



The attributes of love: a comparative study of Saint John of the Cross and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai

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Abstract

This comparative study is an effort to determine something of the notion of love between two of the great mystical poets, that is, Saint John of the Cross and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. There are a few distinctions in their other worldly viewpoints, like love, profound openness, language, and childhood in various settings and group environments. There is a reasonable sign of the likenesses in their ways of thinking also the yearning for genuine affection with God and gathering with the Beloved, articulations of sensations of separating and the delights of extreme association with God. Through this exploration it very well may be seen that Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai gives off an impression of being an otherworldly supporter of Maulana Rumi; thus, this view has been the principle focal point of examination. Along these lines, the review tracks down likenesses and contrasts underway of the two writers. The review reasons that, in spite of utilizing repetitive and various portrayals, the two writers share unavoidable likenesses with one another by goodness of a common mysterious mindfulness.

Keywords: comparative study, Poetry, love, profound openness, association with God

1. Introduction

Spirituality, the term is not just recent, but also includes complexity in both conceptual and historical characters. The fundamental thinking here is that the mystical consciousness, known as the presence of God in the whole process of experience, understanding, approval, love and decision making, may be a more appropriate way to understand our deeper presence in order to achieve direct manifestation of God.

As Saint John of the Cross and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai are two of the most famous mystic poets in the world, their poems found expressions in their very generations also the audiences around the world. But the distinctive perception about both of them is that they are sacred men in their respective religions. Both express these abilities in their writings and claim to have a direct relationship with Divine. Both feel the tension of what Paul Tillich the philosopher-theologian describes as “the infinite distance between the infinite and the finite” (Tillich, 2001, p. 71). Therefore, the works of Saint John and Shah Latif are founded on their mystical experiences as a consequence of their affection for and longing for the Divine, which is the eventual destination for all the creatures of God.

The ultimate objective of Sufism is to attain ecstasy and the refinement of the heart (*qalb*), reduction disciplining the lowest self, the elimination of the individual personality (*fana*) in order to achieve the highest relationship with God (*haqiqah*) and the higher knowledge (*marifat*). In Islamic mystical experience, visiting the sacred places, especially the Sufi saint's tomb is a means to achieving these goals.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

As the spiritual practices of intuitional fellows in distinct countries with one of a kind religion and cultures which shows that people in this global are far from the actual region of safety and desire to regain it. The yearning for returning to the original home is in truth a wish to attain the religious cohesion that man has lost to worldly affairs. This aspect is observed not handiest inside the mysticism of prepared religions, together with Christianity and Islam, for which Saint John of the Cross and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai embody respectively.

1.2. Research Questions

How does the poetry in the Spanish and Muslim traditions of Saint John of the Cross and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai respectively, represents the attributes of love, affection self-recognition, and brightness of soul?

2. Introduction and selection of the Poets

2.1. Saint John of the Cross

John of the Cross was born in Spain in the 16th century. His poems about his experiences with God make him been considered to be the Spain's greatest lyric poet. But to Catholics, his popularity known as the Spanish saint, who along with another mystic Teresa of Avila reformed the Carmelite Order. With only thirty-two others, the prestigious titles “Doctor of the Church” and “Doctor of Mystical Theology” were conferred on him. However, due to consequential frictions in Catholic Churches, he was restrained in 1576 and 1577.

During this time, he began to write poetry, some of his best works depicting the stages of spirituality, ascent and also known as the journey of the Soul to the Christ. Many of John's poems, including the “*The Living Flame of*

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Love and *"The Dark Night of the Soul"* are established the pinnacle of the mysticism Spanish literature. His famous work, *"The Spiritual Canticle,"* was written when John was imprisoned by religious authorities for his work to bring reforms in the Church systems. It was an effort to prompt the different stages by which a soul achieves union with God. When John runaway from prison he wrote even more poems and treatise about his understandings of mysticism and mystical experiences.

2.2. Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai

Shah Abdul-Latif Bhattai, one of the prolific spiritual writers, was born in the year 1649, A.D, in HalaHaveli, a town situated in Hyderabad district, Sindh, Pakistan. His father, Shah Habib, was also a famous writer and also arenowned Sindhi language artist. He is known as "*the morning star of Sindhi verse*". Abdul LatifBhattai got the strict customs of the family from him as they offer prayers and fasts on a regular basis. Shah Latif was meditative, from his early age. He adored to stay in the desert and mostly spent his time in isolation and. After reaching adolescent age, he consumed most of his time in the sand mound, so he became renowned as "*Bhattai*" (he who resides in the sand mounds).

He embraced a wide range of plots in the pursuit of truth and reality. With them as well as with his pupils, he meandered to notice the excellence and nature of the formation. He went to better places and met a few spiritualists, writers, and holy people while voyaging. As a result of that nearby perception, he began to portray the locations of nature in his verse delightfully. It is accepted reality that Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai generally kept all the time, three masterpieces of sacred verses with him, which are Maulana Rumi's Mathnawi, Shah Karim, and the holy *Qur'an*. This incredible spiritualist writer passed away in 1752 and was buried at *Bhit*, close to Hyderabad. Consistently his commemoration is praised that draws in a huge number of individuals from everywhere the country.

3. Analysis and Discussions

The mystics are fundamentally Sufis, those who seek moral form of Islam and believe that direct and personal experience of God could be obtained through thinking. Sufi mysticism strives to create a personal experience of the divine through mystical and ascetic discipline. Sufism has been influencing the spirituality of humanity for an extended period of time. The beginning of Sufism goes back to Muhammad (PBUH), Prophet of Islam and even to the first prophets of different religions. Sufism fundamentally reflects a path that liberates man from self-pride that leads to the ills of the existing world. Sufism also guides a person to how to achieve a higher level of spirituality (Dehlvi, 2009, p.xix). The body has a secondary value in Sufism and is simply considered the container of the spirit, which is why the soul and spirituality are the main concern of all Sufis. They emphasize more in spiritual development compared to any other development. It is a search to find the ultimate truth that is God and the love of God. (Shoaib, M. 2012)

Islamic mystics believe that they can communicate with God. The last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was able to communicate with Him with the voice of the angel Gabriel (A.S.). Islamic mysticism terms Gabriel (A.S.), as an "Archangel Angel" (*Raees-ul-Malaika*) of God and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the last and most noble Prophet of God. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the only lover of God, who has an opportunity of physical interaction with God called *Mi'raj* (Ascension) and *Isra'* (Night Journey). This journey is comprehensively discussed in *Quran*. (Lashari, 2014)

Christians believe that, God tells and guides them through the heart. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, where the rest is God and Jesus. Every Christian believes that he knows God by knowing the Holy Spirit. This is done through prayer, meditation and thinking. Some believe that the Holy Spirit survived in the hands of Jesus Christ and Saint Cross, saves people through their mystical approach. This concept is worthwhile to anyone who is connected with God through mysticism. In general, Christian literature on mystical tendencies explains how people talk about God's insights and information. (Hashmi, Mahmood, & Khuram, 2019)

3.1. The Concepts of Love by Saint John and Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai

The idea of affection is the key to practically all the Sufis, spiritualist artists. Love is the sense or essential articulation of one's internal identity. By this statement of affection humankind came to live in cognizance and acknowledged each other in the arrangement of concurrence in light of the fact that for Sufis there is no differentiation of cast, creed, doctrine and standing; they trust just infatuated.

Love should be renowned as a vital element in the illumination of soul. Because in mysticism the very basic element is love e.g. love of God. This is the mirror through which we can recognize God; we can have faith in God. Love is the spirit of all the creation by God. Mystic always have his head bowed to God and do what He intuits him. This is the characterizations of the *Higher* order.

Thus, for both of these poets, the love of the Creator/God is the emblem of joy, everlasting pleasure, comfort, and resolution of all the difficulties. Moreover,

Saint John pens:

*“How gently and lovingly
you wake in my heart,
where in secret you dwell alone;
and in your sweet breathing,
filled with good and glory,
how tenderly you swell my heart with love”.* (John, Kavanaugh, & Rodriguez, 1991, p. 56)

Tempting towards the love, Shah Latif states the same view:

“Come, Come on towards Kaak place, where there is pull of love; and there is no prohibition (discrimination on any basis) all may have opportunity to love, to hope”.

The above guideline of unlimited love remains exceptionally normal with the both spiritualist writers. It resembles a religion in their particular conduct of the affection. Both are oddly installed in the religion of affection. Aside from the affection, there is neither religion, nor statement of faith and no connection for them. Assuming someone has 'love' that is all anyone wants.

In above-referred models, Saint John and Shah Latif stand in practically complete understanding. One says, 'gathering of sweethearts turns out to be liberated from mosques and sanctuary' and different says that 'strict and different customs are not a definitive way for the darling, consequently darling can be had without religion or doctrine. Now Shah Latif appears conceding the impact of Saint John in that idea and at numerous spots Latif lets it out as well.

3.2. Love is the Foundation of Creation

Sufis remain always of the view that the Universe is formed just because of love, which inspired God to craft this universe. Muslims relate this concept of love of God with His the most Beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Saint John also uses this expression and links Mother to God as mother is explicitly stated in John's commentary to his poem *"The Dark Night of the Soul"* "sweet and living knowledge" (st.1, line 18). His treasure on his poetry uses the symbol of God as mother who gives birth to a child, nourishes her child and make him a virtuous human being. In the Catholic belief system, God is both mother and father. God's immanence, the relationship between Creator and creature." (Hashmi, Mahmood, & Khuram, 2019)

Here, God directly addresses the love saying that without you (Prophet), I had not created anything (universe). Here Saint John is articulating it straight, while, Shah Latif defines it in a rather different way:

“Am I not your Creator? When I heard by my ears at the time of birth, “yes you are” said my heart and at that moment I promised to love my fellow being”.

In above lines, Shah Latif ascribes the reason of formation; the affection of creatures is the true love to God. Additionally, the beloved ones are also referred to as "Sweetheart" and described as "heart-ravishing." The symbol of "beloved" refers to God that is passionate and beautiful. He wishes to love as long as her lover dreams for her. And "he" is still undoubtedly as he; the Beloved is clearly male as he refers to as a man, when he refers to another place in poetry.

John's poem has a Bride that longs for her Beloved. His poem "The Spiritual Cantic" describes the search for the bride for his lover who is hiding from him. Beloved is a Bridegroom and the male lover. He is described as beautiful and gentle. God is Beloved ones in both poets, all the characteristics of a man's lover is a lasting, attractive, but sometimes inaccessible and mysterious one. They track down a lot of congruity in perspectives to lay out the timeless idea of affection in various tones and demeanors of talk, yet their essential goal appears to help one another, however accidental and regular. Thusly, we can observe numerous likenesses in the perspectives on the both spiritualist writers in regards to the production of this cosmos and the peculiarity of adoration with God, the Creator. (Hashmi, Mahmood, & Khuram, 2019)

3.3. Ishq-e-Haqiqi (The intimate love for God)

In the world of love, in spiritualist practice, it is clearly true that every kind of love eventually leads to the love of God which is supposed to be immeasurable love. In Eastern wisdoms, it is known as *Ishq-e-Haqiqi*. This kind of theory is found in both spiritualist poets. In such context. Love is renewal, and for Saint John of the Cross it is a utilization of oneself and afterward there is no exacerbation, it implies self-negation. In this manner, for both incredible writers, the affection for God is a picture of reassurance, joy, everlasting delight and settlement of the general huge number of troubles. Moreover, Saint John, the mystic, communicates his '*Ishaq-e-Haqiqi*' as losing his soul and parting himself. (Hashmi, Mahmood, & Khuram, 2019)

The notion of self-denial is exclusive in the thinking of the poets of sub-continent, the Sufis see this while practicing sacrifices and it is the test of the lover imposed for them. However, John uses the figure of

drunkenness once in his poems yet it relates with the significance of impairing and misfortune. The bride (metaphor) in "The Spiritual Canticle" says:

*"In the inner wine cellar
I drank of my Beloved, and, when I went abroad,
through all this valley
I no longer knew anything
and lost the herd that I was following" (st.1, p.17)*

For Shah Latif, just turning into a darling isn't adequate however it is the initial move towards the accomplishment in becoming one with the cherished, be that as it may, when the sweetheart penances himself right away he achieves timeless achievement. In another sense, John intently portrays Shah Latif's ideas and appears as though he has communicated it in a way that would sound natural to him:

"There is no bitterness (un-sweetness) at the beloved's side, all is sweet if you taste from your affectionate desire".

Consequently, leading situation for both these writers is love. After, at that point, every one of the hardships, every one of the distresses and all the un-sweetnesses only strides towards the genuine objective, the adoration for God.

As it is all around acknowledged in mystery of Eastern tradition that self-destruction is the fulfillment of adored or love comparative confirmations are overflowing at both the spiritualist artists. Hence, there is no self-image, no self-acclaim for convention the genuine darling; one requirement to go past the inner self and oneself; that is the message of the spiritualists. Shah Latif moreover, propagates similar perspectives:

"Whatsoever you listen, don't reply ever, this is Beloved's (God's instruction), so important, along with the whole body and soul, kill your ownness, "I" and "me".

In the lines above, there is the idea "*selflessness*" before going to the Beloved (God), and things come after, are forfeited emanates the genuine love or "*Ishq-e-Haqiqi*". It is observed at many places that Shah Latif, is by all accounts Saint John's otherworldly supporter.

3.4. Ishaq-e- Mijazi (Worldly Love)

On exhibition of the "*Ishaq-e-Mijazi*" or worldly love, both of the spiritualist poets, seem to relate the exact way of thinking. When one poet appreciates his Beloved passionately, the other rationalizes it from a different perspective. One advocate love, the other keeps working over it superbly.(Sodhar, Zain-ul-Abdin, & Abdul Ghani, 2015)

Whenever there is notice of romantic tale, the darling listens cautiously that everything about be perceived and in the wake of observing that thing the sweetheart begins to look through the dearest. It isn't known by the sweetheart that people in love assume nothing but the best, it can't see, and the dearest is his part, in his own reality not somewhere else. Along these lines, minutely the perception is attributed, so delicately is contacted the idea of affection. The same way Shah Latif avows that assertion as:

"Make your existence mirror and watch your beloved; in this way you can observe him because 'apart/out of you there is nothing".

Conferring to Bhattai, love makes their consultations conceivable and that is the only way. In this perspective, John was fully aware that in all of Christian mystical traditions, it was *Jesus* who was the mystic ideal and therefore *Jesus Christ* was his primary companion in the mystical path. Interestingly, John never uses the name *Jesus*. He uses other symbols for him He is the "Son" and "Beloved" as previously mentioned and *Jesus* is main the main source of "*Ishaq-e-Mijazi*" (Worldly Love) for Saint John.

The Incarnation of God is a central theme in John's poetry. The paradox of John's poetry is that *Jesus* is the soul's companion in as much as He is its goal. Jose Nieto writes in *Mystic, Rebel, Saint: A Study of Saint John of the Cross*:

"It is obvious, then, that nothing can be said about the mystical union, infused contemplation, or any other topic of John's mystical thought without referring it ultimately to Christ who is the historical personality which links the empirical world with the transcendental world...Christ who is the mediator and the way to the Father, is also the way to union with God". (Nieto, 1979, p. 67)

So, although a soul can benefit much from the companionship of fellow mystics, it is primarily *Christ* who is the soul's main companion in case of John.

Reference to the above lines, the lover and beloved one appears as the eternal part of one another, they are not separated. That observation is the cure for the twinge of love. *Budhha* defines the pain of love as "*Surrom Dukhum Dukhum*" (all is painful), the similar pain is love but opinion of that reflection is important. Shah Latif explains it as:

"Don't withdraw your sword and don't point to murder me, my dear, you reside in me, so you may hit yourself".

John provides the reflection of his sweetheart while Latif calls it presence and the picture of the adoration is perfect for both the spiritualist writers.

The magic of the words by John is that in many of his poems darkness is preferred to light, John states;

*“And though I suffer darkness
in this mortal life
that is not so hard a thing
for even if I have no light
I have the life of heaven
or the blinder love is
living without light in darkness”.* (st. 2, p. 11)

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai plainly characterizes his dearest's magnificence, tending to the moon, since moon is dependably image of excellence in verse yet Shah Latif has tracked down the bits in contrary Saint John found in the flares. Along these lines, for both the spiritualist artists, there isn't anything as delightful as their dearest or the cherished one.

This is exceptionally outrageous of the idea of adoration for both the artists. One denies the ideas straightforwardly while, different decreases the feelings of dread of the wild animals and rejects those apprehensions and ideas in a roundabout way. Both are very sharp and clear in their hunt and move near the affection and cherished any of the situation.

3.5. Love of Humanity

There is an abundant projection of both the forms of love '*Ishaq-e-Haqiqi*' and '*Ishq-e-Majazi*', yet, there are other characteristics of love. Both poets treat this theme with delicacy and exceptionally. The love of humanity separated from other concepts of love and love is central to practically every one of the spiritualist poets. Love is the intuition or fundamental manifestation of one's inner self. From the appearance of love, for the Sufis there is no differentiation of caste and creed; they just believe in love.

In Saint John's Poem "*The Living Flame of Love*", he says that the soul recites in cherished love with God:

*“How gently and lovingly
You wake in my heart,
Where in secret you dwell alone;
And in your sweet breathing,
Filled with good and glory”* (Stanza 4)

Then again, Shah Latif dissimilar to Saint John has given significance to woman with no orientation predisposition and he teaches the significance of lady citing custom from Holy Prophet (PBUH) so he might make lady equivalent in adoration since affection is the attribute of humankind not the creatures. Furthermore, that adoration is inadequate without lady. Furthermore, toward this path, Shah Latif implores Beloved (God) for the entire mankind:

4. Conclusion

It tends to be determined from all the above conversation, in regards to the idea of affection for the extraordinary profound artist Saint John and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, there are a few likenesses in regards to the idea of adoration and their way of thinking of affection. However, there is a distinction of hundreds of years yet there is practically a similar way of thinking and acknowledgment of adoration. Notwithstanding these likenesses, there are a few distinctions in their portrayals as well.

Firstly, as a matter of first importance, Saint John in his management of the subjects, takes total or exhaustive accounts of the portrayals, while, Shah Latif takes a few significant and most critical occasions from the story and doesn't portray the entire story. Secondly, Besides, Saint John's portrayal is immediate and forthright/clear managing the ideas and stories, while, in Shah's verse, there is a circuitous and creative portrayal. Holy person John depicts everything without help from anyone else like a narrator, while, Shah Latif takes his himself to portray his sentiments and to pass on his message. (Sodhar, Zain-ul-Abdin, & Abdul Ghani, 2015) While seeing the wellsprings of both the extraordinary writers, one can see that Saint John utilizes powerful foundations more than Shah Latif, who takes each model from his local land and society layers with native images. In this unique situation, there is overpowering strict and insightful appearance in Saint John's verse while, Shah Latif has straightforward and normal things for articulation. Latif utilizes two sources regularly, first and foremost *Holy Quran* and also the lessons of Rumi.

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