give forth love abundantly if we are able to receive it, soak it up, and be nourished by it. If we don't feel loved within ourselves, then how can we ever truly love?

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@vsnl.net)