

LOVE: A UNIVERSAL REALITY

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Love is a complex, controversial and a universal issue among the human societies. From early times until now, a large number of scholars have made it the subject of their discussion by preferring its one aspect or the other. The majority, however, agree on the superiority of Godly love. This natural love has universality and it is found in every thing of the universe. The beauty of the nature is because of the element of love and it has positive effects.

In this paper, besides the definition of love, its types, power and its universal function are examined.

WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is a bounty of God and that is ascended through spirit in the nature of Universe. Mankind is part of this universe and is also gifted with love in his nature. Love is the name of unification “between the scattered parts of soul that has become divided in the physical universe, a union effected within the substances of their original sublime element.”¹ Paul Tillich also defines love by saying:

“The ‘values’ towards which the erotic orients itself refer to the beauty manifested in human form, but also to

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1 M. I. Haq (2002), Comparative study of love and Eros among Plato, Ibn Hazm and the modern philosophers. *Al-Hikmat*, Volume 22, p. 34.

the beauty of nature, we find in nature, to the beautiful and true in culture, to the mystical union with that which is the source of the beautiful and true.”²

Some of the philosophers have said that God has created every soul in the shape of a circle. Then He cut it down into two pieces. Everybody meets the other body, which contains the other half of the soul. They have love between them because of the ancient relation.³ Islamic teachings have the same notion, which reveals that origin of mankind is one. The Qur’ān says:

It is He who created you of one soul, and fashioned thereof its spouse, that he might find response in her.⁴

The same is confirmed with the tradition of the Prophet in which he said: “Spirits are regimented battalions: those who know one another remain at variance.”⁵

Imam Ghazali has defined as follows:

“Affection is an inclination towards a thing which affords pleasure; if this inclination grows strong and gets confirmed, it is called ‘love’.”⁶

Abdul Qadir Junaid Baghdadi gives love a wider role and spreads it to all non-living beings. He writes:

Love is a divine affection and a revelation which God Almighty has made obligatory on all animate things, so that they may derive great pleasure from love which they were unable to derive from any other source.⁷

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- 2 Alexander C. Irwin (1991), *Eros Toward the World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 6.
 - 3 Muhammad Ibn Daud al-Zahiri, *Al-Zahrah* with ref. Ibn Hazm, *Tawq al-Hamamah*, ed. Tahir Makki. Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 1975, p. 21, fn 5.
 - 4 Qur’ān, 7:189.
 - 5 *Tawq al-Hamamah*, p. 23.
 - 6 Mir Waliud Din (1969), *Love of God*. Sh. Mubarak Ali Oriental Publishers, Lahore, p. 2.
 - 7 Afzal Iqbal (1978), *Life and Works of Rumi*, 4th edition. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, p. 200.

STAGES/TYPES OF LOVE

Scholars have mentioned several stages of love and the number varies from person to person.

Imam Ghazali counts seven stages such as:

- (i) compatibility of temperament (*mu'anasat-i-tabi'a*),
- (ii) inclination (*mail*),
- (iii) friendship (*mawaddah*),
- (iv) affection (*muhabbah*),
- (v) yearning (*ishtiyāq*),
- (vi) wonderment (*walah*), and
- (vii) love.⁸

Shah Abdul Haq of Delhi has mentioned eleven stages of affection,⁹ while Shaikh Abdul Aziz, in his *Risala-i-Ishqiya*, has arranged ten stages in fifty phases.¹⁰

A famous Andalusian scholar Ibn Hazm has described the qualities of love in twelve chapters¹¹ and they are different in nature than those mentioned by the Sufis.

A famous saint Abdul Qadir Junaid Baghdadi has also addressed this issue. Explaining "love" he says:

This affection exists in ego and lovers have allotted to it different stages. Thus, there is not an individual who is not in love with an object by which he secures values for his own class of people and guides his own path.¹²

The western scholarship, too, has a lot of work on this subject. They have their own distribution of love. According to

8 *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

9 *Ibid*, p. 5.

10 Shaikh Nasirud Din (nd), *Saha'if-i-Suluk*. Muslim Press, Jhajjar, Rohtak, pp. 43-46.

11 See for details his famous work *Tawq al-Hamamah*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif.

12 *Life and Works of Rumi*, p. 200.

Greer, "it is of two types: a fleshy love, according to which the person who loves sows in the flesh. There is a spiritual love, according to which the inner man when he loves sows in the spirit."¹³ It means that the fleshy love is also called love, but its pleasure does not go beyond the flesh. The spiritual love is not restricted. Its pleasure is boundless and its flight is far-reaching.

Another famous scholar, Paul Tillich, has divided love into Eros, libido, philia and agape. He says that "it is true, however, that libido, philia and Eros are to some extent linked to 'contingent characteristics which change and are partial' ... The fourth type of love 'agape' affirms the others unconditionally, apart from higher or lower, pleasant or unpleasant qualities. Agape love is universal."¹⁴

One other scholar, Nygren, considers Eros and Agape completely two opposite types of love and in his words they are 'dangerous rivals'.¹⁵ But Tillich describes agape differently as a 'type of love which seeks the other because of the ultimate unity of being with being within the divine ground.'¹⁶

From these few examples, it is clear that love is the name of qualities of affection and it depends on the ability of a person to which degree he reaches. It is generally agreed upon that the field of love is very vast and different people and things have affection with different objects. However, the highest form of love is the one in God.

POWER AND FUNCTION OF LOVE

Love is not something useless. It has qualities and power that can compel a person or object to do something. According to Plato, it is "a Great Spirit who works as a messenger between

13 Rowan Greer, *Origin*. New York: Paulist Press, p. 223.

14 Alexander C. Irwin (1991), *Eros Toward the World*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, p. 9.

15 Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, tr. by Philip Watson (1953). Philadelphia: Westminster Press, p. 162. See also Irwin's *Eros*, p. 20.

16 Paul Tillich (1951-63), *Systematic Theology*, 3 Volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 280-81.

men and God.”¹⁷ He also gives Eros a serious role that is carving for the beautiful which is capable of leading the soul upward to the philosophical appreciation of ideal beauty.¹⁸

Writing about the authority of love, Ibn Hazm says:

Love exercises as affective authority and decisive sovereignty over the soul. Its commands cannot be opposed, its ordinance may not be fluted, its rule is not to be transgressed, it demands unwavering obedience and against its domain there is no appeal.¹⁹

This love is not restricted to man and woman who desire union. It has universality and it covers day and night, heavens and the earth and the whole universe.

Referring to this function of love, Rumi says:

1. Heaven says to the earth, “Welcome! To thee I am (in the same relation) as the iron and the magnet.
2. In (the view of) the intellect, heaven is man and the earth woman: Whatever that (heaven) casts forth this (earth) fosters.
3. Therefore regard earth and heaven as endowed with intelligence, since they do the work of intelligent beings.
4. Unless these two sweethearts are testing (delight) from one another, then why are they creeping together like mates?
5. Without earth how should roses and *arghawan* flowers grow? What, then, would be born of the water and heat of heaven?

17 Plato, *Symposium*, tr. by Alexander Nehamas and Paul (1989). Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hacket Publishing Company, p. 202.

18 M. I. Haq (2002), Comparative study of love and Eros among Plato, Ibn Hazm and the modern philosophers. *Al-Hikmat*, Volume 22, p. 34.

19 Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove*, tr. by A. J. Arberry (1953). London: Lazak and Company Ltd., p. 60.

6. The desire (implanted) in the female for the male is to the end that they may perfect each other's work.
7. God put desire in man and woman in order that this union should preserve the world.
8. He also implants the desire of every part for another part: from the union of both an act of generation results.
9. Likewise night and day are in mutual embrace: (they are) different in appearance, but (are really) in agreement.²⁰

In the *Mathnawi*, Rumi gives wide and active role to love which functions everywhere in the universe. He also believes that each successive stage is reflecting the one immediately above it and everything is striving to reach its original source. He also writes:

“Whenever anyone seeks, the soul of the object sought by him is desiring him, (whether it be) man, animal, plant or mineral, every object of desire is in love with everything that is without (has not attained to) the object of desire.”²¹

It is clear from the above discussion that the whole universe is designed on the principle of love. Everything is attracted to another and everything is in love with another. This love is a mercy and blessing from God to the whole universe to act upon and get pleasure.

FUNCTION OF LOVE IN HUMAN LIFE

If we look at the principle functioning in human life, we can see its effects in our lives. This is the love that unifies two different people and makes their lives pleasant. Marriage gives them the sense of completion that cannot be achieved through any other means. This is what Allah says in the Qur’ān:

20 Afzal Iqbal (1978), *Life and Works of Rumi*, 4th edition. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, p. 200.

21 *Ibid*, p. 201.

Among His signs is that He created couples for you from yourselves that you may get tranquility in her, and He created between you affection and kindness.²²

The same role is played by love between parents and children, and among brothers and sisters. It is the loving heart of a mother which forces her to get up from her sweet sleep at the midnight, and bear hardship for her child. Love functions even after the death of one party, and a person cannot forget the beloved one. A famous poetess and a sister, recalls her brothers Mu'awiyah and Sakhr after their death. Mu'awiyah was killed in a raid and was avenged by his brother Sakhr who sustained a serious injury which caused his death. Their sister al-Khansa laments and shows her love for her brother by saying:

My eyes, when his memory strikes my mind
Overflow like a stream on my cheeks.
The eye cries for Sakhr and is tearful,
It is newly been bereft and before him are curtains of dirt.
Khansa' cries and will not cease as long as she lives.
She will moan for him though her strength should flag.²³
(tr. by the author)

LOVE FOR FREEDOM

In our human life, freedom is in human nature. People are born free but later on some of them are made captive and their freedom is gone. They struggle to reach the original life of freedom and love for freedom makes them suffer like a person in love suffers for his/her beloved. The freedom movement of the Muslims of subcontinent and later on the freedom movement for Pakistan is the best example of love for freedom. In this movement, because of their love for freedom, the Muslims sacrificed their wealth, their children, even their lives, and tried to get their independence.

22 Qur'ān, 30:21.

23 Al-Khansa' bint Amr, *Diwan al-Khansa'* (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, Dar Beirut, 1963), pp. 48-50.

PLANTS AND LOVE

Besides human beings, the act of love is found in plants. They flourish and become fruitful because of unification of male and female through pollination, which could be termed as the act of love.

There is another aspect of human-plant love relation. A gardener's object of love is his garden. When he loves his job and gives full attention to his garden, the garden flourishes and gives fruits and flowers. There is mutual act of attraction between them. As the gardener shows his love to a garden, the beauty of garden attracts not only the gardener but also other visitors.

Mawlana Rum discusses such love between a body and herbs and says:

“The desire of the body for green herbs and running water is because its origin is from those, the desire of the soul is for life and for the Living One, because its origin is the Infinite Soul.”²⁴

LOVE IN INANIMATE

If we turn our attention to non-living things, the act of attraction and flourishing is also found there. In our present day system of electricity, we see the combination of negative and positive wires. Any time when they attract each other and get together, it results into conquering darkness.

This is what Allah (SWT) has said:

“And all things We have created by pairs, that haply ye may reflect.”²⁵

LOVE FOR KNOWLEDGE

In the field of knowledge, some of the scholars have love for their job and are deeply involved in research. As much as they

24 *Life and Works of Rumi*, p. 201.

25 Qur'ān, 51:49 (tr. by Pickthall).

take interest in it and desire to uncover the veil of the secrets of the universe, the universe begins revealing itself for him. Most of the discoveries have become possible only through the moving force of love.

LOVE IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM

As pointed out earlier in a poem by Mawlana Rum, the relation between the earth and the heaven is like the iron and the magnet. The universe has become into existence from the same material. The earth is part of this universe. Thus, various parts of the whole universe are attracted to each other. No life is possible on earth without sun. This co-relation of the planets made life possible on the earth. In other words, we can say that earth is beloved of the sun.

The solar system by itself is attracted to its centre and it circles around the sun, like a family runs around the father. According to Isaac Newton, every piece of matter attracts every other piece²⁶ and this is called force of gravity. This gravity in other words, could be called "love" which is keeping the solar system together. If the force of love or gravity were suspended, the whole system would collapse.

HEAVEN AND THE EARTH

In the human perspective, life came into existence because of the sperm, which plays the role of love between a couple. The same system is adopted for general life on earth. Vegetation on earth is not possible without heavenly affection. Affection between the heat of sun with the water of the ocean causes clouds and rain. The act of such love causes vegetation. The Qur'ān turns our attention towards this fascinating relation:

And We send down from the sky blessed water whereby
We give growth unto gardens and the grain of crops,
And lofty date palms with ranged clusters,

Provision (made) for men; and therewith We quicken
a dead land.
Even so will be resurrection of the dead.²⁷

TRIANGLE OF GOD, PROPHETS AND BELIEVERS LOVE

Prophets are messengers between God and human beings. The last messenger Muhammad ﷺ (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is like sun for his followers.²⁸ Sun illuminates bodies of other planets and causes life there; similar is the Prophet who spiritually enlightened lives of the believers. In fact, it is mercy and love of God for the human beings that He, not only made arrangements for their physical life, but also for their spiritual life. This spirit played very active role among the believers. The followers of Muhammad ﷺ belonged to different tribes who, in the past, were staunch enemies of each other. But it was his divine love that he brought these people on one platform. Referring to this blessing, Allah (SWT) says:

He is it Who supported you with His help and with the believers. And intimated their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth you could not have attuned their hearts, but Allah has attuned them.²⁹

It is must for a successful love that a beloved is kind and loving person. Such quality of love enslaves a lover. If we look at the life of the Prophet ﷺ, we would find that he was symbol of such qualities. The Qur'ān, referring to this quality, says:

It was by the mercy of Allah that thou vast lenient with them (O Muhammad), for if thou hadst been stern and fierce of heart they would have dispersed from round about thee.³⁰

27 Qur'ān, 50:9-11.

28 The Qur'ān says, "He is caller towards Allah with His permission, and a bright lamp" (25:61).

29 Qur'ān, 10:63-64.

30 Qur'ān, 4:159.

As the Prophet loves his followers, they too, love each other just for God. Allah, too, has declared His love for those who meet each other just for Him, visit each other because of Him, and spend money on each other because of Him.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

Some of the salves of Allah are those who are neither prophets nor martyrs, but the prophets and the martyrs would be delighted about their rank with Allah, on the Day of Judgment. People asked: O Messenger of Allah, who would be these people? He said: "They are the people who love each other in God, though they have neither blood nor business relation. By God, their faces will shine and they will be in light. They would not fear when people would have fear; they won't feel sorrow when people would be grieved."³¹

Love demands sacrifice. When a beloved demands that a lover delightedly sacrifices himself because he thinks about the everlasting union with the beloved. When beloved is God, and He demands from His lovers to fight in his path and sacrifice themselves for Him, they happily get ready for it and nothing can stop them from such act. The Prophet shows his desire to do so again and again, if he could. He said:

By whom in Whose hand is my life, I would love to be killed in the path of Allah, then become alive, then killed, then become alive, then killed, then become alive, then killed.³²

Here, the Prophet desires to sacrifice himself in the path of his Beloved. But same is desire of a believer to attain love of God by sacrificing his self. Anas relates from the Prophet ﷺ who said that:

31 Jalil Ahmad Nadvi (1982), *Rah-i-Amal*, 15th edition. Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., p. 185.

32 Khatib al-Tabrizi (1932), *Mishkat al-Masabih*. Delhi: Noor Muhammad Karkhana-e-Tijarat-e-Kutub, p. 329 (*Kitab al-Jihad*).

A martyr would desire to return to this world and get killed ten times (in the path of his Beloved, God), because he knows its nobility/appreciation.³³

From here it is clear that God loves people and His Messengers, Messenger and his followers love each other, and they all love God. Thus, the triangle of love, from God to Prophet, to people, to God, is completed.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that love is neither restricted to body nor just to human beings. The whole universe is working on the principle of mutual love. This love is moving force of life. Every part of the universe is attracting other parts. Same is the case of human life. If bonds of mutual love were cut down between a lover and a beloved, their life would turn into destruction. Likewise, if any time, these bonds of affection and attraction among various parts of the universe were cut down, the whole universe would be ruined. It is then proved that love is a universal reality.

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