



Philosophy
of
Love

DR RAMENDRA

Philosophy of Love

By the same author

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Philosophy of Love

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Philosophy of Love

Considering the fundamental importance of love in human life, in whichever sense we use the word, it is surprising that philosophers have devoted relatively little time to it.¹

In this philosophical essay, I will apply philosophical thinking to the phenomenon of “love”. This will be done in three parts:

First, there will be a *conceptual analysis* of the word “love”. What are the different meanings of the word “love”?² Besides, I will indicate in which sense the word is being used in this essay.

In the second part, an attempt will be made to psychologically explain the phenomenon of love. Why do human beings “fall in” love? And why do they “fall out” of it?

In the third and concluding part, I will make a logical analysis, or in other words, make a critical evaluation of some of the beliefs associated with love. For instance, “love and

sex are one and the same thing”, “we truly love only once and only one person in life”, “first love is the only true love”, “to love someone is not a deliberate decision, it simply happens”.

I

Meaning of “Love”

Let me clarify at the outset that in this section of the essay, I am not interested in giving a definition of “love” from my side or *stipulating* a meaning of the word “love”. On the contrary, I am interested in finding out the *lexical* meaning of the word: how is the word “love” actually used in the language?

Let us begin by enumerating some uses of the word “love”:

1. Humanists love all human beings.
2. Wives and husbands love one another.
3. Parents love their children.
4. Sisters and brothers love one another.

5. Friends love one another.
6. I love Bertrand Russell's book Why I am Not a Christian.
7. He loves his blue car.
8. She loves chocolates.
9. They made love with one another.
10. In Sharat Chandra's novel Devdas, Paro and Devdas love one another.

The way the word "love" has been used in the ten examples given above, something might be in common among their meanings, but there are subtle differences as well. But is it really so? Is something really common among their meanings, or there is only what Wittgenstein has called a "family resemblance"?

What, for example, is common among "making love", "loving a book", "loving chocolates" and "Devdas loving Paro"?

Be as it may, let us turn to some standard dictionaries to find out the different meanings of the word “love”.

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English gives six meanings of “love” as a noun out of which two are relevant to our present discussion:

1. “warm kind of feeling, fondness, affectionate and tender devotion” (for example, “mother’s love for her children”, “love of learning”, etc.)
2. “warm, kind feeling between two persons; sexual passion or desire, this as a literary subject” [for example, “love story”, “marry for love”, “make love” (to have sexual intercourse)]

According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, “love” means “the feeling of liking another adult very much and being romantically and sexually attracted to them, or strong feeling of liking a friend or person in family”

Enough about different meanings of the word “love”, let me now clarify that I will be using the word “love” in the sense it has been used in the tenth example above, that is, the sense in which “Paro and Devdas loved one another”. To distinguish this sense of love from other senses, it is often called “romantic love”. In this sense, love has been a favourite subject for story-tellers, poets and movie-makers, but has received relatively little attention from philosophers. From now onwards, in this essay, I will be using the word “love” in this sense only.

II

The Psychology of Love

The *psychological explanation* of love is much more difficult and complicated compared to clarifying the meaning of love.

There are so many people in the world, why some one falls in love with any one person? Why everything appears useless without that one person? Why is the feeling so intense? In

short, why do human beings “fall in” love? And equally important, why do they “fall out” of it?

Unlike philosophers, psychologists have devoted much more attention and time to studying love and the wider topic “interpersonal attraction” in an *empirical* manner.

Interpersonal attraction has been an important subject of research in social psychology³, because attraction is an important factor in forming social networks, which, in their turn, provide security, and satisfy the need of the individuals to belong to a group.

In trying to assess the nature of attraction, psychologists have used methods like questionnaires, survey and rating scale to determine the level of attraction between persons. Many factors, which bring about attraction, have been studied by psychologists including:

(i) physical proximity, (ii) physical attractiveness, (iii) familiarity, (iv) similarity (v) complementarity and (vi) reciprocal liking.

Masters & Johnson: The Romantic Love Cycle

Before discussing relatively recent researches on interpersonal attraction in general and romantic love in particular, let us survey what the authors of *Masters & Johnson On Sex and Human Loving* has to say about romantic love in the chapter titled “Loving and Being Loved” of their book⁴.

Definition of Love: Coming to the definition of love, the authors have quoted Robert Heinlein’s definition, “Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own”.⁵ Besides, they add, “in any type of love, the element of *caring* about the loved person is essential” [emphasis mine].⁶

The great loves of fiction and verse, according to *Masters & Johnson*, have been romantic

loves “marked by a whirlwind of emotions from passion to jealousy to anguish.”⁷

“In romantic love”, they continue, “unlike any other type of love, we immerse ourselves almost completely in another person ... the intensity of romantic love distorts our objectivity. In our craving for our loved ones, we may overlook flaws, magnify strengths, and lose all sense of proportion.”⁸

The Romantic Cycle of Love: The authors of *Masters & Johnson* have discussed some psychological theories about the nature of romantic love, and then presented an interesting “conceptual model” of “the romantic love cycle”. They begin by clarifying that the model “does not imply that all romantic loves are identical or that each romantic love passes through the phases of this cycle in a predictable, sequential fashion. Instead, it gives us a way to organize our thinking about romantic love.”⁹

According to *Masters & Johnson*, “the process of experiencing romantic love begins with a

stage of falling in love that ranges from the instantaneous ‘love at first sight’ to a gradual process that requires months or years of development”. Again, they add, “in real life, instantaneous love is the exception, not the rule”.¹⁰

According to them, *falling in love* is a process that can start in many ways, such as, dating, or being physically near to a person. Friendship sometimes may blossom into love, “although it may be difficult to pinpoint exactly when falling in love occurs”. However, they continue, “the trusting atmosphere of an intimate friendship may make passion seem out of place, and love, if it develops, may be a low-keyed rather than fiery emotion”.¹¹

Two aspects of falling in love, according to *Masters & Johnson*, are particularly likely to ignite passion: one, the excitement of getting to know someone intimately; and two, the excitement of sex. “Both types of arousal”, they say, “intensify the push towards love by positive reinforcement.”¹²

Being in love, according to *Masters & Johnson*, like falling in love, can happen whether or not the love is *reciprocated*. If there is no indication that reciprocal love might develop, the probability of a person staying in love begins to decrease rapidly. But a person who has reached the “being” phase of romantic love is usually inventive, hopeful and willing to accept “even the flimsiest sign of reciprocation”.¹³

The romantic lover at this stage, say the authors of *Masters & Johnson*, may be “head-over-heels in love” or in a “more tranquil, self-satisfied, secure and objective state”. Sexual attraction is almost invariably strong, although it may not lead to action because of shyness, sexual problems, moral constraints, desire to keep love “pure”, or if the loved one shows no interest in sexual relationship. Whatever form *being in love* assumes, it is, point out the authors of *Masters & Johnson*, “usually a passing phase, *lasting an average of one to two years*, according to many researchers” [emphasis mine].¹⁴

Most of the time, say the authors, romantic love either changes into another form of love, called “companionate love”, or gradually dissolves because of conflicts , boredom, or lack of interest.¹⁵

The *transitional stage* of romantic love is a *crucial* time, according to *Masters & Johnson*. The initial excitement of getting to know someone and the passion of new sexual relationship begins to reduce and the thrill is going, if not gone. Lovers begin to notice imperfections in each other that were previously unobserved or ignored, and boredom or impatience begins to set in. Frustration occurs when love does not measure up to fantasies, when the lovers realize *all* their problems are not resolved, or when they discover that ecstasy cannot go on forever without interruption.¹⁶

Lovers in transitional stage, according to *Masters & Johnson*, begin to test one another, and the presumed strength of their love in

various ways. Each lover is likely to force or trick the other into becoming what they were thought to be or what he or she would like them to become. Power struggles and competitive strivings begin. Testing becomes a means for making a rational decision about the future of the relationship: whether to stay in the relation or get out of it. “Jealousy may rear its ugly head, anger may erupt, and conflict is unavoidable.”¹⁷

The transitional stage of love, say the authors, is “basically a time for testing reality”. In a sense, “love pulls its head down from clouds, and conflicts and doubts that arise may lead to a stage of *falling out of love* or measures may be taken to push the relationship into a temporary state of *truce*” [emphasis mine].¹⁸

Further, according to *Masters & Johnson*, the truce may either lead things back to the “love in transition” stage (with probability being high that further conflicts will occur), or may lead directly to a *companionate love* relationship. On the other hand, if, “given the ingredients of

motivation, flexibility, cooperation, and a little bit of luck, the conflicts are resolved”, the relationship may return to to the *being in love* stage. If this happens, the new version of relationship may actually be stronger, strengthened by the ability to survive its conflicts successfully.¹⁹

According to *Masters & Johnson*, just as people *falling in love* delight in learning everything about their partners and revealing much about themselves, people *falling out of love* are less open, intimate, and interested in their partners. “Concern for partner’s happiness becomes a second priority rather than a guiding light and eventually becomes an incidental thought.” Communication may become strained because the two lovers are no longer “on the same wavelength”, and “whatever troubles occur at this point in the relationship hardly seem worth the effort to overcome”.²⁰

Love relationships, point out the authors, come apart in different ways, most of which are painful. Only about fifteen percent of love

relationship end by mutual consent.²¹ Many times one person pulls out of love relationship, while the other is still “in love”. The falling-out-of-love stage occurs at different times for the two lovers. The heartbreak and sorrow of the deserted lover are sometimes very similar to a “grief reaction”, passing through a period of tearful mourning and shock followed by a time of persistent, haunting memories before there is a return to happiness. At other times, the jilted lover becomes “angry, vengeful or determined to avoid future love at any cost”.²²

Once having fallen out of love, according to *Masters & Johnson*, some people quickly revert to a state of love readiness, “no worse for wear and perhaps even wealthier from their love experience”.²³ There is a “kernel of truth”, according to them, in the notion that a person “on the rebound” may be more open (and more vulnerable) to a new love relationship. On the other hand, there often seems to be a “refractory period” early in the “being out of love” phase during which it simply is not possible to fall in love again.²⁴

Companionate Love: According to *Masters & Johnson*, it is rare for the passion and excitement of a romantic love relationship to last for more than a few years. Usually romance is replaced (except for occasional brief flickers) by another kind of love, which comes to a new state of equilibrium. This is called *companionate love*. It can be looked as a steadier love based on sharing, affection, trust, involvement and togetherness, rather than passion. Many companionate relationships include an exciting, satisfying sexual side, and, say the authors, in many ways the partners may find that “their pleasure in each other increases”. Companionate love is less turbulent and more predictable than romantic love, so many people find it to be a soothing and secure kind of relationship.²⁵

Again, according to *Masters & Johnson*, companionate love is “most characteristic of marriage and other long-term committed relationships”. Because it is “less possessive and consuming than romantic love”, it allows two people to carry on their lives – working,

raising children, having hobbies, relaxing with friends – with a minimum of interference.²⁶

Researches on Love: Much of the research on love, say *Masters & Johnson*, has addressed itself to this issue from the perspective of social psychology: looking at *interpersonal attraction* as a possible source for some answers on the causes of the feeling of love. Research has shown that *physical appearance* is an important element in determining how attracted one person is to another.²⁷ In a thought provoking experiment some psychologists²⁸ found that physical attractiveness also influences our expectations about other people's personalities and behavior.

According to *Masters & Johnson*, scientists have pointed out to the *biological* component of love:

... evolutionary biologists point out that reproductive success may be at least partly linked to love. Hundreds of centuries ago, successful reproduction hinged on two factors: (1) genetic diversity to ensure the

health of offspring, and (2) the man's closeness to the sexual partner during pregnancy and infancy of their new born child to provide protection and food, and to help in child bearing. Love might have created more stable attachments than sexual attraction could accomplish by itself. Love also drew genetically unrelated persons to engage in mating, thus diversifying the gene pool and contributing to the survival of the species.²⁹

Baron and Branscombe: Social Psychology

Let us now turn to relatively recent researches on interpersonal relationship and love. Let us see what Baron and Branscombe have to say about it in the chapter titled "Interpersonal Attraction, Close Relationships, and Love" of their book *Social Psychology*.³⁰

Since love is a kind of interpersonal relationship, let us briefly survey what

Baron and Branscombe have discussed about interpersonal relationships.³¹

Internal Sources of Attraction: Much of our life is spent interacting with others. According to Baron and Branscombe, this *tendency to affiliate* or associate with other people seems to have a neurobiological basis. In fact, “the need to affiliate with others and to be accepted by them may be just as basic to our psychological well-being as hunger and thirst are to our physical well-being.”³²

This makes a perfect sense from an evolutionary perspective: “cooperating with other people almost certainly increased our ancestors’ success in obtaining food and surviving danger”. As a result, a strong desire to affiliate with others appears to be a basic character of human beings, though the *need* to affiliate may vary from person to person. Basically, we tend to seek the amount of social contact which is best for us: preferring to be alone some of the time

and being in social situations some of the time.³³

External Sources of Attraction: *Proximity* and *Physical Attractiveness* are two important external sources of attraction, according to Baron and Branscombe.

A very large number of people live on our planet, but we interact with a relatively small number in our life time. Physical nearness or *proximity* is a basic precondition that must be met before we are attracted towards anyone. In fact, this was true in the past, but now, as Baron and Branscombe have rightly pointed out, in the internet era, social networks and other electronic media make it possible for people to interact and form an initial feeling of liking or disliking without direct face-to-face contact. Of course, ultimately face-to-face contact must take place for close relationship to develop beyond “virtual world”.³⁴

Though beauty is often said to be “skin deep”, research shows that *physical appearance* does have a strong effect on humans. In fact, physical appearance or attractiveness often plays a powerful role in interpersonal attraction.³⁵

Factors based on Social Interaction: *Similarity* and *Mutual Liking* are additional variables that have a strong effect on attraction. However, these factors emerge only when we interact and communicate with others and acquire more information about one another.³⁶

Research findings tend to confirm the *similarity hypothesis*: the more similar two people are, the more they tend to like each other. So, the birds of a feather do actually flock together. Earlier research proposed attraction of opposites as a factor and often called it *complementarity*. Nonetheless, according to Baron and Branscombe, on the whole, the evidence is both strong and consistent that *similarity*

and not complementarity (opposites) seems to be the basis of attraction.³⁷

Similarity in terms of attitudes, beliefs, values, and interests is one of the many factors determining attraction towards another person. Though dissimilarity tends to have a greater impact on attraction than similarity, we respond to both: *the larger the proportion of similar attitudes, the greater the attraction.*³⁸

The effect of similarity is even found with respect to physical attractiveness, where recent evidence, according to Baron and Branscombe, support the *matching hypothesis*: the view that we actually tend to choose romantic partners who are similar to ourselves in physical attractiveness.³⁹

Mutual or reciprocal liking, or *reciprocity* is another important factor based on social interaction, which has an effect on interpersonal attraction. In words of Baron and Branscombe, “research findings offer

strong support for powerful effects of others' liking for *us* on our liking for *them*." The rule of reciprocity, which applies to many aspects of social life, operates within the sphere of attraction as well. In general, we like those who like us, and dislike those who dislike and negatively evaluate us.⁴⁰

Close Relationships: Close relationships are foundations of social life. Relationship with family members is our first and most lasting close relationships, and, according to Baron and Branscombe, we acquire an *attachment style*,⁴¹ which is based on level of self-esteem and degree of interpersonal trust, in context of these relationships. Next to family relationship is life long close friendship beyond the family. Be as it may, let us now turn straightaway to the subject of our essay: love.

Researches on Love: According to Baron and Branscombe, from 1970 onwards, love has been a major topic of interest for

social psychologists. As a result of such research it is now known, fairly clearly, what love is *not*. It is not merely a close friendship extended to physical intimacy, and it involves more than being merely romantically or sexually interested in another person. The specific details vary from culture to culture, but there is reason to believe that the basic experience we call love is relatively universal one.⁴²

Passionate Love: Many people fall in love, but no one ever seems to have “fallen in friendship”. *Passionate love* “involves an intense and often unrealistic emotional reaction to another person.” It “usually begins as a sudden, overwhelming, surging, all-consuming positive reaction to another person – a reaction that feels as if it’s beyond control ... and drives away thoughts of almost anything else when it occurs.”⁴³

Sexual attraction is an *essential* component of passionate love, but it is not

sufficient in itself for concluding that some one is in love with another person. One can be sexually attracted to someone without being in love, but one is not likely to be in love without sexual attraction. For many people love makes sex more acceptable, and sexual activity tends to be romanticized.⁴⁴

Besides sex, passionate love includes, according to Baron and Branscombe, strong emotional arousal, the desire to be physically close, and an intense need to be loved as much as one loves the other person. Loving and being loved are positive experiences, but they are accompanied by recurring fear that something may happen to end the relationship.⁴⁵

Often, sadly, just one person falls in love, and her or his feelings are not reciprocated by the partner. Baron and Branscombe have called it *unrequited love*. Persons in this kind of situation can draw consolation

from the fact that they are not alone in the world to experience it. In one large survey investigation, about sixty percent of respondents said that they had experienced this kind of love within the past two years.⁴⁶

Two social psychologists, Hatfield and Walster, who have studied love for many years suggest passionate love requires the presence of three ingredients: (i) one must have an idea or *concept of passionate love* – one must have a basic idea of *what it is* and believe that *it exists*. (ii) an appropriate love object must be present. ‘Appropriate’, in this context tends to mean a physically attractive, unmarried person of opposite sex. Although this differs in cultures and in various groups within the culture. (iii) the individual must be in a state of *physiological arousal* (sexual excitement, fear, anxiety or whatever) that can then interpreted as the emotion of love.⁴⁷

Different kinds of Love: “Though passionate love”, according to Baron and Branscombe, “is a common occurrence, it is too intense and too overwhelming to be maintained as a long-term emotional state”. There are, however, other kinds of love, which can be more lasting. For instance, *companionate* love, that is, the “... affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined.”⁴⁸

A different conception of love is provided by **Sternberg’s triangular model of love**. According to this theory, each love relationship consists of three basic components, which are present in different cases in different degrees: (i) *intimacy*, that is the *closeness* two people feel, and the strength of the *bond*, which holds them together. Partners high on intimacy are concerned with each other’s welfare and happiness; and “they value, like, count on, and understand one another”. (ii) *passion*, which is based on romance, physical attraction, and sexuality. (iii) *decision* or

commitment: cognitive factors, such as the decision that we love, and want to be with the other person, plus the commitment to maintain the relationship.

When all the three angles of the triangle are equally strong and balanced, the result is *consummate* love. It is the ideal form of love, but something difficult to attain.

Intimacy, passion and decision or commitment; the basic ingredients of love, can exist for different couples, according to Sternberg, as one of the three components, or a combination of any two of them, or all the three. These possibilities, according to him, yield seven kinds of relationships:

(i) *liking*: intimacy alone (true friendship without passion or long-term commitment).

(ii) *romantic* love: intimacy and passion (lovers physically and emotionally

attracted to each other, but without commitment).⁴⁹

(iii) *companionate* love: intimacy and commitment (long-term committed friendship, such as marriage in which passion has faded).

(iv) *infatuation*: passion alone (passionate, obsessive love at first sight without intimacy and commitment).

(v) *fatuous* love: passion and commitment (commitment based on passion, but without time for intimacy – shallow relationship such as whirlwind courtship).

(vi) *empty* love: decision/commitment alone (decision to love another person without intimacy or passion).

(vii) *consummate* love: intimacy passion and commitment (a complete love consisting of all the three components).⁵⁰

The Origin of Love: Baron and Branscombe, too, like *Masters & Johnson*

have referred to the evolutionary explanation of the origin of love. When our early ancestors started walking in an upright position, they hunted for meat and gathered edible that could be carried back to a shelter. Their survival, and that of the entire species, depended on their reproductive success. Such success was more likely, if heterosexual pairs were erotically attracted to one another; and if they were willing to invest time and effort in feeding and protecting any offspring they produced. These two important characteristics – desire and interpersonal commitment – are presumably based on biology. “We experience sexual desire and desire to bond with mates and our children because such motivations were *adaptive*... they helped our species to reproduce and survive” [emphasis mine].⁵¹ As a consequence, today’s humans may be genetically primed to seek sex, fall in love, and become loving parents.

According to Baron and Branscombe, cultural influences can affect both desire and commitment through religious teachings, civil laws, and the way love and marriage are represented in song and stories.⁵²

Some Concluding Remarks

Before concluding this relatively lengthy section on the psychology of love, let me make some brief, critical remarks.

Firstly, in social psychology, like in any other social science, we are dealing with *human beings*, and not with *inanimate* objects as in physics or chemistry.

Human beings have *free-will*, or in other words, the capacity to *choose* among various alternative actions at a particular time. Every individual has an *unique personality* based on *nature* (genetic make up) and *nurture* (upbringing, cultural

environment, etc.). Under similar circumstances, different individuals *may* and *do* act and react in different manner. So, in social psychology, we cannot hope to arrive at “laws of nature” as in physics and chemistry. The best we can hope for is ***approximate generalizations***, and, that too, after much careful, empirical research.

The authors of *Masters & Johnson*, before presenting their “the romantic love cycle”, begin by clarifying that the model proposed “does not imply that all romantic loves are identical or that each romantic love passes through the phases of this cycle in a predictable, sequential fashion. Instead, it gives us a way to organize our thinking about romantic love.”

Besides, Baron and Branscombe have themselves drawn attention to the fact that, in the context of love, specific details vary from culture to culture, and in various

groups within a culture; including the way love and marriage are represented in songs and stories; but there is reason to believe, according to them, that the basic experience we call love is *relatively universal one*.

As far as the *origin of love* is concerned, according to Baron and Branscombe, nothing can be said with certainty, and the mystery of love is only partly solved. However, they, too, like *Masters & Johnson*, have referred to the *evolutionary* explanation of the origin of love, though in a little different manner. This explanation, even if it cannot be *conclusively* proved, might be *accepted hypothetically*, unless further research throws up a better explanation.

III

Logical Evaluation of some Beliefs associated with Love

In this concluding section, I will make a *logical evaluation* of some of the beliefs associated with love. Are they true or false? The psychology of love makes it easier to decide this.

Love and Sex are one and the same thing

Sometimes love and sex are confused with one another. For example, in the sentence, “they made love with one another”, the words “made love” have been used in the sense of having sex or, to be more specific, sexual intercourse. Again, sometimes a person may say “I love you” to someone, just for having sex with her or him. The evolutionary explanation of love, outlined above, may further strengthen the belief that love is invariably linked to sex and reproduction. However, *are love and sex one and the same thing?*

No matter how the love genes might have originated and proliferated. At present, *three logical possibilities* are there: (i) *love without sex* or so-called “platonic” (non-sexual) love; (ii) *love with sex*, as, most often, in marriage and “live-in” relationship, or even without these kinds of relationships; and (iii) *sex without love*, as in casual sexual relationship with sex-workers, or in so-called “one night stand” or even outside these contexts, the most extreme example being forced, sexual relationship *without the consent* of the other party, namely, rape.

According to *Masters and Johnson*, sexual attraction is *almost* invariably strong in romantic love, although it *may not lead to action* because of shyness, sexual problems, moral constraints, desire to keep love “pure”, or if the loved one shows no interest in sexual relationship.⁵³ There could be other reasons also, such as, serious illness, geographic separation and one-sided, *unreciprocated* love.

Similarly, again, according to *Masters & Johnson*, many companionate relationships include an exciting, satisfying sexual side.⁵⁴ None the less, the authors point out that, “there are also forms of romantic and companionate love in which there is *no sexual component*” [emphasis mine].⁵⁵ So, love without sex is not only a *logical possibility*, but also an *empirical fact*.

There is an interesting passage in *Masters & Johnson* distinguishing between love and sex:

Because sexual desire and love may both be passionate and all-consuming, it may be difficult to distinguish between them in terms of intensity. The key feature is the substance behind the intensity. Generally, sexual desire is narrowly focused and rather easily discharged while love is a more complex and constant emotion. In pure unadulterated sexual desire, the element of care and respect are minimal, perhaps present as an after-thought, but not a central part of the feeling. The desire to know the other person is defined in only physical or sensual way ...

This end is easily satisfied. While love may include passionate yearning for sexual union, respect for the loved one is a primary concern. *Without respect and caring, our attraction for another person can only be an imitation of love.* Respect allows us to value a loved one's identity and integrity and thus prevents us from selfishly exploiting them⁵⁶ (emphasis mine).

To conclude, though normally the element of sex is present in "romantic", or what Baron and Branscombe call "passionate love"; love and sex are not one and the same thing. Love and sex *can exist without one another*, and they can also *co-exist*.

Most importantly, *it is possible to purchase sex in the market, but not love.* Just as someone may say, "I love you" to someone, only for having sex with her or him; similarly, one may *pretend* being in love with someone in order to gain wealth, or for some other reason, but, then, we are not talking about love, but something else.

To love someone is not a *deliberate* decision, it simply *happens*

Let us examine the statement, “to love someone is not a *deliberate* decision, it simply *happens*”, on the basis of the research on the subject.

As we have noted earlier in the second section of the essay dealing with the psychology of love, according to *Masters & Johnson*, “the process of experiencing romantic love begins with a stage of falling in love that ranges from the instantaneous ‘love at first sight’ to a *gradual process that requires months or years of development*”. Again, they add, “in real life, instantaneous love is *the exception, not the rule*” [emphasis mine].⁵⁷

According to them, falling in love is a process that can start in many ways such as dating, or being physically near to a person. Friendship sometimes may blossom into love, “although it may be *difficult to pinpoint exactly when falling in love occurs*” [emphasis mine].⁵⁸

One of the “salient findings” by “love researchers”, according to *Master & Johnson*, is as follows:

The notion of “love at first sight” may be in *many cases a myth* that fulfills our need for instance acceptance and rationalizes our feeling of sexual arousal by giving them a “dignified” label, but in *some cases it proves to be real* ... only a passage of time will tell which is which [emphasis mine].

On the other hand, according to Baron and Branscombe, “passionate” love “usually begins as a sudden, overwhelming, surging, all-consuming positive reaction to another person – a reaction that feels as if it’s beyond control ...”

To conclude, in either case, that is, love developing in a *gradual* manner or *instantaneously*; the statement “to love someone is not a *deliberate* decision, it simply *happens*” is true as an approximate generalization. Even “love at first sight” or being attracted towards someone *suddenly* is not a deliberate decision. One can deliberate

and decide “let me be a friend with this person”, but one cannot deliberate and decide, “let me get attracted towards this person or let me fall in love with this person.”

We *truly* love only once and only one person in life and first love is the only *true* love

“We *truly* love only once and only one person in life”, and “first love is the only *true* love”, both these statements are best examined together, because their truth or falsity are closely interrelated. *The Romantic Cycle of Love* outlined by *Masters & Johnson*, which we have discussed in “The Psychology of Love” section of the essay, is sufficient to disprove both of them.

Suppose someone falls in love for the first time in life, what are the possibilities? Either she or he falls out of love, or romantic love changes into companionate love. It is also possible that the first love is unreciprocated, one-sided love. Again, it is possible that two persons love one

another, and one of them falls out of love, while the other one is still in one-sided love. Alternatively, both of them may fall out of love.

In any case, if the lovers fall out of love, then there is always a possibility of their falling in love again.

Once having fallen out of love, according to *Masters & Johnson*, some people quickly revert to a state of love readiness, “no worse for wear and perhaps even wealthier from their love experience”.⁵⁹ There is a “kernel of truth”, according to them, in the notion that a person “on the rebound” may be more open (and more vulnerable) to a new love relationship. On the other hand, there often seems to be a “refractory period” early in the “being out of love” phase during which it simply is not possible to fall in love again.

Therefore, research on love shows that though one can be in romantic love with only one person at a time, it is not true that all of us truly love only once and only one person in life.

However, the possibility cannot be ruled out, as pointed out earlier, that the first love changes into companionate love.

As far as the first love being only true love is concerned, there is no point in saying that the second love is untrue as long as it is genuinely felt. In fact, when the first love is a failure, the second one may turn into companionate love, and so on. According to both *Masters & Johnson* and Baron and Branscombe, it is difficult for the passion and excitement of a romantic or “passionate” love relationship to last for more than a few years. Usually romantic love is replaced by another kind of love, which comes to a new state of equilibrium. This is called *companionate love*. It can be looked as a steadier love based on sharing, affection, trust, involvement and togetherness, rather than passion.

References and Notes

¹ Bertrand Russell's *Marriage and Morals* contains a chapter on "Romantic Love".

² Like most of the words in language, the word "love" has more than one meaning.

³ Researches in social psychology are a source of information for social philosophers.

⁴ William H. Masters, Virginia E. Johnson and Robert C. Kolodny, *Masters & Johnson On Sex and Human Loving* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1988).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 220-21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.222.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ According to researchers Hill, Rubin and Peplau, quoted in *Masters & Johnson*.

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- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid., pp. 222-23.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.222-23.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.223.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid., pp. 223-24.
- ²⁸ Dion, Berscheid and Walster.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.225.
- ³⁰ Robert A. Baron and Nyla R. Branscombe, *Social Psychology* (Delhi, Chennai: Pearson, 2015), pp. 208-243.
- ³¹ They have drawn from the works of several social psychologists.
- ³² Ibid., 211-12.
- ³³ Ibid., p.212.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 215.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.217
- ³⁶ Ibid., p.221.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 222.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 227.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 225.
- ⁴¹ The degree of security experienced in interpersonal relationships.
- ⁴² Ibid., p.233.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 234.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Sternberg's concept of "romantic love" is different from the concept of "romantic love" used in this essay. "Romantic Love", in the sense used in this essay, can also be what Sternberg calls "consummate love".

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 234-5.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.234

⁵² Ibid., p. 234.

⁵³ William H. Masters, Virginia E. Johnson and Robert C. Kolodny, *Masters & Johnson On Sex and Human Loving* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing, 1988), p. 221.

⁵⁴ Ibid.,p. 223.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p 227.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 214-15.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 220.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 222-23.