



To See the Best in the Other

Kuruvilla Pandikattu

Papal Seminary, Pune 411014, India

When two people initially develop a loving relationship, the bond seems almost total. But all too often, the love melts away, leaving behind an ugly puddle of contempt. Why do we end up in a situation, where in spite of searching, we are unable to find a single good quality in the person we once loved?

Love ripens when we identify commonalities, but it rots when we only see the differences, writes Shubha Vilas, Spiritual seeker and a motivational speaker, in *The Huffington Post*. When two people love each other, they admire each other — almost as god — and consider the other to be infallible. When the focus is purely on the good, the vision is always divine and the experience of the relationship is heavenly. This glimpse of divinity in the other person, however, is fleeting. It can only be sustained within a limited time span and within the boundary of a limited medley of events.

As life progresses and taxing events unfold, the person's response mechanisms manifest in the form of less

Love ripens when we identify commonalities, but it rots when we only see the differences

desirable qualities. When such qualities surface, it almost seems that the person has been replaced by his or her diabolical doppelganger. These detestable behaviour patterns then lead to doubt. And doubt is a seed, that eventually grows into a tree of separation.

High expectations are products of the imagination. The mind fools us into expecting perfection in every sphere. But relationships that are expectation-oriented fail. On the other hand, relationships that are discernment-oriented last. Discernment or the ability to judge helps us evaluate people, based on realities and not imagination. Most people want to deal with successes and not failures. Similarly, most people want to deal with the strengths and not the weaknesses of others; their stabilities and not their idiosyncrasies; their good and not bad natures. “Everyone expects a perfect masterpiece in others, while they themselves are happy to be deformed relics.”

Vilas refers to Ramayana, we find that Rama and Lakshmana had diametrically opposite personalities and yet, were the closest of associates. Rama not

When you look for good qualities, you find people resembling gold mines, with invisible nuggets of gold enclosed in massive amounts of dirt.

only knew the sweet side of Lakshmana, but was also fully aware of his angry and violent side. With genuine care, Rama not only appreciated his good side, but assisted him to deal with his bad side. Rather than rejecting a person due to his bad side, the need is to provide empathic assistance in dealing with his shortcomings.

With those, whom we love over relatively longer periods of time, it is important to remember that people seldom change, but our perceptions base on our steady expectations. When you look for a perfect god, you meet with imperfection and, naturally, disappointment follows. When you look for a mortal, you meet with someone struggling to overcome imperfections. Shubha Vilas further adds: “When you look for good qualities, you find people resembling gold mines, with invisible nuggets of gold enclosed in massive amounts of dirt. It's worth shovelling away heaps of dirt to uncover one piece of gold. Appreciation of others' good qualities is not just lip service, but a meditation.”

Thus, discovering the best and the worst in the other — and in oneself — is the prelude to love. After having discovered the best,

we need to emphasise the best and revere the other for it. From this point of strength, without denying the worst in them and us, we can reach out to the other tenderly. Such a bond of love lasts, because it is based on the best and the worst in our hearts

Originally published in *Financial Chronicle*
Jul 27 2015, 2117

-
- "To start anew from Christ means being close to him, being close to Jesus. Jesus stresses the importance of this with the disciples at the Last Supper, as he prepares to give us his own greatest gift of love, his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus uses the image of the vine and the branches and says, Abide in my love, remain attached to me, as the branch is attached to the vine. If we are joined to him, then we are able to bear fruit." — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*
 - "To evangelize, therefore, it is necessary to open ourselves once again to the horizon of God's Spirit, without being afraid of what he asks us or of where he leads us." — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*
 - "Spreading the Gospel means that we are the first to proclaim and live the reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, unity, and love that the Holy Spirit gives us." — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*