

The Water Wheel of Love

by Gopikrishnan Kottoor (March 2015)

*I want to load my boat/ with those waiting, thirsty ones/Who
are left behind:*

And carry them by the opal pool/ of iridescent joy–

Whispers from Eternity

Paramahansa Yogananda

As the old song goes, people are the same wherever you go. In America, in Mexico, in Paris, or inside The Louvre, wherever, I have always carried with me a fascination with trying to understand the attitudes and behaviors of people I have come across. One thing is certain. People everywhere in this world are looking all around for happiness. But, are they looking in the right direction? Towards love, that comes from within?

Outside a classroom in Texas State University, near the stairwell, I watched a young girl crying, holding on to her young lover, "Please don't go away... please don't leave me, ever." The boy just removed his jumper so he could free himself, and long after he left down the stairwell, the girl was still crying into it, sobbing her pretty little heart to pieces.

Early one morning, while looking out of the Amtrak train window, somewhere near Louisiana, I found a young man squeezing a young woman in his arms, smothering her with early morning kisses... and I wondered to myself how long this love, that was but another name for lust, just how long would it last?

Sometimes my memories still take me to some of the compositions I asked my freshmen students to write in Flowers Hall. There were always sad true stories of jilted love. Of children looking for love in deserted homes and among divorced parents. One story in particular by a young girl Dian stays embedded in me. Dian called her composition "The Wall of Glass." She wrote how she had been dreaming every night since she was three, of her father whom she had never seen, but whose love she wished she had known. The mother and father had parted when she was born. The girl in her dream every night would climb a long winding stairway only to reach a wall of glass. Inside, someone sat with his back towards her, her imaginary father figure, whose face she had never seen. Dian would then knock at the wall of glass. The wall would suddenly break to pieces taking her with it, and she would fall down, down, hundreds of feet below, and wake up screaming. All for Love.

Late one night in a Los Angeles air lounge, where it was a pretty sight to watch planes flash up and down every second, I was jolted from my dream trek to a painful sound, and turning, saw a young Mexican slap his aged father who could hardly stand, so hard that I almost froze. The old man said not a word. The old woman by his side held the withered face that had turned a river, close to her bosom, and they wept together, silently.

Near Niagara Falls, I watched a group of men trying to pull a crying black woman away, "No one loves me, Please let go, let me die," her torso still hanging over the misty railing.

In my hometown early one morning I saw a hefty man pulling a woman by her long hair and throwing her amidst her screams, with her arms tied behind her into a roadside bin.

In a dustbin in Washington D.C. near the Indian Embassy, I saw a sweeper pull out a dead fetus swarmed with fiery ants.

Why was all this happening? Where is love? After listening to John Lennon singing "All You Need is Love," why do we switch off the music video and fight? Where is love? Where is forgiveness?

I remember a journey on a train where I sat opposite a young couple seated at opposite ends of the long seat before me, hardly looking at each other for the full 12 hour journey. Both kept looking out of their separate windows and the scenery they were seeing was not the same either. There seemed nothing in common between the young pair. There was not even an inclination by either of them to turn and see if the other even existed. In my mind I wondered whether the young couple was already heading for a divorce. Already?

...And there's one never fading memory that I'll always cherish. That belongs to a train journey too. There was this aged couple sitting before me, and nearly all through the 14 hour journey from morning to night they were holding each other's hands—never for too long letting go! I stared, immensely fascinated at the pair of aged hands of the couple clasped together. If ever they let go, the hands came back with blind affection and the fingers entwined again, much like an involuntary action. It was as if they were parts of the same being that could not exist differently. There was no wild embrace, no celluloid romance, no deep squeeze, no lusty kiss upon the lips, but it was clear that love in their hearts would ever stay, working its magic quietly and lovingly. It made me suddenly wish that the whole world would light up with a love like that. What a peaceful happy place our earth would then be!

Love offers us the advantage of total happiness in our lives. Between two people in love, there is a giving, a taking, and making of love's great monument in which the Happiness

Principle is ever at work. But yet, most partners we meet or see are hardly partners in steadfast love for life. We live in a changing world where we change love like the apparel we wear.

True love that comes from within and lasts a lifetime has ceased to have meaning.

"Don't know, man," said Rick to me one evening as we sat watching country songs on TV in downtown Dallas. "I was reading my newspaper, man. She comes over with my two children, one in each hand, and says, 'I have had enough of you, Rick, I'm leaving.'" Rick put his hand into the hip pocket of his faded jeans and pulled out a faded photograph that came out with a ten dollar bill and a credit card. It was the photograph of his two little children, a boy and a girl, by the beach, smiling with Rick and his wife on either side. "Never seen them since," said Rick, looking into my eyes with his bespectacled eyes as he pushed the photograph along with the ten dollar bill back into his hip pocket. "Never seen her since either," he emphasized again slowly shaking his head reflectively, as though somewhere deep in his mind the shock of parting had still not left him. "She found somebody else man, the kids got another dad." I looked into his dry, aged eyes and smiled.

Why do we work against our own selves to let our relationships run us down and under? Why do we do things to hurt and wound ourselves when we can as well turn around and give love and lifelong happiness a real try?

Love is the greatest triumph of the spirit. It is the culmination of the power of the self to rise above grief and unhappiness. Love is the sanctum of your Mind, the ultimate in human happiness.

For love, emperors have given up their kingdoms, thrones, wealth and fame. Emperor Napoleon used to write his letters to Josephine upon the saddle back of his horse while he led his wars. Imagine the power of love!

It would be well to remember that no love or lover was ever perfect. If you are looking for perfection in love, then you might as well not love. It is in the midst of human foibles that love must make its actual presence. That is when true love rises above the ordinary. It requires courage, and integrity of the self to be steadfast in love and to find happiness in the waves of love's seas. Each tumult of the heart must not be an excuse to give up on relationships that are sacred for the happiness of the self and that are meant to last a lifetime. Just as prayer requires penance for fulfillment, and meditation requires discipline of the mind, true love, which is the pinnacle of human joy, has its share of sacrifices and give and take to endure, to make love last for each other.

When was it that you last held the hand of someone you loved, just to feel the touch and for the simple joy of holding your lover's hand in your own? Do you remember? Or do you have to try to remember? How often do you kiss, or reassure the one you love?

Late in autumn 2000 while leaving for the US to attend a post graduate creative writing programme, my father and mother came to see me off at our hometown airport. My father had just recovered from an acute phase of metabolic encephalopathy, a condition in which the sodium and potassium levels in the body get depleted. The condition, if not controlled, leads to the onset of coma. I still remember the glazed look in my father's tear-filled eyes as he looked up at me from the car. The look seemed to ask me, "Will we see each other ever again?" But I brushed that thought aside, thinking it silly—well, I was going to get back home on holiday in six months.

Far up in the skies, all alone, fastening my seat belt in the airplane that kept shifting away into the fluffy clouds, I remembered the laden look in my father's eyes once more, and suddenly wished I had kissed him while saying goodbye. Would I ever be able to kiss my father again? What was the meaning of that look in his eyes that seemed to be going farther away where I could never reach him? Soon memories of my life with him as a child, as a growing up son, and as a friend, began to unroll as on a video tape, and I felt tears brimming in my eyes. What if I could run down the wings of the airplane, hold my father in my arms again, give him the kiss of my life and get back? 30,000 feet up in the skies was no place to make that dream come true.

That is what happens to most of us. When we are too near and capable of giving love, and making it possible in our lives, we take it all for granted and go up 30,000 feet high. But 30,000 feet in the air is no place to love. It is the place to sit all alone and regret not having loved, when given the chance by providence to love and be loved and there was all the space to be together. Three months later, alone in an apartment in Riverside, I got a call from home. Father was sinking. He was slipping back into his unconscious state. I tried to speak with my father that night on the phone, and over the Atlantic, I heard his feeble voice ask, "When are you coming home, my son? I am going to sleep, dear, I am going back to sleep." Those were the last words that I heard father speak. That night I cried in my bed. I felt that strange longing to kiss my father again return, as if with a vengeance. How many hundreds of times I could have kissed him when I was home with him. I just didn't or wouldn't do it. I packed my bags preparing to return, praying to God that my father, though sinking would... wait for me.

When I met father again, he was in the intensive care unit, drifting into a coma following a

massive seizure. The doctor tapped him on his shoulder and he opened his eyelids. He seemed so far away. I looked into his eyeballs that had started rolling as his lids opened, as though they would never stop. I kissed him then, saw his eyes gaze at me in one last glazed moment that seemed an endless minute, in the mysterious twilight of his fast eclipsing consciousness. He then fell back, his eyes, unfocussed, rolling like pin balls all over. The coma had, in my presence, suddenly gripped him entirely. It was as though all along, father was fighting back his deepening coma, waiting just to see a last glimpse of his son. Now, before my eyes, my father was gone deep into his coma. There was no coming back. What use was my love now? What joy did my kiss give him? Did he ever know? Will I ever know, if he knew?

With my father's passing, I realized that of all things in life, love and happiness should never be made to wait. If you make them wait without letting them blossom in your Beautiful Mind, you stand to lose forever. All else in life can wait. Money, possession, desire... the list of things that can be made to wait in life is endless... but not your quest for love and happiness. Love and happiness should be made to happen, given then and there, here and now, and forever. When you discover happiness within yourself, your Self begins to shine. It then spreads its aura all around. The Beautiful Mind, kindled with heavenly light, emblazons its celestial chandelier.

I reviewed the things I had missed, and the moves I should be making so that I would not regret giving happiness as soon and as much as I could, to those whom I loved and those who loved and cared for me. The joy of love shining back at you through the eyes of those who really love you and those, whom you love, is love's sacred reward.

Reviewing my life, I saw that it had been ages since I kissed my mother, my wife or children. I did not even seem to remember when I had kissed them last. So I made it a point that even if I did not have the time enough to spend with loved ones every day, I would hold them to myself awhile and kiss them good night every night and even reward my children's acts with open acts of love and kisses realizing now that there was no need to be ashamed to show love and kindle happiness in those whom I loved. I found myself lifting out in heart and spirit, because I wasn't hiding anything from myself anymore when reacting to myself and to those around me, I was only going out from deep within, calm and true to my inner self.

The mind is the lotus on which one lives like the a drop of dew. This is the quality that dawns in living from the mind, from within the realization of the inner self.

Why then, do we end up hurting those whom we love?

Love takes us through a spectrum of expectations. Expectations bring us grief, because they

rise within us in the hills and valleys of our love, seeking gratification and fulfillment. In the beginning, with just love's idealization in the platonic, expectations take a side step. But when realities step in, expectations of and from each other rush in, pushing everything else to the side. When expectations are not gratified in the name of love, the non-gratification begins to take its toll in the form of hurt. We end up hurting back.

Now remember the water wheel. To be in love, and to be happy, let your mind at all times be a rolling water wheel to your emotions and expectations. Let your mind roll on, sieving and sifting your emotions, letting into your heart only just as much emotion as is necessary to let your love or happiness be, without burdening it, or flooding it with too many desires. Work on the water wheel of your mind to make your life simple and happy for you. The simpler your live, with more give and take at every level of your life, the more you will be able to let in happiness.

This was what Kahlil Gibran meant when he said "Let there be space in your togetherness." In the space between your togetherness, you'll sit in the shade of each other's open heartedness, where expectations and desires are distanced and reviewed for mutual good, and where there is room to open each other up, talk things over, hold hands, let love in, and be happy.

Gopikrishnan Kottoor regularly reviews poetry for the *Hindu Literary Supplement*. His poetry has won National poetry prizes (All India- British Council awards-Four annual awards in various categories). They have been published in magazines as *The Illustrated weekly of India*, *Verse* (US), *Toronto Review*, *Ariel* (Canada), *Fulcrum* (US), *Orbis*, *N fifth online* (UK), among others. He attended the MFA of Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, USA with a McCormick scholarship scholarship in the year 2000. His work, *Father, Wake Us in Passing*, translated into German, won him a residency in the University of Augsburg, Germany. His works include 'A Mask of Death' a radio play on the final days of John Keats, *Presumed Guilty*, (A Novel), *A woman in flames* (A Play). and ten books of poetry. He founded *Poetry Chain*, a poetry quarterly which assumed a national stature, promoting, and discovering poetry voices writing in English in India. Presently Kottoor promotes a poetry site, www.undergroundflowers.com that seeks to further discover new voices in Indian English poetry.

To comment on this short story, please click [here](#).

To help New English Review continue to publish original stories such as this, please click [here](#).