

Nature of Love and Romantic Relationships in Modern Times

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Abstract:

Love has been dissected, romanticised, theorised, by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists along with poets and literary figures. For example, love was tied to ideas of virtue, sacrifice, and divine connections by philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

After its Greek conceptualisation, love has also undergone multiple changes. However, modern romantic relationships refuse to be defined in any such coherent and teleological manner. They are shaped by rapid technological change, evolving social norms, and growing cultural diversity. Phenomena such as online dating, long-distance virtual relationships and algorithm-driven matchmaking somehow questions about the authenticity, emotional intimacy and sustainability of relationships under the influence of contemporary western society and acknowledges a broader spectrum of relationships, including LGBTQ+ love, polyamory, and non-romantic forms of deep emotional bonds, which makes love more flexible and fluid, and is very different from the conventional understanding of romantic relationships as having the foundation of sacrifice for the maintenance of its divinity. Love today is not merely seen as destiny to be found but a complex dynamic process that requires ongoing communication, self-awareness, adaptability, emotional satisfaction, personal growth and mutual compatibility, unlike the past where marriage was a more powerful representation for a romantic relationship, though it was tied to social and economic obligations. These conditions make love both easily accessible and extremely complex, with new challenges.

Understanding of love and romance may include the media cultural story, the structure, and the social narrative about the position of love and romantic relationships, which often create tension between romantic fantasies and lived reality. The aim for this paper is to provide a nuanced understanding of love in modern times by reinterpreting the conventional thinking, then logically analysing it to give a conceptual clarification about the postmodern 'fluid love' and adding some old school values of conventional ideas in it so it can deal with the fear of existentialist problem of losing one's individuality and other ethical issues so it could be used in our generation for a better understanding of love and romantic relationships. Ultimately, helping people avoid, or at least become conscious of, the psychological consequences of emotional pain, heartbreak, and depressing phases while using technology and innovations to find love.

Introduction:

Who hasn't heard the name of Romeo and Juliet, one of the world's most famous works on love by William Shakespeare? But after modernizing and critically analysing the storyline from a modern perspective on love, one may find it a little over-rated not from a literary standpoint, but from a philosophical understanding of love. Very few of us are aware of another character in this story, called

Rosaline, the first romantic connection of Romeo (Shakespeare, 1597/2004). Though all these characters are considered to be hypothetical, my point is to bring light to the understanding of love and romantic connection by building bridges between earlier and current ways of seeking love. So after analysing the storyline one may find that Rosaline was considered to be the unrequited love of Romeo, that had given him a heartbreak and it was incomplete in the sense of destination, it made his intuitive perspective of having pain in love (Shakespeare, 1597/2004, Act 1, Scene 1, p. 31). But is it just because he didn't get the results as per his expectations? And will this view make preconceived notions about love in his head that might influence how he sees love in future as well? And if he really thought that there is pain in love, how did he fall in love with Juliet later, as no one wants pain? How he overcame that heartbreak is also a position one should observe, as it is mentioned in stances where Romeo goes to the party just to see Rosaline where he has no further expectations from Rosaline in love but just the acceptance of his own feelings that has made him free from the pain somewhere (Shakespeare, 1597/2004, Act 1, Scene 5, p. 43). Now when he sees Juliet at the party, he claims to fall in love with her. Here one can question whether it is just her physical appearance that he had noticed and got infatuated (Shakespeare, 1597/2004, Act 1, Scene 5, p. 43). Belonging to rival communities, this action of making a romantic connection between Romeo and Juliet was unacceptable (Shakespeare, 1597/2004). Just by kissing Juliet, Romeo mentions the sin to get cured. Though it is a very metaphorical representation of considering a person to be the cure of emotional pain that somehow shows the dependency of love over the other partner, it also shows the change in Romeo's perspective on love; from considering it dark, depressing and painful to now seeing it as like the sun that has overcome that darkness, (Shakespeare, 1597/2004, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 51). But in my perspective, it wasn't just Juliet's existence but also the unconscious will to move on from that emotional pain that was the reason for this new feeling of love for Romeo. But what made Juliet fall for him? Well, I would answer this by bringing attention to the fact that she was a teenager, so it can be called as 'puppy love' that is immature and happens at this age, which would have made her curious about love and hence highly infatuated without having a clear understanding of what love is (Shakespeare, 1597/2004). Even if she had one, it was from a deeply rooted patriarchal perspective of the society and thus I will discuss how society also influences love in my later sections.

Moving on to the ending part of the story, where Juliet risks her life for their relationship, but because of some tragedy Romeo dies in reality and when Juliet sees him dead, instead of taking the same poison that Romeo had taken, she chooses his sword for killing herself (Shakespeare, 1597/2004). That shows the presence of a well-functioning mind in love as she wasn't willing to take the risk of being saved at all. But does all this courage to make their love eternal come from love itself? Or can we also say that the level of frustration and pressure they both must have been feeling made them do this? Does modern society have the same notion of love or have some influence of it? Or have multiple new elements developed in modern relationships of their own? Besides this, all the other external factors that affect the success of relationships are also very important but are these important for 'feelings' of love as well? And does love get substituted or remain the same if the source of love gets changed, as happened in Romeo's case? Or does that affect our inner self as well? Or does reflection of love depend on the inner self itself? All these questions become very important in today's time where development and innovations in technology have made intimacy and romantic services easily approachable and convenient. So, let's try to find these answers by analysing love and its changing patterns in the modern time period.

What is 'love'?

Traditional lens / perspective:

No doubt love is also an emotion that makes us feel good as 'love' loves to love 'love', and that love has reference of a person as a source of love. But is it the whole person or their unique attributes including physical appearance, intellectual capabilities, emotional availability, helpful, friendly and kind personality, loyalty, consistent and understanding companionship etc that one likes and calls it as love? For earlier thinkers like Socrates, as mentioned by Plato, there are seven speeches that explore the nature of love here he claims to reveal the "truth" about love (Plato, Symposium, cf. 201d–212b). This knowledge was attributed to a wise non-Athenian woman, Diotima of Mantinea, as his instructor in love (Plato, Symposium, 201d). Here love (eros) was a spiritual journey that starts with physical attraction to beauty and ascends toward higher forms of beauty, just as one climbs on a ladder, Plato's "Ladder of Love" describes ascent from love of a single beautiful body to all beautiful bodies, then to the beauty of the soul, to laws and institutions, to knowledge, and finally to the Beauty itself, eternal, absolute, neither coming into being nor passing away, similarly as ascending taking multiple steps on a ladder to reach at the top (Plato, Symposium, 210a–212). Thus, love becomes a philosophical movement from the sensible to the intelligible realm. But the question is, what should be considered to be the common sense of beauty or in other words

Is it possible to understand the essence of love?

Later Aristotle saw love as a spectrum of interconnected feelings and commitments, not merely a monochromatic emotion (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII, trans. Irwin, 1999). He uses three central concepts, the first is called 'Philia', that is the love in the form of deep friendship, mutual respect, shared values, companionship, recognition of goodness by one soul to another. Second is the 'Eros' (Plato, *The Symposium*, Section 9, 201d–212b, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, 1989), that is the passionate romantic love, burning desires and attraction that brings the initial spark between two individuals. According to Aristotle, it is like fast water coming out of a dam that needs to be controlled and utilized correctly otherwise it may result in disasters like a flood of uncontrolled actions regulated by emotions. Then comes the third one 'Agape' (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII, trans. Irwin, 1999), that is the unconditional love usually called to be given to children by their parents and considered as most divine according to him. But in all these concepts there is an emphasis of having the virtue of temperance (Rhetoric, trans. Roberts, 1984), which not only stands for self control and resistance but finding and working on maintenance of right balance between two people by prioritizing genuine feelings of love rather than just a surface level infatuation. Love is said to be an inward voyage, not destination, not just present but future growth, not mere an emotion but an act of will and a journey of self discovery, not personally but mutually or together for a love relationship. Now I am expanding this philosophical inquiry of love under the influence of modernization, with the popularly known philosophers and thinkers of today's time.

Modern lens/perspective

J. Krishnamurti had made his understanding and acceptance about inner self first that includes cessation of inner violence and shedding off the societal conditioning that dulls mind's own tendency of having its own perspective, before talking about love, it's like 'setting the pitch for playing cricket'. For being capable of loving someone, there should be the elimination of this violence within ourselves by self reflection, confronting our own violent tendencies and their root cause without justification or denial, deeply

engaging with the issue, and fully living in the moment rather than just treating it as an abstract by giving attention with immediate decisive action (Krishnamurti, 1969/2010, ch. 06). But this cessation of violence doesn't guarantee inner peace or harmonious relationships as desire is the root of the contradiction that creates the struggle between 'wanting' and 'not wanting'. (Krishnamurti, 1969/2010, ch. 07; Krishnamurti, 1968). 'What is' with 'what should be' leads to hypocrisy and conflicts that align with unattainable standards therefore one should accept and recognize 'what is' for clarity and embrace inaction can lead to complete action, while on the other hand acting from confusion leads further confusion only (Krishnamurti, 1969/2010, ch. 06). He further adds that to understand love in a relationship, one must look within without analytical distraction, you need to go outside the field of thought, consciousness, time and sorrow, as love cannot coexist with sorrow and is considered to be fresh, new, and alive, has no today or tomorrow. Emotional attachment or possession leads to jealousy and insecurity in a romantic relationship creating dependency where love can't flourish, and pursuit of safety or commitments leads to sorrow and fear but true and authentic love needs freedom from attachment and self centeredness, i.e. total self abandonment that includes 'Doing nothing', because as we don't know what to do, we do absolutely nothing that brings inward silence, meaning, not seeking, not wanting, not pursuing anything, not any center at all, then finally we understand what is love (Krishnamurti, 1969/2010, ch. 08).

Now after J. Krishnamurthi I would like to take notes on the definition of love from a famous book of Chandra Mohan Jain or Osho who talked about sexuality and marriage as a traditional, societal and cultural taboo for women, that can be understood as an influential factor for the definition of love-relationship. According to him, a relationship is nothing but an escape from aloneness, fear of not being loved hence one should embrace aloneness that leads to peace, self love and deeper connection with others as one is born, lives and dies alone (Osho, 1985, pp. 22–25). He says that marriage is an unnatural institution that reduces women to ownership and resentment and eventual hatred for men, as lifelong promises are false, and attraction naturally fades with time (Osho, 1985, pp. 45–52). This societal pressure fades genuine freedom and friendship as love is an act of giving without expectations (Osho, 1985, pp. 53–60). He also focuses on how true sexual fulfilment and orgasmic experience are symbolized to spiritual liberation, offering a glimpse into meditation and the potential for profound personal growth but got suppression, especially for women as there is the fear of intimacy, rooted in societal and biological constraints including traditional views on intimacy, foreplay dissatisfaction or having pressure on men for giving multiple orgasmic fulfilment that leads to nothing but emotional frustrations (Osho, 1985, pp. 88–101). He says that the key for a long lasting relationship is not clinging but allowing love to grow naturally, free from all societal and romantic pressure (Osho, 1985, pp. 66–72). According to Tantra, the body is fundamental to well-being and spiritual growth and guides sensory experience by awakening it for attraction, and mind towards silence and awareness which is called a state of pure consciousness (Osho, 1985, pp. 103–110). Mental ideas and comparisons lead to dissatisfaction with the physical appearance, and real beauty is not physical appearance but comes within (Osho, 1985, pp. 115–120). When one is in love, consciousness becomes temple of love and completely impersonal, flows naturally as love is multifaceted experience shaped by individual perception and consciousness, having possessiveness, domination, control, jealousy and conflicts at the lower level, but on the highest level it transcends relationship, and become state of being, unconditional, pure, meditative i.e. real authentic love itself (Osho, 1985, pp. 130–138). Besides this, Nathaniel Branden talked about the roots of romantic love that includes aloneness as an essential part along with understanding of personal identity and responsibilities for loving others (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 27–34). He criticised the idea that a love relationship is about mutual benefits, as romantic love is a

mature expression of self awareness and personal growth (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 35–42). He uses the ‘Mutnik principles’ for explaining core nature of romantic love as the self awareness induces pleasurable experiences that are the feedback from others that results in intensification as romantic love, intimate emotional connection (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 43–49). This self awareness is not pseudo visibility of unrealistic perception or validity but visibility as understanding of one self (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 50–55). Further he says that sexual intimacy is the blend of self affirmation and immense pleasure that reflects competency and control of ourselves over our existence by fulfilment of profound psychological needs contributing to psychological and sexual happiness in romantic love (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 56–63). He further includes that the concept of love at first sight can be considered to understand the initial attraction, (as happened in Romeo’s case) but true love takes time (Branden, 1988, ch. 3, pp. 78–84). Romantic attraction arises from recognizing shared values, attitude and goals, sometimes without even verbal expression or confession, through a sense of life including how someone faces challenges and relationships (Branden, 1988, ch. 3, pp. 85–92). Besides this he brings focus on how unresolved childhood trauma results in seeking and relying on external validation instead of fostering individualism, marked by manipulation, dependency and role playing results into the emotional immaturity that leads to breaking, failure or end of a romantic relationship (Branden, 1988, ch. 2, pp. 64–70). Hence one should appreciate differences and similarities of other partners whether it's complimentary or fictional . He also adds the importance of biological roles and syncing of energy levels of partners in a romantic relationship otherwise one partner will feel impatient and the other feels over pressured (Branden, 1988, ch. 2–3, pp. 70–75, 100–104). As we can see from the above analysis that somewhere modern times has developed more vivid understanding about intimacy and individualism, though the self awareness is still a very common feature in both the times but in modern days, there is a strong influence of society, western culture, competitiveness, emotional and sexual frustrations, preconceived notions about love, unresolved trauma etc along with a very fast life and low self control leading to multiple challenges and failure of relationships as in comparison to the past. So let's examine their impacts on love relationships in modern times deeply.

Influence of Western culture on modernization of love and intimacy :

Primarily in modern society the love and marriage were driven by economic and social imperatives rather than personal affection or sexual attraction and their motive was to secure wealth, status and property without having much emphasis on emotional connection (Musial, 2013, pp. 52–54; Aries as discussed in Giddens, 1992, pp. 26–30). Even sexuality was tightly controlled and considered inappropriate if it's not for reproductive purposes (Foucault as cited in Giddens, 1992, pp. 27–29) and the position of women was largely defined by dowry and domesticity of men for long term and moral duties (Illouz, 2007, pp. 10–15). Anthony Giddens concept of ‘pure relationship’ was on mutual satisfaction and emotional equality sustainability as both parties find fulfilment with externally imposed commitments on personal choices and self reflection (Giddens, 1992, pp. 58–63). He also talked about ‘plastic sexuality’ that shows decoupling from reproduction and shaped by individual desires and identities (Giddens, 1992, pp. 2–3, 165–168). Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of ‘liquid love’ sees contemporary relationships as fluid and transient in which connections are easily formed and dissolved, often lacking depth and stability because of the influence of customer culture's emphasis on individual freedom and instant gratification (Bauman, 2003, pp. vii–xv, 3–6). Here "liquid love" reflects the increasingly fluid, fragile and superficial romantic relationship of modern times that is the result of commodification and trivialization of love and intimacy, making bonds less durable because of easily disposable emotional connection (Bauman, 2003, pp. 12–15).

Historically relationships endured hardship and emphasized emotional depth, but contemporary society, having social media and dating apps that reduced people to profile and appearance only, where partners are easily replaceable (Illouz, 2007, pp. 90–98). This hook up culture, where love and intimacy are commodified, especially among younger generation like GenZ, casual intimate and physical relationships may represent a liberation from outdated norms, that are considered to be as restrictive (Griebing, 2012, pp. 34–41; McNair, 2002, pp. 87–93), but it also contributes to emotional isolation, loneliness, a weakening of social cohesion, increased rate of depression, and identity confusion as long term stable relationships are linked to greater happiness, emotional support and a sense of purpose (Durkheim, 1897/2006, pp. 168–172). However, mental health support, relationship education and therapy also plays an essential role in helping people in navigating modern relational challenges (Hochschild, 2012, pp. 21–25). Eva Illouz studies the intertwining of love with economic and cultural factors and pursuit of anatomy, abundance of choices and commodification of relationships i.e. like market transactions or shopping on the basis of immediate desires can lead to emotional distress, emotional pain and anxiety (Illouz, 2007, pp. 77–85). This sense of inadequacy and unequal experience particularly affects women (Illouz, 2007, pp. 96–103). Further she mentions in her book ‘Why love hurts’ that personal desires and societal expectations have conflicts and lead to several challenges, but still love should be the fundamental aspect of human identity and social life (Illouz, 2007, pp. 1–8). It often results in complex interplay of personal autonomy, emotional fulfilment and societal influences with the structural and the duty bound relationship of the past (Musial, 2013, pp. 60–66). Also this consideration of love as shopping, where immediate desires are the base of chosen and discarded partners, lacks deep emotional connection and results in shallowness only (Illouz, 2007, pp. 109–112).

The change in western society in terms of love and close relationships can be understood by two views i.e. “liberation view” that has the concept of ‘pure relationships’, confluent love i.e. sharing of mutual understanding and experiences and ‘plastic sexuality’ in which individuals have more freedom, equality, and liberty to define their relationships (Giddens, 1992, pp. 61–72). And second is the “colonization view” that talks about commercialization of love and intimacy by market forces like dating apps and relationship counselling (Habermas, 1987, pp. 320–327; Hochschild, 2012, pp. 5–12). Both views are valid and interconnected as these commercial interests shape more freedom in relationships with having the profit from people's desire for connection and understanding where modern love requires consideration of both personal choices and societal influences (Musial, 2013, pp. 70–74). Giddens also talks about the contraception that has given the freedom to explore sexuality for women to avoid unintended pregnancy in 'plastic sexuality'; it also supports the idea of “reflexive project of the self” where there is a continuous reflection and modification on that shapes the identity of an individual that leads to more democratic and equal intimate relationships (Giddens, 1991, pp. 32–38; 1992, pp. 165–168). Brian McNair talks about the democratization in relationships by increasing the presence of nudity in media, including pornography (McNair, 2002, pp. 1–9). These liberations in sexual cultures see greater rights for women and sexual minorities, suggesting sexual openness can lead to broader social progress (McNair, 2002, pp. 155–160). Besides this the essentiality to recognize the broader societal and economic factors or the demand of work and capitalism on shaping personal relationships that may or will limit the freedom that modern intimacy promises is also mentioned in their work (Hochschild, 2012, pp. 11–18). Arlie Russell Hochschild argues about the increase in outsource elements of intimate life is the reason for transformation risk of genuine emotional experience into commodities with the help of ‘The Commodity Frontier’ (Hochschild, 2012, pp. 3–9) in which a wealthy man seeks a personal assistant for various

personal tasks and shows how market dynamics can depersonalize intimate connection (Hochschild, 2012, pp. 15–18). She also mentions the book ‘The Outsourced Self’ and examines services like Family360 that includes hiring of professionals for private tasks like love coach guiding, advising clients to treat dating as job hunting. By calculating ‘return of investment’, emphasizing personal branding and applying corporate strategies like setting specific goals, conducted evaluation and script dinner conversations to enhance communication (Hochschild, 2012, pp. 23–31). But these things feel a lot more like business operations than spontaneous connection, leading to a more transactional and less authentic human connection. Thus they say that modernization of intimacy is an ambivalent process (Musial, 2013, pp. 75–80). Giddens and McNair underplay the role of rationalizations, but Hochschild and Habermas focus on colonization of the lifeworld revealing the dual nature of modernization offering freedom but introducing new forms of control and commodification in intimate life (Habermas, 1987, pp. 355–373).

Daniel R. Smith says that irrespective of all the complexities and contradictions, love is a very important and powerful force for forming social bonds in our fragmented modern world (Smith, 2011, pp. 6–10). He supports Freud's idea of ‘transference love’ in analysis, where patients fall in love with their therapists that may seem inappropriate but reveals how past experiences of being loved influences current feelings, without following logical or social rules (Freud, 1915/1958, pp. 159–171). Smith also connects Eva Illouz's idea of the fragmented society because of instability in modern romantic relationships (Smith, 2011, pp. 12–15). Georg Simmel's idea that life is made up of incomplete parts and transference love is made out of fragmented parts yet form deep, real and meaningful connections (Simmel, 1908/1997, pp. 231–240). And as Jacques Lacan suggests, our desire for others in romantic relationships is because we believe that they have something we lack that shapes how we see ourselves and our partner (Lacan, 1977, pp. 103–110). This is not a logical desire but a deep unconscious need which is like ‘flirtation’ and ‘transference love’, involving ambiguity and not following clear rules, yet have the possibility of deep connections without fixed outcomes (Smith, 2011, pp. 18–21). His article also explores how couples are understood in modern society. Sociologists like Durkheim see marriage as a helping tool in controlling sexual desires and maintaining social order (Durkheim, 1897/2006, pp. 168–172) and even in today's time where some people accept sex outside marriage, ie open marriage, infidelity is still considered as wrong, that makes commitment important.

On the other hand Eva Illouz argues how modern love struggles to contain sexual desires, which is often restless and without a clear goal (Illouz, 2007, pp. 142–150). But Sven Seebach's view talks about stabilizing desire by focusing on shared experiences and commitments (Seebach, 2017, pp. 55–61). Philosopher Georg Simmel examined that the complexity in modern relationships is because these days individuals seek meaning through personal experiences, but love is actually a deep connection between unique individuals that is mysterious and cannot be fully understood, that is a mix of desires, individuality, and both partners are changed by the relationship, even if they can't fully understand each other (Simmel, 1908/1997, pp. 244–252). Freud's idea of transference love is bold because it shows how love can mix with many social boundaries, especially in psychoanalysis (Freud, 1915/1958, pp. 165–170) and Lacan and Simmel later expanded the idea of mistaken identities, as they are central to love and modern life (Lacan, 1977, pp. 111–118; Simmel, 1908/1997, pp. 248–252). This modern life is made up of broken pieces or fragments and love, like transference love, connects these pieces and helps people to give meaning to their emotional experience (Smith, 2011, pp. 22–26). ‘Flirtation’ on the other hand tries to explain the complex relationship between love, intimacy, physical relationships and social life (Simmel, 1908/1997, pp. 133–140). Basically, the transference-love between a patient and therapist that remains

undecided, i.e., ‘neither a yes or a no’, and as in today’s time sexual relationships are seen through the idea of consent (Freud, 1915/1958, pp. 168–170). This yes or no choice becomes important and may limit the idea of real love. But this model of flirtation is not enough according to Angel and Simmel, and they say that flirtation is playful and never fully commits, i.e., both yes and no at the same time (Simmel, 1908/1997, pp. 136–138). The idea of wanting and not having that helps in understanding individual and social life. Unlike sexual relationships, which end with a clear result, flirtation stays open-ended and symbolic and expresses how to understand the balance between unity as people are connected and loneliness as they are separated at the same time in love.

Erich Fromm differentiated between mature and immature love, by saying that love is often misunderstood as a search for the right object to love rather than cultivating the potential to love. In ‘The Art of Loving’ (1956) he says “People think that to love is simple, but to find the right object to love, or to be loved by is difficult” (Fromm, 1956, p.3). Also according to Redfield’s notion of ‘control drama’ individuals unconsciously develop behavioral strategies to gain psychological energy from others, especially in moments of insecurities and cope with the emotional scarcity or invalidation (Redfield, 1993, pp. 23–35). He primarily mentions four types of it, i.e. the Interrogator, Poor me, Intimidator, Aloof (Redfield, 1993, pp. 34–45). Besides this, Sartre defines how, in a relationship one becomes aware of being seen through the look of another which objectifies and limits one’s freedom and sees it as “bad faith” (Sartre, 1943/2003, pp. 340–347). And authentic love has its ground in recognizing and accepting the radical freedom of others and allows one to be fully autonomous (Sartre, 1943/2003, pp. 475–480). It coincides with the vision of love as a sharing between spiritually whole individuals but Sartre also mentions this type of love to be fragile and difficult (Sartre, 1943/2003, pp. 486–490).

A real hustle : Finding love and romantic-partner in modern times:

Dating behaviors have increased the complexities for the quest of authentic love, though they are offering unprecedented access to potential partners via apps; but also complicating the genuine connections (Musial, 2013). Let us try to understand how this large-scale socialising on these dating apps is influencing our generation to become more selfish, with the help of some dating lingos, shedding light on the complexities and challenges of navigating relationships in today's time (Musial, 2013; Smorasinska; Griebing, 2012).

Behaviours like ghosting, that is abrupt cessation of communication, can leave individuals in emotional limbo that brings questions of authenticity and their own worth (Times of India, 2024; Marriage.com). Other such behaviors like breadcrumbing and love bombing, in which minimal attention is given without commitment and overwhelmed affection that seems flattering , can often lead to prolonged uncertainty, emotional distress and unbalanced power dynamics that not only hinders the trust building but also can be risky for life and health (Times of India, 2024). Also the terms like situationship and pocketing highlights the ambiguity and secrecy that develops to emotional confusion and feelings of exclusion that develops insecurity (Marriage.com; Times of India, 2024). Not only this but gaslighting to one can put an individual in a position where they start doubting their own perception, eroding self-confidence and trust (Branden, 1998), that usually happens because of micro cheating that betrays trust without full infidelity, leading to emotional turmoil, questions the boundaries of acceptable behaviors in a connection (Times of India, 2024). Besides these there are furthermore types of relationships including casual relationships that do not include the commitment but rest all the desires and needs of both the partners are taken into consideration Furthermore, open relationships, that again includes desired freedom based on mutual consent of partners

but there is a fixed commitment to the partner as well (Griebing, 2012). Another type of such openness in a relationship can be seen in polyamory. This is the process in which one person, simultaneously engages in multiple romantic relationships, with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved, unlike casual relationships, it has open communication, extensive consent and established guidelines to ensure the emotional well-being of all parties (Anapol, 2010).

Critical evaluations shows that there are two categories of individuals for opting for polyamorous relationship, i.e one who are psychologically dependent, whose sense of identity is contingent upon validation and exclusivity from a partner, for such people polyamory may exaggerate insecurity, jealousy and ultimately lead to emotional fragmentation, asserted by attachment theory as well (Bowlby, 1988) that says individuals with preoccupied attachment style or anxious personality may have a long term consequence of depression, emotional fatigue or loneliness particularly in their midlife (LaMotte, 2020). On the other hand the second category, i.e. emotionally mature, individuated person akin to zen-like selfhood, has resemblance to concepts of self actualization, secure attachment and non attached compassion in Buddhist philosophy (Krishnamurti, 1968). Such a personality sees love as offering not as need and experiencing polyamory not as hedonistic escape but a practice of radical openness and might indeed remain non-depressed in later life. But this polyamorous relationship structure requires time, communication and negotiation, which can be energy draining regardless of one's maturity (Anapol, 2010). But polyamory at its best is the expression of freedom not a mask of any unresolved psychological wounds. Also sexual normalcy i.e. normalization of casual sex can be a foundation of a more mature and profound mode of rational evaluation that prioritizes authentic personality and emotional depth than physical or sexual allure (Fromm, 1956). The 'Casualization of Intimacy' is the mirroring of casualization, seen in labour markets, to the modern society's romantic and intimate relationship including insecurities, uncertainty and pressure (Griebing, 2012), here flexibility becomes a crucial part unlike personal relationship where adjustments and perspective of the other partners also plays crucial part and because individualism is deeply rooted in western ideologies that seeks personal fulfillment and autonomy in relationships (Musial, 2013). CNM or 'Consensual Non-Monogamy' exemplifies this casualization (Griebing, 2012). CNM and monogamy both centers on committed dynamic bonds in which CNM prioritizes open communication and self-disclosure, addressing challenges like jealousy and autonomy through transparency with flexibility and individualistic fulfilment and on the other hand monogamy prioritizes stability and mutual sacrifice, sometimes individuals desires for relationships longevity (Griebing, 2012).

Here, one thing that we should count is that somewhere the roles that are given for the man and woman or the ideal images that are influenced by either a patriarchal society or the modern society in which individualism and feminism types of new aspect of living life are also getting introduced, is somewhere having its footprints in Friedrich Nietzsche's understanding of love. He had introduced four major keys for having a successful romantic relationship in *The Gay Science* (Section 14). First was the 'Enjoyment of Talking' that makes you believe that you will be able to converse well with the person into your old age as well. These conversations should not be about past but future and present should not be at each other but with each other (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). Second he has talked about 'Cultivating true Friendship' that should not be based on money, looks etc but should be of 'reciprocated good will', that is mentioned by Aristotle as well in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VIII). It is about bringing out good in each other even with criticism not just having mutual feelings of being sad or hurt but should have genuine happiness and enjoyment in each other's growth and success that may include challenging them with your opinions and

being in a competitive situation of becoming better but together. Third he emphasized on ‘Never promising everlasting love’ as this is completely meaningless because loving forever, hating forever or even being faithful is promising over something that is not in our control as our emotions are not in one's power (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). But because of dishonesty, betrayals and carelessness etc are something that no one wants, hence the promise can be made to always act lovingly towards each other, he further describes this by saying,

..For long as I love you, I shall render to you the action of love. If I cease to love you, you will continue to receive the same actions from me, though from other motives...(like respect, humanity, care etc).. (Aphorism 142, Section 14, The Gay Science).

The last one that Nietzsche mentions is to ‘Be a little selfish in love’ as according him if you can’t be selfish in love than you can’t love, as when we admire one person more than the rest of the world by loving them, we are already being selfish (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). Because if we ignore our wants and needs we expect our beloved to do the same as that person is also in love with us, so a love relationship should be only yours and your partner’s, benefiting from selfishly excluding the rest of the world. So following the trends like CNM or casualization that are making people aware about their individuality and sexuality in the way of getting complete freedom and rights over themselves as well, needs a potential understanding that only those who have actual and correct knowledge of liberalism and feminism, can understand (Musial, 2013; Smorasinska). But unfortunately in our society the wrong or distorted knowledge propagates faster than the correct knowledge that results in defaming feminism or other revolutionary thinking. Such emotional disbalancing that is the result of allowance of easy replacement of partners, may put individuals in a situation of identity crisis, dignity issues and emotional instability (Sartre, 1943/2003; Smith, 2011).

Therefore we should consider love, its influencing power, emotional depth and intensity of consequences that society is facing because of not having a long term loving partner, more seriously as only love can conquer this hatred, pain and emotional damage (Fromm, 1956; Plato, Symposium; Shakespeare, 2004). And as per Nietzsche’s view trying to ensure the dignified version of love bond from all sides, so if we try to cultivate and practice these efforts effortlessly, by the means of meditation and other mindful activities that results in developing a better self control and understanding by introspection of our inner self (Krishnamurti, 1968), we will be able to deal with the traumatic consequences of this modernity of love relationships as well in a better way.

Falling in love with artificial intelligence or robots:

What happens when your phone , having all your data ,gets snatched? Well no doubt because of innovative software technology we can have all our data back in our new phone or other devices, and after sometimes when we get used to our new phone ,we barely think of the older one because all the services or may be better, are still provided to us in new device, here to make it more close with identity, I would replace the new phone to the same model of the older one with same features. Would you feel the exact same way while using it as you used to feel with an older one? For instance we can say yes because of the qualities it has , but the fact that it is not the older one can't be denied. Till now we have understood about the needs that a human being seeks in a love relationship and how our generation is trying to chase all those requirements via multiple ways (Branden, 1989, ch-02; Fromm, 1956, pp. 3-8). Also the evolving technology is playing a major role by keeping the demand and desires of humans in mind and therefore the innovation of love robots or apps used for adult conversations or simply chatting with artificial

intelligences are coming into existence (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 1-5; Viik, 2019, pp. 12-18). Though these innovations are made by considering the emotional, mental and physical requirements of human beings, still they are facing multiple challenges (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 6-10). Some people believe that these sex robots or modified versions of them that I will call as love- robots can substitute the dependency of humans on humans for love as they are highly skilled, perfectly programmed and specialised for us while on the other hand some thinkers deny this (Saetra, 2005, pp. 215-220; Turkle, 2011, pp. 275-280). Let's examine what are the grounds and studies that these thinkers have used and how they have justified their ideas.

Apps for adult themed conversations:

Firstly I would like to talk about AI sex bots or simply we can say the platforms for intimate chats in which all the responses are artificially generated by the app itself to evoke the erotic feelings, or used to overcome the loneliness of a person by giving an artificial engagement of conversation that works for companionship, by using empathetic language (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 3-6). Some apps like CandyAI, Couple.me, GirlfriendGPT, CrushOn etc are famous example of those apps that allows the user to create their virtual girlfriend or partner, including her personality, looks, voice, relationship, occupation, roleplay by choosing desired story or giving their own storyline, customized photos to enhance the realism of interaction for their adult themed, flirtatious and seductive conversations. Besides this some apps like Replika and Pepper can hold or respond to human feelings by adapting and recognising the user's way of communication that may give equivalent emotional connection formation possibilities like pets or people, that may fulfill the emotional needs (Turkle, 2011, pp. 289-295; Bowlby, 1988, pp. 120-130).

Now the important thing to notice here is that it will be on screen only, that means it lacks the physical touch and presence of the desired partner (Sartre, 2003, pp. 364-370). Not only this, but if we are focussing on the arousal of the feelings only, will it give a better or even equivalent experience of having adult themed conversation just like a human being? Consider hypothetically, other apps like Instagram, whatsapp, snapchat or dating apps where you will have the same conversations but with a human, exactly the same words but just with a living creature like you, what would you prefer then? Well in my personal opinion this realism will be way more erotic than the artificial one just because of its authenticity (Fromm, 1956, pp. 21-25). Besides this when we have such private or personal conversations with a human being, it doesn't give us immediate ,pre-determined and selective responses but still has a basic understanding about our emotions , unlike AI that will need a long description for understanding what exactly one needs (Sartre, 2003, pp. 471-480). . This is also a very important factor that works as resistance for making us fall in genuine love with such a technical and superficial source of fulfilling our emotional needs. But one can argue that it might be because of the lack of physical presence of the characters that one is using, otherwise sometimes human beings are also very complicated and work on the recognition and understanding of the love language of another person (Branden, 1989, ch-03). Human beings also have some limitations that can create misunderstandings and complexities in a different manner eg. One may not be able to understand the intensity of a bad day for his or her partner even after a long elaboration about the incidents that happened with them (Krishnamurti, 1969, ch-07). So let's examine this side as well before coming to any conclusion, by expanding it up to love robots.

Love robots:

Starting with the idea of Aristotle and Sartre on love (eros) , we can say that Aristotle believed that love

involves mutual emotional connection and virtue while on the other hand Sartre emphasized that love requires genuine interaction with another person (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, 1156b-1157a; Sartre, 2003, pp. 475-480). Modern thinkers like Sue Johnson and Shannon Vallor have also worked on understanding the importance of depth of human relationship for aspects of love (Vallor, 2016, pp. 120-130). Hence all of them will argue that love robots may not lead to genuine emotional fulfilment as they are lacking true emotional and consciousness, therefore cannot provide authentic love (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 8-12; Viik, 2019, pp. 55-62). For Aristotle love (eros) was built on mutual virtue and deep friendship (philia), emotional connection and shared growth that includes physical desires (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, 1156b-1158a). A love robot can work on a desired purpose but humans naturally seek meaningful relationships that help us become better person, guided by self control and moral character, and needs genuine reciprocity and emotional depth qualities (Fromm, 1956, pp. 52-60). Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism talks about "How humans are condemned to be free" that emphasis on authenticity, freedom of choices without pre-determined essence and responsibilities (Sartre, 2003, p. 34). He distinguished "Being in itself" for object without consciousness and "Being for itself" for conscious being capable of self definition (Sartre, 2003, pp. 96-102) that he uses for individuals seeking connection while preserving mutual freedom in relationships and for desires like touch, it cannot replicate genuine human desires. Robots can mimic affection and provide companionship but they cannot genuinely reciprocate feelings (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 9-13). It offers an illusion of connection without depth of human relationship as suggested by Sherry Turkle warn (Turkle, 2011, pp. 294-296). Hernik Skoug Saetra also says that we can form attachment with robots, but for falling in love with them, there must be a shift in understanding of love (Saetra, 2005, pp. 222-225). If we think of relying on them for deep love, love has to become more superficial, only a self centered version, prioritizing convenience over authentic connections that will decrease patience and empathy in human interaction (Viik, 2019, pp. 70-75). Hence it is said that robots can simulate aspects of love, but cannot replace the profound reciprocal bonds of humans in a love relationship (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 12-14).

Initially love involves strong emotional connection with another person who has their own thoughts, feelings and freedom to choose that makes another person truly different from us (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, 1157b). But using the method of 'phenomenology' one can argue to understand how people understand love is nothing but how things appear to us in our mind (Sartre, 2003, pp. 23-30) and hence if a robot looks and acts like a human i.e., works, talks, move and shows or mimics empathy, people might start seeing it as lovable (Viik, 2019, pp. 40-45). Some of the researchers tried to study whether it is possible for humans to feel genuine love towards robots even if those feelings aren't truly reciprocated or returned, by experiencing love in a new, non - human way (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 5-9). Love includes thoughts, feelings, actions and cultural influence either for people, animals, objects and ideas or simply romantic and passionate love (Nietzsche, 1974, §14; Plato, *Symposium*, 138). It includes strong attraction, deep respect for other people's uniqueness and dreams of a shared future that affects the feeling and the whole person on level of mind, body and emotions (Branden, 1989, ch-02; Fromm, 1956, pp. 37-44). It is sometimes very sudden and out of our control that results in putting efforts to impress our partner to make them feel the same way. Besides this it also changes how we see ourselves, our roles and our future (Branden, 1989, ch-03). Even the misunderstandings between two people based on limited information or cultural expectations are also expressed by shared ideas and social roles making it both deeply personal and influenced by society (Musial, 2013, pp. 45-52). A love robot, looking and mimicking all behaviours like human beings may still have some physical appearances or features that

seem strange or ‘not right’. This will make people feel uncomfortable and stop them truly loving a live robot. This can be better understood with the help of Masahiro Mori's hypothesis or simply ‘Uncanny valley’ (Mori, 1970, pp. 33-35). This phenomenon talks about how a little imperfection of humanoid objects like robots evoke feelings of eeriness or discomfort. Uncanny valley also highlights the sensitivity to subtle imperfections in human likeness and says that genuine human interactions are marked by true emotions that are irreplaceable (Mori, 1970, p. 34).

Though uncanny valley's effect is supposed to be avoided by making the design of the Robots different but appealing or informing humans that they are artificial (Mori, 1970, p. 35). Besides this the perfect memory, and lack of boredom or excitement, constant love and loyalty feels unnatural like a programmed response and not ‘earned’ like in a human relationship (Turkle, 2011, pp. 300-305), making It is hard to value and relate to love. Also they are synthetic not biologically alive that means they don't grow, age or die that is again not relatable including us being aware from inside in advance that they are just acting to love us but aren't truly doing it at all (Saetra, 2005, pp. 226-228). This will ultimately make it hard or even impossible for majority of the human being to feel loved, as not only getting what this artificial tool of love will give but also what it will get going to matter equally, as love is also a position of delivering the best to your partner and believing or trusting that the other person is also truly feeling loved (Fromm, 1956, pp. 47-55). And hence if we need human love from a robot that demands the need of understanding of human love or romantic relationships, that changes with time, will ultimately need humans for love to understand it , hence it will never be able to substitute human love completely (Danaher & McArthur, 2012, pp. 13-15).

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