among the four aspects of who you are — your physical body, your mind, your emotion and your energy, people generally know emotion as the strongest force within them. This is the reason why emotion is widely used in religious and spiritual context; and love in particular because it creates a conducive atmosphere around you. The world will work out the way you want it. Let us look at it technically, not in terms of good or bad, right or wrong.

Love essentially means somebody else has become far more important than you. That may be distressing — your existence is threatened. The moment you say ‘I love you’ to somebody, you will lose all your freedom; you will lose everything that you have, you can no longer do what you want in your life. There are innumerable problems, but at the same time it drags you in, it is a sweet poison. A very sugary poison; it is self-annihilating.

If you do not annihilate yourself, you will never know love. Some part of you must die. That something else or somebody else has to occupy that space within you which was you all this time. If you do not let this happen, there is no love, only calculation.

We have formed a variety of relationships in our lives: family relationships, spouse relationships, business relationships, social relationships, a variety of relationships to serve different needs of our life. I am not saying there is no expression of love in these relationships. There is. It should be there in everything that you do. Every action can be conducted lovingly. But when we are talking about love as a spiritual process, we are talking about love as a process of self-annihilation. When we use the word ‘annihilation,’ it looks like a negative word.

When you really love somebody you are willing to surrender everything — your personality, your likes, your dislikes. When there is no love, people are rigid. Suddenly when they fall in love with someone, they are willing to twist themselves any way they need to, which is a fantastic spiritual process, because you are becoming flexible. So love is definitely self-annihilating; that is the most beautiful part of it.

Whether you call it annihilation or liberation, whether you call it destruction or Nirvan, when we say, ‘Shiva is a destroyer,’ we are saying he is a compulsive lover. Love is not necessarily self-annihilation, it could be just annihilation. It all depends whom you have fallen in love with. So he destroys you; because if it does not destroy you, it is not a genuine love affair. When I say ‘destroy you,’ it does not mean destroying your home, your business or this or that. When what you call as ‘myself,’ your rigid personality is destroyed in the process of loving, that is self-annihilation.

Your ways of thinking, your ways of feeling, your likes, your dislikes, your philosophies, your ideologies melt down when you fall in love. That must happen to you; do not wait for another human being to come and do it. Just make it happen for yourself because you do not need anybody to love. You can just love anything. If you simply, deeply create an unreasonable sense of love towards something — you can even do it without any external object — you will see self-annihilation will naturally happen.

But generally what society calls as love is a mutual benefit scheme. ‘You give me this, I will give you that, but if you don’t give me this, I will not give you that.’ It is an arrangement. There is still some sweetness in this, mutually both people are benefited — but it is conditional. If you get very unreasonable as to what you want from it, the other person will slowly back off. Even in your love affair you have to be reasonable.

If you love a man or a woman or a child or whoever, in the process of loving it is not just you who is getting entangled, the other person also gets entangled. Once the entanglement is mutual, you cannot release yourself when you grow out of it. But devotion is love unreasonable. There is no reason — it is one-sided madness. That is the beauty of loving God because you don’t have to have a relationship — you can just love.

The idea of looking up and loving Krishna, loving Jesus, loving something up there or loving a Guru is because you need not have any fear of entanglement from the other side. You love as much as you want; when you grow out of it, there is no resistance from the other side. That is the beauty of devotion. It is a very good preparation for one to become meditative. Without some sense of love in you, without some sense of self-annihilation, you cannot meditate. Some part of you has to be pulled down for you to become meditative.

If you pull down the whole of what you call as ‘myself,’ you will become absolutely still and transcendent.

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