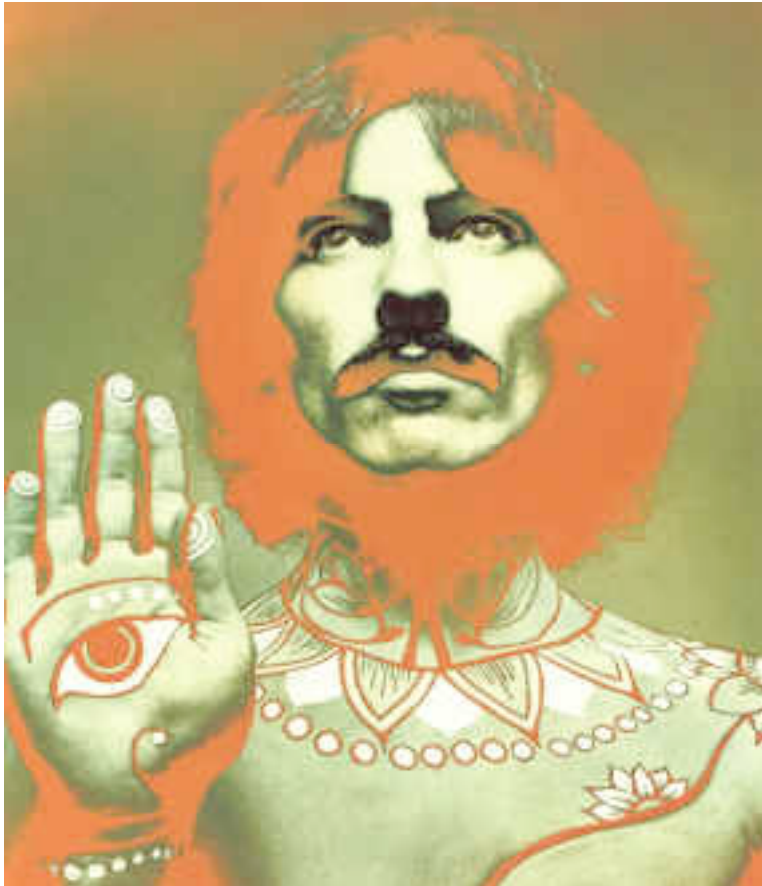


The Love Within

*A critique and personal interpretation of "Within You, Without You"
by George Harrison*



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As far as pop icons are concerned, the Beatles take the cake. Lennon himself once made the statement that the popularity of the group rivals that of Jesus himself. While this statement wasn't wildly popular amongst the sects of Christ's followers, the notion was hard to discredit. Few musical acts could compare to the global popularity of the 'fab four'. Although they began with a mediocre pop sound for the time, all of the boys grew up, and so did their music. In the last four released albums of the Beatles prior to their disbandment, a significant change became evident not only in their musical composition skills, but also their overall maturity. Each of the members were very uniquely different, and each developed their own taste and style of song writing.

While I am a huge fan of Lennon because of his quirky personality and humanitarian nature, my favorite song writer of the group was Harrison. In the mid-60s, George became deeply involved with Indian culture. He studied spirituality under the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whose famed students also include doctor and writer Deepak Chopra. George also studied spirituality through music, under the guidance of the world renowned Indian musician Ravi Shankar. As far as I'm concerned, there is no better representation of George's reflection of the Hindu religion than the song "Within You, Without You", found on the well-known Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band album.¹

The lyrics begin as a casual reflection of a conversation between the narrator and an unknown entity (possibly one or many persons).

*We were talking
about the space between us all
and people who hide themselves
behind a wall of illusion
never glimpse the truth
then it's far too late
when they pass away*

The "space between us all" could be interpreted as the space in which we perceive, but is not actually there. People see themselves as being different from everyone else, and almost isolated and alone from the universe. It is a common conception to think that you are not the same as your brother (as in that of brotherhood), even though you are the same species. In the Hindu religion, it is felt that the human conscience, while it makes us unique and different in respects of personality, is just a small piece of a large, single consciousness. In other words, one person's conscious is just part of a large network.

Since sometimes the conscious is referred to as light, I like to think of the singular conscious concept as a strand of Christmas tree lights. All of the individual bulbs, while seemingly small and insignificant, are vital to the chain. If one bulb goes out, the whole chain of lights are messed up because usually at least half of the corresponding string cease to function! If half of the strand of lights doesn't work, then it's a pretty pathetic looking Christmas tree. However, the concept isn't really about dependence on each

other's conscious, but the idea that one light is just a small part of a larger whole. Though while the light is small, within it holds a puzzle piece to a very important picture. So in reality, although we all believe we're so different from each other, the truth is that we're all part of the same chain of existence. This is by far my favorite notion of the Hindu religion; the idea that everyone, no matter who or where, is connected. ²

This one verse also goes on to talk about the illusion of false reality, as well as the ego in which we put in front of ourselves to hide behind. In reference to the idea of light as the conscious, the word enlightenment refers to the knowledge and full understanding of your light within. This is the ultimate goal, and after reaching it, your conscious leaves the Earthly realm and permanently joins the intangible realm of the greater conscious. The theme of enlightenment is very popular in the Hindu based religions (including Buddhism), and it is ultimately the central idea surrounding this song. By living our lives behind a wall of illusion, either created by ignorance of our inner light or by ego in which we project upon the world, we are incapable of reaching enlightenment.

As the words echo, when we die it's "too late" to reach enlightenment. However, the good news is that there's reincarnation! The whole purpose of reincarnation is so that our conscious can be recycled on the Earthly realm for another chance to figure everything out. However, it's "far too late" for you in your previous existence, and so your mind is reset to the infantile stage, and you must relearn everything and start from scratch.

*We were talking
about the love we all could share
When we find it
to try our best to hold it there
with our love, with our love
we could save the world
if they only knew*

The conversation continues, as the aspect of love comes up. I don't perceive this as romantic love, but as universal brotherly love. Love, to me, defines the absence of ignorance and the subsequent hatred attached to it. It accentuates acceptance, understanding and embracement of all things (including people, of course.) There's this sheer feeling of elation that I have experienced in the past. I know that many others have shared it with me, where I am at a heightened peak of awareness, and I feel love and compassion for all of those around me. However, just like a sugar high, this elation eventually seems to fade to a murmur when I wake up on the wrong side of bed or someone cuts me off for a silly parking space. For this, I identify with the line "to try our best to hold it there." It seems so easy to love, and yet so challenging when we allow ourselves to become victims of environment and circumstance. It's a very difficult thing to be completely compassionate and selfless with everyone. Though I do agree that if such a point could be reached among mankind collectively, we could indeed "save the world". Love, to me, is absolutely the answer.

*Try to realize it's all within yourself
no one else can make you change
And to see you're really only very small
and life flows on within you and without you*

I believe that this verse very obviously speaks for itself. The power to love and to change the world belongs to each and every one of us. It also lets us know that no one can force us to be better people, as it is a decision in which we must make and follow through with on our own. It also warns against the ego, and urges you to realize that one person is not bigger than the world itself. Life, in its vast eternity, is “within you”. Though when your body expires, it shall indeed proceed without you. This is both in the sense of the world around us, as well as our consciousness, which never dies, even without our physical selves.

*We were talking
about the love that's gone so cold
and the people who gain the world
and lose their soul
They don't know, they can't see
Are you one of them*

This part may have been directly aimed at a particular person or group of persons, though it can certainly be applied to people whom everyone has encountered. To me, everyone starts off with an innocence about them. They desire simple happiness, simple pleasures, and their minds are unscathed and uncluttered by frivolous and destructive thoughts. We all know someone who at one time was very open and receptive to life and their emotions, only to be overtaken by greed, power and the ego (I think I sense a trend here.) People become so blinded by ambition and contempt from arrogance that they forget what everything is really all about. They lose sight of brotherhood, love and the bigger picture. Their soul, in a sense, becomes blind and ignorant.

*When you've seen beyond yourself
then you may find
peace of mind is waiting there
And the time will come
when you see we're all one
and life flows on within you and without you*

We conclude with instructions, though seemingly too simple to be effective. Yet they are brilliant and poignant. When you are capable of losing your ego, and breaking down the wall that you build between yourself and the rest of the world, your heart and mind may be at ease. Eventually, as insinuated, this practice shall lead to enlightenment of the soul, and you shall realize that your essence within is a common denominator among us all. Your essence, life itself, resides within you, and transcends beyond you. The capability and capacity for us all to love is within ourselves. Love heals those around

us, and promotes positive energy in the atmosphere. If only man was truly selfless enough to realize the bigger picture and strive for universal love, perhaps the world could indeed be saved.

Notes

1. “Within You, Without You”, while it was on a Beatles album, featured only one member, George himself. The rest of the musicians were part of an Indian orchestra in which George put together.
2. In one form or another, this idea is expressed throughout several religions, including Hinduism, and is referred to as monism.