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STREAM OF SPIRITUAL LOVE IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

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**Abstract**

William Shakespeare was blossomed as a supernatural swan of Avon that had a magical stick of romantic and dramatic power. In Elizabethan garden, he must have been compared to the most fragrant flower that perfumed the whole realm of English literature. As a matter of fact, all the colossal and quixotic bards of literary reflection have uttered melodiously the verses of Shakespearean fame which was the major source of discussion in the marvellous and miraculous reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Moreover, he is one of the most valuable gems who played a remarkable and memorable role in the fields of dramatic literature. He is a man of versatile genius that flourished both dramatic and poetic world of literary composition. Besides, he has covered all the universal themes of human life in which thematic concern of love is playing a prevalent role in most of his creative works. In fact, love whether it is material or spiritual often plays a pivotal role in most of his ingenious writings and penetrates his art of literary production. Broadly speaking, spiritual love is nothing but a source of divine attachment creating a relationship between two parties or poles with the fecundation of divine goals. Admittedly, the bond of love between Romeo and Juliet was so intense that they died for each other and resulted as a divine unification of the two souls. Consequently, it is right to argue that Shakespeare dissipated the seeds of spiritual love in the grooves of his romantic imagination – *Romeo and Juliet* – as he desired to kindle the flambeau of spiritual love under the canopy of entire mankind so that the tree of human beings might prosper and flourish with the fruits of divine and holy love. Thus, this paper, fundamentally, focuses on the stream of spiritual love that takes place in Shakespeare's romantic play – *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Keywords:** Love, spiritual, stream, imagery, true, soul, attachment, beauty and religion etc.

**Introduction**

William Shakespeare is one of the most sparkling literary diamonds whose brilliance has illuminated every corner of English Literature.

Moreover, he is a writer of versatile brainiac who developed not only dramatic but also poetic field of literary composition. His creative writings include tragedy, comedy, history, romance, fantasy, and horror etc. which are still poignant, prevalent and

eloquent in the literalistic world of the modernistic trends. His heroes and heroines, villains and rogues are the most enduring and intelligible characters in the history of literary English. If someone has gone through his works, he would be unable to forget the reasonable and rightful advocacy of Portia, the scheming of Richard III, the premeditated resolution of Lady Macbeth, the jealous and suspicious attitude of Othello, the ridiculousness and absurdity of a lovesick Malvolio, the wit of Beatrice and Benedick, the domineering passion of Venus for Adonis, the prohibited love of Romeo and Juliet and the sorrowful vanity of King Lear. Pondering over the matter of Shakespeare's universality, Prof. T. K. Dutt reflects:

Shakespeare's universality is probably the greatest mark of his genius. That is why, Coleridge has called him myriad-minded Shakespeare. Very few dramatists or literary artists ever possessed such a creative imagination, such an insight into men and things, such a rare sense of humour, such a command over expression – in harmony of words as well as in depths of thought – such an insight into human passions, and such a skill in the art of characterisation, as Shakespeare possessed. (4)

Considering Shakespeare's place in literary English, W. J. Long honestly states: "Shakespeare holds, by general acclamation, the foremost place in the world's literature....He leads all that brilliant group of poets and dramatists who have given undying glory to the Age of Elizabeth". (137)

William Shakespeare is one of the greatest dramatists of the Elizabethan age, indeed, of any age. His scope of dramatic talent is very wide and it has lighted up every corner of English literature. As a matter of fact, his dramatic imagination has touched all the aspects of human life such as terror, hate, history, politics, advocacy, religion and love etc. Love is one of the most important elements which are thrived in Shakespearean dramatization. Broadly speaking, love may be divided into many kinds – paternal love, maternal love, brotherly love, sisterly love, Sexual love and spiritual love etc. in which spiritual love is greater and better than any other one. Indeed, this is nothing but a source of celestial adherence generating a kinship between

two souls with the enrichment of heavenly destinations. Spiritual love is the kind of love that attaches two or more spirits intellectually and celestially. Moreover, it is beyond material attachment that is temporary and short-lived whereas spiritual attachment is selfless, eternal and everlasting.

*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term 'spiritual' as 'standing in a relationship to another based on matters of the soul or pertaining to, or affecting the spirit or soul, esp. from a religious aspect'; (2961) while *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* delineates the term 'spiritual' as 'of or pertaining to the spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature'. (1840)

In addition, *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning of the term 'love' 'that state of feeling with regard to a person which manifests itself in concern for the person's welfare, pleasure in his or her presence, and often also desire for his or her approval; deep affection, strong emotional attachment'. (1647) and *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* defines the term 'love' as 'a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person or a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend' (1139)

Considering the meaning of these terms, it can be analysed that the spiritual love is, indeed, a strong emotional attachment that unites two or more spirits on the basis of their inner qualities. It is that kind of attachment which combines souls spiritually and this does not last ever and remains even after life. Consequently, it is right to argue that the love that joins and binds two persons or parties cordially and spiritually is known as spiritual love. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it is the matter of two spirits that are combined with each other with the bond of divine love. In the play, Shakespeare highlights the stream of spiritual love that is flowing between Romeo and Juliet. Indeed, it is very deep and intense and not superficial.

**Stream of True Love between Romeo and Juliet:** True love is not based on the physical beauty such as rosy cheeks, star like eyes and coral lips etc.

Besides, it does not want to get worldly possessions such as money, wealth and princely or kingly power because it detects the beauty of heart and soul. Similarly, Romeo wants to get Juliet and Juliet wants to get Romeo and nothing else; they are complement to each other and their love is established on the adherence of their spirits.

Romeo loved Rosaline very much but she refused his proposal of love because she wanted to remain virgin throughout her life. At this Romeo was very sad, disturbed and depressed. When he comes to know that Rosaline would attend the Capulet's feast party, he goes to attend the party to meet her but, as soon as, he sees Juliet's beauty and brilliance, he forgets his love for Rosaline as he utters:

"I'll watch her place of stand

And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night."  
(*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I Scene-V 34)

Afterwards, during their talking, both Romeo and Juliet use poetic language which is full of holy, sacred and spiritual imagery such as profane, shrine and pilgrim etc. These words express gravity and purity that runs between the love of Romeo and Juliet. Romeo says that if he touches the holy shrine – the hand of Juliet – it would be a blasphemous act. He, further, says that his lips are two blushing pilgrims who are ready to kiss the hand which has been made rough by his touch. In response, Juliet addresses him as a good pilgrim and allows for his wish. Besides, the poetic tone of their conversation is heart-touching and spiritual as it is observable through the following lines:

ROMEO

If I profane with my unworhiest hand

This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.  
(*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I Scene-V 35)

In fact, Romeo is so much attracted towards physical and spiritual beauty of Juliet that he is most willing to kiss her. When Juliet does not oppose him and then Romeo kisses her passionately. It proves that there has begun to flow a stream of love which will be perennial and everlasting. It is, indeed, clear through the following dialogue:

ROMEO

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in pray'r.

ROMEO

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do!

They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is purg'd.  
[Kisses her.] (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I

Scene-V 35-36)

By this meeting, both Romeo and Juliet were extremely attracted towards each other. This love is not shallow and slight but heart-touching and full of spiritual light. After this loving confluence, Romeo recollects Juliet at all the time and Juliet also remembers Romeo at each and every moment. Though the nurse tells her that the boy is the son of

Montague, she does not care for it and continues to love him. In the orchard scene, Romeo takes an oath of the moon to prove his true love for her but Juliet forbids him to swear the moon that is changing throughout the month. She says that there is nothing which can prove his true love but his 'gracious self' is enough for this. In this connection, their discussion is noticeable:

ROMEO

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear,

That tips with silver all these fruit tree tops

JULIET

O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,

That monthly changes in her circled orb,

Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.  
(*Romeo and Juliet* Act-II Scene-II 48)

Romeo and Juliet again promise to be true to the words. They say that they would be loyal to each other. Juliet further intensifies that her love is not superficial because it is as deep as the sea. Romeo leaves the place only when he becomes totally satisfied with the idea that she would remain loyal and faithful to him by the last breath of her life. The delineation of this conversation is quite revealing:

ROMEO

O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET

What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?

ROMEO

Th' exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

JULIET

I gave thee mine before thou didst request it;

And yet I would it were to give again.

ROMEO

Would'st thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?

JULIET

But to be frank and give it thee again.

And yet I wish but for the thing I have.

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,

My love as deep; the more I give to thee,

The more I have, for both are infinite.

I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu!  
(*Romeo and Juliet* Act-II Scene-II 48-49)

When, as a banished person, Romeo goes to Mantua and Juliet's marriage is finalised with Parish, she is much disturbed and worried. Juliet's love for Romeo is so deep that she plans to go to the counsellor Friar Lawrence and will search a solution for the problem. If there is no solution, then she would die as she says:

I'll to the friar to know his remedy

If all else fail, myself have power to die.  
(*Romeo and Juliet* Act-III Scene-V 102)

**Religious Imagery: A Source of Spiritual Love:**

Shakespeare has used a heavy weight of religious imagery in the play – *Romeo and Juliet*. This religious imagery is a great source of spiritual love that takes place between Romeo and Juliet. Although suicide is a punishable offence in Christian religion, they would not be punished because they are having their own religion that is the religion of divine love. This is observable from their very first confluence when Romeo, after seeing Juliet, utters:

"O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I Scene-V 33-34)

This statement assures that the love between Romeo and Juliet is twinkling as a light against darkness. Romeo further says: "touching hers, make blessed my rude hand" (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I Scene-V 34) These words express that their love is absolutely different from the contemporary love that was prevailing and in fashion in those days. Romeo seems to establish a new theme of religion

as he likens himself with a pilgrim who is going on a holy journey to see a virtuous saint. Comparing Juliet with the saint, he states that his hand is not worthy to touch the "holy shrine". Giving an elaborate response, Juliet says, "Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much... For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch" (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-I Scene-V 35) Besides, in balcony scene, Romeo regards Juliet as a "bright angel .... winged messenger of heaven". It means that Juliet is a lustrous and radiant harbinger for Romeo. Further Juliet regards Romeo as "the god of her idolatry" Thus it seems that she does not worship any Christian God because Romeo is her God and she will adore and idolize him. Thus, it is clear that both the lovers Romeo and Juliet have their own religion and this is the religion of true love. Ostensibly, they do not follow the rules and regulations of Christianity. In reality, they have generated a religion of love in place of religion of Christianity. In the garden, Romeo says to Juliet, "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd" (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-II Scene-II 46) Here Romeo wants to say that his sins are wiped out with the effect of Juliet's love and now he is as pure and innocent as a new born child who has just taken the ritual of baptism. As a matter of fact, this religious terminology proves that Romeo and Juliet have created their own religion which is based on the principles of spiritual love. Though they commit suicide for each other, they remain virtuous even after their death.

#### **Stream of Spiritual Love between Romeo and Juliet:**

So far as the matter is concerned, *Romeo and Juliet* – a tragic and romantic story – is rooted in scenes and sights of spiritual love which does not yearn for money, power and any other worldly possession. Indeed, it is stationed on heavenly or godly attachment that survives even after the end of life. The couple of Romeo and Juliet is called 'a pair of star-cross'd lovers'. It means that their love is high beyond the sky. Moreover, their love may be called idealistic and naturalistic. The marital ritual which is carried out by Friar Lawrence is also having a heavenly spark of spiritual love between Romeo and Juliet. Marriage is a religious bond in each and every religion. In Christian religion, marriage is a holy activity that unites two souls with the blessing of a

divine union. In addition, it is a sacred ordinance of God. The play ends with the glooming peace of spirituality that becomes a source of inspiration for both the families of Montague and Capulet:

A glooming peace this morning with it brings.

The sun for sorrow will not show his head.

Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;

Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished;

For never was a story of more woe

Than this of Juliet and her Romeo; (*Romeo and Juliet* Act-V Scene-III 142)

Romeo and Juliet die on account of the enmity of their families. Now, at the death of Romeo and Juliet, Montague and Capulet families realise that both the families are responsible for the great calamity of the lovers. Now they are willing to restore a friendly relationship between them. Moreover, Montague promises that he would get a golden statue built in the sweet memory of Juliet. Similarly, Capulet takes an oath that he would construct a good statue in the memory of true and faithful Romeo and these statues would be erected side by side. In the concluding lines of the play, it is seen that both the families, Montague and Capulet, are reconciled and seem to be united and harmonized with the threads of spiritual love.

#### **Conclusion**

In fact, *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most valuable tragedies of William Shakespeare. It highlights the tragic tale of Romeo and Juliet who are tied to each other with the bond of spiritual love. Their love is not founded on the charm of physical attraction and sexual association. Since their parents along with family members are enemies to one another, they – Romeo and Juliet – are unable to live happily as husband and wife during the span of their life. But their minds, hearts and souls are united spiritually and cannot live separately. When Romeo comes to know that Juliet has died, though it was fake news as it was a devised plan by Friar Lawrence, he comes to her grave and kisses her beloved lastly

and dies passionately by drinking poison. When Juliet comes into consciousness and sees the dead body of her lover, she also kills herself by stabbing a dagger in her stomach. Now they would live happily and lovingly in the paradise of God and there would be no one to check the pure and perennial stream of the spiritual love which was the source of living respiration for both Romeo and Juliet.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare unites two souls whose relationship is spiritual as they do not want to get physical pleasure but the pleasure of heavenly union that is evergreen and everlasting, and can never be extinguished. Undoubtedly, love between Romeo and Juliet is spiritual as it relates both the spirits from the very beginning to the end. The fact is proved at the end of the play when Juliet dies after awakening from the tomb. Finally, it is right to conclude that Shakespeare's romantic imagination – *Romeo and Juliet* – is sparkling with a thematic analysis of spiritual love that amalgamates the spirits of Romeo and Juliet cordially, heavenly and spiritually.

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