

## Secret Message Of Love

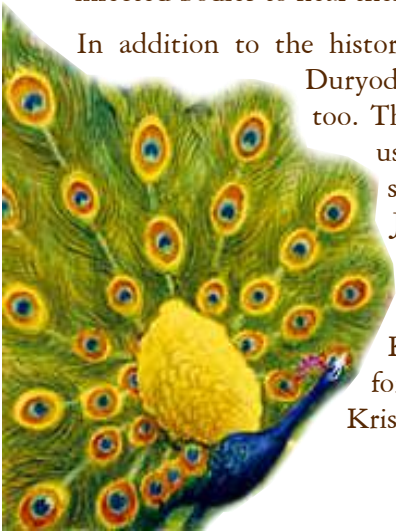
Love is one of the most spoken and least understood words. Love is commonly equated with sensual enjoyment, but such superficial titillation offers no substantial satisfaction to the heart. The suffering of the stomach hungry for food is well-recognized, but the agony of the heart hungry for love is often overlooked.

In our modern love-starved society, the conclusion of the Gita's philosophy – its hidden message of love – can act as a much-needed healing balm. The Bhagavad-gita has been acclaimed as a philosophical masterpiece by intellectuals like Albert Einstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Hesse and Mahatma Gandhi.

Real love is based on wisdom, not just sentiment. Therefore Krishna starts his message of love by telling Arjuna that we are all souls, spiritual beings (Gita 2.13), entitled to rejoice in eternal love with the supremely lovable and loving God, Krishna. When our loving nature is contaminated by selfishness, we start loving things more than persons -- especially the Supreme Person. This misdirected love forges our misidentification with our temporary bodily coverings and impels us to exploit others for our self-centered desires. The virtuous Arjuna exemplifies the pristine loving soul, whereas the vicious Duryodhana exemplifies the perverted soul afflicted by selfishness. A well-wishing doctor who doesn't want to cause any pain to the patient may still have to carry out a painful amputation to save the life of the patient. Similarly, Krishna exhorts, Arjuna too has to surgically separate Duryodhana - and his allies - from their selfishness-infected bodies to heal their eternal souls.

In addition to the historical context, the mentalities that Arjuna and Duryodhana exemplify are present in our own hearts too. The battlefield setting of the Gita beckons all of us to become spiritual warriors and conquer the selfish lower self with the selfless higher self. Just as the wisdom of the Gita empowered Arjuna, it can empower us to make love reign in our hearts -- and in the world at large.

Krishna, the speaker of the Gita, is an enigma for many. The sporting, loving cowherd youth Krishna of Vrindavana seems to contrast starkly



with the philosophical, analytical diplomat-warrior Krishna of Kurukshetra. Could it be that Kurukshetra shows us the way to Vrindavana? Could the Kurukshetra message, the battlefield setting notwithstanding, be essentially a gospel of pure spiritual love? And could the Vrindavana pastimes, their pastoral romantic context notwithstanding, be a demonstration of that gospel?

In the Gita, Krishna offers a concise overview of the various paths for spiritual progress – karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga and bhakti-yoga. Simultaneously throughout the Gita, he drops clues that there is a secret message; a secret that only a heart filled with love can fathom (Gita 4.3). Finally at the climax of the Gita (18.64-66), he bares his heart's love in a disarmingly sweet revelation, "You are dearly loved by me. Be mindful of me with love offered to me; sacrificing for me act out of reverence for me. Truly you shall come to me – this I promise for you are dearly loved by me. Completely relinquishing all forms of dharma, come to me as your only shelter. I shall grant you freedom from all misfortune – do not despair."

Thus the Gita advocates, not sectarian religious belief, but universal spiritual love. It is essentially a revelation of divinity's love for humanity as well as a love call for humanity's reciprocal love for divinity. The Gita not only teaches this love, it also demonstrates it. This love is seen in Krishna willingly accepting the menial role of a charioteer to assist his devotee Arjuna in the battle. Krishna is, as the Beatle George Harrison immortally sang, the "God who loves those who love him". Let us tread the path of love revealed by Krishna. Let us love and be loved.

