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**UNFOLDED THE DEFINITION OF LOVE FOR NEW GENERATION:
THROUGH THE LENSES OF RALF EMERSON AND BHAGAVAT GITA**

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Abstract:

Bhagavat Gita teaches us about the selfless love and devotion towards relationship with God or highest power, the spiritual enlightenment. One can achieve 'Moksh' (ultimate liberation) by attaining this kind of purest, selfless love, without any expectations. On the similar page, Ralf Emerson's essay about love has explained initially about the initial days' romantic love and outer beauty between lovers. In later part of the essay, he is trying to explain that love is not only about the romance, physical attraction, and about outer beauty or materialistic attraction, but he explains how love grows and shows the path to connect with highest power with mutual understanding, with sharing responsibilities, taking care of each other in relationships, knowing inner beauty and virtues of partner, supporting each other for their personal growth. If one can attain this kind of relationship, they can achieve more success in life, peace, and a higher state of being, a meaningful life. Instead of focusing on fruit of action or personal benefits, Emerson is asking to follow the process and actions about love as he mentions in his essay, which is most necessary philosophy for today's 21st century's young generation. Humans have the power to bring out the best in them, so as about love, much like a hidden gem revealed by burning ray, as Emerson says in first lines in his essay about Koran's philosophy.

Keywords: *Bhagavat Gita, Love, Relationships, Spirituality, Beauty, Life, etc.*

Introduction:

Though Ralf Emerson, and *Bhagavat Gita* differs in cultural, philosophical backgrounds and centuries, Ralf Emerson was a fan of *Bhagavat Gita* like other famous people and writers in the world. There is deeper connection of Emerson's essay on love with *Bhagavat Gita*'s concept of love. Both texts are giving more spiritual and deeper concepts and aspects about love. Barbara Miller is a scholar of Sanskrit literature comments about relationship between Emerson and *Bhagavat Gita* that among the many works of Asian literature that were studied in Concord, Massachusetts, in the mid-nineteenth century, none was more influential than the *Bhagavad Gita* and Ralf Waldo Emerson is one of the nineteenth century's great American philosophers. The *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes on love, duty, equanimity, spiritual growth, at the same time guiding on how to live a meaningful and balanced life.

Illustration: "I was as a gem concealed, me my burning ray revealed" (Koran, 95). Ralf Emerson expresses these lines in his essay "Love" that such genius(gems) people's thoughts are supposed to be locked in a cage, their true potential is hidden until the discovery of their creativity like a ray of light revealed, brings out the hidden talent from a gem.



Pantelis Georgiou is explaining in his paper about love in a practical way as - According to Physicist Jim Al-Khalili "Love is Chemistry". In biology, love is a powerful neurological condition like hunger and thirst. The love can be called unconditional or blind in the sense that people have no control over it. Whereas the temporary passionate sexual desire involving the release of chemicals such as testosterone and estrogen. While on true love the brain releases a major set of chemicals like dopamine, nor epinephrine, pheromones, oxytocin, vasopressin, and serotonin.

Ralf Emerson is expressing love in his essay very differently, in a romantic way, in different terms of nature's boundless and looking ahead nature, which includes kindness, goodness, happiness, humanity and all these characteristics binds two people into love and finally into marriage and family, which will help these two people to stimulate their imagination into reality, adds heroic and sacred qualities to their character and it ensures the stability in human society.

As per Emerson, young people reject the love as a mature and philosophical thing thinking its dull and pedantic thinking. And he himself was harsh and against of those people who are in love. Emerson is appealing to adults that they must feel love as deep as similar to young ones though in a mature and noble way.

Emerson states that at any age, it doesn't matter to love at any age, and while describing the love at any age, one can miss the aspects at the one age as compared to the other ages. Love starts with the ignition of a small spark between two hearts. And it spreads throughout the world with its generous flames. Zick Rubin while differentiating about liking and loving, explains love which is made up of three different elements – attachment, caring and intimacy.

According to Emerson, when one overlooks at life and past, they feel bitterness and sorrow in their own life, filled with regret and sadness which is imperfect as compared to other people and they feel others life as ideal one without any pain or suffering. As age increases, this old memory seems more and more bitter and painful. But to understand love, one must look at life with hope and imagination, not just through the facts of history. The muses, the symbols of inspiration enjoy and celebrate the joy in the daily life's challenges and fears too. The details in each life's event can be seen as sad, but the overall result is noble and good one, one must understand this as per Emerson's love essay.

Through novels or by seeing intimate relations between couples even though they are unknown, one can feel connected and interested in their romance, even they are roughest people. Emerson has given example of a village boy while finding a true-life partner. He can search a sincere and genuine life partner through the past interactions happened in his/her life. If one is in interaction with opposite gender since childhood, they don't have any risk like scholars and great men to find true love. Emerson has given Milton's (famous poet) example that while finding true love, prominent and intellectual figures might experience complicated and troubled relationships.

According to Milton, love should be based on mutual respect and understanding, rather than superficial attractions. Emerson states, people are the essence of love, even the most logical or intellectual person can't deny the power of love and the ordinary memories become the magical one. Those will be the delightful memories, its beauty is hard to describe, and it lasts lifelong even in old age. Emerson regrets while writing the essay as he was earlier cold towards the love and personal relationships.

When Emerson thinks about love, he is expressing his thoughts what the two people in love think all the time other than even old best or purest friends too. The people who are in love, they have



different definition about poetry, music, art, as well as nature which looks more beautiful to such people. A single word or any small moment becomes precious memory, which can make heart race for a moment. Emerson has deeply explained about the two lovers that the other one's presence captures all attention and when they are absent, their memories are captured by the thoughts even in late nights. As Emerson quotes, "The words of the beloved object are not like other images written in water, but, as Plutarch said, "enamelled in fire," and make the study of midnight." The words spoken by the beloved ones cannot be erased like images drawn on water can be erased easily, but they are carved or ingrained in memory which occupy the thoughts of lover even late into night, lying awake and days felt too short. People in love are in their own imagination and thoughts of lovers, that they don't have any sense nor they live in reality, as people from streets feel like pictures, stars in the sky seemed like letters, flowers like secret codes, air filled with songs, birds singing feels like directly speaking to heart, clouds having faces, trees, grass, flowers, all nature feels like home for lovers than with other people and everything in the world is imaginary.

Emerson has decorated the essay of love and is expressing his thoughts with beautiful imagination and meaningful words. Someone said – "All other pleasures are not worth its pains." Adding this quote in his essay, Emerson is suggesting that no other pleasure is worth than the pains of love, and this is the essence of his essay he is trying to capture. People in love cherish each moment, which is described in poem by Ralf Emerson:

"Fountainheads and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves,
Moonlight walks,
when all the fowls Are safely housed,
save bats and owls,
A midnight bell, a passing groan,
— These are the sounds we feed upon."

People in love find peace and solitude at the natural places like fountainheads and pathless woods, moonlight walks, when only bats and owls are awake, and the lovers feed upon onsounds like midnight bell and a distant sorrowful sound.

Emerson further explains in next paragraphs about lovers' delighting moments in his imagination such as talks with himself, speaks with grass and trees as if they are friends, he feels deeply connected with flowers, music, verses and with nature. When people have good inspiration, passion, etc. then only they may write else cannot write well under any other circumstances. "The like force has the passion over all his nature. It expands the sentiment; it makes the clown gentle and gives the coward heart."

When a person is in love, he can defy the world with heart and courage, because he is passionate in love. Emerson describes how love can transform a coward into a stronger person with passion, being braver and kinder whenever needed and how love has the transformative power. Being in love, a person can discover himself more, a unique individual with a separate soul, who is not belonging to his family or society. A person in love becomes a separate entity from the world having aims with new perceptions. Also, the lover imagines his beloved as perfect, her existence makes the world rich, also, and lovers see her as summer evenings, diamond mornings, rainbows, as well as song of birds.



“The ancient called beauty the flowering of virtue.” Ralf Emerson mentions in his essay of “love” about beauty which resembles with nature and art too. According to Emerson, beauty, love, and art all are interconnected. Beauty is not only the outward expression but an inner quality of goodness too. Lover doesn’t get attracted by outer physical beauty but sees this inner beauty in partner’s goodness and virtues and goes beyond imagination with motivation. The art, music, poetry as well as nature are connected with beauty only, because when we see beauty in anything, then only one can fall in love with it and from that moment, the imagination starts. And when there is someone who loves more than anything, lovers get motivation to transform, and elevate himself to the highest, purest form of one’s soul. Jean Paul Richter’s quote about music’s love is added by Emerson in his essay of love — “Away! away! thou speakest to me of things which in all my endless life I have not found and shall not find”.

When lovers understand each other’s good deeds, inner beauty, instead of outer materialistic beauty, their love will grow day by day with deeper and quicker understanding of noble qualities amongst them. With this good understanding between them, they can show each other’s flaws too without causing any offense and improving oneself for reaching to the highest purpose in the society or world.

Emerson is criticizing about the women’s education about marriage means only related to financial or materialism or saving money. He is giving example of great people like Plato, Plutarch, and Apuleius taught it, so have Petrarch, Angelo, and Milton. To showcase love which has the same definition since all ages of these famous people, women must be taught for understanding more about love and to understand and develop the potential which is naturally available in women.

Emerson is trying to focus on youth public, who initially don’t understand the deeper meaning of love, which doesn’t limit lovers themselves only, but it spreads as the love grows day by day. The beauty is only the one scene in our play, means the beauty seen in love is just the one part in one’s life. There is involvement of society, people, everyday things, geography, history, utensil, toys, nurses, domestics, yards, households, etc. Emerson is trying to explain about love and beauty as these are the first step and one part of life and then marriage, kids, family, house, related chores, and many more things come up. With deeper understanding between both lovers, these things can remain at the back sit, to grow as an individual, as well as their connections becomes stronger. Emerson is giving example of Romeo and Juliet for young lovers who are just blind in the love and away from the real world. But they cannot escape from the real world’s challenges. Still even after dying, lover imagines that he must be turned into star to make the sky beautiful. Imagination and love never ends in lovers’ life. This union of lovers is so affected in their world, that they feel and imagine everything valuable and beautiful in the real world, and these souls become sweeter than anything.

Emerson argues over this self-thought of goodness of love and beauty that love doesn’t remain forever as it is at the initial stage which is only the temporary phase. Once they know each other’s flaws, they argue, and have fights and pains. They need deeper understanding about their strengths and weaknesses as well as understanding of humanity. Then only relationships can grow. According to Emerson, lovers must understand, “as life wears on, it proves a game of permutation and combination of all possible positions of the parties, to employ all the resources of each, and acquaint each with the strength and weakness of the other.” Finally, everything is woven with the texture and nature of men and women.



अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते/तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्॥ (9.22)

Translation: “To those who are constantly devoted and who worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”

Bhagavat Gita mentions about love and devotion, when one loves selflessly to God or nature or anyone in the world, those will be taken care by the higher spirit. *Bhagavat Gita* teaches us about the true love which is selfless and universal love which not based on personal desires, goes beyond personal relationships, recognizing the divine present in everyone. Though *Bhagavat Gita* is teaching about spirituality, Emerson is connecting the dots in human beings, to youth to love selflessly without personal desires to connect with the partner as well as to the higher spirit, universal beauty, and goodness.

Bhagavat Gita suggests for the materialistic detachment from the fruits of actions and to focus on higher spiritual goals to avoid the suffering as well as to attain inner peace. Emerson is trying to link these thoughts in his essay of love, if partners in love wants peace in their relationship, then they must understand each other, without complaining, the lovers take their responsibilities. Sometimes, men's happiness depends on other person or persons, when affection or emotions are ruling his thoughts. But when he is healthy, he becomes stable, his mind is filled with brightness of galaxies of immutable lights.

**कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्माते सद्गोऽस्त्व कर्मणि॥ (2.47)**

Emerson's quote which matches to above verse from *Bhagavat Gita*, “In giving him to another, it still more gives him to himself. He is a new man, with new perceptions, new and keener purposes, and a religious solemnity of character and aims.” Emerson is trying to explain that with love, a person can gain a profound sense of purpose of their life and a deeper understanding of themselves.

Emerson is trying to connect this love and beauty, nature, and art to spiritual journey. As this journey helps to purify and helps to reach and grow to the highest spirit and soul. None should fear about losing anything by this progress of soul, as this journey and the soul itself may be trusted to the end. Such beautiful and attractive relations must be succeeded or supplanted/replaced only by what is more beautiful and this journey will remain continue so on forever. This Emerson's thoughts match with the *Bhagavat Gita* which explains the purpose of life in realizing and finding one's true self (Atman) and to attain union with the Supreme (Brahman). *Bhagavat Gita* mentions about *Dharm* and *Karm* Yog's to gain knowledge about the responsibilities. *Dharm* means duty or righteousness. *Karm* means the practice of selfless action performed for the benefit of others and as an offering to God. This selfless action must be performed without being swayed by emotions while performing responsibilities and surrendering to divine without any expectation which is called Equanimity.

नैव तस्य कर्माणि नोपसर्गः सत्किरिः सत्कर्माणि वर्तते सदा क्रियते। सद्दृशीः (3.22)

“Neither does he attach any importance to his actions, nor does attachment arise to him from them. He always remains equal in success and failure, in happiness and distress, in praise and blame, and



heat and cold.” Bhagavad Gita is Emphasizing on the selfless love in devotion to God and selfless action.

Emerson’s thoughts are matching to this selfless love not only in attraction of outer beauty, but in partner’s inner beauty, virtues, caring, taking responsibilities, mutual understanding, which will lead to self-discovery and growth as an individual as well as humanity. *Bhagavad Gita* while encouraging to focus on eternal soul, it teaches simply the impermanence of physical world, relationships, and emotions which is just a small part of larger journey of the soul.

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथादेहेकौमारंयौवनंजरा।
तथादेहान्तरप्राप्तिर्षीरस्तत्रनमुह्यति॥2.13॥

Emerson is showing in his essay at last how the passionate love is the temporary one and how it matures over time, which can lead to deeper connection with partner with mutual support, deeper understanding, helping each other’s personal growth, fulfilling each other’s roles and responsibilities, as well as with broader appreciation of beauty and virtues, which can lead to spiritual connection. Instead of being selfish in relationship or keeping limited personal connection for personal benefit only, one can lead to a deeper connection with partner as well as with higher spirit, which will help to grow in and out.

To conclude, Emerson’s essay on love is trying to explain about the real meaning of love to the young and fast-paced generation in connection with *Bhagavat Gita* which is the old ancient Indian literature. Emerson was very fond of *Bhagavat Gita*, and though his thoughts are matching with the *Bhagavat Gita*, the literature from very old centuries, he is pointing to new generation to know the real meaning of love, which is losing in today’s practical and robotic generation. He is correlating the love and relationships with connection to highest power which is beyond attachment, or outer beauty and physical attractions, selfless actions, duties, and shared responsibilities while living together, more of understanding each other, supporting each other’s motives throughout the life to have better and deeper connection between them as well as higher and universal power which is in the form of love only.

In today world of focusing more on individualism and materialistic approach in each aspect, Emerson’s thoughts and Bhagavat Gita’s knowledge are trying to focus on selfless services and duties, empathy, humanity, compassion, in any relationships and society which is now a day becoming rare. By taking example of Emerson and *Bhagavat Gita* one can attain and fulfil inner peace, satisfactory, meaningful life. Instead of focusing on outcomes, these thoughts are encouraging to today’s generation to focus on the quality and process. Fruit of action will get automatically by putting efforts from bottom of heart in professional as well as personal life.

While implementing these thoughts of Emerson and Bhagavat Gita, one can achieve harmony, resilience, gratitude, mindfulness, mental health and emotional balance and overall well-being in the life with the help of spiritual attainment and connection. Universal love can help to gain respect, avoiding inequalities, injustice, and overall peace in the world. Eric Murphy Selinger criticises on philosophy of Emerson about love as “too pathetic, too pitiable”, some says it is not related with practical realities and overly idealistic. Though criticised in 19th century, they can challenge today’s 21st century’s generation to think deeply about love and relationships, as they have inspirational qualities and profound insights. In short, Emerson and Bhagavat Gita’s timeless wisdom on love has eternal implications and a valuable guidance for the modern-day’s generation which are highlighting the transformative power of love, importance of inner beauty and



understanding the love, a selfless journey towards achieving a higher spiritual power for a compassionate and purposeful life in today's fragmented as well as fast-paced world.

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