

To see is to Love

In this paper, I primarily talk about love and how its operations make the very act of loving political. It is important to note here that when I say love, I do not mean just romantic love; I mean love of any kind. I also insist that love and desire could be used simultaneously. I am not interested in looking at what is known as bodily desire and what is known as loving the person (and not the body) as two different ontological categories.

There is no logical impossibility in conceiving of individuals loving multiple people, romantically or otherwise. Thus, if we conceive of an individual A who loves several people, romantically or otherwise, it makes sense to say that all the people A ends up loving in their life are likely not to have the same social positionality as A. Thus, through the people A loves, A is likely to encounter perspectives and stances that differ from their own. It is not hard to imagine that this person's family/friends are their loved ones and that the opinions/perspectives that A's parents (or the generation before A) have will completely align with those of A's partners and friends. Similarly, the views A's partners and friends will espouse are likely to be different from the ones A's children (or the generation after A) will espouse. This is sensible because the times change, and with time, we see a lot of change coming about in how people see the world.

Now, something important about the nature of love is that it mandates that a person tries to resolve differences with their loved ones. A precondition of love is that if and when differences in values and opinions are encountered, the first impulse of people who are said to be in love with each other or among themselves is that they make a conscious effort towards seeing the world as their loved ones do, and this becomes an opportunity for people to wrestle with a view different than theirs. This very act of trying to inhabit a vantage point similar to that of the other person entails that the person considers the social realities of who they love,

and thus, they try to, and many times end up making sense of why their loved ones think what they think.

Now, this is one of the ‘merits’ of the act of loving, even though I do not believe that we love to achieve something. Love (or desire, for that matter) is not politically correct, nor is it utilitarian. This is so because love/desire is beyond the scope of rationality, and thus, predictions do not work when it comes to love/desire.

So, it is sensible to say that love, in a sense, makes us intellectually honest/rigorous; to endure friction caused by differences and trying to come to terms with it not only makes one pursue a deeper inquiry into the psyche of the other person, but it also makes sure that the objective of this inquiry is not to prove the other person wrong. Depending on the intensity of the love felt amongst individuals, love instils a yearning among people, and they end up desiring a certain closeness with their loved ones, be that in body or mind. Love is an extraordinary force this way because it is rare to see people passionately disagreeing and their egos not stealthily entering such debates. The point of disagreement between people often becomes to prove one right and the other wrong, even though people might have had better motives for such disputes when they started. Thus, interestingly, love becomes a driving force for engaging with views that differ or even radically oppose our views. Therefore, love prevents us from becoming blindly defensive of our views. Love fosters dialogue in scenarios like these because it makes this a necessary condition: that the first impulse when a difference is encountered will be that of a desire towards agreement and not a short-tempered reaction of moving away from the other person at the first chance itself. Even though this might seem like a straining exercise and relationships many times do fall apart while individuals are passing through this stage in relationships, it makes sense to say that they get better at working their way around conflicts with time. Love is an act of negotiation this way, and it ends up teaching us empathy and close attention to detail, virtues prized in academia and life as well, in general.

This intellectual honesty that the act of loving gives us makes us free in a way. The freedom here is the ability to trust one's authority, one developing a habit of questioning and pursuing inquiries deeper into what one is thinking about. Now, we can use 'trusting of one's authority' as a working definition of freedom because of the following reasons. We need to understand that mere bodily autonomy cannot be called freedom, as true freedom stems from a free mind that is not easily persuaded. This act of loving triggers several questions in a person, and this requires a person to rigorously perform second-order reasoning. Thus, this makes sure that a person is capable of critical thinking and makes them more likely to question authority. Something interesting can be noted in the music video "Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya", from the old Bollywood classic film *Mughal-E-Azam*. The music video of the song tells us that this is a song sung by a courtesan, Anarkali, to the emperor of India, Akbar, that Anarkali is in love with Akbar's son, Salim, and that Akbar is infuriated at Anarkali's song, which is a rebellious confession of Anarkali's love for Salim (*Mughal-E-Azam*). In this song, we find Anarkali precisely questioning authority, which in this case are social norms and Akbar, their upholder. Anarkali challenges these social norms, which deem her unworthy of the prince because she is considered a sub-human just because she is a courtesan and hence unworthy of the prince's love. Love, even in this case, becomes the motivating force that pushes Anarkali to fight for her love, and in the process, she ends up asking questions concerning her social position. Even throughout the film, we see Salim challenging his father and putting up a decent fight; I wonder if Salim would ever be inclined towards noticing the direness of social issues at all if it were not for him falling in love with a courtesan of all people.

Thus, even though love/desire is beyond reason, and when love occurs, it disrupts a person's rational thinking, love compels one to think rationally at a later stage to preserve this very love that disrupts logical thinking. At this stage, I will refer to Bell Hooks and her idea of the bondage of patriarchy that men suffer from. Bell Hooks states in her book *Feminism Is for*

Everybody: Passionate Politics that men do benefit a lot from patriarchal systems and that they've always enjoyed these benefits but perhaps not without any discomfort/remorse at all (Hooks ix). She says that "most men find it difficult to be patriarchs. Most men are disturbed by hatred and fear of women, by male violence against women, even the men who perpetuate this violence" (Hooks ix). She also criticises man-hating feminists when she says that it "was difficult to face the reality that the problem did not just lie with men" (Hooks 67); she insists that women can also very well be perpetrators of misogyny. Not only that, but she also expresses her faith in men and says that she believes that men who actively participate in patriarchy can "change and grow", freeing themselves from the "bondage of patriarchy" (Hooks ix). What is interesting here is the idea of this bondage, and I suggest that love frees one from this particular bondage. I have argued till this point how love insists us to look at our loved ones and realise their social realities. I now argue that in a typical monogamous heterosexual relationship, if a man is to love a woman and keep the relationship going, he has to make a conscious effort to see the woman's world and how patriarchy marginalises her. This is supported by Hooks when she says, "women active in the movement were often in intimate relationships with the men who were struggling to come to terms with feminism" (Hooks 68). Now, how far these men were convinced by the causes of feminism is a different question, but the larger point here is that a clash happens when people fall in love and that these clashes are revelatory. When Bell Hooks says that men are afraid of what a world without patriarchy would look like (Hooks ix), she's referring to a problem that love can solve: love insists that we see and engage with the world of our loved ones, which many times ends up varying wildly from the world we inhabit.

Thus, using Bell Hook's meditations on the supposed discomfort of men benefitting from patriarchy and her other views, we can conclude that in monogamous heterosexual relationships, it is axiomatic that both people will have to believe in feminism and believing in

feminism will make the very act of loving political, let alone the expressions of it. It is impossible to view love as distinct and unaffected by social realities, as getting to know different people while trying to love them will force us to wrestle with their social positions and circumstances. But does this only work for this very specific type of relationship? Can't we suggest that romantic relationships of different kinds could also operate along lines similar to feminism? What happens when, say, two men love each other? In a patriarchal world, they both can be said to benefit from the oppression of women and thus are in similar social positions. As a result, they might even espouse the same world views. What, then? Is their love beyond the scope of politics?

Now, let's think about feminism or any other movement that has the same spirit as feminism. If feminism has a spirit, it is the one shared by all movements across the world which strive for the liberation of the oppressed. Anti-racist, Anti-casteist, Anti-homophobic, etc., all such movements talk about oppressors, the oppressed, the ways of oppression, and so much more, and are similar to feminism because of this. Now, if we try to apply Bell Hook's paradigm to movements and social issues that are not feminism but are along certain similar principles of striving for liberation of the oppressed, etc., we find Bell Hook's paradigm is working pretty well with these other movements and issues. Whites, Upper Castes, Heterosexual people, etc., do realise that they are directly benefitting from the oppression of their marginalised social others. But do they stop doing it? For the most part, no, they do not. However, as Bell Hooks would say, it is wrong to imagine that the privileged categories are beyond change and growth. Thus, even in scenarios that are not related to feminism, we find a common thread of connectivity: the oppressor needs to see the world of the oppressed, the oppressor needs to acknowledge the discomfort that comes out of this oppression, and that love becomes the driving force that not only frees the oppressor of their bondage of oppressing but also the oppressed of their oppression at the same time.

Thus, to answer the question I raised a little back, if even two men are said to be in love with each other, it is not difficult to imagine that one of them might as well be from a community that has been oppressed for a long and the other man might be from a community that has directly benefitted from this oppression. Human beings do not have singular identities; rather, their lives are defined by the specific juxtaposition of all the identities they have; this juxtaposition determines what their social realities will look like. So even when it might seem from the perspective of a single identity that people in love come from similar places, it is very much possible that there exists some other identity concerning which the individuals' relationship with power could be wildly different.

The very act of seeing the other's world and trying to truce with the wild differences again becomes a direct consequence of the act of loving, forcing people to get out of their little wonderlands and put things into perspective. And that love becomes this instrument that actively fuels these protests; it becomes radically political, and thus it becomes impossible, even in cases other than feminism, to see love as a discrete category that is never haunted by the difference in the worlds of people who are in love. This is how love becomes inherently political.

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Works Cited

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Hooks, Bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. South End Press, 2000.