



THE INGREDIENTS, STAGES AND EXPERIENCE OF
LOVE: A PARALLEL EXPOSITION OF
JALALUDDIN M. RUMI AND
ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the concept of love as presented in the writings of two prominent thinkers, namely Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi (d.1273) and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (d. 1974), representing two spiritual traditions and historical periods. It attempts to examine man's experience of love at various levels – physical and spiritual, earthly and divine – and to establish connections and relations between the two. In this respect a biographical introduction and a historical background of each thinker is provided along with an overall account of the concept of love as reflected in their respective schools of thought. The research has addressed the concept of love under three main heading, 1) Ingredients of love, 2) Stages of love, and 3) Experience of love. Under “Ingredients”, elemental topics such as self, knowledge and beauty are conversed. Under “Stages”, various levels and categories of love – personal, social, romantic, spiritual and divine – are discussed. And the concept of “taste” (“*dhawq*” in Rumi's terminology and “*rasa*” in Coomaraswamy's) has been deliberated upon under “Experience”; this most profound level of understanding love involves all stages and ingredients at their various intensities and purities. The study of this aspect through the literature produced by Rumi and Coomaraswamy shows how much the notion of love has evolved, or remained unchanged, among different people with different beliefs. The research provides a comparative analysis highlighting the similarities and differences on the concept of love by Rumi and Coomaraswamy and their contributions to the field of philosophy and mysticism.

ملخص البحث

تعدّ هذه الدّراسة محاولة لمقارنة مفهوم الحبّ في بعض أعمال جلال الدّين الرّومي (ت 1273) وأعمال أناندا كوماراسوامي (ت 1974). كما أنّها تحاول كشف النقاب وشرح، بل وتحليل التراث العلميّ والمذهب الفكري عندهما. وهذا العمل يتضمّن إبتداءً الإسهامات الإيجابية التي قدّمها كلّ منهما، كما أنّه يشير أيضاً إلى النقائص التي تعترّياها. إنّ مفهوم الحبّ في هذا البحث يتناول العناصر والمراحل والتجارب التي تكتنف الحبّ. لذا فإنّ البحث إذ يركّز على هذه القضايا الأساسيّة الثلاث، يقوم بتصنيفها والتوسع فيها حسب ما يراها كلّ من الرّومي وكوماراسوامي. هذا ويُجرى البحث أيضاً مقارنة بين المدرستين الفكريتين. علاوة على ما سبق تُقدّم الدراسة خلفية تاريخية للمفكرين البارزين وأخرى عن سيرتهما، كما أنّها تُلقي الضوء على رؤيتهما للحبّ. وفيما يتعلّق بوجهة نظرهما حول عناصر الحبّ، تقوم الدّراسة ببيان مصادرها وتصنيفها إلى ثلاثة عوامل: النفس، والمعرفة، والجمال. وما يتعلّق بوجهة نظرهما حول مراحل الحبّ فإنّ البحث يقوم بعرض المنهج الذي يسلكه كلّ منهما على حدة في تحديد المراحل المختلفة التي يمرّ بها الحبّ. وأمّا ما يتعلّق بتجارب الحبّ فإنّ البحث يتوسع في معنى مفهوم "الذوق" عند الرّومي و "راسا" عند كوماراسوامي كتجارب شخصية عاشها كلّ منهما وذلك لإبداء علاقة هذه التجارب بالفرح، كما أنّه يبيّن كيفية رؤيتهما للمتعة الحقيقية الخالصة والسعادة الأبدية. يقوم البحث بمقارنة تحليلية حيث يُلقي الضوء على مواطن الاتفاق لدى كلّ من الرّومي و كوماراسوامي ومواطن الاختلاف بينهما وذلك فيما يتعلّق بالخريطة الإدراكية التي يُشكّلها كلّ واحد منهما حول الحبّ ، مع الإشارة إلى الإسهامات التي قدّمها الإسلام والهندوسية في مجال الفلسفة والتصوف.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the finding of my own investigations, except where otherwise states. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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**THE INGREDIENTS, STAGES AND EXPERIENCE OF LOVE:
A PARALLEL EXPOSITION OF JALALUDDIN M. RUMI AND
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Affirmed by Leyla Hajimehdi Tajer

.....
Signature

.....
Date

To my husband Mohammad Reza S. Rezaei,

My daughter Golbahar

And my son Mohammad Javad

With love and gratitude

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|
| ء | ’ | خ | kh | ش | sh | غ | Gh | ن | N |
| ب | B | د | D | ص | ṣ | ف | F | هـ | H |
| ت | T | ذ | dh | ض | ḍ | ق | Q | و | W |
| ث | Th | ر | R | ط | ṭ | ك | K | ي | Y |
| ج | J | ز | Z | ظ | ẓ | ل | L | | |
| ح | ḥ | س | S | ع | ‘ | م | M | | |

| Short Vowels | |
|--------------|---|
| اَ | a |
| اِ | i |
| اُ | u |

| Long Vowels | |
|-------------|---|
| اَ + اَ | ā |
| اِ + اِ | ī |
| اُ + اُ | ū |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 The Problem Statement

Human race is created in three dimensions or levels: body, mind and spirit. Each of these dimensions is responsible for the status of health, action and intention (spiritual being). The three dimensions' numerous abilities include self healing, self control of action and finally spiritual satisfaction. The loss of balance among the three dimensions in a social context would eventually lead to a crisis at the global level.

The mechanical approach to life and a tendency towards a higher quality of life has negatively affected man's inner strength. However, sages and thinkers in various traditions, institutions and schools of thought have referred to love as a key element of healing power. A common part that the Sufi orders point to is the healing power of passion and enthusiasm (*'ishtiāq*) for the Divine. Mystics have pictured their experiences of love in literature or poetry and defined the relation of the Divine and the cosmos symbolically. "Self-realisation" in this endeavour proves to be central. When man (*'ālam-i Ṣaghīr*), knows himself he will know the world around him (*'ālam-i Kabīr*), hence establishing a relation between himself and the Divine Source. The fundamental question, therefore, is: can man reach the stage of self-realisation and be united with the creation following the path of love?

The present study investigates the nature of man; his present issues as related to the three dimensions of his nature and the way the mystical path of "love" can work as an effective solution to help him overcome his issues. The research involves a

comparative study of the works of two prominent thinkers from two different schools of thought, namely, Jalaluddin Rumi (d.1273) and Ananda Coomaraswamy (d. 1974).

Rumi was not a philosopher. In his works, there are often attacks against intellectual philosophy and he claims not to be a classical poet.¹ However, he was a passionate lover of God and expressed his feelings in a poetic style that is rather unorthodox. He created a style which is unique in the entire Persian literature. Historically, influences of the religious and philosophical thought of Ghazālī, Suhrawardi, Sanā'ī, 'Attār have been traced in Rumi.

On the other hand, the significance of choosing Coomaraswamy as part of the core of this study is that we gather the influence of some great figures on Coomaraswamy's thought like Guatāma, Shankāra and Kabir, or Rumi, Laotse and Jesus, whom he called prophets, and also some philosophers namely Plato and Kant, Tauler, Behmen and Ruys Broeck, Withman, Nietzsche and Blake can be traced.²

Coomaraswamy indeed quoted from many great figures such as Plato, Nietzsche, Meister Eckhart and St. Augustine, in addition to the sacred literature of Hinduism and Buddhism, the Bible and the Qur'an. Therefore, we may claim that this study could be a representative of a wide scope of intellectual as well as spiritual traditions. According to Coomaraswamy: "I have simply used the resources of Vedic and Christian scriptures side by side. An extended use of Sumerian, Taoist, Sufi, and Gnostic sources would have been at once possible and illuminating."³

¹ In his works both in the *Diwan-i Shams Tabriz* and the *Mathnawi*, he proclaimed his dislike for rhymes and poetical artifices. See: Ritter, "Jalaluddin Rumi," in *the Encyclopedia of Islam*, New edition.

² Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Dance of Shiva; Fourteen Indian Essays* (2nd edn.), New Delhi: Munshiram, 1982. p. 152; Also see *Ananda Coomaraswamy: Remembering and Remembering Again And Again*, p. 57.

³ Coomaraswamy, *A New Approach to the Vedas*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2002, p. IX.

Rumi developed a certain trend sociology and education in his works based on Islamic teaching, and after seven centuries, Coomaraswamy equated him with philosophers like Blake and Lao Tze. Despite the fact that in this vast interval several new theories of love were evolved, the influences of Plato, Rumi, Shankara, Eckhart, Platinius, Philo and Rumi are strongly evidenced in Coomaraswamy's work.

The purpose of Coomaraswamy's writings is to show the power of the human soul, working on passages taken from Hindu and Buddhist sources representing the ideas, myths and images of many traditional cultures in search of a fundamental common ground. Apparently "his search for self-knowledge" was his first approach and the main part of his biography.

To my knowledge, Rumi and Coomaraswamy's School of Thought have not been reconstructed and compared systematically enough and in significant details. Both approaches are complex and comparisons must be made carefully and with an open mind. We must not assume at the outset, for example, that Rumi and Coomaraswamy shared the same concerns about love or that they asked exactly the same questions. Nor that they have similar theories of the human mind or similar methods of investigation.

Love seems to be a large mystery with infinite dimensions and components. Desire, reason, pleasure, the continuation of the human species, creation in the arts and sciences, immortality, the theory of ideas, beauty and the good, the human soul and the divine--Rumi brought all these and more into his poem of love. To these Coomaraswamy added the stage of self-realisation and the ultimate experience of liberating love that is beyond pleasure and pain. In addition, Rumi has discussed love in several of his writings, sometimes implicitly. On the other hand, Coomaraswamy did not deal directly with 'the love life of man' until nearing the end of his life when he wrote *the Dance of Shiva*, where the traditional foundations of Art and life is explained;

it talks about the practical stages of *sahaja* that is beyond pleasure and pain. The process of self-realisation and experiencing the stage of selfless love is an important theme in his collection of essays.

For all these reasons, it seemed necessary to put together the views of the two thinkers on the question of love, and reconstructing ‘theories of love’. Nevertheless, making due allowances for differing views in different works, development of ideas, and difficulties of interpretation, we maintain that both Rumi and Coomaraswamy showed grand, coherent – and fairly consistent over time – approaches to love.

1.1.2 Research Objective

Love is universally thought to be a relation between at least two terms, something that loves, the lover, and something that is loved, the beloved or the object of love. It is also clear that love is not always mutual: one’s love may or may not be returned, and perhaps for this reason, studies of love are usually studies of the lover. The first question that arises is about the possible range of meanings of ‘lovers’ and ‘objects of love’.

The objective of this study is a critical exposition and comparison of Rumi’s and Coomaraswamy’s perception of love, which relies primarily on explications of texts and philosophical analysis. The study will aim at addressing the questions related to the experience of love, role of love in individual’s spiritual growth and the relation between beauty and love. It will also discuss the time-bound and timeless kinds of love and effect of culture and religion on its various manifestations.

1.1.3 Limitation of This study

Besides linguistic variations, the study of Rumi's and Coomaraswamy's theories of love also involves analysing different cultures, historical periods and disciplines. We acknowledge this complexity, and because of it we need to state the limits of this study. Rumi and Coomaraswamy lived in different cultures and historical periods; one was a Sufi master, the other primarily a philosopher (a traditionalist). Though love seems to be a universal human phenomenon, how it is conceived, practiced and valued may sometimes vary within different cultures and historical settings.

The present dissertation is mainly a critical exposition and comparison of Rumi's and Coomaraswamy's view of love, which relies primarily on explications of texts and philosophical analysis. Here, we hope to elaborate on the concept of love, especially from spiritual, mystical, and religious perspectives. We have selected two prominent thinkers, namely Jalaluddin Rumi and Ananda Coomaraswamy, as representatives from two different traditions. Studying the writings of the two, we shall make a comparative study of their views, especially dealing with the notions of self, beauty and love. It is worth mentioning that the connection between the two, though they belonged to different epochs, has already been established: Rumi was knowledgeable in Indian spiritual tradition, and Coomaraswamy has often spoken about Rumi's cosmology in his writings.

1.1.4 Research Methodology

This work involves extensive and in-depth analysis of relevant literature produced by the two prominent figures, Jalaluddin Mawlana Rumi and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, both in their original language and in translations. In this regard, their major books are selected as the core text. In addition, some major sources (books and articles) that have

commented and elaborated on their thoughts are consulted. Various aspects of the works of these two writers, their methodologies, worldviews and their backgrounds, are also studied.

The principal method employed in this project is content analysis, an unobtrusive methodology involving a close reading of the original source texts, followed by conceptual analysis and rational reconstruction. Furthermore, it is a survey of the literary uses of the metaphor of ‘love’ (*ishq*, *ḥub*) in Persian, earlier Arabic, and Islamic literature and analysis of different levels of love. Using the same approach, this study deals with the notion of ‘love’ (*kāma* and *bhakti*) in the Hindu tradition. Also, Coomaraswamy makes our mind receptive to the depths of meaning and profound life-giving qualities of perennial works such as the *Vedās*, *Brahmanās*, *Upanishāds* as well as the writing of Plato, Platinus, St. Augustine, Rumi, Dante, Eckhart and Blake.⁴

The research will be based upon textual study to examine the concept of love (*ishq*) in Rumi and Coomaraswamy’s works. It is historical, textual and analytical due to the nature of the subject matter.

1.2 CHARACTERS, SOURCES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of love and the importance awarded to it is not confined to a certain tradition. Indeed, many notable figures like Mo-tzu in China, Narada in India, Plato in Greece, Augustine in Christianity, to name but a few, have argued that “love is the single most potent force in the universe, a cosmic impulse that creates, maintains, directs, informs, and brings to its proper end every living thing.”⁵

⁴AnandaCoomaraswamy: *Remembering and Remembering Again And Again*, p. 57.

⁵J. Bruce Long, “love”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, v.9, p. 31.

Some writers have praised love for its clarifying effects on the mind, its capacity to dissolve the clouds of confusion and give one a direct and straight view of reality. Others have decried the power of love to confuse.⁶

The concept of "love" may generally be categorized into Material and Spiritual. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* goes a bit further and presents love in three broad categories, namely Carnal, Friendly and Divine love, descriptive of the emotional, moral and spiritual qualities of the experience.

Plato's discussion of the nature, source and motivations of the human experience of love is contained in one of the most eloquent and thought-provoking of his dialogues, the *Symposium* as well as *Phaedrus*. Socrates declared that love is neither mortal nor immortal, neither a pure alteration nor unbroken continuity, but a hybrid combination of the two. Love is the mediator between the divine and human realms, "who bridges the chasm that separates them" and "in whom all things are interconnected."⁷

In modern psychological view of love, the writings of Hegel (1770 – 1831) on the subject of love may be viewed as a bridge between late medieval and modern views in philosophy, psychology, and literature. The idea is that the highest form of love is the desire to live on behalf of the welfare of the whole, which lay at the base of Aquinas's view of love and reappears in the writings of Hegel four hundred years later. In his *Philosophy of Right* he contended that love is "consciousness of my unity with another."⁸

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) revolutionised the reigning concepts of love in Western culture by making it and its cognate ideas the central core of his system of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Leo Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, Seth Benardete (ed.), The University of Chicago Press, London, 2001, p.6.

⁸ J. Bruce Long, 32.

psychoanalysis. But rather than tracing the sources of love back to some divine model or external historical force, he localised the causes and operations of love within the diverse faculties and functioning of the human psyche. Freud identified the motivational center of experience of desire, love, affection, friendship, and all other aspects of the emotional life in “the libido or channel for the projection into the external world.”⁹

In Indian religious tradition we have many references to love as a mystical experience. We might say that Sanskrit literature is, on the whole, a romantic literature that interweaves with idealism and practical wisdom and with passionate longing for spiritual vision, and this makes Sanskrit literature a great literature. We have the great songs of the *Vedās* on gods and goddesses; the splendor of the *Upanishāds* – about 112 *Upanishāds* in number, but the most important ones are eighteen – also leads us to understand the concept of self and a journey of self towards Self. This books elaborates that they are two names for one Truth, and the two are one and the same: the Truth of the Universe is Brahman, while our own inner Truth is Ātman. In the *Vedās*, from nature one goes outside; whereas, in the *Upanishāds* one goes into his own inner nature, and from the many he goes to the One.¹⁰

Besides the above sources, for the manual of love we have the *Kāma Sutra* and for mystical love of *bhakti* we have the glory of *Bhagavad Gītā* – which is part of the vastness of the Hindu social ethic the *Mahābhārāta*.¹¹ In the *Bhagavad Gītā* the earliest proposal of Indian *bhakti*, love is given primary spiritual value. Furthermore, we have the love epic of Rāma and Sitā – as the ideal man and woman or lovers of Truth – in the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Juan Mascaro, *The Bhagavad Gita*, translated from the Sanskrit, New York: Penguin Books, 1962.

¹¹ *Mahābhārāta*, is the significant source as the source that claim “what is here is available elsewhere; what is not here is found nowhere else.

tenderness and heroism of the *Rāmāyāna*. The *Purānas* – also often called “the scriptures of the common man,”¹² even of “the religiously disfranchised people”¹³ – is another main source of our research. However, it is rather surprising that in the Hindu texts, especially among all the *Purānas*, *Bhāgavata Purāna* is the most important source for this dissertation. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* teaches us that the highest love for God constitutes the highest good of man.

Zaehner¹⁴ translated the *Bhagavad Gītā* in English.¹⁵ In his *Mysticism Sacred and profane* (Clarendon Press, 1957), he tried to show that there are varieties of mystical experience just as there are varieties of religious experience in general. The great divide seems to be between those types of mysticism which regard love as being the central phenomenon of the whole experience and those which disregard love altogether and expressed themselves exclusively in terms of either unity or the escape or ‘liberation’ from time, the phenomenon world, and all that conditions it. Very rarely, it seems, do the two combine, for very few people among the mystics themselves apparently have had both experiences and witnessed the distinction between the two. In that book, Zaehner was able to cite the Flemish mystic of the fourteenth century, Ruysbroeck, almost alone. Subsequently, he discovered that the same distinction was made by the Muslim mystics, Al-Junayd of Baghdad, Ibn Tufayl of Andalusia, and the Iranian Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, and, on the Hindu side, pre-eminently in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. As he grew increasingly familiar with the text of this wonderful work, it became ever more insistently clear to him that here was a text the whole purpose of which seemed to him

¹² R.N. Dandekar, *Some Aspects of the History of Hinduism*, Poona, 1967, p. 103.

¹³ R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, London, 1966, p.12.

¹⁴ R. C. Zaehner who was the Spalding Professorship of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford in 1952

¹⁵ Zaehner, R.C., *The Bhagavad-Gītā With a Commentary Based on the Original Source*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973.

to demonstrate that love of a personal God, so far from being only a convenient preparation for the grand unitary experience of spiritual ‘libration’ (the *moksha* or *mukti* of the *Upanishāds* and the *vimutti* of the Buddhists), is also the crown of this experience itself which, without it, must remain imperfect.¹⁶

The concept of *bhakti* is very significant in *Vishnāva* or *Krsnaite* branches. They believe that the path of love and passion is the easiest and most efficacious route to the knowledge of God and, thereby, of the self. However, the isolation of love or passion as the surest way to God throws the *Vaisnāvas* into the heart of a troublesome paradox. If every human being is divine by nature, then to love God unreservedly is to revere one’s own self and to elevate oneself to the stature of divinity.¹⁷

The *Sahajiya* tradition looks back to the *Bhagavata Purāna* for guidelines in defining the route taken by the spiritual pilgrim. The route to salvation progresses in five stages of spiritual development, in which the *bhakta* enjoys an increasingly intimate relationship to God. This *Vaisnāva* theology of love reached sublime heights of expression in numerous collections of love lyrics that appeared in India between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most notable are the love songs of Vidyapati and Chandidas and the *Citagovinda* (Love Song of the Dark Lord) by Jayadeva.¹⁸ Chandidas’s song and his world view is an important literature for this study. To become familiar with Chandidas’s world view as a knower of love and the *Sahajiya* tradition, we need to study the *Bhagavata Purāna*, India’s classic sacred love story. For this purpose Coomaraswamy’s works present a perfect candidate especially his article on “*Sahaja*”.

¹⁶Zaehner, p.3.

¹⁷John B. Carman, “Bhakti”, in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, v.2. p.130.

¹⁸Carman, p. 130